

DOCTOR GLAZER CAUGHT UNAWARES

Doctor Manfred Glazer, 81, once an outstanding dentist but now retired, had taken advantage of the generosity of the local coffee shop in providing a narrow room for those urgently requiring private relief. He was seated comfortably, relaxing and humming tunes from “Oklahoma,” when the door burst open and an astonished intruder stumbled in. He was a tall, lean fellow, about thirty years of age, with a moustache and slicked down hair, whose face was now deeply red in outrage.

“What is the matter with you!” shouted the newcomer in an accent clearly foreign, which Glazer could not identify. “Are you without decency, eh?”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said, greatly apologetic. “The fault is mine, and you have every right to be greatly offended.” The fact was that Manfred had forgotten to lock the door. He suspected that this was another instance supporting the tests recently given by his physician, who gently told him that there had been some significant decline in his cognitive faculties, and that he would have to be very careful to avoid blunders of this kind.

With his usual kindly desire to “put things right”, he said, “can I treat you to a latte of your choice, when you emerge from these...quarters?”

The intruder exploded in mirthless laughter. “You Americans! You think that you disgrace me, and then you think with your money or your toys and your footballs that I don’t care. Never for me!” He paused, glowering at Manfred. “But!” he said, suddenly thrusting his finger high into the air, “I love people. I forgive! I accept your goodness. You say any latte I want?”

“Yes, any one.”

“A deal!” He bowed gracefully. “I am Chronis, here from Greece. Now go and please arrange your clothing, and then, after I use the machine, we will have our latte.”

From the baleful thug- like man, Chronis had altered completely to a child-like expression of good will. And it was then that Dr. Glazer noticed the tattered sleeve, the worn denims.

They went together into the seated area of the store, where Chronis guided Manfred to a small table in the corner where a young woman had been waiting.

“You must meet my girl friend, Helena. She speaks little English.” He spoke rapidly to her, and she smiled appreciably, nodding at Manfred. She was a pretty girl, a curly blonde with varying streaks of dark hair, and very shy, with blue- grey eyes rolling for comfort to the ceiling whenever someone tried to talk to her.

When they had been seated with their colossal late of an esoteric mixture, Manfred, who had also brought one of the astonishing drinks to Helena, noticed that the girl had winced in pain whenever she tried to swallow on the left side of her pretty face.

“Pardon me,” said Dr. Glazer, “As a dentist, I couldn’t help notice Helena’s discomfort. May I look?”

“You are one of the gods if you can help!” said Chronis. “Yes, she hurts, but we have no money,” he coughed suddenly, “that is, at the moment. But I have plans for making riches soon. And you will benefit! Let me die if I betray you!”

He leaned forward to Helena and explained it to her, at which she smiled and nodded, while looking at the ceiling. Assured that she agreed, Dr. Glazer moved to her adjoining chair, and very carefully coaxed her head down and gently drew open her mouth.

It did not take him long. With word and hand signals, he informed Helena that her pain is due to a serious abscess in a tooth which must come out –immediately if it is not to infect the other teeth.

“ I thought it would be bad,” moaned Chronis, “but what can we do?”

“I’ll do it for her,” said the Dentist. “ No charge. We can do it at my house, just a few blocks away.”

They were astonished. So grateful, touching him, laughing, that he was delighted too, and was certainly not going to impair their confidence by informing them that he had been expelled from his firm after thirty years of practice and his license removed, after his several episodes of inappropriate conduct, culminating in a bizarre event in which he was found languidly reposing in the dental chair and eating ice cream while his bewildered patient is waiting for instructions what to do. Indeed, after three years of retirement, he began to think that it may not have happened after all.

The removal of Helena's tooth turned out happily just as Dr. Glazer anticipated. The renegade little tooth was so near to falling out, that it took not much more than a wiggling to bring it from its cave, and to present it to the awed Helena in the palm of his hand. And after she cautiously touched the dreaded area of her mouth only to find that the wicked thing was gone, she did a brief dance swirling around the Doctor, which he understood to mean when she suddenly bowed low before him, that she loved him for doing such a fine thing for her.

Recognizing that the success of an extremely difficult surgery deserved a celebration, Manfred brought out some of his Irish whiskey – which had reposed under the telephone book over several years – and for a

brief time, the three of them had such a good time that the noise they made brought the upstairs residents to pound angrily on the ceiling.

The silence that followed left a sudden void; awkwardly, they looked at each other. Chronis looked at the clock at Manfred's kitchen, and shook his head.

"We must go now," he said. He took Manfred's hand in his and shook it fiercely. "When I am filthy," he announced, "I shall repay fifty times over!"

"That is too much!" responded Manfred courteously. "But thank you."

Little Helena came forward and kissed him, three times.

She was so cute, Manfred was so sorry to see her go. "Call me, if you have any other dental problems."

Again, Helena's eyes rolled wildly to the ceiling, until Chronis explained its meaning. She bowed deeply, and then they were gone.

"That was great," sighed Manfred. "But it was a little more than I could take."

He took off his shoes and went into his TV room, where he sank gratefully into the depths of his mighty chair. His two cats, having been hiding under the beds during the merriment, emerged to join him.

He turned it on, and Tyrone Power filled the screen.

To Manfred's pleasure.

The end.