

Dreamscape

by

Robert P. Fitton

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1

Unlocking Kathryn's demons would destroy her. The same dream haunted her every night for two weeks and she could not face more nights alone in the dark. In the mirror, her messy auburn hair and the sinewy paths of newly formed blood vessels webbing her green eyes only added to her depression. She adjusted her gold rim glasses and exhaled. Her goal in booking the appointment with Dr. Rashid was to make sense of her dreams and understand why Lucy was locked inside her head.

She turned her brown Toyota into Rashid's dirt lot. The overgrown hedges covering the first floor windows as well as the wispy, yellowed grass blades, and peeling black lettered sign swaying in the wind, exaggerated her heightened vulnerability. Most professional buildings were located downtown in Ellerby, but this three story, faded red Victorian was isolated on a rural stretch near the town forest.

After locking her car, she swung her pocketbook strap over her shoulder and hiked across the dusty lot. Grassy clumps and sprinkled ant mounds pushed through the weathered cement walk. Lucy never spoke during the day, but her pleas for help, as if trapped within a silty, hidden underwater pocket, would bubble up at night. Kathryn paused at the olive paneled front door. She wandered over the porch slats and placed her hand on the tarnished brass knob. Again she stopped. With a single twist she opened the door. The faint smell of incense and stronger unfamiliar food aromas lingered inside the stuffy wood veneer foyer.

In his office Dr. Rashid scrawled vigorously on a legal pad propped on his folded leg. The crimson stain glass lamp produced a single light swath over his open beige shirt and charcoal slacks. His dark eyes, black hair, and deepened beard stubble reminded her of a tribal mystic. He looked up as she stood rigidly on the foyer rug. His heavily accented voice punctuated the heavy air. " Miss Jenner, right on time."

Kathryn now wished she had solved her own problems. Rashid set down his pen and trekked across the office. She squeezed his hairy, tacky hand.

" Kathryn Jenner."

" Please sit down... Please."

He fumbled with the office door and motioned her over to a padded Queen Anne sofa. After exchanging vague pleasantries, he sat in a soiled beige chair and ran his blue plastic pen back over the yellow legal pad. He pushed a button below the chair and New Age jazz subtly reverberated from cob webbed, silver speakers in the ceiling corners. Kathryn wondered why Roz had recommended this guy to rid her of the hellish nightmares.

She tapped her fingers rhythmically on her leather pocketbook and followed the neatly woven, complex blue and brown Oriental rug to the wall. Yellowed glue had seeped through the older wallpaper seams and the plaster was cracked across the high ceiling. The front window light was dimmed by the hedges and a tall green door between the rear bookcases was closed. Rashid crossed his legs again. His accent, combined with his low voice made her uneasy. " I'm ready. Sorry for the delay."

" Roz said you could help me."

The whites of his eyes glared as he nodded and jotted something on the pad.
" You feel... like someone is trying to kill you."

" Conrad Ridder."

His bristle brows rose over the dark rim glasses. " The man who has the talk show on national TV? "

" Yes."

" Forgive me, Miss Jenner I do not watch much TV, but I do know Conrad Ridder is nationally famous."

" No, you don't understand. It's a dream. The same dream every time. It started two weeks ago. I'm in Plymouth. You know, where the Pilgrims landed. I've never been there in my life."

" Sometimes we extrapolate things."

Kathryn wiped the sweat beading on her forehead. How could she ever relate the horror of someone trying to murder her? Her stomach problems erupted again as acid crept up her throat and threatened to dissolve her vocal cords.

" God, this seems so real. I almost want to go back there and straighten this out. "

" Tell me the dream."

" I'm running along a stone, sea wall at night. Only I'm not me. I'm Lucy."

" Lucy?"

" Yeah, and I'm with this guy named Smitty. We're running down the road and all the cars, they're all old, maybe twenty-five or thirty years old. Big cars with fins. We run past the place where the boat is. You know, the replica of the Pilgrims boat. Ridder is driving down the road in his white Volkswagen. An old type Volkswagen. We tried to hide near the monument. The big granite monument where the rock is. I saw the engraved 1620 on the rock. Ridder is out of the car. He has a

gun. Smitty holds me and tries to talk to Ridder. Ridder is younger and he yells out: ' I'm sorry guys, but you're in the way...You won't stop me! ' And that's it. He points the gun and fires. Then I wake up."

" I see... And it happens the same way every time?"

" Yes, all the time. Every night. Tell me how to stop it, Doctor."

" A lost soul is reaching out."

" A what?"

" A soul is reaching over the time and you are the conduit."

" At other times, she calls out for my help."

Rashid nodded again as if he had heard this complaint before. " The soul may be this woman you call Lucy. I can help with Transformation Therapy."

" I'm not familiar with that."

He smiled just long enough to flash his white teeth. " Miss Jenner, I engage in certain practices that may not be classified as conventional. I can assure you Transformation Therapy is real. It does work where the body is inhabited by restless spirits. But there are side effects, if you will."

Kathryn sat up in the chair. " So, you're telling me I actually have spirits inside me? Is that it?"

" Repeating dreams are often manifestations of spirits longing to bridge time and space." His brow deepened and his voice reflected a new intensity.

" These spirits possess a yearning to be free from the burden they carry."

" Burden? What burden? Come on. I've never heard of that nor have I heard of this therapy." She sprang from the sofa and mechanically strapped her bag over her shoulder. " I was looking for regular therapy. The kind you get from a shrink."

Rashid balanced the pen on his chin and moved his tongue around his cheek.

" Miss Jenner. This dream is not going to stop until you satisfy this lost soul; this Lucy. And just your talking about it could trigger more dreams. That is the great danger. Let me help you."

" Oh, come on, Doctor. I consider myself a competent woman. I am assistant director of a marketing company here in Ellerby. I may not be married yet at age twenty-eight... I was going out with a guy. He was a jerk. Maybe that started all this."

" I don't think so," said Rashid. " I've dealt with this pattern before. The spirit is there. Perhaps, Lucy was murdered. Transformation Therapy is a form of hypnosis. We can jar loose the spirit. "

" I'm talking about legitimate psychological problems and you're bringing this Transplant Theory."

" *Transformation Therapy*. As I said it is not without risk."

Kathryn glanced at the outside door. " Something I won't have to worry about. I think I'm going to seek the services of someone a little more mainstream. No offense."

Rashid set down the legal pad, stood and faced her. " Miss Jenner, it will only get worse if someone is reaching to you over time. It will begin to consume you."

Kathryn studied the beard stubble across his tanned skin. A dramatic seriousness and mystery resided his black eyes. " I just have to trust my judgment."

" I can't force you. I just feel for what you're going through." He pinched an orange business card from the plastic holder on the table and inked a number on the back. " Please, call my private number if it gets worse. And I know it will accelerate because the spirit is aware he or she has your attention."

" I prefer to think my dreams are a result of my own tensions."

" Maybe not." He placed the textured card with raised yellow ink into Kathryn's trembling hand. She glanced at the Ellerby number. " Thank you... But I'm going seek professional help"

" Please no explanation is necessary." He escorted her around the sofa and opened the foyer door. " Remember, Miss Jenner, life issues must be resolved. Someone is reaching out for help and they won't stop until the world is made right again."

" Okay." She moved quickly into the foyer and shot out the front entrance. The clean forest air refreshed her from the strange, stifling environment inside the house. She looked over her shoulder as she trotted down the cement walk and Venetian blinds quickly descended over Rashid's door window. She fumbled for the car key. " This is nonsense. This guy is a Loony Tune."

Once safely inside the Toyota she repeatedly assured herself Rashid posited a wild, rationalized theory. She whipped the car around the dirt lot and the red house was soon lost within the dusty cloud. The idea of spirits crossing time and space was absurd. She stared into her own eyes as she drove. Forces beyond her control lurked behind her dark expanded pupils. Rather than actually flying back east to Plymouth, she needed a competent therapist to draw out the true nature of her malady and solve her problem.

2

Kathryn grabbed the remote off the dresser when she entered her bedroom. Revitalized from a hot soak in the tub, she flung herself on the bed and pushed the TV power button. Conrad Ridder's thick gray hair and wide cheeks slowly materialized on the twenty-seven inch monitor. " Oh, man, I can't get away from this guy!"

Why was this man at the center of her nightmare? She pushed the remote, and was about to channel surf when she heard the President's southern twang, but Ridder's smooth delivery and charm rivaled the popular President's charisma. Kathryn stared at Ridder's perfect gray coif, longer than most TV personalities. His shaded black eyes exuded an empathy with millions of viewers. The well-timed clarity of his questions made people feel as though he were speaking for them. They called him, " The Voice, " because the media said rather than just asking questions, Conrad Ridder cared. Kathryn now understood how he could translate his popularity into votes if he really did run for Governor of Colorado.

Maybe his charm and ability to draw viewers was the basis of her dreams. She adjusted the pillows and thought back to a murky image of Rashid's office. His conclusion about a spirit being stuck in her head bordered on the ludicrous. Kathryn did not believe in spirits. She was convinced her breakup with Mark had triggered all these dreams, but fitting Ridder into the role of a killer baffled her. On the screen he was upstaging the President, who loved the spotlight, but seemed to en-

joy yielding to Ridder. She closed her eyes and listened to, " The Voice. " Ridder's clear baritone was surprisingly effective even without the video.

" I know, Mr. President, that your golf game is both consistent and on target."

" What about your game, Conrad?" asked the President.

" My game?" he chuckled. " My game is very consistent... Consistently bad."

Ridder had the unusual self-effacing ability to win over his friends and detractors. But why was he armed with a handgun and in a white Volkswagen, decades ago in Plymouth, Massachusetts? She thought back to her psychology courses in school and the various symbolism employed by the brain in dreams. Who was this Smitty, accompanying Lucy on her nocturnal journey along the sea wall to the Plymouth Rock monument? The lanky young man with a crop of brown hair was someone she never had seen nor met. Yet, they were running from Ridder. What could they have done to make him kill? She smiled and looked at Ridder's tailored blue suit. His gold cufflinks glistened under the bright lights. He represented success.

A substantive relationship with Mark was thwarted when he left. She was successful in her job and had not thought about pursuing another career. Yet, her unexciting life monotonously rolled along. The setting in Plymouth directly related to the Pilgrims, people who fled persecution and found a new life.

She sat up and propped the pillows, convinced she had figured out the mechanism of the repeating dream. The gall of Rashid telling her some spirit inhabited her thoughts now angered her. She thought about reporting him or at the least

going back to that weird red house by the woods and giving him a lecture on reality and professionalism.

The phone line rang and she grabbed the receiver off the end table.

" Hello."

" It's me," said Roz.

" Ah, the culprit."

" Whaddaya doin'?"

" Watching Conrad Ridder coddle the President. "

" The man of your dreams. I have better things to do between ten and eleven."

" Those dreams are not funny."

The large framed, dark haired Roz appeared with her cordless in the doorway. " So, did Rashid help you?"

" Roz, where the hell did you find that kook?" Ridder leaned back and smiled as the President kidded him. " Rashid reminds me of one of those occult people who have a handwritten sign for Tarot card readings and crystal balls out in front of a rehabbed house by the side of the road. "

" So you like him, huh?"

" Like him? I'm ready to sue the man."

" How long were you there?" asked Roz.

" Only five minutes. The guy is a kook."

" Rashid helped my friend Kitty at work, " said Roz, cordless phone at her ear as she stepped into the bedroom. A numbered purple nightshirt, with some football player's name on the back, covered her bulky form. On her wrist was a gold bracelet studded with diamonds.

" Roz, you're not wearing that bracelet out again, are you?"

" It was my Aunt Jenny's fiftieth present from Uncle Max."

" Somebody's going to rip it off your arm."

Roz still spoke through the phone. " *Paaa-leeese!* Kathryn Marie, you worry too much. Dr. Rashid worked with Kitty just two times and she was fine."

Kathryn chuckled at how her hefty roommate would call her at night from the bedroom across the hall. " Kitty... Sounds feline."

" Kitty has a fetish with army boots and-"

" Roz, I have my own problems. I don't even want to go to sleep." She turned back to the TV. The President leaned forward. " Isn't it true you're running for Governor of Colorado?"

Ridder formed a coy smile and paused long enough for people to await his answer. " Mr. President, when you're a public figure, you're always running. We're thinking about it. Certain considerations have to be made. We should have a decision by Friday. Now let's talk foreign policy."

" I say you need to change parties."

Ridder tilted back again, laughing as if the President was the funniest man in the world. " It's been a party, let me tell you. As you know, Mr. President, its people that fuel any political efforts and the cards, e-mail and faxes coming into our offices is astounding. The support is there."

" Roz, are you listening to Ridder?"

" Can't stand him."

" He's going to run for Governor out in Colorado," said Kathryn.

" I have enough trouble here in Ellerby. If I get dumped one more time, I'm moving to the landfill. " Kathryn smiled. Roz's pudgy face and mass of short

brown hair added to her ability to be funny. " Listen, you on for Friday night? Should be a wild party."

" You and your parties," said Kathryn, studying Ridder's phantom eyes. She wondered if he would someday run for President. " Roz, you know I don't fit into that loud crowd."

" The loud crowd, that's us," she said disappearing into the hall, but she continued talking on the cordless.

" Well... I belong in a simpler time."

" Cerebral Kathryn Marie. What are you going to do about the dreams?"

" Hope they stop. Although if I listen to Rashid ...when I started asking questions, the spirit would be aware of my interest and the dreams would get worse. A real confidence builder."

" Don't discount Rashid."

" Roz, he's a quack."

" Yeah, so, what's the problem?"

" Good night, Roz."

" Catch you later."

" Catch ya."

Kathryn set down the phone and checked the green digits on her table alarm. In seven hours she would be at her desk, sorting through marketing surveys. She shut off the light and only saw Ridder and the President on the glowing TV. Maybe it was time to go back to school, or find another line of work. She longed for the companionship she lost when Mark left her six months ago. Maybe his finding another woman really was at the cause of all the dreams. She yawned and sunk her head in the pillow, but when she closed her eyes she only heard Ridder's voice.

With the remote in the air, she pushed the power button and the room went dark. Fatigue crept over her as she slowly drifted off. In the vague world between consciousness and sleep Lucy's faint voice echoed sporadically like waves slowly rolling toward a level shore. "*Kathryn, help me... Kathryn... help me.*"

* * *

As Smitty drove the Nash along the ocean wall, Lucy stared at the spit, sheltering Plymouth harbor. The convoluted evening clouds hovered over the darkening water and Uncle Charlie's untimely death constantly filled her thoughts. Smitty braked at a small rotary where Route 44 began. She spoke loudly through engine hum.. " Smitty, maybe we should just let things be. Investigating Uncle Charlie's accident won't bring him back."

" Charlie was scammed. You said it yourself."

The brakes squeaked at the Court Street lights. Lucy checked the traffic and rows of buildings toward Uncle Charlie's real estate office behind Pilgrim Hall.

" Yeah, he was taken. But, saying Conrad Ridder or Sam Hunter caused his accident is pushing it. I'm afraid of them both. I say back off."

" That's not advice I'm getting from Dan Jansen," said Smitty.

" Jansen's just a police sergeant."

" If we find something Ridder or Hunter said, Jansen said he would alert the District Attorney's office and they start looking into Charlie's accident."

" You mean murder." Lucy's eyed filled. Her uncle was an outgoing guy who vitalized everyone around him. Charlie told her how Hunter took his money,

but without proof, she kept that information from her despondent Aunt Stacey. "I don't believe Uncle Charlie was drunk when he hit the trees on 3A. "

Smitty pulled away from the lights and drove up the hill. " Not what the coroner says. Listen, Hunter was your uncle's best salesman and he convinced Charlie to invest the money. And now Conrad is bidding on WXBN. How does a twenty-two year old kid buy a radio station? Hunter and Conrad were seen at the station. How did they link up? " Smitty brought the Nash past the hillside cemetery near the highway bridge where Uncle Charlie was buried. The long hill continued under the highway toward a distant brown water tower within the woods. " I think he or Hunter did something to Charlie's Fury. The car was less than a year old.. "

" Exactly. And who is Hunter? What's his background? The same with Conrad. He leaves Plymouth for school in New Jersey and comes back a radio talk show host. "

" Conrad is very talented," said Lucy.

" He sounds older and wiser than he is. "

" But he has an ego a mile wide. I swear he's financially linked with Hunter, " she said, clenching her fist. She checked the back windshield for anyone who might be following them. " What would stop them from killing us if he knew we suspected them? "

" Hopefully Dan Jansen gets to the DA first, so neither one can pull anything. "

" What a stench, " said Lucy, holding her nose. The rich smell of cow manure filtered into the car and the sharp sunlight caught cornfields and a tall

white silo. WXBN 's high red and white antennas towers stood like rockets on the pad overlooking the bay up to Duxbury. Yesterday Smitty asked a few questions about ownership and selling price of the station. The receptionist mentioned Conrad and Hunter talking with the station owner about purchasing the station. She wondered if he had only stirred up trouble.

Black and white cows basked in the afternoon light near the high-tension wires heading south. The creosote coated wood poles cast shadows over the high grass. " I need to look at Charlie's Fury," said Smitty. " It was a brand new fifty-seven, so no one can argue mechanical failure. If his blood alcohol level wasn't so high, they might have done a more thorough investigation. "

Lucy nodded as the road narrowed and wound through the wooded back lands. " Uncle Charlie liked a glass of wine, but he never drank to excess. He told me he was going to have two glasses and that was it. I don't get it. "

" He was at The Wayside for less than an hour. And every waitress in there said he sat alone looking out the window and had a couple of glasses of wine. Did he start drinking once he got in the Fury? But he got a phone call at the table. Who was it and what did they want?"

Lucy put on her sunglasses as the sun cut through the trees ahead. They passed a series of cranberry bogs, matted red in the sunlight. " Gwen Rowland said he talked to her at the register. He wasn't drunk. Half an hour later he was dead and two days later the coroner said he was drunk. What happened from the time he left the restaurant until he hit the tree? "

Smitty shifted the car again. " That is the question that may never be answered, Lucy. We have to work around that with circumstantial evidence. " He looked out the side window. " The junkyard is on the Carver town line. "

" Uncle Charlie called Aunt Stacey from the Wayside and said he had business to attend to. He said he'd be home by eighty-thirty. He wanted to watch Gunsmoke..."

Smitty shook his head. " Somebody met him and got him drunk. The car is the only physically evidence we have right now. "

" If it's still at the junkyard.. "

* * *

Smitty signaled at a rusted metal sign for S. L. Horwitz Auto Salvage, an automobile junkyard carved into a wooded section in Carver. In the twilight, the Nash rolled over the uneven dirt road toward a tarpaper office shack under tall pines. Smitty slowed the car and shut off the engine about fifty feet from the shack. Lucy stepped from the car and her heart raced as she scanned the mounds of compacted cars. More rusted frames surrounded rows of stripped cars up the forested hill. A couple of German Shepherds appeared inside the shack windows and hit their paws against the glass. " Smitty, I don't like it here."

" Suppose Hunter really sabotaged Charlie's car, Lucy? We need to find that Plymouth Fury. The police report said the car was towed here."

" Maybe we should let the cops handle it," said Lucy.

" I told you. What if they know all the cops and paid them off?"

Lucy followed Smitty past the half shingled shack, over to the first aisle of junk cars. He studied the cars, looking for Uncle Charlie's red and white Fury. Lucy remembered Uncle Charlie showboating his new car when he picked it up at the dealership up in Brockton. He and Aunt Stacey drove around for hours and gave trips through Plymouth. Lucy sat in the front seat as her gray haired

uncle gripped the large plastic wheel, beeped the horn and waved throughout the town. Then her mind shot back to Uncle Charlie's funeral. She pictured the flag draped casket at the cemetery last week and how Aunt Stacey's tears never stopped.

Smitty, elevated on a car bumper, peered over the wrecks down back. He pawed over the mangled cars while Lucy followed; her arms folded as she constantly watched the office shack. Several times she pleaded with him to leave, but he was adamant about finding her uncle's car. Half an hour later he abandoned his search and brought her back to the main office. A couple of motorcycles were now parked near the trees and a Buick station wagon was backed against the building.

Smitty motioned her inside the tarpaper shack's open door. Lucy stepped into a smoke laden office with grease-smearred walls. A little man in a loose fitting, sleeveless undershirt adjusted his black rimmed glasses and stroked a hint of a mustache. He stood behind a desk scattered with papers soiled by car parts and placed a cigarette in a glass cup as he exhaled. " Who the hell are you?"

" Somebody looking for a car."

" That's what they all say." His right arm had a vivid blue tattoo of a mermaid and a tall ship. He pinched his cigarette, made a goon face and talked like a baby. " Let me guess, you've lost your dream car?"

" Fifty-seven Fury. White with red trim."

" What the wreck? You talkin' about the tree accident on 3A?"

" Charlie Leone," said Smitty.

" Yeah, that car is up back, but you ain't gettin' near it. Car is scheduled to be towed."

" Did anyone run tests on it? "

" Tests? What tests? What the hell you talkin' about? I don't think you understand, kid. It's all over. The thing is going bye-bye. "

" If it's here then why can't we see it? " asked Smitty. His Adam's apple moved up and down as he spoke.. " Well?"

" Because you can't. Now beat it. "

A small revolver was partially hidden within the used parts scattered on the desk. Lucy raised her brows and slowly nudged Smitty to the door. He spun around once they were in the yard. " I don' t have to listen to him."

" I think we'd better go. The man had a gun on his desk."

" Maybe they paid this guy off, too. That car is still up here. It may be our last chance to prove anything. Come on. "

Smitty took her hand and they darted behind another row of rusted cars. Lucy had a queasy feeling in her stomach. She glanced back at the office's sagging roof and was afraid the tattooed man would grab his gun and come after them. They ran past the tonnage scattered near the dirt slope. A few minutes later, next to a crunched green Buick and a wood bed truck along the woods, Smitty spotted the Fury's fins. The cracked windshield and crunched front end sent tingles across her abdomen. " Bingo, Lucy."

" Smitty, what would we be looking for? " She had not counted on the wave of grief descending upon her when she saw her uncle's car.

" Tire punctures, " he said on his knees. " Broken gas or brake lines. "

" Wouldn't the police have found this? " she asked, hiding at the edge of the Buick. " What if that guy sees us out here? "

Smitty said nothing as he stuck his head under the car frame near the collapsed front white wall tire. Lucy turned away from Uncle Charlie's blood, dried brown on the white seat under the cracked windshield glass. She closed her eyes and refused to face the car. "Hurry, Smitty."

His voice was muffled under the car. "Do you see anyone?"

"No."

She looked back toward the shack again. Smitty rocked from side to side on his back as he emerged from under the car. He placed his palms under the edge of the crushed hood. The hinges creaked as he forced the deformed metal upward. "Lines are intact."

Lucy still saw no one on the slope.. "What's in there?"

Smitty fidgeted with something under the hood. "The brake fluid levels."

The man with the gun and two men in denim jackets and jeans appeared in the main area. "Smitty! They're looking around!"

"I've almost got it off. "Something clicked under the hood. "Gone. Gone. The damned brake fluid is gone, Lucy!"

"You mean he had no brakes?"

Smitty pushed down the twisted hood and grabbed her hand. "Someone drained his brake fluid!"

Lucy ran with him along the cars. "Then Uncle Charley was murdered!"

"We need to forward this to Jansen. I can't believe this!"

They squeezed around the cars and rushed into an adjacent aisle, but the little guy in the sleeveless undershirt spotted them. He gripped the revolver with both hands, aimed and fired twice. The bullets pinged off the surrounding cars. Smitty pushed her to the ground. Other gunfire erupted as they crawled through

the tall grass between the cars. Once on the other side, they sprinted to the Nash. Smitty flung open the door and started the car. Lucy leaped inside as he backed around in a huge circle, tearing up the dirt. More shots were fired as the car fishtailed onto Route 44.

Back toward the junkyard the three men ran toward the Buick, parked by the office. The Nash bounced over the ruts. " They're going to kill us! "

" They won't. We're going to call Jansen. "

She balanced her chin on the seat as the Buick backed away from the shack. Smitty's contorted face reflected the escalating tension as he raced back toward town. " We have a good idea Hunter took the money but we don't have the proof he drained the brake fluid in Uncle Charlie's car. "

" That's up to Jansen, " said Smitty.

" He can't make a case if they tow away the car! "

Smitty checked the mirror himself. " I know. Let them get a court order. Oh, God, no! "

" What's the matter? " she asked, turning again.

A couple of hundred yards behind the Nash, the Buick raced onto Route 44. " They'll kill us, Smitty! They'll kill us! "

At the next turn a white Volkswagen veered onto the highway from the wooded road up to WXBN. " Conrad! "

" I'm so scared."

" Let's get downtown, along the water and call Jansen."

* * *

" Ahhhhhhhh!" Kathryn sat up and screamed into the darkness. She reached for the light above the digital clock, but knocked over the lamp. The bulb flashed and popped as Roz raced into the bedroom.

" Kathryn Marie I can't see you!"

" They have guns!"

" Who?" Roz flipped on the side lamp. The bedroom's bright walls came back into focus. Roz held her shaking hands. " You're sweating!"

" My God! My God.... What a horrible dream. I, I, I'm back thirty or forty years in Plymouth, in a junkyard and Conrad Ridder and this guy Hunter may have killed Uncle Charlie!"

" You should have let Rashid help you."

" And I'm with this guy Smitty again. I don't know any Smitty. Do you hear me, Roz?"

" I'm right here, Kathryn."

" We found the car. See Ridder or Hunter tampered with the brake fluid and Uncle Charlie died."

" Who the hell is Uncle Charlie?"

" Lucy's Uncle Charlie."

Roz nodded. She rumbled back to the kitchen connecting the two apartments. " Let me get you something to drink. You want milk or a real drink?"

" Milk... We left Plymouth took Route 44 west.

" Route 44?" asked Roz from the kitchen..

" It was so clear. Don't you see, Roz? It was part of the other dream. It had to be. What happened before Ridder chased us at the monument. The junkyard guys were shooting at us!"

Roz appeared with two glasses in her hands. " Thank God you woke up or I'd be calling the medical examiner."

Kathryn smiled and wiped the sweat from her brow as Roz put the cold glass in her hand. She sniffed the glass. " What is this?"

" Oh, be quiet, it's milk."

" Roz, I don't know what to do. I can't take this anymore. I'd like to pretend I didn't dream it, but I did." She sipped the cold milk. " Maybe it won't happen again. I pray it won't happen again. It's like I'm in another life."

" See. It's Lucy. She's trying to tell you."

" I don't put any credence in what Rashid said."

" Then how do you explain it?" asked Roz.

Kathryn slowly shook her head. " I don't."

3

Ridder reluctantly listened to the two the two NBA players pontificate, but his director motioned with spinning fingers to wrap up the segment. The lights blazed into his eyes as he leaned toward his guests. " Ron Thomas and Elroy Johnson are neck and neck in total points as the season winds down and incredibly are best friends. Gentlemen, thank you.

Tomorrow night my guest will be former actor turned Senator, John Webner. Or is it Senator turned actor. Well, sometimes you have to wonder." Ridder smiled into the lens and chuckled. " So, I guess there is hope for us all."

" I wonder if NBA players can run for governor," quipped Johnson.

" Put your hat in the ring!" Ridder turned to the camera again. " I'm Conrad Ridder and *I'll be seeing you.*"

The center camera's red light blinked off, the surrounding light barrage dimmed, and Ridder leaned back in his chair. Johnson pointed from across the table. " Mr. Ridder, you didn't let me talk about the fans on that last road trip."

" Be damned glad you were on the show. You give me lip and they'll be no repeat performance."

" You're like a different guy off camera, man."

" Yeah," said Ridder standing. He paused and looked into Johnson's dark moist eyes. " Well, shit happens, doesn't it?"

Dimitri wandered behind camera two. He pretended to clap. " Good show, Sput. *The Voice* still has it after two weeks off."

" I need a damned drink," said Ridder moving away from the desk and the two gawking NBA players. " And where's Sandra? I want her up in my room."

" Sandra went over to Brubakers. You didn't mention you wanted to see her after the show. I don't read minds, Conrad."

" I want that bitch followed. She starts fooling around: she's all done. Professionally and otherwise."

" Then call Brubakers."

" I'm not calling Brubakers." Ridder bit his lower lip and shook his head as they walked into a side corridor. " That secretary in the news section. You know the red head, Tyler."

" Everybody knows her," said Dimitri.

" I'll call her and have Champagne sent up."

" Whatever. By the way Norman called. As your agent he insists on following through with the live remote he booked. And I agree."

" Yeah, because he gets the cash for it, " said Ridder, turning. " Screw Norman. I'll be glad when we get out of this racket. Forty years is long enough. When do we meet with Senator Olsen and his people?"

" Politics is another racket. Three tomorrow. We'll iron out the announcement. The Alden poll puts you twenty points ahead of the Governor now."

" Piece of cake."

The two men marched around the corner and down the long corridor to his dressing room. " You'll announce after the last commercial break. Keep everyone waiting. Everyone knows you want to be Governor of Colorado."

" Why stop at Governor?" asked Ridder.

" First things first, Sput. We have a ten-thirty nightcap with the Styron Group. That banking money is going to be critical against Governor McLaughlin."

" It sure will, the bastard got that cash for the past six years. I'm going to ruin him. He had his chance and didn't take me for Lieutenant Governor three years ago."

" Things are in place," said Dimitri. " I guarantee the dirt on McLaughlin will come out. If there isn't any dirt, we'll make dirt. Just like we always have."

Ridder stopped and held Dimitri's arm.. " I'm still worried about the past. The press will dig."

" The press have dug for years. Forget what happened. It's ancient history. It's buried so deep. No one has ever questioned it. Just put it out of your mind."

Ridder shook his head. " I can't. The closer we get to announcing, the more I worry about McLaughlin's people going back east and finding the truth."

" Listen to me," said Dimitri, pulling him aside. He spoke in a lower voice. " No one will ever find out what we did to Charlie or the niece and her boyfriend. There is just nothing to find. There is no car. There are no bodies. The money transfers took place on a cash basis. all the witnesses are dead and the records burned. Anybody that would have anything to say, is relying on hearsay and rumor. No one has ever said anything because they don't know. And WXBN is one of the more successful radio stations. McLaughlin nor any of his people can uncover anything. We just stick with the issues and let our people tear McLaughlin apart."

* * *

Ridder looked into Tyler Kirby's blue eyes. Four months had passed since her crimson hair covered his pillow case. He glanced at Dimitri and his staff working Styron and the others across the hotel meeting room. Two hours of grooming the dog-faced Styron pushed the limits of Ridder's patience. " I'm right upstairs, Tyler."

" Really? What makes you think you're going to get the chance?"

" I will leave that to your discretion," he said, tilting toward her. Dimitri produced a sour face at the next table. Ridder whispered in her ear. " Just think what it would be like making love in the Governor's Mansion."

He detected an uninhibited grin. " I miss you, Conrad. You haven't called."

" I'm running for Governor. I've been busy, sweetheart. " He put his hand on her wrist. " What do you say?"

" You know the first rule of politics: strike a hard bargain."

Ridder helped her up. Dimitri immediately leaped from the far table without excusing himself to Styron. Ridder smiled. " Here comes trouble."

" Where the hell do you think you're going?"

" Upstairs."

" No way. You leave now and the stories start. Miss Kirby, I can make arrangements if you wish to return with Mr. Ridder, but I must insist he meet you up there later. "

" Okay."

" Good... Conrad just say good night to her and come back with Styron and his people. We're talking a several million dollar transfer according to Styron. Let's not rattle the guy or give him reason to back off. "

" Is it legal?"

" Since when have you worried about legalities?"

" Never," said Ridder. " I don't worry so much about legalities as I do getting caught. Anything is possible as long as you don't get caught."

Tyler's sparkling brown eyes excited him. He smiled and moved with Dimitri back to the main table, overlooking the city lights. A woman with short dark hair smiled at him. He could feel the power his position generated. In his career he pushed for ratings and gaining market share. In that constant battle he had always come out on top, and along the way he swept up those who challenged his abilities, his ambition and his power. He moseyed next to the woman and extended his hand. " Conrad Ridder, I don't think we've met."

4

On her way to her downtown office, Kathryn recounted the nocturnal trip to the auto junkyard. Her eyes itched as if she had stayed up all night and Lucy's weakened voice calling for help repeated in her daytime thoughts. At the office, as she sat in front of her computer screen, but the image of the tattooed little man with the black rim glasses and the mustache flashed into her head like a close up on a large cinema screen. The crack of the shots and the spinning tires were as real as anything she had experienced in her life. By her third cup of coffee she vowed to trace Conrad Ridder's past and access a map of Plymouth on the Internet.

She wandered to the window screen overlooking the parking lot cars.

" Lucy... Are you real, Lucy?"

" Did you say something, Kathryn?" asked Nora from the other room.

Kathryn's head snapped back. She was embarrassed about her mumbling Lucy's name. " Just thinking."

" You have the one o'clock in Granby about that new account."

" I do. Yes... I won't be returning to the office," she said, checking her watch.

" You want to grab a sandwich, Kathryn?"

" Not today, Nora. I'm a little under the weather." She lifted her bag strap over her shoulder. " Maybe the end of the week."

" Sure."

Kathryn opened the office door and started down the old wood staircase. Her legs weakened and a clash of echoes preceded Lucy's strained voice. She stopped midway down the stairs and held her temples. " *Kathryn, help me... Help me, Kathryn.*"

" No, this can't be happening. Who are you? Who are you? Why are you inside me?"

She thundered down the remaining stairs and pushed the heavy outside door glass with her shoulder. In the warmer air she ran toward her car. The sun blinked behind the leafy branches as she quickly unlocked the car door. She sat rigid behind the wheel, awaiting another chorus within her head and debated traveling to her one o'clock appointment. Her unsettled stomach buzzed like a loose chain saw as she recklessly backed the Toyota around the parking lot.

" Get in control, Kathryn. It's not real. it's not..."

She shifted into **DRIVE** and thrust her foot against the accelerator pedal, but quickly slammed the brakes as she skidded into the intersection. A man in a large truck sounded his horn and swerved. Her hands shook as she signaled for the service road paralleling the highway. Like a drunk, combating inebriation, she fought the tension and chugged slowly along the rural stretch. Several times she wandered over the yellow center line. As the tires hummed on the rough asphalt she sensed voices. She no longer had control as the car veered into an open field and she went out. " *Kathryn, help me... Help me, Kathryn.*"

* * *

Smitty pulled Lucy across Water Street and under the portico. Someone had contacted Conrad. He had fired a gun from his Volkswagen on Route 44. Smitty climbed over the granite monument's metal railing. She followed him over the edge and splashed into the salty water spreading over the boulder. Maybe Conrad had not seen them crawl below.

Lucy clung onto Smitty when she heard somebody on Water Street. She thought back to grade school and her earliest memories of skinny Conrad Ridder. He had shifted from the quiet child to the calm intellectual in high school and had gone onto Princeton. Now his hollowed dark eyes, once benign, assumed the crazed intransigence of a young man seized with great ambitions and the need to kill. Smitty held Lucy's trembling frame and she now wished they had never gone to the Carver junkyard. Everyone had assumed Uncle Charlie smashed his Fury into the huge oak in Manomet because he was drunk. Uncle Charlie was killed because Hunter and maybe Conrad stole money to fund a radio station purchase. And now Conrad somehow knew Smitty had examined drained brake fluid.

Conrad's deep voice was muffled between the portico's street level air currents and the sloshing surf at her feet. "You're dead! Both of you, you're dead!"

"Do something, Smitty," whispered Lucy. "Dead God, do something. He's going to kill us!"

She peered at Conrad's perfectly styled dark hair in the murky light above the railing. With the gun firmly in his hand, he shuffled between the pillars. Lucy pictured the gawky kid, playing with old radio sets in grade school or camping all day in the library. When he started his radio broadcasts in high school, no one thought he would own his own station.

As Conrad circled the monument, less than fifteen feet above them, and Lucy gripped Smitty's arm again. Conrad panned the gun toward the ocean and he grinned when he saw them. He pointed the gun. "I'm sorry guys, but you're in the way...You won't stop me!"

Orange bursts blotted the darkness. Lucy fell onto the rock and slid into the water within a deafening numbness, only partially hearing Smitty's agonizing wail. Her body tumbled into nothingness and all her thoughts slowly scattered like the evening clouds moving inland over Plymouth Harbor.

* * *

The afternoon sun burnt Kathryn's eyes as she sat up. Across the spreading field, huge cumulus cloud puffs dwarfed the forest foliage and her heart smacked against her chest as she checked the radio's digital clock. The car was still running and she had lost thirteen minutes. Her mind remained in Plymouth, a place she had never seen. The horrific image of a younger Conrad Ridder, pointing a gun over the Plymouth Rock portico's metal railing, lingered. She shut off the car and stepped into the field. The grass blades whipped against her legs as she ran forward for several dozen yards, tripped and landed in the taller grass. She flipped on her back and the mammoth clouds hovered in the sky. Her erratic breathing continued and she held her skull. "Stop this! Leave me alone!"

Tears cascaded down her smooth cheeks and she flung off her glasses. The clouds blurred. Some part of her wanted to believe Rashid. Hearing Lucy vividly calling for help bordered on schizophrenic. Yet, no other voices had entered her consciousness and the dreams were both consistent and repetitive. Smitty and Lucy

seemed more than figments of her mental processes. Maybe he and Lucy really died below the monument's granite pillars.

She sat up and looked at the smeared image of her car off the road diagonally in the field. The image sharpened once she placed her wire rim glasses over her eyes. Getting on the Internet and calling up a web site for Plymouth would be a first step. By checking the area roads and surrounding towns, she might find some basis for the dreams. Only then would she know if Rashid's astonishing assessment was valid.

5

She pumped the Toyota's brakes, wove across the crowded apartment lot and slid to a stop as Roz stepped from her little pink jeep. Roz scooted over to Kathryn's open window. Her bracelet glistened in the sunlight as she leaned in the window. "Kathryn Marie, you all right?"

Kathryn stared at her for several seconds. "Roz, I lost control of my car."

"You what?" she asked, looking over the Toyota. "It doesn't look wrecked."

"I drove into a field. I just went out."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Roz, I'm serious."

Her friend held Kathryn's wrist. "You'd better call Rashid."

Kathryn twisted the door lever and got out. Roz's brown eyes followed her as she staggered against the fender. "I had the dream again. Where I was killed at the rock."

"See, Rashid was right. You start asking questions and it just taps into the spirits. Get them all stirred up."

"I'm not possessed by spirits. That's ridiculous."

Roz held her arm and they started up the walk.. "Come on, Kathryn Marie. You're going inside."

"Why is this happening to me?"

" Who knows?" Roz opened the door and Kathryn scanned the silver mailboxes. They trod up the wood staircase to the second floor. " How can you get to the bottom of this?"

" Find out about Plymouth." She turned her key in the apartment lock and Roz pushed open the door.

" How are you going to that?"

" I need to boot up the computer." Kathryn veered into the kitchen and grabbed a glass from the cabinet. " Drink, Roz?"

" Depends... I'm making some coffee. Suppose you find things. I mean like the route numbers, places..."

" I don't know," said Kathryn as she poured cranberry juice into the glass. " And I don't know why I'm having these dreams. Either way I'm scared to death."

" You know what Rashid said."

" Yeah, I know what he said." She lifted the tart juice to her lips. " I did called my doctor this afternoon. He'll make an opening for me if I want. I've never blanked out like that."

Roz stood beside her. " You're damned lucky you didn't hit a tree."

" Frightening, isn't?"

" Kathryn Marie... I really believe this woman, Lucy. She died and she may have somehow drifted into your head."

Kathryn poured the last of the chilled juice down her throat and set the glass on the counter. Her soft skin slowly tightened around her aching eyes.

" That just isn't possible."

" Sure, it is. That woman didn't want to die."

She slid around the counter but stopped on her way to her computer.

" You're assuming there is a Lucy. I'm dreaming this, Roz. There's no Lucy. How could Conrad Ridder have killed anyone?"

" Why not?"

" Bodies would have been found. Someone would have figured it out."

Kathryn shook her head as she plodded over to her desk. She settled in the chair and flipped on the tower switch. " I want to see a map of Plymouth."

" It's really weird. No doubt about that."

" Roz, it was a dream. Who knows what images from the past our brains dip into?" The screen lit up and she clicked the mouse. " I could have seen something on TV about Plymouth. Read about the area in a magazine."

" No way. Not like this." The computer produced a combination of telephone dial tones. " Rashid said talking about the dream would trigger other dreams."

" I just want to make sure I don't have a tumor or something seriously wrong with my head."

As the modem screeched and beeped the computer connected, and Roz sat in the adjacent chair. An almond coffee flavor spread across the apartment.

" The dreams are connected. They weren't before. Somehow Ridder found out and followed Smitty and Lucy..."

Kathryn instituted a search for Plymouth, Massachusetts. " Conrad Ridder is a respected man and is running for Governor of Colorado."

" This is real. I know it is," said Roz.

A list of possible sites materialized in blue font on the screen. She clicked on more selections and finally connected to the general site for Plymouth. " America's home page." The main page listed a number of museums, a Plimouth Plantation

and a wax museum. A snapshot of the Mayflower II, some people dressed in pilgrim garb, and a crisp photo of the monument housing Plymouth Rock filled the right side of the screen. Kathryn studied the boat's wooden masts stretching into the sky. Bright stripes were painted across flat stern and the brown hull. Bits of the repeating dream replayed in her head as Lucy ran in the darkness with Smitty. They neared the boat and headed down to the granite pillars of monument.

" Well?" asked Roz.

" That's the boat."

" I'm getting the coffee."

Kathryn nodded and clicked to the EVENTS line. She read some more background tourist information and jotted down toll free motel phone numbers. In the kitchenette Roz hovered over the gurgling coffee maker. The next page revealed a dramatic color photo of the granite portico surrounding Plymouth Rock. " My God..."

" You say somethin'?" asked Roz.

" Nope, nothing at all." Her dream sequence matched the columns and a similar inner iron gate exactly. She did not remember viewing pictures of the monument. How could she as Lucy run by that boat, up to the rock and have a visual knowledge of the area? She had studied the Pilgrims in grade school. At some time, even though her recollection was foggy, she must have seen photos of both the ship and the monument.

" I brewed it a little strong." said Roz from the kitchen. " I probably should add a few shots of Brandy is what I should do."

Kathryn plowed through several more pages, skimmed descriptions of the area and clicked onto a glowing red, white and blue map. She sat upright and heard

Roz clanging cups, but her eyes were focused on Route 44, originating at a rotary near the ocean. To the north and south Route 3A, the sight of Charlie Leone's car crash in the dreams, cut a winding swath parallel to a major superhighway.

Roz stood with two cups of steaming coffee. " Well, well, well... You starting to believe it, Kathryn Marie? How would you know about those routes?"

" There's a rotary there, too."

" See, see," she said, setting Kathryn's cup on the desktop. " There's no way you'd know that."

Kathryn scanned the rest of the site. She wanted to know if Route 44 continued toward a town named Carver. Again she pictured Lucy and Smitty driving off the narrow state highway and into the junkyard. " I'll have to go to a Massachusetts map."

She clicked proper sequence for the Massachusetts site. While she waited she lifted the cup of coffee upward and inhaled the almond flavor.

" Smells good."

" Is that all you can say?"

" Okay, thank you, Roz."

" Kathryn Marie, you're dreaming things you could never know about."

Kathryn brought the warm coffee into her mouth. " Perfect, Roz, Perfect."

" My opinion is that you should call Rashid and start this Transformation Therapy. Get to the heart of these things. Get Lucy out of your head."

" There's no one in my head." She swiveled back to the screen. A relief map of Massachusetts, highlighted in green and brown, materialized on the screen. Plymouth was designated with a red historical star along the eastern shore. She lowered

the cup and quickly clicked forward. With Roz leaning over her shoulder, pages flew by until she focused on a highway map of the state.

Roz traced her finger on Route 44, emerging from Plymouth into a town called Carver. " You tell me, girlie, how the hell you would know that?"

Kathryn warmed her hands with the cup and shook her head. " I just don't understand."

" I understand it. This bastard, Conrad Ridder began his illustrious career by buying a radio station. He was responsible for killing the man his buddy Sam Hunter stole the money from. Lucy and Smitty were onto what he did. Charlie was her uncle...."

Kathryn stood up quickly. " Damn this!"

" Kathryn, call Rashid."

" No," she said, spinning from the screen. " No, that man scares me. "

" A lot of my boyfriends scare me, but that doesn't stop me from going out with them."

" Why me? Why me?" She leaned over the desk and again traced Route 44 out of Plymouth. Even Route 3A, as in the dream, headed south of the town. " I need to know if these people existed."

" Who, Lucy and Smitty?" " Try the local newspaper. They must have had a funeral. Do you know what year?"

Kathryn inwardly chided herself for succumbing to the idea two people in her dreams actually existed. Again she shook her head and walked away from the screen. She looked out the window at her Toyota in the parking lot and Roz's pink off road vehicle. " This can't be happening."

" It is."

She sipped the almond blend. " I'm dropping it. I'm not going to check any more. I don't want to know."

" No," said Roz, pulling up a chair to the computer. She grabbed the mouse and clicked.

" What are you doing?"

" He must have a web site."

" Ridder?" asked Kathryn.

" Yup."

It did not take long for Roz to locate Ridder's site. In the official biography Ridder's publicity photograph was blown up over the screen. His long nose and perfectly aligned white teeth did not seem real. But the sinister black eyes, carved into his brow, had a catalyzing effect. Kathryn gripped the desk as she thought back to the younger version of this man standing in the portico. Now his neatly styled hair had fully grayed and his white turtleneck covered his double chin

" He's the same guy in the Volkswagen. He is."

" Now you see." Roz clicked to the next page and Kathryn stood quickly and stepped back at what she saw.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

1958 Station Manager, Owner, and Broadcaster, WXBN, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

1959 Station One Group President, Radio Coverage of Democratic national Convention, Los Angeles, California.

1963-1968 Late Night Radio Program, KRB, Los Angeles, Califor

nia.

1968-1972 Television is Talk, (Syndicated), KCVC Los Angeles.

1975-1981 The Wee Hours with Conrad Ridder (Integrated Media Group)

1983 Political Review, KMOS, Denver

1985- The Conrad Ridder Show, Denver (Integrated Media Group)

" How would I have knowledge of the station call letters? How would I know Conrad Ridder started his career in Plymouth, Massachusetts?" asked Kathryn as the tears wandered down her cheeks. " Oh, Roz."

Roz put her hand on Kathryn's shoulder. " There's a reason for everything in life. It's how we face what's thrown at us. I admit this is the weirdest thing I've ever heard of, but it's real, Kathryn Marie, it's real."

" I'm scared, Roz."

" I know."

Kathryn threw her arms around her hefty friend. " What can I do?"

" Maybe you have to go back there."

" To Plymouth?"

" Yup... Maybe you have to back and find the truth."

6

Lucy pushed her finger into the rotary dial and spun Smitty's number. She held the receiver to her ear as the dial slowly rotated back. Uncle Charlie entered the living room, rubbing his hands together, and a wide smile spread across his jowls. " You've still got it, Charlie Leone. You've still got it."

" What have you got, Uncle Charlie?" asked Lucy.

" The perfect land deal: Capital Hill... We're going to build up the hills west of town. Ten years from now the area will be booming with kids, school buses, and new schools."

The line kept ringing. " You can really project ahead to 1968? You must have investors."

" Nope." He poured himself a cup of coffee. " Coffee, Lucy?"

" No thanks." She set down the phone. " I guess Smitty isn't home."

" You serious about him?"

" As serious as anyone can be at twenty-two. I suppose we could potentially get married."

" The Smiths are a good family."

" They are," said Lucy.

" Ah, I'm in such a good frame of mind, " said Charlie, leaning back and he clicked the yellow table model radio's knob and waited for the set to warm up. He spun the dial and the modulating signal vibrated in the speaker. " Let me

see if I can catch the game. I keep hearing talk about Williams retiring."

"Teddy Ball game."

"See, you follow the games."

"Smitty does."

Conrad Ridder's professional voice vibrated the radio speaker. He spoke about the traffic to the beaches. Uncle Charlie picked up the newspaper.

"Game must be over. Let's see what's on TV. We have Jackie Gleason, then Phil Silvers."

"I never pictured Conrad Ridder being on the radio," said Lucy, propping her elbows on her desk. "I still remember him and his torn apart TV at the science fair. You know what they call him."

"What?" asked Uncle Charlie, turning on the floor model TV..

"Sputnik. Because his head is up there somewhere," she said, pointing toward the ceiling.

"Don't laugh. That boy has great ambition. He went to Princeton." A round point of light on the TV brightened into black and white images of dancers. "He's smarter than you think."

"Conrad?"

"He's going places."

"I guess you just never know."

"Well, everything gets finalized on Tuesday," said Uncle Charlie, turning from the commercial. "I'm going to buy a color TV."

"What bank is overseeing this?"

"You mean Capital Hill?" Uncle Charlie smiled and shook his head.

" Lucy, you have a few years in this game and you'll understand. Money's all pooled. We'll keep it locally until we work out the deal. "

" I guess you've been doing it all these years," she said.

" Just a matter of trust," he said, pointing at her and retreating to his office.

Lucy smiled at his ability to put the deal together. She turned to the radio and listened to Conrad doing a commercial for Freddie's Gas Station on Long Pond Road. The phone ring took her away from Conrad's powerful selling job.

" Hello."

" Lucy, it's Smitty."

" I just tried ringing your house," she said.

Cars passed in the background. " I'm downtown, grabbing a bite. If you see Charlie, tell him I have tickets for the game. "

" He just tried tuning in the game and got Conrad Ridder instead," said Lucy.

" Sputnik... I still remember everyone making fun of him on the bus when we were kids. I can't believe he's actually broadcasting."

" That guy is in the right place and the right time, but I can't fault him for taking advantage of his opportunities."

* * *

The jet's engines revved and the humming shook the cabin. Kathryn slowly opened her eyes to a wide expanse of blue ocean, dotted with islands and a wiggly shore. She leaned her forehead against the wall panel as the jet banked over Boston,

but felt as if she had just stepped through a door from Charlie Leone's house countless years ago. Only twenty minutes ago, somewhere over western Connecticut, she decided to snooze, but she never thought another dream would overtake her. The plane, still out over the ocean, swept north of the city. This dream had not frightened her like the others. Seeing Charlie Leone alive only confirmed what Rashid had told her and what the web site revealed. Although, she supposedly heading back to Plymouth for a well deserved vacation, she was really traveling back to find out what happened to Lucy Leone.

Her breathing was steady and her heartbeat strong as the plane dipped toward Boston. She removed a tiny red notebook from her pocketbook and thumbed back several pages of notes concerning her prior dreams. Capital Hill and the investment by Ridder was an important component of what Lucy was trying to tell her. Kathryn had spent hours concentrating, as well as speaking out loud to Lucy, but aside from a few meager pleas, she heard nothing. The landing gear popped. In less than an hour she would rent a car and drive south of the city on the same super highway leading to Route 44 in her dream.

* * *

She slowed at the green and white road sign along the fast paced Route 3. Several cars whipped by her in the outside lane as she passed over the Plymouth line. Highway lanes were bordered by condos, cut across the wooded hills and a sign for a mall indicated more mass development. Several towering red and white antennas now appeared on the green hill ahead. Decades ago Conrad Ridder had

broadcast from the WXBN studios. She adjusted the digital frequencies on the rented car radio and as she stopped at 106 FM, she called out. " Lucy.... Lucy..."

She grinned as Ridder's original station spewed out Buddy Holly singing from the fifties. As she moved down the highway a billboard for the station, advertising the oldies format, appeared at the edge of the woods. Under the antennas a series of white buildings with long window spans, visible from the highway, sat atop the hill. Within that complex Conrad Ridder had launched his long and successful career.

Kathryn tightened her brow and now fully accepted her dreams as reality. She scanned the industrial park at the bottom of the hill and caught sight of a battered old drive-in movie screen. Green trees branches protruded through gaping square holes and metal scrap was stored where cars had viewed movie years ago. At the next slope the sign indicated Route 44 was only a mile away. Everything she dreamed over the past weeks and every fear hidden in her head, now catapulted in to her consciousness. She veered into the right lane leading down the ramp under a new bridge. A massive shopping plaza was gouged out of the woods to her right and a plethora of fast food restaurants, donuts shops and car dealerships lined the once rural highway toward yet another plaza up the water tower hill. The cemetery beyond the bridge matched what she had seen in the dream. She signaled at the green traffic light and headed left toward town.

The descending hills and older clapboard houses were very similar. Kathryn knew Lucy and Smitty had crossed the little rotary leading toward Plymouth Rock and the Mayflower. Before she registered at her hotel, she was compelled to go through the intersection ahead and see for herself what she had only dreamed. She waited at the Court Street light, her hands moist on the wheel, and she peered

down the hill where the road turned toward the rotary. Her thoughts were focused on the night Ridder chased Lucy and Smitty in the white Volkswagen along the sea wall. Without question she had traveled this road in another time.

A few cars sounded their horns. Kathryn checked the rearview mirror and quickly sped across the intersection. She slowed under a row of trees and leaned right with the road. The sky brightened and the azure ocean appeared beyond docks and a restaurant. A hundred yards ahead, near the restaurant's white clapboard siding, cars rounded a small rotary. A stone and cement sea wall beyond, no more than three or four feet high, separated the sidewalk and the bright blue, bay water.

Her hands tightened around the wheel and tears remained in her eyes as she skirted the outer edge of the rotary and brought the car along the sea wall road. She put on her blinker and pulled into a metered parking space. The wall was weathered and the cement darkened. She stepped onto the hot asphalt. Somehow this wall had a greater meaning than just a prop in a bad dream. As she moved closer she sensed she had known this area since she was a child. Her fingers traced the angled stone edges. She had walked along this wall many times before.

As she leaned forward, the wind gently furrowed her long hair and she crossed her arms over her jersey. Goose bumps, maybe from the breeze, proliferated across her arms. She bit her lower lip and gradually panned the bay to the Mayflower's wooden masts. Bright red and white stripes were painted above the boat's bow. She wandered down the sidewalk, alternating glances between the boat, an adjacent brown clapboard house, and the distant large gray granite pillars of the portico. " It has to be true..."

With each stride she moved closer to the grass walkway. Families with running children, older women in polyester pants suits, and single stragglers lingered near the line to the boat. The tour guide's repetitive cadence slowly diminished as she passed the house and headed directly toward the stone pillar temple, housing Plymouth Rock. She stopped twice, both times turning to where she estimated the location of Conrad Ridder's Volkswagen forty years across time.

People gazing at the historic rock gathered along the granite retaining wall. Kathryn's heart soared and she pushed forward as if she were fighting a driving rain. Lucy, chased by a gun toting Conrad Ridder, ran down this road with Smitty. Kathryn swallowed when she placed her hands on the portico granite and peered down. The slow moving clear tide slid over the rounded rock chiseled **1620**. She exhaled and studied the sand bordering the rock where Lucy and Smitty hid from Conrad Ridder.

She tried to fathom what she had dreamed, but more confusing was what she would do with the yet unproved knowledge. Even if she found physical evidence linking Conrad Ridder and Sam Hunter to the deaths of three people forty years ago, such evidence was not easily prosecuted. Having identified so strongly with Lucy, she felt compelled to find the truth.

She clutched the iron railing and peered between the portico pillars across the harbor. A man with sandy hair gripped the railing on the far side of the portico. His blue eyes caught her eyes for a second, but she swung her eyes down to the omnipresent rock. She took in the salty air. The man was gone when she looked up again.

She yawned and released her grip on the iron railing. The guy, clad in a blue-checked shirt, jeans and brown leather boots smoked a tiperillo as he strutted to a

park across the road. Kathryn started back to her rental, parked along the sea wall. Getting a good meal after she checked in at the hotel would refresh her thinking. She looked over her shoulder at the portico as she continued back past the Mayflower. Roz would want to hear all about what she had seen in Plymouth. Maybe she would have suggestions. She pictured the confident Ridder on his TV show and contrasted the ugly young man who had fired his gun at Lucy and Smitty. Somehow she would find the truth.

7

Kathryn squeezed the restaurant pay phone as the line rang loudly. She peeped through the window panes at the gray smeared cloud layers creeping over the harbor. The incoming salt air hung heavy over the dining room and stirred a combination of restaurant food aromas. Her frustration mounted each time Roz's answering machine tape had tripped during the afternoon. She was about to lift the phone away when the line again clicked for the machine. Her friend's powerful voice overrode the machine message. " Roz here."

" Roz, it's me."

" The little Pilgrim herself. I just got in."

Kathryn smiled and turned toward the packed restaurant. She brushed her long hair with her fingers. " You won't believe it."

" Should I call Dr. Rashid and offer your apologies?"

" As a matter of fact you can. I drove down from Boston and what I saw was unbelievable. Route 44 was slightly different at the bridge. Lined with new businesses and buildings. The bridge itself was new, but *it was the same area*, Roz. I saw the cemetery across the highway."

" I took the liberty to call Rashid. I briefed him about what you did."

" What did he say?"

" He thinks Lucy is real and so do I."

" So, do I... I drove the rental down to the lights and across the street I saw the rotary. It was the same damned rotary where Lucy and Smitty drove the Nash.

The sea wall was *exactly* the same. The Mayflower was docked next to the clapboard house just like the dream, but... the monument over Plymouth Rock. Down to the pillars and the surf covering the rock. Even the way 1620 was chiseled in the stone... I keep calling out to Lucy, but I get no answers."

" That's not how it works. Rashid told me a spirit can only do so much. It's all coming through another realm and what we see may seem weird or it may seem as if the spirit isn't making much of an effort."

Kathryn nodded as the sandy haired guy from Plymouth Rock stepped up to the hostess. He ordered a table in the smoking section. She stared at his spit shined brown boots and square silver belt buckle. With his blue checked shirt and jeans, he looked out of place in New England. " I had another dream on the plane. Charlie Leone was alive and well in his house. There was a real estate deal called Capital Hill west of town. I think that's where Ridder got his money. Charlie called Ridder, Sputnik."

"What the hell is that?"

" The first satellite sent up by the Russians. 1957. Makes sense. That happened around forty years ago."

" You need to verify that land deal. Maybe do some digging."

The man in the western garb spoke briefly with the hostess, smiled a quick straight smile and sat at a table overlooking the harbor. He removed a pack of tiperillos from his jersey pocket and struck a match. " The first thing I want to do is find out for sure that Charlie Leone existed and died in that accident."

" Check the cemetery. But Kathryn Marie, once you find out that, how do you prove Ridder and this guy Hunter tampered with Charlie's car?"

" I don't know. That statute of limitations never runs out on murder, Roz."

" Sounds like what Lucy would tell you. But Conrad Ridder is a powerful man."

Kathryn pushed her teeth together. Evidence, albeit circumstantial, had begun to build against Ridder. She pictured the suave, gray haired talk show host speaking with the President the other night on TV. " Justice isn't hindered by time."

" Good quote." The stranger 's tiperillo produced a blue smoke trail from the black ceramic table ashtray as he studied the laminated menu. " Rashid says if you can't find what you're looking for, he can do the Transformation Therapy."

" What is it, some kind of hypnosis?"

" Yeah, I guess that's part of it. He says the spirit is activated and you have mobility to bring yourself to her."

" Scary."

" It is scary because you risk being pulled in, he said, but he refused to even talk about it. He just said it is not without risk."

" Well, hopefully I'll find what I'm looking for back here."

" Then get a good lawyer..."

Kathryn nodded. " Yup. Roz, I'll check in after I track down the newspaper accounts. I just know I'm going to find reports about that accident. I'll come home if I find nothing and the whole thing is bogus."

" I guess that will be the proof in the pudding. *Pleasant dreams...*"

" Thanks a lot," said Kathryn, smiling. " Good night, Roz."

Still smiling, she hung up the phone. The guy at the window slowly swung his eyes away from her and back to the menu. She moved toward the hostess, glancing at the guy as a short-skirted waitress approached his table with pencil and pad in hand. He pointed at the menu, said something and ordered his dinner.

" Miss," said the hostess, sliding a menu from the holder.

" Thank you."

The hostess brought her along the barn board wall to a darkened booth with a floating candle. She sat on a cool vinyl bench seat and slowly opened the plastic coated menu, but she kept thinking about tomorrow morning. According to the hotel clerk, town library was located one exit down Route 3, and the woman she talked to on the phone said past issues of the local newspaper were stored on microfilm in the first floor records room.

Twenty-five feet away, her mystery man set down his menu, propped his elbows on the table and rested his chin on his folded hands to peruse the bay. Through the windows, beyond the fishing and speedboats, an elongated spit lined the outer harbor. Occasionally he puffed on the tiperillo, but always returned to the harbor.

" Are you ready to order?" asked an older waitress.

" Oh, I'm sorry," she said, lifting up the menu.

" I'll give you a few minutes."

" Thank you."

Kathryn glanced across the restaurant and then focused on the entrees. Too much had befallen her that afternoon. Absorbing the truth about her vivid dreams required a radical adjustment. Maybe later, after nibbling on a small meal, she would return to her room she and sort through the implications of finding the truth.

* * *

Lucy stepped out of the Nash. Uncle Charlie leaned on the side porch balustrade and stared into his back yard. His tie hung loosely over his short sleeve shirt He kept running his hand through his disheveled hair and talked to himself.
" Uncle Charlie?"

Uncle Charlie panned his moist, red eyes toward her. His flushed face looked pummeled. " Lucy."

" Uncle Charlie, what's wrong?"

" Oh, God, Lucy. You don't want to know."

" What happened?"

He closed his eyes momentarily and his lower lip quivered when he spoke.
" My sweetheart, I have allowed my trust in humanity to be my downfall. You can't say anything until I prove it. Nobody knows, not even Aunt Stacey. "

" I don't understand."

" Sam Hunter."

" Sam, what about him?" asked Lucy.

Uncle Charlie put his arm around her and they faced the back yard behind his Shire Lane office. " Capital Hill."

" What about it.?" Charlie shook his head and Lucy thought back to the one time she heard mention of the project. " I didn't pay much attention to it."

" You wouldn't." Again, Uncle Charlie closed his eyes and tightened his hands. " Oh, God, I put everything I had into that project. I trusted Sam with eighty thousand dollars. But, my dear, Lucy, there is no Capital Hill.."

She held his arm. " Then just go to the police or to the courts."

" No, I can't. I could be in trouble with the courts and state. I could lose my license. The problem is I have nothing in writing. I need to prove it. But I can't

find Hunter. " He turned toward his new red and white Plymouth Fury. " I was so proud of that car and the company was showing real profit. I had to go for the big hit and now I've been taken."

" I'm sorry."

" Please don't tell anybody, especially Stacey."

" I understand. What can I do? How can I help you?"

Uncle Charlie creased his brow. " I trusted Sam. I have to hire somebody to find out who he really was. He lived in North Plymouth, near the Cortege Works, but he had another place. I'll talk to Dan Jansen about it... First, see what's in that North Plymouth house."

" You don't think that was his real name?"

" No... Nor did I think the man was a scoundrel. How do I explain my poor judgment? Eighty thousand dollars is insurmountable. We'll lose everything. I need a drink." He picked up his hat off the porch table. " Lucy, I'm going to the Wayside. "

" Getting drunk won't change anything, Uncle Charlie."

" Poppycock. I am going to have two glasses of wine, admire the lights on the bay and then head home and watch Gunsmoke. I'll find him I have to."

Lucy circled her arms around him. " You'll get through this, Uncle Charlie. You'll find him. You will. It could have happened to any of us."

" You're very kind, Lucy. You tell Smitty to keep up his studies in Boston. Going to school full time must put a strain on you two."

Lucy raised her brows. " Yeah, but we still have time together. Two years and he's a surveyor."

Uncle Charlie kissed her forehead and managed to smile. He walked across the porch and held the banister as he descended the stairs to the driveway. She never realized how old he had become as he waddled to his new Fury. He opened the door and sat behind the wheel for a few seconds. Lucy had known Hunter as a senior real estate partner since she was in high school. Charlie started the car, shifted, and backed around the lot.

Lucy walked to the far end of the porch. Charlie's brake lights brightened and his right blinker flashed before he pulled onto Main Street. She needed to speak with Smitty. He would know how to find Sam Hunter. Uncle Charlie getting taken for such a large amount of money belied his astute business sense as well as conservative nature about taking chances. As she thought, a loud motorcycle engine started behind the bushes down the street and a guy with greasy dark hair, side boards, and biceps bulging from his tee shirt, raced by her uncle's office. She blocked her ears and headed inside the office.

She stared into Hunter's side office, adjacent to Uncle Charlie's corner office, picked up the phone and dialed Smitty's number in Kingston. The line rang and she tapped her fingers on the blotter. She hung up the phone and wandered into Hunter's office. The wall pictures showed Uncle Charlie and Hunter, a little man with receding dark hair, at the golf course. Hunter was a short, fast talking broker who was never around. A mass of Hunter's cards, paperwork, a map of New Jersey, and calendars were strewn across the desk top glass. She pulled out one of his cards.

Another picture of Hunter with a group of people on a boat in the Caribbean was wedged between the glass and the desk, but no family photos. The framed color photo on the desk, showed him behind the mike at the WXBN with

Conrad Ridder interviewing him on a Sunday morning broadcast. A wall photo of Hunter with everyone at the real estate office resided on Uncle Charlie's desk and she was reminded how much Uncle Charlie had trusted Hunter.

Lucy turned and started into Uncle Charlie's office but tripped on one of the electric typewriter cords. She fell forward quickly and hit the floor hard.

* * *

Kathryn kicked the quilt and rolled off the mattress. The slider's laced curtains fluttered with the cool evening breezes, chilling her skin. She put on her robe and stepped onto the fourth floor balcony. Hunter's connection to Conrad Ridder, hidden in the labyrinth of time, added to her confusion. Red and green buoy lights pulsed colored ripples over the breakers toward the hills, silhouetted against the starry sky. To her left, WXBN's four antenna towers red lights blinked ever so slowly like warning beacons through time. She owned it to Charlie Leone and Smitty and Lucy to find the truth.

8

The waitress at the register nodded as Kathryn charged the breakfast to her tab and walked through the revolving hotel door. In the bright sun, she slipped her prescription sunglasses over her eyes, glanced at the rental and decided to walk along the sea wall. Last night's dream convinced her she would have to trace Hunter's identity, but she was uncertain how she would break through forty years of history. She inhaled the clear morning air, trotted across Water Street and immediately touched her fingers to the sea wall's rough rock edges.

The cottages along the outlining the beach spit were hazy in the sunlight as she panned the bay. She compulsively looked back to the hilltop antennas north of town. Ridder was linked to Hunter. Whether they both conspired to defraud Charlie Leone was uncertain. Ridders's purchase of the WXBN launched his national career.

She trekked along the sea wall again. After her walk she would take the rental car to the library on Long Pond Road and confirm her dreams about Charlie Leone's accident. Once she had access to the microfilm machine, she could scan back issues of the local paper from 1958. Somewhere in the Plymouth library or maybe at the local school, pictures of Lucy and Smitty were trapped in old high school yearbooks.

The ship's intricate rope network formed a web between the Mayflower's mast and the wispy clouds tracing in the morning skies. Standing at the end of the long wood pier, with his boot propped on a post and a tiperillo between his fingers,

the guy from the hotel, stared at the rock jetties jutting into the bay. Under his arm was a clipboard with a yellow legal pad.

Kathryn slowed and debated whether to approach him. He positioned the clipboard in his hands, securing his boot against the mooring pole and then balanced the clipboard on his knee. She looked closer as he scribbled something onto the pad. Maybe he was a writer or a reporter doing a travel story on Plymouth. She continued down the sidewalk toward the granite portico and looked over her shoulder several times until the two clapboard cottages blocked her view.

Only a couple of people leaned over the monument's inner black rail gate. Seeing the portico's thick smooth pillars and the rising grass hill across the street invoked memories of Ridder chasing Lucy and Smitty. She neared the outside granite retaining wall, edging her way to the iron railing, and stared into the luminescent brine washing over the boulder. The Pilgrims stepping on this rock meant considerably less to her than Lucy Leone shot to death down there.

A slight breeze took her long hair and cooled her skin. For a full fifteen minutes she fixated on the surf and the rock. Images of Conrad Ridder standing where she stood and pointing his gun down at Lucy and Smitty now blended in the salt water flux. She sensed the passage of time as she scanned the bay's blue waters through the portico pillars and finally backed away from the monument.

Her thoughts were not specific as she wandered in the shade of the tall, cooling pines. Beyond the small houses, the stranger had left the dock. Although she did not know the man, his presence in the area was becoming as much a fixture as the rock or the Mayflower. She continued along the sea wall, studying men working with huge yellow gloves on fishing boats. A lengthy line of people awaited passage on one of the many harbor tour boats along the dock. Again she felt the cool grainy

rocks along the sea wall. The wall's cemented rock points flipped against her fingers like the spokes on a roulette wheel as she retreated back to the hotel.

From this angle on Water Street she noticed a huge truck rig with chrome side pipes, parked the hotel lot near the shrubs and the stockade fence. She crossed the hotel lot and unlocked her tiny rental, but as she slid across heated vinyl seat and placed her sweaty hands the wheel, she worried whether she would find the truth. Until she checked the library microfilm and year- books, nothing was yet proven about the existence of Lucy and Smitty, Charlie Leone or Sam Hunter.

* * *

She buried herself in front of the microfilm screen and loaded numerous spools of dark, glossy miniaturized copies of the local newspapers, beginning in the spring of 1958, onto the sprockets. The pages moved upward, blurring at times as she moved through the months. She rubbed her eyes and crossed her arms as she gazed across the library desks. A few people were perched behind a row of white computer monitors in the room to her right while others turned book pages in alcoves along the main room. Again she twisted the threaded plastic knob and spun the pages. An ad running on page 16 of an April, 1958 edition caught her eye a few minutes later.

PLEASANT VALLEY REAL ESTATE**New Homes, Rentals, Land****617 Shire Lane****Charlie Leone Sam Hunter****Plymouth-8740 Plymouth-8741**

She smiled, raised her hands into the air and removed her glasses. For a moment she doubted her own perceptions, massaged her eyes again and thought about the kindly Charlie Leone in her dreams. Her heart cranked when she put on her glasses again and focused on the screen. The ad was real, Charlie was real, and the dreams were real. She pushed the wood chair over the carpet and started back through the research room, but veered toward the pay phone near the front desk. As she was about punch in Roz's number, her mystery man, now wearing a solid yellow shirt, carried several books up the mezzanine stairs. Kathryn slowly lowered the receiver back in place. She caught sight of his boot heels disappearing at the top landing. She was drawn to this man in an odd way she did not understand.

She scurried up the crimson stair runner and stuck her head around the mezzanine corner. At the far end he took a seat along the windows and held open one of the books. Why was she bothering with this guy? Charlie Leone existed. While her dreaming about Plymouth might have a basis in reality, her awareness of Charlie Leone and Sam Hunter was not easily explained. She stared at the guy thumbing through pages at the far table. Then she started down the stairs to call Roz, but stopped. She shook her head and returned to the mezzanine. As she marched along

the rail above the first floor, the guy slowly turned in the chair. He stood and faced her as she walked closer.

His blue eyes locked onto her as she stopped a few feet away. " I'm sorry, I don't know what I'm doing up here."

" I keep seeing you around town." He had a ready smile and extended his hand. His voice possessed a Western twang. " John Tucker. I'm here on vacation from Phoenix, Arizona."

" Kathryn Jenner." She still was not sure why was talking to him at all.
" I live in Ohio."

He blocked the chair as if he were guarding what was on the desk. " A long way from Ohio, Miss Jenner."

" Even longer from Phoenix," she replied.

" How long you here for?"

" Oh, probably until I relax," she chuckled.

" I know the feeling, I've driven truck for fifteen years. You probably saw my rig by the hotel."

" As a matter of fact I did."

" Let's just say I had the urge to come east."

" Me too... I'm a senior vice president with a marketing firm in Ellerby...
Ohio."

" Sounds important."

" I don't know about that." She tried looking over his shoulder at the books spread open on the desk. " Well, I guess I'll see you around."

" Yeah, I'll be taken in the sights just like any tourist."

He held the back of the chair as he leaned against it. " You been to the rock yet?"

" Couple of times. I wonder if it's the real rock," said Kathryn.

" I like to call it the traditional rock. It could be the stupid rock or it could be what they say is the rock. Who the hell knows? Main point is they landed somewhere near here."

" And the rock was here."

" Yeah, yeah, now you got it.." He studied her hair and face, but she did not mind. " What about that boat?"

" The Mayflower?"

" Does the thing really sail or just stay there at the dock?"

" Good question..."

" I thought that damn thing was the original boat."

Kathryn grinned. His ruddy face and chiseled nose made him appear older, but she figured he still had at least ten to twelve years on her. " Did you really you think that was the original ship?"

" Hell, you're talking about a good old boy from Scottsdale. I saw the ocean when I was in the service, but I was in the Marines. I wasn't a Navy man."

" Me either."

It took Tucker a few seconds to appreciate her sense of humor. " I get it."

" What did you do in the Marines?"

" First Lieutenant. I carried out the orders." He was about to say something else, but stopped. He tilted his head and pressed his lips before he spoke again. " I don't mean this to sound like a line, Kathryn, but I feel like I know you."

Kathryn nodded her head. "That's why I came up here. I could swear we met, but I've never seen you before. I've never been to Arizona."

"I drove my rig to Akron once. But I sure as hell don't know where Ellbery is."

"Well, maybe we'll see each other at the hotel," she said, hoping he would ask her to dinner.

Tucker squinted and the lines around his tanned face tightened. His blue eyes had a deep sincerity. "Yeah, I'll see ya around."

"Okay." Kathryn retreated along the mezzanine railing and started down to the main floor, but again stopped on the landing. She gazed up the stairs. Her stomach wrenched and she shook her head, grinning as she slowly climbed up again. Tucker was back at the window table turning pages. She started down the lengthy cranberry rug and then jogged along the railing as he raised his hands to his temples.

His glassy eyes were fixed on the black and white pages of a yearbook. The yearbook's distinctive ink smell was still evident as she swept over student photos until she saw a young woman with dark hair and brows. The girl's eyes were deep and she possessed a certain allure for a young woman of her age. Kathryn spoke her name out loud. "*Lucy Anne Leone*. Holy shit!"

Tucker looked up at Kathryn. "You do know, don't you?"

"Yeah..."

Tucker's bewildered expression matched her own inner turmoil. She turned the pages rapidly but she did not know Smitty's first name. Tucker's brow furrowed. "His name was William Smith."

Kathryn stared at Tucker for a moment and flipped the page to a picture of a thin kid with a crop dark hair parted on the right and freckles across his face.

" Smitty..."

" I dreamed his dreams," said Tucker boldly.

Kathryn raised her left brow " Lucy brought me back here."

" Conrad Ridder killed them," said Tucker. " It's all real, Kathryn."

Kathryn's parched mouth hung open. She swallowed several times and slowly grasped his callused hand. " Come with me, Tucker."

Tucker nodded and scooped up the yearbooks. She led him along the mezzanine rail and down the stairs. The microfilm screen still glowed across the study room as they crossed between computers and back to the microfilm tables. She released his hand slowly as Tucker leaned closer to Charlie's ad in the newspaper.

" Son of a bitch: Charlie Leone..."

" Lucy's uncle... He died in an accident on Route 3A."

Tucker briefly closed his eyes before studying the screen. " I sure as hell wondered if someone else dreamed what I dreamed."

" I think I have."

" That's Charlie's real estate office. What does it all mean?"

Kathryn sat in the chair and he put his hand on her shoulder. His touch reassured her someone else in the world understood what she had gone through. " I can't believe I found you, Tucker. I'm was trying to locate a report of the accident."

" The accident happened in the late spring or early summer, in my dream. It was hot when Lucy called Smitty."

She gawked at him, tightening her brow as she held his wrist. " This has been trapped inside me, but you understand, don't you?"

" I thought I was nuts."

Kathryn moved the newspaper pages along again. Her eyes filled up.

" We need to talk about this whole thing."

" Hell ya... I had some shrink back home telling me I was a loon. He had some dumb-ass term for it."

Kathryn now realized what a conventional therapist could not have told her back home. Rashid's darkened office flashed into her head as she rolled the micro-film into June, 1958. " I ended up at this guy who said there was a soul inside me, trying to resolve something in her life. I didn't want to believe it and I didn't believe it until I saw Charlie Leone's ad, withy Lucy and Smitty in that yearbook..."

" I almost dropped dead myself when I saw the ad. He was a real person."

" I dreamed her being killed at the rock," said Kathryn.

Tucker 's eyes brightened. " And *Conrad Ridder* pulled up in a Volks-wagen."

" Yeah, that's exactly right." She looked at the newspaper pages, but turned them rapidly. " Tucker, just what are we going to do with this information?"

He shook his head. " I thought about that. I know from the being in the service if you're gonna take the offensive, you sure as hell better have an effective force. How do we take on Conrad Ridder with our dreams as the only witness?"

" I'm convinced he killed Lucy and Smitty and had something to do with Charlie Leone's accident."

" One of my dreams started with me falling through dark water. The shrink said it was my unconscious thoughts trying to get through. Well, that's bullshit. That was a great theory until another night I dreamed some little guy with thinning dark hair was bringing Smitty's and Lucy's bodies out into the bay in a small speed boat-"

" *Hunter...*" In the dream I saw his picture in Charlie Leone's office."

" Charlie Leone's partner?"

" Yeah..."

" I had that same dream ten nights in a row. And then the Ridder dream at the rock repeated. I thought I was losing my mind."

" Oh, I know the feeling." She continued flipping through June of 1958.

" I don't think Lucy's inside me all the time. It's as if she walks in through a door and I see what she sees and then she leaves."

Tucker produced a gleaming white smile and pointed his index fingers at her.

" That's right. Not like we're possessed."

" I think Smitty and Lucy want Ridder and maybe Hunter brought to justice."

" The old question of how, Kathryn?"

On the screen the report of Charlie's accident slowly moved up page one of the next day's edition. " There it is! There it is!"

Tucker pulled a chair next to her and she focused the image on a newspaper headline from June 28, 1958.

REAL ESTATE BROKER KILLED IN CRASH

Owned Pleasant Valley Realty

Manomet-June 27. Local Real Estate broker, Charlie Leone lost control of his 1957 Plymouth Fury near White Beach Drive on Route 3A last night. According to police reports, Leone was traveling south toward his home in the Manomet

section of Plymouth when he careened into a row of oak trees at the bottom of a winding slope. Leone was transported to Jordan Hospital where he was declared dead at 9:36 PM. Police are awaiting laboratory reports.

Charlie Leone was a lifelong resident of the town and formed a real estate business after his return from military service in Europe in World War II. He leaves his wife of twenty one years, Stacey and a brother Harry Leone of Plymouth. Funeral arrangements by the Dole-Gerson Funeral Home and Mass at St. Thomas chapel in Manomet pending announcement.

Kathryn ran her fingers over the dusty plastic screen " Tucker, that car's brake line was drained."

" How do you know this?"

" In one of my dreams, Smitty checked the brake line..."

" I didn't have that dream. Where did you see that?"

" A savage yard west of town. That's what started the chase to the portico."

Tucker set his elbow on the table and squinted as he thought. " Yeah, I wondered why Ridder got all riled up. Was he at the salvage yard?"

" No, somehow he found out about it. But we're talking about something forty years ago."

" Yup. Something we can't prove."

Kathryn looked up and they locked eyes for a moment. " You want some dinner tonight, Tucker?"

" Hell, yeah. I always want dinner, but I always treat a lady to dinner."

" Good and I always like to be treated."

" Maybe between the both of us we can figure this thing out"

9

Tucker transported the Styrofoam food trays into the tree shaded park across from the portico as Kathryn carried the manila folders stuffed with photocopies made at the library. They passed a varnished bench overlooking an arching wood bridge and the clear, slow moving stream. She liked Tucker's antics, especially how he played the dumb country boy, but she sensed a greater intelligence under the facade. He found a spot on the grass and they settled under the wide oak branches along the stream banks.

He opened the waxed paper wrapping surrounding veggie pocket and handed her a small ice tea. " I first knew I had to come back here when I dreamed about Ridder chasing Lucy and Smitty in the Volkswagen. The dream kept repeating until the details were so clear... I had to see this area for myself."

Kathryn sipped the cool tea through a straw. " I thought I had lost my marbles until I saw Route 44, the rotary down the street, and the sea wall."

Tucker nodded and bit into the pocket, chewing the pita bread as he looked around the little park. " You say they saw Charlie Leone's car, the Plymouth Fury."

" Yup. I'll bet there was an auto salvage yard over the Carver line. I checked on the map. Carver is the next town over. For all the good it will do now. They were chased from the junkyard by three armed men and ended up being killed at the rock by Ridder."

" Eat some food, Kathryn."

" Thanks." She bit into the soft pita bread and the fresh vegetables crunched between her teeth. " This is good."

" Charlie Leone had no chance if somebody drained the lines. Not everybody knows how to do that. Must have been a mechanic or somebody who knew something about cars." He pressed his thin lips together and leaned on his propped knees. " And who the hell was Hunter? After forty years, I don't think he would have left time capsule of evidence incriminating himself. And was he the one I saw dispose of the bodies? "

" There's no doubt he set up Charlie Leone," said Kathryn. " The question is: How did he link up with Ridder? And Ridder, twenty-two year old, buys a radio station in the same time period Charlie was killed."

Tucker washed down the food with a tall Coke. " Ridder is a major talent no matter what you think about him. Hunter must have seen that. Ridder was his investment. Get Ridder's career going while investing in the station."

Kathryn nodded and watched a few people gawking at Plymouth Rock across the street. " Hunter could buy more media properties as the years went by and Ridder advanced his career. Hunter is the center of this as much as Ridder. He must be still associated with Ridder. But how do we get Smitty and Lucy justice?"

Tucker held the Coke on his thigh and stared in the stream. " After all this time what do we have? I didn't have dreams about that phony property. Lucy saw that."

" Capital Hill."

" Right," he said chewing the veggie pocket. " Sounds like Hunter handled with cash on the barrel head and fake documents."

" Charlie Leone trusted him."

Tucker finished the pocket and wiped his mouth with the napkin. " The car is long gone, but what about the guy at the junkyard?"

" The little guy with the mustache. I'm assuming he was Sid Horwitz."

" Could he still be alive?"

Kathryn shrugged her shoulders. " He must have been thirty-five, maybe older. So, it's possible. He and the other guys wouldn't have fired at Lucy and Smitty if they weren't tied into Hunter's operation."

" Maybe. Or they could have been rattled.... But who was or is Sid Horwitz? He might be eighty years old and I doubt, even if he is still alive, he would volunteer information about his complicity in two deaths."

" My guess is he drained the lines."

" Possible."

Tucker stretched his legs and put the Styrofoam cup in the white bag.
" Sounds like Hunter is the guy in the speed boat if you match him with the picture in the office."

" Your description is exact."

" So, Hunter actually dumped the bodies."

" Right." Kathryn gazed to the blue waters beyond the portico. " Wait, the bodies must still be down there."

" Well, that's true, youngin'." He stood and peered back to the bay.

" And that is significant."

" Youngin'?" she asked, smiling.

" Yeah, I got a few years on you."

" Not that many."

" Listen, what if we arrange for someone to go down under? Hunter, or whoever was in that boat, pushed Smitty into the water. It wasn't that far out in the bay, but he attached weights to the body. Smitty moved down quickly. I kept waking up when he hit bottom, but I don't think it was more than a few hundred yards out. Before the blinking lights on that land in the harbor."

Kathryn stood and held his wrist again. " Tucker, so they find the remains. Okay. We can't just come forward and accuse Ridder or even Hunter. There are no witnesses, no evidence, no way to convict them of anything."

He pursed his lips and with arms locked around his ribs, stared at the bay. " And I don't foresee us finding the spilled brake fluid."

" So, what do we do?"

Tucker deposited the contents of the lunch in a metal trash barrel. " You know, the only real thing we have is the purchase of the station by Ridder. Everything else is long gone. "

" And the guy at the yard," she said.

" No, wait a minute. What if someone else suspected what we suspect? Did Charlie ever tell anyone else what he told Lucy outside the office? Maybe this Dan Jansen, the police sergeant."

She looked into his blue eyes. " Tucker, forty years is a long time."

* * *

As Tucker drove a rented, cherry red mini van up Route 44, Kathryn pointed to the large shopping plaza beyond the Route 3 highway bridge. " In my dreams that big plaza was just woods. The road was more rural and narrow."

" I ain't surprised. You know I don't think it's smart we tell anybody about these people skipping in and out of our heads."

" Agreed. Roz knows."

" Friend?"

" Roommate."

" *Roz*; sounds like a roommate." Tucker smiled and brought the van up the long hill toward the water tower, now painted green. The road was widened into several lanes. " See, the way I look at it, neither one of us can prove murder from these home movies in our heads."

Kathryn grinned. " You have a way with words, Tucker."

" Well, we can't prove it."

" You're right." She studied his angled profile as he drove into an expanded five-corner intersection near a new fire station. A huge silver microwave tower with assorted dishes and linear antennas popped up behind the fire station. " Stay on 44, Tucker. This road really has changed."

Tucker checked the mirror and sped into the outside lane. " I wonder if we can shake up Ridder about this or con him into thinking we have the goods on him. We might want to try that."

" A big risk. He's Conrad Ridder and who are we?"

" Right..."

The power lines rose over the trees ahead. Newer and higher concrete poles supported thicker and numerous lines above the remnants of the farm. The gray weathered silo was nearly collapsed and the farm acreage reduced to a few fields.

" I kind of like the simpler time before everything was paved over and homogenized. The plazas, the buildings, and supermarkets. It all looks the same. Back forty

years ago, there were small businesses not these big store chains. Businesses with individual owners. More responsibility if you own your own place."

" Who the hell has responsibility now a days?" asked Tucker as the van moved under the high tension wires. " You go to the doctor, you don't pay him. You don't even decide where you go. Some big health care conglomerate tells you what's covered and what isn't. Life has become to damned complicated."

" I wonder what it was like forty years ago. When things were slowed down," said Kathryn.

" Right, at time when Ridder started his career. I was just thinking Hunter's name must be on real estate transactions."

" I don't know. In my dream Charlie made it all sound real fishy." Kathryn pointed to the housing tract roads to her left. " Look, Tucker. They did develop the area. It made sense. It would make sense at the time for Charlie Leone to invest in this area. Somebody made a fortune. Maybe Hunter?"

" Who knows? Or he may have just fled the area. Why would he take the chance Charlie could have talked about Capital Hill?"

" Charlie didn't have time to prove it."

As in Kathryn's dreams the road narrowed. They passed a small apartment complex and velvet crimson cranberry bogs spread across the surrounding flat lands. A couple of hundred yards ahead the Carver town line sign was staked in the tall grass and across the highway, a stenciled black and gold sign hung from a pressure treated pole. Tucker slowed the van. " Pine Hill Estates? "

" Asphalt, kid's play houses, and swimming pools." She figured the office shack was once situated about fifty feet behind the first bend in the road. " I don't think we'll be seeing any '57 Furrys here."

The road swept within viewing distance of the high-tension wires. Newer foundations were poured into freshly scooped sand along the hill and a number of pickup trucks and an oversized yellow front end loader were parked in front of a white construction trailer plopped at the bend. Tucker looked at Kathryn and stopped across from the trailer.. " A good place to get information."

" Remember, forty years is a long time."

She stepped into the hot sun, followed Tucker across the loose dirt and up the trailer's narrow metal steps. He opened the door. A few men in construction boots sat around a large man with a loud voice. The air conditioner hummed as they stepped inside and Tucker closed the door.

The big guy looked up. " Yeah, can I help you?"

" We're looking for some information," said Tucker.

" Wanna buy a house for the Mrs., do you?"

" Nice houses," said Kathryn.

" We start with the base and bring it to perfection." The man struggled to get his huge frame out of the chair. He thrust out his chubby hand. " Rick de Marco. How the hell are ya?"

" Nice to meet you," said Tucker. " Actually we're looking back in time. I understand there used to be a car graveyard back here."

Rick's' face froze and he stroked his chin. " Who the hell told you that? Don't go spreadin' rumors about my development."

" I ain't."

" We want to know what happened to the junkyard," said Kathryn.

" Oh, hell they hauled the last car out of here twenty-five years ago. I gut all my permits if you're from the state. Or are you feds?"

" Neither," said Tucker. " We're lookin' for the guy that used to run the yard."

" Who? Old Sid?"

" Little guy with a mustache," said Kathryn.

" Yeah, the old geezer... Okay. Yeah, Sid ran that place for years. He was here when we cleared the land. Used to sit in a lawn chair. Hell, I got Sid the sun umbrella."

" Is he still alive?" asked Kathryn.

" Oh, he's alive, but he don't say much. Had a stroke a couple of years ago. I've been meanin' to go in town and see Sid."

Kathryn tried to picture Sid as an old man. " Can he communicate at all?"

" He ain't never said nothin' ta me for a couple of years."

" He ever know Conrad Ridder?" asked Tucker.

" What?" Rick looked out the trailer window. " Ridder, the guy on TV? I watch him all the time. Why the hell would he know Ridder?"

" Ridder was born in Plymouth."

" No shit?"

" Where is Sid now?" asked Tucker.

" The nursing home down on 3A, just as you get into Manomet."

Tucker smiled and shook his hand again. " Thanks for the info. Nice houses."

" Name's Rick... Sure you don't want to buy one?"

" Just passing through, Rick, old buddy." Tucker reached for the door and held the knob, but then he turned around. " You ever hear of Charlie Leone?"

Rick was about to sit down and nearly lost his balance. " Leone. I don't know no Leone. Hell, I come down here from Billerica." He lowered his body into the chair. " But if I see him, I'll tell him you were asking for him."

" You do that," said Tucker.

Tucker helped Kathryn down the stairs and shut the metal door. In the sunshine she faced his intense blue eyes. " We need to see Sid."

" It's worth a try, Tucker, *old buddy*."

10

The TV voices meandered down the corridor near Sid's room. The nursing staff said he had lost his ability to speak, but constantly watched TV. Kathryn hesitated, glanced at Tucker and stuck her head inside the doorway. A man with white scraggly hair, rimmed around his bald head, slouched in a chrome-framed wheelchair perched before a small TV. She squinted as she shuffled into the stark white room and carefully rounded the wheelchair. Sid's black framed glasses, lenses smudged and magnifying his dark eyes, balanced snugly on his straight nose. His right arm, tattooed with a faded representation of the mermaid and the tall ship, was in a gray sling. With his left his thumb pressed against the remote button he flipped the channels. She recognized him within the withered pale, wrinkled representation of the cocky little man in the junkyard forty years ago. His midnight eyes blinked and rolled the left to focus on her. The right side of his face was drooped.

" Sid, my name is Kathryn Jenner. This is my friend Tucker." Sid's flattened pink smile curled up the left side of his face. Someone had missed shaving a cropping of short stray beard stubble on his cheek. " We want to ask you a few questions."

He raised his thumb above the remote and the moisture level in his eyes rose. Tucker squatted next to the chair. " Sid, we want to talk about something from a long time ago."

Sid pushed the remote to an afternoon soap opera as Kathryn leaned over. " Did you know Charlie Leone?"

He stared at the characters holding hands on TV and made no motion with his hand. Then he spun the channels like an out of control motor. Tucker creased his brow. " He died in a car accident forty years ago."

Sid lifted his thumb from the remote and the tiny TV filled with gray and white snow. Kathryn knelt next to the padded side arm of the wheelchair. Sid stared at the fluctuating signal. Tears descended his frozen face. Kathryn's throat compacted as she visualized him as a younger man. " We don't think Charlie died by accident. We think somebody drained the brake fluid from his car."

" Charlie was scammed for big bucks," said Tucker.

Sid fiddled with more buttons on the remote and amidst the blue screen, a series of blue lettered programming instructions appeared. He clicked the timer buttons slowly and plugged in the settings.

PROGRAM MODE

DATE: 6 / 27 / 58

START: 10:00 PM

STOP: 11:00 PM

CHANNEL: 22

SPEED: EP

" Then you know he was killed. Do you know who did it?" asked Kathryn. As tears smeared his eyes he clicked the remote. " I'm sorry, Sid, I don't mean to frustrate you."

Tucker stood, grasped Kathryn's hand and helped her up. She glanced at the rotating channels but Sid's blue lettered program stayed in her mind. Tucker leaned toward her and whispered. " Kathryn, I don't think we're going to learn anything here."

" He knows, Tucker. He knows. He put the date on the screen."

" What the hell does it mean? Useless information."

" I have to ask him about Lucy and Smitty." She returned to the wheelchair and Sid continued scanning the channels. " Sid, did you know Lucy Leone and William Smith?"

He stopped channel surfing, maneuvered his thumb across the buttons, and configured the timer on the screen. But he changed the top sequence.

PROGRAM MODE

DATE: 7 / 3 / 58

START: 10:00 PM

STOP: 11:00 PM

CHANNEL: 22

SPEED: EP

" Isn't that the date they disappeared?" asked Tucker. Sid popped his thumb up and attempted to bring the smile up his face again. He fought to keep his eyelids up. Alternatively, like a battery recharging, he waved the remote at the TV, but he seemed frustrated and finally closed his eyes. Kathryn put her hand on his shoulder. More tears leaked out his closed eyes. " Sid, we're staying in the area. We'll come back."

She did not want to leave him alone. Tucker held her shoulders and walked her into the corridor, but peeked back into the room before they left.

" Poor guy."

" I swear he knows more, but what good is it?"

* * *

Tucker nudged the van along a constricted, hilly Route 3A, and Kathryn scanned the trees along slope for a remnant of Charlie Leone's accident so many years ago. Tucker slowed where the hill dipped. A long galvanized rail now shielded drivers from the wide tree trunks lurking along a gully. " If we talk to Sid again we need to ask him specific questions; try to reconstruct this... There it is."

" Sure, now they have a rail there." Tucker pulled to blue stone highway shoulder beyond the break down lane. He checked the map and pointed to the road across the highway. " Now, there's nuclear power plant down the road over there. Don't think it was there forty years ago."

Kathryn tried to envision Charlie pumping his Plymouth Fury's brakes and losing control as he gained speed down the steep hill. She wondered about his last thoughts as he careened toward the trees. " He must have tried the brakes all they way down the hill. I'm sure they drained the fluid in the restaurant parking lot. The cops might have investigated the accident if Charlie hadn't been drunk. They must have assumed the booze caused the accident."

Tucker looked up from the map. " Yup. Who would bother looking? Somebody planned it real good."

Kathryn smiled. " Except it's all air-tight now. Probably was even back then. People from that restaurant must be dead."

" The Ridder-Hunter connection is the only link," he said, looking over his shoulder as he moved back onto the highway and started up the opposite hill. The road wound through the woods, but leveled a short time later. Tucker checked the map and signaled at the huge new Mobil station at the corner. Across the street a number of cars waited to leave the shopping plaza. He turned left.

" According to the phone book at the library, Charlie lived at 57 Cushman Street."

Beyond a small grassy cemetery's weathered white marble stones, several poorly paved side streets jutted toward the ocean. Tucker signaled at the Cushman's faded black and white street sign. Kathryn spotted an aluminum mail box with a twisted red flag. A spotty grass front lawn bordered a mildewed cement wall and front walk. Thin plastic sheets covered the outside porch windows and two rusted compacts sat in the rutted driveway. Dented pale green siding covered the house and the unattached garage.

" So, they drain the brake fluid, knowing Charlie has to travel down winding Route 3A."

Tucker looked at the odometer. " Four and a half miles. Enough time to lose control of your car."

" You think Sid did it?" asked Kathryn.

" I think old Sid was paid to get rid of the Fury and later he found out about what happened. I'm leaning toward Hunter only because nothing ever leaked out."

" Right, adding others would mean the chances of something leaking out no matter how much you paid them."

" Or Ridder himself. But how do you get witnesses at the restaurant and talk to patrons that no longer exist?" asked Tucker.

Kathryn yawned. " Excuse me."

" Bored?"

" Bored I'm not."

" We should get back to the hotel. "

She checked her watch. " It's three-thirty. What do you say we take a little trip to that radio station and then you can get me something to eat."

Tucker grinned. " Oh, yeah? I can get *you* something to eat... Should I buzz the hotel and have them run a bath for you, too?"

" *Tucker*," she said, smiling as she hit his arm. She studied the worn slate roof on Charlie Leone's old house and tried to assemble a composite of how the house appeared forty years ago without the siding, with the cement new, and the lawn full and green. Somehow she would find justice for Charlie Leone, too.

* * *

According to the crinkled map Tucker claimed he could see across the silver sheen bay to a vague tower in the haze toward Provincetown at the tip of Cape Cod. Kathryn gazed upward to the four red and white metal grid antennas reaching toward the puffy pink clouds above the hilltop trees. Tucker opened shingled building's the glass door and Kathryn stepped ahead of him into an air-conditioned, glossy tiled lobby with tall fluffy green plant in the corner. A elderly receptionist, wearing a headset and a hands-free microphone, answered phone calls behind a

sliding glass window. The small waiting area contained black vinyl chairs and a glass coffee table, strewn with magazines.

The window rolled open. " Can I help you?"

" Yes," said Tucker, leaning toward her. He spoke quickly with a sense of urgency. " John Tucker. Free lance writer." Kathryn raised her brows and tried not grin at his antics. " Doing a piece on Conrad Ridder."

" Rita Potts." She grinned. " Well, it all started right here."

" That's why I'm here, Mam'."

" I knew Conrad very well." She raised her index finger and answered the phone. " WXBN. Yes, I'll connect you." She looked up again. " What do you want to know?"

" What kind of individual was he?" asked Tucker.

" He was just wonderful. We all loved Conrad."

" He bought the station," said Kathryn, edging forward.

" Oh, that was so long ago. He was only here a few years, but they were glorious years, let me tell you."

Tucker grinned, glancing at Kathryn. " He ever come back?"

" Oh, no..." Rita had a deep longing in her eyes. " I never saw him again, but I've followed his career. Collected newspaper articles. Can I have a copy of your piece when you finish?"

" Sure."

" I suppose you want to talk to the station manager?"

" That's the ticket," said Tucker.

She pushed a button on the switchboard. " Mr. Henrickson."

" You've got me convinced you're writing an article," said Kathryn. " We need to establish the link Ridder and Hunter and the money for the station purchase."

" Hunter sounded too slick to pen his name to anything. "

" Mr. Henrickson, somebody's out here doing an article on Conrad. Yes, I will." She looked up. " He'll be right out."

" You know anyone named Hunter?"

" Hunter was Conrad's manager. Only his real name is Dimitri Meritokis."

Tucker raised his brows. " Dimitri... Meritokis... Rita, you have been very helpful."

" Conrad and I used to... We used to date."

" What else do you know about this Meritokis?" asked Tucker, leaning inside the window.

" He did all the talking. You know, as far as business."

A tall peppered haired man in white chinos and an unbutton blue Oxford, stepped out the side door. " Mr. Tucker, I'm David Henrickson. I manage WXBN."

" John Tucker and this is my assistant, Kathryn Jenner."

" Miss Jenner," he said as he shook Tucker's hand. " Well, tonight is the big night for Conrad Ridder. All signs point to him running for Governor of Colorado and who knows we'll he'll go after that..."

" I'm looking at the early years. I understand I bought the station in 1958."

" Was it '58? We have some pictures over here." He motioned them through the waiting room to a wood paneled corridor leading to the studio rooms. " Of course he was a lot younger then."

Kathryn's eyes tiptoed along the dozens of black and white framed photos nailed to the paneling. Henrickson pointed to a large, silver framed, black and white photo of a beaming, youthful Conrad Ridder, dark hair cropped, and dressed in a white shirt and thin, dark tie. Fear spread in Kathryn's stomach as she stared at Ridder's deep rutted eyes and visualized him chasing Lucy and Smitty into the portico. The photograph, at a restaurant table, was probably taken within weeks of the shootings. It matched the photo on Charlie Leone's office wall.

" The white haired man is Harris Goodwin, original owner of WXBN. I guess Goodwin was ready to move to Florida. His wife is to his left and I believe the rather chunky man was the station accountant. This was the old Wayside on 3A. They tore that down in the sixties according to the natives."

" Oh, you weren't born in Plymouth?" asked Kathryn.

" I hail from Springfield."

Kathryn studied the tables in a darker light behind the group, but it was Tucker who pressed his finger on a small man with a dark, thinning hair and wide smile. " Who is that?"

" Dimitri Meritokis. You've probably seen him in the news. The man behind the man or I should say, the man behind The Voice."

Tucker winced as he looked into her eyes. " He's the guy in the boat."

" What?"

" He is the guy in the boat, Kathryn."

" Now, we have a number of early pictures of Conrad Ridder. He only owned the station for two years. Somehow he managed to broadcast from Los Angeles when the Democrats nominated Jack Kennedy. His radio career took off then

and the rest, as they say, is history." Kathryn scanned the other pictures for Dimitri Meritokis.

" He paid cash for the station?" asked Tucker.

" Oh, I don't know. Ridder was a local boy who made good after graduating from Princeton. I guess he saved some money and must have taken out a loan. A good investment, wouldn't you say? Dan Jansen would know more about those days."

" Jansen is still alive?" asked Kathryn.

" Used to be on the police force. A sergeant You know him?"

" Yeah... I. Where is he now?"

" Hampton Gardens, you know, the retirement home. Town owns it. On Turnberry Street."

" Any records on that original transaction?" asked Tucker.

" You're not one of those tabloid guys, are you? Because I don't go for that kind of journalism."

" No, I'm not."

" Well, doesn't matter. The station has changed hands a dozen times since Ridder owned it. I've never come across the original stuff. I'm sure they're long gone. Might want to check the town hall or the county records."

" Just like everything else," said Tucker. " I'm at the Bay Inn on the water. Any other information you might have about Conrad Ridder... I'd be glad to put it in my article."

" I will make a note of it," said Henrickson. He escorted them back and pulled a self adhesive note off his desk. " Very good, Mr. Tucker. Nice to meet you and you, Miss Jenner."

" Thank you for your help," said Kathryn

Henrickson retreated down the corridor to his office, but Tucker headed back to the receptionist. He waited as she finished up on the phone. " Rita, I have a question."

" Sure."

" There's a photo in the corridor. Conrad Ridder is sitting around a table."

" With Mr. Goodwin."

" Yes, the man in the background. With the big jaw and receding hair."

She nodded her head. " That's Dimitri Meritokis."

" Right, did he go by the name Sam Hunter?" asked Tucker.

" Conrad always told me Hunter was his professional name."

" I see... And you don't know that much about him?"

" He was behind the scenes." She paused and pushed a switchboard button.

" WXBN."

" Thank you, Rita." Tucker put his arm on Kathryn's back and steered her toward the outside door. They walked slowly into the asphalt parking lot. The large expanse of blue ocean unfolded as they rounded the building.

" The mysterious Mr. Hunter is mysterious no more."

" I don't know about that. We have his name but know nothing about him."

" Cheer up, Tucker. It's a start," she said as they headed for the van parked under the trees across the lot.

" Yup."

" And we need to contact Dan Jansen."

" Or go back to 1958. "

" Dream on. " Tucker opened the van door for her. " I just hope Jansen is in better shape than Sid Horwitz."

" Tucker, did anybody ever tell you, you're an excellent actor?"

A spark ignited in his eye and he winked at her. " Sometimes you gotta be."

11

Before driving to find Jansen in the retirement home, Tucker brought the van under the highway bridge on Route 44, along a rusted chain link fence and through the iron gates to Oak Ridge Cemetery. He navigated through the cemetery's narrow paths, along rows of worn inscriptions across slate weathered stones and stopped the van at the top of the hill. As Kathryn watched the cars whip over the highway bridge, one of the kids cutting the grass shut off the lawnmower motor and directed Tucker to a shed near the highway fence.

The lawnmower started again and Tucker spoke through the buzzing noise. " He says the groundskeeper might know where Charlie is buried."

He got inside and started the van. They moved upward toward a light metal-sided building away from the highway. Kathryn shook her head as they rumbled over the uneven asphalt. " You know I still can't believe we've both been drawn back here."

" I'm kind of losin' track of that myself," he said, pulling up next to the shed. A tall guy with curly steel hair and an orange tank top, walked from the inverted lawnmower he was working on. " Excuse me, I'm lookin' for a grave."

The man lit a cigarette quickly and exhaled. " Who ya looking for?"

" Charlie Leone."

" Oh, yeah. He died when I was a kid. Didn't know him. But I know the grave."

" Then he is buried here," said Kathryn.

" Yeah," he said, pointing the cigarette toward the adjacent tree lined hill.

" See those maples right up top."

Kathryn nodded and peered through the windshield at the lollipop green maples ahead. " He died in 1958."

" June 27, 1958. I've mowed this cemetery for twenty years."

" Thanks for your help," said Tucker, briefly squeezing his hand.

" What about Lucy Leone or William Smith? "

" Yeah, they disappeared. Don't know what happened to them. "

" Thanks. " Kathryn watched him return to another lawnmower. He hurled the cigarette across the grass. The shade of the maple branches covered the van as they ascended the road. Up a slight grassy rise a pink granite stone was chiseled boldly in the sun.

LEONE

Charles Arnold Leone

September 12, 1902

June 27, 1958

Stacey Ann Leone

June 29, 1908

December 13, 1962

Once outside the van, Kathryn pushed her lips together as she trotted across the grass and neared the stone. " I can't explain this, but it exists. He and his wife existed."

" Who the hell would believe it?" asked Tucker. " I wouldn't tell Jansen. I had a dream with him in it. Guy with red hair and blue eyes. Had the gift of gab from what I could see. Smitty was talking to Dan Jansen aboard a small speedboat on the bay."

" Really? I only heard them talking about Jansen and how he was going to the DA once they had something," said Kathryn.

" Yeah, that's what he said. Sometimes they called him Danny. He wouldn't talk until they were out in the bay. Smitty mentioned how Charlie was in trouble but he never said Charlie was screwed in the land deal."

" He told Lucy on his office porch." She knelt on the grass and with her fingers outlined the chiseled granite representation of Charlie's name and the dates of his birth and death.

" I wonder what Jansen thinks happened to them?" asked Tucker.

Kathryn held his wrist. " If he's in the same shape as Sid, we've got problems." Tucker's face tightened and he panned the graveyard. " What are you thinking, Tucker?"

" He might have the vital piece."

" Then why didn't he nail Ridder?" she asked. He grabbed her wrist and hoisted her up. " Did Smitty tell Jansen anything about Ridder?"

" Not in the dreams I had, Kathryn."

" Poor Charlie..."

" He sounded like a nice guy who was taken by Hunter," said Tucker.

" Smitty never mentioned Hunter or should I say Meritokis, to Jansen either."

" I'd like to know Dimitri Meritokis's background." she said, thinking back to the office. " He's right on the wall at WXBN: just like in my dreams."

" I tell ya, he was the guy in the boat. The guy who dumped the bodies."

" I know, I know. Damn. So much time has passed." She shook her head and pushed back her hair, warmed by the afternoon sun.. " Sometimes I wish I never had these dreams. Why me?"

" I've asked myself the same thing."

" I shouldn't whine."

" No, there has to be a reason, Kathryn. We live in opposite areas of the country, but these two people got inside our heads. What we saw was their reality. And I feel an obligation, more than anything I've felt in my life. I have to find the truth here."

Kathryn nodded and gazed back at Charlie's stone. " You're right. He was murdered and so were Smitty and Lucy."

* * *

Kathryn cleaned her glasses with a tissue and focused on the dance floor. The social worker told her Jansen, now eighty-five, had resided here twenty years and had outlived most of his contemporaries. Tucker again alluded to Jansen as a forty-five year old, husky man with red hair. The white haired man gliding across the parquet floor, dressed in the bright green blazer and yellow tie, retained his nimble frame. When the big band tune ended, the social worker flipped over the cassette tape.

Jansen patted his forehead with a blue handkerchief and talked to several women, possibly twenty years younger, as he drifted toward the snack table. He had a crisp New England accent, notoriously neglecting his R's. " At my age I don't

worry about cholesterol, heart attacks or cancer. I eat what I want, do what I want and don't know when to shut up."

The women around Jansen giggled like girls parading after school dance.
" But Danny, we have to watch our figures."

" No, I have to watch your figures." He pointed at them. " I told you I don't know when to shut up any more."

" Excuse me, Sergeant Jansen," said Tucker in a clear voice.

Jansen turned quickly. " Son, I haven't been called Sergeant since Jimmy Carter was President. Do I know you?"

" No."

" Oh, Dan Jansen." He shook Tucker's hand and gazed over at Kathryn.
" And your beautiful young lady."

" Kathryn Jenner," said Tucker, motioning toward Kathryn.

" So, you came to talk to the old duffer, eh?" They all laughed. " What can I do for you?"

" You wear your age well, Mr. Jansen," said Tucker.

" Thank you. Years of tripping the life fantastic."

" Mr. Jansen," said Kathryn. " We've come into some information."

" Oh, yeah?" he asked as the music shook the cassette player again and he watched the younger woman.. " Did I win the lottery or am I inheriting money from a long lost cousin?"

Tucker cleared his throat. " Does the project Capital Hill ring a bell?"

Immediately Jansen's face flushed and for the first time seemed at a loss for words.

" And Charlie Leone's death?" asked Kathryn.

" I have to dance."

Tucker grabbed his arm. " We know the story, Dan."

" Then why do you want to talk to me?"

" We need you to fill in the details."

Jansen again dabbed the sweaty beads off his forehead. " Listen, I don't know anything."

Tucker folded his arms. " Charlie died in a car accident after losing everything in a land deal."

Jansen pursed his lips, patted his forehead again and shook his head. " I don't know any Charlie Leone or anything about this Capital thing. Good luck." He looked at them another time and headed back to another group of women across the room.

" He knows, Tucker. He knows."

" I know he knows. But why won't he talk about it?"

The social worker, smiling moved closer. " You found Mr. Jansen."

" We did," said Tucker. He wrote the hotel name on the back of a piece of scrap paper and handed it to her. " I guess Mr. Jansen is busy. Can you just let him know I'm staying at the Bay Inn?"

" Sure. Good old Danny is always after the ladies."

" Thanks," said Kathryn as they headed into the corridor. " He knows. He knows."

Tucker stared at Jansen. Several times Jansen glanced at them, but continued speaking with the women. " That man has a lot of information, Kathryn. I don't know why he won't share it, but he may be the key to unraveling all of this."

* * *

Kathryn gazed at the bright TV monitor behind the bar. The national and international news seemed unimportant. Even though the dreams had subsided, her anger at Ridder and Hunter soared. She agreed with Tucker and was convinced Jansen's knowledge of the case was extensive. " I feel bad for him."

Tucker cut his chicken. " Who Jansen?"

" He knows about Lucy and Smitty and who knows what else, but that information is going nowhere."

Tucker removed the fork from his mouth and chewed the chicken. Then he gestured with the fork. " Physically, Sid can't get out the information. Jansen is different. He doesn't want to get things out. You've seen him. He's in still great shape."

" Forty years hasn't hurt him," said Kathryn, looking at the TV monitor.

" And I don't think somebody paid him off. Maybe he's at the age where he thinks it's useless. Who knows what he's been through all these years?"

Kathryn nodded and nibbled on her fried clams. The report on the TV switched to Conrad Ridder. The gray haired Ridder was seen in clips interviewing the President. " Oh, here we go. Tucker, look."

" There he is. And it all started right here up on the hill at XBN."

" He went right to the top all right." Ridder was filmed earlier in the day, walking into the tall green glass office building in Denver, housing his studio. He led an entourage inside the building lobby. Someone turned up the TV volume and the announcer's voice echoed around the bar. " Ridder had no comment about

reports he will resign his position on The Conrad Ridder Show this evening and announce his candidacy for the Governorship of Colorado."

Ridder moved with the others in to the silver elevator. " Listen tonight on the show..."

" The Hearn-Ruggles polling service gives Conrad Ridder a twenty-two point spread over his nearest challenger, Governor Joe McLaughlin, in that race. Pundits have speculated Ridder may be using the Governor's position as a stepping stone to national politics, possibly the Presidency in four or eight years. For now, we'll all have to wait for the announcement that is almost guaranteed to come this evening on The Conrad Ridder Show. John Burlingame reporting, CBC News."

The anchor leaned his shoulder and looked into the camera. " Maybe Conrad needs a replacement. I'm available," he said to the woman beside him.

" She grinned as he glanced at her. " I guess stranger things have happened."

" He's got that right," said Kathryn.

Tucker sipped his coffee and seemed to savor the flavor. " You know I don't want to come out with anything unless we have exact proof. Without it they'll bury us."

" I'm just a woman from Ellerby, Ohio. I go to my job every day and I can't say I'm looking forward to the national press swarming all over us because we've implicated Conrad Ridder in murders from forty years ago."

" We'll have to funnel whatever we have to someone who can do something with it. An attorney or DA."

" I wish we were back then, you know, forty years ago. "

" We'll have to settle for the laws of today, " said Tucker.

" Or... his enemies in the Governor's race," said Kathryn, with grin.

" That would fix his wagon. You know despite what I just said. I think of poor Charlie Leone's body rotting up in the cemetery. He never got to live out his life and neither did Smitty and Lucy. That's what really angers me about Ridder's success."

Tucker leaned back. He studied her face and nodded. " We need to find more on Dimitri."

" Maybe, but I bet the trail ends at Capital Hill."

12

In his office chair Ridder grinned at Dimitri's mirror image as Julie applied the powdery makeup to his face. Her long blonde hair swept across his shoulder and she returned his smile. Dimitri said something into his cell phone, clicked the button and tucked it in his pocket. The phone rang immediately. " Meritokis. No, I said call the people at all the networks. I want coverage when Conrad leaves the building. Not the exclusive on set after the show has... that slot has been taken. Right. Listen, I have twenty-two minutes to air. Bye."

Ridder kept smiling. Dimitri's nervous system was always on overload.
" You look nervous, Dimitri."

Dimitri adjusted his red silk tie and put on his tan jacket. Ridder waved to Julie with his fingers as she left his dressing room. Dimitri quickly kicked the door shut and focused his dark eyes on Ridder. " You're taking this much too lightly, Sput."

" You mean, ' The Voice, ' shouldn't have nerves of steel." Ridder stood and stretched his arms skyward. " One more hour and I'm out of this rut!"

" Whenever you have nerves of steel, the program becomes stiff. You get out there and don't be so damned cocky. This is serious business in the minds of voters. They can sense when you think the job should be handed to you on a silver platter. Get your act together."

" My act is together and it always has been. Don't tell me about what people think. I've been gauging viewers for a long time. You worry too much. Screw you."

Dimitri grabbed Ridder by the shoulders. " You listen to me. I have a whole plethora of interest groups who are counting on me and I'm counting on you. We need a constituency, Conrad. We have the power base but it means nothing unless you get the damned votes."

" We've got the votes," said Ridder, gritting his teeth. " While I admire your cleverness, Dimitri, and I always have I might add, it's my talent that has got us where we are. And it's my talent that will get us where we're going."

Dimitri was not often flustered. " I would only say you should remember from whence you've come, my friend."

Ridder brushed his white shirt slipped his arms into the smooth tailored sleeves of his navy blazer. He gave Dimitri a fleeting grimace and opened corridor door. Getting flummoxed over something he had firmly in his grasp made no sense. Through the open door Karen Gurtz's short red hair blurred across the studio as she positioned cameras and barked out orders. Everyone seemed nervous.

" Conrad, we have twenty minutes."

" Twenty minutes til' liftoff," said Ridder, chuckling.

" We have request for interviews after the show."

" Talk to Dimitri. He's on top of this and he'll go ballistic if he's not consulted. " He pulled back his leather chair and sat at the desk he had occupied for so many years".

" You're remarks are arranged on top." Her perfume enveloped him as she leaned over his shoulder. " I have a list of who is calling in around the country."

" I like your perfume," said Ridder.

" Wonderful. I can make it through the night with that knowledge. Let's stick with the game plan here."

" We're going to party later, Karen."

" Conrad, give up. How many times have you asked me out?"

One of his aides dropped several pages of questions and his short speech, planned for the end of the broadcast. " Sixteen times I've asked you out. I keep a list of everything."

" Chalk it up to experience. The list and times of out scheduled callers there are under your remarks."

Ridder held her wrist. " You don't know what you're missing."

" I know, I know," she said laughing. For a moment Ridder thought about having her fired, but he needed her expertise. " Your live guest will come out after the first break."

" Good old Wil Jordan. Pay him a good salary and he's twist the data any way you want it twisted."

" That's his gig. And, Conrad, I would attempt to quell your giddiness."

" I'm not giddy."

" You are. You're gloating all over yourself. Use humility. I've seen you turn it on. Keep it low key."

" Not in my nature. And you've been talking to Dimitri..."

" No, I haven't," said Karen as she disappeared around the corner.

He held the large print paper in his hand. Dimitri had written most of the speech, aided by a team of writers. Ridder really did not care about the content, but more about a flawless delivery. He felt loose despite everybody's concern about his humility. The speech would last less than ten minutes before they cut to the break. Then Wil Jordan would arrive in studio. He scanned the callers. They had sched-

uled Hollywood people, politicians agreeing with his positions, whatever they might be, and two former Presidents.

Ridder pushed the papers aside on the counter. The main thing was to remain loose and keep his sense of humor. His antidotes and wit would bring him through any challenge. The desk phone rang and he casually picked it up. Susan's voice was low and sensual. " Good luck, Conrad. I'll see you in LA next week."

" My pleasure, Susan. How are you and how's your family?"

" Family is fine... I've already reserved apartment sixteen."

" Dimitri says I have to be careful with the press all around now. But we can be discreet. I'll e-mail you when I get there."

" Nervous?"

" Excited."

" About me or the announcement?"

" Both."

" Good luck.."

Dimitri folded his arms and gazed down at Ridder as if he were a recalcitrant school boy. " Conrad, please. You have to listen to me. We need keep these things in the proper realm. Any liaisons will be handled by me and that's it."

" You worry too much."

" I have to." His cell phone sounded again. " Meritokis." Ridder picked up the speech again and scanned what was written for him. Dimitri yelled into the cell phone. " I don't care what the hell you say. I told you a long time ago, *you're alive due to the grace of God...* Don't threaten me. I won't stand for it!"

" New girlfriend?" asked Ridder with a grin.

Dimitri's eyes burned. " Damn you!"

" What did I say?"

" You have no idea what I have done to maintain your power. Without me. You'd be some second rate disc spinner in the boondocks."

" I'm the best, Dimitri. I'm, ' *The Voice*. ' " Then he tilted back his head and laughed. " You need to chill out. Look at me, ten minutes to air time and I'm going to eat them up."

Dimitri shook his head and hurried off the set. Ridder grinned and cupped his hands behind his head. They were positioning the cameras for the last time now. The bearded Wil Jordan appeared off set and waved. Ridder gave him the thumbs up sign and readied himself to broadcast live around the world.

* * *

Kathryn viewed Tucker's arrival in her room as a quasi-date. She ordered snacks from the bar, some beer, and soft drinks. A few minutes ago she dragged the large TV monitor stand next to the dresser and set up chairs between the two beds. In the mirror she brushed a comb through her wavy auburn hair, adjusted her glasses and applied a muted pink lipstick. The knock at the hotel room door startled her. She pushed the TV remote button. A woman on channel 22 read a quick news summary near the top of the hour as Kathryn backed up.

She twisted the dead bolt and opened the metal door. Tucker wore new jeans and a green striped jersey and handed her a small bouquet of daisies, mums, and baby's breath. " I stole them off one of the restaurant tables."

" No, you didn't... did you?"

He smiled as he walked in. " I see you've set up the theater for Sputnik's announcement."

" I had forgotten that nickname." She stuck the flowers in the large water pitcher on the side table. " Thanks for the flowers. That was nice of you, Tucker."

"About time your life was brightened up from those dreams."

" Amen to that." She lifted a glass. " Beer, Coke?"

" Beer would hit the spot," said Tucker, taking his front row seat. " All the networks have been running feeds on their news break segments."

" Every time I see Ridder now, I think of the oak trees on 3A in Manomet."

" Or Charlie's grave." She handed him the beer and glass. " Well, ten PM, Channel 22. It's time for, ' The Voice. ' "

Tucker smiled but quickly furrowed his brow. " What you just said."

" Oh, do I sound like the announcer? I may have a new career."

" No, I was just thinking about what Sid put on that timer. The date of Charlie's death and the time and channel of Ridder's Show."

" *Of course.* Right, I should have seen that." She smiled and nodded her head. " Tucker, you're a genius."

" That's true." He flipped the beer can tab and gas whooshed from inside. " Genius is my middle name."

" Listen, tomorrow morning we go back and question Sid. Just keep asking yes and no questions."

" Okay, so we find out Ridder did it and maybe we get details. Maybe we even find out what Hunter's role was. Again, what do we do with the information, Kathryn? Especially if we don't have hard proof."

She shook her head as the guitar music for Ridder's show blasted from the TV speaker, but she quickly turned down the volume and watched the graphic collage sweep across the screen. A shot of Ridder walking to his office carrying a briefcase cut into video clips from a number of his other shows, mixed with photos. " Bottom line is we need hard info."

" From Denver, The Conrad Ridder Show. And now ladies and gentlemen, ' The Voice, ' Conrad Ridder."

The back camera zoomed by two forward cameras and the director, and brought Ridder's wide face and dark, caved-in eyes into focus. His words resonated with sincerity and clarity. " Good evening. I'm Conrad Ridder. We're going to take a little different tact tonight on what may be in fact my last broadcast."

He swung to his right as the second camera picked him up. His dark suit was tailored perfectly at the shoulders and his bold red tie suggested an aggressive appearance. " During the past few months of reflection and careful consideration, I have felt it incumbent on me to delve into the possibility of running for Governor of Colorado. Looking into a political career is not without risk. I have enjoyed, as they say, a long and successful run on both radio and television. However, there comes a time when moral responsibility outweighs personal popularity, where one's duty to state and country assume a new dimension."

Again he switched cameras. " Some people have branded talk of my running for elected office as taking advantage of my status as a member of the media. Well, that may be true and I don't deny that everyone in America and many around the world know of my celebrity. To those detracting pundits, I say I celebrate the celebrity status. Yes, I use that name recognition as a positive force. I use it as a way to ring the issues to the public. To make our children safe in their schools from at-

tack and the threat of drugs. To send forth moral responsibility for all of those in authority. Let us take responsibility and thrust opportunity to all our citizens."

As Tucker stood and applauded Kathryn smiled and leaned back. Then she pulled him back to his chair. " This guy is good, Kathryn."

" No one ever denied that. He is so believable. That is his great asset. Sure, he can read what they gave him, talk and discuss issues, but he is *so credible*. No wonder he got to where he is today."

" Yeah, articulation and tampering with Charlie Leone's car." Tucker folded his arms as Ridder prattled on. " I think he just does what he's told. You know, read whatever they put in front of you, but do it with conviction."

Kathryn poured more soda and stuck a straw in the glass. As she sipped the icy bubbles into her mouth, she reflected on what Tucker just said. Maybe Dimitri controlled Ridder so many years ago. She faced the TV screen again. " Tell me, Conrad, where would you be without Charlie Leone's money?"

" ... of what I believe about this country. I love this country. The citizens of this country deserve leadership that reflects their needs and desires. Service to our citizens not lip service. I have enjoyed my time behind the microphone, but the time has come to move onto new ventures.

As of eleven p.m. this evening, I am resigning my position with the Conrad Ridder Show. I will make a full time commitment to win the nomination of my party for the office of Governor of the state of Colorado. I will give it my best shot. For those who support me, I give my thanks and for those who don't, I ask you to come onboard. Thank you for being my loyal listeners.

We'll be right back."

The TV screen filled with a younger photo of Ridder with longer hair and sideburns, as he spoke in front of a group of college kids in the 1970's.

" Three cheers," said Tucker. The Massachusetts map crinkled as he spread it over the blanket. " Maybe old Sid knows the whole story. And he did link Ridder with his remote on the TV programming."

" Not exactly court's evidence," said Kathryn.

Ridder's younger image covered the screen again. On a second camera, farther back, he sat with a gray bearded man. He introduced the man as an old friend and pollster. Both men first talked about the current political situation in the country and specifically Colorado. Over the counter they spoke of old times and Ridder's career, but they never mentioned Plymouth nor WXBN.

Tucker rolled off the bed and retreated to the bathroom when someone rapped on the outside door. Kathryn looked at the metal door, but fear stopped her from answering. Tucker must have heard the knock. The bathroom door flew open and he bolted across the room and put his ear to the metal. " Who is it?"

" Dan Jansen," said Jansen, his voice muffled through the door.

Tucker raised his brows and pressed his lips as he turned to Kathryn. " I would say we should let Mr. Jansen in."

" Amen to that."

Tucker brushed away the door chain twisted the brass lock and knob. Jansen stood silently in a navy windbreaker. His ruffled white hair was thinner than it had appeared on the senior dance floor. " I have to speak with you. I know more than I said. May I come in?"

" Yes, of course, Mr. Jansen. Please do," said Tucker.

" Thank you." He walked through the doorway, but his eyes immediately swung toward Ridder on the TV. " Oh, boy, there he is."

" Can I get you a drink, Mr. Jansen?" asked Kathryn.

" Water. Gave up the booze long time ago. And, please, its Dan or Danny."

Kathryn noticed the tension his clenched fists and he seemed obsessed with Ridder. " Please come in. What, pray tell brings you by here?"

Jansen pointed at the screen as he stepped in from the hall. " Him."

" Funny, I didn't think Conrad Ridder had the ability to move people around at will," said Tucker.

" You'd be surprised what he has the power to do. " Jansen sat in Tucker's chair and rubbed fatigue worn face. Then he turned away from the TV. " Congratulations, you're the first people in thirty-five years to talk about Smitty and Lucy. How do you even know them?" He looked up at Tucker. " You can't be more than thirty-four yourself."

" Thirty-three."

Kathryn smiled. " Twenty-eight. Suffice to say we know they were murdered."

" Now, how can you know that? I could never prove it." He removed his handkerchief and dabbed his forehead. His speech was slow and raspy. " They disappeared after going up to the old junkyard over the Carver line. I know they were trying prove something about Charlie's car. There's a lot that went on that night."

" The brake line was drained," said Kathryn.

" Nice guess..."

" No guess. That's how he lost control of the car."

Jansen shook his head. " They set him up that's for sure. Grignano. I had a dozen witnesses over the years who told me they saw him with both Conrad and his manager, a con man named Dimitri Meritokis. A mechanic buddy of Grignano swore he heard Meritokis order Charlie Leone's death. He coordinated the whole thing with Grignano. I almost nailed Grignano at his father's funeral. Summer of '68."

Kathryn sat on the edge of the bed and handed the glass to Jansen. " Grignano was ordered by Meritokis to kill Leone?"

Jansen gulped the water. " But, I never had proof. No proof, damn it."

" AKA Sam Hunter?" said Tucker.

" Sam Hunter was or is Conrad Ridder's force. The force behind, ' The Voice. ' Con man. "

" Rita was right," said Kathryn.

" Ah, so you've been up to the station also." Jansen gulped more water.

" I'm telling you all this, but who are you?"

Tucker perched on the edge of the bed. " Let's just say we both received information about Charlie's death."

" I knew him well." Jansen took another swig of water. His eyes moistened and his thoughts seemed far away. " Who would give you this information?"

" You wouldn't believe us if we told you," said Kathryn. " Did you know Dimitri conned Charlie Leone as Hunter?"

" What?"

Jansen would have no way to gather that information. " Hunter smoozed Charlie Leone and got him to invest eighty thousand dollars in cash for a project west of Plymouth called Capital Hill."

Jansen shook his head and set the water on the TV. " No, you're wrong. There was no project called Capital Hill."

" Exactly," said Tucker. " The little bastard took Charlie's money and then had him killed."

" Did Hunter disappear after Charlie Leone died?" asked Kathryn.

" No, he was around after Charlie's death. He and Conrad were involved with the purchase of WXBN. I never understood why Stacey lost everything after Charlie died and she didn't know where it went. And I have to say at the time I did wonder about Conrad and the station. You're right Dimitri was and is a bastard. But how do you know all this?"

" Does it matter?" asked Kathryn.

" Well, I don't know," he said, finishing the water.

" You want another glass?" asked Kathryn, rising from the bed.

" Sure... My doctor says I have to watch my body fluids."

" What about this guy Grignano?" asked Tucker.

" Anthony Grignano was a mechanic. By the fall of 1958, he left for LA. and bought a house in El Monte. He shot himself in 1971."

" That's interesting," said Kathryn, running the tap in the bathroom. She filled the clear glass and started back to Jansen. " Real interesting."

" I think it was guilt for what he did to Charlie's car." She handed the glass to him. " Thank you... You see, I was hours away from finding that car."

" Charlie Leone's car?" asked Tucker, sitting up straight.

" Yup. They towed it away from Carver and it was gone. I was too late. Grignano's brother said Grignano would wake up nights screaming for Charlie and telling him he was sorry. "

"Where's the brother now?" asked Tucker.

"Heart attack, 1985. Dead and buried. He was convinced his brother shot himself because of guilt, but I never let on about Charlie. See Grignano was in the parking lot of-

"The Wayside," said Kathryn.

"I should have known you'd know that, too. Did you know Harry or Anthony Grignano?"

"No.."

"I knew Anthony did something to that car. You say it was the brakes. I think he slipped something stronger into Charlie's wine. You know, to bring up the blood alcohol. The waitresses said Charlie had two glasses of wine. See, I found Charlie. Me and my partner, Johnny Hegarty. Johnny's dead twenty-one years now. They didn't want me looking into it. But when I heard Charlie only had two glasses, I became suspicious. Then I traced down the description of Grignano. He had tipped a few at The Wayside before all this. And at the time I had an unsubstantiated report of Grignano with Hunter, AKA Dimitri."

"And Hunter continued to work in the real estate office after Charlie's death?"

"Hunter left the office at the same time Conrad moved west. Early sixties."

"When did you know Dimitri was Hunter?"

Jansen's eyes were heavy and he took a few deep breaths. "Sorry, I'm getting up there, boys and girls. I'm tired..."

"But you knew Hunter was Dimitri..."

" I told you in the sixties when Conrad got big. I checked Dimitri's background. It was apparently clean. But I heard rumors he was tied into crime people in New Jersey. The stunt as Hunter was the only blip."

" An eighty thousand dollar blip back then," said Kathryn.

" And Charlie's niece and her boyfriend disappeared right at the same time. Lucy's parents came back from Bermuda and were devastated. Neither Lucy or Smitty ever came back."

Kathryn nodded and her eyes filled. " Dead?"

" I knew Smitty since he was a little kid delivering papers to my house. He and Conrad were both paper boys. I couldn't prove anything here either about Smitty's death, but I swear it was related to everything else. Too much of a coincidence they disappeared right after Charlie was killed. Lucy was a pretty girl."

" His car holds the answers," said Tucker, standing and crossing his arms.

" See, there's a guy named Sid Horwitz, " said Jansen.

" We met him. Had a stroke..."

" Well, Sid swore three years ago, the towing company was paid by Grignano to get that car out of action. But he never said where."

" So much time has passed," said Tucker. " Damn. What else you got, Dan?"

" I have or had a witness, Ed Gibbons. Saw Conrad's Volkswagen a few hundred yards behind Smitty's Nash. Conrad chased them through the lights at 44 and Court, then headed down toward Water Street. I also had another witness, Eleanor Crowell. Lived in a house near the rock and heard a loud noise. I talked to her years later. As they years went by I became convinced Ridder shot them. The Nash was never found either."

" The bodies were sunk in the bay," said Kathryn.

" Come on... I don't understand how you know all this..."

Kathryn pressed her lips and stared at Ridder, taking calls on the air with Wil Jordan. She stroked her chin as she turned to Jansen. " You want to find the truth, don't you, Dan?"

" Of course. All these years and I haven't solved it..."

" No, you haven't proved it," said Tucker.

She slid closer to Jansen. " We intend to prove it. It doesn't matter how we got our information."

" Maybe not. I look at Conrad, so popular and there was nothing I could do about it. And here is running for Governor. You don't have any witnesses, nothing in writing..."

She looked into Tucker's heightened blue eyes. " No, we don't."

" See, they're never gonna get caught," said Jansen, finishing the water.

" Sid knows more, but you'll have to question him. He may have direct knowledge of Grignano being paid to kill Charlie."

" I would say Sid called Ridder when Lucy and Smitty searched the Fury."

" You from the FBI?"

" No. " Kathryn smiled. " Dan, can you meet us tomorrow at the nursing home to talk with Sid?"

" Sure. Don't be too hopeful about Sid talking. And I don't mean because he is sick. I've been trying to pry information out of him for forty years. Sid has this code of silence. An old fashioned loyalty. Nothing can shake it. Not even money."

" Maybe death," said Tucker. " What's the old quote? Facing the hangman in the morning sharpens the senses."

Jansen stood and watched the TV as he slid toward the outside door.. " I sure hope so, because I've got nothing more." He looked down at Ridder. " After all these years... I owe it to Charlie."

" I know," said Kathryn. " If Ridder and this Dimitri are guilty, it has to come out."

" By God, I hope so." He shook Tucker's hand, but Kathryn hugged him. " Good night."

" Thanks, Danny."

Tucker gradually pulled open the door. Jansen nodded and with a distant look, walked into the dimly lit hotel corridor. Tucker watched from the doorway and closed the door. " Guy's lived with that knowledge all these years."

" He did his best." Kathryn turned to the set. A dated video of Ridder at the Capital in Washington, D.C. played as Ridder watched live from the studio in the corner screen. She studied his demon eyes. " Look at him. He got away with it."

" No..."

" Come on, Tucker, who's going to believe Dan Jansen? He's in the practically in the geriatric ward."

Tucker sat next to her the bed and put his hands over her hands. " Not only do I want Ridder brought to justice... Plain fact is I just don't like the man and I'm going to get the son of a bitch."

13

" I'm Conrad Ridder and *I'll be seeing you.*"

The camera retracted slowly and in the shadows Dimitri held up both thumbs. Ridder saw the first camera's red light blink out as he shook hands with Wil Jordan. Camera two was still active. They were rolling the credits by now, but the audio was off.

Wil Jordan raised his hand in the air. " ' The Voice, ' reigns supreme."

" That's good, Wil. Very catchy. Tell Dimitri about that. We can use it in the campaign."

" You know that campaign shouldn't be taken for granted. I know you. You'll be lackadaisical."

The second red light went out and Ridder unsnapped his clip-on microphone. " This thing is in the bag. There's no competition, Willy. I've never felt more confident."

" Well, you can feel confident, but do what the pros tell you to do."

Dimitri was not on the set. " I do what my gut tells me to do, Wil. Always have. Where the hell is Dimitri? I just saw him off camera."

" You do what your gut tells you... with Dimitri's approval of course."

" Of course." He stood and scanned the set. " Not like him to be hiding on an occasion like this."

He smiled as the set crew broke into applause. A couple of people shook his hand as he walked around the counter. Congratulations continued into the outside

corridor. Wil opened the swinging doors and they headed back to the dressing rooms, but an odd depression enveloped him as he walked beside his friend on the white waxed tiles. Ending his broadcast career was a time for celebration and a gloomy attitude was not smart while attending the parties later. The press would report the smallest detail.

"Conrad, I have to make a few calls. Where are we going?"

Ridder stared at Dimitri's closed door. He heard what Wil asked him but had trouble answering him. "Out to parties. Listen, Wil, I have to talk with Dimitri. I'll meet you in the lobby in half an hour."

"Sure. You all right?"

"Fine."

"Okay, buddy. See you in half..." He smacked Ridder shoulder and entered the stairwell under the red exit sign.

Ridder nodded and watched the stairwell door slowly close. He knocked on Dimitri's wood grain door. A few seconds later one of Dimitri's suited security men cracked open the door and with an order from Dimitri, fully opened the door. Dimitri and a table full of security people looked up at Ridder.

"You're going to need personnel with you from now on, Conrad."

"What the big pow wow about?" asked Ridder as the guy closed the door behind him. "How are you, Eddie?"

"Okay," answered Dimitri's head security man.

"Again, what's the problem here?" asked Ridder.

"Not important. I'll have a limo brought around for you. We're meeting Senator Morton at eleven thirty. We'll have to crank it."

"This doesn't have anything to do with Plymouth, does it?"

Dimitri's lips spread outward as he pushed the chair back from the table. He took Ridder's elbow and escorted him into the kitchenette. " Plymouth? Why would you think about Plymouth on a night like this?"

" Because I thought I heard you talking to Jansen on the set earlier."

Dimitri's dark rigid eyes swung away. " You worry too much."

Ridder grabbed his arm. " We should have gotten rid of Jansen years ago."

" Jansen is an old man. He has nothing and can prove nothing."

" Really? I know the media, Dimitri. Doesn't matter if you've done anything. Never mind we have done something. The innuendo will croak you. Any accusations will be investigated. I've been telling you that."

Dimitri gestured with his hands as he spoke in a strained voice

" And I've been trying to tell you for years. All the mechanisms are in place. We have answers for any accusation. The bottom line is they can't prove anything, but they won't even question or find anything. It's all buried, Sput."

Ridder leaned against the door casing and stared at the floor tiles. He shook his head as the fear spread. " Why did we take the chance?"

" A trail would have been established with Jansen dead," said Dimitri.

" Do you really want to take the chance with Jansen now that we're running for office?"

" I told you, Jansen is eighty-five years old." He clenched his fist and exhaled. Ridder sensed his frustration as he pressed his lips. " Okay, we have things to do."

" I remember when you told me Jansen was seventy-five years old, eighty years old..."

" *Don't worry about it.*"

" Did he call you again?" asked Ridder. He stepped into the room and moved closer.

" Yes, he did."

" Great... What the hell did he want?"

" The unusual nonsense. He was just upset you were running for Governor."

" The media will find him."

Dimitri drifted by him. " He's not a threat. Get downstairs, Conrad. And I don't want to see you without security men."

Ridder tracked him across the suite. " Did he threaten to go public with what he knows?"

" Unimportant," said Dimitri as he reached the wall phone by the table.

" This is Dimitri. Bring the limo around to the lobby in fifteen minutes."

" Dimitri!" yelled Ridder. " Cut the bullshit!"

Dimitri set down the phone. " As I have always told you. You just worry about your career, I'll handle the rest. That formula has always worked."

" But I wasn't asking for the public's approval," said Ridder.

" Let me tell you something: you've always sought the public's approval."

* * *

The Senator's entourage inevitably included gorgeous women intoxicated by his power and wealth. Ridder wondered if the debonair Morton wore his black tuxedo on the Senate floor. After a slew of drinks and promises of nighttime adventures with the tall blonde from Alabama, Ridder shed his earlier pessimism and fear of Sergeant Jansen.

Sheila dragged her long dark hair over his neck and squeezed him at the waist. Ridder leaned toward her as if he were changing camera angles. " So, how long have you worked for the Senator?"

" Oh, about six hours." Her hazel eyes brightened and she produced a huge smile.

Ridder liked her velvet green cocktail dress rubbing against him. " Oh, such a long career. Should qualify you for a pension plan."

" Are you really going to be Governor?" she asked, her ruby lips resting on the glass rim.

" We'll I don't know. I thought I might marry you instead."

" Just like that?" she asked.

" Why not?"

" You haven't been married for awhile. I read your book."

Dimitri stood with his back to the long food table, the cell phone pressed to his ear as he turned. He closed his eyes and nodded. A slight smile crossed his lips as he put away the phone and stepped up to the bartender at the opening between the kitchen and the front room.

" Excuse me, Sheila. I'll be right back."

" I'll save your spot," she said, squeezing his arm.

Ridder dodged a few guests as the bartender slid a whiskey into Dimitri's hand. His bald headed little friend's dark beard stubble pushed through smooth tanned skin. He sipped the drink as Ridder approached. " Have a drink, Conrad."

" Who were you talking to on the phone?"

" Logistical problems. You're going to be campaigning all next week." He squinted as he always did when he was telling the big lie.

" Yeah, right. You'd better start telling me what the hell is going on here!"

" You're making a scene."

" Maybe I should. The past will kill us," he said through compressed teeth.

" You let me worry about the past. I haven't got you this far without handling things the way they should be handled. You keep worrying about things long gone and it's going to affect your public image. People pick up on things like that."

" Oh, shut up..."

Ridder spun around and bolted for the balcony. He swung open the door and stepped into the night air. The bright city lights extended to the horizon, but his mind was back on the small radio station on the hill back east. Vividly he saw the red and white antennas within the forested slope near the ocean. How much longer would Dan Jansen be alive?

Ridder wanted the Governorship. He cherished the attention of being a celebrity and his dreams extended beyond Colorado. Dimitri had formed a wide circle of advisors and statisticians. They would perform all the chores of government. And Dimitri was right. Being Governor would just be another favorable run with high ratings and a door opening to a beckoning future.

14

Through the van window Tucker sat behind the wheel. Kathryn hiked across the hotel parking lot and opened the door. He turned down the steely guitar music.

" Why do women always take so long in the bathroom?"

She climbed inside and grinned. " A prerequisite for being a woman. When you going to take me out in your rig?"

" When we get done what we have to get done. Let's go talk to Sid."

" Get some more information in light of what Jansen told us last night. Did you dream last night?"

" Nothing to do with you know what."

" Me either. I thought for sure I'd dream about this."

His fingers whitened on the wheel as he thought. " Maybe Smitty and Lucy know we're looking into the murders now."

" Makes sense. I may place a call to Rashid. When I get back to Ohio, talking with him and doing that therapy might bring out the rest of the information. Like going through a door."

" Transformation Therapy?"

" That's what he called it."

" I wouldn't mention it to Jansen." Tucker maneuvered the van under the hotel canopy and checked the road as he pulled out. " Imagine living your whole life with the knowledge that Ridder and Dimitri killed three people and not being able to prove it. Let's just hope that it doesn't happen to us."

" Roz said the same thing when I called her. She says she met with Dr. Rashid."

" I thought you said Rashid was a kook." The van engine whined as he headed along the sea wall between Water Street and the matte blue bay.

" I thought he was, but he was right." The Mayflower's high masts seemed to move as she passed. " Roz, says we should call him. He wants to look into it more. Maybe write an article in some journal about it."

" That's all well and good, but we need to get the goods on Ridder and his pal."

" I know..." She looked at a group of school kids gathered in a straight line under Plymouth Rock's surrounding granite monument. More children were exiting a long yellow bus near the river park. " I definitely would like to try this Transformation Therapy. Really meet Lucy."

" You really think you can do that?" asked Tucker.

" I didn't get into detail with him about it, but I'm convinced you can reach out. He did say there were risks..."

Tucker checked the rear view mirror, but his face contorted as a muffled report came over the radio and he turned up the volume. " Oh, God no..."

Kathryn turned toward the dash speakers. The announcer read a simple statement: " Jansen was an officer of the town police force for thirty-five years, a member of Trinity Church and played in the town softball league well into his eighties. There were no witnesses to the hit and run accident which occurred around two a.m. this morning outside Hampton Gardens Retirement Village on Turnberry Street..."

Kathryn raised her hands to her mouth. " No, no, that was no accident."

" Not now... What was he doing out there at two o'clock in the morning?" Tucker veered off the road past the park. " They killed him. They killed that nice old man just because he was on to what they did!"

" How will they ever find out who hit him?"

" They won't." Tucker spun the van tires in the dirt, reversing direction and some of the school children turned as he started back to the rotary.

" Somebody up there at the retirement place has to know why Jansen was wandering around so early."

They sped past the hotel, but slowed at the intersection. Tucker already knew the side streets and raced by the parked cars up the village hill. A few seniors sat on the outside benches across the cars along the sidewalk. With no police cruisers present or any sign of the accident in the daylight, Kathryn questioned the validity of the radio report. Tucker stopped behind a cream colored sedan and they both trotted outside. He first approached the people hunkered on the shaded tree benches. " Does anyone know what happened to Dan Jansen?"

" Killed in the middle of the road. Running in his pajamas," said a little woman rummaging through a white pocketbook. " Must have started to get Alzheimer's."

" No way," said Tucker. " There was nothing wrong with Dan Jansen. Does anybody know why he was outside? Did anyone take him out?"

" Hell, we're all in bed by midnight," said a man with thick lenses.
" Maybe Danny couldn't sleep."

" This isn't exactly a major thoroughfare," said Tucker.

" Kids are all out drunk after midnight. Some kid killed Danny," said another voice.

" But was anybody over here looking for him last night?" asked Tucker.

" Dunno," replied the man with the glasses.

" Great." Tucker rested the butt of his hand on his forehead. Kathryn took his arm and led him back to the van. For the first time since she arrived in Plymouth, she wondered if someone would try to follow them. Tucker stopped and lifted his index finger. " Why would they wait all this time to kill him?"

" Maybe it *was* an accident," she said.

" No... I ain't hanging around here."

" Let's talk to Sid."

Tucker ripped open the van door and shook his head skyward. " I've got a good mind to unload this to the media."

" Who would believe it?" she said as she got inside. Her throat tightened when she visualized Jansen in the hotel room just hours ago. " Dan Jansen was a nice guy. I'm sorry he's dead, but I'm even more sorry he lived out his life carrying that knowledge."

* * *

" Maybe we need to go to the cops about Jansen," said Tucker. It was his first utterance since they left the Hampton Gardens. He still had a tenacious look as he burst from the van. " Son of a bitch."

" I know, but what do we do? Tell the cops Jansen confirmed what we knew in our dreams?"

" The poor guy. Who the hell do these people think they are?"

" People with power." She pulled open the nursing home's main door. Tucker followed her into the air-conditioned foyer. " People who don't care about life, only maintaining their position of power."

Tucker caught the inner door and motioned her inside. The pervasive antiseptic smell became apparent as he stormed up the staircase. No one looked up from second floor corridor desk as Tucker marched into the side corridor and continued his brisk pace. " Sid, isn't exactly going to be a star witness."

" I don't know the law," said Kathryn. " I guess you'd have to show he knows something and you could get a response from him. But this stupid case is ancient history! I can't believe Jansen is dead."

" According to Jansen..." His eyes were moist and he struggled for words. " Jansen said Sid had Grignano ditch Charlie's car."

" Yeah, but Grignano is dead."

" But Sid must have figured out why Grignano paid him," said Tucker.

" He knew the whole story or he wouldn't have chased Lucy and Smitty out of the junkyard and tipped off Ridder."

Tucker slowed his pace before they reached Sid's room. " Their bodies are in the bay. We dredge them up. Pure and simple. No one can argue with a dead body."

" No... Hire somebody to sweep the bay? "

" Yup."

Kathryn held his arm near the room. " Tucker, again, who's going to open this up after forty years? Even if we get something substantive from Sid."

She shook her head and stared at the floor. He placed his hands on her shoulders and she gazed into his crisp blue eyes. " Kathryn, I don't care how

flimsy this is. Dan Jansen was just murdered. I'm sure of it. He must have contacted Ridder. These people, they sit back with their TV shows and now he's going into politics. It ain't right."

" No, it's not right. But I'm starting to think they're nothing we can do about it."

He pursed his lips and placed his hand behind her back. They walked diagonally across the corridor, but slowed at the open doorway. Sid's mattress was stripped and his name had been removed from the slot behind the bed. She turned to Tucker. " What the hell is going on now?"

" I don't know, but I don't like it," said Tucker, his eyes sweeping the room.

He took her hand and rushed back into the corridor. She trailed behind, still clutching his hand as he sprinted to the nurse's desk. " Excuse me. Sid Horwitz, where is he?"

" Who?" asked a woman with short blonde hair and green-rimmed glasses.

" Sid Horwitz."

She dropped her ballpoint pen down the length of a perforated green and white computer sheet. " Oh, he's in Room 239."

" The hell he is," said Tucker.

" Oh... well I just came on duty forty-five minutes ago."

" Can you find out?" asked Kathryn in a shaky high-pitched voice.

" Oh. Yeah, sure..."

" He's dead, " said Kathryn.

" We don't know that."

A tall woman in a blue pants suit emerged from behind the desk. Her black and white badge and photo ID indicated she was a nursing supervisor.

" I'm Cara Lorenzo. Did you know Mr. Horwitz?"

" Well, yeah. We just talked to him yesterday," said Tucker.

" I'm sorry, Mr. Horwitz expired last night. I'm not sure whether it was a heart attack or another stroke."

Kathryn rocketed to the counter. " He just died?"

The supervisor shook her head. " I don't know what he was doing in the physical therapy room."

" Physicist therapy? The man had no mobility! He was confined to the wheelchair. He could only use one hand," yelled Tucker.

" Sometimes they get out of their rooms."

Kathryn smacked her fists on the counter. " What?"

" Have the police been notified of this?" asked Tucker.

" Police?"

" Yeah, the police."

She chuckled. " The man was in his eighties..."

Tucker pointed at her. " This needs to be investigated."

" Please, we don't need trouble here. I don't want the state inspectors all over this place. Let me take your name and we'll have the Medical Examiner call you. I think Mr. Horwitz somehow thought he could do physical activity."

" Did anyone suspicious come in here last night?" asked Kathryn.

" I just got on," said the flustered woman behind the desk.

" Doors are locked at nine. Open at nine," replied the supervisor.

Tucker crunched his teeth as Kathryn followed him into a tiny waiting area adjacent to the stairs. He sat on the vinyl sofa and had a ferocity in his eyes. " Con-

Convenient deaths."

" There's nobody left. They're all dead..."

" A string of deaths." Tucker propped his elbows on his knees and balanced his chin on his folded hands. " This Dimitri, he must have left a paper trail. Or maybe Grignano's brother's family knew something."

" I have my doubts Grignano killed himself out west."

" Got that right." He shot to his feet, his fists still clenched as he marched to the front windows and sat on the long green air conditioning unit.

" Maybe we'd just better drop this, Tucker," she said, following him. The unit fan cooled her face.

" I know," he said, facing trees moving in the breeze outside and his body tightened. " Kathryn!"

" What's the matter?"

" Three guys near the van!"

A man in a light jersey and jeans poked his head inside the van's open side door as a stubby guy with a crewcut man talked on a cell phone up front. The third man, in a red shirt, hurried across the lot from a gray BMW. He said something to the man on the cell phone and then opened the driver's side door.

Tucker grabbed Kathryn's hand and barreled past the front desk. The nurse on duty looked up for a second as they rushed by Sid's room. Tucker smashed against the glass stairwell door and they leaped down a single set of concrete stairs, but the outside fire door was locked. He stepped back and sent his boot crashing against the metal surface. The door swung on its hinges and smacked the outside bricks.

" How do they know about us?" yelled Tucker as they scrambled down a grassy slope toward the woods. " How could they possibly know about us?"

" They've been following us!"

She trailed him into the forest and hurtled the scrub brush down the hill.

" We need to get to your rental!"

She was not sure whether she and Tucker were heading back toward town. Her legs scratched, Kathryn followed Tucker onto a side street and paralleled the duplexes into the village. Her sides ached, but she plodded forward and was aware they were now targeted. Tucker hailed a cab on Main Street and they leaped inside. She was breathing heavily against the seat as he directed the driver back to the hotel. " They could be back at the hotel. All my stuff is in the room, Tucker."

" Forget you stuff. We get your rental and get the hell out of here," he said, turned toward the rear window.

" They'll know where we live from the registration and the credit cards." Kathryn gripped his wrist. " Tucker, the photocopies are there and my journal with all those things written about the dreams and how Ridder killed Lucy and Smitty. That will give them the excuse they need to kill us."

" Maybe they already have it."

" Or maybe not."

" I don't know." Tucker stroked his chin and turned. " All right. Just get the journal and then we're out of here."

The taxi moved along Main Street's crammed clapboard buildings. At the Court Street intersection the driver stopped at a series of brick townhouses. She looked back down Main Street, but did not see the **BMW**. The driver turned toward the water, drove a few hundred yards and then swung

into the hotel parking lot. Tucker slapped a five dollar bill into the driver's hand and exited the taxi with Kathryn.

They spun the hotel's brass framed, revolving door and bolted down the side corridor. She fumbled with her electronic door card and finally jabbed it into the slot. Her heart thumped as she opened the stuffy room's door and ran to the chair. She popped the suitcase and grabbed the maroon wire rimmed book and manila folders. The guys outside the nursing home were still fixed in her thoughts. She wondered exactly what happened.

Tucker called from the doorway. " Okay, let's go, Kathryn."

She dodged the bed and ran with Tucker down the hall, but outside the window the BMW glided into the hotel lot. " Tucker, stop!"

" What?" he yelled, halting his progress a few feet ahead.

" Outside!"

He leaned toward the window. " They don't waste any time, do they? Give me the rental key."

Kathryn dug the key from her pocketbook and deposited it in his hand. He motioned her down the corridor and casually opened the courtyard door. She followed him along the first floor windows and around the building. He stuck his head around corner bricks.

" What do you see?"

" One guy by the BMW. Okay, we move right along the front of the building."

" They'll see us!"

" No choice. They'll be inside the building."

He took her hand tightly and with his back to the wall, shuffled along the outside gravel. Her heart cranked and she tried to stop hyperventilating. Tucker pulled her left, directly onto the cement sidewalk within a few dozen feet of the BMW and escorted her behind the tall green junipers. Through the branches the crewcut guy in the suit, stood rigid at the BMW's hood, and her beige rental was still five cars away. Tucker straddled smaller bushes as he helped her onto an asphalt walkway. They jumped behind an oak tree's wide trunk and crawled across the grass.

Once near the rental he hunched over and inserted the key into the lock. He slowly twisted his wrist and the door button popped. As he opened the passenger door, he motioned her over and she crawled onto the scorched vinyl seat.

From a crouched position in the warm air below the dash, she watched Tucker guide the key into ignition, turning it, but he did not start the car. He yanked the shift lever, stuck it in neutral, and the rental's tires crunched the parking lot sand as they rolled back. Somehow, while peeking into the side mirror, he maneuvered the rental away from the BMW and into the street.

" Neat trick, Tucker."

He finally started the car and Kathryn sat up. The man at the BMW turned. For a few seconds he stared as Tucker skidded away from the hotel and Kathryn held the door handle. The guy quickly removed a cell phone and broke into a run across the lot. Tucker watched the rear mirror as he were viewing a TV program and slapped the gas pedal to the floor. As they rapidly accelerated toward the Court Street traffic light the guy slowed at the edge of the lot. The other men jaunted from the front door as Tucker banked into a gas station and bounced over the asphalt between the station and the pumps. The pump bell sounded quickly and he leap-

frogged over the curb. Then looked over his shoulder as he veered onto Court Street and headed north.

" We' d better damn well hope that BMW goes west on 44."

Kathryn gripped the back of the bench seat, still heated from the hours in the sun, and she stared out the back window. " Where do we go?"

" Boston or even Providence or I could drive to Albany. We'll get a connecting flight to Ohio." He brought the car rapidly up slope, lined aging company houses. " You have a map?"

Kathryn twisted the glove compartment knob and retrieved the map of Massachusetts. " Tucker, we don't have to take this. Let's just call the FBI! Anybody!"

" Then we're visible and we have no proof, no direct proof of Ridder and Dimitri doing anything wrong. They've covered their collective asses and we'll end up dead."

" What can we do?"

His misty blue eyes and sandy hair askew gave him a deranged appearance.

" I'm sorry, Kathryn. I don't know."

" Albany is a long way."

He looked up from the map and checked the mirror. " Ohio is even longer."

" What do you mean?"

" We're driving and we ain't gonna stop. Call your friend Roz. Have her get a place for us to hide... Somehow we now have to find proof about these bastards....
Or we're dead."

15

Ridder stretched his arm over the barricades. His swollen hand ached but he kept reaching as the as the crowd cheered. Dimitri and five security people squeezed along with him. He was pleased with the media coverage of his now redundant speech at the tiny airport. A caravan of mini cams, lights and recording equipment trailed him past the orange sawhorses. With little orchestration he had consistently earned top billing on the evening news broadcasts. Combined with the interviews for late night, his recognition ratings soared.

Dimitri tugged his arm and shouted over the crowd noise. " Let's get back to the limo and head to the VFW."

" Good idea, my hand's about to fall off."

He nodded to the security people and they formed a wedge between the reporters. The shiny limo door opened, they lifted Ridder and tucked his head into the car. Dimitri crossed his legs on the wide seat and had the limo phone at his ear. Once the security men were safely inside the driver inched his way across the Tarmac. " Have Philips call me in the limo."

" Where is Eddie Philips anyway?" asked Ridder.

Dimitri disregarded the question. " Conrad, you want a drink?"

" No, I know you send him to do your dirty work. Where is he? Back east?"

" Back east like you say."

" For what?" Ridder leaned across the seat. " You don't think the Plymouth thing will surface, do you?"

" Plymouth, no of course not. Plymouth is a dead issue, Conrad. Don't worry about it. And don't worry about what's going on behind the scenes."

" You've been telling me that for years. You tell me when Jansen finally croaks and then I can sleep. Horwitz I'm not worried about."

Dimitri had an odd, cunning look on his face. " Right..."

" Is Jansen dead?"

" We can't kill everyone associated with Charlie Leone's accident."

" Accident, *right*," said Ridder smiling. " I'll take that drink now."

* * *

Ridder held the text in his hand and studied the oversized print. It was the same speech, with minor modifications, he had given in Wolf Creek, at the airport, and Colorado Springs. He chuckled at the local references to people he did not know, but he would embellish his compliments and make these people feel as if he was their best friend. To his right Dimitri shouted into the cell phone. Ridder gripped the paper and moved into the wood paneled corridor.

" What's the problem now?"

Dimitri did not acknowledge him at first. " Impossible, Eddie! You had them! Who the hell are these people anyway?"

" What happened?" asked Ridder.

" Nothing," he said, turning. " Conrad, get back to the stage. This thing is going live on C-SPAN."

" Who did Eddie have?" Ridder grabbed his old friend's suit coat. " Listen, I think it's time you tell me what you're doing in my name."

" Getting you elected. Now get back where you're supposed to be." He stepped with the phone down the hall. " Split it. Half look in California. Half in Ohio. Just do it, Eddie! I have no idea how they found out anything. Hell, they never knew each other from what you told me. Just get rid of them. Find them." He clicked off the phone and jammed it in his suit coat pocket.

" People are tracking down what happened forty years ago." Ridder shook the speech in front of Dimitri's face. " We're screwed! I knew if I ran for office this would happen."

" You're getting paranoid. This speech, even though it's in this pit, will be seen nationally. They'll replay it twice before the weekend."

Ridder stepped closer and bared his teeth. " Damn you!"

" This affect me as much as it does you." Then he smiled and put his arm around the taller Ridder. " You just let me handle all the bullshit. It's going to be all right."

" I don't have the time to be worrying."

" Exactly. You're gonna win this damn thing and then we'll set out sights in other directions. I'm telling you nothing will stop us."

* * *

Kathryn sunk her head into the Ohio motel room's soft pillows as Tucker slept face down in his clothes on the other bed. She grabbed the remote off the night table and turned down the TV volume. He had driven directly from Massachusetts to a motel Roz secured in Worthington, ten miles west of Ellerby. She pushed her thumb on the channel select and zipped past soap operas and daytime

talk shows. Over the miles on the Interstate Tucker argued Ridder was vulnerable because of the money paid to purchase the station so many years ago. The IRS could detail how the money came from Dimitri's land deal scheme. But contacting someone from the press could raise the issue and it has a snowball effect. Even without direct proof, once the media looked into it, Ridder would have to explain how he purchased the station.

She paused for a few minutes, watching the shopping network's segment on jewelry. Tucker's red-checkered shirt moved up and down like a continuously running machine. Kathryn clicked the remote again, skipped a few scrambled stations, but stopped when she saw C-SPAN'S coverage of a speech about to be delivered by Ridder in Colorado. Ridder, dressed in a striped shirt and dark tie, stood next to the podium as a local VFW commander extolled his candidacy for Governor.

Kathryn shimmied down the bed and dangled her legs over the mattress edge. Ridder beamed as if he deserved every flattering word. The commander turned to his left and with a wide sweeping motion, yelled into the microphone. " Gentlemen, I give you Conrad Ridder, *the next Governor of Colorado!* "

Through thunderous applause, Ridder waved, shook hands with the commander and gripped his elbow as he made small talk. The commander again motioned toward Ridder. Ridder acknowledged the crowd, slowly bowed his head and mouthed his thanks. Then he clasped his hands together as if he had just won a heavyweight fight. He wandered over to the podium and positioned the text. The applause continued even when he raised his hands into the air. " Thank you. Thank you..."

" They love ya," said the commander.

" Good crowd. Thank, you, Commander Donnelly. You know, Colorado needs new leadership. Colorado needs new jobs. Colorado needs Tourists... Colorado needs a new talk show host."

The crowd applauded and Ridder smiled. He had the odd habit of letting his tongue roll out as he raised his brows. " My name is Conrad Ridder and I need a new job. Can you help me?"

Tucker stirred on the bed when the crowd resounded. He rubbed his head, rolled over and his voice sounded nasal. " What's going on?"

" Roz is on her way over and Ridder is speaking in Colorado."

" I thought I heard him," said Tucker pushing the pillows against the headboard as he sat up. " How did he get national coverage?"

" He's a nationally celebrity," said Kathryn.

" Must be a slow news day... No calls from the IRS?"

" No calls."

" I tell ya, it's all over once the IRS goes after Ridder and Dimitri. Receipt of that money has to be buried somewhere. This is a perfect case for the them."

Ridder, using his hands freely, delivered an eloquent and impassioned plea for social justice in his state. The lines were well timed and his cadence perfect as he enunciated every word. Although he spoke in generalities, the words and promises elicited some form of hope. Kathryn faced Tucker. " He's good."

" Too Good."

" We need to tell the press."

" They like him. Nobody cares. They don't want to see him trashed. He's their boy. I don't see Dimitri," said Tucker. He held up the colored newspaper pic-

ture of Ridder getting off a small plane with his the shorter Dimitri, dressed impeccably in his light suit.

Kathryn tried to superimpose his face over the old photo on the wall back at WXBN. " That's definitely him in the photo background at the station forty years ago."

" Sam Hunter. Let's see how the IRS handles that little discrepancy."

" I don't know, Tucker. What about the statue of limitations? " The center phone rang and Tucker picked it up quickly. " Yeah, Tucker... John. Roz. Yeah, I'm looking forward to meeting you, too. Here she is."

" Roz, where are you?"

" Sittin' at the traffic light with a car full of Chinese food. I think sniffing MSG is bad for my health."

" Thanks, we're hungry."

" What do you mean? This is my food. You guys get a bagel and a glass of club soda."

Kathryn smiled. " Ridder's on the TV."

" *Paaa-leeese*. I didn't know the hotel had smut on the screen. There we go. Green light finally. Listen, Kathryn Marie, I'm half a minute away."

" We're not going anywhere."

Tucker smiled as she hung up. " I like her."

" Thank God she got us this place." Tucker creased his brow. " You've got that masterful plan look in your eye, Mr. Tucker."

" That's because I have masterful plan. We'll listen to what the IRS has to say, but maybe you're right. If we go to the press and the press acknowledges us,

Dimitri would be a fool to send his men after us. They'd be right on his tail. Let's see him explain old Sam Hunter to the press."

" And if you're wrong?"

" We're dead." Headlights pierced the tiny spaces between the blind slats. Tucker rolled off the bedspread and Kathryn followed him to the window. " She have a pink off road vehicle?"

" That's Roz."

Kathryn unlocked the chain and twisted the dead bolt. The moist evening mist wet her face. The little pink car abruptly stopped. Her hefty friend, white boxes in her hands, pushed open the door and stepped into the lot.

" Hey, Kathryn Marie, what's new?"

" You need help with that, Roz?"

" Eating it or carrying it?"

Kathryn hugged her friend and pecked her on the cheek. " Careful, you'll have flattened egg foo yung." She handed two boxes to Kathryn. The food odor hung heavy. " You two are very lucky."

" More than lucky. I wish I could say the same for the two dead men in Plymouth."

Roz kicked the door shut with her sneaker. " I talked to Rashid."

" Oh, and what does he say?"

" He wants to see you."

" Roz, I don't think we have time to see him. We're trying to nail Ridder and Dimitri before they nail us."

Tucker stood in the open doorway and took her boxes. " You must be Roz."

" The one and only. So, you're the guy who's been visiting dreamland with my friend Kathryn Marie?"

" Hard to believe."

" You like her?"

" Roz, what kind of a question is that?" said Kathryn as Tucker moved inside and smiled. He set the boxes on the center table. " Well?"

" What's not to like. Sure I like her."

" But are you sweet on her?"

" Roz, that's enough." Tucker winked at her and smiled. " What about the drinks?"

" Oh, yeah. How do you wash down this garbage without something to drink.? On the seat."

" I'll get them," said Tucker and he headed back outside.

" Guy's a hunk, sweetie. A little older than you are, but maybe you'll get together if you guys don't die first."

Kathryn spread the boxes on the side table near the sliders. " We work well together."

" You have your first big break with somebody new and all you can say is you work well together? He likes you. I can tell. Roz knows these things."

" Roz..."

" I knew about the dreams, didn't I?"

" You did." The car door slammed and the ice cubes inside three waxed cups clattered as Tucker returned to the room. " Now be good."

" If I was good, I'd probably be married with kids. You got a girlfriend, Tucker?"

" I date now and then."

She snapped her fingers. " But nothing steady. See, you two were made for each other. You were."

" You want the sweet and sour?" asked Kathryn. " Or the pork fired *Roz*?"

" Funny... Yeah, sure. What do you do, Tucker?"

" I-"

" No, let me guess. You run a travel agency."

Tucker tilted back his head and laughed. " Not exactly."

" Professional golfer," said Roz.

Kathryn smiled as she spread the food and drinks around the table.

" Nice try, Roz."

" I drive my rig," said Tucker. " Except it's sitting in a parking lot in Plymouth."

" I knew that," said Roz, stuffing a roll in her mouth. She spoke while chewing. " So, how's the trucking business, Tuck? You in it for *the long haul*?"

" You gut a first class comedian for a friend," said Tucker.

" And how does it feel to have Smitty in your head?"

" Ain't seen him in awhile."

Kathryn stepped forward. " Tucker's dreams are like mine. They come and go like Rashid said on the dreamscape."

" Hum... you need to contact both Smitty and Lucy. They must have that one piece of info."

" She called for help once," said Kathryn. " But in the dreams usually are a sequence of what happened back then."

" Call Rashid. He can solve this," said Roz, looking at the TV. Ridder was done with the speech and shaking hands. " Hard to believe Conrad Ridder killed those two kids."

" It's all covered up," said Kathryn.

Tucker pointed at the set. " There he is!"

" Who?" asked Roz, dipping into the pork-fried rice.

Kathryn stood and pointed at the TV. " It's him. Dimitri, Hunter..."

Dimitri's rounded dark eyes and bushy brows revealed a countenance aged through the years. His gray hair surrounded his bald head and he talked on a portable phone. At the same time he directed several men in the entourage as Ridder talked with the men off the stage. Dimitri pointed at someone he knew on the floor, raised his brows and smiled.

" So, the bald guy is Hunter? The con man?" asked Roz.

Tucker stood with his hands in his pockets. " Yeah, but we can't prove it. 1958 was a long time ago."

" There must be records somewhere," said Roz.

" There's no way with Dimitri's people after us, we're going to get anything," said Tucker, staring at the set with his hands on his hips.

" It's late," said Kathryn. " I don't think we're going to hear from the IRS today."

" Whatever," said Tucker as Roz handed him a platter and a plastic fork.

" Thanks, Roz."

" You guys don't know it, but you're booked tomorrow morning. Nine o'clock."

" Huh?" asked Kathryn.

" I made an appointment with Rashid."

" Roz, we don't have the time. We need to contact the press and make sure our names are out there for our own protection."

" Look, you need to know why Lucy keeps getting into your head. And who the hell knows, you might get more information."

" I don't know if seeing this guy is wise," said Tucker, digging into the rice.

" I take back all the good things I said about you Tucker." said Roz.

Kathryn looked at him for a few seconds, but was drawn to the TV. Poll numbers gave Ridder twenty-three points over Governor McLaughlin. " Look at this. He's squashing McLaughlin. It's all over."

" Guy's a murderer, those numbers will vanish if we get the truth before November."

" Tucker," said Kathryn. " We don't have until November. We don't have weeks. Unless we nail them soon, we're dead. They'll find us."

16

Kathryn stretched out on the bed and watched an old black and white movie about the Strategic Air Command. Tucker, in a contemplative mood, folded his arms in the side chair and propped his bare feet on the bed. When the phone rang she casually reached toward the nightstand. Roz had promised to call her.

" Hello."

" Yes, this is Willis Mathews. You call my office about a possible violation. I apologize for calling too late."

" Are you calling from the IRS?" she asked and Tucker, like a gymnast in competition, swung his legs off the bed.

" Yes, I am, Mam'. I would like to ask some preliminary questions."

Kathryn put her hand over the receiver. " It's the guy from the IRS. He wants to ask some questions."

" He *says* he's from the IRS," said Tucker, now hovering over the phone. " Get some kind of identification."

" You want to talk to him?"

" Sure," he said, scooping up the phone. " John Tucker here. Who are you and where are you calling from?" Tucker paused and nodded. His eyes darted as he listened. " What is the number there? I'll call it right back."

" What happened?"

" I wanted to see if this guy is who he really says he is."

Kathryn alternated glances at huge bomber planes trekking across the skies on the TV and Tucker asking the information operator for the Pittsburgh number for the Internal Revenue Service. He jotted down the number on the hotel pad and rapidly placed the call, asking for extension 1537. He smiled and lifted his sandy brows. " Ah... Mathews. Guess you're for real, buddy."

" I want to meet with him," said Kathryn.

For the next fifteen minutes Tucker responded to wide range of questions about Ridder and Dimitri. Kathryn turned down the TV set volume as he repeated the story about the purchase of WXBN in 1958. Tucker listened for some time and soon became adamant about meeting with Mathews.

" Okay... Yeah, there's a restaurant across from the *Squire Motel* here in Worthington. Six p.m. is good." Tucker rolled his tongue about his cheek as his brow tightened. " This is no false complaint, Pal... Who? I'll tell you: Conrad Ridder. It happened a long time ago. Does that really make a difference? I think it's significant. What? I got it digging... That's more like it. Very good. Six o'clock. I'll see you then. Good night."

He slowly lowered the phone and Kathryn looked into his pensive eyes.

" Well?"

" He'll meet with us. Finally. But he sounded real suspicious."

" At least he's going to listen to us."

" Right, right." Tucker stroked his chin as he rounded the bed. He flung his feet back on the bed, slouched in the chair and folded his hands on his chest. " I hope we did the right thing."

" What do you mean?"

He stared at the TV. " Nothing... I must be getting paranoid."

" At least you checked him out. That's more than I would have done."

" I don't trust nobody."

She sat across from him on the bed. His eyes moistened as he watched the set. " You're wondering if this guy will call Ridder."

" Yeah."

" I can't see them pulling any shenanigans until they get the facts and *it is* the IRS. They'll follow procedure."

" Let's look at this," said Tucker, half watching the movie. " If they will investigate it... they'll find Dimitri had another identity and Ridder at minimum will have to explain how he got the money for the station. And could lead to everything else."

She spun back to her bed and sunk her head into the foam pillow.

" Good. It could be the beginning of the end for him."

" Oh, I know we have to be very careful. Ridder is powerful and more importantly Dimitri has power and they're about to get more power. I look at power as a steam roller, Kathryn, rolling over everyone and everything that gets in its way."

* * *

Ridder pinched the Champagne glass stem in his hand, swishing the golden bubbles as he glided behind Dimitri under the cascading crystal chandeliers between round hotel tables. His old friend placed his hands the white table linen and everyone at the table looked up. " You don't have to call him Governor yet."

" Hello, Dimitri," said the rotund John Furlong. The support of the teacher's union, although not critical, would soothe the victory. Furlong had an annoying

voice that constantly cracked. " Conrad, I will call you, Governor because you're going to trounce McLaughlin."

" I think we're looking good, John."

" Modest. Modest. McLaughlin should drop out right now. " Furlong produced a hearty laugh, igniting the others at the table. " By the way, thank you again for that segment on the show last month. Helped us in our negotiations with the state."

" My pleasure."

" You gonna miss doing the show?" he asked.

" What's to miss? We're just moving it to the Governor's mansion." Again Furlong bellowed. " Same old dog and pony routine."

Furlong nodded and held Ridder's shoulder and wrist. " Well, you call me anytime you need anything."

" Thanks, John," said Ridder.

Dimitri's cell phone sounded as they moved away from the table. Ridder sipped the warm Champagne. " Meritokis... What? That's impossible. You find those people and get rid of them, damn it!"

" Get rid of who?" asked Ridder, turning.

A VFW guy with one of the funny olive hats and medals pinned to his shirt, approached and extended his hand. " Give em hell, Conrad."

" I'll certainly try," said Ridder, briefly squeezing his hand. As the man left Ridder again turned to Dimitri, now a few steps away on the parkway floor.

" Dimitri, you've been on that damned cell phone all day. What is going on?"

Dimitri's dark eyes fluttered as he spoke. " I don't care what you have to do. Just do it."

" Well?" asked Ridder.

Dimitri dropped the phone in his coat pocket. " You don't want to know."

" You keep telling me I don't want to know, yet you're barking out these orders about getting rid of people. This isn't 1958, sweetheart."

" No, Sput, it isn't. I have tried to shield you from your enemies. And the more powerful you get, the more powerful your enemies. Just stay within the realm. Be the candidate and leave the rest to me. If we get past certain things they'll be no stopping us with your political career. Are we agreed on that?"

Ridder stole another glass from the passing waiter's tray. " Who is it you want to get out of the way? Are you talking politically or-"

" I said let me handle it."

" Those days are over, Dimitri."

Dimitri looked around the spacious conference room and smiled. " Don't chance saying anything in public. You have anything to say, Conrad, say it when we're alone."

Ridder looked into Dimitri's eyes. " Agreed. But we will talk later."

" Hello, Conrad," said Harriet Crosley, a party stalwart and one of his earliest supporters. " Well, you can't say the media doesn't translate into voting power."

" Harriet, I say nothing until I get the final count in November."

17

Kathryn set the fast food tray on the slot above the trash bin. Tucker was already outside on the curb and walked the restaurant lot. Roz's bracelet dangled in front of Kathryn's face as she held the glass door. " Roz, put that bracelet in storage, will you?"

Roz shook the diamonds again. " And not be glamorous?"

She walked beside her friend into the parking lot as Turner stood at the curb and panned the street. Kathryn held Roz's wrist. " And you don't have to bring us to Rashid's place."

" You kiddin'? I want to watch this therapy in the den of horrors..."

" Actually this works out well," said Kathryn. " We might have more of a chance to prove this as well as save our own hides if Rashid can unlock more of this."

Tucker arms were folded tightly across his red checked jersey. He glanced at Kathryn as she approached. " I'm hopin' we can have something else to give the IRS, and sink Ridder and his buddy, Dimitri. That's if this guy, Rashid can draw the info out of us. Then we'll place a call to the press and the IRS will have to respond."

" My thoughts exactly," said Kathryn. " Should we follow you, Roz?"

" Stay behind little Pinky," said Roz, opening the little pink jeep's door.

" Will do," said Tucker. He unlocked the rental car door for Kathryn and checked the lot one more time.

" You see something, Tucker?" asked Kathryn.

Tucker's crow's peaks deepened. " Sorry... I just think we have to be careful. Dimitri ain't stupid."

" I think we have time."

" Yeah, but how much time?"

* * *

Kathryn's stomach fluttered when the red Victorian materialized in the mist. Roz swung into the dirt lot and Tucker pulled alongside the pink car.

" This is still bizarre when you think about it, Tucker. The dreams, the therapy... The reality of what happened forty years ago in Plymouth."

" Hey, you know, I'm a skeptical person and here I am about to step inside this witch doctor's office for some kind of spooky therapy. But I also know what we learned back east. I really believe Lucy and Smitty tried to contact both of us."

She pinched the bridge of her nose as the tension mounted. " You think we'll really contact Lucy and Smitty?"

" I don't know. Happened before in the dreams." He held her hand. " It's all right, Kathryn."

" Thanks."

" You were holding her hand," said Roz, waddling over from her car..

" Don't try and deny it."

" Guilty as charged," said Tucker. They moved across the moistened dirt and up the front walk. " Roz, what's this guy's claim to fame anyway?"

" Rashid is a very smart man. He senses things others never know."

" Probably sees and hears things, too," said Tucker.

Kathryn laughed and tilted her head back, but Roz pointed at them both..

" You'll see. Both of you."

" Okay," she answered.

Roz leaned closer and placed her hand over her mouth as she spoke in a low voice. " I heard he once contacted Harry Houdini."

" Houdini have e-mail?" asked Tucker.

" *Paaa-leeese.*" Roz opened the wood door and motioned them inside the house.

The thick spicy odor again reminded Kathryn's of Rashid's unconventional attitude and methods. Classical music trickled out of the main office. Once inside Tucker pulled back the curtain sidelight and stared outside. " I keep thinking those guys from Plymouth will find us eventually. That's why this IRS meeting is imperative."

Rashid was in the process of removing off his black rimmed glasses as he emerged from the back office. He wore a lighter suit this time and a fuchsia tie.

" Ah, Miss Jenner. I am so glad to see you again and quite excited. Yes, quite excited. You've had quite an adventure, confirming what I was trying to tell you."

" Thank you for seeing us. This is my friend John Tucker."

" And Mr. Tucker. Smitty entered your mind. You completed Miss Jenner's cycle."

" I still find that hard to believe." Tucker shook Rashid's hand, but immediately returned to the window edges.

Rashid lifted a tray of aqua colored drinks from the hall table. " Please, some refreshment. A cooling fruit nectar."

"Everybody's nervous about this Transformation Therapy," said Roz, grabbing the glass and she sipped the liquid. "Hey, not bad, Doc. You should become a bartender in your off hours."

Kathryn took the remaining two glasses and placed one in Tucker's hand. She brought the sweet, thick apricot flavor to her lips. "This is good."

"Not bad. What the hell is it?" asked Tucker at the sidelight.

"It's wet and it's cool," said Kathryn.

Tucker held the glass by the rim. "Doctor, while I believe Smitty somehow contacted me, I don't know if your therapy is going to get him to simply skip into the your office."

"A healthy skepticism is welcomed, Mr. Tucker."

Tucker gulped the rest of the liquid. He set the glass back on the tray and returned to the thin window. "Hum..."

"Something outside, Mr. Tucker?"

"I certainly hope not."

"You ought to bottle this stuff," said Roz.

"The ingredients have a long history and their cost is prohibitive."

"How long will this therapy take?" asked Tucker, finally joining them in the hall.

"No more than one hour. But time will be irrelevant, I assure you. Please come into my office. Sit down, relax. What we want to accomplish is direct contact with the two souls entering your mind. That is an incredible feat."

"You really think you can do that?" asked Tucker as they retreated into the office.

" What I am doing is allowing your mind to step through a door. A door opening into another realm. To reach them."

" I don't understand this door terminology," said Tucker as he and Kathryn sat on the sofa. Roz lowered her frame onto the sofa arm.

" The door is the transitional point between here, this world, and the lost ground between life and death." Tucker grinned and Rashid pointed at him..

" You are smiling, but the lost ground exists."

" What are you saying?" asked Kathryn. " They are just floating out there?"

" Not in the sense we would understand." The phone on the table rang.

" Excuse me."

Tucker stared at Rashid and then raised his brows at Kathryn. " Wild."

Rashid tightened his brow. " Who is this? Well, ask if you will, but I do not give out a list of clients, sir. I am very busy. Good bye." He shook his head and hung up the phone. " Some people are too pushy. Now, you were saying, Miss Jenner. "

" How do you open the door? " asked Kathryn.

" I summon those lost souls."

" Where did you learn this stuff?" asked Tucker.

" This therapy is not new. Variations have occurred throughout history. I have researched a wide range of methods to contact the dead. My work is the compilation of the efforts of hundreds through the ages."

Tucker shrugged his shoulders. " What the hell? We've got a few hours before we meet the IRS people."

" Open your mind, Mr. Tucker. I know you still doubt." Rashid stood abruptly and motioned them toward the rear green door.

Tucker grabbed Kathryn's hand and followed Rashid across the Oriental rug, but Rashid stopped at the inner door and his dark hand covered the silver door-knob. He took off his glasses and pursed his lips. " I again must warn you there are risks."

Like a fighter about to begin Round One, Tucker stepped up to Rashid.
" Just what kind of risks? What the hell are you talking about?"

" Being trapped," said Rashid.

" Trapped?" asked Kathryn.

Roz called from the sofa. " Trapped?"

" Minds, thoughts, and physically reality can be transformed into the realm you are entering."

" This is bullshit. Let's just get it over with," said Tucker.

" The opening to the lost ground is powerful, Mr. Tucker. Very powerful. And the spirits in that arena are indeed lost. We have to be very careful."

" Bye, Roz," said Kathryn, waving with a smile.

" Au Revoir."

" Remember, Roz, we cannot be disturbed, least we disrupt our link and place ourselves at risk."

Roz saluted. " Yes, sir."

Rashid finally twisted the knob and opened the door to a dark room, lit only with black light tubes along the wide baseboard. Swirling dark vines and sharp edge leaves were stitched into a spreading wall tapestry and a rich leather smell permeated the cool, humid air. A high backed chair abutted two reclining couches. " I must ask you both to lie down."

" Lie down? Are you shittin' me?" said Tucker.

Kathryn squeezed his wrist. " *Tucker...*"

" Come on, This is weird."

" Sigmund Freud eat your heart out," called Roz.

" I think Dr. Freud would find this interesting," said Rashid. He closed the door and the air pressure immediately increased.

" Dr. Rashid," said Kathryn. " I don't discount what your saying and I'm sorry if I've been disrespectful. If we do make contact with them, we need to know a couple of things."

" You will have ample opportunity to ask. I cannot speak for them. Please be seated."

Kathryn spread her body over the first couch's cold leather. Tucker lay down on the couch next to her. " Here we are."

" Hey, it's good just to rest the old bones," said Tucker

" Feels good."

" Excellent... Continue to relax. We must all be in the proper frame of mind," said Rashid.

" You know what? We have to find answers about that radio station, Tucker, or they get away with everything. Charlie Leone, Smitty, Lucy, Jansen and Sid. All those deaths will be in vain unless we nail Ridder."

" That's true," said Tucker. " Not to mention saving our own lives."

Rashid spun the high back chair around and sat down with his back to them. " We will focus our bodies and our minds into a tranquil state of reception.."

" Are you going through the door, too?" asked Tucker.

" I am the facilitator. I am the catalyst. I summon those departed and those so dear. "

Kathryn was unsure of time as she closed her eyes. The yearbook photos of Lucy and Smitty came filled her thoughts. In the lost realm of souls they might not appear as they had in life. Rashid's mumbling from the chair was transformed into a sharp, harsh foreign language. The long tubes lit the wall tapestry with a vividness, causing the woven vines and leaves to move. She glanced at Tucker, his eyes closed and body stretched out on the next couch. Rashid's chanting frightened her, but when she tried to rise from the couch, something held her stomach. "I can't move."

Tucker's voice overrode Rashid's incomprehensible dialogue. "I can't move off this table either. That's enough, Rashid. Therapy is one thing but this is bullshit!"

Rashid returned to English. "William Smith and Lucy Leone. Your days walking upon this Earth have long since passed and you know the pain, the suffering and anguish of your lost lives. More than pain is the lost justice you seek. It is this longing for justice of all those lost. Reaching out you have signaled. You have called out for help. Help us now and let us seek your souls."

Kathryn's heart pounded onto the leather couch. Her ears popped as if she were in a plane as the pressure in the room intensified. In the cold moist air the long tubes were out of focus. She settled onto the leather as if she were actually pushing softly through the couch, but relaxation spread throughout her reclined body. A distant gong chimed as a great time gap slowly passed.

"Tucker," she called out in her thoughts. "Tucker..." She knew she was in the room, yet her mind drifted in and out of another place, unseen, yet real. In the other place she was receding as if she were on a fast moving boat skipping across

the water. Rashid was right. Time's constrictions now seemed meaningless. Although still zooming away she still floated when she closed her eyes.

Her soothing thoughts were abruptly interrupted by a far away, rumbling crash and the pressure dropped. Rashid sprang from the chair in slow motion and for the longest time meandered like a swimmer toward the outer office door. Bright light scattered in linear colored rays from the outside office and his voice modulated in a low scary drone.

***" I...TOOOLLLLLDDDD YOU. STTAAAYYY AWAAAAAY
FROOOOM THIIIISS ROOOOOM ! "***

The room's light stretched and everything was caught in a slow, undulating roll. Just outside the door Roz's clear voice cut the room's instability. " Kathryn, they have guns!"

" I knew it," said Tucker. " The phone call. The bastards know where we are."

Kathryn was enveloped within unseen plasma when she tried to roll off the couch. Her own words were muffled within confusing modulations around her. Men with guns darted around the outer office. As Roz leaped into the darkened room, Rashid rushed outside and placed his hands against the door, forcing it shut. Again the pressure gradient rose, but the black lights twisted into contorted pretzels. Roz grabbed her Kathryn's hand and fell to the floor as the room raced down like an elevator in free fall. The elongated black lights revolved rapidly, forming a spinning blur and Kathryn's body was pushed hard enough against the couch to affect her breathing. As she gasped for breath the high pitched sound reached a crescendo, but instantly stopped.

The darkness persisted whether her eyes were open or shut. Her unseen shackles shed, she moved freely within the void, breathing normally, but time eluded her and she floated. In the total isolation, tears formed in her eyes and her voice echoed when she called out. Again she closed her eyes and her body tumbled like a spacecraft slowly out of control. She longed for the touch of another human being. Loneliness inside the void was markedly worse than death, itself.

* * *

Rashid looked up as the tract lights brightened. A short man with a crew cut waved a revolver in his face. "Where are they, Doctor?"

"Who?"

"You like being alive, Pal? Tucker and Kathryn Jenner. Where are they?"

"Not here," he said, sitting up. "I should think that would be obvious"

Rashid grinned as a younger man tried to open the green door. "What's behind the door?"

"You will find nothing back there."

"I'll be the judge of that," said the short man, aiming his gun. He fired once at the knob. The other man opened the door. Bright lights blazed and he shielded his eyes.

"Just a therapy room," said Rashid.

"Nothing back here, Eddie," said the man from inside. A few seconds later he rubbed his eyes as he returned into the office. "The only way out is through the door we came in."

" Well, that damned rental car is out front. So is the roommate's car. They came in here, didn't they, Doctor?"

" If they came in they would be here." Again he glanced at the brightened back room and grinned.

" What's so funny?"

" Why are they so important?" asked Rashid.

" You let me worry about that," he said, motioning Rashid into the hall. He picked up the phone and dialed rapidly. " I won't put up with this."

" They must have been outside, Eddie."

" Good point, check the woods and keep an eye on the cars. Let the air out of the tires." He pushed the phone to his ear. " Get me Dimitri right now. "

" I assure you, you won't find them."

" We'll see how cocky you are... Dimitri," he said, turning. " They're gone. I know. I know. Who, him? Rashid?" He faced Rashid. " What did they tell you?"

" Nothing."

" You hear that? No, I don't believe him either. What? I've got them searching the woods now. I know. We will take care of them. I'll check back."

" I resent this intrusion," said Rashid.

Eddie stepped forward and grabbed his shirt. He cocked his fist and smashed him in the jaw. Rashid next opened his eyes from the floor. " You're wasting your time."

" I don't think so. They have vital information that could bring down powerful people."

" I haven't seen them," said Rashid, holding his sore chin.

Eddie removed a gun from under his coat. " You have no time left, Doctor. If you think your life is more worthless than theirs, then shut up. If you want to live, then tell me what you know."

" I know nothing."

18

A blue expanse of sky loaded with mammoth clouds hovered above the silver rippled ocean. Kathryn sat up amidst swaying grass blades and listened to the surf crash somewhere at the base of a bluff, jutting from the curved, tree covered shoreline. Roz and Tucker stirred in the high grass behind her. Tucker opened his eyes and jumped to his feet. "What the hell is this?"

Roz awakened, but looked groggy. "Wake me when it's over, will ya?"

"Where are we?" asked Kathryn.

Tucker marched over toward the edge of the bluffs and put his hands on his hips. "I told you he couldn't be trusted. He drugged us with those drinks and brought us back to Plymouth."

"*Plymouth?*" asked Kathryn. She stood and helped Roz up. "That's impossible."

"That jerk has a lot to answer for," said Tucker.

Kathryn and Roz stepped through the grass toward Tucker at the edge of the bluffs. Prodigious white surf sheets dissipated over the rounded boulders along the ocean shore and the distant land curved around the expansive bay. Across the grass, a small, shingled shanty was center positioned on the point and surrounded by a circular road.

Tucker's face twisted as he pointed up the shore. "See, that's Plymouth Bay."

Kathryn followed the jetties and the beach spit toward town. The WXBN antennas stood like soldiers guarding the town below. " Why would he do this? Roz? "

" Roz? What did I do?" She pushed her cell phone **SEND** button.

" You recommended him. I knew he was kook."

" No signal." Roz stepped back along the grass. " He sent us back in time is what he did."

" *Yeah, right,*" said Tucker. " He drugged us and we fell for it. Maybe we can use this to our advantage because Dimitri's people aren't going to know where we are."

Kathryn stared beyond the sandy shore. " Maybe he drugged us with that drink, but we were floating. Why do I only see two antennas?"

" I tell you Rashid sent us back in time to solve this," said Roz. " But I want to know how we're supposed to survive here? First thing we need to do is get to a phone and a hotel room,"

" Agreed about the hotel room." Tucker's eyes followed the shore and his face soured. " But, we're not *back in time.* "

Kathryn stepped toward Tucker as he scanned the shanty. " Tucker, there's nothing left to investigate back here. We reached dead ends. What's left?"

" I don't know. Maybe some of Jansen's kids or somebody who knew Sid."

Roz wandered across the soft asphalt drive near the shanty.

Kathryn folded her arms. " Well, if we aren't back in time, Dimitri's guys *will* find us."

" We're not back in time, so cut out that talk right now. We should just get the hell out of the area," said Tucker. " I mean scatter. Change our names so they

never know where we are. Let Ridder become Governor or whatever the hell else he wants to do."

" I know what you're saying. I'm just disappointed in Rashid," said Kathryn.

" Guys!" called Roz from behind the shanty. " I see a '55 Oldsmobile, a '49 Chevy, and a 1952 Ford truck. Looks like we've taken a little side trip!"

Tucker shook his head. " We're going inside. This is ridiculous..."

Kathryn marched beside him around the building. The three antiques cars were parked diagonal to the shanty. Roz opened a screen door. Hot and heavy, fishy air surrounded them and men worked frantically behind a tall counter as jazz or big band music was piped around the room from brown Bakelite table radio.

Tucker rapped on the counter. " Excuse me, can we use your phone?"

The little guy up front removed a cigarette from his mouth. " Huh?"

" Can we use your phone?"

" Local?"

" Yeah, we need a hotel."

" Phone book's under the phone." He pointed to a black rotary phone atop a stack of papers on the side desk under the window.

Tucker stepped around the counter, removed the little phone book and thumbed to the yellow pages. Kathryn looked over his shoulder as he slowly gazed into her eyes. " This is impossible."

" What is it?" asked Roz.

Kathryn held the edge of the book. " The phone numbers, they're in three and four digits." She flipped back to the front cover. " Phone book for Plymouth, June, 1957."

" I don't believe it. Impossible. This has to be some kind of hypnotic suggestion. This clown is very clever, " said Tucker, pounding his fist on the desk.. " We don't need this! Rashid!"

Kathryn grabbed his wrist. " Tucker, I really think he did it. Look at the phone book."

" I see it, but I don't believe it."

" I sure as hell believe it," said Roz. " Welcome to the fifties, Tuck."

Kathryn turned the book cover. On the first page was dialing instructions. " You can call the operator or just dial the local number."

" Hey," said Roz, turning to the guy sorting the fish. " What's today's date?"

" What kind of question is that?" he asked, the cigarette ash falling to the floor.

" Easy question."

" July 7th."

" Fifty-seven?"

" No, fifty-eight. Wise guy."

" We really don't know," said Roz.

Kathryn continued flipping the telephone book pages. She dragged her finger down the page to Dan Jansen's name. " Jansen, Daniel, 123 Sidlen Road. 603. You think you're dreaming, Tucker? Go ahead, dial his number."

Tucker laughed and shook his head. " Dan Jansen is dead. It's a trick. Rashid has hypnotized us."

Kathryn picked up the heavy phone and heard a dial tone click in. She spun each digit and let the dial retract. The line rattled with unfamiliar noises, but finally rang. "It's ringing."

Tucker rolled his eyes. "This is just too weird."

"Good, Tuck, good," said Roz. "The weirdest things are the most fun."

"Hello," answered a woman on the other end.

"Yes, is Dan there?"

"Danny gets off duty at four-thirty. Who's calling please?"

"Kathryn Jenner. I'm looking into Charlie Leone's accident."

"Poor Charlie. You from the insurance company?" she asked.

"No, I knew Charlie."

"Well, like I say Danny will be in after four-thirty."

Kathryn bit her lower lip. "Is it all right to come over then?"

"Sure, I'll tell Danny that Kathryn Jenner is coming over. Bye."

Tucker raised his brows. "Very good. You are getting quite good."

"What do you think, Tuck?" asked Roz. "You believe we're back here?"

"Whether he's making me think it or whether we are, I'll accept it for now."

"He'll accept it for now," said Roz, rolling her eyes. "*Paaa-leeese!!*"

Tucker crossed the kitchen and looked at the guy cutting the fish. "Anybody going back to town?"

"We make more restaurant runs around five."

"Can we hitch a ride?"

"Yeah," he said looking at Roz. "She really doesn't know what year it is?"

Roz contorted her face as Tucker smiled. "She's a little touched."

"Thought so. Yeah, you can ride in the truck. We'll get you down town."

19

A kid with a flat top hair cut, tight undershirt pulled over his thin chest, and cigarettes stuffed at the shoulder, shifted a Ford truck. The engine cranked and he started down the road leading from the bluffs. A smooth rendition of Twilight Time echoed from a single dash speaker. "What's your favorite music, kid?" asked Tucker

"Elvis."

"Elvis...Oh, is that right? And that's it?"

"No, I like Buddy Holly."

"Tell me about the Beatles."

"You mean the Crickets? Buddy Holly and the Crickets."

"Okay," he said looking at Kathryn, wedged between Roz and the door.

"He sounds plausible."

A white and brown unblemished '55 Chevy convertible passed them on the road. Both Roz and Kathryn turned.

"Wow!" shouted Roz. "Look at that, will ya?"

"I still don't believe it," said Tucker.

"I like the Everly Brothers, too," said the kid as the ground leveled out within a group of cottages. "You know them?"

"Yeah, yeah I know who the Everly Brothers are. You know where Sidlen Road is?"

"Yup."

The song ended on a high note and a newscaster came on the air. " That of course was the Platters, still at number five on the XBN top parade of songs. Say, this weekend at Nantasket Beach, Paragon Park is cranking up for summer time fun. WXBN will be at Paragon Park at the giant roller coaster beginning at five p.m. tonight. That's in one minute for all you people on Cape Cod. News is next and remember Conrad Ridder is on late night from one to five a.m. And now Ron Bradley with the five o'clock news. Ron."

" Thank you, Jumping Jack. And good afternoon everyone. President Eisenhower's trip to Canada is being overshadowed by reports of the loss of yet another U. S. rocket. A Vanguard rocket's second stage failed to ignite. Adding to the loss of the third U.S. satellite, Explorer III in the atmosphere last week, officials are looking to Washington for control of the U.S. space program. An announcement is expected in two weeks, creating a civilian agency to promote space development. Sputnik III from the Soviet Union, Vanguard I and Explorer I are currently satellites now in orbit."

Tucker stared out the window as the truck moved up a cottage-lined hill.

" In political news a new poll pits Vice President Nixon against former two time Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson. Nixon would win with forty-nine percent of the vote to forty-three for Stevenson. The figures change to a fifty-one forty-two spread against former vice Presidential candidate, Estes Kefaufer, but Nixon trails Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, fifty-one to forty-nine percent."

" Well, Tuck?" asked Roz.

" How do we survive back here?" asked Kathryn.

" Good question," answered Roz. " With money from forty years in the future, no place to stay. We're up Rashid creek without a paddle."

Tucker shook himself from deep thought. " Damn. Then we must be here... All right. I give up. I don't know how he did it. Do you know what this means?"

" It means," said Kathryn, pressing her lips. " It means putting ourselves at risk, but it also means finding the truth."

* * *

Roz wanted to walk downtown and see how things were in 1958 and agreed to meet Tucker and Kathryn later at Jansen's house on Sidlen Road. The Mayflower II was painted with more muted colors in this time period and huge cars with chrome bumpers were parked perpendicular to the sea wall. Kathryn did not see the hotel where she and Tucker stayed in the future and a number of different small shops lined the opposite side of the road. She noticed many signs for salt-water taffy. The kid dropped Roz off near the Plymouth Rock portico. She waved at Kathryn in the side mirror.

The kid drove the truck up Water Street, but whipped onto a side street and up a long hill. The brakes squeaked and he stopped abruptly at a two story white house with antenna rods attached by metal bands to a worn brick chimney. A large blue Oldsmobile was parked under the dirt driveway branches.

Tucker thanked the kid and the truck engine rattled down the hill. Goose bumps trailed up Kathryn's arm as a big boned woman, wiped her brow with her red apron and met them behind the sculptured aluminum **J** emblazoned over the screen door. This woman was long dead when they met Jansen at the retirement

home in the future. Not even in her forties now, she smiled and introduced herself. She directed them to the side parlor while Jansen changed his clothes upstairs.

" Can I get you something to drink?"

" I'm all set," said Tucker.

Kathryn studied the photos of a young Jansen in his khaki army uniform in World War II.

" How about you, Miss Jenner?"

" Oh, I'm all set, too. Thank you."

" Danny will be right down." She returned to making dinner in the kitchen.

The smell of onions wafted through the room, but in these days prior to microwave ovens, Kathryn heard the sound of water boiling and a radio played swing music in the background.

A bulky TV with a set of rabbit ears filled the space between two long windows with yellow shades pulled down halfway to the sill. The phone, similar to the dark rotary phone at the fish shanty, was located on the end table. Three Raymond Chandler paperbacks were strewn over a newspaper under a brass floor lamp with a taffeta shade. In the kitchen she heard Jansen's voice, less raspy, clear, and not as strained as in the future. Wearing a blue jersey and white chinos, the youthful, only slightly older than the World War II picture, Jansen stepped through the doorway. His red hair was cropped at the ears and his wide smile filled his taut face. He stretched out his hand to Tucker. " Dan Jansen."

" John Tucker." Kathryn stared at his crisp blue eyes. " This is Kathryn Jenner."

" Miss Jenner." He turned back to Tucker. " What can I do for you, Mr. Tucker? My wife said something about one of you knowing Charlie Leone."

Kathryn, overwhelmed by Jansen's younger age and quicker movements, stepped forward. She knew Jansen was only days into the investigation. " I knew Charlie. He sold me a house."

" Charlie was a good guy. It's a damned, excuse me, Miss Jenner, shame. A damned shame."

" Especially if somebody tampered with his car," said Kathryn.

Jansen's eyes opened wide. " Why would you think that, young lady?"

" Smitty and Lucy," she said, plugging in their names.

" So, you talked to them, too?"

" Yes, I know Lucy. That's how I bought my house. Problem is I can't find her."

" They're both missing. We're looking into it down at the station. They were checking about Charlie's death, also. What do you know about his car?"

Kathryn stroked her chin. In this time, with Ridder just beginning his career at the expense of three lives, she needed credibility with Jansen to find the truth. " I think that Fury was rigged so Charlie went off the road."

" I talked to Smitty just last Thursday and he was going up to Sid Horwitz's yard to look over Charlie's car. I'm trying to go up there tomorrow. The Chief has had me working round the clock and with Charlie's funeral, I haven't have time. I do know this: Gwen Roland told me she served Charlie two glasses of wine and that was it. Charlie wouldn't drive off the road after two glasses of wine."

" No, he's wouldn't," said Kathryn.

" Did anybody check about the parking lot?" asked Tucker. " You know, strangers out there."

" Good point. That's where somebody would have the opportunity to play around with Charlie's car."

" Did you know about Capital Hill?" asked Kathryn.

" In Washington?" he asked with a large smile.

" Lucy said Charlie told her something in confidence. Charlie's partner-

" Sam Hunter, you know that guy is a fast talker," said Jansen.

Kathryn stepped toward Jansen. " Hunter had Charlie put up eighty grand for a project... tract homes west of town in the hills."

" Come on." Jansen reached over and pulled a blue wire rim notebook and pencil off the table near the Chandler paperback. " Capital Hill."

" Then Hunter left town."

" Left town? No, he didn't leave town. He was at the funeral and down to Charlie's office. No, he's here. You're saying Lucy told you Hunter took Charlie for eighty grand?"

" Yes."

" Serious charges. That is important, young lady. Very important. And where is Lucy?"

Kathryn looked at Tucker. He seemed as if he wanted to say something, but she motioned him off. Saying anything about the shooting or the dumping of the bodies in the harbor would require explanations she could not provide. " What do her parents say?"

Jansen shrugged his shoulders. " Smitty picked her up Thursday night and no one had seen them since. Everybody is frantic. I say they may have run off to get married or who knows? Vacation? I need to check whether they made it up to the junkyard Thursday."

Mrs. Jansen leaned into the parlor. " Would you two like to stay for supper?"

" Oh, no, that's not necessary," said Kathryn.

" No, no. I insist," said Jansen. " I can use all the help I can get in this. See without any direct evidence, the Chief doesn't want me wasting my time. More important to direct traffic. Sit down, I'll be right back. I'll have Amanda set places at the table for you."

Kathryn shook her head as he left the room. " We're in deep doo-doo, right, Tucker? We have no current money and no place to stay. We're lucky we're getting the meal. "

" I can't believe we're really here." He took out his wallet and pulled out a few crisp bills. " We get caught with these babies and we'll end up in some Federal penitentiary for counterfeiting."

" We have to be extremely careful," said Kathryn. " If we provide Jansen with too much information without anything to back it up, he's going to get suspicious."

" Exactly. We need to take what we know and prove it."

" Start with finding witnesses to Ridder's shooting Lucy and Smitty." Kathryn looked out the window. The afternoon light dabbed patches across harbor.

" The bodies must be right out there. We need to convince them to start searching."

" What about Hunter?" asked Tucker. " He must have records of what he did with the scam. I mean his own notes."

" He lives in North Plymouth if I'm remembering correctly, yet he was away for periods of time."

" Another place, another identity," said Tucker. " I'll bet the hundred future bucks in my wallet he was known as Dimitri at that place."

" And Dimitri is linked to this guy, Grignano. "

" True."

Jansen returned to the room. " If I get the time, I can pick up you two up in the cruiser tomorrow morning. I want to head over to Carver and we'll check out Charlie's Fury."

" Sounds like a good idea," said Kathryn, wondering where they were going to sleep that night.

" What about Hunter?" asked Tucker. " We might want to talk with him at the office or at his place in North Plymouth."

Jansen nodded. " I don't want to accuse him of anything. Let me handle that. If he pulled hanky panky with Charlie I've got to substantiate that. Come on in the kitchen and have some good home cooking."

" I never turn down a meal," said Tucker.

He motioned Kathryn forward. She remained amazed at Jansen's youthfulness and vigor. An evening breeze crept through the back screen door and open windows. Steamed billowed from pork chops, onions, potatoes and green beans, spread over the aqua plates placed on the yellow tablecloth. Kathryn gazed at the calendar picture of a municipal fire station positioned over a July 1958 calendar. She pulled back the rounded oak chair. " Everything smells wonderful, Mrs. Jansen. I think I'm going to like it here."

* * *

Jansen smoked a thick brown cigar in his front porch chair as his wife read the evening paper under the porch light. Kathryn, in a brief conversation with Tucker, agreed Jansen believed her story about buying the house. During supper she learned Sid Horwitz had once been arrested for bank robbery in the thirties and although he frequently played the numbers, his record was clean over the past few years. Kathryn wondered if the same man who died of a stroke in the nursing home would now cooperate.

She was about to leave and search for Roz downtown, when she heard something backfire down the hill. Everyone except Jansen leaped up.

" I hear guns!" said Kathryn.

" Car," laughed Jansen. " You're just like Eleanor Crowell. Eleanor claimed she heard shots the other night. I told her it was a backfire."

" What night?" asked Kathryn.

" Thursday. That would be the third."

Kathryn slowly smiled and tilted her head as Roz drove a navy blue convertible up the hill. She shifted, grinding the clutch, and pulled next to Jansen's Oldsmobile. " I don't believe it."

" Heidi ho, everybody!"

" Roz, how did you get that car?"

" You know her?" asked Jansen.

" She's my friend."

Roz shut off the car. The engine kept turning, shaking the car, but it finally shut off with a bang. " A 1952 Ford convertible. A more than one time owner," said Roz. " I say when in Rome."

Kathryn trotted down the porch steps and whispered to her friend. " You didn't steal that, did you? Jansen is a cop."

Roz held up her bare wrist. " We're okay."

" You're Aunt Jenny's bracelet You sold it."

" I got us a hotel room, too. Roz has the situation under control."

" I guess she does."

20

Dimitri yanked the keys and squeezed out of his polished red Corvette convertible. In his blue oxford shirt and white chinos Ridder stood with his hands on his hips, gazing skyward at the radio station's antenna supports. He put his hand on Ridder's shoulder. " Not much longer, Conrad. In another few weeks we'll get the approval and this station will be yours."

" Mine?" asked Ridder, facing his dark haired friend.. " That's a joke."

" Well, yours in name. I'm going to begin a career for you here. We won't have Goodwin managing the station and telling us what to do. As owners of the station we'll have carte blanche. Your name will be synonymous with call-in programs."

" Dimitri, I'm twenty-three years old. I understand you've had business experience and connections to people I don't even want to think about, but I fail to see how anyone would want to listen to me over anyone else. All the kids I know are listening to rock and roll stations."

" Let em. You have the talent, you have the voice. Give it time, we'll make it work. This is our first stop. Hold onto this station for a few years and move on."

" I'm still not sleeping after the other night. God, I killed two people I've known all my life. And what if the bodies-"

" Shut up about that. Just shut up. I don't want to hear it again... Besides, those bastards deserved it." Dimitri looked toward Cape Cod in a brown haze curving around the expansive deep blue bay. " Charlie's niece and the kid got in

the way and would have found out about his car. Horwitz had orders to call either one of us if he caught anyone snooping around his place. You were closer and you did the right thing."

" I panicked."

" No, you did the right thing, Sput. And you did the right thing by calling me in Brockton."

" I don't know what the hell I would have done with the bodies."

" Precisely."

" I thought they would wash out to sea."

Dimitri put his arm around Ridder and steered him toward the WXBN building. " Let me tell you something, Conrad. There are going to be people who get in your way as you advance your career. People who try to eat you up. You crush them or they crush you. That's the way of the world."

" I will do what it takes to advance my career."

" You proved that to me."

Ridder put his hands in his pockets and walked beside Dimitri across the parking lot. " What if Jansen keeps digging?"

" You let me take care of Jansen. There's nowhere for him to go. Believe me, he's boxed in. And I'll take care of the things behind the scenes, pay off the right people. You just keep doing what you're doing on the air and you'll go all the way."

" I will go all the way, providing nothing floats to the surface."

Ridder's dark eyes remained pensive as he walked with Dimitri to the station entrance. Dimitri held the door. " If you're worried about the bodies... I weighed them down. They'll never be seen again."

" I'm not worried."

" Good, let's talk to Goodwin."

Dimitri opened the weathered wood panel door and followed Ridder into the front lobby. The blonde haired Rita's sparkling blue eyes rose over the counter. " Mr. Hunter, you have a call."

" Yes, who was calling me, Rita?" She handed Dimitri a slip of paper. He looked at Grignano's Brockton number. " Thank you."

" Anytime, Mr. Hunter." Her eyes shot over to Ridder. " When are you going to buy me that drink, Conrad?"

" Is that what you really want?"

" You want me to answer that?" she asked, glancing at Dimitri.

" Meet me at my apartment. Six o'clock. I need to relax before I go on the air."

" Six..."

As he walked Ridder into the side office and Dimitri shook his head. Ridder looked annoyed. " What's the matter now?"

" Listen, you're going to also find the broads will be after you because you're on the air. Being on the air represents power. She wants to screw you, Conrad."

" No kidding."

" Don't do anything that will get you in trouble. Rumors can kill you." He picked up the phone. He had the operator place the call to Grignano.

" I'm going to get laid, Dimitri. I really don't care about rumors."

" Grig, this is Dimitri."

The connection was clear, but Grignano seemed flummoxed. " We gut problems, Greek man."

" Why? What now?" asked Dimitri as Ridder stared out the door toward Rita's tight green jersey.

" A guy who looks like he's from Texas and a younger woman visited Jansen's house."

Dimitri covered the receiver and turned away from Ridder. " Are you saying Jansen hired somebody?"

" Shit, I don't know. I don't need nobody lookin' into this, Dimitri. I did what you told me to do all around..."

" I need names. Are they local?"

" I don't have no names. I asked George, but he's just a janitor at the Plymouth station."

" What does it take for him to watch Jansen, damn it!"

Ridder turned around. " What's the matter?"

" Nothing, go hustle Rita, will you?" He spun around again as Ridder shrugged his shoulders and wandered out front. " Grig, you tell that son of a bitch, George, we're paying him for information. He finds out those names or he doesn't get the money this week."

" I don't want spend time behind bars."

" Who even gives a shit about Charlie Leone now? He's dead and buried. You're not spending time in jail."

" Yeah, well I'm sendin' somebody down to Plymouth for that Fury. Get it the hell out of the area."

" You will do nothing without my coordination, Grig."

" You don't tell me what to do, man."

Dimitri stood and grinned. He held the phone out. " Oh, really? Maybe you'd like to rethink the events of the last ten days?"

" *You... you.*" Grig said nothing for at least ten seconds. " I know there's more to this Charlie Leone thing."

" I have friends, Grig. Friends in law enforcement and friends on the other side. I don't think you want to meet any of them. You will not do anything until I talk to Horwitz and I see you when I get up there."

" You're a double crosser."

" Then you'd better do what you're told to do." He slowly lowered the phone and walked into the corridor. Ridder had propped his folded arms on the counter and leaned forward toward Rita. " Conrad."

Ridder's head snapped left. " Yes, sir."

" Rita, I want to see Goodwin now," said Dimitri forcefully. Grignano upset him, but he knew Grignano would comply with his orders.

" Yes, Mr. Hunter."

" Come on, Conrad." Ridder mumbled something to Rita, and she giggled as she sashayed down the corridor in her tight white skirt. " As soon as we get this station, you won't be working those late hours."

" I don't mind. You get unique callers at that time."

" Repeat after me: I don't need to work in the middle of the night."

" Repeat after me. My manager is a dim wit."

" Funny boy."

Goodwin, a tall Yankee with wire rimmed glasses and silver wavy hair, stood in his office doorway. " Hello, Sam."

" Harris, how are you this afternoon?"

" Fine, I am fine. I do have to compliment our late night man. Hat's off to you, Conrad. You are drawing in listeners from all over New England. Another month and you'll call the shots as major investor in the station."

" I look forward to it.

" Yes, I think we can raise what little advertising rates we have at those hours. Congratulations."

" Thank you. As I was just telling Sam, people at that time of night are more perceptive than you might think."

" You're right. You may be creating a new art form here." He turned to Dimitri. " I want to let you both know even though I will have a twenty percent stake in the station, Conrad you can let it roll."

" So, everything is on schedule with the purchase?" asked Dimitri.

" Yes, of course. After all this time, we'll let the attorneys battle out the small stuff," said Goodwin as Norman Ginta from the news room emerged from one of the broadcast areas down front. He carried a yellowed lined paper in his hand.

" What's on the docket tonight, Norman?"

Norman's round face flattened. " Well, we have a missing persons report filed at the police station."

" Source."

" Dan Jansen."

Dimitri looked at Ridder. Ridder shifted his weight between each foot.

" Well, we're on our way out. I just wanted to checked out the status of the sale."

" I understand. Thanks for stopping by, Sam. Some night next week, we'll all have dinner. Sign the papers, take the pictures..."

" Good idea." He motioned Ridder down the hallway.

" I knew it. I knew it."

" Quiet, Conrad. Let's go outside." They marched by the front desk and Rita waved at Ridder. Dimitri opened the outside door and Ridder ran by him.

" I knew it. Jansen knows. He knows!"

" He only knows they're missing. How the hell is he going to find them? "

Dimitri raised his head back and laughed into the sky. " You worry too much. We've got it made."

21

Roz shifted, worked the clutch and backed the blue convertible away from the parking meters. Tucker smoked a thin tiperillo, shook his head and exhaled quickly. The sun caught his rattled blue eyes and beard stubble. Kathryn held his wrist. "What's the matter, Tucker? You all right?"

"Just amazed we're back here. This can't be real."

"It's real. I don't know how Rashid did it, but look around you. You don't see any computers, fax machines, and Roz's cell phone doesn't work."

He nodded and chucked the tiperillo out of the convertible. "Again, the idea is to not let Sid onto what we're doing. Find out about that car and find out about Grignano. Just as well Jansen had to stay on duty."

"Right." She thought back to last night in the hotel and how they sat next to the table radio and listened to the clear voice of Conrad Ridder take phone calls on his late night radio show. "What about the backfire? Sounds like there might be a witness to those shots."

"I know." said Tucker. "Apparently, we have time, plenty of time."

The convertible's radio blasted with a song about a purple people eater and Kathryn grinned. "What is *that*, Roz?"

"The Purple People Eater. This was an oldies song. The thing just came out. I just heard The Witch Doctor."

Tucker opened the door and they climbed onto the bench seat. " Can't say this was one of my favorites. I agree with the kid from the fish market: give me Elvis."

Roz shifted the car and they started back to Route 44. She began an off key rendition. Kathryn smiled and as the wind blew her hair back, she studied the astonishing changes at the Court Street intersection. The old gas pumps were tall and narrow and attendants raced to pump gas and service customers. One of the men in a white uniform swiped a squeegee quickly over the rear window of a green Chevy with a metal visor instead of a tinted windshield.

The pizza place across the street forty years in the future was preceded by white clapboard houses with wood shutters. The cars at the traffic lights were larger and weighed down with chrome, but not as shiny as the antiques she had seen in the future. Roz shifted and smoothly brought the Ford up the hill. Things were not too different along the side streets. Ahead, the cemetery and an older bridge were smaller and aligned differently along the highway.

" Take a left. Roz."

" In the cemetery? I hate cemeteries." She down shifted and signaled.

" Up the hill. Look at how much smaller the trees are up there and some older ones that were gone later."

Roz drove up the narrow road. Kathryn directed her to the top of the hill. The short green grass was shaved by the mound covering Charlie Leone's freshly dug grave, and a wide variety of flowers, highlighted with wilted red roses, were spread over the fresh dirt. Tucker leaned on the window frame.

" He's been in the ground less than a week. No stone. Nothing... I don't know how the hell we're back here. But we have to find the truth. We must be here to nail Rider, Dimitri and the other guy."

" Grignano."

Kathryn stared at Charlie's grave for some time, trying to picture from her dream what he was like in the good times before he was defrauded by Dimitri. His wife had just lost her husband and stood to losing her house.

She looked into Tucker's intense eyes. His teeth were crushed together as he spoke. " This Dimitri, he had Charlie's car sabotaged and took his money. How low can you get? The bastard..."

" Let's go," said Kathryn.

* * *

Stripped of the gas stations and shopping plazas Route 44 retained a strikingly rural character. The water tower, painted pale green, was stuck between the short scrub oaks and pines coating the surrounding hills. A profound sense of simplicity, before the massive influx of people and changes, swept over Kathryn as Roz drove along the open highway's broken white lines. The complex traffic signal lights at the five-way intersection was presently controlled by faded red stops signs. She smiled and the wind ruffled her hair as they zoomed up the long hill toward the farm.

Where the hill leveled, the future slumping white farm silo stood straight. Fields were plowed, and cornrows dotted the hill to the wood poles connecting the electrical lines. A couple of barns were positioned behind an additional wing of the

white clapboard farmhouse. Men in denim overalls moved about the yard and another man bounced on a glossy red tractor across the distant hill.

"Cows," said Tucker, pointing the numerous Holsteins grazing in the sunlight across the grassy area to the right.

Roz modulated her voice and sounded like a disgruntled cow. Kathryn grinned and shook her head as Route 44 cut into a wooded section. The tract developments were not yet built. A multitude of wires were strewn between weathered gray telephone poles, through the tree branches and eventually crossed open cranberry bogs. A few hundred yards away groups of workers marched across earthen dikes above the square, irrigated bogs. She looked ahead for the Horwitz's sign seen only in her dreams. "I hope we pull this off."

"Piece of cake, darlin'. Sid doesn't know who the hell we are," said Tucker.

Reality mirrored Kathryn's dream when she saw the salvage yard's hanging sign and, unlike the future development, rows of abandoned cars were heaped over the grassy hills and pine grove forest. Roz shifted the Ford onto the dirt road. Lucy and Smitty were up here less than a week ago and now were at the bottom of Plymouth Bay.

Her heart thumped as Roz coasted to stop next to blue and green Chevy, parked front of the tar paper shack. She knew Sid Horwitz, the same man who's whitened face was half frozen in the nursing home, was inside the shack. This Sid Horwitz had not yet grown old. As the German Shepherds barked at the window, the car engine again sputtered and fought to stay running. With a quick puff the engine went out.

Sid, thinner in his tee shirt and with short dark hair covering his head, stepped from the open door and laughed. The mermaid tattoo was darker and

prominent on his arm as he pointed at the Ford. " You gonna drop her off right now?"

" Timing is off,' said Tucker, stepping from the car.

" Sounds like it needs a tune up," said Sid. " What can I do for ya?"

" You Mr. Horwitz?" asked Tucker.

" Call me Sid. You lookin' for a car or just parts for that Ford?"

" I don't know... What do you have in '52 Fords?"

" Yeah, we gut '52's and you can check the '50's, the '51's..." Roz caught his eye. " And how are you, baby?"

" I'm not your baby."

" I asked how you were doin'"

" Just wonderful, Sid. I just love spending my afternoons in a junkyard."

" This ain't no junkyard. It's an auto salvage."

" Right," she said, panning the rows of dismantled cars.

Kathryn was taken aback by the vibrancy in Sid's gait and speech. He spun around to Tucker, but kept glancing at Roz. " Look around, man. You need tools, call me." He looked Kathryn over and smiled. " Your girlfriend?"

" Yeah."

Then he smiled at Roz and stared at her. " What are you lookin' at?"

" Whaddaya doing Saturday night?"

" You don't waste any time, do ya? I can't even think past tomorrow, Big Sid."

Kathryn crossed her arms and scanned back toward the woods. She wondered if Charlie's Fury was still hidden up the knoll. " Tucker, you want to look around?"

" Good idea. You got any cars that require just a little work?" asked Tucker.

But Sid seemed taken with Roz. " What's your name, sweetheart?"

" Little Bo Peep. Come on guys, let's take a look around."

" Playin' hard to get... Okay."

" Yeah, real hard to get."

" I'm game," said Sid.

Roz rolled her eyes and as they walked into the yard Kathryn elbowed Roz.

" I think he kind of goes for you, Roz."

" Be still my heart."

Kathryn smiled, looked up the hill and spoke in a low voice. " I'm sure Charlie's car was up this hill. I remember Lucy and Smitty climbing the hill."

" Let's check it out," said Tucker, glancing at Roz. " I think he does go for you."

" Will you guys cut it out? The guy is slime."

Tucker raised his index finger. " No, we might be able to use it to our advantage."

" I am not going out with that guy. I won't do it. I know what he wants and I don't want to get onboard."

" You might be able to find out about Grignano."

" I'm not listening," said Roz, traipsing along the car-lined trail.

Kathryn trekked up the incline, paralleling the abandoned cars along the woods. She looked at Tucker's chiseled face. The crows' peaks compressed as he thought. She tapped his arm. " I can see why Jansen never solved it."

" Sure, he didn't know what we know. They hid it too well. And I bet nobody fully investigated the reports of shots near the rock."

" You mean they thought it was a car back firing?" asked Tucker.

" Even if they didn't... what was to prove? Dimitri deep-sixed the bodies before anyone knew Smitty and Lucy were gone. The same question remains: How do we get people to start checking the harbor?"

When they reached the top of the hill Kathryn moved under the pines toward the space between a rusted wood bed truck and a smashed red Buick. She scrambled back to Roz and Tucker. " Gone... This was the space. I'm sure of it!"

" Damn... Damn!" Tucker knelt down and ran his fingers along tire tracks dragged across the grass and dirt. " It hasn't been out of here long. No sir."

" But where did they bring it?" asked Kathryn. " See, Jansen would have no way of knowing that. Sid wouldn't tell him."

" Sid's a pain in the ass," said Roz near the truck.

" Yeah," said Tucker, standing. He's a pain in the ass all right. But he knows where the Fury is."

" You think he knows Grignano?" asked Kathryn.

" Sure he does. We find Grignano, we find Dimitri's hand in Charlie's murder," said Tucker. He looked down the slope toward the shack. " Roz, you need to go out with him."

" Forget it."

" It's perfect because he set it up. There's no way he'd think we were looking for information. Let's get down the hill before he sees us snooping around the space."

" Roz, he likes you," said Kathryn, grinning.

" I'm not listening, Kathryn Marie."

Kathryn walked over to her. " What's the worst that could happen?"

" Oh, I know the worst that could happen."

They started down the hill again. Tucker spoke to Roz without turning.

" Roz, all we need to know is the answer to one question: What did they do with Charlie's Fury?"

" I told you guys, I'm not listening."

" Or Grignano's activities," said Kathryn.

" That may be pushing it," replied Tucker. " Roz, you can do it."

Roz parroted the words from the Purple People Eater as she moved along the wrecks. The dogs barked out front and Sid held a wrench and a greasy metal part in his hand as he spoke with three young guys. He looked over to Roz. " What do you say, beautiful, you want to go to the drive-in tomorrow and see The Blob?"

" The what?" asked Roz.

Sid used his hands as he spoke. " The Blob. See, this blob that comes in on a meteor and starts spreading. Eats up the diner. Where you been?"

" You want me to go with you tomorrow night and watch a movie about a blob of something eating a diner?"

" Yeah, what do you say, beautiful?"

" We'll double date, Sid," said Tucker.

Sid crunched his nose. " Yeah, what the hell? You didn't find what you were looking for?"

" We'll have to look when we have more time," said Kathryn.

" Or maybe just bring the car in for a tune up."

" What exactly were you looking for?" asked Sid.

" Parts. Body parts," said Roz.

Sid laughed. " I like you, chipmunk."

" Wonderful."

" Where do we pick you up?" asked Tucker.

" On 44 near town. Samoset Street, number 16, second floor. Make it seven-thirty. They don't start the show until it gets dark." He raised his brows to Roz and moved his fingers quickly. " Bye, chipmunk, look forward to seeing you."

" The pleasure is all yours,." said Roz, but Sid laughed.

" I like you. You're funny."

" I'm just a laugh a minute," said Roz as she started back to the Ford.

" We'll see you tomorrow," said Tucker.

They climbed inside the car and Roz attempted to start the engine. Tucker pulled the choke and it turned over. Roz shook her head. " You guys, Sid and me and The Blob. Thanks a lot."

She shifted the Ford and rumbled along the dirt road. Traffic whizzed by on Route 44. Before they reached the end of the dirt road, a white Volkswagen passed the salvage yard and headed toward Plymouth. Kathryn leaned forward, her hands on the metal dash. " Ridder, that's Ridder!"

" The little murderer," said Roz as she spun in the dirt and the tires caught the highway asphalt. The Ford shook as she accelerated.

The Volkswagen passed the farm and crossed under the high-tension lines. Roz shifted and closed the distance as the road dipped toward the five corners below. Ridder's brake lights never brightened when he stopped abruptly. Roz downshifted and rolled into his back bumper. The driver's door flew open and the dark haired Conrad Ridder, wearing a white shirt and thin black tie, hurled a cigarette to the pavement. His concave dark eyes were surrounded by smooth skin and his voice was higher than his radio voice. " You some kind of wise-ass?"

" I didn't know wise-asses were categorized," said Roz.

" I'm in the right. You rammed me."

" Don't bother the lady," said Tucker, stepping from the car.

He whined as if he were a baby. " She rammed me, she rammed me."

" You slammed on the brakes with no brake lights, you turkey!"

The thin, youthful Ridder contemplated Tucker's words. He bent over and checked the chrome bumper. " You know I'm on the radio, so you're trying to harass me."

" About to launch your career, are you?"

Ridder looked baffled. " See, you know I'm on the radio."

His eyes caught Kathryn as horns blasted behind them and vehicles pulled around. Tucker laughed and stood within inches of Ridder's nose.

" You're Conrad Ridder the famous DJ."

Ridder backed up to his car. " I am a late night host, not a DJ. You follow me back to the station right now and we'll talk about damages."

" WXBN?" asked Kathryn.

" Yes." He slammed the door and shifted the car away from the light.

Roz pulled the Ford over as Ridder shifted and zipped up the hill.

" I never stopped to think how people got to be where they are," said Tucker, returning to the Ford. " You know, all the events leading up to what people become."

" He has talent. No doubt about that," said Kathryn. She watched the white Volkswagen disappear over the hill. " What a price those around him have paid."

" Hey, guys," said Roz. " I got news for you. This is a rented car and I ain't got no 1958 license. What if he pushed for damages?"

" The damage was minimal," said Tucker. " He's a little jerk. When I think he killed those two kids. I'm going to nail that son of a bitch."

22

Dimitri descended the train coach steps into a crowded Grand Central Station. Robert Dawson, in a long sleeve, starched white shirt, scurried through the crowd. He kept his brown leather briefcase straight by his side and marched if he was still in a military parade. Clean-shaven, even in late afternoon, he nodded once when he spotted Dimitri and put out his hand.

" Right on time."

" Robert, good evening."

" I wanted to come out here personally to head off any speculation about what maybe happening in Plymouth."

Dimitri picked up his bag and they blended into the crowd along the hissing train. " I don't understand."

" We got an incoming call from a man who says he's working for you. Grignano was his name and he was from Brockton, Massachusetts."

Dimitri stopped quickly. " I told him not to call down here."

" I thought that was the case. I advised him quite emphatically not to call again. He said he understood but insisted you call him right away."

" What did he want? Everything was fine when I left."

" He only reiterated the importance of you're calling him," said Robert.

Dimitri closed his eyes briefly. " I need to get to a phone."

Robert pointed across the benches to the far side of the station. " Of course. Next to the concessions."

" Thank you, I'll be right back." He walked into the sun rays sweeping across the wide expanse. Hopefully, Robert had not placed a called anyone in the organization. He approached the wooden booths along the wall and pulled back the folding doors. Grignano calling New Jersey was unforgivable. He slammed the folding doors, he quickly sat on the stool and grit his teeth as he dialed the operator. " Operator."

" Yes, Operator. A collect call from Dimitri Meritokis. Number I am dialing is in Brockton, Massachusetts, JU6-0823."

" Thank you, sir."

Dimitri pinched his tightened brows and watched the people dart along the train cars and through the gargantuan station. The last thing he needed was a report from Grignano about something gone wrong. With Leone's niece and her boyfriend dead, he was convinced his promotion of Ridder's talents and purchase of the station was a sure thing. As the line rang Robert read the newspaper on one of the side benches. Anyone other than Robert would have reported the call.

Grignano's distant voice was both loud and crude. " Yeah."

" I have a collect call from Demos Merokits"

" Dimitri Meritokis," he said quickly.

" Yeah, let it ride."

" Grig."

" Hey man, we got trouble."

Dimitri needed a few seconds to get his anger under control. " You listen to me, *Grig*. I'll kill you if you ever call down to New Jersey again."

" Tucker and Jenner were at Horwitz's today along with another woman according to George at the police station. They called Jansen and he called the DA's office."

" Oh, really? The DA's office... Well, well. I want to know who the hell these people are. Did Jansen hire them?"

" I don't know. Should I call Horwitz?"

" No, do not call Horwitz under any circumstances. He knows nothing about what we've done. He's just followed orders. You locate these people."

" Kill them?"

" No. No. First find out why the hell they're looking into this. I will be back on tomorrow morning's train to Boston. I will call you once I get into South Station."

" Hey, I'm getting nervous. I'm the guy they're going to come after."

" *Find out who those people are.*" Dimitri hung up the phone, but held onto it. " Damn..."

Fresh air and a cavalcade of noise filled the booth when he pushed open the oak doors and he thought about killing Jansen, but with three people already dead, and others asking questions, Jansen's demise might trigger an expanded investigation. He crossed the busy station and remained concerned about outsiders tiptoeing around Plymouth. As he neared Robert, the realization his plans were in jeopardy, caused him to inhale quickly.

" Bad call?" asked Robert, looking up from the paper.

" I'm having problems with a cop and a couple of other people looking for Leone's car."

Robert raised his dark brows above the paper. " I haven't mentioned anything, but I'm telling you, Dimitri, that station purchase needs to progress without problems." He folded the paper and tucked it under his arm as he stood. As he picked up his briefcase, he looked down into Dimitri's eyes.

" You're batting a thousand, my friend. The future looks good. Everyone is impressed how you raised the money to purchase the radio station."

" It was worth it, Ridder will be a major talent. We'll bring him along."

They started across the huge area. " Having *him* kill the niece and boyfriend will keep him in line. That was considered brilliant."

" I truly believe nothing should get in this kid's way. He has the potential to bring us and himself power, and a bankroll of money."

" That's the name of the game, Dimitri," he said as they sailed around the revolving doors to the waiting black finned Cadillac. " Let's just be sure nothing messes it up."

23

Tucker drove the open Ford convertible past Plymouth Rock to a brown stained, clapboard house beyond the town river. Kathryn wiped her face with a napkin from F.W. Woolworth as Roz finished her charred hot dog. The new bridge in the park was not yet built and the landscape work was not as extensive as in the future.

" Why don't you two see Mrs. Crowell?" asked Tucker. " Let me walk back along the water front and see what I can find out."

" Good idea, we don't want to overwhelm the lady," said Kathryn.

Roz mashed the hot dog, mustard, relish, onions and sauce into her mouth. Tucker glanced over as he held the wheel. " Think you have enough on that dog, Roz?"

" *Mile Long Dog*," she answered, still chewing. " Listen, nobody's made the connection between the backfire and shots. Maybe Sid, but he sure wasn't going to say anything."

" Your boyfriend," said Kathryn, chuckling.

" Watch it."

Tucker nodded as he parked near a bulbous gray car with a dark metal visor atop the windshield. " If we can find out more information, maybe somebody who actually saw the Volkswagen." He shut off the Ford and it did not sputter.

" Hey, how'd you get that thing to shut off?" asked Roz.

" The magic touch," he said, opening the driver's door. He faced Kathryn and Roz on the other side. " Give me forty-five minutes. I'll start asking questions while it's still fresh in people's minds."

Kathryn wiped the mustard off Roz's cheek. " Don't get into trouble."

" Who me?"

" You."

" Yes, Mam'," he said, saluting

" Hey, Tucker, you don't think Ridder will pursue those damages, do you?"

Tucker, his back toward them, kept walking as he replied. " I doubt it. Don't amount to nothin'."

Kathryn half smiled he marched toward the portico. She pressed her lips and was stunned by the growing affection she had for his gruff character. When she turned, Roz stood in front of the car and crossed her arms. " You like him."

" Yeah, I *like* him."

" No, I mean you *like* him."

" I don't know," said Kathryn as they ambled up the brick walk and climbed the front steps. " I can't really figure him out to be honest with you."

" What man can any of us figure out?" Roz gripped the brass knocker and rapped it against the thick wood door. " There's a reason for everything and don't you ever forget it."

" Yes, Mam'."

Kathryn turned toward the portico under the trees. Every time an old car chugged down Water Street she marveled at the fact they were really in 1958. Props were dramatically different here, but the world was remarkably the same. The door

creaked opened and a woman with dyed black hair and glasses, wearing a lavender and black flowery dress, flung open the door.

" Hello."

" Mrs. Crowell?"

" Eleanor."

" Dan Jansen sent us."

" Oh, Danny. Yes, yes about the commotion outside my house last Thursday night. Sure, come in. Please come in."

" Thank you, Mrs. Crowell."

" Please call me Eleanor." Kathryn followed Roz into the cooler house. The blinds were half open, shadowing the living room. Antiques and knick-knacks were stacked on shelves, end tables, even window shelves and the place smelled like fresh cedar chips. " I appreciate your taking the time."

" Does Danny think I heard something else other than backfire?" she asked, sliding into a small wooden rocking chair. Roz and Kathryn sat on the couch's flowery green slip covers.

" Are you sure it was car backfiring?" asked Roz.

" Well, to tell you the truth... I think so. Can I get you anything to eat? A drink perhaps?"

" No thank you. We just ate Woolworth's. Eleanor, did you see anyone out there?" asked Kathryn.

She moistened her lips and moved her head in a slow circular motions as if she could not wait to tell her story. " Well... I had just gotten in my bed and tuned into Playhouse 90. My late husband insisted we get an RCA for the bedroom. I had

a glass of bicarbonate and some cod liver oil. Thank God I drank it or I would have spilled it all over my sheets when I heard the noise."

"It was that loud?" asked Roz.

"Not loud, sudden. Quick bursts," she said, rocking the chair. Kathryn gazed down the stretch of bay past the rock and straight down the sea wall. The portico was less than two hundred yards away. "I rose from bed of course and came down stairs."

"What did you see?" asked Kathryn.

"Nothing. You sure I can't get you something to eat?"

Kathryn smiled. "Thank you. We're all set."

"See, I looked out the window and I saw the rock, the sidewalk in the street light. It was pretty quiet like it always is at night."

"Was anyone near the portico?" asked Kathryn. "You know walking around."

"You mean the rock?" asked Eleanor.

"Right."

Eleanor turned in the rocking chair and looked out the window. "No, I saw only one car later when I went back upstairs."

"A car? What kind of car?" asked Roz.

"It was a Studebaker. Just like Edna McGillicutty's."

"Was it her car?" asked Kathryn.

"No, Edna has a light blue car. This car was black. But it was a Studebaker."

Kathryn wrote down the time in her little notebook. "Did the car stop?"

"No, it continued along the sea wall and I went back to bed."

Roz turned on the couch and leaned toward the window. " You hear anything else out there, El?"

Eleanor removed her sharp edged glasses. " I could have been dreaming, but I heard a boat engine." Roz opened her dark eyes, stepped back from the window and gave Kathryn the thumbs up sign. " You know one of those little speedboat engines. I was in and out of sleep so I can't say for sure."

" Do you know Conrad Ridder?" asked Kathryn.

" Oh, Conrad. I've known Conrad since he used to deliver papers on his bike. Always an industrious boy. Worked very hard. Still does. And smart. He's one of those kids you know will get ahead."

Kathryn waited for her to say something additional about Ridder. " You see him at all on Thursday night?"

" I heard him."

" Mam'?"

" Well, I turned on the radio. I do that when I can't sleep. I sit here in the rocking chair and listen to him and the kooks that call into his show. " She pointed to a huge wood veneer floor model radio near the kitchen doorway.

" They really got up his dander that night. I guess he was just in a bad mood."

" That's interesting," said Roz.

" He kept lecturing everybody about doing the right thing. He sounded like Pastor Benson. Pastor gets in the pulpit and starts castigating the world. Last Sunday-"

Kathryn looked at Roz again and nodded. " Do you know Sam Hunter?"

" Sam Hunter. Let me see. No, I can't say I know any Sam Hunter."

" Did you see anyone in trouble by the rock?" asked Kathryn as she stood.

Eleanor slowly shook her head. " As my late husband used to say: See nothing, hear nothing: Stay out of trouble."

" But did you see or hear anything, El?" said Roz as she also stood.

" Nothing."

Kathryn tried to think of something else to ask. She rubbed her teeth on her lower lip, glanced out at the rock and back to Eleanor in the rocking chair. " Well, give me a call if anyone you recall seeing anything unusual out there or if you know of anyone who might have been out there. We're at the Red Line Motel."

" Yes, of course. What happened out there?"

" Probably nothing," lied Kathryn.

" But maybe something," said Eleanor, standing. " Danny will find out. He's always been a good cop. Danny and I graduated together in 1932. Danny was at Corregidor. Was wounded, too. He didn't have to go but he volunteered."

" He's is a good man."

" You sure you don't want something to eat?"

" No, we have to be going," said Kathryn.

" Thanks for the info, El," said Roz as they drifted toward the front door.

Light burst into the hall when Eleanor opened the door. " I know a lot of people in town. I'll talk to them. See if they saw anything out there."

" Good, thanks," said Kathryn. She shook Eleanor's hand and they stepped outside.

" Bye, El..."

Kathryn shuffled down the brick wall, still thinking about the scenario played out two hundred yards ahead of her at the rock. " That Studebaker belongs to somebody."

" See nothing, hear nothing: Stay out of trouble. That should be our motto back here... The Studebaker could be a tourist," said Roz.

" If we're lucky, a local. Let's head over to the rock."

24

The heavy cars with white wall tires were parked near the tourists lingering around the portico. Across Water Street the town river cut under the tree branches and steadily moved toward the sea. Kathryn's fast food dinner with Tucker in that park was forty years in the future. She focused on the portico's gray pillars and remembered back to the dream. The real events unfolded just last Thursday night. Ridder arrived that night in his Volkswagen and probably parked where she now walked. Lucy and Smitty had raced down this sidewalk to the rock. Maybe they had enough evidence to prompt Jansen to an official investigation of Hunter and Ridder's activities. But Conrad Ridder, armed, and fearing the end of his short-lived career, stormed the Plymouth Rock monument.

A tour guide in emerald Pilgrim garb spewed forth a history of the rock. He stepped in front of the group as Kathryn and Roz approached the granite pillars. "The story of Plymouth Rock has historical validity. As early as 1741 the town mentioned constructing a pier to house the rock. One of the town's aged citizens, Thomas Faunce, carried to the rock in a chair, at that time said his good-byes because he feared the rock being buried forever. His father, who arrived in the New World in 1623 on the Ann, was a constant conveyer of the story of the Pilgrims stepping on the rock you see below."

With Roz by her side, a mesmerized Kathryn studied the surf grazing the rock's rounded surface. She gripped the black metal grate. Fear surged through her stomach as the dream image of Ridder aiming the gun from behind this grate

formed and the gunshots exploded in her head. The water washed rock again and the bordering sand showed no evidence of blood.

" Now the rock split during transportation to Town Square in 1774. Although housed in separate locations for many decades, the rock was cemented back together along the waterfront in 1880. On December 21, 1921 the top was hoisted by steam crane into storage. The portico you are standing under was built by Roy B. Beattie of Fall River, Massachusetts. The same company supervised the joining together of the rock into a square granite foundation under the control of renowned sculptor, Cyrus E. Dallin. "

" I know Ridder shot that gun, Roz," whispered Kathryn.

" We need proof," said Roz in an equally low voice. She put her hand on Kathryn's shoulder as the guide continued.

" Dallin's painstaking work of bringing sections of the rock together with weather resisting cement transforms the rock to its present configuration. Chiseled to the Manifest Destiny of the west is date of 1620, the year the Pilgrims arrived in the new world."

Roz pulled her away from the group and back to the road. " Someone in the black Studebaker must have seen what happened or at the least observed Ridder's Volkswagen."

Kathryn nodded and looked at the stretch of parking meters along the sea wall. " What about the Nash?"

" The what?"

" The car Lucy and Smitty were driving. Where is it?"

" Good question. I didn't see any Nash in my buddy, Sid's junkyard."

" No, I can guarantee it's not there," said Kathryn. A hundred yards away, along the shops, Tucker waved in the haze. " There's Tucker."

The tour guide fielded questions as they trekked toward the Mayflower. Roz shook her head. " How the hell do we prove Ridder killed them? You looked yourself. There's no evidence they were shot on that rock. It was washed away."

" What about the speedboat? Maybe somebody saw the bodies moved off shore. See, Ridder had to kill them because they figured out the thing with Charlie Leone's car."

" I know. All because Dimitri used Charlie's money to fund Ridder and his own success."

" Yup."

Another tour guide brought a new group up to the boat. From the street, Kathryn vaguely heard a references to how the model of the original boat had arrived in Plymouth one year ago in June, 1957. Across the road, Tucker waited for a car to pass and then trotted across the road. He carried a box with a clear plastic front, filled with colored salt-water taffy. " There they are, Frick and Frak."

Kathryn grinned. " You find out anything, Tucker?"

" I talked to a few clerks at the hotels and some people at The Blue Bird Cafe. Nobody saw Ridder or Dimitri down here last Thursday night. I did learn from a shop owner who knows Hunter, that he drives a new red Corvette."

" Dimitri drives a new red Corvette," said Roz, eyeing the taffy box. She dipped her hand into the box, pulled out a handful of colored waxed paper wrapped soft taffy and plopped a few pieces in Kathryn's hand.

Kathryn held the taffy as they wandered over in the salty air and sat on the rough edged sea wall. " Dimitri's car would more than likely be in the area if he

was the one who piloted the little boat into the bay. Eleanor Crowell heard a boat later in the night."

" And he took care of the dirty work," said Roz as she mashed the taffy in her mouth.

" Did this woman see Ridder or his car?" asked Tucker.

" No, but she did see a black Studebaker driving along the road after she heard the shots."

" Ah, someone else was down here. Good work."

" Just call me Perry Mason, Tuck. How are we supposed to find one black Studebaker?"

" Tucker will track it down, right Tucker?" asked Kathryn, elbowing Tucker in the ribs.

Tucker smiled, unwrapped a piece of taffy and peeled back the waxed paper with his fingers. " I am real surprised Ridder would be so stupid to fire a gun in the open."

" Maybe he panicked," said Kathryn. Tucker placed the taffy on her tongue. The caramel taste spread in her mouth and she flattened the taffy with her teeth. " I'm sure Ridder was real scared they were going to tell someone about Charlie Leone."

" His illustrious career," said Roz. " *Paaa-leeese.*"

Tucker closed the taffy box. " What do you mean, Roz?"

" The guy 's ambition is extraordinary. He probably saw all his plans thwarted by Smitty and Lucy and he fired. Then he must have contacted Dimitri."

" What amazes me," said Kathryn, swallowing the last vestige of the taffy, " is he actually got on the air later. Guilty as sin, but he had the piece of mind after committing murder to get on the air. Wow..."

" Okay." Tucker stepped from the wall and faced them. " We have a Studebaker and a red Vet. And we have Ridder possibly using a phone if he contacted Dimitri."

Roz pointed to the phone booth in front of a small restaurant across the street. " That would be it."

" Could he have placed a long distance call or did he have to contact the operator?" asked Kathryn.

" That's right," said Tucker. " We'll have to check who the operator was that night. Right now, let's get back to the motel, get something to eat and we'll contact Dan Jansen. At least we have something."

25

Kathryn was surprised when Tucker retrieved a message off the desk clerk's white pad. Jansen called during the afternoon and scheduled an eight p.m. meeting at The Wayside with Richard O'Conner from the District Attorney's office. For the first time since the dreams started, she believed the ugly conspiracy might unravel. After a quick dinner, she showered and put on white slacks and a red jersey, purchased a few hours ago at a small department store downtown.

Roz opted to remain at the motel and handed the car keys to Tucker. He shifted into town with the convertible top up. At a small gas station south of town a uniformed man wearing a hat and a gas company red star rocketed from the gas station when the Ford rolled over a black cord, tripping a bell inside.

" Fill it: regular," said Tucker.

" Yes, sir. Fill it: regular. Check under the hood?"

" Good idea."

" Yes, sir."

Kathryn looked out the rear windshield. The man, removed a gas cap from under the trunk area, pulled the nozzle from the pump and stuck it the tank. Tucker chuckled as the guy ran to the pump island and dipped a long handled squeegee into a bucket. He darted to the front windshield, the squeegee pad dripping, and vigorously scrubbed the dirty windshield.

" This guy really earns his money," said Kathryn as the man slid the rubber blade over the water smeared glass, producing a clear view toward the old cars stopping at the Route 44 light.

Moments later he lifted the hood, yanked out the lengthy dip stick and pulled it through a pressed paper towel. He furrowed his brow and leaned around the hood. " Looks fine, sir."

" Thanks," replied Tucker.

" Air for the tires, sir? The front one, on your side, looks a little weak."

" Go for it."

" Sir?"

" Please, yes. Air for the tires."

" Yes, sir."

The man scooted to the air pump next to the building, adjusted the pressure and the machine clicked as the he dragged the pink pump hose around the hood. Kathryn held Tucker's wrist. " Where did this type of service go?"

" Self serve pumps."

" Look at the uniforms, Tucker. Everyone has a niche and a place. I like a man in uniform."

" I don't know if truck drivers wear uniforms in 1958."

" They probably do." She thought about Jansen's message. " Do you think this DA guy will believe what we told Jansen?"

" Don't know," he said as another attendant pulled the nozzle from the gas tank under the trunk and placed it back in the pump. Air gushed inside the front tire. " I'd say that fact he's agreed to the meeting is good. We get the DA on our side, Ridder and Dimitri are sunk. Sunk. We gut em' "

" I want to somehow get any records Dimitri might have at his house. Records would convict him."

" Remember, he's still Hunter. At least here. And records aren't going to be readily available."

" Will that be all, sir?" asked the attendant, holding the airline in his hand.

" Yes, thank you. It's good to see such service."

" Thank you, sir." He turned toward the tall and thin metal pumps. Kathryn marveled at the rotating black and white numbers on a rounded spool. " That will be three dollars even."

Tucker removed the bills from his wallet. The man tipped his hat once the money was in his hand. " Thanks again."

" You have a good night, sir. And you, too, Mam'."

" Thank you. Tucker, there was no LCD on that pump. The numbers spun around like the old fashioned odometer here in the car."

Tucker started the car, shifted and pulled onto Main Street. She studied his well defined facial features as he drove in the traffic past Main Street's buildings. He crossed over the town river, a few hundred yards from the portico and continued on Charlie Leone's route to The Wayside. Charlie's anger with Hunter and his fear of losing his life's savings must have haunted his thoughts upon leaving town. The well traversed the road, bordered with older, well-kept houses followed a ridge above the water. The Wayside's pink neon light flashed at the bottom of the hill near the town beach. She scanned the same parking lot where someone had tinkered under Charlie's hood and drained brake fluid.

The Ford's directional clicked and Tucker veered into the lot. " I wish we had more information going into this."

" You mean absolute proof?"

" Yup."

" Hopefully this guy, O'Conner will help us get what we need."

* * *

Jansen wore his blue police shirt, his tie loosened, and he had a beer stein in his hand. He sat with his partner, gray haired Johnny Hegarty, and introduced a shorthaired kid in his twenties as Rick O'Conner, one of the ambitious lawyers in the DA's office. According to Jansen, O'Conner had the approval of his boss to begin a preliminary investigation into Sam Hunter's business dealings. O'Conner had a yellow legal pad, a pen and a cup of black coffee on the booth table. Kathryn did not like the way he smiled before and after asking a question. " How do you know about this Capital Hill land deal?"

" That isn't important," said Tucker.

He sipped the coffee. " It most certainly is in a court of law."

" Lucy Leone," said Kathryn.

" I understand from Dan that Lucy Leone is missing along with her boyfriend."

Kathryn did not dare say anything about the murders. " That is correct. They were last seen Thursday night."

" Forgive me, but I'm empowered to look into any illegalities resulting from Sam Hunter's the land dealings." O'Conner's rounded blue eyes scoured the restaurant. " And you say Capital Hill required no investors. Charlie Leone put up all the money himself. Eighty thousand."

" That is what she said," said Tucker. " She said Charlie told her before he left for this very restaurant."

" Gwen over there," said Hegarty, pointing to a bleached blonde with short hair. " She says Charlie had two glasses of wine and talked about some local things. No mention of Capital Hill. "

O'Conner scribbled and flipped back his notes. " Leone's blood alcohol levels were not consistent with just two glasses of wine."

" Somebody got to him," said Kathryn.

" How is that? Who?" asked O'Conner.

" Somebody between here and the bottom of the hill on 3A."

" Interesting theory, Miss Jenner." He glanced at his notes again. " And his car is no longer in Horwitz's yard in Carver?"

Tucker looked at Kathryn and tapped his fingers rapidly on the table edge. " Find that car, O'Conner, and you might have something."

" I would say that would be a logical assumption, Mr. Tucker."

Tucker raised his brows. " Can't you make Sid Horwitz testify?"

" Not at this stage. If the investigation progresses, why yes of course. I will, however question Mr. Horwitz about the car." Again he looked at his notes. " I am having the waitresses and anyone working here last Saturday night to make a list of people they remember being in the restaurant. I am working on getting a search warrant for Hunter's apartment in North Plymouth as well as Charlie Leone's bank withdrawals. If anything illegal took place, we should be able to establish a trail."

" What do you know about Hunter?" asked Tucker.

" I know he was Mr. Leone's chief salesman."

" Is that his real name?" asked Kathryn.

O'Conner held the coffee cup halfway between his mouth and the table.

" Why would you ask that?"

" Lucy thought he had another address," said Kathryn. " If you were going to take somebody for eighty thousand dollars, Mr. O 'Conner, would you use your real name?"

O'Conner finished the coffee. " Remember you are talking about allegations, Miss Jenner."

" I understand... His name is Dimitri Meritokis." O'Conner's placid face reminded her of Sid Horwitz's stroke ridden countenance. " I just think for practical matters it might be smart to find out about his background."

" I'll consider that of course." He wrote something on the yellow pad.

" That's Meritokis?"

" Correct."

Kathryn recognized the owner of The Wayside from when they first entered the restaurant. He was a tall man, probably in his fifties. " Excuse me, Mr. O'Conner. That phone call you were waiting for."

" Great, thank you. If you people will excuse me." O'Conner slid from the booth and moved with the owner to an opening behind the bar.

" Looks like he'll get this thing moving," said Jansen.

" I think he's a bullshit artist," said Tucker.

" He seems sincere, " said Kathryn.

" Something about him I don't like."

" Look, Tucker," said Hegarty. " If Hunter has any records of the scam, they'll be at the house."

" Maybe. Maybe not..."

Kathryn folded her hands and wondered if Tucker was being too cautious. Across the bar, the smiling O' Conner retreated to the booth alone. " I have good news. Judge Winslow has just granted the order. We can search Hunter's house in the morning."

Tucker continued to tap his fingers as he looked at Kathryn. She turned to O' Conner as he sat. " What if you find evidence of the scam?"

" Then he's all done," said Jansen.

" What about the radio station?" asked Tucker.

O' Conner tightened his brows. " Radio station?"

" Yeah, we have evidence the money might go into purchasing WXBN."

" Really? Who told you that?" asked O'Conner.

" I'm not divulging my sources right now," said Tucker.

" Well, if you want me to do anything about it, you'll have to name names."

" I'm telling you Charlie Leone's money will end up buying that radio station."

" I'll make a note of it, but without evidence I'm not putting it on the priority list. Such sales need FCC approval and take time. Besides, if you have concerns about this dual identity, any background check would certainly come through in a station purchase. But that could take time."

" Not if it was not in Hunter's name," added Tucker.

" Then who's name would it be in?" asked O'Conner, not smiling.

" Conrad Ridder."

" Who?"

" He has a late night talk show," said Kathryn.

" You have evidence of all this?" asked Jansen.

" Yup."

O'Conner scribbled several more lines onto the legal pad. Then he grinned.
" You know this sounds rather outlandish."

Tucker grit his teeth. " And why is that? The guy got the cash from Charlie Leone and then killed him."

" And where are Lucy and Smitty?" asked Kathryn.

" Are you saying their disappearance is related to this?"

Tucker leaned toward him and banged his fist on the table. " Absolutely."

" We have a witness who heard what could be shots down by the rock," said Kathryn.

" Now wait a minute," said Jansen. " Eleanor Crowell heard a car backfire."

" I would check it out," said Tucker. " She also heard a speedboat heading into the bay later on."

" I didn't know that," said Jansen.

" Suppose they were killed," said Tucker.

" That is a stretch," said Hegarty.

Tucker shook his head. " Then where the *hell* are they? You know, Dan, they were looking into Charlie's death!"

" Well, I don't know, but to say they were murdered by the bay..."

" We can't include that as part of the investigation even if they were really looking into Mr. Leone's death," said O' Conner.

Tucker popped out of the booth. " Hey, you people can't see the forest for the trees."

O'Conner smiled one more time. " I have my parameters, Mr. Tucker."

" Maybe you should expand them, " said Tucker as Kathryn followed him from the booth.

" If you want evidence, we'll get it for you. Good evening."

" Tucker," said Jansen. " He can't overstep his bounds."

" I don't think he is overstepping his bounds. We'll call you."

" Right." Tucker took her arm and left them in the booth. He opened the outside door near the register and stepped into the parking lot's fresh air. " That guy will drag this. We'll have to do this all ourselves."

" He is going to search Hunter's place."

" So what?" asked Tucker. He put his arm around her and they walked toward the moonlit jetty. " Kathryn, somethin' ain't right. I'm tellin' you. I have a bad feeling about this."

Tucker's arm was still around her when they reached the jetty rocks. " So, what do we do?"

He gazed across the silver ripples and toward the bluffs where they had first arrived from Rashid's office. " Well, maybe I've been lookin' at this the wrong way. I keep thinking we have to solve every part of this. If we're going to nail both Dimitri and Ridder, we only have to prove who he really is and that he either defrauded Charlie Leone or hired somebody to kill him. As far as Ridder goes... somebody has to have seen the Volkswagen there."

" Someone driving the black Studebaker."

" Yeah, or somebody else along the waterfront. Dimitri brought Ridder to the top of his game as the years went by. He's not stupid. He wouldn't keep his records out in the open. We need to find the other cars, the Fury and the Nash."

" Good old Sid Horwitz."

" He knows."

" Roz will have to get that information from him," said Kathryn, chuckling. " She's going to love that"

" And tomorrow morning we talk to Charlie's wife. I can't believe she knows nothing about this."

" Good idea."

She sat with Tucker the rocks. Her hair fluttered in the cooler sea air off the water. She leaned her head against his chest and he slowly secured his arm around her shoulder. The moonbeams pinged across the rolling waves. Living in a time before she was born was an unsettling, lonely feeling, but his touch grounded her fears and his tenacity made her believe it was really possible to attain justice.

* * *

Roz stood outside the motel lobby, gyrating under the canopy's yellow porch bulb as Tucker pulled the Ford into the lot. Kathryn slid over from Tucker and leaned toward her. " Hey, Roz. You have a nice relaxing night?"

" Grignano."

" What about him?" asked Tucker.

" He was here."

Tucker gripped the wheel. " Come on."

" I was out walking. I saw this Harley parked right out here. When I got closer, I saw him. Stocky guy with black hair, wearing jeans and a tee shirt. He was talking to the clerk."

" How do you know it was Grignano?" asked Tucker.

" I heard him say his name was Anthony Grignano. He was asking about us by name. Wasn't there a motorcycle in the restaurant parking lot the night Charlie died?"

" He was asking about us?" asked Kathryn.

" Yeah."

Tucker squinted in the low light and leaned toward the passenger window.

" How the hell did he track us down here?"

" Who cares, honey. I'm not hangin' around to get shot, said Roz, moving backward.

" I wonder if Sid tipped off Grignano?" asked Kathryn.

" I don't think so. We didn't tell Sid who we were," said Tucker. " The only person we told was Jansen. There's somebody getting our information."

" You think Jansen isn't on the level?"

Roz followed the car on foot as Tucker glided to the room and turned off the engine. " No, I'm telling you somebody has big ears. Great. What exactly did Grignano ask?"

" About the Ford."

" Oh, no..." said Kathryn.

" And the clerk said we were here?" asked Tucker.

" Nope," said Roz. " Grignano pressed him, but got nothing. He stepped outside, got on his motorcycle and left."

" We're out of here now," said Tucker. " We ain't takin' the chance he's going to come back. We'll find another hotel away from Plymouth."

" What do you think he's going to do?" asked Kathryn.

" Well, I damn well don't know, but I do know that son of a bitch probably killed Charlie Leone. We *are* out of here."

" What do you think, Roz?" asked Kathryn.

She saluted. " No argument from me. Let's move out, partner."

26

For twenty-four hours they had alluded Grignano. Butterflies crossed Kathryn's stomach as the Ford approached the scene of Charlie Leone's accident. Tucker braked at the bottom of the long hill in Manomet, and she spotted the oak bark, torn to the whiter wood below. Small glass chunks reflected along the road shoulder. Black skid marks were smeared across the asphalt and cut the tall grass. She shook her head as she thought of somebody sabotaging Charlie's car in The Wayside parking lot.

As he drove up the next hill, her mind flashed back to late last night when Tucker checked them into an L shaped motel in Pembroke, north of Plymouth. Lying in bed, the pressure mounted all night as she realized Grignano was somehow tipped off. She trusted Jansen, but agreed with Tucker's thinking about how one of Jansen's conversations had somehow trickled back to Dimitri. Roz wanted to remain at the new hotel.

Tucker slowed near a gas station in a more settled area in Manomet. Kathryn checked the piece of paper where she had written Mrs. Leone's address early this morning. " Number sixty-five Cushman."

" There's Cushman," said Tucker, shifting the Ford. He turned and slowed near a gabled three story house with a louvered glass front porch..

" Poor woman. She sounded so scattered on the phone," said Kathryn.

" Sure, Dimitri just knocked off her husband."

Kathryn nodded and stepped out of the car. A rotund woman with silver hair, wearing a yellow sun dress, appeared at the screen door. Her large arm pushed against the screen and her wasted eyes moistened behind her thick silver glasses as she focused on Kathryn climbing the stairs.

" Thank you for seeing us, Mrs. Leone. I'm sorry about Charlie," said Kathryn, reaching the porch. " I'm Kathryn Jenner and this is John Tucker."

" Mam'."

" Thank you for your concern. Dan Jansen said you were helping him find out about Charlie's bank accounts. Please come in. I apologize, the place is a mess."

" Not at all. We really don't want to intrude."

Casual wicker furniture and a glass table were scattered about the porch area. She brought them into a small foyer and a hallway lined with black and white photographs. Kathryn immediately recognized Lucy standing in a graduation cap and gown with Charlie and Mrs. Leone. A dozen other pictures of Charlie, a short man with striking eyebrows and dark eyes, but a ready smile, adorned the green striped wallpaper.

" Where are Lucy's parents? " asked Tucker.

" You know, they had saved for years for their Bermuda trip. I didn't contact them about Charlie, but this Lucy thing, on top of everything else, is... overwhelming. She loved Charlie. And now she and Smitty have gone off together. "

" I'm sorry, " said Kathryn.

" And Charlie's bank accounts are empty and I don't know why." She led them into a parlor with high back chairs and a smooth blue fabric sofa. " Please sit down."

" Did Charlie tell you about the withdrawals?" asked Kathryn.

" Not a word. See, Charlie usually made a deal and then told me when he was all through with it. Charlie didn't want me to worry."

They sat on the sofa and Mrs. Leone assumed a stiff position in the high back chair. Tucker folded his hands on his thighs and leaned forward. " Any mention of what Charlie was doing? You know, phone calls, people coming to the house."

" Just the usual. Charlie was on the phone all the time being a real estate agent. He had clients coming and going. Salesman coming and going."

" What about Hunter?" asked Tucker.

" Sam? What about him?"

" Was he over here?"

" Oh, no. Charlie called him the wheeler-dealer. He worked the office and field. A business relationship. We never knew him socially."

" Do you know about any deals Hunter may have proposed to Charlie?"

" No... Charlie would get calls from Sam, but-

" Excuse me," said Kathryn. Her stomach knotted and she asked the next question slowly. " *But did Charlie call him?*"

" I suppose so. Yes, yes, of course."

" Do you have a record of your phone calls, say over the last few months?" asked Kathryn.

" I do... What are you getting at?"

Tucker leaned forward again. " Suppose Charlie called someone relating to the money that left his accounts?"

" Yes, Danny mentioned that might be important. He also said someone from the DA's office would be talking to me."

" Can I copy those numbers into my notebook?" asked Kathryn.

" I don't see why not. Sure, if you think it will help. But let me ask you people one thing."

" Yes," said Kathryn.

She paused, swallowed and her eyes sharpened. " Do you think Charlie's accident was an accident?"

Tucker looked at Kathryn and then back at Mrs. Leone. " I think all angles of this have to be checked."

" I understand. And don't think I'm jumping to conclusions." Mrs. Leone furrowed her brow as she stood. Her eyes filled as she headed down the hall. " I'll get the records for you."

Kathryn turned to Tucker when Mrs. Leone left the room. " What do we do, start calling the numbers?"

Tucker sprang from the couch and went to the front window. " Numbers are proof. Remember we need all the physical proof we can get. No one's going to listen to dreams we had."

" Just like the Fury."

" I'm sure the Fury is long gone, too," said Tucker. Mrs. Leone shut a drawer in the other room and he remained at the window, but he swiped open the curtain. " What the hell is that?"

" What do you see, Tucker?"

" I just saw a motorcycle out on 3A."

" No..." She ran to the window and but only saw an empty gas station. " I don't see it."

" Grignano. We have to move fast. Damned fast."

* * *

Tucker stationed himself at the window and Kathryn asked questions about Smitty and Lucy. Mrs. Leone was not sure whether treat the young couple's case as a disappearance. Kathryn vigorously copied dozens of phone numbers, but was confused by the interchanges. " Do you have a list of these local phone names? You know like Union and Juniper."

" Yes, right in the front of the book."

She handed the open directory book to Kathryn. " We have Temple, we have Union, we have Juniper."

" Juniper is long distance to Brockton," said Mrs. Leone.

" Who did Charlie know in Brockton? I have at least a dozen different calls. An equal number to Boston. One to Springfield."

" His office records are even worse."

" Do you have those records?" asked Kathryn.

" Yes, I can call down to the office and have them make a Photostat of the calls. Save you all the writing."

" That would be great. Thank you."

" If Charlie were here and he thought the truth was being twisted, he'd want to get to the bottom of it."

27

Inside the car Kathryn looked up from Charlie Leone's freshly copied phone records. Tucker moved the Ford into the new hotel parking lot, but repeatedly checked the rearview mirror. She easily connected identical numbers between the office and home bill. " Brockton keeps popping up all over the place. Especially JU6-9045."

" I don't see the Harley." Tucker shut off the car. " We need to start calling those numbers now. If they're onto us, we don't have much time, Kathryn. "

" Grignano could be just keeping tabs on us."

Roz rushed like a rouge elephant out the room door and rumbled into the parking lot. Her eyes were wide open and her face serious. " I'm glad you guys are back."

" Ready for the big double date with Sid?" asked Kathryn.

Roz squinted and feigned a smile. " I've got more important things to think about. Like natural disasters, fires, earthquakes... Listen, two things: Jansen called. That DA guy O'Conner, searched Hunter's house in north Plymouth and came up empty."

" I could have told you that," said Tucker.

" Well, listen to this: I took a taxi down along the water. One of the motels had a guy from Rhode Island stay last week. He owned a black Studebaker."

" Good work, Roz," said Tucker as they all headed for the open door.

" Yeah, I have a number and address. Name's Roger McPhee. His wife said he'd be home after six."

" Good. We have numbers, too," said Kathryn. " Our friend Grignano was cruising near Mrs. Leone's house. It could be just coincidence."

" I don't think so," said Tucker. He splashed water over his half shaven face and dragged a towel over his moistened skin. Then he popped the lock to the next suite and went into his own room. " Dimitri has to be covering every angle right now."

Kathryn sat on the bed and dialed the frequently listed Brockton number. The line rang for the next thirty seconds. She hung up and tried again, shaking her head as she looked over at Tucker standing in the doorway with his hands on his hips.

" Nobody there."

" Try back," he said tersely, but she knew he was tense.

" The drill sergeant is back," said Roz.

" Lieutenant," said Tucker. " Okay, we have a couple of hours before we pick up Sid. Roz, we need to know where they brought the Fury and if Sid knows Grignano."

" We'll have to get the guy drunk," said Kathryn.

" He likes you Roz. He'll talk to you."

" Oh, I know he'll talk to me, it's just what he's going to say that bothers me."

* * *

" I passed this drive-in when I first drove through Plymouth, forty years from now. It was dilapidated with trees growing through the screen."

" Kathryn Marie, you're not listening to me. Sid, he's all over me!" shouted Roz as she carried hamburgers, fries, a shake, and popcorn from the cinder block concession building.

Kathryn grinned, trying not to laugh as they backtracked between the cars angled up to the screen. " Every time you tell the guy his breath stinks, he thinks you like him."

" It does stink, kid. Smells like a combination of motor oil and garbage."

" Probably is." Kathryn smiled and peered at the screen. The massive brown blob now fully enclosed the little yellow diner as the music rattled in the silver window speakers. " I remember this movie late on some forgotten Saturday night when Mark and I first went out."

" A real classic." Roz stopped and plucked a French fry from the paper container. " Please don't send me back to that sleaze ball."

" He agreed to go to the bar and with the beer Tucker's been giving him, we should get him good and drunk."

" Oh, yeah, easy for you to say."

" Roz, come on. McPhee said he saw the Volkswagen parked no more than fifty feet from the rock. We're closing in. Come on."

" All right. All right. It is a far better thing I've done, kissing that rat face, than I've ever done before."

Kathryn saw the convertible ahead. Sid held a beer can in his left hand and spread his arms across the back seat. He stirred as they approached.

" Hey, here comes chipmunk!"

Kathryn laughed and had trouble swallowing her orange drink as Roz sa-shayed over to Sid in the car. "Hi, Sid. How's the blob?"

"Come on back here, chipmunk, I've been waiting for you."

"Wonderful. How about a hamburger?"

"Not what I'm after."

The bulbous brown glob, expanded like cooled molasses, covered most of the diner. Kathryn winced. "My God, that's gross."

Tucker turned up the speaker volume as she handed the food cartons to him. "Sid was telling me how profitable his business is and how he sells cars outright to *other yards*."

"Oh, other yards? You're going to be rich, Sid," said Kathryn.

Sid slid his arm around Roz. Roz rolled her eyes as he kissed her neck.

"I think the mosquitoes are out," she said, slapping his hand.

"Hey watch it!"

"Have another beer, Sid," said Tucker, opening the amber bottle with the chrome opener from the liquor store.

"What about you, chipmunk?"

"I just want to have a good time."

"Now, you're talking," said Sid, grabbing her by the waist. Roz dumped soda over his pants. "Hey, whaddaya doin'? I'm soaked!"

Tucker grinned from the front seat. "Well, I say we head out. Drinks are on me."

"You mean drinks are on Sid," said Roz.

"Man, I'm soaked."

" I'm real sorry Sid," said Roz. She kissed his cheek. " Let Roz make it up to you."

" Can I trust this broad?"

" Probably not," said Kathryn, smiling at Tucker.

" If Tucker is paying for the drinks... What the hell..."

" Where to?" asked Tucker, lifting out the speaker and placing back on the outside hook.

" The Wayside."

" We know it well," said Kathryn

As Tucker backed off the rise, Sid turned and kissed Roz. She raised her brows and kept her eyes open. " See, I'm not that bad."

" You're right. You're worse."

* * *

Sid's eyelids sunk in the blue light as Tucker pushed another gin and tonic along the wood grained bar. The salvage yard owner opened his eyes wide, swiped his hand through the air and precariously clasped the frosted glass.

" Tucker, I don't care what the hell they say about you."

" You don't?" asked Tucker, glancing at Kathryn. Roz played pinball on a noisy machine with bells and gongs in the corner away from Sid.

" Nope," said Sid and he gulped the gin. " Oh, boy. Hey, where's my chipmunk?"

" She'll be back, buddy," said Tucker, putting his arm around him.

" Hey, Sid. I have to compliment you. You run a good business."

" My old man gave me the business, Tucker. We get em in, strip em down and get em out." Sid hoisted the glass and took a prodigious gulp of the clear liquid.

" You must make a bundle of money."

" Only when we get rid of the whole car," he said, holding the sides of his head. " Oh, boy, my head is spinning. I think I'm gonna pass out. "

" No, don't do that... You have places that buy your cars?"

" The city... the city, Tucker. Where the hell do you think? "

" All the way to Boston?"

" Boston, whaddaya ya, nuts?" Sid pounded the glass on the bar. " I want another drink."

" Another drink for the man!" called Tucker, motioning to the bartender, but Sid's head fell and his chin smacked against the bar. " Sid, wake up!"

" Get him some coffee," said Kathryn.

" I'll straighten him out." Tucker lifted him up by the scruff of his neck.

" Come on, Sid. Wake up there, buddy."

" I want another drink. Where the hell is my drink?"

" It's coming. So, you bring your cars to the city?"

" I want my drink." He spun around in the stool and howled into the air. Roz opened her mouth and her hands were frozen on the pinball levers.

" Drink's comin' " said Tucker, as the bartender handed him another glass. Sid reached for the drink, but the gin flooded over the varnished wood. " So, Sid, *where do your cars go?*"

" You want me to get into trouble with the squirt."

" Who?"

" The squirt."

" He told me to send Charlie Leone's car to Brockton." Tucker's eyes popped. He looked at Kathryn and winked. " What the hell was I supposed to do? He gave me fifteen hundred bucks to tow it out. That and the other car."

" What other car?"

" Nash..."

" To Brockton?"

" To Brockton!" yelled Sid, raising his glass. He poured the contents into his mouth, stood up, careened against the bar and hit the floor hard. " Where in Brockton, Sid?"

" He's out, Tucker," said Kathryn.

As Tucker gazed over Sid's fallen form, Roz deserted the pinball machine and retreated quickly to the bar. She leaned over Kathryn's shoulder. " What a man."

" Brockton, same as the phone calls," said Kathryn.

" I guess I know where we're headed," said Roz.

" But we don't know exactly where. Let's try and sober him up."

Kathryn nodded. Tucker clamped his hands around Sid's ankles and she and Roz both took an arm. As they dragged Sid toward one of the side booths, Dimitri Meritokis, dressed in pleated light pants and a yellow jersey, wandered through the front door. Behind him, the shadowed eyed Conrad Ridder scanned the bar. "*Tucker.*"

Tucker's head snapped up and he dropped Sid's legs. " Damn!"

" Roz!"

" We've got trouble, people. Follow me." He grabbed Kathryn's hand and bolted with Roz through the swinging kitchen doors.

Kathryn hurried across the slick floor and skirted the black cooking ovens. " Dimitri... Grignano must have told him we were here."

" I don't know." Tucker kneed the screen door and they burst into the rear parking lot toward the Ford. Dimitri's red Corvette, top down, was parked parallel to the building. Roz leaped in the Ford's back seat as Tucker cranked the engine and Kathryn slammed the passenger door. As he swung the car around, both Dimitri and Ridder both appeared, brandishing guns at the front door. Kathryn ducked as Ridder immediately aimed at the Ford. The gun discharged twice and a bullet pierced the fender. Tucker wove across the lot and additional shots punctured the trunk. She popped her head over the seat as they spun onto 3A. Both Dimitri and Ridder both ran onto the highway and fired several more times, but missed the accelerating Ford. Tucker shifted and raced around the bend back toward town.

" They know! They know!" shouted Kathryn.

Tucker gripped the wheel with both hands and sped up the wooded hill at sixty miles an hour. " Screw them! We know those cars are in Brockton now."

Roz held the back of the bench seat. " The squirt is out for blood!"

Tucker skidded left without signaling and moved up a narrow tree covered dirt road. He shut off the headlights and cut the engine.

" He's not going to rest until he finds us," said Kathryn, looking back to the road.

Tucker turned with Kathryn and leaned on the seat. " The Vet will race by. I guarantee it."

" Then what are we going to do? How do we escape them now?" asked Kathryn.

" First, call Jansen and tell him Mr. Meritokis, AKA, Sam Hunter, is using us for target practice."

" His word against ours," said Roz.

" We're heading to Brockton. *Tonight*. We can't go back to that motel."

" Took the words right out of my mouth, Tuck," said Roz from the back seat.

An older model car chugged up the road under the street light. Less than a minute later the red Corvette convertible, with Dimitri driving and Ridder in the front seat, flew under the street light back toward Plymouth. Kathryn closed her eyes.

" There he goes, but he'll be back."

" Face it guys... We're dead meat," said Roz.

" No, relax," said Tucker. " When we call that guy in Rhode Island we'll have a direct witness, placing Ridder near the murders. We need to get divers into the harbor. And I know we're going to locate those cars in Brockton. Both Ridder and Dimitri know it might be closing in."

Kathryn slouched in the seat as Tucker started the car. " They won't rest. After what they've done, they have to kill us all."

28

With a phone book spread across her slacks Kathryn lay against Tucker's shoulder. She leaned forward and wiped the cold, foggy windshield. A streetlight cut a swath of sharp light across supermarket parking lot somewhere in Brockton. Kathryn and Roz both had checked the phone book and quickly found Anthony Grignano's address. Scanning for JU6-9045 took longer. Six hours ago Tucker scrambled to a phone booth outside a closed department store on Brockton's Main Street and called Roger McPhee in Rhode Island. McPhee unequivocally said he had seen a white Volkswagen parked near the portico housing Plymouth Rock, but he had not heard any shots or backfire. Tucker thanked him, hung up and called Dan Jansen.

Jansen's had no problem taking the call when his wife woke him. Before Tucker could speak, Jansen told him he had looked into things behind the scenes at WXBN a few days ago. Conrad Ridder had indeed filed some time ago with the FCC to purchase the radio station. Tracing the money would prove incriminating to Dimitri if Ridder used his manager's money to actually purchase the station.

He slowly and carefully detailed the events of the evening, including McPhee's story, to the stunned Jansen. Tucker later told Kathryn he was now convinced Jansen would question Ridder about last Thursday night. Jansen promised to place a call to O'Conner in the morning and Tucker agreed to call him back at the police station at ten a.m.

In the pre-dawn hours, Kathryn looked at Roz sleeping under a blanket in the back seat. For two hours they had listened to Ridder's broadcast from WXBN. Kathryn leaned toward the dash speaker when the commercial ended. The young Ridder voice resonated clearly and possessed a strong maturity. " This is Conrad Ridder. You're on the Conrad Ridder Show."

" Yes, Mr. Ridder. Your subject is Presidential politics. How can Senator Kennedy with no foreign policy experience perform the duties of President of the United States?"

" First of all Senator Kennedy hasn't indicated whether he will run for President. "

" Oh, come on-"

" Sir, let me finish. Secondly, I think you have to look at the man and his ability to make decisions."

" He is untested. The Vice President is a known commodity. He assumed leadership when the President had his heart attack, you boob-"

" Sir, you're not listening. I said you have to judge the man," said Ridder. The line clicked. " The hound dogs are out there tonight! This is Conrad Ridder, we are out of time as we leave for the day. I'm Conrad Ridder and *I'll be seeing you.*"

" He's very touchy. I think it's getting to him. Let's see if he's on the air tonight," she said softly.

Tucker nodded. " It's going to unravel, Kathryn. Ridder will have to answer questions about Thursday night. Jansen will hire divers himself at this point. They will find the bodies and even if they don't, Ridder can't buy that station without them looking into the money."

Kathryn yawned and closed her eyes. " What about Grignano?"

" Let Jansen track him down. We'll give him the address once we find the Fury."

Ridder's voice again vibrated in the dash speaker. He was pitching a local restaurant. Kathryn opened her eyes as Tucker flipped off the key. " What's the matter, Tucker?"

" I'm sick of hearing, ' The Voice. ' "

* * *

Kathryn thought back to their late breakfast in donut shop on Belmont Street. She pictured Tucker a few hours back, navigating the Ford through the side streets to one of the salvage yards described by a milkman in the shop. After wandering throughout heaps of stripped automobiles all morning, she wondered about Dimitri's next move and whether he would think to look in Brockton.

" Nothing here," said Tucker. " Let's get something to eat and try that yard in the Polish Village."

Kathryn placed the handwritten directions they had received from the truck driver into Tucker's hand. He nodded and looked back toward Main Street.

" Okay, let's check it out." Roz walked behind them, tracking her finger down each column of a local phone book. " Roz, finding that number could take days."

" Do you know who you're dealing with, Tuck?"

" He knows," said Kathryn as they piled in the convertible. " I bet Sid is wondering where his chipmunk is this morning."

" Honey, Sid ain't gonna wake up til' sometime next week."

* * *

After three o'clock Kathryn spotted the yard in the village spread over a sweeping area east of the city and no one seemed to watch Tucker park the Ford along a weathered stockade fence. She strolled with Roz in the warm afternoon haze. For the next few hours they lounged on abandoned cars, talked about Ellerby and her dreams as Tucker climbed over cars stacked in long rows. Tucker wandered back around four o'clock as they sat on the edge of a mammoth truck with no tires.

" Maybe they just destroyed it," he said. " Why wouldn't they?"

" Then we have no evidence." She watched Roz's finger move like a preprogrammed machine down the white pages. " How can Dimitri be held accountable for tinkering with the brake fluid in a car that no longer exists?"

" He is so savvy, that guy," said Tucker.

" Not so savvy," said Roz, her finger stopped in the middle of the page.

" Look at this: A. Messier, JU6-9045."

" All right, Roz! But who the hell is A. Messier?"

" Somebody Charlie Leone called twenty-seven times in the last couple of months." Kathryn looked over her shoulder. " See, Kathryn, JU6-9045."

" On Warren Ave. What do you think, Tucker?"

" I think you've brought us a step closer. Good work."

" Thank you, Lieutenant."

Tucker stroked his bristly chin. The perspiration soaked his sandy hair at the temples as he surveyed the flat area ahead and started walking. " We need to find that car."

" Good work, Roz," said Kathryn as Tucker started ahead.

" Thanks, Kathryn Marie, but we're screwed if don't get something on Dimitri or Ridder real soon."

" That's why we're trying to find the Fury," said Tucker ahead of them.

" How many names does Dimitri have?" asked Kathryn.

" Messier might be one of them," said Roz.

Kathryn shielded her eyes as Tucker pattered near the woods. " At least Jansen can question the guy from Rhode Island."

" No proof again, Kathryn. I say we hire people to search that harbor. Dead bodies make good evidence."

From atop the hill Tucker shouted, but she did not see him. She pivoted and jogged over the uneven ground toward the woods. Roz trailed behind, cursing the warm weather exertion. In a scalloped out section of oaks, the red and white Fury, vivid in her dreams, was sandwiched between a stone wall and three older cars. Tucker had popped the hood just as Smitty had only days ago. " No fluid! No damned fluid! They killed Charlie Leone!"

Kathryn peered under the crunched hood at the clean engine. Tucker had opened a small, double humped metal box. " Will this hold up in court?"

" Hell, we'll have to ask O'Conner, but I would think it would."

Roz, breathing heavily with the phone book tucked under her arm, trudged the remaining steps to the grassy opening. " Man, I'm as hot as a bacon strip sizzling on a skillet... Hey, Charlie's car!"

" I think the DA is going to want to know why Sid ordered the car to be brought up here and he will want to know who towed it up here," said Tucker.

" And he will question why there is no brake fluid in the lines. I think we have a good case building here, people."

Roz saluted. " Yes, sir."

Kathryn smiled and touched the warm fender metal of Charlie Leone's Fury. " Let's see where Jansen is at with this McPhee guy and give him the Warren Ave. info."

" I'll bet money," said Tucker, putting his foot on the rounded chrome bumper, " there's something inside that Warren Ave. place."

" You really think Dimitri rented it?" asked Roz.

" I don't know. Like you say, let's talk to Jansen and then take a trip over there." Tucker gazed across the yard toward the Ford. " These clowns were so clever. Put the bid on the station, get the money from Charlie Leone, kill Charlie so it looks like an accident, and then buy the station. Wow."

" Dimitri kept his ass out of it," said Roz.

Tucker nodded and turned. He placed his hands on the fender and leaned under the hood again. " And they did it all from the shadows."

" Except last night." Tucker motioned them back to the open area. In the haze along the hill they trekked along the piles of cars back toward the Ford.

" We could notify Charlie's insurance company," said Kathryn. " They track this down, too."

Tucker gave a quick nod, but he was checking out more cars to the right. He scampered down the hill into a depression. A powder blue Nash, tires submerged in a swampy morass of water, trees and vines, rose into view.

" Smitty's car."

" That's it," said Kathryn as she approached.. " They didn't waste any time."

" More fuel for the fire."

Roz crossed her arms. " Yeah, if we don't get killed first."

Tucker nodded and pointed back to the road. " Good point. Let's get out of here."

29

Dimitri rubbed his itchy eyes as he shifted the Vet down WXBN's long hill.

" You were shaky on the air, Conrad. You need to have grace under pressure."

" Where the hell are they? I'm starting to get real worried."

" I don't know. I have found nothing on them."

" It's all going to come crashing down"

" No. Nothing can be proved. " Dimitri accelerated onto the highway without signaling. " Screw them, looking into our affairs."

" Did Sid ever sober up?" asked Ridder into the wind blowing through the little sports car.

" Yeah, a couple of hours ago." He shifted the car and headed under the highway toward town. " I have the names."

" Pay them off. Anything."

Dimitri downshifted between rows of company houses. " No, that won't work. "

" What about Jansen?" asked Ridder. " He seems to be the cause of all this."

" I am aware of that. I know where his cruiser will be this morning."

" You can't kill him, Dimitri. That will stir up everything." Dimitri maneuvered the car toward the water. The Water Street sea wall extended toward the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock beyond. " I can't believe I shot them."

" You went wild. I've gone wild before and will again... Get over it, Conrad."

" I just pray those bodies don't surface."

Dimitri smiled. " I want to tell you something and you'll understand this as you get older. You can be behind like in a ball game, but you don't let it get to you because it won't change a damn thing. Stay loose and play well."

" Easy for you to say." Dimitri glanced at him and pulled into a space at the sea wall. The morning sun cut through the low clouds and stung his eyes. " I'll find them."

" What if they tell Jansen you shot at their car?"

" Let em." He smiled as the sun rays shot through the clouds. The sea wall and surrounding street were basked in yellow light. " See, the sun coming out is always a sign."

" I'm still worried about Jansen."

" Conrad, you are about to own that station up there." He pointed back to the antenna on the hill outside of town. " You will have a daytime show and I start making plans about advancing your career. We'll be out of here in no time. I have connections."

Conrad stared at the jetties south of town and a gradual smile came to his face. " Rita was all over me again, Dimitri."

" See, you're loose. Women keep you loose. Especially a guy like you who has high aspirations."

" That's a dream."

" No, Conrad. I have people backing me. People who know how to get things done. Jansen and the people in the Ford are blips. They'll all be gone and your career will continue."

" You get some rest. Relax and let me do what I have to do."

* * *

Grignano never dressed properly nor was he on time. He stumbled into The Quartermaster after four o'clock in his greasy jeans and tee shirt. Dimitri sprang from the table and met him at the counter. "Where the hell have you been?"

"I couldn't do it. He had his partner with him."

Dimitri grabbed Grignano's inflated biceps and brought him back to the table along the rear wall. He leaned forward, speaking in a low, but forceful voice.

"You stupid bastard, Jansen knows too much."

"Oh, and I'm just supposed to ride up and plug him?" asked Grignano.

"*You'd better.* I'm bringing people in from New Jersey. This whole thing is getting out of hand. My reputation has been tarnished. This should have been a simple operation."

Grignano opened his blue eyes wide and pointed at Dimitri. "We don't have background on Tucker or Jenner. Where the hell are they?"

"That's why you and I are taking a ride with Conrad to Brockton after you find Jansen." Dimitri sipped the bitter coffee and nibbled on the salad.

"You know as well as I, if they were asking Horwitz questions, they're after the Fury. The Fury and the Nash will be crushed immediately. I want no proof and will take no chances and do whatever I have to do."

30

"What time is it, Tucker?" asked Kathryn.

"Six-thirty."

"I'm worried we can't locate Jansen," said Kathryn as he signaled left.

"That's not good."

Roz checked a crisp new map from the drug store where they had finished a hefty meal of hamburgers and fries. Evening shadows crossed two boulevards, separated by a central sidewalk and street lights up the hill. Tucker took the boulevard to the right. "This is Legion Parkway. Warren Ave is up top. We need to go left on Warren."

"Jansen is still on duty, Kathryn," said Tucker. He had not said much since the trip to the junkyard.

"If Dimitri got to Jansen, we haven't got a prayer."

"He'll be available in another hour," said Tucker. He shifted at the traffic light and slowed at the top of the parkway's long slope. "By then maybe we'll have something."

"Turn left here at the High School," said Roz, her finger still on the map.

Kathryn's stomach tightened when she thought about Dimitri and Ridder firing at the Ford last night. Tucker turned left. She looked at the school's deep red stone facade and empty school yard. Jansen should at least have left a message from their last call. She prayed their presence back in time had not accelerated Jansen's death. "Where now?" asked Tucker.

" Through these traffic lights and the ones at Belmont Street."

Kathryn leaned forward. " Tucker, do you think they've hurt Jansen?"

" I don't know." Tucker looked at her in the rear view mirror. " We can have the Plymouth cops radio his car."

" I think we should. I just feel like he should have at least left a message. Where is he?"

As they passed through the second set of lights, Roz turned around.

" We're just all tired, Kathryn Marie. When you're tired, you start believing all kinds of things. We'll talk to Jansen and they'll have people up the junkyard. All we have to do is get the DA to think. They'll take the ball."

" I suppose you're right."

" Is that it? Three thirty-three?" asked Tucker as he slowed. A three story brown, shingled tenement was shaded by large fluffy maples and an empty drive-way leading to an unattached garage. " I'm parking around the corner."

" Good idea, Tuck."

" You know, I was thinking," said Tucker.

" God help us," added Roz.

Tucker smiled. " At some time, Dimitri must have been aware of Ridder's talents. Heard a broadcast."

" Or somebody told him about Ridder," said Kathryn.

" Yup," said Tucker, moving onto the next street. " He saw the talent, but needed the power. Purchasing the station would give him that power to develop Ridder's career and assure him future holdings when he sold the station."

" He's a sharpie," said Roz.

" Oh, no. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Meritokis. I think we have to buzz in and out of that apartment whether we find something or not."

" Or, Tuck," said Roz. " We may just get lucky."

* * *

A. Messier's name was typed on a small card within the green enameled porch mailbox slot, designated for the first floor apartment. Kathryn's knees weakened when she stepped back from the hallway window and hurried over to Roz, waiting at the first floor apartment door. Tucker, balancing on the wooden bulkhead, popped open the rear window.

" He's got it loose."

Roz turned from the sidelight. " Good, I'm getting real nervous in here."

" You, nervous?"

" Me, nervous," she said, walking past the mailboxes.

Kathryn heard Tucker move inside Messier's apartment. The worn steel knob twisted and he raised his brows from inside. " Do I know you two?"

" Unfortunately, yes," said Roz and he smiled.

" I need you on guard by the front window. I don't want our friends showing up unexpectedly."

Roz saluted and marched across into the living room. For the next fifteen minutes Kathryn helped him search through the well-kept apartment. The modern teak furniture was spread over hardwood floors throughout four rooms. Tucker rummaged through the alcoves of corner desk. He pulled out a stack of papers. " I

don't think Dimitri is Messier. Messier works for Prudential Insurance according to this."

" Then who is Messier?" Kathryn leaned over a polished wood hutch and checked the drawers. Old photos were strewn amidst crunched invoices for fishing equipment. She saw consistent pictures of a man with wavy hair and a mustache.

" Charlie must have known Messier. And Messier is definitely not Dimitri."

" Right, Messier simply lives here," said Tucker, carefully placing the papers back in the desk slot.

" But Charlie called so many times," said Kathryn, stroking her fingers over her chin. " Unless he was good friends with Messier. We'll have to ask Mrs. Lenone."

" All clear on the Western Front," said Roz from the window.

" They must know we're in Brockton."

" Don't be so sure," said Tucker, pulling open drawers under a glass hutch.

" Linens and china. Damn. Back to square one."

Kathryn hovered over the phone. JU6-9045 was stamped on a round plastic circle inside the rotary dial. " This is the number. This is the place. Maybe we should just let the cops handle this."

" That might give Dimitri time to regroup."

" Hey guys, you're missing the boat," said Roz.

" What do you mean, Roz?" asked Kathryn.

" Suppose Dimitri just *used* the phone."

Tucker pointed at her with both index fingers. " Upstairs."

" Exactly."

Kathryn closed her eyes " I keep thinking Dimitri will come driving up here."

Tucker briefly held her wrist. " I hope the hell he doesn't. Come on, we'll check upstairs and get out of here."

" The sooner the better," said Roz, putting her arm around Kathryn.

" Don't worry, Kathryn Marie, we'll nail that little twirp."

They bounded up the straight staircase to the second floor. An additional stairway led to a third floor. Tucker tried the second floor knob. " Locked."

" Now what?" asked Kathryn.

He stepped back and hurled himself against the door. The door cracked and swung against the empty apartment's wall. Kathryn raised her brows and followed him into the vacant rooms. Tucker approached Roz at the front window and scanned Warren Ave. and the side street. " Okay, let's try the third floor."

He pulled the cracked white door until the lock slipped into place and they raced to the third floor. Again Tucker stepped back and slammed full force against the door, snapping it inside.

" Superman," said Roz.

Kathryn smiled. This apartment contained a sofa and an end table centered on the bare hardwood. A small unfinished pine table and chairs was located under a silver chandelier near the back window. She looked for a phone. The kitchen had a tiny white refrigerator and plates and cups behind yellow-bordered glass cabinets. Two empty Knickerbocker beers cans were tossed in the corner next to a half filled bottle of Scotch. She wandered out front. " At least somebody is up here."

" An unmade bed and light," said Tucker from the bedroom.

" You mean, somebody's makin' whoopee," said Roz, stationed at her window post.

Kathryn grinned and poked her head in the bedroom. Tucker, on his knees stuck his head under the bed. She pulled open the top drawer of an unpainted dresser. A few jerseys were scattered against a pair of boxer shorts and socks. The bottom drawers were empty. " Nothing in here unless you can tell a man by his boxer shorts."

" What kind of boxer shorts?" asked Roz.

" White."

" Yuck..."

Tucker spread back the blankets and a thick gold covered paperback book went flying onto the hardwood. He quickly retrieved Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand from the floor. Kathryn stared at an odd cover picture of man sketched black against a flaming orange background. Tucker pulled the bookmark, a business card from the middle of the book.

PLEASANT VALLEY REAL ESTATE

Houses, Rentals, Land

617 Shire Lane

Charlie Leone

Plymouth-8740

Sam Hunter

Plymouth-8741

" Bingo."

" Then he used the downstairs floor for phone calls," said Kathryn.

" I bet he owns the building." Kathryn followed him as he opened the closet door. A tan suit, white shirt and thin dark tie hung on the metal rod and a pair of bucks were placed perfectly on the floor below. Tucker found nothing in the pockets.

" What do you have?" asked Roz. " Another pair of boxers?"

" Nothing."

Kathryn faced Tucker. " Now what?"

" I should have known he wouldn't keep anything here. Anything valuable is probably in a bank deposit box somewhere." She held his hand and they moved out front. " Enough... We need to find Jansen."

" Come up empty?" asked Roz.

" Yeah. I'm sure he stayed overnights.... used the phone and conducted his operations. The DA can ask Mr. Messier in more depth about those questions. I wanted something linking Dimitri and Ridder to Capital Properties. We'll call Jansen and have him set up a meeting with O'Conner and guarantee our safety."

" Against the twirp in the Vet?" asked Roz.

Tucker nodded and they headed into the hall. He closed the door and they started down the stairs. " And we need to get divers into the bay."

" That would shake them up," said Roz."

" And Ridder." Tucker opened the first floor door, stepped across the porch, and Kathryn followed him into the flickering early evening shadows.

" You can't say you didn't comb this place from top to bottom. Although, he didn't check the cellar. "

Tucker stopped on the walk, compacted his brow and held her arm.

" Wait. *What about the attic?*"

" Was there an attic?" asked Roz.

" I don't know." Tucker spun in reverse.

" Did you lock the door, Tucker?" asked Kathryn, trotting after him up the porch stairs.

" Nope." He thrust open the door and they galloped up the stairs. Tucker shot past the third floor and opened a dull varnished door at the end of the hall. He flipped an overhead light switch and leaped up the wood stairs to an upper door.

" I'm staying at the hall window," said Roz.

" Okay, Roz." Kathryn breathed rapidly. A light popped on inside the attic. She climbed to the top and heard movement. Under the sloping roof 's protruding nails Tucker tore apart a cardboard box. " What do you see, Tucker?"

" Wait," he said, shuffling through papers and envelopes. " Dimitri Meritokis. Legal documents, land transactions from The Bronx. 1955 and 1956. He's a lawyer, Kathryn! Some of these people. I wonder if he's linked to organized crime..."

" Isn't that wonderful?"

He pointed to more boxes on plywood sheets, spread across the floor joists. " Kathryn, start looking through the other boxes."

Kathryn tugged at string wrapped around a smaller box. Earlier documents from 1951 and the late forties contained additional land and real estate transactions in New York and New Jersey. For the next fifteen minutes they sifted through the papers, but checked every few minutes with Roz at the window downstairs.

" Definitely linked to organized crime," said Tucker, holding the documents in his hands. " They must want the radio station or stations and Ridder."

" How do we take *them* on?" asked Kathryn, wrapping the box with the string.

" We don't. We just go to the DA with what we have on Dimitri and Ridder." Then he chuckled. " We mention nothing about New York."

" Okay. Before Messier gets back. To a phone booth."

Kathryn headed for the stairway door. Tucker was about to shut off the light when she saw the tip of manila envelopes tucked with in the loose insulation under the louver. " Tucker, wait."

The attic went dark and Tucker leaned against her. " What's the matter?"

He yanked another light chain and tiptoed across the joists to the far end. She pulled out the edge of a nine by twelve manila envelope. Tucker rifled the insulation and found three more envelopes of various sizes. He swatted his hand through the insulation and then pulled himself back.

" You guys all right?" called Roz from below.

" We're all right," shouted Kathryn. They retraced their steps across the rafters. Once on the wood boards she unwound a string securing the envelope. Inside she found documents typed on an old typewriter, alluding the vague financial references she did not understand. When she plucked a green ledger page, wedged between banks deposits to a bank in Newark, New Jersey, her brows shot upward.

" Tucker, eighty grand. June 16, 1958. Three weeks ago."

" Let me see that," he said, leaning over her shoulder. " Pay dirt. We've got em', Kathryn."

For the next few minutes Tucker thumbed through clumps of papers as she stared at the deposit slip. She envisioned Charlie handing over a box or an envelope of cash to the fast talking Dimitri. Dimitri must have driven his little Corvette at high

speed to the train station and headed to New Jersey for deposit of Charlie's hard earned cash.

" Oh boy," said Tucker. He held a neatly typed document with a raised brown header on crisp taupe linen paper.

Gelbert and Gelbert
16 East Hobart Street
Boston, Massachusetts
Tel- Andrew 8-6838
CAPITAL HILL: A PROPOSAL
October 10, 1957

" Tucker, this is it and we have the bank slip for eighty grand."

" The whole thing is in here. This firm, Gelbart and Gelbert, is probably phony."

" But well done. Very clever these people."

She hugged Tucker and stuffed the bank slip back in the envelope.

" Let's get the hell out of here."

" Roz! We've got them!" Tucker pulled the light chain and she started down to the cooler air downstairs. " Roz!"

" All clear on the Western Front," she said, turning from the window.

Sweat slivered down Kathryn's cheek as she raised the envelopes.

" Eighty grand bank deposit in New Jersey."

" And the Capital Hill proposal," said Tucker. " He conned Charlie Leone. This guy is a professional. And once Ridder killed Smitty and Lucy, they had him, too."

" Let's go, Tucker," said Kathryn. " Before he comes."

" Let him come," said Tucker and they moved down the hall and onto the third floor stairway. " We've got him! We've got him!"

* * *

In the outside twilight, Kathryn's new excitement mixed with the anxiety sparking her nerves. Tucker marched them under the trees toward the blue Ford convertible, parked near a stretch of woods, two streets from the apartment house. Kathryn gripped the envelopes. " This is what Smitty and Lucy would have eventually found."

Tucker was about to speak when a loud engine roared down Warren Ave. He pushed them behind the trees as Dimitri Meritokis spun his red Corvette, headlights flipped up, around the corner. Ridder, crammed with Grignano in the single passenger side seat, pointed to the trees. Tucker led them across a side lawn toward the Ford on the next street. Several shots bounced off the adjacent tenement. Roz screamed and blood splashed across her pink jersey. She staggered for a few feet and fell onto the grass. " Roz! Roz!"

Tucker grabbed Kathryn under the arm and shoulder. She hesitated, wanting to get back to Roz, but he catapulted her over the porch railing. More bullets tore the grass as the Corvette fishtailed in the street and banked around the corner. Kath-

ryn wailed and pleaded for Tucker to bring her back to her fallen friend, but he dragged her across the back yard toward a row of tenements on the next street.

" We have to get to a phone," said Tucker as they ran into the yard across the street.

" She's dead! She's dead!"

Tucker tightened his grip as they ran. " We have to get these papers to Jansen or the District Attorney's office."

Kathryn's fragile emotions splintered when the Corvette's tires chewed up the tar on the adjacent street. " I see them coming!" She sprinted with Tucker across Warren Ave. The Vet veered back to Messier's apartment.

" They killed my Roz, Tucker!"

Tucker clamped her hand and careened down to the Main Street sidewalk. The traffic moved steadily as they rounded the corner. Within view of the higher buildings downtown, Tucker located a phone booth by a newsstand and instructed her to keep watch behind the booth. Kathryn's hands shook as Tucker set the manila envelopes on the phone book below. He dropped nickels into the slot and she kept her eyes on the side street leading to Warren Ave. as the coins were digested into the phone. Tucker needed another nickel. She quickly pulled change out of her slacks pocket and placed it in his hand. He crammed the coin into the slot. " I'm dialing Dan Jansen in Plymouth 1537."

" Murderers!" said Kathryn. " Murderers! Damn murders!"

" Hold on, Kathryn. We'll make it. We'll make it. Line's ringing,," said Tucker, listening. " Hello, hello, Mrs. Jansen. This is John Tucker, we met the other day. I need to talk with your husband! It's an emergency!"

The Corvette whipped off the side street and skidded diagonally on Main Street. "Tucker!"

Tucker dropped the phone and grabbed the folders. More shots in quick succession, shattered the booth glass. He pulled her between the newsstand and a house to the left. They darted across the narrow street, behind a hardware store dock, loaded with push mowers and stacked grass seed. Chills circulated over her back as she sensed she could be shot from behind at any time. She raced with Tucker up the loading dock stairs and into the stuffy store. They dodged a key making machine, the side register, and rows of tools along the wall. Between the stacked merchandise and the long front window the Corvette turned at the newsstand and disappeared down the next street. Tucker kicked the front door and slid her below sidewalk awning. Across the street, a hundred yards back in the twilight, a bulky green bus's engine hummed.

"The bus," said Tucker.

She faced death with every step across Main Street to the stinky bus. A spectacled, gray haired driver pulled back on an inside lever and opened the bus door. Tucker pushed her up the stairs, but she kept her eyes on the side street next to the newsstand. He paid the driver and Kathryn squeezed to a curbside seat. She leaned against his chest. "Tucker, Roz... Oh, Roz. Those bastards!"

His touch protected her from a certain death, but she continued crying into his shoulder. "It's all right, Kathryn. It's all right." The bus engine buzzed, the driver checked the side mirror and pulled slowly from the curb.

"We'll find a phone and get the cops to help us."

" Roz did nothing wrong. *Nothing!*" She peered over his shoulder as the Corvette now approached the hardware store corner and stopped. " Oh, No! There they are! Ridder did it. I saw him do it!"

The bus lumbered down Main Street and the Corvette trailed slowly. Tucker grimaced. " They wouldn't know we picked up this bus."

" Then why are the following us?"

" I don't know. And he can't know we have the Capital Hill documents."

" Roz is lying dead out there!"

" I know. I know " He looked down the darkened aisle to the rear window. " There they are."

" I'm going to kill Ridder myself. I will. I will kill him. The man doesn't deserve to live."

Tucker rubbed his teeth against his lower lip and again pulled out some of the Capital Hill papers. " Whoever prepared these documents were pros."

A couple of hundred feet behind the bus Ridder, Grignano and Dimitri moved steadily in the Corvette. As the bus slowed and turned right, the Corvette's blinker brightened. Kathryn whispered. " *Tucker...*"

Tucker looked over his shoulder. " I see them." He shoved the papers back in the first envelope and wrapped the string in place. He took her hand and rushed up the aisle to the older driver. " Where is this bus headed?"

" Our main terminal across from the Fair."

" Fair?"

" You know, the midway... rides... agricultural displays."

" See that Corvette behind us." The driver pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose and squinted at the side mirror as the bus continued up the road.

" They're trying to kill us."

His blue eyes opened wide. " You *are* joking."

" No joke, buddy."

" They murdered my friend," said Kathryn, her throat tightening..

The driver's kindly face contorted briefly and he licked his lips as he stared into the side mirror. " Listen, stay up front here. I'll open the doors when I slow up. Run directly into the fair entrance. I'll block the car. You'll have time to get inside and get a cop. There should be cops all over the place."

" Good... Thanks."

" Hey, you the good guys?" asked the driver, moving his bushy white brows.

" I hope so."

" We haven't killed anybody, they have," said Kathryn, wiping her eye.

At the top of the hill a high chain link fence surrounded midway rides and a crowd in flux. Tucker moved Kathryn down the steps, closer to the door. The driver checked the mirror and leaned over as he positioned his hands on the large wheel. " I'm going to bank right and slow, but not stop. Get out when I open the door, even though I haven't stopped, and run like hell into the fair. We won't be going fast."

Tucker nodded and the driver reached for the door lever as his foot brushed the brake pedal. He adjusted his silver glasses and glanced at the side mirror. Tucker held Kathryn's shoulders near the doors. He grabbed her hand again and she looked into his tense blue eyes. " I'm scared, I don't want to die."

" You ain't gonna die. We'll find cops and put an end to this nonsense right now."

Kathryn's shoulder briefly touched the door glass as the driver swung the bus to the right. He gripped the handle and pulled the lever. The thin folding doors separated and the fresh air rushed inside as the brakes squealed. Tucker nodded at the driver, took Kathryn's hand and winked at her with a reassuring smile. She bent her knees above the passing asphalt.

" Ready... Go!"

They were airborne only a few seconds and landed running on the hard surface. Carrying no tickets, they hurtled through gate turnstiles and onto the midway. She heard the bus chug along the chain link fence, but the Corvette's tires screeched and the little red car swung under fence trees.

Along the midway, barkers called out for passersby's to participate in games of chance and the smell of onions and fried foods permeated the evening air. Behind a cluster of people throwing darts at colored balloons, Tucker anchored his feet, stood upright and scanned the area. " I don't see any cops. Or just somebody in charge. Where the hell is somebody in charge?"

The popping balloons made her crazy. She briefly covered her ears and peered back toward the entrance. " They were out front, Tucker!"

He motioned her back on the midway toward a wide Ferris wheel, outlined in yellow and green neon bulbs. Bright blue and red gondola cars slowly trekked on slumping cables above the length of the midway. The barkers cadence continued over the noisy crowd as Tucker darted frantically. " We have to find a damned cop! "

She looked over her shoulder as they ran. " They know we're in here!"

He stopped in next to a ride pressing screaming people against the outer edge of a rotating red and yellow neon lined drum. Tucker surveyed the area. " I just want one cop!"

Back at the gate Dimitri left the ticket booth with Grignano and Ridder.
" Tucker!"

Dimitri stopped next to a small roller coaster and panned the midway. Tucker pulled her behind the crashing bumper cars. Sparks sizzled against the metal contacts along the electrified metal ceiling. " All right, let's play it cool, Kathryn."

He checked behind the bumper cars, took her hand and jaunted toward the long dark fun house. Bizarre noises and muffled music shot out the crooked front door. A line of people waited beyond the little ticket booth at the end. Tucker slid money under the brass ticket booth bars. The woman inside handed him two crisp blue tickets. He rushed Kathryn past the people in line and bounded up the metal stairs.

The shadowy eyed Ridder sprinted ahead of the others past the bumper cars as Tucker pulled open the fun house door. She brushed away the canvas curtains into a darkened area. Ghoulish luminescent faces flashed out of the blackness and loud wailing ghost noises echoed ahead. " We have to stay put. Let them look down the midway."

" I'm afraid they've got Jansen. Oh, God and Roz is dead!"

A group of kids passed them onto an uneven surface. Kathryn fought to keep her balance as Tucker held her shoulders. " I tell you they can't kill Jansen. Too many questions. We have to get out of here and find a cop."

As the fun house patrons gasped and laughed, Tucker kept her at an adjacent corridor entrance for another ten minutes before proceeding through the bright

strobe lights and ghoulish figures popping out of the darkness. When they reached the fresher air, the descending night was highlighted by brightly colored lights, bulbs outlining the numerous rides on the noisy midway. Ridder and the others were not in the area.

Roz's smile and dark eyes filled Kathryn's thoughts as she looked upward at the wispy evening clouds to the west. Tucker, the envelopes firmly in his right hand, led her down the stairs and they blended in the crowd. With every step, Ridder and the others, like figures in the fun house, might spring out and grab her. Tucker looked up at the gondolas in the last orange vestige of daylight. " We need to get up in those cars. Then we can see the whole fair. Locate the cops and move."

" This is awful."

" We have the goods on them, Kathryn. We find a cop and it's all over."

She nodded and continued cautiously along the midway rides toward the gondola ticket booth. Tucker had just mumbled something about the Nash back in the junkyard, when she felt something hard against her back. When she turned Conrad Ridder's penetrating deep eyes peered down at her. He thrust a small revolver into her ribs. " You're dead."

" *Murderer.*"

" Put the gun away, Ridder," said Tucker. " We can talk."

" Oh, you'll talk and you'll tell us everything you know and who else knows it."

" I guess you win," said Tucker, dipping his head, but he swung his boot into Ridder's hand and the gun tumbled across the asphalt. He pulled Kathryn up the stairs into the Hall of Mirrors and easily slipped into the first reflective corridor.

Ridder retrieved the revolver and stormed up the stairs. He opened his eyes wide, concealing the gun as he entered the mirrored passageway.

Tucker seemed to understand the maze and took three steps to the left. Incredibly they stepped outside again, but Ridder was trapped. He smashed into one of the mirrors, grabbed his forehead and grit his teeth, but his grumbling was muted. The wood grained gun handle stuck out of his slacks pocket.

" Good move, Tucker"

" I've been in fun houses since I was a kid. He'll be in there awhile... the dummy."

As Ridder pounded on the maze glass, they trotted along more games and a motorcycle racing dome. They reached a ticket booth under the gondolas. Tucker paid the woman and with two additional blue tickets in hand, he directed Kathryn to the ramp where the car swung around for the repeat trip above the midway. He gave the tickets a the red faced man with a stubby cigar. The guy flipped the retaining bar and they sat down on a soft vinyl seat. The car kicked, and with her feet dangling Kathryn rose with Tucker above the crowd and rides below. Ridder was still flailing the glass inside the Hall of Mirrors.

" Over there," said Tucker, pointing beyond the balloon game. Dimitri, his gun hidden, directed Grignano up the midway. As they both scattered through the crowd, the little gondola car inched upward along the twisted cable strand, high above the asphalt. " Look for a cop, Kathryn."

She panned the midway to a sloping grandstand, supported by metal girders. Ahead a smooth dirt-racing track formed an ellipse around the grass. Beyond the track the sun dabbed orange blotches across a brick building's white cupola and a number of canvas agricultural tents below. Across the street buses moved into a

brick terminal building with a white faced clock tower. Kathryn finally spotted a police cruiser behind a pen, housing black and white cows near the tents beyond the race track. " Tucker."

" Where?"

" By the tents."

" I see."

Ridder, finally extricated from the mirror maze and now trotted along the midway side shows. Dimitri passed the turnstiles and reached the open area at the race track while Grignano folded his wide arms over his tee shirt near the Ferris wheel.

" Okay, we head behind the midway rides, across the grass and along the race track to the cupola building."

She closed her eyes as the car dipped downward on the cable. Tears meandered down her cheeks as she continuously pictured Roz bloodied on the grass. Again she reached for Tucker and cried silently into his shirt. The police cruiser was less than three hundred yards away, but she could not shake the persistent feeling of being under siege and wondered what it would be like having her body pierced by bullets. " Tucker, if we don't make it..."

Tucker produced his familiar half smile. With a reassuring wink, pulled her head against his chest. " We're going to nail the sons of bitches, Kathryn."

The car pitched about fifteen feet above the turnaround. Grignano remained on duty at the Ferris wheel ticket booth as the gondola moved under a red and white canopy. Tucker pushed up the retaining bar before the kid attending the cars could lift it. He grasped her hand, hurried down the wood ramp and skirted the crowd. They scampered past a cotton candy machine and leaped over a cluster of

black electrical cables behind a fleet of rounded silver trailers. Once on the grass behind the trailers, Tucker stopped and looked across the race track. The cruiser was parked near the end canvas tent and three cops spoke with each other along a roped fence, surrounding the cows. Kathryn did not see Dimitri near the grandstand to her right.

" We run toward the clump of trees by the cupola building. Then we follow the tents down to the cops."

" Okay," she said swallowing.

" Piece of cake."

She smiled, took his hand and rumbled across the grass. The odd stalking feeling returned once they were in the open. The dirt exploded less than a hundred feet from the trees and a muffled gunshot sounded from an unknown direction. Kathryn screamed as more bullets hit the ground. Tucker brought her behind the trees up the hill. Her sides ached and air pushed into her lungs as they paralleled the brick building. The gunfire stopped. The alerted cops, guns drawn, sprinted across the grass. One cop grabbed a walkie talkie microphone.

Tucker cupped his hand as they approached the tents. " They're shooting at us!"

" Over here, behind the cruiser!" yelled the gray haired cop.

" We're being stalked," cried Tucker.

Kathryn extended her hands against the cruiser fender.

" Where are they?" asked the cop, looking at the other cop on the cruiser radio. " Who is stalking you?"

Tucker caught his breath as he spoke. " Three men... Short guy with receding dark hair and a yellow jersey. Blonde guy, taller, red checked shirt. Other guy..."

" Take your time."

" Tee shirt. Hefty guy with dark hair and side boards."

" Got that, Tommy?"

" Gut it."

As Tommy spoke into the mike, Kathryn squeezed Tucker's hand. The cop faced them. " You have names on these individuals?"

" Dimitri Meritokis, AKA, Sam Hunter... A man named Grignano. And Conrad Ridder."

" Billy, get these people something to drink."

As another cop ran toward one of the tents, Kathryn scanned back to the grandstand, unsure whether Dimitri would continue his attack. She made a conscious attempt to stop hyperventilating and held Tucker's hand. " I can't believe we're still alive."

Tucker struck a match and lit a tiperillo. He shook out the flame, smiled and exhaled a flume of smoke. " We've gut em."

31

At twenty past nine a sunburned O'Conner walked into the DA's third floor office in downtown Brockton. He wore shorts and a white jersey and looked directly at Kathryn, seated next to Tucker. A few of his staff brought the written statement given to the police at the fairgrounds. She reached for the cup of tea on the side desk. The water was tepid, but she savored the deep flavor.

O'Conner cleared his throat. " This is an extraordinary report."

" Are the cops still looking for them?" asked Tucker.

" I haven't changed any orders from the police department," said O'Conner.

Kathryn set down the cup and swallowed the tea. " They killed my friend. Conrad Ridder shot her."

" Yes, I see that in the report. I am sorry, Miss Jenner." He set down the paper and for a few seconds his face remained blank, but his brows slowly compressed as he slid a chair next to them and folded his arms on the back. " I want to go over everything you know."

" They'll try to get away," said Tucker.

" I'm aware of that. What about Charlie Leone?"

Kathryn shook her head. " No, no, what about Dan Jansen? We've tried calling him four times. His wife hasn't seen him. Where is he? That's what I want to know. Should we add him to the body count?"

" We can check that," said O'Conner, glancing at the older guy to his right. The guy jotted something in his notebook. " Tell me what you know about Charlie Leone."

" You make it sound like we're the ones being investigated here," said Tucker.

" Sorry."

" What's to tell," said Kathryn. " His car, the Plymouth Fury, sitting in the junkyard in the Polish Village, was moved from Horwitz's yard in Carver."

" It was towed from the accident," said Tucker. " Because the little bastard, Dimitri, ordered Grignano to drain the brake fluid."

" So clever," said Kathryn.

O'Conner folded his arms. " Are you sure about all of this?"

" He did it outside The Wayside. Witnesses saw him out there and somehow he got more alcohol into Charlie," she said. " I don't know he did that."

Tucker crossed his legs and leaned back. " See, Charlie's niece and her boyfriend, Smitty, start looking into the accident. Smitty finds out about the brake lines being emptied."

" And Lucy already knew about Capital Hill."

" What's that?" asked O'Conner.

Kathryn looked at Tucker and picked up the manila envelopes. " Right in here. The whole proposal and how Dimitri assumed the name Sam Hunter. How he came to Plymouth with native son, Conrad Ridder. Their expressed purpose was buying the radio station down there and advancing Ridder's radio career." She handed the envelopes to O'Conner. " To do that he conned Charlie Leone out of

eighty thousand dollars. The sale of the station is pending and they will pay for it with Charlie's money."

" And Lucy and her boyfriend know about this?" asked O'Conner, pulling documents out of the first envelope.

" Yeah," said Tucker, pounding his fist on the desk. " Except they're dead! Shot to death by Ridder."

" What?" asked O'Conner. His face soured. " You have proof of this, also?"

Kathryn nodded as she sipped the tea. " Yes, but it gets tricky, but I think we've put it together. Mrs. Crowell down by the water heard two things last Thursday night. She said she thought she heard a car backfiring, but we think she heard shots fired."

" It was shots fired," said Tucker, standing. " That damned Ridder had them cornered at the rock."

" Plymouth Rock?"

" Yeah, we found a second witness in Rhode Island who has said unequivocally he saw a white Volkswagen like Ridder's parked near the rock at the same time Mrs. Crowell heard the backfire."

O'Conner looked up from the document he was reading. " I see, but where are the bodies?"

" Dumped in the bay," said Tucker. " Weighted down."

" I see."

" Mrs. Crowell later heard a boat motor. Dimitri helped Ridder dump the bodies," said Kathryn.

" How do you know this?"

" Well, I."

" You're assuming. Miss Jenner," said O'Conner.

" We've built the beginning of a case that can bring these people to justice," said Tucker.

O'Conner's forehead wrinkles tightened as he smiled. " I commend you on your work. Yes, you have accomplished what Dan Jansen had only begun."

" You should be able to throw the book at them when you find them," said Tucker.

Again O'Conner smiled and stood. " I don't think so."

" What do you mean, you don't think so?" growled Tucker, moving toward him. " Any one of these things would warrant them being prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

O'Conner turned toward the open door. " You can come in now."

Kathryn slowly stood as Dimitri Meritokis, wearing a light weight jacket, and his gun drawn, stepped inside the office. He was followed by Conrad Ridder and Grignano.

" Oh, my God!" cried Kathryn, raising her hands to her mouth.

" A pleasure to finally meet you up close, Kathryn," said Ridder. " You made a fool out of me."

Tucker held her back as she swung her arms. " Murderer!"

" What the hell is going on here?" asked Tucker as he dragged her back.

" What's going on is you're both going to be killed." said Ridder. " And you know what? I will personally send you bodies to the bottom of Plymouth Bay where you can reside with your compadres."

" You son of a bitch!" shouted Tucker as he rushed Ridder, but Dimitri thrust his revolver outward. Tucker slid to a stop and breathed quickly as he spoke. " You're all damned murderers."

" So harsh, Tucker. So harsh," said Ridder, grinning. " You people didn't have a chance."

" The truth will come out," said Kathryn.

O'Conner pushed the documents back in the manila folders and handed the folders to Dimitri. " Don't count on it."

Dimitri glanced at the folders. " While I admire your prowess and persistence, I feel compelled to set you straight. You don't confront power, you only succumb to it."

" No way you'll get away with this," said Tucker.

" I will."

Ridder again grinned at the door and Kathryn's stomach churned. All her thoughts scattered as she rushed him again. " You killed Roz! You killed Roz!"

Ridder swiped her with the butt end of the gun, cracking her cheekbone and her knees buckled. She heard Tucker scramble and yell, but Grignano leaped inside the office. Tucker backed away from three guns pointed at his head. " I'll get you Ridder! I'll get you!"

" Enough!," yelled O'Conner, leaving the room. " Get rid of them now."

Kathryn sat up and tightened her queasy stomach as Tucker held her. He ran his finger over her throbbing cheek bone. " Are you all right, Kathryn?"

" We should have known. Of course, he pays off the assistant DA."

" Out of here," said Ridder, fanning his gun.

" You're a mighty brave man with that gun, mister," said Tucker, standing. He helped Kathryn up.

" Shut up."

" What are you going to do with us?" asked Kathryn, holding her cheek. The tears moistened her eyes. " You killed my good friend."

" If she had behaved herself she'd be alive," said Ridder.

Dimitri stepped forward and waved the gun. " Everybody out!"

Grignano lifted his gun as they passed and he marched with Ridder into the courthouse corridor. Dimitri stood with O'Conner by the elevators and pointed at one of the documents from the manila folder. He mentioned something about WXBN and told O'Conner more money would be delivered to him. As the elevator doors opened he stepped inside.

" The truth will come out, O'Conner," said Kathryn.

" Not in your lifetime, Miss Jenner."

Dimitri stood inside the dull elevator light as Grignano pressed his gun against her back and ordered her inside. She gazed into Dimitri's dark eyes, but saw nothing resembling compassion or empathy. The little man's solid face, like a powerful futuristic computer, seemed consumed with an unsettling meticulousness to perform tasks. His cold calculating actions scared her more than losing her own life.

32

Ridder and Dimitri sat with weapons drawn in the front seat as Grignano raced a 1956 Chevy away from the midway lights. Within minutes they entered a more rural, darkened area. Kathryn clutched Tucker's arm as the passing street lights flashed across her closed eyelids. Tucker continued to berate Dimitri and Ridder, but they no longer responded. She had prepared herself to face death ever since she first returned to Plymouth, but now they would die without bringing the men in the front seat to justice.

Dimitri whispered something to Ridder and turned to Grignano. Grignano raised his brows and nodded. At the traffic light, he shifted the car and turned at a gas station onto a narrow road.

"Change of plans," said Dimitri. "I wouldn't want anyone linking your bodies with those other two." The influx of cool night air was tainted with a sickening raw sewage smell. "The city sewer beds will serve my purposes."

"You'll all rot in hell," said Kathryn. "You killed Roz."

"You should have minded your own business," said Ridder.

Tucker's glassy blue eyes tracked the headlights shining up the road. Past a row of trees and a tiny cemetery, Grignano, whipped the Chevy into an open, bumpy dirt surface below a distant prodigious levy. Dust rose into the night as he swerved and skidded to a stop. Ridder, the gun propped in his hand, pushed open the passenger door and Dimitri slid out behind him.

Grignano also kept his weapon trained on them as he backed out the driver's side door and flipped up the seat. " Get out."

" Get out and be killed," said Tucker.

" That is entirely correct," added Dimitri from the hood.

Kathryn stiffened her body and tightly gripped Tucker's hand, but Tucker leaned back in the seat and laughed. " You're all a bunch of losers."

" You're about to meet you maker, Tucker," said Ridder with Dimitri at the hood.

" Maybe so. But you're going to have to clean up quite mess in this car, now aren't you, Conrad?"

" Stop wasting time," said Dimitri. " Get them the hell out of that car!"

Ridder turned, the gun in his hand. " Me?"

" Grig, get him the hell out of the car!"

Grignano exposed his front teeth and threw the gun to Dimitri. He stuck his head inside the car, leaned over the folded seat to grab Tucker. Tucker cocked his fist and jabbed Grignano's nose. The stocky man raised his hands and fell back. Blood trickled over his lips and into his mouth. He removed a handkerchief from his back pocket and spoke through the muffled fabric.

" You bastard! Just give me the gun, Dimitri."

" Get the girl!"

Tucker dove into the front seat, shifted and started the car. Ridder fired the gun, smashing the side window and glass went flying. The car lurched a few feet forward as the engine shut off and Tucker leaped out the door. Grignano grunted and clawed his way into the back seat. She squirmed but was caught by Ridder on

the other side. Grignano pushed her out the passenger door, Ridder flailed her face, sending her to the ground.

A mass of stars twinkled across the black sky above the open dirt, but the odor from the sewer beds made her nauseated. As Tucker yelled at Dimitri around the other side of the Chevy. Grignano yanked her up and as she staggered, she saw Tucker leaning on the hood across from Ridder and Dimitri.

" Up the embankment!" yelled Dimitri. " Both of you."

Ridder pointed the gun at Tucker. " You heard him."

" You're scum, Ridder. Without the guns I'd kill you with my bare hands."

" Kill them here," said Dimitri.

Kathryn kicked Grignano's wrist. The gun arced in the air over the Chevy and Tucker disappeared behind the hood, but Grignano pulled out another gun. He pointed the barrel at her throat and smiled in the gray light. She looked into his dark eyes, but quickly he winced and raised his hands upward as three quick shots echoed off the levy and he collapsed to the dirt. Ridder and Dimitri dropped on the ground behind the Chevy.

Tucker fired at them and then led Kathryn up the grassy embankment. Dimitri, on his belly, nudged his head around the tires. Tucker unloaded the gun again as they scrambled. The odor at the top thickened and they scurried along the murky beds. As Dimitri assumed a firing position near the fender. Tucker pulled Kathryn over the embankment. She hit the ground hard as a single bullet whizzed overhead. " Too close."

He slid her toward the sewer beds, but she expected Ridder and Dimitri to bound over the top any moment. She gagged as additional bullets tracked over em-

bankment. Tucker gazed to where the levy met the stars. He waited, then moved her back up and slowly stuck his head over the edge as Kathryn slid over his shoulders.

A racing police cruiser's blue and red lights pulsed across the flat plains below the embankment shadows. In the headlight's glare, both Ridder and Dimitri retreated along the earthen wall. Ridder scrambled toward a thicket at the far end as Dimitri crawled like a crab up the levy slope. Dan Jansen's gun flared out as he burst from the cruiser and immediately assaulted the slope. Johnny Hegarty darted left and wobbled after the fleeing Ridder.

Tucker climbed away from the sludge and faced Dimitri, now only a hundred yards away along the dike. His voice was clear in the night. " Drop it, Dimitri."

Jansen yelled as he bounded to the top. " You heard him, Meritokis."

Dimitri still gripped the gun and called into the night. " I have good lawyers and can walk."

" You scammed Charlie Leone and then ordered his death!" cried Tucker, inching forward on the dirt packed surface.

" We'll see what my lawyers do with that," he said, laughing.

" Smitty and Lucy didn't deserve to die!" Kathryn yelled from below.

" And neither did Roz! "

" They got in the way..."

Dimitri swung his gun hand but a bright orange burst surrounded Jansen's gun muzzle. Like a prisoner facing a firing squad, Dimitri's body snapped back, tumbled repeatedly down the sharp slope, and splashed into sludgy sewer bed. Jansen froze, his contorted face covered with flashing blue and red light. He stepped over the top and stared down at the sewer beds. As the peepers chirped and the distant bark of a dog cut the night air, Kathryn looked back to the city light

glow to the east. The distant wail of police sirens grew louder beyond the blinking red lights of a high antenna. Tucker, also gazed into the beds, shuffled up to Jansen and placed his hand on the policeman's shoulder. " You did the right thing, Danny."

Jansen twisted his facial muscles. " He would have gone free, Tucker. I just couldn't allow that. I couldn't."

33

In the warm breeze along the Plymouth dock Kathryn squeezed Tucker's hand. " Jansen said they'd have Roz here anytime."

" She's lucky as hell. I thought she was dead," replied Tucker.

To the right the tourists causally waited in line to board the Mayflower and another line formed in front of the portico down the street, but her eyes were fixed to a bobbing boat anchored several hundred yards near the long spits bordering the bay. Since five this morning divers had searched under the rough waters for Lucy and Smitty's bodies. She had little doubt Smitty and Lucy would soon be placed next to Charlie Leone in the cemetery along the highway.

" Ridder can't survive a police manhunt," said Tucker.

" He has for eighteen hours," she said as they moved along the dock. Her eyes were packed with fatigue. " Hegarty couldn't find him in the woods."

" He's not immortal and neither was Dimitri. I have no regrets here. I told Jansen he did the right thing and I meant it." He shielded his eyes as he scanned the bay. " And here we are still back here in 1958."

" I've learned not to question some things." She looked into his vibrant blue eyes. " I never would have believed someone dead could enter my consciousness either." Several smaller boats headed toward the main boat across the harbor. " I want to head for the hinterland, Tucker, live on the land. I want to see the sun rise and set everyday of my life. I want to see the stars change position in the night sky with the seasons and I want to feel the cold winter air biting my face."

He moved his arm around her pulled her closer. " I know..."

A black and white Brockton cruiser rounded the sea wall and started up the dock. The crowd cleared as the police car edged forward. Roz's right arm was in a sling, but she slowly waved with her left hand as the car looped in front of Kathryn. She hurried over and opened the back door. Roz, winced as she stepped onto the dock. Kathryn held her hand. " I'm so glad you're all right."

" Yeah, I'm rather pleased myself," she said, grinning. She looked ahead as Tucker joined Kathryn at the cruiser. " Hey, Tuck, what's new?"

Tucker smiled and shook his head. " What's new? How does it feel to have been in combat?"

" Ready for duty, Lieutenant. Sorry, I can't salute."

" Acknowledged."

" Jansen told me someone at the courthouse tipped off him and Hegarty about the sewer beds," said Roz.

" Wonderful place," replied Kathryn.

" Sorry, I missed it." Roz pinched her nose and looked across the bay.
" They're pulling out something."

A cluster of men on the large boat's deck spun a lever and retracted a thick rope onto an overhead spool. The blurred image of a limp body emerged from the water and was hoisted into the boat. Kathryn ground her teeth and kept her eyes fixed across the bay. " They only wanted the truth. Was that too much to ask?"

Dan Jansen in full uniform walked down the dock from the harbor office. Tucker stepped forward. " What do they have, Danny?"

" They just pulled a body from the bay." Jansen removed his hat and dabbed his handkerchief on his forehead. He peered over the bay as a small speedboat cut across the water toward the dock. The boat slowed and approached at an angle.

" Here comes David Anson. He'll confirm this."

" Confirm what?" asked Kathryn.

" Danny!" Anson shouted into the wind. He slowed the little boat and steered the rear motor with his left hand.

" Did they find the two kids?" called Tucker

Anson threw a new rope to Jansen. " You're not going to believe this!"

" Believe what?" asked Jansen.

" They found Lucy Leone and Billy Smith, but they just brought up another body."

" I don't understand," said Tucker.

" Conrad Ridder." Kathryn's stomach jolted. " He must have shot himself. The divers found his body near the Leone girl."

Kathryn and Tucker turned to Roz at the same moment. Kathryn pressed her lips, her eyes moistened and goose bumps covered her arms. As Jansen talked to his friend, she glanced at the Mayflower and then at the granite portico where Lucy and Smitty died. She moved slowly away from the group and crossed her arms. The strong black and white yearbook image of the dark eyed Lucy Leone and the youthful Smitty captured her thoughts. " Rest in peace now."

She stared at the portico's smooth gray pillars and slowly panned back to the bay's choppy waters. When she crossed the dock boards Roz put her good arm around her. " It's all over, Kathryn Marie. No more dreams. And here we are back here in 1958."

Tucker stroked his chin with a sly smile. " True."

" Why the long faces, buckaroos? You two have each other and what the hell, I always liked the fifties..."

Kathryn panned the clouds mottled across the western skies beyond the silhouetted town buildings. " I want to disappear... leave this place."

" Tell, her you love her, Tuck."

Kathryn turned to her friend. " Roz..."

" She's right," said Tucker, with a wide grin.

Roz paralleled them down the dock as Kathryn beamed, took his arm. She glanced at the boat rocking with the waves and then looked up at Tucker in the late afternoon light. " I say we head west and keep on driving. What do you say, Tucker?"

Roz moved closer and cupped her hand as she leaned toward Kathryn.

" I think he already said it, Kathryn Marie."