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The timing was just right enough so that things worked out wrong for everyone. Adrian

Mellon and Don Hagarty came out of the Falcon after two beers, walked up past the bus

station, and then linked hands. Neither of them thought about it; it was just something they

did. It was ten-twenty. They reached the corner and turned left.

The Kissing Bridge was almost half a mile upriver from here; they meant to cross Main

Street Bridge, which was much less picturesque. The Kenduskeag was summer-low, no more

than four feet of water sliding listlessly around the concrete pilings.

When the Duster drew abreast of them (Steve Dubay had spotted the two of them coming

out of the Falcon and gleefully pointed them out), they were on the edge of the span.

'Cut in! Cut in!' Webby Garton screamed. The two men had just passed under a streetlight

and he had spotted the fact that they were holding hands. This infuriated him . . . but not as

much as the hat infuriated him. The big paper flower was nodding crazily this way and that.

'Cut in, goddammit!'

And Steve did.

Chris Unwin would deny active participation in what followed, but Don Hagarty told a

different story. He said that Garton was out of the car almost before it stopped, and that the

other two quickly followed. There was talk. Not good talk. There was no attempt at flippancy

or false coquetry on Adrian's part this night; he recognized that they were in a lot of trouble.

'Give me that hat,' Garton said. 'Give it to me, queer.'

'If I do, will you leave us alone?' Adrian was wheezing with fright, almost crying, looking

from Unwin to Dubay to Garton with terrified eyes.

'Just give me the fucker!'

Adrian handed it over. Garton produced a switchknife from the left front pocket of his

jeans and cut it into two pieces. He rubbed the pieces against the seat of his jeans. Then he

dropped them to his feet and stomped them.

Don Hagarty backed away a little while their attention was divided between Adrian and the

hat — he was looking, he said, for a cop.

'Now will you let us al — ' Adrian Mellon began, and that was when Garton punched him

in the face, driving him back against the waist-high pedestrian railing of the bridge. Adrian

screamed, clapping his hands to his mouth. Blood poured through his fingers.

'Ade!' Hagarty cried, and ran forward again. Dubay tripped him. Garton booted him in the

stomach, knocking him off the sidewalk and into the roadway. A car passed. Hagarty rose to

his knees and screamed at it. It didn't slow. The driver, he told Gardener and Reeves, never

even looked around.

'Shut up, queer!' Dubay said, and kicked him in the side of the face. Hagarty fell on his side

in the gutter, semiconscious.

A few moments later he heard a voice — Chris Unwin's — telling him to get away before

he got what his friend was getting. In his own statement Unwin verified giving this warning.

Hagarty could hear thudding blows and the sound of his lover screaming. Adrian sounded

like a rabbit in a snare, he told the police. Hagarty crawled back toward the intersection and

the bright lights of the bus station, and when he was a distance away he turned back to look.

Adrian Mellon, who stood about five-five and might have weighed a hundred and thirtyfive

pounds soaking wet, was being pushed from Garton to Dubay to Unwin in a kind of

triple play. His body jittered and flopped like the body of a rag doll. They were punching

him, pummelling him, ripping at his clothes. As he watched, he said, Garton punched Adrian

in the crotch. Adrian's hair hung in his face. Blood poured out of his mouth and soaked his

shirt. Webby Garton wore two heavy rings on his right hand: one was a Derry High School

ring, the other one he had made in shop class — an intertwined brass DB stood out three

inches from this latter. The letters stood for the Dead Bugs, a metal band he particularly

admired. The rings had torn Adrian's upper lip open and shattered three of his upper teeth at

the gum line.

'Help!' Hagarty shrieked. 'Help! Help! They're killing him! Help!'

The buildings of Main Street loomed dark and secret. No one came to help — not even

from the one white island of light which marked the bus station, and Hagarty did not see how

that could be: there were people in there. He had seen them when he and Ade walked past.

Would none of them come to help? None at all?

'HELP! HELP! THEY'RE KILLING HIM, HELP, PLEASE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!'

'Help,' a very small voice whispered from Don Hagarty's left . . . and then there was a

giggle.

'Bum's rush!' Garton was yelling now . . . yelling and laughing. All three of them, Hagarty

told Gardener and Reeves, had been laughing while they beat Adrian up. 'Bum's rush! Over

the side!'

'Bum's rush! Bum's rush! Bum's rush!' Dubay chanted, laughing.

'Help,' the small voice said again, and although the voice was grave, that little giggle

followed again — it was like the voice of a child who cannot help itself.

Hagarty looked down and saw the clown — and it was at this point that Gardener and

Reeves began to discount everything that Hagarty said, because the rest was the raving of a

lunatic. Later, however, Harold Gardener found himself wondering. Later, when he found

that the Unwin boy had also seen a clown — or said he had — he began to have second

thoughts. His partner either never had them or would never admit to them.

The clown, Hagarty said, looked like a cross between Ronald McDonald and that old TV

clown, Bozo — or so he thought at first. It was the wild tufts of orange hair that brought such

comparisons to mind. But later consideration had caused him to think the clown really looked

like neither. The smile painted over the white pancake was red, not orange, and the eyes were

a weird shiny silver. Contact lenses, perhaps . . . but a part of him thought then and continued

to think that maybe that silver had been the real color of those eyes. He wore a baggy suit

with big orange-pompom buttons; on his hands were cartoon gloves.

'If you need help, Don,' the clown said, 'help yourself to a balloon.'

And it offered the bunch it held in one hand.

'They float,' the clown said. 'Down here we all float; pretty soon your friend will float too.'