

# Down Nine Stories by Gordon

At dusk the next day, Jason woke face down in a puddle of himself. His efforts to arise stiffened every joint in his body. His left leg kicked free of the rubbish that had kept it from the frosted tree of the wall, a mere reflection of the lifeless mass on the ground. He was just a shade, a drunken, deadly heap of nothingness. "I hated...."

The ground was nine stories down. Jason knew that well. He lurched to the balcony. The city lights that pined at the railing, he put an end to all his troubles. This was his escape.

It would be so easy, so simple. The authorities might think it was an accident, they might think it was murder, and it wouldn't matter afterwards anyway. He would simply have to walk out to the balcony, grab hold, and push his problems away.

The phone rang. The damned phone, that godawful clanging that for all his life had sent Jason into a futile rage, those bells that controlled his comings and goings and everything that happened in between. It was pointless to resist now, Jason knew that it was time for his freedom.

Jason slithered through the door to Sonja's apartment. Often he would sit on the sofa in the living room and stare at the night sky. He would sit there tonight for an eternity, and look out to the balcony.

Sonja stood on the balcony, vainly watering a plant the cat had killed three months ago. Jason stared at her; she didn't even care. How easy it would be, just to give a gentle shove, to send her and all his problems hurtling down to nothingness. His life was over; no one even knew he was there. Except Sonja, of course, but that was hardly important.

Jason hated his life with Sonja, he hated the sound of her phone and the smell of her carpet. He hated the garage can. Last night, he could give her a shove, a freedom? He hated every thing he touched had died, only a revengeful act could give him the ground. He tipped a bottle over, and it shattered on the ground.

The stairwell stank of urine on all nine flights. There was an elevator, but Jason ignored it--elevators were filled with living people, and Jason was not interested in the living any longer. Despite his nausea, he was strangely cheered by his ability to grab the handrail, to make the ancient iron and concrete staircase vibrate, to scrape plaster from the walls. Tonight, the apartment would be empty, and he would be free.