

Chapter One

AGAINST THE BLUISH-GRAY OF THE DRIFTING SAN Francisco fog, her blonde hair was easy to follow as was the scent of her perfume. He stalked her for a block clinging to the darkness. The poorly lit street casting its long shadows smothered all movement. Twenty-three year old Susie Smallwood sensed someone was behind her. This often happened when leaving the club.

She didn't look back. It was usually some lonely man and a quick exchange of words was all they wanted. But she picked up the pace. Someone was still there. She could hear their footsteps splash against the wet pavement behind her. She was right, someone was following her.

Starting to panic, she thought to herself, be stern...and don't show any fear.

Without realizing, she quickened her pace and racing through her mind were the words...I must get to the car.

Her keys were digging into her white clenched knuckles and someone was moving in fast. As she approached her car the sound of footsteps suddenly disappeared.

Susie stopped for a moment and listened, took a deep breath, and relaxed. With her car in sight she was home free. She turned to see who it was and instead saw a blur of a shape, then felt a sharp blow across her temple.

Norm Applegate

Susie staggered and collapsed against her car sliding down the smooth metal door onto her back. Her temples were throbbing. She lay motionless until her eyes came back into focus. The shape towering above her smiled down.

"Ve're finished playing, yes?" The accent was foreign.

He was a rugged European with growth on his face. He had dark brown eyes, thin lips and no distinguishing marks. His thick black wavy hair curled over his ears and on his neck. He was easy to forget. When described by women, good looking was never mentioned. His dress was grungy: baggy corduroy pants and a plain dark green colored shirt. At five ten and one ninety-five his stocky build fit snugly into his dark blue windbreaker.

Minutes later a small sports car moved swiftly from the area of the club and turned onto Ivy Street. As the cold wind swept past the rocks of Alcatraz and up the curving side streets, the Mission District felt the chill of the late night air. Traces of eastern spices from Chinatown teased the nostrils but few people were on the street this evening to appreciate it. For those that were, getting out of the damp cold was more important than watching a Russian.

In the trunk was the assignment, and no one had seen a thing. She was helpless and bound with gray duct tape across her mouth and white plastic police cuffs immobilized her hands behind her back. When Susie woke up she could not believe what had happened. It was so quick and she was now so helpless.

An occasional glance in the mirror was enough to satisfy Victor that he was safe. As they drove out of the city he knew he had picked the right one. Reaching up he brushed the hair from his face, he was sweating.

Victor turned and yelled toward the trunk, "no sound, yes?"

His voice was loud enough to send chills down Susie's spine. He liked talking to his victims. They gave him their

Into The Basement

full attention and that didn't happen often. Nobody gave anything to Victor. He had to take it.

The car edged onto the bay to bay and through the tunnel. Forty minutes later Victor pulled into a driveway and stopped. No house was visible.

Victor opened the trunk and peered down at her. Susie's eyes were wide open in fear.

She screamed into the gag, "let me go!"

All he heard was the muffled sound of pleasure. Lifting her sweatshirt, the sight of her breasts and nipples stirred a desire deep inside. But not tonight, maybe not ever she was not his. He stroked her plump breast like petting a soft puppy. It had been awhile since he had felt such a young firm body. Victor sensed her fear and he enjoyed it. Darkness was all around. Emptiness was all he could see. Susie could see nothing.

Victor slowly focused his eyes and looked at her. "For me the assignment has come to an end, for you, it is just beginning." Then he paused making the sign of the cross on his chest, "let's go."