Hickory Dickory Dock

Chapter 1

Never date a student.

Should be so obvious it doesn't need to be said.

Bill Edwards had never thought about it even.

Before Elise. Elise Scott. Damn her.

And then, as soon the fever fog of insanity lifted, he'd broken it off.

Explained it to her.

She was a student.

He was a teacher.

And she'd given him a look. The one which said "True, but I'm not done with you yet,"

And that was why he was standing outside his own history classroom, quaking in his patent leather shoes.

If he saw her, his resolve would start to crumble.

And that's assuming she didn't do anything.

But it was Elise.

Mr Edwards re-ran the conversation he'd had with her the night before... mature, adult. She'd taken it well. Except for the look....

Mr Edwards straightened his shoulders and plunged into the classroom.

"Good Morning! How are we all today? Good, good? Excellent! Where were we? Somewhere in the third Reich, I believe,"

Elise was sitting third row back on the right. Seemed normal. She wasn't even throwing him those flashing humourous looks from under her lashes the way she usually did. Mr Edwards felt a little annoyed. He quickly squashed it. Just a student.

Mr Edwards babbled about the Third Reich desperately for fifteen minutes before his terror subsided. She wasn't going to do anything. She knew it was crazy. They'd been crazy. She was a smart girl. Most insightful essayist he'd encountered. Of course. Sensible girl. It had all just been a moment of madness.

He resolutely turned to put some notes up on the blackboard, and told himself sternly to stop picturing her. Her slightly fuzzy white-blonde hair, pulled into a ponytail over one shoulder, ironic eyebrows over blue eyes, a smattering of freckles and her straight slender frame. In a blue-and-white school uniform. She was a student. A *student*. He could lose his job.

"So if everyone could open their text boobs-"

He nearly dropped the chalk.

"-to page one hundred and twenty two," he said smoothly, tossing Elise a quick glare of disapproval.

Damn girl had to be wearing a push-up bra.

She'd unbuttoned the top of her blouse while his back was turned, and now she was leaning forward over the desk, listening attentively, and batting her lashes with exaggerated innocence.

What the hell was she doing?

Mr Edwards went on teaching, a little frantically.

Elise fluttered her eyelashes at him. She shook out her hair in the best shampoo add impersonation she could do with her fuzzy hair. She tied it back up, into two school-girl plaits.

Mr Edwards told everyone to do the revision questions at the end of the chapter, and sat down and buried himself in marking.

Elise undid some of the buttons at the bottom of her blouse and tied the loose corners together, midriff revealed.

She'd re-hemmed her skirt the night before. After he'd come to his senses and said all those things.

Mr Edwards kept his eyes glued to his marking. Third Reich, Third Reich, Third Reich

Elise pulled out some bubble gum. She'd had to buy it especially. The pink stuff that blows big exploding sorts of bubbles. The kind you weren't allowed at school.

Mr Edwards twitched convulsively at a sudden popping sound, and looked up to see Elise putting the pink gum back into her mouth with one neatly manicured finger. She threw him a look of pure innocence, and began twirling one of the plaits with her other hand. She blew another bubble.

Mr Edwards forced his gaze back to his marking. He was *not* going to keep her in after class. What on earth was she doing anyway? She was starting to look a little bit like a bad Brittany Spears impersonator. What the devil had he said last night to cause her to assume the look of a slutty school girl?

School girl.

Oh God.

He hadn't said 'student' at all, had he.

Oh shit.

"Please, sir," Elise had her hand up, "I don't understand," she pouted. Lips shiny and pink with strawberry lipbalm.

Oh, no you don't, thought Mr Edwards, I'm not coming over there to be stuck looking down your top while you pout and bat your eyelashes at me. Ha.

"Bring your book up here, Elise, I'll have a look,"

For a second, he felt quite pleased for not falling into her trap.

And then she stood up.

Damn it, damn it, damn it.

She flicked him a sweet little smile, and catwalked down the aisle.

As though he could ever forget those legs.

She put the book on his desk and leaned on it.

Mr Edwards did the only thing he could, given the situation.

He took his glasses off.

"Now Elise," he said to the blurry blob leaning on the desk, "What seems to be the problem?"

The Elise blob leant closer.

A smaller pink blob developed and started to swell and, unnervingly, got pinker, rounder, curvier.

Further confusing the issue, his vision, as usual, blurred further.

A perfect round pink orb floated in his distorted vision.

"My God," he thought suddenly struck by bad, bad yet strangely suggestive and erotic notions.

"What is she doing?"

The pinkness and roundness got bigger, closer and perkier.

"Surely she wouldn't!"

"But would she?" his mind hand-braked, thinking of his previous exploits with hurriedly fumbling fingers on her tender pliable flesh.

In a burst of panic he reached for his glasses and just as he perched them on his nose he heard the tell-tale pop of an exploding bubblegum bubble.

His vision returned and framed in his sight Elise delicately removed the residue of the burst bubblegum balloon from her twin terror lips with the delightful moist point of her seductive, slowly-winding, sinuous, serpentine.......

"Stop it!!! Stop it!!! Stop it!!!!!"

"For Christ's sake man!!! STOP IT!!!!!!"

"SHE'S A STUDENT!!!!!"

"What are you thinking? You could get the sack."

That said to himself he reached for a modicum of composure and couldn't find it anywhere.

A single bead of sweat moistened his brow, ran down the length of his nose and then evaporated with the heat and momentarily fogged his glasses.

Between slightly pursed lips he reluctantly blew a breath.

She smiled in triumph, a small, easily won, but never the less, tasty, victory.

"Ah, yes, Elise. Where were we?"

Without revealing too much, but still, just enough to arouse, she leant over his desk, spun his open book around, plucked his red correcting ballpoint from his numb fingers and began to write.

He sat very still, unsure what to do. Nobody had taken his red correcting ballpoint before so he took the sensible way out and did nothing.

"That'll show her," he thought vehemently.

She wrote one word.

Us?

He fervently hoped it was in reference to some US history question, perhaps the lasting effects of WW2 on the world economy at large, or General Patton's legacy on forceful battle tactics, or maybe even the Third Reich's crucial strategic errors leading to their defeat at The Battle of the Bulge, all terribly interesting stuff, riveting, but somehow, he doubted it. American war history wasn't Elise's cup of tea.

He knew full well what Elise was driving at.

In his slowly clearing mind Bill formulated a response, one he hoped she was satisfied with and one he hoped to defend, at least better then the Germans did at The Battle of the Bulge.

As she spun the book around for his benefit and their eyes met the classroom door opened with a sudden violent swing.

Now, nearly cheek to cheek, guiltily, both their heads turned as one to the figure casually lounging in the newly opened door.

Veronica Dock, vamped up and dressed to kill, sizzled in the doorway.

She knew guilt when she saw it and maybe, just a tiny fleck of it had reached her eager probing eyes just before Elise Scott and Bill Edwards had managed to shut it down.

Something was cooking. Her nostrils flared slightly, sniffing opportunity and her fingers tingled and twisted with calculated anticipation.

"Bill?" she drizzled suggestively. "Can I see you for a moment?"

"Uh. Oh. OK sure. Miss Dock."

"Call me Veronica."

"Uh. OK Miss Veronica."

He was terrified of Veronica Dock and with good reason. Although officially uncertified she was a certifiable lunatic. There was an unnerving passion about her

that had to be felt to be believed. Her whole being smoked and smouldered. Bill had always been terrified of being alone with her. He was sure she would eat him and suck on his marrow.

He was more or less right.

As he followed in her wake towards the gym his eyes wandered freely. She knew and just let him, purposely exaggerating her grind.

She was the newish youngish phys ed teacher and was covered with heroic muscles, veins and such and she was the proud owner of a totally superior BMI. Bill didn't know if he had one or not but was sure if he did it would be rather disappointing so he hadn't bothered really. But, he was pretty sure Elise would have one. She was trim, taut, terrific, pert... soft.....downy....

"STOP IT!!"

He commanded himself wiping his mind with the saintly internal windscreen wiper. He forced his eyes to the middle of Veronica's back and trudged faithfully behind.

Veronica forged ahead. Leading him to the gym where she murdered medicine balls, knotted all the ropes worth knotting and regularly beat the punching bag senseless. Poor things didn't stand a chance.

All this rigorous activity showed. She was a razor sharp, tight strung feline of muscle, tendon and whipcord.

Although ten years his junior, Veronica Dock had always harboured rampant thoughts on what to do with Bill Edwards. He was a nice man and she liked nice men, in a cat play with mouse kind of way.

Apparently, if you believed her psychologist, she was sex craved and possibly a nymphomaniac. But as she often thought to herself as she sat in his sterile office, on his immaculate white leather upholstery, listening to his endless banter while imagining him in his underpants and below, who listens to what they have to say anyway.

"Idiots."

She's half a mind to bring in the whips and handcuffs and take to him in a sluttish frenzy. Except he was old, dreary, and well, just crusty. Some of these things were pardonable but not all three in combination. Anyway, sex craved indeed. She was just a reasonably active woman for her age that had some slightly obscure tastes and requirements. Which brings us nicely back to Bill, or indeed, Elise?

Now, there was a pretty little thing.

All these competing but deliriously delicious thoughts ran unbridled through her mind as she firmly gripped Bill's arm and lead him into the gym.

"Well Bill. We do have a lot to think about."

Bill gulped involuntarily, in a mouse fearing cat kind of way.

Veronica Dock had Bill in a headlock as she practised a new technique to be used in her next self defence class.

'Can you breathe?' she asked.

'Yes,' he grunted, feeling the pressure of muscle and bone against his windpipe and the cushion of ripe, full flesh against his cheek. In a strange way it was quite a pleasurable experience, except for the fact that he was starting to see stars before his eyes.

Their interlude was interrupted by a sound at the gym door. Veronica eased the pressure at his throat and Bill took a great gulp of air.

'Mr Edwards come quick!' Natasha Garlick was beckoning madly.

Her eyes and mouth wide were with alarm, and the rest of her was wide with... well...with too many cheeseburgers and upsized fries and sodas. Let's just say she was not the most attractive pupil in his class. Especially with her meaty chicken wings flapping wildly and her infected face so red with distress that Bill thought every one of her ghastly, festering pimples might erupt at any moment and come shooting forward to douse him in revolting, yellow goo.

How does one duck from exploding sebaceous cysts, Bill thought, trying to free himself from the clutches of the vigorous Veronica.

'Dick is tearing up the class room!' Natasha screeched.

'Oh my God!' Veronica and Bill groaned in unison.

Dickory Whit, the recently arrived student from Woolgoolga was having trouble assimilating. With the impressive looks of Channing Tatum but the intellect of Homer Simpson he was proving to be a difficult student. And if all the gushing love notes written in very bad English on questionable toilet paper, and left on a particular desk were to be believed, he too had a major crush on Elise Scott.

Veronica released Bill and he dropped like sack of Desiree potatoes onto the smelly, sweat stained gym mat.

'C'mon, Billy,' the mistress of torture commanded with more than a glint of excitement in her ice blue eyes, 'Let's go.'

He just shook his head. 'You go first, I'll be there in a minute,' he urged catching his breath and planning a quick escape through the emergency exit. Maybe he'd catch a bus back to his family home across town. He hadn't seen his mother for a

while and she would surely love for him to drop in. Maybe she'd make him some fairy cakes with sprinkles on like when he was a child. He felt an urgent need to be mothered.

'You're his teacher and your coming now!' Bill heard as he was picked up by the scruff of his neck and frogmarched out of the gym.

At the other end of the hall he could see Natasha and a gaggle of girls jigging outside his classroom and screaming back into it, 'Don't hurt him, don't hurt him!' Books, pens, a laptop and and a chair (with Lyle Lovegrove still attached) came flying out the door and into the hallway. This was a meltdown of gi-normous scale.

'What's going on?' Veronica enquired rubbing her hands with nervous tension (or was it sadistic pleasure) at the carnage she was about to observe.

Lyle, picked himself up from the hall tiles and dusted debris from his uniform. 'Dickory got his jocks in a twist about Elise coming on to everyone but him and got a little c-a-r-a-a-z-y when she told him it was none of his business. Turns out he thought otherwise. Says she's his and no-one else's.'

'But she isn't,' Bill interjected a little to swiftly. 'She doesn't have a boyfriend. She can't have. She told me.' Perspiration formed above his lip and dripped into his open mouth.

'And when might that have been, Billy boy?' Veronica's eyes bore into his with the intensity of a laser beam.

Bill wouldn't have been the least bit surprised if an alien burst from her heaving, glorious chest to grab him by the testicles - which could be a feat in itself seeing they'd shrunk to the size of ball bearings at this turn of events. God, what he wouldn't do for a time machine. One that could take him back to before he'd applied for this damnable teaching job at this damnable school with these damnable people.

Veronica shoved Bill into the chaos. The room was heaped with wreckage and masses of whimpering teenagers. At ground zero stood Dick, a colossus, growling with raging anger and hormones above the startled form of Elise Scott. Bill quivered with fear, Veronica with desire. Bill took a step back while Veronica took a step closer.

Her heart raced. Now this was a male who could match her strength for strength. Veronica's mind whirled with possibilities. 'Now, now, Dicky, that's not the way to behave,' she soothed, taking up a chair and venturing forward like a circus lion tamer, 'Take a deep breath and settle down. Everything will be ok.'

'You!' Dick cried, pointing a blunt finger in the direction of Bill who was now cowering by the whiteboard, 'You filthy piece of shit! I've seen you pervin' on my girl!'

'No!' screamed Bill.

'Yes!' screamed Elise, 'He's a paedophile.'

'What?' Bill squawked staring at the one who had willingly tempted him beyond belief. What a turncoat. 'Liar,' he yelled and watched with mortal terror as Dick the slayer, brushed Veronica aside with one hefty swipe and steamed towards him, nostrils flaring, fists flying.

D-I-N-G! The recess bell echoed through the building and brought everyone to a standstill; including Dick's hammer of a fist, right in front of Bill's trembling face.

'Mr Edwards?' a voice called from the doorway. It was Brenda from admin. 'The principal would like to see you and Elise Scott in his office immediately.'

She shuffled over and handed him a note. It seems Elise's father had turned up sprouting something about his daughter's diary and inappropriate behaviour.

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it.

Bill wished there was a mouse hole he could crawl into.

Brenda then retreated out the door, calling: 'Bill, Bill, Bill'.

'That's funny', thought Bill. 'Why is she carrying on like this, and she usually calls me Mr Edwards.'

Bill was struggling to make sense of what was going on: people were behaving right out of character.

He continued struggling to make sense of things, while increasingly, he was finding it seemed like he was walking through pea soup.

'Bill', again came the even louder woman's voice. 'You need to wake up. You're making a frightful noise.'

Bill slowly made sense of his surroundings. He struggled groggily to sit up in bed with June very worried beside him.

'I really shouldn't read those stupid books I've confiscated, if this is going to be the consequence,' he thought.

'Thanks love, he said, 'a ridiculous dream about school, I won't bore you with it.' To himself he thought, 'It seemed like we were heading to a BDSM session the way we were going.'

Bill got up to visit the toilet, and on returning to bed, went straight to sleep, while June, having woken unnecessarily, read for another hour.

The next day at school, everything was back to what constituted normal for Bill.

Yes, Elise was still being her usual extrovert self, but not quite in the same state of undress, or more correctly, not the extreme lack of clothing she was wearing in his dream.

Dick Whit could still not get his head around the difference between the SA and the SS in Nazi Germany Twentieth Century History lesson.

Veronica kept herself in her Dock, according to the students.

And, there was no sign of the Principal or his secretary, Brenda.

In fact, Elise had a dreamy quality about her, and Dick kept staring at her from his usual perch in the back row.

'These two will never be an item,' Bill thought as he ran the class through their project on the misdeeds of Nazi Germany. 'Funny to think about it', he thought, 'how some of the main protagonists of the Nazi Party were born in Austria, not in Germany. Hitler, of course, Adolf Eichmann, Aribert Heim, who was "Dr. Death" in the Mauthausen concentration camp, and Amon Goth of the Kraków-Płaszów

concentration camp, the site of Thomas Keneally's book 'Schindler's Ark. But then, against that, Oskar Schindler was also Austrian.

'That's the thing about teaching history: it's the personal stories of the characters which help students understand the context of modern life.'

But, Dick's constant staring at Elise was beginning to disturb Bill, and it was noticeable that the other students were showing their interest in the unlikely pairing.

When the bell rang at the end of class, Dick was in no hurry to leave. He just waited until the end of the exit procession, then joined just at the point where he could follow Elise out.

Bill would not see this group again until after the term break, and he fell to musing about what Dick and Elise would be doing during the this break for today's lunch. He saw Elise disappear with her gaggle of girlfriends to the benches near the front fence where they could watch for good-looking guys as they passed in their cars and trucks - there weren't many on foot in that part of town. He could hear their boom box blasting out Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' as they went.

Bill lost sight of Dick, but eventually caught a glimpse of him walking away purposefully from the classroom as Bill wandered over to the Staff Common Room for lunch.

Conversation was about the forthcoming end of term and what everyone intended to do over the break. Victoria, dressed in her usual white track-suit, sauntered over and sat in the seat next to Bill, and following the general conversation said, 'I'm just staying home. Catching up on sleep seems like a good idea. But young Whit seems to be very interested in gymnastics, so I might give him a few hours to help get his technique up'.

'What! Dickory Whit?' Bill could hardly believe his ears. 'I thought he was more in need of academic coaching rather than Phys Ed.'

'You wouldn't believe how enthusiastic he is', responded Victoria. 'He was apparently a fair wiz when he was at Woolgoolga. He's small and muscly, so he's just the right shape. I think that there's some promise there.'

Bill was stunned, remembering his nightmare of the previous night. 'Well, I'll be blowed,' he murmured.

When school resumed, Bill was again amazed to overhear Dick say to Elise, 'I've got something really special just for you at the gym during the lunch break.' Elise just stared at Dick as she might at a talking cat, but managed to bring out 'What?'

'I've got some Michael Jackson stuff for you there, in my gym bag', Dick responded.

'Girls, I'm going with Whitless for a bit. I'll join you in a couple of secs', was all she said, as she dawdled after Dick in the general direction of the gym.

When she got there, Dick was in baggy shorts, singlet and high top sneakers. LMFAO was gently pumping out 'Party Rock Anthem' from Dick's iPad on the corner of the gym mats.

Dick ignored Elise. He rolled his head and shoulders in time with the thumping bass, gyrating his arms in rap dancing fashion, before going down on his hands, with his feet parallel behind him, revolving across each other, then quickly developing the movements into a smooth circle on his hands only, before suspending his whole body on his hands, while he turned a circle.

Elise yawned as the music stopped.

Dick was up, and into the corner of the floor exercise mat before the yawn was finished. He performed a presentation movement before heading off diagonally at a prance. A high leap followed, before Dick fell flat on his face on the floor.

Elise stifled a giggle.

Dick got up shamefacedly, performed a presentation movement again, before slinking off to the opposite corner, where he commenced again what he had just started. This time, it was a perfect double aerial summersault, with a forward roll which ended in Dick landing perfectly on both feet with not so much as a wobble.

Elise almost clapped.

Dick turned again and started another run up after the perfunctory presentation movement, this time there were three back flips one after another, ending in a perfect landing.

Elise was not impressed.

On the next movement back towards the start corner, Dick tried the same movement again, but got his feet tangled on take-off, landing in a heap in the middle of the mat.

Elise stifled another giggle, getting impatient for the Michael Jackson things which were promised her. She got up to go to find that Dick was motioning 'just one more minute'.

Dick performed a double back-flip from the middle of the mat to get back to the commencing position, and gave a final presentation movement.

He sauntered back to Elise, picking up a glittery jacket, a hat and a white glove on the way. Dick stooped to his iPad and touched it, immediately commencing the Michael Jackson moves to 'Billie Jean' as the music commenced, starting with the grasp of his crotch.

Elise was entranced. She'd never seen anyone imitate the King of Pop so precisely. She knew that none of the moves were easy. She'd tried the moonwalk herself, giving it up as a bad job. The quick shoe shuffles were almost impossible, and the high step walk/dancing was exhausting. Dick kept it up for the whole of the track before taking a bow.

Elise jumped up without thinking and embraced Dick.

'Glad you liked it', was all that Dick could manage, and after few heavy breaths, 'Will you come to the Formal with me please?'

'Of course,' breathed Elise in his ear, as she took his hand and led him back to his gear.

The final day of the current school term arrived with the usual lack of scholastic enthusiasm. Conversely the air was filled with an almost tangible mood of anticipation. It was the school Formal this evening. Even the round, Natasha Garlick seemed to be somewhat excited and had for the moment ceased picking at her many spots. She was engaged in mindless conversation with an equally round Shona Fried, regarding satin, lace and crimplene, and how many meters of each had been sacrifice to create her gown for the evening.

Bill was dreading it. He and 'Veronica the Delicious' – damn he has to stop mentally calling her that whenever she popped into his mind, which was often since the dream of a few nights ago. He knows for sure he will say it out loud one day if he keeps it up. He shivered at the thought.

Anyway he and the delic...damn... he and Veronica, are to be chaperones for the evening.

"God it's going to be hell" he thought, "I'll need all the help I can get" and he patted his jacket pocket to make sure his vodka filled hip-flask was still in place.

The day drudged by. His only highlight was the early wrap-up of classes to enable the young ladies and young gentlemen to go home and prepare for the formal.

Young gentlemen and ladies, "Ha" thought Bill. Not one of them deserved to be called either, although that strange young lad, Shannon DeLacey, may be closer to the title than some of the females who will attend this evening.

Time was escaping and he figured he should go across to the school hall and make sure the preparations had been finalised. He looked around and seeing the coast clear, took a quick tug on his hip flask. "Heaven" he thought as the clear warm liquid made its way to his belly.

"Mr Edwards"!

The startling call came from behind him; it was Elise.

As he turned around and caught sight of her in her formal gown, most parts of his body did exactly the opposite of what his jaw did, which was to droop loosely. Surely she can't be the same young girl he had watched in class and seen in disturbing dreams, with the bubble gum and provocative skirt hitching and so forth.

No this was an angel sent from heaven. Although not the same heaven they spoke about in church.

She had the body of, well the body of a very well proportioned schoolgirl and as she got closer he realised his mouth was open and he slammed it shut with an audible pop.

He must try to blink. But he didn't want to; he didn't want to miss a single second of her approach.

Her hips swayed gently beneath the smooth, not too tight fitting, knee length, electric blue dress that had obviously been manufactured by experts in the trade of turning professional teachers into drooling, dirty old men. She was outstanding.

"Mr Edwards" she repeated, somewhat breathlessly, "I'm glad I caught up to you".

"Ms Dock sent me to ask you if you had the tickets. She's looked everywhere in the Gym Office and can't find them. She wants you to help her search if you don't have them".

Bill came to his senses, "Umm, thanks Elise, aahh, I don't have them so I'd better go and see what I can do That dress is very becoming" he said.

Elise flashed him a spectacular smile and pulled her shoulders back, stretching the material of her dress slightly tighter across her fulsome young figure. "Thank-you Bill, you look rather dashing in that blue sports coat".

"How the hell does it stay up"?! He thought to himself as he stared at the strapless creation and once again snapped his mouth closed. "Thank-you Elise and please call me Mr Edwards"; "or I may start thinking even more inappropriate thoughts about you" he finished in his mind.

Elise simply continued to smile and brushed very closely past him, "See you inside Mr Edwards".

God she even made that sound sexy.

Bill checked himself and the surrounding area – all clear – and took another pull on his hip-flask before briskly and rather anticipatorily heading off to meet 'Veronica the Delicious' in the gym.

He could hear Veronica rifling through draws and cupboards as he approached the office and before going in, took one more swig of fortifying vodka. "Delicious" he thought, "Just like Veronica". "Damn, damn, damn"!

He walked into the office and there was she was; at least there was her shapely behind. She was bent forward into one of the sports lockers and muttering soft curses, which only added to the eroticism of the vision before Bill's eyes. He couldn't take his eyes of her athletically toned posterior. He uttered not a sound. He wanted this to last!

Damn she was indeed delicious to look at. He had only ever seen her in the schools hideous yellow tracksuit, although she managed to make even that look exceedingly good; unlike everybody else, who looked like they were trying out for the part of B3.

She eventually straightened and turned around.

"Oh! Bill"!

"You startled me" she said as she walked towards him.

Everything in the cream pant suit she was wearing was exactly where it should be; was proportioned with precision and moved like a well oiled piece of machinery – very sexy machinery. Maybe like the workings of a Cartier wristwatch, or a well oiled steam driven piston engine, or............ He realised his mouth was open again.

Veronica stopped only a couple of inches from him, forcing his eyes to focus, reluctantly at first, on her face, which included her beautifully made-up eyes and delightful to behold, well glossed, soft pink lips, which smiled knowingly at him.

"Bill, where you checking out my butt"? She asked provocatively.

Bill simply stammered incoherently and reached into his jacket pocket,

"Drink"? Was all he could trust himself to ask.