



**IF
I
SHOULD
DIE**

by Virgil Thompson

They say the child of a suicide is more likely to try suicide. I don't know the statistic but Stephanie believed it on a number of levels. Stephanie Vosburgh, a graduate nurse who swung hospital volunteer hours, foundation luncheons, charity dinners, and fund-raisers while bringing up a couple of kids. She was also well read. As for me, I am writing for all the times I

could have told her about the cave and I didn't, and for the things that I said too late. You will at times feel outrage. I will not plead. At least I will not plead much. I found Stephanie at a time when holding together the bricks of my world seemed unlikely. Using love as an excuse is like swearing in church, and if you are looking for redemption you won't find it here. But if you want to know about the evil, and if you need to understand the things they write about me, and the things they write about us, then you are indeed home. Please sit down. Take my hand.

In the autumn of 1997, I carried a 9mm Glock, the small-frame model 19. I applied for the firearms license, took the certification course at an indoor range in Norwalk, and bought the gun on no one's advice. Because I could and could too often becomes should. By the time I met Stephanie, I was sleeping with the semiautomatic pistol under the unused pillow, the empty pillow, in the master bedroom of the Nutmeg Suite at the Bonner-Chancellor. I would go to sleep around nine or ten in the morning with the gun out of sight but terribly present, next to my head, and a round—a bullet—in its chamber. When I slept on my stomach, sometimes my arm crossed the untenanted half of the king size bed, slipped into the frigid underside of the lonely pillow, and encountered the smooth, unyielding metal of the weapon. The gun was locked and loaded, as they say. Since the Glock's safety is its operator—there is no external switch to flip up and down—I was locked and loaded in earnest.