

# Humble

# PI'

By A.R. Foote

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It was Tuesday. The rain beat down on the roof of my car. The car stereo played a mouth organ recital by Boro Minovich. This was not a nice day. I'd had no work for about a week, and I was taking it easy. I lit a cigarette, the smoke wafting around the cab, before being dragged out by the ventilation. I was absorbed in the rising and falling tones of the mastery of this musician. It might be wet, cold and stinky out there, but it was warm and pleasant in here. I was driving over to Manning to visit my sis. Her old man had walked out and she was a bit down. I glanced at my watch.

"2:38pm" it read. I drove on, arriving at Celia's about 2:50 pm. She was glad to see me. We talked.

Over a coffee and another cigarette. It seems Johnny was messing about with other women, I felt angry that led sadden my sister, but hell, marriage is like that. Some guys are just assholes. I comforted her, she asked me to stay for tea. I did. By about 9pm, Celia had settled down a bit. "Don't worry", I told her, "he'll be back. they usually come back."

She smiled, reassured. I reassured her with a smile of my own. The phone rang.

"Mrs Talbot?", asked a voice.

"Yes" replied Celia.

"It's Sergeant Willis, from the Central police station."

"Oh god, what's happened", she shrieked.

"Your husband has been involved in an accident. He's at Mercy hospital, but I'm ~~think~~ told he'll be ok.", he said

"What kind of accident?" asked Celia.

"A rather unusual one I'm afraid. He was struck by a light aircraft on Highway 13. We don't know who was flying the plane. A witness said the plane "swooped" down out of the sky, hit your husband and flew away. We're waiting to speak to him Mrs Talbot. Well let you know if we find out anything else." He hung up.

Celia turned to me, with the look of someone who's just seen a ghost.

"What's wrong?", I asked.

"It's John. He was hit by a plane", she said. She told me what had happened. There was no clue as to why the plane had struck him, who was flying it, or why he was walking along Highway 13. When he left, he'd taken the car. We went to Mercy hospital at once. John was really banged up, but the Doc said he would live. There were a few broken bones, and he'd been knocked out, and was in a coma, but he would live. Celia convinced herself that it may have been some freak accident. I remained unconvinced.

It was clearly a deliberate act. My guess was that the police would get nothing out of him when he came to. For someone to try and Top him like that, he must have really pissed them off. If that was the case, he'd be hiding the reason why. I bet to myself, that John would remember nothing.

About mid morning on the following day. He came to. I won my bet, as police asked a list of questions and got vagueness & "I don't know", every time. Just as I thought. I felt that John was in some kind of trouble. I decided to wait until the cops had gone, and talk to him myself.

"How are you John", I said.

"Sore", he replied.

"Where's your car?" I asked. "I'll have it picked up for you", I said. Johnny shook his head,

"I don't know", he said.

"Look John, I want to know; Are you in some kind of trouble.?" I said. John didn't answer. I sensed something worrying him deeply.

"Look atta Celia", he said

I nodded and walked out.

"See you later" I said.

There was something wrong with this. I called

Dan on my cell phone. He had the same thoughts as I did. John could be tied up in something that had gotten into over his head. We agreed on the need for a guard on his hospital room. Dan assigned a man, who had strict instructions not to allow anyone in, who wasn't his wife, me, or Dan. The police were conducting inquiries into the accident. Because of the odd circumstances; It was sent to Dan's office for detectives to look at it. Dan had just read the report when I'd rung him, I was intrigued by all of this. I didn't want to upset sis, so I said nothing to her. I drove out to Highway 13. I knew that the police had already been to the scene, but I wanted to go out and look around. They'd found nothing. After years of poking around into every nook and cranny, I'd discovered that there was always a clue. The clue I'd hoped to find, was John's car. I guessed it would be nearby where he was hit. I just couldn't see him walking all the way out there. I searched up and down the road for a couple of miles either side of the scene. Nothing. Next, I looked up all the side roads in that area. This search paid off. I found John's car in a field about a mile away from the road. I'd followed a dirt road on a hunch. As I approached the car, I had this gut feeling that something was amiss. John's Chevy was parked facing the field. The driver's door was open. I stopped the car and got out. I walked to the Chevy. From twenty feet or so away, I could see that it was splattered with what appeared to be bullet holes. They were small calibre, around .22, probably from some small automatic. The windshield was ~~broken~~ shattered, with small glass fragments all around the inside of the car. I looked it over, and came up empty. For whatever reason, John had.

driven to that field, and been shot at by persons unknown. I developed that theory. Maybe John was tied up with something, drugs shipment for instance; Maybe he'd gone to that particular field to either meet a buyer, or transfer goods to a waiting aircraft. Maybe he'd done the dirty on them & they became instantly pissed at him for doing whatever it was that he did, and shot at him. He could, and probably did make a run for it, and they followed in the plane, raining him down on the road. He obviously knew more than he was telling. Even if he'd accidentally stumbled over something I wanted to know, he could, and would be in danger because of it, I felt I had to help him, because to fail to do this would put sis in the same danger he was in. Later that day, I visited John in hospital again.

"John, what happened? I want the truth," I said sternly.

"I dunno," he said, in return.

"John," I said firmly. "I found your car. Now what gives?"

For a minute or so, he ignored me. I could see that he was in pain, but I thought to myself that he wasn't in as much pain as he'd be in if anything happened to Celia.

"Spit it out!" John. I snapped.

"All right, just give me a minute" he replied. John looked thoughtful as he lay in the hospital bed running over the events of the earlier day in his head.

I... I -- don't know really. I remember driving out to the river to take a breather & think things over. Next thing I knew, I'd gone down the wrong road. I didn't realise at first, but as I approached a clearing

I found a field to be there. There was a  
"plane"

"Plane?" I said, interrupting him.

"Yes. A small one. A Piper Cub I think, a red & white one. There was a sort of badge on the doors. There was a picture of a lion or tiger, or something like that. The badge was orange & yellow. I thought it was weird to have a badge or a plane," he said, staring straight ahead.

"What happened then?" I asked him.

Well, the plane was sitting there in this field. I thought it must be a farmer or something. At least that's what I thought until I saw a large beige American car parked nearby. I knew that something was going on. I stopped, and tried to reverse, but because of the rain, the ground was boggy & I got the car stuck. It wouldn't budge. The next thing I know, there's these guys running over to me. I thought they were going to help push me out, until one started firing a little machine gun at me. The windshield shattered. I got my ass out of the car, and ran into the forest back the way I'd come. They only chased me on foot for a while, then ran back to their car. I heard it drive by a couple of times. I also heard the plane taking off. I managed to get back to the road, and watched the beige American car go by 3 or 4 times. They never saw me though. It then drove away, back towards town. I walked out on the road, trying to flag down a ride. They'd shot my car up and I knew there was no point going back to it. Any way, I didn't know if there was on was not, someone still there. A few cars went by but wouldn't stop. Next thing I'm standing in the

roadway, ~~the~~ car swerves to a halt about 100 feet behind me, looking above my head. I turned around, & saw this plane flying along the road at about 5 feet. Next thing I know, I'm here with a mess o' troubles. That's all I remember," said John.

He closed his eyes for a moment, breathing hard. He opened them again.

"What am I going to do?" he asked.

"I don't know right now John. I'll work on it," I replied.

He looked confused. I doubted whether I'd get much more from him. I asked if he knew what they were doing. All he remembered, was a briefcase on the hood of the car, and the man standing near it. I left the hospital. From what I'd heard from John, some kind o' buy was going down, and led blundered right into it. ~~That~~ he was telling the truth, he was in a lot o' danger. Once the guys in the field got wind o' the fact that John was still around, they'd probably try and make certain that he wasn't, I called Dan. In light o' the events John had witnessed, Police ~~had~~ decided to move him elsewhere, and publish notice o' his death from injuries in the local and national newspapers. He would be required later as a witness, and would require protection. In the meantime, I would need to find out the identity o' the men. I had the police arrange for Celia's protection as well. It was conceivable that if they wanted John, they could ~~get to~~ get to him through her. On the face for several years, I'd seen it happen many times. Things always got ugly. The wife, ~~at~~ a kid o' the inkers would be kidnapped and held in exchange, when they got the inkers, they kill them both. There wasn't much to go on, really only

The plane with that badge on the door. Since it was only a small plane, in theory, it wouldn't have come from far away. No one would be stupid enough to do a long distance in one. They'd be too slow if something went wrong. Either it met with another con, some where in the area, or it had come from the aero club & plane hire at the airport. I drove to the airport. It didn't take long to discover that the badge on the plane door was that of "Lionheart Airline".

The guy who ran the place was H. Ted Allan. I had no cooperation from him at all. He told me his planes had gone nowhere, on account of the weather. I told him I knew he was lying. I said that someone saw his logo on the plane, his answer to that was that they must have been dreaming. He said "who'd be stupid enough to fly in that weather, let alone land, in a muddy...." He stopped short, realising I'd said nothing about landing anywhere. "I think you're lying Allan," I said sharply.

He rubbed his chin, took two steps back and, turned and walked briskly away. I knew I was onto something here. I followed him into the office.

"Mr Allan, I'd like to see the logs, for all your planes," I said.

"Piss off pal, they're none of your business", he replied. "You can show them to me, or you can show them to police. What's it gonna be?"

He thought for a moment before picking up a bunch of log books off his desk & handing them to me.

"Thank you," I said, opening the first one of yesterday's date, there was nothing out of the ordinary. Likewise with the rest of them.

"Can I see the planes?", I asked.

"The books are all in order", he said.

"Yes they are. Can't see the planes?" I repeated.

Be-grudgingly, he nodded his head. I took the log books with me. I wanted to check off the flying hours against the records in the planes. Two planes were out. The rest were there. He kept them in top condition so there was no trace of mud on any plane. They all looked brand new and spanking clean. The first 3 planes hour counters matched the corresponding logs. The fourth however showed a slight discrepancy. It was only a matter of seven hours, but that was flying time. Not the time it stood on the ground. That was probably several unaccounted for trips. Allan was up to something.

I went back to him.

"Alright Allan, what's your game?" I asked.

"I don't know what you're talking about" he replied.

"One of the logs doesn't match. There's seven hours missing Allan."

He looked at me strangely. There was nothing to say. He knew it too. I put the logs on the desk and turned to leave.

"Ask your friend Sam Talbot", he said.

"He's dead" I replied.

"I know better than that." he said disbelievingly. "Ask him. He knows. It has nothing to do with me."

"Thanks", I said. "But he's dead". I said again. I turned and left.

If he did know that John wasn't dead, how did he know. He effectively told me that John was not the innocent party that had made himself out to be.

Since I was not privy to John and Celia's whereabouts, I had to relay information through Dan. The 'special squad' were in

charge of Johns' case now. Dan was surprised to learn what I'd found out. They weren't protecting a witness. They were holding a player in whatever game it was John was involved. It made it all the more difficult for me. I was not able to get near John to try and get more information. I had only one shot. Something at John's house, or ~~in~~ in his car must give a clue of some kind. Otherwise, there was little chance of getting Celia out of the crap he'd pulled her into with him. Whatever it was, there was money involved for John. I'd often wondered how he could afford the things they had when his credit didn't exist. Dan told me that John had been calling out a name, Alec Farrar, in his sleep. It had been checked out by the squad. It came up cleaner than a horsehair in the rain. It was the only clear thing he'd said; the rest was a mumble. When he'd awoken, and was asked about it, he remembered nothing.

I went to his house. As I arrived, a large black car left. There were two men in it. I pulled into the driveway and got out of the car. I carefully approached the front door. It was open. Inside, the place was a mess. They had obviously been looking for something but what? Drawers were pulled out, curtains off the furniture were slit and the stuffing shown about the place. Even the books in John's den were tossed out of the book shelf onto the floor. I looked around the desk, trying to find some clue as to the identity of this Alec Farrar, or John's involvement in all of this. Amongst all the rubbish, I found a small desk top notepad. There was a store number, ~~with~~ with the word 'AT' beside it. I put it into my pocket. I saw the same name on the desk

blotter, with the same number and a message. 'Johnstones yard. Friday 22nd.' 'That's ~~was~~ today's date' I said to myself. I couldn't think of a 'Johnstones yard' anywhere, but I had the phone number. I called Don from the house.

"Dan?" I asked

"Yeah ~~Plumb~~ he replied.

"I need a favor," I said.

"Does it concern the Talbot case?"

"Yes"

"Well then, I can't do it. Special Service and all that crap. I've been asked to tell you to keep out of it thumb. Nothing personal. For your safety," they said," said Don. "Sorry"

"Yeah sure," I replied as I hang up.

I figured that those guys must think they're onto something. I wouldn't be surprised if that was them who left as I arrived, still. I had the number & they didn't. I was still one step ahead. If I could have got to John, I could sort this out quickly. I might even save his bacon. For the moment, there was this one lead, and a weak one at that. This whole thing was getting very loosey, almost stalling. I could feel the crush of frustration on my mind. To find out what's going on in the underworld you go to the underworld. Having found nothing <sup>more</sup> of relevance in the house, I got into my car & went downtown.

Jerry the fish was an old acquaintance of mine. A real saout in the total sense of the word. He was camp as a row of pink tents and had the best stable of hookers this side of the Waa Waa club. I pulled up at his feet.

"Bruin man, hows it hangin'?" he said.

"Jerry, how it's hangin's none of your business. Listen Jerry, I need some info," I replied

"Well, maybe you come to the wigging place," said the fish. I held out a fifty.

"Then maybe you didn't," he smiled. "How can I help you --- B-r-u-c-e?"

I lit a cigarette.

"Alec Farran?" I said questioningly.

"What about him?"

"Where do I find him?" I asked.

"If you're lucky, you don't. Man, he is some mean dude. Heavy into smack and shit. Word is he iced Johnny T.," he said informatively.

"Johnny T?"

"Yeah man, your Bro in law. sad. He's got a warehouse on 3rd and Maple. Man might find his ass there if he looked". He walked away. I drove away

I drove to where the fish had sent me. It was a warehouse, indeed. Parking the car, I walked slowly along the ~~sidewalk~~ sidewalk until I reached the warehouse. I tried to get a discreet look inside but the windows were painted out. I heard voices though. Someone was in there. Walking around to the alley, I found a side window. It wasn't painted out. Inside I could see three men in the little room, only ten feet or so from me. They were talking.

"Al, Al, Al, how many times do I have to tell you. He won't open his mouth. You're worrying about nothing".

"Yeah maybe so. He doesn't know you though, or Johnstone. Does he Johnstone?"

"No Boss, I only talked to him on the phone a couple of times".

"He knows me though," said Al. "If he opens his mouth I'm in the joint. Dave!" Al said.

"Yeah" answered Dave.

"Find him, and kill him," ordered Al. "And you Johnstone. Esire will be at your yard

tonight at 9:30 pm. Be there, get the cash, give him the shit. In that order," Al commanded.

"Yeah boss. I'll take care of it," said Johnstae.

"You come with me Dave!"

The three got up and left the room. As the door opened, I could see that the warehouse was full of crates. They had large black 'This Way Up' arrows on them, but I couldn't make out what was in them. The contents of one stood on top of a crate, but it was too far away to see properly. I ran back to the car. I waited only a minute or so, before two cars came out of the warehouse, Farver and his man Dave were in one. Johnstae was in the other. I followed Johnstae. Whatever it was that was changing hands was obviously in the car. Finding Johnstae's yard was easy. I followed him right to it. He had a trucking firm. I drove past, a few yards, and parked. I decided to have a little look around his yard. It was getting on for 9:20 pm. I bought the urge to light a cigarette. I could be seen in the darkness. I walked stealthily into Johnstae's yard. I watched him go inside the office. He wasn't alone in there: there were four men in suits. Two of them came to the door with pistols drawn. Whatever was going down was big. I squatted behind an International, and waited.

Right on 9:30, A car pulled into the yard. Two men, with guns drawn, stepped out of the car and scanned the yard. Then when it seemed safe. A third man got out. In the dim light, I recognised him. It was Andre' Colosa, alias John Esione. I'd remember that silhouette anywhere. About six years

ago I got a line on him for stealing art works. Particularly, <sup>and</sup> custom made and fabulously expensive jewellery. It seemed unusual to me that he was connected with Farrar, if Farrar was a drug lord. Something smelled fishy. Six years ago, he was the one that got away. Somehow Esione found out I was a plant. I took a slug in the shoulder from that jerk. Andrews, my partner, bought it. They went inside. I moved up so I might catch what was said. The windows were double thickness to shut out the noise from the trucks. All I could make out, was the words 'Eastern Jewel'. That could mean anything. I took a very careful look in the window. I could see an open briefcase. There was close to a million bucks inside. Esione slid it across the table to Johnstone. There was a little bit of vocal exchange. The Esiones body guards headed to the door. I hid behind a 46 gallon drum until they got into the car and left. What was odd, was that the only thing Esione got in return for the money was an envelope. Whatever was inside must have been pretty valuable. Esione's black Mercedes reversed out and drove away. I slipped quietly out and back to my car. Driving back to the office, all I could think about were those sure words 'Eastern Jewel'. Whatever it was, was something to do with artworks, or jewellery. Of that I was sure. I called Dan. I asked him for information on Esione. He asked if it was in connection with Johnny, I said "No, nothing at all to do with it".

"Esione's suspected of running an artwork theft ring. No one been able to prove it. It's just too hard to track," said Dan.

"No kidding," I replied. "What about Eastern Jewel?"

I asked "That mean anything to you."

"What, the old cargo boat at Number 3 ~~East~~?"

"A boat?" I said surprised.

"Yeah, what's all this about? Have you found out something about Esire?" Don asked.

I told him what I'd seen. He looked up "the Eastern Seal" on the register. She was all above board and not connected with Esire, on paper at least. I had it in mind that whatever connection Esire & that boat had, it indeed that was the "Eastern Seal" that they spoke of; had something to do with my brother in law. If only I could get to him, I know I'd know what I was getting myself into.

I left Pam, and went to the docks. Driving beneath the cranes, and stacks of containers, I came across the sign "NO 3 WEST". I turned onto that pier and stopped suddenly. There was no doubt that this was the Eastern Seal I'd heard mentioned. It was 10:45 pm; the pier was deserted but for one car. Esire's car. I reversed out & turned around, ~~parked~~ I'd no sooner parked between two lines of containers, and got out of the car, when Johnstone arrived; he had no one else with him. He didn't see me standing there, just drove on around, pulling up behind Esire's limo. A couple of minutes later, he'd disappeared up the gangplank onto the ship. He was carrying a package, not a large one, but about the size of a biscuit box. I went in for a closer look, with gun drawn.

There was a guard at the top of the gangplank. Only the one. If there were more, I couldn't see them. That way was out so I thought quickly of the alternatives, settling on the mooring ropes. They were

very thick, but not impossible to climb. Creeping to the ore at the back of the ship, I proceeded to climb it to the deck. Although it wavered a bit, it didn't take long to get aboard. The deck was uncluttered. I made my way quietly along to where Johnstae had gone. I drew my gun. About midships I thought I'd been spotted, as the guard turned to face me and walked forward. However, he went in a door and disappeared from view. I walked up to the window, near the door and stopped as I heard voices coming from within. I took a quick look. It was Esiore & Johnstae, not to mention the gathering of guards. The package was on the table against a wall in the cabin. I watched as Esiore had one of his men take it out. He revealed a smallish antique piece. A figure of the madonna. I heard the word cocaine come up two or three times, and was surprised as Esiores man picked up the Madonna and smashed it with his pistol butt. Three or four bags fell to the table. Esiore pulled a knife from his pocket & flicked it open. Picking one of the bags, he dabbed his pinky finger into the white substance & tilted the small amount of substance to his mouth. A few seconds later, he nodded his head. Instantly, the guard who'd been outside pulled his pistol on Johnstae. Esiore laughed as Johnstae pleaded for his life. A single gunshot sounded as Johnstae fell to the floor, with a hole in his fore head. I wasn't staying around any longer. I ran as quietly as possible down the gang planks as red & blue flashing lights switched on. Dan called me over to his car.

as the others screeched in, cutting off any escape from the boat.

"Shit Don, where the hell did you come from. How did you know about all this?" I asked.

"Your brother in law talked. He was tied up in this. He told us about shipments of cocaine. One was going out tonight," he said. "Johnstone's dead, one of Esquivel's crowd blew him away. I found out the connection between the antiques and the cocaine." I said.

"What's the game then?" asked Don as his men stormed the boat.

"The antiques. The cocaine was slipped in the antiques. There's a sample in there. He had it concealed in statues of the madonna, antique reproductions of course, to be in keeping with his business. So John was in on it?" I asked.

"Yep, he got a bit greedy though & they argued about money, the rest is history. F.B.I. stopped me telling you about it. Sorry about that thumble, but if we got here any later you'd be swimming with the sharks no doubt," he said.

"Yeah, probably," I ~~said~~ replied.

The police took the men from the boat and confiscated a shipment of Madonnas, complete with their illicit cargo. I went back to see Celia. Sled, gone though. Bob & John went on the witness protection program. I never did find them. Mind you. I didn't look that hard.

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