THE CORPSE WITH NO NAME

by

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Maybe you knew this man. He was beaten to bloody unconsciousness on the night of July 11, 1973 by two youths on Hanover Street, in Boston's North End, and died the following day at the Massachusetts General Hospital. The assault was seen by at least three witnesses who came to the man's aid and called the police. An hour before the assault, the man had casually conversed with an advertising executive at a crowded, expensive bar, but never gave his name. And during the fourteen months that the body lie in the morgue, all attempts to identify him led to dead ends. Finally, on September 19, 1974, he was buried in Potter's Field at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Boston. On his death certificate, where his name should be, are the words, "unknown white male."

Who was he? Where did he come from? Where was he going? No one knows the answers. In the annals of the Boston Police Department's homicide unit, he has become known as the victim with no name. The FBI had no fingerprints of him on file in Washington, and Interpol had none in Europe. And neither the dental nor

medical examinations have led to an identification. They found a half dozen items in his pockets, but no wallet. Yet, the police ruled out robbery as the motive for the assault. When I asked one of the detectives who had worked on the case if he had any theories about the man, he answered, "I don't go through that theory stuff anymore. It's always wrong anyway."

Yet, they do have a theory. They think he might have been an artist because he had a full beard and soft hands, not the hands of a laborer or a seaman. They did find a set of nail clippers in his pocket. The medical report described the victim as being a "well-developed and nourished white man who appears to be 25-35 years of age measuring 69 inches in length and weighing an estimated 170 lbs. The eyes are blue, the pupils round and equal measuring 4 mm. The teeth are natural, in good condition with absence of the two upper incisors. The penis is not circumcized. . . . The hair is brown with slight graying. There is a full beard and moustache with graying of the chin whiskers."

The estimates of the man's age vary with each report. The death certificate gives it as being between 20 and 30, while a newspaper story set the probable age at between 35 and 40. At the trial of the suspected murderer, the medical examiner said, "His blood vessels were smooth and elastic and upon that basis I estimated his age to be rather young." When I saw an eight-by-ten glossy of the dead man's bruised face, I was jolted by its nightmarish look. But I was also struck by its youth. Smooth skin, not a line nor a wrinkle. I thought he might be in his late twenties or early thirties. It was the slight gray in his beard that tended to make investigators think he was older.

Clues? His personal effects and the contents of his pockets provided more than you would expect: nail clippers, a comb, a new-looking Timex watch, a pair

of keys on a ring with a Dutch coin attached; the keys had the word "Lockwood" stamped on them; a pack of Winchester cigars; a Zippo lighter with the word "Atlantis" stamped on the bottom; a few bucks and some loose change; a piece of paper with the name David Taylor written on it; a menu from the Rusty Scupper, the restaurant-bar in which the man had conversed with the ad executive, whose name was Jack Butler and whose business card was also found in the victim's pocket. On back of the card Butler's home telephone number had been written in a large handwriting along with the word "Sailing."

The Rusty Scupper was located at the waterfront, near fashionable apartments, shops and offices in restored old wharves. It was the "in" place in 1973 and attracted an affluent mixed crowd. It was the kind of place that was known by word of mouth. That night it was rather crowded, and Butler told the police that he struck up a conversation with the man who gave the impression of being a writer or an artist. They talked about boats and sailing, with the man mentioning that he had just come up from Florida and was staying temporarily in the area. He seemed to have a guttural accent of some sort -- Dutch or Gerran -- with a touch of British. He told Butler that he had been taught English by an Englishman. He also said that he had a boat in Connecticut and was looking for someone to sail it with him to Maine. Butler told the man about a yacht he owned that was berthed in France, and the man discussed the possibility of chartering it. Butler gave the man his card, but did not get the man's name in return. This is not unusual. Some people go to bars to talk, others to remain anonymous and listen. But usually, when you give a card to a man you've just met in a bar, you generally exchange names out of courtesy. And then some ad men compulsively give out cards to whomever they meet. But from what the few clues tell us, the victim-to-be was neat in his

appearance, but not at all self-assertive. Nobody else in the bar remembered having seen him there. He was the classic loner.

The man must have left the Rusty Scupper about 11:30 p.m. or so, for it was not a long walk to his "rendezvous with death." This may sound like one of the oldest cliches in the book, but if you have a strong sense of fatalism, the idea is irresistible. It was one of those overcast summer nights, with intermittant rain, in which the sky is luminous and brightens the streets below. On exiting the Rusty Scupper the man may have turned right on Atlantic Avenue and then headed down Richmond Street toward Hanover into the heart of the North End, the Italian casbah of Boston. Although its streets are narrow and its alleys are dark, it has not been known as a dangerous part of town. On the contrary, a lot of single working girls have been attracted to the area because of its relative safety as a family neighborhood where everyone knows everyone else. And if an assault were to occur in the area, Hanover Street would be the last place to expect it. Hanover Street is the North End's main thoroughfare, well lit by street lights and the neon signs of shops and restaurants. And the exact spot of the assault, in front of Jem's Discount Store, was located between two of the most popular restaurants on the block, one of which attracted people from all over Boston. But at that particular hour on that particular night, the street was strangely deserted. The stores were closed and there was no traffic. Everything seemed to conspire to make an assault possible.

How the assault began is a mystery. One of the detectives told me: "It was a typical North End street thing. They took offense maybe because he wore a beard." The assailants were two teenagers, and what they took offense at we shall never know. But what we do know is that they beat, kicked, and clubbed the man with

pieces of wood the size and thickness of baseball bats until he was almost dead. And apparently he put up no resistance. If he was the classic loner, he also seems to have been the classic victim, caught by surprise, totally unprepared, physically paralyzed by violence. Undoubtedly the attack was so sudden, so savage, and so unexpected that resistance was impossible. But whatever the circumstances, had you been there you would have had the rare but blood-curdling experience of hearing the sound of wood bashing against a human skull.

There were witnesses. Jessie Spring, a 21-year-old single girl, who looks a little like Sandy Duncan, lived on Prince Street, a few blocks away from where the assault took place. During the day she worked as a tax assistant at a downtown law firm. That evening she had had two of her former Northeastern University classmates over for dinner, Gary Silverman and Mark Harris. At about 11:40 p.m. they decided to walk Gary to his car which had been parked near Durgin Park, the celebrated restaurant at the Quincy Market.

From Prince Street they took a short cut through the community center court yard to Parmenter. When they emerged on Hanover, which struck them as being unusually quiet and empty, they could see scuffling about a block ahead. "Oh, my God," Jessie gasped. Someone was down on the sidewalk and two men were standing over him, kicking and beating him. One was wielding a three or four foot piece of wood with which he was beating the man repeatedly, while the other threw a bottle at the victim, which shattered. From Parmenter Street to the front of Jem's Discount Store is approximately a hundred walking steps. At about sixty steps along the way is Spanguolo's Restaurant, and as Jessie and her friends continued to walk in the direction of the assault, she could see in her view a heavy-set, pot-bellied man step several times out of the restaurant doorway and look in the

direction of the assault. When Jessie and her friends reached the front of Spagnuolo's, more than halfway to the scuffle, the two attackers stopped beating the man, tossed aside their weapons, and started to run toward Jessie and her friends. Gary and Mark continued walking, but Jessie stopped dead in her tracks. She wanted to get a good look at, at least, one of the assailants, and when one of them ran to her right, she looked directly into his eyes as he passed. She was so stunned by the pair of eyes she saw that she knew she would not forget them.

Jessie and her friends then rushed to the victim's aid. She later told the Grand Jury: "I went and saw that he was very badly hurt. He was choking on his blood, and I turned almost immediately and ran back to the bar and went in there rather hysterically asking for the use of the phone and was told not to use the phone or that there was no phone -- I don't remember the exact words, but they were negative as far as helping me -- and sighted on the wall just inside -- there is like a back door and just inside that doorway -- I don't know if there was a door -- there was a pay phone, and at that time I turned around to go back to my friends, realizing I didn't have any money, and there was a man in the doorway of the bar and I said, 'Quick, give me a dime,' and he gave me a dime and I ran and called the 911 number and I ran out of the bar again to the gentleman."

To prevent the victim from choking on his blood, Jessie and her friends turned him on his side to let some of the blood drain out. She used her fingers to help get some of it out of his mouth. However, in minutes the police were there, and they took over, putting in a call for an ambulance. Since there was nothing further they could do and it had started to rain quite heavily, Jessie and her friends left the scene and completed their walk to Gary's car. They could hardly believe what they had just experienced and didn't say much. But when they finally got to

the car, Gary's parting words were, "Don't call me. I'll call you."

Mark walked Jessie back to her apartment. On the way up Hanover, they looked around for the piece of wood that had been used to beat the man who, by then, had been taken away. Jessie had seen the attacker drop it under one of the parked cars, but now it was nowhere to be found. Someone had apparently disposed of it. Back in the apartment, Jessie phoned the police to give them her name and address as a witness should they need her. She was still shaken by the evening's strange events. The man's bloodstains were on her shirt, and there was blood under her fingernails. But she was sure she could identify at least one of the assailants.

Meanwhile, the victim had been rushed to the Massachusetts General Hospital, and a police officer from District One had gone there to find out the man's identity and the cause for the assault. The victim briefly regained some consciousness, and the officer's report describes the scene:

"I went into one of the emergency rooms where they had this unknown white male on a table, and the doctor and nurse were working on him; and I attempted to talk to him to learn his identity and also the cause of his injuries. He appeared to be semi-conscious and sort of raving or hysterical, and to my questions as to what his name was, he said, "No, I won't tell you"; or kept shouting, "No, no, no. Don't don't." . . . I was unable to learn anything from him, unable to learn his identity or what had happened to him."

Later the victim fell into an unconsciousness which he would never come out of. The next day, after surgical treatment, his heart stopped beating. Attempts were made with a defibrilator to revive him but failed, and he was pronounced dead at 2:20 p.m. According to the death certificate, he died of a "blunt force injury of head with fracture of skull and cerebral contusions." It was now a matter of

homicide, Boston's sixty-fifth of that year.

That afternoon the officer who had been to the hospital called Jessie and arranged to meet her after work. They went over the scene of the assault and Jessie described what she had seen the night before. She described the assailants as being between 17 and 20 years old, of average height for that age. The one she got a good look at was clean-cut and handsome, the other slim and muscular. Two weeks later she and Mark were asked to come down to police headquarters to look over hundreds of pictures of possible suspects. But neither she nor Mark could find anyone among the pictures who looked like the assailants.

Meanwhile, attempts to identify the victim were leading to a series of dead ends. Not that the homicide bureau had had any great sense of urgency about the matter. There was always the assumption that sooner or later, as inevitably happens, someone or something would turn up that would pinpoint the identity of the victim. In the meantime, they were busy trying to solve other murders in what was turning out to be Boston's record year for violent deaths. In fact, on July 26, only two weeks after the assault, there was another murder in the North End. In this incident, a 32-year-old resident of the area was shot to death on Prince Street, only a short walk from where the man without a name had been attacked and beaten. But in this second incident, there were no witnesses, at least none that came forward.

By December, the police still had no idea either who the victim of July 11th or his assailants might be. Then, a couple of days into the month, they received an anonymous note from someone in the North End naming two brothers, Daniel and Victor Paolino, as being responsible for the two murders: Daniel, 17 years old, was identified as the one who had clubbed the unidentified man with the board, and Victor, 19, was identified as the killer of the North End resident. The note ended

with, "Both brothers, No Good."

The North Enders were being terrorized by this new impulsive generation of young killers, and none of them was willing to take the risk of "getting involved." Anonymous notes were all well and good in helping to steer the police in the right direction, but they could not serve as warrants for arrest or as evidence in a courtroom. However, a few days after the note was received, an incident occurred in the North End that would provide the basis for making an arrest. But before we describe the incident, we must return to the night of July 11th.

On that night, the last we saw of our assailants was as they were fleeing down Hanover Street past Jessie and her two friends. When they got to Parmenter, they swung left and fled down that street. We know this because they were seen by two patrolmen who had been walking toward Hanover on Richmond which runs directly into Parmenter. They heard the two youths running, but did not know what they were running from. They saw the youths turn down Parmenter. And they got a pretty good look at one of them because he had grabbed hold of the fire alarm box on the corner and swung completely around it, so that the officers saw his full face and profile before he fled down Parmenter. The patrolmen then gave chase, but lost the youths somewhere in the narrow streets.

It was some minutes later, after the two patrolmen were called by walkie-talkie to the scene of the assault, that they realized what the boys had been running from. Later on, back at the District One station, they went through a picture file of North End youths but could not find the ones they had seen.

Then, five months later, on Sunday, December 9th, came the first break. At about 6:30 p.m. the same two patrolmen who had given chase to the two youths in July, were called to the scene of an auto accident and fight in one of the North

End streets. On arrival, they were told by a 31-year-old man that his brand new car, while parked at the curb, was struck by a VW with four young white males in it. While passing papers a fight broke out and the man was assaulted by the youths, one of whom pointed a sawed-off shotgun at his head. The man's wife pleaded for them not to shoot, after which they fled.

The two officers investigated further and found the VW later that evening parked about a block down from where the fight had taken place. Two youths were sitting in the car, and the butt of a sawed-off shotgun was quite visible protruding from under the front seat. But what was even more interesting was that the officers recognized the youth in the passenger seat as the one they had seen back in July fleeing from the scene of the assault. He was Danny Paolino, and it was his striking good looks that had given him away. It was not a face you would easily forget.

The two youths were then arrested on a charge of assault and battery with a deadly weapon, brought to the District One station, booked, advised of their rights, sent to the identification section to be photographed and fingerprinted, and subsequently released on bail. Meanwhile, District One informed homicide that they had one of the suspects in the July 11th murder. It was now up to homicide to get an indictment. But first they had to make sure that they had the right suspect.

The detective in charge of the case, John Daley, called Jessie Spring to find out if she was available to make an identification on the day that Paolino was due to appear in Juvenile Court. She replied in the affirmative. Daley then called Paolino's lawyer and asked if he preferred to have his client viewed at a lineup or in a less formal setting, among a crowd of people in the corridor of the Juvenile Court. He chose the latter.

Jessie's place of work was only a short walk from the Juvenile Court and she got there in the late morning. She had been given no information whatever about the suspect and was asked to wait near the entrance to the corridor. Knowing that a man's fate was at stake, she made an effort not to look at anybody in order not to prejudice her mind. So she concentrated her attention on a man and woman who were discussing their own problems right in front of her.

After a twenty-minute wait, Daley returned and told her to walk the length of the corridor, to also look into the side rooms, to see if she could identify the man she had seen in July. The sixty-foot corridor was crowded with from seventy to a hundred people milling about. Jessie walked slowly down its entire length, looking into the side rooms, almost completing the tour when she suddenly came upon him quite unexpectedly. As she saw his eyes, a bristling feeling of electricity rushed through her. She became very nervous and continued to walk by him. She then turned around, approached the individual from the front, and looked directly into his eyes. Yes, these were the eyes she had seen in July.

The man she had picked out in the crowded corridor was Danny Paolino, and on the basis of that identification he was charged with the murder of an unidentified white male on the night of July 11, 1973. In February 1974, the Grand Jury handed down an indictment. And it wasn't until a full year later, in February of 1975, that the case finally went to trial, a trial that would last four days and depend mainly on Jessie Spring's testimony for its outcome.

The defense attorney realized how heavily the state was relying on its central witness for a conviction, and so he whittled away at Jessie's testimony until she had to admit that her identification of the accused rested almost entirely on her recognition of his eyes. Those eyes had left an indelible impression on her mind

because, as she explained, "I could not believe how young and innocent-looking they were. I just couldn't believe that this face was hurting anyone. And I think that's why I remember the eyes so clearly."

That was indeed the irony of it all. The eyes of the killer who ran past her that night were "round, soft, liquid, gentle, expressive." And that's why she could not forget them. She couldn't believe, when she first saw them, that their owner had just finished beating someone to death. She had told the court: "They were sensitive eyes. I was surprised, to put it bluntly, that he just didn't look like someone who would have been doing what I just saw him doing."

All during Jessie's testimony, the accused sat quietly in the defendant's box, handsomely clad in a dark blue suit, avoiding Jessie's eyes. Yet, in the course of the trial their eyes met ever so quickly once or twice. It gave Jessie a peculiar sensation, but it never frightened her.

The strategy of the defense was to prove that the accused had been nowhere near the scene of the crime on the night of July 11, 1973. They contended that he was at a summer cottage on Cape Cod, attending an aunt's birthday party, and they produced several emotional relatives who testified that they were pretty certain that Danny was among the celebrants. In addition, the defense, in a very clever move, had persuaded Mark Harris, Jessie's boyfriend, to testify as a defense witness. Mark simply told the court that he did not get a good enough look at the assailants to be able to identify them.

Of course, the jury was told nothing about the anonymous note, or about the incident with the sawed-off shotgun which led to the defendant's arrest. And they were not told of the phone calls Jessie had received during the trial from terrorized North Enders praising her for having the courage to come forward as a

witness. This information would have prejudiced the jury. The jury had simply seen a handsome eighteen-year-old, accused of murder, identified by witnesses who could have been mistaken, defended by relatives who said that he was at a birthday party. After the summations by both prosecuting and defense attorneys, the judge put the matter to the jury in very clear terms:

"The ultimate issue of identification is one that you have to resolve . . . Now whether you do or whether you don't, when you come to the basic issue of identification, an important consideration is the witness who makes it. . . .

"Proof beyond a reasonable doubt does not mean proof beyond all doubt nor beyond a whimsical or fanciful doubt, nor proof beyond the possibility of innocence. If an unreasonable doubt or a mere possibility of innocence were sufficient to prevent a conviction, practically every criminal would be set free to prey upon the community. Such a rule would be wholly impractical, and would break down the forces of law and order and make the lawless supreme."

The jury deliberated for fifteen hours but could not reach a verdict. The court declared a mistrial, and the accused was once more released on bail until a new trial be convened. But in May of 1975 the U. S. Supreme Court handed down a decision in Breed v. Jones ruling that "the prosecution of a juvenile defendant as an adult in Superior Court, after an adjudicatory finding in Juvenile Court that he had violated a criminal statute and a subsequent finding that he was unfit for treatment as a juvenile violated the Double Jeopardy Clause of the Fifth Amendment."

It was all very technical, but it meant that Danny Paolino, the suspect with the eyes of a poet, could not be tried again for the same crime, unless the state, through an appeal, could get a ruling in its favor, which was unlikely. He was, in other words, inordinately blessed with good luck, while his victim was not.

And if one believes in fate, or predestination, one may ponder the mysterious design of life whereby killers and victims cross paths and act out their inevitable and irresistible rites of violence. Even the judge sensed the mystery in the case when he told the jury:

"We haven't much direct evidence, at least from the people who were involved there that night as to what caused the scuffle. What was the start of it? Who was the aggressor? Who did what and under what circumstances? We will probably never know."

But the biggest mystery of all is still the identity of the victim. Finding out who he is has become the personal obsession of Detective Jack Spencer of the Boston homicide unit. Spencer, a tall granite-faced veteran of twenty-five years on the force, cannot remember a similar case. Unidentified bodies are not rare, but an unidentified murder victim with a known defendant is unheard of. The problem is usually that of trying to find out who did it, not who was it. In this case, Spencer has left no stone he can think of unturned. He carries the victim's set of keys with the Dutch coin attached to his own in the hope of finding the locks into which they will fit. Whenever he sees a doorknob-type Lockwood lock, he takes out the keys and tries them. He has tried hundreds of locks in the city of Boston, but without any luck.

He has talked to Butler, the ad executive, a half-dozen times, trying to get him to remember anything specific the victim might have said that would lead to an identification. But Butler's memory of the conversation has always been kind of sketchy, and had not the man been killed, the conversation would no doubt have been forgotten like so much barroom talk steeped in alcohol. The only vivid impression Butler had of the man was his voice, its guttural accent which was laced with a

refined sort of English accent. Otherwise, there was nothing specific.

The clues told their own story. A catalog from the Lockwood company identified the type of locks the keys were made to fit. There were thousands of such doorknob locks all over Boston, hundreds of thousands of them all over America. The Timex watch, it turned out, had been manufactured in Puerto Rico three months before the victim's death. But the watch, a popular $9.95 model, could have been bought in Puerto Rico or anywhere in the United States. The word Atlantis stamped on the bottom of the lighter could have been the name of the Japanese manufacturer or a ship. Spencer had checked this out and had found a cruise ship named Atlantis that had belonged to the Chandres Line. But the ship had been sold and its name changed, and the former skipper of the vessel, whom Spencer had located, was unable to identify the mystery man. Spencer also found a ship named Atlantis attached to the Oceanographic Institute at Woods Hole, Cape Cod, which was used for scientific expeditions, but no one there could identify the dead man.

All of these clues, plus the foreign accent, the barroom conversation on sailing, the Dutch coin, seemed to suggest that the man was a seaman. But the soft hands and the pale, unmuscular body suggested a non-physical, sedentary, intellectual type. Nevertheless, Spencer checked out all of the seamen's rooming houses and all of the ships that had been in port at the time of the murder. In addition, about five hundred sketches of the man were sent to rooming house owners at license renewal time. But nothing turned up.

The victim's clothes offered no fruitful leads. He had been wearing a new but cheap work shirt, a very neat pair of light chino pants, a pair of inexpensive imported Italian shoes, a well-worn brown leather belt with faded gold lettering reading "Town and Campus Shop Jordan Marsh." The belt was old and from Boston's

leading department store. It could have been bought in any one of a number of second-hand clothing stores, or it could have been bought new some years back when the victim had lived in Boston. Perhaps he had gone to school in the area.

The man's dental work provided the most promising avenue of investigation but in the end merely compounded the mystery. A very thorough and careful examination was made by a leading oral diagnostician at the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. It was found that the man took fastidious care of his teeth and that he had about a thousand dollars worth of plastic veneered gold crowns and silicate restorations, all of which seemed to have been done by an American dentist. The May 1974 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association published a sketch of the man plus a description of his dental work, but no dentist came forth to claim the work as his own. A seaman who had read about the victim's dental work in a Boston paper sent Spencer an anonymous letter informing him that there was a Chinese dentist in Bombay who was well known among seamen the world over and who might have done the work. His name was Dr. Chen. Spencer composed a very polite letter to the Chinese dentist, enclosing a picture of the dead man plus a copy of his dental chart. But Dr. Chen did not know him.

Fingerprints, dental charts, and the artist's conception were all sent to the FBI, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Interpol in West Germany and the Netherlands, with negative results. A laundry mark found on the pants also led nowhere. The slip of paper found on the victim with the name David Taylor written on it also produced no results. They checked out everyone in the Boston phone book and the city directory with that name, but no one could identify the victim. Nor could the National Crime Information Center in Washington come up with an answer or even a lead. It was the most frustrating investigation Spencer had ever

been involved in. He was puzzled by the obvious contradictions of character: the juxtaposition of cheap clothes and expensive dental work, an interest in sailing but an unmuscular body, the bare essentials in his pockets but a taste for an expensive drinking place. There was nothing to indicate that the man was anything. "He's a nothing," Spencer cried out in despair after showing me the results of months of investigation, "a nothing."

But no one is nothing. And in this case it was the lack of identity that was creating, ironically, something out of nothing. The corpse with no name was getting a great deal of attention and achieving a fame of sorts because it defied identification in a world where ego, name, and identity were all important. But in Spencer's eyes, there was also the matter of human dignity, and he felt very bad, that the man had to be buried in Potter's Field, with no funeral, no mourners, no prayers. The man had been brutally deprived not only of his life, but also of his identity.

Indeed, the wonder is that a man could lose both his life and his name while casually walking in the middle of Boston, one of the world's great centers of culture and learning. How could it happen? Moreover, in our society any man who reaches the age of thirty leaves a long, cluttered trail of records behind him: birth records, school records, medical and dental records, employment records, social security number, selective service record, bank accounts, library cards, credit cards, passport records, tax records, police records, insurance policies, utility bills, rental receipts, cancelled checks, cashed checks, letters, diaries, driver's licenses, automobile registrations, telephone listings, directory listings, address books, club memberships, subscriptions, property ownership records, sales receipts, yearbooks. One becomes integrated in the fabric of society by all of these inter-

weaving threads. One becomes a consumer, a name on a mailing list, a subscriber, a member, an alumnus, a credit risk, a taxpayer, a somebody. The process may lead for some people to a listing in Who's Who. Or one can become a "drop out" and, in the process, a nobody. Spencer speculated that this was the case with the victim. In his notebook he wrote: "There are indications that this man led a good life in the not too distant past and suddenly he 'dropped out.'" But why would anyone drop out of a good life? Had he suddenly been deprived of a good source of income?

I interviewed Gordon Parry, the chief clerk in the office of the Medical Examiner of Suffolk County (Northern Section), in whose custody the body had been kept for the fourteen months until its burial. Parry is a tall lean man in his early forties who has been on the job for twenty years. He told me that unidentified bodies were becoming more and more common because more and more people were leaving their wallets at home for fear of being robbed or mugged. Every week they got one or two unidentified bodies at the mortuary. But in a few days or a couple of weeks at most somebody comes looking for the missing person and the identity is established. The mortuary has a ninety-nine percent batting average for identifying the bodies brought to it. But they get one or two a year that defy identification. Usually it's a skidrow type or a suicide. But this is the only murder victim that in Parry's experience has not been identified.

Parry is convinced that the man was not a sailor or a seaman. He was not the physical or outdoors type, and in July he had no suntan whatever. There was a certain delicate or refined air about him, as if he lived by his wits, his brain. He had probably gone to college and did not earn his money by physical work. He was probably a thinker, an intellectual, or maybe a con man, or a divinity student as one of the detectives suggested. But if he had been anyone of these things,

wouldn't he have been missed somewhere by someone? Wouldn't his landlady have wondered what had happened to him? Wouldn't the postman have inquired about his forwarding address? Wouldn't his creditors have tried to find him? Wouldn't old friends have become concerned about his long absence? But people were disappearing all over the nation, leaving bags behind, with no forwarding addresses, giving no inkling where they might be. There was, Parry told me, no central clearing house of information on missing persons in this country, not even in the state of Massachusetts. This means that there was no regular channel of inquiry whereby a missing persons report in, say, Tampa or San Francisco could be matched with an unidentified body in Boston or Buffalo. Nor do rooming houses as a rule report missing guests to the police. The assumption is that the missing guest skipped out to avoid paying rent. In such cases, whatever possessions are left behind are more likely to be sold than turned over to the police. And if any large sum of money were to be found among the possessions of the missing guest, you can bet that the owner will keep mum about the whole thing.

Twenty years of seeing cadavres brought into the Boston mortuary in every possible state and shape has made Parry understandably cynical about the human race. He knows what human beings are capable of doing to one another. Reality is stranger than fiction because it does not have to conform to human expectations or prejudices or fantasies. "There's a lot of horseshit on television," Parry said in reference to how crimes are neatly solved on the boob tube. "You can depend that when there's a kinky show on TV we get a few calls from nuts." Concerning this case, he said, "You see so many strange things, you get almost psychic in this business. But with this guy we ran up against zero."

There was some speculation that the man might have been a foreign agent or

involved in the narcotics traffic. But there wasn't a shred of evidence to suggest either possibility. He could just as well have been a victim of amnesia. When you know next to nothing about a person, anything is possible. In any case, by putting together the few certainties we do have, a picture of the man begins to emerge: someone between 25 and 40 but probably in his early thirties, five feet nine inches in height, 170 pounds, in good physical health but nonathletic in build, a full beard and a full head of brown hair, blue eyes, fine hands, with neat self-grooming habits, a moderate smoker, inexpensive clothes and common personal effects, expensive dental work, a taste for an affluent drinking place, a foreign accent, probably Dutch with a touch of British, an interest in sailing, obviously pretty well connected in former years, and a very cautiously protected ego.

The only uncommon item found on his person was the Dutch silver coin attached by a small chain to the key ring. The coin, worth two and a half Guilders, is about the size of an American silver dollar. A small hole has been carefully drilled through the tiny zero of the coin's 1930 date. On one side is a profile of Queen Wilhelmina. The coin is not a collector's item, and thus it must have been of some sentimental value to its owner who carried it with his keys. Perhaps it was the victim's only memento of his maternal origin, symbolized by the portrait of the Queen mother. Who knows?

But somewhere in this world, someone in a moment of agonized puzzlement must be asking, "Whatever happened to . . . ?"