

The truth is in there (if you can find it)

by Tanaqui

Alva rested his hand on top of one of the crates of books stacked near the door and surveyed the old print shop. There was plenty of shelving arranged around the room, from sets of square pigeonholes to slender racks that would hold only a folder or two and on to long low bookcases running to one side. A few battered but still serviceable metal filing cabinets were also dotted here and there.

The question was: how to arrange everything. Would it be best to shelve books by author or divide them by subject? Should advice on speaking with the dead be ranged near works discussing ghosts and poltergeists, or would it be best to divide supernatural creatures from spiritualism or signs? The box of hemography files already sat in pride of place on the battered desk crammed in the small corner office, of course, but what of the other files that held newspaper clippings and articles and notes? Should he create card indexes by date or by place? There was a pattern, a larger picture, to be discovered—but how to find it?

He took a moment to feel regret for the secretaries and librarians left behind on the other side of the Charles River. He took another moment to not regret the dull-witted students and duller-witted administrators who'd wasted so many of his hours.

With a snort of amusement, he reached into the crate and hefted the first book, feeling its weight in his hand. No doubt he would rearrange things a dozen times before he hit on the perfect scheme. No doubt he would look up and find it had gone dark and he had lost an afternoon to reading whatever work he was supposed to be shelving. No doubt he would find connections he hadn't made before.

oOo

"We should get a computer," Evie called over her shoulder.

"What?" The response floated out of Keel's office.

"We should—." Evie realized Keel probably still wouldn't hear her. Giving an unloving look at the battered IBM electric typewriter on her desk, she got up and made her way to the door of his office. "We should get a computer," she repeated.

"Huh?" Keel looked up from the book he was reading. "You think so?"

Evie edged her way into the office, careful not to disturb the tottering pile of file boxes, with half a dozen books stacked on top, that loomed near the door. The squad room back at District had been cramped and equally full of paper, but it had at least been organized. Of course, there'd been people to do the organizing. When she'd taken the job with Keel, he'd told her he wanted an investigator, not a file clerk....

"There's lots of databases online now," she pointed out. "We could look things up much more quickly instead of us—" *Me.* "—going to City Hall all the time. We could even create our own case database. Much easier to look things up on than typing up five index cards to cross-reference everything." And then not be able to find wherever Keel had put the box with the actual files. Although she wasn't quite sure they could have whole case files stored on computer; the Police Department had spent a lot of money

installing its system.

"Hmmpf." Putting his arms behind his head, Keel leaned back in his chair, still not looking convinced.

"We could get email," Evie added, remembering the occasional eagerly anticipated airmail letter whose contents might shed some light on an ongoing case. "You won't have to wait for your colleagues in China and Japan to write you. And I think some of the libraries and booksellers have their catalogs online now." She knew it had taken Keel several weeks to track down the copy of the out-of-print book he was currently reading.

Keel snorted again, before tipping his chair forward and bending his head back over his book. He waved a hand. "Okay. Look into it and tell me what we should buy."

Evie gaped at him. She'd expected more of a fight. "You're sure?"

"Uh-huh." Keel looked up at her and gave her a rare smile. "I want you to be happy working here."

oOo

Paul had dug back through the yellowing copies of the Journal of Psychical Research, shelved by year. Easy enough to locate the four editions that made up volume 60 and scan them to find Keel's article. Not that it helped much; he'd already learned most of the contents through his work with the Church or from what Keel had shared. And though Keel had described the circumstances of each case, he'd omitted names.

When Evie went for lunch, Paul used her computer to access the SQ case database. Gretchen Albright's name led him to a casefile number, a brief note that Keel had interviewed her three years previously—Paul guessed there would be transcripts—and a half dozen cross references. Tracking them through the database, he found the names of the five others who'd seen words form in their own blood, and the shelf number for the file box where the casefiles could be found.

The space was empty.

Paul looked either side and above and below; Evie had warned him Keel was careless with his filing. He widened his search. Still no luck.

Throughout the afternoon, as he moved around the office, he kept his eye out for boxes. For that particular box. As the day lengthened and there was still no sign of it, he grew more irritated. The sense of disorder, of things not being the way they should, bothered him. Checking details while he wrote his report on the house on Keystone Street, he couldn't help but admire how neat his own records were: every page in his notebook dated so he could quickly flick back through the past. Letting his gaze rove over the barely controlled chaos of the SQ offices, he sighed.

At last, as Evie was leaving, he broke: *I'm looking for the hemography files.*

Disclaimer: This story is based on the David Greenwalt Productions/Spyglass Entertainment/ Touchstone Television series *Miracles*. It was written for entertainment only; the author does not profit from it.