

This is a SAMPLE of MYSTERY NOVEL WRITING

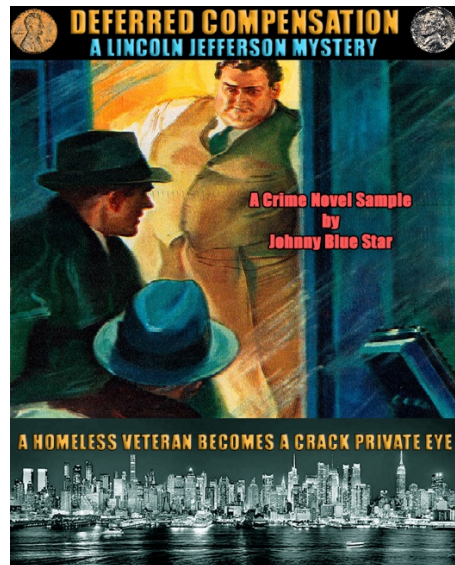
WRITING SAMPLE

DEFERRED COMPENSATION

-a Lincoln Jefferson mystery-

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CHAPTER 1

When Lincoln came back from Gulf One, he had a bum hand.

It looked okay, for the most part. He could move it and it held up stiffly. But in a certain posture, it would drop down and just dangle from his wrist. It was an impossible, annoying and a dangerous positioning problem for a straight-shooting, steely-eyed P.I. with an image of unyielding combativeness to protect.

When he first had the accident in Kuwait City, he was promised complete disability and was scheduled for a round of appointments with neurologists and surgeons. He didn't mind. He just wanted to get it fixed. The accident itself had been traumatic enough with Ted being blown to bits in front of his face.

Ted was the only person he could speak to coherently in the military and they were both very disappointed when all their prep work was sabotaged and the troops never got to Baghdad. How that damn Iraqi managed to hide in Kuwait City after all his buddies had hit the road or been captured wasn't clear. But the bastard had a damn good RPG, long before they became popular with the insurgency years later, and it virtually demolished the jeep and poor Ted.

There was a lot of other damage besides his arm but it was all reparable- but no one thought he should stay in. And he was shipped to San Diego before everyone else, bandaged almost from head to foot.

He didn't do too badly. After two operations, they assured him there was no shrapnel left in his body.

The arm was an imponderable. He needed a specialist. Someone who could explain massive neurological damage with nothing visible on x-rays or the one slightly damaged MRI that was made available before he left Kuwait. Maybe it was brain damage. Everything would be fine when he got back to New York.

But, unfortunately, it wasn't.

His first visit wasn't to a surgeon or a neurologist. It was with a psychiatrist, a very suspicious fellow- who had looked at all his charts, including the one from the MRI.

"I have looked over all of this with a fine tooth comb and I've gone over it with the Neurology department. There's nothing wrong with you physically. Let me see your hand."

He probed it a few times and then, unexpectedly jabbed a needle in it. I winced with pain.

"So you felt something..."

"Damn it, yes. I didn't say I couldn't feel pain. I just can't move it."

There wasn't much more to the interview. Lincoln said he wanted his surgical and neurology appointments. The psychiatrist said he would look into it.

The result was the beginning of a long, protracted fight with the Veteran's Administration. It took six months to get to see a living, breathing neurologist and she apparently didn't believe him either though she didn't mind flirting with him, hinting at how much she like Mandarin cuisine. She wasn't all the bad-looking but by the time she got down downsizing his injury, he would have rather have taken out somebody's pet dog than the medical incompetent who kept flickering her mascara-dripping eyelids at him.

Lincoln was sure there were some nice people in the Veteran's Administration but he couldn't find them. He wound up on partial disability after going through three different lawyers.

For three months, he wound up on the streets, sleeping in an oddly, secure alley way with a few other Vets and at Penn Station, where he was generally left alone after he met Hank, one of the security guards who had also been at the Gulf. Sleeping wasn't comfortable but it was possible to live. And had enough money for food. Barely.

CHAPTER 2

Lincoln was sleeping when someone poked him. Startled, he looked up, glancing at the Big Clock. “Holy shit!” he thought. I overslept. Hank took off at least two hours ago.

“You homeless?” a young man with large owl-like glasses asked him. Then, somewhat deferentially, “I meant no offense. It’s just like this guard and some police officers seem to be having a conference about you.”

The young man pointed at the small group of men staring at him about a hundred feet away. They noticed that he was up and was talking to the young man. They seemed indecisive. Lincoln’s clothing had still not gone to rags and he ruthlessly tried to get showers in every few days. He could have been a client who had just fallen asleep.

One of the police officers decided to find out and was walking towards them.

“Hey, can I buy you a cup of coffee?” the young man said.

The officer was about twenty feet away. Lincoln stood up suddenly and smiled, “Yep. You sure can.”

The young man put his arm around Lincoln’s shoulder and steered him towards a Chock Full of Nuts.

Lincoln’s eyes were still full of sleep and he unceremoniously cleaned them with a napkin as he looked at the young man, who was looking through the menu. He must have been twenty-five or so. His suit and tie were impeccably clean and somewhat expensive looking. Perhaps Wall Street. Maybe even a young doctor.

Lincoln had never answered his initial question but Lincoln had answered it for himself.

CHAPTER 3

“You have weird name,” Ling said, while she was sticking pins in his wrist. “I study American history.”

“Great,” Lincoln thought. “My name again. The ultimate conversation starter.”

“It could be your father named you after two great American statesmen- Lincoln and Jefferson. Or it could be you named after Lincoln and big, mucky-muck confederate General Jefferson Davis.”

“I don’t have a father,” Lincoln said. “I’m a test tube baby.”

This completely cracked Ling up and her beautiful ivory face, so straight and so sad, now became an irrepressible fountain of joviality. "You G.I.s all crazy," she said.

"I'm no longer a G. I., Miss Chin. I'm just a plain ordinary citizen with a hand that doesn't work. Can you fix it?"

"Tell me about your name."

"Well, you were right about my father. He hated me from the day I was born- so he gave me a name that makes me crazy. When I was an adolescent, I used to ask him all the time and he would say, 'Well, Lincoln, I'd like to tell you the whole story but I just don't have the time. Catch me when I'm not busy.'"

"Was it Thomas Jefferson or Jefferson Davis?"

"You either figure it out or wait until I get around to let you know."

"But he was always busy, Miss Chin--"

"Call me Ling."

"-even when he died, Ling. He just never got around to it."

"Then it's up to you, Lincoln. Up to you to decide."

"I don't know. They both were slaveholders. Thomas may have been more friendly with his- and, despite his protests, more ambivalent than the great Jefferson Davis, who was willing to die for the policy."

"I think you're more Lincoln than Jefferson."

"Lincoln also was ambivalent. They were all muddled."

"Will you take me out to lunch, Lincoln?"

"I--"

"How much is the treatment?"

"Twenty dollars. You go uptown you never see prices like this."

Lincoln took out a twenty.

"That's all I have Ling."

"Okay. Then I take you out to lunch. Very good lunch. You look pale, Lincoln."

CHAPTER 4

He couldn't look at her face anymore.

It had been, no doubt, a beautiful face in life. In death, it the look of an ivory mask, implacable, without any specific focus. In his view, death must have been swift, the assailant unnoticed by the victim. The stab wound was vicious but it must have been exceeding quick and strong. His guess was that, despite the harm it did, the knife was wielded by a cold professional. It was a vicious attack but not any kind of revenge.

"It wasn't for money- that's for damn sure," Simmons said. He was a big man, perspiring greatly- and grieving that such a beautiful flower would go to her grave so darkly. Simmons wasn't really cut out for his work. He should have been a psychotherapist or a minister not a forensics expert. .

"That's your final view?"

"Nothing's ever final, especially death- these days. But the lady had over two thousand dollars in her purse. Two thousand dollars!"

"Maybe it wasn't hers."

"Well, it was right there in her wallet."

"Maybe it was planted."

"Oh, I see, someone knocks her off- and in order to make her look in the other direction, they stick two thousand dollars into that cute little Jimmy Choo clutch-thing."

"You're talking about her purse."

"Yes."

"Damn it, Simmons, how can you talk about a purse with such familiarity? Are you a cross-dresser?"

Simmons turned red. "Now look, Lincoln. 90% of my larger investigations are into the murder of rich people- about 2/3 of them women. That started about twenty years ago. So I began to study about what rich people know. I read all of it- from O to Harper's Bazaar. I read gossip columns. I go to fashion shows."

"You're weird, Simmons."

"We have the same clients but I don't know any of this crap."

“Well, I think you’d rather pay for it than read it yourself.”

“You’re right about that. So what did you find out? Who was she? What did she do?”

“She was a broker. Somewhat up and coming. A little strange- studied a bit of astrology, some say she tried to tie Feng Shui into her recommendations. Had a peculiar following. Yet, she was not much of a closer. She sort of sucked her clients in by her quiet assurity about everything she did- at least that’s what Mark Hastings told me.”

“He knew her.”

“Yeah...”

Suddenly, the both turned at once. There was a loud sound from the other room, sort of a thumping sound- as if something very heavy had dropped. Lincoln’s gun was already out by the time Simmons stepped into the other room. He was two paces behind when the door blew off, knocking him back about nine feet, where he slid across the room and hit his head against the wall.

He was coming to, coughing violently, when the cops rushed into the room. Water was sloshing on the floor from the other room which fronted to the fire escape.

For a moment, he didn’t know where he was. It was an awful nightmare to wake up to. Simmons had been a lot of fun to work with.