The Sweet Pipe

By

John P. Seiler

All Rights Reserved, 1/2015

-1-

Leo, Donald, and Varten were in the course of enjoying a quiet evening at Castle Pesaro. The three of them sat in Leo's smoking room puffing on their Old Earth pipes. Leo was smoking a Dunhill Group 4 tanshell bent billiard, Varten his Jim Cooke straight black sand blasted billiard and Donald his Ashton straight rusticated magnum Dublin pipe. Donald had brought the evening's treasure, a tin of Old Earth McClelland's Dark Star. The enticing aromatic cloud of smoke encircled them as they talked.

"A sweet smoking pipe is a joy forever" Donald observed.

"True" Leo commented as he puffed "but did you ever find a really sweet smoking pipe that was sweet from day one and continued to be sweet every time you smoked it?"

"I find that many pipes may smoke sweet at a specific time and place, only once in a while and usually with a specific tobacco" Varten replied "The sweet pipe would be the Holy Grail for any pipe smoker."

"I agree Varten" Donald continued "and it also depends on the environment in which one is smoking and the company in which one is smoking his or her pipe."

"I agree with you both, but my question relates to a pipe that always smokes sweet or pleasurable, regardless of when, where, with whom, the type of tobacco or any other conditions. It smokes sweet from the first time and every time" Leo clarified.

"Because of all of the factors that lead to the 'perfect' smoke; the pipe itself, the tobacco and its conditions, the environment, and so forth, I pretty much considered the 'sweet smoking pipe' to be a myth" Donald replied.

"To me" Varten replied "the concept of a 'sweet pipe' would seem to be smoker dependent. Your sweet pipe may not be my sweet pipe. Beside the pipe, its engineering, the tobacco and its condition, and the physical environment, how the individual smokes the pipe also enters into the equation. It is totally subjective to the pipe smoker. I would also have to say that I do not believe that such a beast exists."

"Well, I can tell you that it does exist, and I have one. Several months ago I was going through my extensive pipe collection with Ike McCane. In one of the display cabinets of Old Earth pipes, I came across a large red hawkbill shaped pipe. In Castello terminology, it was at least a GG in size. I had purchased it several years ago, not smoked it and it had just sat in the display cabinet. Suddenly, it had called my name. We looked it over and found it was made by an Old Earth pipe carver named Clarence Mickles. Ike told me that he had known Clarence and that the pipe carver was one of the few that had nailed the hawkbill shape. Next to Castello, he made one of the best hawkbills in the late 1990-early 2000 F.A. time period. No one else had reached his height in making pipes in this shape. I put the pipe aside with others to try. Several evenings later, I was smoking the pipe with a neer-virginia blended tobacco. It struck me that this tobacco blend had never tasted sweeter. The tobacco was nothing special, just an ordinary bulk blend. I compared it with more that I had and found no difference in the quality of the experience with these blends when smoked with this pipe. I smoked the tobacco in several other pipes and it did not seem to match the sweetness of when I smoked it in the Mickles hawkbill. Once again, I filled the Mickles hawkbill pipe with this same tobacco, lit it, and thoroughly enjoyed the sweet smoking pipe. I went on to find that the pipe gave every tobacco that I smoked in it an undeniable sweetness. The pipe is a treasure to smoke." Leo said.

"So where is this wonderful, magical pipe?" Donald asked.

"That is the mystery. It has disappeared from the collection" he said "I can't locate it. Ike and I have gone through every part of the collection. We have searched all of the rooms here at the castle where we smoke. It has sort of disappeared into thin air. Now I wonder if this pipe really existed or if I just imagined it."

"I will find it" Varten said in a low key voice "we can't just have things disappearing here at the castle. This is, after all, the administrative nerve center of the Empire. Things do not just disappear. I will start an investigation tomorrow."

They continued their discussion on the sweet pipe and other pipe matters well into the night, wrapped in plumes of pipe smoke from the tin of Dark Star.

-2-

Varten set the wheels of the investigation in motion. Photometric evaluation of the Castle Pesaro security recordings were made for the past 30 days to see if anything would turn up that was out of the norm. He had a discussion with Ike McCane who pretty much confirmed Leo's story on the locating of the pipe within his collection. Ike did add one interesting piece of information. He told Varten that back in his original time period, late 20th and early 21st century on Old Earth, there had been a cult following for Mickles pipes. It was rare to find one on the market as many collectors kept them for their collections.

Varten has also quizzed Leo more thoroughly on the sweet pipe. He wanted to know to whom Leo may have discussed the topic. Leo said he had discussed it with others in his intimate circle of friends and staff in one way or another. He had also discussed the concept with other pipe smokers he had visited when on Empire business for about the last month. As Leo had previously returned from a two-week long trip throughout the Empire, Varten thought he might have an extensive list. He also sought out Nick Reardon, who with his wife LuJo had just returned to Castle Pesaro after an extended Empire Intelligence Service (EIS) assignment.

Nick and Varten met in one of the smaller conference rooms. Varten smoked his JT Cooke straight black sand blasted billiard while Nick was smoking a small Larenzetti pipe, both filled with a local neer-virginia tobacco.

"Where is LuJo" Varten asked?

"She is having lunch with Leo and Helen." Nick replied as he studied some paperwork that Varten had given him.

"You have quite an extensive list of contacts with which Leo may have discussed the concept of a sweet pipe. I think we could condense it a bit. The purloining of the pipe was either a theft of opportunity by someone here at the castle or it was a well planned theft. If we take the position that it was a planned theft, then we could shorten the list by identifying who would have the resources to conduct such an operation. First, it would have to be a collector. Second, it would have to be someone who has sufficient financial resources to send a team here undetected, commit the theft, and get away unnoticed."

"And third" Varten added "I would think that it would have to be someone who has either a grudge or vendetta against the Emperor. There is no one on this list that overtly meets this third criterion."

He continued "With respect to the first two, Bill Kartick who lives on the planet Selima and Robert Walker who lives on the planet Ranger meet both. They both have extensive pipe collections and the resources to commit the theft. Politically, both belong to the opposition party in the Reischstagen, but I am not aware of any deep grudges."

"I will have our EIS people check the travel between their respective planets and here on Hayden. I think it might be a good idea for you and LuJo to visit our prime suspects." Varten said.

"I believe that LuJo has met Bill Kartick due to his interests in antique furniture. She would be the person to interview him. He has quite a business interest within the Empire distributing and selling furniture and antique furniture. He has the financial resources and may have the means to commit the theft since his people are on many planets. I have met Bob Walker. Before coming into his inheritance, he was at the EIS Academy. When his parents were killed in the space

accident, he inherited their wealth and he left the Academy. At one time, he was a promising candidate to become an agent for the EIS. He would have the wherewithal to commit the theft." Nick expounded.

There was a knock on the door and LuJo entered smoking her Old Earth Group2 tanshell billiard. "May I join you gentlemen?" she asked.

Nick filled her in on their discussion up to this point. She agreed that she would be the best person to interview Bill Kartick. "Leo is quite upset about losing that pipe" she said "It is almost as if there was a death in the family."

"Obviously he was very fond of it. You may only find a consistently sweet pipe once in your lifetime so I can understand why he grieves for what he has lost or had taken from him" Varten replied as he finished his pipe.

"OK so we will both leave this evening on separate needle ships to conduct our investigations. We will keep you informed of our progress." Nick said.

"Yes, do that, and good luck."

-3-

She was alone in her needle ship bound for the planet Selima. It was located in a nebula far away from Castle Pesaro. She had finished her dinner and was about to smoke the Ser Jacopo hawkbill that she had received when she competed her first solo EIS mission when the communicator indicated an incoming message. She filled her pipe with a neer-virginia tobacco blend that she enjoyed, lit it, and brought the message up on her screen. It was from Varten. The message had been sent to both Nick and her. It said that there had been quite a bit of traffic from both planets to planet Hayden and the capital city Samlis, near to Castle Pesaro. They did have a video of two intruders into the castle grounds, but the video was not clear and they could not be identified. There was no other video footage and no one seemed to notice anything else that had been taken.

She thought to herself "So they basically have nothing." She thought she had several pipes that had given her a sweet or perfect smoke but they were rare occurrences. None had ever done so on a consistent basis, under any conditions, with any tobacco. When the heavenly smoke did occur, as if the stars were in perfect alignment, it was like a gift from the gods – a wonderful happening.

She read the information that Varten had sent her regarding Bill Kartick. He was a very rich man deriving his monies from his furniture empire. He had stores on an estimated 80% of the planets within the Empire. He lived in a walled estate on Selima with his wife and two daughters outside the capitol city of New Sydney. The daughters were both off planet attending universities. He was known to have an extensive Old Earth pipe collection and antique furniture

collection. He was consulted on both by many universities and was considered an expert in both areas. Her contact on Selima was a Lieutenant Johnson of the local New Sydney police force.

She sent a text to Lieutenant Johnson informing him of her arrival in the morning. The needle ship would land at the New Sydney space port.

She landed the needle ship and quickly passed through customs. A tall man approached her who she recognized as Lieutenant Johnson. They left the spaceport in an unmarked aircar and headed towards New Sydney. She was ushered into a private office. There was a humidor and pipe rack on the desk.

"You may smoke Mrs Reardon if you like" Johnson said "the tobacco is a local blend called 'red devil"

"Thanks she said as she took out her rather ordinary neer-briar pot shaped pipe. "'Red Devil' is an interesting name for a tobacco. I guess it is delicious with a little kick to it."

"That is as good a description as I have heard without someone smoking it" he replied back.

She lit the pipe. The tobacco reminded her as being near the Old Earth McClelland #5100 that she liked but it had a little something extra. "I like it" she said "it reminds me of a mature virginia tobacco with which I am familiar but it has a little something extra."

"Niceties aside, I have been asked by a high ranking official to assist you in your time here. What are you looking for and how can I help you?" the lieutenant asked.

"A very valuable pipe has disappeared from Castle Pesaro. We have two suspects of which Mr. Kartick is one. I am here to talk with him and if he is the guilty party, to obtain the item and bring him to justice. My partner will be interviewing the other suspect."

He tamped his neer-briar billiard pipe and thought for a minute. "I doubt that Mr. Kartick is the person you are seeking. He is well thought of both as a person, a member of our community, a businessman, and as an expert in both Old Earth pipes and antique furniture. Our records indicate that except for his attendance and meeting Emperor Leopaldo at the biennial quadrant meeting last month, he has not been off world."

"It would seem that he has a pretty tight alibi" Lu Jo replied "but I still must interview him."

"And so you shall. We have about an hour until we are due at his estate. You have enough time to finish your pipe. Is there anything else you wish to know?" he asked.

"No, I will just enjoy the tobacco."

They sat in the office and enjoyed a little solitude with their pipe while their brain kept moving.

Nick had received the same message. He thought of Robert 'Bob' Walker as he filled his travel pipe and began smoking it in his cabin on the needle ship. Bob Walker had always been distant at the Academy. He did not have many friends, but did well in his studies. It had appeared to Nick that Bob had been a bit relieved when he heard of his parents deaths when their space liner had collided with an asteroid while coming out of a jump. He took the opportunity to resign from the Academy and returned home. He had not heard from him in the intervening years. He did hear that he was the representative from the planet Ranger to the Reichstagen, being a newly elected Senator. The supplemental reports from Varten indicated that Bob had a very large pipe collection. It was not as large as Leo's collection, but was very respectable numbering around 1000 pipes of which there were at least 30 Old Earth pipes. He was a noted contributor to some of the pipe collection literature and had written one article on Clarence Mickles as an Old Earth pipe carver.

Varten had informed him that his contact on Ranger would be a Ms. Sara Woodkey, a member of the Ranger Police Department. He used the ship's communicator to text her that he would arrive in the morning and asked for a suggested place to meet. A while later he received a message that they should meet at the Old Sexton's Pipe Shop located in the outskirts of Melbourne, the capital city of Ranger at 10:00 AM local time the next morning.

He arrived at the Melbourne space port late in the evening. He quickly cleared customs and took an airtaxi to the Empire Hotel. He checked in at the hotel using his platinum Empire Express card. He entered his suite of rooms and was surprised to find a very shapely young woman waiting for him.

"Let me guess" he said "Sara Woodkey".

"Yes, what gave me away?"

"It was just a good guess"

"I wanted to have a quick chat with you before we meet tomorrow because I suspect we will be observed even at the tobacco shop" she said.

He took what looked to be a small pack of cigarettes out of his travel bag and turned it on. Nothing happened for 15 seconds then a green light came on. "No bugs" he said "the room is clean of any listening devices."

"There is one more thing I want to do" he said "Come here" he directed her.

As she approached he tore open a small gauze with alcohol. She held out her hand and he rubbed it below the palm. A small Sherlock Holmes tattoo became visible. He also did the same below the palm of his right hand with the same result. After a short period of time, the tattoos disappeared.

"Ok, now I have validated that we are who we claim to be, we can begin" he said.

"I was told that you are a very good agent" she said "Do you mind if I smoke?"

"Please do and I will join you."

That sat in the plush chairs in Nick's room suite and filled their pipes from a pouch that she proffered. "It is a near-virginia blend similar to the Old Earth blend known as Best Brown. The blend comes from one of our local pipe shops. I find it to be very tasty."

They filled their pipes and lit them. "I need to tell you that you must operate as if everything you do or say is being monitored. I know you are here to investigate Mr. Robert Walker. Senator Walker is a very powerful person on Ranger. Although the image he fronts is all on the up-and-up, Mr. Clean himself, we believe that he is connected to the Ranger criminal underworld. There is no proof, and there never is, but we have our suspicions" she explained.

"I am here to investigate the theft of an item of importance to Emperor Leopaldo. The pipe is one of his favorites. The EIS staff has gone over all the videos, the Emperor's contacts and so on. In the end, it comes down that we suspect two people that may have the means to execute the theft of the pipe. Bob Walker is one of the suspects. I plan to interview him tomorrow."

"I suggest that we meet tomorrow at the Old Sexton's pipe shop. Don't forget; assume that we are being watched because we will be. If you like the Best Brown, you can purchase some at the shop."

-5-

They arrived at Bill Kartick's estate by aircar. It was very impressive with the wrought iron fence encircling the house, yards, gardens, and a small lake. A butler opened the door and informed them that they were expected. They were taken into a large library full of antiques. "Mr. Kartick will be with you shortly" he said as he closed the door.

The door opened and a short man entered. He was in his mid-to late sixties. His bright silver hair was starting to thin out. He appeared to be full of nervous energy. "How do you do Lieutennant, and Mrs. Reardon, I am Bill Kartick. What can I do for you?" he asked "Can I offer you some of my Old Earth McClelland' Christmas Cheer 2014?"

"Thank you, certainly" she said as she began to fill her pipe. She packed the tobacco down and lit it. "I am here as a representative of Emperor Leopaldo. A certain pipe has been taken from his collection."

"I am suspected?" he asked as he finished lighting his large calabash and tossing the match.

"Let's say that either you took the pipe or someone wanted it to appear that you may have taken it. All of the computer records, cross checks on travel and so on indicates that you may be involved."

"Oh how utterly very interesting. I have come to the attention of the Emperor. You know I just met him at the quarterly meeting and we had such an interesting discussion over a pipe. I think it was about a sweet pipe or a magic pipe, or something like that. He was just so interesting a fellow, so involved in his pipe collection. He was just so great with which to converse."

"That is the very pipe that was taken" the lieutenant replied.

"I don't even know what brand or shape it was" Bill replied "we just discussed the concept". I have pipes that are great smokers, but I don't have any that do it all of the time. I enjoy when it happens, but I think you would get spoiled if you had the perfect smoke every time you lit up a pipe. It would get rather boring. There would be no variation. No, thanks for thinking of me, but I wouldn't even want such a pipe."

"Are you familiar with a pipe carver named 'Clarence Mickles'?" she asked.

"I am. He lived south of the Old Earth city of Chicago and carved pipes from around 1990 through 2002, F.A. if I recall correct. He was a mechanic or machinist who became a pipe maker. He made some very beautiful pipes, well engineered, constructed, and finished. I do not have any in my collection, but I have heard from other collectors that his pipes smoke great and they are cherished. At one time, there was a cult following for his pipes. I believe another collector, Bob Walker wrote an article on Clarence Mickles, but then you probably already know that."

"Why yes we do" she replied. Do you know Mr. Walker?"

"I know of him, I do not personally know him. We have never talked, but I have read some of the articles he has written. Do you have any more questions or is there some way I can assist you? My wife is ill and I try to stay close in case something happens."

"No, I do not think so" LuJo replied "I want to thank you for your help."

The lieutenant and LuJo left the Kartick estate. As the aircar lifted off, she told the lieutenant "I don't think this is our man."

-6-

Nick met Sara Woodkey at the Old Sexton's Pipe Shop precisely on time. They walked in to the shop whose interior was done up as an old 1900s pipe shop. She introduced him to John O'Comer the proprietor.

"I have come to purchase some of you Best Brown blend" Nick said "I would like about a pound"

John found the jar and weighed out about a pound of the tobacco. He gave it to Nick and he paid with his Empire Express Card.

"Sara tells me that you are on your way to visit Senator Walker. Would you please take a package to him from me? It is his monthly tobacco order consisting of Best Brown and a blend of my own creation called Emperor's Delight" the shop owner asked.

"Sure, but you better give me a couple of ounces of the Emperor's Delight. I want to see if the Emperor is delighted by it" he laughed.

They took Sara's aircar to the Walker Estate outside New Sydney. The estate was actually a large working farm. The fields and pastures were laid out in a neat geometric fashion surrounding a large multi-room central building. There were out buildings for barns, sheds, stables, and so on. The aircar pulled up to the house. The main door opened and a man strolled out. He was in his mid 30s to early 40s, tall, thin and athletic in appearance. "Hi Nick" he said "Long time no see".

"Yes Bob, it has been a long time. May I introduce Ms. Sara Woodkey of your local police force?"

"Sara and I are well acquainted" he replied "Let's go inside and talk over old times."

They walked into the old farmhouse structure. Once inside, Nick saw a quite up-to-date interior, very spacious. They walked down a hall into the library. Bob closed the door.

"So who do you work for now, Nick? EIS? Naval Intelligence? Marines Intelligence? CID? Secret Service?"

"I work for whoever pays my rent the best" he replied "Here, I have a package for you from the proprietor of the Old Sexton's Pipe Shop" he said as he tossed the package to Bob. Bob placed the package on his desk and offered Nick and Sara some tobacco from one of his jars. "It's a nice rare virginia blend from Old Earth" he said "it is called McClelland's Christmas Cheer, dated 2017 F.A."

"I have tried this tobacco before" Nick replied "It was a different year, but it was a great smoke."

They filled their pipes and started smoking them.

"Thanks for the package; it is my monthly supply of fine tobacco. Old John makes some very good blends. OK, why the visit?"

"My sources tell me that you had a conversation within the last month with Emperor Leopaldo about a sweet pipe."

"Yes I did" Bob replied "Emperor Leopaldo was very excited about his finding such a pipe. We discussed the theory. I told him that it was just a myth that no such pipe existed and he argued the contrary. He went so far as to tell me he had one. He wouldn't describe it, but he was emphatic in that he had found our holy grail."

"Emperor Leopaldo's holy grail pipe has been stolen from his collection" Nick stated "I am here because you have been identified as one of the suspects. I have a couple of questions that I wish you would answer."

"Sure Nick, anything for the Emperor."

"What is your opinion on the existence of a 'sweet' pipe?"

"Like I said, I don't believe it exists. I have never found such a pipe that smoke great from day one and thereafter regardless of the tobacco that is placed within it" Bob replied "Such a pipe is a myth."

"You do agree that any quality pipe with the right tobacco can yield a fantastic smoke for a pipe smoker. However, the trick is to find the right combination of tobacco for a given pipe for a specific pipe smoker."

"Yes, I can agree to that" Bob answered "the Christmas Cheer I have given you to smoke may be perfect for you. Sara may not like it. I may hate it. It depends on the pipe, the tobacco, how we have learned to pack/tamp/light and smoke a pipe, the room or situation in which we find ourselves smoking, and other factors. But to have one pipe which would rise to the occasion and give a dream smoke each and every time, I find hard to believe."

"I have read your article on Clarence Mickles. It was a well written article on the Old Earth pipe maker" Nick stated "do you think he could make such a pipe?"

"Clarence Mickles was a wonderful pipe maker. I have several of his pipes in my collection. They are over there in that display case. For me, they smoke great most of the time, especially when I have a fine old virginia blend in the bowl. They do not smoke well for me when I have a flake or an English blend."

Sara walked over to the display case to look at the pipes.

"It's interesting; Emperor Leopaldo consulted me regarding Clarence Mickles and his pipes. His large red Clarence Mickles hawkbill pipe was made in 2001, right before Clarence joined the heavenly group of pipe makers. Although it was a nice pipe, and Clarence was at the peak of his skills, it is not the holy grail pipe."

"How do you know that the large red 2001 Mickles Hawkbill was Emperor Leopaldo's holy grail sweet pipe?"

"He told me so when he contacted me!"

"No he didn't, you said he only discussed the sweet pipe as a concept, with no specifics. Emperor Leopaldo did not tell anyone which pipe was his 'sweet' pipe. Only two people knew the specifics, Ike McCane and Emperor Leopaldo prior to the pipe being stolen and only a couple of people know since the pipe was stolen and you are not one of them!"

Bob rose and started back towards his desk. Sara moved over from the pipe case to behind Bob.

"Look Bob, the only way you would know the connection between the Mickles hawkbill pipe and it being the Emperor's 'sweet' pipe would be if you had it stolen and it was not in your possession."

"Sweet Pipe! What Rubbish! The Mickles hawkbill is no Sweet Pipe. Yes, I stole it. I've smoked it and it smokes terrible! He reached for a box on his desk which fell on the floor and out came the Mickles Hawkbill pipe! He reached for a needle gun on his desk, but Sara was quicker, stunning him with her taser gun."

"He will be out for a while" she said. "First in my class at the EIS Academy!"

"Ok, he is all yours" Nick said. "He is guilty of at least theft of items from Emperor Leopaldo or at the barely least receipt of stolen property. I think that is enough for you to get a search warrant for the local police for this property. I will have EIS people crawling all over this property within an hour. He won't be able to keep his underworld connection hidden once our people get here. I get the pipe" he said as he picked it up along with its box. He looked at the lid of the box on which a piece of masking tape had been placed where he read 'Sweet Pipe' in Leo's handwriting.

-7-

They were all sitting in Leo's smoking room at Castle Pesaro. LuJo and Nick were both back from their assignment. Varten, Helen, and Leo were joined by Donald. Quite a few pipes were being smoked and you could cut the pipe smoke fog with a knife. Nick had returned the 'Sweet Pipe' back to Leo along with his package of 'Emperor's Delight' pipe tobacco from the Old Sexton's Pipe Shop.

"It seems" Varten was saying "that Bob's crew was from off planet, but with inside help from one of our kitchen staff who no longer is employed here. In fact the two off worlders and the insider are now 'fruitfully employed' on a penal colony picking tobacco. It turns out that Bob Walker always blamed the Empire for the death of his parents. It seemed that the navigator on the space liner had been under the influence when he plotted the jump and he miscalculated and

hit the asteroid. He survived the accident; but the official investigation did not blame him for being the cause of the accident which killed Bob Walker's parents. Bob basically pinned that blame on you Leo which is why he developed his underworld connections. He is undergoing a bit of psychological readjustment after which he should be a bit more normal and he will return to a more sedate life on his estate. He has resigned from his senate position in the Reichstagen."

"It's a shame" Leo said "and I never suspected."

Varten continued "Sara Woodkey has turned out to be a very good EIS agent. We will be sending her for advanced training and she will be reassigned as we need her."

"She better not be working too closely with Nick in the future" LuJo shouted.

They chuckled.

Leo took the floor "After thinking over what has happened, I have come to the conclusion that there is not a 'sweet pipe' that will be sweet for everyone all the time. We who are fortunate will have a sweet pipe that will smoke sweet for us all the time maybe once in a lifetime. Some of us will be fortunate to have a sweet pipe that will smoke sweet for us most of the time. Indeed most of us will have many pipes that will smoke sweet for us a lot of the time. After all, without variety in our pipe smoking it would be a very boring hobby."

He sat down, took his Old Earth Clarence Mickles red oversized hawkbill pipe, filled it up with the 'Emperor's Delight' tobacco and put a match to it. He puffed on it for a few minutes and said "Even the Emperor can delight in this combination tonight!"

They continued smoking their pipes late into the night – friends among friends.

Towards the end, Nick pushed a little package over to LuJo. She hesitated opening the box and out came a book that fell on the table. The title of the book was 'Secret Agent Girl – Quick on the Draw"

She looked toward the sky and said "How many of these damn books are there?"

They all laughed.

"I got an idea" Donald Trimp said "Maybe you should send your Secret Agent books to EIS Agent Sara Woodkey. She may need to study them in her advanced tradecraft class."

LuJo tried to throw the book at Donald, but Nick held her back as the others laughed.

-END-