Soonville

A story by Gen Maros

- 'If you've got the money I've got the time ' -

Lefty Frizzell, 1950

 ${\it All \ events \ in \ this \ narrative \ are \ fictional} \ .$

 $Any\ resemblance\ to\ individuals\ ,\ either\ alive\ or\ dead\ ,$

is coincidental

For my brother Eric

If I Could Only Stay Asleep by Patsy Cline, 1958

written by Ethel Bassey & Wayland Chandler

Last night I dreamed of you sweetheart

Once more you loved me you said we'd never part

It's dawn again oh how sad am I

My dream has ended and tears fill my eyes

Gently swaying around my feet

like memories from the past

Each leaf reminds me of a dream a dream that wouldn't last

For once I know your promise you would keep

If I could only only stay asleep

Gently swaying around my feet like memories from the past Each leaf reminds me of a dream a dream that wouldn't last For once I know your promise you would keep If I could only only stay asleep

List of characters

Douglas Ford Just got out of jail

Rodney Collins [R.C.] Bettor

Martha Blonde, widow of Walter Malpais,

bank robber who died in jail

during conjugal visit

Innocent Faraday Martha's man friend, black, ex-con,

Nam-vet, never got shot. Takes care of Jenkins

Johnny Malpais Martha's son, conceived in jail.

Never knew his father

Jenkins Bartender at Jenkins', Nam-vet,

stores all guns in a drawer

Ritchie Lancaster Barman at the Bullhorn, shot a man the other

day .His father's still buried at the mine.

Done time too

Kathleen Lancaster 'Cottonmouth', Ritchie's sister . works at

Macev's

Lee D. Chantre Sheriff of Soonville

Tobias Willeines Prison guard at Tumpkin's, the man inside

Morgan Treffoin Convict, doing life at Tumpkin's Eddy Falin Got himself shot at the Bullhorn

Eibersen, Joneys & Hogwin Three local simpletons, always together

Macey Runs the brothel in Creek's End

Delano Roy Deputy
Corinthe Caldwell Roy's wife

Caldwell Senior Corinthe 's father

Howard Granger Deputy

Glen Strathairn Owner of Glen's Diner Claire Wakefield Waitress at Glen's Diner

Hewey Barber in Soonville since forever

Dr. Louis S. Campbell Physician

Charles Massey Mayor of Soonville

Warren Heismann Businessman, owns the Brewery

Joseph CraneStock farmerJimmy FearonHardware storeGilbert MillerCar dealer

Tracey Geraldine O'Connor 'Trace' or 'Gee', used to work the bars

of Terence with Macey

Julie Caldwell Works at the bank, Corinthe's second cousin

Chad Penbrooke Grocer Randall Perin Retiree Tenderson Junior Steve Strongbow Kenneth Agee Manager 'Tenderson Savings and Loans' Building contractor, employs Johnny Malpais Guard at Tumpkin's, suffers from a hitherto

unknown skin disease

Conductor of Creek's End Church Choir

FBI-agent

Ralph Spendlove Hawkins

Day One

'Was having a particularly bad day till a shabbily dressed young man of lean disposition with no visible scars or tattoos walked into the bar and introduced himself as Ford.

Put a thousand on the bar, said it was mine, even knew my name, and never wasted any words on what he was here for.

He made it sound like a formality, a prank he had to play, well paid for that matter, actually saying that some stranger leafing out bills apparently got off sending parolees like him on errands with an empty gun.

Cunning, but foolish, 'cause Ford didn't skip nothing and made it sound like a formality, but I already said that.

Could tell he needed a drink as it hit ground moment he put out his landing gear,

he bought Innocent and Martha a drink too.

Innocent told him the story, which is a short one, but when you're quick of understanding it's not hard to follow

Then Martha sees this guy approaching from outside, she thinks it best for Ford to move out, she's been right before.

Ford hands me the rest of the money and the gun , like I'm a teller , I give him a hundred in return to go to Macey's and he's gone .

I always keep my guns in the drawer and keep it locked at all times.

The key moves around behind the bar, but never in sight.

So, I was just putting the money away and the empty gun when this Collins walks in, talking to himself.

First thing 'bout him strikes me 's his pouch, wrought in dark riveted denim and one of these clanging black jackets with straps in the wrong places, the funny shoes to finish it.

Dangling a car key, he asks about Ford's whereabouts.

The shyster seemed pleased with himself and in his own way was tryin'

to be funny. Bought us a drink too and gave a forty-cent tip.

That was the first time he came in.

The second time he came in, Ford had just left, through the back door again,

now holdin' the key to the back entrance.

Threatening to shoot us all, big shot wanted to know where Ford was,

probably the fool was after a refund.

I was counting the money inside the open drawer, my guns oiled and loaded, but it's so loud to fire a round inside, I have a problem with noise, see.

Before I have time to ponder what to do, next Martha's sardonic question whether that's his car.

Like I said , Ford ain' wasting time setting fire to that car like he did . He was back in a jiffy , shoving the emergency-exit key to me and stealing my Heineken I just got from the ice-box .

Collins already standing outside , bawling , then three shots , loud , more shouting to add to the circus goin' on outside .

Three simpletons walk into the bar , making a racket , shortly followed by the sheriff himself , smelling of gun powder, whiskey and pussy .

Educated guess he's scored another brush with the twins, but still in a foul mood.

As if still some flames hiding there, he's tapping down Ford, makes him empty his pockets on the table, see he still got most of the hundred I'd given him two hours before.

Then that idiot Lee whacks the ashtray from the table.

felt like a dagger goin' through my spinal column,

like I said I'm very sensitive to noise.

Day One Jenkins

Lee's a very boisterous type, I was grateful though he sent those three dorks out.

Then makes a show of takin' Ford's fingerprints on my stationery , whatever good that is, leaves sayin' he owes me , guess he won the bet .

The fire truck must 've broken down, 'cause I had to hose down the burning car myself.

While puttin' out the fire one tire burst.

It was loud again.

Next day they hoisted the wreck on a trailer and towed it away.

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'Last time someone was shot in Soonville was when people said it would be a town soon'
'Saw him come in'
'Pulling an empty gun on Ritchie'
'Right here in the Bullhorn'
'That was a dumb thing to do'
'Pulled the trigger too'
'Click'
'But Ritchie didn't wait'
'To see what's next'
'Hold down your voice, he's looking at us'
'Can we have three more beers, Ritch?'
'He's a decent enough guy '
'And quick too'
'Eddy Falin'
'Who's he?'
'One Ritchie shot'
'It was a head shot'
'He's a good hand'
'Wonder where he keeps his gun'
'Pull a gun and you 'll know '
'Thanks, Ritchie'
'Scumbag came straight out of Tumpkin's Penitentiary'
'This mister Eddy? He did, er?'
'Had five hundred dollars in his jacket . New bills '
'Where he got them?'
'Could have spent them first'
'At Macey 's '
'Get a blowjob'
'Who pays five hundred for a blow job?'
'Okay, you know what I mean'
'Cottonmouth!'
'Get in line.'
'She knows how to suck'
'Keep your voice down! It's Ritchie 's sister.'
'Hey, how's your sister? - $300 '
'I never knew he calls her sister'
'I call her Cottonmouth'
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'Macey 's, Creek's End... Hey! What about Wednesday?'

Deprived of a view for long Ford took in the environment.

In the distance the outlines of woods were visible and their attraction was only increasing now they were heading South in the direction of a town

called Soonville.

It was the end of summer and Ford was glad to be out.

Standing outside the gates of Tumpkin's Penitentiary, still in awe of a freedom just regained, he was offered a ride by a stocky man.

It never dawned on Ford the man might have been waiting for him.

First of all, how was he to know Ford was to be released today?

There had been an administrative delay which kept him in limbo till finally at dusk the okay was given .

Though he had no place to go, he wouldn't have stayed another night.

Except for the forty bucks on him there was no property in his name,

had wife nor kids nor owned a car.

'Dispossessed ' would make a fitting definition , but all this didn't matter , not now he was leaving behind him the grim walls of prison and opportunity loomed , of trying his luck on whatever or wherever .

Ford was an optimist and despite his poor appearance there was an unaffected sense of pride on him, his 6 foot 3 never slumping.

What he needed most now was a cold beer, which should be easy.

And a woman he didn't count on meeting this very evening.

People said he had piano hands. Women liked that.

Do something about the money situation . Enjoy this , yesterday the tremendous anticipation , tonight at last .

He thought about Morgan, doing life.

When Morgan said 'That's life ' he meant something else.

Few things he owned inside he had given away.

Little things can mean a lot in jail.

The clothes on Ford 's body and the pallor of his countenance were in fact all he had.

The man offering him a ride was driving a black F350, a luxury Ford gladly accepted. The seats were all leather.

Ford leaned back and audibly sighed.

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'What's yr name?'
'It's Ford'
'Ford! From the president's?'
'Nah, not from the president'
'The car!'
'No, not from the car either'
'You 're Ford right, that's what you said just now '
'It 's Ford alright, but it 's not from the car, nope'
'Speaking of cars, you ain 'got a car?'
'I, er.., have no car at the moment..'
'You must be hard up .'
'Yeah, well.. thanks for giving me a ride'
'So it's the impoverished branch of the family'
'I.. I'm in some sort of trouble '
'Which explains the jail, eh?'
'Not that hard to tell, is it?'
'- Might have a job for you'
'A job, that's good. I don't mind getting my hands dirty
as long 's it's a clean job'
'You won't get yr hands dirty on this iob'
'You're a con too?'
'Why 's that?'
'Coz you can tell'
'Ain' that hard, skinny, the threads, look in yr eyes'
'So what's the job about?'
'You walk into a bar '
'Could use a drink'
'You take this gun with you'
'Hev!'
'And pull the trigger on the barman'
'I'm not a hit man!'
'Don't worry, don't need no ammo'
'Are you kiddin' me?'
'Listen, the gun is empty, all right? It's easy, walk up to the barman, Jenkins that is, draw the gun and
pull the trigger'
'Then what?'
'Then you leave '
'No drinks for me then'
'I got whiskey for you'
'You want to scare him?'
'No, he's cool, it's just..'
'What's your name?'
'Why's that?'
'Who are you?'
'It's Rodney Collins, but everybody calls me R.C, here is my card'
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Rodney Collins, bettor
R.C's what you see
R.C's what you get
369 Rowell Drive, Soonville
Dranlow County
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'Here's ya card '
'What?'
'No'
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'Thousand bucks'

'No'

'2000 bucks '

'No '

'No? It's two minutes work!'

'Four'

'Four minutes work?'

'Four thousand'

'One in advance, rest afterwards, bring back the gun'

'All at once'

'No '

'Pull over'

'What do you want all that cash for in advance?'

'I like having cash on me'

'I 'll park the car here .

'This is Soonville?'

'Place's called Creek's End . Be watching you from here .

There's Jenkins' Bar . Remember, don't talk . Here's the gun.

What are you waiting for?'

'The cash'

'Here, four. Well, okay, you don't have to count it. Be back soon'

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'The name's Ford.'
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'You's lucky . Here's a thousand on the bar . It's yours , Jenkins .

I'm gonna pull a gun on you, but it's not loaded.

Outside there is a man in a F350 who paid me to do this. So here's my empty gun.

Gonna pull the trigger now .. '

'What are you drinking Ford?'

'Scotch'

While you pull the trigger on me I'll pour you a drink '

'I needed that '

'You's lucky too . And smarter than the other guy '

'What other guy?'

'The one got shot at the Bull Horn . In Soonville', a black man said,

sitting by a table next to a blond woman.

'Can I offer you a drink?'

'What are you drinking, Martha?'

'I'll have a bourbon '

'That'll be two bourbon then . Very decent of you . To offer us a drink '

'What about the one got shot?'

'Have heard about this guy, betting on people, that's how he makes his money'

'So what 's the bet about?'

'Coaxes people like you inside a bar with a blank gun to pull the trigger on tenders like Jenkins . Or Lancaster .

He made twenty on the last one, that bum playing that trick at the Bull Horn? Shot through the head, just like Rodney Collins, 'coz that's his name said he would.

Barman's called Richie Lancaster, I know 'coz I' ve been doing time with him at Tumpkin's '

'You've done time?'

'Have I been doin' time! That's why 'could tell you juzz' were out, look like you 's from Tumpkin's even if you wasn't'

'I'll get some clothes tomorrow'

'Shoes too . Can always tell a man by his shoes'

'I'll do that . Thanks '

'Ought to make a bet on him', Jenkins said.

'What has the sheriff to say about this?'

'Sheriff said Lanc wouldn't shoot, but sheriff was wrong. Cost him dear. I know Richie 'coz I 've been doing time with him. Knew his father too. Al. Blew himself up. Accidentally. 's Mistake he made. Sheriff made a mistake too.

Now he's pissed for losing money'

'Who's the lawman in Soonville?'

'z name is Lee D. Chantre and it's best to stay out of his way since he's mean. 'll be looking for you by now by this time. Dependin' on what he said would happen, that is '

'Ought to make a bet on Collins', Jenkins said.

'Think it's best to get out of here, see somebody getting out of that car', the woman said.

'Take the back door. It unlocks from the inside.

^{&#}x27;Used to drive a Ford . What can I get you?'

'Case you're looking for some tits, lace and cunt go to Macey's, two blocks from here. Can't miss it. Take a left turn. Leave the gun here. I'll put it next to mine in the drawer, or would you rather have some ammo? And don't go to Macey's with all that cash you 're carrying' Jenkins took the wad of cash.

'You're a good negotiator'

'I don't come cheap'

'A hundred should do . I'll put it next to your gun . And my thousand . You won't be needin 'a receipt . Drinks 're on me '

'Thanks, Jenkins'

'Be back in two hours , we gotta talk ', the black man said .

'See you aroun' then ', Ford said, leaving.

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'What 's takin' 'm so long?', R.C. said, entering the bar.
'Howdie', Jenkins said.
'Where did that man go who just walked in?'
'He's standing right in front of me'
'The other guy . Ford 's his name '
'He left'
'What did he do?'
'Who's asking?'
'Rodney Collins . R.C.'
'Howdie', Jenkins said.
'What did he do?'
'He bought us a drink', Innocent said.
'Can I offer you one?'
'Sure hoped you would'
'Another bourbon, Martha?'
'Agrees with me'
'I'll have the same '
'Same for me'
'You can call me Innocent'
'Anything else I can call you?'
'Long as you don't call me nigger it' s fine with me'
'Did that man have a gun?'
'He did'
'What did he do?'
'Pulled a gun on Jenkins'
'Then what?'
'Pulled the trigger'
'He did? Then what?'
'Then he bought us drink . Bourbon , just like you now '
'Then what?'
'He left'
'I never saw him leave '
'We did'
'Where did he go?'
'Never asked'
'You got business with him?'
'Keep the change'
'Well, look at him', Martha said,
'Way he's getting inside his car, he's mighty proud of that car'
'His car, eh..?'
'Nothing like Walter 's old truck '
'They ought to shoot him'
'Everything in its time, Jenkins.
Everything in its time..'
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Day One

Creek's End wasn't much of a town.

For some, the only building of importance was the church . For others , Macey's would come first .

Truth is , for both of them Sunday was the busiest day .

God 's ways are manifold and handling temptations was only one of the self- justifications that guided men the 400 yards from worship to whorehouse .

Macey knew good business when she saw it . The girls ' farm ten miles from Soonville had made her an independent and respected woman .

She had a bevy of women;

Tabitha, closer to fifty than she 'd ever been was advertised as 'voluptuous',

a kind way to say she was short and fat .

A cheap perfume that would clean windows mixed with cigarette smoke and an almost tangible body odor.

'I 'm an animal in heat ', is how she sold herself', 'but you don't put nothing on the tab with Tabitha . Show me the money first '

The swaying gait was defined by her physique. She 'd been

over weighted all her life and took it as a natural burden, though she'd

sometimes complain , mostly in summer when temperatures would exceed ninety and drench her struggling body in sweat .

Her panties would crawl up 'r crack and she would be glad to take off the brassiere that was leaving lashes on her back , as if she had been the subject of a whipping during those shameful days of slavery long gone .

Tabitha 's gums were retreating which gave her a horsey appearance, making the mouth an even bigger resonator for her voice which had the shrillness of a blue heron.

In the small room with the double bed where she plied her trade lights were kept dimmed , so the cellulite on her sagging ass cheeks would go unnoticed , as would the striates etching a blind man 's itinerary on her glowing front and back , drawing lines where dust and grime seemed to have settled with age .

'I have everything white patrons 'd be looking for ', she used to say , which was true . Bossing men around , she sedated the clientele with a lascivious intermezzo , collecting her fees in advance . Though brief , it always worked and men always came back .

It's what they wanted.

Yun, a tiny 30-year-old Chinese who did the only thing she knew how to do and do it right: fucking. There's not a single phrase here for her and if you wonder what she's doing in this story then, I just told you.

The plethora of luxury and opulence surrounding the twins Sue and Elaine made sure men could and would pride themselves on their private stamina, sexual prowess and solvability.

Fifi claimed she was from Paris . Yet the only French words she mastered came from a newspaper she found in a diner once . Curly red hair made Johns wonder whether it was true , but she shaved , like women do in Paris , Fifi would 't fail to emphasize .

Irrelevant to her clients she was Irish really. There's no dialogue for Fifi either and if the same reasons apply, so be it.

But the biggest money maker of them all was Kathleen, 27, a local girl.

Rumor has it she still , though far from immaculate , is a virgin and has remained so for the five years to become the star girl she is today . Men dressed up and got a haircut , sprinkled Cologne , brought flowers just to let her wear his crown , but Kathleen never undid her panties .

Zealously , men cleaned their finger nails , showered for an hour , shaved their balls , left pearl earrings on her bedside table , but the panties never came undone .

Then, as a matter of course, they started offering money.

All bids were turned down, but their disappointment was skillfully abated by what gained her a reputation, a proclivity to swallow till nobody remembered the name of Kathleen and she was only known as Cottonmouth.

So when R.C. walked in one night, pretty much convinced she wouldn't let go of the sum he was dishing out on the hardwood bedstead he was rejected like numerous before him.

He had grabbed her, locked his left arm round her luscious waist and dropped himself backwards on the double bed dragging her with him.

Now she was on top, and his right hand was where it never should have gone, under her skirt and in her panties, his fingertips moist with the scent of her femininity.

Next thing he smelled was his own blood when his nose exploded.

Cottonmouth had stretched her arms, lifted herself and planted her knee in his face.

He never found his front teeth again, although sometimes he dreamed he would spit them out one day.

She let him take the money he'd laid out, but he was to get on his knees to collect it.

'What do you think I am?', she had screamed.

'Ya wa fakkin' Ho!', he'd replied.

Most accommodating for a kick in the nuts.

Now he knew why they didn't need a bouncer.

The money saved on her he spent on an orthodontologist in Charting.

He well remembered her hissed warning never to come even close again .

Which is why he wouldn't be looking for Ford at Macey's.

It would be the only possible place to have gone to because there was nothing else really in Creek's End.

He had another problem: he'd bet his car Jenkins would shoot this Ford at the spot.

But he didn't.

Now Lee D. Chantre wanted his car.

His car.

How he was going to make Jenkins shoot that bastard?

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In about two hours' time Ford returned to Jenkins', walked up to the bar and asked,
'Jenkins, can I cash some money?'
'What money?'
For the first time Ford saw him smile.
'I'm only fucking with you.. You've come to make a withdrawal?'
'I need to get some clothes'
'No need to tell your banker what you need it for '
'Five hundred?'
'You won't be needing the gun?'
'Guess not'
'And some shoes too', Innocent said.
'I'll give it to you when you leave '
'This time the drinks are on me'
'Beer for everyone'
'So where you'll be staying? Passing or what?'
'Got a room at Macey 's '
'They like you, eh?
'Top floor'
'They love you then'
'How long were you in for?'
'Three years'
'How is Morgan?'
'Morgan! I know Morgan! He's okay ...'
'Tobias?'
'The guard? One of the few'
'He comes sometimes to visit me'
'Good man to have around'
'He's the man inside .. '
'So what did this R.C. want?'
'He was looking for you'
'Probably wants his gun back'
'Let him have it'
'Yeah, I'll do that'
'When?'
'Soon'
'Like tomorrow'
'Gotta go shopping first'
'What's with the tattoo?'
'Tattoo?'
'The blue spot under your right eye ..., it's like a frozen tear'
'If I were white it 'd be red
That's what he always said, Innocent.
'It's God who picked me up from the dirt. Pull me back'
'For real?'
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'First memory I have 's when I was born . Second I have 's when I was dead .My father brought me back when I was an infant .Mouth to mouth . Seven weeks old I was .

God agreed with my father 's what He did.'

'And your third memory?'

'More drinks , Jenkins. -I might have a job for you ...'

'R.C. had a job for me too '

Yeah, but this one 's more ...'

'Secure?'

'Profitable ...'

'Oho...' , Martha again .

'This time he's armed . Better split , son '

'Take this key , Ford.. backdoor . Go '
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'How can I thank you, Jenkins?'

'You can 't'

The door banged open.

Jenkins leaned on the bar . R.C. was holding a gun .

'Loaded this time?', Jenkins asked.

'You can bet', R.C. snapped.

'Well, sort get used to it', Jenkins sighed.

'Smart ass . Okay, motherfuckers , where's Ford?

Better tell me or I'll kill y'all . Now!'

'Who you gonna shoot first?', Martha asked.

'Ford's not here .. '

'You! What's yr name again?'

'It's Innocent and I 've never been shot '

'Not until now-what kind of a name is that anyway?'

'I was named Innocent to make sure I'd die Innocent'

'Is that your car?', Martha asked.

Day One F350

Hand in your sleeve.

'Bing—bing—bing—bing', the door said when Ford tried the locks. Clever. Left it open. Black leather. Captain seats. Expensive sunglasses keeping an eye out on the interior.

Plush . Surround Dolby . Tinted glass . V8 . AC . Everything electric .

Stack of country cassettes. Pretty good taste for a redneck.

Box of cigars. Whiskey flask. Nice car.

But he already knew that . Now it seemed even nicer . Hand in your sleeve .

'Tschunk'

Central locking. Now the tail gate is open.

Hand in your sleeve . What he hoped for . A jerry can . Full . Pick up the rag . Take the jerry can . Walk back to the front . Door still open .

Bing—bing—bing—bing-- . A low fine-pitched , well-tuned , civilized and comfortable bing .

Put it down . Front seat . Cover the lid with the rag . Unscrew . Tilt it .

Gloo—gloo—gloo—gloo—gloo—gloo—gloo—

Five gallons. Now the car no longer smells like leather.

Take the rag . Push in the cigarette lighter .

'Tunk!'

The lighter is ready.

Rag . Take it out carefully . Stand back . Chuck . Sush .

Strike a match instead . Stand back . Chuck .

Whoosh.

Throw the door shut. The bing-bing stops.

Run.

A distraction won't turn the tide, but a car on fire will turn your head. Your car.

Inside the bar, Martha turned her head.

'Is that your car?', she asked.

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'That car sure burns'
'It's a Ford'
'F350'
'Nice car'
'Big too!'
'They're the best'
'Gimme a Chevy'
'Gimme a drink'
'Let's have one at Jenkins' and watch the show from inside'
'I'm game '
'If they don't put that fire out now it will blow'
'Any moment'
'Step back'
'Like I told you'
'There it goes'
'The bar window's still in one piece '
'We're having three beers'
'This is a good table'
'We got the best seats'
'It's first rank '
'It sure is an entertaining evening'
'First Macey's, then a car fire'
'Wonder what 's next'
'Let's sit back and wait'
'See what happens next'
'We were just in time'
'Any idea what's going on here?'
'Hell of a night, guys .. '
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