

The Club Code

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“Fact: All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this paper are accurate.”¹

As Jon Golden drove across the Suspension Bridge on a sunny winter Monday, he wondered what prompted his old colleague, and fellow Literarian, to invite him to lunch at the Metropolitan Club that day. Bill McTeague and he had been on the faculty together at the University for eleven years, and Bill had been one of his sponsors to the Club; but since retiring, McTeague spent much of the year in Harbor Springs, Michigan, and Naples, Florida. Golden saw little of him, save at McTeague’s rare appearances at the Club, where he was treated as an *eminence grise* even in that grey and eminent company.

Unlike McTeague, Golden had always had to live on his professor’s salary; he didn’t travel in McTeague’s circle. So, although McTeague had been a mentor to Golden professionally, their social and age differences had always kept their relations –except through The Club – mainly professional. Golden had never lunched with McTeague since the older man’s retirement.

So, it was strange to get the invitation last month, and stranger still to have it come in ordinary mail along with two books and a note saying “Please read these and join me for lunch at the Metropolitan Club at noon on February 6th.”

¹ Dan Brown says this of his novel in a preamble to THE DA VINCI CODE.

The books were an odd duo: *THE DAVINCI CODE* and *SACRED PASSION: THE ART OF WILLIAM SCHICKEL*. Golden had of course heard of the first, and knew that it had been on the bestseller lists for many months. But he had never read it, and was surprised that Bill McTeague would have any interest in a book that was either outside the field of anthropology, or had been written in the last thirty years. Whenever anyone on the faculty had tried to talk to McTeague about anything close to a popular book, he'd always said, with a smile, "When I've read everything that's a classic, I might get around to that one."

The second book was even more of a poser – a picture book on the life and work of a Loveland artist known mostly for recent Roman Catholic liturgical art. Bill McTeague was such a traditionalist that for him "modern" was English Perpendicular, or a facsimile of it. As for Golden, he was familiar with Christian art and iconography from his work. He knew Schickel's period fairly well. Schickel had flourished in the 60's and 70's, when the old church's leap into modernity after the Second Vatican Council had been earnest, abrupt, and, so it seemed to Golden, awkward. The goals of much of the Catholic church design of the period had been clear enough – change the churches from priest focused arenas with the congregants relegated to audience or vessels, into participatory halls. Unfortunately, most of the work of the period, had, it seemed to Golden, proven what John Ruskin had said a century and a half earlier – "Our banks look like churches, and our churches look like banks."

Golden nevertheless thought Schickel had done some fine work even in the style of the time. His gutting and rebuilding of the Trappist monastery's chapel in Gethsemani, Kentucky had pleased Thomas Merton, a writer Golden knew well enough

to guess that even a vow of obedience wouldn't have led him to false praise on matters of style. Still, the Schickel book was so out of the way -- Golden had on a hunch checked the Public Library catalogue and found it unavailable despite the subject's local connection -- that Golden wondered what had led McTeague to send it.

At lunch, Golden found McTeague lean and alert as always, tan from his time in Florida, but looking tired. When Golden asked, McTeague attributed that look to his recent red-eye flight, and assured Golden that he was in perfect health, with a recent physical to prove it. Most of lunch was spent catching up on faculty colleagues, local happenings, and Golden's recent work.

"You'll remember, Jon, that it was me who steered you to neurosymboly to begin with."

"I do, with gratitude. Who besides you knew to tell a psychology grad student fifteen years ago to ignore the theorists and historians, and concentrate on what happens in the brain when brain meets world? With the progress in physical measurements, I practically got to invent my own field."

"You're giving me too much credit. And besides, I had the selfish motive of getting you into The Club. Your papers have been fascinating -- although they often violate the Bob Hilton rule on not writing about your work."

"Well, there's also a Hilton rule about not doing book reports. So can I ask then, what's with the reading assignments? Are you leading me into book-report temptation?"

"I truly hope I'm not leading you into anything, but you never know. I know that, like me, you don't often read bestsellers, and I thought you might find it interesting to read a popular book, with a protagonist so much like you."

“Me like Robert Langdon? Hardly. Langdon was a word man, a historian, a comparative religion teacher. I’m a brain man. I don’t care what the thing is in itself; I just want to know what it does to the brain, and how many brains it will do it to. Langdon went to history to find that a chevron-shaped mark – his so-called ‘blade’ -- is the ur-symbol for man, and a broad v-shaped mark – his so-called ‘chalice’ – is the ur-symbol for woman. I don’t want to know the history. I want to know what these stimuli do to people who see them without historical baggage. Of course, insofar as Langdon was unmarried, and a bit of a jock, I’m guilty as charged.”

“And those last two qualities made you and him campus heartthrobs, as you well know.”

“Like Dr. Langdon, I’m as pure as snow, on the field of academe.”

“Let’s hope, Jon. But I didn’t have you read the book to discuss your love life – although I’m sure it’s fascinating. You realize that THE DA VINCI CODE has sold thirty-six million copies? Not bad for a book by a prep school English teacher.”

“Not bad, and why not? The plot’s clever enough, and the frame that Dan Brown gives to a potboiler – the search for the Holy Grail – is pretty timeless. At least 800 years old, as you probably know better than I, Bill.”

“Except that Brown’s grail isn’t a cup – it’s the proof that Christ’s blood line is alive today, and that the early history of Christianity is a history of fraud and concealment. As conspiracy theories go, this is an all time great. It’s not an original one though. The idea that the Magdalene was the wife of Christ isn’t Brown’s – as his current plagiarism trial shows. But to wrap that in the conventions of the mystery novel, with brain-teasers and feints, was clever – as it was to tease his readers with the

possibility of physical proof of the suppressed truth, with one secret society pledged to destroy the proof, and another to preserve it. To steal a word from another figure before your time, he picked what Hitchcock would have called the ultimate ‘McGuffin’ -- the physical thing that everyone in a mystery is after, that starts the plot going, and moves it along.”

“Bill, I’m not sure that your clerical friends would approve of your calling the Grail a ‘McGuffin’.”

“Then I won’t call it a ‘Mary McGuffin,’ either. Besides, we’re just talking about why a particular book took off. In any event, I’m old enough and unwise enough to risk disapproval – among other things. By the way, are you familiar with the group called the Committee against National Turpitude?”

“Mainly just aware that they have an unfortunate acronym to work with.”

“Actually, Jon, I think it works on a couple of levels. You know that one of their top leaders – Gary Farmer -- is based right here in Northern Kentucky. They, and groups like them, were so disturbed by THE DA VINCI CODE that they made the ancient mistake - - in polemics -- of giving it free publicity. They worked so hard to contradict Brown’s fairly tepid claims of historical truth, that they must have sold five million copies on their own. If a fatwa had been an option, I’m sure they would have used that.”

“Funny that you use that word. I read that Salman Rushdie called THE DA VINCI CODE ‘a book so bad it makes bad books look good.’”

“Well, then Rushdie must have read enough of it to draw that conclusion, hadn’t he? As to Brown’s claims of basing his books on historical facts, the Web is so efficient at exposing obvious mistakes, that in five minutes anyone with Internet access will know

that his books are full of howlers. One I found for myself is the claim that the Christian communion ritual was taken from the Aztec concept of ‘god-eating.’ Unless the pre-Columbian Christians were getting together with the Aztecs in very mysterious ways, that was a pretty good trick.”

“No doubt they were common victims of alien abduction.”

“No doubt. I can always trust you, Jon, to point out the truth that’s staring me in the face. I have eyes, yet fail to see. My point is that the book is innocuous.”

“Well, you’ve convinced me. And what about the other book – THE ART OF WILLIAM SCHICKEL? Is that the book of the two that’s filled with unplumbed secrets?”

“Why do you say that?”

“Well, I’ve been trying to figure out why you gave them to me in tandem.”

“And ...?”

“Upon my usual deep reflection, I offer the following. Item one: Schickel and his family settled in Loveland, Ohio because a Catholic organization called ‘the Grail’ had a community there. The book says that the mission of the Grail was ...”

“Hold on Jon, I brought another copy, you can quote it verbatim.” As McTeague said this, he pulled out the book with what Golden thought was, for McTeague, an unusual flourish. Golden took the book, found the page, and read:

“‘The specific mission of the Grail – laid down by its founder, Father van Ginnekan – was to ‘counterbalance in the world all masculine hardness, all the angles of masculine character, all the results of alcoholism and prostitution and capitalism, which are masculine, and to Christianize that with a womanly charity.’

In other words, its mission was to foster everything that THE DA VINCI CODE said there was a 2000 year conspiracy to suppress.

Item two: Schickel designed the interior of the Grailville oratory in Loveland.

Item three: He redesigned the chapel of the Trappist monastery in Gethsemani, Kentucky.”

“And why did that strike you, Jon?”

“Wasn’t the garden of Gethsemani close to where the Grail was used, in the Last Supper?”

“Actually, Jon, in the real Grail legend the Grail was the cup Joseph of Aramathea used to catch some of Christ’s blood at the crucifixion. The cup used at the Last Supper is traditionally called the Holy Chalice.”

“Then that Indiana Jones movie ...”

“Was written by a screenwriter who didn’t do his homework. Just imagine that ... Anything else strike you?”

“No – those were the main things.”

“You’re slipping, Jon. Take look at pages 90 and 91.”

Golden took up the book. The two pages were a spread of the mural “Love Letter to the Queen.”

“But Bill, the ‘Queen’ in the mural is the Queen City, not something like Brown’s mother goddess.”

“I know, Jon, but maybe Mr. Schickel was capable of double meanings, too. But, unfortunately, I’ve got an appointment up at the University. How about lunch next week, same time, same place? And, you can keep this copy of the Schickel book ‘til then.”

With that, McTeague proffered the book with what Golden again thought a big, stagy gesture.

Three days later, Golden read on the front page of *The Enquirer* that Bill McTeague had been killed. Shot dead as he drove up Vine Street at midday the day before. The paper was full of it – and full of speculation on whether it was a hate crime, or whether the victim had been hit by one of the stray bullets that had taken more than one life in Cincinnati's streets.

The feeling of having been punched in the gut stayed with Golden for the rest of the day. Being asked by the Club Trustees to contribute some thoughts to McTeague's memorial, and concentrating on that task, helped deal with the shock. Then, two days after Golden first read the news of McTeague's death, the mail brought an envelope with no return address. Inside was a note signed by Bill McTeague. In entirety, it read: "In times of trouble, cross the river to Germania, looking east. Most sincerely, (signed) Bill." It was dated the day of their last lunch together. Five days to get a letter across town was pretty rare, which prompted Golden to look at the postmark. Cincinnati. Thursday – the day before yesterday. Two days after McTeague was shot.

Golden called Jim Berning, an acquaintance on the University Police, and shared the letter. Yes, Golden believed it was in fact signed by Bill McTeague. No, he had no idea what it meant. No, Bill McTeague wasn't a person given to cryptic correspondence. In fact, McTeague had rarely used "snail mail" with Golden at all in the past few years. This letter, and the earlier lunch invitation, were all the regular mail that Golden recalled getting from McTeague in about five years. Berning said he'd pass this information on to

his contacts on the Cincinnati police, and that Golden would no doubt hear from them. In the meantime, he should keep the letter safe, and avoid further handling of it.

The following Friday, Golden got a call from a woman who identified herself as Detective Stella Johannigman. She wanted to stop by Golden's condo the next Monday with a forensics technician to pick up the letter. She'd want to interview him then.

Stella Johannigman was not what Golden expected. Her voice on the phone had been pleasant enough, but the embodiment of it that he'd envisioned – based on no experience of detectives, male or female, was of a harried, overworked and underpaid civil servant subsisting on coffee and nicotine. Detective Johannigman exuded tranquility. When she came in, it was like the lights went up, and the background noise went down. Her more red than blond hair was striking, and in a becoming short cut. Her pale skin and pale blue eyes showed that the hair color wasn't likely from a bottle. She was about five-eight and very slim, but lithe rather than gawky. She couldn't have been more than 34 or 35.

Golden caught himself taking this inventory. "Good God, Jon, you've gone all Dashiell Hammet – 'one look and Marlowe could see that all her parts worked together.' True enough, but this isn't fiction. She's here about the death of your friend."

Much of the interview was predictable. How did Golden know McTeague, had McTeague had any enemies, financial troubles, personal entanglements, when did you last see him? Surprisingly to Golden, the Detective was unaware of The Literary Club.

"You guys obviously don't give us a lot of business," was her explanation.

“Detective, if you were to attend a meeting, which unfortunately you can’t, you’d see why. Membership in The Club is more linked to male pattern baldness than criminality -- for a number of reasons.”

The interview turned to Golden and McTeague’s last lunch together. In the retelling, it had to Golden even more of a through-the-looking-glass quality than it did at the time. THE DA VINCI CODE. The Grail. CANT. Schickel.

Johannigman, as it turned out, had herself been a critical reader of Dan Brown’s book. “It’s hard for me to read detective stories. Not exactly an escape from the job. But when one sells that big, and is attacked as heresy, I’ve got to read it. Dan Brown got his facts wrong a lot. You know he had Christians borrowing from the Aztecs about fifteen hundred years too soon?”

“McTeague and I talked about that very point.”

“Well, after that, I read it as comedy. About the letter -- let’s say for today it’s genuine. Do you have any idea what it means?”

“No.”

“Fair enough. The lab will know more about it in a couple of days. Until then, think about every possible meaning of every word. I’ll get back to you. And oh, by the way, let me borrow that Schickel book to take a look at – the one he gave you at lunch. They don’t have it at the public library.”

Golden did as asked. He thought about every word in the message “In times of trouble, cross the river to Germania, looking east.” He thought about “times of trouble”. Irish history? No obvious connection to McTeague. The past few days were times of trouble. Bill was dead. Maybe he had felt threatened. “Germania” was the most unusual

word, so should be most helpful. An Internet search quickly showed that “Germania” was a book by Tacitus, and a painting by a Philipp Veit, in the German National Museum, in Nuremberg. In THE DA VINCI CODE, the first clue had been in a painting.

Golden stared at the image of the painting he had pulled up on his computer screen. “Germania, 1848.” The feminine personification of Germany, shown at dawn. Dawn for the dawn of a new nation. Broken leg iron at her feet. She holds a lance in her left hand. A sword in her right. Also in her right hand a sprig of what looked to Golden like marijuana, but was said to be an olive branch. Oak leaves, for loyalty, circle her brow. She should be looking east. But the dawn is behind her, and she’s looking very slightly to her right. She’s looking west, or slightly southwest.

Another Internet hit, the Germania Society of Cincinnati, seemed more promising. But Golden didn’t see how he, the recipient of the letter, would be crossing any rivers other than the Mill Creek to get to the Society’s Forest Park home. Or what looking east from Forest Park meant. Still, he’d tell Johannigman about it.

She called four days later. She had the lab results, would he come down to District One? Golden suggested that meeting at a public place downtown would be more to his liking, if it was the same to her. She laughed, “Every citizen should visit District One, but alright, I have to eat somewhere. Meet me at Kaldi’s, if you know it.”

Over lunch Johannigman reported that as always, the graphologists couldn’t be certain about the handwriting, but the paper of the letter carried several McTeague fingerprints. As did the Schickel book, which supported Golden’s account of the lunch.

“I didn’t know my account was in question.”

“Let’s just say there’s only one living witness. If I really suspected you of something I wouldn’t tell you any of this. But, just in case you’re trying some sort of professorial humor, I’ll also tell you there were no prints but yours on the envelope your letter came in. Which means one possibility is that you got the letter from McTeague before he died, and resent it for reasons known only to you. By the way, the stamp was a stick-on, or I’d be asking you for a DNA sample.”

“Are you suggesting I had something to do with McTeague’s death?”

“There’s no evidence of that. Your background, which we’ve looked at pretty closely, would be more consistent with a man trying to make some mind game out of a traumatic event. Just in case, I want to remind you there’s a thing called obstruction of justice.”

To keep from giving a response he would regret, Golden put his chin in his hands and closed his eyes for a few seconds. When he opened them, they were focused on the storefront across the street from Kaldi’s. “That’s funny.”

“What?”

“We’ve been eating lunch across the street from Mary Magdalene House.”

“So?”

“I don’t know, maybe I have DA VINCI CODE fever.”

“I think you do. Mary Magdalene House offers showers for the homeless in Over-the-Rhine.”

Golden thought about that odd neighborhood name. “Over-the-Rhine! Crossing the Canal was crossing the Rhine. The Rhine is a German border river. Maybe that’s the river in McTeague’s note.”

“Then what’s ‘Germania looking east’?”

“I don’t know, but I have my laptop, with a wireless card. Let me try a narrower Internet search.”

Ten minutes later, Golden and Johannigman were staring upward and westward at Germania. She stood, a larger than life stone figure, in a second story niche in a glorious old building at the corner of Twelfth and Walnut streets. She was looking east. Directly at a Club called “Alchemize.” A few minutes’ pounding on Alchemize’s door raised one of the owners, who had been straightening the place up for the night’s action.

Johannigman’s badge got full cooperation. The owner said he’d been asked by a man to hold an envelope for some people who were on a scavenger hunt, and who might figure out that they had been sent his way. The man said the scavenger hunters would pay \$300 for the letter. He was described as mid-thirties, dirty blond, short, athletic looking. Clearly not Bill McTeague. The owner handed over the envelope, which was addressed to “J.G.”

Golden turned to Johannigman: “Can you hold off on the CSI stuff, Detective, until I have a chance to read this?” With permission, Golden opened the envelope. A single page read: “Tv Yawn. Yours, Bill. P.S. Please give the man three hundred dollars.”

To Johannigman’s questions, Golden could only say that “Tv Yawn” meant nothing to him. “For Bill McTeague, all of TV would have been a yawn. McTeague was one of those TV snobs who prided himself on having a miniscule black and white TV. He kept it in his basement – which was old and dank – to be watched only for news of rare, earthshaking events.”

“Well, the Internet eventually got us here, so try your laptop.”

A web search of “Tv Yawn” gave lots of complaints of boring television, and one very direct hit – a painting of that title by an English artist named Kate Forrest. It was an abstract work with primary colors in thick impasto spilling out of a black rectangle.

Forrest’s website said she was a commercial photographer who also taught photography in the English mental health system. The only other reference to “TV” or “yawns” in the site was in her resume:

In recording and making note of my environment, I am a traveller, a passeur through culture, whether it be a fascination with 'the television', a conveyor of information and images, the routes through which I journey, or the physical texture with which I am daily confronted.’

Neither the painting nor the quote meant anything to Golden.

Johannigman reminded him that in the first message, the painting was a false trail.

“And,” she pointed out, “There was a local connection – maybe that’s going through all this.”

Golden searched “Tv Yawn Cincinnati,” and got dozens of hits for boring television shows with a Cincinnati connection. Nothing sensible to him. He tried quotes around “Tv Yawn”. That found a few blogs that didn’t even appear to have the search terms. Johannigman took the letter, asked Golden to keep working on what the message meant, and to get back to her with any ideas.

But it was Johannigman who got back to Golden two days later. “It’s phonetic. A German girl from the West side named Johannigman – excuse me, Yo-hahn-ig-mahn – should have figured that out. There are a million Internet hits for “Turnverein Jahn – J – A – H – N.”

“So what does it mean?”

“It means ‘Jahn Gymnastics society’ – and every town in Germany seems to have one. A Friedrich Jahn invented the sport. He was also a big German nationalist – following the ‘Germania’ theme. But the point is, I know where to look next. I’ll see you in fifteen minutes.”

After picking Golden up at the Polk building, Johannigman turned north onto Broadway. “We’re headed to Inwood Park, on Vine. There’s a monument there to T v Jahn – ‘Turnvater Jahn’. We didn’t make anything of it at first, but if you look at this copy of the note, you’ll see the ‘T’ is capital and the ‘v’ is lower case. It’s a good thing they had German at Mother of Mercy High. The upper and lower case letters made me think of a combined German word. From that, I spelled “yawn” the German way, and did a search for “J-a-h-n” with “Cincinnati,” since the first clue was local. That led to Inwood Park, and the monument. By the way, Inwood Park isn’t very far uptown from the spot on Vine where McTeague was shot. You’ll read most of this in the paper tomorrow, so I can tell you now that he was shot with a small calibre rifle -- .223 Remington. It’s very likely he was shot intentionally.”

“How do you know that?”

“Accidental shootings of bystanders uptown are always done with handguns – usually cheap 9 millimeters, occasionally a .45, like that policewoman was shot with a few weeks back. Drug dealers and street scum don’t carry rifles. Rifles aren’t concealable, and they’re not handy in tight spaces. On the other hand, if you were trying to shoot someone in a moving car, it would take a miracle to hit him with a pistol unless it was at very close range. And no witnesses saw a shooter nearby when McTeague was

shot. So it's likely that McTeague was shot from a building by someone who was trying to hit him. We're here."

They parked at the end of Wellington Place, off of Auburn. They stepped out of the car, and walked through the gap in a low stone wall, down a hill toward Vine Street. On their left was the monument – a huge granite boulder inset with a worn portrait medallion of Jahn hovering over a truncated tree with strange, enormous leaves. Golden recognized in the tree one of the many common 19th century symbols for death. On the reverse side of the stone was a rectangular recess where a plaque, now missing, had once been fixed. Below that was a message unmistakably for him. In six-inch spray-painted letters in gangster-graffitti style, was: "J.G.: The Seventh Seal. Where 'they' like people. In the black of night."

"And what does that mean to you, Professor?"

"The Seventh Seal' means a couple of things. At root, it's something mentioned in the Apocalypse in the Christian bible. The author has a vision of a heavenly scroll sealed with seven seals. When the first six seals are broken, there are momentous events – the four horsemen, earthquake, judgment. When the seventh seal is broken, there's a spell of silence. Ingmar Bergman took "The Seventh Seal" as the title of one of his movies. McTeague was an old-movie buff and a Bergman fan. He certainly knew the movie."

"Who's Bergman?"

"Swedish director – big in the '50's and '60's. McTeague probably saw most of his movies first-run. He used to talk about how much he enjoyed sitting in the dark watching black and white movies, in tiny theatres they used to call 'art houses'. There

was a movie in the early '90's with two slackers who played twister with the Grim Reaper. That was a reference to 'The Seventh Seal'. It had a knight playing chess with death."

"And what about 'Where they like people' and 'In the black of night'?"

"Nothing comes to mind. 'In the black of night' could refer to a dark movie house. 'Where they love people' suggests this 'Seventh Seal' is a place, but this doesn't fit together for me – at least not yet. To this point, the Internet has been the decoder, so let's both work on it."

Golden burned the midnight Internet oil over the next three days. A web posting of a sermon at Christ Church, just down the street from Golden's condo, had a reference to both the Apocalypse and Bergman's movie. Golden tracked down the sermon's author, a Dean Diamond, but there was no link to McTeague or to any additional message. Johannigman found and interviewed a local guitarist who had played in a heavy metal band called "The Seventh Seal", with the same result.

On the next Friday, an item in the local news section of *The Enquirer* caught Golden's eye. The Grailville oratory in Loveland had been burglarized. Only a few items, less than \$500 in value, had been taken, but the place had been ransacked. Golden thought it odd that a place he had recently heard of for the first time, from a man who had been murdered, should be a crime target. He pulled out the Schickel book that McTeague had mailed him, checked the pictures of the Grailville oratory, and noticed again the Trappist monastery in Kentucky, which Schickel had had stripped to the bare walls during renovation.

He went to his computer to find out where “Gethsemani, Kentucky” was. “Trappist, Kentucky”, the actual site of the abbey, turned out to be about 160 miles from Cincinnati, almost due south of Louisville, near Bardstown. The monks maintained a large and informative website. The abbey phone number was at the bottom of page one. Golden thought it might be more effective if Johannigman made the call. Her called her and suggested it. She called him back barely an hour later.

“You were right. The local sheriff told me there had been vandalism in the chapel and garden – ten days ago. He didn’t call it a break-in, since the place always has lots of strangers there on retreat. He interviewed most of the recent guests, hasn’t turned anything up. There’s not much damage, and nothing of value taken, so this will probably just get dropped. He said the monks were very upset – nothing like that had happened in the hundred and fifty years they’d been there – not even during the Civil War.”

“Detective -- the chapel and garden were the places Schickel redesigned.”

“And what do you make of that, Professor Golden?”

“Well, it could be that there was some significance to the Schickel book. Or, since we’re obviously being led elsewhere by McTeague and someone working with – or I guess I should say ‘for’ him – it seems more likely to me that the whole Schickel thing was a red herring.”

“This does mean you have to be careful. Anyone who’s willing to burglarize a monastery is eager to get something. And they’re following some sketchy leads. They could well be following you, or both of us, on our scavenger hunt.”

“Our scavenger hunt seems to have hit a wall. I haven’t come up with anything that makes any sense for ‘Seventh Seal’ and ‘where they like people,’ ‘in the black of

night'. Searching on the Internet with the last two terms probably has me on some government watch list by now."

Johannigman allowed that she hadn't had any better luck with the last message: "Sometimes it works best to just let a clue sit for a while. Come back to it in a few days and see if it feels the same."

Golden followed that advice. Since he hadn't been teaching that quarter, he concentrated on his academic writing and clinical reports. A Saturday morning found him at a favourite place, Findlay Market, where he loved to pick up a week's worth of different cheeses, and some olives and fruit to go with them.

Driving back downtown to his condo, as always he looked for the faded paint of old business signs and ads on the bricks of Over-the-Rhine's hundred-and-fifty-year-old buildings. As always, the signs made him think of an odd word: "Palimpsests – they're like parchments scraped clean for reuse. Except that a lot of these parchments aren't getting reused – yet."

As he drove down East McMicken, he slowed to read a faded sign painted on a wall on the left:

"Seventh Seal Café. Carry Out Beer Wine. 'We' like people." He slammed on the brakes and pulled over to park.

Golden saw that the Seventh Seal Café was obviously long closed. The paint on its big hanging sign was gone, leaving bare galvanized sheet metal, and the holes where neon tubes had no doubt been fixed. He knocked on the padlocked door. As he expected, there was no answer. He was attracting stares from the few passers-by on this

chilly Saturday. Golden decided that the Seventh Seal would best be opened with Johannigman present.

To Golden's surprise, Johannigman asked that he meet her at the District One station at 3:00 A.M. the following Wednesday. She pointed out the clue referred to the "black of night". Also that 3:00 was a good hour for private work. Too late for most partiers. Too early for most workers. And, the next moonless night was Wednesday. To Golden's worry that there would be too much light from street lights, Johannigman simply said, "Don't worry about it."

As Golden and Johannigman drove from District One to 56 East McMicken, Johannigman reported the results of her digging on the café. The current owner of the building never had a business there. The ground floor had been converted to apartments by the time he bought the building in the mid-eighties. The apartments had long been vacant. And the last phone directory that showed a "Seventh Seal Café" was from 1973.

They parked across the street from the old café and got out into a bitter cold night. As Golden had expected, the sign on the wall was well lit by a street light. The two of them stared at the words for a few minutes. "Excuse me for a second, Professor." Johannigman crossed the street, and stood nearly under the street light opposite the café. She pulled out what seemed to Golden an enormous pistol, pointed it skyward. Golden heard two soft puffs. On the second, the light went out.

Johannigman lit a flashlight and crossed the street. "Don't report me for vandalism, Professor. I've already reported the broken light to CG&E. It'll be fixed in a few days. If I'd tried to get them to turn it off, it would have taken weeks. They're set up

to fix broken things, not help police investigators. So the pellet gun was the way to go. Does our sign look any different with the lights out?"

She saw for herself that it didn't. "Let's see if I brought the right medicine." With that she pulled out a second flashlight and turned it on. She turned off the first. There was no illumination, but letters that hadn't been there before glowed blue on the building's side. In the black light of Johannigman's flashlight, they read:

"WORDS FOR FAST PHONY" And one line lower,

"JG: HIS LIBRARY"

"Well, Professor, another personal message for you. What does this one mean?"

"Before that, Detective, how did you know about the black light?"

"Well, we read the book, remember? And the one clue that was in the black of night was in the Louvre, shut down and dark for the night. Black light showed the clue. And if this clue follows true to that one, the first part is a jumbled word or words. The second part is an instruction, obviously to you. Maybe if we figure out the first part, we'll know what to look for in your library."

Golden and Johannigman spent what little was left of the night at District One trying to decipher the anagram in the first part of the message. The lack of sleep slowed their thinking. The phrase "darn spoof" for some reason kept recurring in Golden's attempts, but it left too many unusable letters. At eight in the morning they gave in to exhaustion. Golden agreed to call Johannigman if he came up with a solution that made sense. He came up with phrases like "Draw off thy sponsor" and "Prof worthy of sand." Bill McTeague had been his sponsor, and a worthy prof, but Golden saw no meaning there.

Golden's attention to the latest clue was broken by the news in Saturday's *Enquirer* that Gary Farmer, number two man in CANT, had been found dead in his car in Mount Storm Park. He had apparently killed himself with a shot to the temple. Golden thought back to his last lunch with Bill McTeague and McTeague's random question about CANT. Golden's cell phone rang. It was Johannigman:

"You've read the paper?" Golden said he had.

"Well, I'm on the case. Thought you might be interested to know that there was a copy of the Schickel book in the briefcase in Farmer's car. The FBI has talked to his wife. She said Farmer had been nervous and depressed for several weeks. His credit card records showed a couple of interesting purchases from about that time. The Schickel book, and a shredder."

"I understand the Schickel book being an odd purchase, but lots of people have shredders."

"Lots of people have shredders in their offices – which is where Farmer got all his bills – even bills for home. Fear of identity theft wouldn't lead someone like that to get a home shredder. There's no reason to think that Farmer's death wasn't a suicide – it seems like he got some bad news about the time McTeague sent you his lunch invitation. Some news that could have led Farmer to want to get rid of papers bulky enough to make a new home shredder worthwhile. So, I've got two cases now that make me want to know what the last clue means. Have you gotten anywhere?"

"Nowhere that makes any sense. I'll keep working on it."

The following day was a grey Sunday, but Golden left the Polk building for a walk around Lytle Park, as he often did to clear his mind. As he approached the Lincoln

statue, he glanced right, towards The Literary Club, and thought back to Bill McTeague's graciousness in sponsoring him eight years ago. And he thought of what a funny and stiffnecked little institution it was, unreconstructed and proud of it. He thought of its roots. A shock of realization nearly knocked him down. He rushed to a bench, and pulled the small notebook that he always carried from his pocket, and a pen, and wrote the last clue "Words for fast phony. J.G.: his library." He started to pick the letters from the first part: "A-Y-N-S-W-O-R-T-H S-P-O-F-F-O-R-D. Aynsworth Spofford -- one of the founding fathers of The Club -- J.G. : his library."

Golden nearly ran back to his condo. He rummaged through his cluttered office, and finally found the CD with the pictorial tour of The Club. The program seemed dead slow as he clicked through to the library. The first image that greeted him there was the Club seal opposite the door. In the light of the past weeks, Golden's eyes saw three ascendant blade flames, on a field dominated by one large chevron blade. He rotated the view to the right, and on the window from Harvard's Appleton chapel saw in the three open books holding "Veritas", three of the ancient chalice symbol. He wondered what "truth" lay behind this seal, and decided in that moment that it was a truth Johannigman didn't need to know.