

The Jewish Prince of Denmark

By Michael Fine

Copyright © 2023 Michael Fine

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

She's lying somewhere in a pool of blood. I can see it. Clearly. A young Black woman as beautiful as a mink, her hair black, half braids, half that wet look that the young girls are wearing. It's Miss X (a well-known singer). She talks to me when she comes into the store. She comes into the store just to see me. We have a bond. She'd really like me to, well, you know, to take her out.

But I haven't given in to her yet. I'm waiting. We talk all the time. She tells me about her career, about her famous father and her almost famous sisters, about the record companies and the concert promoters.

I'm really kind of an advisor. She comes into the store for no reason at all and buys little things -- a bar of soap, a package of cigarettes -- just so we can talk. You wouldn't believe what she says about her lovers. I think she's really coming on to me. It's a crazy world.

But now she's lying someplace in a pool of blood. I don't know how I know this. I just know. It's the little things. I hear hints under the breath of the announcers on TV. I've been seeing men with red hats everywhere I go, not something most people would notice or understand. Two days ago she was talking about going barefoot on a beach in Greece. Remember what happened with Sergeant Pepper, all the evidence that Paul was dead? Same story here.

And she hasn't been her usual self, like there's something freaking her out, like she's worried about something or someone that's too intense for her to talk about, even to me. She's only come in every other day or so for the last week. That's different for her.

She used to come in twice a day, maybe more. She hasn't been in at all for two days. Maybe she's mad at me, maybe someone told her something derogatory about me, some lie behind my back, like that I'm not really a genius after all. I'm certain she said she

was going to be in town, that she was worn out from touring, from running back and forth from coast to coast. I don't understand it. No, I'm certain I'm right. There's just no other explanation.

So now I can't sleep. I can see her, just lying there. She's lying in a building that doesn't have any windows on the first floor. The floors themselves are wooden. It might be a loft. It might be a barn, but I don't see any hay. I'm walking up and down, back and forth in my room at night. I can't get it out of my head.

"Are you taking your medicine?" I ask.

I'm taking my medicine, your medicine, everybody's medicine. I'm taking the medicine you give me, sure, but look, it isn't that good, it isn't strong enough.

We have everything in the store. My father gives me things when I think I need something stronger. Valium. Haldol. Cogentin. I don't like Thorazine, it makes me too sleepy, like a zombie, you know. I want to sleep, but I don't want to be, well, drugged.

"It's not a good idea to take medicine on your own."

Wait a second, I'm the one up all night, pacing the floors. What about Miss X? What are we doing for her? How can we help her? I called the police but they're corrupt, too busy to bother with the problems of Black people. What's a dead Black woman to them? One more number, that's all. They hate all the Blacks, they think all Blacks are garbage, they wish all Black people were dead.

I was thinking of calling the UN, or maybe the Russians or the Chinese, but I don't know, I'm not sure they'd understand.

"Why the Russians or the Chinese?"

They have something to prove. We're always going on about how much better we are than they are, how we have civil liberties and big cars and so forth, but it's not really true. It's all

the same. A big lie. They have better social welfare, free medical care, no unemployment. We'll never do that. We like to let people suffer.

We have racism. A famous Black person, a famous African American woman singer is laying in a pool of her own blood and no one will do anything about it. If they looked into it and exposed us, it would look really bad at the U.N., and then maybe people would understand we're not what we're cracked up to be.

"But they have their own problems with human rights. Their own ethnic minorities. Isn't there a better country to talk to? The Scandinavian countries?" (He had mentioned the Danish delusion before, and I wanted to explore his thoughts about this in greater detail.)

Now there's an idea. You mean Denmark.

"Yes. Denmark."

I could call my father, I suppose. He's a very smart man, very busy. You know I was abused as a child, that they were too busy, and used to tie me in the closet. I have scars on my wrists to prove it. (He holds out his wrists, on which there are familiar looking scars.)

It wasn't necessary, him being royalty. But you don't believe the royalty part, do you? It's because you're Jewish too.

"Is your mother Jewish?"

Now she is. She had to convert to marry my father. But she's just my stepmother, see. My real mother was killed by the Nazis. She fought in the resistance. She was Jewish, on her father's side. Italian Jews, also royalty.

"When were you born?"

1948. You mean, how was my real mother killed by the Nazis, if I wasn't born until 1948? She was in Poland, after I was born, doing DP work. There were a few pogroms, nobody talks about them because it was after the war and Europe was a mess. The Poles took after the Jews who survived. They thought the Jews were getting better treatment. They blamed my mother. She was one of the last Jews to die in the Holocaust. Even though the Holocaust was over by then. It was very strange.

"I see." I wait. "Do you think this belief you have that you yourself are Jewish and that your real mother died in that way could have anything to do with the fact that I am a Jew and the child of Polish immigrants, concentration camp survivors?"

No, why? Oh, you mean the transference. No, sorry, that's really what happened to my mother. I'm not making it up, if that's what you mean. Why would I make it up? That's how my real mother died. She was, I guess you'd call her a hero. I don't know why she's not famous, like Wallenberg. I think it's because of my father. They had to keep it quiet. Europe was a very complicated place after the war, and my father is a complicated man, lots of strange connections, strange friends, all suspect, all dirty, though I myself believe it was all for a good cause.

"I see."

You still don't believe me. (He sighs, and waits a moment before continuing, uncertain that he can trust me. This distance is an obstacle to his progress that I have been unable to resolve.)

My father's family lived in Spain until the Inquisition. That's where the name comes from, why no one thinks I'm Jewish. They were merchants but very well-educated people, advisors to the king of Grenada, I think, for what good it did them. When the Inquisition

came, they fled to Portugal, then to Rhodes, in Greece. From Rhodes they found their way to Amsterdam. They established themselves in Amsterdam, in banking. Eventually, they set up a merchant bank that was to provide the capital for the first voyages to the New World. Then there was an argument -- not over money, but over theology, something to do with Spinoza, who was a distant cousin. One branch thought he should be excommunicated, the other didn't, something like that. There were words, and one branch got sent to Denmark, to run the family business, a kind of exile. To everyone's surprise, the Danish branch did very well. Denmark was a backward county then, a place where no one could read or write, and the Danes had no understanding about banking at all. My father's great-grandfather became an advisor to the Danish king. Actually what happened was, he saved the country from bankruptcy, the whole country. My great-great grandfather and the king became close friends. They used to go out hunting. The Danish king made my grandfather a prince. It's an honorary type title. We can never become king or anything like that. But the title gets passed down from father to son, from generation to generation. I get it when my father dies. It's no big deal.

I haven't thought of calling the Danish embassy about Miss X. It's not a bad idea, but I don't think using influence would be fair. I want the police, the authorities to become involved because there is a life at stake, a human life. It's a terrible injustice.

The Chinese. I think I'll try the Chinese. The Russians, they have too much confusion right now, they don't know which end is up. The Chinese are trying to get back at us for getting mad about Tiananmen Square. This should be right up their alley.

"Our time is exhausted."

I know. You probably just think I'm crazy.

"What I think is of little importance. If you are unable to sleep, I suggest we meet again tomorrow at this time."

Sure, as long as it's after work. I hope Miss X comes into the store tonight. I'd sleep a lot better.

"I'm certain she will return. She is probably just out of town."

That night, I see a notice in a back page of the Times about Miss X, who I'd never heard of. She has disappeared, failed to appear for a regular booking, the police are involved, something about crank calls. Apparently Miss X is quite well known after all. I begin to wonder, to worry. There is nothing in his history, nothing in his ego structure that would suggest danger or instability. I'm quite certain he would have discussed any homicidal ideation with me. He has always been open with me, amazingly open.

Then I replay our conversation in my head and recheck my notes. The image of a woman lying in a pool of her own blood, which comes up again and again. The repressed anger at the father, the abuse, the denied homoerotic identification with the therapist. Although my clinical judgment is that he is harmless, an objective analysis of this interview is disconcerting.

I decide to sleep on it, to discuss it with my supervisor in the morning. This was a privileged exchange. I can only violate his confidence if there is strong evidence of imminent danger to a third party.

On the other hand, what if this woman were to be hurt and my records were subpoenaed? I could be held accountable myself.

I myself am now unable to sleep. This case should not be affecting me in this manner. Countertransference? What conflicts in my own life, my own sense of self, are unaddressed? Is this guilt about superego lacunae?

I rethink my relationship to my own parents, who are well and live a few miles away, who I see weekly, our relationship fully formed. Our major conflicts have been resolved. We have moved beyond adolescent conflicts long ago.

Some sort of misplaced guilt about the Holocaust? A Child of Concentration Camp Survivors' Syndrome? I have lived with the Holocaust all my life. I neither deny the Holocaust nor blame myself for it. It occurred before I was born.

None of this helps. Finally I rise from bed and decide to read.

Something takes me to a book about Sephardic Judaism, which traces refugees from the inquisition from Spain, through Portugal, to Rhodes and Amsterdam, and mentions a community in Denmark.

In the morning, before my first patient, I get a call from the Danish Ambassador, asking me questions I am not at liberty to answer.

The patient disappears. He misses his appointment. He doesn't answer his phone.

I call the store. He didn't come to work. Yes, Miss X was a frequent customer. The police have been by. Who am I? A friend.

Now I am completely unable to sleep. Now I lie awake nights, picturing the body of the beautiful Miss X, the blood dried beneath her. It is as if the blood is on my own hands.

I thought I *knew* patient X.

What have I done? What has been done in my name?

At last, I decide to warn Miss X. I call the police and refer to my credentials, my training. They send a detective to talk to me. He smokes without asking permission, acts like he's known me all his life, calls me 'Doc'. He listens, nods his head, shrugs his shoulders, but tells me I'm not really giving him anything to go on here. It'll be in the file, see, but there's no reason to think there's a problem, no evidence of foul play. This woman, she had a history, see. They are all like that. She probably ran off with her pimp. They're not like us, he says.

And then he winks, just in case my incredulous stare is serious, to let me know maybe he's joking, maybe he's just trying to throw me off the track. We'll look into it, he says. But they've had fifty calls a day on this one, from every nut in the city. Not that he means to suggest that I'm a nut, of course. He's got it all down, got the guy's address. They'll call me if they need to know more.

Weeks pass.

I don't sleep, certain I know the truth.

I am losing weight. My colleagues look at me strangely.

I go to his address. The woman who answers the buzzer never heard of him. No, she won't let me come up just to talk.

Some months later, I get a postcard from Greece, a picture of him standing on a beach with a beautiful Black woman on his shoulders.

They are both waving.

He looks a hundred times better than he looked when he was here.

The is the title story of Michael Fine's new book ***The Jewish Prince of Denmark and Other Stories***. It is available now from Stillwater River Publications https://www.stillwaterbooksri.com/search/apachesolr_search/michael%20Fine or on Amazon : <https://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Prince-Denmark-Michael-Fine/dp/1960505920>

Many thanks to Carol Levitt, Penney Stein and Catherine Procaccini for proofreading and to Brianna Benjamin for all-around help and support.

Please click [here](#) to receive Michael Fine's monthly short stories and his new series, What's Crazy in Health Care. Please invite others to join by sending them the link [here](#).

Information about Michael's books, stories, posts, talks and performances is available at www.MichaelFineMD.com or by clicking the link [here](#). Join us!