

Short Story: A Corruptive Influence [B2]

In un tragico colpo di scena, Hetty uccide accidentalmente suo marito Torrance credendo di essere inseguita da criminali. Mentre cerca di affrontare lo shock, scopre che Torrance aveva orchestrato tutto come una sorpresa per il loro anniversario



Torrance and Hetty had a tradition. In fact, the [couple](#) had many traditions. That's because they'd been married for a very long time. They were driving home from San Diego, where they'd visited the restaurant where they would celebrate their fortieth wedding anniversary later that month. It would be a nice celebration, with family and friends. However, Hetty wished they could celebrate [in style](#), do something extravagant, go on the [cruise](#) she'd always wanted to go on. But she knew they couldn't [afford](#) that. Every time the [couple](#) drove home from San Diego, they stopped at an abandoned property that Torrance's family owned [to go for a walk](#). And this time was no exception. As they walked around the property, Torrance stopped [to pick](#) an [avocado](#) from a tree. It was then that Hetty saw it: a bag at the tree's base. "What's that?" she asked, [retrieving](#) it. She opened the bag and for a moment, she couldn't believe what she was seeing. It was money. A lot of money. "We can't [keep](#) it," Torrance insisted, as he and Hetty drove home.

"It's against the law." "It's a stupid law that nobody knows about or obeys," said Hetty. She had looked it up on her phone and discovered that in California, anyone who found money, even a few cents, was obliged to try to return it to its owner. "Well, we know about it," said Torrance, "and now there's proof that we know about it on your phone. Besides, someone knows about the money, and when they find out it's gone, they'll start searching for it." "They'll never know we found it. Nobody will ever know." Hetty knew the real problem wasn't that the money wasn't theirs. It was that Torrance believed money had a corruptive influence. He always said it was the root of all evil, while she believed it was the root of all happiness. It was one of the few things they passionately disagreed on. In the end, Hetty convinced Torrance to keep the money, at least for now. They would bury it in the garden, and if anyone came for it, they would return it to them. Everything was OK for a while, but then Hetty began to feel paranoid. Whenever she went out, she felt that someone was following her. It got so bad that she bought a gun, and began going to a shooting range. She didn't tell Torrance about it. She couldn't tell him. He hated guns, and she had always hated guns too. But now she needed a gun, for protection. The people who owned the money were certainly criminals — because who else left money on an abandoned property? And if someone really was following her, it must be a criminal, a criminal who knew she and Torrance had the money, and so they were both in a perilous situation. It was the evening before the couple's fortieth wedding anniversary. Torrance had already bought Hetty a present, which she was to open the next day. But Hetty had been so distracted over the money that she hadn't bought a present for him. So she went out to get him a box of his favorite cigars. As she walked to the cigar shop, she again felt that someone was following her. And as she walked home, she heard footsteps behind her. She clutched the gun, which was in her bag, and walked more quickly. When she arrived home, she called Torrance's name but there was no response. The door opened behind her and she retrieved her gun, turned around and fired it. The person behind her fell on the ground, dead. It was Torrance. Torrance? How could it be Torrance? Why had Torrance been following her? Had he been plotting against her? He'd always said that money had a corruptive influence. What if it had had a corruptive influence on him? Hetty's first instinct was to call the police, but

what if they didn't believe that it was an accident? What if she went to prison? Then the money would [remain](#) buried in the garden forever. No, she'd make it appear like a home invasion: she'd come home and found Torrance dead. She buried her gun in the garden with the money, and then called the police. A few hours later, Hetty was at the police station. It was easy to present herself as a [grieving widow](#) because she was a [grieving widow](#). She had loved Torrance. She hadn't intended to kill him. But at least she had the money, and now that she knew that her husband, and not a criminal, had been following her, she could finally [enjoy](#) it. That was some consolation. "We found this at your home," said the police officer, and presented a DVD. It had been Torrance's present to her. He inserted it into a computer and Torrance appeared. As he talked, Hetty felt the world [spin](#). "Happy anniversary, my beautiful wife," he began, and then [apologised](#) for following her. "I'm a terrible man, really, but after forty years of marriage, I thought it was time to resolve our disagreement over money, to discover if it really was the [root](#) of [evil](#) or happiness." Torrance explained that he had recently [inherited](#) and sold his family's abandoned property. "That money buried in the garden is ours, and there's a lot more of it. I've concluded that we're both right. Money might have corrupted my pacifist wife, by causing her to buy a gun, but it will make her happy too. I've bought two tickets for that [cruise](#) you've always wanted to go on. Surprise!" Then there was another surprise for Hetty, as the officer presented the money, retrieved from the garden, and the gun she had used to kill her loving husband.

Glossary

- **cruise** = crociera
- **grieving** = in lutto
- **apologised** = scusarsi
- **obeys** = obbedire
- **looked it up** = cercare
- **proof** = prove
- **disagreed** = essere in disaccordo
- **widow** = vedova
- **avocado** = avocado
- **inherited** = ereditare
- **bury** = sotterrare
- **remain** = restare
- **fired** = sparare
- **enjoy** = godere
- **couple** = coppia
- **in style** = con stile
- **to go for a walk** = fare un giro
- **keep** = tenere
- **find out** = scoprire
- **certainly** = senza dubbio
- **evil** = male
- **cigars** = sigari
- **footsteps** = passi
- **plotting** = cospirare
- **afford** = permettersi
- **to pick** = cogliere
- **retrieving** = raccogliere
- **root** = radici, origini
- **Besides** = inoltre
- **shooting range** = poligono di tiro
- **clutched** = stringere
- **spin** = dar vueltas