

PROLOGUE

From where the Eavesdropper stood in the dark hallway, just the left side of Sheriff Nathaniel Jefferson could be seen. What was he doing in the kitchen? He had walked out of the Lake Room without a word. Upon noticing this, the Eavesdropper had followed, more curious than anything else.

“My boys are in jail. Two of them for a long time cause of me. The other only because he was the big brother and trying to help them and me. It’s all my fault.”

*Ah, it was Butch, Briel, whomever, he was talking to, thought the Eavesdropper. Perhaps the sheriff was curious as to why people called him Butch rather than Briel. That was easy. Everybody thinks Dame Edna is having problems with lucidity whether it’s senile dementia or early onset Alzheimer’s and wants her to feel more comfortable.*

“She’s right, Dame Edna. She may be senile, but she was right. That rat Frenchman did come on that plane like she said, and my boys weren’t here. It was the first day of deer season, and they was in the woods. Each got a deer that day. Best day ever. Anyways, I helps him to the guesthouse. Mr. Edmund wouldn’t let him stay in the house for some reason.”

*No, it wasn’t Mr. Edmund. It is Dame Edna who calls the shots in this house.*

“We were there, and that French guy says to me that he needs to see Mr. Rolli. I asked him why, and he says there is a debt to settle. He was mad. He says that Mr. Rolli ratted him out to the cops in Montreal. A bank job or something; I don’t remember it all. He was going to even things up. He had this pistol in his bag. He showed it to me. Checks it, and then puts it on the bed. Says we’ll go after he uses the loo. Funny that. A Frenchie calling it a loo likes them English do.”

*The Body Under the Bridge* by Douglas Ewan Cameron

*What's Butch doing?*

“I like Mr. Rolli. He always been good to me. He was a good friend of Dame Edna. They grew up together. I knows that if that Frenchie would kill Mr. Rolli, that it would break Dame Edna's heart, and she just lost her husband. Her son's not around much, so she's pretty lonely – she counts on Mr. Rolli to be company. I can tell they like each other. Not like lovers but like brother and sister. So I know that I can't let that Frenchie do anything to Mr. Rolli. I takes the gun and stand over by the bathroom door. When he comes out I steps behind him, but he hears me and turns around. He sees the gun and reaches for it, so I shoot him, and he falls back against the bed. Then he starts up, so I puts a bullet in his head.”

*What? He's confessing to killing LeBeuf. Needed killing, that's a fact. But why confess? He didn't do it. But it did happen somewhat that way.*

“Nobody heard the shots I guess cause I go back to the house, and tell Mr. Edmund that the French guy was taking a nap. Says he real tired and would eat in his room that night. I took him a tray like he was going to eat and flushed it all down the toilet. I wrapped him up in the bedclothes that already be spoilt and called my boys. I told them to deep-six him and the gun. But Burke didn't – kept the gun for some fool reason. Biggest mistake that boy of mine made was with that crate. He wasn't thinking. Tired after being in the woods all day, I reckon. He sees the depth as 50 feet like I told him and puts the motor in idle, but that old boat just kept moving and by the time they were ready to dump it, they'd passed up the slope. That's how it got found.”

*Can't save his boys from the crime of dumping the body, but he's throwing in another decoy as to who called him.*

*The Body Under the Bridge* by Douglas Ewan Cameron

“Then that deputy comes and starts asking questions about that Frenchie, and I know there was going to be trouble. Dame Edna was real upset, and she calls Rolli and tells him about the deputy, so I knows I had to do something. So I calls and tells the boys to sideline that deputy who was causing trouble.”

*Now he's confessing to another crime he didn't commit. He didn't call the boys.*

“Burt and Burl are good boys but not too swift. I should have waited and talked to Burke, but it might have been too late. They took the gun – the Frenchie's gun – and shot that deputy. Nows they's in trouble, and it's my fault. I ruined their lives just like I ruined mine. ‘Sides that, me and Dame Edna got the same problem. Getting too old.”

Suddenly the sheriff's form disappeared, and there was a gunshot.

“Shit,” the sheriff said, followed by silence.

*Mon Dieu, Butch shot himself. Why?* The Eavesdropper started forward, but stopped when he heard the sheriff talking again.

“Barbara Ann, send some backup including Walker and Roberts to the Fitzgerald house. Also a squad, although that's a formality. Call Wallace Hibbs, and tell him that there'll be a removal.”

Having heard all that needed to be heard, the Eavesdropper silently stole back down the dark hallway. *I cannot let Butch take the blame for those crimes. It wouldn't be fair to the boys no matter what they've done. It would kill Edna, too. She thinks the world of Butch. I need to do something to sideline this. Maybe another confession. Or two. I just don't understand why he killed himself.*