

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat		Code Sujet	CLG 32
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Your main commentary should be focused on *the articles a and Ø*. Other topics may also be addressed.

A very small girl opened the door. It was a heavy door and it took her backward with it a few steps before she remembered to let the knob go. Her yellow flannel sleepers were printed with drawings of the comic-strip dog Snoopy. A rubber band tugged her taffy hair into a topknot, but some strands had got away and were damp. She was rosy from scrubbing. She clutched a plastic duck.

"I had my bath," she said. "Now Daddy's going to read me about snakes."

"That sounds like fun," Dave said.

Back of her, in a long sunken living room where gentle lamplight glowed on glossy new Mediterranean furniture, a pair of older children, six, eight, sat on deep gold wall-to-wall carpet and watched television. Winchesters crackled. Orange Indians tumbled from purple houses. A young woman came between him and the action. She wore splashed denims, but starchy white was what she was used to. She moved like a nurse. She was blonde as the child, her eyes were Delft blue like the child's—but not childish. Armed.

"Dr. De Kalb," Dave said.

"He doesn't see patients at home." One hand eased the child backward, the other began to close the door. "If you'll call the office tomorrow morning and make an appointment—"

"I'm not a patient. I'm from Medallion Life."

"Thank you." Her smile flicked on and flicked off. "We have all the insurance we need."

"The death-claims division," Dave said. "It's about a former patient of his. A man who drowned."

"Oh?" She frowned, but she stopped moving the door. She turned and spoke into the room. "Phil?"

The chair De Kalb unfolded from faced the television set, but he hadn't been watching. He'd been reading. The book was in his hand. Grey and heavy. A medical text. He kept a finger in it as he came to the door. He looked young, but he walked old, a stoop to his shoulders. He was tall and lanky, a towhead like his wife and kids. His eyes were Delft too but hidden under a bony thrust of

brow. His ears stuck out. They didn't look adaptable to a stethoscope.

"Thanks," he told his wife, and she gave him a smile that was brief but real and led the little girl away, and he asked Dave, "What's the problem?"

Dave gave him a card. "It's about John Oats."

"Ah." De Kalb winced and shook his head. "That was tragic, damn it." He stepped back. "Come in."

The room he led Dave to was down steps and out of range of the television gunshots. Desk and coffee table were deal. Easy chair and couch were tawny corduroy. The walls were knotty pine and crowded with glittering sports trophies on wooden brackets, sports photographs in frames. A few were team pictures—baseball, basketball. But most were of De Kalb solo. Younger but unmistakable. Head thrown back, muscles strained like wires, face twisted in agony, chest snapping a track-meet tape. Leaping straight as an exclamation point to slam back a high drive on a tennis court, packed bleachers in the background. Jackknifed in mid-air over a tourney swimming pool. No wonder he walked old. He laid the book on the desk, dropped into the easy chair, nodded at the couch.

"I don't understand it," he said. "John was doing just fine. Considering the extent and severity of his burns, he'd come back very well. No sign of liver dysfunction, which is what you really fear in these cases. He was a happy man the last time I saw him. Why would he kill himself?"

"Did he?" Dave sat and lit a cigarette. "The coroner's jury called it accident."

"Hah. They never swam with him." De Kalb stretched a long arm, rattled open a drawer of the desk, brought out an ashtray. "Scars and all, he could outlast me."