

Route of the "Blue Comet"

Alice Schueur was expansive, as she often was after her Tuesday morning massage. "You are so terrific. Isn't he terrific? Doesn't everyone who comes in say so?" she asked Kim the receptionist. "You find all my spots and knots and stresses that I don't even *know* I have, and you go right to them, and bam! - this huge rock I had on my back and didn't even realize, it's gone. I'm calmer, I'm happier, I even perspire less, even when it's August and a hundred degrees." She gestured out the windows, where the sun blazed on the parking lot and a passing commuter train. "Even on good days when I'm thinking life's maybe ok, I'm not so stressed, you take these huge rocks out of my back. I don't know how you do it, you must be psychic. I'm always recommending you to people. Did Leona call you?"

"Leona who?" asked Jeff Greene, the object of her enthusiasms.

"Leona Goldstein. For her husband Morry. A retired button broker from the Garment District. He developed heart trouble, and Leona thought maybe massages would be good. So I said, you have to send him to Jeff."

Jeff confirmed that a Mr. Morris Goldstein had indeed set up an appointment for the following morning. "He's a character," Alice obliquely warned. "He's seventy; and he's the type, like, he's old enough to know better but doesn't care, if you know what I mean? Don't let him bug you, his bark's worse than his bite."

Jeff took the caution in stride. He was well experienced in handling prickly or nervous clients, and was always glad of new business. He had second thoughts the next day, when Mr. Morris Goldstein came attended by a ghost.

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The woman looked as solid and 3-D as the rest of the waiting room, sitting there in an old-fashioned blue outfit and dark hair in a bun; yet there was something unreal about her, as though she had been computer-generated into the scene. She sat completely motionless, without even the stir of breathing, her hands clutched in midair above her lap, as though holding a purse that was not there. Her skin looked pale and unwholesome. Her features were indistinct. And as Jeff drew closer, he saw that she was completely and totally drenched to the skin. There was not a drop of water on the floor round her.