

Excerpt from  
**The Evil That Men Do**, by Michael Blair

I struggled to stay awake, aided by the uncomfortable metal frame of the lawn chair. Harry Zylstra's head lolled as he dozed in his chair. Every few minutes, I raised the binoculars and scanned the *Mariposa II* and the nearby boats. Harry stirred.

"I think I'll go inside," he said, standing.

"Go ahead," I said.

"Can I get you anything? Another coffee?"

"No thanks," I said.

"Shout if you need me," he said. I told him I would.

Half an hour after Harry went inside, a flicker of movement near the stern of the *Mariposa II* caught my eye. I raised the binoculars and saw a dark figure clamber on to the boarding platform from an inflatable dinghy and climb the steps to the afterdeck. Unsecured, the dinghy floated away.

"Hell," I said, half under my breath.

I'd been wrong. Brandt hadn't been hiding out on the boat after all, but somewhere nearby, waiting until dark to go aboard. But as the figure paused at the sliding door to the main cabin and looked around before disappearing inside, there was something about the breadth of the shoulders that made me swear again.

It wasn't Chaz Brandt; it was Lawrence Thomason.

Leaving the binoculars on the chair, I opened the security gate, which Harry had left unlocked, and went down the ramp to the floats. The sectional float on which the *Mariposa II* was moored was twice the length of a football field, but it seemed longer as I made my way toward the boat, armed with nothing but a long steel flashlight and a hefty flat-bladed screwdriver, both borrowed from Harry. My stomach was tight and my hands felt hot and tingly with adrenaline.

As I neared the *Mariposa II*, I tried to keep to the shadows in case someone was watching from the darkened cabin, but if anyone were watching, I would be clearly visible. The lower cabin lights were still on. I hunkered down on the T-float and tried to peer through a porthole, but the curtains were drawn. I moved toward the stern and stepped on to the boarding platform, transferring my weight gradually from the float to the boat so as not to alert anyone aboard to my arrival. The boat was big enough that my weight likely wouldn't cause much movement, if any at all, but better safe.

Thankful for the crepe soles of my desert boots, I climbed the steps and crept across the afterdeck to the flybridge companionway, which was to starboard of the door to the main cabin. Concealed by the companionway bulkhead, I took a quick look into the cabin through a gap in the vertical blinds. The cabin was only dimly lit, but there didn't appear to be anyone in the salon or the galley.

I stepped out of the protection of the companionway bulkhead. Before resorting to the screwdriver, I tried the door. It was unlocked. Slowly, cautiously, I slid it open only as far as necessary to slip through into the salon. Leaving the door open, I stood for a moment, listening, letting my eyes adjust. I heard muted voices from below. I moved forward through the salon to the galley, heart freezing as I nearly tripped over the step up to the galley.

"Be careful with that thing," a man said. I recognized Lawrence Thomason's voice. "You wouldn't want to shoot the lady, would you?"

"Yeah, that would be a shame," another man said. Chaz Brandt, I presumed, as I cat-footed through the galley to the partly closed hatch to the lower deck. Brandt didn't sound as though he cared one way or another about shooting Addy Shay.

"Look," Thomason said. "Don't do anything stupid, okay? Just give me what I want and I'll be out of here. Then you two can go back to your fun and games."

"And what is it you want?"

"The money, of course. What do you think?"

Chaz Brandt laughed. There was no humour in the sound. "Christ, you're even dumber than you look if you think I carry more than pocket change around with me."

"Okay, so where is it?"

"Nowhere you can get at it. Now get the fuck out of here."

"Not till I get what I came for. Okay, so you've stashed it offshore somewhere. Give me the account numbers and the name of the bank."

Brandt laughed again. "Jesus, you really are a moron, aren't you? You think I'm going to hand over the account numbers just because you ask for them? You're not exactly bargaining from a position of strength, you know."

"Give them to me or I'll snap her neck like a twig."

"Go ahead," Brandt said, a shrug in his voice. "You'll only weaken your bargaining position."

"Enough talk," Thomason said. "Give me what I want or you'll regret it."

"And how do you figure that?" Brandt said.

"I've got your wife and kid," Thomason said.

"So what? I don't give a shit what happens to Terry. She's nearly as stupid as that dimwit. And the kid's not mine, anyway."

"What about your sister and her kids? Do you care what happens to them?"

"Not particularly," Brandt said.

"I don't believe you," Thomason said. I did.

"You know," Brandt said. "You're absolutely right."

"Uh. About what?"

"We've talked enough."

*Oh-oh.*

"That's better," Thomason said.

"You won't think so after this," Brandt said.

His words were punctuated by a hard, twangy snap, followed almost instantly by a meaty thunk and a woman's scream. I yanked open the hatch and bounded down the companionway. The master stateroom was at the aft end of a short passageway. The door was open. Lawrence Thomason sat on the deck, his back against the foot of the king-sized master berth. A crossbow bolt protruded from the right side of his chest, an inch or so to the left of where his nipple would be. Blood bubbled on his lips with each laboured breath.

Adrianna Shay screamed again as I charged into the stateroom. Chaz Brandt was trying to reload a crossbow, clumsy in his haste and his lack of familiarity with the weapon. I snatched it out of his hands. He made a run for the door. I grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and threw him to the deck at Addy Shay's feet, causing her to scream yet again. She had a good set of lungs.

Kneeling on Brandt's spine, I tossed the crossbow on to the master berth.

"Jesus Christ," Addy Shay said. "Fuck-fuck-fuck."

"Addy, calm down. Take it easy." Blood ran from a wound on her right upper arm, two inches below the point of her shoulder. Thomason breathed in wet, bloody gasps. Brandt squirmed under my knee. "Lie still," I said, and squeezed the back of his neck.

I looked around for something to secure him. There was a lamp on the bedside cabinet. Still kneeling on his spine, I stripped the electrical cord from the lamp and, holding his arms behind his back, made three quick turns around his crossed wrists. I folded up his right foot and tied the lamp cord off around his ankle, trussing him like a roped calf ready for branding.

"Let me look at you," I said to Addy. Her upper arm had been gouged by the crossbow bolt sticking out of Thomason's chest. It was more than a scratch, but not serious. She was one very lucky lady. "You'll be okay."

Keeping an eye on Brandt, I knelt by Thomason. His eyes were wide with fear. His hands were wrapped around the shaft of the bolt.

"Take it out," he pleaded, wheezing, blood in his mouth, on his lips, dripping from his chin. "Take it out."

"I don't think that's a good idea," I said.

Addy Shay squeaked, yanked open the door to the master head and knelt over the toilet, retching. Harry Zylstra burst into the stateroom. "Holy shit."

Watching Brandt, I took out Zach Jardine's iPhone, but couldn't get a signal. There was a cordless phone on the bedside cabinet. I lifted it out of the charging cradle and handed it to Harry. "Call 911. Police and ambulance. Tell the operator a man's been shot through the right lung with a crossbow bolt."

"Christ," Harry said.

Chaz Brandt tried to sit up, struggling against his restraints. "Untie me, for fuck's sake!" he yelled, as Harry went out into the passageway to make the call. "This crazy bastard shot that guy, not me."

"Shut up." I knelt by Thomason again. "Hang in there, Lawrence."

"Pull it out," Thomason said again. His breathing was rapid and shallow. Blood spilled from his mouth.

"You'll bleed to death if I do that." He might bleed to death, anyway. "Better to wait for the medics."

"Stupid bastard," Chaz Brandt said. I didn't know, or care, if he was referring to Thomason or to me. "How much would it take for you to let me go?"

"More than you've got," I said. "Lawrence. Where are Terry and Rebecca?"

"They're ..." Blood gurgled in his throat. "Oh, Christ. It hurts."

"I heard you tell Brandt you had them. Where are they?"

He didn't answer, shook his head, swallowing blood, gagging on it.

Harry came back into the stateroom. "Cops and paramedics are on the way," he said. "I gotta go to the main gate and let them in."

"All right. Take Addy with you." Addy Shay sat on the deck in the head, trembling, greenish under her tan, holding a bloody hand towel to her shoulder.

"What about him?" Harry asked, indicating Brandt.

"I can handle him," I said.

Harry went into the head, helped Addy Shay to her feet, and the two of them went above.

“I made sure I wasn’t followed,” I said to Thomason. “How did you know Brandt was here?” Perhaps he had got to Marie-Claire Cloutier after all. “Did Marie-Claire tell you where to find him?”

Thomason didn’t seem to understand the question. I repeated it.

“No.” Thomason swallowed, tried again. “You ... ”

He coughed, spouting blood, and moaned. Tears leaked from his eyes, diluting the blood around his mouth.

“Never mind,” I said. “Don’t try to talk. The medics will be here soon.”

“I think ... too late,” Thomason said, voice barely audible. “M-m-m ... ”

“Don’t talk,” I said.

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