

Jack and I often discuss the best way to die. The cause of death ranges from, for unnatural death, accident, execution, homicide, misadventure, suicide, terrorism, war and abortion. For death by natural causes I was told that old age is not a scientifically recognized cause of death.

So if you find that your wife is sleeping with another man and you kill her, it is classified as “unnatural death” in the coroner’s inquiry. And if your ninety-nine-old wife went to bed before midnight and you woke up in the morning and found that she has stopped breathing you can assume that she is murdered.

Jack and I are colleagues. We work at this private investigation agency. I shall not reveal the name because I am going to tell you this story. This story belongs to me. It is my own story and I am glad that I am still alive to tell this.

During lunch, Jack and I talk about many things. One time he even went so far as to tell me, “When I stand in front of the washing machine and I turn it on, it works, when I stand in front of the microwave oven, it works; but when I stand in front of my wife sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t, I don’t know why.” Jack was often exasperated with his wife.

I first came to know of this agency through the “Classified Ads”. I wanted to work there at the agency because I think the scope of the job would be very interesting. Imagine being a private eye. You are being paid to spy on other people. So I told my husband, who was reading the newspapers at the time, that I wanted this job badly.

I am a housewife and he didn’t really want me to work. I rang for an interview. Two men interviewed me. Jack wasn’t one of them. The

fact that there was a mannequin in the conference room where I was interviewed said nothing about the company except to give me a creepy feeling.

I am not too sure why I was eventually picked for the job but I know that my looks mattered a lot. I mean, not that I was pretty or what. It was that I look very ordinary. To be a private eye you must have a nondescript face, a kind of face where people look at you and would not want to take a look at you a second time.

When Mr. Singham came into the conference room to interview me the first thing he said to me was, “This you?” showing me my picture in the resume, which I submitted.

I knew that this isn’t the end of the selection. Mr. Singham had two other candidates waiting for him outside the conference room to be interviewed. The application is open until 9 April and today is only the 7th. They may decide to wait until after the 9th to make the final decision.

But Mr. Singham’s decision is based on Mr. Wong’s choice as I was told after I was given the job. At the interview I promised both Mr. Singham and Mr. Wong seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. To this end I also gave them my cellphone number so that was how I got the job.

“You work eight hours a day, forty-four hours a week.

We begin at 8:30 a.m. and we end at 5:00 p.m., lunch is from 12:30 p.m. and we start again at 1:30 p.m. You may be required to work at night because of the nature of the job. However, you will be given double your hourly rate when you report to work at night.”

I asked Mr. Wong if I could wear jeans during weekdays and he nodded his head approvingly, “You are supposed to wear jeans,” he said,

“As a PI you must look as casual but not too casual,” he added, “but you shouldn’t be wearing slippers, high-heeled sandals are alright.”

I was told before that if you can’t finish your tasks during office hours you are a lousy worker.

“How long am I supposed to take for each assignment?” I asked.

“It could be weeks, or even months, so long as you procure the evidence.”

“Do I need to buy my own camera?” I asked.

“No, you sit in the office and wait for the instruction.”

“What kind of instruction?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” and with that he ended the conversation. I gathered that if I wanted the job I had better keep quiet.

I am a night person. In the mornings I have to drop by the coffee house at the ground floor for a cup of coffee before I start the day.

Once I got the phone call from Miss. Suzie I knew that I was in. “See you on the 10th of April,” she told me over the phone. I was elated. After I put the phone down I immediately went into action.

I organized all my clothes the ones for rainy days I kept them all in a basket and as I threw open the wardrobe I decided on the black Gucci bag as it has many pockets and is more functional. I found my sunglasses

from the drawer and I put it on to see if the frame still fitted nicely. To be a private eye a pair of sunglasses is a necessary tool for the trade.

Whereas Mr. Wong has a pair of sheepish eyes, Mr. Lee has a strong physique. By that I mean that you see that he is tough and you conclude that he can withstand cold weather and long walks. Not surprisingly both of them chose their profession in the private investigation industry.

On the first day I started work I packed my cellphone, my purse, my house keys, my pouch, and a notebook with a pen, and I carried a denim jacket with my bag. My bag was the Gucci that I picked. I wore a dress and then after looking into the full-length mirror I took it off and changed into a pair of black pants and a black silk blouse. I was glad that I could still fit into them.

I was told to be there on 10 April. I arrived at 8:15 a.m. sharp and I made sure that the security guard at the ground floor lobby saw me. I tried to tell him that I am a new staff to one of the tenants there in the building but he ignored me completely. Then I gave the agency fifteen minutes to open. It was officially open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

I didn't want to be late on my first day at work. First impressions always count. So far I have given the employers the idea that I am a hard worker. And two days ago I bought two silk blouses and they cost one hundred and fifty dollars each. I am hoping that my salary can cover the capital outlay soon.

The first person I met on the fifth floor was Jack. I wasn't introduced to him yet so I just smiled at him. He merely said, "Hi" and he promptly went inside the conference room leaving me standing by the

reception. My first impression of Jack was that he was about thirty, and married with at least one kid. He looked a family man to me.

Another guy was sitting at the reception and I was glad that he did not seem to be interested in me. Later I found out that his name was Bobby. It seemed that the agency took no notice that I was reporting in today.

Three minutes later Jack came out and he told me to go into the conference room and sit down next to him. I merely sat there watching him type. When I became restless I stood up and asked him whether I could have a cup of coffee.

“You can use the guests’ cup today, but tomorrow please bring your own.”

I was annoyed with myself that I didn’t prepare a mug to bring in today. As Jack took one from a set of six he ordered, “Don’t break it,” before he promptly left me standing in the kitchen.

The coffee percolator is brewing the powder and I can smell the flavor of the Arabian coffee. “Is it the Arabian brew?” I asked.

No reply came so I stood there and waited until the coffee was ready. I poured the brown liquid into the cup and found that I needed milk as well but this time I dare not disturb Jack again.

I simply opened the fridge to look for fresh milk. There was none. So I brought the coffee back to my seat and started sipping the black coffee at regular intervals until it was time for lunch. It is bitter and for the first time in my life I didn’t like coffee.

I was completely ignored for the first half of the day and I didn't know when I could have my lunch. During the morning I found out that the wall clock was slow by ten minutes and that Jack was following the hour on his PC. He got up from his chair at twelve twenty by the time on the wall and then went to the back to see Miss Suzie.

I could hear them talking but I couldn't decipher the content of the in conversation. After a while Jack came back and asked me to follow him out for lunch. I left my cellphone on the table and forgot to bring it out with me. The cellphone was the latest iPhone 5S series and very expensive. "Never mind, next time I call you on the cellphone to go out for lunch so you won't forget." Jack was kind.

After four days I realized that my work was just typing the reports, which did not involve any field jobs. I was still not properly acquainted with the other colleague by the name of Bobby who came in to change the clothes on the mannequin every day after lunch. Work became boring so I asked to be given field jobs.

During this time, I learnt that a "subject" would be the person whom we were engaged to spy on, and the "suspect" would be the person who is related to the "subject" usually by way of having an affair. The number of people having an affair when I started counting the number of files that I had been given surprised me. Clients need not give their real names.

The firm has recently taken on the case of *Paul. Paul* our client suspects that his wife Monica is having an affair with another man and before he files for divorce he wants clear evidence of adultery. By that he means that he wants direct evidence and not circumstantial evidence. So

far Bobby has only been able to produce pictures of his wife Monica having coffee with a man at the **Cluny Hotel** in the mornings.

The man was usually reading the newspapers and you can't really see his face hidden behind the pages in the pictures. The firm has spent a substantial amount of money on getting Bobby to arrive at the hotel to have breakfast at the same time. Each time the subject Monica would pay for the bill and walk to the concierge to hand over the keys at the counter leaving the man still sitting at the table with the newspapers.

We tried to find out the room number but were unable to do so. We even took a picture of Monica holding the key card and tried to zoom in on the number on the magnetic access card but the image was blurred.

What we needed was the information on a meeting between the lovers for us to prepare ourselves at the scene to do some video-taping or at least a camera shot of the two going into a hotel room. So far the evidence we gathered was nothing more than a spouse's unfounded suspicion. We needed a continuous link to provide the chain of causation to prove that the two of them, Monica and the man reading the newspapers, actually went up into the service apartment for sex.

The fact that a man and a woman are having breakfast together does not imply that they slept together the night before. You could only infer that they might be having breakfast together again tomorrow.

As usual Jack has lunch with me today.

Out of the blue Jack asked me, "Do you know why Mr. Singham has this mannequin in the conference room?"

“No,” I said, waiting for him to tell me.

“Mr. Singham’s wife ran away with another man.”

“What?” I was very shocked.

“Yeah, that was why he has this mannequin in the room, to replace her.” Jack elaborated.

“Was Mr. Singham very heart broken?” I was curious. And actually I am beginning to find Mr. Singham a little funny.

“Obviously,” “How did he find out?” I wanted more gossip. But Jack stopped short and continued with his food.

I didn't know that Jack was in love with me until we were at night together doing one of the field trips. He told me that he had been feeling this way for me for a long time now. I was flabbergasted, as I did not expect this to come. He knew very well that I was married, what was he expecting to get out of me? I wanted to ask him. Jack was thirty-four whereas I was forty-three. All along I had thought Jack a safe male companion because of the age gap.

Now that this has happened, either I accept Jack’s advances or I resign. This job was getting interesting. But the trouble was that I was also infatuated with Jack, something I myself had not want to face. So I did not turn Jack away at once. I merely told him to put his feelings on hold. I wanted to see what happens to my own marriage. I have always been very frustrated with my husband’s sullen character. He does nothing but reads the newspapers whenever I am around.

My husband does not know that I have been going out at night. To

work on this “Paul” file, we have to station ourselves at the vicinity of the **Cluny Hotel** early enough before the subject and the suspect arrive, so that we can follow them from then on. This is called “Project Planning”. Once Jack or I spot either one of them we are supposed to go up to the concierge to try and check into one of the rooms on the same floor.

If we succeed we might be able to take a snapshot of the lovers coming out from the same room. This is still circumstantial but it is better than nothing. Bobby has seen the layout of the premises by pretending that he wanted to book a room there for three months. By now Bobby is closely acquainted with the concierge manager. The convenient thing was that Cluny Hotel is just two blocks away from our firm.

Bobby is good at these things. In his case, Jack told me, he was sleeping with his bosses’ secretary while he was still married, and after three years his wife divorced him. The funny thing was that his wife just left their matrimonial home one night and never returned. He couldn’t careless as he already had this other woman. Three years later his wife suddenly reappeared again with her lawyer’s letter and filed for divorce on the ground of a three-year separation.

This morning as I came in I found that the conference room door was shut. It is usually left ajar so that we can go in to look for either Mr. Singham or Mr. Wong if they are inside. I wasn’t sure if it meant that a client was inside so I went closer and then I heard a voice say,

“Are you sure?” this seems to be Mr. Singham’s voice.

Then the sound of a chair being pulled to one side, “Sit down, I heard Mr. Singham again.

Before I could walk away, Mr. Wong came out of the room and he ordered me to go to the kitchen to get a drink for “the guest”.

“How could this happen?” as I was walking away I heard Mr. Singham asking.

I wanted to stay behind to listen to the full story but I had to fetch the drink for Mr. Wong’s guest. I quickly went into action so that I could come back and follow up. I took out one cup from the set of six. The pattern has some cherries on it but I was in no mood to admire it. And then I poured coffee that has already been brewed for drinking. I added some coffee mate, which Jack taught me to get from inside the cabinet.

As I brought the beverage back to the conference room, I knocked on the door. “Come in,” was Mr. Singham. I was shocked to find someone sitting on a chaise lounge, just beside the mannequin. The mannequin didn’t look so eerie this time maybe because Bobby changed her sarong into a *cheongsam*. I placed the cup and saucer on the table in front of the man, careful not to spill the liquid. “Meet our client Mr. Paul”, Mr. Wong tried to introduce us.

Evidence of the night’s stay with the man and Monica as his guest has been procured. Bobby had befriended one of the concierge managers and with a significant sum the concierge manager gave him a copy of the hotel bill with the man’s name on it and the signature of Monica on the use of the access card. Nothing could be clearer than that. Nobody knows why the subject signed with her full name “Monica”.

When I saw the name on the hotel bill I was shocked beyond belief. It had the name “Simon Wong and guest”. It turned out that the man was my husband the suspect behind the newspapers. With the NRIC number S689932C I know beyond reasonable doubt that Simon Wong is not married to Monica because he is married to me.

In the conference room Miss. Suzie was busy taking down notes. I found my chair and quickly sat down to join in that part of the conversation that I had missed. I almost tipped over Jack’s mug, wondering what brought *Paul* here.

So my husband is having an affair with another woman. All this while when I was working with Jack he was sleeping with another woman. And all along I had thought that Simon did not mind my working after midnight. The conclusion was that Simon leaves the house after I had left for overtime work to have a rendezvous with Monica.

Luckily I told Jack to give me time to think over our relationship. Shall I continue to stay on in the marriage? Shall I forgive my husband? Or shall I simply file for divorce? If I were divorced would Jack divorce his wife too?

I know that I have been sneaking out of the house at midnight coming into the office to work. But I myself have not committed adultery so my conscious is clear. But I had no idea if my husband knew about Jack and I. Was I neglecting him? The clock on the wall was still slow and I was wondering if I had to sit here any longer to torture myself.

As Jack was typing away I could see that it was already 12:30 p.m. on his PC. Then I saw Jack picked up his cellphone and tapped on it. My cellphone rang. I excused myself and got up from my chair. Jack was turning off his PC. As I was leaving the conference room I heard **Paul** asking Miss. Suzie. “Where are they going?”

“Jack and Jill are going out for lunch.” Came Suzie’s reply. At lunch I know that Jack will complain to me about his wife again, and then I am wondering if he knows that my husband is the suspect in this entire **Paul** file. Should I tell him about it? I feel very sorry for myself now that I may be forced to make a decision. I have been procrastinating for a long time. If my husband is unfaithful I must make a clean break at once.

I turn to Jack and ask him a hypothetical question. “What happens if your spouse is sleeping with another person?” I asked. “Depends. The man with another woman or the woman with another man?” “Both,” I said. “If I were you I would file for divorce,” came Jack’s reply. “You mean you know that this man is my husband?” I asked Jack.

Jack walked a little faster so that I would need to catch up with him if I wanted to pursue the topic. My heart is still unsure as I am wondering what to make of the situation that has been presented to me so far. I am used to being married to Simon and I like the status of being married.

To divorce Simon all I need do is use the same materials gathered on the **Paul** file and produce it at the Family Court. But then I could never see myself as a third party in Jack’s marriage. I am still reluctant to have an affair with Jack. Even if I were divorced I should not be another man’s mistress. As I walked my thoughts were racing.

Once I caught up with Jack he held my hand. And as he grabbed me tight he led me into the **Cluny Hotel**. With efficacy he produced his passport at the concierge and gave the man at the counter the number of guests as “one”. I was hypnotized as I followed Jack blindly. Then I saw him take his ring out and put it into his breast pocket.

“I have never been married, I have been lying to you all along, and I tried to pretend that I was married because I did not want to fall in love again. Until I found you, Jill.”\

Our mission now is not whether our clients have committed adultery. It is whether I would sleep with a man before I married him.