

“The Big Sleep,” a short story by Meg Pokrass

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He was meticulously rude. Sometimes profoundly nice. When we weren’t arguing, we’d snuggle under our effective sweat-box comforter, frayed from so many happy and sad years of sex and sweat and dog hair. Outside, the whole world seemed to be tanning and wrinkling.

The police popped in one night to see if our fights were murderous. We’d been arguing loudly in the kitchen about the texture of a birthday cake I’d baked for the twentieth anniversary of our sweet dog’s death. It was hard as a rock, and nothing had ever been different. Arguing was part of the cake-eating experience.

When I heard the doorbell ring, I tippy-toed from the kitchen into the bedroom.

“Hello sir, mind if we enter?” a cop-voice said.

“Do you own any weapons, sir?” he asked my husband. It sounded like there were fifteen people, like horses and villagers or showgirls. Lots of feet. A dog toy squeaked. “Whoops!” one of them said.

“With a chef like my bride? Weaponry with this woman here?” then a scratchy minute of silence, my ear to the door. “Where did she go?”

One of the cops let out a giggle. The talkative one sniffed the air, said, “Um. Interesting scent.”

He was referring to the sweet smell of marijuana.

It was time for me to enter, so I idled into the living room wearing my “Munch Me” shortie night shirt, and my long-nosed barracuda slippers. Not much else. My legs were still shapely, and tan from bronzing gel.

“Hey! I recognize you! I think I knew your mom!” I said to the younger cop.

He was adorable, with dirty blond hair and an ape-like neck.

Clicking over to him with my vixen slippers, I looked him over the way Bacall checked out Bogie in *The Big Sleep*.

“You know how to whistle, don’t you?” I said, with my full, husky voice. And then I laughed.

He smiled sheepishly. “We didn’t mean to disturb your evening, ma’am, just doing our jobs.”

“Ha,” my husband said. “Who in their right minds would kill her? Would you kill her?”

After they left, my husband was in fine spirits. He put on Sinatra’s “Fly Me To The Moon.”

“You have such wonderful moves,” he said. Asked me to dance. (434 words)