

Here's a mini-excerpt from **VERGA'S BLESSING**. Cub journalist and criminal justice student Patella Sackworth is investigating the possibility that Foul Play is clucking in Balona and has left 14-year-old Dirk E. ("Turkey") Dwindle pale, weak, with a sore on his neck and no more pocket change. Could a disreputable subsidy publisher be on the loose?

Patella narrates:

Being seventeen, I am almost a "trained observer," as we say in my Criminal Justice class, so am I qualified to interrogate little Turkey Dwindle? Of course. And I have also had your psychology training that all kids have to take over there at Chaud County Community College (which we refer to as "C4"). It is called Psychology and Your Sex Life, and it is taught by our very own Balona resident Ms. Francesca Poone. I got a B-plus. I would have got an A except I had a psychology experiment go sort of wrong, what with the droon going back to his wife, et cetera.

I figure I could, while interrogating the child, help Turkey socially. I could give him a few pointers on how to get along with his peers. I would do him this favor since the kid has crouched up to me several times and said he likes me. This is always a surprise, since no other kid has ever done that. What he will do when he sees me on the street is get really close and lean his head onto my sweatshirted boobs area, sniffing me. "I like the way you smell, Patella," he will say, actually saying my name. Which is a nice thing to hear, even from a fourteen-year old who may not be all there.

Actually, he emits this saying when I have just come out of Frank's where I have had a couple chocolate donuts or a Franksburger, so Turkey may be sniffing those eats rather than my own essences. But anyway, it is encouraging that anybody will say such a nice thing....

**Wholesale: Baker & Taylor, Brodart, BWI,
Coutts, Follett Library Resources, Mackin;
and at discount via The Balona Web Site**

<<http://www.balona.com/verga.html>>