

Matter 1

Summary

A Beheading in Baltimore

Account by:	William Miller, 26. Insurance salesman.
Source:	Carbon copy of statement to police.
Location:	Baltimore, United States.
Event:	10 May 1962.
Report:	10 May 1962.
Catalogued:	27 Jun 2009.

Report

So here's what happened.

It was gone half-past one and I had a meeting with a client at two. I'm an insurance salesman by trade, an unglamorous occupation for unglamorous people with unglamorous lives. Still, it pays the bills and I'm good at it; I was in line for promotion, though maybe not so much now.

Anyway, in the morning, the paperwork for a claim ... oh, it doesn't matter. The point is, I only had twenty-five minutes for lunch, so I figured I'd

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pick up a sandwich at Manny's and eat it on the way back.

I didn't get to Manny's. I'm taking a short-cut down the alley off of Piedmont Street when I see this huge guy ahead of me, wearing judo attire but carrying what looks to be one of those big, medieval swords like El Cid has in the movie.

Now down this alley I often see a hobo by the name of Micky or Mikey. I don't bother him. He doesn't bother me. He's there asleep against the wall of the old bookstore when the guy with the sword strides up to him and runs him through. Just like that. He takes his sword and sticks it right in the chest of Mickey or Mikey or whatever his name is, doesn't say a word. He looks at the end of his sword instead, as if that's what he's interested in, not the man he's just murdered with less emotion than I'd show for killing a hot dog.

Well having witnessed that, I do what anyone else would do if they still had control over their bowels: I run in the opposite direction screaming "HELP!" at the top of my voice.

Suddenly, though, the guy is in front of me. How did that happen? He swings his El Cid sword at me and whoosh, off flies my head. Jeepers but it hurt!

Next thing I know, I'm waking up at home, head still attached. As you can imagine, I'm in something of a state of confusion.

I go downstairs and there's my wife. She's talking to a friend on the phone, some kind of

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gossip about another friend neither of them like. She's shocked to see me.

"Honey", she says. "When did you get home?"

"Just now", I reply. "I was on my way for a sandwich when a guy with a sword as tall as I am decapitated me."

My wife is not persuaded by my explanation. The time, though, is one forty-five. Jimmy Bale on the desk at the office saw me leave at twenty-five to two. I've had my head lopped off and seconds later woken up in my bed fifteen miles away.

I tell Judy – that's my wife – that I need to call the office, 'cause I still have a meeting in fifteen minutes, whether I'm alive or dead. She hangs up and relinquishes the phone.

I get through to Milligan, my boss, and tell him I can't make the meeting.

"Why not?" he asks me. "This is an important client, he runs a car-hire business. He could be worth a thousand bucks a month to us."

"Because I'm at home", I reply. "Some guy with a sword chopped off my head and I've just woken up in bed."

"Jesus!" says Milligan, and not in a way that suggests he thinks I am the man, notwithstanding my resurrection. "That's quite the story."

"Isn't it just?", I reply. I am pleased that someone believes it.

I am not to be so pleased for long.

"Bill", says Milligan, which shows he is concerned because I'm normally Miller. "You've

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been under a lot of stress lately. Why don't you take the rest of the day off?"

In the insurance business, you check out people's claims with a cynical eye, because – now this may come as a surprise – they don't always tell the truth. I am attuned to the subtleties of this and realise that my story is substantially lacking in supporting evidence. I therefore do as Milligan says and treat the rest of the day as mine.

Now, I think, I should go back to the alley and see what I can find. I know I'm not dreaming, because my imagination isn't this good, and I know I'm not mad because when I open the garage my car isn't there. Of course it's not there: I parked it at the office five and a half hours earlier.

Judy doesn't want me driving her car if I could teleport to our bed at any moment and crash it, so I take a cab. I have it drop me off at the alley where I find a small crowd has gathered.

Seems that Micky or Mikey, or maybe it was just Mike, come to think about it, well he woke up in a pool of blood and when he got to his feet he found another, bigger pool of blood where my head had parted company with my body. A police officer was taking notes, but Micky didn't seem to remember anything about it.

I approach the officer and say I have some information. He regards me as a somewhat more reliable witness than a rarely-sober hobo, and holds this opinion strongly until I reach the part where I'm murdered. This is when he invites me to the

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station to make a statement, I suspect because he thinks I'm crazy and have killed someone else and maybe eaten the body or something.

So, here I am and here's my statement. You won't find a body, because there isn't one, or rather there is, but it's mine, and I'm no longer dead.

I can't say how what I've described happened, only that it happened. Believe me, don't believe me, your choice.

All I ask is that the next time someone reports being murdered and then waking up seconds later in the same place they last woke up, you gosh-darn remember what I've told you.

Notes

William Miller died of emphysema 18 Feb 2000 aged 64. This carbon copy of his police statement was obtained from his widow, Judith Miller. The original is believed to be in FBI files.

Judith Miller verbally confirmed the veracity of the part of the statement in which she features, but contended that her telephone conversation was not gossip but a political discussion.