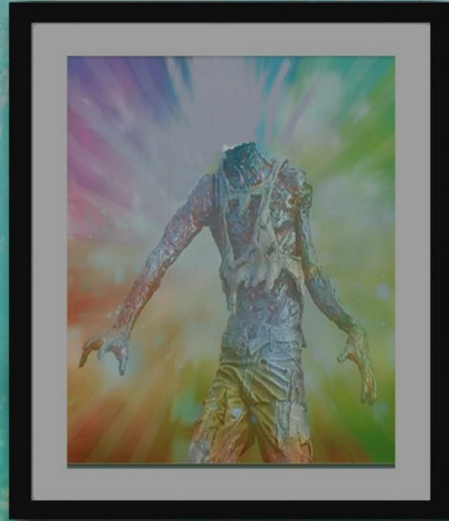


R.J. Stanchfield



THE  
COMPLEX REPLICATION  
OF

# LADY TREAT

FROM *THE ODD PROFESSION OF JEREMY SCRATCH*



THE  
COMPLEX REPLICATION  
OF  
LADY TEAL

R. J. STANCHFIELD

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# THE COMPLEX REPLICATION OF LADY TEAL

**H**ERE'S WHAT HAPPENED.

In 1976, Gunther von Hagens took his assistant, Bogdan "Boogey" Nagy, to buy cadavers in Mongolia.

Screams vibrated through the cold, moonless, night. Gunther waited for deliveries from the asylum and the prison. Boogey was asleep in the cab. Gregor, the wolfdog hybrid, readied to terrify the laborers. The crossbreed looked for where the screams originated. The trucks arrived. With the vehicles came the foul, ill-scented odor of human remains. The road became impassable. A few travelers pinched their noses as they tried to pass through.

Gunther looked for broken bones. A cadaver had a rancid odor. The corpse got taken a hundred paces away.

The last body became bartered. Gunther acquired thirty cadavers. The Chinese left. But words between two Mongolian laborers erupted. One man slashed another. Blood gushed. The man died.

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A Mongol held up two fists expecting payment for the still-warm body. Gregor growled loud at the man. The man backed off. The Mongolians left.

“You get five stiffs, Boogey. Plus I’ll give you those still breathing.”

They laughed.

One day Boogey invited Jeremy Scratch to speak at his Plastonics factory in Romania. He was sponsoring an annual symposium to the International Anatomist Society.

Scratch had already become known for his many papers and talks on preserving human skin. The body of anatomists in attendance had heard Scratch discuss the new science.

He started.

“The well-known *plastonic* body has five stages. Human taxidermy — or what we call ‘*replicates*’ — have three more stages,” Scratch began.

“The sixth stage,” he continued, “is skin fixation. It’s made with silicone rubber, epoxy paste, and tilapia. Tilapia, as we have learned, is a generic name for over a hundred species of fresh and saltwater fish. Burn bandages use different species. What you have is tilapia skin helping to heal human skin. It also cuts down the healing time. We at Enchanted Endings are testing to find the perfect covering.”

Scratch took a glass of water.

He began again. “The seventh stage is sculpting. Then detailing the healed skin. The fingernails, lips, body hair, and fingerprints.”

Scratch had finished that part of his exposition.

“How many have attended funerals recently?” Scratch asked.

About ten or fifteen hands raised.

“Did the departed look as they were?” he asked.

Laughter and rumbling raged through the symposium.

“No, of course not. Replication’s goal is to keep the body and free the soul,” he continued.

“Corpses I’ve seen aren’t dead ringers. They’re dead.”

"I'm for and promote a double funeral," Scratch announced. "First friends and family have a closed casket grieving over projected pictures."

Attendees are talking to each other.

"Six months later, a second service to revere the life of the departed occurs. The replicate joins the party posed in the way friends and family remember. The soul will already be with the gods. Now what remains are the bones and skin."

Scratch continues into a short reminder:

"This was what the Egyptians wanted. The Aztecs, the Mayans wanted a preserved human, an artistic effort. Ultimately, it's a spiritual journey for all involved. Much thanks."

There was a standing ovation. Boogey became amazed at how so many people supported the idea of human taxidermy.

Scratch supplied the United States, North and South America. Boogey delivered to Europe and Asia. Together, they introduced the new science of human preservation to the world. They agreed that the next horizon will start in the Sahara Desert.

\* \* \*

Maestro Hugo Teal functioned as the Philharmonic conductor of the Carnegie Symphony Orchestra. He had become a great presence. At retirement, he had been at the helm for forty years. Known for his long, wavy hair that followed the motion of his baton, the short, musical genius was now bald. With his interest in the new science of replication, he went into Enchanted Endings. Teal contemplated the exciting new method of preserving the human body upon death. He and Lady Teal had vowed, if one of them died, the other would arrange replication for both. They didn't want to get buried six feet deep with maggots, or want to get cremated to be the same as cigarette ashes.

*BodyWorks* introduced Maestro and Lady Teal to replication. It was a show that featured the science of

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preserving animal and human bodies. This procedure replaces body fluids with liquid plastics. Animal and human bodies solidify as the plastic hardens. The main use of this process is for educational purposes. Medical schools and science have specimens of deceased humans.

Replication's result was a complete interior and exterior specimen of the human being. Yet, the resulting top layers were as soft as real skin to the touch.

Lady and Maestro Teal couldn't read or hear enough about replication. They let everybody who listened know how great the procedure was. The Teal's guests couldn't attend a cocktail party without a lecture about the benefits.

The Teals made a vow to always be together, and it made them feel younger and more invigorated.

"They walked on air," the gossip columnist Rita Conklin wrote. To selected friends, she called it the "Teals phenomenon".

It was while Maestro Teal composed *The Replication Symphony* that his wife began to fail. Signs of what turned out to be a long and bitter bout with cancer began. Even her sickness became associated with her desire to replicate. They reminded their friends and families of their decision to be preserved. During her last week, Lady Teal told her students at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music what to expect. The students applauded her bravery.

She passed.

"How should we pose Lady Teal?" asked Luke.

Maestro Teal wanted his wife "playing a grand piano in a room next to the bedroom".

"You don't want her singing?" Luke asked, somewhat stunned at the decision.

"Well. Uh," said Hugo Teal. "It's better if she is playing the piano."

Maestro Teal tried to avoid operas — especially the operas of Lady Teal. The classical music circles knew she was a better piano player than a singer. But only a few knew Hugo Teal got angina every time she played her piano.



"I prefer she would be looking out the window at nature as she plays." There was a pause. "Did you get that, Mr. LaForge?"

"Yes, sir."

Maestro Teal said he wanted Enchanted Endings to be the general contractor for the whole job.

"How large do you want the room?" Luke said.

"Ten by ten feet, with glass walls on all three sides?"

"It is up to you, Maestro," Luke said. "I think a baby grand is more correct."

"We will use Lady Teal's piano," the Maestro said as he started to walk around between the caskets. He allowed their presence to take his thoughts in another direction. Walking toward Luke, he balked, but finally got the strength to speak up. "I have a sensitive question."

"What's that, sir?" asked Luke.

"My wife suffered a terrible, hard, year-long fight with an awful disease."

"I can imagine, Maestro Teal."

"She lost weight over this period, and she lost more weight in that awful, final battle."

"Oh, I see," said Luke.

"Can you make her a bit thinner?" Teal said.

"Sir, we can do whatever you ask," Luke told the bereaved husband.

"Take off an extra fifty pounds, please."

"We can do that," Luke said. "What else?"

"That will do it, Luke."

"Give me a few minutes, and I'll have a written proposal for you."

Luke went to the office and put together a proposal. In the meantime, Teal again walked amongst the caskets.

*How long they are*, he thought. *Will people remember me as taller?* he wondered.

He told his attorney he wanted a standard-sized coffin.

*Will people who know my actual height dare to open the lower lid to see where my feet are?*

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Luke returned holding the proposal.

"The total price is \$342,000, of which \$42,000 is an allowance for the extra room we would build attached to your house. I will need a first payment of \$200,000."

Luke tried to give Maestro Teal the written proposal. But he resisted, as though if he touched the paper, he'd own the bill. He pulled his hands away.

"Oh, I see," said Maestro Hugo Teal.

There was a long pause. Luke knew what was coming.

Teal looked at the caskets, one by one, not realizing he hadn't uttered a word in ten minutes. Then he remembered the promise he made. And more, there were friends and family. And there was the columnist, Rita Conklin.

*What would she write if I bury Lady Teal instead?*

"Can you do heads only, and I won't need a room either? I'll put her head on a pianola."

"We can," replied Luke.

"How much?"

"It will be \$72,000."

Another pause. Teal walked back a third time toward one casket.

"How much is the coffin?" Hugo Teal asked.

"It isn't a coffin; it's a casket, sir," said Luke. "Coffins have six sides, and caskets have four sides. Coffins are smaller at the bottom to save on the cost of wood."

"Sorry. Will you take \$50,000 for the head? Otherwise, I'll bury her in a coffin ... I mean casket. To hell with it," Teal said.

"Maestro Teal, Enchanted Endings can preserve Lady Teal for no less than \$63,000," Luke said.

Maestro Teal took out his checkbook and wrote a check for \$31,500 — the first payment.

\* \* \*

A few days later, Luke opened the Jewelry store at 10:00 AM. Five minutes later, a woman came in and asked where

she could find Enchanted Endings. He directed the lady to the second floor.

"I'm not sure Mister Scratch is in yet, so I will be right up. I help the owner when he is running late," Luke offered.

"That's not a problem," she said, "I won't take too much of your time. I want to buy a replicate, but only after I get a few questions answered."

"Of course," Luke replied.

The woman took the elevator and Luke took the stairs.

"My name is Luke La Forge and I am the proprietor of the jewelry store."

"I gathered that, Luke," she said. "Can I see the models?"

"Yes, Ms. ..." Luke said, his voice dropping down a few tones and softer.

"I'm Carmen Cordova, a Mexican-born American singer and a professional ventriloquist. I sing to my puppets," she replied. "Can I see your models?"

"Please follow me, Ms. Cordova," opening the door to the stages. He turned on the lights and she screamed!

"I must have this one," she said, as she trotted up onto the stage and sat in a model's lap.

"The models are not for sale. They perform to show how a finished replicate can look and get posed," Luke said.

"I get it, Luke, but the sale will be with Mister Scratch and me," she made clear. "I'd like to get questions answered."

"Of course, madame," Luke responded. He wanted to tell her to leave, but so far he remained calm.

"As you can see, I fit in his lap, so questions relate to whether I can get him to move his lips, mouth, and neck?"

"We can, but Scratch knows better," Luke said.

Carmen asked if they could make the model's wrist, arm and fingers move and grab her breasts.

"I'm also a comedienne," she explained.

"I don't know."

"Luke, can you guess the price of the model?"

"I shouldn't," Luke said.

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“Here’s my card. Have Scratch call me.”

Neither of them even nodded good-bye. Luke started to lift his middle finger, but stopped himself.

\* \* \*

New York offered real comfort. It is the comfort of familiarity.

Whatever it was, Scratch was glad to be home, could engage in his work at his leisure, and not have the need to be somewhere. He promised himself that, when Dada got back, he would take her to Broadway and see a good play.

*I wonder if she’d like to see Les Miserables.*

Scratch stopped in the jewelry store to give Luke the jade ring he had bought in Paris.

It caught Luke off-guard. “Hey, *mon ami*, why did you do this?” Luke couldn’t remember the last time he received a present. He looked at Scratch, smiling, but his smile seemed forced.

“Don’t you worry. It isn’t an engagement ring,” Scratch teased.

“This Cajun sold four more. Three of them are full body replications. We got a *plasticate* of a torso for an internist’s private practice,” Luke said. He expanded his chest, proud of his sales.

“Great.”

“One client was nice, and the other was easy. I can handle it. If they come on back-to-back, it’s hard,” Luke said rolling his eyes.

Scratch looked at an order.

Scratch continued to page through the four orders, ignoring what Luke said. He went to the window and looked across the street at the Library.

“You know, I even missed the library when I was away. Oh, okay, I’ll get in touch with him.”

“How was France?” Luke asked.

“Don’t ask.”

Scratch went back to the window and said, "I really did miss the library."

"Let's go have an early dinner together."

They took a cab to the Central Park Café. Over dinner, Scratch told Luke what bothered him. It wasn't so much the France trip. In fact, what troubled him was how stressed Dada's job could be in the three days they were together.

Scratch threw a pea at Luke. He smiled as it got lodged in Luke's nostril. The pea came out to rest on Luke's handlebar mustache.

"I wish I had my camera!" Scratch said.

They took a taxi back to the Brenner building and each man went to his apartment. Scratch went right to bed.

\* \* \*

In the morning, Scratch slept peacefully until the phone rang. He sat up and then answered the call.

"Yes?"

"I can't find Lady Teal's head," he said.

"What!" responded Scratch.

"I cannot find Lady Teal's head. It isn't with the others," said Luke.

"Did you look everywhere?"

"I looked everywhere."

"Okay, where is Lyle Clements and Dennis DiNardo?" asked Scratch.

"Here, where they're supposed to be," Luke said.

"I'll be up there in a few minutes."

Scratch arrived and went to the freezer to see Lyle and Dennis.

He repeated the actions that Luke had performed two hours earlier. He looked throughout the loft, behind the curtains, under this and that. Scratch went one more step. He got the ladder, climbed up and opened a skylight to see if Lady Teal's head was on the roof of the loft. It was not.

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They looked in every casket, opening the top and bottom lids.

At the end of the search, they agreed it was foul play. They could not find the head of Lady Teal. Neither Luke nor Scratch mentioned calling the police. They didn't dare.

Scratch started to think of enemies they may have. Luke couldn't think of anybody. Both men got along with everybody.

At the exact same moment, they looked at each other and said, "Maestro Teal."

The next step was to list reasons why Teal took the head. Maestro Teal hated Lady Teal.

"Who knows ...?" Luke said. "Teal may think we have insurance for loss and, if she doesn't show, he could get his money back."

"Yes, he doesn't care whether Lady Teal's head arrives. If her head arrives, it will go to the basement anyway," Scratch said. "He might pay to steal her head. It sure would risk his reputation. And he is too inept to know where the head was."

"Maestro Teal didn't steal it," said Luke. "We need to keep looking."

*Tunji took the head. It isn't going to appear. I will not discuss this with Luke. Tunji was sending a message.*

\* \* \*

Scratch went to France again. He looked for six-story office buildings to buy. They wanted to extend the business. As usual, Luke took care of both the jewelry business and the human taxidermy. They hired college students to wait on jewelry customers. As a result, Luke could make more decisions and sell replicates.

On Tuesday, Luke was examining diamonds when a young man in his twenties entered the store. He asked one of the students for the store manager.

"Luke, there is a gentleman here to see you."

"I'll be out in a minute."

Luke came from the office. “Hi, I’m Luke. How can I help you?”

“My name is Ricky Conklin and I am an investigative journalist. I’m here to ask you a few questions about Hart Island.”

“I know nothing about Hart Island,” Luke said.

“Well, I’ll help you with that,” said Conklin. “It started its public use in the 1860s as a training camp for United States armed service of colored troops. It was then turned into a prison camp holding Union Civil War soldiers. It was a tuberculosis sanatorium and psychiatric institution. Hart’s Island had Potter’s Field, a mass burial site. There was a homeless shelter and a boy’s reformatory, a jail, and drug rehabilitation center. A planned amusement park for Hart Island was never constructed. It is now a burial site,” reported Ricky Conklin.

“It sounds like a lovely place,” Luke said.

“This is no laughing matter, Luke.”

“What do you mean?”

“Hart Island became the final burial place to over a million of unclaimed bodies. It’s thought got to be the largest government-sponsored mass grave in the world. Luke, do you know Hugo Teal?” Conklin asked.

“What’s your point, young man?”

“I know companies like yours have been for hundreds of years buying cadavers to do what you are doing here. Do you know Hugo Teal?”

“Mr. Conklin, I’m afraid I must escort you downstairs. I am instructing you that you’re prohibited from ever setting foot on this property again.”

\* \* \*

Scratch returned from his trip to France.

“Any luck?” Luke asked.

“So. I made an offer on a seven-story building, like New York City Brenners West. It has a loft upstairs. Only the first

floor has a storefront. I made an offer on a theater. It will become a factory, if needed."

"It sounds great," said Luke. "But we need to talk about Rita Conklin's son."

"This sounds bad. Can we do this over lunch? I need a Malones Cheeseburger."

\* \* \*

The parrot screeched as Luke and Scratch walked in. The bartender welcomed Scratch home. He pulled two beers from a tub full of ice, opened them, and gave it to them at the end of the bar.

"Thanks, Mike, we'll eat in the back," Scratch said.

They sat in their favorite corner away from most of the early lunch crowd. They gave their orders to the waiter: two cheddar cheeseburgers.

"So what's the matter with what's-her-name's son?" Scratch asked.

"Rita Conklin's son, Ricky, came into the store last week. He identified himself as an investigative reporter. He then insinuated that we were buying corpses from Potter's Field," Luke reported.

"What's Potter's Field?" Scratch inquired.

"It's a cemetery on Hart's Island, up in the Bronx."

"How did he ask?"

"He asked if we knew Hugo Teal. I immediately ended the conversation and threw him out."

"Did he respond?"

"No, he said, 'I'll be back.'"

"Did you call Teal?"

"No," Luke said. "I went across the street to the library and learned Rita had a son. Then I read some of her old columns, where she talks about him. She's been writing about him for twenty years as if Ricky is her husband."

"Are you serious?"



"I made copies," Luke said and pulled five pages from the library. He handed them to Scratch.

The burgers came and Scratch read as they ate.

"He's no investigative reporter. He's a mama's boy," Scratch laughed.

"It's more than that."

"What do you mean?"

"You need to read her columns," Luke directed.

"Oh?"

"Yes!"

"Shit."

"I did more research on Hart's Island," Luke said.

"And ..."

"Well, the screenwriter, and director Leo Berinski, died alone and in poverty. He lies in plot 45, section 2, number 14, if you ever want to visit him. Labor activist T-Bone Slim is there. He wrote and sang folk songs. He was a Wobbly and friend of Woody Guthrie. They found him floating dead in the Hudson River. He, too, is at rest on Hart's Island. I didn't get his address."

"Okay, Luke, I get it. There's an Oedipus Complex going on. The nutbag mother at least is a very published columnist. I need to call Matty and ask him to snoop around."

Scratch's analysis sounded solid to Luke.

"It's now in your hands," announced Luke.

\* \* \*

Scratch dialed Matty Hooligan's number and got his voicemail. He left a message.

"Matty, Scratch. I need information on the journalist Rita Conklin and her son Ricky. In particular, I need what the real psychological relationship is between them. I'd love it if you can get to their therapists. Thanks."

Three days later, Matty sent a fax with a handwritten note:

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Scratch, you owe me a Filet Mignon dinner. The therapist has a record and at least one outstanding warrant. I got everything he had. But, he does know his business. It's called "emotional parentification".

The fax had over forty pages ... About Rita Conklin and her son, Eric "Ricky" Conklin, who lives with mom, and never worked a day in his life.

Matty called Scratch the following day.

"Ricky takes the role of being a mediator or confidant. The mother is also harmed," Matty explained.

"What do you mean?"

Matty responded. "She is having an unfulfilled adult relationship of her own. There is an over-concern for Ricky as a prime source of her own neurosis."

"How does the neurosis play out? Did you ask?"

"They are lovers."

"Back in Bosler, Wyoming we heard about that," Scratch responded. "So what's my best play? I want them to leave us alone."

"Let me have another talk with the therapist and see what he says," Matty said, ending the call.

\* \* \*

Four days later, Matty called Scratch.

"What did you find out?" Scratch asked.

"I learned that Rita went for a therapy session over what Ricky did with Luke."

"What happened there?"

"The first thing I learned," Matty said, "was she gave Ricky holy hell for daring to stick his nose in her business. She sees Enchanted Endings as a good thing."

"Well, that's good."

"The problem is Ricky is angry at his mother for not believing what he believes. Also, that she doesn't believe the

models you have on display all came from Potters Field," Matty added.

"Luke and I never heard of Hart Island and the mass burials. And we have paperwork on each model," Scratch responded.

"Let it play out for the next few weeks," Matty advised.

\* \* \*

Scratch got another call.

"Mr. Scratch, this is Carmen Cordova. I'm a Mexican-born American singer and a professional ventriloquist. I was at Enchanted Endings a few weeks ago."

"It's nice to hear from you Ms. Cordova. I understand you have an interest in Ricardo, our Hispanic model."

"I have a great interest in him. I want to sit on his lap and have him talk to me and caress my breasts."

Scratch laughed. He liked Carmen.

"We've never adapted our models to move mouth muscles to talk and embrace women," Scratch informed. "But, I guess we could try. We have great artists working for us."

"Please think of a mannequin, which I've considered."

"You struck a nerve in me."

"I have? I'll work with you if you work with me."

"Ms. Cordova, you would ..."

"Please, Mr. Scratch, call me Carmen."

"I'll call you Carmen if you call me Scratch. Deal?"

"Deal! Let's make the big deal happen," Carmen suggested.

"I like where this is heading. More, I never liked Roberto, so maybe we can cut a deal."

"What's the next step?" Carmen asked.

"Let's meet Pablo, my lead artist, at our factory in Long Island City. Can you meet on Wednesday around noon?" Scratch inquired.

"Perfect."

\* \* \*

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The following Wednesday, Carmen and Pablo had already met when Scratch arrived.

"I'm happy the two of you have met."

"Yes," Carmen said, "Pablo knows exactly what needs to get completed!"

"Good day, Professor Scratch, I have everything understood. It is likely a week's work for me and our eye expert. We want his eyes to move. The stroking of the caress needs more fluidity. We can do it."

They discussed technical issues. In a very short time, the conference came to an end,

"Can I give you a ride back to Manhattan?" Scratch asked Carmen. "We can close the deal if you want."

"Yes, I will ride with you."

They got into the back seat of the limousine.

"Let me start by telling you I can pay \$20,000. I can pay the balance in monthly payments," Carmen offered.

"I have a better idea for you. It will need only \$5,000 upfront."

"I love it. What makes the deal?"

"The deal will work this way: I will lease the model to you as per your and Pablo's understanding. We will service the model, and correct it as needed for your act. In return for \$5,000 yearly, you will play gigs for me as I show the advanced models we can also produce. We also will receive your singing skills. Now, the final part. At the end of ten years, you own all Ricardo, because you will feed him too much and he will get too fat for Enchanted Endings," Scratch finished and offered a handshake.

Carmen shook his hand.

"Thank you ever so much, Scratch. You've made a friend for life."

"We will see a lot of each other. I do a lot of entertaining and promotion. Plan on trips all over the world. We will work well together. In about six months, we will be bringing

Ricardo to an exposition in Africa. We'll make each other very famous."

Carmen giggled her way back to Manhattan.

\* \* \*

Matty called three days later.

"Scratch, you may not believe this, but it is absolutely true. Are you ready?"

"If it's good news, I'm ready," Scratch rejoined.

"A very fortuitous truth has emerged. It seems that an up-and-coming singer is a favorite of Rita Conklin's. She's reviewed this woman many times. As a result, the young lady is being booked on prime-time shows," Matty reported.

"What's that have to do with Enchanted Endings?"

"Everything. The woman's name is Carmen Cordova."

"Are you pulling my leg?" Scratch posed.

"No," Matty said. "The common denominator is that Carmen also sees the same therapist. I couldn't stop laughing and neither could he."

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, in a few weeks, according to the analyst, your ventriloquist will have her dummy joining her on gigs. After you and she introduce yourselves, I know Rita Conklin will reciprocate. She'll do regular columns about Enchanted Endings."

"But, what about her crazy son?"

"Come on, Scratch. That's easy.

"How easy is it?"

"It's as easy as giving him a job making replicates in Long Island City. It gets him away from his crazy mother. He will never even remember where Potter's Field is or where it is."

"You're a genius,"

\* \* \*

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Luke called Scratch.

"Scratch," he said. "Hugo Teal called and needs a call back."

"Damn," he said. "I forgot her."

"We still have the pictures of her," Luke said. "Pablo can help. He could sculpt Lady Teal's head in less than a week."

"Good idea, Luke. Pablo is perfect. Look, if Teal calls again, tell him you've passed on the information, and I will be back from France in a week ... and tell him Lady Teal's head is on its way. Is Pablo at the Long Island plant?"

"Yes, he'll be working today."

An hour later, Scratch's chauffeur drove him to Long Island. With him, he carried twenty-five photos of Lady Teal. When they got to the studio, Scratch asked his driver to get Pablo.

As he waited, he looked at the photos of Lady Teal.

*Lord, is she a challenge to see.*

Pablo got in the back seat.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Scratch."

"To you too, Pablo," Scratch agreed. "You are the most talented sculptor and artist we have. I have a special assignment for you, and there will be a nice reward."

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate your confidence," he said.

"Let me explain the predicament we are in, and how I think you can help us out," Scratch said.

"Yes, sir," Pablo said.

"Great. We had a customer many months ago. He is a famous musician. His wife passed, and he wanted a bust of his beloved. Luke and I finished the replication and were ready to hand it off to you. But we misplaced Lady Teal's head. We looked everywhere. No Lady Teal. Now her husband has called."

"So, you want me to sculpt, paint, and texturize Lady Teal," Pablo said, "I can do the job as well in clay."

"I'm hoping to complete it in ten days."

"Did you bring pictures, by any chance?"

"I did." Scratch pulled out the photos and handed them to Pablo.

Pablo studied every photo and asked, "Do you know her hat size?"

"No!" Scratch panicked. "I don't know. We'll tell him heads shrink or enlarge and there's nothing we can do."

"Don't worry, sir. We know by the texture. I will get a sense of her size once I start the sculpture. I will start the first thing in the morning."

Three days later, Scratch called Pablo to ask about how the sculpture was coming.

"It will be ready tomorrow."

"I'll be over in a day or two."

Luke saw Scratch later in the evening over dinner.

"He called today," Luke said.

"Who called?"

"Maestro Teal."

"Pablo finished the sculpture, and will start the texturing and painting," he told Luke.

"You should call Maestro Teal," said Luke.

"Why me?" Scratch asked.

"Well, I told him we may have his wife next week, and he just hung up on me."

"Something's on his mind."

"I'll call him as soon as I have her head in hand," he said.

Two days later, Scratch went over to the studio to see how Lady Teal was coming. Sure enough, Pablo came through. It was perfect in every way. Scratch admired Pablo's artistic ability. He paid the artist \$3,000.

"Thank you, Dr. Scratch."

Scratch took the art and held it on his lap. After a moment, he turned Lady Teal's head to face the front. He then noticed his driver adjusted the rearview mirror, presumably so as not to see Lady Teal.

He called Maestro Teal and reached his voice mail. "Good day, Maestro Teal. Please know we have completed

*The Complex Replication of Lady Teal*

Lady Teal and will have her delivered on Friday. I am leaving for Spain. Oh, and because we were tardy, we won't charge you for the balance of the work. Happy holidays."

He had lunch and went back home to do more paperwork.

He saw he had a call and listened to the message.

"Mr. Scratch, this is the new Lady Teal. Please consider this. If you or your confederates dare to bring a bust of Emma, Gloria, Eve, or whatever her fucking name is, I will take it. I will then start banging the head of any delivery boy or girl you send. Do what you want with my husband's dead wife's head, but keep her the fuck out of here. I hope you understand. Please call if you have any questions."

Scratch took three quick shots of bourbon straight up and watched the news.

The following day, he asked his driver to bring Lady Teal's head to the Bronx. He arranged to have a laborer meet the driver, and accept Lady Teal's head, at this address: Plot 46, Section 2, Number 13, Potter's Field, Hart's Island, N.Y.C. New York.

Please take photographs of the burial. We'll send a wreath every Christmas. You never know, it could be that Maestro Hugo Teal will ... no. Never mind.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ronin James “R. J.” Stanchfield, storyteller, has journeyed through existence, including opposing the war in Vietnam, being a founder of the United States Green Party, and closing not one, but two, nuclear reactors. He was a whistleblower at Shoreham and, a few years later, found the purposely hidden “lost pages” describing the radioactive leak at Brookhaven National Lab’s High Flux Beam Reactor.

Ronin went from heavy industrial construction to two decades of high-end residential design and construction, building mansions in Southampton, East Hampton, Sag Harbor, and Shelter Island. During these years, he always made time to get involved in creative projects — whether it was to make a movie or write books.

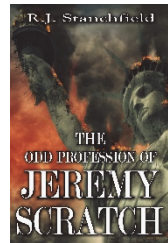
He has worked for *Billboard* and the *Chelsea Clinton News*, and written freelance articles for many of the Hampton’s newspapers, including *Dan’s Papers*. You can learn more about the world and works of R. J. Stanchfield at *R.J. Stanchfield Storyteller* ([rjstanchfield.com](http://rjstanchfield.com)).

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