

The Madonna Dilemma

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Publisher Aaron T Knight

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A full moon illuminated the high desert country east of Los Angeles as the Cadillac maintained a steady speed in rhythm with the traffic. It was headed away from LA on I 15. Hours went by and the car continued to eat up the miles. Past Barstow, then Baker, heading east. At 5:30 AM the car passed through Las Vegas still on I 15 but headed north now toward Salt Lake City.

Seated at the steering wheel the lone occupant never moved, nor turned his head . By mid morning, the Cadillac was north of Cedar City Utah. Abruptly the engine began to sputter. Then the car surged forward with full power, only to falter again.

This jerky momentum continued for several miles. Frustrated motorists honked at the slowing car, then moved around it to the other lane of I 15. When the engine stopped altogether, an old pick up truck nearly collided with the rear end of the sedan. Its young driver swerved out of the

way, cursed the driver of the Caddy, threw the car a bird, and roared off down the interstate.

Coasting along without power for a bit longer, the Cadillac began to drift toward the side of the road. When the car reached the edge of the pavement the right front tire dipped into loose gravel, causing the vehicle to roll down into the ditch. When the Caddy reached the bottom, it rolled for a few yards, then came to a halt. With the shift of weight, the man in the drivers seat slumped forward onto the steering wheel. What the passenger and the engine had in common was the fact that they were both dead.

In less than an hour, police cars were on the scene with their blue lights flashing. Several cars were parked in front of the official vehicles. Motorists were gathered around Sheriff Potter.

One of them was saying excitedly to the sheriff,

"I seen this car here in the ditch officer, so I stopped to see if I could help. I didn't expect no dead man."

Fat Belly Potter", as he was called by his subordinates when he wasn't around, disliked civilians. Maintaining a calm attitude, he replied,

"We thank you for your assistance Mr. Bladder."

He corrected the sheriff, "That's Bladeau sir."

“Sorry Mr. BLA-DOW. Sergeant Bivens will take your statement.”

Not to be put off so easily by the sheriff, Bladeau asked.

“Was he murdered? What do you think officer?”

Overcoming his mounting irritation, Potter replied,

"Looks like a heart attack to me. Nothing unusual."

“Oh,” Bladeau looked disappointed.

When he saw the murderous look forming on Potter’s face, Sergeant Bivens hurried over,

“If you will come with me, I’ll take your statement.”

Bivens escorted the motorist to his police cruiser.

Potter went back to studying the corpse. No sign of violence, no identification on the man, nor in the car, he mused to himself. California license plates though, maybe that will turn up the man’s identity. Years of police experience had made the sheriff into a keen observer, but there was nothing unusual about anything.

He poked around for another hour until the ambulance arrived for the corpse, and a tow truck came to impound the Cadillac. Potter was grateful he hadn’t found evidence of a killing. He didn’t want any complicated deals in his county.

Several days later, the Sheriff was still in the dark about the dead man’s identity. The FBI had no fingerprints on the

deceased man. A police bulletin came in stating that the Cadillac had been stolen in California, and so had the license plates. Much to Potter's relief, the Coroner announced the dead man had expired from a heart attack within a 24 hour period prior to his discovery in the ditch.

Potter reasoned the dead man had probably been down there most of the night. No big deal, just a routine death from natural causes. All he had left to do was to get an identification on the man, and close the case.

Sergeant Bivens and the district attorney annoyed the sheriff by continuing to speculate about the stolen car .

"Just a car thief who died while trying to get away. Simple as that !" he snapped at them.

"Don't be stirring up trouble where there isn't any Bivens.  
"

Dealing with the district attorney was another matter. Potter couldn't order him to forget the incident.

"A heart attack, if it was one, doesn't explain everything away Potter. I'm going to stay on the case until the California State Police clear this up."

"There is 'no case' John, only a dead guy. We don't need to dig any further . We've done our duty ."

"It's not over until the facts are all in Potter."

"Suit yourself then," the sheriff replied irritably.

He left the County office building to have lunch at the diner with his cronies.

A week later, Bivens burst into Potter's office waving a missing persons bulletin at the sheriff.

"Look here sheriff, it's our guy. You know, the dead man in the ditch."

"You sure?"

"Well, look for yourself .It's him alright."

Potter studied the picture on the bulletin. It was the man for sure. No question. He read the bulletin description of the man:

Anthony Perrine Art Dealer Los Angeles. Missing since June 22. Believed to be headed for Salt Lake City to attend an art conference at the University of Utah. Subject is a recognized expert on Southwestern artists.

Huh, Potter grunted, headed for Salt Lake City alright. I wish he'd got there instead of ending up dead in my county, he thought to himself.

"Okay Bivens, notify LAPD that we've got their man on ice up here."

"Yes sheriff," Bivens rushed out of the sheriff's office to make the call.

For the next several days Potter's comfortable routine was derailed. The widow of the deceased arrived in town accompanied by an LA detective. She positively identified the stubby corpse with the neatly trimmed beard as her husband. Potter was kept busy making out reports and the papers required to release the body into the custody of his widow. Damn it all! he thought as he viciously signed another form, no card games for two days, no lunches, no nothing!

To add to his misery the LAPD detective sat across from him with his feet propped up on his desk. He watched him sign the forms and asked Potter detailed questions about everything involving the discovery of Perrine in the Interstate ditch. Potter finally became so frustrated and nervous trying to answer the questions being fired at him while he tended to the paper work, that he exploded.

"Sergeant! This stuff you're asking me is in the written reports. Read them! Our county coroner has determined Perrine died of a heart attack. If you feel you have superior medical knowledge over our doctor, then be my guest! Go over to the morgue and examine the corpse yourself. . If you're not going to do that, then get out of my office and read the reports, dammit!"

Sergeant Andrews looked shocked by the sheriff's outburst then remarked reproachfully

"I just thought maybe there was more information than you can put in a report. That's all. I'm just trying to do my job Sheriff Potter."

"Read the reports" Potter replied quietly.

At last, an ambulance arrived to take the body away to LA and the deceased's widow and the LAPD detective left shortly afterward. Heaving a sigh of relief, Sheriff Potter started to leave his office for a well deserved day off. He never made it. Bivens intercepted him at the door.

"Sheriff, it's Aaron over at the garage. He's on the phone and he says he has to speak to you about the stolen Cadillac impounded over at his garage."

Potter closed his fists at his sides, controlled himself and replied, "Thank you. I'll take the call in my office."

Sitting down heavily at his desk, he pick up the receiver

"What is it Aaron?"

As Potter listened to Aaron on the phone his eyes widened.

At one point in the mechanic's dialogue he said

"No kidding?"

Conversation over, Potter muttered into the phone,

"I'll be right over."

## Chapter Two

Potter pulled up to the garage a few minutes later. He eyed Aaron standing by the grease rack nearly jumping up and down with excitement. Before Aaron could say anything, the sheriff breezed past him,

“Okay Aaron,” he said, “Let’s have look at the caddy.”

They stood under the car which had been elevated on the hydraulic lift. Aaron waved a portable light back and forth while he pointed with his other hand to areas of interest.

After a few minutes, Potter told Aaron he could shut the light off. Potter left the garage without another word to the mechanic. As he headed to the police cruiser he suddenly stopped, and looked back at the Cadillac. Then he let out a low whistle. He drove the squad car up to the open door of the garage. He waved a hand at Aaron. The mechanic stepped up to the car window.

“Aaron what you have seen and know about this Cadillac is strictly confidential. Don’t tell anyone.

You hear? Not even your wife. This is police business. Not a word. Do you understand me ? And another thing,” Potter continued, “Get the car down from the rack and park it

behind the garage. Cover it up with a tarpaulin”

Aaron stared at the sheriff while he moved his head up and down vigorously. Finished with the mechanic, Potter roared off in the squad car. Damn ! he thought to himself, won't this dead man ever go away? He returned to his office to make a phone call.

In the afternoon of the following day, an RV pulled into the parking lot at the sheriff's office. Bivens heard the vehicle and glanced out of his office window. He figured it was probably some tourist needing directions. He turned back to his paperwork. Sheriff Potter had seen the RV pull into the parking lot as well. He went outside to greet the passengers.

A young man in a rumpled suit climbed down from the driver's seat. Out of the back door emerged a slender man with black wiry hair and a prominent nose. A big cigar was firmly planted in the side of his mouth. As he walked up to the waiting sheriff he said,

“Clayton, it's been about four years hasn't it?”

“Bout that Lieutenant O'Keefe.” Potter replied looking very pleased to see his visitor. As he walked toward his office with him, Potter said in a low voice,

“I called you Lieutenant in front of my officers CC so

they would show proper respect, especially Bivens."

CC smiled and replied,

"Thanks we have discipline problems in LA too."

Seated in Potters' office CC offered the sheriff a cigar. Potter took it, and they both lit up and leaned back in their chairs. Zack Parrish, the young detective who had driven O'Keefe to Utah began to choke as the air became heavy with cigar smoke. Then he began to cough. O'Keefe said,

"Zaccariah you can wait outside if you want."

He immediately headed for the outer office. Zack was thoroughly exhausted from the twelve hour road trip from Los Angeles and irritated that he had been stuck with all of the driving.

Zack was disgusted over O'Keefe's refusal to fly to Utah. Added to all of that, was his disillusionment over finally meeting this veteran detective and finding him wanting in his view of things. He had expected someone looking more like a detective with a cool professional manner. O'Keefe in actuality was a cigar smoking, horse player, who wore polyester pants when he was off duty. Polyester!

In Potter's office the two men reminisced about the famous manhunt for a serial killer that brought O'Keefe to the sheriff's county over four years ago. There had been a

special task force of police officers from the western states formed to try to quickly apprehend a mass murderer before the death toll reached any higher.

Potter and O'Keefe had been paired off during the search and became good friends. They shared a passionate belief that too much activity would only cause more confusion. Their progress in the manhunt had been slow, with frequent breaks for needed rest and recreation.

Then a witness came forward claiming he had spotted the notorious killer up on a nearby mountain range. Groups of police men were organized to climb the mountains and screen every inch of it for the killer. Horrified at the idea of climbing and hiking in the rugged country, O'Keefe and Potter had masterfully avoided the exhausting searches in the mountains on foot.

Most of their time was spent in Potter's office maintaining a communications center. When things were quiet, CC competed fiercely in high stakes pinnacle games with the sheriff and his buddies. O'Keefe was several thousand dollars poorer by the time the killer was apprehended within two blocks of Potter's office by a team of FBI agents.

Getting down to business Potter said

“CC, this Perrine deal stinks of murder. I’ve kept the lid on things the best I could. You know I don’t want any publicity around my county. Life’s too short, and the pay is too small, to get involved in a big sensation. It’s why I called you. I knew you’d understand. If I had gone through the official channels at LAPD this place would probably be crawling with police and media people already.”

CC replied

“No doubt Clayton. This Perrine guy was a well known art dealer on the West Coast. He’s big news. But so far, no word has leaked out about his death until things can be checked out. His funeral was stopped in LA. Our coroner’s city unit is performing another autopsy to see if your doctor was right about a heart attack. Had you called in to the LAPD detective division God knows how many people would know the cause of Perrine’s death is suspicious.”

Potter grunted,

“Old doc could be wrong about a heart attack being the cause of death dammit. He’s becoming a little vague, and his eye sight is fading. I hope his medical skills are still sharp. If not, I could be in for a big hoopla.”

“If it's murder, the LA Coroners Office will nail it down. Nothing against your local coroner, but this whole thing

appears to be the work of some professional criminals. Which brings me to the subject of the car. What's special about it?"

"It's high tech stuff CC," Potter replied, "The Cadillac is rigged up to drive itself."

"What do you mean 'drive' itself?"

"I mean, there's some sort of electronic guidance system attached to the steering and accelerator mechanisms. The car will operate without a driver."

CC took a long pull on his cigar then let out a thick plume of smoke. He looked at Potter

"Are you sure? Maybe it's just a trick." \

Potter shook his head,

"Aaron, the mechanic at the local garage, discovered all the stuff yesterday when he tried to move the car to another spot. Neither the steering wheel nor the accelerator worked from inside of the Cadillac. All he could do was start the engine. When Aaron got underneath the car to see what was wrong, he discovered the electronic gadgets."

CC looked confused so Potter explained it in more detail.

"Aaron found out there is a gear arrangement installed to control the direction of the car. Then there's another gizmo he doesn't understand, intercepting the throttle and a bunch of other stuff. under the hood. It has a thirty five gallon gas

tank installed in it. So the Caddy must have traveled a long way without refueling. Aaron said the gas tank was empty when it was towed onto his lot.”

”So you don’t know if the car went five miles or five hundred miles.”

"No, I don’t know how far it traveled, or even if Perrine was alone in the car. But I won’t be surprised if the technical people say the Caddy drove itself. I can make a guess it was probably launched in California on I-15 and guided by those electronic contraptions. It traveled until it ran out of gas if the thirty five gallon gas tank was full when it began the journey."

CC rolled his cigar between his fingers.

“Off the top of my head, I’d say a big sedan like that one couldn’t get any more than 18 to 20 miles per gallon.”

He turned to the big map of the Western United States on Potter’s office wall.

"Assuming the Caddy was sent off on I-15 in California and programmed to head toward Salt Lake City, I’m guessing the starting point was somewhere around Riverside California. From Riverside to Salt Lake City there are no stops nor traffic lights. A launching point going north from east or south, requires a complicated interchange of connecting interstate highways.

‘I-15 from Riverside California to Salt Lake City Utah is unique, because it’s a stretch of interstate highway without any traffic interruptions. Yeah, I’ll bet they didn’t care where the car stopped running, they only wanted Perrine’s body to end up a long way from LA. Probably they had to be sure the corpse wasn’t found for at least a day. Any time short of 24 hours might have been too risky for the killer to accomplish whatever was necessary. It was very clever planning. No amateur planned this Clayton.’

Potter relit his cigar and replied.

"Good thinking CC. But, why so elaborate? Why not just dump the guy anywhere and disappear? It would make more sense.”

"If my theory is correct. there was a reason why time was of prime importance." CC replied, "I don’t think it was just a clever stunt.”

Potter thought it over,

“Of course, we’re assuming the Coroner finds evidence of a murder.”

CC glanced at the sheriff with a shocked look.

“It's murder alright. It can’t be anything else.”

Potter looked sadly at CC

“I was only hoping for some miracle to keep my office

out of a sensational murder case.”

“I know you like things peaceful Clayton.”

CC said quietly.

“Is there any chance of staying out of it?”

"Don't panic yet, there may be a way out for you."

“Really?” Potter exclaimed eagerly.

“When I get back to LA I’ll go to work on Captain Lundgren, my superior. He’s really dedicated to police work. Maintaining a great arrest record is all he cares about. I think I can stroke him, and turn this damned case away from both of us. You know I don’t want any complicated deals either. Lundgren would love to get rid of me, but so far, I have a slick arrangement that has kept him off my back.

“When I make my report to him I’ll remind him a murder case isn’t in my jurisdiction. Then to be sure the case goes elsewhere, I’ll snow him about his own men’s wonderful detecting abilities, and suggest he take personal command. I will also argue a rural sheriff’s police force isn’t equipped to handle this case, and LAPD should be in charge. He’ll eat it up.”

Potter was relieved,

“We are brothers CC. Early retirement without any trouble is my goal too.”

They looked at each other and laughed.

"Do you want see the car CC ?"

"Let's go see this electronic marvel," CC replied, "I have an engineer on his way from LA to examine the car. He should arrive in a couple of hours."

When Potter pulled up at Aaron's garage he was surprised to see a large number of cars parked around the area, but there was no one in sight. As the two policemen walked into the garage. Aaron came out of the storeroom to meet them. He looked nervous.

"Aaron, this is Lieutenant O'Keefe from LAPD. He's here to look at the Cadillac."

Aaron nodded, as he twisted his hands on the wrench he was holding. He looked as if he were choking a chicken. Potter noticed his nervous behavior.

"What's the matter with you?". he asked Aaron.

"Nothing sheriff. But, how about you wait here, and I'll bring the Caddy around and put it up on the rack for you." Potter smelled a rat. "You didn't blab to anyone about this car did you?"

"No sir. I swear I didn't tell anyone not even my wife." Aaron replied.

"Well then, let's go around back to the Caddy first, then

you can put it up on the rack when we're finished looking at the interior of the car."

Potter pushed past Aaron and headed for the rear door of the garage .

"I swear, I didn't say anything sheriff."

Aaron called after him. The sheriff opened the rear door of the garage. He was stunned to see over a hundred people gathered around the tarpaulin-covered Cadillac. Some of the men were down on the ground under the car. Only their feet were visible. The rest of the mob of people stood around the car like a bunch of curious turkeys, staring at it. They looked as if they expected it to do something spectacular any minute now.

Predictably, the sheriff absolutely exploded.

"What the hell is going on here?" he thundered. "You people move away from the car! You have no business being here! If you don't disburse in the next 30 seconds, I'll start arresting all of you! Billy! Get out from under the car! Joe, dammit get your hands off the engine!. All of you get the hell out of here and go do something useful !"

Everyone scattered quickly as Potter continued to bellow threats at them.

There was a roar of car engines as the crowd hastily left the scene. Aaron quickly removed the tarpaulin from the Cadillac, backed up the tow truck and pulled the car around to the front of the garage. Potter barred Aaron's way as he dismounted from the tow truck.

"Didn't tell anyone huh? Only about half the county!"

"I swear I didn't tell those people about the car" Aaron replied nervously.

"Well then, you had better have an explanation for how those gawkers learned about the rigged car!"

"The only one I told was one of your officers sheriff."

"Who was it?"

"It was Bivens. He got on the phone to me as soon as you left your office yesterday to come over here to see the car. I swear, I was sure it would be all right to tell Bivens about the electronic devices on the car. I thought it was an official call he was making. Potter stared at Aaron for a moment, he believed him about Bivens. It was just like him to pull a sneaky stunt like this behind his back.

"I believe you Aaron, but I did tell you 'no one' didn't I? You should have followed my orders exactly. Bivens is the nosiest gossip in town."

"Sorry sheriff." Aaron replied quietly.

Potter paced in the garage trying walk off his anger.

“ If the news media gets wind of this and we have a big national circus here over this Cadillac, I swear I’ll skin Bivens alive!”

With the crisis over, Aaron put the car up on the rack and showed his discoveries for CC’s benefit. CC also whistled when they were through with the inspection.

## Chapter Three

Zack hadn't been invited to go along to the garage. After awhile he slipped into the RV for a nap. At this time he was mostly in the dark about the trip to Utah. He had gained some information from Bivens after the sheriff and CC left for their trip to the garage. As he drifted off to sleep he thought smugly about his future plans for police investigations. He would be a new wave kind of detective.

Right now, he was well trained in computer technology, and he attended evening classes in Criminology. He planned to do his crime cases with technical and legal knowledge. Hard facts, gained through modern technology, rather than intuition and guess work. Men like Lieutenant O'keefe would appear to be bumbling amateurs. Smiling, he fell asleep.

It was dark when Zack woke up. He looked out of the RV windshield and spotted O'Keefe in Potter's lighted office. Zack dressed himself then proceeded over to the office. He knocked on the door and Potter opened it,

"It's your driver CC." the sheriff announced.

O'Keefe was seated with another man Zack didn't

recognize. CC turned around in his chair looking distracted.

. “Zaccariah, go have some dinner over at the diner. I’ll be tied up here for awhile longer. “

“Yes, Lieutenant.” Zack replied.

He was annoyed about being left out of the conference. Just a damned chauffeur, he thought to himself as he left the county building.

In the sheriff’s office O’keefe turned back to the engineer who had flown in from LA to inspect the Cadillac.

“So, how did the Caddy stay in the right lane of the highway and turn with the curves in the road?”

CC asked him. Mr. Russell, the engineer, replied,

"Photo electric cells were rigged through the parking lights to an apparatus under the hood, except these gadgets are advanced technology. They are used in the Navy's guided missiles. Basically, the cells would 'read' the white paint on the lane markers, then send that information to the computer installed under the hood of the car.

“They are set to read at intervals, since highway lane markers are painted in intermittent strips. So, when the highway curved, the information for the degree of change in direction was constantly relayed to the computer.

“Then, the computer sent a signal to the gear apparatus controlling the steering mechanism. So the car stayed precisely in the middle of the right lane of the highway. The speed of the car was controlled through the cruise control system which is standard equipment on a luxury sedan like this one. The Cadillac was set to maintain a speed of 58 miles per hour.”

Potter interrupted Russell,

“But what if there was another car in front of the Cadillac moving at a slower speed?”

"The electronic guidance equipment was also used to detect objects appearing in front of the car. A Navy guidance module was installed to handle the possibility of colliding with a slower car in the right lane of the highway. The system works like radar. It takes its information about objects in the vicinity through electronic impulses it sends out.

.”If the Caddy were to approach a slower moving vehicle, the unit can read the object and send the information to the computer. It then sent a command to a device installed to intercept the fuel injector system, thus slowing the Cadillac. When the lane was clear in front again, the cruise control would bring the car back up to 58 miles per hour.”

CC spoke up,

“I suppose whoever rigged this car was taking a risk the right lane might be closed at some point on the route. I mean, there wasn’t any way to stop the vehicle if there was something immovable blocking the way was there?”

“No. The brake system had no controls attached to it. If another car had been stalled in the right lane, the Cadillac would have started to slow down at three car lengths, but then it would have plowed right into the stopped vehicle or any other object in its path for that matter. If there had been such a collision, the Cadillac would have been doing about 35 miles per hour at the time of impact.”

Potter cut in

“Couldn’t the steering mechanism steer the car around the object?”

“No. The guidance system wasn’t designed to perform such a maneuver. They would have had to design a system far more sophisticated. Whoever designed these controls knew what they were doing. Actually, the steering gear only allows for a 35 degree turn to the left or right to take care of curves in the highway.”

, “It was a cold blooded plan. That car could have killed a number of people if there had been an accident in its path.”

Potter commented

Mr. Russell gathered up his notes and diagrams.

“Anything else lieutenant?”

"Yes, what kind of electronics background would be required to rig a car like this?"

"It's pretty broad. Engineers, electronic technicians, ex-Navy personnel trained on guided missiles, and a bunch of 'techy' amateurs who like to tinker with electronics as a hobby."

O'Keefe didn't like Russell's answer, :

"Sounds like nearly everybody."

"I'm afraid so. The electronic equipment installed in this car was either manufactured by Satellite Guidance Systems or Aero-Tech. Those are the two companies that supply most of the guidance equipment to the Navy. Maybe this equipment was stolen from one of the companies."

"Thanks, we appreciate your help."

"I'll talk to you some more back in LA lieutenant. We'll arrange to have the Cadillac shipped back to LA tomorrow."

Potter was exhausted. It was nearly midnight now, and he had been busy since early morning.

"I've got to get to bed CC. My butt is dragging."

“Clayton, I want to keep you out of this Perrine deal. If any news types come around asking any questions, just tell them you are cooperating with LAPD. You don’t know anything about the case.”

Potter felt much better after hearing CC’s assurances of no trouble in his county. They shook hands

“Nice to see you again Clayton. And don’t worry. You’ll probably never hear another word about this deal”

“See you, CC. Don’t forget to come up for some fishing and card games real soon. “

## Chapter Four

O'Keefe entered the RV and roused Zack.

"You drive. I'll sleep. Let's go."

Zack pulled out of town more irritated than ever. He didn't know hardly anything more than he did when they arrived in Utah. Just what Bivens told him about the Cadillac.

CC was unable to go to sleep in the RV. He was much more worried about this Perrine affair than he had told Sheriff Potter. He was fretting now that Captain Lundgren might find a way to assign the case to him even though it was clearly not within the jurisdiction of his squad.

CC knew Lundgren had ways of persuading his superiors to let him handle a case and make the personnel assignments. If the death of Perrine was indeed murder, then the investigation would attract a great deal of media attention. Since Lundgren hates me, he could assign the case to me, CC thought to himself.

If he did force the case on him, he knew the captain would make sure to set him up for failure. Then he could have CC forced out of LAPD. CC shivered at the thought. One faint hope came to him as he squirmed around on the

bunk. Maybe Lundgren might assign the case to one of his favorite detectives for the glamour and the media attention the case would generate.

CC didn't seek any recognition. He wanted to drift along in the department with a minimum of effort until he retired. His highest ambition since he had entered the Police Academy was to live a comfortable Civil Service life, then retire as early as possible. He wanted to devote his energies to the more important things in life, like betting on horse races and playing golf. CC was an avid gambler, he got a thrill over the possibility of winning a big score. His wife, Marge, had a strong influence in keeping his gambling within reason.

He was born Christopher Christo O'Keefe. His father thought the name had a certain elegance to it. In no time at all he was called CC by his friends. He had been with LAPD for 18 years. Now forty years old, he had just two more years until he would be eligible for the treasured early retirement. Leaving the police force was a sore subject between him and his wife. CC tried avoid the subject whenever possible

Marge was a formidable force for one so tiny. Just a little over five feet tall, her fierce will was more than CC could

reckon with. She usually won out. CC used diplomacy, white lies and lots of charm to screen his activities from Marge. He was a busy man. There were horses to bet on every day, rounds of golf to be played, and, of course, his job with LAPD. As a last resort in a fight with Marge, he would make passionate love to her. Sometimes it worked.

CC had never dreamed of becoming a lieutenant on the police force. His highest goal was to maybe make sergeant before he retired. But destiny, if you believe in it, or just dumb luck, had conspired to lift him out of obscurity in the department. CC was thrust into the glare of public attention and to the notice of city politicians without warning.

On traffic patrol one night when he had been with LAPD five years, he parked his squad car in front of a familiar bar to check on his horse bets on TV. CC sauntered into the bar oblivious to the patrons, because his attention was focused on horse racing results. As he walked toward the TV, the tavern was suddenly engulfed in a deafening roar of gunfire. Bullets were flying from behind him and in front of him. CC was caught in the line of fire between two groups of men.

He ducked low and ran for the kitchen with bullets whizzing around his ears. There were five men in front of him running and firing back at their opponents. CC and the

shooters reached the kitchen door at the same time. They slammed it shut as bullets sprayed the door.

A large man in the group yelled at CC,

“Hey cop. Call in and get some police back up. Real quick. CC fumbled around for his cell phone but he had left it in the squad car. He saw CC searching,

“There’s a phone on the wall over there. Get help!”

Petrified, CC did as he was told. He crawled along the floor and made it to the phone. He put in the call for help. As fate would have it, there was a patrol car a block away.

Immediately there was the welcome sound of a police siren. It was loud, indicating the police car was close to the bar. Gun shots ended quickly as the opposing group of men scrambled out of the tavern. In the kitchen they could hear the squealing of tires as the gang made their escape from the area.

CC was amazed he was still alive. He was even more incredulous when the five men in the kitchen laid down their guns and surrendered to him. The large man who appeared to be the leader of the gang said to CC,

“We demand police protection.”

Then he kicked a black bag toward O’Keefe. Finally remembering who he was. CC drew his revolver and with

his hand shaking pointed it at the group.

The large man told him,

“Relax kid. We won’t hurt you. The only way we’re going to get out of here alive is surrounded by cops. The bunch shooting at us, and will be nameless, is the toughest gang on the West Coast. We’re dead meat without a police escort. Jail is better than dead.”

CC nodded dumbly.

Before CC could do anything more than stand in front of his prisoners, with his gun held loosely, and pointed aimlessly at them, the first members of LAPD burst into the kitchen. They were heavily armed and ready for action. Taking in the scene, they lowered their weapons and stared at the mob in front of them with their hands in the air. They looked at CC, who seemed to have everything under control.

“We’ll search these guys for you.” offered one officer.

CC nodded.

While CC stood there, several officers began to collect a wide assortment of weapons from the five men. There were guns, knives, brass knuckles, black jacks and cans of Mace. They were handcuffed, and the police started taking information about the gang’s identities. All of the police

work was being done for CC who was still standing stiff as a statue. Within an hour, the bar was crowded with uniformed policemen and detectives.

TV crews weren't far behind them. Several detectives took charge of the prisoners. CC finally came to life. He knelt down to pick up the leather bag the large man had kicked over to him. Opening the bag CC found what he figured to be about two hundred thousand dollars and some accounting ledgers. He had the ledgers in his hands staring at them when a TV crew squirmed into the jammed kitchen and got CC on camera holding the ledgers. Timing was perfect to record a dramatic photo of CC.

In an instant before the TV camera focused on CC, his police cap had been knocked off springing loose his wiry hair. His shirt had been ripped open by a nail during his wild retreat to the kitchen baring his somewhat skinny, but hairy chest. His eyes were half open, so he appeared to be mean. Cameras are said to never lie, but in this case the result was a distorted view of reality. CC came off looking like Bruce Willis with hair. So much for reality, and the integrity of pictures.

The large man, wasting no time to be certain he was firmly in the custody of the police, spoke up:

"This cop here is the reason we gave up. He's been after

us for a long time. But then, would you believe it? He saved us from being gunned down by eight guys which was after the money in the bag there. We was going to surrender to him anyway, he's too tough for us."

CC was in shock. He didn't really comprehend why the man was telling such big lies.

Before CC could say anything, a detective took the ledgers from him. The books were a detailed record of several chop shop operations and a jewel heist which had been unsolved for months. Such a sensational story was a media dream. An extra bonus was it happened at a time when the mayor of LA and LAPD were receiving scathing criticism. LA citizens were loudly complaining about escalating crime in the city. O'Keefe turned out to be a butt saver for City Hall.

CC O'Keefe, a lowly traffic cop, was the center of attention. Media types followed him everywhere. City officials and top ranking LAPD officers lauded him with dinners and decorations. There was praise from the mayor and dignified statements from LAPD officials regarding their pride in one of their own rallying bravely to the call of duty. Not knowing what to say, since he didn't know anything, CC kept his mouth shut.

In a ceremony at city hall, O'Keefe was promoted to sergeant, and assigned to the detective division. CC had caught the job of his dreams. Transferred to the detective division, which he wasn't trained for, and everyone knew it, O'Keefe's duties consisted of sorting and filing papers in a small office. He played the horses and slipped out for a round of golf whenever possible. His wife was impressed. He nimbly avoided her probing questions about his detecting work on the gang he captured single handed with such phrases as,

"I had a hunch. There was this gut feeling. Let's make love."

For the next eight years CC enjoyed a wonderful life. He became proficient at collating, filing and organizing files. So good, that he had time for his personal pursuits. No promotions, no attention from anyone in LAPD. There was the sheer freedom of anonymity. Only his wife Marge presented any problems with his comfortable routine.

Whenever the subject of his lack of further advancement in the department came up, which was frequent, CC snowed her with stories about his detecting abilities. He told her there weren't any assignments to the important cases because his skills intimidated his superiors. He was

never sure Marge bought this line of pure fantasy. But, there were never any serious threats to his nicely balanced life. An instant bond of friendship with Sheriff Potter in Utah happened because they thought along the same lines of reasoning..

## Chapter Five

Then, five years ago fate again brought O'Keefe to the attention of the city officials and LAPD. At the time, LA had a famous murder involving the killing of a movie producer. He had been the head of Miracle Pictures. Their motto was, "If it's a good picture, it's a Miracle. "

A mega production was underway with internationally known movie stars. However, the picture was beset with many problems, mainly caused by the demands of the actors. Rumors flew around Hollywood that the delays in production had put the picture dangerously over budget.

Charged with the murder of the producer, Antoine De Porelli, was Samuel Stevens, a major investor in the film. He had been quite vocal in his criticisms of the producer, the director, the cast, the story, two extras, a secretary, a grip and a Partridge in a Pear Tree (sorry). Stevens was caught in a money trap. He had no way out, except to protect his investment with more money to get the picture finished. He blamed most of the difficulties, and inept handling of the cast on De Porelli.

Antoine was shot to death after a public argument with Stevens at a screening party. Stevens was still at the party when De Porelli's lifeless body was found in the lobby of the hotel. In a secluded sitting area of the hotel, his body had been propped up in a lounge chair. By chance, a rather snookered guest stumbled over De Porelli's feet causing the corpse to tip forward onto the floor.

He had been shot twice in the back. Even the alcohol impaired man who tripped could see the bloody holes in the man's back. It was a sobering sight even for a drunk and began to yell for help so loudly everyone in the lobby ran over to him.

Stevens was the prime suspect because of the well known feud he had with the slain producer. He had no alibi. No one at the party could actually say Stevens had been with them, since he had been cruising around to different groups of people. Then the capper. In the trunk of Stevens car LAPD found the murder weapon. Open and Shut case as far as LAPD was concerned. A murder trial for the accused would be a mere formality before a jury declared him guilty.

O'Keefe had been assigned to do the paperwork on the case. He codified, dated, stamped, and filed by date order

tons of paperwork. CC naturally expanded his role in the case for Marge. She seemed to be impressed. On the final day of the trial, he was brought to the courthouse by his superior to tidy up all of the remaining documents.

Efficient CC, quickly put the files in order, then leaned back in one of the offices to study a horse racing sheet. Unexpectedly, the lieutenant returned to the office,

"Sergeant O'Keefe, get your feet off of the desk," he commanded, "You make the department look bad propped up like a bum. Office workers can see you from the hall as they pass by."

Then he paused and looked at the neat stacks of records piled up on the desk.

"It looks like you have the files ready."

CC nodded.

"We'll be here for another hour or two. Shuffle some papers until we leave. Look busy. Show some pride in being an officer of LAPD."

He nodded again.

For awhile, CC buried his head in some folders appearing to be studying their contents. Several office workers passed by and gave him a knowing smile. This won't do, he thought to himself, I have to appear to be really busy or I'm

liable to be reprimanded. Maybe even a comment in my personnel file.

With early retirement clearly at risk, he carefully set up a lap top conspicuously in view from the hallway. There were stacks of daily financial reports from the movie production that had become so notorious. O'Keefe began to add up columns of figures from the daily reports.

CC knew enough about double entry accounting to know the totals in the right and left columns had to be the same amount. Adding up the columns became a little game to play to pass the time. On the tenth daily report, he couldn't make the totals come out right. There appeared to be a \$30,000 error. CC ran the figures several more times, but the result was always the same. Even though the totals at the bottom matched, an itemized addition of the figures in the columns showed the expense side to be \$30,000 too high.

He began to add up all of the daily financial reports. Every seven to ten days there was a report that didn't add up correctly. The errors varied in amounts from \$20,000 to \$50,000. O'Keefe dimly realized something was wrong. But what?

While CC was pondering the problem, an assistant district attorney came by the office. He noticed CC's perplexed look.

"What's bothering you sergeant? The jury has retired to begin their deliberations. We should be out of here soon."

O'keefe replied ,

"Well, I've been sitting here killing time running these daily production figures because the lieutenant told me to look busy until we left."

"And?"

"Some of the reports are all screwed up."

"In what way?"

"The totals in the right and left columns at the bottom of the reports match alright. But when I added up the columns of numbers some reports don't add up right."

"Show me."

An hour later, the assistant district attorney, with CC close behind him, hurried to the courtroom. There were wild gestures and fingers pounding on reports to the dismay of the prosecuting attorney. After a rapid conference, the attorneys, the LAPD lieutenant and CC went to the judge's chambers. Shortly the whole bunch, including the judge, burst out of the office. The jury were hustled off to a hotel for the night while the officials decided what to do next.

One of the lynch pins of the city's case against Stevens had to do with the sound production services that the accused's own company was providing for the ill fated movie. Several witnesses had heard DePorelli accuse Stevens of padding the amounts being charged for the sound services. These were the very expense items that were suspect in the reports CC had been adding up.

While the trial was suspended, accountants pored over the production computer records. Ultimately, it was discovered the chief financial officer for the film production had been stealing. He had charged the production budget for more expenses than the sound company had actually billed for their services. It wasn't caught by anyone because the sound company was paid the exact amount they had charged the studio.

The financial officer then pocketed the difference, instructing the computer to forget the transfers that siphoned off nearly \$10 million. The CFO had killed De Porelli when he developed suspicions about the expense accounting. DePorelli had demanded that the killer bring in an outside auditing firm to verify the figures. The financial officer had to kill him before an audit team arrived.

O'Keefe's role in the case, although purely accidental, and barely understood by him, was crucial in saving an innocent man from a murder sentence. His reputation with city officials rose to new heights. He had displayed great bravery eight years prior, but now, CC was exhibiting superior intellectual abilities as well. What else could the city and LAPD do but to promote him to lieutenant in the detective section?

Wanting to get all of the mileage possible out of this new sensation, it was announced O'Keefe would be the head of a new unit in the department. In a joint news conference the mayor and the police commissioner declared they had been planning for a unit devoted to investigating organized crime activities in the city. CC was the perfect officer for the challenging assignment.

CC was to be assisted by two detectives. Since he had considerable clout at the moment, he was allowed to select two traffic policemen he had worked with in the past to be his deputies. There was Police Officer Gustave White and Police Officer Juan Rodriguez. White (Gus)} was tall and skinny, Juan {Speed} was short and skinny.

Soon CC's unit was called the "Boneyard" by other police officers based on the skinniness of all three officers. This

quality of slimness was noticeable whenever the Special Unit on Organized Crime officers were seen together. Gus was CC's horse racing partner, and Speed played golf with him. Another thing they had in common was the goal of early retirement with a minimum of pain in the interval.

They were subjected to endless briefings by top police officials, the DA's office and several Federal agencies about organized crime activities in LA. All three of the detectives in the unit were amazed at how sincere these people were. All of this information and attention made them fret, sweat and become nervous. The job called for highly trained officers with a knowledge of mob organizations. They knew this job they were assigned to was way, way, over their heads. To save themselves there were feverish searches for ways to appear to be doing the work so their inadequacies wouldn't be uncovered. A specter of losing retirement benefits was an active spur to creating illusions of busyness.

Captain Lundgren, their superior, watched them closely. Here was a policeman who was dedicated, demanding, inflexible and scary. He was a giant of a man who kept himself in top physical condition. His day started at 4:30 AM with a five mile run. Then there was a daily workout in

the gym that left younger physical enthusiasts watching him in wonder.

To a proud officer like Lundgren, the specimens in the Boneyard were a disgrace to LAPD. Soon suspicions about the three men grew into a conviction that these guys were faking it. Sessions with them after their briefings by organized crime police units produced paper shuffling, coughs, vague answers and looks up at the ceiling in case God would care to help them out.

Thin ice it was. Then, they were rescued by a resentment. CC was spending some time with an elderly FBI agent named Terrance Therbough (pronounced Ther-bow not Ther-buff) learning about the Mozzarella organization. It used to be called a mob or gang. Over time, the Mafia has become more respected, ergo, organization.

CC listened to Terrance as he skillfully dissected the activities of the Mozzarella organization. He explained to CC their connections with powerful people in politics, government agencies of all kinds, big players in the corporate world and guys who could get them tickets to the Super Bowl.

O'keefe invited Terrance, now Terry, out to an unofficial dinner with him. Over drinks he asked Terry,

"Why aren't you the head of the LA office by now? You really know a lot more than these other guys who have been briefing me. And you have seniority. No offense Terry, but I don't understand why a man with your abilities isn't higher up after 28 years."

Terry's upper lip curled as he replied,

"Damned politics in the department is all. Why I've solved case after case only to have the credit for my successes snatched away from me by one superior or another on his way to the top. They know I'm the best so they're afraid of me.

They manipulate around and shunt me off to the side to do the hard digging work. Then they all cash in on my efforts. God how I'd love to humiliate some of them. But, if I did that, it could mean losing my job and I'm nearing my 30 year retirement."

Suddenly a warm feeling spread over CC as the white light of salvation surged through him. For the next half hour CC outlined his predicament to Terry.

"That's a tough spot you're in CC."

Terry commented' when he had finished describing the jam he was caught in.

"We could help each other Terry. You could feed me

information on the organized crime types, and instead of your superiors getting the credit, I'll make the arrests. You will be given credit by me for your crucial involvement in solving the cases.

“Then, I'll subtly humiliate your bosses with casual comments giving the impression they had screwed up. You get your revenge and I get to save my ass.” CC added an after thought, "And maybe stop some crime, too."

Terry accepted the deal after one second of deliberation on the proposition.

Spectacular results blossomed out of the conspiracy. Much to their relief, the three guys in the Boneyard didn't have to actually arrest anyone, nor be anywhere near any possible gun play. All CC had to do, was lay out the details for Captain Lundgren. He and his team loved the action. Still, the captain knew things weren't right somehow.

It was hard for him to believe that he was wrong about O'Keefe and the other two officers. He rarely found them in the office. His informants reported to him about the golf and the trips to the race tracks. Whenever he was confronted with the information the captain was getting from his spies, CC would gloss over these activities as cover for the contacts feeding them information.

So, Captain Lundgren was frustrated. CC's unit had a good record of arrests and convictions. In addition, the paper work was expertly prepared by O'Keefe.

## Chapter Six

Zack could hardly believe it when CC told him to take a few days off to get some rest. He left the office thinking to himself Lieutenant O'Keefe should be aware of how important time is in a murder case. He should be running down possible suspects starting with the people at the Perrine Art Gallery. He decided to take one day off, then start his own investigation.

When Zack had left the office, CC called in Gus and Speed. He told them,

"Before we get started on the Perrine case let's go over the bets. Did any of my horses come in a winner?"

Gus replied,

Sorry CC, you drew a blank."

"Damn, now I'm down another 200 clams. My luck had better turn around soon."

"I told you to play that long shot Morning Glory in the third at Santa Anita."

"Did you bet the horse?"

"Sure I did. I won \$500."

O'keefe groaned.

"Let's get off the painful subject of horses. You know I got dragged into this Perrine thing by my friend, Sheriff Potter. He only wanted me over there to protect him from a big deal investigation about Perrine's death. I kept Sheriff Potter out of the case by claiming it to be LAPD's territory. Here's how we dump the case since we're temporarily assigned to it. As soon as we finish the preliminary stuff, I'll give it over to Lundgren and remind him this killing isn't mob related. He can't argue about that.

"Then, we're out of a murder case looking like it could become a big mess. All we do now is get the coroners autopsy report, then interview his widow, and a few people close to him. I'll put the stuff together and we're out."

Gus replied,

"Actually the coroners report came in yesterday. Says in there Perrine was definitely murdered, He didn't die of natural causes like the doc in Utah reported. They found traces of a powerful sedative in his stomach, like knock out drops. There was a puncture mark in the left femoral artery on the inside of the thigh. A footnote written by the LA coroner stated a puncture wound in the thigh is easy to miss unless you were looking for something unusual. Sounds to

me like coroners stick together and the LA guys are covering the Utah doctor's ass.

"Anyway, they figure Perrine was injected with a large amount of air through the artery. A massive dose of air traveling to the heart causes almost instant death. He figures the syringe used to inject the air was the type an undertaker uses to draw the blood from a corpse. They're big."

O' keefe puffed on a cigar and looked at the ceiling as he leaned back in his chair.

"This is a clever killer. Its a good reason to drop the case fast. Whoever did this knew how to fake a heart attack, then rig a car electronically, and send it 600 miles from the scene of the crime. I'll bet a big money deal is involved in this. This kind of planning isn't done by some amateur with a grudge against Perrine.

"No, the killer or killers had a vital reason to have Perrine out of LA and his death kept secret for a few days. Look at the engineer's report on the Cadillac. It was rigged to ensure the victim would be found a long way from LA."

When Gus and Speed finished reading the engineer's report about the Cadillac O'Keefe inquired,

"I know you haven't had much time to investigate since I called you from Utah, but give me what you can about Perrine."

Speed spoke up,

"We checked him out. Perrine has no police record. Terry did some nosing around. He said he didn't have anything on him. But he said several nasty characters had been trailed to Perrine's art gallery during an FBI field investigation. He thought there might be a connection between the criminal types hanging around Perrine's art gallery and his murder. He said it's only a hunch."

Gus cut in,

"Two of the men Terry named are international thieves. They could have been casing Perrine's art gallery for a possible robbery. Or maybe, Perrine fenced some stolen paintings for them. No evidence of a fencing operation though."

Speed added more information given to them by Terry:

"He looked at the records for any reported robberies at the gallery. No break-ins were noted. Perrine has a partner, his name is Richard Riley. Terry checked him out. He said Riley operates as the outside man in the business. He does the PR work, sets up art shows, attends parties and brings

in a lot of celebrity types to buy paintings. A real ladies man, Terry says. Most of the art patrons he sells to are movie people, mostly female."

CC had taken his feet down from the desk, then made some notes. He asked,

"What about Perrine's wife ?"

"She left for Can Cun with some friends two days before Perrine showed up dead in Utah." Speed replied.

She wants to see you CC. Real bad."

"About what?"

"Spoiling her grand funeral. probably. You ruined all of her arrangements just a day before the big send off. You had the body removed from the funeral parlor and sent to the coroner. Perrine was well known in the art world. A couple of hundred mourners flew in for the funeral. They were also upset. "

O'Keefe grunted,

"She should be grateful to LAPD for finding out how her husband died. I hate to have to be the one who has to tell her about his murder."

"Wait til you see her CC. A doll face and a bubbly personality. So no, I think she would rather have had her funeral arrangements go smoothly than care how her

husband died."

"Really?"

"You have to experience her."

"Let's get this over with. Call her and say we'll be over in an hour. I can make my apologies, and maybe learn a little more about Perrine to put in the report for Lundgren."

At Perrine's Beverly Hills residence, O'Keefe and his associates were greeted at the door by the maid. CC looked the place over while they waited for the widow. Paintings adorned all of the walls. There were groupings of different styles of art. Southwestern paintings were hung on the largest wall in the living room. It was an interesting collection put together by an expert on Southwestern artists.. Furnishings in the main room of the house were simple, and understated.

Angelique Perrine entered the room from a door near the large fireplace. CC expected a barrage of complaints about the interrupted funeral. Instead, the angel faced young woman smiled as she greeted her guests,

"Lieutenant O'Keefe, I'm Mrs. Perrine. I've already met sergeants White and Rodriguez. I was terribly upset for a few days about the cancellation of Anthony's funeral. But then when I had time to think about it, of course finding out

how my husband died was more important than the inconvenience to several hundred people.”

"I'm sorry I didn't have time to inform you before I sent your husband's remains to the county coroners office."

Angelique waved her hand airily in a dismissive gesture,

"Oh, the funeral, although delayed, will still be a great tribute to my husband. I'll see to that. Please excuse me if I slur my words, my doctor has me slightly sedated due to the shock of Anthony's passing. Then there has been investigations into the cause of his death."

"I understand Mrs. Perrine" CC replied.

He studied her face. About thirty he guessed. A true beauty with exquisitely regular features. Her green eyes were large and expressive. She had an animated feminine spirit about her that was a natural attraction for a man. Her hair was short in a stylish cut and the color was a dark copper color. CC wasn't sure if her hair was dyed or if it was natural.

Angelique made a graceful gesture with her hands,

"May I get you something to drink gentlemen?"

They declined her offer. She continued speaking,

"I do want you to be comfortable in my home. Does the tube in your breast pocket contain a cigar?"

"Yes it does." CC replied.

"Please smoke if you want. I just love the aroma of a good cigar. It's so masculine. Don't you think?"

CC started to answer her, but she swept on,

"Tony, Mr. Perrine I mean, always smoked a fine cigar after dinner and so did my daddy. It makes me feel so secure, men smoking cigars. I feel protected by strong males when I'm in a room permeated with cigar smoke."

O'Keefe lit his cigar gratefully. He puffed away while Angelique looked on adoringly.

They settled in on a large couch. CC at one end, and Angelique seated prettily on the other end. She was in a side saddle position with one long graceful leg extended. Taking a deep breath she said to CC,

"I know you have come to visit me about Mr. Perrine's demise."

Mrs. Perrine ---- " CC began, but Angelique interrupted.

"Call me Angelique, lieutenant."

CC was thinking hard on how to tell her Perrine was murdered, and how much to tell her about the Cadillac. He puffed on his cigar then tapped the ash. Oh well, might as well get this over with, he began again,

"Mrs. Perrine."

"Angelique."

"Angelique," he began anew, "it's a good thing that we had your husband's remains examined again by the LA coroners office. The doctor in Utah mistakenly concluded your husband died of natural causes. However, the LA coroner discovered a puncture mark on the inside of his left thigh made by a large needle used to inject a massive amount of air into the artery.

"When the air reached his heart it caused a massive heart attack. It was done to make Mr. Perrine's death look like it was from natural causes."

Angelique gasped. She clapped a hand to her mouth as her head swayed back and forth. Alarmed, the three detectives converged on her to help. O'Keefe grasped her shoulder,

"Are you all right?"

Angelique didn't answer. She sat there, head swaying, eyes closed. She rose unsteadily from the couch,

"Excuse me for a moment gentlemen."

She walked over to the bar on the other side of the room. She poured a large scotch and drank it down neat. Holding onto the bar, Angelique began to speak as one big tear ran down her cheek,

"I,I can't." The three men waited expectantly.

"I, I don't." she stammered. They waited for her to go on. She poured another large scotch and drained it.

Taking a deep breath, she opened her mouth again,

"I can't imagine anyone wanting to kill my husband. Tony was a sweet man. It's a terrible shock."

She walked back to the couch, and sat down rather heavily, in her original position, with one leg gracefully extended.

"You must find this part of your job unpleasant. I'm all right now. You may ask your quesshuns. I mean questions."

CC put out his cigar and said to her,

"On behalf of the three of us, I must say we are sorry about your husband. I can come back some other time."

"No, lieutenant, I'd prefer to talk now. Just let me fix myself another drink. Anyone else?"

They declined her offer.

When she was seated again, CC began his questioning.

"Can you think of anyone who would want to kill your husband? I mean for any reason. A grudge, over money, or something else, or maybe, pardon me, over you Mrs. Perrine?"

Angelique frowned daintily.

"Why no, looo-tenant. None of those things. My hush-bin. Sorry. My huz-band was a respected man in the art

field. I can't think of a single reason why anyone would want to kill him. The only thing-----" she trailed off.

CC prompted her,

"Yes? The only thing?"

"I was never involved in my hush-bin's biz-ness affairs . I did host parties here for business meetings, and to help out at art shows at the gallery. We were socially active, and known to hundreds of people."

She suddenly stopped talking. O'Keefe waited for her to continue. He prompted her,

"You didn't finish your thought, Angelique."

"Oh yes. Tony's business partner is Richard Riley. We don't see each other much but I was with him at the gallery one day and he was upset. He told me about a man who had accused Tony of selling him a fake painting.

"Mr. Riley told me the painting had been on consignment from another gallery, so Tony hadn't made any guarantees about its authenticity. Anyway, my husband apparently made a money settlement with the client to avoid a law suit. His name is William Horton. Mr. Riley told me he took a call at the gallery about a month ago .It was Horton, demanding to speak to Tony about setting up a meeting. He was angry about something. Richard was worried, because he had heard Horton was a violent man."

Angelique stopped talking again. CC patiently waited for something to happen. He was tired of pushing her. He was startled when Angelique suddenly said,

"I wouldn't have mentioned this lieutenant but Tony's murder makes me think of something else. About three weeks ago, Mr. Horton showed up at a restaurant where my husband was having lunch. He attacked Tony."

"Did your husband tell you why he assaulted him?"

"Oh no, Tony didn't tell me anything about the incident. I found out about it a few days later when I had lunch at the same restaurant. The maitre' d is a dear friend of mine. He told me about the attack."

"Do you know this man? Where he lives or works?"

"Richard Riley told me he's president of Satellite Guidance Systems. Apparently the company is a big defense contractor."

Gus had been furiously taking notes as Angelique talked, knowing CC was in a hurry to put a report together. CC would be furious if he missed anything. O'Keefe was now anxious to leave so he could work on his report and dump the case on Captain Lundgren's desk.

"Mrs. Perrine, I have some business to attend to. You've been very courageous to talk with me at such a shocking

time in your life." CC said smoothly. "I wonder if I could leave Gus and Speed here, so they can gather some more background information."

"I'll be happy to cooperate in any way"

Angelique replied, speaking slowly, carefully forming her words. She was trying to sound bright while sedated and a little tipsy from the scotch.

Late in the afternoon the report on the Perrine case was ready. They had worked harder than they ever had in their entire careers at LAPD to get the report finished. This was for high stakes. They knew what a lot of work Lundgren would require of them if they got stuck with the Perrine affair.

CC hurried to Captain Lundgren's office with the report. He paced outside the captain's office door waiting for a summons to enter. Finally, Lundgren's secretary ushered him into the office. Lundgren watched O'Keefe with a dead pan expression as he approached the desk. CC was still frantically trying to think of ways to twist things around to ensure the Perrine case didn't end up as his responsibility.

Lundgren could read CC well by now. He knew the little swine would attempt to slide off the hook on this murder case. But, Lundgren had a little bomb to drop on the skinny

runt. He would be patient, savoring his moment. Maybe with some luck, the Perrine case would be O'Keefe's undoing, exposing him as the sly con man he truly was. Then I'll be rid of him, Lundgren thought maliciously to himself.

"How are you captain?", CC inquired, They never were on a first name basis.

"Doing well, lieutenant. I suppose you're here to give me a report on your trip to Utah?"

"That's right, captain."

"Well then, I'm ready to hear all about it."

CC explained to Lundgren about the electronically guided Cadillac and the probability the car was started somewhere near Los Angeles. For a finale he added,

"Of course, this case doesn't come under the jurisdiction of my special unit. There's no evidence of any organized crime involvement. So, if you'll let me know which detective will be handling the case for you, I'll make up the report for him first thing in the morning."

Watching O'keefe's face closely, Lundgren felt exhilaration rising inside of him as he replied,

"Well now, just a moment lieutenant, you may be wrong about this case."

"Oh?" CC said weakly, his mind raced furiously tracking for anything he might have missed.

"Yes, one of my detectives received a bit of news from a regular informant of his about Costus."

"What did he hear?" CC inquired in a low voice.

"Costus was seen several times in the company of Anthony Perrine. They had dinner two weeks ago."

"Really," CC squeaked,

"Imagine, Cal Costus being interested in art. Our number one mob figure here in LA, suddenly a connoisseur of paintings. I don't believe it."

"Maybe he was buying a painting for his house," CC offered feebly.

"No way," the captain replied, "There's something else involved here. Since your unit is responsible for organized crime activities, the Perrine case is naturally yours to investigate."

CC didn't answer, there was nothing he could say, he was trapped. What could you say about a disaster?

"Quite an honor lieutenant," Lundgren went on, "You might get lucky and pin the murder on Costus. He's eluded arrest for years, maybe this time he goes down."

CC was quite pale. There was a fixed smile on his face.

"That would be nice," CC meekly replied.

"Get to it, lieutenant, I want your preliminary report on my desk in the morning. That is all."

Lundgren lowered his head and pretended to read a report as CC stood up to leave. Actually the captain's belly was shaking hard with suppressed laughter.

Stunned, CC shambled along to his office. Man. this is exactly the kind of thing I have tried to avoid for so long now, he thought, this could bust up my career. Never mind what the case will do to my golf schedule and betting the ponies! I may not have time for anything but work for a long, long time. Then he really panicked as the horrible truth hit him. Terry at the FBI may not be able to help him! Gus told him Terry didn't have much information about Perrine. Without his savior, he wouldn't know how to even start the investigation!

He sat down heavily in his office chair. Thinking about the whole situation, he fervently hoped Cal Costus wasn't involved. He could get killed! Suddenly he remembered what Angelique had said about William Horton. Hope sprang up in his heart. Maybe he did it! he thought. Quickly he dialed the phone and called Gus,

"This is CC, I need you and Speed right away."

Within an hour, Gus and Speed were at CC's office. O'Keefe told them about his meeting with Captain Lundgren. Their eyes filled with horror at the idea of Cal Costus being involved in the murder. Gus had a rubbery face. When he was excited, his forehead moved up and down as he talked,

"That's a bad problem, CC," he said with his upper face making rapid movements. "what about this Horton?"

"It's what I had in mind," CC replied, "Let's get him in here for questioning. Maybe he did it. Then we'll be back to business as usual."

"No golf tomorrow CC?" Speed asked.

"No, and maybe not for a long time", CC replied sadly. Gus rolled his eyes,

"Speed and I will go see William Horton, try not to worry too much, CC".

## Chapter Seven

After making up his preliminary report, O'Keefe headed for home. It wouldn't do to have his wife suspect there was anything wrong at the office. Over the years CC had been able, sometimes barely, to make his wife believe he was a competent police officer. Her suspicions had been aroused at times regarding his detecting abilities. Remarks about taking early retirement and, CC's attention to his off duty pursuits, golf and gambling, raised doubts. His promotions and the spectacular arrests to his credit kept Marge unsure.

Arriving at home, CC strutted in, calling,

"Where's my honey?"

"In the bedroom, I'm painting," she called back to him. O'Keefe entered the bedroom to a familiar sight. Marge on the floor, in shorts, holding a paint brush between her toes, deftly making strokes on a canvas. She had a slender body, dominated by a wild mop of curly red hair.

Marge fixed her bright blue eyes on CC,

"Did my dwait big man miss his wittle wifey?"

"Stop that, I hate the baby talk and you know it."

She tweaked his ear with her toes, twisting the lobe.

"Cut it out, Marge, it's weird the way you use your feet to do everything. It creeps me out."

His wife giggled, dabbed her brush on the pallet and applied more paint to the canvas with her foot.

Marge was proud of being different, she often demonstrated her foot dexterity to people she met. She had discovered her talented feet at a young age. Her parents had a terrible time making her write with her hands, as well as such other activities as eating, washing and dressing herself. At school, the other pupils were fascinated when Marge would remove her shoes, and proceed to do everything with her feet they could only do with their hands. She was a constant bane to every teacher who was unlucky enough to have her in their class.

Unlike the school children, Marge's remarkable talent didn't fascinate CC. He found it gross and vulgar. Out of his love for her, he tolerated Marge's oddities.

"How was your trip?"

Marge asked him as she applied brush to canvas.

"Long and tiring," CC replied, "Turns out this Perrine guy was murdered."

"Will it be a big murder case?"

"Suppose so, he was a famous art expert. The murder was somewhat bizarre. There was a car rigged electronically to take his body 600 miles away from the scene of the crime. The press will love it."

"Are you on the case?" Marge asked him excitedly. CC avoided looking at her,

"Lundgren has assigned the case to my unit. We're beginning the preliminaries."

"This case could make you a captain. Imagine, a captain with your own department to run, then, maybe all the way to the top of LAPD."

Thinking about such a possibility chilled CC,

"Too early to tell, we haven't started yet."

"But doesn't the chance for promotion get you all excited?" Marge asked him, on her feet now, peering closely into his face. With great effort, CC replied,

"The higher the better."

It was a tense evening at home for O'Keefe. Too much reality to handle.

All right, there was no way of avoiding it. He needed to begin investigating the Perrine case. Then too, he would miss a Pro Am golf tournament next week. He sighed as he dried himself off after his shower. As he left the bathroom,

a foot caressed his neck at the doorway, startled, CC jumped. Marge snickered,

"Your widdle wifey has the hots, bwave man." Beginning to feel of a like spirit, CC didn't mind the baby talk now,

"Would you do the thing with your feet tonight honey?"

"I thought you didn't like my feet."

"Just sometimes,"

William Horton suddenly found himself in deep trouble. O'Keefe had him brought in for questioning about the murder of Anthony Perrine. Horton showed up with his attorney at his side. He was a big man with huge hands. Towering over CC's desk he scowled down at him,

"This is a waste of my time lieutenant. I already told Sergeant White I don't have a clue about Perrine's death. He was a little weasel and deserved killing, but it wasn't me. So make this quick."

CC started to answer but the attorney spoke first,

"Lieutenant O'Keefe, my client is obviously upset about these interrogations. Sit down Bill. Lieutenant, you may direct your questions to me. I'll decide if my client should answer or not. You may proceed."

CC looked across his desk at Horton's angry belligerent face and the serious attorney. He was caught off guard. This

wasn't the way he thought the meeting would go. Holding his notes in a steel grip, CC cleared his throat three times then began to read in a low voice. Both of his visitors leaned forward in their chairs straining to hear him.

Horton was disgusted.

"For God's sake man! If you drag me down here and take up my time, you could at least talk loud enough for me to hear you."

CC began all over from the beginning. It didn't go well at all. Most of his questions were a repeat of the interview Gus had with Horton. The attorney broke in on CC,

"I don't understand what you want lieutenant, I have a copy of the notes Sergeant White provided before. It covers all of Mr. Horton's background and his whereabouts at the time Perrine was killed. Now, unless you have something new to ask, we're leaving."

CC hastily scanned his notes.

"Uh, did you threaten Mr. Perrine in a restaurant a few months ago?"

"That's an impossible question for my client to answer," the attorney replied. "It would lead to all kinds of qualifications regarding what is considered a threat. My client won't answer it lieutenant. All through?"

"Mr. Horton, there may be further questions, so you are to stay in the LA area until after the Coroners formal inquest next week". CC managed to say.

He realized he should have been better prepared. And he now fervently wished he had asked Terry to prepare his notes for him. After Horton and the attorney left his office, CC sent for Zaccariah Parrish. Zack entered the office rather sullenly, he had been left out of the investigation all along. He now startled Zack with an important assignment..

"Zaccariah," CC announced, "I have a job for you."

Zack leaned forward expectantly. CC continued,

"I know you have a thorough knowledge of computers, and what they can do to aid us."

Zack's heart beat faster.

"You are going to thoroughly investigate William Horton's background. I want you to use every computer source you can think of to gain a complete profile of the man's life. His business affairs, personal life, hobbies, anything to help us know this man.

'He's obviously intelligent. Satellite Guidance Systems Inc. is owned and operated by Horton. This suspect will be tough to nail down. His attorney was with him for our meeting, which means he isn't going to cooperate with us in any way. Do you understand what I want?"

Zack nodded eagerly. He fairly sprinted out of CC's office.

CC lit up a cigar. He was feeling smug. Zach had been foisted on him by Lundgren without any warning nor with any say in the matter. He was there to be a sort of assistant to O'Keefe, or so the captain said. He had no doubt Zach was a spy. Anything he did or said would get back to Lundgren. It had become a game to find ways to keep Zach out of the office, so O'Keefe could do business as usual without Lundgren finding out anything from the young officer.

This Perrine case has some good points CC mused, it has turned out to be a way to get rid of Zack for awhile. He can do researching, and maybe get him into trouble too. He knew how ambitious the young man was. He was pretty sure Zack would leak information about the Perrine case to someone in the media, hoping to curry favor for later advantages. If he did blab to someone, and Lundgren found out, he might even be rid of Zack.

O'Keefe went back to his racing forms. He needed a winner soon. He groaned, none of the horses hit him, he had no feeling for any particular pony. He called Gus into his office.

"What's up, CC?"

"I can't figure my bets, who're you betting?"

Gus smiled broadly

"Finally going to come around to my system?"

O'Keefe looked at him coldly,

"Give me your list Gus, gloating is egotistical."

## Chapter Eight

As CC suspected, Zach saw an opportunity in the assignment he had been given. He would call the famous news columnist, Roland Rank, and gave him an exclusive interview, instead of talking to reporters who covered police headquarters. Zach knew of Rank's influence in LAPD as an outspoken critic of the police and City Hall. He was also aware Rank had paid informers in the department feeding him information.

Zach wasn't doing this for the money. He was ambitious, and his move to grant an exclusive interview to the powerful Roland Rank a day or so before the rest of the media was briefed, would place him on the right side of the great man. Rank would remember him favorably. Finally a good break, he thought to himself as he placed the call to Roland.

Roland Rank, nationally renowned columnist for the LA Daily Wind had been sniffing around the Perrine murder case. His sources had been bringing him bits of news. Now, Zach Parish gave him the information he had been hoping to find. He had smelled a cover up and he was right.

In the media business he only used his first name. He was syndicated in hundreds of newspapers around the world. At his home paper, the LA Daily Wind, he had carte blanche to pursue any news story that interested him. He dealt in sensationalism. An expert at subtle nuances and half-truths, he had bullied his way to the top of the newspaper world. Many lives had been ruined by Roland's journalism. His lofty status immunized him from most attacks.

Roland had been sued on numerous occasions for defamation of character. Trotting out the shield of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, he avoided conviction in libel suits. Occasional defeats in court hadn't deterred him from his career goals. Quite to the contrary, the notoriety brought on by the law suits only added to the number of readers who followed his column.

He was all "image". Now in his early forties, he insisted on a particularly flattering photograph of himself in his late twenties to accompany his column. For his public appearances on television, and elsewhere, Roland used subtle makeup, and a sturdy girdle to maintain an appearance of virility. The truth was, his large frame was pudgy, and much of his once thick head of hair had gone South. Also headed South was his plump rear end. A career as a talk show host had eluded him because he had a

ludicrously high voice.

This newsman was particularly feared by LAPD. At least once a year, he would put out a scathing column on the ineptitudes of Los Angeles city government and its law enforcement personnel. CC remembered him well. When he had been promoted to lieutenant, he came to Roland's attention. He had been writing a series of articles about Miracle Pictures and the De Porelli murder. In a final story after the conviction of the killer, the financial officer for the production, Roland dissected CC.

Using material gathered by his police informants, he described CC as an incompetent fool who accidentally solved the murder. Roland hinted CC's character was such, that he was probably an accidental birth too. He had writhed in agony over the article. Marge had dismissed the whole thing with a sensitive sentiment,

"Screw'em,, everyone knows Roland can't get it up."

He was intrigued with the Perrine murder case. Much of the story hadn't been made public by the police. Although he knew LAPD probably wasn't prepared to reveal all they knew, it wouldn't stop him from being the first reporter to run an in depth article on the case.

Zach Parrish had spelled out the whole confidential story to Roland.

CC awoke the following morning determined to have a positive attitude about the Perrine case. After all, today was a new beginning. He might get lucky with a horse bet he thought as he was dressing himself. Buoyed up, CC entered the kitchen. He kissed Marge on the neck, she liked that, then said cheerfully,

"Good morning pet, let's have some coffee."

"I hope you can maintain your sunny disposition after you read this,"

Marge replied as she handed him the morning edition of the LA Daily Wind. Roland Rank's column was on page one of the paper. Sipping his coffee, CC peered at the paper through his reading glasses.

#### "Roland's Round Up"

Another cover up by LAPD? What is going on here? Recent events surrounding the murder of Anthony Perrine, nationally known art expert, have been suppressed by LAPD officials. Again! We are tax payers dear friends, we pay the salaries of the law enforcement personnel. Yet, we are repeatedly left in the dark regarding important cases.

This investigation is shrouded in cover up. Did you know

Anthony Perrine was transported 600 miles in an automobile guided by electronics without a driver? His body was discovered in Utah on Interstate I 15. There has been no mention of this important information by LAPD. WE have a right to know. Why was this information withheld? Doesn't the sophisticated rigging of an automobile with an electronic guidance system to remove the body 600 miles from the scene of the murder strike you as a mob execution?

Someone, probably a mob boss, obviously needed Anthony Perrine's killing to be kept a secret for awhile. Why else would a killer go to such lengths?

To add to this stench, it seems the Perrine murder case has been assigned to, it's hard to believe, our Lieutenant Christopher O'Keefe. There are two things wrong with this picture. First, Lieutenant O'Keefe is an incompetent, inept civil servant. Secondly, Lieutenant O'Keefe isn't a homicide detective. He is in charge of the Special Unit on Organized Crime. If a mob organization isn't involved as LAPD claims, why is this police unit investigating the crime? All efforts to have this mystery explained have been met with stone walling by LAPD. Again, we tax payers are being treated as obedient sheep by an arrogant City department.

There are far more questions than answers. But don't worry. I won't rest until all of the facts are revealed.

CC slowly lowered the paper.

"Just what I needed", he groaned, "Roland Rank nosing around. It's not enough to have Lundgren on my back. Now I have Roland to contend with too."

"Oh, get your pecker up honey," Marge replied, "Roland is a lot of windy words. Who gives a damn what he says. Just do your job. You won't get fired."

After CC went off to work, Marge decided to write a letter to the editor. Her attack on Roland Rank was well written, but vicious, as she dissected Roland's character, and commented on the man's arrogance.

Marge knew a girl who worked in the Editing department of the newspaper. She did Marge a favor by calling attention to the letter, and mentioning how the paper had a public duty to report dissenting opinions. It worked. Marge used an alias to protect CC from getting into trouble. Lun

Marge was a rebel and a brat. She ruled her own little world and had done so all of her life. Ironically, she was the daughter of a devout minister and his gentle wife. Being an only child made her dictatorship complete. Every demand

she made was met by her parents. But of all her outrageous behavior the bane of her father's life as a clergyman was her exceptional talent at playing the organ.

When she was twelve years old, she demanded to be allowed to play the organ for his Sunday church services. Using patient diplomacy he was able to get Mrs. Odum, the established church organist, to relinquish the 9:AM Sunday service to his little darling. Marge at the organ in his church made him nervous. Satan himself couldn't have caused the trouble Marge created for her father and the members of the congregation.

For her first Sunday performance, Marge carefully planned her entrance into the church. Three minutes before the church service was to begin, everyone was startled when the quiet was broken by loud clicking noises. It was Marge, strolling down the aisle with her tap dancing shoes on. Every step caused a loud metallic click. Everyone stared at her. Marge smiled sweetly at them all as she made her way to the organ at the front of the church. She was wearing the most innocent looking white dress with a blue ribbon sash and a matching ribbon bound up her wild mop of red hair.

Seated at the organ, she played an introduction to the first hymn. Everyone stood up holding their hymnals waiting for Marge's first note. Her hands came down toward the keyboard, and the worshipers sang the first word of the song, but, there was no accompanying organ music. Marge had stopped her hands just short of touching the keyboard. The singing tapered off raggedly.

This time they were prepared. They wouldn't start singing until Marge played the first note. However, this time she plunged right into the hymn leaving the congregation struggling behind her trying to catch up to the organ music. By the end of the first verse, they had caught up to the music.

As the second verse began, Marge slowed the music down. Then she turned her head around and smiled at the congregation as she continued to play. Before she could get into serious trouble, Marge played the rest of the hymn properly. For the very first time in his life, her devout father contemplated killing someone. Namely, his daughter Marge.

Thus, was the beginning of the singing wars. Because he was popular with his flock, the Pastor received no calls from members of the congregation complaining about Marge and her bratty ways. But the telephone lines were

red hot as they talked among themselves about the problem. Ultimately, the deacon of the church was put on the spot to approach the reverend regarding his daughter's eccentric organ playing.

He showed up at the parsonage on Tuesday evening. Social amenities covered, Deacon Fenwick cleared his throat and took up the subject of Marge, as delicately as possible,

"I must say there's a great deal of talk about your daughter's organ playing. She has talent."

"Thank you", the pastor replied, not being sure whether the remark was meant to be sarcastic, or not.

"Although we all consider Marge to be a gifted organ player, the congregation is wondering if she might be a little young to take on such a responsibility. Not that we don't all enjoy her wonderful music."

He added quickly.

"That's a good point," the pastor replied, "I'll talk to her about waiting a few more years."

After a little more talk about church matters, the deacon left the house relieved, believing the problem of Marge was resolved. Pastor Pinkton had declared his willingness to cooperate, and remove his daughter from the organ bench.

Marge however, was not about to be outflanked. She enlisted the support of her mother and grandmother to beleaguer her father into recanting his decision about removing her from the church organ bench. Pastor Pinkton was caught in a terrible trap. An upset family on one side of him, and an angry congregation on the other.

As a last, but feeble attempt at influencing Marge, he had a talk with her about being careful when leading the congregation in song. She played the part of a loving daughter and told her father she had taken his advice to heart. But the tap dancing shoes stayed. Marge insisted, because she said they were the only shiny patent leather shoes she owned, and didn't her father want her to look nice?

He offered to buy her a new pair of patent leather shoes with normal soles and heels. Marge said no to the offer. They were her favorite pair of shoes. After a lot of cajoling, praise, and cash, the pastor did manage to change her schedule of organ playing to once a month for the 9:00 AM Sunday service, for the time being.

Word got around, On the next Sunday, the pastor was stunned to find the 9:00 service nearly empty of worshipers, and the 11:00 as full as the once a year Easter

Sunday crowd. He also noted the early morning congregation was composed of the hard of hearing, and those of such an advanced age that they didn't know the difference, nor did they care about the hymns. His voice was almost done in by the shouting he found to be necessary to preach to the nearly senile and almost stone deaf worshipers at the 9:00 Sunday service.

Members of the congregation who were in attendance at the 9:00 service the prior week, and those who had been warned about the monster at the keyboard, were crammed into the 11:00 worship. They were unwilling to endure Marge's antics at the organ.

When Pastor Pinkton walked down the aisle for the later service, he stared at the overflow crowd. Most of them averted their eyes, feeling guilty. It hurt to betray their spiritual leader, but they would probably get over it. Since the pastor then announced the change in the schedule to a once a month for Marge's performances, attendance at the early, and late services, returned to normal.

Two weeks later, the 11:00 worshipers heard the familiar metallic clicking noise of tap dancing shoes, just two minutes before the service was to begin. Down the aisle marched their nemesis, clicking and clacking along. Caught

off guard, it was too late for the service attendants to make a dignified exit from the church. Only several cowards near the rear door of the church escaped.

This Sunday was even worse than her debut. There were pauses, fast starts, and lingering notes that put one's teeth on edge. Marge caught the word "bitch" spoken quite loudly in coordination with a pause in the hymn she was playing for the congregation. She stopped playing in the middle of the song, and turned around on the organ bench. It was easy to spot the perpetrator. In the first row, a wife was frantically tugging at her husband's sleeve. Marge stared at him,

"What did you call me? It sounded like 'bitch'."

Red faced, the man thought quickly,

"Oh no. I was telling my wife I had a terrible 'itch'. Sorry for the interruption."

Marge didn't acknowledge the apology. She turned around to the organ and caught the congregation off guard with a fast combo of chords in the hymn. They never caught up to her. The hymn ended over, and over, and over again, as the singers finished a few notes before, with, or after, their fellow singers.

After a few more Sundays with Marge at the organ, a delegation descended on the besieged pastor. No more

polite hints. Either his daughter quit playing the organ for church services, or they would soon be looking for another pastor to tend to their spiritual needs. This move by the congregation played right into Marge's hands.

She never did anything for nothing. It was time to strike. She made her demands on her father. A new computer, an Ipod, a 60" TV, and a promise to buy her a new car when she received her drivers license at age 16. Besides, Marge was becoming bored with torturing the congregation on Sundays. Peace returned to the church, but at a high ransom paid by Pastor Pinkton.

## Chapter Nine

Horton's attorney stayed calm as his client raged on.

"If I have any more trouble over Perrine's murder, you won't live long enough to enjoy your fees."

"Threats aren't going to help Bill. Calm down. Now the way I see it, your assault on Perrine in a public place is the main thing throwing suspicion on you. Do you know who told them?"

"His partner, Riley, must have told the police. Sure I hit Perrine, now Riley's using the incident as a way to keep suspicion away from himself. So the creep tells LAPD about me. My beef with Tony was over a Winslow painting stolen from my mother's home a year ago. I have my sources, and I traced the painting to Perrine. He tried to lie his way out of it. I told him he was a dead man if he didn't return my mother's painting."

Horton's attorney quietly asked him,

"Why didn't you go to the police about the theft?"

"I had purchased a stolen picture from Perrine a few years ago. It was a fake. Tony returned my money on the purchase. When I threatened him about my mother's picture, he told me he had kept records on my purchase of a

famous Southwestern painting I had bought from him illegally. He showed me the receipt I had signed for the painting. There was a detailed description of the artwork on the receipt. He had me. Perrine said if I didn't back off, he would take me down, even if he would be incriminated."

"You know I have my sources in city government.

"So?"

"So, I have some inside information LAPD hasn't made public yet. Perrine was murdered in LA, then shipped in a Cadillac guided by electronics to Utah. I managed to get a copy of the engineer's report on the car that was carrying Perrine. It was your company's guidance equipment which was used to send the car 600 miles without a driver."

"I swear I didn't kill Tony. Why would I be so stupid as to use my own company's electronics equipment if I was going to kill him?"

"It might be considered reverse psychology."

"I tried to shake him up and force him to find, and return my mother's picture, it was all it was meant to be. So here's where you can work to earn your fee counselor. No prison time for me."

Looking at his client intently the lawyer was inclined to believe him.

“Right now, there's a lot of proving to do Bill. Your guidance equipment installed in the car doesn't prove anything. Your fingerprints aren't on the car are they?”

“No dammit. I'm telling you straight. I didn't kill him.”

Horton's attorney was still watching his client closely,

“You left for Paris the day the Cadillac was apparently launched from the LA area. It may appear to the police that you were trying to establish an alibi. But look, just hold tight. LAPD hasn't charged you with anything yet. If you didn't do it, I'll get you out of this. I can't afford any surprises. I need to know about anything else involving your dealings with Perrine.”

“I've told you all you need to know.”

Horton stood up and left without saying another word. His attorney watched him stomp out. He was troubled about the evasive answer his client just gave him about his dealings with Perrine. He didn't like it. Horton could be dangerously strong willed. He was not afraid to step over the line of the law to further his interests. Usually he managed to stay out of trouble, because he was a shrewd player. As his attorney, he hoped his client was smart enough to provide him with all of the information he would need to save him from a murder indictment.

Zack proudly wheeled a cart into CC's office. It was piled high with computer reports.

"We have our man, lieutenant. These computer records will prove conclusively that William Horton killed Anthony Perrine."

For an hour Zack presented the facts he had gathered on Horton. Triumphant, he played his aces. Horton's flight to Paris on the day Perrine's body was discovered, and the missing guidance equipment, ostensibly stolen from his company's warehouse.

He then produced the police report about the alleged burglary of the equipment. The report stated there were no signs of forced entry into the warehouse. The equipment went missing a week before Perrine had been murdered. Zack said he could prove Horton was at his place of business on the day the equipment was reported stolen.

"Shall I arrest him lieutenant?"

"Fine job Zaccariah. But we can't arrest him at this time. We only have your fine work. It's not enough for a warrant. I want you to bring Horton back in for further questioning. Make sure the news hawks downstairs see you bringing him for interrogation."

"Why, lieutenant?"

“A little publicity about the case and our quick response will be good for LAPD. It makes us look efficient to the public who pay us.”

“Oh, I see. I’ll take care of it.”

Zack left CC’s office confident that it wouldn’t take too long before he was sitting in O’Keefe’s chair. On the other hand, CC was pleased with himself. He had hedged his bets by encouraging Zack to stick his neck out with the newspaper reporters who hung around hoping for a hot story. CC also pleased Lundgren because he had allowed Zack to have an important role in the Perrine murder investigation. He would be kept out of it. So, if things went wrong, or William Horton wasn’t the killer, the Boneyard couldn’t be blamed for any of it.

Captain Lundgren wasn’t a happy man at the moment. A sudden shift of suspicion to an industrialist wasn’t what he had hoped for in the Perrine murder. CC had just left Lundgren’s office with a little strut to his walk after recapping the information Zack had gathered on Horton. If there was more evidence forthcoming, he would be forced to indict William Horton for murder. But it didn’t sit well with him. There was no apparent tie to mob boss, Cal Costus. He had been trying to get Costus for years. After

contemplating this bad news for awhile, his thoughts naturally turned to O'Keefe. I'll bet that little swine is heading for the golf course right now.

Further investigation of William Horton, a well known industrialist by LAPD, sparked a media blitz. Zack had kept the press informed of everything. TV news programs explored, poked at, exploited and speculated on the murder case. In the course of a search, the police found a large syringe in Horton's work shop which the coroners office confirmed to be of the type used to inject Perrine's femoral artery with air.

There were also comments and hints about the fact his work shop was full of tools, and a metal working set up. Alluding, of course, to the electronically rigged death car. Everyone conveniently forgot Horton was a mechanical engineer and an expert tool maker before he founded Satellite Guidance Systems.

Later in the week, Angelique Perrine phoned CC for an appointment to see him. A little surprised, he set a time for her. He couldn't imagine why the widow would want to speak to him. Exactly on time, Angelique was at his office escorted by a handsome blonde man.

He appeared to be in his late twenties.

"It's a pleasure to see you again Mrs. Perrine."

"Call me Angelique."

"Angelique." CC corrected himself.

"You're ever so gracious Lieutenant O'Keefe. I would like you to meet. Mr. Gary Slater." They shook hands. Angelique continued talking,

"Mr. Slater is an investment manager. He has been handling an investment portfolio for my late husband for four years."

"How close were you to Mr. Perrine's financial dealings Mr. Slater?"

He avoided eye contact with CC as he replied,

"I handled whatever money he gave me to invest for him. You know, stocks and bonds with an eye to minimizing his tax liability. That sort of thing."

He finished with a dazzling smile.

"Oh, so you didn't have access to his accounting records?"

"Absolutely not. Mr. Perrine and his secretary handled the company's financial affairs."

O'Keefe turned his attention to Angelique,

"Well Mrs. Perrine---"

"Angelique."

CC avoided repeating her name by saying,

"What can I do for you?"

Angelique leaned forward and pressed CC's hand,

"This investigation is causing me some financial difficulties. Your police department froze all of my late husband's business and personal checking accounts when the murder investigation began. I was wondering if you could please remove the holds placed on the accounts. I need access to the funds. I have all of the probate papers with me. I need money or I'll be forced to sell my assets to raise funds to pay my bills."

"And indeed you won't have to, CC replied grandly, I'll take care of it this afternoon. You'll have your money by tomorrow."

CC failed to mention he already knew the accounting records had been released. Angelique smiled like a delighted child,

"Oh thank you lieutenant. I knew you would help me if you could. You are truly a gentleman like my daddy."

"Sorry for your trouble, but being a criminal investigation it's necessary to freeze assets until we have the information we need. If anything else comes up I can help you with, don't hesitate to ask me."

Angelique replied,

"Yes, there is one other thing. Tony had a safe deposit key he carried on his person. It wasn't with the personal effects turned over to me."

"As far as I know, all of Mr. Perrine's personal things were turned over to you in Utah."

"Could you please check again for me?"  
she asked him sweetly.

"Not a problem. I'll make a call to Sheriff Potter in Utah right now."

Fat Potter was dozing in his large comfortable chair when the phone rang. He looked around. There was no one else in the office. He grunted, and picked up the phone,

"Sheriff Potter here."

"CC here, Clayton. How're things?"

"Quiet CC, just the way I like it. What can I do for you?"

"Mrs. Perrine is here with me. Remember her?"

"How could I forget? Damn near got sucked into a big mess on account of her dead husband. What's she want?"

"She's trying to locate a safe deposit box key her late husband always carried with him.

I wanted to check with you to see if it turned up out there."

"Not as far as I know. Hold on, I'll check with the

coroner, he's old and forgetful."

A few minutes later Potter came back on,

"Nope, he didn't find any kind of key. Nice to hear your voice again CC. Take off a little time and I'll take you fishing again."

"I will Clayton, as soon as I can clear a few things here."

CC turned to her,

"Sorry Angelique but Sheriff Potter checked. No key. If you go to the bank where the safe deposit box is located with your ID and death certificate they'll take care of the problem for you."

Angelique was disappointed. She thanked CC, and left with Slater.

O'Keefe went back to his racing forms. Gus wasn't in good favor with CC. His betting system had finally failed leaving him deeply in the red again. I've got to find a winner, he thought fiercely.

## Chapter Ten

Anglelique's smile had faded quickly when she left CC's office. As she walked briskly down the hall of the building, Slater remarked,

"You didn't think about having the bank open the safe deposit box for you. It's great the lieutenant told you to use your probate papers so they will turn the box over to you."

"Gary," she replied, "I've already told you, Tony didn't rent the safe deposit box in his own name. I found out about the box a week ago. I can't tell the police, nor the bank officials Tony opened it using an alias, it would start all kinds of questioning."

"Sure stupid to use a phony name."

"Tony was obviously hiding something. I have my suspicions about what he was keeping to himself. It seems Tony kept a bunch of things to himself. In addition to this sneaky trick, I found out today from his 'regular broker' he cashed in all of his securities. I hope to God the money is still in the checking accounts."

"Let's have lunch at that good French restaurant on the way home." Gary suggested.

Angelique was about to say no, then changed her mind. She needed a quiet place with a cheery atmosphere so she could work on Gary.

“Let’s do it.” She replied.

Gary brightened up,

“It’s the restaurant where we first had dinner together. Remember?”

“I know sweetie. You were so romantic that night, and you still are, of course.”

God, he’s sooo good looking, she thought.

After they had eaten their lunch and were sipping their coffee, Angelique, made her approach,

“Gary, do you really love me?”

“More than anything,” he promptly replied.

“Do you trust me to do the right thing for both of us? You know, for our future together?”

“Of course baby, I think you’re very clever.”

“I asked you because I need to know you would help me in any way I needed.”

“Naturally I will. Just ask me.”

Angelique breathed deeply, then said,

“We need to go back to Utah where they found Tony’s body.”

“What for?”

“To look for the missing safe deposit key.”

“But, Lieutenant O’Keefe just called Sheriff Potter about it. They don’t have it. I don’t understand why you want look for the key in Utah.”

“The key can only be at the coroners office or it's lost for good. I’ve searched everywhere in the house and Tony’s office. Now I’ve tried LAPD, and they obviously don’t have the key either.”

“But, the sheriff asked the coroner again, and he said he didn’t have it.”

Angelique was becoming agitated.

“Oh, I met the old fart when I was in Utah to identify Tony’s remains. He’s a doddering old fool. The key could be stuck to his elbow and he wouldn’t know the difference.”

“So we’re going to fly all the way to Utah and ask him again? I don't understand.”

“No. We’re going to drive there and do our own search for the key.”

"I don’t think the coroner will like it.”

Angelique stared at her handsome baby,

“We’re not asking for his permission. We’re going to break in at night.”

“Oh my God, do we have to?” Slater protested.

“Trust me Gary, it’s the only way left to us.”

Slater didn’t appear to be convinced about Angelique’s plan of action.

“Richard thought it would be easy to obtain the safe deposit key.”

“Richard? Do you mean Richard Riley?”

“Well yes, I was chatting with him at the art gallery the other day while I was waiting for you. It was the day you were in Tony’s office with the attorney going over all the documents.”

“What else did you tell him?”

she asked, keeping calm with some effort.

“Well, we were talking about all the bad things happening lately. He told me how sorry he was for you having to take care of Tony’s estate and his other affairs all by yourself. I told him he didn’t know half of what you were going through. I explained to him about the secretive way Tony opened up a safe deposit box without telling you.”

"Is there anything else you shared with that reptile?"

"Only about Tony using an alias to rent the box."

“I suppose you told Riley the name Tony used for the safety deposit box and the bank he used?”

“Richard asked me, and since he was Tony’s partner,

I told him everything."

Angelique looked skyward, then finished her aperitif in one gulp.

"Gary, I have pleaded with you not to trust Riley. He's a devious snake."

"Richard is always polite to me. He gave us those airline tickets to Can Cun and he always picks up the tab if we're dining in the same restaurant."

Slater said defensively.

"Mr. Cool is an expert at covering up his black heart. He wormed his way into Tony's business. I've seen how he operated when Tony was traveling. He even tried to seduce me more than once. Oh, why did you have to spill your guts to him?"

"I was only chatting with him. I didn't know the key was such a big deal." Gary replied in a whiny voice

look of determination came across her face.

"Now we'll have to move fast. I'll stop by my bank and settle everything about Tony's checking accounts, then we'll head out for Utah. I wouldn't be surprised to learn Riley has left town too. I can only hope we're not too late. After the bank, we'll go by my place and pick up Tony's gun, then hit the road."

“Gun? Why do we need a gun? You know I’m an expert shot and I know a lot about weapons. I know they only attract trouble.” he said stiffly.

“Gary, I’m not suggesting we kill the old coot. We need it in case we wake him up or something. Then we can use the gun to threaten him, so we can get out of there. Do you see?”

Angelique didn’t want to tell him there might be trouble with the coroner. Plus, others who were also interested in Tony’s safe deposit key After a few minutes of silence, she asked Gary,

“Are you going to help me or not?”

"Of course I will. But it makes me nervous talking about guns and break ins.”

“It might be exciting honey. You know how we are when things are stimulating.”

She murmured in his ear.

“Right" Gary replied with a slight smile

## Chapter Eleven

Dr. Clyde Hampton, county coroner for Backslide, Utah was deeply annoyed because the file cabinet in his office wouldn't open. No matter which way he turned the key he couldn't make it work. "Damn" he said as he slammed the key down on his desk. He opened the desk drawer hoping there might be a spare key stashed in there. What he found was the original file cabinet key well worn from continuous use. Puzzled, he peered at the key. This is my old key, he thought, then what the hell is this other one for?

Searching back in his memory, a dim recollection filtered into his consciousness. Now I remember. This key was lying on the floor of the lab when I did the autopsy on that art dealer fella. His name was Pine, no, no, Rhine, that's not it. No, it was Perrine! He's the one. Then he remembered Sheriff Potter's call to him about the safe deposit box key. But this is it, the doctor thought, I'd best call the sheriff.

Bivens stuck his head into Potter's office,

"Doc Hampton's on the line for you sheriff."

Potter was stuffed from his recent lunch at the diner

consisting of country fried steak, fries, cole slaw, green beans, three dinner rolls, a side of pinto beans and apple pie. It was an effort to pick up the phone.

“Potter here doc. What you got?”

“You called me about the Perrine corpse and a safe deposit box key, you remember?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“I think I’ve found it. I had it mixed up with my file cabinet key. I tried to open my file cabinet with it. It doesn’t fit anything in my house. I tried it on every lock. Should I bring it over to your office now?”

Potter was in a food stupor and the thought of dealing with Doc Hampton right now was unappetizing, so to speak.

“No doc. Hold on to it for me. I’ll stop by your house tomorrow and pick it up.”

Potter leaned back in his chair. Dammit. Perrine never gets out of my hair. Always something coming up about his corpse to ruin my life, he thought angrily. Hell with it. I’ll call CC in LA tomorrow to let him know Doc Hampton found the missing key. Then I’ll drop by the doc’s place to pick it up. Maybe CC would want it mailed to him.

Anthony Perrine’s death was continuing to cause a big stir in other people’s lives as well. His desperate actions

before he was murdered were those of a man trying to escape someone or some thing. Below the surface of his public image was a set of circumstances threatening to destroy him.

He had withdrawn all of his cash and securities from his accounts without a word to anyone. No doubt he had a plan of escape in mind, but he was killed before he could get away. Only something of catastrophic proportions would motivate a successful art dealer to abandon everything he had accomplished and run away.

Fencing stolen art seems like an odd thing for a prosperous, internationally recognized expert of Southwestern art to dabble in. Perrine had a powerful greed for money within himself, cleverly hidden from everyone for years. For him it was an exhilarating thrill to be paid handsomely for a work of art that had cost him nothing. It would seem this defect of character cost him his life. He had obviously taken a big risk in some crooked deal either voluntarily, or he was pressured into it by someone with power.

A triangle of separate people was now descending on an unsuspecting Doc Hampton. There was Angelique and Gary Slater (lover, financial manager), two of Cal Costus'

best mob men, oops, organization men. And, the third side of the triangle, was formed by Richard Riley who was operating alone.

This triangle of parties, interested in finding Perrine's safe deposit box key, had exhausted all possible locations. They had all made inquiries, personal searches and bribes to police personnel to thoroughly search through the rigged Cadillac for any personal effects possibly overlooked by LAPD. Riley had learned about the existence of the key from loose mouth Slater. Cal Costus heard about the safe deposit box key from a police informant.

There was only one last place to look for the key. It was the residence of Doc Hampton, coroner of Backslide, Utah. All of the interested parties reached the same conclusion at the same time.

It was now evening. Doc Hampton was watching a TV rerun of "Quincy" starring Jack Klugman as the fearless, crime solving coroner. Hampton lived on a small ranch on the edge of the town of Godalmighty, Utah in the county of Backslide. At 10:30 PM, Doc Hampton turned off the TV and went to bed.

Watching the lights go out in the house were Angelique and Slater behind the barn, in a grove of mesquite bushes

lurked Richard Riley, and down in a draw near the road were the two Costus' men. The locations of the three groups formed a triangular fix on the doc's house. Unaware of each other's presence, the triangle began to move stealthily toward the ranch house.

Doc Hampton owned a dog named Brutus. It was a bulldog with damaged vocal chords, so, he couldn't make any sounds. All he could do was "mouth" bow wow. And Brutus was frantically mouthing now as he heard noises. His head rotated right and left swiftly as he mouthed, because the sounds were coming in from three directions. He ran rapidly around the house trying to protect everything at once. He was trying to mouth as fast as he could.

Brutus knocked over a lamp from a table in the living room. Doc Hampton sat upright in bed fully awake at the sound of the crash from downstairs.

"Who's there?" he shouted as he leaped from his bed and grabbed his double barreled shotgun. One of Costus' men let out a yell as Brutus bit his leg.

"Hey!" he shouted as he tried to get a bead on the dog in the dark. He began to fire his gun wildly at the floor in an effort to do Brutus in, which caused Doc Hampton to

respond with an equally wild blast from his shot gun.

Sounds of shooting caused a chain reaction in the triangle of people. Riley fired from the bathroom. Slater pumped lead into the dining room. Both Costus' men were firing blindly at everything from the living room. It became one big continuous roar of gunfire in the dark as the walls and windows were pierced repeatedly with flying bullets.

Becoming overexcited, Doc Hampton swooned. Riley took off like a bat out of hell through the kitchen door. Costus' men ran out the front door with Brutus in hot pursuit. They were still firing their guns in the dark. Slater tried to run, but cool Angelique having spotted the prone doctor. said,

“Wait, whoever was here has run out. See? The shooting has stopped. Let’s look for the key. The old man is out cold. We have to make it fast. Even though this place is outside of town, someone might have heard the gunfire”

They quickly searched the lab, and then the office. Right on top of the file cabinet was the missing key with a note attached for Sheriff Potter which said,

“In case I’m not home when you come to pick up the key, here it is.”

“Let’s get out of here.” Slater said as he grabbed

Angelique's arm and propelled her out of the back door. In the distance they could hear police sirens. Panting from a mile run through desert scrub brush to their car, the pair jumped in. They kept the lights off and headed for the highway.

By the time an upset, half dressed police unit arrived at Doc Hampton's ranch, the triangle was gone. Potter found Doc Hampton passed out on the floor.

"Bivens, get some water and a towel," he ordered, "Doc's unconscious."

With cool compresses applied to his head Hampton was revived from his swoon. He blinked rapidly a few times then stared at Sheriff Potter as if he were an alien.

"Are you hurt doc? Any bullet wounds or anything like that?"

"I don't think so," he replied feeling his body.

"What in the hell went on here?" Potter thundered as he gaped at the numerous bullet holes in the walls and the shattered windows. Hampton flinched from Potter's loud voice.

"Sorry doc." The sheriff said in a lower pitch, "This place looks like a war zone. There's bullet holes wherever you look. Good God."

Before he answered Potter, he asked for, and received a

glass of whiskey. He gulped it down,

“Brutus knocked a lamp off a table down here shortly after I went to sleep. As I was getting out of bed to check downstairs, there were shots fired in the living room. So I grabbed my shotgun and went downstairs. I let loose with a shot in the dark at a shadow looking like the silhouette of a man. Then a loud roar of gunfire let loose. There was shooting coming from all over. I blacked out from the shock of it.”

“Who do you think broke in here?”

“Don’t know sheriff. Maybe it has something to do with that damned safe deposit box key.”

“Oh yeah. The key.”

Standing up a bit unsteadily, the doctor made his way into his office. He turned on the lights and looked at the top of the file cabinet.

“It’s gone sheriff., it must have been the key the gang was after alright.”

“No one who is sane would go to all of this trouble to find the damned thing unless there’s a pot full of money stashed in the safe deposit box. I’m sure it’s tied up with something illegal as hell or the rightful owner would have contacted me directly. Anyway, I say good riddance,” Potter replied,

"Now maybe we'll get back to normal."

"I don't know any more than you do sheriff. They have the key now, and I hope they have the right one, so they don't come back here, and rip up my place again. Past that, I don't give a damn."

Potter grunted,

"I don't give a damn either. They can have the lousy key for all I care. I'll put a patrol car out here to watch your place around the clock for awhile, in case they come back."

"Thanks sheriff. I feel better knowing someone is out here watching the ranch. Probably not necessary, I'll bet we never hear from them again."

As the sheriff and doc came back into the living room, a swarm of news media people burst into the house. Immediately, they were surrounded by bright camera lights and microphones. A reporter lunged through the crowd and thrust a microphone into Potter's face. Before anyone had a chance to begin questioning, Potter roared at them,

"What the hell is this! How did you people get here so fast? Get that damn thing out of my face! I'll make up a written statement for all of you tomorrow Now clear the hell out of here!"

Potter spotted Bivens on the edge of the crowd with some news hawks giving a private interview. He lost total control of himself and grabbed Bivens by one of his skinny arms. He was literally propelled onto the porch of the house. Bivens stared at the sheriff with terror in his eyes. Potter had never looked this angry before. With his face several inches from his countenance, the sheriff bellowed,

“Bivens! You’re in deep trouble this time you little sneak! It’s your stripes for this. I don’t care if your uncle is a county commissioner, you’re demoted to highway patrol as of now, Patrolman Bivens. Now get out of my sight!” Bivens leaped off the porch and disappeared into the dark yard.

Potter shoved his way through the crowd gathered outside of the house. He was tired, and he hated to have his sleep disturbed. Now this ugly turn of events put him in a savage mood. Upon reaching his patrol car, he yanked the microphone off the dashboard. Turning the volume up to full blast, he announced,

“This is an official police investigation you’re interfering with by coming out here and getting in my way! You have five minutes to be clear of Doc Hampton’s yard, or I will begin jailing everyone who doesn’t belong here. I’ll hand

out citations for obstruction of justice. You can explain it all to the judge when you are released from your jail cells to get sentenced. All of you media people are included in my order, you have no special immunity, and you can shove the First Amendment up your ass! Now move!”

he screamed.

A mass evacuation from doc’s ranch began with honking horns as everyone jockeyed for position on the road. Headlights were playing back and forth in the dust rising up from the Doc Hampton ranch exodus. In a remarkably short period of time the place was empty.

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Potter then motioned for Bivens to come hither. He wouldn’t speak to Patrolman Bivens. Instead he pointed at Doc Hampton, then pointed at him. Then he made a writing motion with his hand. Bivens sat at the dining room table, which miraculously only had three bullet holes in it and began taking down Doc Hampton’s statement. Potter lit a cigar, poured a liberal portion of whiskey into a tumbler, then sat down on the porch.

Heaving a heavy sigh, he puffed his cigar, took a healthy slug of whiskey, and sat back in doc’s cushy porch chair. Brutus slowly made his way across the yard still mouthing. He mouthed, walked around in a circle, then collapsed onto

the porch floor on his side.

“My sentiments exactly Brutus.” Potter grunted.

## Chapter Twelve

Since no one was killed or wounded in the fracas at Doc Hampton's ranch, the news media lost interest in the story in a nanosecond. Sheriff Potter was relieved when only a lone reporter for the local newspaper showed up for the promised interview regarding the shoot out.

"Morning Adelaide."

"Morning sheriff," replied the diminutive senior citizen acting as a part time reporter for the Backslide County Bugle.

Her sharp little eyes probed the sheriff's face.

"How's Doc Hampton?" she inquired for an opener.

"Oh, when I left him about 1 AM he was tight as a tick. Went right to bed when I left. I put a patrol car out there in case whoever it was that broke in decides to come back again."

Adelaide quickly wrote down every word Potter uttered.

"Why would anyone want to rob old doc?"

she queried.

"Probably a bunch of kids looking to steal a TV and such to buy some drugs."

“That your theory then?”

“It’s all right there in the official police statement, Adelaide.”

He shoved a single sheet of paper across his desk. She had known the sheriff since he was born. She knew it was the last word she would get out of him about the case.

“And don’t be out there bothering doc. He don’t know any more than I do. Is that all right with you Adelaide?”

“Sure sheriff, we’ll run the story and your statement in today’s edition.”

Potter liked to bait her a little because of his general aversion for reporters.

“Today’s edition? Only because your weekly paper comes out today.”

Adelaide glared at him and left the office.

CC listened to Potter with growing apprehension.

“How many people did Doc Hampton estimate there were in the house?” CC asked when Potter had finished telling the story of the bizarre break in and shooting spree over the phone..

“Near as he can figure anywhere from four to eight people. There was shooting going on from all directions.

He can't be sure 'cause he passed out."

"Could be more than one bunch is interested in the safe deposit box key."

"Possible. I guess we'll never know now."

"Yeah, and it doesn't much matter to us anyway. We have a prime suspect under investigation. This William Horton guy has motive, and a nasty temper. We're hoping to indict him this week."

After CC got off the phone with Potter he began to worry. He fervently hoped Horton was the murderer. He didn't even want to think about any other possibility which might involve Cal Costus in the case.

Angelique was anxious,

"Let's go Gary, its almost nine o'clock. We need to get down to the bank."

Gary was putting on his trousers,

"What's the rush? We have the safe deposit key, and no one knows we have it."

"Don't be so sure. There were others in the house last night or did you forget already? I'm sure the others were Costus' men. We need to clean out the safe deposit box and leave LA fast."

Gary glanced at his blonde good looks in the mirror,

“I suppose. But I think you’re worrying too much..”

Angelique looked at him. I’d get rid of this brain trust if he wasn’t just sooooo gorgeous, she thought to herself.

As they were walking out Gary commented,

“I still don’t see why you didn’t ask Doc Hampton for the safe deposit box key. After all, it belonged to your husband.”

“One more time honey. The safe deposit box was rented under an assumed name, not Tony’s name. Whatever is in the box could have raised a lot of questions if we had approached the old fart. He might have become suspicious and brought it to the attention of the fat sheriff. There’s a murder investigation going on about Tony’s death or did you forget that too ?”

“I guess you’re right. sweetheart. Its good to be cautious.” She rolled her eyes, “Thank you.”

She was on edge, it had only been a week since she had learned about Tony’s secret safe deposit box and the alias he had used to open it. Then, she was informed by his broker Tony had cashed in his entire stock portfolio. Another bitter blow was finding out all of his checking accounts had been emptied, and closed. Most of the art

works in the gallery and many of the paintings hanging in their home were there on a consignment basis awaiting sale. Only a commission would be paid to the gallery for selling someone else's painting for them.

She calculated if she sold off the remaining assets, she would net about \$150,000. Then there was the \$100,000 in securities she and Slater had finagled into her name. She was almost penniless. Her anxiety was somewhat assuaged when she thought about the treasure probably hidden away in the safe deposit box. She now had the key to the box.

Angelique was used to money. She was comfortable around it, and couldn't imagine life without a secure cushion of luxury. She was the only daughter of a corporate executive. Beautiful, pampered and spoiled by her daddy, her parents sent Angelique to the finest girls schools. In these private schools she was given the proper social tune up and honing for the good life. At the time she hadn't a clue about reality.

Disaster struck in her junior year at college. Daddy ran off with the runner up in a teenage beauty contest. Forsaking career and family, he disappeared with all of the liquid assets. Apparently, he left the country and changed

his name. Angelique's mother could never find him. She spent half of the proceeds from the sale of their house on private investigators in a search around the world for the miscreant.

Dumped flat on their dainty behinds, both mother and spoiled daughter had to face the cold economic facts. They were practically penniless. Her mother was able to find employment with a non profit organization funded by a close friend. Angelique was sent to a local community college to learn something which would get her a job to make a living.

Due to a total lack of interest and her depression, she had struggled to get marginal grades. She graduated with a two year degree in business studies. Her entrance into the business world was at the lowest possible rung on the corporate ladder. She sized up the situation and used her beauty and classy charm on the junior executives of the company. More or less through flirtations and a couple of extramarital affairs, her advancement in the firm was almost breathtaking.

She met Anthony Perrine at an art exhibit at his gallery. Angelique had been working in the business world for three years when they met. She was sick of working, budgeting

money, having so little and hustling men to ensure her job future. Luxuries were practically nonexistent. Desperate for a better life style, Perrine was the perfect candidate. There was money, a glamorous way of living filled with interesting people, and lots of parties.

Her prospect was a short, plump balding man. He was rolled under by a blitzkrieg of feminine beauty and Angelique's special brand of charm for the fortunate. He fell deeply in love. She fit his dream of the perfect mate. She looked sensational, knew how to dress extremely well, mingled easily with people and needed money.

Although he was smitten, Tony had no illusions about himself as a suitor. His appeal to her was based upon his wealth and outstanding status as an art expert. Tony would settle for what he could have. He wanted Angelique.

She looked at her hole card, checked the ante and decided marriage to him was a better deal than her progress up the corporate ladder. So it was a natural union, if not exactly an equal love match. It was a few years before Angelique became restless.

She had no complaints about Tony's treatment of her as his wife. Only there was no passion in the marriage. In that regard, Tony had his shortcomings, so to speak. Yearnings began to nag at her. At parties Angelique couldn't help

admiring the attractive young men. She resisted acting on her strong desire for quite awhile. Then she met Gary Slater. A handsome, athletic young man with a dazzling smile. She felt her ice melting when they met for the first time at a party.

Slater had "jocked" his way through college as a varsity tennis player. Not one to let academics interfere with his college life, Slater, with the eager assistance of a number of coeds, cheated his way through to graduation. On graduation day, some of the professors were heard to comment,

"Who is that student? Must have had him in one of my classes. Should remember a handsome young man like him. Either my memory is going, or it's the sea of new faces year after year."

His physical coordination was exceptional, but he lacked the mental acumen and the level of concentration needed to compete at the professional level of the tennis world. So, he hustled a living teaching tennis to wealthy ladies. On the side, he had hooked up with an investment firm. As a representative for them he brought in small orders from wealthy ladies taking lessons from him. In more than one instance there were other activities extraneous to tennis.

All Mr. Slater had to offer Angelique was himself.

Her husband traveled extensively, because of his expertise on Southwestern art, and to make business contacts. It was a perfect arrangement for Angelique when she began her affair with Slater. As their romantic liaisons became more intense, it became clear they needed to see each other more often than once or twice a month.

Angelique hatched the investment adviser idea as a solution to providing a cover for more time together. She applied relentless, but subtle pressure on Tony. He finally reluctantly agreed to allow Slater to manage some of his investments. Tony's eyes were sad on the day he told Angelique about retaining him as a broker, but she didn't notice his distress. She was thrilled. Now she had a legitimate reason to be with her lover as often as she liked. Perrine, of course, had seen through her duplicity but she wasn't aware he knew.

Angelique and Gary arrived at the bank where the safe deposit box was located. She had the false identification with her to gain access to the safe deposit box. She was furious with her dead husband. It cost her over \$5000 to purchase false identification credentials from an expert forger. This isn't the way it should be, she thought herself. I

gave Tony five years of my youth, and this is what I receive in return.

She smiled brightly at the bank official. They huddled at the officer's desk. Papers were exchanged. Gary looked on as Angelique's hands waved up and down, and the bank official kept nodding. They stood up. Then with a flourish, she was escorted to the safe deposit vault.

As the safe deposit key was slipped into place alongside the bank official's vault key, she was flooded with excitement. It was the largest box of its kind in the vault. Graciously, the officer carried the box to a booth for her.

"Thank you so much," she said to him.

He nodded his head, and left her in privacy.

With a quiver she opened the box. Peering inside of it her face fell. There was only a single sheet of paper lying in the vastness of the black box. She read the note quickly,

"To Angelique, or anyone else who has the key to this box: If you are reading this it means I didn't make my escape. As for you, Angelique, you lived luxuriously for the five years we were married. I would have been more generous in my bequests if you hadn't taken up with pretty boy, Gary Slater. Now you get what you deserve. I seriously doubt you, or anyone else who might be reading

this, will ever find what you are looking for. I have the last laugh. Tony “

Angelique crushed the note in her hand. Tears of rage filled her eyes. Damn him, she thought furiously, damn him! She stalked out of the vault and Gary had to high step it to keep up with her. “What’s wrong?” he kept asking as they walked along. She marched on without answering him.

“I’m not finished yet!” she suddenly proclaimed, “I’m not beaten yet!”

Gary stared at her.

“Let’s go see Mr. Costus.” She wanted to cover herself with him, so he knew she wasn’t holding the painting, nor any money. She also hoped Costus would offer her a generous reward if she did find out where Tony stashed the treasure.

## Chapter Thirteen

CC wasn't having a good day either. An assistant DA contacted him to inform him, after careful consideration, there wasn't sufficient evidence to indict William Horton for the murder of Anthony Perrine. What CC had, the attorney said, was largely circumstantial. Horton couldn't be placed at the scene of the crime, wherever that might be, no one knew.

There were no fingerprints of Horton's found anywhere on the death car, nor on any of Perrine's personal effects. It wasn't going to hold water. The holes outnumbered the fabric, ten to one. He said the Horton case was being closed for lack of proof.

Distracted and distraught, CC slowly made his way over to the coffee shop where he would meet Terry Therbough of the FBI. Terry had contacted him to meet with him about something important. He was waiting for him when he arrived at the coffee shop. He waved from a booth,

“Over here.”

“How're things CC ?”

“Huh.”

“Why so down ?”

“The DA’s office has dropped the indictment proceedings on Horton. Not enough evidence to indict. It was all bits and pieces of a case, now I don’t know what to do next.”

“I have some news to cheer you up.”

“Anything but my death notice would cheer me up.”

CC grumped.

“If you recall, I told Captain Lundgren, that Perrine had been seen in the company of Cal Costus.”

“How could I forget it. It’s the bit of news which roped me into this case in the first place.”

Terry ignored his remark. He was familiar with CC’s insecurities.

“I think I’ve found the connection between Costus and Perrine. My source of information is a specialist Costus occasionally uses on jobs. He’s known as ‘Nitro Nick’.”

“You don’t have to tell me what Nick does. “

CC replied sarcastically.”

Terry stared at him,

“Do you want my help or not?”

“Sorry, I’m all wound up today.”

“Anyway," Terry continued, "Nitro Nick is the Michaelangelo of explosives. Never a sloppy job. He can

figure a nitro or plastic charge to a milligram. Vault doors he has blown often appear to be fine, unless you look closely. Nick is an international operator. He's done jobs all over the world. He did a big caper a few years ago in France. Recently, French police cracked the case, and Nick was fingered by one of the prisoners as the explosives man on the job.

"Nick doesn't want to be extradited to France so he contacted me to find out if the Bureau could intervene if he turned himself in. There's a number of cases being investigated in this country where Nick is suspected of being the juice man. If he has to do time, he wants to serve it in the States. So, he gave me several large commissions he committed in the US. 'Commissions' is his term for his work."

"What's any of this have to do with Perrine?"

CC asked impatiently.

"Geez you're jumpy. I'm coming to it. Nick did a job in Rome a year ago. It was a big heist for an Italian Mafia organization. He's positive Cal Costus set the job up but he can't prove it. You'll probably remember the case. A vault was blown in a church containing the famous religious painting found two years ago in a cave on Mt. Eruptus."

Terry paused and studied his expression,

“You don’t follow the news very closely do you? I can tell by your total lack of interest, you don’t know anything about the painting.”

“Only vaguely,” CC mumbled.

“The painting of Madonna stolen from the vault is considered to be priceless, Terry continued, Its discovery has been proclaimed to be the most remarkable find of the twenty first century, according to a number of authorities. Not only the experts on religious artifacts, but the art world has also commented on its uniqueness. Nitro Nick was hired for the job because the vault had been built specially for priceless religious artifacts with a controlled atmosphere to prevent damage to the ancient treasures.

“A great deal of money was also spent on the vault to make it burglar proof. Only a guy like Nick would know how to open it. In order to study the painting, art experts have to be locked up in the vault. It is only brought out of the vault for public view on certain church holidays. The painting is estimated to be worth around \$100,000,000.”

“No picture is worth that much,” CC snorted.

“I’ll tell you the whole story if you care to hear it. Then you might understand why it's priceless. What will it be? Do you want me to explain it to you or not?”

“Okay,” CC replied, looking bored.

“The painting was discovered by archaeologists in a cave on Mt. Eruptus. It had been completely sealed up by a massive eruption occurring around 1250 A.D.. It was an eruption similar in intensity and result to the one that buried Pompei. With its tremendous explosive force, much of the countryside for miles was covered in volcanic ash.

‘Near the volcano, everything was sealed up and preserved by the ash produced by the eruption. You know, in Pompei people were found still sitting at their tables eating. The explosion was so powerful it consumed all of the city's oxygen instantaneously.

“After years of excavation work, the cave and the town below Mt. Eruptus, were uncovered. They discovered the remains of a reclusive monk identified by research as, 'Simon the Wretched' who had been living in the cave. It is this monk who created the masterpiece. Religious experts were able to trace Simon's history through the records of a monastery nearby, and the many writings about him found in the town cathedral. It seems the small village had originally been called, 'Peaceful Valley'. Then, after the arrival of Simon the Wretched they changed the name to 'La Dolce Vita '.

‘Simon began his religious life as a monk in an order dedicated to the renunciation of earthly pleasures. Quite a bit was written about him by the elders at the monastery. Simon first attempted a lifetime of silence. Unfortunately, he only lasted a week. Then, Simon swore off wine. He failed again. Within a week he was drinking wine. But, he was determined to succeed in the order. He went on to try fasting, self-chastisement, flagellation and not drinking water. Laying off the water worked rather well actually.

“Despite all of the efforts of the elders, and Simon, it was decided he wasn’t meant to be in the order. In their final report regarding Simon, the elders came to the conclusion God had blessed him with an extraordinary weight of earthly temptations to bear. Thus the name, Simon the Wretched.

“He decided to become a recluse rather than trying another order of monks. Establishing his home in a cave on Mt. Eruptus, he soon began to produce a fine brandy. It was similar to the liquor made at the monastery for centuries. Simon’s brandy was even better, it had more kick to it. He traded his brandy for the necessities of life with the people of La Dolce Vita.

According to the records found in the town’s cathedral,

Simon became an influence among the peasants. Mention is made of his generous contributions of brandy to many religious holidays and harvest festivals. Certain town folk would go up to Simon's cave at his invitation from time to time and spend a few days with the monk. They often returned to the town relating stories of having visions.

“There were some doubters though. Some people believed it was the brandy creating the visions. Simon and his brandy became so popular, no celebration was considered complete without his presence. His liquor and the dances he invented, made every occasion memorable. Invitations were sent up to the cave by the peasants hoping Simon would attend their family events. In most cases, it seems Simon honored the request.

“Simon had taken up painting as well as brandy making. A number of canvases were found in the cave along with the masterpiece. These other paintings weren't very good. Art experts believe they were the works of students Simon was teaching to paint. Mysteriously, only the one masterpiece of Simon's was ever found.

“When the cave was opened, Simon and his belongings were found to be well preserved by the sealing effect of the eruption. He was lying on his back on top of the

masterpiece. His robe was full of oil pigments. Probably Simon was working on the canvas when the eruption occurred. When archaeologists removed his body from the canvas they saw this incredible abstract.”

“Abstract?” CC cut in, “Abstract painting is a modern art form.”

Terry gazed at CC with the look of the well informed trying to instruct the ignorant. He continued,

“Religious experts, (he put the emphasis on 'expert') are certain beyond any doubt the painting was divinely inspired. In the abstract they have positively identified the main figure to be the Pauper Prince Paul.”

“He spent all of his money?” CC asked

After another withering look, Terry continued,

“Pauper Prince Paul gave all of his worldly goods to the Church. In the abstract are other figures the experts are studying. They are convinced a divine message is contained in the abstract. It may take years to decipher the images. But, the most remarkable find of all was on the reverse side of the canvas. There, the archaeologists discovered a painting of Madonna.”

“The virgin?”

“No. Madonna the rock star. It's incredible, but true. In the picture is a perfect likeness of Madonna singing ‘Material Girl’.”

“Wow!” is all CC could say.

“Authorities in the fields of art and religious history are studying the masterpiece for its significance. They’re sure there are many meanings in the painting. It is enigmatic. There is a permanent committee of world renowned experts formed to study the masterpiece on an on-going basis. What is the message?”

Terry concluded dramatically.

CC snorted,

“Looks to me like a drunken Simon was blown onto the canvas by the eruption.”

“You’re no expert. The painting is a puzzler for the ages. Madonna, of course, wants to buy it. Nitro Nick is certain the masterpiece has been brought to this country. Nick was born in America, but his parents taught him the Italian language. Italian Mafia members in Rome assumed he was a typical American with no knowledge of their language. So they spoke in Italian whenever they didn’t want Nick to know what they were talking about.

“Their conversations gave Nick some information about

an air freight schedule to the States, and the special packing arrangements for the Simon masterpiece. They were speaking in Italian over the phone with Cal Costus before, during and after the heist.

“Here's where Perrine enters the picture. Since his killing, we have been looking closely at his operations in the art world. With the assistance of Interpol we have put together a detailed study of Perrine's international activities. We have enough information to know Perrine had been fencing stolen art for a long time. However, there has never been any proof of his involvement in anything illegal. We know Perrine had dinner on several occasions with Costus. I suspect they were partners in some fencing operations.

“It would seem to be logical for Costus to make a deal with Perrine to fence the Simon masterpiece to the highest bidder. More than likely, Perrine had a list of customers for stolen art. There must have been a double cross on someone's part, or maybe Perrine made a mistake. Possibly, Costus had him murdered.”

CC listened, horrified. Costus again, he thought to himself, maybe I can make some sort of a deal for early, early retirement as of now.

Terry looked at O'Keefe,

"This is a great opportunity for us."

"How do you figure that? I could get killed nosing around in Cal's affairs."

"Right now, my superiors aren't aware of any connection between Costus and Perrine. Only you know what I have found out. We can do this investigation without tipping anyone off. Think about it. Here is an opportunity to score in a big, big way. You can stick it to Lundgren, and I retire with some sense of satisfaction for getting my own back."

O'Keefe appeared to be reluctant to agree with Terry's bold plan. So, Terry continued trying to persuade him.

"You won't have to personally do anything. All I want is for Gus to watch Angelique and Slater. Speed can keep tabs on Richard Riley. They're probably in the hunt for the missing painting. Angelique would surely have known about a deal between her late husband and Costus. Riley was a partner in the art gallery, so he's a suspect too. For all we know, he could actually be the main player in the fencing operations."

"You keep talking about a fencing operation," CC objected, "But no one has found evidence of Anthony Perrine fencing anything. It's all speculation."

Terry replied,

“From what I do know, I have no doubt the art gallery operation included dealing in stolen art. From what you have told me about the hunt for the missing safe deposit key, I am convinced, at the moment no one has the Simon masterpiece. All of the actions and maneuvers by the parties who would have a reason for finding the painting, is evidence it's missing.”

CC changed the subject,

“Okay, let's say I go along with your ideas, and my guys follow Angelique and Riley, I think you're leaving someone out.”

Terry shot CC a look saying I'm losing my patience.

“I mean Cal Costus.”

“You may be assured the Bureau covers all of his activities. I'll be the first to know if something breaks there.”

CC didn't answer him. He had the appearance of a man who would rather be anywhere other than where he was at the moment. Terry continued,

“I've helped you keep your job for a long time. This investigation is the perfect time for you to repay me for my work on your behalf. I can retire anytime now and I want to

have full credit for busting Costus, arresting Perrine's killer, and finding the Simon masterpiece."

"You don't expect much, do you?" CC remarked sarcastically. Terry replied defensively,

"It would only be fitting to be remembered for nailing the biggest fish of them all, Cal Costus. He's evaded the law for years. I want to be the one who brings him in."

"Okay Terry, you've made your point, I'll go along with your plan. What about me after you retire? If Lundgren is still around then, he'll have me for lunch."

"Don't worry. I'm already grooming my replacement in our deal. He's as pissed off at the Bureau as I am."

"Oh," CC said with relief.

## Chapter Fourteen

O’Keefe had a meeting with Gus and Speed. He made the assignments to follow Angelique and Riley. They looked at CC with sorrowful eyes. Working alone on surveillance meant literally no sleep. Maybe for days.

“No help?” Gus inquired

“No Gus, for the reasons Terry has told me about, we must keep this investigation among ourselves. I know it’s a tough assignment, but we owe it to Terry. He’s saved our jobs. We wouldn’t be in LAPD anymore if it wasn’t for those arrests he gave us.”

“Don’t forget this mess about Costus, we’re on the hook with Lundgren since he assigned us to the Perrine murder case. His killing seems to tie in to the painting Costus stole in Rome. Without Terry, we don’t stand a chance in hell.”

“I suppose “ Gus replied sulkily.

CC couldn’t stand the looks he was getting from the two detectives who were really more like his friends.

“Before you start on the job take off for the track. Here’s the bets I want you to lay down for me. After the beating I took using your system, I’m using my own method.”

Gus blinked rapidly,

“Only a temporary glitch. I’ve got it straightened out. My ponies look good.”

“Just bet ’em like I wrote ’em down.”

CC turned to Speed,

“You and I are going golfing at our favorite golf course. I made a tee time for us.”

Speed brightened up at the mention of golf. When he smiled he displayed a mouthful of teeth reminding one of tombstones.

“You can start tomorrow too. CC said defiantly.

Strings, strings of misfortune. Mishaps seem to come in strings. At the golf course, CC and Speed were enjoying their round of golf. “Speed,” Rodriguez’ nickname, had been inspired by his golf swing. He swung a golf club so fast he resembled the swordsman, Zoro, making his lightening fast “Z” on a wall.

In the current round, he was ahead on the bets. They bet on everything, length of the drives off the tee, putting, overall score etc. So the competition was always intense. At the final hole, number 18, a string tugged at CC. Speed hit an errant shot into the woods. The golf ball came to rest a foot away from the trunk of a fallen tree, effectively

blocking his shot to the green. In order to win the big bet for the final score, Speed had to par the last hole. His ball was only 100 yards from the green.

He could move the ball away from the tree trunk but it would cost him a penalty stroke. But it would put his chances of paring the hole in jeopardy, Speed decided he could clear the log with a sand wedge. He swung like lightening. Faster than a speeding bullet the ball hit the log, and rebounded viciously. It struck Speed squarely on the forehead. Thwack! He went down like a wet bag of sand. He was unconscious. CC rushed over to his friend to help him. An ambulance was called to bring Speed to the emergency room of a nearby hospital.

An hour later, CC slowly walked away from the emergency room. Speed had a severe concussion, CC was told by the doctor. He would be out of work for at least a week. Maybe longer. Perfect ending to this day of disasters, he thought to himself, this forces me to use Zaccariah to trail Riley. He had no other choice.

He would have to be careful about what he told Zack, because he was sure anything he did or said were relayed to Lundgren. He would also have to warn Terry about saying anything around Zack. Only he and Terry knew about the

information Nitro Nick had supplied to the FBI about Costus' connection to the robbery of the Madonna painting in Rome.

Even winning the golf match today didn't cheer him up. Collecting the money Speed owed him on the golf bets from his wife had crossed his mind. She was right there at the hospital. But, he decided he could wait until Speed regained consciousness, then collect from him when he made his first visit to him at the hospital.

There was one more string attached to CC today he wasn't aware of. He should have done what Terry asked him to do. That was promptly starting the surveillance of Angelique and Riley. Their actions would have given him some information potentially of great help to him.

## Chapter Fifteen

Cal Costus was a powerfully built man. He had the dark looks of an Italian, his hair was black, his countenance was swarthy and he had heavy lidded eyes. Although he was an immaculate dresser, he still looked like a gangster, which, of course he was. Cal's most outstanding characteristic was his temper. Not a bad fault considering his profession, but there was a down side to his anger too.

When Costus lost total control, he paid dearly for his violent actions on occasion. Replacing valuable associates was one price. Then, there was the high cost of paying for a firm of lawyers who were often busy buying off people he had either accosted or threatened.

His name was the result of creative thinking at Ellis Island when his grandfather had immigrated to America. His name was Calamari Costellini. In the course of rushing the new arrivals to America through Ellis Island, a hassled clerk shortened his grandfather's name to Cal Costus, because the original name was hard to spell. He told the grandfather,

“That's your new name. Your American name.”

He could only nod, tip his hat in a sign of gratitude, smile, then board a ferryboat to cross the Hudson River to New York City. His grandson had been named after him.

He was a physically precocious child. By the age of 12 he needed a shave. His large presence, dark jowls and brooding eyes frightened the nuns at the grammar school he had attended in New York City. They looked the other way when Cal shook down his fellow students for their lunch money. His school attendance was whatever days he decided to go.

Violence was as natural as breathing to Cal. He was a street gang leader at 14. His gang members were young men in their twenties. Given his temperament, and wide spread criminal activities, it's almost miraculous that Cal never served any time in prison. As a lad there were some misdemeanor charges for assault and battery, petty theft and threats, but no juvenile institution time served.

Cal's "luck" in staying out of the slammer was due to several methods of keeping himself clean. He would finger another boy for the fall, or intimidate potential witnesses against him, also his young age. When grown men filed complaints with NYD about the 14 year old boy's extortion tactics, the deeds couldn't be substantiated. They sounded silly to judges. Local precinct police tried to keep an eye on

him ,but it was all they were able to do.

Much to the relief of the high school teachers, Cal dropped out of school when he was 15. He told his frightened mother, she was afraid of him too, how he didn't "need no more lousy schooling" No one disagreed with him.

A born criminal, he quickly came to the attention of the Mafia hoods who operated in his neighborhood. Recruited by the mob, Cal eagerly took on the most dangerous and violent assignments. In a short period of time as a gang member, I mean associate, he was feared by all of the local gang associates. Somewhat like a hot potato, Cal was passed up the line to work for the top Mafia boss in the district.

He was patiently schooled in all of the intricate relationships that made the organization successful. Not an easy task given his lack of education. Cal learned slowly, but he learned. As his strengths in the organization developed, he eventually became a threat to the bosses in the New York City organization. They feared an inevitable power struggle with Cal. They didn't like the odds against them if they were forced to fight this violent, merciless hood.

Wisely, they took a page from the local mob's book. As the local mob had bumped Costus up to a higher level in the organization to get rid of him, he was now promoted right out of New York. They forced a territory open for Cal on the West Coast. He continued to mature as a criminal. He became more adept at committing his violent acts and leaving the scene without a trace.

He also learned about the wonderful protection afforded him by putting money in the right hands of those in power. Cal had a corp of sharp attorneys who were experts at twisting the truth. When all else failed, he could always finger someone else.

Law enforcement agencies on an international, national and local scale had tons of files on Cal Costus, but never any convictions. Cal and his organization associates were watched closely by various police groups. His associates were trailed relentlessly. At times the mob was amused by the attention. They made jokes like,

“Hey Cal, if you're headed for the can maybe one of them FBI guys will flush the toilet for you.”

“Don't go to bed with any broad with phony looking tits there might be a bug in the implants,” etc.

Despite the close surveillance, Cal carried on his business mainly by word of mouth. When he went anywhere, his

moves were screened off by decoys set up to confuse the police. Investigations came and went periodically in his life. It was frustrating for the police.

Cal had one weakness. Money. There was never enough money to satisfy his appetite. At times he took on risky ventures because he couldn't resist the lure of a big cash pay off. A prime example of dangerous risk taking was the recent theft of the Simon masterpiece. To steal a work of art of such international acclaim was more like teetering on the edge. His obsession for money didn't extend to the money itself, but for the power it generated. More money, more power, more personal influence in the world.

It was a heady game. Cal was fascinated by the changes he could accomplish with power. Failure of any of his ventures couldn't be tolerated by him. It was a shameful thing. After a few years, his West Coast territory became too restrictive for Cal. He didn't want to have a power struggle with the other organizations in the States. So he turned his attention to liaisons with crime organizations in Europe. Most of his criminal activities in that part of the world were smuggling and fencing valuable stolen goods.

At the moment, Cal was in one of the worst moods his

men had ever seen. He was rather proud of the Simon masterpiece theft. All of the details of the heist were personally planned by him. He had selected the Italian Mafia organization for the job and Nitro Nick was his choice to blow the vault.

Even the seemingly mundane task of shipping the painting to the States had been planned by him. His plan was executed perfectly in every detail but he was now holding nothing. I should be counting my money by now, he raged to himself, instead I don't know where the hell anything is, and who decided to double cross me!

Cal had also personally cultivated the fencing arrangement he had with Anthony Perrine. As his international operations had grown over the years, Perrine's name had come to his attention. He began to check around about Perrine. He learned from several international fencers Cal respected, Perrine fenced their more expensive and better known stolen paintings.

He also found out the art dealer had no arrest record. So he watched, and made some more discreet inquiries. When he was satisfied, he contacted an old acquaintance to introduce him to Perrine. The old acquaintance had been Richard Riley who was Perrine's partner in the art gallery.

It was a delicate mission Costus had undertaken. Without any doubt, he was sure Perrine knew who he was. He did know, and he was terrified at the idea of doing any business with Costus and have a transaction go wrong. He could imagine the consequences which would surely follow a failure to perform to Cal's satisfaction. Costus was certain Perrine would be skittish, so he made his approach slowly.

Cal bought some paintings at the art gallery asking Perrine's opinion on his purchases. Casual talks continued for some time, and Cal avoided being seen around him. He declined invitations to art shows at the gallery. Eventually, Tony accepted dinner invitations at secluded restaurants. Cal gradually put his cards on the table. He told Tony he wasn't a big player in stolen art, but once in awhile he needed to fence a few pieces. He flattered Tony about his fame as an art expert, and the clever fencing operation he ran on the side.

He might have avoided becoming involved with Cal under other circumstances, but there was Angelique to consider. She was expensive, and Tony wanted to keep her. Here was a way to fatten up his bank account and still remain independent of Costus. After all, only an expensive painting to fence occasionally would fatten his profits. It

certainly didn't mean total involvement with the mob boss. So Tony agreed to fence art for Cal.

Costus reeled Perrine in slowly. Gradually, the number of stolen paintings presented to Tony were increased over several years as he stepped up his activities in stolen art. Tony was extremely careful when he handled a fencing job for Costus. It made him edgy to have dealings with the dangerous man. However, the money was good, so good, he became more dependent on Cal for his cash flow.

When Costus told Tony the Simon painting heist was his work, he tried to get out of fencing this hot piece of art. He knew law enforcement agencies on both sides of the Atlantic were working overtime to find the painting. There was tremendous pressure being applied to the police from a variety of influential groups to catch the perpetrators of this heinous crime, and return the masterpiece. Not to mention the Italian government.

A fund had been established by church and art institutions offering a large reward for information. There were teary appeals on television for the return of the Simon painting. As time went by without any word at all from anywhere, the fund made a desperate move. They promised to pay the asking price for the painting, within reason, of

course, and immunity from prosecution. The immunity thing was a rather wild claim since they had no assurances from any police agency the offer would be honored.

At this juncture, Costus used his power over Tony. Fencing the painting became an order from him rather than a request. He made his intentions and what he expected from him, perfectly clear. Tony was trapped. He didn't have any choice if he liked being alive. He began to search desperately for a way out of this life threatening mess.

## Chapter Sixteen

Cal was now brooding. He didn't have the Simon painting nor did he have the money from the sale of the masterpiece. He had zip. His men were working around the clock trying to find some clue to what had happened. As each attempt to solve the mystery failed, his men hated to report another failure to Costus.

They were never sure if the iron resolve Cal was exercising in this frustrating situation would hold. Oral reports to Cal by his men were presented delicately with lengthy explanations of their efforts, and why things hadn't worked out.

The most recent mob disaster had been the failed safe deposit box key caper. Two of his most trusted men had been sent to Doc Hampton's ranch. Unbelievably, they returned without the key. They didn't even have a good explanation for why it had not been possible to overwhelm an old doctor and take the damned key. Cal heard a wild story from his seasoned associates about a fierce fire fight erupting in the farm house. They were in disgrace and wondering if they had a future.

Cal needed to find out who had the key now. It appeared Perrine had either stashed the painting in the bank safe deposit vault, or the money from the sale of the painting. He phoned Riley suspecting he might have been one of the large mob of men in the farmhouse his men assured him were there. A least fifteen men they estimated. Cal was a little suspicious about their estimate of the size of the army present at Doc Hampton's ranch. When Riley answered the phone, Cal told him to come to his house for a meeting. Richard quickly agreed to be right there.

Before Cal could give the order for his men to bring in Angelique and Slater, they arrived at his home. He wasn't sure what this move by Angelique meant, but he would know in due time he assured himself. Strangely, the triangle which had formed around Doc Hampton's house was reunited in the Costus residence.

While CC was playing golf with Speed, Angelique, Slater, Riley and the two Costus' men were gathered in Cal's den. It would have been important for O'Keefe to know about the meeting. Strangely, none of the members of the triangle at the meeting was aware of the others being present at the Hampton ranch.

Everyone watched Costus nervously as he sat at his desk. His heavy lidded eyes probed each face in the room. He was elegantly attired in an expensive dark gray suit, a dark blue shirt, with an even darker blue tie. Gold studs gleamed from his shirt cuffs, His hands were clasped tightly together on the desk. Sheer will power was controlling his rage.

Only the flutter of his right eyelid was evidence of his inner turmoil. His two men watched Cal carefully, staring at the fluttering eyelid. What they had seen happen when his eyelid fluttered like it was now, made the two men shudder inwardly.

Cal's voice was calm when he addressed Angelique,

"It is nice of you, Mrs. Perrine, to visit me so unexpectedly. We are all hoping, he said, as his head inclined toward his associates, that you have some good news for us. Do you?"

Angelique nervously cleared her throat,

"Well, not exactly, Mr. Costus. I have searched all of the places I can think of where Tony might have hidden the Simon painting, or the cash from a sale. Just today I went to a safe deposit box I discovered Tony had opened under an assumed name. This is all there was in the box."

With a trembling hand, she placed Tony's note on the desk.

As Cal read the note his right eyelid fluttered more violently. One of Costus' men swallowed hard. Fashionably dressed, impeccable Richard Riley, couldn't look at Costus. He was sure his number was up unless he could come up with something fast. Slater was admiring Cal's clothes.

He pushed the note back to Angelique, then quickly clasped his hands again.

"It is sad Mrs. Perrine, your late husband did not conduct his business affairs in an ethical manner. It is in fact shocking to me that after several years of profitable transactions with your late husband, he should morally falter in carrying out our biggest arrangement together.

"In good faith, I gave the Simon painting to Tony so he could show it to a buyer. A buyer, Tony assured me, who was most eager to pay the \$30 million we had agreed on as a fair price for said painting. Greed is a terrible thing Mrs. Perrine. Had your late husband dealt fairly with me his cut was \$6 million big ones. And now you tell me the painting is nowhere to be found. A shame."

Cal's knuckles were now white. Riley coughed nervously. Angelique watched him with a terrified stare. Slater was

still checking out Cal's wardrobe. He turned his intense gaze on Riley.

"Surely a man of your talents has some answers for us," Cal said in a polite level voice. "You were Tony's partner, did he not confide in you?"

Riley shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He fought off the urge to look away from Costus. He replied,

"Tony told me what an honor you had accorded him by entrusting the sale of the famous picture to him. He didn't tell me who was interested in buying it, nor did he ask for my assistance in the sale. I'm quite sure Tony wanted to handle it personally."

Cal interrupted Riley,

"If he was so proud to be helping me, then how come I'm sitting here with nothing?"

His eyelid fluttered faster. Like a good poker player, Riley controlled his fear and appeared calm. He was a survivor, so he decided to blow some smoke Cal's way,

"I suspect Tony was sucked into some kind of double cross." he said bravely.

The statement caught Cal off guard,

"What do you mean? By who? Do you know who?"

"A source of mine has informed me Nitro Nick is being

held by the FBI.”

“So what?”

Riley continued,

“He told me Nick made a deal with the Feds to serve time here in the States so he wouldn’t be extradited to France on a job he did there. Some guy was arrested for the robbery in Paris and he fingered Nitro Nick as the juice man. Nick, in turn, had to give the Feds something big enough to make them want to do a deal for him. So he confessed he was the one who blew the vault in Rome to snatch the Simon painting.”

Cal was caught off balance,

“How do you know this?”

“I pay a guy in the maintenance department at the Fed building to gather whatever information he can for me. Sometimes he brings me a gem like this one.”

Cal’s mental wheels were spinning fast,

“Nick didn’t know he was working for me. I did it blind through the Italians. I had them contact Nick direct, so how would he know about me? How could he finger me?”

Riley shrugged,”

“I’m only repeating what I heard.”

He knew Cal would check out his story about Nick’s

arrest. Riley was playing for time by diverting attention away from himself.

“What else do you know?”

Cal demanded drilling Riley with his eyes.

"Nothing. It might be worth checking on Nick to verify what my informanr told me. I would also want to know if Nick fingered anyone else in the robbery.”

Cal thought a moment,

“We’ll check. I still think Tony pulled a fast one. The note smells of a double cross.”

Suddenly, Cal’s powerful body uncoiled from the chair,

“You, Mrs. Perrine, and you, Mr. Riley, have one week to find the damned painting or the money Tony might have collected for it!” he yelled, causing everyone to jump. His control was slipping fast. Cal’s fist hit the desktop. It quivered from the blow.

“No answers. You all die. Capeesh? He pointed a finger at his two men, "Including you two bums!”

His eyes blazed with pure venom,

“I will personally kill all of you! I give you a week! No more! No excuses, no empty hands only the goods count. Capeesh?”

They capeeshed. Even Slater now capeeshed.

“Now get out of here! You will all be watched around the clock, so don’t think you can run away from me. There’s no place far enough.”

He was sweating. His face was a dangerous shade of red, and his right eyelid appeared to be trying to fly away.

Everyone left Cal’s office quickly, frightened, but relieved they were still alive. Angelique was frantically searching her mind for anything she had missed about Tony’s habits. Riley was going to check out the frame shop they had set up. It was used to cover up the stolen paintings underneath other legitimate art work, which was, in turn, shipped to the LA gallery. Costus’ two men would shake up the LA streets for any informant who might know something about the double cross. All the while, the five threatened people knew Cal had his entire organization watching them.

The triangle was now living in a fish bowl. Gus was trailing Angelique and Slater. Three of Costus’ men were also following the pair. Zack was right behind Riley and so were two of Cal’s boys. Times were intense. Searchers were searching, trailers trailing, and detectives detecting. Energy crackled everywhere they all went. In the

meantime, CC was so upset he stayed home for two days making love to a surprised, willing, and delighted wife. Her toes were tingling.

Captain Lundgren was receiving reports from Zack about the investigation. He had the impression, based on the vague instructions CC was giving Zack, that the little swine was grasping for straws. At the present time Zack was in Lundgren's office for a meeting.

"I think you have him this time sir. He hasn't even been in his office for days."

Lundgren replied,

"I know. He called in sick. I have to appear to be fair to him for another week, then I'll pull the plug on him. I probably can't get him dismissed from LAPD, however, I should be able to have him transferred back to the little office he came from. You're doing a fine job Zack. Let me know if he changes your duty assignment. And, I mean even in the smallest detail. I have to try to anticipate anything he might try to do to save his butt."

Zack left the captain's office dreaming of promotion.

## Chapter Seventeen

Richard Riley was studying his options. He had initially squirmed out of fencing the Simon painting by convincing Costus his customers wouldn't touch the Simon picture for several reasons. First, was the amount of heat being generated by law enforcement on a global scale. Secondly, he pointed out to Cal, the painting was considered to be a divine relic, and a legend had sprung up about the masterpiece. Many people, he told Cal, were superstitious about spiritual matters. Newly created folklore proclaimed whoever desecrated the painting, including stealing it, would be cursed.

Along with the curse came the usual dower predictions of disasters, cripplings and horrible deaths to the offenders. Cal had been skeptical telling Riley he didn't believe in all that stuff. But he was persuaded when Richard reminded Costus about the true to life terrible happenings to possessors of the "Hope Diamond."

Cal fenced a good deal of jewels and he was familiar with the doomed story of owners of the famous Hope diamond. So he bought Riley's story about his customers' refusal to consider buying the sacred Simon masterpiece.

He let him off the hook. But, then the situation changed quickly and Riley was now in a dangerous position with Cal anyway. Being Perrine's partner had naturally placed him at the top of the list of people Cal suspected of double crossing him. And Angelique was next in line.

He knew it would be useless to try to run, or cover up his movements. Cal's men were experts at shadowing people. He knew Costus had pressured Tony into fencing the painting. What troubled him was his partner's behavior. Tony had refused to tell him the name of the prospective buyer who put up a \$1 million in cash so the painting could be examined. Then he became secretive about the details of the transaction. Tony didn't tell him anything. After five years of close association with his partner the sudden change in behavior made Riley suspect some kind of trickery. But what?"

Richard was flying to Toledo to track the movement of the Simon painting. He knew the picture passed through the frame shop on its way to the LA gallery. Maybe a switch had been made somewhere along the line. Possibly the painting arriving in LA was a fake, and the authentic art work was diverted elsewhere. He had to consider all of the possibilities. Making a mistake like missing a clue meant

forfeiting his life. Costus never made a threat he didn't intend to carry out, if necessary.

When he boarded the plane at LAX, Riley went forward to the first class section of the aircraft. He had never traveled any other class in his life. His clothes were the latest fashion worn by Hollywood movie stars. Richard's art patrons were in the film business and he emulated their style of dress.

Darkly handsome, he was often mistaken for a movie star. Most common was to mistake him for Andy Garcia. His black hair was combed straight back and perfectly barbered. Immaculate, was the impression he made on female admirers. Most of his clients in LA were women. On the flight he expected to be given special attention by the flight attendants. He wasn't disappointed, everything he wanted was quickly tended to.

In actuality, Riley was a retired cat burglar. Now 40 years old, he was still fit and agile. One day, he realized the top physical stamina required for success in the high risk game was no longer there. For this, and several other reasons, he had been smart enough to quit in his mid thirties. He did miss the exciting life he once led in his youth. His

transition to a life as a cat burglar had been easy for him because he had been a trapeze artist in a circus.

Riley was born into a family of aerialists. His acrobatic training began as soon as he could walk. Riley hated the hard work and discipline required of him as a member of a traveling troupe of circus performers. He wanted more money to spend and an easier life style. His family was aware Richard's temperament was very different from their other sons.

He wasn't a simple, hard working, proud artist like his father. Scheming and cunning were his methods of dealing with people. Richard was the type of person who watches people closely without seeming to. Always figuring out a way to take advantage of people if the opportunity arose. When an opening occurred, he already knew what moves to make to get what he wanted from his pigeon.

Serious thought wasn't a part of his nature. Contemplation of himself and others never occurred to him. He lived for the sensation of the moment without any reflection on the damage inflicted on others by his dishonesty. Nor did he have any sense of responsibility. His behavior wasn't due to a lack of intelligence, but to his innate character. Perhaps Richard was born the way he was because of a throw back

gene inherited from an ancestor.

His parents gave up on trying to change him, and sadly accepted the truth about their son. At 20 years of age, Richard found an opportunity to break away from the circus. While performing in France, his girl friend of the moment introduced Richard to her brother Jacque. He was a member of a minor local gang. Robbing small banks and jewelry stores were their main sources of income. As he became a regular visitor at his girl friend's house. Richard learned about the gang her brother belonged to. and he formed a friendship with her brother.

Richard's skills as a trapeze artist were of prime interest to the brother. He carefully questioned Richard, sizing him up. When he was satisfied Richard was trustworthy, he asked him if he would be interested in making a large sum of money using his aerial skills for one quick job. Of course he would, Riley declared.

Jacque introduced him to his gang leader Pierre Le Clerque known in criminal circles as the "The Cheese" because he was a rat faced little man, with shifty beady eyes, and a cheesy breath. Pierre proceeded to satisfy himself about Richard before he told him the nature of the robbery he had planned. When he was sure of him, he

explained the heist he had planned, and mentioned success would depend on a highly skilled athlete. Richard told him he was the man he was looking for.

Pierre then went into the details of the robbery. A short distance from their village lived Count Peugeot, a wealthy exporter of goose livers. Several of the count's servants had told Pierre about his miserly ways. In his bedroom, the count had a large vault stuffed with cash and jewelry. Being a miser, Count Peugeot had skimped on the alarm system. It would be an easy thing to disable the simple alarm, and enter the castle by the front entrance.

There was a hitch though, it was easy in, but an escape from the front of the building would be nearly impossible. The castle sat on a hill, and the front of the property was open terrain for several miles. Another reason the count had spent so little on an alarm system was the nature of the rear of the property which backed up to a sheer cliff. There was a straight drop of 800 feet down to the river, making an entry from the rear suicidal.

An aerialist could traverse the steep ravine on a rope. Across from the precipice at the rear of the castle, was a higher cliff on the other side of the deep chasm. Where the higher cliff paralleled the castle, the distance was over one

hundred yards between castle and cliff. Only a skilled aerialist would have the strength to successfully traverse the ravine to the castle.

Pierre's plan was to crack open the safe on a night the count was away on business. An informant on the count's household staff would advise him of the safest time to pull off the burglary. When the time arrived, the inside man would disarm the alarm system and unlock the doors leading to the count's bedroom. A team consisting of Pierre, Jacque and a look out would then open the vault and bundle up the loot.

At the rear of the castle, Riley would shoot a line, then traverse over the chasm. He would then fix up a descending line for Pierre and Jacque to use to lower themselves to the bottom of the ravine and escape. Richard, in turn, would traverse back to the other side with the booty. He would have to make three trips to bring back all of the valuables. The loot would appear to have vanished into thin air. A simple and bold plan.

When the night came for the robbery, everything they had planned was carried out without any problems. Riley's physical strength was tested to its limits by the end of the

third trip across and back. It turned out to be simple and daring. No one had ever believed someone would attempt to cross such a treacherous ravine. Riley's cat burglar career had begun.

After several years of working with The Cheese, he decided to work alone. Richard was handsome and charming. He had a flair for fine clothes, and he painstakingly cultivated good manners. These qualities were his ticket into the inner circles of the rich. Usually Richard would find an accomplice who had access to the people he was interested in knowing.

Needing money, for one reason or another, these miscreants took Richard's payoffs and did their duty as traitors. In this fashion, he learned a great deal about who had what, and intimate details about the location and movements of art treasures. Without too much trouble, Riley robbed their homes for cash, jewelry and art works. He also worked with various gangs on heists for big prizes.

He loved the life style he had created for himself. As a cat burglar he traveled around the world to find the next opportunity. Following the money meant he lived in the places the wealthy frequented. He was in the right jet set

spot each season of the year. He kept a careful record of the dates he had lived in various seasonal destinations. For example, it wouldn't do to show up on the French Riviera, if last season he had broken a young debutante's heart, and robbed her parents of their valuables.

At times he made some large scores, but Richard never saved any of the money. His credo was live for the moment. Many law enforcement groups were interested in Riley. Over the years, they could never develop enough hard evidence to arrest him. He was hauled in for questioning on the complaints of some of his victims. On certain robberies, Riley came to mind, because he had dumped his victim's daughter a day or two before. It was only allegations. He was quick to point out to the police the parents were angry with him for jilting their princess.

Then he made a major mistake when he was in his mid twenties. Ordinarily, Richard concentrated on one caper at a time and limited his attention to one woman. He became impatient in Boston where two irresistible opportunities opened up at the same time. It was winter in Boston, and he longed to be down in the Caribbean sun. He reminded himself working only one plan at a time was the safest way to operate. Greed won out over his good thinking for the

loot available in two homes, and his impatience to be out of the cold weather. For these two reasons he took the risk and broke his own rule. His favorite island was calling to him.

Kimberly Houghton was barely nineteen. She was a student at Boston University. Riley had been compelled to mention matrimony in her case which was something he rarely did. Kimberly was sharp, so he had to use an emotional vision of marriage to dull her senses. Her usual shrewd insight about people was clouded over by a deep passionate love for her man.

Richard had a tried and true method he used to heat up the infatuation to a red hot fire. Thoughtful little gifts arrived daily at her apartment accompanied by love sonnets and passionate notes hand written by her swain. His notes contained such swill as,

“I would surely die if I didn’t know we will be together tonight” etc.

These sentimentalities and the expert love making sank the hook deep into Kimberly's passionate nature.

Taking his chances, Riley was also seeing Betty Updike. She was a mature woman in her forties. Although she wasn’t a fool, Richard’s dark good looks, manners and lots

of passion overwhelmed her. It was a busy schedule. He saw Kimberly mostly in the late afternoon or early evening. Then, it was off to attend to Betty at night. His stamina was being tested, but he was sure he could make it through for the short period of time it would take to set up his robberies.

Strings again. Little strings of misfortune began to work against him. He was seen in the company of Kimberly at a large cocktail party also attended by Betty Updike. Richard wasn't aware of her presence at the social function. Betty slipped out of the party without being seen by Richard. She was extremely upset, however such was her infatuation that she kept quiet about her discovery, for fear of losing him.

Several days later, Riley left Kimberly's apartment in the early evening. After he left, she realized she was out of cigarettes. While walking to a convenience store, she was shocked to see Richard kissing an older woman near his parked car. After a long embrace, they drove away. Kimberly recognized Betty as the older woman with Richard. Their families had been friends for years.

Kimberly contacted Betty. They had lunch together and compared notes about Riley. They both reached the conclusion they were being had by a clever con man.

Infatuation soon turned to outrage regarding Richard's purpose in being with them, and hurt pride for allowing a crook to outwit them. They contacted a top police official they both knew.

He investigated Richard's background. Unbeknownst by him, Kimberly had taken a photograph of him early in their affair. With the photo for identification, they learned he was really Richard Riley, not Cliff Burton, the name he had used with the two women.

An Interpol report identified him as a suspected cat burglar. Never caught nor arrested. On many occasions Riley was recognized as being seen in the vicinity of the robbery. He often attended charity dinners and fund raisers to meet rich patrons. Complaints filed against Riley were all from wealthy people. No hard evidence was ever found to tie Riley to the burglaries. It was noted he traveled around the world, and apparently he had no permanent home.

Kimberly and Betty identified Richard for the police. Cooperating with the law as a civic duty, and for a lot of revenge. But mainly for personal reasons, the ladies helped the police set up a perfect trap for Richard. A surprised and

delighted Riley was fed the information he had been looking for from his two lovers over the course of a week.

He was arrested and taken into custody in the Houghton home with his hands in the bedroom wall safe. Shocked and angry, Riley was led out of the house in handcuffs. As he passed by Kimberly and Betty, who were there to see their ex-lover get what he deserved, they both gave him the finger.

Riley served three years in state prison. When he was released, he returned to his life as a cat burglar. Wiser now, he became more cautious in his planning. He continued to be successful without any further trouble from the law. In his mid thirties he had several narrow escapes due to reduced physical agility. Riley decided it was time to retire. and disappear from his old haunts.

Over the years, Riley had sold some stolen paintings to Anthony Perrine. They became casual friends and shared information useful to each other about activities in the art world. Riley admired the low key method Tony used to conduct his fencing operations. He had the perfect set up to screen his illegal sales. Tony was a well known art expert and widely respected in the art field around the

world. He kept the fencing operation modest, until Angelique came into his life.

Tony had never been deeply in love before. Short and plump, he was aware of his limitations as a desirable mate. So he had kept his love life modest too. Angelique was a different experience altogether. Tony couldn't control his passion for her. Blindly in love with her beauty, he couldn't recognize any flaws in her character. A short time after their first meeting at an art exhibition they were married.

Money became an obsession as he paid all of the bills resulting from his bride's expensive life style. So when Riley contacted him about a partnership in the fencing operation he was willing to listen. Something he never would have done in the past. Tony had preferred to work alone.

Riley told Tony his cat burglar days were over. He explained how much harder it was becoming for him to meet the required physical demands of his criminal activities. Tony listened to Richard's proposition. He explained the international crime connections he had cultivated when he worked in Europe on major heists with the biggest European mobs.

Riley had been contacting these people, and he learned they were interested in another American connection for stolen paintings. Plus, Richard knew some big buyers in the States. He declared Tony's clever operation, and his connections, would make them a fortune. Given the circumstances, Perrine agreed to take Richard on as a partner.

In the next five years, the fencing operation had doubled. Commissions were larger, and there were some major art works passing through their set up. Riley learned how to stroke his partner's ego with constant praise about his international fame and referring to himself as his humble partner. Many deals were made by Riley without Tony knowing about them. If something slipped up and Tony became aware of some of his secretive deals, Riley would smooth things over by referring to Tony's busy schedule handling the legitimate side of the business. There hadn't been enough time to keep him informed Riley would explain.

From the beginning of their partnership, Riley had a master plan of his own for the operation. One of his main objectives was the inclusion of Cal Costus. An alliance

with this powerful mob boss meant a much bigger fencing operation through Costus' connections and his money. They would be dealing at the top level. Riley dreamed in millions while Tony thought about Angelique's lavish spending.

Richard had meetings with Cal and coached him on how to handle Tony. Wheels were set in motion. All was well until Costus took over the expansion of the fencing. Cal made a connection with "The Fox" an internationally known cat burglar who specialized in stolen art works. He was able to make a deal with The Fox after his main fencing source was busted in Europe. In addition to that occurrence, Peter Mihail Petrovsky, The Fox, wanted to expand into the States in partnership with Costus . The Fox would have another outlet in the States if more of his fencing sources were busted by the police.

Tony became nervous and paranoid when he realized Costus had taken over his fencing operation. He neither liked, nor trusted him, and he was definitely afraid of this violent mob boss. He had already witnessed Cal's sudden bursts of temper. It was around this time of the take-over that Tony became aware of Angelique's love affair.

Perrine might have succeeded in holding his ground with Cal if it hadn't been for the Simon painting. This was really big time stuff. Riley managed to beg off by convincing Cal his customers wouldn't touch the painting. Tony on the other hand, didn't know how to say no to Costus. He went to work to find an interested buyer for the Simon masterpiece.

Tony found a buyer who was eager to pay the \$30 million asking price. He saw an opportunity in the fencing operation of the Simon painting to solve all of his problems, and a way to grab \$20 million. There was so much sorrow and hurt inside of him over Angelique's affair with Gary Slater, he had to take some action or go insane. The only way to ameliorate his agony was to dump his wife in an unceremonious manner, and disappear. He laid his plans.

Riley was thinking about all of this as the plane cruised on. Zaccariah had been easy to spot at the airport as he tried to trail Riley. And he knew Zack was on the plane with him. Costus' men had been harder to recognize, but eventually he identified them. It would have been amusing to have the police and the Mafia trailing him at the same time if the stakes in the game weren't so high.

Richard figured this trip to Toledo to trace the Simon painting was probably an exercise in futility. He had set up the Toledo frame shop himself, choosing a trusted associate to run the operation. Going directly to the shop from the Toledo airport, Richard wasted no time in having a confidential meeting with Roy Peterson.

In the back office he questioned him,

“This Simon deal is becoming dangerous for me. Are you sure the Simon painting was shipped to LA?”

“I have several eye witnesses who can tell you they saw the painting picked up, and shipped. Sid and Fred were right here with me throughout the operation from the framing process to shipping it. Do you want me to call them in here.?”.

“No need Roy, I believe you. I’m in deep trouble. Tony is dead and he seems to be the only one who knew where the painting went. All I know for sure is Tony had an interested buyer. I now have Cal Costus breathing down my neck. Since I was Tony’s partner, he expects me to find the picture, or the money if the purchase actually took place. It’s a real mess. But don’t worry about yourself, I’ll make sure Cal knows you’re clean.”

After a few hours of discussing some business with Roy

he left the shop. It seems like a stupid thing to do coming all the way to Toledo to ask a few questions, he thought. But I needed to see Roy's eyes, and know for sure when I questioned him. Richard trusted no one.

As he walked to the curb waiting for his taxi to take him back to the airport for the return trip to LA, he spotted Zack immediately. He was across the street from him wearing gray coveralls and attempting to look as if he was repairing a parking meter. Richard hadn't walked half a block to the corner before Zack abandoned his "repair work" and began to trail him.

Clever stuff, Riley thought to himself. I wonder if its a technique they teach at the police academy. Cal's men were watching him from a car. When Richard got into the taxi they followed, staying a block and a half behind the cab. He looked over his shoulder at the trailing car. Well, it does take away that lonely feeling, he thought.

He began to analyze his dilemma in depth. He hadn't decided yet what action to take to get out of this mess, but he had several ideas. One thing he was sure of, he wasn't going to be the victim because of Perrine's double cross.

## Chapter Eighteen

Angelique was facing the same predicament as Riley. She had taken to constantly looking over her shoulder whenever she was outside of her home. Slater just looked. Searching for clues to lead her to the painting or the money, she had ransacked Tony's belongings. His clothes had been ripped to shreds in case her late husband had sewn something into the linings.

Both of his desks, one at the gallery, and one at home, were reduced to kindling wood. Filing cabinets hadn't fared any better. They were now flattened panels. Part of the destruction was caused by searching, and the rest was Angelique's fury at her late husband for leaving her in this terrible fix.

Her final search had been a careful review of the contents of Tony's files and his legal documents. Finally, she was left to stare at Tony's Last Will and Testament. Its contents filled her with frustration and rage. One of the unkindest acts Tony had done to her, not to mention the sneakiest, was to deed over his Malibu cottage to Josephine Cadwalader for the sum of one dollar. Josephine had been

Tony's loyal secretary and assistant for over twenty years. Working for him right from the opening of the art gallery, she worked at his side from the start of the gallery to the top of the art world.

Angelique had been careless. She had failed to check the ownership of the cottage. Not until his demise had caused a complete accounting of his assets, did she learn she had never been named in the deed to the cottage. Angelique had been counting on raising money from the sale of the Malibu property.

Tony's disappearance with all of his assets and the ugly truth about the deed had nearly destroyed her. To add to the pain, was the nasty trick he pulled on her with the empty safe deposit box and the mocking note. It was her daddy all over again, she thought furiously. Now her safe little world was gone.

At this low ebb, a bright thought entered her mind. She hadn't considered the Malibu house! In her frantic search she had forgotten all about the cottage. Maybe Tony had hidden everything there, she thought to herself. It also came to her there was a possibility, if he hadn't been killed, he was going to dump her for that bitch, Josephine. A feeling of inspiration flooded through her.

A search in Tony's study produced the key to the Malibu cottage. She called out to Slater,

"Hurry in here Gary, I have an idea."

Gary looked annoyed when he appeared in the doorway.

"I'm going to take a shower. What is it?"

"Something more important than your shower. I may have the answer to where Tony hid the Simon painting, or the money."

"That's good," Gary replied, not looking very interested. Angelique saw the look.

"Sweetheart, have you already forgotten we're in deep trouble with Cal Costus? If we don't come up with something in the next two days, there's a good chance he'll kill us both."

Gary didn't like to think about unpleasant things and he was annoyed at her for reminding him about Costus' threats. He was also frightened of him which prompted him to reply,

"I know we have a serious problem with Costus. I'll do whatever you say."

"Much better. Get dressed we're going down to the Malibu house.

"Josephine owns it now."

“I know sweetie, but I have a key to the place. It may be where Tony hid the money. We haven’t looked there.”

“Oh right. It would be great if it's hidden there.”  
He’s still gorgeous and he rings my chimes, she thought, but what a price I have to pay to have him around.

When they arrived in Malibu, Angelique was relieved to find the cottage dark, and apparently unoccupied. The pair entered the house laden down with an assortment of hardware.

“Gary,” she ordered, “Pry up the floorboards in the den.”

“But sweetheart, those floors are beautiful,” Gary protested, “Hardwood is expensive.”

Losing her patience, she shouted at him,

”Don’t you understand anything? What do I care about the floors. It belongs to Josephine, 'the bitch', Cadwalader' now. Another one of Tony’s jokes.”

Slater reluctantly began prying up the floorboards being careful not to scratch the wood. Angelique, on the other hand, viciously swung a heavy hammer at a wall poking a big hole therein. Using a flashlight, she peered into the hole in the wall. Nothing there. She then proceeded to bash holes in the walls all over the house.

Slater took the den apart.

Angelique was bending over with her head in the latest hole she had created, when policemen burst through the front and rear doors of the house. Slater and Angelique were quickly rounded up, cuffed, and read their rights, as Josephine Cadwalader leaned against her front door frame with her arms folded.

As the pair were escorted past Josephine, Slater said,

“I was careful not to scratch the wood.”

Angelique, on the other hand, spat at her, but she missed. It wasn't her day. It was Josephine's day. She had adored Tony. Being a plain woman, Perrine had never shown the least bit of interest in her romantically. They did become close friends. It had crushed her when the late blooming Tony had given all of his love and attention to Angelique.

Of greater consequence to her was the change in Tony after he was married. Although Josephine was aware he dealt in illegal fencing of stolen art, he had never involved her in the operation in order to protect his friend. With heightening concern she watched Tony become increasingly desperate for money as Angelique made her

demands for the luxurious things in life.

Then she watched helplessly as Tony agreed to take Richard Riley in as a partner in order to bring in more money from the fencing operation. Josephine knew Tony was a much better man than Riley. She was certain Tony wouldn't have associated with him had it not been for the circumstances created by his marriage to Angelique. She neither liked, nor trusted Riley.

As for Angelique, there was open hostility between them.

It had been on a sudden whim when Josephine decided to go down to Malibu to relax and spend the night at the cottage. There had been on-going heavy demands on her since Tony's murder. She was coping with the requests for business information from the IRS, LAPD, and the FBI. Almost finished with the last of the paperwork on the legitimate side of the business, it was time to rest. Josephine quite honestly told the authorities she had no knowledge of any fencing operation involving her boss.

After an extensive investigation, LAPD declared Josephine to be innocent of any involvement in stolen art traffic. Clever Riley was also cleared by the authorities, at least temporarily, but he was still a suspect. By sheer luck, she had spotted Angelique and Slater driving ahead her on the

highway. She followed them to the Malibu house.

Parked across the street, Josephine watched the pair break into her house. When she was satisfied they were on the premises, she called the Malibu police. After the police had entered the house, she walked over to the front entrance to see Angelique in handcuffs. It was better than a movie thriller. Few moments in her life had ever been more fulfilling than witnessing Angelique hauled off to jail. Josephine told the sergeant in charge that she would be down to the station shortly to sign a criminal complaint against the pair for illegal trespassing, malicious property destruction, and money damages.

When everyone had gone, Josephine went to her car. She removed an ice bucket and a bottle of champagne. It was part of her plan to give a final toast to Tony at the beach house. Josephine opened the bottle and poured herself a drink. She said,

“To you, Tony my love, and up yours Angelique.”

She drained the glass, then smashed it on the fireplace sending small shards of glass glittering on the floor.

CC was abruptly awakened at 1 AM by the incessant ringing of the telephone. Extracting his ear from one of Marge's feet, he lunged for the phone

"Wha?" he muttered.

"It's Terry. Wake up CC. I need you right away."

"Wha for?"

O'Keefe mumbled while he groped for the bed lamp.

"Angelique and Slater were arrested this evening down in Malibu Beach. I heard it on the late news. They were caught ransacking Perrine's beach house. It turns out Perrine deeded the cottage over to his assistant Josephine Cadwalader. She called the police when she discovered the pair in her house destroying property. I found out about the break-in from the Malibu chief. You need to get down there before LAPD finds out about the arrest. This could be a big break for us CC."

"On my way," CC replied. He was excited. A break in the Perrine case! Maybe he would get lucky and save his job and his life.

## Chapter Nineteen

CC met with the Malibu chief of police. He was welcomed as a brother officer and invited to sit in on the interrogation of the prisoners. Gary Slater sang like a 175 pound canary. He blabbed, and blabbed. Essentially, Gary was a law abiding citizen, so he cooperated fully with the Malibu police. He had never forgotten his Boy Scout Pledge. Mainly because it was the only thing he had ever been able to remember word for word.

He told the authorities everything he knew about the Simon painting, which was vague in the details, but enough information to cast suspicion on Perrine, Riley, Angelique and Costus.

Angelique couldn't be pressured into saying anything. Her attorney was summoned immediately. With her attorney at her side to guide her, she denied everything Gary had told the police. Her denials didn't prevent CC and the Malibu police from formulating a report detailing the information Slater had volunteered. Gary readily signed the statement.

Captain Lundgren was furious when he heard about the arrests in Malibu. CC was back in the news again, Lundgren wondered what fluke of luck had occurred to place the little swine in a position to be the first LAPD officer to arrive at the Malibu police headquarters? CC's quick response was of course due to the begging Terry had done to make him show up in Malibu. It had paid off in a big way for Terry and CC. Only CC had all of the information Slater had provided about the Simon painting and Cal Costus' involvement in the robbery of the masterpiece.

Until now, there had been no knowledge of any connection between the theft of the famous painting and Perrine's killing. The news caused an international sensation. CC was now able to include the information Terry had given him about the robbery in Rome. That was another piece of information no one had heard about before. Lundgren couldn't believe the little swine had accomplished all of this detecting on his own, even though the media believed CC was the master of detection. It was almost more than the captain could bear without shooting O'Keefe.

He was given a temporary office at City Hall to handle all of the interviews for the news media around the world. Talking heads showed up in LA. They took turns standing meaningfully in front of LAPD headquarters. Then they solemnly detailed the recent news about the sensational art theft and the murder of a renowned art expert for the little people.

Slater, who had been trying to break in to the movies for years was an instant media star. He came across as a handsome, sincere man who had been manipulated by a cold and calculating woman. In other words, an innocent pawn caught in the web of a scheming temptress. And the camera loved him.

Angelique covered her head with her coat when she was led into LAPD headquarters for questioning, while Slater had hundreds of his fans mob him as he was escorted into police headquarters. She was furious at him for spilling his guts, and the media attention Gary was receiving. He was liked by sympathetic people, so she refused to look his way. Slater was hurt by her hostile attitude.

Her anger quickly turned to fear as she was interrogated by the police. Questions about Tony's business were driven at her from various angles, all designed to confuse her into

eventually contradicting her own answers. Luckily for Angelique, she truly knew very little about Tony's business because it bored her. She was telling the truth when she said, "I don't know" to their questions.

After several days of interrogation, CC and other LAPD Detectives came to the inevitable conclusion she knew nothing of importance. Her knowledge of the involvement of people in the Madonna robbery was no more detailed than what blabber mouth Slater had given the police already.

She certainly didn't have anything to do with his murder, since she was Can Cun at the time. She wasn't part of the Simon painting robbery in Rome either. If they had any doubts about her innocence, it was of no consequence. They had no evidence against her except for the felony charges she faced in Malibu Beach.

Slater took even less time to question. He had already made a statement to the Malibu police, however his allegations couldn't be substantiated. Ironically, Angelique saved Gary a lot of time. She had denied all of the information he had provided to the police.

Roland Rank was furious. He had no advance warning of the sudden revelations in the Perrine murder case. He was left in an embarrassing position. He had made a bold statement to his readers that he would be doing the reporting of the inside story exclusively in his column.

His paid informers in LAPD were treated savagely by Roland. Where were they? Why wasn't he kept informed? Do you like my money? Then earn it! etc. Roland was in the public spotlight, but not in a nice way. Instead, he was being laughed at, and ridiculed. His many enemies were delighted to have sweet revenge on the columnist.

He was portrayed as a muck raker, and a spreader of false information. Insiders in LAPD swore no one was aware the Simon painting robbery tied into the Perrine murder. Roland burned with humiliation.

Of course, no one knew Terry had suppressed Nitro Nick's information about the theft of the masterpiece in Rome. So naturally, everyone including LAPD, were clueless about the connection between the theft and Perrine.

Roland waited. He made no further mention of the Perrine/Simon affair as the news media rushed about interviewing and speculating on the story. When it became clear Slater's statement wouldn't be sufficient to indict Costus, nor anyone else, Roland struck like an adder.

“Roland's Round Up by Roland Rank:”

Had enough news frenzy about the connection between Perrine's murder and the theft of the Simon painting? I have. During the furor over the revelations of Mr. Gary Slater regarding an alleged meeting with mobster Mr. Cal Costus, I didn't participate in the endless speculations dear reader. Want to know why? The facts speak for themselves. None of the information provided by Mr. Slater can be proven. Notice there have been no arrests in the case. LAPD is no closer to a conviction than they were before Mr. Slater started talking.

Where is LAPD now? Nowhere. How did this happen? It was all about publicity and attention for the LAPD officer supposedly in charge of the Perrine murder investigation, our own Lieutenant O'Keefe. It has been a number of years now since the lieutenant has been featured in newspaper

headlines. I believe Lieutenant O'Keefe deliberately withheld the story from his superiors in order to have all of the glory. The information he kept to himself now appears to be cooked up by someone.

Do I have proof of my allegations? I do. None of the LAPD officials nor City Hall were kept informed by Lieutenant O'Keefe about a connection between the Perrine killing and the Simon painting robbery. These allegations came from a really reliable source, Mr. Gary Slater, tennis bum, and the darling of a number of wealthy ladies paying him for whatever. What a solid witness.

In his usual grandstand manner, Lieutenant O'Keefe rushed off to Malibu Beach alone and brought in Mr. Gary Slater. Who proceeded, with some coaching, I'm sure, to tell his lurid, pulp fiction story, about the alleged Perrine/Simon connection. He claimed our mobster in residence, Mr. Cal Costus, masterminded the robbery of the painting.

Once again, LAPD has bumbled into a trumped up story by believing an hysterical man telling a wild story not backed up with any corroboration. He was brought in by our Lieutenant O'Keefe whose ability to detect anything is

suspect. For shame gentlemen of the LAPD. Next time, bring in some solid proof stemming from actual, 'honest to God', police work.

All of this merely points up what I have maintained for years. LAPD is a loosely organized, undisciplined, unprofessional group of individuals on the city pay roll. A word to Captain Lundgren. You are Lieutenant O'Keefe's superior, isn't it time for you to finally exercise some control over this loose cannon? What are you thinking?"

On to other things-----

CC read Roland's waspish column writhing in agony. Sensitive about his shortcomings, which he only acknowledged to himself, it was torture to receive such vicious public criticism.

"Oh man, why does Roland hate me so much Marge?"

"The fool doesn't hate you baby. You're only so much space to be filled in the rag he writes for."

"I wasn't grand standing. I received a tip, and I followed up on it. That's all. I should set Roland straight."

"Oh crap," Marge replied, "The weasel would twist anything you say to him into a big lie. Leave it alone honey."

"I'm sure you're right, but the worst part was his criticism

of Lundgren. He will be all over me about the news article. I'm in enough trouble with him as it is."

"What Captain Marvelous has to say, let'em say it. Keep your cool. Don't answer him at all. Sit quietly, and let him rave. Remember you're a Civil Service worker."

"Okay Marge. It sounds like good advice. I'll take the heat and let it cool down."

Captain Lundgren launched a savage attack on CC. His ego was badly bruised by Roland's blatant remark about his competence as a police professional. He reasoned he wouldn't have been in a position to be open to public criticism if it weren't for CC's actions. O'Keefe had to endure over an hour of brow beating, threats, and sarcasm. He sat silently through it all as Marge had suggested.

He left the captain's office knowing the matter wouldn't end with only a reprimand. He was sure Lundgren would find a way to demote him and kick him out of the Special Unit. Slater's unsubstantiated lurid story, and Roland Rank's comments, would only act to spur the captain to work more resolutely to get rid of him.

Cal Costus was brought in for questioning. Lundgren figured he would at least have the pleasure of annoying

Costus, if nothing else. He sat silently in front of Lundgren's desk as his attorney sat beside him reading a prepared statement regarding his client's innocence. It was overkill. Cal was never in any danger of being charged with any felonies.

All the police had was Slater's statement about an alleged meeting at Cal's home which was denied by Costus. And no one was backing up what Gary said about Cal's involvement in the theft of the Simon masterpiece. Statement finished, the attorney asked for permission to leave. Lundgren glared at Cal as he waved his hand toward the door as a gesture of dismissal. Costus smiled at the captain as he left.

## Chapter Twenty

After a week of searching the Perrine art gallery for stolen art work, the police gave up the hunt. Nothing had been found. They also searched the Perrine residence, Slater's apartment, and Riley's penthouse. All of this effort left LAPD no further along in their investigations than they were the first day. No evidence of any kind had turned up.

Their most solid information was the break in and search of the Malibu cottage by Angelique and Slater. Everyone could guess what they were probably looking for, but there was no proof. They were escorted back to Malibu to stand trial for breaking and entering, plus malicious destruction of property.

Gus was in trouble with CC because it had been his responsibility to follow Angelique.

"How come you didn't catch on to the break-in at the Malibu house?" CC inquired, "Your assignment was to stay close to Angelique and Slater."

Gus' forehead moved up and down vigorously,

"How was I to know it wasn't Mrs. Perrine's house anymore."

“You could have checked.”

“You didn’t tell me to check on anything. You only said to follow them.”,

“A little imagination Gus, especially with the loud noises coming from the house. Angelique busted huge holes in the walls with a sledge hammer.”

"I thought the noise was coming from a cop show on TV" Gus replied defensively.

“Captain Lundgren has made a big issue out of your failure to follow the proper procedures on a surveillance assignment. He has formally reprimanded both of us. It is now part of our personnel files.”

CC sat down behind his desk and lit up a cigar thereby violating the no smoking policy.

“Oh man, we’d better get lucky on this case or I smell demotion in the air.”

"Am I still assigned to watch Angelique and Slater?" Gus asked softly.

CC stared at him,

“They’re in jail down in Malibu! What are you planning to do? he shouted at Gus, "Sit across the street and watch the jail?”

Gus nervously looked away from him. CC sighed, “Go help Terry, ask him if he has anything you can do for him. Otherwise, I’ll have to assign you to help Zack keep an eye on Riley. He got off the hook on this deal the same as Costus. Maybe Terry will crack the case, or if we get lucky, one of the suspects might make a big mistake.

O’Keefe went to see Terry hoping for maybe a tiny ray of hope. Terry didn’t like to talk to CC in his office, so they went out for coffee at a nearby shop. After the waitress served them, CC complained to Terry that the incident in Malibu hadn’t led to anything. He expressed his worries about being demoted by Lundgren.

“I had to tell everyone Perrine had taken all of his cash out of the bank, and sold his securities. So it was easy for Angelique to convince LAPD she was only looking for Tony’s money at the cottage. Oh man, if I don’t get a break soon I know Lundgren will do his worst to me.”

While CC had been talking Terry was looking up at the ceiling. This time he had no answers for CC. He had come up dry too. He knew he had to say something to O’Keefe, but the hopeful look on his face made it difficult for him to tell him the truth.

“Maybe a break will come our way soon. Right now, I can’t help you. I’m going to review the information we do have on the case, maybe I’ve missed something. Murder cases can be like that. Some little thing you should have seen before jumps out at you.” Terry stopped then. He had nothing more to say.

Hearing these discouraging words from his friend and savior caused CC’s heart to sink. Slowly rising CC said,

“I might as well go over to Utah for a week and go fishing with Clayton Potter. Whether I’m here or not isn’t going to make any difference to my career. Either way, Lundgren is going to roast me.”

Terry gave him a slow wave of the hand as he left.

After lying to Marge that he had to go back to Utah about the murder investigation, CC lit out. Two days later, Potter and CC were comfortably seated on the bank of a stream. Neither of them had their fishing lines in the water. They were relaxing while sipping beer.

Potter spoke,

“See now CC, don’t you feel better? If things get too bad over there in LA you come on over here. I’ll get you deputized. We’d have a hell of a good time you and me.”

Having had a belt or two of whiskey, and several cans of

beer, CC was feeling euphoric.

Serve'em right if I quit LAPD. They'll never see files and paper work as neat as I've given'em for years. Why, the section I was assigned to was a mess until I straightened out all of those files."

Potter snickered,

"Hell, my office could keep you busy for years cleaning up my mess."

CC snickered back,

"Careful there Clayton, your fishing line is awful close to the water. Some fish might get caught."

The remark sent them off into a fit of laughter.

After a hearty lunch washed down with more beer, the pair drifted off to sleep. CC's fishing line had dropped into the stream. A large trout hungrily bit at the bait. Caught on the hook, the trout swam off downstream with CC's fishing pole in tow. Vacationing with Potter also meant card games which were held every night. CC managed to escape only a few hundred dollars in the hole.

Back in LA, Lundgren was preparing to strike. He culled all of the files he had kept on the Boneyard's activities, and meticulously gathered all of the negative facts together in

chronological order. I'll knock off all three birds with one shot, he thought to himself. He knew how, and when, to influence the police board. Lundgren was disappointed about the collapse of the Perrine case. It had looked so promising with CC in charge of the investigation. A perfect setting for O'Keefe to fail miserably and be fired from LAPD.

Although he passionately wanted the three of them gone from LAPD, for now he would settle for something less. Another opportunity will come along he thought, then I'll be rid of the little swine, and his idiotic deputies altogether.

He was prepared, Lundgren headed down the hallway for a meeting with the police board. His strategy was clever. While giving credit to O'Keefe and the Special Unit, he subtly interwove the negative data he had been collecting since the unit was formed.

He finished strong by making a recommendation the Boneyard be replaced on the grounds of their age. It was time, Lundgren argued, to replace them since they were nearing retirement age. A new unit needed to be formed.

He then presented a comprehensive plan for replacing the unit with younger personnel he had personally trained for the job. It was an impressive plan. By a close margin

Lundgren's ideas were passed. CC was to be transferred back to paper shuffling in a lateral move. Gus and Speed were headed back to Traffic where they had formerly served. Lundgren felt faint for a moment as exultation over his victory flooded through him. He was finally rid of O'Keefe and his two stooges.

At the end of the week CC returned from Utah. His lazy days with Potter renewed his morale somewhat, so he was back in a hopeful mood. At LAPD, the Boneyard met. Horse bets were thoroughly reviewed as well as the picks for the following day. CC was actually a modest winner for the week. This pleasant surprise helped his morale even more.

Turning his attention to the monthly golf schedule, he and Speed figured out the best possible days to play. After several hours of this important work, CC asked them,

“Anything new on the Perrine case?”

Speed and Gus were caught off guard. After a few minutes of pondering they shook their heads. Nothing new.

Before they could break up, Lundgren's secretary walked into the office. She announced,

“The captain would like to have a conference with the

three of you. He said to tell you Lieutenant, any other business can wait until after the meeting.”

They looked at each other. They shrugged their shoulders almost in unison. Indicating that none of them knew the reason for the conference.

They dreaded a meeting with Captain Lundgren. It could mean the moment in their careers they had fervently hoped would never happen, being kicked off the police force or demoted. Bracing themselves, the Boneyard walked into Lundgren’s office. Each of them was frantically trying to think of possible evasions to the captain’s familiar probing questions.

Lundgren was actually smiling when the trio entered his office. "Come in“ he said heartily. Warily, the three men sat down on the edge of their chairs as if they expected him to vault over his desk and flail away at them. Instead, he relaxed, and sat back in his chair

“It's unfortunate the Perrine case seems to be back where it started. Another dead end with the Malibu investigation I understand. Where does the case stand now, is the question. Perhaps you can enlighten me, lieutenant, on your progress.”

Lundgren sat back in his chair so he could watch them sweat.

“Well, we’re not watching Mrs. Perrine and Mr. Slater anymore.” CC replied nervously, “They’re in jail in Malibu waiting to stand trial.”

“Go on.” Lundgren said calmly.

“We’re watching Richard Riley. Detective Parrish has him under surveillance at the moment. Nothing to report right now though.”

CC said, looking around for help.

“I’m due to relieve Detective Parrish in an hour.”

Gus offered.

“Me too,” Speed added.

Desperately, CC contributed a bit more information,

“The FBI is covering Cal Costus, we receive reports from them almost daily about Costus’ movements. They’re right on top of it.”

“No new leads then?” Lundgren asked with an angelic smile on his face.

“Not at the moment,” CC mumbled.

Gus coughed. Speed scratched his head. CC stared down at his left shoe.

“Well then, since there isn’t anything breaking on the Perrine case, this is an opportune time to make some changes in your special unit, lieutenant. The police board approved my plan to make a number of adjustments I had recommended to them.”

Lundgren said with a smile..

“What adjustments?” CC squeaked.

“As of tomorrow morning lieutenant, you will report back to your old office. You two sergeants, I’m sure, will remember how to find your way back to Traffic. Lieutenant Pearson is the new head of the special unit and ably assisted by Sergeants Parrish and Smith.”

“Sergeant Parrish?” CC stupidly asked in a daze.

“I promoted him yesterday,” Lundgren replied, “He’s the only member of your unit to remain. Does that tell you anything lieutenant? Clear your things out of the Special Unit office right now,” he ordered, “You have one hour to be off this floor and out of my sight. Dismissed!”

He gripped the edge of his desk to hold back a war whoop of victory.

It was over. The Boneyard was no more. Three skinny guys packed up their things in cardboard boxes in silence

as they cleaned out their desks. They carried the cartons out of the office. There didn't seem to be anything to say. They waited at the elevator watching the floor indicator flash numbers. In the elevator car they stared straight ahead. When they reached the ground floor they stupidly shook hands, not knowing what else to do at the moment. Then they set off in three separate directions.

## Chapter Twenty One

O’Keefe was numb. That which he had feared for so long, had happened to him. As he walked along he was trying to think of some plausible excuse or explanation to feed to Marge. Foremost in his concerns, as he mulled things over, was destroying the image he had created for Marge’s benefit. Himself as a courageous, decisive police officer.

Surely, learning he had been kicked out of the Special Unit created for him by the City, would change Marge’s respect for him. Maybe he could come up with a sensational, outrageous lie for her to swallow. Maybe my marriage will be in jeopardy if she finds out. I’m an ordinary civil servant, he thought to himself. After all, she had loved the promotions and the arrests accredited to him because of Terry's good work. He might be forced to confess Terry was responsible for all of the arrests, if he couldn’t come up with a colossal lie.

A wave of self pity was born inside of him. All I wanted to do is make as easy a living as possible, he told himself pityingly, and have some fun. And of course, love Marge.

Is that too much to ask? Now he would be closely watched by everybody because of his demotion.

He was certain his golf games and trips to the race track would certainly suffer. But, the most important issue of all was how to tell Marge. He was a mighty small figure as he shambled down the police headquarters hall.

CC brightened a little as he walked along. I won't tell her! he thought feverishly. My pay will remain the same. He was still a lieutenant. She didn't have to know he wasn't the head of the Special Unit anymore. That's it! I just won't tell her. His brilliant insight restored his self assurance as he drove toward home.

Marge knew something was up within five minutes of his arrival. He made no protest when she tweaked his nose and ears with her feet. Baby talk bounced off of him like rocks thrown against a stone wall. He stood there with a stupid frozen grin on his face, reminding Marge of a small boy who has wet his pants in front of his mother. This will take time, she thought to herself, knowing he was the master of the side slip.

Being unconventional herself, CC's disregard for the standard method of worming his way up the civil service

ladder was one of the qualities she loved about him. She also knew he was lazy, irresponsible, devious, and in love with her. Marge's kind of man. Nagging him about promotions was mainly to keep him in LAPD.

After all, if he was to quit, or get fired, their steady source of income which kept her from having to work, Work! would be cut off. CC could end up in a minimum wage job, and that meant either starving, or going to work, Work! herself

Marge began her approach to pry out of him the secret he was keeping from her.

"Is widdle wifey's big bwave man hungwy?" she simpered.

"Not really," CC replied gloomily.

"Tell your pwecious what's wrong. I'll make it all better for my Bunny Bear."

CC couldn't restrain himself any longer, his brave front crumbled, and the words came out of his mouth like a machine gun,

"I was demoted today-- Lundgren had me moved downstairs-- I'm no longer the head of the Special Unit--- Gus and Speed are back to Traffic-- don't worry the pays the same-- I didn't go to Utah on an investigation-I went

fishing with Potter--I'm ahead on my race bets-- I can't play golf for awhile--please forgive me--please don't leave me--you can have a cat--I've never looked at another woman--I love you--I'll do better--I swear no more lying--I'll work hard--you'll be proud of me- please say you love me too--I've been keeping money on the side--I'll never do it again--please--please--don't leave me."

"Are you through ? " Marge asked him.

"Yes" CC whispered with his head down.

"Screw'em all honey. I love you because you don't follow the rules. Don't you get it you little liar? We're two of a kind. Always have been. I don't give rat's ass either," she giggled, "Come on to bed I've got a new move to try on you with my toes. By the way, keep a low profile on your job. Don't screw up anymore. We need the money to keep coming in from the public trough."

CC became extremely stimulated now that he was out of trouble with Marge. It would be quite a night.

## Chapter Twenty Two

Terry was still in his office late in the evening. His investigative nature wouldn't let him forget the Perrine/Simon case. This was a difficult challenge to his thirty years of sharpening his mental faculties. He had to search for the solution, which his experience told him was there, somewhere among the people involved in the robbery/murder. He particularly hated overlooking the obvious in his investigations.

His telephone rang, and he tore his attention away from the Perrine file and answered the phone. It was one of his street informants reporting in. As the man on the other end of the line talked, Terry's eyes became brighter. He thanked the caller and hurried out of his office. What his informer had told him motivated Terry to check FBI Records, Interpol, and police headquarters in several cities in the States.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, all of the information he had requested from his sources had come in. Most of the information he had been provided was already

known, but one item was important new information. Terry believed he was on to something. Based on what he now knew, he thought the surest way for him to learn what he needed, and confirm the information his informant had supplied to him, was to take a personal trip.

Terry took an emergency leave of absence. Packing a carry-on bag for his flight, he set out for LAX. His dream of retiring from the Bureau with the kind of recognition he believed he deserved was the motivation to solve this baffling case. Quite bald, and carrying around extra weight, Terry didn't fit the popular image of a relentless crime solver.

While Terry was off investigating, CC was sitting in his old cramped office space surrounded by stacks of reports and files. Angrily, O'Keefe slammed down a completed file. He said aloud,

"These guys didn't do anything since I left the department. It'll take me months get the place squared away."

He stood up abruptly and headed outdoors to smoke a cigar. Puffing away, he reminded himself to calm down, do the job, and go home to Marge each day. At least things

were all right at home. CC was relieved Marge had taken his demotion so well. No more screw ups he thought, I'll put up with this mind numbing routine.

He missed playing golf with Speed. His time was limited for picking the horses, and he was losing right now using Gus' revised system of betting. The other two members of the defunct Boneyard were unhappily grinding through the daily tedium of traffic duty. They hadn't seen CC since "The Day Calamity Struck". There were a few phone calls to compare bets with Gus. They were counting the days left until they could put in for early retirement.

When Terry returned from his investigative trip he called CC. He wouldn't tell CC anything over the phone, much to O'Keefe's annoyance. Terry told him to meet him for lunch the following day. Now I have to wait until tomorrow for any news he thought resentfully. Why is Terry always so damned dramatic? He's over-cautious about phone conversations in my opinion.

CC was waiting at their usual dining place. He was early. Terry was prompt. After giving their orders to the waitress, Terry said,

"I've been on an exhausting trip to Spain, then Hoboken,

New Jersey and home. I needed to check on some important information I was given by an informant of mine. His information is correct. Richard Riley isn't Richard Riley."

"Who is he then ?" CC asked impatiently.

Terry looked at him steadily,

"My informer received a tip from a former cellmate of his. He said he recognized Riley from his picture in the newspaper. The photo was taken when Slater caused all the stir about Cal Costus. Riley changed his name when he got out of prison and disappeared from the area where he was arrested. We didn't pick up on him, because his new identity was done by an expert. It included a new set of fingerprints from a dead man which somehow got slipped into the FBI files. He has perfect cover as Richard Riley."

CC was getting excited. Visions of leaving his little cubicle danced in his head. Terry continued,

"I traced his family background from the information my source gave me. He was born in Hoboken, New Jersey to a family from Northern Spain. Four generations of the family have been aerialists, or trapeze artists, if you prefer. They were one of the finest troupes in the business. They

traveled with various circuses, and that is why Riley was born in the States. Riley was a trapeze artist himself. He is one of four sons.

“They were billed as the ‘Flying Fingeroas’. Riley’s real name is Flamenco Fingeroa. His brothers are named, Frederico, Fredo and Fernando. He is one of the middle Fingeroa boys. All of the Fingeroas flew except for the smallest Fingeroa boy, that would be Fernando. Fidel, the father, apparently had no luck trying to teach Fernando to fly because of his fear of falling. So Fernando took care of the flying equipment and helped his father with the finances and the accounting figures.

CC cut in, “What about the mother?”

“Farina flew too, as well as the three daughters Flora, Freda and Frances. Anyway, all of this was hard to trace because Riley was the only Fingeroa born in the States. They were performing in New York City at the time of his birth. I was hoping to gather evidence Riley wasn’t an ordinary partner in the Perrine art gallery.

"My digging paid off because I learned Riley was formerly a cat burglar. Burglary is what landed him in prison. My source said Riley’s ex cell mate believes he is

the boss of the fencing rather than Perrine. He based his observation on what he knew about him. He is a cunning man and he hides his abilities by maintaining a low profile. With all of the information I learned about his background, I couldn't come up with any proof he's involved in fencing stolen goods."

CC looked disappointed.

What about the family? Surely they had some answers."

"The Flying Fingeroas are finished flying. Fidel, the father died five years ago. His wife Farina retired to Florida. The small Fingeroa, Fernando, he didn't fly, was killed in an accident while the troupe was performing in Philadelphia."

"I thought you said Fernando didn't fly?"

"He didn't," Terry replied testily, "Fernando was taking down the trapeze equipment and he stood on a chair trying to reach a trapeze. He lost his balance and fell head first into a large bucket of water kept for thirsty elephants. The fall was fatal. Fernando drowned in the bucket."

"What about Frederico and Fredo?"

"Fredo Fingeroa now sells cars in Frisco. He has a wife and four kids. Frederico Fingeroa married a girl from the circus, Fatima. Frederico and Fatima continued to perform as the Flying Fingeroas for awhile but they closed the act. Not enough Fingeroas. So they moved to Frederick, Florida

They're now distributors of fat free foods."

"Looks like nothing there of any use," CC said sadly.

"Not so far," Terry replied, "But we know a lot more about the kind of man Riley is. This information might be the key somehow. There weren't any business connections with his family. He's a bit of an outcast to them because of his criminal record, and for abandoning the family. None of the family members wanted to talk about him."

"What now Terry?" CC asked.

"Something will break in this case, and we know a lot more than LAPD, so we might still have the odds in our favor. Next on my agenda is the rigged Cadillac. I have an appointment with the head engineer who supervised the inspection of the car down to the last bolt. Maybe he'll mention something not necessarily of significance to him, but might be from my perspective as an investigator."

CC had already lost interest,

"Sounds tedious Terry. I wish you luck."

"Nice to have you on my side CC. It's a great comfort," he said sarcastically.

Before Mr. Johnson arrived, Terry inspected the Cadillac. He didn't really expect to discover anything, but he did

want to familiarize himself with the car. He looked the car over from every possible angle. For reasons he couldn't explain, his intuitive feelings were aroused in the physical presence of the vehicle. He had studied the written reports, but it wasn't the same as being near the car. Out loud he said,

"You're the key to this whole case. I wish you could talk."

Mr. Johnson arrived at the garage with a briefcase. After greeting Terry he had the Cadillac put up on the hydraulic lift. Using a portable light the engineer pointed out, and explained in great detail, what Terry was looking at. The electronic guidance equipment received the most attention, since it was the heart of the navigation system.

Emerging from under the car Terry asked him,

"Would you explain from the beginning all of the steps you took to study the car."

Mr. Johnson was pleased to be of assistance because the car was fascinating,

"Every mechanical part on the Cadillac was removed and studied. We kept detailed notes on every mechanical system as we looked for any kind of evidence. Then, we put the car back together checking everything carefully to make sure we didn't miss something.

We found nothing of significance to report.

"As I told Lieutenant O'Keefe back in Utah, the guidance system isn't too sophisticated. There are just a few simple tasks to perform having to do with speed, turning ability, and steering the car in the right lane of the highway. I will admit the concept is brilliant.

"Maybe there were two men," Terry speculated, "Perhaps a mechanic, and maybe an electronics technician. One of them being the master planner."

"There's no evidence to suggest how many people worked on the car."

Terry persisted,

"To place the gears, and the guidance equipment into the engine compartment, might require at least two men because of the weight and bulk of the machinery."

Mr. Johnson mulled over Terry's suggestion,

"I know one man could do the job with the right tools to support the equipment as he installed it. It seemed to be possible using a hoist, but the job would be faster and easier with a helper because of the limited space in the engine compartment."

Terry headed back to his office feeling better. He believed he was right. The car itself would provide the name of the killer, his intuition had never failed him. Now, it was time for the digging work he did so brilliantly. For the next four days Terry worked his way through every piece of information he had on the Perrine investigation. His file on the case contained much more data than the police files. He had retained bits and pieces ignored by the other investigators.

He was trying to find something that didn't fit. After sorting through the physical data without any result, Terry turned to his computer to begin a searching process of possibilities. Downloading the files he would check, cross check, match, and maneuver looking for the thread.

## Chapter Twenty Three

It was the final day of the time Cal Costus had allowed for Angelique, or Riley, to bring in the cash from the sale of the Simon painting, or the masterpiece itself. Riley had placed many calls to Costus hoping for a reprieve from his death sentence. Cal refused to talk to him. By the afternoon of the final day, Richard had done all of the digging work he could, looking for the Simon painting. There was nothing left to try as far as he was concerned. Obviously nothing had changed Cal's mind, he knew what was coming.

Two Costus men were always close at hand. Right now, they were sitting in a parked car on the street next to the Perrine art gallery. Then he received a call from Costus informing him his men would pick him up in the evening to bring him to his house for a meeting. Riley figured the "meeting" meant his demise. He was trapped, there was no place to hide, any move he made would be useless with the mob following him everywhere

It was now time for him to make his own move. He had been going to the art gallery every day on a regular

schedule since his return from Toledo, except for interruptions when LAPD summoned him for questioning. His tails were easy to spot. Currently, Zack was pretending to study a painting in the art gallery window. Cal's men were in their parked car. Occasionally one of Cal's hoods would cruise by on foot to make sure Riley was still in the gallery. Zack was the most obvious of his trackers.

Riley moved close to the display window in the art gallery where Zack was standing on the sidewalk. Richard stared at him. Finally, he looked up and saw Riley looking at him. Richard jerked his head in a gesture that meant come in here.

"Wha?" Zack mouthed silently.

Riley jerked his head more violently.

"Wha?" Zack mouthed again.

Giving up on this method of trying to communicate silently with Zack, he jerked his thumb and mouthed "get in here." He finally understood. Once he was inside the gallery, Riley led him toward the office in the gallery. Not wanting Cal's men to be disturbed by his actions, Riley said quietly to Zack as they walked along,

"I'm going to cooperate with LAPD, and stand up in court as the state's witness in the Perrine murder. I want you to call for back up right now."

Incredulous, Zack asked,

"Why would I need police back up? I'm right here."

"Two of Cal Costus' men have been trailing me all the time you have been watching me. They're across the street now, checking around to see where you are."

"I didn't see anybody."

"Believe me, they're right where I said they were. Now make the call!" Riley said urgently.

Zack called Captain Lundgren's office. When the captain came on the line, Zack didn't know what to say. Riley grabbed the phone away from him,

"Captain Lundgren?"

"This is he."

"This is Richard Riley. I want to be the state's witness against Cal Costus in the Perrine case. Two of Costus' men are following me. Right now, they're across the street from the art gallery. The only way to get me out of here alive, is to bring four unmarked police cars to the front of the gallery very quietly with their lights off. When they get out of their cars, have them hit the lights and the sirens."

"Don't tell me my job." Lundgren growled.

"I am telling you! If you want me alive, and a sure way to finally put Costus in prison, you'll do it my way!"

Lundgren thought about the chance to get Costus and replied,

"I'll do as you say. We'll be there in fifteen minutes."

Riley looked at Zack,

"Take your gun out officer. You do have one don't you?"

Zack pulled out his weapon, and pointed it at Riley.

"Don't point your gun at me. I'm not under arrest. I'm a cooperating witness. You need the gun in case Costus' men decide to come into the gallery. That's a real possibility if they saw you come in here. They know who you are."

"Oh right," Zack replied, turning his attention away from Riley and on to the front entrance to the gallery. He assumed a shooting stance. Riley rolled his eyes upward.

Captain Lundgren took personal charge of the rescue team. After carefully coaching his men, the unmarked cars moved out in different directions to converge on the art gallery. Arriving at the store, the four cars quietly moved to four points effectively blocking any movement toward the entrance. At Lundgren's signal the police suddenly

displayed flashing lights and the sirens began to wail. Lundgren placed his men strategically outside of the building, then he sprinted into the building with his gun at the ready.

Riley was seated at his desk calmly smoking a cigarette. Zack stood behind him at attention with gun in hand. Richard waved his hand for Lundgren to sit down.

Seated he said,

"I'm Captain Lundgren of LAPD. I know who you are Mr. Riley. Although I wasn't present when you were questioned about the Perrine case, I did listen to the tapes of the interviews. Now what do you think you might have that would be of interest to me regarding Cal Costus?"

Riley looked at the captain coolly and replied,

"Enough information to put Costus away for a long time. You know my life is at stake, Costus has already threatened to kill me. When I turn state's witness his reasons for wanting me dead will quadruple."

"Why would he threaten you? In your statement to us you denied knowing anything about the Perrine killing, nor the Simon painting. So why, if that is true, would Costus be the least bit interested in you?"

Riley replied,

"Costus has it in his head, because I was Tony's business

partner, I would naturally know about the Simon painting and my partner's plans. I won't give you anything until I'm satisfied I will be placed into a witness protection program. I know the Feds are also interested in getting Costus, but I want LAPD handle the case. I'll talk to you but not to them. Understood? I figure one group of cops is enough to deal with. I won't have questions pumped at me by more than one detective at a time. Agreed?"

Lundgren strongly disliked the idea of Riley setting all of the terms. He would have to live with the situation, he wanted Costus badly. He realized Riley was in a position to dictate his terms. He believed him about Cal's intentions, otherwise, Riley wouldn't have put himself in a position of great jeopardy by squealing on one of the most dangerous thugs in the country. He made his decision,

"I'll take personal charge of the investigation."  
he said huffily, "Leave it to me. You'll be safe in jail."

"Who said anything about jail? I'm not going to prison, I haven't done anything criminal. If you want what I have to give you, a suite at the Hilton will do nicely. All interviews are to be conducted there. I'm not going to be shuffled between the hotel and police headquarters. I wouldn't last two days, Costus would have me hit. I won't leave the

hotel, if you will provide me with these items."

Riley handed a list to Lundgren. Lundgren's face became progressively redder as he studied the list of demands.

It read as follows:

An open bar.

Polaris exercise equipment.

A sauna.

His barber each week.

"Miss Lavidia Prince to have full visiting privileges including staying over at times. My attorney is to have free access at anytime, and he is to be present for all interviews.

Lundgren put down the list, "Is that all?"  
he asked sarcastically.

Lundgren wavered while Riley waited for an answer.

"Do you want Costus or not"

Riley asked with a mocking smile on his face. Hesitating for a moment, he then replied grimly,

"I want him."

Lundgren alerted the FBI from the gallery about Riley's offer, and terms of cooperation. It was agreed LAPD, and the bureau, would rush extra men to watch Costus' house, so he wouldn't have a chance to slip away. Riley agreed to

having an FBI agent present at all of the interviews with LAPD, but not to participate. His offer to be a witness was to be kept a top secret. Only a few officers would know about his cooperation.

Before they left the gallery, Riley opened up a briefcase crammed full of files. He produced photographs of Cal Costus carrying the Simon masterpiece, and other shots of Cal carrying paintings with several of his men.

"Satisfied?" Riley asked coolly.

There wouldn't be any big media splash this time. The disturbance outside of the art gallery was down-played, and explained away as a possible attempt to steal a small painting. A suspect was being questioned, police stated. Some of the veteran reporters weren't completely convinced, because of the police activity occurring at the now famous Perrine Gallery. By the time the press arrived, Riley was already on his way to the Hilton.

Cal Costus was arrested that evening at his home. Riley's photographic evidence was enough to hold him. Media people around LAPD headquarters thought they saw Costus being hustled in a side door but they couldn't be sure. Some speculation began in the newspapers since the action had

centered around the Perrine Gallery, and this brought up the story of the unsolved murder of Anthony Perrine.

Lundgren's team, with an FBI agent present as an observer, interrogated him most of the night. But it was Riley's show. taking his time, he told them the story. He had been partners with Perrine for five years. It upset him when he discovered Tony was fencing stolen art. His prison time had taught him a bitter lesson about the virtues of staying within the law.

His candid remark about being an ex con caught the police off guard. Their ignorance about Riley's background was embarrassing. Agent Terry Therbough hadn't told anyone in the Bureau about his discovery of Richard's true identity. Appearing to be fools didn't sit well with Lundgren. He was raging, and wondering who had missed this piece of information. CC came to mind as naturally as breathing.

According to Riley, he became aware of the fencing operation being conducted by Tony several years ago when he saw him with Cal Costus. He accidentally encountered them at a Hollywood restaurant. It was an out of the way place, not frequented by the general public. He was greatly

disturbed he said, and he warned Tony to be careful about his associations.

Costus was a mobster, he told Tony and a dangerous man. He told Richard he was merely a customer interested in Southwestern artists. So he was helping him select the better paintings in the art gallery collection. Never, Riley said, did the art gallery's books reveal anything unusual, only the day to day purchases. But his encounter with Tony in the company Costus made him suspicious. He began to watch his partner closely. Several more meetings occurred with Costus.

Then one evening several weeks ago, Riley said he happened to come back to the gallery to pick up a painting he had promised to deliver to a movie star. They could have the lady's name in case they wanted to check, he told them righteously. But he would rather they didn't, it was bad for business.

Imagine his surprise to find Tony and Costus in the gallery office with the Simon painting. He was aghast. Riley said, he recognized the masterpiece immediately from the pictures he had seen of it in the newspapers. Fearing for his life, he promised to keep quiet about what he had seen. Riley said Tony vouched for him with Costus

as a partner he could trust to keep his word. Actually, he had met Costus a long time ago when he was a cat burglar. A time he would always regret.

Cal assumed he was in on the fencing operations with Tony. He let Costus believe it. After he had left the art gallery leaving the Simon painting with Tony, he demanded to know what was going on. Tony told him he was fencing the Simon masterpiece for Costus. his commission on the sale was \$6 million. Tony said he had a buyer who was willing to pay \$30 million for the painting.

Riley warned Tony it would be easy for Costus to double cross him, and take all of the money from him after the sale was complete Maybe kill him, so there wouldn't be any way of tracing the transaction back to him. Tony wouldn't listen to him, and said he was delivering the painting the following night.. He couldn't reveal the name of the buyer, it was an integral part of the sales contract.

Tony didn't show up at the art gallery the following day. Riley became worried Costus had followed him then waited until the sale was consummated, grabbed the cash and killed Tony. Riley was frightened when Cal showed up later the same day with two of his men. Cal asked him to help

them take out stolen art hidden behind other paintings on display in the gallery. Shocked, shocked! Riley agreed to help him out of fear for his life.

Hidden cameras he had installed in the art gallery produced a graphic record of Cal and his men dismantling the paintings. Until now, he had told no one about the incident. He explained over the last two years, after accidentally discovering Tony's connection to Costus, he had searched for, and found, Tony's records of the fencing sales. He had the ledgers and notes about the illegal business Tony was conducting with Cal and a number of other thieves.

In actual fact, from the beginning of their partnership, Riley meticulously made sure his name did not appear on any of the records Tony kept. He also covertly duplicated all of the ledgers. He had more photographic and paper records than he released to LAPD. As some knew he was a cunning man.

Riley had laid out all of the information and documents for the authorities, now he sat back and answered all of their questions. LAPD officials, and the head of the LA branch of the FBI were ecstatic over his testimony about Cal's stolen paintings operation with Perrine.

Riley was to remain in the hotel until he had finished working with the police on the details of the stolen art operation. Then he was to be moved out of LA to a destination known only to several top police officials. He would remain there pending the trial of Cal Costus. They were guarding their star witness carefully.

It was time to break the big news to the media. It was a glamorous story full of intrigue, and topping it off was the arrest of a top Mafia boss. There was mystery too about the Simon masterpiece. This part was played up big. Where was the painting? Who had the masterpiece? Coverage included tearful church officials begging in an open message on television for the return of the divine art treasure. Madonna, of course, did a lot of crying and begging too.

There was only one problem, two actually, where was the painting and who murdered Perrine? For all of the sensational publicity of the major breaks in the case, the major questions were still to be answered. The DA's office was working frantically to build a case proving Costus killed, or gave orders to have Perrine murdered. So far, they had no proof Cal had anything to do with Tony's murder.

Hoping for a break, they were pressuring the two accomplices who were jailed along with Costus, having been identified from the photos Riley had taken in the art gallery. Everyone was convinced the murder had to have been Cal's work. He certainly had a motive. Well, half a loaf and all that, they had Costus, good publicity, praise, public acclaim, promotions, and a great deal of manly pride.

## Chapter Twenty Four

A month later, the Costus trial began. Media people swarmed into LA from all over the world.. Major mob figure indicted, handsome state's witness, the Simon painting. And right there in LA. The courtroom trial was to be televised. It was a cash windfall for the TV networks. Hours and hours of testimony, and interviews with lots of participants in the trial, all paid for by the advertisers' big bucks.

Since LA was Roland's home territory, and the court case would be tried there, he was given an almost exclusive position as a journalist to cover the trial. There were loud protests from other media groups regarding Roland's preferential treatment. Even the television coverage inside of the courtroom was under his supervision. Years of political maneuvering and public intimidation by Roland of the city government and LAPD, paid off handsomely.

“Roland's Roundup by Roland Rank”

“I am happy to announce dear friends, that the trial of Cal Costus, notorious Mafia leader here in California, is to be reported in a responsible manner. In order to avoid cheap

sensationalism, the LA city administration has appointed me the director for all news coverage of the trial.

What you will see and hear on the live television coverage will be monitored by me. Anything you read in the newspapers and magazines will have been approved by me. The city in its wisdom wants you, my dear friends, to have the truth, not some cocked up version of the facts. I will do my job."

Only approved spectators were allowed in the courtroom, which mainly consisted of media people, and law enforcement personnel. Terry managed to be there by pulling his seniority in the Bureau. Captain Lundgren took malicious pleasure in having O'Keefe assigned to do the police paperwork for the trial.

CC had to work long hours to keep up with the tons of paperwork already created. He was informed they expected him to stay current with his other work as well. O' Keefe was tired and cranky most of the time, as the job pressures mounted. Marge was almost ready to agree to early retirement. Under the circumstances it led to some spirited spats at home. This added misery made CC even more demoralized .

On the opening day of the trial, Costus, and the two mob members caught on camera with him at the Perrine art gallery, were led into the courtroom by a host of policemen. The presiding judge had refused to allow the men to be out of jail on a bail bond. Discussions and arguments about bail for the mobsters had lasted for two days in court.

Television cameras followed the dramatic procession to a table where defense attorneys waited behind a mountain of files. Policemen unshackled the defendants, and led them to the defense table. Cal was dressed in a conservative midnight blue suit, white shirt, and a plain blue tie. His men were wearing dark gray suits with subdued ties. You couldn't tell the defendants from the lawyers.

Famous Frank, leading the defense team, was the most conspicuous person at the table. A dapper dresser, Franklin Bonner Worth AKA Famous Frank, was wearing a sky blue suit and a pale blue tie with breast kerchief to match. His shirt had blue stripes. He had a strong face, a bold nose and piercing blue eyes. His leonine head was capped with wavy white hair. He looked formidable, and in many ways, he was.

Famous Frank, a name coined by the press, used everything in a courtroom trial. He was aware his

appearance was intimidating, as was his baritone voice that could whisper, as well as roll like thunder. Many judges, and a host of prosecuting attorneys, had been plowed under by Famous Frank. He was a master of the arena. On his staff were some of the most talented lawyers in the business. Brilliant researchers, in awe of Frank, busted their guts preparing a case for him.

Over on the other side of the aisle, was the District Attorney, and two assistant DA's. They were busy behind their mountain of files, whispering and jotting down notes, as the DA gave last minute instructions to his assistants. Paul Landon Smith was a veteran prosecuting attorney. Although a little nervous to be up against Famous Frank, he had a tight case. He had first hand testimony from Richard Riley, which was backed up with records and photographs.

What he was particularly nervous about was trying to prove Costus murdered Perrine. It was shaky ground on the murder charge. Riley hadn't been of any help about Perrine's disappearance. He claimed Perrine was around the art gallery for only a day prior to his disappearance. The DA only had some thin testimony from Tony Tortellini, one of the men on trial with Cal, to present to the jury.

Under interrogation, he said Cal made threats about getting Perrine for his double cross. Tortellini also told them Costus, and several of his lieutenants, weren't around for a few days. He swore the dates of their absence matched the time of the murder. Sketchy as Tortellini's story was, the DA could only hope this testimony would open the door to directly questioning Costus about the murder. He would bear down hard on what little he had, hoping for a break with the jury.

Judge Raymond Garfield, a testy magistrate, with little tolerance for wasting any of his valuable time, was the presiding judge. He abhorred courtroom theatrics. Famous Frank was not thrilled to be defending Costus in Garfield's courtroom. Many attorneys had felt the lash of his tongue, and learned how quickly they could find themselves paying fines for contempt of court.

Frank had done his best with the jury selection. He was fairly confident several of the jurors were suitably impressed with him. He would play to them whenever possible. Famous Frank's strongest argument in defending Costus was the lack of any convictions against his client. He had never served time in prison, he paid his taxes on time, and he was a major donor to a number of charities.

His main concern was Cal's notorious temper. If he were to lose control of his anger during the trial it could be very damaging to his case. It would destroy any chance for Frank to sculpt an image of Cal as a victim of a frame up. He couldn't even imagine what it would be like to lose a case.

## Chapter Twenty Five

Judge Garfield entered the courtroom, the bailiff called, "All Rise." Everyone in the courtroom watched the judge walk to his bench. Most people had to look down to see him. Garfield was barely five feet four. He had a spindly little body attached to a large bald head. He was close to being pop eyed. His enormous eyes shifted around the courtroom as he briskly made his way to his chair on the bench. He sat down, perched reading glasses on his nose, and opened the file in front of him.

He nodded to the bailiff who intoned the title of the case. Everyone sat down, and the trial was underway. DA Smith made his opening statement to the jury. A solemn man of dignity, he was rather dry as he listed the offenses, and an outline of the evidence against the defendants. As a trial lawyer he was plain Vanilla.

In contrast, Famous Frank was quite dramatic. At times he wore a sweet smile, and his voice was gentle as he spoke to the jury. By turns, Frank then thundered about citizens' rights, the constitution, and the present state of affairs in the police community. Judge Garfield fiddled, twitched,

and shifted in his chair several times during this elaborate oration. However, Garfield patiently waited for Famous Frank to, for God's sakes, finish his speech.

At the end of his opening statement Frank described his main defendant, Cal Costus, as a credit to his community. He listed Cal's sizeable contributions to charities, the honors bestowed upon him by some obscure foundation, and his standing as a quiet neighbor where he lived. Costus looked straight ahead expressionless, during Frank's speech.

DA Smith started with his strength. Richard Riley was put on the stand as the state's principal witness. Riley was calm as the DA led him through the written statement he had previously made for the police. Then the wealth of evidence turned over to LAPD by Riley was presented to the court by the prosecution. There were the photographs taken in the art gallery by Riley's hidden cameras recording Costus and his men carrying stolen art works including the famous Simon masterpiece.

A big blow up had been made of the picture of Costus holding the Simon painting, which eliminated any doubt he had participated in, and had knowledge of, the fencing

operation of stolen art works. There were also numerous accounting records purporting to show illegal transactions between Perrine and Costus introduced into evidence.

Famous Frank listened carefully to Riley's testimony and took notes. Riley returned to the witness stand after the lunch break to be cross examined by the defense. Famous Frank was up to bat now. After he had asked Riley a number of routine questions, he. attacked him:

"It's hard to believe, Mr. Riley, that you only recently learned of this illegal operation. You were there for five years as a partner in the business, while millions of dollars of stolen art paraded through the gallery. How do you explain that?"

Riley: "I didn't have any reason to suspect anything. Stolen art work delivered to the gallery was hidden behind other paintings."

Frank: "I see" He paced, and smiled at Riley. "Could it be possible you are attempting to divert attention from yourself by accusing my client of criminal acts?"

"Objection" The DA called out.

"Sustained" Judge Garfield ruled, "Mr. Riley is not on trial here, Mr. Worth."

Frank: "Sorry, your honor." He continued, "My client claims you and Mr. Perrine invited my client to the art gallery, and he had no idea you were in possession of the Simon painting. Is that true?"

Riley: "No. it is not."

Frank: "My client states the two of you, mistakenly believing my client to be a criminal, offered to sell the painting to him. Is that true?"

Riley: "No it isn't true,"

The two men stared at each other, neither wavering.

Frank: "My client bought several paintings from the Perrine Art Gallery, the records of the firm show these transactions. Are the paintings Mr. Costus purchased from the gallery legitimate, legal paintings?"

Riley: " Yes they are."

Frank turned to face the jury. Looking at each face as he slowly walked, he repeated Riley's answer,

"Yes they are. They were the same kind of legal purchases any one of you would make."

His arm swept toward the jury box.

Frank walked back to his table, and he looked at Costus,

"This man has been falsely accused of being involved in a number of illegal transactions. These accusations come

from a man who is a partner in an art gallery carrying on the largest illegal fencing operation in the country. Mr. Riley is also a convicted felon. Who are we to believe? "

Frank approached Riley again:

Frank: "My client has stated to me, you set him up.

Is that true?"

Riley: "No, it is not ."

Frank: "Mr. Costus also states you enlisted his help in clearing the art gallery of stolen paintings. My client claims you implored him to help, because you were afraid you might get caught with the paintings. So, all he was doing was to help a friend out of trouble. Is that true?"

Riley: "No, it is not."

Frank: "Mr. Riley, I believe you are a thief, and you set my client up to take a fall for you."

"Objection." the DA called.

"Sustained. I will not have you making wild accusations in my courtroom, Mr. Worth,

Frank:"Isn't it true your real name is Flamenco

Fingeroa ?"

Riley hesitated,

Frank: "Answer the question, Mr. Riley."

Judge Garfield interjected, "I am the judge here, Mr. Worth, not you. It's not for you to demand anything from the witness"

"Sorry, your honor."

"Mr. Riley," Garfield ordered, "you must answer the question."

Riley: "Yes, I was born Flamenco Fingeroa."

DA Smith cringed. He had hoped somehow the defense wasn't aware of Riley's background. The police had only known of his past because Riley had told them.

Frank: "Isn't it true that you were convicted of your crimes under the name of Flamenco Fingeroa ?"

Riley: "Yes, it is true."

Frank: "Was your change of name done legally ?"

Riley was squirming now, he looked at the DA, Smith nodded to Riley, meaning answer the question. Frank waited.

Riley: "No, I paid an expert forger to give me a new identity."

Frank: "Why did you change your name? To hide something ?"

Riley: "No, I had brought enough shame on my family. I wanted a new start as an honest citizen with a new identity."

Frank: "Really, Mr. Riley, or Flamenco Fingeroa, or whoever you are. Or, was it because you continued your life of crime after being released from prison, and your old name was becoming too well known?"

Riley: "No, that's not true."

Frank switched angles.

Frank: "How long have you known Mr. Costus?"

Riley: "I was introduced to him by Mr. Perrine several years ago."

Frank: "Are you sure of that, Mr. Riley ?"

Riley: "Yes."

Frank: "My client states he has known you for over ten years."

Riley: "It's a lie."

Frank: "Careful, Mr. Riley, I have proof you were acquainted with my client ten years ago. I would like to submit as exhibits, several photographs taken at a party at Mr. Costus' residence a little over ten years ago. As a second exhibit, I would like to introduce affidavits from four people who were present at the party. They have

positively identified Mr. Riley, then known as Flamenco Fingeroa. Would you like to change your answer now ? “

Riley: "I could have been mistaken." he mumbled.

Frank: "What was that, sir?"

Riley: "I was mistaken." he said louder.

Frank looked at the jury with a knowing smile.

Frank: "I guess you were mistaken, Mr. Riley. What was your reason for being at the party?"

Riley: "If I remember correctly, it was a charity function."

Frank: "You're finally correct, Mr. Riley, it was a charity fund raiser." He looked at the jury. "But, you weren't there to be charitable were you?"

Riley looked at Smith for help, he was becoming very rattled. Smith jumped up,

"Your honor, I'd like a moment with the witness."

"The court will adjourn for fifteen minutes,"

Smith was angry now, and when he was alone with Riley he shouted,

"Why didn't you mention any of this before?"

"I didn't think Costus would want to reveal he knew me from my old days, I'm as surprised as you are."

He was sweating, almost a first for him.

"Why were you there at the party?"

"To sell him some stolen jewelry."

"Oh God!" Smith agonized.

"What should I say?" Riley asked.

"You have to tell the truth."

"Oh." Riley replied.

Smith looked at him steadily,

"Look, it will do some damage to our case, but we're solid with the photographs and the accounting records. Just tell the truth. If you don't, Frank Worth will have you for lunch, and he might win by swaying the jury to his side."

Back on the stand, Riley appeared cool again.

"Feeling all right, Mr. Riley?" Frank asked solicitously.

Riley: "I'm fine ."

Frank: "Okay, where were we? Oh yes, why were you attending the party at Mr. Costus' home?"

Riley: "Well, you have to remember I was a criminal back then. Not anymore though, I went straight after the lessons I learned from my time spent in prison."

Frank: "Please answer the question. "

Riley: "I made contact with Mr. Costus to sell him a large amount of jewelry I had stolen."

Frank: "Did Mr. Costus buy the jewelry from you?"

Riley: "No sir, he didn't."

Frank: "Why didn't he purchase the jewelry?"

Riley: "He told me it was small potatoes to him. It wasn't his thing, he told me. But he wanted to do business with me, because he knew of my reputation as a cat burglar. He said he could use me now and then."

Frank: "That's how you remember the meeting? Strange, Mr. Costus recalls his conversation with you quite differently from your version."

He turned toward the jury at this point.

"My client states he was introduced to you by one of the charity board members. Is that true?"

Riley: "Yes, it was a lady named Mrs. Lexington. I was working a scam on her at the time. Mr. Costus already knew me by reputation."

Frank: "Again, my client has a different recollection about the meeting. Mr. Costus declares he invited you at the request of Mrs. Lexington, and you proceeded to try to sell him stolen jewelry. Here the story diverges dramatically. My client states he tried to befriend you after you approached him, and made every effort to persuade you to give up your life of crime. Isn't that true?"

Riley: "No, it is not true. Cal Costus is a criminal! I'm telling the truth."

Frank: "I move that Mr. Riley's last statement be stricken from the record."

"Sustained," the judge concurred, "Mr. Riley, you will confine your answers to the questions."

"Yes your honor." Riley replied.

Frank looked at the jury, he shrugged his shoulders, as if to say, what would you expect from a witness like this?

"No more questions," Frank said as he walked toward his table.

Terry was in the courtroom listening, and taking some notes, as the trial began. He noticed at the end of the day's proceedings, Riley came over to the railing where the spectators were seated. He spoke briefly to a young man Terry didn't recognize.

## Chapter Twenty Six

On the second day, the indictments against Costus' two men were taken up. Frank did battle with Riley again, trying desperately to discredit him as a witness. Famous Frank was winning some points with the jury. He threw a good deal of doubt into the jurors' minds regarding a possible entrapment of his client by Riley.

Most troublesome for Frank, were the transactions between Perrine and Costus. Several deposits of money made to one of Cal's corporations were traced to checks written by Perrine. Frank was trying to claim they were refunds on paintings Cal decided not to purchase. It was tough going.

So far, the murder charge had been the easiest matter to handle. There was no hard evidence Costus had anything to do with the killing. He couldn't be placed anywhere near the death car. There were no fingerprints, and he had several witnesses stating he was at home.

The "being at home" thing was open to some question, since the testimony was coming from several of Cal's "business associates" who didn't in any way look like

corporate executives, unless it was "Murder Incorporated." So, the prosecution was stymied. Without a witness to the killing or hard facts, there was nothing to prove Costus was involved in Perrine's murder.

That is, no evidence on the murder charge until the fourth day of the trial. In the morning, DA Smith announced that he had another witness to present. Famous Frank looked at Costus questioningly, Cal shrugged his shoulders. Garfield recessed the court until the following morning so the defense could have a chance to study the relevance of the witness, and what he was claiming to know about the murder of Anthony Perrine. Frank's staff of attorneys were searching frantically through the files. They finally shook their heads, indicating to Frank they hadn't a clue about this witness.

When court was convened the following morning, DA Smith wasted no time in asking the court to allow him to bring in the new witness. A man in his mid forties was brought into the courtroom. Short and stocky, the man's face bore the scars of a former boxer. Being a keen observer, Frank studied the man. He noticed the DA had a little more bounce in his step as he approached the witness.

Smith asked the witness to state his name.

"Vincenzo Spinelli " was the reply

Costus looked at the man intently, he looked vaguely familiar. He leaned over to Frank, and whispered,

"I think I know this guy, but I can't place him yet."

All they could do was wait to hear what the mystery man had to say. DA Smith began to question the state's new witness:

Smith: "Mr. Spinelli, you contacted the police yesterday with some information that has a bearing on this trial. Is that correct?"

Spinelli: "Yes sir."

Smith: "The information you provided incriminates you in several crimes. Is this also correct?"

Spinelli: "Yes sir."

Smith: "What made you come forward with this information knowing you will be tried for these crimes?"

Spinelli: "This here is about a murder case, and I was afraid the police might find out about some things I know and tie me to the killing. When I heard about Cal Costus being indicted for murder I saw where I was involved, because of some things Cal Costus hired me to steal."

Spinelli avoided looking toward Costus. He looked

straight ahead at Smith.

Smith: "Please explain to the jury what things you were hired to steal."

Spinelli: "I was the one who stole the black Cadillac that Anthony Perrine took his last ride in. I stole the Caddie for Cal Costus."

Loud talking erupted as everyone heard the startling news from Spinelli. Judge Garfield was banging his gavel and screaming for order in his court. Policemen scurried around the courtroom shutting people up. Judge Garfield stood on his chair, red faced, his pop eyes glaring at the courtroom. He towered over his bench,

"Another such outburst, and I will clear this court of everyone but essential personnel! Understood?"

When dead silence was achieved, Garfield looked at the witness, "You may proceed."

Vincenzo was nervous now, his first words were shaky.

"Like I said, I, uh, stole the caddy for Cal Costus. I got it off Apple Avenue in Riverside, California."

He named the date of the theft. He continued,

"I also stole some guidance equipment from a Satellite Guidance Systems warehouse for Mr. Costus." He named the date. "I didn't know what Mr. Costus was going to do

with the stuff I stole."

Famous Frank felt as if the floor had just opened up and was about to swallow him. Frank looked at his client. Costus was staring at Vincenzo, his right eyelid was fluttering violently,

"I know this guy," he whispered to Frank.

"Who is he?"

"The little creep works for Louie The Finger Lasagna. Louie has been after my territory for a couple of years now. I've been set up!"

Before Frank could stop him, Costus stood up,

"You lousy punk! You're trying to set me up! I know who you are, you're one of Louie's boys!"

As if in a trance, Cal vaulted over the table and headed for Vincenzo. Judge Garfield broke his gavel pounding on the bench as Costus came toward the witness. Then the judge dove for cover. The crowd began to scream and shout, as the police ran to converge on Costus.

People and television equipment were in the policemen's way, impeding their efforts to reach Cal before the crazed mobster reached Vincenzo. He was trying escape through a fire exit. Even with all of the commotion that was going on,

everyone in the courtroom could hear the sharp crack of Vincenzo's neck breaking in the powerful grip of Cal Costus.

More screams and shouting immediately followed. Two policemen bumped into Roland and up-ended him off his chair as they tried to reach Costus. A TV cameraman maliciously recorded the entire humiliating episode as Roland disappeared under a table upside down. Frantically, the great reporter scuttled like a sand crab to hide. For Roland haters the video scene was a classic.

Cal, wild eyed and completely out of control in his killing rage, hunched his shoulders like a bull charging. He attacked two policemen who were trying to subdue him. Cal's street instincts were completely in control of him now as he began to throw policemen around the courtroom. It took ten policemen all badly mauled by Cal, to finally subdue him.

Famous Frank was furious. A fiasco in the courtroom, the killing of a witness by his client on national television, and the mention of his name in connection with it all was the worst catastrophe in his professional career. He immediately withdrew from the case.

He placed one of his assistants in charge of the defense. Such as it now was.

Of course, the killing was done to death by the media (no pun intended). Footage was shown over, and over, of the wild melee in the courtroom. Because of these unforeseen events, the trial was postponed for a week. Cal Costus could no longer claim he had never been convicted of a crime. A conviction was certain in the death of Vincenzo. He also had never been in prison. Another first for him

As for Roland, it would be a long painful process to regain his image as a fearless journalist. TV footage of his imitation of a crustacean in his mad scramble for safety nearly set a record on the Internet for the number of times the site was visited. It was a classic episode of the mighty falling in a humiliating scene.

## Chapter Twenty Seven

In the pandemonium resulting from the incredible events occurring in the courtroom, Terry had found himself in the middle of a mob of people being herded to the building exits. There was a constant roar of voices. Spectators at the trial were in shock, and they babbled to one another about the violent scene they had witnessed moments before.

Near him, Terry spotted the young man he had seen speaking to Riley during the first day of the trial. His investigative eye automatically took in the young man's physical appearance. Terry's attention was drawn to something about him that stood out, and set off connections in his mind. He touched the young man's arm, Getting his attention, he said,

"I'm Terry Therbough, FBI, I'd like to talk to you."

Two days later, at 2 A.M., O'Keefe was awakened by a call from Terry.

"CC?"

"Yah.Wha?"

"It's Terry"

Partly awake now, CC reacted,

"Can't you ever call at a decent hour, Terry? You're always waking me and Marge up early in the morning. Don't you ever sleep?"

Terry replied coldly,

"I've helped you out many times in the last few years CC. I wouldn't call you at this hour if it wasn't vitally important."

CC was still sulky,

"Yeah, the last time was a dead end."

"CC, I want you to come over to my house as soon as you can get dressed."

"Why?" CC asked in his haze.

"We're going to crack the Perrine case."

This startling statement finally filtered into CC's sleepy brain,

"Be right there."

O'Keefe listened closely as Terry told him what he had discovered. CC's face brightened as Terry talked, then hope began, and slowly a smile crept in. Finishing his narrative, Terry said with an evil look on his face,

"We have to make our move tomorrow. Call Gus and Speed now. We need their help to make this thing work out on schedule. This will be our finest moment."

Me, representing the Bureau, and the Boneyard for LAPD will receive full credit for solving the Perrine murder. We get our revenge for the lousy way our superiors have been treating us. They will look like bumbling boobs."

"Are you absolutely sure of yourself?"

CC asked Terry anxiously.

"Dead sure."

Gus and Speed called in sick. O'Keefe made a plausible alibi for his absence. They met Terry and drove to Long Beach. He gave instructions to the Boneyard, and an hour later they were on their way back to LA with a young man in their custody.

Terry was busy making phone calls from his car.

The Bureau chief was irritated at the interruption of his schedule. He had been in a meeting about the Costus trial due to commence again in a few days. Captain Lungren was also annoyed when Terry contacted him. He was personally heading up the investigation of the killing of Vincenzo by Cal Costus.

It would be his great pleasure to be the officer of record for putting Costus in prison. Both of these police officials were told enough by Terry to convince them to follow his instructions.

Richard Riley made no objection to the meeting.

At police headquarters all of the people Terry had requested to be present for his special conference were assembled in a meeting room. He stood at the front of the room, he looked around at the group. All was quiet as the group waited for Terry to begin. He glanced at the young man to his immediate right. They were somewhat startled, when Terry suddenly said,

"I'd like all of you to meet Tom Winston. It is the legal name Mr. Winston has adopted. His original name was Fred Fingeroa. He is a nephew of Richard Riley's who was born Flamenco Fingeroa. Tom is president of Wings of a Dove Video Games located in Long Beach. They manufacture video games equipment and software. Richard Riley, AKA Flamenco Fingeroa, is the largest stockholder in Mr. Winston's firm. Come up here, son," Terry said to Winston, "Hold out your right hand."

Winston nervously did as he was told. There was a nasty scar on the top of his right hand.

"I noticed Mr. Winston on the first day of the Costus trial when he spoke to Mr. Riley in the courtroom. On the day of the killing of Vincenzo Spinelli I saw Mr. Winston again.

This time I happened to notice the scar on his hand. Curious about him, I questioned him outside of the court building. "

Terry gestured for Winston to sit down.

"I asked him if he knew Mr. Riley. He denied knowing him. When asked why he was hanging around the trial he said he was interested in the case.

"When I questioned him about the hand injury, he told me he had carelessly left his hand in the door jam of his car. and a friend had slammed the door on it. When I asked him where the injury had been treated Mr. Winston lied to me. Checking around, I found the emergency room where he had gone for treatment."

Riley stood up and walked toward the door,

I don't have to stay around for this."

CC and Gus barred his way to the entrance and ushered him back to his seat.

Terry continued,

"I spoke to the orthopedic surgeon who had treated the wound. The hand had been badly fractured. I borrowed the x ray films the doctor had on file of the two fractured metacarpal bones. The film showing the fractures before being reset by the doctor matches the angle of the gears of

the steering mechanism installed on the death car. This modified car carried Anthony Perrine's corpse to Utah.

The 'V' made by the two gears at the point where they meshed fits the angle of the two fractured bones on Mr. Winston's hand. Mr. Riley accidentally activated the steering mechanism just as Mr. Winston was finishing putting a gear into place. The gears began to rotate and his hand got caught between them. Before the mechanism could be turned off by Mr. Riley, the hand was crushed. "

Riley stood up,

"That's a lie. I had nothing to do with the Cadillac. I've seen pictures of it in the newspaper. It's as close as I've ever been to the car. Tell them Tom."

Tom spoke up,

"Richard, I told the police over and over, you had nothing to do with rigging the Caddie. Honest Richard, you've got to believe me".

Terry countered,

"We know you're trying to protect your uncle. But you have refused to name anyone else."

Tom persisted,

"I can't tell you who the other man was who hired me to

help him rig the car. I swear that I had no idea the car was rigged to carry Mr. Perrine's body away from California. If I told you anymore than I already have, I will be a dead man for sure. I'll do time but I'll never tell you anything."

Terry shook off the denials and continued,

"Mr. Winston's accident occurred two days before Anthony Perrine disappeared. A search of his home brought forth a bag of tools. Several of the wrenches had blood on them. I had an engineer inspect the tools. He confirmed the bag contained all of the equipment needed to install electronic equipment in the death car.

"I confronted him with all of the contradictions to his many lies. When told him I knew Richard Riley was his uncle, Mr. Winston decided to cooperate with me. In his signed statement Mr. Winston states he was enlisted to rig the car. His knowledge of electronics and his mechanical ability were perfect for what the person, who I believe is Mr. Riley, had in mind.

"My theory is based on several facts. Riley had bankrolled his nephew's video games business and he had helped him after he was released from prison for burglary. It would seem there is a bad gene in the Fingeroa family only affecting some of its members."

Terry paused for a moment. Everyone watched him expectantly. He continued,

"With the help of Lieutenant O'Keefe, and Sergeants White and Rodriguez, I was able to piece together Riley's plans. Although he has maintained he hadn't seen Perrine for days, he obviously found him."

Both Tom Winston and Richard Riley stood up simultaneously,

"That's a lousy lie!" Riley shouted.

Tom chimed in with his uncle

"No! no! you've got it all wrong!"

Lundgren stood up, grabbed the pair and sat both of them down roughly.

"Now, stay put, and stop interrupting. You'll have your say."

Terry continued,

"I believe Riley drugged his partner, then injected him with enough air in the femoral artery to cause heart failure. He drove the body to a prearranged spot in the desert where Mr. Winston was waiting for him with the rigged Cadillac. Riley drove the Cadillac to I-15 and Tom followed him in his car.

Five miles or so past Victorville they stopped, and propped Perrine behind the steering wheel. Activating the guidance system they sent the car and Perrine's lifeless body on the journey which ended in Utah.

"But why do this elaborate killing? To be clever? No, Riley needed time. Why? Why couldn't he have Perrine's body discovered in LA?"

"Why?" Gus asked inadvertently. "Sorry," he muttered.

"Because," Terry went on, "He couldn't afford to have the police start an investigation into his partner's death. It would naturally include a search of the art gallery. At the time there were ten stolen paintings in the gallery belonging, as we now know, to Cal Costus.

"To keep suspicion away from himself, he set up Costus by taking the photographs of Cal with the stolen paintings in his hands. Perrine had to be out of the way in order to carry out this crucial task. To his way of thinking, the police would naturally assume Costus sent Perrine for the ride in the Caddie."

"Aaah," everyone muttered, except Riley and Winston.

"My investigation has led me to some conclusions about motive. I believe Riley was upset about the fencing of the Simon painting. It's too famous, too much risk involved.

Riley wanted more than anything to stay out of prison. So he was furious when Perrine agreed to fence the painting for Costus.

"It wasn't the chief motive for the murder. Riley learned of Tony's intent to flee. So he faced a dilemma. If Perrine successfully left the country with the money, he would be left alone to deal with Costus. Without any defenses Cal most certainly would have killed him. He needed enough time to gather the information he needed to become a believable witness to put Costus in prison.

"There is a safe in Perrine's office hidden in the floor. I'm quite sure Riley knew about it and probably also knew the combination. Tony kept all of his secret documents in the safe. We discovered it yesterday. There, as we did, Riley would have found a Swiss bank account number. His next move would be to gain access to the account."

Agitated, Riley shouted at Terry,

"My nephew has told you I wasn't involved! Without any corroboration of your cocked up imaginative story you can't prove a damned thing."

"I think we can, Mr. Riley," Terry replied, "We took another analysis of the syringe found at William Horton's home. A syringe you planted there when he was being

questioned about the Perrine murder. The police discovered it in Horton's work shop. One full fingerprint was found on the syringe. It belonged to a man who had supposedly died at sea seven years ago. You were probably a little careless, knowing your fingerprints on file as Richard Riley were those of a dead man.

"In light of the information I had gained from your nephew, I had your fingerprints from the prison records compared to the one on the syringe. Naturally, it was a perfect match. This afternoon we filed a charge of murder in the first degree against you. Sometimes mistakes are made when you have no time to waste. Sergeant White would you please take Mr. Riley into custody?"

Gus stood up on the other side of the conference table. Riley rose from his chair as Gus walked around the table and pulled out his service revolver. With a lightening move, too quick for the eye to follow, Riley grabbed Gus' gun hand, whirled the policeman around and disarmed him.

Using Gus as a shield, Riley gestured with the gun for everyone to move to the wall.

"Now, gentlemen," Richard ordered, "Carefully and slowly put your weapons on the floor in front of you." Lundgren glared at Riley, "Captain, now is not the time to

be foolish, I will surely kill you if you don't do as I say right now!"

Lundgren's face was crimson as he laid his gun on the floor. Clutching Gus in a steel grip, Riley kicked all of the weapons away from them.

"You're at police headquarters, Mr. Riley, you'll never leave here alive," Terry said evenly, "Please think about it, you're a clever man, the odds are stacked against you."

Riley ignored him,

"All of you file singly into the restroom. I must say it's a lavish toilet the tax payers have provided for you."

As they began to move slowly toward the restroom Riley said, "My cousin goes with me."."

Tom protested,

"No Richard, they can't prove anything. Don't do this."

"I'm not staying around to be framed for murder. I'll take my chances. Someone got my fingerprint and put it on the syringe. Stay if you want Tom, but I'm out of here. I'm taking Sergeant White with me. Close the door please", Riley ordered.

When the door was closed, Riley had Gus jam a chair under the door handle. He fled with Gus as the men in the

bathroom tried to break out. In the hallway Riley could hear the shouts of policemen as the fire alarm went off. One of the group inside had activated the alarm in the bathroom.

At the head of the stairs Riley shoved Gus away from him. He dove into the stairwell, grasped a railing and lightly landed on his feet on the floor below. Opening a window, Riley went out onto the ledge. He hung from the edge then dropped down to the next floor.

Gus rushed to the window, he saw where Riley was heading. He momentarily forgot he wasn't a brave man. A skinny guy can usually run fast. He rushed down the stairs, hoping to reach the destination he was sure Riley had picked for his escape. It was the exit door near the Traffic department's fleet of cars. Gus went out on the second story ledge. He spotted Riley reaching ground level. He closed his eyes for a moment, and screamed,

"What am I doing here?"

Then he jumped from his perch landing partly on Riley's back. The blow knocked him to the pavement and out for the count. Dizzily, Gus stood up. Retrieving his revolver, he pointed it at the unconscious fugitive. Then he read Riley his rights. It's doubtful Riley heard him.

## Chapter Twenty Eight

Terry and Gus were the heroes of the hour in LA. Praise was heaped upon them for their police work. Terry made sure the Boneyard was given full credit for their assistance. Richard Riley and Tom Winston were put on trial and charged with the murder of Anthony Perrine. Riley was also charged with possession of the ten stolen paintings. Further investigation of his activities revealed nothing about the fencing operation, since the con man had kept everything in Perrine's name,

Famous Frank had a chance to redeem himself because he was hired to defend Riley and Winston. It was a case made for his talents. It was a trial loaded with supposition, and no solid evidence Riley killed his partner. The charge on possession of stolen property was easily swept aside by Famous Frank. Riley took the pictures of the art work in the hands of Costus and his mobsters. Riley walked.

Winston was charged as an accessory to the first degree murder of Perrine. Efforts to convince him it was in his own best interests to name Riley as the person who hired him to install the guidance equipment were of no avail.

Winston refused to implicate his uncle, claiming Riley wasn't involved in hiring him to rig the Cadillac.

Famous Frank wasn't successful with him either, he steadfastly kept silent. Frank used his courtroom skills on behalf of his client to persuade the jury a life sentence was much too harsh. He argued, Winston had no idea at the time he was aiding a murderer when he rigged the car. Mercifully, the jury went along with Famous Frank's argument and recommended a twenty year sentence for the luckless Winston.

What else could the City of Los Angeles do than to decorate CC and his two sergeants? As an added bonus, they were transferred back to the Boneyard. Captain Lundgren, after a prolonged vacation for his mental health, transferred to the Police Academy. He would dedicate the remainder of his career to making sure ANOTHER O'Keefe-like person didn't infiltrate into LAPD. Zack vigorously complained about being transferred out of the unit and into the computer department.

Realizing now how good he had it being the head of the Special Unit on Organized Crime, CC was finally grateful to have the job. No Lundgren to contend with, and no Zach

around to spy on him. CC could play golf and bet on the horses without having to sneak around. Gus and Speed were nearly hysterical when they were transferred out of Traffic and back to the comfortable nest called the Boneyard.

Several months after the Costus trial, CC had a phone call from William Horton's attorney asking for an appointment. They agreed on an afternoon meeting on the following day. CC was puzzled by the request, since the Perrine case was no longer being pursued by any law enforcement agencies. It had been declared to be an open, unsolved murder case. Filed and forgotten.

Remembering how badly he had come off the last time he met with Horton's attorney, CC was ready to come to his own defense at any moment. The attorney showed up at his office right on time. After the obligatory greetings, the attorney opened his briefcase and pulled out a thick file. Swiftly turning pages, he found his place,

"I'm here at the behest of William Horton. If you follow the news you are probably aware Mr. Horton is deceased."

"Uh- huh," CC lied.

Sensing that CC hadn't known Horton was dead until he told him,, the attorney tactfully said,

"Although I'm sure you have heard about Mr. Horton's demise, perhaps I should explain the circumstances at the time he had his first heart attack."

"Yes, I wish you would. Of course I knew he had passed on." CC lied calmly.

"Mr. Horton was at his vacation home on the island of Waka Waka when he had the first attack. It was bad one. A cardiologist on the island wouldn't allow Mr. Horton to be moved back to California, because of his dangerous heart condition. I was notified about my client's illness."

CC was getting fidgety. What in hell is he doing here? he thought to himself. Because of CC's obvious impatience, the attorney moved on quickly,

"Two weeks ago I received a call from the doctor telling me Mr. Horton had another heart attack, worse than the first one. He said Mr. Horton wanted to see me immediately. When I arrived on Waka Waka island, his heart was weakening rapidly. He had asked for me because he wanted to make changes to his will. He made a statement to be read to you, Lieutenant O'keefe, after his death."

The attorney pulled out the piece of paper in the file.

He read the letter to CC:

"This statement is in no way made with any sort of guilt. I want to set the record straight about Tony Perrine's death. I never forgave Tony for selling me a fake painting. More importantly, for selling my mother's painting. It had been stolen from her house. I considered him to be a low life weasel. As my attorney knows, I neither forgive nor forget, a wrong done to me.

With Tony, I patiently built up his trust in me, and bided my time for the right circumstances to do the most damage to him I possibly could. We had some business dealings on several stolen paintings. I made it clear to him I could be counted on to help him find buyers for the fencing operation.

Then, the opportunity I had been waiting for came along. Perrine found himself in big trouble with Cal Costus over the Simon painting. He told me Costus expected him to sell the painting which seemed impossible to him. It is a famous masterpiece known to everyone in the world. Tony didn't know what to do. It was the perfect set up for me. I told him I would find the right buyer for the painting. He was ecstatic over my offer to get him off the hook with Costus.

A week later, I told Tony I had found a solid buyer for the Simon painting who was ready to do business. Costus wanted a million dollars in earnest money to hold. This allowed the buyer to examine the Simon painting, before committing to the sale. It cost me a million dollars, but it was worth it to exact my revenge on the miserable cheat. Of course, there was no buyer. I had it all figured out. Not being fond of Richard Riley either, I set him up in my plans too.”

His nephew, Tom Winston, worked for me before he started his own video games business. He's a brilliant electronics technician, so I hired him to help me rig the Cadillac. Tom thought I was experimenting with my guidance equipment on the car. He was all excited about the concept of an electronically guided automobile. We worked nights in my shop at home to install the equipment.

When Perrine arrived at my home to pick up the \$30 million dollars promised for the sale, we drank a toast to our success. His drink contained a potent knock out solution. Once he was out, it was easy to cause heart failure with a large needle filled with air. I took his body and drove to a previously selected location east of Victorville where the barren stretch of desert begins on I 15. Perrine was propped up in the driver's seat, and sent on his last trip.

I walked a mile to a highway utility area and drove back to LA in the car I had previously hidden there.

More than likely, the Simon painting will never be seen again. I didn't destroy the painting but it's unlikely it will be found. I hid it in a secret place which would be difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to guess. The missing masterpiece is my final revenge on Anthony Perrine. He will always be remembered as the infamous crook who robbed the world of a rare painting. That destroys his fame as a respected expert of Southwestern art. I'm dying satisfied.

William Horton

CC notified the LAPD chief of police about William Horton's confession. It was a sad day for the world to learn the Simon painting might be lost forever. Horton's confession cleared up most of the mysteries surrounding the Perrine killing, but the climax to the entire affair was devastating, since a valuable art treasure might never be found. Based on the new information clearly explaining how Tom Winston had been duped into helping Horton rig the Caddie, he was granted an appeal hearing. His sentence was reduced to one year.

## Chapter Twenty Nine

On the tropical island of Waka Waka a gentle ocean breeze stirred the palm trees lining the walkway which led to an airport terminal. Two deeply tanned men strutted out of the terminal entrance, and headed for their rental car. CC and Speed had been at the airport to change their airline tickets. They extended their vacation for another week. Their wives were having a great time shopping and they were in golf heaven.

These days life was perfect. Lundgren was out of their lives at LAPD. Terry was grooming a replacement at the Bureau, so his work with the Boneyard would go on after Terry retired. With early retirement almost in reach for the Boneyard, the new FBI agent wouldn't need to work very long on their behalf.

Walking to their car rental, CC remarked to Speed,

"Gus must be having a blast down in Miami betting the ponies at Hialeah. It's too bad we could never get him interested in golf."

Speed replied,

"Yeah, I would have liked to have taken his money."

They both laughed as they got into the car. Speed was behind the wheel, CC sat back and let the tropical sun warm his face.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted another rental car moving toward them. As it came closer, CC recognized the passengers,

"Hey Speed, look over there, it's Angelique Perrine and Gary Slater in the convertible."

"Where?"

"In the rental car. There." CC pointed his finger, and Speed spotted them,

"I thought they were serving prison sentences."

"So did I, maybe they escaped. Let's follow them. We don't have any police jurisdiction on this island. But we can find out where they're going, then run a check on them."

After Angelique had passed them Speed pulled out to follow her.

"This island is beautiful, look at the white sand beach. I can't wait to tan up. My skin is so pale from being in prison," Slater chattered.,

Angelique replied,

"We're not here for our looks Gary, nor for the high life."

"Well, it wouldn't hurt to spend a day or so sun bathing," Gary replied wistfully.

Angelique's command look warned him to drop it.

She turned onto a steep road that curved around a volcanic mountain. Trailing behind them, Speed kept his distance, and made the turn onto the steep road as Angelique's car disappeared around a curve.

It was slow going, carts, kids, chickens and bicycles impeded their progress. Nearing the top of the mountain they ran out of shacks and people. Angelique cut sharply onto a lane lined with tropical trees. Speed followed her cautiously. A half mile down the lane the tunnel of trees opened to a small courtyard.

At the rear of the drive was a modest sized Mediterranean style house. Angelique pulled up to the cottage. Speed stopped fifty yards away, hidden by the trees in the driveway. She stepped up to the front door with Slater following her.

Out of her sling bag she took a key opened the front door and entered the house. CC and Speed sprinted stealthily behind her. At the front door they paused.

"What if they have guns?" Speed whispered to CC. O'Keefe hadn't thought about that possibility. Not one to

put his life on the line, or be put into a position which might injure him, he thought feverishly.

"Go back to the car," he whispered, "Get out the 5 irons from our golf bags. "

Speed whispered back ,

"Maybe a 4 iron would be better."

CC replied after a moment of thought,

"I think that's over-clubbing a bit, better stick with the 5 irons."

Speed nodded, and crept off. When he returned, they felt a little safer with 5 irons in their hands. Before they could enter the cottage, Angelique and Slater came back through the front door carrying a large canvas wrapped bundle.

Raising his 5 iron, CC yelled,

"Police! Drop the bundle! Put your hands behind you!"

Slater spun around, saw the menacing 5 iron and fainted. His end of the bundle hit the porch. Angelique dropped her end of the bundle and swung her sling bag at O'Keefe. She missed and fell into a bush head first. The canvas bundle rolled down the porch steps. CC dragged Angelique out of the bushes.

"See if there's any rope in the house Speed. I'll keep an eye on these two." He held his 5 iron at the ready.

Speed returned with some duct tape. It's universal stuff. He neatly taped Slater's and Angelique's hands together.

Slater came to,

"Is it time to go to the beach yet?"

Angelique glared at the two policemen,

"Just once, couldn't I have a lucky break?"

"How did you get here?" CC asked her, "I thought you were in prison."

"Just released on parole," she mumbled.

"How did you know where the Simon painting was hidden? I'm assuming it's the painting wrapped up in the canvas.",

"I might as well tell you the whole story lieutenant, you were always kind to me. When I first married Tony, I thought he was an honest art expert. I didn't know anything about the fencing business for the first few years. Then I walked into his office unannounced one night in the middle of one of his deals. Tony admitted to me he did some illegal stuff once in awhile. He was my husband and he treated me very well, so I kept quiet.

"When the Simon painting deal came along, Tony asked me to help him. All I had to do was to bring the painting to this island and meet William Horton. He was acting as the

agent for the buyer of the painting Tony told me. I met Horton here at his house and turned the Simon painting over to him. I learned of Horton's death when I was serving time in prison. I came over to the island hoping the painting was still here. I was right, but it doesn't do me any good now."

CC was excited about their blind luck. He and Speed would be international heroes for finding the masterpiece. He said to Speed,

"Let's get a look at the picture that's caused us all of this trouble."

Speed eagerly began to untie the ropes holding the canvas covering in place. When he was down to the last rope holding the roll together, CC noticed a conspicuous bulge under the canvas. Suddenly he remembered Horton's confession and his boast no one would find the painting. It occurred to CC Horton might have meant in one piece!

He ran over. and tackled Speed as he was attempting to undo a difficult knot in the rope. They ended up in the dust with their legs entangled. Speed exclaimed,

"What the hell CC, why did you tackle me?"

"See the bump under the canvas? I think there's a hand

grenade, or something that will go off, if you open the last rope!"

Speed's eyes opened wide,

"Yeah, I see it too. Thanks for the tackle."

The Waka Waka police came to take Angelique and Slater away for breaking and entering, again. CC told them about his suspicions regarding a possible booby trap in the canvas roll. Very carefully the canvas was opened up by one of the policemen with bomb disarming training. It turned to be a flash-bang grenade the army uses. If it had detonated the explosion would have turned the Simon painting into instant ashes.

O'keefe and Speed were decorated by LAPD and the Italian government. CC was promoted to captain, and Speed became a lieutenant. Gus now wished he played golf. Captain Lundgren heard the news about the dumb luck CC had fallen into, and he took early retirement.

It became known as the Perrine affair. It was a bonanza for the media. First, there was William Horton, then the notorious Cal Costus and his trial, and the continuous speculation about the Simon masterpiece. Then, Horton again, who killed Perrine. It was capped off with the

discovery of the Simon painting. And the arrest of Angelique and Slater as the crowning events.

Beautiful, now notorious Angelique, was at center stage. Don't feel too sorry for her. There's a book deal underway as she serves time in prison. Many guest appearances on television have been booked pending her release, and there's a movie offer. Slater has signed a contract to appear regularly on a daily soap opera when he gets out of prison. Early retirement was achieved by the Boneyard guys and they went out in a blaze of glory.

Terry kind of got the short end of it, after all of his detecting. He had some solace in knowing Costus wouldn't have been convicted without his efforts. He dug up the information needed to convict the mobster.

Costus is directing his organization from prison, and none of his associates seem to be tempted to usurp Cal's authority. Richard Riley is in deep trouble with the mob for turning state's witness on Cal Costus. No one has seen him since he walked out of the courthouse after being exonerated on the Perrine murder charge. Some say he took off for Australia. Then there was a rumor about a scientific expedition to the South Pole with one member of the group

looking a lot like Riley, or maybe it was Andy Garcia, or  
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A distinguished delegation from Italy consisting of art experts and church officials came to LA. There was a ceremony at city hall and the masterpiece was turned over to them. Captain O'Keefe and Lieutenant Gomez were given the honor of representing LAPD. On their flight back to Rome, they were accompanied by Madonna, whose likeness was portrayed on the mysterious canvas.

Art experts and religious historians were nearly hysterical about meeting Madonna. It gave them a chance to look her over, I mean meet her. She was given unrestricted visiting rights to the Simon painting.

