



Custody

Installment Five
February 2024

Custody: A Serialized Novel
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*The events related in first four monthly installments of **Custody: A Serialized Novel** have taken place in eight days before the Labor Day weekend of 1992, from Thursday August 27 through Thursday September 3.*

*Six-year-old Linda Lowry is the object of a custody battle between her divorced parents, Rosalyn and Myles. In the last installment, Linda and her mother were settling in at **HAPPYDALE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL**. Reading is a large part of their lives. Linda must show she can read to be placed in the second grade at her new school. Her mother's adult life has revolved around unstable mental health caused by her assumption of the personalities of book protagonists, whom she allows to become her heroines and models of comportment.*

*Mrs. Lowry manipulates people she relies upon to get her way and socially advance. One such person, Valerie McKinley, is a former college friend, who currently teaches at **HAPPYDALE**. Rosalyn leverages that friendship to acquire Valerie's help to flee her apartment, to spy on her divorce and custody agreement hearing the Monday before Labor Day, and to secure her recommendation for a job and school entrance for her daughter, Linda, at **HAPPYDALE**.*

*Rosalyn is a former teacher and has become chosen as the new librarian at **HAPPYDALE**, in part due to her threat to expose the Administrator's secret affair with another woman. Rosalyn continues her devious way at the school, making new allegiances with mothers and daughters she can twist to her advantage, as she plots her next moves to further escape her husband, the courts, and the law. When last we saw her, she was scheming to monetize her future with some sort of ill-gotten source of income.*

Her husband, Myles, seems to be a likeable enough businessman. His reliance on his long-time friend and lawyer, Ned Hegerman, has yielded him an intractable custody agreement of just one monthly visit of six hours duration for two years. That agreement is on the brink of expiration when Rosalyn flees to avoid a potential reversal of the agreement by a family court decision. Without any other apparent recourse, Myles still relies on Hegerman to

extricate him from the odious agreement, and hopefully win him fulltime custody of his daughter going forward.

Attorney Hegerman is assisted by three capable women at the firm where he is a partner emeritus and near retirement. Unknown to many, his health is failing, and he is working to build a team to carry on this case. It is the only significant one the firm's three principal partners will allow him to undertake. There is some underlying unease in his sense of failing Myles two years earlier, when the unconscionable visitation agreement was reached.

Hegerman's help is provided by his loyal administrative assistant, Eleanor Quatrane; his preferred stenographer and legal archivist, Gabriella Costa; and his up-and-coming protégé whose legal expertise is international conflict resolution, Karidja Soro. So far in just one week they have helped Ned, but also become more efficient as a task force and begun to form a workplace friendship based on mutual trust and respect.

This arrangement became more important and necessary to Myles's cause in light of Roslyn's disappearance. Arguing for her case, is her lawyer Godfrey Mellon. Mellon seems to be equally interested in his competition with Hegerman and their law firms than he does with Rosalyn's case to win permanent custody and prohibit Myles from further visitations with Linda, until she is eighteen years old and no longer considered a minor by New York State Family Court. His client's absence sets the stage for Attorney Soro's eleventh hour conflict resolution—postponing the decision until the end of the calendar year, with no prejudice or penalty to either parent. The agreement hammered out between Attorneys Soro and Mellon, on behalf of their respective clients, is approved by Judge Eoin McCarver and the clock begins ticking—both for settling the matter and for finding Linda Lowry and returning her safely home to the court's satisfaction. Judge McCarver places a condition on any ultimate settlement and resolution, requiring both living parents to be present in his court for the action to be considered. On the evening the agreement is reached, the last day of August 1992, Ned Hegerman's worst fears come true. He suffers a catastrophic heart attack, is taken to the hospital, and placed under the care of his cardiology team represented by heart surgeon, Dr. Isidore Aronsen.

During his hospital stay, the three women Ned depended upon to help Myles Lowry, now also begin to help him with his personal affairs, as well as the case. Predominant in their concerns are finding Linda, returning Rosalyn for a resumed court hearing, and securing Ned's reputation and situation in the legal

community. The ladies gain a remarkable addition to their team, in the person of private investigator Danny Hart. Ironically, Hart first was providing services to Rosalyn's attorney for her side of the custody dispute. But an unresolvable difference between the lawyer and the investigator led to Danny being fired and becoming available to help Myles and his representatives instead. A significant wrinkle in their efforts to serve Ned appears at the hospital in the person of a mystery woman who professes to be next of kin to Ned. She refuses to allow Ned's legal colleagues and friends presence in his hospital room, news of his condition, or access to his private papers or home.

On a momentous Friday before Labor Day, Myles, Hart, Karidja, Gabriella, and Eleanor assemble to compare notes and strategize for the future, realizing that Ned's death is imminent because his family has removed him from life support. They recap everything they know and are shocked to hear Danny tell them he is splitting off his investigation to find Linda from theirs and will not be regularly in touch with them in the near future.

Each of the assembly's participants arrives home that night and checks a pre-recorded nightly message about Ned's condition. They learn Ned has died that Friday afternoon.

Custody

120

On the morning after a three-day weekend, it is usually hard enough for people to get started. It is even moreso when that weekend marks endings and beginnings. That is what every Labor Day does. Ends the summertime. Begins the autumn season.

Of course, most meteorologists, geophysicists, and planetary scientists will disagree with that weekend being the seasonal transition. But even the men and women in those professions, or avocations, are just as prone to needing that extra cup of coffee that day to get going as is everyone else they pass driving down the highway, walking down the sidewalk, or riding the train to work.

On top of these annual rituals, this day is hard on you if you're coming back from a school suspension. Or if you have your first proposal to present at a new job. Or if you are half-convinced you will be fired this first day back after an unsettled set of days that were anything but a relaxing holiday.

For some, for whom this day is funereal, the finality is unambiguously existential.

121

Clementine did exactly as her mother directed. The feisty redhead arrived at Mrs. Steadman's class early. She took her seat and organized her materials. She set on her desk the copy of *Green Eggs and Ham* that Miss Alex signed out from the library for her on Friday morning. For three days after that she and her mother had looked in on Dr. Seuss and Sam-I-Am from time to time. 'Red' could recognize the words by sight or sound them out. She could read the first five pages of the book on her own. She was thrilled.

She and her mother had a deal. She promised her mother she would take good care of the library book. In return, her mother said she would go

right to Ms. Grey if anyone bothered her about being able to read. Her mom asked Clementine to keep her anger in check, and most importantly, not to raise a hand or even her voice to any of her classmates. In return, her mother vowed to spend some time every day reading together.

Not all the class had breakfast that Tuesday morning in the dining hall. A few ate at home. Others skipped it altogether. The desks in Mrs. Steadman's classroom filled little by little. Ashleigh brought her copy of *Now We Are Six* and wore a shirt with Eeyore moping under a tree. The not-exactly-accurate single word, 'Mondays,' was printed below the picture.

The room was half-filled when Linda Lowry came in and took her seat at the base of the horseshoe ring of desks. She placed *Black Beauty* on her desk and was ready for when Mrs. Steadman moved the lesson to reading.

With only three desks still unoccupied, Mrs. Steadman came in, walked across the front of the room, and without greeting anyone, began to organize her own papers and folders for the new week ahead.

Three last classmates walked in together. And Linda noticed that this time Deidre and her followers also had books. It did not surprise her that they carried different volumes from the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series.

122

On the other side of the quads set in the center of the **HAPPYDALE** campus, Rosalyn Lowry sat outside the office of Ms. Beatriz Grey. Books were also on her agenda. She had prepared her first proposal to Administrator Grey. She knew the administrator was in her office and wondered about the uncharacteristic ten-minute delay in beginning their appointment. Five minutes later still, Ms. Grey appeared at her door and did not wait for Rosalyn to arise and follow her in. To Rosalyn's surprise, Beatriz Grey had taken an armchair and with an upturned palm and smile, welcomed her visitor to take a seat on the settee arranged before a low coffee table.

Grey spoke first. "Good morning, Mrs. Lowry. I trust you had a holiday weekend that gave you time to settle in here at **HAPPYDALE?**"

"We did. Thank you. Linda and I have organized our place here and are very happy with everything we have seen and done so far." Rosalyn knew the dance of manners and politics required in her new position. "We even had time to see some of the library and to get acquainted with some of Linda's classmates we met there."

"Yes. I have heard that." Grey was not willing to commit any further.

"I see," was Rosalyn's reply.

"What have you for me, then, this morning?" asked Grey, signaling this interaction was not going to engage in the small talk of relationship-building.

"I have two things for your consideration," started in Rosalyn. She adjusted the materials she had brought with her. There were essentially a pair of two file folders, which were color-coded, thanks to the supply in the library stationery closet. One was tan and the other was orange. Lowry knew it was enough to mimic Grey's use the week before of colored folders during her interview, without imitating the actual colors she had used to designate candidates for the job.

Raising one eyebrow, her right, was the only 'tell' Grey allowed to signal the barb did not go unnoticed. She leaned forward to look at, but did not pick up, the set of folders Rosalyn had placed on the coffee table for the administrator's reference.

Opening her own tan folder, Rosalyn began the oral part of her presentation, having executed its silent foreplay. "As I said in my hiring interview, I want to be a librarian aware of . . . and responsive to . . . the teachers' curriculum and their classroom assignments. Last week I learned of an unfortunate event involving my daughter's classmates."

Administrator Grey nodded to signal she knew of the incident and to permit Rosalyn to continue. She offered no official or personal comment on the dining hall confrontation between Clementine and Deirdre and her entourage.

Lowry paused a moment to display her unfulfilled expectation that she might hear the administrator's evaluation of the status quo. The look they exchanged was not the same as they did in a singles bar a week earlier,

but it wasn't a distant cousin either. The librarian tilted her head to the side and raised both of her eyebrows before starting in again, "Since it seemed to be about reading and being that Mrs. Steadman assigned each girl to bring a book to class today, I started looking in our circulating library for books to suggest. As much as I could learn from my daughter and Miss Alex or from the girls and moms I met at the library Friday, I started selecting books and matching them to individuals. So far, I recommended A. A. Milne's *When We Were Six*, Theodor Geisel's Dr. Seuss titles, *The Cat in the Hat* and *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*. And I wholeheartedly agreed with Miss Alex giving one of last week's combatants the library's *Green Eggs and Ham*."

"Clementine."

Rosalyn thought 'touché.' But she only said, "Yes," with feigned meekness that fooled neither of the two women.

"You can say students' names here, Rosalyn. I am not protecting or persecuting anyone. **HAPPYDALE** is about holding students responsible for what they do and say, not crushing them for expressing themselves, no matter how inappropriately. That's part of what they are here to learn."

"I'm sorry. I was trying not to add to any troubles that already existed."

"Well, you can let me worry about that, Rosalyn." She assured the librarian with a not-so-friendly smile and a double head nod, unaccented by her eyebrows. "What have you in the folder?"

"Principally there are two lists. One is a group of books in our circulating library that might be suitable for second graders, depending on their skills and interests, and on their teachers' considerations and parental encouragement. If such a thing meets with your approval as a model, I'd like to talk to a few teachers and develop a graded list for each class level here at **HAPPYDALE**. I'd hope to finish it by the end of the calendar year and have it ready, after your approval, for use in the second semester when classes resume in the New Year."

Showing she was following attentively, but again committing to nothing, nor expressing any enthusiasm or distaste for the book list concept, Beatriz asked, "And the second list?"

Rosalyn adjusted herself on the settee, quarter-turning her torso to be facing toward the administrator a bit more without having to turn her head as much. "The second list is for teachers as well. But it is also for those parents who live with their **HAPPYDALE** students, even though they constitute a minority of the student body. This list is arranged as a columnar spreadsheet."

Since Grey still had not picked up the tan folder from the coffee table, Lowry revolved her folder, so the administrator could see the sheet. "The book title and author are in the first two columns. The range of most likely age level for self-readership is in the third. My hope is that parents and teachers will read these books to the children, who will ultimately then be able to read them themselves."

She turned the folder back toward herself and set it in her lap, with the spread sheet open so she could read from it. "Then the last and widest column on the right presents a profile. Depending on the book, this column identifies other interests the student has that might make this book a good fit. My daughter likes horses and trains, for example. So *Black Beauty*, her favorite, or *The Little Engine That Could*, for a student at a lower reading level, would be so noted." Rosalyn took a breath, knowing this next part was going to be the hardest to sell.

"Another aspect of this last column would be to signal a problem a child might have, for example, not getting along well with others, or not being willing to try new things. This would be the last column entry for a book or story, listed over in the first column, about a person or child who overcame such a situation. It would be a book or story to offer the student a model or encouragement to develop one's character accordingly." She closed the folder on her lap and gave herself and Beatriz Grey a moment to think, and perhaps a chance to speak about the idea.

Rosalyn was to receive no such satisfaction. All her boss had to offer was to say, "And in the orange folder?"

"Well. Yes." She rearranged her things and used the side of the settee she was not sitting on to rest her materials. She did not want to place anything on the coffee table that would obstruct or complicate the set of two file folders she had placed there, just in case Grey wanted to eventually pick them up to discuss. "This is an advanced idea. For a numerically smaller

audience. But one perhaps as equally important. It's an idea for a book club for the mothers of girls who are here at **HAPPYDALE**. Regardless of their living together or not. I wondered if the library might sponsor such a monthly gathering to discuss a book or story. To promote adult reading, and if necessary, literacy." She paused. "I get the feeling that the majority of women whose girls attend here are single parents. With many being divorced as I am. It appears to me . . . in my daughter's class . . . that the parent-reader in their child's earlier years was their now-absent dad. I'd like a chance to have the library get the moms involved in reading for themselves and to boost their confidence to read with their girls."

She cleared her throat. "I know that may be an oversimplification and a presumption on my part, but it's a feeling I find hard to ignore. Especially if it's a situation I can do something about as librarian." She placed the orange folder next to her on the settee, leaving her hands free to gesture while she pleaded her case. "And I'd like to start with fairy tales. The ladies will be familiar with them. And it will appear as if they were joining for their kids and not having to publicly admit to any uncomfortableness they might have about their own literary literacy. Even for those who are functionally literate for everyday living, but so occupied in just getting by, that they are not taking advantage of the personal stimulation available from reading." Rosalyn allowed herself to look around Grey's office, especially at the wall lined with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. "And Grimm's written tales are the ones we can use, not Disney's substitutes they've seen on television or the movie theater."

Rosalyn glided right into the last part of her presentation. "And I'd like to make my first library field trip this Friday, a one-day excursion, not three days. Just to try it out. I would like to go to Barnard's library and do some research and get some reference assistance on Grimm's Fairy Tales. I'd leave right after the beginning of the school day and be home before dinner. I can make arrangements for one of the older girls to stay with Linda after school until I get back."

Rosalyn was taken aback at how rapid and incomplete the reply was from the still-seated Beatriz Grey. "I agreed earlier to the field trips. So, you can go. I am thankful this first one is more modest, to a library that is nearby, and does not involve an overnight stay. But allowing it is not an affirmation or authorization for the book club. That will take more time to consider." She leaned forward and picked up only the tan file folder. "As for the student reading . . . I'll need a week to get back to you on that."

Before Rosalyn realized what was happening, Beatriz Grey stood up and wished her a good day and headed toward her desk. She left the orange file folder on the coffee table. Undecided at first, the librarian left it there also and exchanged the wishes for a good day. She opened and closed the door behind her without looking back. As such, she did not see her boss fling the tan folder back over toward the coffee table. It opened mid-way to its target and loose sheets of paper fluttered around for some moments. Then, the folder and papers landed on various parts of her office furniture and floor.

123

Attorney Godfrey Mellon was not anxious to see Ned Hegerman's daughter, Marie, the first thing on a Tuesday morning. But her father's death on the prior Friday afternoon made such a session necessary.

She was not a pleasant person. At least when it came to dealing with matters concerning her late father. And she had had plenty of time to think of what she wanted to accomplish in the next few days as she sat perched in the corner of his hospital room. Taking care of the uncertainty of loose ends was at the top of her list.

"Good morning, Ms. Aello. May I offer you a beverage? Coffee? Tea? Water?" Mellon was on his best behavior. He was using his office and not a more public and visible conference room.

Marie Aello, Hegerman's only living next of kin, his illegitimate daughter, replied nicely enough. "Well, thank you. But no thank you."

"So where would you like to start? May I give you an update on Ned's legal matters?" Mellon had absolutely no interest in getting involved with planning or arranging religious or civil services for Ned upon his passing. His concerns were solely on medical certainties and legal ramifications.

"With the loose ends first," recited Marie. "I assure you I don't like loose ends. They remind me of careless people walking down a hallway with a trail of toilet paper stuck to their heel. And we have two, at least, I can think of for you to tell me about." She took out a pack of cigarettes and set them on the table next to the chair she was occupying. Mellon dared not stop her, but

she decided to bide her time when he reverberated in his chair at the sight of the matchbook she set atop it.

“And to what loose ends do you refer?” was all Mellon managed to squeeze out of his constricted throat.

“Not what,” she glared. “Who!” she exclaimed. Can you guarantee me that this Charles person you instructed to infiltrate my father’s firm for Rosalyn and me will never show his face again here in Manhattan. Or anywhere else for that matter?” Marie locked eyes on Mellon, intent on making him squirm.

“He will never clear law school. Oh, he’ll probably try, with the leads we gave him and mild recommendation for a school out west. But in the end, my contacts there will see to it that he washes out as an intern.” The lawyer was satisfied with his answer.

But Marie Aello was not. “That’s at least six years from now. What will keep him from returning in the meantime?”

Mellon was sure of himself, saying, “He is not that bright, Marie. He won’t figure it out before graduation. And if he does after that, he will be in such a crazed state of having wasted the prime of his life on an education he cannot ever use to find employment . . .” he raised one hand up and the other against his chest, satirizing an oath-taking at a trial.

“I hope you’re right. I know Rosalyn had her hopes pinned to it. He was her fall guy if my father was ever suspected to be under her thumb.” She played with the matchbook. “And now, good sir, tell me you know where dear Rosalyn is these days, having slipped off from her Jersey apartment.”

Mellon rose from his desk chair and walked around the room before turning to her, again with his hands extended, but this time in an elongated shrug that started in the tensed cords of his neck. “I honestly don’t know.”

Marie was dumbstruck. “You mean that bitch has played you, too?”

“Now, now, Marie. We must guard our language and emotions. Such outbursts just won’t do,” cautioned Mellon, mockingly. “Truth be known, I thought she was with you.”

“And how did you come to that conclusion; may I ask?” she was getting that same feeling of torque in her chest that Rosalyn had proven so capable of twisting in the past two years.

“From a woman named Angie Flynn. I have her looking in on that apartment over in New Jersey each week, or more frequently, if need be. She coordinates with Miss Hayes.” Mellon said as little as he could.

“Who is she? A neighbor or something?” shot back Marie.

“No. She’s a licensed private investigator. We’re overpaying for the service. But I don’t quite care. It’s coming out of Rosalyn’s settlement, like the rest of our fees.” Mellon sat again and steeped his fingers the way he was accustomed to doing after pursuing what he felt was a particularly effective cross-examination in court.

“And how did this Flynn person link me and Rosalyn? I’m not happy about that at all, sir. You shouldn’t be so pleased with yourself. That finger steeple won’t feel so good up in your colon, if someone makes you sit on it. And keeping your hands clean in all of this will not be so easy when that happens, I assure you.” It was no wonder that the bed-ridden Ned Hegerman had been happy when he had momentarily come out of his sedation in the hospital and saw that his Harpy of a daughter was dead asleep in the corner chair of the last room he was to occupy on earth.

Here in his office on Tuesday morning, Mellon was nowhere near death as Ned had been that past Friday evening. He was grateful enough to defend himself against this half-woman, half-beast’s raging revenge. “There is no connection. The PI used the side of a pencil on a blank note pad she found. She made an impression out of a message written on the sheet above. It read: ‘With M.’” Mellon paused a moment for effect, then said, “Flynn called Miss Hart last week when she was there the very first time. She asked if Rosalyn had come to our offices. She thought I was the ‘M.’ And I thought Mrs. Lowry left me a message, to say she was with you.”

Shifting her focus abruptly enough to shock even the jaded Mellon, Marie Aello lived up to the chosen name she legally adopted way back in 1970—before applying for undergraduate studies on her daddy’s dime, and then again to go to Columbia Law. She wrote at that time, in her therapist-prescribed journal, that Ned required her to change her name as a pre-

condition for financing her education. Her choice outraged him, but she had refused to change her mind or the name, which would become predictive of her relationship with him forever after.

“What’s left for me to use to bury him? I want it done tomorrow. And I don’t mean the inheritance that involves his will. That’s for later. I mean the float money you are holding.” She stood and put the cigarettes and matches into her coat pocket.

Mellon said he’d have to check. To which she said, “Leave me a message on my home phone. I’ll be at the mortician’s in ten minutes, and I’ll use his phone to check my messages to hear how much you have for me.”

She held the door ajar as she was leaving, making sure Miss Hayes could hear her. “I am very grateful for your assistance at this trying time, Mr. Mellon. I’ll call you from the funeral parlor with the details in a little while.” And as she passed in front of Miss Hayes’s desk, she said, “And thank you, too, for all you did for Ned. Not many people were kind to my father.”

As Aello left, she could see back behind herself in the reflection of the glass partitions by the office entrance a look of shock and confusion seize Miss Hayes’s face.

The elevator doors whooshed open, and Marie felt the breeze of the office high rise’s vertical shaft sweep past her and into the hallway.

124

The three ladies were still employed when they gathered in Gabriella’s work area at three in the afternoon that first Tuesday back to work. But Eleanor Quatrane, Karidja Soro, and Gabriella Costa were certainly finding themselves in a much different workplace than just a week before. They no longer were in three separate work areas. The managing partner had directed them to be gathered within the steno pool, vacated by all but the three of them. And they were able to use the quiet reading room because Danny Hart had exited the premises for the present, and perhaps even for the foreseeable future. Myles Lowry was a client only once more, not an impromptu member of an ad hoc assembly.

Attorney Soro had spent the morning reviewing her case files. In the early afternoon she sat in on what seemed a corporate game of Monopoly, a distinctly different type of Boardroom game. She witnessed the managing partner and executive attorneys move her active case files from her domain over to theirs and their teams. It was as if her property cards were being transferred to other landlords. They went through the client files as if they were looking on the back of the deed cards to see what each held as a value. Their likely commissions for winning settlements were mentally estimated and bartered on a seniority-first-choice basis, like the rent would be for little plastic green houses or large red hotels. Soro was allowed to pass GO and retain her \$200 each circuit of the board. Otherwise, she was seemingly an entity in bankruptcy, waiting for an orange Chance Card to say she had to pay fees incurred on the occasion of her boss' passing to another playing field.

Stenographer Costa spent most of her day retrieving and rebuilding the files that were extracted from their orderly arrangement, rifled, copied, and then left on the locked conference room table by the auditors and security people over the long weekend. She contrasted the extant material to the lists she had carefully constructed the prior week. But she had no way of verifying if the files were integral—meaning that they still had in them all they had in them Friday afternoon, when she left them for the technical staffers to copy. She did not have access to the copies made for the forensic auditors.

For her part, since she no longer had a senior executive she could serve as an administrative assistant, Eleanor Quatrane had time and opportunity to pursue the past. The good will she had garnered over the years reaped a priceless return; mostly because she had never been after anything for herself when she treated others well. The copyists had managed to subvert the auditing process and worked late into Friday evening to make her a complete, surreptitious set of the historical files she was after. And since they replaced the paper files to their basement archives unnoticed, her incursion into the current leadership's sordid ascension to power and partnership went undiscovered. Thus, the three ladies agreed, it would be Eleanor who was to use the reading room, and its clandestine subfloor storage capacity, to study the trove her efforts had unearthed.

It was only at three-fifteen Tuesday afternoon as they were briefing one another on their efforts, successes, and frustrations that their computer stations signaled an incoming electronic bulletin from management.

The message was stark and unfeeling. Black letters on a light blue computer screen background.

ON BEHALF OF HIS FAMILY, WE ANNOUNCE THAT FUNERAL SERVICES FOR NED HEGERMAN ARE TOMORROW MORNING AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK AT ANDRETT FUNERAL HOME 199 BLEECKER STREET. ALL EMPLOYEES ARE FREE TO LEAVE WORK AT TEN-THIRTY AND CAN REMAIN AWAY FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, WITH NO LOSS OF PAY OR ASSESSMENT AGAINST PERSONAL TIME.

Eleanor Quatrane's voice delivered the message in a far more compassionate and warm manner, even though she knew she was leaving her words on answering machines for Myles Lowry and Danny Hart. It struck her as an unfitting closure, contrasted to the hospital bulletins about her friend Ned's health she so carefully constructed and recorded the week before.

125

At Thursday's three o'clock afternoon coffee break, Karidja, Eleanor and Gabriella discussed how they still could not comprehend why Danny Hart had not been at Ned Hegerman's funeral service. And why they had not heard from him.

They were not surprised that long time friend and client Myles Lowry attended. They had not seen him since before the holiday weekend. And speaking to him was brief and unsubstantial outside the mortuary. Clearly, he was trying to get himself immersed into his business. He felt he had virtually neglected it for the past two whirlwind weeks, during which they saw him almost every day. He had heard nothing more about Rosalyn or Linda from Detective Howe in Jersey. And he had heard nothing at all from Danny Hart. For their part, the three women had no news of the Lowry women either.

The ladies were surprised that the principal partners had not been back to them for any substantial help or input for the auditors or for back up documentation. That's what Gaby had been assembling and holding ready for

reference, having re-organized the remains of the prior Friday night's rip-and-run copying. With the next day being the deadline for the auditors' report to Mellon, they had expected a busy day that did not materialize. "Rest up for tomorrow in case it's crash time," Gaby told them.

Karidja had found no further legal documents in Ned's papers that were required or would be helpful to counteract or at least slow down the Mellon express.

Eleanor said good night to her colleagues as they left for the day. She said there were a few things she still had to do before wrapping up for the day and "filing away" her work documents. This had become their shorthand for Eleanor placing the copies of the historical files, and her notes, into the 'hidey-hole,' as Gaby named it, in the reading room floor. They were fairly confident not many people knew about.

When that was done, Eleanor gave in to the nagging feelings she was having about Danny Hart. Additionally, she had made a discovery that day that warranted Danny's attention. If he was still interested in the Lowry case, that was. So, she dialed his number in hopes of leaving him a voice message on his protected office device. She was speaking her name into the recording when there was a clicking sound and, to her surprise, she heard a voice.

"... Eleanor?"

"Danny?"

"Yes."

"Danny, I found something out I need to show you."

"I'd say that's a coincidence ... if I believed in them, Eleanor," chirped the familiar, enigmatic voice.

"What do you mean, Danny?" She couldn't decide how to take his comment and his tone of voice. "Don't you believe ... me?"

"Of course, I do, Eleanor," he said. "And don't take that lightly, please." He paused. "I'm finding it prudent to be very skeptical these last few days."

"Are you okay, Danny? Has anything happened? We missed you at the funeral." Eleanor did not regret telling him that.

"We'll have to talk about this in a while. For now, you must hang up, your time is about up. Call me back from a pay phone as soon as you can, safely and comfortably." He paused. "Bye now."

Eleanor had over a quarter of a century of life experience more than her friends Karidja or Gabriella, so she was more immune than they were to Danny Hart's charm. But those same twenty-five years of listening to people made her exquisitely attuned to the change in the cadence and tone in the voice she had been hearing for the better part of two weeks. She didn't know if it was because she trusted him or because she trusted her own instincts. Whichever it was, she hung up the phone without delay or question or panic.

126

Elsewhere in Manhattan at the offices of Easton International Medical Supplies, Myles Lowry was bidding good night to Itzel Cocom. She had become more instrumental to Myles, even after he returned from his absence during the "custody and disappearance" time, as he had come to call it.

"I know tomorrow's Friday, but I'll be in for the beginning of the morning, Itzel." She stopped heading for the door and turned to face him. "With the holiday, it's only been a four-day week as it is. And I took time yesterday for Ned's funeral, so I can't take another whole day." She nodded, but waited, as it looked like he had more to say. "My only stop tomorrow is going to be uptown, at the library at Barnard. I'm heading up there to check out its reference section for an old yearbook."

127

Eleanor was happy to find the bank branch open right near the office. Going all the way home to get change for a pay phone would have caused quite the delay. Armed with a fresh roll of quarters, she went across to the boutique hotel. It had a bank of four pay phone booths outside its coffee

shop. She grabbed a container of coffee for two reasons. She decided she could use an afternoon jolt. And once she closed the bi-fold glass door on the booth, she perched the cup on the shelf under the phone next to a spread-out mound of quarters, as a signal that she was going to be on the phone a while. With three other booths available, she was even more confident she would not be interrupted. Danny answered on the second ring.

She started right in. "Danny are you okay? Has anything happened?"

"I am fine, Eleanor. Thanks for asking. Just busy. Very busy." Danny sounded okay, if not a little weary. But he asked her immediately, "Eleanor, do you remember what we were talking about when I asked if you did any driving in the city and had a driver's license? Take a minute if you need to."

As many lawyers had discovered over the years, there was very little Eleanor Quatrane did not recall, even if it took her a moment or two. She realized Danny had been told this. It reminded her that there were many reasons to like this man. And to trust him. "Yes, I do. We were talking about a lady with two eye colors and a man who lost his underwear, both getting past security at the courthouse."

"Okay. Good." That was all he said. A half minute passed. "And now, Eleanor, what do I want you to do?"

"You want me to step halfway outside this phone booth and look around to make sure no one is watching me or following me." She was amazed at how sure she was of her answer. She inserted a quarter from her pile into the circular slot atop the phone.

"Take your time. I'll hold on," he said.

She could see no one. She gave it a full two minutes to make certain no one entered her field of vision, thinking they had waited long enough and didn't want to miss her leaving. She stepped into the booth, sat down, straightened out her skirt on the short corner seat, and said into the mouthpiece, "Everything seems to be fine, Danny. I seem to have inherited your 'look around' motif."

"I hadn't doubted it for the smallest second, Ms. Quatrane," he told her.

“And . . . Danny?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you for thinking to protect me.” She really meant it.

“It’s always has been my pleasure. And will continue to be.” Hart told her.

“Including asking me what I remembered so I could tell you I didn’t— if I had needed to let you know I was not alone.” She said that half-hypothesizing, and half as a certainty.

Danny smiled even though no one was nearby to see him do it. “We are going to get along quite nicely, Eleanor.”

“Yes, Danny. I think we are. And thank you for that, too,” she said. They each took a moment. Then he began. “Okay, let me tell you that finding our friend Linda has been like searching for a single feather from a bursting pillow. But I will find her in the swirling cloud her mother’s stirring up around her. And I’m not laying my head down to rest until I do.”

“I am glad to hear you are still working on the Lowry case, Danny. When we didn’t hear, we worried maybe you had gone on to something else.” She paused, trying to make sure he wasn’t offended. When he said nothing, she again took up her end of the conversation, and a quarter for the first alert from the operator. “We missed you at the funeral, Danny. We worried.”

“Oh, I was there. And at the cemetery afterwards,” he said.

“What? We didn’t see you in the chapel.” She thought a moment, trying to recall. And then the full weight of his statement hit her. Obviously, he had given her the time she needed for that to happen, because he remained silent at his end. “Wait! Danny, that was a private service. The location was not announced at the mortuary, or even beforehand in our offices.”

“Yes. Eleanor. That’s what private investigators do.” He allowed himself a chuckle. “Now to our coincidentally needing to see each other . . .”

“Oh, you were serious about that?” she asked, almost in surprise.

“Most certainly, Eleanor. In fact, you are the only person I am willing to see right now involved with the Lowrys. Or, perhaps, even to talk to, for that matter.” He was speaking more openly now that they were on a pay phone connection.

“What do you want me to see . . . or do?” she inquired. And then the operator came on and asked for more change. She dropped in three quarters so they could go on for a while without interruption. At each one, a little bell sound reverberated into both their earpieces. The sound reminded Hart of young Annie Meadows describing the pay phone connection, from the still unidentified caller on the day of Linda’s disappearance.

When the line cleared again, Danny said, “First, take another look around.”

After Eleanor did, and saw no one she thought to be concerned about, she came back on the line. “All clear, I think. You were going to tell me . . .”

“I would like you to look at a few dozen pictures, Eleanor. They are photos I took yesterday at the funeral and the cemetery. I expect that you are the only person I can trust to name most of the people in them, and then to tell no one we have met and done this.” He paused. “And no one means Soto and Costa, too, I’m afraid. At least for the time being” He waited. “And of course, not Lowry, either. Perhaps, never Lowry.”

“That’s a little ominous. But so is what I have to show you, I guess. Danny, I feel like the tide’s going out and I’m standing barefoot in the surf, with the sand slipping out from under me.” Eleanor told him.

“Tell me, Eleanor, what are your feelings about driving to New Jersey?” he measured his words carefully.

“It’s not on the top of my list of favorite things to do. But I shop every week for my whole grocery list at the market, even the stuff in the middle—so I guess I’m game,” she mused.

“Normally I wouldn’t ask. But I can’t be seen in New York at this time. I could give you an address. If you came over for seven, I’ll save you the marketing trip. I’ll have dinner ready for you—home made. Promise.”

"All right, then. It is for a good cause." She admitted.

"There's no better cause than Linda Lowry in my life right now, Eleanor. Seven should give you time to miss traffic. I will be on the corner at this address." He gave it to her. "It's a stop sign. I'll get in the passenger seat and bring you the rest of the way."

"Okay. See you at seven," she allowed.

"Thank you, Eleanor. So very much. See you then." And he closed the connection.

The operator did not ring back to ask for more change. The seventy-five cents did the trick. Eleanor scooped up the pile of quarters and dropped them into her change purse, which in turn she let fall into her handbag. Right next to the triple folded piece of copy paper she had carried out of the office.

128

"He ended the call too quickly, sir. We couldn't get a fix on his location. We even worked it backwards through the internal switching for the desk phones. No luck. We'll have to wait for the next time she calls out. Sorry."

The security chief had just done a yeoman's sized job over the Labor Day weekend of supervising the auditing of all the files pertaining to Hegerman's ownership, partnership, cases, and personal papers. So, the managing partner gave him a pass on missing the call's destination. After all, it was amazing he had the foresight to monitor the three ladies' calls in and out. A partner could not ask for such a thing to be done, privacy rights and all.

"Did they say anything of substance? Do we know why she called?" asked the executive.

"Only that it seemed they each had something to show the other. She and Hart were careful not to be too explicit. So, I think it was more than casual. I will make sure someone keeps an eye on her in the office starting in the morning. And if that turns up nothing, maybe we should look after her

outside the workday as well. But that will take professional help, especially him being who he is. I'll get back to you on that, sir."

All the managing partner said was, "Please do that. Good night."

129

Eleanor could see something of the facades in the early September twilight as she slowly drove by. As she approached the intersection, she saw a four-story building on her right, two before the corner. It had a half mansard roofline and was one floor taller than its abutting structures. On the top floor the fenestral vacancies had been replaced with wood inserts painted to resemble casement windows, whose sills had potted plants with colorful petals. She halted at the crosswalk at the stop sign. As advertised, Danny Hart appeared, stepping off the sidewalk. She reached across to unlatch the door, and he slid in.

"We turn right here. And then we take the first right again." He was all directions. No small talk.

Eleanor followed expertly. The road after the corner turn went down a steep hill. At the first right, she turned into a street that was little more than an alley. It was posted as a ONE WAY and lined with typical urban square red and white NO PARKING signs along both side curb lines.

"We turn in the second driveway. It's sharp; you'll want to pivot out a bit. Favor the left side." Succinct, no frills.

Eleanor turned and slowly eased into a drive wide enough for two cars. She passed through an open chain link gate, with razor wire curled and stretched along the top. She saw that she was at the back of the four-story building. Once in the driveway and off the alley she could look around. She saw it had been cut out of the same hill she had just driven down from the main street. Alongside of the cutout on the right side was the fence gate in its swung-open position. In front of her, an overhead garage door was rumbling up, in response to Danny pushing the button on the remote opener he had taken from his jacket pocket.

“Well, here we are,” was all he said. “Just head in.”

The garage was deep enough for two cars to fit in, single file. She drove in behind what she assumed was Danny’s car. There was plenty of room. Opening her door to exit the car was not impeded by a wall. She stepped out and looked around as the garage door was coming down. The wall-mounted and overhead lighting was sufficient for her to see the entire garage.

To the right of where she had driven her car, there was an array of machinery and utilities along the side wall. She recognized a large-sized electrical power board, an air conditioning unit with overhead ductwork disappearing into the ten-foot ceiling, and a furnace with a network of insulated heating pipes next to an oversized fuel oil tank. In the front corner, she recognized what looked to be an elevator door.

She followed Hart toward the elevator. As she looked over her shoulder she saw there was room in front of his car for other equipment, most notably a large, walk-behind snow blower.

They took the elevator up one floor. It drew back automatically to reveal an open layout professional office space covering the front half of the building. It addressed the sidewalk on the level of the street she had driven down to get to the stop sign where Danny had waited for her. It was separated from the back half of the first level space by a floor-to-ceiling mural of an urban street scene. Eleanor did not fully recognize the image as a realistic reproduction or the artist’s imaginary construct. “This is work,” said Danny. “Upstairs is home. That’s where we’re going.”

He made a hand sweeping gesture back to the elevator, which was still in position with the door open. She had not seen him press the hold button as they had stepped out to let her see the first floor.

Danny explained as they ascended smoothly. “It’s a conversion. The people who spent the money on it went bankrupt doing so. They were not very nice. They hoped to entrap the tenants into closed-end leases that were impossible to break and that had annual escalation clauses for rents. The bank was fined for red-lining. The loan officers were more than happy to dump the paper on the place for pennies on the dollar, to get a reduction of the fines and no jail time. The second and third floor have three apartments

each. Same original tenants with revised long-term leases, rent controlled, live here still. Top floor is mine. Oh, here we are.”

Eleanor was taken aback. Not only by what her eyes told her, but by what her nose did. “Danny is that dinner I smell?”

“Yes, it is. Beef stew. With all the trimmings.” He smiled and offered to take her coat. He hung it in a generously sized front closet to the left of the elevator door. “Turns out this week Thursday was cooking day. If I start at around three-thirty, by about nine I can have five dinners made and put up for freezing or refrigerating for the week ahead.” He walked her toward a seating area arranged around a low coffee table. “Want to sit here and relax or be in the kitchen. Either way. Your call.”

“The call I have is from mother nature, if you can point me in that direction, please.” They both laughed. “Over there’s the guest room and bath. Help yourself. I’ll check on the dinner.” He pointed toward a door at the other corner of the front of the building opposite the elevator.

It was certainly a strange looking room for a single guy in his mid-sixties. Of course, the boarded-over window was odd. The wood was painted in a color complementary to the wall paint in the room. Both were blue, but the wall was darker. On that blue background there were a pair of huge, high-definition posters. They covered most of the board. The picture on the top was an enormous ice floe from somewhere near one of the earth’s poles. She couldn’t tell if it was the Arctic or Antarctica. It was shaped like a flat-topped mesa or an abominable snowman’s aircraft carrier. The whole waterline along its length of one side was eroded in a pattern of intriguing caves. Their entrances were vertical parabolas, with the closed curve serving as a type of top arch. Directly below was a second poster that filled the bottom half of the board. Same size, same dimensions. They were meant to be a matching set.

But this formation she recognized. When she toured Ireland’s west coast, she had stood near it and gazed upon it as millions of others had done over the centuries: explorers, saints, invaders, shepherds, wanderers, settlers, lost souls, and tourists. She could remember the feel of the wind in her hair. No hat she owned could stay on her head at that overlook. She was gazing at a photo of the famed Cliffs of Moher. The raging Atlantic had sculpted out caves in the cliffs that were shaped and spaced almost identically as those in the massive floating ice formation above.

There were two twin beds in the spacious room, one on each side of the co-ordinated poster portraits. Colorful matching pattern handmade quilts lay folded across the foot of the twin beds. But across the room along the perpendicular wall nearer to the bathroom there was a baby's wooden crib. Folded over the top of the crib's footboard was a knitted coverlet that could cover about two thirds of the mattress space. It was blue and white. Between the bathroom and the crib was a changing table, also set lengthwise against the wall as was the crib. A decent sized work desk sat in an alcove formed by the mansard roofing on the side of the house.

There was nothing remarkable about the bathroom other than the faucet fixtures. They were retro white porcelain with small capital letters spelling out FRIA and CALI. There was a stand for toothbrushes, but it stood empty. It seemed there were more towel racks on the walls than normal. And they seemed affixed about a foot lower on the wall than was typical, but not low enough for a person in a wheelchair to use. Eleanor could not quite figure it out. Along the side of the tub were plastic bottles of bubble bath, No More Tears shampoo from J&J, and a white bar of ivory soap in a rubbery plastic dish.

Eleanor met him back in the kitchen. He had set the kitchen table for the two of them. But he invited her to take a stool at the counter island that segregated the kitchen from the combination living room/dining room space that had entered from the elevator. The soft stool was not exaggeratedly high. She noticed that one chair in the kitchen had a booster seat strapped in.

Danny didn't miss much and caught her eye. He had purposefully let her see the guest room. He thought it impolite to make her ask questions, so he offered an explanation. "Sometimes the families downstairs get in a jam. They will ask me if their kids can stay for a few hours. Very occasionally, I may have an overnight guest. It wasn't always this way. They had to get over the tenant and landlord thing first." She almost guessed it, but he said what she expected was true. "These peoples' safety became a big reason why I had to become so careful that I'm not followed and that I avoid working in New York when I can."

When Eleanor's eyes widened, he laughed and said, "Yeah. The only way the insurance company and the bank's board of directors could pay me my fees for discovering the improprieties of the developer and loan officers, and to cover the reward percentages for the funds they were able to recover,

was to offer me the building. Otherwise, those six families were on the street and in big debt." He shrugged his shoulders and smiled wanly. "Oh, well."

She smiled and shook her head. She said, "Danny, Danny. If anyone knew this about you . . . you'd never hear the end of it."

"And that, my dear Eleanor, is why you will make sure no one does, please." She assured him with a smile and a put out her little finger in mock show of a pinky swear. He replied by asking, "May I offer you something to drink?"

"Not with me driving back home tonight. Water or club soda would be fine, thank you."

"How about I bring that to the table and we have dinner, then?" he asked. She slid off the stool to make her way to the table, letting that be her answer.

"One reason I like beef stew is that it's a one pot recipe. You can cook it and serve it in the same pot. I hope you don't mind, Eleanor. I always make a double recipe for two dinners, so that was in the works when you called. Hope it's a suitable choice for you. I really should have asked. But I didn't have an alternative, so I took my chances." He spoke as he brought the cook-and-serve cauldron to the table and set it among the plates he had already put out, along with a green salad he had tossed, and a tray of brown and serve dinner rolls. "A bachelor's idea of a balanced meal," he offered.

"Just perfect," she said in reply, taking a roll from the tray he passed to her.

Danny turned the serving ladle to her side of the cauldron and said, "Why don't you help yourself, so you get exactly what you want and how much you'd like to have. And I won't be insulted if you take just a little to try and then come back for more if you like it."

Eleanor spread her plate with several chunks of stew meat, some pieces of potato, three carrots and four little pearl onions. She ladled it with some gravy. She passed on the egg noodles he had in a serving dish. Her salad she placed in the side bowl he had set out.

Danny then helped himself to a similar arrangement, but included a healthy helping of egg noodles on the side of his plate.

They had eaten a bit quietly, which seemed to be a universal experience of sharing a meal with someone for the first time, before Danny spoke up. "Since we will need to spread out the photos I have for you to look at, how about 'ladies first' with what you wanted to let me know about?"

She stood up and went over to the chair where she left her pocketbook. She took out a folded piece of paper and brought it back to the table. "I have spent many hours last week and this going through historical files that were never digitalized. They still exist as one paper set only. Most people have forgotten about them, because they are away in a basement file archive and not out in plain sight. The copyists stayed on last Friday night and secreted copies out for me and returned the originals undetected." She ate another piece of stew while he reflected on her information.

"The reading room you were using is now at my disposal, because we three have been marginalized, as you heard about when we met at Gabriella's home last week, before you walked out on us—or so you led us to believe." She looked at him, took a drink of her club soda, and continued her explanation. "I don't know if you discovered there is a compartment beneath the carpet and floorboard. It is large enough for me to hide those copies when I leave at night. This page is a photocopy of one of those sheets." She passed it across the table to him.

He read the sheet enough to realize it was a page from a larger document. The context was not sufficiently revealed in the one page. But Quatrane had carefully underlined a name for him to see. He said the name out loud. "Does this name mean anything to you, Eleanor?"

"First, let me tell you that I did not underscore the name legibly on the copy of the pages remaining there in the floor. I highlighted it so it was not readily discernible without leaving any copyable markings. I did that by placing another sheet of paper over the page. At the location of the name, which I could see through using the light on the glass of the copy machine, I drew an underline with a pen and ruler several times on the top blank sheet. When I took the marked paper away, there was a faint indentation underlining the name on the page in the copies under the reading room floor." She sipped again. "I used to do that for Ned when he had presentations

to make in conference over the last few years. That way he could appear to be looking at a full, unmarked page. But I had highlighted the key ideas so he would not forget them. Everyone else around the table saw a page with no markings and was amazed he still was sharp and able to remember things that were important. All he had to do was hold the page at a slight angle, which is normal when holding a single page to read, so the lighting in the room exposed the invisible underline for only him to see.”

“Son of a bitch. I saw him holding papers in that fashion in the courtroom. It was so natural, you couldn’t tell,” recalled Danny. “You figure that out, or did he?” he asked.

“I did.” She smiled. “And now you have something you can’t tell anyone. We’re even.” She looked at him over the edge of her glass as she finished the drink. She held it out to him so he would refill it for her. She asked, “Please?” as she did.

As Danny walked back over from the kitchen counter and lowered the glass down at her place setting, he asked again, “So, does the name mean anything to you?”

“No,” she said. He looked disappointed. “And, yes . . .” she said as he sat down. “I don’t know the person. I do not remember ever meeting him, or her. But the context makes it reasonable to expect that is the name of a man, who was the person who served as the broker involved in supplying the funding for an acquisition Ned’s partners made in 1959 to expand the firm into handling copyright law cases.”

“And how is that important, again?” Danny needed to make sure he had all the pieces in the right place. He was doing what he respected Jersey Detective Howe for doing before he went to Gabriella’s house in Brooklyn, the last time he saw the entire group of Linda’s advocates, Ned’s friends.

“That acquisition is the original event that led years later to the eventual dissolution of the firm’s five partners, leaving only Ned behind in limbo, and the ascension of the current three principals.” Quatrane let Danny take that much in before going on. “I’m still sorting details, but I sense there is a connection between that acquisition and Mellon Jr. scheming to weaken the firm after Ned’s passing. And that’s why I’m glad you’re still on this case. You’re going to have to pursue this with resources you have. I can keep after

the history. I have the documents. I lived through it, without knowing all that was going on. But you need to see where this leads to and how Mellon is wrapped up in it.”

“And you think finding that out will smoke Rosalyn and Linda out of hiding somehow?” asked Danny.

“Yes. I do. Especially if they are hiding from Mellon. I still think he did not know they were going to take off before that hearing. And that he doesn’t know exactly where they are today.” She exhaled. Then she surprised them both. Sitting straight up in her kitchen table chair, she shuddered, buttocks to shoulders. Her arms went rigid, her elbows stiff at forward right angles, wrists pointed at Danny across the way in front of her. Her arms vibrated. If she had been holding the refilled glass, she would have sloshed the club soda out over the rim and all over her clothes.

“My God, Eleanor. Are you okay?” Danny pushed away from the table and was on his way to help her if he could.

She calmed. Sitting still, Eleanor said, “I’m okay, Danny. You know, my grandmother used to say that’s what happened when somebody walked over the fresh grave of a friend or relative.”

“I could look tomorrow for footprints. I saw where they buried him. I won’t need a headstone marker.” He tried to make her relax, but it did not work.

“Anyway. That’s why I needed your help. See, I took many pictures yesterday. Many pictures. At the funeral parlor and at the cemetery. People, faces, couples, groups of people, people caught looking at other people, cars, and license plates. The works.” He thought about all the investigators who told him about taking pictures for divorce cases and of cheating spouses and employees embezzling. It was an activity he had not conducted for years. And yet here he was displaying the fruits of such labor for Eleanor to see. He was vaguely ashamed.

“But I need you to tell me who these people are, Eleanor. And which of them you do not recognize. Like your document search, I think there is something, or someone, in these pictures I need to discover. And when I do, I feel that person will lead me to Linda. Or give Rosalyn a reason to return

home to her apartment with Linda. Safely." He paused. "And if they are now scared to come back . . . to make them no longer afraid to come back."

"I've had enough to eat, Danny. Why don't we clear these away and get started. I still have to drive home tonight."

It took two long and tedious hours. They looked at every picture. Danny used a soft felt tip to print on the back of the photos. He arranged them in groups according to where they were from or how they knew Ned. At the same time, Eleanor made lists on sheets from lined pads. Each sheet corresponded to a group of pictures Danny assembled. He put a number on the back of each photo and Eleanor cross-keyed her lists with the identifying number.

When they were finished, they also had a smaller group of pictures with people that Eleanor did not recognize. She suggested that some people may have changed in appearance from years before when she knew them. Others in the pictures of couples might be spouses she never met in the past, or new relationships formed after Eleanor knew one of the pair. They clarified language—calling people "pairs" and reserving "partner" for an owner or manager in a law firm. A side pile had photos of cars and license plates.

"What are you going to do with the pictures next, Danny?" Quatrane asked as she slumped down on the couch in the sitting area. Standing at the counter and sitting in the straight back dining room chairs while they worked the photos and made the piles and lists had given her a sore lower back.

"I'll compile lists of whom we know. I'll see who has links to Mellon. I'll make a list of out-of-towners who came in just for the funeral. I'll make a photo array for identifications when I go asking around about people for whom you have given me names." He stopped a moment and wrote himself a note on a memo pad.

"I may show the cars to Rosalyn's neighbor, the fellow with the dog, Mike Riley. I'll ask him if he's seen any of them around the apartment." He thought some more, getting up from one of the armchairs and walking around. "I might consider showing some of those we don't know to Detective Howe. But I'll have to concoct a story first to get her scanning photo files."

“Like what?” Eleanor asked. As she watched him pace the room, she finally understood why the windows on this floor were replaced with those painted wooden inserts and not glass. It wasn’t an urban art project at all. He never seemed concerned the whole evening to look out to see who was in the street. And, of course, no one was able to look in to see if he was here and who was with him.

Danny was pacing to help think out loud. “Most of the people we don’t know are on in years. I may ask her if she could scan local or national missing person files for seniors. She may see right through that, but she’ll act as if it’s for another case. She seems like ‘good people’ as the police like to say.” He thought some more. “And then I’ll listen to suggestions she’ll make. If she feels like it.”

“Do you think she will?” asked Eleanor, wondering about Danny Hart’s charm and spirited women.

“Something tells me she just might. She won’t ask, but if she thinks it’s for Linda, I have a feeling she will.” Danny opined.

Eleanor could only think he was either naïve or just didn’t want to get into other reasons a healthy woman detective might want to lend Danny Hart a hand—or some other body part.

Another thought came to Eleanor when Danny stopped his musings. “Would you ask Myles for any help identifying those people I didn’t know? After all, he might have known them through Ned.”

His answer surprised her. “Eleanor, I am keeping my distance from Myles for now. And I don’t think it’s smart for me to let him know what I’m thinking or doing.” He considered and then added, “I can’t say why. But if you have occasion to be in contact with him, please don’t suggest that he should try to reach me. Don’t tell him I’m avoiding him. Just let that napping hound catch some winks under the back porch for now.”

She sensed the night was over. It was late indeed. She headed off for the bathroom and said she should get ready to hit the road. When she came out, Danny had on his three-quarter length jacket and was holding her coat to help her on with it.

He asked her, "Eleanor. It's late enough now and dark. No one will see me or expect me to be in your neighborhood. Will you please allow me to bend my rules some and offer to drive you almost all the way home in your vehicle, or at least accompany you? I'll get a car service I use to pick me up a few blocks from your house at a bar and drive me home."

"You know, Danny, that sounds like a great idea. Even without any drinking, that photo work took the wind right out of my sails. So yes. Here's the keys." She was extremely happy not to be going home alone. Truth be admitted to herself, she really was starting to feel uneasy about driving at night.

Four days later, Danny would have driven right into a home surveillance detail at Eleanor's. She never would have forgiven herself. They parted company by a corner neighborhood tavern. Hart was looking above the bar entrance while he held the driver's door open so Eleanor could get herself settled behind the wheel. The bar had one of those ubiquitous blue metal Bell placards displayed to advertise a pay phone inside.

And why not? Quick calls often led to quick shots, and maybe a beer chaser. Good service. Good business. The barkeep put it in to make sure he avoided Dram Law fines, from patrons leaving and driving drunk. He laughed when asked and told his bartenders to say, "A Call in Need is a Drink Indeed."

But for Danny it served as a reminder. He looked into the car and said, "Eleanor. Keep those quarters handy. No more calls to me from the office. Pay phones only, please. There's one in here if you don't see one closer to home."

He closed her door. She drove away. He looked around up and down the street. He went in the bar and made a phone call. By the time he had used the men's room and had a cold glass of beer, his ride came. He heard the car horn, left a ten-dollar bill on the counter, waved to the bartender, and walked out into the night. No one seemed to take special notice of the fellow who wasn't interested enough to even watch the baseball game on the overhead television.

Rosalyn had not been in Lehman Hall at Barnard in quite some time. Upon entering the campus grounds from Broadway, she went directly to the Wollman Library on Lehman's lower floors. Not wanting to attract attention to herself or to be memorable to a staff member who might be questioned in the future about such a visitor, she went right to the shelves marked for Dewey Decimal section 398 to look for collections of Grimm's Fairy tales. She wanted an adult version with notes and insights she could bring back to a gathering of single women at **HAPPYDALE**. And any commentaries that had articles that could serve as discussion starters.

Rosalyn was grateful that this library still allowed patrons, who might or might not have been students or faculty, to remove books from circulating shelving, use them at tables, and then place them on carts to be re-shelved properly by student workers. At the New York Public Library, she knew, she would have had to divulge her identity, her current residential information, and a statement of purpose of why she wanted certain books selected out and brought to her by library staffers.

She purposefully did not dress conspicuously. Jeans and a solid color sweatshirt and baseball cap with no logo or print, and her favorite comfortable sneakers. She applied no extra facial makeup that morning. She had a light jacket against any early autumn chill, but not heavy enough to have to shed and carry around. Placing it over the back of the chair at the study carrel was student-typical, and it provided some cover from casual glances that might later be recalled for size and body shape descriptions. Her spiral bound, flip notebook was steno pad size and fit into the oversized shoulder bag she carried. She had pencils and BIC ballpoints, so she did not need to ask for any assistance for note-taking.

In her first forty-five-minute work period, she scanned the three hardbound commentaries and the annotations within the two volumes of collections she had chosen. From those five books, she narrowed her search for a suitable first Grimm Tale to select. She had what were commonly referred to then as Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, and Little Red Riding Hood. The German root names of the oral folktales the Grimms utilized as the sources for their written Tales were certainly different.

She stretched her legs, taking her bag but leaving the books open, her note pad with them, and her jacket on the chair back. She did not want a student librarian to scoff up the books as if they were finished being studied. She used the ladies' room and ate a snack bar she brought from her kitchen while standing in the lounge space, since food was not allowed in the library proper.

Back at it after a short nine minutes or so, she set out to read the three Tales. As conditioned as she was in the sanitized age of children's versions and animated adaptations, she was taken aback by the violence in the tales as the brothers presented them. But violence and bloodshed were not the reasons that disqualified Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella from her book club selection consideration. Rosalyn rejected the first because it took a man to save the grandmother and the girl whom the wolf had eaten. She put the second aside because the story set women against women.

Of the three, she confidently settled on Rumpelstiltskin. The young maiden in the story appealed to Rosalyn. She was sold out by her father. Then she became enslaved by an avaricious king, who would eventually deign to marry her for her ability to generate wealth. Desperately she risked the aid of a crafty, deformed, heartless trickster. Later in the story, she achieved rank and position as the queen. She bore a girl child, whom the trickster planned all along to kidnap and take into custody. Finding herself miserable and almost bereft of her daughter, Rosalyn's new heroine was realistic enough to seek the help of a court messenger. Rosalyn rejoiced that the Grimms never assigned a gender to the messenger. So, Rosalyn felt justified to consider the messenger to be a trusted woman from the queen's entourage. In the end, the queen outs the twisted little man, who has no recourse but to act like an impetuous child with such abandon that he self-destructs right before the queen's eyes.

For Rosalyn this was the perfect story for her to lead any of the other wronged women at **HAPPYDALE** in book club reading and discussion—all in the guise of adult literacy, right before the piercing gaze of Beatriz Grey.

Having made her fated choice in about two hours, Rosalyn allowed herself the rest of the morning to read a few commentaries on the Grimms' Rumpelstiltskin. When she finished, she collected her things, making sure to leave nothing behind to indicate she had been in the library. She placed all

five of the books on the designated cart for reshelving and headed for the exit downstairs.

131

Itzel Cocom had spent an extra half hour that Friday morning looking one last time over projections for the fourth quarter. She also had been studying some international data. At about mid-morning, she brought her findings and thoughts into Myles Lowry's office for his consideration.

"Good morning, Mr. Lowry." Her greeting was pleasant enough, but he seemed distracted and did not respond in kind. So, she continued.

"I have been looking over some information that I wanted to bring to your attention, if you have time. It's nothing that is on our agenda for the fourth quarter formally yet." She saw a shift in his attention and hoped for the best.

"What have you got, Itzel?" he inquired.

"Last Christmas Day, Mr. Gorbachev resigned, and the Soviet Union was effectively dissolved. It wasn't sudden. And in the year and a half before that, many of the Republics were becoming independent in fact or essence. But medically, in that year and a half, there was a big drop off in vaccinations in that region and cases of diphtheria increased significantly there. This year, elsewhere in the world, advances were made in understanding that same diphtheria toxin. Perhaps those understandings will revitalize vaccination programs." She was happy to see she had his attention.

"But we have weak distribution systems in those former republics—the new Commonwealth of Independent States—for equipment used in such programs. So, my question is, 'Should we be looking to replace the contacts we had with the old centralized Soviet government by targeting investigation of new contacts in those countries or in new CIS cooperative structures?' I think if we start now, we may beat out some competition. And open a new market for fiscal 1993. The experience of diphtheria increase may create a felt need for our products and supplies in those regions."

“Do you think we have the resources to carry out such investigations quickly?” Myles wanted to know.

“If you think this is worthwhile, I’ll have an answer for you by Monday afternoon when you return. Today and Monday morning will be enough time for me to make that assessment.” Itzel was very confident due to some preliminary planning she had undertaken earlier in the week.

“Okay. Please do,” he said. “In the meantime, this morning and on Monday I’ll continue looking at the traditional matters we plan for finishing a year and starting a new one. We can go over both major items on Monday afternoon, then.”

After Itzel got back to her desk, she made a phone call before starting in on her new, authorized task. “Hello, Bembe. Yes. He said it was a good idea to keep looking into the CIS. So, your idea worked. I’ll tell you all about it tonight. Love you.” She hung up on her husband and went back to work.

For his part, after another hour of data review from southern hemisphere markets, Myles was ready to call it a day at the office. He was anxious to begin a day in his search for the mysterious two eye-color woman whom he had been too stubborn to turn around to see in a courtroom two weeks earlier.

He was going to go right up Broadway to 116th Street and be on campus in fairly short order. He wasn’t going to stop for lunch first. He wasn’t going to the car rental. He’d take a cab to get there quickly. He wanted to leave time to follow up on his findings that same day. At least that was the plan he told himself that morning in the shaving mirror.

He knew exactly where he was headed. The reference librarian had told him to come right into the Wollman Library in Lehman Hall and ask for the reference desk. She would direct him to the collection of annuals and yearbooks. She had no doubt that a yearbook as relatively recent as 1992 would be easy to locate, page through for identification, and then have black-and-white or color photocopies made for a reasonable fee. That was what he had stated was his desire when they spoke on the phone.

Gabriella Costa looked up from her desk work and saw that Karidja Soro was also staring at the ceiling in thought. The conflict resolutionist sensed the stenographer's eyes on her. She looked across the room, smiled, and asked, "What?"

Gaby replied, "I don't know how to relate to Mr. Lowry. For a long time, he was just a client. And I was alright with that, whether it was Ned or you who represented him. Then, suddenly and for a time, he was part of whatever we were here for two weeks. Even that took me longer than the rest of you to accept. And now, I feel like he—and we—are not that, whatever it was, anymore. So, he's just a client again? I mean, is that the way I'm supposed to treat him when he comes into the office or calls now?"

"Why? Is he coming in here? Has he called?" Karidja had not heard that either of those things was happening.

"I found a note from reception on my desk. He called an hour ago and said he might be bringing something by for you, since he didn't know how to get in touch with Danny Hart anymore." She looked puzzled. She pushed her glasses up to the bridge of her nose. "Nobody out there is supposed to be talking to us, I guess. So, the note was printed and unsigned. Weird!" She got up and crossed over the short space and handed the message to the lawyer.

"I'm certainly his counsel. So, I should have been given this by reception. In fact, unless he said something to the contrary, the call should have been put through to me so I could talk to him." Karidja seemed just to be stating facts. But Gaby could tell now when she was put out. And this was one of those times. She tried to ease the tension she thought she just caused. "They are probably all rushing out there to get those papers done for Mellon. We may have been forgotten, or at least overlooked, back here."

Karidja read the note and put it on the desk she was using. She looked at the partially opened door to the reading room. It did not appear that Eleanor was in there. Karidja looked back at Gaby. She nodded her head sideways toward the door without asking the question with words.

Gaby spoke, though. "I don't know where she is." She twirled a pencil in her fingers. "Like I said—weird."

The two women went back to what they each had been working on.

133

As she prepared to go downstairs, Rosalyn was looking down into the library's atrium space of the central stairwell. She was deeply shaken by the sight of her ex-husband, Myles Lowry, entering the Wollman Library and walking over to the Information Desk. She fought off the urge to run. She drove herself to find out what he was doing there.

Lurking to remain unseen, she discovered he was seeking help and following a library staffer to a reference section in the stacks. When they left together, the staffer held one book by her side and Myles walked behind her. They went through a door and into a space placarded as the Copy Room. As they worked inside, Rosalyn took the chance to see what reference section they had visited. To her shock, she saw they went to the shelves housing Barnard Annuals and Yearbooks. There was a spine-wide space on the shelf, she now hid behind, where her 1972 book should have been.

Rosalyn saw Myles shake the librarian's hand and head to the check-out desk. He paid some money and left, adjusting an oversized manilla envelope under his arm. When she was sure he was gone, and on his way to wherever he was going, Rosalyn quickly left the library. By the time she was outside she was walking very fast. By the time she was halfway to Broadway, she was running.

The **HAPPYDALE** car service that brought her to Manhattan might be able to come earlier for her if she could get to them by phone. She knew there was some kind of radio contact the dispatchers had with the drivers. She found a pay phone, on the sidewalk mid-block to 114th on Broadway. It was outside a stationer's store whose window decal banner advertised they also sold newspapers, greetings cards, and sundries. It wasn't a full booth; just a square aluminum post with a plexiglass two-winged enclosure around the mounted black phone. She deposited her coins and pressed in the silver metal buttons to reach the dispatch office number printed on the business

card the driver had given her a few hours before. As she waited, she interlaced her fingers around the silver metal braided cord on the receiver and slid her hand up and down, swinging the wire in an arc as if it were a metronome. Gratefully, the dispatcher answered. He put her on hold, which cost her another quarter to keep the line open. Finally, he came back on the line. The driver was in up in the Bronx visiting family. He could be there in a half hour to pick her up outside the store, whose name Rosalyn had provided.

She sat on the chilly metal bench in the bus shelter a few storefronts away, eating her impromptu lunch of a Sabrett's hot dog, with mustard, to pass the time. The blue and yellow umbrellas were still as prevalent around the college as they had been twenty years before.

The more she thought of Myles looking into her class's Barnard Yearbook, she wondered whether she should have destroyed the book back at her apartment. If she hadn't been in such a rush, and so calculating, she might have just taken it and thrown it away. The thought gnawed at her more than her teeth did the Sabrett's. It was a mistake she continued to regret more and more as the clock ticked off her waiting time for her ride. At last, just as the driver must have been turning onto Broadway up at 125th street, she decided to have the car service make a stop on the way back to **HAPPYDALE.**

134

The same desk sergeant who met Hart on his first visit to the station house saw Danny approaching on the exterior street surveillance camera view screen sequencing in front of him. He tapped Howe's desk extension.

"Howe here."

"Detective. You asked me to let you know if your new friend Hart was coming in. He's on the front steps now." The sergeant returned to his paperwork so as not to tip Danny off he was expected.

Looking as casual coming into the lobby from the back offices of the precinct as Danny looked entering from the street, Howe greeted him with feigned surprise. "We could go back in there if you'd like," she said motioning

to the conference room. Danny nodded to the sergeant, who returned the gesture. Danny found he liked the unspoken transparency with which they respected him.

“What have we today, Danny?” allowed Howe.

“Pictures, Detective. Of seniors. I have a case where my client is interested in some missing persons, from across half the country. The client and her firm are specialists in looking for wanderers, lost souls, and maybe even victimized elders. She’s opening a new focus area here in metro New York and New Jersey and heard I had some contacts on each side of the river. She might turn out to be a good client for me in my sunset years. Her firm especially wanted to hire an older investigator. More sensitive to the challenge they were thinking, I guess.” Danny was done. He had had his say. Now it was up to Howe to show if she was interested.

“Sunset years, huh?” she mused. “Thinking of closing up shop, Mr. Hart?” The detective considered this as part of the calculus of helping Hart. She did not desire any long-term liabilities nor favors to pay back.

He owned up. “Could be my last type of work—looking for lost wanderers or the victimized.”

“Okay. Let’s take a look at your lost souls, then.” She knew he would not have come empty handed.

He passed her the manilla envelope, flap open, and the top of some contact prints peeking out. She shook them out onto the table, with the care of a cop to pour them forth, in front of her, with the opening of the envelope pointing toward neither she nor Hart. There had been some nasty powders and drugs released that way in the last few years, as would be Unabombers imitated the mad killer still on the loose.

The shots were mostly facial. Most were of single heads. Others showed a pair of persons. Two pictures were of close-standing trios. The backgrounds were not overly obvious. But clothing and snippets of surroundings were enough to suggest the venue. “Looks like your client has her own retainer. Too bad, though, he passed away. Must have been one of those nomads . . . drives around in a car or an R/V to know so many of these

other campers." She shuffled the photos and arranged them in some groupings.

"Not being able to see their hands is a disadvantage, though." She moved a few more around. Two pictures were of more interest to her than others. She picked each one up and looked at them for more time than the rest. "Laborers and blue color types have different hands than desk-sitting white shirts and ties." She sat for a moment and placed the photos down on the table.

"Did your client provide any names we could enter in the missing persons database, Danny?" He shook his head in the negative. "Didn't think so. You wouldn't need me for that." She passed him the two photos of her interest. "These three fellows you might look for in a homeless shelter in Newark. They are favored by a restaurateur who feeds them free meals from time to time." She motioned for Danny to slide her his note pad. He did.

She drew a ball point from the breast pocket slit in her vest. On one clean page she printed clearly three names and a little below them the name of a restaurant. Below them all she wrote "Newark."

"One of these gents, in this other picture, sort of lives out of his car in a junk lot in Secaucus. Don't know his buddy." On a second page she printed a person's name, wrote 'on left' parenthetically, and a business name above the word "Secaucus."

"I could ask around my friends on the street about some of these other poor souls, if you'd like. But maybe that's too—should I say 'boisterous' for now?" She looked directly at Hart for an indication. When he hesitated, she offered a second option. "I do have a deep junk drawer. I could lay these on the bottom until I hear from you about these first few wanderers, and you hear back from your client." Danny smiled and pushed his chair back from the table.

Howe watched with the sergeant as Danny disappeared out of camera range on the sidewalk outside. "Was it okay to tell you he was coming, Detective?" She patted him on the shoulder in thanks. He went back to his call sheets.

She slid the junk draw closed. Howe was surprised Hart had never been 'on the job' as they say. He knew Howe was being recorded in that conference room, video and audio. He had never asked her for a favor. She had never offered one. There would never be evidence of a *quid pro quo* to threaten Howe's career or sully her reputation. She knew there was a lot to like about this man.

135

Not so far away, Mike Riley was returning from his customary long walk of the day with his dog. It had been almost a mile round trip and they had been gone about a half hour. It would have been longer, but they had not met anyone to talk to or other canines of interest to his four-legged companion.

Without knowing he was on his way back from the other direction, across the dead end, Rosalyn directed her driver to pull into the same lot she and Valerie used for their Thursday night incursion over a week before.

Rosalyn used her key to access the basement through the double bilco door, shielded from almost every potential set of casual eyes. She closed the doors behind her, but did not latch them together to make them fast. She turned on the light switch immediately inside the basement by the bilco. Even in the dim lighting, she could see well enough to make her way over to the storage cage. Once there, she squinted and noticed something was amiss.

She unlocked her side of the cages and stepped in. Her things were not as she left them. The Yearbook she plundered of incriminating photos and captions was inside the box where she left it, but the box top was different. She took it out to bring with her this time, not wanting to leave any more evidence or clues to where she might be hiding out.

In all the years of their packing things, moving, storing items and the like, Myles and she always had a running disagreement. She left the flaps on a box neatly flat and preferred taping them if strapping materials were at hand. But for Myles, that was never enough. He always force-folded the top flaps, alternating which was on top and which was below. He would sometimes hum a mantra someone had taught him as a boy. 'Right corner flap on top . . .

left corner flap on bottom. Rotate and repeat. Right corner flap on top . . . left corner flap on bottom.' The result would be a tightened top with alternating locked flaps closing the box.

She cursed aloud. Herself for not taking the Yearbook. And Myles for being here and finding it. She was incensed more than she had expected. She wanted to fold him over and lock one elbow below a knee and the other knee over the other elbow. She heard her interior voice telling her, 'If I hadn't lost his goddamn father's heirloom lighter somewhere, I would burn this whole fucking tinderbox down right now.'

She spent too much time down there. She knew her driver would be getting impatient. But she swore out loud, "He can fuck himself too." Rosalyn was in a rage and needed to see more to feed it. The cage wire on Myles side had been raggedly cut to permit entry and the wire barrier between the cages was violated as well, though not so badly. She stepped into his side and saw boxes had the tape cut through. When she looked to see what he wanted to retrieve of his own, she saw it was a ruse. The tape was cut, and some things tipped aside. But there was nothing missing from the boxes she had packed so tightly. Years ago, she hadn't cared if they were heavy. The movers would be carrying them, not her. She turned one of them over and made sure everything spilled out on the floor of his cage. Some things broke when they crashed to the cement floor. She should not have been so noisy.

She went back into her side of the cages and opened her box again, reaching inside.

In the back of the building, Mike Riley and his dog had returned. Mike was putting the plastic bag of waste from the walk into the trash cans against the back of the building. They were lined up between the door to the basement and the entry door to the back stairway to the apartments. His dog was agitated, sniffing at the base of the basement door. He even let out an uncharacteristic bark. Rosalyn heard it and panicked. She fumbled through the box to grab some other items. She stuffed them into the Yearbook and turned to run for the bilco doors as fast as she could. Her sweatshirt tore on the ragged wire of the cage. It stopped her and snapped her back. By then, the daylight flooded through the back door and Riley's dog was clicking the cement floor with his extended claws.

She ran in the wrong direction in her fright. Hearing her, the dog charged along the back wall and then up from the near corner, as Riley had taught him to do in the aftermath of Myles's and Hart's discovery. The dog had learned well over the Labor Day Weekend exercise. Riley stayed outside as he wanted no confrontations until his dog had set the stage for his entry to be a rescue rather than a frontal assault.

Rosalyn could see the dog through the open mesh of the cages. She spun around and ran for the bilco while she could. It was only because the dog stopped at the Lowrys opened cages to scent the intruder, that he was too late to catch Rosalyn in his snapping jaw. He crashed with the side of his face into the inside of the bilco door that Rosalyn had grabbed and shut from the outside. Stunned, the dog slipped to the floor. He whined.

That brought Riley in fast. If someone had hurt his dog, he was just fine with a frontal confrontation. It was light enough from the flood of daylight to see well. He heard his dog over by the bilco side of the basement. It was the far side of the track he had trained the dog to use to sweep the basement and hold an intruder at bay.

Riley had chosen that training route to allow for enough time for either a tenant to get back into the center stairwell up to the apartments, or for Riley to run in and intervene in instances when the entry was by a tenant from upstairs and not a genuine intruder.

Now, though, Riley looked back through the open wire mesh to sweep the basement. He saw no one standing. He did not see anyone who made it into their own storage cage and then pulled the door closed to keep the dog out.

By the time he attended to the dog and leashed him again, several minutes had elapsed before Riley and the dog could open the bilco from the inside and exit out to the side yard of the apartment building. By then, Rosalyn and her driver were long gone. The car had been idling the whole time Rosalyn was in the basement and the driver left at a regular pace, not realizing he was piloting a getaway car. Riley had not heard the car leave.

So, for the second time in about nine days, Rosalyn had pilfered her former apartment building and, she hoped, gotten away with it. She knew she'd have to be very careful about any return visits.

Myles Lowry straightened out his clothing and checked his overall appearance as well as he could in the rest room mirrors of the law firm, after passing through security and being allowed into the elevator to the proper floor. It was solely by chance that he saw Eleanor Quatrane through the glass entry doors. He waved and the motion of his hand swept her peripheral vision. Lowry had no way of knowing, that if that chance encounter had not occurred, he may never have seen Karidja, if one of the partners had managed to intercept his visit and his information. Even busy with Ned's audit for Mellon, they would be keen to know why Lowry was in their offices when he had no court appearances on the docket.

When he sat down with his lawyer, it was just the two of them in a smaller meeting area than the large conference room he had been in several times previously. At the funeral services for Ned Hegerman the day before, he had not told her that he planned on going up to Barnard. Now, after the fact, Lowry could not convince Karidja Soro that he had not revealed the trip because he did not know if he would make it after going into work that morning first, or because he would have made it but not found anything, or because he had wanted to avoid her persuading him not to go.

If he told himself the truth, he probably didn't know which of those reasons he believed himself. His lawyer was mostly sure it was the last of those three things. She told him that by saying, "So you took the penalty shot in overtime again, I see, Myles." They both imagined the mascot in the green and yellow jersey, who was somewhere other than this room. Neither asked the six-hundred-pound question, which was 'why weren't they in her office with that same elephant for this session?' Attorney Soro spoke up to fill that void. "So, what have you for me, today, Myles?"

Lowry produced a large manilla envelope. He slipped from it several pages of photocopies that had been made within the previous hour uptown at Barnard. He held them up in front of himself and then knocked the pages together standing them on end on the table to make a neat edge-to-edge set. There were black-and-white copies of group pictures with posed club and activity members. There were more copies of photos of candid shots of students in dorms or classrooms or common areas. And there was a color reproduction of the graduating class picture for a senior whose name was

Valerie McKinley. Above her somewhat crooked smile were a pair of eyes. One was blue and one was brown.

All the black-and-white photos had the same name in their captions, listing several other young women from their Barnard days. In two of the group photos, one of the campus political club, the captions also listed Roz Young. It was a reminder that they knew one another in school and that McKinley was a maiden name that probably was not reliable as a means to find her now, twenty years after graduation.

"This is the woman we knew from college who came to mind. I was unable to recall her name. But after searching the book carefully this morning at the library, I am sure this is the person I was thinking was described by the bailiff as the hearing room intruder. Mostly I recalled her being with Rosalyn in the political club. We had many a long night discussion about the way things were going back in 1972. Especially around the elections. I was the only one who favored re-electing President Nixon. All the ladies Rosalyn associated with were McGovern supporters." Myles handed the sheets of paper over to Karidja after all his explanations were finished.

"Okay. These may prove to be very helpful. If this is the woman, and if she is still in the vicinity, she may be able to reveal where Linda and Rosalyn have gone." Karidja reached out her hand so Myles would give her the manilla envelope to reinsert the sheets of pictures.

For a minute it looked like he wasn't ready to give the envelope to her. "Aren't you going to show the pictures to the others?" he asked.

"I will in good time, Myles." Her answer did not satisfy him.

"What about Danny Hart?" Myles inquired. "I haven't had any luck getting return calls from him. I left him messages on that machine of his."

Karidja told him, "I haven't spoken to him since last Friday night."

"Are you going to give him the pictures? He was there with me when we found the damaged Yearbook in the apartment basement. Has he dropped the case?" Myles sounded worried.

“Mr. Lowry, when I hired him, Danny made it very clear, that even if the firm changed course on the case after things developed between you and the court, it would make no difference to him. He said when he was hired to do a job, he stayed on that case until his work was completed.” She looked at Lowry across the table. “So, no, Myles. Danny Hart is not off your case. Whether we know what he is doing or not, I trust that he is still looking for your daughter.” She paused a moment because he still looked uncertain. So she felt the need to say, “And I am going to do nothing to impede his pursuit, including doubting that he is actively at it. And Myles, I hope you will do the same.”

She stood and motioned that it was time for them to head out of the room and get on with their day. With massively reluctant body language, Myles Lowry made his way out the door and begrudgingly allowed himself to be accompanied to the firm’s front door and out into the elevator lobby. Karidja Soro did not wait for her client to commit to pushing the button to summon the down elevator. She turned and walked away to find Eleanor and Gaby and fill them in on this development.

They weren’t an ad hoc committee for the time being, but Karidja felt obliged to share pertinent information that might help find Rosalyn and Linda Lowry. She still felt unsure if Danny was talking to Gaby or had begun seeing her socially—that ‘Dan’ and ‘Gabs’ thing came back to her mind. If so, it may be her only way to get word of this Yearbook discovery back to him. She might be surprised someday to find it was Eleanor and Danny who were keeping a line of communication open, however selectively and secretly. In her international work, she had heard such a thing called a ‘back channel.’

Until Danny Hart or Mellon found Rosalyn, there would be no going back to Eoin McCarver’s hearing room to revisit the question of Linda’s custody-and-visitation situation. Karidja’s agreement with Mellon that the judge authorized said that both living parents had to appear to continue the considerations. Karidja could only recall that the last time Rosalyn Lowry disappeared with Linda, it took Ned and Myles a year to find her. The judge’s current latitude would expire only a little more than a hundred days away—at the same moment a glittering ball was descending before hundreds of thousands of revelers in Times Square. After that, if and when the girl was found, Linda Lowry would probably become a ward of the State of New York for twelve long years.

Attorney Soro knew this law firm was fighting Godfrey Mellon for its life. For many here, Linda Lowry was of no account.

137

Danny Hart parked his customary block away and walked the rest of the distance to the apartment building. He listened for Riley's dog and heard nothing. He approached the entry toward Riley's home, which was not the same as the one for Rosalyn's place. The small entry hall had the same type of mailbox array that Hart had seen over in the neighboring section of the building. He did here what he had not done across the way. He depressed the brass button set below the bottom of the silver, tall oblong mailbox door, just below the slot for the typical thin squiggly-headed mailbox key.

He heard the buzzing from an upstairs location. It was followed by a two-toned dog bark, the second note a half octave higher than the first. It was just the two, no prolonged fit of overprotectiveness. It was as if Riley's dog was trained to be satisfied to tell him 'someone's here' and that was it.

Danny heard a door on the second floor open and the familiar voice intone "C'mon up." So, he did just that.

At the door, which had been left ajar, the dog stood and looked at Hart silently. When Riley's voice called out, "Please come right in," the dog stood to the side and lowered his head to allow Danny to enter. Hart thought the dog was standing at a canine 'at ease.' No doubt he was ready to snap right back to 'attention' or 'present arms' or 'fire at will' as he perceived required by his master, or 'take no prisoners' if his master went down and could communicate no order.

The apartment was modest and impeccably neat. Danny felt that you could bounce a quarter off the carpet, the couch, the kitchen nook table, or the countertop if you weren't pleased with the performance of the mattress, or you weren't invited into the bedroom. Only the dog's oversized floor pillow and what just had to be Riley's favorite armchair would swallow the coin into an oblivion of comfort.

"Can I interest you in a beer?" his host asked.

Danny replied, "I'd love one, but I'm still liable to be driving a bunch before the day is done, so perhaps a water would be just right."

"How about something with some fizz, then? Club soda, tonic water, soda?" Mike counteroffered.

"Tonic would be great. I'll imagine the gin," said Danny. "I have something to show you, Mike, if you have a few minutes." Danny spoke with a voice loud enough for Riley to hear in the kitchen where he was pouring drinks.

As the perhaps-not-so-ex-military man entered the sitting room with his tall glass of tonic water, Riley told Hart, "Coincidentally, I may have something for you, too."

Danny told him, "Must be the day for coincidences."

Mike clinked glasses and said, "I guess we'll see about that." He was too professional to ask what Danny meant. He would let Hart say what he wanted to say, or not, without being so nosy to need to ask. He sat in that favorite chair. Danny had already taken the idea from the dog that he was to sit on the couch. So he did.

"I took some pictures at a funeral and cemetery yesterday. I was wondering if you'd be willing to take a look and see if any of the cars or plates had been around here before or after Linda's disappearance," was what Danny said. He was straight and to the point with Riley. That was how both men seemed to like to deal with each other.

Mike took the photos. He went through the stack once quickly, placing each picture he looked at to the bottom of the pile and then he started back through the group. "Just this one. The plate. Nighttime. Not as sure of the car." He flipped through again. "Sorry, Danny, nothing on the rest."

He drained his glass. "How about a walk downstairs with us? Meaning the basement downstairs." Danny finished half his tonic and got up.

Eleanor was in the reading room when Karidja came into the steno pool area. She knocked, "You have a minute for us?" the lawyer asked.

"Sure. Where?" said Eleanor.

"Out here in the light would be best, I think. That way Gaby can see, too," answered Soro.

The three ladies had been working on separate tracks that week and not really been reporting to each other as much as they had the week before when the five of them were elbow deep in Ned's affairs. So, there was a need for a little background.

"Apparently Myles has not heard from Danny. He's been busy at his office working on his regular job and plans to make time on Fridays to chase down Linda and Rosalyn. Without telling anyone, he says, he went up to the library at Barnard College this noontime. Thinking that Rosalyn might have ripped pages out of her senior class Yearbook, he went up there to find what he thought were the pages she might have torn out. He had copies made, one or two in color." She paused and took out the envelope.

"Why'd he do that?" asked Gaby.

Karidja replied, "He says he was looking to help identify the woman who came to the hearing room—the one with one brown and one blue eye. He's convinced she's someone he might have known in their college days and that she can lead us—or someone—to find Rosalyn and Linda."

Eleanor spoke up, "And he's found someone?"

Karidja replied, "He says he's very sure it's this woman." Karidja placed the copied sheets on the desks as a photo array. "This person's name in college was Valerie McKinley. If she's married now, or any time in the last two decades, she may have taken another last name, of course." She passed to them the page with the copy of the full color photo from the graduation formal headshots in the Yearbook for the Class of '72. The color copy clearly showed the heterochromia—blue in one eye, brown in the other.

“So, who do we tell about this? And what do we do about it? And is it important anymore?” These were Gaby’s questions. She was still up in the air about the developments since Ned’s passing.

Attorney Soro said, “I think it’s still pertinent to finding Linda. And as Myles’s lawyer that’s what I’m supposed to be doing for him before the end of the calendar year runs out. But I really do not have any trust in our in-house investigators. And Danny’s sort of ‘in the wind,’ though still on the case.”

Eleanor was very careful. “I could try to see if this lady is still on active alumnae lists. Maybe send a letter to the Alumnae Association asking for a roster of active 20th year grads for a potential reunion, or something like that. But I’d scan the Yearbook, if we can get a few pages, for a recognizable name. I’d want to do it without obvious connection to this case, or to Rosalyn and Myles, or to our firm. If you ‘d like, Karidja, I could see what I could do about that.”

“How would you do that?” asked Gaby. “I’d help if I could. I know one court recorder who went to Columbia around then. The schools are sort of related. We could use my Brooklyn mailing address and my mother’s caregiver’s name if I asked her.”

Karidja thought a little and said, “Let’s all think about it. But no one should do anything on her own. We’ll have to make certain it’s all legal and without deceit. If we use the information we gain to find Linda, the manner in which we gain it will have to be above reproach in the eyes of the court. Particularly if it leads to wresting custody of Linda away from Rosalyn and over to Myles. I’d hate to lose on appeal and put the whole thing back to the beginning. I’m sensitive to making sure Linda does not end up a ward of the state because the court gets frustrated with the parents and their legal representatives.” She thought she was done. But one last idea came to her. “I can’t say why I feel this way, but instinctively I do not think it wise to let word of this get into the ears of Godfrey Mellon, Jr.”

To her own surprise, and theirs, Eleanor said a bit too loudly, “Amen to that!”

Danny followed Mike Riley and his dog out the front door of the building, around the side by the dead end, and across to the back door into the basement storage area. The dog became agitated when Mike began to unlock the door, but settled almost right away when the door opened. Rather than charging in as he did when Rosalyn was in the basement, he slowly and thoroughly scented the floor along the path he had been trained to follow.

Riley told Hart that they should follow behind the dog by about five paces. When he got to Myles Lowry's and Rosalyn Lowry's storage cage, he became more active. Mike leashed him so he did not get himself caught up on the shredded edges of the wire caging.

"He was tearing it up to get in here. He knew there was a person in the basement whose scent he did not readily recognize from the building. Since you and Linda's dad saw the damage to the basement," he said this to perpetuate the shadow story he told his neighbors, "I have made sure we sat out front and greeted all the neighbors as they came and went, especially kids. We've let the dog get to know the kids playing in the back yard, just like he knew Linda." Hart looked at Riley with great appreciation, both for what he did and what he did not do.

Danny started narrating his site evaluation out loud for Riley's benefit and for his own thinking processes. "The dog must have slowed at this cage. I can see there's been another disturbance in both sides. The side that was locked last time isn't locked any more. And it looks like more things have been messed with. When the dog was finished here, his prints suggest he ran toward the bilco doors. Whomever was in here, just got out in time without getting bitten." This was not without some speculation.

"It looks to me like the sneaker prints in the floor dust from here to the bilco are very similar to the prints from the upstairs interior staircase over to the cage we saw last time I was here. In fact, they may be close to identical. It's hard for me to be sure, Mike. The earlier prints were all made while walking. These were a mix, walking in and running out, and the dog's scrambling made enough marks to obscure them." Danny was okay with telling Mike all this. Riley would have figured it out for himself, if he hadn't in

fact done so already. And Danny still wanted to build some goodwill capital here with Mike and his dog.

“Tell you what, Mike,” Danny continued. “Why don’t you take that cloth remnant that ripped on the cage wire. Keep it for scenting. We may be happy to have that again, if the dog helps us with any suspect intruder’s lineup of sorts at some point.”

“What if you or the cops need it?” asked Riley.

“I’ll know where to get it. And if you have it, they won’t lose it or misuse it.” Danny was quite firm in his assessment.

Riley concurred. “I’ll come back later before anyone else does and put it in a zip lock bag, Danny.”

Hart smiled in return. “Just use a felt tip to date and initial the outside of the bag before you put it away for safekeeping.”

They looked through the basement again to make sure there was only one person the dog chased out. Riley kept the dog on his leash as he and Hart searched together to make sure no one was hiding anywhere. While they did, they agreed to look for any other belongings or anything identifiable that was dropped that would help them in the future.

When it came to the two cages that held Lowry possessions, there was something else that caught Danny’s eye. He could enter the right-side cage, Rosalyn’s, now that it was unlocked. The box atop the pile was the one that Myles put the Yearbook into and double folded the flaps to keep it shut. But now it was flat flapped. He opened the carton lid and saw that the Yearbook was gone. He did not know to look for anything else that might be missing now from the rumpled belongings remaining in the box. He did mention the Yearbook to Riley, who was across at the bilco making sure nothing there was tampered with to prevent properly relocking the door from the inside.

Hart was convinced that Rosalyn, or a surrogate, had returned yet again a second time. That is, unless Myles came back for some reason that he could not imagine. He knew he was missing a piece of the puzzle to figure out why she would return for the Yearbook. Thinking of a missing piece of a puzzle reminded him of his discussion with Linda’s friend, Annie Meadows.

“Hey, Mike. Have you seen or heard from that Meadows fellow or his daughter since I was here last Friday?” Mike’s negative reply made Danny wonder if he should pay them an unannounced visit right now to see if Rosalyn and Linda were over there. He thought that if it was Rosalyn who was just in the basement, she may have had an accomplice to make a fast departure. Otherwise, the dog should have been able to scent her out and follow her down the street while Mike held the leash.

140

Danny had barely left, and Mike had almost just finished locking up the basement, when Angie Flynn drove into the dead end. Fortunately for Danny, Angie was coming from another appointment and came along the main road in front of the apartment. If she had come from the way she did the prior week, she would have seen Danny walking back to his car. He would have had a hard time explaining why he was there. He couldn’t imagine Flynn not reporting back to Mellon that she had seen him there.

She would report to Miss Hayes later that day in a phone message that the mail forwarding must be working because there was no mail in the entryway mailbox at the apartment. There were no packages or messages at the apartment door, nor had any been passed under the door. The phone was still not working, as expected. There were no voice messages on the machine, as anticipated. All the appliances were in good repair. There were no leaks on the floor or near any of the faucets. All the windows were intact and still locked, with no sign of any forced entry. To all appearances the apartment was in order.

No one in Mellon’s offices, or in his employ, or hired by him, even seemed to know, or care to remember, that there was a basement in the building with personal materials that belonged to the Lowry family. And no one was aware that those belongings, contested by one spouse or another or not, had been pilfered twice already during Angie Flynn’s watch.

141

It was too early to find the Meadows family at home. No one answered the doorbell. Danny had a choice to make. He decided to wait to see the school bus inching down the street. If Annie Meadows got off the bus and her father met her, he would go back up to the door and find out why he had not answered. If they arrived in Paul's car from school, he might anyway, in case Rosalyn and Linda were in hiding inside while he went to school to get her.

He did not count on the eventuality that actually unfolded. As the school bus lumbered down the street from one direction, Paul drove up the same street from the other direction. Danny waited for five minutes after they entered the house and went up the walk and tried the doorbell again. Paul answered and asked him to come in, with absolutely no hesitation. He was eager to know whether there was any news about the Lowry women.

Hart did not think Paul was that practiced a liar nor that good an actor. He decided the Lowry ladies were not inside, nor had they been in contact with the Meadows father and daughter. "I just wanted to see how you two were doing. I wanted to tell you that there has been no news about Linda or her mother. And certainly, there were no indications in the last week that anything bad had happened to them at all."

After Danny gave his report, the men shook hands and Danny excused himself, saying he had another appointment in the area and that was why he had a chance to come by and see them. For his part, Paul Meadows was not so convinced that Danny Hart wasn't a good actor. He found this visit to their door unsettling, when a phone call could just as well have delivered the same message. He was careful to make sure Hart left in his car and did not come back around the block to double check on their home.

142

From the now-becoming-oft-used pay phone by the coffee shop near the apartment, Danny called his machine and found that Eleanor had left him a message from a pay phone. She did not introduce herself. She understood he would know her voice by now. "Myles brought us copies of Yearbook

photos, possibly with information about the mystery lady." It was short and sweet. She knew he would be in touch when and how it was safest to do so. Danny had no idea that she made the call from a pay phone in front of a stationers on Broadway down a few block walk from Barnard College.

From the same phone she called the alumnae office at Barnard. She made inquiries about public access to rosters of alumnae by graduating class year and whether there were additions made for women who had taken a married name different from the name under which they matriculated. She was disappointed to find that there was nothing pre-printed she could walk up to the school and purchase, without disclosing anything that Karidja had warned her would be a problem. Acquiring such a directory, if it existed, would not have been a problem as far as Eleanor could tell. The problem would have come only from how they used it. It was now a moot point.

Unbeknownst to Eleanor, by early the following week, this walk would be monitored by personal surveillance. So even though it seemed a bust today, her very impulsiveness would prove to be a blessing in the long run. The pursuit of the court intruder would remain officially inactive by the law firm.

She took mass transit back downtown and was in the office in the early afternoon and back in the reading room trying to devise a plan for how best to use her time in the upcoming week. By then the auditors' report would have been turned over to Mellon's firm. She was curious if the three ladies would be assigned anything new, or just left to their own devices, as that page of the calendar was ripped off the desk stand to expose September 14, 1992. After all, that Monday date gave the firm only one month more to provide Mellon with a schedule for liquidating Ned's assets in the firm before the end of the calendar year.

Having struck out with the list of names of Barnard alumnae, her mind turned to another list. She began to think more about how to implement the discussion about securing a copy of the pages of mourners who signed the visitors' book on the lampstand at the funeral home. And perhaps even the cue card for the undertaker who lined up the cars that were going to leave there and go to the private burial site. She closed everything up in the floor compartment and was ready to leave at a quarter to four. She wished her colleagues a good weekend and took her time heading home.

By the time she got out of the school-provided service car back at **HAPPYDALE** that Friday afternoon, Rosalyn was furious. She was anxious to find a surrogate for the beating she wanted to lay on Myles. She gave the driver quite a generous tip and thanked him profusely. She hoped this assured his silence about the stop at the apartment. She couldn't be memorable any other way dressed in sneakers, jeans, ball cap, and a torn sweatshirt under a light jacket. But she needed that stop forgotten.

She was back to school ninety minutes earlier than she expected. She went looking for Linda and found that she was over with Taylor playing outdoors with some other girls her age and a little older. Valerie was on the way home from working on papers in her classroom and was surprised to see Rosalyn back so soon. She came out of the quad and called Rosalyn by name. Seeing her surprised face, Rosalyn said, "I got done a lot earlier than I thought. I found great stuff for my research right away, early on."

After a brief congratulatory reply from Valerie, Rosalyn indicated, "I'm going to take Linda home to do some chores."

Her Barnard buddy told her, "We were making burgers and dogs for the three of us. I've got everything lined up. You guys come back in an hour, and we'll eat together. You can tell me about your trip and forget about making a dinner you didn't expect to fix." Valerie was convincing. "The girls were all ready to play a new board game after dinner while waiting for you to get back."

Rosalyn accepted because she was too angry to do anything else.

When they got home, Rosalyn dropped everything she was carrying as soon as she came in the door, including the oversize handbag that held the tattered Yearbook. She needed to find a place to hide it that Linda wouldn't see. Linda had to use the bathroom after playing outside. Her need was so urgent she did not yet notice how fiercely angry her mother had become again, after suppressing it to talk to Valerie about dinner. That gave Rosalyn the chance she needed, at least temporarily, to hide the bag. She went right to her closet and cleared a space on the floor for it under her hanging clothing.

But it took a moment to squeeze it in because something was in the way. She pulled out a large, stuffed pillowcase. It was filled with clean, folded, but squashed, sheets from their apartment. The case must have gotten pushed in there late on the prior Thursday night and gone undiscovered in the weekend of setting up the apartment. Its unveiling, with sheets spread out on her bed, provided the outlet for her anger at Myles and the Yearbook.

When Linda came into the doorway from using the bathroom, Rosalyn raised her voice in a way that Linda was not expecting. "It's time to make our beds with fresh sheets. And we're going to take that train set away from going under your bed to make proper room for the new bedding. So go on in there and start taking that train track apart." When Linda didn't move fast enough because she was so confused, her mother screamed at her. "Get to it. Now. We're getting this done before going back there for burgers and dogs."

Linda was careful not to break the box the train set came in. She placed the locomotive and the cars in the designated spots for them in the precut plastic trays that filled the cavity in the box. Rosalyn came in the room with an armful of new sheets. She tugged away at the draped bedding that lined the sides of the box spring and mattress, ruining the mountain passes and tunnel openings she and Taylor had crafted. As they came away from being tucked in, they caught on the track and lifted it off the floor. Odd pieces separated at torqued connections, with lengths of multiple track pieces flung into the room or back under the bed. Linda had no idea that her mother was enjoying herself as she put an end to her daughter's homage to daddy-and-me playtime. Now she would make this bed and her daughter would sleep in it.

As she left the room with an armful of bedding covers to be refolded and put away, and the dangling, trailing sheets to be placed in the laundry basket, Rosalyn looked back over her shoulder and told her daughter, "Take those track pieces apart and put them in the box carefully so they don't get broken. They'll be ready another time for setting up again, but not right away." Linda was devastated. "I'll be back with fresh sheets to make the bed as soon as I organize these."

Back in her bedroom, Rosalyn reached into the newfound pillowcase and drew out the fresh sheets. But more came out in her hand. Envelopes and pieces of mail. Valerie must have put these in this case as they rushed to pack up the apartment and get things out to the car. Most of the mail was junk,

third class. There were two bills that Mellon's Miss Hayes was supposed to pay. She decided she would throw these away too, rather than be traced by a forwarding postmark. They could pay any late fees. It would be safer for her and Linda that way.

But there were two blank envelopes that never went through the mail. She now recalled they were on the floor, having been slipped under the apartment door. One was in handwriting she recognized as that of Paul Meadows. It asked: 'Are you okay? Can I do anything?' She laughed and ripped it up and placed the pieces into the kitchen garbage pail, with the envelope.

The other she had seen briefly before at the apartment. It was from Mellon. He demanded to know where she was. She wondered if he had been able to find her message in the apartment, as her presumed answer. She had written on the telephone pad's top page, a short and cryptic note: 'With M.' She wrote it pressing hard enough to imprint the pad pages underneath. She then tore up the original and flushed it down the toilet, but only after she had the pleasure of urinating all over the shredded pieces as they floated in the bowl. It thrilled her no end that the note impression might be found, deciphered, and then used to drive a wedge between her lawyer and Hegerman's daughter. The memory of doing that in the prior week took a small edge off her wrath this week about the Yearbook and her husband's temerity to break into her belongings and interfere with her scheming.

She gathered the sheets and headed back to Linda's room. The oversize flat box was organized with care and purpose. All the elements of the train set her father gave her for her birthday were restored to their places in the supportive packaging. The only spot in her bedroom to place it without it breaking from the weight in the box was to slide it under the bed and let it rest on the floor. Linda decided not to ask if she could do that. As her mother entered with the sheets, she looked up defiantly and gently eased the box along the carpeting so it came to rest centered under her bed. After picking up her copy of *Black Beauty*, she stood up and left the room. She did not offer to make the bed. She sat outside on the front steps in the fresh air and read her book. She would wait there until her mother came out when it was time for them to go to have burgers and hot dogs at Taylor's house.

Linda was reading the words she could sound out and figure out from the story—what her teacher called 'context'—in the part of the book where

Black Beauty came to a bridge on a stormy day. His master was driving the dogcart hard in the rain and used the whip to urge Beauty across the bridge. But the horse refused and stood his ground. The master was angry and was all for driving the horse right onto the bridge. Suddenly the tollgate minder came running out on the other side of the bridge. He yelled across the rushing water and warned the master not to try to cross. He told the driver: *The bridge is broken in the middle, and part of it is carried away; if you come on you'll be in the river.* Linda read that part over and over, three times. By then her mother was finished making the beds and had come out. Linda put the book back in the living room so it would not get lost or ruined. Then they walked over to eat with Valerie and Taylor.

144

With her quarters in hand, but with a bottle of water she bought instead of a coffee, Eleanor sat again in the boutique hotel lobby phone booth. She had reached Danny and was telling him about Myles and the Yearbook.

“Do you have a way to find out what this Valerie calls herself these days, Eleanor?” asked Danny.

She explained her attempt to find a directory and the ideas that Karidja and Gaby had, as well as the lawyer’s warning. She then told Danny that perhaps it wasn’t important in the long run, and they should let it be considered a bad idea.

“Eleanor. Remember I told you not to doubt yourself?” He paused, “What am I saying, of course you remember. What am I thinking?” He laughed. “Listen, I can assure you this is extraordinarily important.”

Eleanor dismissed his claim as exaggerated. “That’s sweet of you to say, Danny, but—”

“Hey, Eleanor”, he said. “I told you I’d never sweet talk you, or lie to you. And I won’t.” He almost sounded annoyed.

“I’m sorry, Danny. I just meant—”

He interrupted her again. "Look, here's what I think Rosalyn did today." He heard her gasp on the other end.

"You saw Rosalyn? Today? Where, Danny?" Is Linda okay?" She dropped money in the slot before it was called for just to make sure she didn't lose him.

"Slow down. I didn't say that." Danny got her to catch her breath. "I think I missed her by less than a half hour." He explained the whole afternoon adventure about the basement cages and the Yearbook that was now missing. He left out the part about the dog, which someday he would come to regret. "So, take it at face value, Eleanor. Whether it was Rosalyn herself, or someone abetting her actions, that Yearbook identifies this Valerie woman as our two-toned eyeful in the back of the hearing room. And Mrs. Lowry doesn't want her found out."

"So, what do we do, Danny?" she asked him. "I'm so afraid I might do something to ruin Karidja's case for Linda."

"Here's my best advice, Eleanor. Give me a week. I won't be in touch, but don't let that worry you. You can leave me messages. You know how. I will check them as I always do. While I am working on the Valerie woman, make sure nobody else does. Too much attention at the college will tip our hand."

He went on. "What I need you doing . . ." He paused. "I'm sorry that sounded very horrible. I meant that I was depending on you, not that I was telling you what to do. I—"

"Danny, that's how I took it. Stop worrying about me. Please." She was teetering on the edge of doubt enough as it was. She didn't need him adding to it.

"Okay, then," he said. "The task that only you can do is to continue chasing the story of that original acquisition. You've got the broker's name. Now we need to trace the source of the money. Maybe you can find something about that. I'm still trying to figure out what to do with the name of the broker in case he's alive and we can get to him."

"Danny. What if I can chase that name through the feds?" she asked.

“What do you mean?” He wanted to know and understand.

“I’m not sure. But maybe I can find an angle through the SEC. They’re downtown in the financial district. That office has jurisdiction in New York and New Jersey. I can go back over the documents and see if the transaction required any review. If an SEC employee had fingerprints on the acquisition, maybe I could see who it was and why. And then make up a story about some information I need for historical purposes or something and go and see them downtown.” She was thinking out loud more than she was talking to him about a firm idea or course of action.

“Okay. But you might want to see if there is a friendly lawyer in the firm, more in Ned’s camp than the current managing partner’s, to make sure you’re not hitting a yellowjacket’s nest with a honey stick.” It was the only advice he could think to give her.

“What if I need to see you?” she asked him.

“I suspect it will have to be right under their noses, Eleanor. I can’t explain it, but I simply don’t trust them. I have a very bad feeling about how they are going to conduct themselves as we learn more about all these dynamics. These three guys are not going to want to lose their control of this firm. And if Mellon is coming after them, to strip away Ned’s shares and values, you can bet everyone is going to be under a microscope of some sort or another.” He dared to say next what he had been thinking for two days.

“It’ll just have to be you and me. We can’t lose Karidja on Linda’s case. And I know that somehow Gabs is going to be a lynchpin as this comes down to the wire. They both must be above reproach. They will have to be seen as disassociated from us and anything we are doing. I know that will stretch their credibility, but if we keep them at arm’s length, they should be able to muddle through.” He knew how bad that sounded, but it was better said and out on table than not.

“If you absolutely need to see me, think of a place you can go that you won’t be followed. Maybe followed to a spot, but not into an area in that spot. Call me and let me know where that is. Of course, only on a pay phone away from the office. Unless, perhaps, we want to purposefully lead them to a place we can watch to see if they are listening or following us.” He told her one

more thing. "Eleanor . . . don't think being extra careful is being paranoid. It's not. It's a life skill, not an obsession."

"Okay, Danny." She heard the operator ask for more money. "I'm going to go now." She hung up before he could say anything else.

145

Rosalyn and Linda enjoyed the burgers and dogs. The mom had a half of each and so did the daughter. They split them, though not in such a friendly way Valerie, watching them closely, would call sharing. They simply cut them in half on the platter their dinner host had set on the counter and taken what they wanted. After that, Rosalyn had a second whole hot dog to herself. Her mustard spilled onto the front of her already doomed sweatshirt.

"What game are you going to play, Taylor?" her mother asked to move the night along past dinner. She really wanted to talk about Rosalyn's field trip.

Taylor told them, "It's called *Insecta*. I borrowed it for the night to see if we liked it. If we do, I might ask you to get it for me." And when she saw her mother's face of non-excitement at the idea, she offered, "Or see if you'll let me buy it with my some of my ba . . . money I've saved up."

"How do you play? Is Linda old enough?" asked Rosalyn.

"That's part of what we are going to find out," said Linda. "Taylor says that sometimes the way these game boxes are labelled isn't exactly right for everyone."

Taylor added, "We thought we should see where we fit and not let the company put us in or out of a box."

Rosalyn was amazed at the universality of what seemed an innocent answer. But she saw a different type of smile on Taylor's face as the girl spoke. It made Rosalyn wonder if the answer was really quite so innocent, or the testing voice of an emerging teenage girl. "How do you play?" she asked.

Taylor explained briefly, “Each player designs her own mutant insect. You pick five body parts from the choices you are given and assemble them into your own creation. Then you decide how much flexibility and instinct your creature has. You start your life off in a place called The Hive. You work with your team to fight your way out of The Hive to freedom.”

Except for the team part of the game, Rosalyn sure liked the sound of it and hoped Linda was old enough to play, and would like doing so. “Well, have fun,” she said, with a half mouthful of hot dog roll.

“Tell me about Barnard,” invited Valerie, as the girls went into the next room to play.

“I discovered things I did not know before about fairy tales. The ones by the Grimm brothers especially,” started Rosalyn.

“Was that your target for the library visit?” inquired Valerie. She was wondering how as a teacher she would use those stories if the librarian was suggesting them.

Mindful of what she really needed to talk about to Valerie, Rosalyn found herself quickly in a quandary. She couldn’t dismiss her questions. But she also still had no authorization from Grey to use the Grimm stories the way she intended. Revealing that to Valerie would probably be a mistake. So, as she had done many times before with Valerie, at Barnard in the past and now at HAPPYDALE in the present, Rosalyn initiated a half-truth. “I started off that way. But I’m not certain anymore. The way those two brothers transferred the oral traditions to collect and write their stories was new information for me. And it seems the way that Disney reimagined the Grimm tales was very different from their originals. So, I don’t know what to do. I still have to think about it some more.”

“Well, I’m sure you’ll come up with something. You’ve always seemed to be able to do that.” Valerie’s voice intoned equal parts admiration, flattery, and caution. “What was the old place like? I’ve never been back. I don’t go to class programs or reunions.”

From inside, Linda let out a shout. “He just missed me; I’m going to run up this way.” Rosalyn thought the rooms were mirror images, like those in the diner so many weeks ago, both Lowry women were recognizing a core

aspect of the *Insecta* game— ‘Don’t get caught.’ ‘Be ready to run.’ It had worked for Rosalyn a few hours ago in a dark basement being chased by a dog. Maybe it was an omen of a life lesson for both of the Lowry women.

She went back to talking to Valerie about Barnard, “There were message board flyers at the library about get-togethers,” began Rosalyn. “But I don’t get those in the mail. I’ve not kept up. I don’t think I even gave the school or the alum society my married name.”

“I never did either,” said Valerie. “Not even address changes.” She straightened out the food platters on the counter and motioned over toward the table to sit back down again. “I got so bullied there, I just took my degree . . . which I earned . . . and left the rest behind . . . which I never deserved . . . like I decided I wanted to have the two eye colors they all thought was so weird.” She sat and took more than a sip of the red wine she liked with her ketchup-covered cheeseburgers, even when it was just her and Taylor having a cookout. “All they would have used that name and those addresses for was to ask me for money, anyway.”

Rosalyn was amazed it took so short a time to find out what she needed to know. She had come over for this precise information more than for the food. Let Myles have the Yearbook. Barnard would not know Valerie was here. So, Myles wouldn’t find her and Linda either. **HAPPYDALE** would continue to be their safe refuge. As long as Rosalyn continued to be careful.

She sat back and let herself relax on this Friday evening. There were plenty of sights she had seen at Barnard that she and Valerie could discuss over their beverages, and the few chips she kept picking at from the bowl Valerie had carried over to the table. She would let the *Insecta* players have their fun and then head back to put in a laundry of the sheets her rage at Myles had made her strip off their beds. Beds that Myles would never sit on to read a book or lay in to sleep—ever—in what she hoped would be a long and miserable life.

Little could Rosalyn imagine just how wrong she would be.

By midweek Eleanor Quatrane was in the hot seat. Managing partner Thomas Bruce pointed her toward a rigid chair after he had summoned her, and she entered his office. It was just the two of them, looking at each other with only his massive desk between them.

"It's already the sixteenth of the month, Ms. Quatrane," he began. "We have very little time to prepare whatever we are mandated to give those independent auditors. We've set that day to be this coming Tuesday, the twenty-second. We are asking them to finish that audit by the seventh of next month, about a week before Columbus Day. That will only give us a few days to review it with them before they present it to Mellon. Most people think an independent audit is free of review. To a degree it is. But we are going to reserve the right to review it for factual errors, with enough time for them to correct anything we find."

Eleanor sat quietly, listening with the appearance of respect that her mother taught her, while seething with the disdain she inherited from her father. She had both feet flat on the floor and her hands at rest, one on each knee.

"You have a unique contribution to make at this point." She almost flinched at his phony flattery. "I am going to give you the report we gave Mellon, as required, last Friday. Our auditors built it off the documents that you and your team prepared for our copyists before Labor Day, as well as financials we took from the business office, data from our tax accountants, and projections from our CEO." He handed her a bound copy of the audit.

"What I need you to do with this, Ms. Quatrane, is to go over it with a fine-tooth comb. You bring to it a pair of fresh eyes. I have insulated you from having any vested interest in its correctness." She could hardly believe his audacity. "We will meet here again at four o'clock Friday. At that time, I need you to present to me any information you have from your knowledge of Ned Hegerman's work and habits." He paused and sat forward in his leather chair, with the scent of lemon polish and his wood desk in between them. "You labored by his side for so many years. Long time employees here know the accuracy of your memory is legendary. I'm counting on you, more than anyone, to find in this audit anything that should not be there or that is stated

incorrectly—not necessarily the accuracy of the figures, but the very presence of any particular item in the first place.” And then he leaned over even further to set his elbow in front of him, so he could extend his pointing finger closer to her side of the desk.

“And, Ms. Quatrane, I need to have you tell me, and only me, if you know of anything Ned had, that was not yet discovered and that is not listed or accounted for, in this preliminary audit.” Bruce looked at her almost conspiratorially.

What Eleanor saw was a face she knew would have enraged her father. In fact, she allowed herself to imagine her father would probably have punched Bruce’s face in. And then, her dad would have gotten up and walked out of the office and completely out of the building, never to return. And so, she made herself be mindful of her mother as well. Only a few times in her life had Eleanor Quatrane spoken her private mantra silently to herself: *Act like dad; look like mom.*

Bruce’s voice came back through the mantra’s fading echo. “I want you to do this in the quiet and privacy of the reading room. And I do not want you to ask assistance of Attorney Soro or Ms. Costa. I want you to lock this audit up securely each afternoon out in those long file draws by your old desk. Do not bring it out of the building.”

Eleanor’s mind was racing. She asked Bruce, “Should I follow our standard procedure if I choose to stay and work late on this tonight and tomorrow evening, sir?”

Bruce seemed pleased that she was ready to work. He did, and said, precisely what she had hoped, when she swung out not with her father’s fist, but with Danny Smart’s honey stick. “I will notify security and maintenance that you will be staying late and possible coming in early until Friday evening.”

“Thank you very much, sir,” was all she decided it was suitable to say.

Thomas Bruce sat back in his chair and then stood up. “And thank you as well, Ms. Quatrane.” He motioned her toward the door and began to see her out of his office. But she stopped walking and turned around to face his desk.

She picked up a brown, flat, expanding wallet folder. "May I use this, please?" She handed it to Bruce so he could check it was empty. He gave it back to her. She inserted the bound report, closed over the flap, and drew the elastic cord across to close it.

"Thank you, again, Ms. Quatrane," was all his secretary heard him say as he saw her out his office door. Eleanor smiled at his secretary, a woman she had known for years. As Quatrane walked back to her temporary work-place-in-exile with the folder tucked up into her drenched armpit, she had two thoughts. She was grateful she had chosen a very dark colored dress to wear that day. And she began thinking about how to photocopy a bound volume without bending the pages or breaking the spine.

147

Danny Hart browsed in the small side street storefront several blocks above Central Park. The glass case displays had artisanal art, handicrafts, and original indigenous jewelry. The storekeeper noticed his special interest in bracelets and necklaces made of metal and stone in a Mesoamerican style. "I see you are partial to these pieces?" she hinted. When he smiled and nodded, still looking down at the jewelry to avoid the security cameras and her memory, she pursued what she supposed was his interest. "Bembe is very meticulous. He has studied what he calls 'the Mayan way.' And you can see it in every piece that bears his small letter 'b' signature."

"Have you a brochure of his pieces I can bring to show my . . . lady friend?" he asked innocently enough. He was surprised to find she had one to give him. The various uses of silver and jade were creatively different from others in nearby cases, which might have caused his prices to be about twenty-per-cent higher than the rest. Though the blank space on the back of the folded sales sheet was rubber-stamped with the name and address of the store he was in, there was a post office box address for the artist he could pursue. He would need a photo to go along with the name in order to ask Detective Howe for her help.

Perhaps when he talked to Eleanor, they could figure a way to wheedle a picture of the Cocom spouses out of Karidja's work with Myles. Danny had never been in Myles's office to see if such a framed picture was

there on a bookshelf or his desk. Of course, he could not tell either of them why he wanted their faces on film.

148

Itzel Cocom and Myles Lowry sat for their second session of the week. They were finalizing their presentation proposing an Easton International Medical Supplies incursion into the new, post-Soviet, eastern European, or CIS, marketplace. Her idea had grown from Bembe Cocom's dinner talk a year before, as they watched the people of Berlin tearing down the wall that had separated families and neighbors for so long. He knew of the historically underdeveloped and mismanaged mining industry in those former soviet republics. His business contacts in the gems and metals markets spoke of it often in the past. They now were predicting those republics would soon break away from Gorbachev's control, like so many bricks and cement blocks strewn on the streets of Germany's proud city. When Itzel saw the report on spikes in diphtheria in those regions, her mind went right to her work with Myles.

When she told Bembe about their proposal, he told his jewelry business contacts he might now have a way to reach people in the raw materials markets there. His idea had come full circle, from gems to hypodermic needles, and back to gems.

149

Danny Hart had wondered about foul play for almost a month, from back when he still worked for Godfrey Mellon and first heard Linda Lowry had disappeared. Plagued with the idea that 'it was always the husband,' he had begun to examine Myles Lowry's continued financial success, and the vulnerabilities success might have visited upon him, and his family's lives.

He was nagged by a particular nasty idea when he learned of Myles's business associates at the international firm where he worked. He had been particularly generous and accommodating to a family named Cocom, from Mexico City. Danny mused about the possibility that Myles's wealth was

based on a clandestine share of the proceeds of a Mexican cartel drug pipeline piggybacked on jewelry and medical supply deliveries back and forth across the southern border.

Hart would be the first to admit that all this was pure speculation on his part, with no foundation in fact or evidence. But he felt much like he did when he started a former investigation into bank fraud, that had left him with a building and rental families he now felt responsible for. This was all on his mind when he decided to take a firsthand look at the location of the post office box on Bembe Cocom's brochure.

When Danny eventually would get word about the firm expanding its network into the fallen soviet marketplace, he would definitely seize on the idea that Myles was exploiting contacts in parts of Queens in New York as a logical next step. Where Itzel and Bembe Cocom fit into this he would also have to determine. And, of course, if Rosalyn was his or their willing partner. Again, he reminded himself, just speculation. But it relentlessly tugged at him.

In all of this, he had already begun to wonder if Linda had been kidnapped as a leveraging action in some drug dispute. His suspicions would surely escalate when he came to hear about that CIS move. But that was still down the road a piece. For now, the road he would travel would be to a post office in urban New Jersey.

150

Rosalyn's morning coffee was getting cool when Linda left for Mrs. Steadman's classroom that Wednesday morning. She had heard enough from Linda that the reading experiment was moving on along. Apparently, even Deirdre and her cohort were plowing through their *Choose Your Own Adventure* stories. Rosalyn wondered when she was going to get word back from Beatriz Grey about her reading list proposal for the second half of the academic year. Some second graders and their moms had been in to the library that week already looking for a new book to read, having finished their first shorter ones, especially the Dr. Seuss and Golden Books titles.

Today, Rosalyn wanted to go to town and shop. She went over to the dining hall to see if Margie was still in the habit of grabbing coffee there in the morning before Katie went to class. She hoped to line up an afternoon trip and see if Katie would come across and spend time with Linda. As she entered the hall, and poured a coffee at the drink table, she saw a group of the women at the accustomed table. Fortunately, Margie was there and greeted her as she approached the table.

“Well, if it isn’t our librarian. How are you doing, Mrs. Lowry?” she asked in a boisterous voice for all to hear.

Rosalyn set down her cup and pulled out a chair. “Good morning, everyone.” Some of the others nodded or gave ‘an inside wave.’

“So, what’s up in the world of books?” asked Margie in a more conversational tone.

“More kids seem to be reading. I’m getting my feet wet over in the library. And I’m sharing ideas with Ms. Grey that I hope to hear back about soon.” Rosalyn was upbeat and very positive for public consumption. Hopefully word would get around that the new librarian was happy at her job.

She turned her attention back to Margie. “Any chance you were going shopping today after class? I could use some things if you want a rider to keep you company. And maybe Katie could spend some time with Linda while we’re away. What do you think?” She stayed buoyant and friendly, so as not to appear to be begging for assistance.

“I’ll check Katie at lunchtime to see, okay?” the elder stateswoman replied. “I’ll come over to the library to let you know. I’ll check my pantry and make a list in case she doesn’t have anything else going on. She spent some of her allowance last weekend, so she might be looking for a few dollars right about now.” Margie straightened out her place at the table and swiped the space with her napkin. “But for now, I have to get back home. I’ve got stuff in the oven for tonight’s dinner that needs attention.”

“Great. I’ll watch for you later.” Rosalyn stood as well. To the rest of the moms at the table she said, “See you later, ladies. Here or at the library.”

But she headed back to her place, not needing to be at the library for another half hour.

When she returned, since the campus seemed quiet and underway with midweek activities, Rosalyn went into her bedroom, closed the door, and drew the shade on her window. She withdrew the tattered Yearbook from the bottom of her closet. Bulked up inside the ravaged book were several brown interoffice envelopes. They were oversized and had a few predrilled holes front to back to expose the fact that there were contents inside. The envelopes were of the style that was preprinted on the front with red lines marked "To" and "From" and a "Date" space. Through the holes these had a blank page of tan construction paper that blended in with the envelope's color. A thin red string was wrapped around two circular tabs to keep them closed and the contents securely inside.

Last Friday, even in her flight from the pursuing dog, Rosalyn had the presence of mind to snatch all six such envelopes. She had secreted them previously, carefully tucking them separately apart from each other, inside and between random books and folders in the storage cage carton. She had never envisioned having to take them all at once. But she realized as the dog was running between the rows and aisles of the cages, that she would most likely not be going down to that basement again any time soon, if ever at all.

Her basement red-hot tantrum was sparked by the Yearbook invasion. But her blistering white hot anger in the school car was fanned by the fear that Myles might have stumbled upon these envelopes. Each held almost a thousand dollars in a mix of hundred-, fifty-, and twenty-dollar bills. She had started collecting these when she knew she was pregnant with Linda. Myles never perceived her pilfering. Originally, she had no specific designs for using the money. Then she thought of it as her cache for escape. Now it had become their stash to live on for the year at HAPPYDALE, until other financial accommodations could be made.

Now Rosalyn put a small amount of the money from the first envelope in her purse and some in the zipper part of her pocketbook. Some she folded and put in her pants pocket. Now that she knew no staff came into the individual units for cleaning or housekeeping purposes, she could figure places to hide the envelopes. Certainly, she would not tape any to the bottoms of drawers. Those spaces already held their own cache for the future, though less readily available.

The remaining cash in the first envelope she placed in her top dresser drawer. If anyone came looking for valuables to steal, this would probably satisfy them, preventing further searching. She folded the first empty interoffice envelope and slipped into her back pocket. She would discard it in the trash at the library, so it did not leave a hint for what to look for in their unit. She would also look for a place in the library to conceal one of the other brown envelopes, in case she needed funds to flee quickly and had no time to get back to their living quarters.

151

By the end of Thursday's extended hours at work, Eleanor had managed little by little to photocopy all the pages of the files she had hidden each evening below the floor in the reading room. It had not been easy. She carried sections of files from one copier to another, looking as if she was just copying one file and not taking inordinate amounts of time at any particular workstation. It also made it more difficult for security to follow her around undetected in the office.

She did not yet have any idea how to copy the bound report without it showing in a tell-tale manner when she returned it with her four o'clock Friday report to Thomas Bruce. She had built a list for Bruce of things she thought should be reviewed in the audit. Those were neatly keyboarded and copied. There was an original for Bruce and her reading copy for the meeting, which she was sure he would make her leave behind when their session was completed. The third copy of the list was intended for Danny Hart's eyes, along with the copies of the files under the floor. She was hoping Danny did not need any more than the week he asked her for, to look into the broker of the acquisition deal. Her copies would help she felt sure, if he hadn't yet tracked the broker down.

Quatrane had no idea he was also investigating an entirely different aspect of Linda's disappearance—the possibility that it had something nefarious to do with her father, and maybe even her mother.

The intercom on the phone on the outside desk Gaby used sounded. She went to answer it. It was the front security desk. "Ms. Quatrane? Hi, this is Bill at the front desk. The Triple A truck you called is in the parking lot at

your vehicle. Driver and mechanic say they need you to come down with the key to pop the hood so they can look at the battery and give you a jump start if you need one." Before she spilt the beans, Eleanor caught herself. Danny had said if they were to meet it would be right under their noses. She hoped it was him and that it was not a mistake.

"Please tell them I'll meet them at the car, Bill." She almost ended the call, but didn't. "And please tell the driver I might need to ride with them to the repair place if it isn't just the battery."

So, Bill at security was very anxious to help her with the outer door, when he saw her with her valise and a brown bag filled with groceries it was taking her two arms to hold. "Good night, ma'am. See you tomorrow. Book says to expect you early. That still going to be the case, now your car's messed?"

She assured him it was. "And thank you so much, Bill."

He tipped his logo inscribed hat, with its yellow capital letters SECURITY. When his supervisors reviewed the camera footage at some point a few weeks later, it would become apparent that Bill missed the security check of the bags Ms. Quatrane handed to the solicitous mechanic.

Danny Hart's oversize red metal toolbox was completely empty except for a pair of jumper cables. He used them to fail in starting her vehicle. Without the distributor cap clipped in place, no amount of battery charge would start her vehicle. She kindly accepted the ride in the truck and sat between him and the driver, who was two hundred dollars richer than he was an hour before. Danny set the cables behind the bench seat and filled his toolbox with the files and the bound report that Eleanor withdrew from the grocery bag. She would shop the next day and replace Karidja's and Gaby's lunch supplies and fixings for their coffee. Just like she'd collect up the law book in the expanding envelope she locked in the long file drawers overnight.

The surveillance driver followed Eleanor's taxi from the repair garage to a corner tavern near her home. He left her for the night when he saw her nursing a drink at the bar. He'd want a drink too, if he was upset about his car sitting in a garage awaiting repairs the next day. God knows how long she'd take having that drink and talking to a guy in a fedora a couple of stools down the counter.

It was almost one in the morning when Danny Hart had finished reading the bound report and audit. He made notes of his own and notes that Eleanor told him were items of importance. She cross referenced those to pages in the copies of the historical files. He would still need to study them on his own time.

"I'm sorry I was unable to find out anything more in the notes about the SEC broker, like I wanted to do, Danny." She told him as they were wrapping up on the audit. "But Bruce has been pretty vigilant about my comings and goings out of the building. Will your garage guy call tomorrow and say he's done the repairs? Will he bring the car back to the firm's parking garage?"

"My new friend will call you late morning. He'll return your car and keys and give you a bill for replacing a cracked distributor cap. Give him a credit card. He'll run it while he's with you. When he gets back to the garage, he'll run a credit. Give him a twenty for a tip and all will be right with the world." Danny had made these arrangements when he gave the tow truck driver the original two hundred dollars.

"As far as the broker is concerned, I have no leads. I see your files have a form signed by the SEC reviewer from back then. Between the two of them, you might find something by early next week. Don't you pursue it if it gets you caught. Bruce may have opened the door for you to ask at SEC. I'll hold off until you give it a try. But please be careful. After you're done tomorrow, your window of opportunity may close." Danny swallowed the last of his glass of water. "Will you get that audit report back in okay in the morning?"

"I'm taking a cab in early. Both to get there and to validate my car repair story. I won't trip any metal detectors with the report. They typically don't check bags that early in the morning, being too busy opening up and walking the halls. The audit book will be inside a cereal box, with the rest of the food items I'm bringing in to replenish our break room." Her confidence seemed to satisfy Hart that she would not get caught.

"And, Danny, it's a good thing you told me to drive in all week and park in the garage. But I guess that was your fall back all along to get to me safely." She shared a shrug. He shared a nod. "Thanks again, Danny."

152

Myles Lowry phoned in a multiple-day car rental on Friday morning. Since he did not know how long he would need for his first foray into the past, he left the return date unspecified. "Sometimes you just don't know what you're going to find and how things are going to end up," were his departing sentiments.

At least that's what the dispatcher told the police was his best recollection of the phone call reservation.

153

Another Friday began at the law firm without Ned Hegerman around to center the day and review the week past and plan out the week ahead. This is what Karidja, Gaby, and Eleanor looked forward to doing once they were invested in Linda Lowry's case Ned was handling, long before that disrupted Monday hearing. Now their efforts were as heart-felt, but not as centered.

A few hours into the morning, Gaby asked Karidja, "I had an idea about trying to find Valerie McKinley. But you said to run anything past you first, so it's properly done."

Karidja set her attention away from her materials, which were a review of custody law in the event of a parental death. "What are you thinking, Gaby?"

"Well, we know from Eleanor's trip and phone call that there is no directory that tracks alumnae maiden names. So, we probably can't get something you considered would be in the general domain. So, we must make a request and be on record for doing it, right?"

"Yes. That's what I could defend in a hearing. Completely above board and transparent," affirmed Karidja.

Gaby continued with a confidence that Karidja was pleased to see returning, even if it took until late in the week after they saw Ned off at his funeral. "Ned always was telling me that it was important to make sure the judge knew Ned respected him. Even if there were contested rulings and the like going on." She waited a minute and said, "So here's my idea." She turned a half turn in her chair to face Karidja more directly. "How about if I make a direct request to Judge McCarver's court recorder. I say that I am closing out Ned's final cases for office procedures and for continuation of actions by other members of the firm. I'd present it as a wider issue than just the Lowry case. I would say I was going through the transcript of the Monday afternoon hearing between the Lowrys and noticed that there was an interruption in the back of Judge McCarver's courtroom, and that the bailiff had to clarify for a non-authorized party that she was in the wrong courtroom. But my files do not account for who that person was. And I was wondering if she, the recorder, could have the bailiff or someone else review the security logs to see the lady's name on her driver's license that she showed for access identification."

Karidja started to reply exceptionally, but Gaby held up a single steady hand. "We only supposed that this Valerie person had Rosalyn's license and that's how she got in. Because that's how it's supposed to work." She picked up a piece of paper and looked at it, put it down and continued. "But how did the bailiff know to tell her she had the wrong courtroom? Was he looking at another license?" She pushed her glasses back up on the bridge of her nose. "Maybe there was a distraction, by her or something else. Perhaps she got past security with her own license with her married name. Quick-spoke the guard with her thumb on her first name? Said she remarried, or that was her maiden name before she was Mrs. Lowry? Who knows?" She made a wobbly parenthesis out of her hands extended over her lap as wide as her knees were apart. "We only saw her on the video after she was past the guard. We never saw them interact."

Karidja was certainly thinking about it.

"Karidja, the worst that could happen is that my asking shows a person used an improper ID to get into the courthouse. That's not on me—us—for asking." She shrugged. "If that happened, we're no further along than we were before. If not, maybe we find McKinley's current name." And finally, "And maybe Judge McCarver gets to thinking that Mellon was up to something himself." She laughed. "Ned would call it a win-win, no lose."

The attorney in Soro was still cautious, but the fan of the Côte d'Ivoire Elephants was all in. Karidja looked atop a file cabinet at her mascot, recently relocated from her regular office for this round of non-friendly away games. "Okay, Gaby, please give it a try." And as an afterthought, "Just let's make sure we tell Eleanor, so you are both not asking for the same thing for different reasons."

154

Eleanor had finished her work for Bruce early enough that it gave her a chance to make one phone call to the SEC. She stepped out for coffee, asking the other ladies if she could bring them back anything, and taking their orders. She was acutely aware that, when she was moving from place to place in the building, she was being watched by a security staff member in a business suit, not a uniform. To her surprise he did follow her to the coffee shop around the corner, standing a few patrons behind her on the line. If she had Gaby's confidence she would have turned and asked him if she could get him a coffee. Danny would have left enough money with the counter server to cover the security man's coffee without saying a word to him. For her part, she just hoped the people between them were ordering enough food to slow him down before he could follow her from the store.

And that's what happened. Just enough time for her to slip around the far corner out of sight and to enter a stationery store with a phone booth.

"S.E.C. New York. How may I help you?" The operator's voice was young and pleasant enough.

Eleanor inquired about talking to a person who could help her locate the name of an SEC transaction agent from a document that was about thirty or so years old. She was asked to hold. She kept looking out for the security man, but she did not see him.

"Yes. Hello? This is archives." said a new voice of an older person.

"Good morning. I am calling from a law firm here in the City. I'm tracking old documents from the files of a long-time, semi-retired partner

who passed away last week. We are trying to make heads or tails out of an acquisition he worked on between 1959 and 1961—”

“I’m very sorry,” said the archivist.

“But I didn’t get to tell you what—” tried Eleanor.

“No. No. I meant sorry he passed away.” There was a little chuckle. “I guess working down here in archives all these years has made me . . . let’s say I used to be a better listener when there were people to work with every day.” Another chuckle. “How can I help?”

“Thank you for your condolences.” Said Eleanor. “Ned was a truly a good man.”

“You mean Ned Hegerman, ma’am?” asked the no-longer-chuckling voice.

“Why, yes. Did you know him?” asked Eleanor.

“Back in the day, as he used to say. I saw the obit.” She sighed. “What may I do for Ned?”

“On one of his acquisition papers, there is a signature of an SEC reviewer. I can’t make out the name. I was hoping to talk to him about the transaction, if he remembers it, and if he is still alive.” That’s all she was prepared to say. More really than she planned. She was taking the chance on Ned’s reach from the beyond to help.

“My name is Mrs. DeWitt. Think of the guy who built the Canal upstate. That way you can remember my name. Mail me a copy of the signature page and the cover page with the date and file number of the document. Address it here to SEC, but put my name and Archives on the envelope. I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.” And that was all she said. The connection was ended. Like she had said, she wasn’t used to talking to people any more.

Danny was certainly influencing Quatrane. She hung up the phone and began to calculate what to do about the security guy. She bought the first paperback detective novel she could find with the gaudiest cover and a copy of the morning’s newspaper. She carried both of them so the book was visible

in front of the folded headline, with the now cold coffees and pastry in the white paper bag from the shop where she left him stranded on line. He was nowhere to be seen on the sidewalk, nor in the lobby.

When she thought she saw the back of his jacket in the reception area through the glass entry doors, she ducked into the ladies' room by the elevator. When she came out a few minutes later she appeared distraught. There were coffee stains on the white store bag with the coffee bean logo and she was still wiping the water off her coat that she had apparently used to clean it off. In that clumsily wiping hand, she clutched the coffee-stained newspaper and a paperback book that had been spared the indignity. Her pocketbook was slung over her shoulder by its strap. With beseeching eyes, she asked him through the glass to open the door and let her in.

As she walked to the back steno pool area and the reading room, he did not follow. She hoped he figured she was not unaccounted for any longer than it would take to stop in the stationer's for a *Daily News* and to pick out a quick-to-read paperback to curl up with over the rainy Saturday forecast for the next day. He could justify absolving himself for thinking she was going to return directly to the office from the coffee shop.

She apologized for the cold coffee. The ladies reheated the containers in the counter microwave. Over their delayed drink and pastries, they exchanged their morning efforts. Though not completed, they had successfully started three identity searches of their own before the week's end—for Valerie McKinley's current identity, for that of an unknown SEC agent, and, hopefully, an acquisitions broker from the past.

Gaby chimed in over her crumb cake topped muffin and her lukewarm coffee, "Now if only someone could make progress on our missing person search for the Lowrys, the ladies that is."

Before the coming week was out, she might have to reassess the head count of missing Lowrys.

At four o'clock on the button, Thomas Bruce and Eleanor Quatrane sat face to face. On his desk was the empty brown expandable file, with the bound copy of the auditors' report beside it. In front of him were the two pages of typed, single-spaced notes that Eleanor had assembled. She had her own copy for reference for the discussion.

"So, what did you come up with, Ms. Quatrane," Bruce requested.

"The overall picture looks complete. There are private and public numbers for Attorney Hegerman and there are financial forms for the company related to his activities." She smoothed out the first page against the top of her thigh with the palm of her right hand. She held the second page in her left thumb and forefinger, and used the other three fingers to stabilize the sheet on her leg she was smoothing out.

"Okay, good. That's what our people found." Bruce seemed pleased, but that emotion was not to last.

Quatrane continued. "The thing that bothers me, though, is that the auditors did not seem to be able to create a sense of balance between the two." She let the comment hang in the air in the space between them.

Bruce looked concerned. She had not seen him frown often. It was not a pleasant sight, as his wife and pets probably already knew. "How's that?"

But she was neither of those creatures. So, she went on, "Ned seems to have expenditures that exceed the income detailed in the company's books. If the independent auditors or Mellon pursue those to establish a value for Ned's corporate assets from these numbers, they will find discrepancies. This is what Ned taught me to do for him as he prepared cases. From what I know from working with Ned on client motions, especially on some divorces, it may seem that assets are being underdeclared or values overstated. I'd dare to say that if I could find these in two days, those independent vultures Mellon will no doubt hire will do so in the weeks they have."

She could not tell if Bruce was annoyed with her for speaking out or angry at the auditors' oversights. "How do you explain what you are saying? What are you seeing? Could you be mistaken?"

And now she knew she was the irksome one in the equation. This was what Ned used to tell her was 'show time, or go time.' And there was only once that she knew Ned to say it was not time to show, it was just time to go. She was sad to remind herself it was Myles Lowry's settlement case.

"Not to sugar coat it, sir. The auditors who did this work in-house were data and statistics biased, it seems to me. They took the firm's data as gospel without question. They discounted all the money that Ned declared as donations, contributions, and charitable funds. The problem that creates is, they do not indicate the firm is the source of income or wealth that Ned used for those giveaways."

She changed papers to have page two on the top in her hand. "An independent audit for Mellon will be similarly biased. That report, and Mr. Mellon, will be predisposed to consider the value of all that Ned gave away came from company assets. And if the audit does not clearly declare the source of those assets, there will be an assumption that there are more corporate assets left undisclosed in the audit."

She kept at it while she had the floor and moved on to page two. "To fix this in time for Tuesday, one of two, or both, things will have to happen. The auditors will have to look again at the company books. Perhaps they have to look back further in the corporate financial history than they were given access. There may be a transaction of value that was held separate from operating funds at some point, and drawn on for special purposes, like charitable donations perhaps."

Happily, Bruce was caught short enough to keep his mouth shut. Eleanor saw a crack in the façade. Could it be he was the managing partner because he was not the top authority among the troika's three not-so-equals. She wanted to keep some cards out of the shoe, but give him enough that he might get the boot. She had read enough about these three pirates to feel she owed Ned that much. She thought of her dad and not her mom as she went on.

“Once Ned had a case of a fairly well-to-do couple with a contested divorce settlement. Ned found that a party to the divorce was an heir to a stipulated endowment, to a college I think. The existence of the endowment had been long forgotten in the family history. The accountants, who the partners getting divorced had used over the years, simply recorded the activity of the endowment, its disbursements and its accrual of interest and investment gains. The opposing divorce lawyers missed it in the initial proceedings. The husband and wife never called it to their attention.”

Eleanor saw Bruce’s eyes were glassing over from her purposefully droning tone. She ratcheted it up and he appeared startled to hear a sharper voice drawing conclusions. “So, sir, maybe something like that has occurred and needs to be gotten at in the next few days.” She was done. She never mentioned she knew of the acquisition in 1960. And she did not ask about the college and university expenses Ned paid out from 1970 to 1979, which Eleanor only learned about herself as she pored over copied archive notes in the previous week, ensconced in the quiet of the reading room.

Eleanor could not believe it when Bruce stood and slid the bound audit across his desk. “Keep this Ms. Quatrane. Study it some more. In case you can find something else out before Monday. “I’ll call those clow . . . auditors . . . in for an after-dinner session tonight and get them working over the weekend.”

Eleanor was hoping what she heard skidding on the desk was not the sound of a buck passing in her direction. Thomas Bruce was a classic example of a desperate man in search of a fall guy. Ned was talking to her once about Bruce and the others who took over the firm being very concerned with appearances. She remembered the former generation of managers who had been ‘released’ from regular duties by these same three partners to focus on a problem in the copyright law department—just as she and Karidja and Gaby found themselves ‘released’ right now to finish up Ned’s business. With her legendary memory, Eleanor heard Ned’s voice talking about the three of them. “Remember” he had said, “Herod once took a head to save face.”

It was Sunday morning. Rosalyn Lowry was sleeping late, even though she had not been out the night before. She had made sure during her trip to the stores that week with Margie that she did not need to go out to have a few drinks on a Saturday night. She watched television while her daughter slept.

On the ABC affiliate she watched Clint Eastwood and Geneviève Bujold in a tense crime-noir movie, *Tightrope*, about a cop who learns how to treat women better, after discovering them so misused and abused in the film. Rosalyn didn't particularly care for the film but thought Bujold held her own against Eastwood. She was disappointed to see that Eastwood let his own daughter play a part in a film with prostitutes being murdered by a serial killer.

Rosalyn stayed awake long enough to watch the news on NBC and see Ross Perot declare he might re-enter the Presidential race to make sure his economic plan was debated. She then fell asleep in front of the TV while a rerun played of Saturday Night Live. The eighteenth season wouldn't start for another week with Bobby Brown and Nicholas Cage as featured guests.

Sometime during the night Rosalyn awoke. She took the time to change for bed, brush her teeth, and straighten out her bedside table. She took her old copy of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* she was re-reading and stood it up on the nightstand's lower shelf with the rest of her special books.

It had stopped raining by morning and the grass was dry enough for Linda to take her extra house key and wander out toward her caboose. Her mother could take her train set away for a while, but she couldn't do anything about the caboose in the woods she knew nothing about.

On this trip to the caboose, Linda found that she could ascend into the roofline of the observation compartment from the inside, and then slide part of the floor closed behind her. It made a great hiding spot. As long as she did not close the panel all the way, it would not lock and trap her inside.

Linda returned after a half hour of imagining riding the rails and talking to the conductor and the engineer. The ground was firm, and she did

not leave any muddy sneaker prints in the house when she came home. She checked her schoolbooks and made sure they were ready to bring to class the next morning.

157

Danny Hart was in his at-home clothes, jeans and stocking feet, and a tee shirt with a Yankees logo on the right breast front. He planned on going nowhere for the second day in a row. He had split his Friday with other tasks outdoors and cooking for the weekend and the days after. He had reserved Saturday and Sunday to do a thorough study of his copies of the documents from under the reading room floor that Eleanor smuggled out in a grocery bag Thursday night.

His answering machine phone rang, and he was going to ignore it, just listen when it stopped in case the caller left a message. But since he was between pages and had just poured a second coffee, he picked it up.

A very uncharacteristically excited Mike Riley almost screamed at him through the line. "Hart. You've got to come right away."

"Why?" Danny asked.

"Because it's Sunday man." Danny never heard Riley call him 'man' before, or use it as a figure of speech.

"Right now?" he asked.

"Yes, he's here. In the yard. I think he's looking for Linda." He inhaled. "Here, boy." He exhaled. "Get here Danny. No walking. Drive right into the dead end. Hurry."

Mike stayed hidden from view and watched him from his upper window. The train rider walked the fence line along the top of the ridge. Halfway across the width of the yard, with his back to the dead end, he turned up the gentle slope five paces and then turned again to his left. He ducked into the natural enclosure under the tall rhododendron to see if he

was fortunate enough to be on time for a tea party again. There was no one in attendance. No places were set. He withdrew and eyed the back of the building.

He had not noticed this door on his last trip, his first to crest the ridge and enter the yard in response to an invitation that was impossible to refuse. He walked over to it to see if he could get inside. He still carried the small device from his former life that had gotten him in out of the rain and cold many times on his journeys. The lock yielded easily. It was a simple affair. He entered and found a light switch that cast a dull grey shade over many storage pens.

He made his way over to a double door against the side wall. He heard the same scraping sound the back door made when he had opened it. There was a sliver of daylight that vanished as quickly as it briefly appeared.

158

There was very barely enough light for the dog to see. It had been light of day when Mike let him off leash to enter. When the door closed there was still some grey. But then it, too, went dark. Not the dark of their walk after feeding, which grew gradually—and that had smells of night come on with the lessening and then loss of light.

Now, it would take some time to get acclimated to the sudden change of more complete light to dark. This was man he smelled, not the night grass laying over and the bugs darting and the bats feasting. It was a man he did not know. And the scent was powerful, with sweat and dirt. He had not marked territory in this space, yet he had sometime not too long ago, but a ways off. It was a quiet man. His step was cautious. His breathing was rhythmic and slow.

The dog matched the man's pace and direction, guided by his scenting. He walked along the length of the back wall as Mike had trained him to do the last few weeks. But along the side wall, the man had not gone all the way to the front end. He had turned back down the first row. So, that is where he went, following the scent. But halfway down the row, he lost the scent. So, he

backtracked. The scent dropped off more than it would have if the man had turned around and come back that way.

Now the dog had to wander to find the scent fresh again. He slowly walked the first row, padding as quietly as he remembered how, claws retracted. When he lost the scent on the floor, he raised up on his hind legs. Mike had not taught him this. The others had, to tree a prey. But this open enclosure of cage wire did not hold a scent like a solid trunk of maple or tulip. He could not see above him. He shied away in case the man was right above. He would never forget being jumped on from above by prey. It had hurt. Badly. He had almost lost an eye. Now he dropped to all fours and scented the air.

He couldn't know or see that the enclosures went right up to the flat concrete ceiling. And he did not hear the stealthy man grappling sideways along the face of the taut enclosure to reach the end of the row, up ahead, and then lower himself back to the floor. By the time he progressed methodically down the row far enough to recapture the scent, the man had moved along two more rows from the entry door.

If his Mike opened the door behind him, the dog might see the man and not need to rely on sound and scent so heavily. But that was not the training. He had to find the prize first, and then bark once for Mike to open the door. If he was unable or hurt, one whine would bring Mike in, as well.

Once more the scent became very strong on the floor and in the air. He did not run it down full speed, but he moved more intensely. He bumped his shoulder and rebounded but did not concede. He pivoted and snarled. There were obstacles to his right, but he sensed an opening. Deeping into that opening here was the strongest scent of man. The scent was fresh and unmoving. The dog lunged before the scent could move. He sank his teeth into the cloth and wrangled it side-to-side. It did not resist or call out or strike at him.

But there was movement from above him that emitted the same scent. It swung down from higher up. Solid objects fell atop the dog and the man dropped to the floor next to him. The dog released the fabric and tried for bone and flesh. But his jaws clammed down on air. He turned. In front of him he heard the scraping again of the bottom of a swinging door, without

knowing what it was. Again, he lunged as the scent moved away from him. His teeth snared the wire mesh before him.

The man and his scent moved off. Be he went without speed. The dog crashed the wire mesh twice more. He tried to go around, but he failed. Twice he ran into some more. And then he bumped items that moved. Other things fell on him from above the ones he crashed and moved. He had nowhere to go. In frustration, not pain, he gave in and whined. Just the once.

Light flooded in as his Mike flung open the back door. The dog saw he was trapped. He could not read the Lowry name on the cube. It was the only one that had been unlocked and left ajar in the entire basement. Evading the dog, the man had walked directly into it and cut himself in the face before the dog, and a plan, was upon him. The dog had charged into the Lowry storage cage and the door had then been shut behind him by the elusive, escaping man.

The taste of the man's outer clothing was in his mouth still and the ragged cloth that had been bundled in the corner as bait lay tattered in shreds. He could see the man now, standing with his back to him. He heard his Mike rushing in.

Mike saw the intruder bent over at the task of working the lock on the door to the staircase upstairs. Mike called out and chased him. The man was fast. He rose and ran in the same motion, toward the twin bilco doors he could clearly now see in the daylight flooding in from the back door Mike left open.

Mike made a choice as he heard, from outside, tires screeching to a stop in the dead end. He swung the cage door open for his barking dog. He could see through the cages the man was running down the far wall and heading for the back door to the yard, the embankment, and the train below. He was too fast for Mike, but not for his hyper-excited dog. Mike's verbal command upped the ante further. The intruder made it through the door first, but the dog took him down in the yard before he could clear the fence line.

"Enough. Break." Riley heard the shouts. He thought it was Danny Hart screaming, as he ran into the yard from the dead end. But the harsh cries came from the grounded runner. Riley was unsure how this train rider knew

the standard police commands. But it was futile knowledge because Mike had taught his dog different verbal orders. Riley had sworn to the kennel owner he would never cede control over his dog to an officer of the law. Never.

Now he called out those private words and his dog released the bleeding, but unbroken, forearm from his jaws. The man on the ground grasped his lower arm and applied pressure. He saw Danny. He heard Riley.

"Just stay there, friend. Or he'll be back on you for your throat." Danny was terrified for the man, to whom he had thrown his stripped-off sweatshirt to use for wound care. But he didn't need to be. Neither Hart, nor the train rider, knew that Riley had never taught his dog to attack fatally. Never. "There could be kids in this yard for God's sake," he'd tell Danny later. But his recent combatant had no way to know this. So, he stayed still.

"Good boy," Mike told the dog as he leashed him.

159

Myles Lowry awoke in his motel room recliner after spending most of Friday afternoon and all day Saturday doing library research. He knew the wrist and elbow draped across the arm of the chair, and poking out from beneath the tussled queen bedsheet jammed up against the chair, did not belong to him, because he had no tattoos adorning his forearms.

Over eggs and bacon and English muffins, orange juice and plenty of coffee, in the motel's complimentary morning café, Myles and his severely hungover guest were able to assure one another there was good reason they both still were fully clothed when they awoke. What began as waiting out the worst of a rain shower and weathering the effects of staying too long in the bar, evolved into a deep and snoring sleep for him and a restless night of tossing and turning for the public library archivist from his boyhood village. The blue-and-grey pulsing light from the silent '*our broadcast day has ended*' television screen kept giving her nightmares. It probably didn't help that the last thing she half-consciously watched was an after-midnight syndicated rerun of Darren McGavin as *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*.

By late morning, Myles had brought her back to her place, a little Cape Cod two blocks from the library, and he was back at reading old editions of the village weekly newspaper on microfilm. She promised she'd come back later in the afternoon.

160

Much to Linda's 'Gentleman Caller's' chagrin, the train pulled away an hour after his take down in the back yard of Mike Riley's apartment house. Fortunately, he was able to tell Danny Hart where to find his scant belongings hanging in his go-bag on a scraggly tree surviving its twisted life on the side of the embankment. In his first month of riding the rails he had lost all he had by leaving it in the corner of a box car when he left to relieve himself and look for food one night. Since then, he always took it with him. Several times he was grateful for the habit. Once or twice, it kept the bag from being stolen by railroad employees inspecting cars at a railyard stop. A few times, when the train started up before he thought it would, he had to hop onto a different car than he arrived in. This mode of interstate transportation seemed to take as much practice to master as frequent fliers needed to know the ticketing for seat configurations on specific airliners.

Now he was only slightly offended that Mike Riley draped a chair—different from his favorite one Danny noticed—with a heavy blanket before telling the drifter to sit in it. From the casualness of their conversation, an outsider would not have imagined the fierceness of the confrontation that scared the neighbors on an otherwise quiet Sunday morning. An outsider had been dispatched by the local police captain, in response to panicked phone calls from two of Mike Riley's neighbor tenants during the fracas. Occupants were still on edge from what was growing in the rumor mill into the certain kidnapping of Linda and Rosalyn Lowry just three weeks before, at the end of the summer.

That outsider was none other than Detective Howe. The captain had chosen her due to her connection with the case and the unlikelihood she'd make a union complaint about getting called out on a Sunday morning.

In addition to the blanket, there were two other things hard for Howe not to observe. One was that the window right next to the blanketed chair

was open as high as the sash could be raised. The second was the Sphinx-like posture adopted by Riley's dog not two meters from the feet of the morning's guest.

"So, I'm to understand you want to press no charges against this gentleman? Is that right Mr. Riley?" She was exaggeratedly formal. When he told her that was correct, she closed her flip-style notebook and replaced her ballpoint pen into the predesigned space for it in the pocket of her protective vest. "Is there anything else I can do for you gentlemen, then, this fine morning?" She directed that barb directly at Danny Hart.

"Well, if you're offering, Detective . . ." he invited.

The other two men in the room were taken a little aback when she inhaled, stretched her lower body by pointing her toes toward the middle of the room, and crossed her legs at the ankles, before asking the investigator, "Yes, Danny. What is it?"

"I may be requesting your . . . shall I say . . . 'sponsorship.'" He smiled. "But first, I'd have to wonder if you have time for a short version of a long story?" He finished by saying, "Without necessarily having to know the parts that make it a fabulous trek and saga."

Howe looked at all three of them. And then she said to the dog, "Hey boy, do you think I should listen to what these fellows have to say?"

The dog had met Howe before, outside on the front lawn on the day of the Lowry disappearances, when she came to interview tenants. Today he remembered her after a moment or two when she came to the door a half hour earlier this Sunday morning. He let her in without incident. He seemed to know she was talking to him now. He picked his head up, pricked his ears, looked at Riley, and then gave a longer look to the man seated in the corner by the open window. He lowered his head from its prior position and let his ears relax and his jaws rest on his forelegs and front paws. He did return his gaze to the corner chair and remained vigilant.

"Well, gents, I guess I'll take that as a 'yes.'" She thought a moment and asked the room. "Does this short story last long enough for a lady to drink a cup of coffee, Mr. Riley?"

“Why, yes ma . . . Detective. It certainly does,” said her host.

“And, Mr. Riley, ‘Ma’am’ is just fine for today, as long as I’m not addressing you by rank, either.” She smiled. They all did. Except the man sitting in the corner. He was waiting for the go-ahead to be a storyteller for the second time that morning.

When it appeared the four of them and the dog were ready for it, the man in blanketed chair sat up and addressed the room. From his appearance it was startling to find he was a remarkably capable speaker.

“My name is Dominic Corredor, with the accent on the final syllable, in the Spanish manner. When I had friends, they called me simply ‘Dom.’ It is four years since I have been home with my wife and two daughters, over in New York. I have been three years riding trains. The year before was mostly on roads. I met Linda here on her sixth birthday, a Sunday. We celebrated it together in the rhododendron bush. She was the first person in years who treated me with respect. Perhaps even more respect than I have for myself at this time. So, when I traveled back this way on a Sunday morning, I hoped to see her if that was possible. Alas, it seems it is not. That makes me sad.” He took a minute to let this introduction set in.

“Before I was on the move, I had a specialty. Not to boast, but so you can understand, I was very good at what I did. Some of my colleagues even told me that no one did what I did better than I did. Even my superiors were known to think that, even if they did not move themselves to say so.” He looked down at the dog and made a slight noise, almost like a kiss, to get his attention. The dog looked up at him more intently. He slowly picked up his hands and opened them, held them near to his body, but in a spread finger, open palm posture. He nodded when the dog looked at him. Then he reached down, ever so slowly, and adjusted the blanket so he could change the way he had his legs set in front of him. He placed one above the other, so he sat cross legged. He nodded to the dog again and set his hands palm down on his upper thighs.

To the others it almost looked as if Corredor was performing a ritual. But that was not the case. He and the dog eyed each other, and Dominic nodded to him. Then he began to speak to the humans in the room again. “My specialty had to do with children. Especially with young children.”

Detective Howe interrupted him. “Excuse me, Mr. Corredor. I must make clear that even though I am not taking notes, I am an officer of the law. Please be careful not to give me reason to take an action that enforces a law you may have found yourself opposing.”

“That is generous and kind of you to say, Detective. And I greatly appreciate it. But you will see that will not be necessary for you to undertake,” he smiled politely. “My expertise was in finding children. Some of them were simply lost. Some of them were undocumented. Some of them had run away. And very unfortunately, some of them had been taken against their will or without their understanding.” He cleared his throat. He watched the dog as he did. But the dog was not upset any longer by this man with the calming voice. He clearly meant no harm to his Mike or Mike’s friends.

“And as you most likely know from experience, Detective Howe, when some of us in law enforcement become so involved with the troubles of others, we overlook the troubles of those closest to us. I am afraid as I worked in situations of danger, I failed to recognize the danger my wife and girls were exposed to was not from bad people, but from me. We were close to needing help with our lives when I left them for two months, undercover, to find four missing children. By the time I found them, they were no longer alive. I blamed myself—and still do—for not finding them in time. Their parents hated me. Since the bad people went away and were beyond their reach, they spoke out against me because I was . . . convenient . . . to them. My daughters saw the news on the television. I could not be at home without long bouts of sadness and depression. I was taken off duty. I was not to be in that work when I was able to be reassigned. I could only support my family if I took disability and sought medical institutionalization.”

The dog snuffled and adjusted itself on the floor. He curled up more toward Riley than pointing toward Corredor. “See even the dog knows I am not one to fear. I used to be when I was hunting those that harmed the children.” He stopped and stared into nothingness. No one spoke or even moved. Somehow the telling of this was more poignant than the first time Riley and Hart heard the shorter version from a man desperate not to be harmed or arrested.

“I decided it would be best to take permanent disability, without terms. My family receives most of my Detective’s salary from what was deemed ‘a grateful’ New York City. And I have traveled to find those people

who killed those four little children. It would seem you have to be willing to play in traffic to catch traffickers." He wiped his face with his hands. "Many of them are now wandering themselves, haunted in the afterlife. Not by my hand, but by betrayal and the anger of their confederates, to whom I made known the sins of their brethren."

"But I have—had—lost all sense of innocence until I was invited to a garden party under the shelter of a rhododendron bush some weeks ago. Revenge is a failed substitute for justice. And I fell to that failure. A failure of character. And until I rediscover it, I can not go home to my wife and children." He cleared his throat again, with absolutely no reaction from the dog.

"So, I ask you to take me on. Allow me to help you find Linda. I assure you I have not lost the skills. In fact, operating alone I have had to improve them. Only, I can not do so as a member of law enforcement quite yet. I can only be perhaps an outside consultant or independent contractor. Whatever, however, you find possible. I only ask for enough remuneration to make myself presentable so as not to embarrass you. And to find lodging and food. My recent choices of portable housing and my mode of transportation are not going to be suitable, I am afraid, any longer."

Howe spoke when she saw the staining on the blanket. "Detective Corredor, you appear to be in need of medical attention. Can we please provide that for you before much more time passes?"

"I would be very appreciative of such treatment. Thank you." And he never asked them again to make a decision about his request. He trusted to leave it up to them to figure it out as best suited their needs and their situations. And Linda's.

After Howe asked Hart to take Corredor to an Urgent Care, so the precinct had no filings for medical transport, she started out without promising Hart or Riley anything. She took the injured man by his other arm and walked Corredor over toward the dead end and Danny's car. As Danny was departing the apartment to get to his car and to the Urgent Care, Riley looked at him hard.

"Danny? I want to tell you something." Riley said.

“What’s that, Mike?” asked Hart.

“My dog. He’s a rescue. Older than usual when I got him. He’s never demonstrated any aggression in the two years I’ve had him. But he’s different since I started training him after the basement incident that Thursday night. I showed him how to prowl the basement from the perimeter and in a grid. Like what I saw the MPs do overseas. But that’s all I showed him. I swear. The rest is all him. He brought it here with him, but kept it inside because he didn’t need it. I awoke something in him, I’m afraid. Something he knew before and remembered.” He put out his hand to shake Danny’s at his doorstep.

He held Danny’s hand a little too long. And then he said what was on his mind. “Danny. About Corredor. Watch out for rescues.”

161

Myles was dozing off at the microfilm machine. So, he took a walk outside to get some fresh air. He had finally found a story that riveted his interest the prior afternoon. He couldn’t help but tell his new friend with the tattoos, April Smith, about it. A legendary heist gone unsolved since he was a kid in town.

And right about then she was sharing that news with a physician with whom Myles was about to become even more familiar.

“You look particular sickly, April. Will you be able to finish this today?” asked the physician.

“This has to qualify as taking one for the team, Doc. I haven’t had that much to drink at one time ever before in my life. I’m glad this guy is okay, or some kids might be fishing me and a zygote out of the Mill River sometime later today.” She was shakily holding a container of very black, very hot coffee from the luncheonette down the avenue. It was still too scalding to even sip, so she wasn’t reaping any caffeine benefit quite yet.

“He’s all over the coverage about that robbery. I can’t figure why he’s so interested. But he keeps asking me to find the microfilm for certain issues

of the old village paper. It seems he thinks the coverage is better as a local angle than the *Newsday* or the *Press* had after they got tired of the story." She tried another sip, unsuccessfully. "Are you ever going to tell me why you're so intrigued by the story and his interest in it, Doc?"

The physician gave what others might think was an offhanded answer. But she'd known him for years. This was his most serious type of communication. The kind she had seen, and felt, it was not healthy to pursue any further. All he said with a flick of his left wrist in a semicircle was, "Highly unlikely, my dear. Highly unlikely."

"The library closes at four o'clock today. I can ask him for that ride home you suggested. I'll ask at three thirty like you said. Takes less than twelve minutes round trip. I timed it yesterday. And when we get home, I'll ask him to go back and get me the item I've left behind. I'll run over to the back door of the clinic right after that and be ready when you arrive." She stood, proudly recalling everything she was supposed to know and do. It was the least she could muster, after all he'd done for her elderly mother.

"What's the rental car type and plate?" he asked.

"Here it is on the library issued visitor vehicle ID card I wrote out. I told him it was so he wouldn't get the car towed after two hours of parking or after hours when we're closed if the car was still in the lot." She handed him the exact information needed to execute the accident properly, with the correct car and driver.

"Thank you, April. You can go over to the library now to help him and keep him distracted. Three-thirty will fit well if he still intends to return to the City this evening, as he told you, to meet the car rental return time."

To be continued next month.