

## **Imp of the Perverse**

By Tami Canaday

(At rise: John crouching next to the bushes watching Rhonda dance in her living room to radio music. Rhonda is not visible to the audience. John suddenly stands up)

JOHN

(Under breath)

Come on. I can't see you.

(Rhonda enters making a wide circle behind John. She sneaks up behind him and pushes the barrel of the gun into John's back. He starts to turn around)

RHONDA

Don't.

JOHN

Okay. Listen, my wallet is in my back pocket. That's all I have.

RHONDA

How much money you got?

JOHN

I don't know. Thirty dollars? I can count it for you.

RHONDA

I can count. Credit cards?

JOHN

All the major ones. Visa, American Express---

RHONDA  
Your signature easy to forge?

JOHN  
What? Ah---

RHONDA  
I don't like fancy signatures.

JOHN  
Of course. My signature is very simple. Two lines with a crown like flourish at the end. Very simple.

RHONDA  
You wouldn't cancel those cards, would you?

JOHN  
Of course not.

RHONDA  
Asshole. Do you know who I am?

JOHN  
No. Should I?

RHONDA  
This is a bad neighborhood for someone like you. What were you doing peeping in that window over there?

JOHN  
Peeping? Peeping? I wasn't peeping. I stopped to look at the stars. There's a clear view of Cassiopeia's Chair. This particular spot is excellent for a viewing---

RHONDA  
Stars are the same anywhere in the city.

JOHN  
Why don't I go ahead and give you my wallet?

(He pulls wallet from his back pocket)

JOHN

Then I'll leave. I promise, I won't contact the police department.

(She slaps the wallet to the ground  
and kicks it)

RHONDA

I don't want your goddamned wallet. You're not from around here. You got one of them formal personalities.

JOHN

Could you please put down the gun? There's nothing else of value on me.

RHONDA

No?

JOHN

Guns make me nervous.

RHONDA

So? They make me feel like God.

JOHN

What do you want?

RHONDA

What do I want?

(Beat)

RHONDA

I don't know.

(She laughs)

RHONDA

Take your clothes off.

JOHN

My clothes? I certainly will not. I am a priest.

RHONDA

You're a priest? And I'm the Virgin Mary. Take them off.

(She pushes the gun harder  
into John's back)

RHONDA

You're no priest.

JOHN

I am not going to stand here and argue with you. What do you want?

RHONDA

I told you. Take your clothes off.

JOHN

If you put down the gun.

RHONDA  
(Firmly)

Take them off.

(He starts to take his sweater off)

RHONDA

So...how long you've been one?

JOHN

What?

RHONDA  
(Sarcastic)

A priest.

JOHN

For many years.

I don't believe you. RHONDA

I am an Episcopalian Priest. JOHN

What does that mean? RHONDA

It means I'm not a Catholic Priest. My clergy identification is in my wallet. Pull it out. JOHN

Don't move. RHONDA

(She walks over to the wallet. She keeps the gun pointed at John. She pulls out the identification and reads it)

Throw your sweater behind you. RHONDA

Did you read my identification? JOHN

Yeah. I'm waiting. RHONDA

(John throws the sweater behind him. Rhonda catches it)

That cardigan was knitted by my wife. It means a lot to me. JOHN

(Rhonda tosses the sweater to the ground)

Take your belt off. RHONDA

JOHN

I don't understand. I want to understand. What does this do for you?

RHONDA

Take it off.

(John takes off his belt. He hands it back to Rhonda. She throws it across the alley)

RHONDA

Your shirt.

JOHN

Why don't you come to my church? We can talk about this. I'll help you. Or, I'll put you in contact with right people who can help you manage your fear. This is all fear based.

(John untucks and unbuttons his shirt)

JOHN

St. Thomas has a fine resource center for referrals. We have a food bank, daycare facilities, mental health counseling---

RHONDA

Your shirt.

JOHN

This is absurd.

(John takes off his shirt and hands it back to Rhonda)

RHONDA

Thank you.

(She throws it on the ground)

*(continued . . .)*

