

## INTRODUCTION

THREE sections. Four different types of mystery and crime stories.

Whether it's the brilliant Boston detective Julius Katz, or his sister Julia, the first three stories in the KATZ section are traditional mysteries. A crime has been committed, the potential suspects are questioned, and the guilty party is exposed. While the fourth story in the KATZ section, *Archie's Been Stolen!*, has the same style, tone and humor as all the other Julius Katz and Archie stories, it's a caper. There's no mystery to solve, only a heist of sorts to commit.

The three stories in the BRICK section are crime thrillers featuring investigator Morris Brick, his bull terrier Parker, and the rest of the MBI team. These stories and the five Morris Brick novels that I wrote under the Jacob Stone pseudonym for Kensington have similar humor and style, are fast-paced, and are populated by

hardened criminals and mobsters. Where they differ is the novels have very bad people committing horrific acts while the stories are lighter. While there's plenty of danger in these stories, ultimately no one gets badly hurt.

The two stories in the STONE section features Hell's only operating private eye, Mike Stone, from my novel *Everybody Lies in Hell*. Even with the unique setting and the fantastic elements, such as souls being tormented by demons and demonic racing horses that bite the heads off of jockeys, these are hardboiled PI stories. These stories are about stripping away the self-deceptions and lies we tell ourselves to expose the ugly truths underneath, and there's not much more hard-boiled than that!

So given that these are all mystery and crime stories, why the title *Detectives and Spies*? While all the stories have either detectives or spies acting as detectives, three of the stories are a merging of the mystery and spy genres.

Dave Zeltserman  
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**KATZ**

## JULIUS KATZ AND THE RUINED ROAST

AT ten-fourteen a.m. Julius put down the daily edition of the Boston Globe, got up from behind his desk and perused his bookshelves before selecting a biography of the Word War Two spy, Virginia Hall. He had found excuses to turn down the last five potential clients who were desperate to hire him, so why not spend the rest of the day loafing just like he had the past week? Me, I felt a jangling throughout, which I knew from past experience was a sensation akin to nervousness. The reason? It appeared as if my plans were about to go kaput thanks to a late delivery. My first three text messages all got the same response, and my last one went unanswered. Since all I could do was wait, that's what I did. Two minutes later I would've sighed in relief if I had lungs, but since I don't, I simply imagined myself doing so. Seven seconds after that the doorbell rang.

Julius ignored the doorbell. He didn't even bother to ask me to check the outdoor webcam feed to see who it was. I waited until he turned to the next page of his book before telling him that three boxes of pastries had been left outside his door.

Annoyance tightened his lips for all of 110 milliseconds. "Archie, please explain the reason for this," he said with forced patience.

"Nothing too nefarious," I said. "I ordered them, although they were supposed to have been delivered an hour and five minutes ago. You really should retrieve them before squirrels, or worse, make a meal out of them."

If Julius was curious about my motive, he didn't show it. Instead he took his time reading another page before telling me in a rather curt tone that I should call around to find someone who would pick up the food before it attracts pests to his Beacon Hill townhouse.

"Sure, if that's what you want, but it would be a shame. The order is from Lenora's Bakery and it includes six of their famous chocolate pecan roses, which are damned hard to get even though as far as I can tell they're little more than a fancy brioche roll baked into the shape of a rose."

That got Julius to put his book down. He wasn't about to give me the satisfaction of running, but still, he moved at a determined pace to retrieve the pastries, which was what I expected given all the recent hullabaloo about Lenora's after their roses were proclaimed by the Globe's food critic to be a regional treasure. Julius would have ordered some himself, except the bakery's policy was not to take orders for the roses. Instead it was first come first serve, and they only baked a few hundred each morning and would sell out within a half

hour of their seven a.m. opening. At that time each morning Julius would be engaged in his two-hour martial arts workout, which was something he wasn't about to forego even for a morning pastry that the critics called *beyond exquisite*. I got lucky when I called to wheedle a delivery from them. While Lenora Chapel, the owner of the bakery, kept the recipe for the roses a well-guarded secret, she suspected that a recently fired employee had brought her recipe for something called a *peach-hazelnut snail* to a rival bakery and wanted to know if this person was working there. A little hacking on my part proved Lenora correct, which was all her lawyer needed to issue a cease and desist letter, and hence the delivery this morning.

Julius waited until he had brought the boxes of pastries safely back to his office and was able to examine them and verify that the prized rolls were indeed included before asking how I had managed this.

“A little wheeling and dealing on my part,” I said. “Nothing for you to be concerned about.”

Julius's eyelids lowered an eighth of an inch. He asked, “Who did you arrange to come here this morning?”

“Is it impossible to believe that I got you those roses and other treats out of the goodness of my heart, even though I don't have one?”

“Archie, please, none of this sophistry.”

“Fine. The four main suspects for the Charlie Lacey murder. They want to hire you.”

That brought a thin smile to him. “Archie, I am grateful for these pastries, but if you thought that I would reciprocate by meeting with them, then you need to recalibrate your neuron network.”

Of course, I never thought that even for a micro-second. I fully understand how stubborn Julius is. When the news broke that the comic Charlie Lacey dropped dead of cyanide poisoning during the middle of his roast at a Cambridge comedy club, Julius claimed that the reputed mob boss Billy Quinn was the murderer simply because the news reported that Quinn was in attendance. It didn't matter that Quinn was there only because Lacey was his godson and that the police had ruled him out as a suspect, Julius wasn't about to admit he had made a mistake. This was sort of like Schrödinger's cat—as long as Lacey's murder wasn't solved, Quinn could both be the murderer and not the murderer, and Julius could be both right and wrong.

“That's not what I was thinking,” I told Julius. “I wanted to get you those roses because I knew how much you wanted them, especially since they'll be a nice surprise for Lily when she gets back from visiting her parents. But I did think the gesture would soften you up enough to listen to reason. Forget the publicity you'd get from this case, the four suspects coming here are willing to put a hundred grand in escrow for you simply agreeing to take the case, which works out to 57,550 dollars after taxes, and that should be enough for you to make the winning bid for a bottle of 1990 Domaine Georges & Christophe Roumier Musigny Grand Cru that goes up for auction this Saturday.”

That got Julius's attention, as well it should since this was a vintage he'd been trying to acquire for years. He contemplated the matter for all of three point two seconds before telling me that a twenty-five thousand dollar bid should be sufficient.

“That might be true,” I said. “That's what the wine is supposed to be worth, but the last bottle that went



up for auction sold for 52,500 dollars. But whether you'd have to pay twenty-five grand or more for that fermented bottle of grape juice is irrelevant since you can't pay that much and also cover your next two months' expenses unless you cut out your expensive dinners at Le Che Cru with Lily and skip the illegal poker game next Friday at Phil Weinstein's restaurant and its ten grand buy-in."

Julius's tone held a petulant note as he said, "You're assuming I'll be losing my buy-in instead of walking away from the game with substantial winnings."

"Yeah, I know, you're a world-class poker player, and you should clean and fillet the guppies you'll be playing with, but luck's a funny thing, especially bad luck, and I remember nights when you've done everything right and still busted out. If you'd like I can provide you specifics."

Julius sat stone-faced while he drummed the fingers on his right hand against his desk's surface, which was always a clear sign that he was annoyed with me. "Blast it," he said after five point seven seconds of drumming. "I already told you who the murderer is."

"Yeah, I know. Billy Quinn. The video recording of the roast that the police took custody of hasn't helped them make an arrest. Maybe if I were able to find it, you'd pinpoint where it showed Quinn poisoning Lacey's drink, but I've hacked all of the Cambridge Police Department's computers, and I can't find the video recording on any of them. So prove the impossible and earn yourself that hundred grand."

Julius brooded for the next eight point three seconds, but from the way he grimaced he must've decided that he wanted the bottle of Grand Cru more than the luxury of spending his time goofing off, and

even more than opening up the box with his own version of Schrödinger's cat and having to admit that his earlier ill-formed opinion was wrong.

He asked, "Archie, when will that mob be descending on my door?"

Four comics were now a mob? I didn't argue the point and instead told him that they were scheduled to arrive in eight minutes.

He cast a glum look at the box filled with Lenora's acclaimed roses. "That doesn't leave me enough time to properly appreciate one of them," he said.

"Yeah, well, I'm sorry about that. As I told you the delivery was late." I simulated taking a breath and holding it, which for me was pausing my central processing unit for fifty milliseconds, then said, "There's still time for me to cancel the meeting if you want."

Julius's expression turned glummer, but otherwise he didn't bother to answer me. He got up from his chair and brought the boxes of pastries to his kitchen.