

Excerpt from "21st Century Security"
Written by Bruce J. Robinson

GREG

Look, Mr. Oscar; this is way more than we can spend.

CLIFF

Well. Well. That's up to you, of course. Believe me, this product doesn't need to beg for buyers. I won't waste any more of your time.

JASMINE

Gosh, I'm sorry to 've wasted your time, Mr. Oscar.

CLIFF

(packing up)

No. No. This is what I do. It's nothing. Though I will admit, usually these babies do sell themselves. And it's still "Cliff," okay?

GREG

(extending hand for shake)

Thanks for coming by, Cliff.

CLIFF

(shaking hand)

Greg.

(taking coat from Jasmine)

Thanks, Jasmine. You know how they say stuff like, "Mr. Oscar is my father?" Well, I... Look. Never mind.

(near door)

Beautiful place, folks. Beautiful things.

(starting out – and continuing out as...)

I'm sure he'd like it.

JASMINE

Who?

CLIFF

The Coughlin boy. Three doors down?

JASMINE

Yes.

CLIFF

He specialized in stuff like this. Well...

JASMINE

He was away in the service.

CLIFF

Jasmine, the color of the uniform that boy's been wearing for the last few years is prison-gray. Look, the really important thing is that the rape allegation against him was never proven. Goodbye.

JASMINE

Cliff.

CLIFF

Ma'am.

JASMINE

Please. One more minute.

CLIFF

(re-entering)

Ma'am.

GREG

How do you know this stuff?

CLIFF

It's all in the public records. Look, Greg; the fee we charge barely covers the huge expenses of 21ST CENTURY SECURITY. One arm of our enterprise combs records readily available to interested parties (and some accessible through years of police work and a web of personal contacts). Doctor Shulkind believed that "forewarned is forearmed." Individuals who are DMs – that is, DORMANT MALEFACTORS – are profiled. That's entered into your software – and, of course, this is all constantly updated to reflect the state of your environs. When a DM enters your premises, your machine readiness is immediate kicked up to CA – that is, CODE ALERT. Believe me, any of these social pariahs who dare come to your door and even consider inflicting any damage on you... well.

GREG

This is kinda...disturbing.

CLIFF

How so?

GREG

This is...is targeting people for something that might be innocuous. If, for example, I had mistakenly been accused of something...

CLIFF

But you haven't been.

GREG

How can you...?

(From Cliff's knowing look, Greg knows that he's been investigated thoroughly. This disquiets him.)

But the point is... the point is...

CLIFF

The point is that if any of these people come to your door with a profile that conforms to that of a DORMANT MALEFACTOR and that person means no harm, what does that person have to fear? Am I right, Jasmine?

JASMINE

Well...

GREG

No. No. Do you know what kind of abuse that could... could..?

CLIFF

Shall we talk about "could?" Let's talk "could" and little Billy Coughlin – three houses down, who spent half his young life polishing his Chevy and the other half playing pool until he was arrested for just one of many larcenies he no doubt committed. Could? He could be in jail right now if he didn't slip by on pure technicality. He could be locked away forever for raping that 19 year-old girl.

JASMINE

That's Daisy's age.

CLIFF

He could come to that door.

GREG

Hey.

CLIFF

He could take what he wants.

GREG

Now, wait a minute.

CLIFF

And God help us if Daisy's home, he could take what he really wants!

GREG

I think we've had enough of this! Please. You can go.

CLIFF

Should I go, Jasmine?

(Beat.)

JASMINE

I'm not sure.

GREG

Well, I am. Thanks for your time...Cliff.

CLIFF

Well, the thing is, Gregg...I don't think Jasmine wants me to go. And in a way, I don't think you do?

GREG

Oh, I most-certainly do.

CLIFF

Didn't you say that money means nothing when it comes to your security?

GREG

Yeah, but –

CLIFF

So the only relevant question is: "Are you safer with or without 21ST CENTURY SECURITY?"

GREG

I'm not so sure, now you've gotta –

CLIFF

Oh, I am; I am. My father was killed by some perp. A solid citizen, tax payer; my father. Dead. Killer? Unknown. Out there. My dad. Alone. With no protection. Only armed with the quaint assumption that danger isn't poised on its menacing haunches ready to spring. No. I won't let this happen to you. Do you know that within a five block radius, there are six men who have been accused of some type of sexual malfeasance; four, accused of breaking and entering; and one head case who... who... Life's the sine qua non; and say it isn't when a criminal or terrorist – yes! terrorist! – invades your world, takes over, penetrates your pocket of peace! Do you have any idea what's lurking out on the street, ready to cross your transom, ready to slit you from belly to brain just for the fun of it?

(Overwhelmed and spooked, neither can answer.)

Greg!? Jasmine!?

(Again, they're too freaked to respond. Finally...)

GREG

Yeah?

CLIFF

May I use your bathroom?

(Greg's dumfounded. Finally, he nods "yes.")

Thanks.

GREG

Second door on the left.

(They wait for him to leave. Greg follows to make sure Cliff's gone.)