

Based on "Touched with Fire" by Ray Bradbury

MR. FOXE'S THEORY

Insurance men do have a certain flaw;  
they tend to analyze the odds and draw  
conclusions, then accept them as the law.  
Thus Foxe laid out his points for Mr. Shaw.

Foxe did a lot of reading; he meant well.  
He hoped to save the woman from her hell.  
He quoted experts; Shaw, an easy sell,  
would nod and frown and listen to him tell

how statisticians pinpoint certain keys,  
like finding bloody crimes occur in threes,  
while temperature of ninety-two degrees  
can trigger murderers and murderees:

Sometimes the victim plays an active role,  
transmitting signals deep within his soul,  
a death-wish blazing in an aureole  
unseen by passing people as a whole.

Yet visible to those the devil plants  
with strange antennae tuned to rarest chance,  
susceptible to special circumstance  
igniting flames that make his minions dance.

Retired, the two old underwriters walked  
together. Foxe was sweating as they stalked  
his thesis to infinity and talked  
about prevention. Suddenly Shaw balked:

"You really mean to speak to her, that witch,  
that ten-mouthed termagant, the sort of which  
I've never seen?" "She's like a flaming itch,"  
said Foxe, "If we can help--we've found our niche!"

"You think she has a secret hope to die  
by someone else's hand, and that is why  
she acts so vile? You think we can apply  
persuasion, get her to a shrink?" A sigh

pursued Shaw's words, "I hope she throws us out.  
It's much too hot to listen to her shout."  
Fuxe said, "I'll take the lead, we'll go about  
it calmly. It's our duty, there's no doubt."

But as with many mortal plans, the best  
can run afoul against some hidden beast.  
The beldam's rage lit fires in Foxe's breast.  
His cane above her head, he failed the test.