

THE RAPE

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Some see God in a sunset, a rose or
reprieve, but I think God dwells most in the swells
and curves of the human body: the hips' flare
forming a woman's behind, the legs' long muscles,
the small-knobbed luxuriance of a bent back, the
soft, private hollows hidden between the thighs,
under the arms, at the front of the throat, the
corners of the still eyes. Surely in the colors of the
body is the iris of God. Surely, there are less
conventional prayers to which He listens.

I hear voices.

I raise my head above the phosphorescent
green growth on the two azaleas I hide behind,
peek out at the emerald backyard lawn, the flying
praying mantises, the white, puffy spores floating
in the hot afternoon air.

On the other side of the lawn, an identical
row of azaleas.

Behind that row, both naked, a man holds
a woman down. They struggle with each other, he
downwards, she upwards, on the thick mat of
grass between the row of azaleas and the twenty-
foot high row of holly hedges behind.

He's got her trapped on her back, her
fleshy legs kept spread by his hands, his untanned
ass bobbing up and down between her thighs,
giving it to her.

Her face twists to the side, trying to get as
far away from her body as possible, facing me but
not seeing me, although I can see her, see the wide
apart blue eyes, the hooked nose, the long, bright
blonde corkscrews, one of those women whose
hair is more attractive than her face, see the
bruised skin, the broken nose, the breath huffing
out between her big lips from the physical
exertion forced on her body by the fuck she's
getting.

His cock poles rapidly in and out of her,
the soft flesh of her breasts and thighs shaking
with the impacts.

A second man, also naked, shorter but
stockier, sits on his haunches by her head between
the azaleas and the hedge, cock high against his
stomach, watching her face as she gets fucked,
rubbing his nose, waiting his turn.

I can't tear away from the rape, from
watching the man punch his power into the
shaking flesh, appalled but aroused by the
brutality of how easy it is, wanting to stop it but

wanting to see it through, to prove beyond doubt that no matter how long a rape lasts, no matter how many times the cock slams dominance down and in, a woman won't ever give in, dreading that if I watch too long the awful truth will be that the big male hands will come off the thighs and the thighs will stay parted, shaking now with the pleasure they tried so hard not to have imposed.

She raises her sideways-turned head off the grass while her fuck continues, a fuck so powerful that out of horrible acknowledgement of the unwanted pleasure of it her eyes close, her long bare legs lift, covered in grass blades and sweat, plump calves crossing above his pumping buttocks, soft flesh of her thighs molding around his hips in a guilty embrace kept secret from her protesting voice. As her hips begin to rotate, her cunt angles up wetly in a disgusting gesture of acquiescence, letting the pale cock pole freely within the ruby phosphorescence, and as the now open pleasure of the fuck seeps up her body her breasts swell, her nipples rise, and finally her voice itself finds out, wide lips squeezing out the ultimate betrayal, a long sigh that has no protest left in it, the final acknowledgement that her pleasure, now out, can't be recapped.

She raises her sideways-turned head higher yet, bruises and broken nose sliding off, landing as leaf shadows on the grass. As her eyes open she focuses across the lawn, eyes widening, staring at an azalea bush beside me.

She stops the man on top of her, pushing against his shoulders to get his attention, and points to the azalea.

I stand up because of the alarm in Sheila's voice, knowing it's going to take a shift in gears before Dave pulls out of her and gets up to look for himself.

Across the lawn there's a row of azalea bushes like the ones we're behind. At the base of the bush she's pointing to, a pair of feet are sticking out. Somebody else fucking? But there's red splotches on the white feet, like blood.

I'm still behind our set of bushes, I see Dave is starting to get up, asking Sheila what's

wrong, so I decide to be the hero, and step through our azaleas onto the lawn.

I'm still naked, of course, still have a hard-on, but the yard has tall hedges all around it anyway, and the house the yard belongs to is hidden down a slope behind these huge yellow forsythia bushes so the owners aren't going to see me even if they're home, one of the reasons we chose this spot, so I start to walk across the lawn, squinting at the feet beside the bush. It definitely looks like blood on those feet, the closer I get to them.

A guy suddenly stands up a couple of bushes over from where the feet are, and he's naked too. Scares the shit out of me, just the unexpectedness of it. I suck in my breath in surprise, feel my cock start to go down.

I wait a beat to keep my voice steady, then say, "What are you doing here?" Of course, it just occurs to me, maybe he's the owner, fucking his wife outdoors. This could be deep shit trouble for us. Trespassing.

He keeps slowly stepping sideways away from the feet, keeping his eyes on me the whole time.

"I said, who are you?" I glance behind me, quickly, not wanting to take my eyes off this guy, but wanting to make sure Dave's going to back me up. Dave's standing up now finally, a big guy, lots of muscles, holding one hand over his cock. He jerks his head up at the guy, saying in effect, I'm asking the same question my friend is.

The guy looks at both of us, shakes his head, and starts moving sideways a little faster towards where the yard slopes down towards the house.

Sheila, braver than Dave and me both, trots naked across the lawn to where the feet are, steps through the azaleas and looks down. As soon as she looks down she stumbles backwards fast and screams.

That does it. I start across the lawn at an angle, planning to cut the guy off before he makes it to the slope, but he pulls a trick on me and takes off in the opposite direction, running along the grass between the hedges and the azaleas, right at

Sheila, shoving her in the teats to get her out of his way. At the corner of the backyard he runs under a pear tree, disappears into the hedge at the corner of the property line.

I don't know what I'm supposed to do at this point, but Sheila's already starting to follow this guy and that's too dangerous for her to be doing, so I run after the guy, plunge into the hedges right behind him, they're pretty thick but not impenetrable, trying to figure out from the hole he made in them if he's my size or bigger or smaller. Looks like he might be a little smaller, unless he was crouching down as he pushed his way through.

I come out on the other side of the hedge into somebody else's backyard, but this yard is a lot smaller, with the back of the house right there, two stories of windows people could be looking out and see me, plus a second floor deck. I'm getting more and more conscious of the fact that I'm stark naked, my cock bouncing back and forth while I run, but of course this other guy's naked too, and of the two of us he's apparently done something a lot worse than trespass.

There's a driveway on the side of the house. The guy is running down it, looking over his shoulder to see if I gave up yet.

What the fuck. I take off after him down the driveway, and we come out on a side street with lots of tall trees and parked cars, fronts of houses on either side.

This is getting a little serious now, and I wish I had taken the time to pull on some underpants at least, but in the meantime the guy isn't hesitating at all, he's just tearing down the sidewalk towards where the street curves to the left about half a block down. I'm going to lose him if I don't commit to this, so I put my head down and run after him, hoping there aren't any kids around or housewives sweeping their front porches or husbands coming home for lunch.

At the left curve of the road he goes right, across someone's front yard. I keep up with him, hearing my breath, the slap of my bare feet on the hard sidewalk.

The front yard we run through leads to a

tar drive which winds in a curve behind the property, low stone wall on the far side, lawn on the right. He keeps running, getting closer to the wall to look over it. Too far a drop, he must figure, with forest floor below. Safer to stay on this. As I race down the curve of the drive after him we come out on a smaller, more intimate neighborhood than the one we first passed through, the homes larger and further apart, the trees bigger and better pruned.

At the end of the street there's a wide pond on one side, a few ducks sliding on the surface, stout stone pillars flanking the entrance.

My sides are starting to heave with the exertion. I need to save some strength in case he sprints. Where's Dave?

Beyond the pillars, I see now, there's a large traffic circle with at least three streets feeding onto it. As I run I see a car enter the circle, driving around it, grey paint glinting. I doubt the driver can see us in the shadows of the trees, but the circle is too public for this guy to run out into it, in my opinion.

He veers off towards the pond.

Once he's on grass again, heading towards the water, he scans in front of him to make certain they're no rocks or roots that could trip him up, then takes a quick look over his shoulder at my pursuit.

He's still about the same distance ahead, but doesn't seem as winded as I am.

He changes his mind, heads out into the traffic circle. Shit. Hopefully, once he sees the cars he might hesitate at continuing to run in public like that.

Halfway around Pond Avenue Circle I see a naked man run out of the entryway to Pond Court. Jesus. He spots me and starts heading west on Pond Avenue, running past Sackett's Realty. As he runs he points behind him and starts yelling, "Help!"

A second naked man runs out of the entryway. This one sees me and stops dead in his tracks, then turns and runs back into Pond Lane.

I speed up around the rest of the circle, hit

the siren and follow him in, cutting him off in front of the Oakthorpe house.

This is fucking crazy. I never should have took off after the guy, he's getting away now and here I am stark naked with this cop for Christ's sake getting out of his car wearing fucking sunglasses.

I cover myself with both hands. I feel myself start to shake with fear as he takes his time walking over to me, plus I feel like I'm going to puke from running so long.

The cop keeps his hat and sunglasses on, just looks me up and down silently, knowing he's got my ass. "You want to tell me what you're doing?"

Stay calm. I leave one hand over my balls, use the other to point out into the circle. "I was chasing this guy. He's getting away right now. My friends and me found him in one of these backyards around here and we think he might be a murderer. It looked like he had a body behind these bushes, we surprised him and he took off and I followed after him."

The cop doesn't change his expression at all, naturally, just keeps looking at me from behind his shades. "What's your name?"

"My name's David Eaton, officer. I'm not trying to be rebellious, but that guy's probably getting away right now."

"He's not going far without any clothes on. Do you live in one of these houses here?"

Shit. "No sir, I don't. I live in another part of town. Pardon me for saying so, but this guy seemed very clever to me, the way he knew where to run and everything, and it wouldn't surprise me if he ducked into somebody's house or something and got a change of clothes. I wouldn't put it past him."

The cop looks over his shoulder, back at his car, then at me again. "Where do you live?"

"I live at 403 Merimack Court, sir. Apartment 3G."

"That's clear across town. What are you doing here? Naked?"

"I-- my friends and I, we were in one of

these backyards, not one of these backyards here actually but one of the backyards up there, where that road leads to? And, you know, that's where we spotted this guy."

"What's your friend's address? Which house are we talking about?"

"It's...well, it-- the house the backyard of which we were in, it wasn't my friend's backyard, it was... somebody else's backyard. I don't know whose backyard it was, actually. Officer."

So the cop takes a step closer to me, and as he does this fucking car pulls into the road and I can see it slow down, this older couple just staring at me being naked, staring at the two-tone police car. They give me this incredibly dirty look, the guy even leaning forward around his wife while he's driving past real slow so I can how dirty his look to me is.

The cop tilts his head back, aiming his voice at the car. "This situation's being taken care of, folks." Then he gives them a cop smile.

The driver looks like now he's mad at the cop too, but his wife keeps jabbing him in the side so he drives past.

The cop turns back to me. "So you were trespassing."

"Yes sir."

"Did you break into the house? You and your friends?"

"No sir, I swear to God. The truth is, we were driving around, me and my friend and this girl we both go out with, and we decided to stop somewhere, I know that's wrong, I realize that now, but we parked on this street and kind of snuck up this driveway into this backyard, because we could see from the street that the backyard was really private, you wouldn't be able to see it from the house because the house is at a lower level, at the bottom of this slope. And that's where we spotted this guy, in the backyard, and there were these feet sticking out of one of the bushes he was behind, and they looked like they had blood on them. And as soon as I started to get closer to him, he took off."

The cop looks around. "Which house are we talking about?"

"It's not on this street, officer. I chased the guy to this street. It's a couple of streets over. I know where it is."

The cop looks at me from behind his shades another moment. "Stay here."

He walks to the back of his car, keeping his eyes on me, and pops the trunk. Still watching me, I guess to see if I'm going to take off, he reaches into the trunk and comes out with this folded-up green army blanket. Who would think cops would have blankets in their trunk, though it does make sense, actually. Maybe he's even got a couple of blankets in there.

He walks over with the blanket over his forearm, then holds it out to me. "Cover yourself."

I wrap it around my waist.

"I could cuff you if I wanted to, but I'm not if you promise me you'll stay in line."

"Oh. I will, officer." Without even realizing what I'm doing, I kind of curtsey in front of him, still holding the blanket around my waist.

"Get in the car."

I point out which streets he should take as we drive, sitting next to him in my blanket, looking at all this electronic equipment he's got built into his dash, and he says to me, "So what were you and your friend doing, you were both screwing this girl?"

"Yes, sir. Or we would have. Dave went first, and this incident occurred before I could go."

He lifts his fingers from their hold on the steering wheel, palms still controlling the wheel. "You're both fucking her?"

"Yes, officer. See, she goes out with both of us. She met us both about the same time, and the deal is whenever we go out with her, we both end up going to bed with her. That's her idea, not ours. My friend and me, we don't do anything to each other sexually ourselves. It's all just with the girl."

"Does your friend always go first?"

"Not always, sir. No."

"Did you ever hear about disease? Ever hear about AIDS?"

"Yes sir, I have."

"Do you and your friend wear protection when you have these encounters with her?"

"Honestly sir, no, we don't. I suppose we should."

"You 'suppose' you should?"

"We should, sir. It's remiss of us that we don't."

We pull into the street where Dave parked, and fuck if the car isn't gone. "My friend's car isn't here now, sir. I guess he took off."

"Some 'friend'." He pulls up in front of the house, turns the engine off. I reach for the handle on my side. "Stay where you are." He lifts the microphone off its holder, stretches the coil out so the microphone is right up against his lips. "524."

There's that crackle like you always hear on TV, and this woman's voice says, "Go ahead, Birdey."

I look over at him while he's got the microphone to his lips, and I can see behind his shades at this angle. Birdey? His eyes look like he's a little self-conscious talking into the microphone in front of me. "I'm at 903 Henderson investigating a trespass, possible assault. One of the suspects is still on the loose, a white male approximately five feet ten inches tall, dark hair, twenty-five to thirty-five. Suspect was last seen fleeing west on Pond Avenue in the vicinity of Sackett's Realty. Suspect is naked."

Crackle. "Birdey, are you telling me we got a naked man running around our town?"

"That's affirmative. I'm checking out the story of the suspect I have in custody right now."

He releases the seat belt catch between our seats, and the unhooked triangle of waist and shoulder harness slides slowly across his uniform shirt.

We get out of the car and the kid pulls the blanket tighter around him. From what I know of human nature, it's unlikely this kid did anything other than what he said, trespassed on someone's property to screw his girl with this other guy, but still I keep him in front of me as we walk up the front porch steps to the front door.

I push the bell, step back so the occupant can open the screen door. The kid's off by the railing, looking up the side of the house.

No one answers the door. Probably at work. I turn back to the kid. "Show me where you were."

We walk up the driveway at the side of the house, turn right onto a cement patio with two large trash cans, a cement sidewalk beyond leading to a screened-in back porch. I try the screen door knob. It's latched on the interior side.

Past the cemented area, up three stone steps, is a small backyard that's been cleared of grass, just bare dirt. A cement sidewalk leads down the middle of the yard, away from the house, to about a dozen steep steps going up into what looks like a larger space.

The kid, still holding the blanket around his waist, gestures at the stone staircase. "We were up there," he tells me. He looks and sounds scared.

To the left of the staircase is a grass-covered slope, too steep to walk up. To the right is a stand of yellow forsythia in bloom, the bushes themselves probably planted in the upper backyard, the yellow branches trailing down to this yard.

I send the kid up the stairs first, just in case his buddy is waiting up there to ambush me.

As we get near the top of the stairs, I step off them onto the grassy slope, digging my shoes in and hurrying up diagonally to make sure there's no one hiding behind the forsythia, which there isn't.

The backyard's a good size, tall hedges around all three sides, azaleas in front of them, a pear tree in each far corner.

"Where'd you see this body?"

The kid points to the row of azaleas on the left. "About halfway down, Officer."

I study his face. He lowers his eyes while I do. He doesn't look to me like he's up to anything. Just a kid. Still, since he's obviously so scared, I wonder if I should go back to the car to get my gun, since all I have on me is the club swinging from my belt. Something I should have

thought about while I was still in the car. It'd take time now to lead him back down the stairs, through the smaller back yard, down the driveway to my car, then all the way back up again.

"I thought you said your friends were up here."

"They were! But their car's gone in front now so they must've taken off."

I look at the azaleas he pointed to. Try to get a sense if anybody's hiding behind them. Can't tell. I was never good at that ESP stuff. "Where did you say you were?"

I point to the azalea bushes on the other side, and the cop looks over at them from where we are, only they look the same as the other set of bushes, you can't tell anything from where we're standing.

I think the cop's a little scared, but trying to hide it from me. "My clothes may still be behind the bushes. My friends may have left them behind."

The cop grunts, thinking to himself, then pushes his hat a little further back on his head. I can see there's sweat on his forehead from being fully dressed in his dark blue clothes.

"Do you want me to look behind these bushes here to see if my clothes are still there?"

"I'm deciding what we're going to do," he says irritably, and now I know he's feeling uneasy. I don't blame him-- there's a bad feeling here, even though it's just an ordinary back yard. Or was.

I speak really quiet and trying to sound humble. "I could just look if you wanted me to."

He pauses. Then, "OK."

We walk over to where the row of azaleas end, and I look down the strip of grass between them and the tall hedges on the other side. I don't see any clothes. Shit. Behind me the cop says, "Where were you?"

The kid leads me down the path between the azaleas and hedges to a spot about halfway down. I can see some of the grass is torn up, like there's been some physical activity. I keep my

eyes on the far row of azaleas, where supposedly the kid saw the body. "Is this where you and your friend were screwing the girl?"

"Yessir."

"Keep an eye on those bushes over there."

I wait to make sure he's watching the other set of bushes, then crouch down to examine the disturbed area of grass. There are scuff marks across one area, another set about three feet up from that set, and a third set about three feet up from the second set. I lean over and smell the middle set of scuff marks. It could be a woman's genital smell on the twisted grass blades, or it could just be my imagination.

I stand up again. The kid has been staring fixedly at the opposite row of azaleas. "Which azalea did it look like you saw the body behind?"

I'm not sure which bush it was now, but I point in the general direction. Naturally, my luck, I don't see any feet sticking out now. Shit. I'm going to get arrested for trespassing, and some other guy's gonna go off scott free for doing god knows what. Unless maybe the body's back there and we just can't see it from this angle.

The cop wades through the azaleas on our side, waiting for me to join him in the middle of the yard. Where he's standing the grass is scuffed up also, like maybe there was a struggle there. I can see by the way he digs the toe of one of his black shoes into the torn-up grass he's thinking the same thing. "Was this lawn here ripped up like it is now?"

"I don't think so, sir." It's hard to remember, I wasn't really looking at the condition of the grass before with everything else happening, but I think I probably would have noticed, because now that I'm closer to where he's standing, I see some of the tufts are torn up completely, to where you can see the dark dirt underneath.

He stares at where I pointed at the opposite row, every once in a while looking up and down the row. "Okay", he says quietly, "What we're going to do is advance slowly across the lawn to the other side, and look over the tops

of the azaleas over there to see what we can see." He takes his sunglasses off, mechanically folds them and hooks them on his belt, and looks into my eyes. To me, he looks nervous.

We start across the lawn towards the bushes. Halfway across, the guy I was chasing stands up from behind the row. He's still naked.

The cop and I both let out a sound of dread.

The cop reaches for his belt, fingers brushing over his nightstick. "Step out of the bushes", he orders. Boy, does he sound scared. I look around. You can't see into the yard from anywhere, not with all these tall hedges.

The guy walks right through the bushes, keeping his eyes on the cop.

"Stop!"

The guy stops. You can see all of him now. His cock hangs down, but it looks like it's still a little hard. He doesn't try to hide it or anything.

"Put your hands up!"

The guy lifts his hands away from his hips, spreading them out but not really lifting them up like they do on TV, where they put their hands straight up in the air.

"What's your name!"

The guy says nothing.

The cop stays where he is, hand wrapped around the nightclub on his belt, licks his lips. "I said. What's your name?"

"I don't know."

I see the cop's eyes widen. He's nervously squeezing the handle of the club, like he's getting ready to pull it out on a moment's notice. "What do you mean, you don't know your own name?" He sounds even more scared now that the guy isn't cooperating.

"I have amnesia."

The cop snorts. "What are you talking about, amnesia?" His words come out in a spittle that ends up on his chin. He doesn't notice.

Meanwhile, the guy is slowly walking sideways, hands still spread out at his sides, towards the stone staircase. He's gonna run, I know it. Plus his cock looks like it's starting to get

hard, which would never happen to me in these circumstances.

I step up alongside the cop, still naked myself. "I think he's gonna make a run for it."

The cop jerks away from me, starts looking back and forth between me and the guy. He's starting to lose it.

He backs away until he's an equal distance from both of us, looking back and forth from me to the guy and back to me again. "Why are the two of you exchanging looks? Why do you keep exchanging looks? Do you know each other?"

I can't believe this! "Officer, no, I don't know this guy at all! This is the guy I was chasing!"

The cop backs up even more. If he's not careful he's gonna trip over the azaleas behind him. "You keep looking at each other! You keep exchanging glances!" He looks at the guy, who's smiling now. "Do you two know each other?"

The guy bolts down the slope.

I have a choice. I can let him go, stay with the kid here who may or may not be a confidant, or I can chase the suspect.

I take off down the slope, actually gaining on the suspect who seems to be having trouble running through the dirt in his bare feet. Halfway across the smaller back yard at the bottom of the slope I reach out, grab the suspect's bare shoulder before I have time to think about my dread in doing so, surprised at how sinewy and muscular it is.

He crouches, his shoulder dropping out of my hand, spins to face me, head at my chest level, and drives his elbow up into my solar plexus.

There's a burst of pain below my heart. I'm semi-conscious, on my knees, as the side of his foot bangs into my face, spilling me onto my back. Thrown dirt bounces off my eyes, my teeth, I'm blinded, choking, realize too late he lured me down here, have to get my nightstick out, fumbling for it, it's gone, must have dropped it.

I hear the cop and the guy struggling

below the slope. My legs are jerking me to run away, through the back of the yard again, but I stay rooted where I am. I'm not gonna run away, the cop has my name and where I live, but I can't bring myself to move closer either. At least where I am I can't see over the edge of the slope, which is fine with me, because something tells me I don't want to see what's going on down there.

But boy, can I hear it, and it's scaring the shit out of me. These loud cracking sounds, like the cop is hitting the naked guy real hard, breaking bones. My body starts shaking like I'm twelve.

Then these terrible, pleading whimpers start up from below the edge of the slope. Like a dog being tortured. One phrase keeps running through my head. Police brutality.

A long time passes. I keep waiting for the cop to come back up the slope, but he doesn't. Meantime, in my mind I'm rehearsing what I'm going to say to the cop, that hey, the guy had it coming, you know-- whatever I have to say in order to get out of this without getting a beating myself.

When it's been quiet down there for quite a while and the cop still hasn't come back up the slope, I finally work my courage up and push my feet forward to the crest.

Oh Jesus. The guy is face down in the dirt, the cop sitting on his back, straddling him. His face is away from me, looking towards the house. He's still holding onto his nightstick.

As if that isn't weird enough, the guy is wearing underpants now. Where did the cop get underpants? The rest of the guy's body is still naked, with dirt or blood or bruises or all three all over it, I can't tell.

While I'm trying to decide how to remind the cop I'm up here, and wondering if it's such a good idea, the cop lets the club drop out of his fingers.

Still sitting on the guy's back, he twists his head in my direction.

Looks right at me. Even from the top of the slope I can see his eyes are different than anybody else's eyes I've ever seen.

I fart and feel hot shit slide down the

insides of my thighs.

He stands up off the body he was straddling. Faces me from the bottom of the slope, bare feet in the dirt.

The young man spins from the top of the slope and flees, running naked across the upper lawn with brown shit down the backs of his thighs, through the azaleas, under the pear, through the hedge.

I pull on the socks and shoes.

Carry the body down the cement sidewalk to the door of the screened-in porch, lean on the door to pop the lock, carry the body through the porch into the kitchen. Drop it on the linoleum.

Red on the floor, red on the walls, lots of red on the ceiling.

At the top of the slope I walk straight down the middle of the yard, feeling the blue flannel heat on my naked body, feeling my cock and balls swing freely in the cop pants.

At the back corner of the yard I pause under the pear. Watch the little brown ants truck up and down the bark for a minute.

Look up.

In the bowl of black limbs, far up, obscured by the delicate pink blossoms, white limbs are draped across black limbs. I see six irises.

I step through the hedge.

The smaller backyard, with a second floor deck.

At a window on the deck, a thin hand pulls the white drapes to one side.

A woman's hand?

I decide it's a woman's hand.

I can't see the face, but evidently I've been seen, because the hand beckons behind the pane, first furtively, then frantically.

Clothed in my cop uniform, I walk naked to the bottom of the wooden steps leading up to the landing.

Start up the stairs.

The hand leaves the window. It leaves leftwards, towards the back door.

The door opens after three jerks. Must be

the hot weather, swelling the wood.

"Officer? Officer?"

I walk unhurriedly across the deck smiling a cop smile, turning around just for a moment before reaching her to look back down at the hedge-surrounded backyard, the neighboring rooftops floating among the trees, the pear.

I turn back towards the woman, who has now stepped out onto the deck.

Astonishingly, she's naked, double stare of breasts, closed-lipped legs, like a better face, underneath those kitchen clothes.

