

**Mr. Biddle**  
**A monologue by Dan Lookabill**

**Mr. Biddle, age 60, has been arrested by police on suspicion of soliciting prostitutes and possible child molestation. He sits alone in an interrogation room. Two detectives enter and begin to question him. He responds.**

**Mr. Biddle:** Well, I was pretty much doing what you thought I was doing ... up to a point. She was thirteen? Well, I shouldn't be surprised ... but she looked at least 16 to me. Yes, I was trying to pick her up. I do that a lot. Although I wouldn't expect you to understand. Oh, that's beautiful – why don't run out into the office and tell them you caught the old roué? (You might want to look it up first – it's in a separate section in the back of most dictionaries ... and you might need some help with the spelling)

Yes, I've been cruising the neighborhoods down there, off and on, for close to a year. And I've managed to connect with a least a dozen little girls, not one of them older than 17. And I'm not the least bit ashamed of myself. Oh, here we go – the fist of the righteous! What are you going to do now, beat the old man into insensibility? I've already run across several pimps who wanted to do that ... figured I was down there trying to score a freebie ... or at least get around them.

I suppose I could have screamed out my story to your bozo in the uniform. But it wouldn't have made any difference. He had that gleam of vengeance in his eye. He was all ready to *protect* the vestal virgin and *serve* me up on a plate. Are you wondering maybe why we've never met? Why if I've been cruising those neighborhoods for so long – nobody ever caught me until now?

Well, I'll tell you why. Started with little girl named Beth Ann. Beautiful – like Alice in Wonderland in the Disney flick. Fourteen. She loved her

daddy – thought he was a hero. But adolescence and hormones and boys – and she started acting like she hated him. And one night, Daddy said no parties tonight. And she screamed awhile and then went up to bed. And after 10, went out the window and off in some boy's car. Except things apparently didn't work out too well. She argued with him, too, and took off on her own.

So now she's ten miles from home, at one in the morning – they figured later she walked around three miles before she started hitchhiking. And three days later they found her in a dumpster. There was no great mystery about what happened. The guy who killed her was drunk and left all kinds of clues and took ... souvenirs. And the trial took a long time but the outcome was no surprise. He's on death row now, but hell, this is California. We'll all be dead before he is. And even if I get to see him die – please don't talk to me about fucking closure.

Thinking about it, you know the worst thing is what she didn't do. I mean she's snuck out of the house ... and sure, her old man's going to be mad. But he had been a hero to her once – and now she's alone and cold and maybe a little scared ... but that bond of trust and love was so shattered, so dead ... that no matter how much she needed to be rescued and protected – it just never came to her to call him.

That was long time ago. And for a long time, I read stories from everywhere – about girls who didn't have a hero ... or a father ... or anyone to call who gave a damn. And I heard about cops and social workers and special schools and churches and sanctuaries and God knows what else ... as though there was this great big safety net. Except the bodies kept turning up in trash dumps, and back alleys and rivers and broken down apartments.

So I started cruising a lot of different neighborhoods at night. What the hell, it's a big city. And I'd just blend in with the perverts. The locals wouldn't care ... I was just another cockroach. Just some aging lothario looking for a connection. I got real good at finding the ones who didn't fit. The girls who hadn't been in hell long enough to give up ... the ones who might still make it out. Or maybe even one like Beth Ann, who didn't belong there at all. Just a victim of the confidence and foolishness of youth and love.

In a way, I think of myself as a pimp for the angels. I had to have a pimp's eye for potential talent... along with weakness, or fear or confusion or naiveté' – and sometimes plain stupidity. Only what they saw as a target – I saw as something to save.

And I pick them up and I get them home or out of town or someplace safe. And I tell them: never try to contact me, never try to thank me. Because I'm always down here in a place they don't want to come near ever again. I don't win all the time – every now and then I get a 16 year-old hooker who's already lived too many lifetimes and probably won't be around much longer. But I'm careful ... and most of the time, I think, I hope .... Oh, God, I hope I keep them alive. I just don't want any more Beth Annes.

So you see, Sergeant, I was definitely picking up young girls. But unlike you – I don't wait until they're dead.