

# The Big Illness

By: Kristi N. Zanker



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# Chapter 1

The Big Illness  
(A *Dragnet* Fan Fiction Story)

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Chapter One

It had been one of those rare slow days—afternoon really. When Sergeant Joe Friday and Officer Bill Gannon came back to Parker Center after lunch, the hours seemed to drag by. Their paperwork was caught up and the phone was remarkably quiet for Homicide Division around three on Thursday, April 27, 1967. They passed the time by cleaning out the top drawers of their desks and sharpened more than their fair share of pencils. When it came to straightening your work area and making sure that each pencil had nice, sharp lead point, Joe knew it was an unusually relaxed day. This was actually a good thing due to the fact that they had the day off tomorrow. Both made small talk as they attacked the contents in the drawers.

“Eileen bought new curtains for the kitchen window yesterday—a yellow rose pattern,” said Bill, dividing every pencil, just newly sharpened and pen he had in the drawer into two tidy, yet separate rows on his desk.

“Oh?” replied Joe, who did the same, but with every trinket in his drawer, which included neatly sharpened pencils, ball-point pens with black, blue or red ink, a couple of new pads of paper, erasers, stray paperclips and thumbtacks--each assembled in an organized pile in front of him.

“The yellow is so bright; it’s the first thing you see when you walk into the kitchen. I think the color’s awful. It doesn’t match anything,” said Bill, as he opened the drawer to his desk, gathered up the pens and dropped them noisily inside.

“Did you tell her that?” Joe asked, when he placed the erasers in his drawer first, then the paperclips, and thumbtacks all to one side.

“No, Joe,” Bill replied, picking up the pencils and throwing them in right next to the pens. “You don’t tell your wife something like that!”

“Well, okay—“ Joe began to say, before he was interrupted by Bill and the slamming of his desk drawer. While his partner chattered on, Joe lit a *Chesterfield*.

“Next thing I knew she was talking about getting new wallpaper in the kitchen *and* dining room. All to match those awful curtains!”

“It’s her kitchen, Bill. She’s in there most of the time. You shouldn’t have a say in how she decorates it,” replied Joe, with the cigarette in one hand, as he continued with the pads of paper by situating them with his free hand in the middle of the drawer for easy access. The drawer was not that big and the paper took up most of the room anyway.

“You just wait; just you wait until you get married. Then you’ll see!” His partner opened the drawer to his desk once again, reached in and pulled out a mess of paperclips. He then asked Joe, “By the way, how’s Gracie these days?”

“She’s fine,” he answered, making sure that the blue and black ink pens were divided from the red ink ones and in order.

“Does she have wallpaper or curtains in her apartment?” Bill pressed on.

“No wallpaper, Bill, and there’s no window in the kitchen for curtains.” The pencils went in right next to the pens. Joe closed his drawer and stubbed out the cigarette butt in the ashtray that sat at his right, toward the end of his desk.

“Well, wait until you get married and buy a house....” His partner’s voice trailed off.

Joe peered over at Bill, who now began to make a chain out of the paperclips that lay before him and hoped the captain wouldn’t walk in at this particular moment.

“How many pencils did you sharpen?” asked Bill, as he added another paperclip to his succession.

“Seven,” replied Joe. “How about you?”

“Ten pencils...that was all I had. I’m glad I found these to keep me occupied for the time being”

“I’m glad you didn’t find any rubber bands in there,” he chuckled..

The phone next to Joe jangled and he immediately picked it up. While listening to the call, he poked around his clean desk drawer and quickly found the pad of paper and a pencil. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Bill had stopped his procession of paperclips and that they just went over the end of his desk. While Joe listened to the person on the other end, a sharp, staccato *tink-tink-tink* sound suddenly filled the nearly quiet room. For a split second, a smile crept across his face as he watched Bill gather up the fallen paperclips.

“Darn gravity!” he heard Bill hiss, as the now unlinked chain appeared in front of him a second time in the same half hour.

“Who was that?” Bill asked, trying to untangle the paperclips.

“Someone named Ida Goodwin. Her little girl Margaret stayed home from school today. Said she was sick and had a fever. She told me that Margaret was fine in the morning, but now when she went to check on her, Mrs. Goodwin thought the girl was dead.”

\*~\*~\*

*This could be a mistake*, thought Joe, as they drove to their objective. *The little girl probably needs a doctor instead of us*. If that was the case, then they would recommend that this Mrs. Goodwin to call their family doctor. It could be a wasted trip, but Joe knew that you had to check everything out.

The ride was silent. The two men soon found themselves in an older section of the city. At one time, this neighborhood was most likely thriving with young couples and their children. Some houses still didn't have a garage, whereas others had a hastily made structure that resembled a garage with two barn-like doors to close and lock their car in. Bill slowed the unmarked 1967 gold Ford Fairlane and stopped at the curb.

The small, tan, pre-war ranch home where Mrs. Goodwin lived had seen better days. Paint peeled on the siding and two weather-stained white shutters were halfway off their hinges. Shingles from the roof littered the front lawn, which needed a desperate mowing. Weeds and excess grass peeked out through the cement walkway to the front door. One of the things both men noticed was the doorbell. Like so many front doors some forty and fifty years ago, the handle sat in the middle of the door instead of off to the side. One had to give it a firm twist in order to allow the bell to jingle. Bill gave the small handle a turn and a sharp *ring, ring* sounded.

“That takes me back,” Bill mentioned, as Joe nodded in agreement.

A lady answered the door and introduced herself as Mrs. Ida Goodwin. She must've been in her mid-sixties with the almost all gray hair pulled back into a tight bun, Joe guessed and because she wore a dress that was fashionable during the Depression. He knew this because his mother had a similar one, only this woman's had gingham red and gray squares, whereas his mother's had been a green and white checkered pattern.

Both Bill and Joe introduced themselves, showed their identification and badges. Once inside, Mrs. Goodwin led them straight to the girl's bedroom. As they walked across the living room and down the short hallway, Joe noticed that the only up-to-date item in the house was the television set. The rest, like the wallpaper, furniture, and even the light fixtures were very parallel to ones he and his mother grew up with in the shabby apartment all those years ago. He even took a quick gander at the kitchen and from what he could see; the appliances had to be thirty or forty years old.

*It's almost like going back in time*, Joe thought, as he remembered his mother as well as his Aunt Mary in a setting such as this one on Collis Avenue. He felt a dull pain in his chest, suddenly missing his mother, who had been laid to rest three weeks ago in New Jersey.

“I...I let Margaret stay home from school today,” said Mrs. Goodwin. “She had a fever this morning. I called Dr. Kenyon, he’s our family doctor, but he said to just have her rest and see how she feels tomorrow. When I went to check on her at lunchtime, she was awake, but she wouldn’t eat anything. I figured she was just tired and let her sleep.”

“How old is she?” asked Joe, glancing over at the dishwater blonde-haired girl motionless in her bed. A green blanket with tiny white flowers covered most of her body.

“Seven years old,” answered Mrs. Goodwin. “She has a ten-year-old brother, Randy. He should be home from school soon.”

“What school do they attend,” asked Joe.

“They both go to Eisenhower Elementary School. It’s in the neighborhood here, just a few blocks from the house here.”

“What grades are the children in?” asked Bill.

“Randy is in fourth grade and Margaret is in second,” replied Mrs. Goodwin.

When Joe gently touched Margaret’s neck to feel for her pulse, he immediately recognized the result.

“Would you excuse us for a moment, Mrs. Goodwin, while we use your phone?” said Joe.

“Oh, go right ahead. It’s out in the hallway, on the stand. You’ll see it.”

“She’s dead,” said Joe in a low voice, as they went into the small hallway and stood by the telephone stand. “Call an ambulance and have them send her to the morgue. An autopsy must be done...fast.”

As Bill dialed the number, Joe came back into the bedroom.

“I didn’t know what to do,” said Mrs. Goodwin. “So I...she’s dead, isn’t she.”

“Yes,” replied Joe. “Let’s head back into the living room until the ambulance arrives. I need to ask you some questions.”

As they filed out into the hallway, Bill fell in step behind them and sat on the sofa next to Joe, with his pencil and notepad poised.

In the next ten minutes, they learned that Margaret and Randy’s parents, Dorothy and Walter Goodwin, were killed in an automobile accident five years ago. Mrs. Goodwin was given custody of her two grandchildren. She raised them alone in the years following their parent’s unexpected death. Ida Goodwin’s husband, Harold, had passed away from a stroke three years prior to her son’s death. Walter had been her only child.

Joe pulled back the curtain slightly and peeked out the front window to see the ambulance rolling down the street toward the Goodwin house. The siren wailed and then ceased once it was in the driveway. Joe and Bill both let the attendants in and took them straight to Margaret's room. Mrs. Goodwin was behind them, watching their every move.

Joe looked over at Bill to see if he noticed the same thing as he had. Before the other ambulance attendant lifted the girl, the one closest to Margaret, gently pulled back the covers, revealing her strawberry-laden nightgown. He took hold her hands that had been straight at her sides, and slowly moved one on top of the other. Next, he placed her clasped hands in the middle of her stomach. It almost looked as if the little girl was praying. That was when Joe noticed some marks on her wrists, as if she kept a rubber band on her wrist too long and the circulation got cut off. Still, they didn't want to assume anything until proper procedures were taken care of. Both kept their mouths shut as the two attendants lifted Margaret and laid her tenderly on the waiting stretcher.

A white sheet now covered her entire body. The two attendants grabbed the ropes at each end of the gurney and wheeled her outside. Margaret was lifted in the back of the ambulance. It would be her last ride.

Not long after that, Joe explained that they were taking her to the hospital to do some tests to see what could've caused her premature death. Once they heard anything, they'd give Mrs. Goodwin a call.

"What do you think about this one?" asked Bill, as they rode back to the office to fill out the DB report.

"I don't know, but I do know that seven-year-old girls just don't die like that," replied Joe, lighting up another cigarette. "We'll wait and see what the autopsy tells us."

By five o'clock the DB report on Margaret Goodwin was finished. For now, their work week was over and Joe was looking forward to the weekend.

As soon as he eased his powder blue 1964 Ford Fairlane out of the space at Parker Center, Joe switched on the radio. The vocals of Kay Starr filled the silence of the car as she sang, "So Tired." He sure felt that, in more ways than one.

It had been a hectic week, until this afternoon. He was even worn out from the alluring, yet overwhelming four solid days with Gracie before returning to work a week and a half ago. Every morning since his vacation, his body did not want to obey when the alarm clock rang, and yet at the same time relentlessly ached to be touched. He dreadfully missed Gracie, but both knew they had to get adequate sleep in order to function well at work.

Tonight, however, the two of them could pick up where they left off if they so desired. Last night, the phone rang after he was in bed. At first, he thought it was the office because criminals can and will break the law whether it was night or day. His heart lifted when he discovered it was Gracie at the other end, inviting him over for dinner the next night.

Apartment 207 was waiting patiently as he unlocked the door. After putting away his pistol, handcuffs, among other work-related items, Joe went to his closet and pulled off a charcoal gray pair of slacks from the hanger. He then found a white button-down shirt and a medium blue cardigan sweater. He was hoping to wear his favorite red sweater, but that was tossed in the hamper days ago and he hadn't had a moment to head down to the laundry room. Before proceeding to the first floor where Gracie lived, he wanted to freshen up a bit. He laid the clothes neatly on the bed and began to undress.

The water from the shower nozzle streamed down all over him as he briskly washed and shampooed his hair. His gold St. Christopher medal he always wore around his neck glistened at the right angle from the light above him. Beads of water dripped from it and the rest of him as he turned off the shower. After drying himself off, Joe draped the towel around himself and stood facing the mirror, reaching for the razor in the drawer on his right side, then picking up the Noxema Medicated shaving cream that stood in the nearly empty medicine chest. After the five o'clock shadow vanished, he padded back into the bedroom. Several minutes later, he saw the reflection of the St. Christopher's medal in the dresser mirror slowly disappear underneath his shirt as he fastened each button.

His mother had presented the medal to Joe ages ago after he was confirmed. Then, for his eighteenth birthday, she had purchased a sterling silver I.D. bracelet with his name on it. For some reason, as the years went by, he couldn't bear to take off the necklace or bracelet. Luckily, both pieces could withstand the harshness of soap and water. Once in awhile, he'd set them in jewelry cleaner to shine and polish them up. But nobody, except the doctor and Gracie knew he wore the necklace. People used to comment and point at his I.D. bracelet, thinking he had gotten it from a girlfriend. Time and again co-workers teased him and said, "Which girl gave you that I.D. bracelet?" "Is she your steady?" "She must really love you to give you something like that!" And the inevitable question, "When are you two getting married?"

That was when he first joined the LAPD. The ribbing continued but mention of the bracelet tapered off. By then, the 1950s had begun and it was virtually forgotten. It became a permanent fixture, along with the necklace for Joe Friday. However, early last year, the clasp broke that held the bracelet together. It currently sat in Joe's nightstand drawer for he hadn't any time to get it fixed.

When Joe finished buttoning up the sweater, he grabbed the small bottle of cologne on his dresser and sprayed a little on him. "Only spray twice now," the store clerk had told him two years ago when he purchased the new brand of men's cologne called Aramis. "One too many and you'll be sorry!" From then on, Joe made sure he only squirted the bottle twice.

He rummaged through the top drawer of his dresser and found a clean handkerchief. He glanced at himself in the mirror once more, glad that he didn't need to wear a tie. First, it wouldn't look right with his outfit and second, he wouldn't have a helluva time getting it off. He grinned remembering that only a little over a week ago, his tie almost didn't behave when he was with Gracie, who sat on the countertop. He kept smiling to himself at the memory of what transpired afterward. He folded, then shoved the handkerchief into his pants pocket, slid into his loafers that sat by the door, and out he went.

"Hi, Joe!" said Gracie, after she opened the door for him.

"Hi, honey," he said, giving her a kiss hello and then whispered in her ear, "I've missed you all week."

“Likewise,” she replied, kissing him back. “Dinner’s ready.”

“I’m ready for dinner,” he said, as he followed her into the kitchen. “Do you need help with anything?”

“Oh no, it’s all finished, you just sit down and relax,” she said turning to the stovetop to give the potatoes one last mashing.

Joe saw that her dark blonde hair was pulled back with a gold barrette. She wore a beige secretary dress with a light blue floral pattern, and a pleated front. The buttons in the front ran up the dress to the ascot bow that tied around her neck. For a split second, he thought about untying that bow and unbuttoning those buttons to see what was hidden underneath.

“Did you have a good day?” she asked, as she reached into a cupboard for a medium-sized bowl.

“Hmmm? Oh, yes. You know the entire week was busy,” he replied, watching as she scraped the last of the mashed potatoes into the bowl. “You don’t have to do that.”

“Do what?” she asked, setting the bowl on the table in front of Joe, only to turn and grab a smaller bowl from the cupboard and dump the pot of canned corn into that one.

“Put everything into bowls like that. It just makes more dishes. Hell, you could just leave the food in the pots on the stove and I can get it myself. You don’t have to go all out like this for me.”

“I don’t mind Joe, really,” she said, retrieving the platter of steak from the counter and aligned it with the other bowls on the table. “I need to get one more thing out of the oven,” and turned to open the steaming oven door to haul out a cookie sheet of dinner rolls.

Joe’s mouth began to water, at the rolls, and Gracie’s stance when she opened the oven door. He turned away and stared at the food in front of him, lifting up the serving spoon to put some mashed potatoes on his plate. He could hear her open the refrigerator door and take something out. He knew immediately what it had been when she plunked down the butter dish. She then got out a bottle of merlot wine; two stemmed glasses and poured each one. Joe kept himself busy by slicing and buttering a roll. Lastly, he grabbed a hunk of steak. He was ready to eat, and watched as she slid into the chair across from him and filled up her own plate.

“I know it creates more dishes, but we have much fun doing that, don’t we? I think I might actually *like* doing dishes now if you’re around!” Gracie grinned as she plopped some mashed potatoes next to the pile of corn. She found a slim cut of steak and then buttered herself a roll.

“You said you had a busy week?” she said beginning again.

“Oh yes...yes, we did,” said Joe, after swallowing some meat. “This is wonderful.”

“Thank you. I got home early from work today and thought I’d make a nice dinner.”

Joe smiled and nodded.

“Wait til you see what I have for dessert,” she said, with a clever beam creeping through.

He chuckled, “I can’t wait.”

“So you had a busy week?” she began for the third time..

“Yes....sorry. Yeah, but this afternoon seemed to drag by, so Bill and I cleaned out our desk drawers. We then got a call around three, but came back in time to check out at five. As you know, that doesn’t always happen. At least, they know where they can reach me besides at my own place.”

Gracie smiled and nodded, knowing that he had given his superior and Bill her number earlier that week, if he wasn’t at home. The room fell silent, except for the clinking of silverware on the plates as the dinner continued. Joe explained to Gracie awhile back that open police cases could not be discussed and she never pressed him to tell her anything, knowing he had seen his fair share of atrocities. But neither of them could understand what would possess a person to kill or harm someone else or even themselves. Joe would say to Gracie that as long as there were people in this world, unfortunately some believe in violent ways and this act would never stop until time actually came to a catastrophic end. However bad things may be, he loved his job and tried to help others live in a safe society. But these days, it was getting more and more difficult.

Joe took a sip of wine and waited to take another bite until the drink produced a warm, fuzzy feeling in his stomach. It was then he began to feel completely relaxed.

# Chapter 2

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Chapter Two

There was no point in denying it anymore—he loved it! Just *loved* plunging into the caverns of her waiting flesh. Absolutely found Gracie irresistible when she'd sigh and moan, *I'm making her do that!* he thought as he moved in and out. Joe knew she really was enjoying this too because when she came, he could feel her insides constricting, squeezing him as if there was no tomorrow.

Last night's thoughts were rudely interrupted by the screaming of the telephone next to him. He could hear Gracie pick up the extension in the living room. She had been making coffee which wafted heavenly through the apartment. In a few seconds, Joe heard his name being called.

He sighed, rolled over and picked up the receiver next to him on the nightstand.

"Hello?" Joe said.

"Joe, I want you to come down right away. They found something. I've already called Bill," said Captain Hugh Brown.

He informed the captain that he would be there as soon as possible. Joe picked up his watch that lay on the nightstand. The hands had spun to nine so rapidly. Last time, he looked at his watch, it was just before he and Gracie fell asleep. It had been past midnight then. He sighed, irritably throwing back the covers.

Several minutes later, he found himself in the shower, trying to wake up and get focused. *This always happens on my day off, always*, Joe thought, as he hurriedly washed. *We had plans! Really nice plans too. We were going to go on a picnic and then I was going to show Gracie where I used to live on Collis Avenue. But forget it now!* He rinsed out the washcloth and squeezed it several times to get his anger out.

His co-workers over the years would taunt him about liking to come back into work, even after the shift ended only two hours before. He would hear the banter amongst the others who were also called back in, and they'd gripe about missing a wonderful dinner or something else. When Joe would step into the room, all eyes fell on him. And it began.

"You're single! If you break a date, they'll understand and never call you again," peals of laughter would erupt then. "*You can drop everything at a minute's notice.*" "Not me," they'd go on, "I had plans to be with my son and spend time with the wife. She was livid when I left the house." "You don't have to worry about things like that, Joe."

He kept his thoughts to himself, thinking *how the hell would they know I had plans or not? I don't like being called back just as much as you at times.*

“You’ll never find someone; you’re married to your job.” That comment hurt the most, but as usual, Joe showed no emotion. But he felt their jabs. It’s a good thing people weren’t mind readers. Let them *think* that he just loved coming in at all hours, and not having plans outside the office. They sure were wrong though.

A half hour later, he breezed into the office. Bill was already in the captain’s office. Joe could hear his voice from the hallway. His stomach rumbled, impatiently waiting for food. He wished the cafeteria had been near by so he could grab a bit to eat. He didn’t even have a chance to any coffee this morning. Gracie had it ready, but he had to leave.

“Thank you for coming in at such a short notice,” said Captain Hugh Brown.

Joe mumbled “no problem.” And the captain went on.

“The little girl, Margaret, who was brought in yesterday; the autopsy result, is in. It tells a very different story than the one her grandmother told you.”

“What is it?” asked Bill.

“Well, she said Margaret had been sick all day and had a fever. According to the autopsy, the girl hadn’t been sick at all. And there were faded bruises all over her body, not to mention some strange scratches on her wrists and ankles. Most of all, they found fluid in her lungs. Margaret didn’t die from being sick, she was drowned by someone. Now, go find out whom.”

Bill called Mrs. Goodwin and let her know they were coming over for more questioning. She had asked if anything was found, and he said they’d fill her in when they arrived at her house.

As they left the office and walked down the hall to the elevator, Bill said to Joe, “I was here before you. What happened? Was there a traffic jam? I come all the way from Eagle Rock and *still* made it here before you.”

“Don’t start with me today. I haven’t had any coffee or breakfast yet.”

“Why not? You always—“

“It’s none of your damn business! Before we head out, I’m stopping at the cafeteria.”

For ten minutes, they sat at a table where Joe ate a cinnamon roll and tried to drink his coffee quickly.

“I knew something was wrong yesterday,” said Joe in between bites. “I think we should talk with their doctor. Maybe she had been sick last week or something. He’ll know their medical history.”

“Yes, we’ll talk with Dr. Kenyon too,” agreed Bill. “Didn’t she say Margaret had an older brother?”

“Yes. After we see Mrs. Goodwin and Dr. Kenyon, we should talk with Randy. After we’re finished here, I’ll put a call through to Dr. Kenyon’s office and the elementary school.”

Back at the office, Joe leafed through the phone book until he found Dr. Kenyon’s number. He called, informing the secretary that they were police officers and needed to ask the doctor a few questions about a patient of his. She told him that Dr. Kenyon was away on a house-call, but should be back within the hour. If they wanted to come in and see the doctor now they were welcome to.

About ten minutes later, they found themselves in the waiting room. Housewives with children on their laps stared at them. It must’ve looked odd to them that two grown men were in a pediatrician’s office and neither of them had a child in tow. Still, the room was surprisingly silent, except for a mother quietly reading a book to her daughter and a baby cooing in the corner.

Joe and Bill overheard the secretary announce their entrance as they heard the only male voice, which belonged to Dr. Kenyon. A few minutes later, a middle-aged man called their names and told them to follow him down the hall to his office. The secretary trailed behind them all, carrying a folder. She left as soon as she dropped the patient’s information on the desk. When Dr. Kenyon shut the door and sat down, the questioning began.

In the next half hour, Joe and Bill learned that Margaret hadn’t been sick in a while, but would come in often because, as the grandmother put it, her granddaughter fell down a lot. He confided in the two detectives that he didn’t believe what the grandmother said half of the time. Still, when he checked the girl out on a regular basis, he did see shadings of bruises. When asked about them, the girl and her grandmother always had a response. He also mentioned that Randy was hardly sick at all and never saw any markings on his body. He wanted to believe Mrs. Goodwin, but he always found himself shaking his head after they left the examining room. Joe asked why he didn’t report such a thing, and the doctor hemmed and hawed stating that he wasn’t entirely sure about anything. He was only there to make sure his patients stayed well.

Before leaving, they thanked the doctor for his time. The doctor then said he wished he had more information for them. And Joe replied that he had told them enough. As they walked out to their car, Bill remarked that they should’ve told him she had died. Joe didn’t want to tell him just yet, if they had, the doctor may have said something different. You had to be careful about these things. But the doctor would definitely be told in time about the death of one of his patients.

Traffic was heavy at this time in the morning due to early shoppers or sightseers. It took them nearly twenty minutes to reach Mrs. Goodwin’s house from the doctor’s office. As their car approached the premises, both men could see that the outside of the house remained the same. They wondered what information lurked inside that had been hidden yesterday.

Joe rapped on the door, instead of ringing the doorbell. It was another way to relieve exasperation. Seconds later it opened and the woman stood in the same dress she wore yesterday.

“What did you find out?” Mrs. Goodwin demanded.

“I’ll tell you, Ma’am,” said Joe. “Autopsies can make liars out of people.”

It was a harsh statement, he knew, but he couldn't help himself. Bill gave him a look that said, "Settle down" as they stepped into the house less than twenty-four hours ago from the first time.

"What? Are you insinuating that—" Mrs. Goodwin began, but was interrupted by Joe.

"No no, it's just that according to the results, Margaret wasn't sick at all like you told us she was. Even your family physician told us that she hadn't been sick for awhile. And furthermore, faded bruises were found all over her body and odd markings on her wrists and ankles," Joe stated. He and Bill still stood by the door.

Mrs. Goodwin sighed. "I can explain that," she said as she sat down in a rocking chair. She rocked back and forth in silence a couple of times before speaking..

"Those marks on her wrists and ankles are from when her and Randy would play Cops and Robbers. They'd take turns being the cop, and tie the other up to a chair. I told them to be careful and not tie the scarves so tight."

"Scarves?" asked Bill. "They used scarves to be tied up in a chair?"

"I don't know about that," said Joe. It didn't sound believable.

"Well, they used the scarves to tie the ankles and wrists, you see. Then, they'd wrap a jump rope around the belly, so they couldn't escape."

"I see," said Joe. "And what about the bruises?"

"Those are from Margaret falling a lot on the playground at recess. She's—she was a very awkward girl, always bumping into something."

"I see, Mrs. Goodwin. Do you mind if we talk with Randy?" asked Joe.

"Why do you want to do that?"

"Just some routine questioning," replied Joe.

"I don't see why you have to talk to him. He's just a kid."

"When something like this happens, we have to check everything out, you understand I'm sure," said Bill.

"Well, all right then, if you have to. You can talk to Randy."

Mrs. Goodwin stayed in the rocking chair the entire time. Joe and Bill saw themselves out.

“I don’t know. Something strange went on at that house yesterday,” said Bill, as they walked back to the car. “Maybe Randy can tell us the truth.”

They had been waiting for ten minutes in an empty office when the door opened, and the teacher who escorted Randy from class told him she’d be outside the door to take him back when they were finished.

“Who are you?” the dirty-blond haired little boy asked, as the door was shut behind him.

“We’re police officers, son,” responded Joe, introducing he and Bill and showing the young boy his badge and I.D. He motioned for Randy to sit down in the chair across from them.

“Really?” The boy’s blue eyes grew wide in amazement as Joe and Bill nodded. “Can I see your badge?”

“Sure,” Joe said, as he removed it from the leather pouch and handed it to him.

“Wow, this sure is something! A *real* police badge!” The little boy said as a smile crept across his face. Randy swung his legs back and forth in the excitement. Joe and Bill took note of the boy’s clothes. He wore clean khaki pants and a yellow and white horizontally striped polo shirt. They way his hair was combed, he looked like a miniature Beatle, with the bangs almost to his eyes.

“Yes son, it is,” said Joe, as Randy handed it back to him.

“Randy, we’re here because we need to ask you some questions about your sister Margaret,” said Bill, getting out a pencil and his notepad.

“Oh, is she okay? Grandma said you took her to the hospital because she was sick. She said she was going to be okay though, that they just wanted to do some tests or something. Is she home yet?”

“Well—what we want to know is, was your sister sick a few days before she went to the hospital?” asked Joe.

“I don’t remember her being sick then, but she did get sick a lot—with colds, I think. She stayed home from school a lot, too. Grandma said she’d be too sick to go to school.”

“Did she see the doctor quite a bit?” asked Bill.

“No, Grandma just said she had a little cold and didn’t need to bother the doctor over something like that.”

“I see,” said Joe. “Did you and your sister ever play a game called Cops and Robbers?”

“Yeah, we played that. Sometimes we’d ride our bikes and one of us would be the policeman and the other would be the person driving too fast down the street. We’d pull them over. If they didn’t stop, I’d get out my cap gun and shoot. We’d take turns being the policeman and the bad guy.”

“Did you ever play Cops and Robbers where you tied your sister to a chair?”

“Sometimes,” said the boy. “That was when we’d play that someone stole something, like money from a bank. When they’d get caught, I’d tie them up so they wouldn’t get away.”

“How would you do that, son?” asked Bill, as he jotted down notes.

“Well, this one time, we played robbing a bank and Margaret was the bad guy. So, I tied her to a chair.”

“How, son? With what? A rope, a belt? How did you tie the bad guy up, so they wouldn’t get away?” asked Joe.

“Oh, I’d ask Grandma if she had any scarves. She’d give them to me and I’d tie the bad guy’s hands and legs together. Then, I’d get Margaret’s jump rope and put it around her and the chair so she’d, I mean, the bad guy wouldn’t get away.”

“How long did you leave the bad guy tied up?” asked Bill. “A long time?”

“No, not too long. We’d then go outside before it got dark and ride bikes again.”

“I’m going to ask you something very important now, Randy,” said Joe. “I want you to give me the absolute truth. You know how on television they say you have to tell ‘the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ in court?”

“Yeah, I know that. My Grandma watches *Perry Mason*.”

“Oh, is that so?” chuckled Joe. “Well, what we need to know is, did your grandmother at any time, ever hit Margaret?”

“Hit her? No...no. I don’t remember Margaret getting hit. She falls down a lot though.”

“Did she herself tell you that?”

“Tell me what?”

“Did Margaret herself tell you that she fell down a lot.”

“Yeah, she sometimes would. I’d ask her if she wanted to ride bikes or play tag outside and she say she was too tired to play outside. She just sat in front of the television set.”

“Okay, where was your grandmother when she’d say these things?”

“She’d be out doing her marketing. That’s what she calls going to the grocery store—*marketing*.”

“Oh, I see,” said Joe. “My mother used to call it marketing too. What did your sister watch on television?”

“Oh, just whatever was on. Grandma didn’t like us to watch too much TV. When we’d hear the car door slam in the driveway, we knew we had to turn off the TV before she saw us watching.”

“What would happen if she saw you two watching television?” asked Bill.

“She’d get real mad and tell us to go to our rooms.”

“She didn’t hit you or Margaret then?” asked Bill.

“No, she’d just yell at us real loud.”

“What about the next morning, would your grandmother still be mad at you two?” asked Joe.

“No,” said Randy, who hesitated for a moment and then spoke quietly. “No, but my Grandma would come into my room in the morning to tell me to get ready for school and that Margaret was going to stay home because she was sick again.”

Joe and Bill looked at one another.

“Would she be better when you got home from school?” asked Bill.

“Sometimes she would and sometimes she wouldn’t.”

“How do you mean, son?” asked Joe.

“Well, she wouldn’t eat dinner with us—me and my Grandma. Grandma said I couldn’t see her because she was still sick and didn’t want me to catch anything.”

“When you did see your sister again, how was she?” asked Joe.

“She was okay. She wanted to play outside again.”

“Did she ever go to the hospital like yesterday?”

“No, I don’t think so. She must’ve been really sick this time to go there. I hope she’s home after school today.”

Joe felt a knot closing in on his stomach. He couldn’t tell the boy that he would never see his sister again, unless he visited her gravesite. Joe cleared his throat.

“Okay, Randy. That’s all the questions we have for you right now. If we need to ask anymore, we’ll come see you at school.”

“Okay! You can come see me on Monday afternoon. We have a math test. I don’t like math too much.”

“All right son, we’ll see,” said Bill, as the three of them stood up.

“If you see my Grandma, tell her to tell Margaret I miss her.”

“We’ll do, son,” Joe said quietly with a lump easing into his throat.

They watched as Randy was escorted back to his class. Before they left, they asked the secretary if it were possible to see Margaret Goodwin’s attendance for this year so far.

After explaining that they were the police and that they needed such information for routine purposes, as well as getting a clearance from the principal of the school, the secretary found Margaret’s attendance record and handed it to them. A Photostat was made of the record which stated that the girl had missed nearly 20 days of school since after the Christmas break.

When the Photostat of Margaret’s attendance record was given to them, Joe then asked if they could see and get a copy of Randy’s attendance record. When they received the older boy’s file, Joe and Bill immediately noticed that Randy had not missed one day of school yet thus far. They thanked the secretary for the cooperation and left the office.

“That poor boy,” said Bill, as they walked into the empty hallway. “He has no idea what has happened.”

“Yes, I don’t want him to find out. When it’s a kid like that you want to protect them in any way that you can, keep their innocence as long as possible. But we know we can’t do that. This boy is living in danger. We have to tell him the truth,” answered Joe.

“We have to tell him that his grandmother has a severe illness,” said Bill, as they walked through the doors and exited the school. Both of them walked in silence to their car.

# Chapter 3

The Big Illness  
(A *Dragnet* Fan Fiction Story)

By: Kristi N. Zanker

Chapter Three

The frustration Joe felt earlier that morning was mounting into rage. He forgot about his feelings of having been called back into work. Joe's mind was focused on Randy and Margaret, and especially their grandmother.

If this case had been twenty-five years prior to today, Joe knew he could just go back to Mrs. Goodwin's house, tell her what they believe to be the truth and arrest her, after she confessed. However, since the passing of the new law a little over a year ago, which had all police officers give criminals their Miranda rights; things were a little different now.

Joe remembered when that law went into effect and everyone had to have the Miranda rights printed on the back of their notepads. He'd read those rights to so many different people at various times, that he knew one day everyone would remember the saying word-for-word; not just the criminals that had been caught again and again, but the police officers as well. They'll be able to read those rights backwards and forwards in their sleep without ever having to glance at the back of their notepad again.

With Margaret and Randy's Photostat attendance records in Joe's hand, he and Bill found themselves at the Goodwin house for the third time in less than twenty-four hours. With his free hand, Joe gave the handle a harsh twist causing the *ring-ring* of the old-fashioned doorbell to sound. They waited for about a minute or so and watched as Mrs. Goodwin pulled back the tiny curtain that hung on the inside of the front door. Her face instantly went to a frown as she saw them.

"I don't have time for more questions," she said, as she stood in front of them, blocking the entrance. "I have things to do around the house."

"That's okay, Mrs. Goodwin," said Joe. "You can still do your housework while we ask our questions."

"If you insist," sighed Mrs. Goodwin, throwing up her hands in surrender. She opened the door wider and let them inside.

"I'm doing ironing out in the kitchen. We'll talk in there," she said, walking toward the kitchen entrance, not even turning back to look at them as she spoke.

Joe and Bill sat down at the small table and Mrs. Goodwin got behind the ironing board that stood in the middle of the kitchen. She wasn't a heavy woman, but she still had to squeeze her way between the board and refrigerator to take her stance. The other side was pushed up against the front of the stove. They watched as she took a boy's shirt, laid it on the ironing board, sprinkle droplets of water over, and crushed the hot iron to it.

“Well, what do you want to ask me now?” she said, staring at the shirt, as she moved the iron across the sleeves. She took careful pride in what she was doing, they noticed, making sure the wrinkles had completely disappeared.

“My wife irons like you do,” said Bill, watching as Mrs. Goodwin carefully lifted and placed the wrinkle-free shirt off to the side on the countertop. “She takes her time.”

“So you came to tell me that your wife irons the same way I do?” Mrs. Goodwin said as she took a girl’s dress and laid it on the board.

“No, Ma’am, we wanted to let you know we visited Dr. Kenyon at his office today, and your grandson Randy at the elementary school,” said Joe, with his eyes fixed on the iron and how Mrs. Goodwin dragged and slid it across the dress in haste. She then set the iron down rather loudly and the machine hissed, almost as if it were mocking her.

“And?” she said coldly. “I don’t know why you went to the school. Bothering a ten-year-old boy like that.”

“Like we said, it was routine questioning,” said Joe.

Now Mrs. Goodwin took a heavily wrinkled scarf, the kind someone would wear when doing housecleaning all day. The wrinkles vanished as the iron slowly and gently went over it.

“Is that one of the scarves the kids used when they played Cops and Robbers?” asked Joe.

“No, those were thrown away—“ Mrs. Goodwin began to say as she slammed the iron down again.

“You threw them away, why would you do that?” interrupted Bill.

“They got dirty, that’s why! Anyway, it’s none of your business.” She had a firm grip on the iron’s handle as she held it, while it hissed again in the silent kitchen.

“So, I see,” said Joe, picking up the attendance papers off of the table and glancing over them. “Like we told you, we met with Randy today. He told us that he and his sister played Cops and Robbers. Told us that she was sick a lot and clumsy—“

“See? That’s just what I told you. Why don’t you believe me? You have to go to a ten-year-old boy to get answers?”

“No, Mrs. Goodwin,” said Bill. “We got a few answers from their attendance records.”

“I told you Margaret missed a lot of school because she was sick a lot.”

“We know, Ma’am, but we also realize that Randy hasn’t missed any school at all this year,” replied Joe.

“Well, he’s trying to get an award. They hand them out every year to the students who don’t miss any days of school during the year,” she said as she yanked the iron and put it back on the scarf. The room was silent again for a few seconds.

“Did you kill her?” asked Joe.

“What kind of a question is that?!” the woman retorted.

“It’s a simple one, Ma’am. Did you or did you not kill your granddaughter, Margaret?”

Joe stared as she raised the iron off of the scarf and slowly put it down. He watched as her blue eyes turned to thick glass.

“You did, didn’t you?” Joe continued.

“And if I did? You’ll never prove it.”

“That’s what they all say, Mrs. Goodwin. But it’s also where you’re wrong.”

“Who told you!? Did Randy say something?”

“Nope, you did,” said Joe.

He watched as she let go of the iron handle, as her shoulders slumped over. Joe then got out his notepad, turned it over and read the wording on the back.

“Do you understand your rights, Mrs. Goodwin?” Bill asked.

“Yes.”

“Do you want an attorney or—“

“No, no. I’ll tell you,” Mrs. Goodwin said as she began to wring her hands out over and over. “I...I had to...I...didn’t know what....*I hate girls!*” the woman screamed.

“How’s that, Mrs. Goodwin?” asked Joe.

“I...I said I hate girls, absolutely *hate* them!”

“And why is that?” Joe’s voice was calm, not wanting to interfere with the confession that was about to happen.

“They’re useless, that’s what they are. Just useless! Margaret was so weak and had colds all the time. She didn’t amount to anything. I hated taking care of her, her being at home with me all those times.

“Now Randy....Randy’s a fine, strong boy. He helps me with everything, you know. He listens to me....he never put on this act of being ill. I know it may seem strange for someone like me to hate girls so much, but I do. I’m a girl, a woman, of course, but I’m strong, like Randy will be.”

“Let me ask you something, Mrs. Goodwin,” said Joe. “What do you think of someone who molests or rapes a girl—“

“They deserve it,” she said, looking straight at him. “They asked for it.”

“But what if the girl is only seven-years-old or younger?”

“Well, if they’re older, they asked for it!” she retorted.

“What if the woman was in her 80s?”

“Stop it, *stop it* with these questions!”

“Okay, Mrs. Goodwin. We just have one more to ask you.” Joe waited a few seconds and then said, “How did you kill Margaret?”

“I need to sit down,” she said, as Bill moved the ironing board that was between them and placed the chair in front of her. Once she was seated, she ran her hand down her face and began.

“That morning...yesterday...I got Randy up for school. I told him right away that Margaret wasn’t feeling well and won’t be going to school with him. He had heard that a lot before, so he didn’t ask too many questions.”

“Was she already dead?” asked Joe.

“Yes, yes she was,” whispered Mrs. Goodwin. “I had closed her door. I didn’t want Randy to go in there because he might find out something. So, he went off to school and I went around the house, doing what I usually do. Dishes, laundry, you know. Around three I called your office.”

“What did you do to her?” asked Joe.

“In the middle of the night, I woke her up. I guess it was around one in the morning or so. I woke her up and told her we forgot to give her a bath. I told her she needed to take a bath to be clean for school in the morning. She was groggy and tired, but I took her hand and she followed me to the bathroom. I then hung up her nightgown on the hook behind the door. Told her we had to be very quiet so we wouldn’t wake Randy. I told her we were going to play a game this time. Just like her and Randy played.

‘We’re going to play Cops and Robbers,’ I told her. ‘You’re the robber this time and I caught you.’ She went along with it. I put her in the tub and took out the scarves I had hidden underneath the sink. I told her to lie on her back. Then, I tied her hands together over her head. I turned on the water, then took another scarf and used that to tie one of her legs to the faucet. You know, there are the hot and cold

knobs. Well, I then tied her other leg to the knob. I told her to stay there. That she was a bad girl for breaking into that bank. I held her shoulders back as the water rose. It kept going higher and higher. I heard her squeal and felt her move in the tub. I demanded that she stay on her back and held her firmly. It was only minutes later that I didn't feel her moving anymore."

"What did you do then?" asked Bill, who quickly scribbled as much as he could in his notepad.

"I let the water out of the tub, picked her up, dried her off and put her nightgown back on. After that, I put her back into bed, made it look like she was sleeping."

"That's where you're wrong, Mrs. Goodwin," said Joe. "When the ambulance crew arrived yesterday and took her, we saw the marks on her wrists, the marks you gave her by tying and then drowning her."

"You couldn't have known that!" she said.

"We suspected something, but you were the one who told us everything just now."

"Of course I did, didn't you listen?"

"No, that's not what we mean. You see how you took careful time with Randy's shirt and barely noticed Margaret's dress? You then were so gentle with that scarf. It was one of them that you used, wasn't it?" asked Joe.

"Yes, but I threw the others away. I told you why I did it. I told you why, I hate girls, that's why."

"You had this planned all along?" asked Bill.

"Yes, I did. I kept her home wondering what I should do. I couldn't bring myself to do it until now."

"Have you thought about Randy and what's going to happen to him?" said Joe.

"Of course I have! He'll live with me. I'll take good care of him. He'll become a useful person in society. You'll see."

"I'm afraid that's where you're wrong again," replied Joe. "Because of what you did to Margaret, Randy will become a ward of the state. He'll be placed in a foster home," said Joe who then told Bill to call the welfare services. He got up and went to the phone that hung on the kitchen wall, took the receiver off the hook, and began to dial.

"They can't do that!" cried Mrs. Goodwin. "I won't let them! He's *my* grandson! I'm his *grandmother*! I'm supposed to take care of him!"

"*And* your granddaughter," finished Joe, in a quieter, yet firm tone. "After your son and daughter-in-law died in that car accident, you were responsible for them. Your job was to raise them and have them *both* be useful in our society. Instead, you have this big illness inside your brain that tells you, "girls are useless." You give in to that by hurting Margaret, lying that she "falls down a lot" and you went as far as

murdering her. What was her crime? Nothing, absolutely *nothing*! She was born a girl, that's all. Mrs. Goodwin, I can't help but wonder what would've happened if your only son, had been a girl."

"Who's going to tell Randy when he gets home from school?" she asked.

"Bill and I will tell him," said Joe, who told Bill to call Parker Center and send out a black and white unit along with a policewoman.

He then dialed the number for Parker Center requesting what they needed sent to Mrs. Ida Goodwin's residence. After hanging up the phone a second time, he went back to the kitchen table and sat down.

"Two uniformed officers are on their way, and a policewoman. Someone from welfare services will be here in about a half hour," Joe said. "You know you'll never see Margaret again, Mrs. Goodwin, but it looks like you won't see Randy again either."

All Mrs. Goodwin did was stare at her hands. Within the next five minutes, the doorbell rang and Joe went into the living room to answer it. He let the two policemen and policewoman inside. They came through the entranceway from the dining room into the kitchen with Joe behind them. One of the policemen instructed Mrs. Goodwin to stand and put her hands up on her head. She did as she was told as the policewoman frisked her.

"She's clean, Joe," the policewoman said, and turned back to Mrs. Goodwin, told her to put one arm down behind her back, followed by the other. The snapping of the handcuffs was the only sound heard in the kitchen. As the three escorted her out of the room, she turned back once to glare at Joe and Bill.

When the door closed behind the four of them, Joe sighed.

"In all my years of being on the force, I never liked this part of the job," said Joe, as he thought of how to break the news to Randy about his sister and what his grandmother had done to her. It never got any easier, even after all this time. Bill could only nod in agreement as they sat there, waiting for the boy to return home from school.

The End  
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