

# *Sketch*

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## Incident

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# Incident

Carolyn Saul

## **Abstract**

Human life begins at the instant of conception. One microscopic bit of matter penetrates a second and the merging sparks the chain of reactions which culminate in human life...

Look at the little marvel. Six legs. Six of 'em. And he can stand on the ceiling with them too. Six slender legs. Six black, hairy, stinking, filthy legs. And a pair of wings to boot.

Yeah, buzz around ya damn fly. Brag about your hairy legs. Drunk in your glory, aren't you. Going around in dizzy circles. Round and round. Showing off your legs. I could take off four of your legs and you'd still have two to drag along with. And a pair of wings to boot.

I wish you'd fly away and leave me alone. Bragging about your damn legs. Flying around here like you owned the whole place. You and your six legs, and wings to boot. Don't even have brains enough to appreciate what you got. I wish I could kill you. I'd just like to smash you into the little smear of filth that you really are.

But you just keep on flying, flying, flying. I can't hurt you. I'm no threat to you. I can't even look over the edge of this basket I'm in without a mirror. I couldn't smash you. I don't even have the arms to scratch the itch on my knee. I don't even have any knees. All I have is an itch that I can't scratch. Damn you, fly. Damn you.

—*Ted Doty, F.T.S., Jr.*



## Incident

**H**UMAN LIFE begins at the instant of conception. One microscopic bit of matter penetrates a second and the merging sparks the chain of reactions which culminate in human life. Who can trace the ensuing movements of the many elements that combine and recombine, the devious and incalculable currents of genes and chromosomes which ultimately emerge as the organic form? Yes, this is mystery; but how much greater is the mysteriousness of the flaw which results from some infinitesimal misconjuncture? For perfection exists only as an ideal which is the one projected image of a

thousand imperfections — remaining eternally of the future tense. But that which is imperfect exists now, a conscious reality in our life today.

*Adsum!* “I am present; here!”

My knee was getting cold; so I changed the drink to my left hand and rubbed at the cold red ring the glass had made. My drink was already half-gone while Jim’s was still full. I shifted and took another sip and wondered how long it would take for him to finish.

“So you and my little brother were juvenile delinquents together back in Fort Worth?” Connie was straining behind the conversational ball.

“Yeh, we really had ahselves some times!” Jim’s visiting friend had obviously had too many beers that afternoon. It showed in his red eyes and tilting gait. He slouched onto the couch beside me and put a hairy arm around my shoulder.

“Do you want me to tell you what kind of a guy this Jimmy-boy is?” Gads, he smelled — beer, cigarettes, and sweat.

I smiled briefly and moved my shoulder. We both looked at Jim. He was leaning against the Welsh cupboard on the opposite wall twirling the liquid in his glass. He was laughing — with his face. The visiting friend had been uninvited and was not especially dear to Jim’s heart.

The hand pated my shoulder, an action which elicited from the owner a slight belch. “He’s a good guy . . .” snort, “Yeh, a good guy.”

“Really?” I said, hoping I didn’t sound as inane as I felt, and smiled again. Jim and I had planned an evening swim at the Springs when the interruption of the guest required some hospitality.

Connie made another comment; Jim went to the kitchen to refill her glass; and I shifted my glass to the other knee. Now I had two red rings — one on each knee. Red rings on tan skin made all the darker because it was contrasted against my white shorts.

One means of distinguishing the presence of a flaw in an organism’s composition is in its behavior patterns — that is, its

reactions to the environment. The manner in which the organism behaves individually can be plotted on the larger scale of mass or total organic behavior. In the middle range of this scale, falls the behavior patterns of the majority of the organisms. The areas outside this middle range, or "normal" area, constitute the abnormal range.

I didn't see her until she was well into the room. Actually, it was odd that I didn't because she was an immediate focal point. She seemed to command attention by virtue of the negative. Gray and green, with sallow white accents was the color impression I received. Grayed yellow hair smoothed around her head to a coil low on her neck; grayed green dress fitting her straight body in a nondescript manner; and sallow white skin enhancing and sharpening the green of her eyes. Her eyes were the only really alive thing about her — a cold, guarded aliveness that throbbed far, far back in her head — a single flickering green flame.

She walked to the chair in front of the window and sat down. The movement had a slightly feline quality. Her motions were real, but I had the feeling that the center of control for her movements was buried deep inside. She crossed her legs and rested her elbows on the arms of the chair. One hand held her glass and the other rested lightly on the smooth wood — completely immobile.

"This is Edith." Jim introduced us, nodding first to me and then his friend.

Edith nodded — once. And then she took a sip from her glass.

A bright bit of talking on the part of Connie had started Jimmy and his friend off on a spree of reminiscence. They spun the thread of recall together — one taking up where the other left off — punctuating with laughs, much good-natured cussing, and long swigs from the sweating glasses. I was in the middle of the conversation plane and found myself looking from one to the other, trying to keep up with them and look as if I were concentrating. Every turn of my head took my eyes past Edith.

She was looking at me. It was a total contained gaze that involved her whole physical self. She was not only looking at me; she was listening to me, touching me, tasting me —

savoring me with her total sense quota. It was without embarrassment, without candor. The hair on my arms rose in gooseflesh.

. . . . .

We made our excuses, leaving Connie to cope with the good-natured blather of the friend. When we finally got out to the car, it was as if after a long journey. I had felt as though I were moving through cobwebs when I walked past Edith and out of the room. Jim's friend sat on the couch, obviously enjoying my attire — or lack of attire. But he wasn't the cause of the cobwebs. She sat in her chair, following my exit as completely as if she were walking beside me.

Jim started the car and we moved down the street. We were silent; he smoking his cigarette as he drove and I watching the traffic slide by.

"Who's Edith?" The thought of the woman had completely enveloped me.

He explained that she was a friend of his sister's who had taken their spare room until she could find an apartment. "She's quite different," he added.

"I guess! I didn't care for the way she kept looking at me." To my chagrin my voice sounded slightly shakey. I stopped, lowered my tone and lamely added, "She's got such strange eyes."

Jim turned the car into the lot and coasted against the curb. The Springs below looked cool — planes of light arranging on the deep turquoise. He turned to me and laughed. "Strange?" Then he leaned forward a little. "You know what — she *likes* girls!"

. . . . .

The tragedy of imperfection lies not in the fact that it is recognized by the group, but that recognition does not by necessity precede or breed understanding. For it is true that there is fascination in the faraway mysterious and obscure, but an immediate abnormality seems to produce a fascination tinged with fear and repugnance, and ultimately — resistance and rejection.

And thus the organism and the group exist — the one and one.

— Carolyn Saul, A.A. Sr.