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CLARE: WIFE, MOTHER,
MISTRESS... MURDERER?
Clare O'Brady Glicman had
it all: Beauty, brains, money,
moxie. Men adored her and
wished they could have her;
Women admired her and
wished they could hate her.
She was, as they say,
someone to die for. And
then someone did. Four
extraordinary people
interact. Join them.*

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MURDERER?**

by James Flaherty

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JAMES B. FLAHERTY

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64438-361-2

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-64438-362-9

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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BookLocker.com, Inc.
2019

First Edition

Cover: Portrait Sketch of The Author's Daughter,
Shannon, by Katrina Bovill

Chapter One:

Clare realizes Her Marriage is Worthless.

CLARE HAD LEARNED TO TUNE RICHARD OUT LONG AGO. She didn't hear his acid-tinged farewell, "I hope you're not planning a candlelit dinner for two, dear... I won't be there." She was vaguely aware of his detestable cologne as he passed through the room, something expensive, but gagging. Richard was rich, but his money wasn't enough to compensate for all his failings—petulant, nasty, and void of ethics or interest. She shuddered, his presence crowding her morning's peace. So, she banished him from her mind and concentrated on something beautiful. In this instance, it was a moment in Paris many years ago. She had been there for a modeling job. It was almost evening and she was wandering through the Tuileries, and in that blissful gathering of minutes that signal the end of day and the beginning of night, while the sun still washed the world with a rosy, golden tint, Paris glowed. Every building, every person, every tree was haloed in light. And whether it was a private trance, or the Gods simply amusing themselves, the city's sounds were muffled neath the sounds of birds. Busses, snarling trucks and raspy horns, became violins. She had been transfixed, not understanding why the moment had been given to her, but grateful for it. A psychologist friend had taught her that trick. Focus totally on something perfectly beautiful, something that thrills or elevates your senses, and by doing so you can block out the depressing,

nonproductive influences in your life. The slamming door forced her back to the ugly reality of Richard the Boring, Richard the Hateful, the arrogant, the despicable.

If Mary Elisabeth O’Brady Glickman, who preferred to be called Clare after a long-gone favorite grandmother from County Clare, so goes the family legend, felt angst, it didn’t show. She looked like a role model for every young woman who faced life with an imperfect nose, or unaligned teeth, or cornflake skin. She had unstudied blue/black hair that ignored the few premature threads of grey. Her face was a near flawless conference of features, with the kind of nose people paid large sums of money to plastic surgeons to duplicate. Her eyes, never evasive, were wide set, a chameleon blue/green. They invited intimacy. They made you think she was about to smile or laugh. Clare’s face was a perfect oval, except for the chin, which was chiseled at the tip, with nary a trace of excess skin tissue. And it all sat atop the true swan neck, a neck that cried out for kisses, or at least diamond and emerald necklaces.

Clare imagined Richard The Boring pulling out of the driveway in his Mercedes. Even that was boring, painted and upholstered in the wrong colors. She momentarily fantasized him slumping over the wheel freeing her from the legal ties that bind, leaving only the capital without any of the personal debt service—but best of all, leaving. She felt guilty and avaricious for thinking the thoughts and decided his money was the unimportant part—but ending her life with Richard would have great value. She spoke quietly, only to herself. “I didn’t know I was capable of hating this much.”

Angela, the Colombian maid, watched her mistress, and wondered, as much as she could understand the complexity of their relationship, what the beautiful mistress saw in the senor, who besides not being handsome, was obviously a bad hombre. The senora was a grand lady, who was important in big business, but also managed the home, and always found a moment to make Angela feel remembered and appreciated. She would say the rosary tonight, just for the senora.

Chapter Two:

At any given moment, Somewhere, Someone is about to Enter Your Life.

WAKING UP WASN'T ONE OF GORDON'S STRONGEST SUITS. At least that's what he thought. So he lay there, knowing the alarm was just minutes from clamor. He also wondered why in hell he always woke up before the alarm. Was it self-imposed penance? Or was he just a harmless masochist who wanted to be fully alert when the blast came so he could revel in the pain? It was all too complicated a thought for 6:30 a.m. He suggested deep sleep to himself and laughed. He pretended to ignore the laughing and closed his eyes, breathed deeply and tried to return to the protectiveness of sleep. Fifteen minutes of pretend sleep passed when the alarm yelped its war cry with a special vengeance. Gordon fantasized he had the strength in his hand to crush it into eternal sleep.

He looked disapprovingly at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. "And who is to blame, asshole?" Needles of hot water and some lemon scented soap washed away whatever sins had plagued his slumber. He wondered if he had been out of line last night but decided not. There hadn't been anyone worth getting out of line with. Perhaps there was one scotch too many, and Gabriel forgive him, there was even a Sambuca or three. Ugh. Although he had trashed himself last night, the eyes seemed remarkably clear, the hair on the

tongue would disappear with two cups of sub-humanly hot coffee, and the urge to succeed would force his overly misused body into action. Despite a trifle too much debauching, the body wasn't bad. Forty-two years sat well on Gordon Zabriskie. Where most men had spare ties or those cutesy rolls they call love handles, he still had a couple of decently hard ridges in his torso. It was a good, masculine body, perfect when dressed, and well appreciated by women of all socioeconomic levels, undressed.

God, Mother Nature and the weathermen were smiling on New York City this morning. The morning's gold rays splashed over the city including the front of Gordon's unpretentious but agreeable apartment building in the East Seventies. Now coffeed, recovered, and cleansed of his unoriginal sins, Gordon was seated on a squashy sofa directing all his attention to a piece of paper in his hands. A ray of sun found the mirror over the mantle and scattered touches of gold around the room. Gordon was thinking about gold, too. Not the warming, poetic gold of the sun. He was concentrating on how to line his coffers with gold. He stared at the piece of paper. Frowned, and then smiled. Looked up at the ceiling and shook his head as though to clear his mind. He looked back at the paper--smiled again—and laughed out loud. "Holy Shit."

THE TODAY SHOW WEATHERMAN BUFFONED HIS WAY THROUGH THE WEATHER. A pleasant and easy way to start the morning of a day that probably wouldn't be so easy. Meredith Viera was no longer on the set, and Matt Lauer, Mr. White Bread, has been accused of sexual misconduct and fired? So, who's left, just a couple of those pretty Today Show Girls exchanging

wholesome banter with the black weatherman? Is this just more of the Harvey Weinstein plague?

Clare heard the Dow Jones figure with some satisfaction. She made a couple of smart buys yesterday. Her clients had “green” reasons to be pleased with her.

“Hello, Sofa, it’s Clare”.

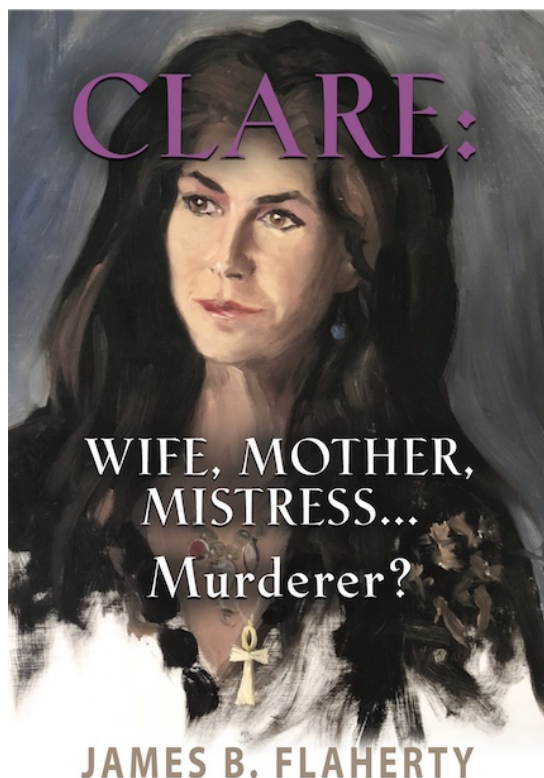
“I’m glad you’re not in this rathole this morning. You know that cocksucker on the other side of your cubicle? Well he smells like a Polish manure factory this morning... must have really got shitfaced last night... he reeks of hooch, and has the goddamn nerve to come in here and make insinuatins’ comments about how all us girls want nothin’ more out of life than to put out for him. I hope he fucks somebody with the clap.”

Clare laughed. “Sofa, you have such a sweet way of expressing yourself.” And in truth, Clare did like Sofa—Sofia was her real name—the total nothing New York background, mixed ethnics, a mouth like an open sewer, but protective of Clare, trustworthy as the Sphinx, and a razor-sharp secretary who somehow managed to assuage troubled clients, with milk-toast language, and could lie more believably than anyone Clare had ever known. “Thanks for the warning, Sofa love; I’ll bring some fragrant flowers so I don’t have to smell him. If there are any calls for me this morning, tell them I’m in a meeting out of the office and should be back by 11 a.m.—and I will make a point of being in by 11 a.m. See you then--ciao dear.”

The pulsing massage of the Jacuzzi whirlpool and peach scented English bath oil washed away her irritation with her husband and allowed Clare to concentrate on what’s ahead today. A meeting with

Edward “Buzz” Collins, the “Buzz” an archetypical conservative lawyer. Bet he wears three-piece tailored pajamas, she smiled to herself—wakes up with combed hair. Buzz has been a puzzle to Clare. She thought when he gave her all those bucks to invest he would probably make a play for her. But to date, it’s been all high tech and no touch. Fine by her. Too dangerous to mix business and pleasure, especially naked pleasure. Besides it wasn’t her style to sleep around. To date, she had \$8,500,000 plus or minus of Buzz Bucks at her disposal. They were both making a nice piece of change with those investments. Today, she wanted to introduce a risky investment, but with high stakes. She mentally rehearsed the coming meeting—what she’d say, what he’d hopefully answer. She conjured up Buzz’s sweet, gentlemanly face, pursed her lips and kissed his forehead. “Thank you, Buzz, you are the #1 love of my business life.”

GORDON ZABRISKIE WAS KISSING SOMETHING TOO--A piece of paper, flooded with figures and notations. “It’s true,” he announced to the empty room, “I can do it and there’s no way anyone can trace it. I can buy and sell and make more money than Midas and nobody will be wiser.” He jumped up in his excitement, caught his toe on the brass base of the coffee table, fell over sideways, and as he hit the end table muttered oh shit, smashing a lamp, an ashtray, a candy dish, bounced off the table and hit the hard hearth of the fireplace with a thump, face down. He lay still for a moment. Breathing? Unconscious? He turned over, slowly and then you heard it. He was laughing. Beyond pain, beyond caring, Gordon had seen his God—Mammon—and was prepared to strike a deal with him.



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