

SO LET IT BE WITH CAESAR

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My name is Kathryn, or so I have called myself. The only person I really loved used the familiar form Kitty. Whenever other people tried to employ that variation, I stopped them. My last name, if I have one, doesn't matter. I am going to give an account of the lives of two men, one of whom might be considered evil, and the other considered good. Most of my account is a matter of public record, but I was involved in their lives, and I can add some details which I alone know. Most of my account will be in the role of a reporter, where I will refer even to myself in the 3rd person. At the end, I will speak of myself as "I".

From the mid 1930s until the end of the 80s, a pair of half brothers lived in the small, middle Massachusetts city of Cartersfield. They had the same mother and different fathers. Bill Helmer was born in 1934 and was the older by 2 years. His father died of kidney failure when Bill was 7 months old. Kidney transplants were of course unavailable in the late 30's. For financial reasons, Bill's mother immediately married again; and Larry Tranford was born a decent 9 months later. From then on, the family had a comfortable, middle class life. The mother died unexpectedly in 1958 from unknowingly eating food at a Chinese restaurant which had been cooked in peanut oil. She was highly allergic to peanuts, a defect transmitted to her sons. When eating out, they always carefully checked that no peanuts were in the food. That they did at the Chinese restaurant, but they did not think to ask about the method of preparation of the mother's menu selection. She became unable to breathe on the way home, and died before anyone was fully aware of what was occurring.

At the time of her death, the paths of the two brothers had already diverged. Bill got a Business Administration degree from the University of Pennsylvania, paying most of his own way. He returned to Cartersfield and took a job at a local hardware store. He never married and hence was able to invest a significant part of his monthly salary in income generating stocks. When the owner of the store retired in 1970, Bill bought the business. He was then 37. With the store and his continued investments, he gradually became one of the more well-to-do residents of the city.

Larry, by contrast, dropped out of high school, and skipped

from one temporary job to another, drinking and jitterbugging half the night with questionable companions. Finally getting bored, he went off to New York City. During about five years there, he fell in with a few individuals of steady, but never clear, employment. They suggested that Larry could profitably open a high interest loan and check cashing office back in Cartersfield, capitalized by an entrepreneurial investment company with which they were acquainted. The company could even supply help in collecting delinquent loans, all for ten percent of the profits. And, if Larry ever wanted to branch out into, say, narcotics, that could be arranged. Larry took up the loan office idea, and his new friends made the necessary contacts with the investment company. It was all very informal; no contracts or other documents were involved.

Larry then went home to Cartersfield with a valise of cash. By that time, it was 1964, and he was 28 years old. He rented an apartment above the Woolworth 5 and 10 cent store and a small store front office on the eastern fringe of the business district. The office conveniently bordered on a low income residential area. His loan business started slowly, picked up volume, and had 4 employees three years later. Larry made frequent trips to New York with cash and financial reports, and to arrange collection procedures when needed. He did not ask what those procedures were. He never visited the investment company office; indeed he never learned its location. He met with company representatives in various hotel rooms.

Larry lived alone for a couple of years and then suddenly became what might for him be called gregarious. He first acquired a cat as a companion. Or perhaps the cat acquired him. It was a female stray that started sleeping in the alley behind the store. Larry took her in. She was probably less than a year old and must once have been a pet, for she was spayed. Some weeks after the cat appeared, people began to notice a woman who also shared Larry's apartment. She was a somewhat shadowy figure, sometimes there and sometimes not. When townspeople had the courage to ask Larry about her, he said only that her name was Kathryn and she and he were not married, but living together. That latter bit of information circulated, rapidly. Living together unmarried was outside the moral range of middle Massachusetts residents in those days. The titillation was either mitigated somewhat, or enhanced considerably, depending upon the interpretation, by the additional knowledge that Larry regularly visited the house of the city's only widely recognized public prostitute. Gradually,, however, Kathryn became a familiar and accepted figure, especially in the downtown area, friendly but not

socially close to anyone except Larry. Relations between Kathryn and the cat took longer to thaw. Larry complained at first that his cat seemed deliberately to avoid Kathryn. When she was present, the cat hid somewhere. After a while, Larry's complaints stopped; and he described the relationships as worked out.

After 5 years, Larry moved the loan business to a larger retail space not far from his first location. The new place consisted of two side by side rooms. The loan office went into one of the rooms. In the other, Larry installed a pop record shop appealing to teenagers. He brought the records to sell back with him on his trips to New York City. Larry worked diligently to become friends with the more off beat, or rather beat or beatnik, of the customers. His aim was to induce them to visit certain merchants in constantly moving locations in order to try various substances guaranteed to produce exotic mental experiences. Larry himself never supplied any of the so-called "recreational drugs". He did receive a cut of the sales for sending in the customers. The money was not nearly as much as he would have gotten as a direct distributor; but his connection with the business was more obscure and legally more tenuous..

Meanwhile, Bill had grown wealthy enough to take up philanthropy. He divided his contributions between the Salvation Army, the Cartersfield Municipal Hospital, aid particular individuals, the last in the form of paying medical bills and giving money for things such as food, clothing, rent, and school supplies. The individuals came to his attention through school employees, apartment owners, and occasionally even the police. His continued contributions to the hospital and a provision in his will leaving that institution a generous endowment led the hospital board to ask Bill's permission to name the emergency room after him. He consented but stipulated that it not be done until after his death.

Through his various contacts, Bill became aware that the city was experiencing an increase in robberies, burglaries, and assaults, which the police associated with Larry's two businesses. Borrowers were turning to crime to pay off their debts, and some were apparently being physically reminded of their obligations by out of town strangers. The same strangers were also creating drug addicts with similar desperate needs for money and with similar criminal means of getting it. The police did what they could with the crimes, but they were unable to get to the ultimate cause, Larry's businesses. Bill finally confronted his brother on the problem. He asked Larry to close both enterprises, and Bill would help Larry get started with something

else. Larry responded with ironic laughter and obvious contempt. Relations between the brothers sank to almost nothing. Bill figured out later that, when the confrontation took place, Larry was in the process of organizing the beginning of the local drug scene.

Besides the emotional turmoil over Larry, Bill was having another difficulty. His father's kidney gene was operating and Bill's kidneys were failing. In 1980, at age 46, the kidneys had become worthless, and a kidney replacement was necessary. A search for a kidney began. Shortly after the search got underway, Larry suddenly left for a several week business and vacation trip to New York. Cynical speculation suggested that he was afraid that he might be asked for a kidney donation. Fortunately, a kidney turned up from a source kept confidential; the replacement operation was successful, and Bill embarked on a recovery and maintenance regimen.

Bill's mental turmoil over Larry got worse. A year after the kidney operation, he tried to repair relations and convince his brother to change his attitude and vocation. He invited Larry to dinner on the latter's 45th birthday. During pre-dinner cocktails, it became obvious that the get-together was going to be a disaster. Larry started out angry and stayed that way. Bill became depressed. Halfway through desert, Larry's favorite of chocolate cake smothered in caramel sauce, Larry abruptly snarled that he was leaving and stalked out. Bill did not even get up from the table.

Then heaven or fate or chance did what Bill could not. On the way home, Larry "lost control of his car", as the newspapers always put it, ran off the street into a tree, and was killed. The police estimated from the damage done the car, the badly torn up body, and the mangled tree that Larry was traveling between 75 and 80 miles per hour in a zone posted for 30, and on a street impossible to navigate above 45. Larry was buried without any kind of ceremony, though Bill and Kathryn were present when the casket was lowered into the grave. Kathryn taped a note to the casket saying, "I loved you, and I always will." She signed it "Kitty". Bill started to utter something starting with, "I wish...", stopped, and said, "I'm sorry, Larry, I'm sorry."

After the burial, Kathryn asked Bill if he would take Larry's cat. Bill agreed, and she delivered it to his front porch the next day, along with a cat box, a scoop, a partly filled bag of cat litter, and some food. When Bill answered the door bell, she was gone; and the cat was curled up in a basket. The cat adjusted quickly to its new home. It

particularly liked sleeping nestled against Bill's abdomen at night. A few weeks later, Kathryn reappeared, ostensibly to inquire about the cat. Bill liked her and they came to spend a great deal of time together. Bill gave her a key to the house; and she was often there when he was not home.

Bill lived for another 8 years and died in 1990 at age 66. The cause was pneumonia, which followed upon a severe case of the flu. Probably the anti-rejection medication which he took contributed by weakening his immune system. Kathryn was holding his hand in the hospital when life departed. His funeral was well attended, and he was buried next to Larry. A few days after the funeral, Kathryn brought to the police station what amounted to a bomb about to go off. It was a piece of paper, signed by Bill, with the signature dated and notarized. In it Bill confessed to killing his brother. The piece of chocolate cake covered with caramel sauce that he put before Larry at the futile, last attempt, dinner contained a large dose of peanut oil, the taste of which the chocolate and caramel completely masked. Probably Larry was driving at a high speed because he felt suffocation coming on and was desperately trying to get to the hospital. Larry may have rammed the tree because he could not breathe. The accident and the mutilated body unexpectedly covered up any trace there might have been of peanut oil. Bill wrote that he had to act because there was no other way to stop the harm Larry was doing to individuals and the social structure of the city. Had Bill been able to influence Larry to change, Larry would have gotten a different slice of cake.

That ends the portion of the account of Bill and Larry that I promised to tell in the third person. I will add a bit, speaking as myself, Kathryn or Kitty. I deeply loved Larry. He was the only person who knew my true nature, and he loved me in both forms. I, in turn, am the only one who knows that it was Larry's kidney which saved Bill's life. Larry went to New York to have the kidney removed so that Bill would never know its source. And recall that the transplant took place after the first altercation between the brothers which resulted in almost complete estrangement. I liked sleeping against Bill's abdomen because inside was the only bit of Larry that was left to me. I found Bill's confession in his desk one day when he was not home. I don't know whether he ever intended for anyone to see it except perhaps his own soul. I liked Bill, but I loved Larry; and I decided that, if I survived Bill, I would take the confession to the police. Bill took Larry from me; I took his reputation from him. He is now remembered as the man who murdered his brother, not for all his

philanthropic work. The hospital quietly accepted the money Bill left it in his will, and just as quietly dropped any thought of naming the emergency room after him.

The evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interréd with their bones. So let it be with the brothers.

As for me, I am old and very tired. I came to Larry 19 years ago. That's a full lifetime. I think I will go to the park, curl up in a secluded place, and go to sleep. Perhaps someone walking a dog will contact Park Maintenance and report a dead cat in the bushes by the gazebo. I will not know that, however.