

Hardcastle Flowers:  
Space Detective

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A moral mystery  
by  
e.shockley

(Inspired by students of Upper Merion Middle School)

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CALVIN HARVEY "HARDCASTLE"QUEEN  
BRENDA BOXER  
REUBEN SCHULTZ  
CHIEF PORTHOS DRESDEN  
SATURN GUARD ROBOT  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
NARRATOR  
REPORTERS  
INTERCOM VOICE  
JANUS  
OPERATOR  
QUEEN  
STAHL FLOWERS  
VOICE

**SCENE I**

(The apartment of Calvin Queen, early morning year 2071. A large carnival style cardboard of a body in a suit with the cutaway for insertion of one's head stands in front of a camera and neat apartment picture. The actual place is a shambles.)

**NARRATOR**

The day began like any day in the post stellar unification partitioning of twenty seventy two.

(**SONG: MORNING SYMPHONY** made up of beeps and mechanized sounds.)

Then I got the call.

(A futuristic phone ends the song.)

They had done away with telephone, picture phone, tactile phone and the like, once matter transference and reconstitution had been perfected and so now each conversation is face to face, 3-D, with one party teleported into the presence of another. Don't ask me to explain it, something about holograms and neurological sensors. I just know that Porthos Dresden, Chief of Intercultural Planetary Police, was standing in my living room at seven hundred hours and he didn't look nurturing.

**CHIEF**

You're late.

**QUEEN**

How can I be late when you're here?

**CHIEF**

That's my point. You were supposed to be there, in my office, old college 3-D, forty six seconds ago.

**QUEEN**

Of course I knew this and was playing dumb. The Chief of investigators was one of those old fashioned types who still believed in kissy face meetings. It didn't make sense in the new technology but then there's always someone fighting the future, isn't there?

(To Chief)

If you're willing to wait then I can be wheeling toward you in under two hours.

**CHIEF**

Don't do cute, Queen, it doesn't sit well on you and I don't need you here, I need you there last nano-second.

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QUEEN

And which particular there do you expect me to explore this time?

CHIEF

Too late.

QUEEN

What'd'ya mean, "Too late."

CHIEF

There used to be a saying back when in the oil age, "You sneeze, you freeze."

QUEEN

Who could you find in the forty six seconds that it took to interrupt my morning workout and don't say, "Brenda Boxer."

CHIEF

Brenda Boxer.

QUEEN

Then at least tell me it's a domestic dispute.

CHIEF

Nope.

QUEEN

A contested will.

CHIEF

No.

QUEEN

A skipped ship or shipment.

(Chief shakes his head, "No.")

So what've you got?

CHIEF

Murder.

QUEEN

Murder! Brenda Boxer couldn't solve a murder if she committed the thing herself.

CHIEF

But she was here and now she's there while you're still in your flowered jammies behind a cardboard cutout.

QUEEN

Who got stiffed?

NARRATOR

And that's when everything changed. You see, the development of habitable space stations coupled with heightened racial and cultural tensions finally provoked the Trans-Global Earth Government to isolate various peoples in separate but equal orbiting satellites. Every imaginable ethnic, political, religious, cultural, and special interest group has been placed in a dedicated location to live the existence that suits their temperament amongst like tempered characters. It was an imperfect solution to an immoral state of affairs but it happened and was only being opposed by one single interplanetary activist, Stahl Flowers.

(To Chief)

I want there, Chief.

CHIEF

You know what they say.

QUEEN

No, but I'm sure you'll tell me.

CHIEF

Rhyming's everything.

QUEEN

And just what does that mean in twenty second century English?

CHIEF

You want the case, you've got to battle.

(Brenda Boxer appears. **HIP-HOP SONG.**)

BRENDA

You couldn't find a beagle in a hay sack.  
If crime was wine then you'd be a tea tottler.  
You're out your mind to think you'll ever get this case back.  
And when we're done you just remember that I told ya!

QUEEN

You can't be serious.

BRENDA

It don't matter if you think it's real or not, Queen.  
The ship has sailed and you're back on the dock, Doc.  
I'm taking names and notes here at the kill scene.  
You're off the clock and remember that I told ya!

QUEEN

I'm not going to sing for a job, Chief.

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CHIEF

Then you leave me no choice...

QUEEN

But if I was of half a mind to join into this word war,  
That rebel there would have to cower to this soldier.  
I'd show her when and where and why and how and what for  
And just for fun I'd say, "Remember that I told ya."

CHIEF

This is big enough for both of you.

QUEEN

I'm strictly solo ops, Chief.

CHIEF

Do you want in on this case or not, Queen?

QUEEN

See you in ten seconds, Dee.

BRENDA

I've told you one hundred times, "Don't call me Dee."

(Queen appears beside her.)

QUEEN

So what have we got?

## SCENE II

(Orbiting space station.)

BRENDA

I thought you didn't do matter transference?

QUEEN

The idea of having your atoms scrambled, shot a few million  
miles through space then reassembled is a thought that  
shouldn't appeal to any sane individual.

(Rube appears.)

REUBEN

Man, I just love being zapped and shipped.

QUEEN

I rest my case.

BRENDA

Reuben, what are you doing here?

REUBEN

The Chief thought you two might need a mediator to get you through the awkward spots.

QUEEN

So what are you doing here?

REUBEN

I know you, I know Dee..

BRENDA

Don't call me Dee.

REUBEN

So I'm the guy.

QUEEN

What guy?

REUBEN

The mediator.

QUEEN

But I hate your guts.

BRENDA

Me too.

REUBEN

See, I've got you agreeing already.

QUEEN

Where were we?

BRENDA

No where. Stahl Flowers is dead. Lazar blast point blank from a frayed conductor wire.

REUBEN

So are we thinking accident?

QUEEN

We aren't thinking anything. You are sitting over in that gravity simulator out of the way while I examine the evidence.

BRENDA

What evidence?

QUEEN

Where there's a crime, there's a clue. Where's the body?

(BRENDA holds up a baggie with a few teaspoons of ash.)

BRENDA

Laser doesn't leave much.

NARRATOR

This was going to be hard but hard is my middle name. Well, actually my middle name is Harvey, but there was this classic movie called Harvey about a thing called a Pooka so I told everybody my name was Hardcastle because kids can be really cruel and then it sort got shortened...

(Brenda clears her throat.)

Anyway, there is always a clue and a snitch. Luck was with me because they both fell into my lap like a blob of ketchup on a white summer suit.

(Queen open the door suddenly and a camera light flashes. Reuben draws his weapon.)

QUEEN

No!

(Queen tries to intercede and gets zapped. The force sends him tumbling until he ends entangled with the photographer.)

You shot me.

REUBEN

I thought you were in danger.

QUEEN

You shot me.

REUBEN

These new stun guns don't have very precise targeting.

QUEEN

Ow!

REUBEN

Does it hurt?

(Queen takes the gun and shoot Reuben.)

Ow!

BRENDA

If you two are done.

(Queen shoots her also.)

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NARRATOR

We got so involved in the tazar tag that we nearly blew the first big lead in the case but our professionalism prompted us to focus and...

BRENDA

Actually the batteries went dead.

NARRATOR

Anyhoot, I spied a shifty eye in the camera guy and we made him sing like a...like a...

BRENDA

Like a cantina cantada.

NARRATOR

Like what she said.

QUEEN

What are you doing here?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I...

QUEEN

A likely story.

BRENDA

Where did you come from?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Just now?

BRENDA

Don't get cutesy with me.

REUBEN

Why are tomatoes red?

PHOTOGRAPHER

If I knew that then I could go on Jeopardy and win a few trillion Euros.

QUEEN

So you think you're tough, punk.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Sometimes a joke can...

BRENDA

We're just getting started.

PHOTOGRAPHER

There's no need for...

REUBEN

Are you now or have you never been to a common member list party?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Does he make sense to you?

BRENDA

No, but he's necessary for the three part harmony.

SONG

What did you do?  
Why did you hide?  
Who did your hair?

(They stare at Reuben)

Why are you here?  
What do you know?  
Is that a wig?

(They stare)

Who...did...you...see?  
Was....it...a...pro?

REUBEN

Did...he...dye slow...

(Everyone smiles)

or did he use the new internal systems where you take a pill that puts little stylist nano-bots inside your body and...

QUEEN

You've left me no choice.

(Queen produces a roll of quarters.)

BRENDA

I don't know if I can condone this.

QUEEN

Step outside if you're squeamish.

BRENDA

This is going against regulations.

REUBEN

Technically we are outside the jurisdiction of earth law on this satellite.

BRENDA

You're splitting hairs.

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QUEEN

I've never known that to cause much discomfort unless perhaps you're interrogating a model.

BRENDA

Five minutes.

QUEEN

With time to spare.

(Exit BRENDA)

Okay, you gonna talk?

PHOTOGRAPHER

If you guys would ask me something sane then...

QUEEN

He's a tough nut to crack but here goes. I'll give you twenty bucks.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Twenty smackers? Shoot!

(Reuben draws his lazard and fires.)

REUBEN

Oops.

QUEEN

Oops? You drop a breakfast plate, it's oops. You incinerate an informant, it's something but definitely not, "oops."

REUBEN

My bad.

(Enter Brenda.)

BRENDA

I heard shooting.

REUBEN

We had a slight miscommunication during the interrogation.

QUEEN

This bozo is the king of understatement.

REUBEN

We can keep this between us, can't we?

BRENDA

Sure we can; as soon as you drop your weapon and place yourself in these restraints.

QUEEN

That isn't going to be necessary.

BRENDA

If you aid this perp then I will be perfectly happy to take you down too.

QUEEN

What's the current policy on zapping bots.

(BRENDA looks.)

REUBEN

It's a robot?..

QUEEN

You knew that, right?

REUBEN

Oh, of course. I knew that.

NARRATOR

So Reuben dodged the hoosegow and we got our first break because every bot has a holographic recorder since Sir George Lucas made a silly string of 2-D movies nearly a century ago.

BRENDA

That's peculiar.

QUEEN

Don't judge me.

BRENDA

There's no holo-record.

REUBEN

I destroyed it with my shot.

BRENDA

No, it was removed and crudely.

NARRATOR

You can bet there's something juicy on that recorder and I was going to see it so I gave my pards the slip and went out on my own.

(Queen performs and elaborate series of maneuvers to duck out on his partners.)

It was nothing personal but working solo suits my style and it's difficult enough cracking a hardcase without worrying about a partner who might vaporize the stoolie or worse, you.

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NARRATOR (cont'd)

I figured I'd lather on a thick layer of liberal praise once I busted this thing, meanwhile, I needed space both figuratively and literally.

(Queen enters the transport device.  
REUBEN and BRENDA are there waiting.)

BRENDA

What took you so long?

**END SCENE II**

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