

Nothing But Rejection Letters by Fritz Heinmillerstein

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“You are a hack. Kindly stop sending correspondence to our offices, Mr. Heinmillerstein... if that is, indeed, your real name.”

“Punctuation! It’s called punctuation, Mr. Heinmillerstein. You might want to give it a try.”

“Congratulations, your manuscript, The Dismemberment of Kati, has been granted the tentative honor of being the 32nd worst manuscript we have ever received -- just beating out Eddie Takosori’s masterfully diatribe: Speeding Ticket Blues. Once again, congratulations Mr. Heinmillerstein! Few writers ever manage to achieve this level of mediocrity.”

<Ding dong!>

“What time is it?”

<Ding dong! Ding dong!>

“Hold your horses.”

<Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong!>

“I’m coming, already! I’m coming!”

<Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong!>

“What do you want?”

“Mr. Heinmillerstein?”

“Yes. What is it?”

“Good morning Mr. Heinmillerstein. I’m Mr. Hornbleaker from Hornbleaker & Associates and this is Seargent Moralas.”

“Yes?”

“You sent me a manuscript to review: The Dismemberment of Kati. Very grim stuff, Mr. Heinmillerstein, very grim.”

“Um, thanks.”

“Can we come in? Thank you. You look like you could use a cup of coffee Mr. Heinmillerstein. How about you, Moralas?”

“No thanks, I’ll just poke around and take a few pictures, while you two talk, if you don’t mind?”

“Excellent idea. So, it’s just the two of us for coffee, then, Mr. Heinmillerstein, if you’d be so kind.”

“Sorry, I don’t drink coffee. Hot chocolate?”

“He doesn’t drink coffee, Moralas, only hot chocolate.”

“There you are, then.”

“So, that was a yes for hot chocolate?”

“No, thank you.”

“Mind if I help myself?”

“Sure, sure. I just wanted to drop by and talk to you about your manuscript, Mr. Heinmillerstein.”

“So, you liked it, right?”

“Oh, heavens no! It was dreadful, awful... horrifying...”

“That was the point! Death at it’s most realistic. Poor little Kati still alive while her limbs...”

Please! Mr. Heinmillerstein. My dreams are bad enough as it is.”

“Powerful stuff.”

“Disgusting.”

“Perverse?”

“Horribly so?”

“Pleased to hear it. So, um... you got a contract with you? A check?”

“You don’t really look like you need the money, Mr. Heinmillerstein. You look like you’re doing just fine... living off the spoils from your victims, no doubt.”

“What? Oh, right? That what you agents call us? Victims? Ha, good one. No, this is from my clients. Dentistry. Got to have a day job, you know.”

“Dentistry, hmm? That would explain your fascination with small tools.”

“Oh, you liked that detail. That really was a fun bit. Sort of author’s prerogative. But you know, after so many rejection letters, I thought why not, just write what you want to write Fritz ole boy, and have fun with it. I guess it showed.”

“Oh, something showed alright. It was very telling.”

“Nothing in the backroom, Mr. Hornbleaker.”

“Oh, I almost forgot about you...”

“Seargeant Moralas.”

“Seargeant Moralas, interesting name. Get the pictures you were looking for?”

“No.”

“But my writing table is right back there? That’s where I get all my inspiration. Oh, do you need me to pose at it, maybe pretend that I’m working? Something arty for the cover, right?”

“Cover?”

“Well, I just assumed I’d get the cover.”

“Cover?”

“OK. No need to get huffy. You’re the one taking the pictures. I only assumed...”

“What is he talking about, Mr. Hornbleaker?”

“I don’t know. What are you talking about, Mr. Heinmillerstein?”

“The cover... I only thought. Look, it’s not important. What did you have in mind?”

“The chair.”

“What?”

“Don’t play coy with me, Mr. Heinmillerstein.”

“Oh, a chair? Really? This is all very sudden. I mean, it’s just the one story. Besides, I didn’t think universities went through agents to fill their slots. You know, I’ve never even taught a creative writing class before, much less been a offered a department chair.”

“We’re not offering you a job. What do you take us for anyway, Mr. Heinmillerstein? Or should I call you Mr. Holt?”

Mr. Holt? Oh, that Mr. Holt! You don't think? But he's just a character of mine."

"You can't hide behind the insanity defense, Mr. Heinmillerstein, Holt, whoever you are. Won't work. Never does. Best to come right out and confess it all."

"Confess?"

"We have a signed statement prepared for you. All you have to do is sign at the bottom."

"This is an admission of guilt... of murder!"

"Yes."

"You think that I?"

"Yes."

"But it's only a story."

"That's what they all say."

"Do you have a warrant?"

"Justice never sleeps, Mr. Heinmillerstein."

"You don't have a warrant, do you? You're a pair of renegade lunatics."

"It will go easier on you if you just sign the confession, sir."

"I'm not signing a confession. So, you're not here to buy my story? No book deal? No advance?"

"For that claptrap?"

"That's it. Get out! Accusing me of murder is one thing, but insulting my art is quite the other. Now, get out! Or I call the police... the real police."

"OK. OK. We're going Mr. Heinmillerstein, but I think it's only fair to warn you that we'll be back. Many of the details in your story were highly specific. Have you ever heard of Angelina Dickinson?"

"Of course, I have! That tragic case was the inspiration for my story!"

"And all of those details, the instruments, the probing, the disposal of the body..."

"So, that's what you were looking for back there. Didn't find anything, did you?"

“No, Mr. Heinmillerstein, I didn’t. How long does it take you to... dispose of a body, anyhow?”

“You two are really something, you know that, don’t you?”

“It’s all in the details, Mr. Heinmillerstein. You can only blame yourself. Giving the game away like that.”

“Bragging? What was it Mr. Heinmillerstein? Wanted the world to know of your genius? But then, that’s where you messed up. There were details in your story that only the murderer would know.”

“Or anyone with Internet access.”

“You would be talking about acer123 and his Internet site, no doubt?”

“We’re going to see him next, Mr. Heinmillerstein.”

“Of course, if you were willing to turn State’s evidence against him, we could maybe work something out, Mr. Heinmillerstein.”

“There is nothing to work out!”

“Well, for your sake, let’s just hope Acer knows his lines as well as you seem to, Mr. Heinmillerstein.”

“That’s it! Get out! Now!”

“So, what do you think, Mr. Hornbleaker?”

“Oh, he’s our man, Sergeant Moralas, no doubt about it. Cleverer than I would have thought considering the structure of his writing, but he’s definitely our man.”

“So, what now?”

“We go talk to that guy he mentioned. Who was he?”

“Acer123.”

“Yep, maybe he’ll crack.”

“Or maybe we should just tell him that we already have Heinmillerstein in custody and he’s pointing the finger at him.”

“Good idea, Moralas. Good idea.”

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