

LINDSEY & PLUM BOOK EIGHT

*The  
Emerald Cat*  
**KILLER**



RICHARD A. LUPOFF

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# **BORGOPRESS BOOKS BY RICHARD A. LUPOFF**

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## **THE LINDSEY & PLUM DETECTIVE SERIES**

1. *The Comic Book Killer*
2. *The Classic Car Killer*
3. *The Bessie Blue Killer*
4. *The Sepia Siren Killer*
5. *The Cover Girl Killer*
6. *The Silver Chariot Killer*
7. *The Radio Red Killer*
8. *The Emerald Cat Killer*
9. *One Murder at a Time: The Casebook of Lindsey & Plum*

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# DEDICATION

To the three persons who first urged me to try my hand at a mystery novel: Henry Morrison, Patricia Lupoff, and Noreen Shaw. And to the wonderful editors who guided Hobart Lindsey and Marvia Plum through their many cases and their longtime relationship:

May Wuthrich  
Donna Rankin  
Gordon Van Gelder  
Margo Power  
Keith Kahla

...and to all the fans and readers who waited so long and who offered such encouragement, this final chapter in the saga is dedicated.

# INTRODUCTION

## “On the Rails of Time” by Patricia Holt

It's easy to get addicted to the writings of Richard Lupoff, a veteran quick-pace novelist who's quietly written more than forty books, many of them with titles that appeal to the kid in all of us: *Barsoom: Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Martian Vision*, *The Return of Skull-Face*, *The Black Tower*, *Circumpolar!*

For mystery fans, though, the most delicious of Lupoff's works must be the eight novels spanning twenty-two years that feature Hobart (“Bart”) Lindsey, a mild-mannered insurance agent, and Berkeley, California, homicide detective Marvia Plum.

We know from the outset that these two may never get together. An African-American cop raising her son as a single mother (Marvia) doesn't usually hook up with a white insurance adjuster living with his mother (Bart). On the one hand, there is Marvia, who sees homicide as both art and career advancement, while on the other there is Bart, who wants simply to settle insurance claims honorably and honestly.

Yet gradually the two sleuths discover a subtle humor, an ability to outthink adversaries, a hidden spark of adventurism and a growing respect for each other—especially, for Bart, when murder occurs and complicates the claim form. Love becomes such an incendiary element that Lupoff reveals himself as much an incurable romantic as deft plotter and, in his way, scholarly researcher.

This last occurs because if you're interested in popular artifacts from the past—World War II airplanes, rare comic books, antique cars—a big bonus awaits you throughout this series. With such novels as *The Comic Book Killer* (1988), *The Classic Car Killer* (1991), *The Bessie Blue Killer* (1994) and *The Sepia Siren Killer* (1995), Lupoff explores the fascinating history of populist art, parts of which might have been lost forever if Bart and Marvia weren't searching for murderers among the remains.

Thoughtfulness fills these pages as much as intrigue. Of people

who engage in the collectible arts, Bart observes, “Their minds all worked in similar ways. They felt that human achievement was bound in the artifacts of human creation, that the preservation and ownership of those artifacts kept civilization on the rails of time. To lose the things of the past was to lose the past itself, and to lose civilization’s compass.”

The compass in Lupoff’s latest, *The Emerald Cat Killer*, is the world of lurid paperback whodunits that used to belong to the pulp fiction genre. Although he doesn’t delve as deeply into publishing as much as he has in other fields, Lupoff has another, more cerebral job to do this time—to bring Bart Lindsey back from retirement after thirteen years out of the field, to dust off his “mental Rolodex” containing the entire casts of *noir* movies and books, and to reintroduce Marvia as a new kind of partner in emotional as well as professional doings.

And while this eighth installment (plus a volume of short stories featuring Lindsey and Plum) may be his last in the series, it’s also perhaps the purest crime-procedural novel Lupoff has written. Showing us how dogged Bart must be to follow one less valuable clue after another, Lupoff also reveals something earnest and formal about Hobart Lindsey that keeps us turning these pages.

Even now, after he’s been forcibly retired, then called back and ordered around by his old boss, it means something to Bart to represent International Surety. No matter how many adjusters do the same, Bart takes his role seriously. He is a special agent who follows company disciplines and acts with dignity and professionalism with villains and victims alike. When he prepares for an interview—“Lindsey took out a notebook and his gold International Surety pencil”—his subtle attention to decorum is touching.

Perhaps it is Bart’s old-fashioned dignity that makes Lupoff’s series as charming and durable as the antiques about which so much mayhem is committed.

*Patricia Holt was book review editor for the San Francisco Chronicle for sixteen years, and is author of The Good Detective (Pocket Books).*

# CHAPTER ONE

Red stopped in place, turned her face to the sky and shook her fist angrily. She shot a string of obscenities at God for doing this to her. Why had she let herself lose focus and wander into this yuppie-infested neighborhood and why had that bastard in the sky sent this storm after her?

She wore a ragged tee shirt and free-box jeans and a pair of old sneakers with holes in the bottom. She'd had a hat earlier tonight—at least she thought she had—but that was gone, probably swept away by a gust of wind when she was thinking of something else. At least her hands were protected from the worst of the cold. There was an elementary school just up the street—she ought to know that, she'd been a student there once upon a time—and some kid must have dropped a pair of gloves on her way home from kindergarten or first grade or second grade, and she'd found them on the sidewalk and managed to pull them onto her skinny, undersized hands.

The rain was coming down and there were even rumbles of thunder and flashes of lightning, not common with Pacific storms, but who the hell knew what God—or was it Goddess—was going to do? She paused under a streetlamp to look down at herself. She was skinny, the skinniest she could ever remember being. The cold rain and wind made her nipples stick out through the thin shirt. At least that was one good thing. They might attract the attention of a john if there was such a thing as a john in this neighborhood full of smug householders and students from smug families.

And the fuzz patrolled this neighborhood. She knew that. It was too late at night for panhandling. Nothing to shoplift, all the stores turned off their lights and closed up before now.

It was her own fault. Bobby had told her to stay in the flatlands when he turned her out for the night's work. Stay in the Berkeley flatlands, or better yet, head for West Oakland. There was more business there and the cops were more likely to look the other way as long as what was going on involved consenting adults.



Was she a consenting adult? How old was she? Hard to remember her last birthday. Hard to remember anything any more. Turned on in middle school, turned out in high school, dropped out, busted, released, juvenile hall, released, using, hooking, dealing. If she hadn't found Bobby—or if Bobby hadn't found her—there was no telling where she would be by now. Maybe dead.

Although that didn't sound like such a bad idea either.

A flash of lightning showed her a black-and-white coming up Claremont from the direction of Oakland. She was pretty sure she was still on the Berkeley side of the city line, but cops from both cities liked to cruise in this neighborhood, criss-crossing the line with impunity.

She ducked behind a parked car. The black-and-white swept by, its tires making a hissing sound on the rain-wet macadam. She didn't want to get picked up now. She needed a jolt. She didn't care how it came—from a pill, a snort, or a pipe. But she liked the pills best. They were like jelly beans. Fun and easy to take. She'd tried a pipe and it burned her throat and made her cough. And she was seriously afraid of needles.

Man, was she ever cold. If only she could get inside somewhere, out of this rain. She contemplated checking out the backyards of some of the houses in this neighborhood. Maybe she could sneak into a garage or a basement and get dry. She'd even try a kid's playhouse or a storage shed.

The black-and-white was gone. She hoisted herself to her feet, using the door handle of a shiny new something-or-other. She caught a glimpse of herself in the car's window. Oh, man, what a vision. No wonder the johns were so few these days. She looked like a hag of forty years old, maybe even older. Nobody would take her for—she tried to remember her actual age. She was probably fifteen. Her hair was dirty and ragged, she'd lost half her teeth, her complexion looked like an old soccer ball.

Maybe she could find a junky looking for a fix. She could steer him to Bobby and Bobby would make a sale and let her stay in the room overnight.

Fat chance.

She started down the street again, trying car doors. They were all locked. She caught another glimpse of herself in a window. Yes, her hair was red. That must be why her name was Red. Or maybe Rita, Rhoda, something like that. It was just so hard to remember anything, to think about anything except about getting a jolt. Getting a jelly bean or two. Getting dry and getting a jolt.

Another black-and-white rolled past and she ducked behind a car until it disappeared into the darkness and the rain. A gust of wind slammed a piece of flying cardboard against her and she had to peel it off her back and throw it into the middle of the street, screaming at God to stop fucking with her and give her a place to sleep, out of the storm.

At least that.

Please, you fucker, at least that.

Her face was wet and she couldn't tell whether it was with rain or tears.

She'd better get off the main drag. Too many black-and-whites, too much chance of getting dragged down to the lockup on MLK.

She turned down a little side street. Most of the lights were off. Smug burghers were nestled all snug in their beds while visions of, what, she couldn't remember, visions of something danced in their heads. Visions of jelly beans, maybe.

Holy cow, thank you Jesus, an unlocked car! She pulled the door open, crawled in, shut the door behind her. Oh, all right, dry and warm and safe. If only she had a jolt life would be perfect right here in her own little nest of safety. She slid across the seat, reached up and turned the mirror so she could see herself, at least a little, in the small light that was available.

One look and she started to cry again. She'd been a pretty girl. Her parents had loved her, she was popular with her schoolmates. And boys, boys really liked her. They were sniffing around after her before she was out of sixth grade.

When had she lost it? She couldn't remember. It didn't matter. Red. That's who she was. Or Rhonda. Robbie. Was she Robbie? No, that was Bobby. Bobby was her source. Bobby loved her, or he would someday. So she wasn't Robbie. Maybe Rosie. Little Red

Rosie, wasn't that a nursery rhyme? Something like that.

She looked around inside the car. Maybe there was something here worth ripping off. They said you could get some nice money for a good car stereo but she didn't know how to get one out of a car, and if she did, how would she get it back to Bobby's room in the old Van Buren Hotel down on Acton Street? No, that wouldn't work.

She punched open the map compartment and pulled out a fat wad of papers. Maps, owner's manuals, insurance certificates, registration papers. Christ, this guy must never throw anything away. She pawed around the dashboard until she found a knob that she recognized as a cigar lighter. Imagine, everybody used to have these things in their cars. She punched it, waited till it popped back out, pulled it out of its little hole and stared at the glowing bulls-eye of red-hot wires. She held it up to her face so she could feel the warmth. It was really great. She decided to warm herself, pushed it against her cheek, screamed when she felt the burning, searing heat on her skin.

She dropped the cigar lighter. It bounced off something hard lying on the floor. She reached down to see what it was. Something black, almost like an attaché case only not an attaché case, more like—she almost had it, she'd get it in a minute but somebody in the house must have heard her scream. She saw a light come on in the house, heard a little yippy dog sending up an alarm.

Somebody was going to come and grab her, she knew it. If she could get out of the car fast enough and get away she'd be all right. Or maybe she should lock the car door. She should have done that in the first place but she didn't think of it, she was too occupied thinking about getting warm and dry and jelly beans. She started to get out of the car, then realized what the black thing was, realized that she'd hit pay dirt after all.

Her heart beat wildly, her blood sang in her veins. This was something she could sell for real money. Or she could bring it to Bobby and he could sell it and they'd share the money. He'd let her stay with him in his room on Acton Street. She wouldn't even need any of the money. He could have it all. She'd take out her share in jolts.

She started to sing a happy song.

Some ancient guy wearing pajamas and a bathrobe must have come out of the house because he was pulling the door open. He reached for her but she didn't wait for him to grab her. She could have scrambled out the other side of the car but this was too exciting. She screamed at the guy and jumped out of the car, straight at him.

He was startled. He hadn't expected that, the sucker hadn't. She'd never seen anybody look so surprised. He actually backed away from her. There was a brick thingamabob behind him, a plinth or a pilaster or whatever the hell they called them in art history class. She laughed at him. She went for him, the black thing in her hands, and she knew what it was, it was a laptop computer and those things were worth real money, worth even more than car radios or cell phones.

The sucker saw her coming at him and he threw up his hands. She hit him smack on with everything she had, smashed him in the face with the laptop computer.

There were more lights on in the house and the little yippy dog was going absolutely bonkers nuts.

The guy she'd hit lurched backwards, his head jerking backwards against the brick thingamabob, and then the front door of the house opened and the little yippy dog came swarming at her followed by a dumpy old broad waving her arms and Red split, she turned around and she ran, ran back to the bigger street, turned, and ran, and ran, and ran, the laptop computer hugged to her chest, her feet soaked with icy rainwater that came up through the holes in her sneakers and she was screaming, "Bobby, Bobby, open up, Bobby, let me in, Bobby, Bobby, I've got something for you, Bobby, for us, Bobby, something wonderful. Oh, love me, Bobby, love me, Bobby, love me, Bobby."

## CHAPTER TWO

*One year later...*

“Lindsey?”

It only took one word to make the old synapses kick back in. If he'd been a retired soldier he'd have wanted to jump out of bed and stand at attention. If he'd been a retired fire horse he'd have snorted once, shaken himself, and been ready to pull the wagon to the conflagration.

Hobart Lindsey grunted, “Yes, Mr. Richelieu.”

He pressed the phone to his ear, swung himself around and planted his feet in his fleece slippers. How long had he been retired, himself? He'd had enough of International Surety to qualify for his pension. He wasn't eligible for Social Security yet and the monthly checks from I.S. weren't exactly lavish, but he'd been able to keep the little house in Walnut Creek after his mother remarried and moved to a gated retirement community in Carlsbad.

He waited to hear what Desmond Richelieu, his old chief at International Surety, top executive at Special Projects Unit / Detached Service, would be calling him about at this hour of the morning. In fact... Lindsey frowned, peered at the glowing readout on his bedside clock, and waited for Richelieu to say what he had to say.

“Lindsey, I need you back on board.”

“I'm retired, Mr. Richelieu.” He couldn't bring himself to call his old chief Ducky, the name that everyone used when Richelieu was

out of earshot.

“I know that. You get a fat check every month for not working.”

“Mr. Richelieu, I earned it.”

“All right, look—wait a minute, where the hell are you, Lindsey?”

“Don’t you know? You called me. I’m at home.”

“Yeah, yeah, vegetating. I’m still working, why aren’t you?”

Lindsey didn’t even try to answer that. “Look, Chief, I’m sure you called me for a reason. You realize it’s an hour earlier here in California than it is there in Denver. Did you just want to wake me up, or is there some ulterior motive?”

“You’re getting feisty in your old age, Lindsey.”

“Yep.” He stretched, stood up, started toward the kitchen. Thanks be given for cordless telephones!

“You were always the go-to guy on wacko cases. I’ve got your file right here on my monitor. Comic books, that Duesenberg with the solid platinum engine, Julius Caesar’s toy chariot. You were always the oddball. Maybe that’s why you were so good at the loony cases.”

“Thanks, Chief. You should have said that at my retirement banquet when I got the gold wristwatch and the fond farewell. Oh, wait a minute, I didn’t have a retirement banquet, gold wristwatch, or fond farewell. I got a fond *Don’t-let-the-door-hit-you-on-the-way-out*. Look, I am longing for a cup of coffee and a plate of scrambled eggs, and since there’s nobody here to make them, I need to get off the phone and do it myself. Unless there’s something you want.”

“You know about the consulting fee account.”

“Right.”

“I can offer you some nice bucks for a few hours of easy work.”

“Right. And there’s a really nice bridge you’d like to sell me.”

“No, I mean it.”

“Okay, hold on.” He laid the phone on the counter, turned on the coffee maker, got a couple of eggs out of the fridge and set them where he could keep a watchful eye on them, and plopped himself in a chromium-rimmed kitchen chair.

Desmond Richelieu’s voice came squirming out of the telephone. “Are you there? Are you there, damn you, Lindsey, where the hell did you go?”

Lindsey picked up the phone. “Sorry ’bout that, Chief. Now, what was it?”

“You ever hear of Gordon Simmons, Lindsey?”

Lindsey frowned. “I don’t think so.” The coffee maker was grunting and chugging like a happy little steam locomotive.

“You don’t keep up with things, do you?”

“Chief, please. He’s not related to Flash Gordon on the Planet Mongo, is he? I’ve always had a fondness for old Buster Crabbe.”

“Don’t joke, you—listen, don’t take it for granted that your pension is guaranteed, Lindsey. Don’t get me peeved.”

“Chief, it *is* guaranteed. Who is Gordon Simmons?”

“Not is. Was. He died a year ago. Murdered.”

“Sorry, Chief. Deponent knoweth not. You want to tell me more, or let me scramble my eggs. I’m hungry this morning.” He looked out the kitchen window. Beyond gauzy, pale blue curtains the sky was a vivid shade, almost cobalt, and the sun was bright. “Did we cover the decedent? Is there a problem with the claim? Why is this a case for SPUDS? I’m sorry Mr. Simmons was murdered but why are you calling me about it? Especially a year after his death.”

“It’s not about the death claim. We paid that off. No problem.”

Lindsey sighed. “Can I call you back after I’ve had my scrambled eggs? I think I’m going to have an English muffin and orange marmalade with them.”

“No, damn it, no! I don’t give a damn about your breakfast. Now listen. The guy lived in Berkeley. Simmons. He had a policy with us. Beneficiary was his wife. Walnut Creek office handled the claim. They paid the claim and we closed the case. This is a new case.”

“You’ll have to enlighten me, Chief.” Lindsey clutched the telephone between his jawbone and his shoulder, broke a muffin in half and dropped the pieces into the chrome-plated retro toaster on the counter. Except that the toaster wasn’t retro. It was original stock. It had stood on that counter for as long as Hobart Lindsey could remember.

“We’ve got a lawsuit pending. Mrs. Simmons is suing a publisher called Gordian House. It’s a plagiarism suit. She has a co-plaintiff, a publisher called Marston and Morse. Gordian House has kicked it

over to us. If they lose the suit we have to pony up. And the Widder Simmons and M-and-M want big bucks. Big bucks, Lindsey.”

The toaster popped. Lindsey clutched the phone again between jawbone and shoulder. He spread some marmalade on one half of the English, butter on the other half, and closed it up. He opened the fridge and put away the eggs.

“Lindsey, here’s what I want you to do. The case file is on the SPUDS server. Get into the Walnut Creek office and read through it. Nobody there has enough brains to pour piss out of a boot with the instructions on the heel. Just read the file and call me back and tell me you’ll handle this one.”

Lindsey poured himself a cup of coffee, added some half-and-half, took a generous bite of English and washed it down with coffee. He didn’t say anything.

There was a lengthy silence.

Then Desmond Richelieu said, “Please.”

It was the first time Lindsey had ever heard him say that word. True, Lindsey could tell, even from the distance of a thousand miles, that Richelieu said it through clenched teeth and very nearly with tears in his eyes. Still, he said it. “Please.”

To Lindsey, that constituted an offer he couldn’t refuse.

\* \* \* \*

The Walnut Creek office of International Surety occupied a suite in a modern high rise building across North Main Street from City Hall. Lindsey left his Dodge Avenger in the parking garage beneath the office building. He liked everything about the car, especially its safety features, except for the name. Why name a car after a World War Two torpedo bomber?

He rode up in an elevator full of hard-strivers half his age.

The receptionist at International Surety looked up from her monitor screen and stared at him as if she feared that he would die on the spot of superannuation. He said, “I’m from SPUDS. Need to talk with the branch manager about the Simmons case.”

The woman hit a buzzer on her desk and Elmer Mueller emerged



from somewhere. He'd added weight and lost hair since Lindsey had seen him last. And how long had that been? Lindsey wondered.

Elmer Mueller offered a reluctant handshake and ushered Lindsey into his private office. Behind Mueller's desk and across North Main, City Hall gleamed in the March sunlight. Elmer Mueller gestured Lindsey to a chair.

The décor was modern. Elmer Mueller's desktop was clear except for a keyboard and monitor. That seemed to be the standard of the day. But the portraits on Elmer Mueller's wall were of President Richard Nixon and Governor Pat Brown. Lindsey wondered if Mueller's intention was ironic.

"Richelieu emailed me about you, Lindsey." Elmer Mueller leaned back in an overstuffed leather chair. He swiveled, nodded permission to City Hall to stay where it was, then swung back toward Lindsey. "We've had to cut back, I can't spare people to hold your hand, and I don't like SPUDS poking its nose into my business."

"Your business?" Lindsey raised his eyebrows.

"Running this branch. If Ducky has any complaints about the way I run this office he can call in Corporate." He dropped a fist onto the sheet of gray-tinted glass that topped his desk. "How long since you worked out of this office, Lindsey?"

Lindsey smiled. "Twenty two years, Elmer."

"Didn't I see your name in the retirement column of *IntSurNews* a few years ago?"

"Ducky asked me to come back on special assignment."

Mueller pursed his lips like an exasperated school teacher and swung his head slowly from side to side. "I suppose I might as well set you up. There's an empty office in the suite. Remember Mrs. Blomquist?"

Lindsey said that he did.

"Dropped dead. Had her retirement papers in, bought a condo down in La Jolla, had her furniture shipped ahead. Moved into a motel for her last few days in Walnut Creek. Came in to clean out her desk and say good-bye and dropped dead. You can use her computer."

Lindsey thanked him. The receptionist who'd greeted him showed

him to the vacant office and handed him a printout of file access codes. She closed the door behind her. Lindsey got to work.

The computer files on the Simmons case were sparse. Policy date and number, premium payment records, date of death, cause of death, coroner's and police reports, claim forms and record of payment to beneficiary. Everything looked normal. Lindsey felt sorry for Simmons's widow, Angela. He wondered if there were any children. If so, they weren't listed on the policy. But it had been in effect for a long time. Maybe Simmons took it when the couple were newlyweds and never added bennies when the tykes came along. Bad work by the agent, if that was so.

He printed out what he needed, checked the bennie's phone number and placed a call to Mrs. Simmons. A neutral voice answered, "Rockridge Savings and Loan. If you know your party's extension enter it now. Otherwise, please speak the name of your party and stay on the line for assistance. This call may be monitored for quality control."

"Mrs. Simmons, please."

She had a pleasant enough voice. She didn't sound particularly grief-stricken and obviously she'd returned to work. But then it had been a year since Gordon Simmons's death. Lindsey explained that he was investigating Simmons's death in connection with a lawsuit. Mrs. Simmons said that she got off work at four o'clock and Lindsey arranged to come to her home.

Before he took his leave of the branch office, he returned Richelieu's earlier call.

"Okay, got it, Mr. Richelieu." Oh, how he longed to call him Ducky to his face—or to his telephone. Maybe someday. Maybe not. "Okay, you know that our client is looking at a nasty copyright infringement suit. We already paid a death claim related to this case, and now we're on the other side of the fence."

"For heaven's sake, Lindsey, don't babble back what I told you. Tell me something I don't know."

"Who's our lawyer? Shouldn't that information be in the file?"

"Isn't it there? You'll be happy about that one, at least. You remember your old buddy Eric Coffman?"

“Of course I do.”

“Well he didn’t put in his retirement papers and go home to sit on his hindquarters and collect pay for no work. He’s still at work. And he’s our sheriff on this one if we can’t head the rustlers off at the pass.”

“He doesn’t work for I.S., does he?”

“He’s on retainer.”

“Okay, at least that’s good. I think I’ll round up a posse and get a feel for what’s going on before I call Eric. But if you feel like it, Mr. Richelieu, you send him a smoke signal to let him know I’m on the trail.”

And where the hell did all the cowboy talk come from?

\* \* \* \*

The Simmons home was a comfortable-looking craftsman bungalow on Eton Avenue, a short side street not far from Rockridge Savings and Loan. A ten-year-old gray Chevy stood in the driveway. A shoulder-high brick pillar set off concrete steps leading to a heavy wooden front door. The house looked like Depression-era construction, well kept, with a tidy front lawn and a small, carefully tended flower bed.

Lindsey had parked at the curb. He rang the doorbell and was greeted by a yipping dog.

Mrs. Simmons opened the door a crack and said, “Mr. Lindsey?”

Lindsey passed a business card through the opening. It read, *International Surety / Special Projects Unit—Detached Service*. There was a cartoon image of a potato, the visual pun for SPUDS, and Lindsey’s name.

“I hope you don’t mind Millicent.” Mrs. Simmons pushed the dog aside and admitted Lindsey. Millicent sniffed his trousers, decided he was not a burglar, and backed away.

Moments later, seated in the living room, Lindsey said, “Mrs. Simmons, I understand that you are suing Gordian House.”

“Angela Simmons, please. Marston and Morse and I.”

Lindsey found himself liking her. She was casually but neatly

dressed, her medium brown hair done in a soft style, her manner relaxed. This was a woman who knew who she was, who lived comfortably, if modestly, who accepted herself on her own terms and the world on its.

He said, “Yes.”

“Gordon’s publishers.”

“I’m sorry, I don’t recognize his byline. I’m afraid I don’t read as much as I ought to.”

“That’s all right, he didn’t use his real name. I’ve saved copies of his books. He was careless about them but I was proud of him, I saved all his editions.”

She crossed the room to a bookcase and returned carrying half a dozen paperbacks. She spread them on the coffee table. The covers featured colorful paintings and splashy lettering. The titles followed a pattern: *The Blue Gazelle*, *The Pink Elephant*, *The Yellow Thrush*, *The White Bat*, *The Purple Cow*.

Lindsey couldn’t keep from starting, “I’ve never seen a purple cow...”

Angela put up her hand like a traffic cop stopping the flow of cars. “We laughed about that a lot. Nobody younger than forty seemed to get the joke.”

Lindsey scanned the book covers. The artwork wasn’t really too bad. His own father had been a cartoonist and Lindsey had an eye for skillful rendering. The subject matter on these was fairly lurid. The byline was Wallace Thompson. Lindsey looked a question at Angela Simmons.

“Gordon had a civil service job. There were government regulations about publishing outside work. I don’t know what they were afraid of. Maybe somebody would give away secrets of the Social Security system. Or maybe someone would write dirty books on the side and some politician would kick up a fuss. But it wasn’t a bad thing. Gordon liked to keep his day job and his writing separate anyway. No one at the office knew about Wallace Thompson.”

Lindsey reached inside his jacket for a notebook and a silver International Surety pen. He hadn’t got a gold watch but at least he’d got a silver pen and pencil when he said good-bye. “You don’t mind