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So what's your name?"

Okay, look: At the time, I didn't think being shot was the best thing that had ever happened to me. That came later, really not until I had survived it all and become fully conscious of its impact, in a sobering transcendental way, if you know what I mean. Granted, holding up a pizza delivery guy with a water pistol was a pretty idiotic thing to try, but I wasn't that dumb to think at the time, *Wow, I've been shot. How wonderful! Maybe I should do this more often.* As mentioned before, I didn't even *know* I had been shot, at least not in the official, real-gun/real-bullets sense. I assumed that the dizziness, the paralysis, and the wavering myopia and hyperopia were the results of the dissolving sodium chloride pellets I thought were coursing through my bloodstream. Admittedly, a nagging sense of fatality kept creeping into my head now and then. The body doesn't lie. Signals were likely being sent to my brain: *You're fucked!* Still, not even when I was lying on the ground and that cop was pressing his shoe into my blown-out shoulder did it occur to me I'd been hit by anything more than salt ammo.

In my foggy, bloodless vision, he looked like a giant, whereas the cops standing around and behind him looked as if I were seeing them through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. I was simultaneously among the Brobdingnagians and the Lilliputians, an immobile Gulliver pinned to the ground by a muddy shoe. Weeks later, when the hospital returned, unwashed, most of the clothes I'd worn that night, there it was on my tan, zippered corduroy jacket: the pointed, circular stain he left as a souvenir. He was trying to squeeze some information out of me, no doubt follow-

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ing the playbook, behaving like the bad cop because the good cop before him, the first Brobdingnagian, had no success at it.

Even after all these years, I can still picture them in my mind's eye. I distinctly remember the first, or "good," Brobdingnagian's appearance, right down to some of the finer points. Did I soak it in as it dawned on me that his might be the last face I'd ever see? It is a round, flat face with bulging light eyes. He's not wearing a uniform. I know this because I can see his thick, shiny black hair, and in those days any cop in uniform always had to wear a cap. None of them are in uniform, as far as I can make out, and all of their hair glistens. It's almost magical. In fact, there's a sheen coating almost everything: The homes, the lawns, the shrubs, and even the air seem to shine in the darkness. It had rained earlier that night. I'm thinking it's been drizzling for a while or a fog has rolled in, but I can't be sure. I don't feel wet, but I don't even feel wet from the blood soaking my shirt, my pants, right down to filling up my shoes, as I'd later learn. I can't feel much of anything, while the world seems muted, like walking outside after a big snowstorm. I'm totally immobilized. I can't even move my head much. I can't see me. I can only see upward into the evening sky. He's hovering over me now, realizing that only in my direct vision can anyone be seen. His solid, athletic frame leans forward, a massive letter C. I can hear some Lilliputians shuffling behind him, talking, while others poke around in the shrubs and scrape around on other people's lawns looking for the weapon, the spray-painted water pistol. It's not "on my person," if that's the correct law enforcement term. Someone must have already frisked me. Maybe it was the good Brobdingnagian. But when? Had I blanked out back there? He starts asking questions, bending forward deeper into his curve. He's enormous!

"Tell us who you were with?"

That's his first question? Not who am I? Later I understand they needed to find that out fast, to have me confess, before I croaked. Maybe I remained oblivious to the severity of the situation, but they sure knew I was on the brink. In time my corpse would give *me* up. But what if they never found the other guy, "my partner in crime," and never learned his name?

"What?" I say, pretending to sound all groggy and disoriented, as if I needed to.

"You heard me," he says sternly, devoid of emotion. "Your friend, the one you were with tonight pulling off that little stunt. Who is he?"

He'll have to try harder than that. I'm not going to cough up Dougie's name just because he asked me twice, however nicely. I'm aware of some

criminal or gangster code, akin, really, to the one beholden by a band of noble brother warriors, the one about never being a rat fink or a traitor or a spineless prisoner and giving up the beans, if that phrase is even used anymore. I undoubtedly held that belief. It's running through my mind even though I'm close to death, having watched God only knows how many Cagney and Bogie movies. No way too would Butch or Sundance give up the other, nor would Depression-era Butch or Sundance from that other film, even though they made it look like one of them had, but that was just part of the scam. Too bad Dougie would fall for a similar trap when the cops told him I'd turned him in, when I hadn't, no matter how many times they showed up at the hospital asking me who was with me. I was prepared to die before I'd give up his name, which is pretty much what had almost happened. Sure, when the cop asked, a part of me wanted to tell him so they might find Dougie and he could be there with me. Also, for some strange reason, I wanted to say something true and honest, skip embracing the ol' silent-treatment code. Also, I had a real need to talk to someone, to say something that might elicit a conversation, like discussing where Dougie lived, whether he was holding the gun and why he never turned around to look back to see if I was okay. I was too exhausted to think of anything more than "What?" again when the cop asked me a second time whom I was with.

A Lilliputian steps forward, growing immediately larger, like a cartoon character that swallows a weird, indigestible object and his rubberized torso expands, then his arms and legs, and then his head pops into a gigantic form. He's muttering something about "Fuck this asshole." Only my eyes can move, so when I slid them right I can't make out much more than a big blurry presence, but I recognize the voice, certainly the temper of the expletives, as the one who promised to blow me to kingdom come if I didn't get the fuck on the ground. The good Brobdingnagian raises his arm, like a tollbooth gate, preventing him from reaching any closer. "Look," he says, still as dispassionately as before, "we know you were with someone. Just tell us who it was, who you were with."

I know that "What?" won't work a third time. "I don't remember," I say. There's no holding back the former Lilliputian, now turned Brobdingnagian. He bursts past the tollgate and stands over me, looming larger than the original Brobdingnagian, bulkier and more menacing. He's oozing hatred. I can't feel much, but this I can. He wants to kill me, to wrap up the night so he can go home or head to the bar for a couple of cold ones. He presses his foot into my shoulder, the one still containing shrapnel to this day, gone so numb there's not much pain, little sensation, except I

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suddenly begin to sink into a hole in the ground that wasn't there a second ago. He starts to grow smaller. "You little fucker," he hollers, digging the front of his shoe farther into me. "Tell us who you were with, right the fuck now!"

"Jesus," the other one says, "he's only a kid," as he pulls on the bad cop's shirt sleeve.

"Fuck that," he says angrily, kicking me in the ribs a couple of times, before flipping his arm into the air and brushing past the good cop.

"All right, all right," the lone Brobdingnagian says. "Forget it. Never mind. We'll find your buddy, anyway. What about you? So what's your name?"

"David," I say.

"David' what?"

"David Borkowski," I tell him.

"Borkowski?" he repeats, alarmed.

"Yes, sir," I say politely, slipping into a degree of respectfulness I rarely used with the nuns or other authority figures.

"What's your father's name?"

I tell him.

"Oh, shit," he erupts, as he connects the bleeding punk on the ground to the cop he knows. After all, how many cops are there with my father's name? It's not exactly Smith or Jones, while his unusual first name, Zenon, makes it all the more obvious.

The same realization occurs to the others, based on the "Oh, craps," "Oh, damns," and "Holy shits," including one from the bad cop. This crowd is obviously from the 122nd Precinct, where my father recently worked before transferring to the City Hall station. Some of them may have worked under him. He'd been a sergeant for a few years by then.

Everything around me is getting smaller. As the hole beneath me grows I begin to grasp that I may be in a real mess of trouble—lots of real cops, labored breathing, and a literal sinking feeling. Maybe I'd been hit with real bullets too.

To think, all of this could have been avoided if I'd remained obstinate after telling Dougie at the start of the evening that I didn't want to do it any more. During the week, my restless nights grew longer and more intense. I was convinced that what we were doing was bad, or insane, or something terribly out of joint. I'd decided it had come to an end. Instead, I let him talk me out of it. "Just one more," he pleaded. "C'mon, it'll be the last one."