



Custody

Installment Seven
April 2024

Part Two

Custody

Wednesday, September 23, 1992

244

Doctor Denison LeClerc had his hands getting more and more full, and his pockets becoming ever so increasingly empty.

He had a clinic to run and custody of a patient to hide. He had enlisted a prominent brain and behavioral specialist to care for his car crash casualty and alienated his staff liaison in the process. He had brought on board a former patient, medically inexperienced and unlicensed, to provide live-in caregiving to shepherd his victim back to consciousness, and thereby demonstrated his lack of awareness about how that damaged the morale of his nursing staff.

Few on his staff knew what was really going on with the mystery man, behind the postponed asbestos removal in the area that was still barricaded and off limits, yet soon to become the newest wing of the clinic.

On top of that, his illegal financial underpinnings of stolen bearer bonds were about to cost him dearly, with another significant cut in his return on the dollar, if he did not make a money move in the next two or three workdays.

The oncologist-entrepreneur sat in his office, awaiting a conference and report from the psychiatric-psychologist on Myles Lowry's condition and recovery prognosis. He was glad she looked upbeat as she entered and started to bring him up to date. "Well, Denison, today is the last of the three days I promised you. Your special guest is rallying." It was the best opening to a medical review he had heard in ages. He now knew how spouses felt when he told them a tumor had been reduced to insignificance, and no surgery would be needed on their partner after all.

“Will you stay on his case, please, Françoise? How about for one more week to see him along his way?” Denison struggled to sound solely interested in his patient and hoped his financial panic did not bleed through in his voice.

LeClerc had done the calculus in his head. If Oulette would see Myles twice daily for another seven days, it would carry him past the Monday deadline for taking the next tranche of his bearer bonds with Kelly Rocco’s help. By then he would still have about half of the month left that April Smith said she’d give him. Then she would leave Long Island and he would have to pay her \$10,000 immediately and another \$24,000 over the subsequent two years, all to buy her silence.

If Lowry rebounded, LeClerc would work at retrieving the remaining bonds from the heist, that he was convinced Myles had stashed somewhere all these many years. If he didn’t, then he’d cut his loses, flee, and figure things out from there—wherever ‘there’ might happen to be.

But for now, he got to the matter at hand. “What’s your prognosis for Mr. Lowry, Françoise? And how can I ask you to help him progress to better health?”

She replied, “First, his prognosis, as I see it, and as I have learned about him from Miss Smith.” She paused a moment, adding, “And Denison, she has been a powerful asset. Her care and attending to his needs have been magnificent, from my point of view.” She waited for his affirmation, but none was forthcoming.

“Mr. Lowry is sleeping well nocturnally, mostly waking only one or two times a night. But that may be his normal sleep pattern restoring itself for trips to the bathroom. His vision and speech do not seem affected by his head injury, but I did not know him previously, so this observation is April’s input. His vital signs are strong for respiration and circulation. He is alert when he is awake, but does still need a few naps of an hour’s duration during the day. He just drops off into these rest periods, they are not on a timed schedule. They may be related to exertion.

She shifted some notes she was holding. “Following the classic hierarchy, I’d say this about what he can accomplish on his own already. He can transfer, that is, he can get in and out of bed, he can sit down on furniture and then stand up again. He is mobile, that is, he can walk on flat surfaces and

a ramp and climb stairs, if even with assistance of a railing or a cane for support, when he is tired. He can feed himself, though we haven't tried food acquisition and preparation, that is, shopping and cooking. Myles can take care of his toileting by himself, and he appears to be able to shower alone, though he has your male attendant for that for safety considerations."

"Well, these are great signs just three days after a car accident with a suspected head injury," the oncologist proclaimed.

Françoise cautioned, "One would think so, from these outward signs. But you must keep in mind that there have been no customary imagings conducted, and no specialized testing of blood chemistries, no deep tissue brain scans, or the like." She shifted her emphasis. "My specialty is dealing with the impact a trauma has on memory, personality, behavior, and demonstrations of overt physical disability. So, I can only tell you how Mr. Lowry is comporting himself, not whether he has less observable injuries from the . . . event."

LeClerc replied, "But I notice you are not telling me you refuse to keep with his case and demand he be brought to a hospital because he hasn't progressed in those observable aspects of daily living." The oncologist reminded her of their agreement to begin negotiating. "Because that was our understanding after you first met him." He checked her reaction.

"It is true that his progress is measurable, sometimes almost by the hour. And that was our agreement." She paused. "Right now, a hospital stay would just be exploratory. I am concerned that the people you told me about may harm him if his whereabouts become known." She stood. "So, I will stay on the case until the weekend, Friday night, as long as we put a regimen in place concerning his memory."

"His memory? Why his memory? I don't see where that matters," said LeClerc. Truth be known, the fact of others finding out about his memories was what terrified the oncologist. Only he wanted to be involved with Lowry remembering about the bearer bonds.

"Take it or leave it, Denison," she was immovable on the issue.

"What are you suggesting?" he asked.

"You have hired Miss Smith for a month, I understand?" she continued.

"That's right. I don't want my medical people spending time with him. I need them for cancer patients. That's what they are trained for, not amnesia cases." He could be just as intractable.

"Myles is demonstrating some signs of concussive trauma. I need to discover if he has a brain bleed or bruising. I don't want—and I certainly can not afford—to stand by while he has a subsequent stroke because he was not treated or observed properly," she explained. "I am uncertain if he is recalling things from his past, his childhood to be precise, or if he just has disrupted short term memory loss."

She explained the plan. "I propose that he and April visit some of the places in the village that he recalls. By seeing them, by being there, I want to evaluate when they return, if it is his short-term memory that clears or if it is his memories from the past that become better focused. The answer to that will instruct my opinion about other care, and medical treatment, he might be needing."

"Françoise, certainly you can perceive why I would have a problem with letting a person involved in an unreported motor vehicle accident and an eyewitness to that accident walk around town after protecting them from harm here in the clinic for three days." He was stunned she would even suggest what she was saying.

"I thought you would object. I did, Denison. So, I have a solution." She sat back down. They should go out in public only under a suitable distraction of a disguise. And a disguise that is not repeated from one trip to the other—"

He looked at her as if she were mad. "What could you possibly be thinking?"

"I am thinking that your oncology clinic has an array of hairpieces and wigs for radiology patients suffering hair loss. Wigs and hairpieces of various styles and colors. And you have an arsenal of canes and walkers and wheelchairs. And clothing for medical escorts." She stared him down. "On top of that you have unmarked transport vehicles that appear to be common vans for transporting persons with disabilities to parking lots for stores and public venues around town." She kept it up when his body language ceased

protesting. "And I've asked April—she has a driver's license. Your vehicles do not require a CDL license, so a standard legal driver's license is appropriate."

Denison caved. "Go talk to them and see if they will cooperate. Then get back to me with a plan for these excursions for me to approve. It must be her. I can not spare a staff member." He seemed to be asserting his authority, as if he had not just lost a major disagreement.

"No, Denison." He looked up about to protest her reply. But she kept talking, showing him who was the authority. "It has to be April Smith because she has a stake in this, because he trusted her before the . . . crash, and because I need her assistance to plan the trips during my morning call and to evaluate them upon their return and my afternoon call." After a moment to collect herself, she finished with, "Don't you dare think to treat April as a lackey, Doctor. She is an able assistant without whom this protocol and strategy simply will not work."

At that, she started out of his office to head back to the restricted area of the renovation wing of the clinic. She stopped suddenly and turned on him. "Get me the keys to a vehicle after you've had it gassed up and cleaned out of all medical gear. The first excursion starts in an hour."

"And I'll need one person—a knowledgeable person—to come back to see me in ten minutes to discuss and arrange for the delivery of the materials we will need for the suitable disguises I have indicated will be required."

Only then did Françoise leave and go back to talk to Myles and April. On her way, it occurred to her that she would not use a prescription pad to secure any of the things necessary for her patient's regimen.

It was not without a large dose of irony that Thomas Bruce had assembled Linda Lowry's advocates around the same large conference table where they first assembled under Ned Hegerman's direction. Their numbers had been augmented. What started out as a custody hearing had become so much more. All three Lowrys were now missing and unaccounted for. There was a massive financial entanglement of Ned Hegerman's estate, involving a

daughter none of them knew about when they began. And in ways not yet completely clear, a fraudulent acquisition from decades before was the root cause of Godfrey Mellon's current pursuit of treasure and revenge.

Thomas Bruce was not familiar with two of the five of the people around the table. He was aware they were not employees of his law firm. He knew of Danny Hart by name, but had no idea who Dominic Corredor was. He allowed them to hear what he had to say, nevertheless.

"Yesterday afternoon, I was supposed to meet with Gregory Mellon. The purpose of the session was for me to hand over to him the final approved copy of the independent audit of Ned Hegerman's estate. The audit was to present personal and corporate assets attributable to Attorney Hegerman at the time of his death. The corporate assets were to include Ned's holdings of any shares or interests in this law firm. The audit was to represent those two sources of value as separate sub totals and, making certain there was no duplication, to declare a grand total of the value of his estate's assets." He handed out copies of a single sheet of paper, so each person had one to reference.

"As you can see, the line items detail the various sources of the assets. Their total value is the number at the bottom of the tally, midway down the page. You will note it is a substantial figure." He gave them a minute to review the top section of the paper they had just been given.

Then he continued to explain, "The second requirement for the meeting was to provide a timeline for the liquidation of those assets and the dates upon which Attorney Mellon could expect to receive, on behalf of his client—Marie Aello, Ned's daughter—their monetized value as a cash payout. All payouts were to be made no later than eleven fifty-nine o'clock on the evening of December 31, 1992. Otherwise commonly referred to as midnight of New Year's Day." He waited for effect and then went on.

"According to the terms of the agreement, Attorney Mellon has until this coming Monday afternoon at four o'clock to verify that this is the complete and whole list he expected. When he signals that, there are no changes to be made in Ms. Aello's claim."

He wasn't finished. "He can appeal and reject the listing at that same time, but not before, should he or his client wish to do so. Such an appeal will then be turned over to a court-appointed arbitrator for a binding decision."

"I have asked Ms. Quatrane to discuss this matter with you further after I have left. The reason for my absence will become self-evident. Thank you. Good day." And with that he left and would never appear before this assembled group again.

Eleanor moved to the front end of the table, that Bruce had just vacated. "The audit and payout schedule summarized on your sheet is defective." Quatrane gave them a moment. Out of respect, no one said anything in response.

"You know I have worked on this for weeks. I advised Mr. Bruce that his audit was defective on more than one occasion. However, when he asked me if I thought it should be given to Mellon anyway yesterday afternoon, I told him I thought it should." She gave them twice as many moments as she had minutes before. And they gave her the same respectful silence, though it was tinged with an expectation of an explanation.

"The defect in the audit is that it does not declare—in either the personal worth or the corporate asset sectors—the existence of, nor the estimated current value of the remainder of, the Trust derived from the fraudulent 1959 transaction engineered by Godfrey Mellon's father." She saw they all looked back down at the sheet of paper, as if they needed their own eyes to detect the Trust was not somehow incorporated in the totals.

Danny Hart glanced up at Eleanor. She raised her right eyebrow, smiled slightly, tilted her head to the right just a little, and ruffled her clothing with half a shrug. Danny knew that was Eleanor giving him permission to say what was on his mind, but that there may be consequences if he dared to do so.

And so, he did. "Will we need you to provide us with an insight into the reasons for withholding the Trust in the audit, in order to do what you are doubtless going to ask us to do next effectively?"

"I can, and will, but only partially," she replied. Everyone sat back to wait for the explanation. Dominic Corredor was extremely intrigued by these goings-on. It was his inaugural presence in this setting, with this full a table. As was his custom, he was as interested in learning the dynamics of such a gathering, as well as the information to be forthcoming. He had always found such interactions interesting and instructive of his further decisions in these types of situations—whether in a squad room, an undercover assignment, or a family of a missing person.

Eleanor inhaled and exhaled and inhaled again. Then she began. "While my personal reasons are interesting, there are several other rationales of greater importance to us; and two that are crucial for Linda Lowry." That shook up the room.

"I advised Bruce to exclude the Trust because I do not think it is Ned's asset. But I could not tell him why I think that yet, without some further proof. And you're right Danny, I'm going to ask the table to find it for me." She nodded in his direction.

"Now, we should understand that Thomas Bruce has a far different pair of motives. He wants to save face and his job as managing partner. If he can keep the Trust out of the settlement of Ned's estate with Mellon, it will soften the blow by maybe half a million dollars this firm has to pay. But, more importantly, he and his two partners forced Ned out and got four major employees ousted from this firm to consolidate their power and to enrich themselves. If the fraud that engendered that Trust is discovered, they will not only be thrown to the curb by a revolt in this firm's ranks; they will be answering to the SEC, and maybe seeing some jail time." That really made some of her colleagues, who were getting too comfortable at this table, sit bolt upright.

"Two other sets of reasons to stifle the information about the Trust for the time being reside outside the walls of this room, this firm, and this building." She scanned the room to see if anyone seemed to be assuring themselves that they were guessing the answer to her puzzle correctly. Only Gabriella was surreptitiously scrawling on her steno pad. She tried to make it look as if she was doodling. But Quatrane knew her too well, and kept talking.

“Godfrey Mellon isn’t sure why he doesn’t want to object to the Trust’s absence just yet. So, what he did was exactly what Bruce did. You see, the session yesterday afternoon had been surrounded with intense expectation for weeks. There was a time when it was thought this room and table were not going to be of a sufficient size to contain the attendees and briefcases lined up at the door to get in.” She let them sneak a side glance around the room and figure its capacity. Then she kept guiding them down the path she needed them to travel, by saying, “Just as Bruce called me after lunch yesterday and told me not to come to the meeting, because he was going to face Mellon alone—Mellon sent a bicycle messenger to pick up the documents. She signed for them like she would a sandwich delivery. And then she probably handed them to a driver downstairs for safe-keeping and speedy delivery to Mellon, before peddling back to her bicycle barn for the night.”

Eleanor couldn’t resist making sure everyone knew who they were dealing with. She reminded them that Godfrey Mellon was the guy who planted Charles-Spada-the-Spy in their midst for the two years of the Lowry case to betray Ned, telling them, “The creep definitely took her aside in his office beforehand and convinced her the delivery mission was ultra-critical. Poor young woman must have had images of a night with the boss in return for her loyalty and speed.” She shuddered to remember. Across the table, she noticed Gabriella winced and dug her fingernails into her palms, thinking back about Charlie’s demise and flight.

Quatrane got to the point after laying the motivational groundwork. “Anyway, Godfrey knows that disclosing the Trust must be done in a way that his father’s criminal activity is not revealed. He hates his dad because he has grown old and that reminds Godfrey that he will do the same himself one day. But the son doesn’t want his legacy to be sending the father to die in a penitentiary upstate or out in the middle of the plains somewhere. No, his legacy is to avenge his dad’s failed copyright law firm by defunding and destroying this firm. And he’s got his piratical eye on his fee for getting her inheritance to Marie Aello.” She took a breath to settle herself. She hadn’t expected that in trying to motivate her colleagues she would also rile herself up, too. “As Danny asked about what he, and probably Dominic now, can do; it will be up to Karidja to figure a way to divest Mellon of his dreams in a legal manner. Her trip up to Riverdale may eventually be a help in that regard.” They exchanged glances.

"Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, there is growing evidence we have gathered from the basement in New Jersey, and various offices at Columbia and Barnard, that Marie Aello has her own greedy agenda about the Trust. But the whole thing is about to blow up in her face before she can claim it. So, she also might have been interested in keeping it out of yesterday's audit. Frankly, we don't have that whole picture yet. But Gaby is running that hound to the ground and needs a little more time and dirt on Ned's illegitimate spawn." Gaby looked down at her steno pad and made a note. It was not a real note, she just couldn't face everyone just right then; afraid she might fail them or let them down. She longed for an hour to talk with Danny in the reading room to boost her confidence again.

Dominic Corredor was growing increasingly dissatisfied. When he sensed that Eleanor Quatrane was running out of steam, he judged it was time to heat up the room, but on a low flame not with a flashbang grenade.

"I have a question you all most likely know the answer to, but I do not." He got up out of his chair and started to pace around the room. It's this: 'How does tracking down these people and getting this Trust issue fixed by Monday help us find Linda?"

He cleared his throat. "I know it gets us close to Rosalyn and we hope she and Linda they are still together. But I'm feeling that Danny and I, or at least me, should keep looking for Linda, absent the activity on the Trust. Danny and I might have to split our attention between the ladies and Myles—but the cops on Long Island are looking for him, at least. And the patrolwoman out there, Maura, and her squad detective are very competent, and they know the territory. It's just that we don't have one of our group members hunting for that little girl."

He searched their faces. "In particular, where are we on finding the school where they have gone?" He eyed Gaby, "Has Barnard been any help to you, Ms. Costa?" She shook her head that it hadn't. "Would anyone be offended if I went up there to scout around, after you reminded me about which offices you've gone to already and how they treated you?"

Danny Hart was curious if any of the ladies was going to take him aside to ask about Dominic when this session was over. He also was trying to

figure out how they could attack this problem from more than one direction, together or split up, as Dom had said on more than one occasion.

Karidja spoke for the first time. "We have heard many good ideas and much information. We don't all agree on what to do . . . and that is good. It means we will keep asking questions. But I wonder if we can agree that we need to take a break? How about fifteen minutes to get some air, use the rest rooms, whatever. And then gather again for some one-on-one chatting, not so formal, but not for more than a half hour. Perhaps we can draw up some action items after that. What do you say?"

They were unanimous in affirming the idea.

246

Doctor LeClerc was a less frequent visitor to Myles in the solarium than April anticipated he might be. But here he was now, while Myles was resting in his recliner with his eyes closed and feet up. It had been an hour and half since Françoise Oulette had told her of their arrangement. And then she left to go back to her practice and her patients. She said she would come back before dinnertime.

When LeClerc came in, April was folding and stacking the clothing and hairpieces that had been brought in for using on their excursions. There was also an array of sunglasses and hats. He gave April the keys to the gassed up and serviced van. "You're good to drive that vehicle, with Myles aboard?" he asked. She said she was.

The plan had been simple for this first afternoon excursion. They would not leave the van. April would drive through the town just to see if Myles recognized anything. And if so, if he would be able to tell Oulette about what he saw when she returned for his afternoon session with her.

"So, you're all set for this drive?" Denison inquired. "You know the doc just wants to see if he recalls things from his childhood; like he did when they were talking this morning."

"I'm not one hundred percent sure of that," April said.

Denison was impatient. He felt forced into this strategy by Oulette. And now it seemed her 'able assistant'—as she had called Smith—seemed reluctant. "What do you mean? Are you asking me to give you a road map? Come on now, April, you've lived here long enough."

"No. That's not it at all, Doctor," she managed, looking over to make certain their voices weren't disturbing Myles.

"Then what, Miss Smith?" he said more sharply than he should have.

It hurt to hear him talk that way, especially calling her 'Miss Smith.' "What I mean is something entirely different. Let me explain." Her voice was back under control. She sat down and gestured for him to do so also. He was taken aback at her directness, but he complied. As he was sitting, a phrase strangely came to his mind— 'the inmates were taking control of the prison.'

April addressed LeClerc carefully, slowly, hoping to create a thinking atmosphere. "Doctor Oulette asked Myles about the town of his childhood, without saying he was in that town right now. He told her about an elevated railroad, a big church, something that was a game, and newspapers."

"Yes, so? What are you getting at?" the oncologist pursued the issue. It was clear to April he was not a psychologist like Dr. Oulette was. He wasn't being a particularly good listener right about then, either. He was more attentive to her a few years ago, when she was trusting him to remove the threats of cancer from her body. If he hadn't, she would not have agreed to stick around and help with Myles. She decided to give him another chance.

"What I'm trying to say is this—a psychiatrist asked a man a question. He gave an answer. Maybe she made a mistake. Maybe she thought he was answering her question." She looked at LeClerc, bobbing her head down a little and looking vertically at him with upturned, widened eyes. "But what if he was answering a different question?" She gave him a moment. "What if he was answering a question about a town he was just in, only some days ago, and was trying to remember that?" She saw he was starting to understand. She nodded her head twice and said, "Yea, now you're getting me."

All Denison did was exhale noisily. Then he turned and looked at Myles. And then, back again at April, who started speaking to him again.

"He was reading newspapers for two days on microfilm. He drove under the elevated train tracks four or five times, going back and forth from his motel to the library. Traveling in that part of town, he couldn't miss seeing the steeple of the cathedral from his car. And you . . . you left his car under the tracks while he was in the back of the van on a gurney, looking out the windows, up at the sky or out along the road. It was cloudy and rainy, but it wasn't totally dark then."

April gave him time to consider and then posed her sense of a dilemma. "What do I do when it happens that he is really aware of things as they are today—including the car crash and our bringing him here instead of a hospital—rather than recalling his boyhood days?" And then, "Don't you think Doctor Oulette will figure it out pretty quickly? She's going to talk to him about every trip out we take. I think he's going to know something is wrong from all the wigs and hats and wheelchairs. Don't you?" she implored. "I only wanted to help. I don't want to go to jail," she almost whimpered. But Myles stirred and she pulled herself together.

Denison was glad Lowry was waking up. He didn't have to answer Smith's extraordinarily perceptive questions. He couldn't decide which would be worse—being found out to be a serendipitous bank robber, serial thief, and money launderer beginning decades ago? . . . or . . . trying to murder or injure someone with a motor vehicle, effecting a hit and run, withholding or destroying evidence, keeping a person in custody against his will without his permission, and maybe even being a doctor who denied proper medical attention to a patient, all as a result of his self-interest?

247

Unlike the foreboding forests and mountain landscapes of the Grimm Brothers' stories Rosalyn was preparing for the adult book club, she had already transported her daughter to Scheherazade's world of desert oases and scented garden enclaves. The mothers at **HAPPYDALE** would make their way among ogres, deformed hags, and lecherous men taking advantage of maidens and abandoned boys. Linda had begun navigating between transient jinns, young girls and boys wanting to grow up, and older men and women who had, and were so disappointed in what they found when they arrived. The hardcover book of *One Thousand and One Nights* her mother gave her

carried her away to places very different from the countryside she rode and walked across with Black Beauty.

The book's illustrations of wispy clothing and incense clouds engaged Linda's young mind and gave her a thrill inside. She could read the age-appropriate words in the edition of *Nights* that Rosalyn bought for her. The library bookmark her mother provided Linda depicted moons and stars and planets. It suited the nightly magic of stories told by a young woman held captive and spinning stories, rather than flax, to save her very life. Linda was happy to have a replacement placeholder, having lost the one her father had given her.

Linda's heroine storyteller was careful to keep the excitement and wonder going, making sure it never ended when each bookmarked reading session was over. Upon waking on many mornings, Linda would find the book open next to her on her bed or closed with the bookmark carefully in place. Linda's dreams were filled with jinns she was careful not to beseech for any wishes.

248

April made sure Myles was properly provided for as they prepared for their first excursion late that Wednesday afternoon. The sanctioned orderly made sure Lowry had used the bathroom safely. His nurse made certain he was medically ready to leave the solarium and disconnected from all his monitors. The valet had left the van, backed into the parking space as directed, right at the double doors LeClerc and Smith had wheeled Lowry through three days before. The asbestos warning sign was still affixed to the exterior side of the door, forbidding entry.

With a hopefully unnecessary wheelchair folded and braced against the wall inside the back of the van, April and Myles were outfitted in their bespoke wares, wigs, hats, and sunglasses as they made their way out the clinic's back service door. Myles was startled by the sunlight, even though it was shielded by the overcast skies that had dropped the most rain in a day so far that month. He seemed willing to accept April's assistance in getting into the passenger seat and buckling in. She was watching for any reluctance

Myles might have about getting back in a motor vehicle. She did not sense any.

She asked him, "Ready?" when she was settled behind the wheel. The replacement van had an automatic transmission, for which she was pleased. It would make driving and keeping an eye on Myles easier. Lowry said, "All set." Earlier in the day Françoise and April and Myles had talked for fifteen minutes about this trip. They told him it was part of his therapy of getting reacclimated enough to go home. His blank expression suggested Myles might know what the word meant, but that it stimulated no image of a specific location or familiar arrangement of furniture or daily routine.

Dr. Oulette had asked April to use the key words of 'railroad' and 'church' and 'newspapers' in choosing a route to drive into and around the town. She said she realized April would have to pay attention to driving, but she requested that the young woman try to pay heed to any reactions of recognition or apprehension that Myles might demonstrate. The psychiatrist in Françoise advised her 'able assistant' to watch for facial indications. The psychologist in the physician cautioned about sudden or unexplained physical feedback to the environment outside the vehicle. The woman in Oulette wished April well and told her to abandon the experiment if anything occurred that made her concerned or nervous for their safety and anonymity. It did not escape April's notice that the clothing Françoise chose for April covered the tell-tale, identifiable roses and vines tattooed on her arms.

April pulled out of the parking lot of the clinic and turned right, diverting to the residential streets adjacent and behind the facility. She declined making a left-hand turn and avoided the typical route delivery vehicles used to get promptly back to the traffic light between the library and the clinic. That signal was on the main road at the end of the bend of dead man's curve. By choosing her alternate route instead, April did not pass the front of the facility and various lines of sight from windows, and, on nicer days, the walkways and benches arrayed for employees and recovering patients and their visitors to enjoy. And she wanted no part of sitting at a red light and being on display for pedestrians, library patrons, and dog walkers—whom she knew all too well frequented the intersection.

April drove down a residential avenue that paralleled the main road from the library and clinic into the village business district of town. She was familiar with this less-trafficked route because she used it to ride her bike to

work at the luncheonette. It also was the better pathway to an elevated portion of the railroad that was still out of sight from the church steeple. Oulette had advised April to let the highlights of this first trip appear through the windshield gradually, and one at a time.

On this street, no one was currently driving right behind the van. They came to a place in the road where the railroad tracks and the columns supporting the overhead rail bed first became visible ahead of them. April waited an overdue amount of time at the first stop sign they approached. It did not seem to her that Myles noticed, or at least reacted to, the railroad. He did lean forward in his seat, though, and looked in both directions along the perpendicular cross street. It was a four-way stop sign intersection. Myles was checking the traffic as any driver would do before proceeding. April delayed still. She noticed his right foot moved to the right and he pressed the ball of his foot perceptibly forward. So, April did the same and they entered the crossway and drove on straight ahead. She would have to remember to tell the doctor about this in their review of the outing.

The next set of stop signs were at a crosswalk, but not a street intersection. They were nearer the elevated tracks now. This time Myles did seem to take notice of the columns and the line of concrete stretched across their view. But he did not have a strong reaction. He sat unmoved and slowly turned his head to the right, as she had done herself, making sure no pedestrians were going to enter the crosswalk. A woman was approaching, pushing a young child in a stroller. She was far enough away that a casual daytime driver would not have waited for her to cross in front of them. April decided to move along. The van would not appear abnormal or worthy of particular notice. And the woman would be one fewer person to remember she saw a man and a woman in a van, with the woman driving.

They rolled up slowly to the last stop sign before the railroad overpass. She had driven Myles close enough now that he would have to lean forward and look up slightly to see the railway. She turned left, going down the access lane parallel to the elevated line. It addressed a neat line of front-end-in parking spaces for train commuters. All Myles could see now of the railway were the cement octagonal columns under the overhead line. April would tell the doctor later, that he looked at them mostly through his side window and not the windshield.

Without much notice, the van and the street started to vibrate. Myles was aware something was different, changing. He reached out and placed his hands on the top of the dashboard in front of him. April brought the van to a slow, rolling stop.

They were overtaken by the rushing noise of an express train that was not stopping at this station. The car shook and the glass in the side windows quivered. Myles shuddered, noticeably. April could not tell it was from surprise or fear or some other emotion. His hands clenched on the dash, and he looked straight ahead, so she could not read his facial expression as she had been asked to do by the doctor. April would certainly suggest this was an event in the excursion worth examination when Oulette talked to Lowry upon their return.

Quietly, the disguised driver asked her passenger, "Are we okay to go on?" Equally silent, the man in the hat and sunglasses nodded that they were. And so, she drove on. She made a mental note to ask LeClerc to get her a train schedule to avoid surprises the next time they came out.

There was an increase in the number of people crossing the street and climbing the stairs to the platform as they neared the station portion of the line. The access lane ended at the main road at a traffic light. She had forgotten she would have to jog out with a right turn, go under the tracks, and then make an immediate left turn to drive down into the commuter and public parking lots on the other side of the elevated platform. April discovered this tight chicane was easier to negotiate on her bike than in a van, but she managed it without too much stress. The maneuver involved an extra pair of traffic lights and two crosswalks now filling with commuters, coming and going, who were constantly looking through the windshield at them. Some were very expressive with certain motions with their hands and fingers, as they had to walk around the front of the van when it encroached upon the walkway.

April was too occupied to pay much attention to Myles. But it seemed to her he was fascinated by all the activity, but unsure of what to make of it—perhaps especially understanding what he did to earn the digital wrath of displeased passersby.

When she broke free of the walkers, April drove away from the railroad station portion of the line. She was following Oulette's directives

about unnecessary sensory overload. She really did not want to be near the station when a train arrived on this first venture into civilization, which might become less than civil. There would be plenty of time for that on their next trips, notably those where they parked the van and strolled around.

A large, red box truck blocked their final escape from the station area. It was double-parked. The driver stepped down from the cab and walked along the left side of the vehicle to the rear liftgate. With a smooth motion, he unlatched the door lock and yanked up on a looped, leather strap. The accordianed overhead door on the back of the truck rattled distinctively in a crescendo as it rolled upwards. Myles snapped up to attention in his seat. He stared at the delivery man as he picked up a bundle of newspapers, hefted it onto his left shoulder, pulled the door down, again noisily, and walked into the railroad station to deliver the evening editions to the newsstand before the commuter trains began to arrive.

Myles continued to stare straight ahead at the closed back of the truck, as it pulled from in front of them and April was able to get the van out around it and drive them away. She purposefully headed to the far end of the blocks-long lot, where she and the oncologist had abandoned the wrecked rental car. She had no idea of whether being there had any effect. Not so much because Myles was most likely not conscious on the lashed gurney in the back of the damaged van that night, but because he was still staring out at the red truck that hadn't been there in their windshield for the last several minutes.

She made a slow pass by the church, but Myles still seemed to be distracted. He did look at the church as they drove along its long gothic side with flying buttresses and stained-glass windows. But he did not appear to react to it any more than he did the elevated railroad when they first approached it at the stop signs earlier. Myles saw the front of the church when April slid the van into a parking space in the lot between the railroad station and the cathedral. She saw no noticeable signs, what Oulette had called recognition or apprehension.

The round, rose window was huge and the steeple was tall and formidable. But they registered nothing in Myles. Perhaps, she mused to herself, the red truck had used up his quota for this trip.

April essentially backtracked to get to the same less-traveled street she would use again to return to the clinic. To get to that street, she turned

out of the parking lot and on to the companion access road to the one she had used on the way in. This ran in the opposite direction, also as a one-way, to the main street of the village business district. She wouldn't need to go through the chicane going this way. April was concentrating so much as she drove that she did not notice they went right past the editorial office of the local weekly newspaper she and Myles had been researching on microfilm in the library just a few days before—before the night in the motel, the restaurant collision, and LeClerc's clinic.

249

He didn't want to make the call that Wednesday, but Mellon did— and confirmed for Marie Aello that the Trust had been kept out of the audit and payout schedule meeting the prior afternoon. He was just cowardly enough to tell her she got what she wanted; and sleazy enough not to admit it wasn't his doing.

250

"This is a tricky proposition," Françoise Oulette explained to April late Wednesday afternoon. "I can talk to you about plans for excursions and what I'd like you to try with Myles. And I can ask you what you thought about what took place, as we did while the attendants were taking care of getting Myles settled back in bed. As you can see, that trip really wore him out." They looked over and saw that Myles was resting, and that he was awake.

"But now I am going to talk to Myles. It is a patient-doctor exchange. And that is subject to privacy considerations. I will have to make sure it is only the two of us that can hear one another. Do you have any ideas about how to make certain that happens?" the doctor asked. It did not surprise April that Oulette was solicitous. But it was awkward, just the same.

"Will it do for you if I go down the hall to that room they set up for me? I haven't been using it as much as they thought I might, other than the toilet and the shower. I've been keeping an eye on Myles mostly by staying

here in the sunroom." She had already changed out of her excursion disguise and was back in her own clothes.

"I hate to make a prisoner out of you," said Françoise.

"I have that detective book I can read. I'll be fine. If you feel badly about it, next time you can bring me a coffee and a piece of pie or something to snack on." She smiled to show there were no hard feelings. And then she threw in, "It's about Myles anyway, not about me. We both know that. Right?"

"You are very special, Miss Smith. I hope you know that," was the doctor's smiled reply.

"Come see me after, so I know what to do next . . . for Myles," she looked over to him in his bed in the corner as she went to her room.

251

Taking advantage of lunch break to sort laundry, Rosalyn put in a machine load to wash for the things she would need to pack the next day for her Philadelphia trip Friday and to make sure everything Linda would need was ready for her during Alexandria's weekend 'companion time.' She would switch it out to a dryer when she took her mid-afternoon break and collect it all up at the end of the workday. That way she could use the evening, after Linda went to bed with Scheherazade, to take care of maps, schedules, cash, and assorted items she would want ready Friday morning.

Getting all these preparations out of the way Wednesday would give her Thursday if she needed to go shopping for last minute items. How she would accomplish that she was uncertain. Rosalyn had not had much to do with Valerie and Taylor for almost two weeks. And she had clearly angered Margie that morning, by not hiring Katie for the weekend.

She told herself she would have to orchestrate Thursday without her two previous 'rides.' Perhaps Miss Alex would drive them, if she switched their at-home pizza plans to a dinner out.

Myles propped himself up on a few pillows with Oulette's permission and assistance. He was pleased that she didn't mind him staying in bed for their discussion. The whole idea was something he was not fully understanding anyway, he told her. The physician was equally happy he stayed rested and calm. She thought it would allow a better exchange.

She asked him, "What do you mean when you say you don't 'fully understand?'"

"I don't know why that woman took me for a ride and why you want to talk to me about it." It was really that simple. He was not argumentative. He seemed willing to cooperate. He just had no understanding of what they wanted or why they were doing what they were doing.

She asked him what it was that he saw as they drove around.

"We saw a train trestle. We heard a train go by, but we did not see it. We saw some people that gave me the finger. I don't know why. I didn't do anything to them. There was a big red truck. And there was a huge church." His voice was as emotional as it would be if he were telling her what he wanted her to get him at the grocery store—milk, eggs, bread, sugar . . .

Oulette asked him if he would be willing to take another ride the next day.

He said he had no objections. Then he surprised her by musing, "It would be nice to get out and around. Maybe tomorrow it won't be raining."

She did not want to miss this chance. "Would you like April to park the van, so you both could get out and walk around in the village?"

"That would be nice. Where would we go?" he replied.

"Is there anywhere you would like to go?" she asked him.

"What is inside that church?" he said.

“Would you like to go in . . . and see? Do you want to go in when there are many people there having a church service? Or would you like to see it just by yourselves quietly?” It was her job to learn, not to tell, a patient what he wanted. But now she was also purposefully pushing boundaries by asking him this many questions at once for him to grasp and answer. She wanted to see how his brain would handle a complex communication. And a decision-making process after that.

“I don’t think I liked it when all those people crowded near the window today.” He seemed tentative, but certain at the same time. Myles did not know it, but he was experiencing the paradox of his traumatized brain managing information and interpreting emotions.

She took him to mean the van’s windshield, but let it go. She wanted to get him, and their discussion, back to the church. “Okay, so I can ask April to take you to the church tomorrow morning after breakfast?”

“Okay,” he answered. “Why not?” It was a reflexive expression. He wasn’t expecting an answer, as far as she could tell.

“Myles, is there anywhere else you would like April to bring you after the church tomorrow?” she left it open-ended this time.

He appeared to be giving her question considerable thought, for some time. Oulette was just about ready to think their time together was coming to an end. But again, he surprised her, asking, “Do you know what it looks like above . . . on the train station . . . where those people were going to . . . up the stairs?”

“Would you like April to bring you up there, so you could see?” Françoise asked in a somewhat more cajoling tone, to see if that influenced his reaction.

Myles looked out the single exposed expanse of glass across the room. Oulette had drawn back the window’s entire vertical blind on its track, not just opened the vanes to let in some cloudy daylight. The psychiatrist-psychologist had wanted Myles to be able to see the van parked out back as they talked. She did not want him to rely on his memory alone, without the help of a visual cue, to have Myles remember the excursion she wanted to

listen to him talk about. She would have April draw it closed when she and Lowry were finished, and her 'able assistant' returned to be with Myles.

After another long period of no talking, Myles said, "That would be nice. I think I would like that, thank you."

The doctor realized that he was getting tired. It was taking him longer to process her questions. He was requiring more energy to formulate his answers. And his speech was conforming to set pieces of polite conversation he probably learned as a young man, as the way to talk to elders and persons in authority.

His fatigue and language fit a pattern of concussive aftermath and recovery. But that was not an exclusive diagnosis. She would have to provide more activity challenges and then witness more of his behavioral responses to make a better judgment.

She stood and extended her hand to see if he recognized the social convention. He did and he shook her hand. "Well, I will be going now, Mr. Lowry. I will see you tomorrow morning. Have you any questions for me before I go?" she offered, somewhat automatically in actuality.

She was again surprised when, after a few steps toward the room where April was reading about Detective Bosch, Myles said, "Yes. I have one. One question, that is." He waited and thought it was okay to ask, so he did.

"Who is April?"

He did not seem to want an answer, because he had already turned his head on the pillow and looked almost fast asleep.

Oulette knocked on April's door. When the young woman's tattooed arm extended some roses in opening it, the doctor pretty much kept to herself what Myles had to say.

She asked the doctor, "Done?"

"Yes, he's asleep." She did not step in when April moved back a few steps to allow her entry. "Would you drive him again in the morning, please? After breakfast and before I come to see him at 11:30?" she asked.

"Sure. Where to?" replied April, disappointed the doctor did not except her invitation to come and sit together. For she really did want to talk and was not sure LeClerc would be the one she'd prefer to ask the questions on her mind.

"He would like to go inside the church, and he wants to see what's up on the train platform," she itemized fairly clinically. "Are you okay with that, April?"

She said she was, and then asked, "Different disguises? Should we use the wheelchair, so he doesn't get too tired to walk?" Smith inquired in a similar technical kind of voice. But before the doctor could reply, she added, "Does the order matter? I mean, which one we do first? And can we get a train schedule from the clinic office, please? I don't want to be up on the station when a series of trains come in, and the platform is filled all of a sudden with people getting on and off trains. It will cause Myles great distress if today was any indication."

Françoise Oulette chuckled aloud.

Smith was offended. "What," she demanded.

"Nothing bad, April. It's just that I warned . . . threatened. . . LeClerc not to belittle you. That you were an 'able assistant' to me. And if he treated you badly, I was off the case, and he could figure out to do with Myles on his own." She gave it a moment while April decided whether Oulette was pulling her leg or not.

Suddenly April burst out and they both had a good laugh together.

253

Karidja Soro sat quietly at home Wednesday night. She kept reading and re-reading the two-page, Trust-related document that Mike Riley had acquired somehow, and passed on to Eleanor.

It must have been important to Marie Aello these two decades later. But why did the document reside in Rosalyn's possession? And what was an

Assignment Protection anyway? She had not encountered one previously. But she did not specialize in the seventies counterculture struggles either.

On face value, it appeared to be a co-signed agreement between Aello and Young when they were in school, perhaps even in grad school for the older Aello. The language suggested the two students had entered into some sort of agreed transfer of scholarship value from Marie to Rosalyn. But it was tangled.

The money was technically not a scholarship from either school—that is, from Columbia to Aello or from Barnard to Young. The scholarship was the sole designated use of the entirety of the Trust—that is, there was nothing else the money from the Trust could be used for. The Trust, and the increased value it accrued from investments, would pass to a subsequent generation, until it was exhausted.

The intent of the documented agreement seemed to be to trigger the transfer of scholarship receipt when one institution expelled the student currently using it. In the first instance, when living persons could be referenced, the agreement seemed to say that if Columbia expelled Aello, presumptively for protest activities, particularly those that consisted of felonies, then Young began to collect the scholarship monies.

Reading it over and over again, and making legal notes, and patterns of logic as syllogisms as she went along, Karidja still could find no legal precedent in inheritance law or in academic financial practice.

She grew too tired to continue. She re-organized the papers, placed them in her briefcase, and set it aside to bring back to work Thursday morning.

The last dog walk of the night took a detour. Mike let the dog wander in the back yard, patrolling to protect entry into the back door to the basement storage area.

Riley entered under the illumination of his flashlight only. He went to the Lowrys' cages. He used the padlock key to open Myles's side of the enclosure. He stretched again through the divider and extended his arm as far as he could. He managed to return the distinctly-addressed envelope, with Marie Aello's twenty-year-old handwriting, back to where it had been for so long.

Thursday, September 24, 1992

255

A new Thursday dawned. And, with it, Gabriella was called in to Thomas Bruce's office first thing.

"Miss Costa, I have a special and time-sensitive job for you to start and finish by the end of tomorrow. That's why I have asked you to come here as soon as your coat was off and on a hanger." Gaby spent very little time in this man's presence one-on-one and she steeled herself not to be impressed by his outsized sense of self-importance.

"You know from working with Ms. Quatrane that we expect a financial challenge Monday from Attorney Mellon. Here is what I need you to provide for my review and execution to use to reduce the claim he can place on this firm." He was curious as to why Costa just sat quietly and listened, without acknowledging him.

"From the time of the weekend before Labor Day until yesterday, I need a day-by day summary of billable hours for this firm's employees' and hired investigators' on the Lowry matter." He saw the blank look on her face and reacted poorly. "Are you unable to do that, Miss Costa? Do you not appreciate how important this task is I am entrusting to you?"

Gabriella spoke softly, having learned well from Karidja. "I can ask Hart for his and his company's numbers. I can get numbers for employees I know about: Soro-Quatrane-Hegerman and me . . . and . . . I could use our standard assessment mark-ups for support staff, machinery, phones, etc."

She waited a moment, "But if you are going to have to defend these numbers for some reason, I should use a fifty-per-cent reduction rate, since once you put us in the back room, we had none of those services available." Bruce's eyes filmed over with angry smoke. She calculated this was now her coup de grâce. And she was not asking for a blindfold.

"But you will have to get me the names and hours for the security personnel and those from agencies outside the company you had tracking us and eavesdropping on our phones. Or just have their supervisors and middle managers who did the hiring provide me with a lump sum. They can give you breakouts to get to those totals, if you really need them."

He stood up and walked over to near where she was sitting. "They told me you had some balls, lady."

"I can assure you sir that I couldn't possibly know who told you that, because there isn't a man—or woman—in your employ who has been in my pants to know." Gabs did not budge. "And neither will you," she assured him, in case he was thinking of dickering with her future.

"You can leave now, Miss Costa. You have a lot of work to do." Bruce said nothing else.

She left and got right to work.

Back in her steno office area next to the reading room, still available only to the three loyal Hegerman devotees and their hired investigators, she looked over her calendar for the month and the end of August. Gaby was surprised at how many crucial events occurred on a Thursday. It looked to be one of the most eventful days of the week in the recent Lowry saga.

After all, it was on a stormy Thursday that a rain-drenched Rosalyn Lowry appeared unannounced at Myles Lowry's place of work to invite him to a birthday dinner for their custody-disputed daughter, Linda.

Within just a week, the next Thursday was the occasion for Rosalyn to get hired as librarian at **HAPPYDALE** and for Danny Hart to begin working for Karidja, with Quatrane and Costa, on Linda Lowry's disappearance.

Most of their working group were convinced it was Rosalyn and her former school mate, Valerie McKinley, who made a stealth supply run into the apartment in New Jersey late on that same Thursday evening.

And the day after Ned Hegerman's Wednesday funeral the following week, the law firm's security chief initiated his surveillance on Ned's staff. She had no regrets about reminding Bruce of his lack of decorum and trust. She was just happy all that was behind them now, as a result of Detective Howe's master bluff about protective custody.

The other earth-shaking event that took place that after-funeral Thursday, which would not be recorded in Gaby's billable hours for Bruce, was something to which she was still not privy. For it was that evening Eleanor Quatrane made her initial drive across to Danny Hart's New Jersey home—to bring him crucial evidence of a legacy of wrong-doing at Ned Hegerman's law firm and they began their covert activity together on Linda Lowry's behalf.

256

After breakfast, Myles Lowry and April Smith began their second expedition. The train schedule was such that it made sense to go to see the interior of the church first and the train platform second. As things turned out, since there were no mid-morning funerals at the church, it was practically empty when they arrived.

The space seemed cavernous, it drew their minds and imaginations to the otherworldly. This was the legacy of Gothic architecture. Its purpose, founded centuries ago on a continent far away, was still successful in an increasingly agnostic decade in a society slipping toward atheism.

Myles arose from their prop wheelchair, also close at hand in case it became necessary after his exertions. He slowly ambled up one of the side aisles. He looked at the artwork depicting moments in the last day Jesus lived on earth—and didn't: dragging himself along the way, telling some women not to be afraid, falling down, having his clothes stripped off, being put into a tomb.

In between these passionate reminders, there were alcoves Myles went up one step to enter, to see statuary and stained-glass windows commemorating believers who paid their own dear price for thinking and feeling the way they did. Myles saw here the black wrought iron racks elevating the winking votive candles that parishioners and strangers had lit—seeking the intercession of these revered men and women—on behalf of what seemed to be equally insurmountable problems in their own lives. Something of an interstellar referral system, of sorts, for some. A creedal assembly of eternal souls, in infinite communion, for others.

Lowry moved as if his minder was not along for the journey.

He stopped at the opening into a bench that stretched halfway across the expanse of the edifice, all the way to the main aisle. After a few moments of watching frontwards and sideways and backwards through the cathedral, Myles felt this place to sit was paradoxically sufficiently isolated and in the open. All that remained was his gaze roofward, which might have been mistaken for heavenward by an unknowledgeable onlooker. Myles ascertained where the chandeliers were in the vicinity. He was satisfied with the optics and illumination, and confident he was not likely to be struck by one, should it fall during his time below.

He side-stepped into the space and sat on the wooden bench. April stood off to the side in the aisle, near the folded wheelchair and somewhat behind him; not wanting to interfere or intrude. After three minutes or so, Myles leaned forward and reached down to lower a kneeler in front of him. With that in place, he moved his entire body forward and rested almost all his weight on his two knees. After that he extended his forearms to rest on the back of the bench seat in front of him and suspended his hands over into the space of the pew immediately before him.

With that, he turned his head and looked at April. She was moderately surprised that he still knew she was there. He nodded sideways to the space on the bench to his right. There was plenty of room for her to occupy between him and the end of the pew, an aisle seat after a fashion. She went from thinking he had forgotten about her to realizing he wanted her not to feel forgotten. She accepted the invitation and entered the seat next to him, and then, as he had done, she knelt.

As she looked over the bench at his hands, she noticed he was moving them in unison, in a way that made him appear as a puppeteer with a marionette. Now she understood why he eyed the chandeliers before choosing his desired seat. Each of his hands threw a grey shadow onto the highly polished, and parishioner-worn, brown oak wood seat before him. The shadows were not dark. In fact, they almost had the appearance of a film negative or an x-ray. She thought she perceived the lines of the skeleton of his fingers, with a lighter gray aura around each of the ten of them, fanned out as he held them.

This was no accident, she understood. This was precisely how Myles expected his hands would appear. He saw she was noticing what he was doing, and then turning to her, he smiled. Then he gestured forward with his head to encourage her to watch again. Now he moved his right hand slowly toward his left. But rather than letting them touch, he kept the left hand about six inches lower, closer to the bench seat, than the right. As he gradually moved his right hand, so it was now occupying the air above his left, April saw what he wanted her to notice. There on the bench seat before them, where the two shadows overlapped, they became decidedly darker. But the other edges and centers of each individual hand's shadows stayed their lighter gray. It was as if he was forming an anti-eclipse effect right before her eyes.

Myles had done this so many times before in his life, in this church and in others like it, that this was not an illusion to him. It was not magic. It was the very nature of how the chandelier lights behaved in a modern gothic cathedral. He knew that in a post-modern house of prayer, whose clear windows were glazed to let in immense amounts of daylight and whose bench seats were of lighter wood, these optics would not be visible, nor even occur in the realm of the invisible.

Then, all of a sudden, like the express train the day before, the air rushed out from the loft above them. The church organist had come to practice, while there was no service scheduled, and only a few visitors to have their prayers interrupted, or perhaps even enhanced. The musician played for several minutes before reaching the crescendo of the hymn's final measures. The music stopped as abruptly as it began. The unique vibration of silence in the cathedral washed over Myles.

A church's pipe organ was a tremendous instrument of beauty and sound. It could fill the space of an immense house of worship and open the tight chambers of the human ear and chest. But it was created to inculcate an almost punishing and fierce quietude in its wake. It made the spirit soar. And then dashed it to the ground. This was the sound of the presence of God and its hauntingly absent aftermath. This was the consumed burning bush of Moses and the waters gently lapping the shore after the chariots of Egypt were no more.

These were things that Myles Lowry learned early in his life. He came back here to this place and now he saw that the world could still work the same way. The two women caring for him, and the man who did not, had no idea he was doing more than reliving memories from his boyhood past. And how could they not? Because until these revelations of light and sound, Myles did not know it either.

257

Her captain was standing next to Maura Hammersmith's desk. Her head was resting on her crossed arms. He wondered if she was 'dream-organizing' again. That's what she told him once she did in these ten-minute escapes that even the noisiest activities of the police station did not seem to interrupt. He'd been watching the clock since he saw her turn her head to one side and lower it. Her ten minutes were about up. He wanted to be there to ask her how the case was going.

"Hello, sir," were the words that accompanied her rising from the desktop. "Did the detectives hear anything more from their canvas?"

It did not surprise him that he became the one answering questions and not her. Somehow, she always was a step ahead. But even in her sleep? Incredible! he thought.

"Nothing yet," he informed her. She looked disappointed, but not defeated. Before she could ask him anything else, he pulled up a chair and sat next to her. He gave her a styrofoamed coffee, one sugar, two creams. She sipped and thanked him. "Maura, one of your other ideas has provided a lead, though."

"Which one? A solid lead?" she asked.

The captain marveled at how suddenly Maura always returned from her dream-organizing. There was never a bit or sleepiness in her eyes or drowsiness in her voice. "The microfilm search," he told her.

"What did she find?" Hammersmith was trying to control her adrenalin. She knew all too well how high hopes could be dashed when a lead waded into unknown waters and drowned.

"She interviewed the head research librarian. I didn't tell her to do that. She just did of her own accord. Good thing she did. Turns out she . . ." He saw his officer was antsy, so he just told her . . . "The reels that are on the machines the longest signify the newspaper editions that are being read, not just scanned. Seems that data is clocked by the mechanical readers and collected by the librarians. The officer you suggested I assign to this task told me the on-screen report of weekly use looks something like the line-by-line printout of a phone bill. The librarians assemble the data on a regular basis to manage the inventory and to make sure specific reels are getting the attention they need, so they don't let fingerprint damage or sprocket tears go unrepaired."

Now her captain noticed Maura getting fidgety. So he cut to the chase, as she was fond of asking him to do often; at which times she always ended the request by saying "respectfully of course, sir."

"Frances says the pattern of newspaper editions Lowry studied consistently shared one featured storyline." And before she could ask him, the captain told Maura, "It's about an old bank heist here in town. Untold amounts in cash and bearer bonds—maybe in the millions—were stolen during a delivery transfer. Strange thing is, the case has yet to be solved, the bonds still are unaccounted for all these years later."

"And that's what Lowry was researching?" she asked. "The guys from Jersey never said a word about money. They were chasing down a missing persons case." She reflected on the day she met and talked to Danny Hart and Dominic Corredor. Nothing came to mind about a robbery. They said a kid had gone missing not money. It was a custody dispute not a bank theft. "I'm going to call those guys and see what they know. They are going to regret it big time if they lied to us, sir."

The captain asked her, "Hold on. Let's not get sidetracked quite yet." She drained the last of the coffee, crushed the cup, and tossed it into the wastebasket beside her desk.

"Hammersmith. Isn't that a drastic way to treat a cup?" has asked.

"Did you say a 'cup' or a 'cop,' sir?" she replied.

Pointing to the trash he said emphatically, "Cup!"

"Oh. Sorry. That's my caffeine intake control, sir. No empty cup in hand to refill mindlessly." She saw his skeptical look. "No really, you'd be surprised how well it works."

He gave her his best authoritative stare and said, "I don't want to be hearing that some NYPD cop or Jersey investigator got crushed and thrown out. Do we understand one another?"

"All too well, sir. All too well," was her reply, which he understood was not a statement of agreement.

"Maura. How about you stay on this with Patrolwoman Frances at the library and the detectives? I'll get someone to do the midnight shift. Someone will want some overtime, I'm sure." He did not want her falling asleep on an overnight. How ironic to have to discipline her for such a thing.

"Great. I'll go home and uniform up and be back soon," she said.

He answered, "You have your shield and weapon with you?"

"Yes, sir, I do," she assured him she was following protocols properly for off-duty time periods.

He told her one thing and asked another. "That's uniform enough for what you have to do." And after a pause, "And what is it that you are going to do?"

She already knew. Which was no surprise to him. "How can I find the files—ours and anybody's—on this theft? I'll have Frances come back from the library and go through them here. She's a bloodhound. She knows more

than any of us recently on this story. She'll let me know if this cash and these bonds are part of this Lowry disappearance." She looked for a business card in her top drawer.

"And then I'm calling," she looked at the card, "this Hart character. I'll go from there." She ran her hand through her hair, which the Captain knew was her 'tell' for thinking on her feet. "He's still looking for the kid over there in Jersey. So, I've got to keep looking for the dad here."

"Two other things, officer," said her captain. "This morning marks the end of the seventy-two-hour period from the alleged disappearance that the judge said we had to wait to execute the search warrant you begged me to request. Why don't you go meet Frances at the Smith woman's apartment? It's right near the library. As you say, she'll know some of what to look for—and, of course, you'll know about the rest."

"I can do that . . . happily," she said. "The canvas of neighbors turned up nothing so getting inside might help after all." She paused. "Captain, you still think they're together, right? And we're not going to find her body in there, or something?"

He declined answering. "And the other thing, Maura . . ." he waited until she shook off her last idea and was ready for him to talk. "I'm going to see if we have any retirees here in town, or maybe county or state guys who worked that heist. Maybe they can shed some light."

258

April wheeled Myles out of the church and over to the crosswalk to the railroad station. She had to wait a moment for a police car that had turned out of the station parking lot and headed toward them. April was surprised to see the driver was a woman not wearing a police uniform.

They rolled smoothly up the inclined curb cuts that had been newly cemented in front of the station. But the yellow urethane truncated domes underfoot for the visually impaired made it a little bumpy continuing to the station door. In the main room of the station there was an elevator off to the immediate right they could employ to get up to the platform. April was

focused on getting the wheelchair over to the area in front of the door, without being close enough to get run into by a person in a hurry getting off the elevator and rushing for a quick exit to the street.

Myles, however, was fixated on the view straight ahead as they entered and then to his left when April rotated the wheelchair. The floor-height shelf was stacked with the *Herald* and the *Globe*, the *Post* and the *News*, on one end and the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Newsday* and the *Times* on the other. Above them facing out were candy bars and packs of gum and pulp paperbacks. The cigarettes and bottles of non-prescription medical supplies were behind the clerk and not within reach from the station floor. The array of newspapers and magazines and books was stunning for a suburban community stop. But it was geared to serve weekday commuters to Manhattan in one direction and weekenders heading out east at the other.

He couldn't place it, but Myles sensed something—or someone—was missing, as he felt April pushing the wheelchair into the elevator carriage and he had to turn to look straight ahead.

The platform was sparsely populated at this time of day. The schedule April consulted showed the last of the city-bound trains departed almost fifteen minutes before, when they were over in the church, getting Myles back into the wheelchair.

As they had discussed, Myles arose again and stretched his legs. He was walking along toward the near end of the platform, where he had seen the stairs during April's zig and zag steering the day before. He would occasionally stop and look north toward the church and then south toward the village's bustling commercial zone. April noticed he was trying to get a good look. He seemed to be taking in the sights of the station platform, the plaza below, the adjacent parking lots, the retail stores and even a motel visible now a block away on the main road through town, running roughly parallel to the tracks and platform, the old Sunrise Highway.

An automatic announcement came over the loudspeaker. It was less dramatic than the express train or the pipe organ, and even somewhat tinny and garbled. A train would be arriving soon on the west bound track, the one on the cathedral and police station side of the platform. They had agreed that if Myles was not steady on his feet, he should sit in the wheelchair if a train was approaching the station. He felt April's hand on his shoulder, their

agreed-upon sign he was to sit, either on a park bench or the wheelchair, depending where they were on their excursions. The unoccupied bench seats on the platform were too far away, so he placed himself down in the wheelchair.

Lowry was fascinated by the people coming out of the train. They tended to pay him little personal notice. Myles felt they registered only the objectified fact that a man in an unmovable obstacle and his minder might be in their way as they headed out on their way. But what really seemed to April to seize Myles's attention was the faces and sides of heads and standing bodies that remained on the train. He stared at them in something like awe as the train gradually slipped out of the station and they moved past the man sitting in the wheelchair in his own fixed spot.

Myles slid his shoes off the footrests. He set his feet in between them and started walking the chair forward. April felt the movement and held onto the chair tightly, to stop its progress toward the yellow safety stripe at the edge of the platform, right next to the train that was gathering speed in its departure.

As the train made its way down the tracks and off into the distance out of their sight, Myles pointed toward the end of the platform in its wake. April came around in front of the chair and did a deep knee bend to be in front of him. She lifted one foot by taking a handful of his pants leg by his shin and placed it back on the footrest. He repositioned the other foot himself. Before she stood again, April gazed up at his face. He had not noticed she had done so. His face appeared to be troubled and faraway. She wondered about this man, who was first assigned to her to do a favor, but who then she somewhat befriended, only afterwards to watch in horror as he was almost murdered, and now . . . she couldn't figure what name to put on what he was to her now.

She stood up, intending for him not to perceive her glance. She moved in behind and began to wheel the chair, cautiously, toward the end of the platform, some reasonable distance away. The end of the platform was protected by a metal tubular safety rail fence. In its center there was a service opening, across which draped two metal-link chains. Connecting the two chains was a flat metal sign, with two lines of black lettering on a yellow background. It said, DANGER Authorized Persons Only.

Myles felt the chair stop about six feet from the railing and the self-important, dangled sign. He looked back over his shoulder and up at the woman who had pushed his chair to this point. It was the signal they said would be his way to say he wanted to stand up. He waited, as he had been told to do, until she reached down and depressed the locking brakes onto each wheel. She came before him and gave him a hand getting the footrests out of the way so he could stand without possibly tripping on them.

The railing and the end of the platform were directly above the street that was perpendicular to the tracks and the old Sunrise Highway. A mile or so in the other direction, this street turned into the sweeping arc of dead man's curve, between the library and the clinic. There were no buildings to either side to block the prevailing winds. As a result, the air at the guard fence was always stirred and standing at the end of the platform was often a breezy affair. Mixed with the force of air preceding the inbound trains from the west, even though they were slowing to a stop, the atmosphere of this location was a swirl of currents, even on a relatively calm day. Sometimes, thoughtlessly discarded paper litter—candy wrappers, torn newspaper pages, strips of light cardboard from food containers—partially interred within the stone riprap down between the tracks, was quickened by the onrush and, in a tornadowy twist, it was resurrected even higher than the foot of the platform.

Two announcements rattled the mechanically distorting speakers, about ninety seconds apart. When she turned around to see if she could make sense of the automated voices, April saw people milling about on both sides of the platform. When she turned back, she saw the daylit cyclops that Myles was eyeing heading into the station from the west. There was no time to get him back in the chair. She ran to his side and to tell him to hold onto the rail. But when she arrived at his side, she saw he had already wrapped a gripping pair of hands around the top railing and was smiling at the approaching engineer.

For a time, both Myles's train from the west and the train that eased in behind him without much fanfare shared platform time. As the audible signal for their doors to close sounded, Myles turned himself around and stood with his back resting against the safety fence. He placed each hand on one side behind him and held the top rail. He saw April watching him. "Like this," he invited. She followed suit, the DANGER sign swinging in-between them.

The trains eased away slowly, and for the length of five cars each Myles was looking from one fixed point at passengers going in two different directions. It was slightly disorienting at first for April. When the trains began, she thought she was moving in one direction, and then in the other. Only after two cars had passed on each side, did she experience what Myles had invited her to feel. She found herself where Myles had invited her in, as a poet had once named it—at the still point of the turning world.

259

Clementine and Deirdre laid out the game board to define the parameters of the *Insecta* universe for the afternoon's contest. Rosalyn had left the box with the game for them on the table in their now-customarily reserved room in the HAPPYDALE library. The girl, whose friend Linda now privately called 'Red'—with her permission when no one was able to hear them—was more confident than ever that she could defeat Deirdre this time. She was sure Linda's help would make her a winner.

The girls were getting tired after a day of school and almost an hour at one game of *Insecta* that was still going on. Deirdre was getting frustrated by the moves that Clementine was making. At first, they did not seem right. But the older girl came to realize that the freckled face in front of her was not reacting to her moves like she did the two days before when they played *Insecta*. In a way Deirdre could not understand, the red head was getting ready to defend against a move that she made, before she even made it. And the tomboy was winning the various head-to-head battles between their insect characters. If she kept doing this, Deirdre knew she was going to lose to her for the very first time.

That time came ten minutes more than an hour into the game. It had taken too long. There was not enough time to have another round and it would not be until next week that she could have a rematch, when the librarian came back from her trip out of town.

As she had done the day before, Françoise Oulette conducted her after-excursion interview with April first and then was going to move on to Myles. But differently from the prior day, the psychiatrist asked April if she would mind talking together in her smaller, more private room. And that is what they did.

“April, I wanted us to be able to talk together without having to whisper or be looking over at Myles or any nursing staff getting him settled after your trip. So thank you for agreeing to do this.” The doctor was making it clear hers was a request and not any kind of authoritarian requirement.

She started the interview after April nodded her approval and appreciation. “Was there anything that stood out to you about how Myles acted, looked . . . anything he did or said, on your outing today that you think I should know about?”

“Yes. Remember yesterday I told you when I was driving, it seemed he was moving his foot and looking in places that it would be expected a driver to do?”

The doctor affirmed she recalled that.

“Well today when we were out of the van, he did a few things that you should know about, I think.” She took a breath and collected her thoughts. These may not be the most important first, but I think I can remember them better if I go in order and . . . sort of . . . relive the trip.”

“If that is good for you, it will work for me, Oulette assured her ‘able assistant.’

“We did go to the church first and the train second, as we planned. Myles seemed very familiar with the church. He knew where things were and he did things he must have done before. The most amazing was something he seemed to . . . ‘invite’ . . . me to watch him doing.” April saw a question on Oulette’s face.

“No, it wasn’t anything creepy at all,” she made clear. Françoise seemed relieved. He picked a specific spot where he wanted to be. He knelt down and put his arms out in front of him. He used his hands to make shadows that were on the bench in front of him. He manipulated the shadows by moving his hands and fingers. The shadows altered their appearance, from very light to darker—but like nothing I’ve seen before. See, he moved them like this,” which she replicated, “and the lighting in the cathedral affected them strangely. I couldn’t do it with the lighting in here. It must be something special in the church.” She paused.

“But, doctor, he wasn’t just discovering it today. He knew it would happen. Or maybe . . . hoped it would . . . because it did some other times before?” she was struggling to explain something she wasn’t entirely certain of herself.

“There’s some technical fancy words for that type of behavior, April. But what it comes down to is this—a person with memory loss or amnesia tries to see if something they remember is valid, or true. If they can validate something, it makes that thing seem real. But even more, it makes them confirm, or validate, that they are real . . . or . . . that something they think happened before actually did.” The doctor gave April time to absorb what she was saying, to understand the importance of the excursion and her observations.

“Did anything else like that happen at the church, or at the railroad station?” the physician-debriefer asked.

“There was one thing that stood out for me. When we were up on the platform, he had me bring him to the end. It was a little scary, but he was very calm. I didn’t think he was going to jump or anything.” April looked at the psychiatrist to make sure talking of Myles committing suicide didn’t upset her.

The doctor did take notice, but did not overreact. “Go on, please,” was all she said.

But April did fear that she had set Myles up inadvertently for some psychiatric scrutiny. She forged ahead despite that apprehension. “So, we were at the end of the platform and two trains came into the station at the

same time. One was going on to New York one way. The other was heading further out on the Island, to the beaches and summer places.”

She thought of how to explain what happened, “Myles was standing with his back to the rail at the end of the platform. He hooked his arms over the top so he wouldn’t get blown by the trains. Then he invited me to do the same thing, so I did. When the trains started to leave, he said to look at the people inside. First, I thought I was moving. And then I realized the trains were. He knew there would be this strange sensation, and he wanted me to feel it, too.” But one more thought occurred to her to tell the doctor. “It was new to me. But I think it was very special to Myles. The way he looked and acted was . . . I don’t know . . . like it transported him to a place that wasn’t the train platform—and didn’t use the trains in the normal way to get somewhere else.”

261

Maura Hammersmith finally received a return call from Hart. It was almost dinner time. He explained that he and Dominic had been out chasing down leads about schools in their area.

“Why are you running down schools?” she asked.

Almost exhausted at reciting the same story over and over again, Hart told her, “We still think it’s possible they are hiding out at some private school, with either the mother as a teacher and the daughter as a student, or just Linda as a student.”

Dominic came in from the guest bedroom and hailed the patrolwoman over the phone from a distance.

“What was that?” she asked Hart.

Danny told her, “That was Dominic . . . asking what you had for us . . . have you found Myles?”

The patrolwoman told him, "Sorry to say, we haven't. She did not mince words. "But you remember I we told you he was doing research with April Smith's help?"

"Yes, we do," he assured her. Has something come of it?"

"Yes and no, I guess I'd have to say." She asked, "Am I talking to you both, or just one of you, Danny? I'd prefer talking to you both. Do you have a speaker or a second extension for the detective to hear us?"

"We do. He just went inside to pick up the extension. You won't get an echo that way." He heard a click. "Are you on, Dom?" he asked. The detective said he was, greeted Hammersmith more properly than shouting across the room, and listened to her continue.

"Good. Thank you. Long and short . . . we think we tracked Lowry's newspaper research to a bank heist in this town many years ago. Just before he went away to college, I'd guess. Cash and bearer bonds. Here's the thing . . . they've yet to be recovered and they've been no arrests of persons suspected of doing the robbery."

"You think Myles was in on it?" Dominic quizzed her.

"The thought occurs. But it's too soon to know for sure." She wanted to get that out, front and center. "But there's more. We executed a search warrant for Smith's apartment today. The basis was for missing persons, but we wanted to do more than a wellness check. We had to wait the seventy-two from Sunday night, so today was it." Maura stopped in case they had questions about the warrant.

Dominic jumped in before Danny could. It was a little awkward being in two rooms on extensions, the men couldn't get synchronized. Danny told himself to go back to the speaker phone in the future. Whoever was on the other end could cope with the echo, if there was one.

"Good plan with the warrant. Nice looking ahead. What did you find? That is, if we could ask," he recalled her caution, when they met, about case separation and authority.

"The place looked lived-in for sure. It wasn't ransacked and it wasn't tidied up any more than a single woman normally would, if she expected to come back before she had any company," those were the facts. Then the officer went into her own speculation. "I took a decent look. We didn't take prints, but we might go back and do so, if we get a better reason to do so—but my captain will have to evaluate with counsel whether the warrant may have to be amended for that." A quick inhale. "Anyway, here's my take. I don't think a second person was in that apartment since she last did any housekeeping. There weren't two sets of dishes or glassware. Only feminine apparel in the place, and no masculine cosmetics or grooming tools in the bathroom. One toothbrush. And it was dry." She gave them only a second to reply. "For my money, I don't think Lowry was ever in the place."

Dominic thought that was all for now, but his unseen compatriot wasn't done with the patrolwoman. "I have two questions, officer," he said.

She didn't seem to mind being called that. She asked in a collegial tone, "And they are?"

"Are you off nights for now? Seems like you've been at it a lot in daylight hours," Hart inquired.

"Yes, as of a few hours ago," she confirmed.

"We reach you in the daytime then through your front desk?" he checked.

"Probably best. If I'm not in the station tell them to use my car radio to connect us, please. Don't be hesitant." She was satisfied with the cooperation. "And, what was the second question?"

"Can you tell me how much cash, the value of the bonds, and the dimensions of the bond papers?" Hart was very intense, but caution laced his every word. Both Corredor and Hammersmith heard it.

"Not yet, Danny. But if it's important, I can ask my cop researcher. She sat at those machines in the library for hours getting us this far." She had a second thought. "And Danny, she did look for bonds in Smith's apartment."

"And?" asked Hart.

"Nothing," she told him.

In a weird twist, Corredor asked Danny a question while he knew that Hammersmith could hear them both talking. "Danny, can we ask you why you want to know that information?"

Since both policemen on the call were geared up for an interesting, if not regrettably long explanation, they were shocked at his answer.

"No," was all Hart replied.

262

Françoise thanked April and left her in her room, reading her paperback mystery about a fictional bank robbery in California that LAPD Detective Harry Bosch was trying to solve.

"Good afternoon, Myles," she said as she approached him. This time he was sitting in his recliner and not resting in his bed. He had a white cotton hospital lap blanket on against any ambient chill in the room.

She sat down in a chair that she noiselessly slid across the floor to be closer to him. Oulette said nothing more before Lowry spoke up first. "How did April like our trip today?"

This was an interesting wrinkle. When they last met, Oulette thought he did not recognize his minder.

And so, she asked him. "Myles. Do you know April? Yesterday you didn't seem to. I am curious."

Lowry looked at his hands and then around the room. He seemed to want to make sure that it was only the two of them present. He adjusted the lap blanket and began.

"I know what April *does*. She works the lunch counter. She archives film at the library. And she looks after me here." He made sure the doctor understood what he was saying. When she seemed to, he went on to say

some more. "I know she does the first two things because that is how she earns her living. I do not know why she is not working those jobs now, but is here with me instead." He waited again. "I know those things."

He shuffled his feet and crossed his legs at the ankles. "But what I asked you yesterday was not about *what she does*. I asked you *who she is*? And since you did not tell me, I wondered if you knew." He inhaled, and asked, "Do you?"

"I only know as much about her as you do, apparently Myles. I am sorry to disappoint you if I have done so. When I was asked by Dr. LeClerc to take you on as a temporary consult, I did not concern myself about Miss Smith. I had history with Denison, and he said he vouched for April. Once he did that, I turned my attention solely to you." She left her answer at that, to see how Lowry would react.

"That is fair enough, then." He did not pursue that topic. But he did keep talking in a measured tone, carefully. Oulette wondered if he always talked this way or if he was needing time to find the words he wanted to use and then more time to be able to say them. "I am fine with being in your care. You have been kind and knowledgeable." And as her body language changed and suggested she was ready for their interview, he held up his left hand, the one nearer to her. "Except for one thing I do not know and would like you to tell me." After a few seconds he was convinced that she was paying attention. "Why am I here? And what kind of place is this?" He did not stop there. "We go around in an unlettered van, and we leave by a back door and use side streets to go to town. Are we hiding something? Did I do something wrong?"

"Myles, you have not done anything wrong of which I am aware." She gave herself a minute to figure how to approach this unexpected situation. "Myles, can you tell me where it is that you think you are, now that April has brought you outside to see things?"

"Yes. I can," he said politely, with no guile or pretense.

Françoise realized he needed a prompt. "Where is it that you think you are . . . where you and April were today, Myles?"

"April brought me to the village where I grew up. We went into church. We went up on the train platform." He thought a moment and then added, "They are different now. But some things there were the same."

The psychologist in Oulette was intrigued. "Myles, can you tell me one thing that was different and one thing that was the same—in church and on the platform?"

She noticed this took Myles some extra time and effort. But he managed to tell her what she had asked, even though she was unable to understand. "At church the walls are a different color. At church the lights can still make body and soul." He smiled slightly and went on. "The station counter has fewer newspapers and more magazines. Two trains can still do now and then, here and there." Myles reassured himself with an almost imperceptible nod. He looked at Oulette and she saw the eyes of a child.

She changed her mind and no longer wanted to ask him anything else about the excursion. Instead, she asked solicitously, "Mr. Lowry, are you feeling okay?"

He shuddered and sat up. "I'm tired, Doctor."

"Well, let's see about getting you into bed so you can get some rest." She had meant that she was going to call for one of the vetted orderlies, and as she stood to do that, Lowry stood as well, and handed her the lap blanket. He was a little unsteady as he walked the ten feet to the bed, folded back the bedcovers, and got into the bed unassisted. He drew up the sheets over his chest, not quite to his chin, placed his head down on the pillow, closed his eyes and fell off to sleep.

By the end of the afternoon Thursday, Gaby had not made as much progress as she wanted. For much of the day, Karidja was in solitary reflection, reading and re-reading the documents from the Trust they had accumulated from archives in various places—some they could acknowledge and some they could not and needed some other source to corroborate.

She kept looking for involvement of Ned's wife, at the inception of the Trust and over the years before she died.

Karidja materialized from the quiet space and addressed Gabriella. "I think I'm going to call it a day here. I have a few things I can read at home. How's your project going for Bruce?"

Gabriella surprised her with the force of her reply. "I could sure use some help on this. Do you really need to read those papers over and over again? What do you hope to find, Karidja?"

The lawyer put on her best smile for Gaby, pulled up a chair, and set her valise down on the floor by her feet. She looked at the spread sheets Costa was compiling from about six stacks of papers and cards and phone messages and memos and reports. And she saw a pile of sheets with Danny Hart's name along the top as a masthead.

Gaby exhaled. She said, "I'm sorry. You didn't deserve that."

"No more than you deserve this pile of rocks to break on a chain gang—I believe that is what it used to be called in this country." Karidja was happy to see them try to restore peace and calm together in their last bastion of fellowship in this workplace.

"May I tell you a story I was reminded of by visit to Riverdale and Mr. Joshua Winston? I have been thinking of it today quite a few times," the conflict resolutionist asked her friend.

"As long as it doesn't involve an expense account, and I don't have to take it down in shorthand to transcribe, knock yourself out," said Costa. They shared a small laugh.

Karidja began her story, "When I was in my first class in law school, in the first week, our professor said to me—

'What, Miss Soro, do you imagine is the inspiration behind saying that a person went to university to *'read law'*?

After my many unsuccessful tries to find an answer, he simply said to me—

'Because each time you read a law, you are not the same. The first time you read it, and each successive time, up to the most recent time you read it, you are more knowledgeable about it, or more experienced in applying it to a specific question or case.'

'Now you come to it again, somewhat more aware, and hopefully more wise, in the ways of reading the law. And suddenly you see something that did not matter to you before enough to notice it, or a nuance of it that gave you an insight you did not have before.'

"And then he told me that once every semester, during my class breaks and during a time a nearby legislature was in session, I should go and sit in the gallery and listen to legislators debate a proposed law, to see how they argue the wording, or find potential or probable applications of the law, as written, to be different from the intent of the legislative sponsor."

"And did you?" asked Gaby.

"Yes, I did," she answered, "every semester. And sometimes multiple days in a row, as the debate raged on," Karidja remembered and told her.

Then she finished the story. "And when the professor saw I was doing that, he said I should go to the legislator's office to see how a proposed law was crafted at the level—even before it came to a chamber of lawmakers. And all that gave me a great foundation and appreciation."

"So, as I go over this Trust document, time after time, I see more and more of what is in there."

Gaby asked out of interest, not just being polite, "What have you found that you didn't see the first time you read it?"

Karidja's eyes lit up, "I have found that Ned Hegerman was a flawed man who tried to make the best of a situation he created . . . that became a life he created." It was all she was willing to say on the matter at the time. Gaby did not persist in asking her more about it. But Karidja did have one more thing to say. "What four hours tomorrow make the best sense for me to help you?"

264

Dinner plans changed for the eve of Rosalyn's trip to Philadelphia and the beginning of the weekend together for Linda and Alexandria. They had dinner out at the nearby town, with Miss Alex driving, so Linda's mother could get some last-minute things for the coming days.

They drove past the library where Rosalyn's discussions with Mrs. Reading had set her on the path for her interview for the job at **HAPPYDALE**. They rode by the singles bar where a dark corner table once offered Rosalyn the chance to leverage her discovery of Beatriz Grey's preference for female companionship. But the small store where here was closed for the day. So they reversed course and Alexandria drove in the other direction for a few miles. When they arrived, Rosalyn shopped at the store her disaffected chauffeur, Margie, took her on her first trip for groceries to stock the apartment for Linda and Rosalyn's new place to stay. Only the dinner eatery near that grocer was a new adventure for Rosalyn. The meal was satisfying and uneventful and the time waiting for the food to arrive was sufficient to finalize the weekend's plan—such that they were expected to be.

265

Myles Lowry was a dreamer. In daylight hours he dreamt about engineering gadgets and gizmos when he was young. But in his advanced academic career he turned seriously to medical devices. His first efforts took all his savings from jobs and internships he held from eighth grade to earning his Master's. His first patented device funded his independent small business and paved the way to being hired by Easton. His second and third patents, begun and submitted before joining Easton, provided the nest egg that his family relied upon. In those years before Easton, and even before marrying Roz Young, his nighttime aspirations were an extension of his daytime work. Problems he had on his workbench or the drafting table sometimes were solved in his overnight imaginings. Many times, those solutions did not dissipate in the light of day.

Now, it was the early hours of a Friday morning in late September in 1992. A divorced and injured Myles Lowry was involuntarily re-imagining his

younger days, before those inventions—before he had even heard about, or ever met, another crosstown resident, Roz Young. And across the softly nightlight-illuminated solarium in which he rested uneasily, April Smith slept soundly on a couch, keeping her nocturnal vigil.

This dreaming Myles saw himself as a slightly pudgy eighth grader. He stood just two steps back outside the ring of boys who were prone to like sports and roughhousing more than the math and science he favored. They were chanting and waving their arms, first out to the side and then above their heads. The disadvantaged man, encircled by these high school taunters, went by the common name of 'Petey.'

Pestering Petey was akin to tying a string of firecrackers to a sleeping dog's tail, lighting the fuse, and standing back to witness what that meanness wrought. The goading was close to performance art for the pre-teens, now arranged in a moving pair of arcs, three to four boys forming each. They made sure Petey could not run away so easily or quickly. Every which way he turned in panic proved to add to his agony.

Petey would clap his hands to his hatless ears. He would begin to scream an atonal wail associated with what the times harshly referred to as the retarded. Petey rotated his body like a slowing dreidel, tilting himself off balance because one of his legs seemed shorter than the other, a remnant of mild polio at birth. That was why he limped in his customary nervously fast walk.

Wrapped by this flesh-and-blood, curved and impenetrable snare, Petey's nose would leak into his trembling mouth and spittle would fly in his insistent denial that any of his tormenters were even there. His hope was that they would be gone by the time he could no longer keep his eyes shut. The cruelest of the persecutors would emit in unison a low sound between their lips, moaning his name in an endless chant. Knowing the sound would guide Petey back and forth, they led the circle toward one of the cement columns of the elevated railway. At the precise moment of his facing the pillar, they would break the circle, cry out for him to escape, and Petey would run, face-first into it, fall to the ground, sobbing and bloody, in a fetal ball.

It was at this very moment of Myles's dream that he bolted upright in bed, channeling Petey's terror and let out an ear-piercing howl of his own.

As she had five nights before, April leapt off the couch and was at his side immediately. But this time, she wrapped her arms around him to calm his night tremors and ease his time-unlocked fears. April was better dressed than she was in that first encounter. Wearing her own pajamas, there were no roses and vines for Myles to recognize and the only angel at hand was April herself. She did not call reflexively for help with the red button staring at her from the signaling device tossed among the bed covers, as she had the prior Sunday-into-Monday night.

Early this Friday morning she just sat on his bed next to him and gently rocked her strange new friend, until she could feel his body relax and his fears subside.

April was certain that Myles never awakened during this episode of distress. When she heard his smooth breathing steady itself, and his chest no longer heaved and clutched against her left arm, she lowered his head onto his pillow and drew his covers up over his shoulders. She took a few steps back toward the couch and heard him stirring once again.

Fearing his upset may return, she padded, still barefoot, to the far side of his bed. She hesitated, then convinced herself it was the right—and only—thing to do. She smoothed the covers beside him, and lay down on top of them, next to him. She rested on her left side to face him and ever so gently draped her arm across his chest. She felt his breathing grow steady again as her own eyes grew heavy. And, for the second time in a week, a chaste sleep descended gracefully upon them both.

Friday Morning, September 25, 1992

266

Their **HAPPYDALE** house was the scene of bustling activity for Rosalyn and Linda on Friday morning. They triple-checked all their plans together. Then they went as early as possible to the Dining Hall. They ate quickly and came back to clean up and start the day.

The night before, Roslyn had time after shopping and dinner, and Alexandria going home and Linda falling to sleep, to finish her covert preparations. She routed out cash from one of the envelopes retrieved from her apartment storage cage. She left money for Alexandria to use, as agreed. And she divided up some of the cash she wanted to take to Philadelphia with her. Some she put in her regular wallet and purse. Some she secreted in the lining of a jacket she was packing in her suitcase. And another bit of it she placed in a money belt she would wear when her wardrobe permitted, which would be the case on this travel day.

Finally, she verified that all the tape was secure on the packages of bearer bonds affixed to the underside of her furniture drawers. She did not want any of it to fall inadvertently into view while Alexandria was using her bedroom or Linda was looking for something they needed in the living room end tables. She would bring none of these with her, though she had her original, pristine encoded list—letters for numbers, two places staggered right and left for odds and evens—to prove she still had all her bonds to sell.

They kissed goodbye inside the house when the early morning cab arrived at the front door. The driver placed her luggage in the trunk and waited behind the wheel. One more hug in the front yard started their weekend adventures apart.

Linda made off for the classroom. She would be early and might even get there before Mrs. Steadman. But the door would be unlocked, and she could read another few pages of stories Scheherazade created to save her skin, and the rest of her.

Since there were no adults to give Rosalyn a ride to the public transit depot, the first leg of her Philadelphian excursion would be this yellow cab ride. Her quick thought getting into the back seat was regretting that buying a car and insuring it would reveal their presence. Usually, people thought of money when they asked if they could afford a car. This was certainly not the case for Rosalyn. Anonymity superseded convenience and safety, by a country mile.

It was early, but Danny recalled that Itzel said she had much to do in only a few days, especially with Myles gone. He called her desk phone and she answered.

After they exchanged polite greetings, Hart asked her right out. "Itzel, any word from Myles?"

"None," was her crestfallen answer. She had hoped he was calling with good news when she heard his voice.

"I'm sorry. And I know you are busy. But I have an important question that may help me figure where next to look for Myles." He thought this context would give him the best chance of cooperation. And it was a genuine statement, which she would concede.

"I'll tell you what I can tell you," was her forthright reply.

"I am trying to prove that Myles did not have any illicit funding for his business startup. And I need to assure some law enforcement people in New York that after joining Easton he did not secure and pass along illegally gotten riches." He paused and when she said nothing in protest or disdain, he went on. "There is a sizeable amount of stolen money in cash and bearer bonds, that has now become a focal point in a cross-over investigation of all three Lowry disappearances."

He gave her a minute and began again. "These are not my doings, and I am not fantasizing drug cartels again, I promise. The people challenging me are out to distance—or connect—Myles to a bank robbery in the town where he grew up."

Now she spoke up. "Mr. Hart, why would they even suspect him of such a thing?"

"Well," he told her, "it turns out that Myles was just conducting a day and a half of research in the public library, using old issues of the town's weekly paper—available now on microfilm. The story of the robbery was what he was collecting information about. It happened while he was just

going into high school. So, he would have had the money in college while he was developing his first medical instrument for what became his business.”

Itzel asked him, “Are they also saying he could have used some of that money to bring me and my family to America?”

“No one has said anything about that to me. And I was not thinking in those terms. But if you are thinking it, I can only imagine some of them might.” He waited and Itzel said nothing. So he queried her. “If I do get asked, what should I say?”

“As I said, I can only tell you what I know,” she replied.

“I can’t ask for anything else, but it would help if I knew whatever it is that you could tell me, Mrs. Cocom.” He didn’t mean to be overly formal, but he meant this question to have more of an official ring to it.

She returned the tone. “Mr. Hart? Why do you keep saying that Myles had a patent for a medical device?” she inquired.

“Well, didn’t he?” Danny stated. He was not willing to divulge how little or how much he had vetted the information.

“No. He did not.” She was emphatic.

It shocked him. “What do you mean? Then how did he—”

And before he could finish, she injected, “Mr. Hart. Myles holds three patents, that address four other devices than the one Easton bought from him, when they bought him out and invited him to join the company. He had filed for the second and third patents while he was still independent and self-employed. His agreement with Easton was that he would own those, and Easton would not. All Easton requested was that he give the company the right of first refusal to buy the patents and manufacture the devices. But it turned out the patents pertained to items that were for totally unrelated mechanisms, and not entire products. The devices they would improve were already made and sold into other sectors of the industry. Since those other companies, there were two, were not competitors, Easton had no problem with his terms to join.”

"That's absolutely terrific news. I wanted to steer them clear of Myles. My drug cartel idea was enough of a distraction from finding the Lowry family. We sure don't need another. I appreciate your telling me all this."

"Mr. Hart? The next time you call me, I truly hope you will be telling me you have located Myles and that he is in good health." And with that the connection was broken so they could both get on with their days.

268

Linda Lowry was early, but she wasn't the first to be in their classroom that Friday morning. From all the way back at the door as she came in, Linda could see scraps of torn paper on her desk. She thought it strange, because the room was always clean at the start of the day. When she got to her desk, she was crushed. There in small torn pieces with angrily jagged edges was her cherished bookmark that her father had given her. The picture of the locomotive was shredded beyond repair. She could tell this was no accident. Her tears began falling before she could collect up the tattered remains of one of the best mementos she still had of her dad.

She wondered who could be so mean. In a flash, she had no doubt of who had done this. She just couldn't imagine why. Linda put a few scraps of the bookmark's locomotive picture into Clementine's cubby hole. Then, she left in a hurry, before anyone saw her. There was only one place she could go. A place she thought no one would find her.

269

At places like Barnard's Alumnae Office, it was the old timers who were always early to work, especially on Friday mornings. Eleanor Quatrane banked on such an encounter. She had struck out with the inexperienced young staff here who had twice hidden incompetence behind acting officiously.

Friendly and respectful greetings were exchanged between the senior women. Eleanor said she was trying to make sure a rejuvenating alum was

able to use the unspent balance of her tuition scholarship on her intended continuing education. The names of the two persons her law firm was interested in while probating a will were Roz Young and her friend Valerie McKinley. Karidja had warned her once before in this regard of approaching a collegiate official: everything had to be above board and not dishonest. Eleanor was very clear that every individual thing she said was completely true. The facts just got mashed up a bit when she put them together. It would be reasonable to think the person to whom she was talking might have gotten the wrong impression.

In the otherwise empty office, the clerk spun through pages on the computer screen she had come in early enough to have already turned on and warmed up to be ready for the day. She told Quatrane, "I don't see those names. Sometimes we carry only maiden names, are those their married names?"

"No. Those are the names they had when they matriculated," she answered.

"Maybe I should check the time frames. When were they here at Barnard?" the woman inquired.

"Most likely from 1972 through the '75 to '77 semesters." I don't know their actual graduating class years. Neither can find intact copies of their yearbooks." To fight the silence and break her tension, Quatrane threw in, "And I think one of them protested graduation and didn't even walk to get her diploma. Imagine such a thing!" Again, she spoke the truth.

"I am truly sorry. I'm striking out here. We hired interns to computerize all this for us. I guess you get what you pay for." And she was about to give up. Then she said, "Those alums . . . continuing their education now . . . what fields did they go into before they were married, had their kids, and got them through school?"

Quatrane was not going to dissuade the clerk from trying. "Teaching, I think. Probably education majors, I'd suppose."

After another two or three screens scanned, the clerk's body language flagged. She moved away from the keyboard and stood pensively. I know it might be a wild goose chase . . ."

Eleanor perked up, "I'll try anything."

"She asked Quatrane, "Have you tried the Happydale Residential School out in Jersey?"

"Why, no, I don't believe we have. I'd have to ask the legal secretary going over the will. Why does that come to your mind, if I may ask?"

"Well, the young staffers don't get involved, but there's two of us old timers who know the school administrator there. A woman by the name of Beatriz Grey. She's a Barnard girl from way back. Old school. She calls here from time to time asking for transcripts and such, or asking for some recommendations of alums who have said they were looking to get back into teaching." She opened a drawer in a desk to which she had walked back. "Here's her business card. She'd be worth a call. Maybe she's heard of those two grads."

Quatrane was so beside herself she imagined the clerk might think she was seeing double, looking her way. She took the calling card and was effusive in expressing her thanks.

The cab driver bringing Eleanor back to the law office downtown was snagged a few times in morning traffic. She almost jumped out and ran, but restrained herself.

270

April awoke with a sense of peacefulness. She was careful not to awaken Myles. She saw it was still before sunrise. She took the bedding off the couch and went to her room, showered, and got dressed for the day. She heard the morning shift moving in the adjacent areas of the clinic and hurried over to the couch, without looking in on Myles. She was sitting on the couch looking at her book when the first staff nurse came to check on Myles.

The lady in white, whose shoes were still silent on the tile floor, must not have cared for what she saw when she looked at Lowry. April got nervous. She thought she had left the bed properly; with no signs she had slept there next to him.

The woman told her, "I'll be right back." She seemed to leave more rapidly than normal.

In a panic, April went over to Lowry's bedside. His head was on the pillow as it had been. But one side of his face was distorted. She heard a disturbance in the outer area and returned to the couch to be out of the way and to avoid being questioned right away.

April was surprised to see that it was Denison LeClerc whom the nurse had—the only word she could think of, seeing how he entered the sunroom was—'fetched.'

The oncologist saw how Myles looked and started telling the nurse things that were too medical in nature April to understand. But she thought she understood two words she overheard—Oulette and STAT. She knew for sure it was time to worry.

271

Gabriella Costa placed the phone call that Eleanor requested her to make. She reflected that they no longer had to be running out of the building to find a pay phone to make this call. There was no recording played back at her when the connection was completed. She was happier than she could have imagined she would be. "Dan? It's Gabs."

He frankly felt her familiarity with a thrill. But he wanted to be careful where he trod on such ground. "Hello . . . Gabs. How are you doing today?"

"Is Dominic with you, Dan?" she asked. He felt as if there was the beginning of softening soil between his toes. "Eleanor asked me to find out if you were together." He thought to himself, 'Well, at least it wasn't quicksand.'

"Yes, we haven't gone out yet," he said.

"Where were you heading?" she inquired a bit more eagerly than he might have expected.

"Back out to the Island to see what we could learn about Myles and his friend, April. I'm really bugged about that bank heist thing." He told her.

"Dan, do you have a strong reason to be doing that? I mean, it's not the drug thing still, is it?" she realized, when she heard himself asking that, that it sounded harsh and critical.

"Look, Gabs—"

She cut him off. "That didn't come across the way I meant it to, Dan. Let me explain . . . please?"

He monosyllabled her with a displeasure that was unmistakable, "Sure."

"Eleanor just got back from Barnard. She has a lead, Dan. We don't know how solid, but it's at least something new about a possible school where they might be . . . I don't know . . . do I say . . . hiding?" She was—

This time it was him who interrupted her. "Wait!" So, she did. She heard him call out for Corredor. And he used his last name. Danny hardly ever did that she thought. In fact, she considered that it might have been the first time she'd heard him use the detective's last name that way. She heard Dominic's voice in the background, echoing in a large room and coming closer. Then there was a click. "Okay, Gabs, you're on speaker and Dominic's here. Go ahead."

She did not stop to greet the detective personally. "Eleanor might have a lead on a private boarding school known to prefer hiring mature Barnard grads as teachers. And she says it's only a little more than an hour's drive from Mike Riley's Jersey apartment. Can you speak to her?" she asked.

Dominic and Danny answered in unison. One said "Absolutely" and the other said "Certainly." Gabs could not tell who said what. So, she just repeated Hart's request, "Wait!" and then she said, "Bye, Dan."

Hart felt he was on firm ground again while they awaited Eleanor's voice. But it was Karidja who spoke first. "Hello, Detective. Hello, Danny." It was also a speaker phone she was using. "All three of us are here, now. Let me explain and request your opinion on what to do."

Danny put the phone on the kitchen table between he and Dom, poured his roommate his first coffee of the morning and refilled his own. They sat to listen and Dominic brought over paper and pens for each of them.

"Eleanor went to Barnard. There's no current listing for Roz Young or Valerie McKinley on the Alum Office computer. But the old timer there said this place called" . . . there was a delay as she reached for Eleanor's pad . . . "Happydale Residential School" uses what diplomats call a 'back channel' referral for Barnard grads getting back into teaching. We ladies think it's worth a try. What about you two?"

"Hold on for a moment, please," said Hart. He covered the mouthpiece with his hand to give them privacy. They went over, quickly and thoroughly, the pros and the cons of going to this school. And they picked Dominic to talk to the three ladies in the law office.

"This is Detective Corredor. Is Attorney Soro there?"

"Why so formal, sir?" asked Karidja.

"Only to make a point and to proceed appropriately," he answered.

Quatrane and Costa started to complain aloud. Their voices melded to be inseparable from one another and to be inarticulate. They could not believe what they were hearing. They quieted down only because Soro put the phone call on hold.

Karidja said in a low and calm voice that forced her friends to be quiet so they could hear her. "Ladies. He's a veteran of law enforcement and missing persons cases. Please, let's hear him out." They nodded approval.

She opened the phone line again. "Excuse us, Detective, are you still on the line?" she asked.

"Yes, Karidja, I am," said Dominic. He used her given name very purposefully.

"Could you run by us the points you would like us to consider, please?" the conflict resolutionist asked politely.

“Sure thing. But first things first. Good morning, ladies. Sorry I was away from the phone when our call started.” There were mumbled hellos from the other end of the line. He accepted them, in the spirit of, ‘that’s as good as it’s going to get, until I make this better.’ So he continued, “Second of all, nice work Eleanor. This could be the tip that breaks this case open and sets Linda free.”

Eleanor’s ‘thank you’ was genuine and energetic.

“This kind of tip presents a great opportunity—and some challenges. How we respond to knowing this information will go a long way to making the best use of it. I’d like to frame out some discussion points, if I may, please?” Danny was amazed that skills like this outlived four years of solitary boxcar living.

“So, there are too many strings dangling from this, and they all come with that expression, ‘with strings attached;’ with which we all are familiar. But these strings also form a web. We must be careful not to be the overeager fly hearing the spider talking. So let me ask you some questions, since you have spent so much time and wisdom getting us this far.”

Gabriella and Eleanor were very pleased for his compliments. Karidja knew she could not have set the stage for a resolution much better than Corredor was doing.

Dom broke it down this way. “I am going to pose a series of questions. But I don’t want you to answer them yet. If you start to give me answers, my next question will sound argumentative. Instead, I’d like to invite you to follow the questions as a logical set of steps to consider. Will that be okay?” he requested. “I know we have done something like this once before.” The ladies agreed and he moved on.

“There are many strings here. The biggest is—Rosalyn, is she here? The next biggest is—Linda, is she here?” he paused.

“Now we might think Linda should go first in this order, but we must realize if Linda is here, we still need to find her mother. And without her mother, we may not be able to do anything for Linda, without a long-drawn-out involvement of the courts. And that might land her into state care. So,

Rosalyn is prime and Linda subprime.” They remained unquestioning as he asked, so he went to the next issue.

“Next, what would you want to do when we drive up to this school? Why would we rush out there rather than calling ahead? And either way, whom do we look for to say why we are there?” Now the ladies could see the complexity that led Dominic to take this contemplative approach to following up on the tip from the Alumnae Office.

Then he got technical considerations up for view. “And that leads us to ask the lawyer, eventually, in our group—do we need a warrant? And if so, what would the basis of the warrant be? And what would the warrant empower us to do? Search? Extract a person? Take property and belongings? Collect evidence? And so on and so on.” Again, there were no disruptions, so he went to the logical conclusion, as he forecasted he would.

“To accomplish these goals, would we need to bring along law enforcement with jurisdiction of the location and authority in the matter at hand? And if the answer to this is in the affirmative, do we select favorable and friendly law enforcement familiar with the case?”

And finally he said, “That’s all I’ve got. When we go through those, Danny and I are ready to hit the road toward to . . . believe it or not . . . Happydale.”

“Dominic?” answered Eleanor. “Can you give us ten minutes, or so, to go over these considerations and call you right back, please. If they are there, they’ll be there for the whole school day, so we won’t miss them if we take time to do this.”

Corredor agreed her idea was a good one and said, “Goodbye for now.” He released the speaker phone button and the connection went silent.

Danny asked, “Do you want more coffee . . . or a cold drink? That was quite a whirlwind, Detective Corredor.”

Dominic went over to the sink and filled a tall glass with cold water. “I was praying, at the very beginning, that Karidja would keep them from telling me something that would be sad and hard to take back, before they slammed their phone receiver down.”

Danny chuckled and made himself comfortable to await the return call.

272

The two doctors were closely examining Myles Lowry. April was watching them, trying to keep her frantic nervousness under control. Would they blame her for not knowing something was going wrong with him during the night? She had told them about his bad dream and calming him down, but that he did not awaken nor walk in his sleep this time. April said none of the monitors made any audible alarm sounds to let her know maybe there was a difficulty he was experiencing. She assured them that she was in the solarium the entire overnight. She just skipped the part about where in the sunroom she spent the second part of the night.

On his way out of the large room, heading back to his office, LeClerc angrily told her that they were almost sure Myles had had a stroke.

Oulette consoled April, "Please don't worry that any of this is your fault. It is not. Absolutely not. There is always a chance that a head injury might take some time to exhibit its worst aspects. Please, remember I told you that when I explained that if he did not show improvement in three days, I would leave Mr. Lowry's care to LeClerc and demand that he be brought to a hospital immediately." And then, for reasons of her own, not April's, Oulette emphasized and asked, "You do remember I told you that, right April?"

273

Linda Lowry was thinking about her father, crying all the way from the classroom to her bedroom. She had the house key her mother gave her for occasions like this. Her mother was already gone and on her way to being away until Sunday night. It would not be until after school today that Miss Alex would come to be with her.

Linda put her backpack, and the schoolbooks inside it, into the bottom of her closet. She did not want it lost or too easily seen. For it to fit, she took

the large box with her train set out and set it, closed, on top of her bed. Then she took the many pieces of her torn bookmark out of her pocket and placed them on top of the train set box.

She took some Oreo cookies and a half-pint container of chocolate milk and jammed them into her pockets. She looked carefully, so as not to be seen, and went out her bedroom window, sliding it down as far as she could after that from the outside. She made her way around the back of the building and headed into the woods. From there she knew the way.

Mrs. Steadman was just about to take attendance when the first line of trees closed ranks on Linda's passing and provided the cover she required. But Mrs. Steadman did not sound Linda's name during roll call. Before class began, Deirdre came to the teacher privately and told her, "I think Linda's mother decided to take her away for the weekend with her." It seemed legitimate to Mrs. Steadman. After all, Rosalyn had just told her earlier in the week that she was experimenting with Clementine and Deirdre after school in the library. There was no one at **HAPPYDALE** who saw Rosalyn get in the cab alone who could refute her. The bookmark destroyer and loser of yesterday afternoon's *Insecta* game had achieved her revenge.

274

The ladies again chose Karidja to voice their considered opinions concerning a search for Rosalyn and Linda at the most recently discovered **HAPPYDALE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL**.

"We think a group should go to the school. There should be law enforcement representation with, as Dominic said, "jurisdiction and authority in the matter." The primary goal will be to see if the administration there has any knowledge of the Lowrys, including if there were applications to teach or attend that were not successful. The tip provided the name of a Beatriz Grey as the person we should ask to see. Though not mentioned by Dominic, we think the group should also inquire about the person we know of only as Valerie McKinley."

"Good idea on that," chimed in Dominic.

"Thank you," said Karidja, "Gabriella's idea." Danny smiled. Then she got back to it.

"We can work on a warrant here while the group drives out there and we will be ready to fax it through to the school by the time our group has arrived. As a point of information, this facility is apparently not a public entity. It does not have one of those new websites. At least an easily seen one. Or a public phone book listing. That is why we have not been aware of it before this morning, regardless of our searching within the mileage circles we have drawn to look for it."

She got back to the plan after the background about the school. "As Dominic suggested, the warrant will have a focus. We are thinking something like—'searching public buildings, living quarters, dorms, school rooms, assembly areas, athletic fields and facilities, dining areas, and recreation lounges, and property grounds and outbuildings for persons going by the name of Rosalyn Lowry, Linda Lowry, Roz Young, or Valerie McKinley, or aliases or married names by which these persons may be known. Additionally, these areas will be searched for any indications by way of personal belongings or the like, that would reasonable be thought to indicate these persons are or have been at the Happydale property. And if necessary, the warrant is extended to cover the search for, and the confiscation of, records at the administrative or other academic offices at the school that may hold record files naming or identifying these persons.'" That was the warrant language and Karidja's tone of voice made it evident she had gotten to the end of its text.

The lawyer caught her breath and went on. "As to who should go . . . definitely Danny and Dominic. For law enforcement we would prefer Maura Hammersmith and Detective Howe, but we realize that officer Hammersmith may be more valuable looking for Myles on Long Island. So, our warrant will be defensible as far as the missing persons case for Rosalyn and Linda, but may be more challengeable, today or later in court, for other matters more applicable to New York jurisdiction. We also think that, to short-circuit any interference or compromise by Godfrey Mellon, under the guise of transparency on short notice, Danny should try to convince Angie Flynn to come along as a witness and serve as a representative of Rosalyn's attorney. As backup, Eleanor can drive over and meet Mike Riley at the apartment, in case that site becomes important as a rendezvous after the fact, or as a refuge for Linda and Rosalyn, should they be found and decide to leave the school of their own accord."

Danny spoke up when he was sure that Karidja was finished. "Will you approach Flynn and Howe as the legal voice in this investigation and case, or are you leaving it to me to ask them, Karidja?"

"Whatever you think is best, Danny," she said. "But all things being equal, I'd rather get on to the development and filing of the search warrant that a proper authority is going to cooperate and present to a sympathetic judge." As an afterthought she told them, "If it is done in time, Eleanor will bring a copy to Riley's."

"We'll do it," said Dominic. "We're going to have to make travel arrangements with them, anyway."

275

Denison LeClerc had not been this distraught since he went by the name of Dennis Clark, back when he was seventeen years old and trying to get out from under his parents' roof and the local police patrolman's watchful eye.

He was glad to have his learner's permit then, the terms of which he violated numerous times by driving at night. The old car was his way out of trouble. He could go a few towns over and avoid the people who thought they knew him most. All he had to do in this adopted town where he spent his time alone was to stay away from the crowd that ganged up on their local hardcase, Petey, up by the railroad in the nighttime, when the sporting kids were at little league with their parents.

He wasn't apparently the only kid trying to get out of a hometown. That early autumn night his life changed forever he met a girl two years older than he was. She was making her way to the train to go the New York City. She was finished her summer job, had come back to collect her last bi-weekly paycheck, and was going back to her freshman dorm at college. That's what she said anyway when she knocked on his side window. He was parked under the elevated tracks. He was trying to smoke some weed for the first time and didn't want anyone else seeing him in case he got sick from it and had to throw up in his empty three-course meal bag from MacDonald's. The bag was now his version of those they had on airliners, just in case.

She looked sort of alright, maybe a little raggy around the edges, notably the shredded hem of her cut-offs. "What are you doing in there?" she said teasingly through the glass. She did not recognize him as a boy from around town. He almost soiled himself, she startled him so much. Before he could answer she had jerked the car door open, thrown her backpack into the back seat and sat close to him on the bench seat. Right away he noticed she had more skin than denim showing between her knees and her waist. "Got one of them for me?" she asked. And before he knew it, they were fogging the inside of the windows with aromatic smoke and stale perspiration.

Suddenly they heard a man's voice wailing. She saw a short fellow with a limp, running down the sidewalk under the tracks. He was coming from the direction of the station. He kept tilting from one side to the other, with what must have been somewhat heavy backpacks, one in each hand, smacking him on the outer thighs and almost making him trip and fall.

When the man was level with the front of the car, Dennis Clark recognized Petey, his face a mess and his eyes red with fear. Clark reached down and pulled the knob straight out from the dashboard. Petey was lit up brightly, with no advance warning. He dropped the back packs, clapped his hands to his ears, spun in a circle, and then ran off into the night, through the tall grass adjacent to the parking lot. They got out of the car and picked up the bags, tossed them into the back seat, and went back to their smoking and toking up front. Clark turned the radio on low and neglected to realize, in his agitated state, that he did not turn the lights off all the way. The car's amber parking lights were still shining, but imperceptibly from inside the vehicle, due to the sodium vapor lights of the parking lot.

Clark couldn't believe his good luck. He was having a better time than he could have imagined. And all she was charging him was forty bucks. Train fare back for the ticket she had already bought to New York; and a burger, fries, and a soda in Penn Station, she told him. He had found out just how much less pant she had on between the hem of her shorts and her now-bare midriff. In exchange, she was helping him discover some things he didn't know another person could make him feel with just one hand and a little spit. She had got him right at that moment he expected to be glorious, when he would be adding to the bodily fluids in his lap.

Right then a teenaged Good Samaritan, out to save some forgetful driver his battery, pulled open the driver's door Clark forgot to lock after

Petey ran away. The passerby couldn't see that well inside the darkened interior. He groped across to find and push in the switch to turn off the parking lights. In the ensuing frenzied confusion, the girl reached over the seat, grabbed her backpack with one hand and adjusted her clothes with the other. She almost fell out of the car on to the pavement, she was in such a hurry. She wanted to get away without being arrested for what she heard TV cops call solicitation. From her side of the car, she couldn't tell that it wasn't a policeman's arm that pushed her climaxing smoking buddy away from her and pinned him to the seat.

When the train was pulling out from its third stop along the way toward New York City, she opened her backpack. It had none of her clothes inside. She had been so careful to remove the labels and leave no ID inside the bag, lest it get stolen. All her money, such as it was, plus forty dollars, was in the pocket of her shorts. This backpack, which did look like hers, had nothing but a load of long white envelopes like those that came in the mail and a whole bunch of the larger manilla envelopes that teachers at school used to carry around with blank tests and reports inside. She couldn't tell what was in the big ones, but the white envelopes had more money in each of them than she had ever seen in one place before. She quickly closed the bag, zipped it, and clasped it on her lap so it was closer to her than the fellow who now had her backpack and several pairs of her underwear as a souvenir of his romantic escape under the tracks.

It was that backpack from Petey he never told anyone about that launched Dennis Clark's career, once he had become Denison LeClerc, gone to med school, and opened a small cancer practice back in that same small town where he planned to make his second fortune.

276

By consensus it was decided that they would take two cars. Howe and Hart in one, Flynn and Corredor in the other. The women drove.

Howe was made aware of just how much jurisdiction she had out at the school. But she was also the only authorized law enforcement agent in the party. Her claim to enforcement was the location of the apartment from which the Lowry women disappeared. And as Detective Howe had recently

told those assembled in the safe house for their protective custody, there was a wide berth and leeway in a missing persons case that a lead investigator could wield.

They agreed to meet about fifteen minutes away from the school in the local public library to go over their plan one last time. They would use the library pay phone and find the up-to-date information on the progress and final approved parameters of the search warrant, in case it was needed.

Howe and Hart would use the drive to continue figuring out how they would divide the search tasks. He was inclined to have her look for the adult, since she was police, and he would look for the girl and tell her that Myles had sent him to make sure she was doing well at the school. She was thinking along those lines, but Hart was concerned that time she had to spend with the administrator might give Rosalyn time to flee again, with or without Linda in tow. Because Howe had never seen Judge McCarver in action with Linda, Hart reminded her that nothing about custody would be settled unless both living parents were in front of him in court. She assured him that, even though she was the only one with a gun, and here she paused to give him a chance to disprove her assumption, which he did not chose to do; then she would make sure she would not, literally, shoot the judge's plan down.

Angie Flynn was learning what she could on the drive from the man whom she was certain had spent more time with Danny Hart than anyone had ever done. Dominic was having a hard time assessing the reason for her interest. He finally just came right out and asked. "Are you sweet on this guy, or what, Flynn?" She said he had a great reputation for being fair, but harsh when necessary. She just wanted to know if that was true, since they orbited the same space in Jersey, but seldom crossed paths. She said she worked best moving fast and coming back around persistently for clues to solving clients' mysteries or following people her customers needed to know about. She likened herself to a near earth meteor, and said she had no interest in becoming a meteorite in Danny Hart's universe.

Dominic said he hoped what he told her was everything she wanted to know—and told her nothing about Danny Hart at the same time. When Flynn asked him where he learned that kind of logic, he told her "in boxcars." And then they started talking about what to do when they got to this school.

Flynn came up with an idea. "You ever been married, Detective?"

"Yes, I am married. But it's been too long since I've been home," he answered.

"Kids?" she probed.

"Two," he said. "Girls."

"Perfect," she said.

"I hope so, but I don't know. I haven't lived with them for over four years now." he replied.

"No." she said. "I don't mean that." She checked the traffic and then glanced his way across the front seat. "I mean, I have an idea that might work, if we get stuck."

"What's that?" he asked.

"What if Hart and Howe go in first. If they don't get anywhere, we'd be fresh bait still. We could show up unannounced and say we need a quick tour to decide if our kid should apply to attend high school this coming semester, right after the holidays. Say she's having trouble at her current high school. Being bullied by kids and hit on by a teacher. Can we take a peek at a high school class and maybe talk to a teacher or two?" She had thought this through. She was sure it would work.

"What's the angle?" asked Corredor, showing some possible interest.

"You guys know the wife's friend, Valerie whatever, was a high school teacher. We go looking to talk to a high school teacher and watch for one with a blue eye and a brown eye. And bingo! You get the friend. And I get my revenge for the bitch sneaking into the apartment on my watch."

Corredor started to laugh. "Good plan, Flynn. "Let's lay it on them at the library and see how far we get."

277

Rosalyn's first stop in Philadelphia was at the meeting place about the bonds. She did not succeed in anything more than securing an agreement to meet someone on Saturday morning in the outdoor gardens of the Rodin museum. She was to wait by the installation of the Burghers of Calais. She was told it was a short walk from the Main Library where she was going.

But Rosalyn got spooked. First, she thought two men were following her from that meeting about the bonds. One walked on each side of the street a few hundred yards behind her. Then when she got back in her rental car, she thought a van behind her was making every turn she was making. She became afraid. And her fear made her plan differently. Rosalyn could not convince herself it was a case of nerves brought on because she had not driven in so long, especially in urban traffic.

She remembered in reading in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, that one summer between school semesters, Brodie told people she was going to vacation in one city, but went elsewhere instead, without informing anyone she had changed her destination. It caused them consternation, but she did not care; it gave her a real sense of freedom and excitement. And that is what Rosalyn decided to do.

When she did not see the van in her mirror anymore, she pulled into a filling station. She came in to find directions and looked at a street map on the office wall. She saw that it was a stone's throw to cross a bridge and be in Camden, New Jersey. She thought if she found a cheap motel there for the two nights she would be in Philadelphia, she would be safe and no one would be any the wiser. Channeling her heroine she drove toward the bridge, recalling that as Brodie she almost always needed to rely on others for transportation.

278

Denison LeClerc snapped out of thinking about his teenage renaissance and focused again on his current dilemma. He knew Françoise Oulette would be here in his office in eight minutes to demand that he

transfer Myles Lowry to a legitimate and proper hospital, as a stroke victim. He was thinking what to do when his phone rang.

“Hey, doc?” said the voice.

“Yes?” he was too distracted to recognize Kelly Rocco’s voice.

“Doc. It’s Rocco. Kelly Rocco, Doc.” He was patient but insistent.

“Oh. I’m sorry, Rocco. I’ve got a big problem here I must solve right now, the oncologist told him.

“Well, Doc. That makes two problems you got.” He talked to someone else a moment, not on the phone. Then Rocco was back talking to LeClerc. “I’ll be brief, Doc. Your second problem is that this Lowry person who’s been hawking product hither, thither, and yon is at it again. This time only a half hour or so ago down in Philadelphia.”

“Why do you think I would I want to know that, Kelly?” he queried, nervous at the timing, but remembering he needed to be understood, but vague, on calls with this man, in case they were being wiretapped.

“Well, the thing is this, Doc. This wasn’t an intermediary like I called you about before. This is the Lowry person in the flesh. And that flesh takes the shape of a woman. The Lowry who’s looking to dump those other things you wanted to know about —she goes by the name of Rosalyn. Just thought you’d like to know while you’re still trying to figure out about what to do on Monday. Remember, Doc. The price is dropping.”

And then Kelly Rocco, expert at short calls, on the phone and in the markets, hung up before tracing could be definitive.

Denison LeClerc used the intercom to request his chief of services to come immediately. He needed to talk to him urgently, before a meeting he was having in less than five minutes.

In forty-five seconds, the chief was standing in front of Denison's desk.

Denison asked him, "Chief, How many beds are occupied today, as of right now?"

"Fifteen up front, and your special guest makes sixteen," was the answer. We discharged five last night and this morning and won't have intake until tomorrow. Four due in tomorrow."

For a twenty-three-bed facility that was a good inventory, financially.

"We have a building emergency, Chief. We are going to have to transfer every one of our patients out by the end of the day. There will be no outpatient work after noon today. And all-day procedures need to go home by four-thirty this afternoon. So, make adjustments accordingly, please. Take my assistant and somebody from medical records to make the calls to families and health care facilities to arrange the transfers."

"When the chief began to speak—in protest probably thought Denison—the oncologist said, "Go. Go. Go. You've not a moment to lose."

As the chief was leaving, Oulette was entering by the other door, from the solarium wing of the building. She began to speak forcefully, "Denison, I demand that Myles—"

"Françoise, can you and April get Myles ready for transfer?" he quizzed her hard on all the details that would be involved. "I'd like him ready to roll no later than three o'clock, please. And much sooner if possible."

Oulette came away having won a fight that was never waged.

"I regret I can not give you a nurse or attendant to help, until the actual roll-out and transport. We are evacuating all our patients today, due to

an emergency in the building. All the other trained personnel will have their hands full.”

She did not move as fast as he was expecting. “Doctor, is there a problem?”

“No, sir,” she answered, walking backwards out of his office and pivoting to go tell April she needed her help.

280

The stone edifice of the library had some age on it. The plaque at the front door suggested it went back to other centuries. The librarian, Mrs. Reading, also had some age on her. But she was still a product of the century they were in.

It wasn't often that four people came at the same time to see her. Even though she recommended a larger table in the library proper, they gently insisted that squeezing into her office would be fine, as the two men in the group were quietly dragging a chair each over the carpeted floor outside her door. It was also the first time in a long time that an armed and uniformed officer of the law, whom she did not know, sat across her desk from her. The two local patrols would come in for a coffee and a book for their kids now and again. But this whole arrangement was definitely a different way to begin the last day of the week.

“Mrs. Reading, can you tell us a little about your town here and the surrounding area, please?” As she would have expected, it was the woman in uniform who was doing the talking for the group to start.

Mrs. Reading was happy to oblige. “Our little town goes back to family industry supporting the Federal troops in the War Between the States. Natural resources, armaments, railroads for transportation or men and materials. That sort of thing. Later on, the generations were more philanthropic with the wealth they accumulated. They built several things for the community. This library is a centerpiece in town. And then there's the school outside of town some.” She switched focus to the present.

"It's a quiet place. Not too much trouble. Kids have things to do. Not many jobs here, though. So, the high school grads that don't go to college mostly leave for nearby cities or larger towns. Like other towns, this internet thing is starting to change how people get along." She didn't want to lose them, so she began to make it personal.

"Even for me here in the library. Why, just last week the lady interviewing for the librarian's job—up at that school outside of town I was telling you about—was asking me what I thought the future was for libraries and librarians." She stopped because one of the men was standing up and leaning over her desk with something in his hand.

Corredor held a photo within her eyesight and asked, "Wouldn't have been this woman by any chance, was it?"

If Mrs. Reading thought she was surprised, she had no idea how shocked the other three people still sitting in front of her were. None of them were aware that Dominic had a picture of Rosalyn Lowry in his jacket pocket. And Danny hadn't seen him 'liberate it,' as Dom would characterize it later when they asked him, from her ex-husband's office, as the Cocoms were sharing with him the photo of themselves in Mexico. Danny was again amazed, but knew he shouldn't be any longer, by what Dominic said were his 'missing persons skills.'

"Why yes, young man, she is the one. She seemed nice. Do you all know her?" Reading inquired.

Danny took over. "Was this woman alone when she came to interview you?"

Reading turned her attention to this other fellow. As she did, she realized there hadn't really been any introductions. She didn't know their names, except for the HOWE name stenciled in white capital letters on the policewoman's vest. "Yes and no," she answered him. "She was here with me alone, but she had a lady friend who drove her into town. She was over shopping at the time. They were going to meet up afterwards and go back up to the school, she said."

"There wasn't a young girl with her?" asked the woman in street clothes. She was either a cop, too, or some kind of person Mrs. Reading wouldn't want to cross. Nice enough in appearance, but just the same. The librarian was starting to get a little uncomfortable. She wondered if she was going to have to re-assess the 'quiet place . . . not much trouble' part of her description of their town.

"No. She said her daughter was in class at the school, so they would have to move along and get back before the school day was over." Reading half-guessed this answer. She was just wanting them gone, now.

The HOWE woman in the vest stood up. "You've been very helpful, Mrs. Reading." She tucked her notepad back into the vest pocket. The librarian didn't even recall her taking it out. "But I do need two very important favors from you."

"And what might those be?" she asked.

"Not might be—they definitely are." She waited until she saw Reading knew how serious she was. Hers were no casual requests, and they certainly weren't going to come as suggestions. "First and foremost, it is absolutely crucial that you tell no one we have been here. Not the school. Not the lady in the picture. And not your local police." She peered into the librarian's eyes tighter than the old folks who brought magnifying glasses with them each afternoon to read the out-of-town papers in the library. "That little girl's life might depend on your silence."

If Reading had stood to say goodbye a few moments ago, she would now have fallen right back into her desk chair. "And the second favor," was all she could manage, with a slight tremble in her voice.

In the most pleasant 'may I borrow a cup of sugar, neighbor' voice, the woman standing next to HOWE asked, "May we have the use of your phone to make a few long-distance calls, please?"

Danny placed two twenty-dollar bills dead in the middle of Reading's desk. "These will be easier to use to pay for the calls than asking you for a bunch of quarters from the fine till outside." As he spoke, he kept going around the side of the desk and extended his hooked arm to escort Mrs.

Reading back out to the general circulation desk. As they went, Reading heard the door to her office click shut behind her. She did not look back.

281

Linda remembered by heart the exact path she took twice through the woods to get where she wanted to go. There were a few more short twigs and thin branches that had fallen in the wind onto the ground. But there was nothing that made her trip and fall.

She still needed to squeeze between the tall white trees, some straighter than others, with only one or two bent down sideways. These were off to the side from where she was going to walk. She thought of them as fairy tale coachmen, bowing to a princess coming out of her palace to take the carriage to a ball.

She crossed the grass meadow with the scattered goose poop, which once or twice she stepped in this Friday morning. There seemed to be fewer geese waddling around or sleepily swimming or paddling on the pond. She saw two white swans resting their long-necked heads on their backs, asleep. She came all the way up to the edge. She walked too close, and one sneaker slipped in and got wet up to the laces. She side-stepped the other canvas shoe over it and in up to her ankle, to stop from sliding into the water entirely. She didn't much care. She planned on staying out until Miss Alex was finished with school. By then her shoe and sock and feet would be dried by the sun.

She took her time walking around the pond. She listened in case voices that did not honk or sing—people voices—let her know she had to hide. But she heard only squirrels chattering and a strange chuffing sound, that soon showed itself to belong to a deer in the woods. She walked up the rise from the pond's far edge to the tree line.

The same trees draped their bangs from high above, to sweep the grass below. Linda pretended that if she made a play to narrate a story of Scheherazade's, the characters could put out their hands and part the curtain of these trees' long, thin strings of leaves. They would be as wispy as the costumes on the women dancing on the grass, as they did on the colorful carpets in the pictures of her storybook. The sun went behind a cloud and

things got dark for a short time. They matched Linda's momentary darkness thinking of the bookmark in her copy of the Arabian Nights and the torn one ravaged by, she rightly suspected, the bully Deirdre. She knew Red would get the message.

But the cloud gave way and rays of sun lit the red side of her caboose and bounced off the white B & O 458 lettering. Linda lightened up at the vision and put the suns and moons and stars on Scheherazade's bookmark out of her mind and looked forward to thinking about her father's locomotive placeholder when she climbed inside the caboose.

Everything in the cabin of the caboose was in good order as she left it. She had closed the door and no animals got inside to chew the wood or rip the fabric. She realized she forgot a flashlight, but she didn't worry. Linda did not plan this trip to stretch until after dark. But she would have to remember to bring one the next time.

The table and chair she dreamed of using to share a tea party with her gentleman caller were still in the caboose. The cupboards were bare—she thought she sounded like an American nursery rhyme instead of an Arabian tale—as they had been on her two previous trips. She did not leave food there, because she thought it would attract field mice—whom she knew would not put on a stewards' coats to await a princess by her pumpkin carriage. Linda knew that books told stories, but that her life was her life, after all.

She had read in her mother's library encyclopedias about trains and cabooses. They had great pictures. Most of the old trains they showed were from what the pages called, The Old West. Buffaloes roamed on the plains near the tracks and there were high mountains in the distance. But they did have black and white photos from the time and some that were yellowy and grey. Some pictures had long white cracks running through them, where they had been folded. She loved seeing the railroad people—in their round hats with short beaks on the front and flat tops, with some kind of badges pinned on the front, where baseball caps had the letter of the team's city or name. Her favorite was the scripty upper case D for the Tigers. On a TV commercial, she once saw a tall man, in really short pants, wear the D on his hat. He jumped over the door and into a small red sports car without a top and drove it away screeching the tires. She never saw the show. It was for adults only.

The top of the caboose looked like it was wearing a square hat, with eyes that were really windows. She climbed up into the top and pulled the ladder up into the space so she could slide the door closed. It became the floor of the space. She looked all the way to the trees from there. The windows did not open, and they were very dirt-smudged on the inside. It was hot up there and she started to feel tired. She lied down, rested her head onto her arms, and dreamed of her dad and their train set as she dozed off. She fell asleep for a long time.

282

Myles Lowry did not feel like himself. He knew he was tired and in bed, flat on his back, with his head propped up more than his feet. But when he went to turn over on his side, he was unable to do so. He wanted to have his left arm come across his body to make it possible for his right side to follow in a rolling motion. Only it didn't seem to work correctly. His arm seemed to flail out instead tuck and reach. And his right side felt stuck and not willing to follow into the rollover.

He thought of a time when he was younger and had his first car in a snowstorm. One back tire spun and the other was gripped by the snow around it. He slid a thick piece of cardboard from a disassembled box under the stuck side to give it traction. The tire caught and forced the box into the snowbank. After that it was impossible to move the cardboard to reposition it. He could clutch one side, but the other was pinned between the tire and the excavated snow. It just wouldn't give, it wouldn't move, and the tire was jammed in tighter than it was before. The car was going nowhere. And now Myles realized neither was he. Not, at least, under his own power.

Two women came and stood bedside. On his left. They looked familiar. He had a sense they were not a danger to him. He fought the tightness in his chest and tried to relax. The message was very slow going from his mind to his body. One of the women moved away. She went toward the foot of the bed, turned right and was walking along the bed past where Myles could feel his left foot. She went passed his foot, and was halfway along, and she disappeared. One minute she was there and the next she was gone. The woman he could still see was looking into the space that the other entered and vanished into. But this one was not acting alarmed or frightened as Myles

was. In fact, it appeared she was still talking into that space, as if the first woman could still hear her.

Suddenly half that first woman appeared again near the bottom of the bed, but closer to Myles's left side. She looked split down the middle, but not across the width of her body like the assistant of a magician, who might have sawn her in half. She looked cloven, head to foot as if a medieval horseman had swung a heavy broadsword down from on top of her and all the way to the ground.

He thought of a time in his high school locker room. The class clown stood perpendicular to a mirror hung at the end of a row of lockers, facing Myles. He positioned himself so the mirror formed a straight vertical line—from his widow's peak, down the center of his nose along the septum, across half his lips and the cleft of his chin; as it went lower it severed his Adam's apple down the core line, and plumbed the line's descent so he had only one breast, half his ribs (like a rack of lamb almost), and only one testicle and half his penis (the jerk was naked), and he stood on only one leg. He pointed his right arm out parallel to the floor and lifted his leg up by bending his knee to a ninety-degree angle. He looked like he no longer stood on the floor, and the mirror reflected his right side to show a pseudo-duplicated left side. He appeared like a toy clown on a stick that when the puppeteer pulled a string downwards, the clown slid upwards with his feet and arms in the air.

Back then, it was hysterical. But when the young woman turned to look at him today, without a mirror to affect the magic trick, she look horrifying and Myles became terrified. He wanted to scream in terror, but no sound would come out from his mouth. The half face looked alarmed and then pulled back into the void and disappeared. Just as he thought he could catch his breath, out of the void to his right her two arms stretched toward him, unattached to any torso. Everything went black, except for the white spots dancing in his head, like pinpricks of starlight faraway on a clear, cold night. If he had not been lying in a bed, he felt he would have fallen as he fainted.

Beatriz Grey was no more accustomed than her neighboring librarian Mrs. Reading was, to addressing a police officer, three other adults, with none of them accompanied by children, in her office all at one time, to question her about the same issue.

She had been asked if she had a recruitment connection with Barnard. "Yes, she did."

She was asked if a woman on faculty here was named Valerie and was a Barnard grad. "Yes, there was." Would that woman's maiden name be McKinley. "Yes, it would be." Could they go and see her as her class ended, without being announced beforehand. "That would be highly irregular." Did she have an alternate suggestion. "Yes, there was a class break in ten minutes, before the last class of the day began, which was enough time to send a substitute and ask Valerie to come to this office." Would Grey make sure the reason for seeing Valerie was not given to the substitute or to Valerie. "Yes, I would." And was there an anteroom or office nearby that Valerie could be shown to, so they could continue in here with Administrator Grey without interruption. "Yes, there was. It would be arranged."

Another set of questions followed about a different person. Grey was asked if there was a Barnard grad on staff here by the name of Rosalyn. "Yes, there are two." Did one of them use the married name of Lowry. "Yes, one of them does." Was she known as a student at Barnard by the name Roz Young. "Yes, she was." Was she newly arrived on staff. "Yes, just this semester." The administrator was then queried about her role at the school. Was Mrs. Lowry a teacher. "No, she was hired as a librarian." Did Mrs. Lowry have a daughter with her here at the school. "Yes, she does." Would her name be Linda the two men who remained in her office asked. "Yes, it is." Should they expect that Mrs. Lowry is in the library and her daughter is in class at this time they wanted to know. "Mrs. Lowry is away on professional training for this weekend." Where would that be happening. "Philadelphia." Would Grey expect she took her daughter with her. "No, she made arrangements with me for her daughter to remain here under approved supervision." How might they verify Linda was at the school. "We could go to the classroom at the upcoming break." Is her room in the same place where Valerie is coming from, they wanted to know. "No, they are in two separate grade level

buildings, not generally in sight of each other." Would you please escort us to Linda's classroom while our colleagues await Valerie's arrival. "Certainly." Could they make a phone call first. "Yes."

On the walk over to Mrs. Steadman's class, Dominic spoke to Ms. Grey. "I am an NYPD Detective, Administrator. Linda's estranged father has gone missing in New York. We are concerned for Linda's safety. That is why we want to make certain she is here. Once we have determined that, we would like to go over with you the arrangements you have approved for her weekend supervision, please." This was the tact he and Danny had agreed might work if conditions required. The ladies would be dealing with Valerie, as a New Jersey jurisdictional matter.

284

Rosalyn was set up in the Camden motel she chose alternatively. Her desire was to be anonymous and hard to find. She asked at the front desk about mass transit between Camden and Philadelphia. The desk clerk told her she herself used PATCO to go back and forth, because she did not always have the family's one a car available to her and parking was too expensive anyway.

She walked Rosalyn over to the type of pamphlet rack ubiquitous in motel lobbies. It was stuffed with tourist brochures for sights in Philadelphia and the south Jersey area, including the Jersey Shore. Among all the bursts of color and excited family members' faces or sleek casino information begging to be extracted from the crowded ranks of advertising, was a drab and forthright PATCO schedule.

The clerk took two copies and brought them back to the counter. It was slow and the lobby was empty, and this woman guest seemed grateful enough for the assistance. The clerk opened and spread the schedules out on the counter. "I'll mark this one up for you and then you can use the clean one for your own plans. No worry. They're free."

Rosalyn said, "I really appreciate it. The less I use this rental car, the better." She had picked it up cheap next to the AMTRAK stop. But now that it

was a known way to track here movements, she wanted no part of using it until she dropped it off Sunday and hopped back on the AMTRAK.

“Okay, here we are.” The clerk penned a circle on the map. “Here’s the PATCO stop nearest here.” That got a square of ink. “You said you were going to the Main Library, right?” A nod of affirmation was all she needed. “So you should get off here,” a blue check mark, “transfer across the way to this line,” an arrow at the end of an underline, and bingo—you’re crawling through those reference volumes like a mad bookworm.” She flipped the page over and drew two ovals, one atop each of two columns of numbers, and neatly printed IN over one column and OUT over the other. Here’s your timetable into the city and here’s the clock to watch for coming back. You don’t want to be walking over old Ben Franklin, now do you?”

“Ah, I guess not?” Rosalyn did not get the idea.

The clerk said, “The Bridge. You get the train underground. It pops up over the river on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. It ducks back underground to your destination. Either way—each way. That’s how it works.”

“This is fantastic,” affirmed Rosalyn. “I’ll plan my weekend out accordingly. I can’t thank you enough.”

“Any time,” she said. “I’m on until early evening.” As Rosalyn walked toward the door, the clerk added, “Anything else you need is in your room, or you can ask me. There’s a booklet in your nightstand. Places to eat tonight and tomorrow that won’t break the bank or religious services over the weekend—you might want the car for those.”

Rosalyn studied the transit map back at the desk in her room. She could see that the same train stop for the library would do very well for the Rodin Museum. She was tired from staying up late after Alexandria left, getting up early this morning, getting Linda out to school, being ready for the cab, and taking two trains to get to the city and renting the car for two days. She wasn’t used to this varied activity, or the strain she felt from being followed.

She made sure the alarm clock worked, set it for ninety minutes, and pulled the room darkening vertical shade and the room drapes closed tightly. She wanted to make sure anyone walking by her first-floor room off the

parking lot could not look in. Remembering some of the detective mystery books and TV shows she had taken in over the years, she left the rental car in the back corner of the motel parking lot, careful not to park it right at her door.

Paying cash and using the duplicate Roz Young driver's license for the car rental and this impromptu lodging situation should protect her for two days, she hoped. She never told Myles that the renewal cycle for her fake college ID was offset by two years from her true valid license. Jumping states and falsifying a residential mailing address with rental property utility bills still worked as well now as when she was getting drinks poured for her that she was too young to be served. She put these worries behind her, in the same draw of the nightstand with the PATCO schedules. She stripped off her clothes and slid under the chilly sheets for a refreshing siesta.

285

Detective Hammersmith took the phone call from New Jersey. It was from Detective Corredor. He filled her in on their progress so far, including the news that Rosalyn Lowry was alleged to be in Philadelphia for a weekend of professional study. They had found she had hired on as a librarian in a private day school called **HAPPYDALE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL** in upper northeastern New Jersey, not far from either New York or Pennsylvania. He hoped he and his colleague would momentarily be face-to-face with her daughter, Linda.

"Do you have any new word on Linda's father that I can tell her?" he asked.

"No, not yet," she conceded. "Nor do I have any news on the Smith woman. I don't think they've fled the area. I just think our keeping quiet about our interest in both of them has made it possible they don't know we are aware of their association, or even are looking for them." She considered and said, "I hope we find him as you're finding the daughter, especially if the mother's off somewhere again." A thought occurred to her. "Detective, are you with Hart?" When he answered in the affirmative, she took a stab in the dark, "Any chance you could ask him if there's any long shot that the mother and the father are planning to meet in Philadelphia?"

Dominic's answer was classic cop humor. "He says only if they have pistols and seconds. He might bring Smith, of course. But he's hopeful that since we have Valerie here, it won't be the case." Then Dom thought to say, "Oh, sorry. Valerie is her friend who would serve as Rosalyn's second in a duel."

They hung up, but each would find in several minutes that their call was premature in its conclusions and certainly not something they'd be laughing at for too long.

Maura's captain intercommed her to come and see him.

"We have something of a medical emergency that's being managed but that you might want to look into." He told her.

"What's that?" she asked.

"You know that cancer treatment center over across from the library?" the captain replied. She said she did, so he continued. "We are getting word they are transferring a little over a dozen patients to local area facilities, some hospitals and some nursing homes. Some type of building emergency."

She lured him in, "And . . .?"

"How about if you take a ride over there?" And before she could ask why and protest because she had this other important missing persons case, he told her, "Maura. I'm thinking a building emergency mobilizing that much activity is worth a look. If it's a gas leak or utility emergency or radiological release, I want you to find out and get the fire chief on it. Because so far nothing's been sounded for such an alarm or alert."

Now she understood the gist of where this was going. And she liked it. Her boss said, "That place is really close to the library and the house where the Smith woman lived. What if your Mr. Lowry was in that rental car when it took a hit. We haven't found him getting medical attention anywhere yet. This is our best chance to find out if he's in there, without any probable cause or warrants, don't you think?"

"I'll get back to you as soon as I find out what's happening over there," were her parting words.

286

Back at the **HAPPYDALE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL** Detective Howe and Angie Flynn were seated in the anteroom. Without asking Grey's permission, they had phoned from a table console and made sure that Karidja knew they wanted that search warrant. The lawyer told her it was granted and ready to fax when they sent her the number. She also confirmed that Eleanor had a copy and had left for Mike Riley's more than a half hour before

When Valerie knocked and entered, she excused herself, "Sorry, I must have the wrong room." She couldn't help but recall telling the same thing to a courtroom bailiff some time ago.

"No, Valerie, this is the right room, please come in." Howe told her. She crossed the room, and they shook hands. "My, what beautiful eyes you have," was Howe's first salvo.

May I call you Valerie? Or would you prefer Ms. McKinley or some other name?" asked Angie. "I'm afraid I missed the opportunity to meet you earlier."

"Valerie is fine. And I still go by Ms. McKinley. I kept it to use as my professional name." She watched both of the women and wondered at the protective vest Howe was wearing. I'm afraid I don't understand, I came over from class as soon as I was asked to be here," she said evenly.

Flynn explained herself. "Oh, not today, Ms. McKinley. I mean a few Thursday nights ago when you were at the Lowry's apartment helping your friend Rosalyn fetch up some of her and Linda's things."

Valerie took a seat on a one end of a small couch and had nothing more to say, at first.

A knock came on the door and Beatriz Grey entered silently, followed by Hart and Corredor. The Administrator did not look very well. She sat down next to McKinley while the men stood in the center of the room. Danny told the room, "Linda Lowry was not in class today. One of her classmates told her teacher Linda went away for the weekend with her mother—Philadelphia. So, Mrs. . . . Steadman? he asked Grey . . . to which she nodded . . . Mrs. Steadman did not report her absent. As a result, the normal procedure for looking in on her did not take place."

Before he could continue, another knock came on the door. Without an invitation to enter, the door swung open and for a moment Ms. Grey's assistant stood in the door, to be quickly replaced by the aforementioned Mrs. Steadman.

The second-grade teacher had two students in tow, one in each hand clutching the nape of their shirts. The shorter one, a red head, had blood on her shirt. Her hair was a mess, looking like a chunk of it might have been yanked out, in fact. She was wearing a smirk beneath her freckles to go along with her torn clothing. But the taller girl looked to be the donor of the shirt blood. Her nose ran red with phlegm. One of her eyes was puffy and the other was still watering.

Grey almost jumped off the couch and inserted herself forcefully between Hart and the red head. "Explain yourself, young lady! What would you say about Deirdre if your mother was here?"

"I would say this fucking liar got just what she deserved and she's lucky somebody broke it up." Her belligerence was superseded only by her arrogance. She was not giving in.

"What is the meaning of this, Mrs. Steadman?" shouted the Administrator.

Howe was expecting to be asked to press charges. She was the only cop in the room. But as she looked around, she saw Valerie with her head down, covering her lower face and trying not to laugh.

The older woman said quietly, "As Red—I mean Clementine—has so dramatically declared, Deirdre was not being truthful when she told me before class today that Linda went out of town with her mother."

“And how do you know this to be true? And why did it take until now for us to know we have a truant student?” It was Grey’s way to deflect any responsibility she might have for the safety of a **HAPPYDALE** student. It was done so transparently for Howe’s benefit. No one in the room was fooled.

Deirdre’s teacher only offered one explanation. “If the two gentlemen had not come looking for Linda between classes, I would not have spoken of her morning’s declaration. But Clementine had information to the contrary. Had she ferreted out the untruth when I was taking attendance, I assure you I would have sounded the alarm sooner. But I was told prior to roll call and did not ask about Linda at that time. Perhaps Clementine is to be commended for remaining in class and restraining herself from looking for her friend for almost a whole school day.”

Howe had heard enough. “Okay, young ladies, fun’s over.” She eased the **HAPPYDALE** adults out of her way and stood before the two girls. She dramatized taking her notepad out of her vest, checking her sidearm was still below its holster guard and the safety was engaged. As all bullies when challenged, Deidre felt sick and cupped her hand over her mouth and made retching sounds.

But Red was indomitable. “Go puke in the sink, pu . . . sissy. It’ll be worse the next time you hurt my friends.”

And that was exactly what the taller girl did, almost pasting the front of Hart’s and Corredor’s jackets in her trip to the sink in the corner.

Howe raised her eyebrows to Clementine. The girl recognized the appreciation on her face, whereas a person more faint of heart would have been terrified. The vested officer told her, and by way of her raised voice, all three of the **HAPPYDALE** adults in the room, “My name is Detective Howe from the town where Linda and her mother lived in an apartment before they came here. And this is Detective Corredor from New York. Mr. Hart and Miss Flynn are private investigators. He works for Linda’s father’s lawyer. She works for Linda’s mother’s lawyer. And in a few minutes Administrator Grey will be getting a fax message that is a search warrant. We are going to use that warrant to look for Linda. And we will not stop until we find her. Trust me, we’ve been doing this for over a month and are not giving up.” She looked over to the girl crying quietly by the sink. “I take it Miss Clementine—you know quite a bit about not giving up, don’t you?”

"Yes . . . Detective Howe," she replied. Most of the adults in the room were at first surprised the girl remembered her name. But they saw her throw a quick glance at the name stripe on Howe's vest. "I bet your mother calls you her 'darlin' sometimes, doesn't she?" asked Howe. The girl nodded, reluctantly.

"Okay. So why don't you come with me and investigator Flynn and . . . Miss Valerie. We're going to go examine what you think are the first two places we should be looking for your friend, Linda. Can you do that, please?"

Red said she would. She told Howe, "The library room where we play *Insecta*. Or her bedroom at her house, with her train set."

"Valerie, please bring us to the library," Howe asked in a voice that was more firm and friendly than stern and mean. "Gentlemen, please secure the search warrant with Ms. Grey's assistance. And then, Ms. Grey, please show the men to the Lowry's living quarters."

Lastly, she asked, "Mrs. Steadman? Is there a medical station or a nurse's office here at the school?" The teacher smiled and said there was. She was liking how this woman was taking over. Grey didn't stand a chance of putting a good face on this.

Howe requested the teacher to see to it that Deirdre got her injuries attended to. "And then, please arrange for her" . . . she needed the teacher to fill in the blank, which she did by silently mouthing the word . . . "mother . . . to get her daughter cleaned up and brought back to Ms. Grey's office to be disciplined."

Rosalyn had successfully weaponized the relationship between these two adversarial second graders, by disguising and reducing it first to a cooperative reading assignment and a game board contest—so it could simmer and fester long enough to be very dramatic when it exploded. And she wasn't here at **HAPPYDALE** to see it. Or to be culpable for setting it in motion. She had internalized the deceptions of Miss Jean Brodie in her prime.

Denison LeClerc's staff had just about completed reserving spaces elsewhere for his bedded population. The evacuation had already started, with Myles Lowry going out the back door before anyone else vacated their rooms through the customary front door or emergency room loadout.

Maura Hammersmith maneuvered her patrol car right up to that emergency room entrance, lights flashing and sirens silent. She respected it was a hospital zone. She did not block ambulance egress or exit lanes painted boldly on the blacktop. But she had made a surveillance loop in her vehicle around the entire facility before pulling in here.

She locked the car with her remote fob and headed in. She found LeClerc in his office, after asking staff where he was. He was startled when he looked up and saw her. He was expecting a low-level staffer he had sent for to move some cartons out to his car. He told his chief of services, he wanted the records at his home office, to be able to run things from there, and to monitor the patient diaspora.

Denison recovered quickly, "Officer?" he inquired.

She was going to make him incriminate himself first, without giving him a question to answer.

Denison tried again, "Officer, is there anything I can do for you?"

"Some of your receiving hospitals and nursing homes have asked the department to give them an assurance your emergency evacuation doesn't involve moving patients they should be concerned about admitting." It was credible and straightforward. She left very little wiggle room for the doctor.

"There are no patient illnesses, nor communicable conditions, Officer. If you have them call me personally on a patient-by-patient basis I assure you I will answer them, while observing patient privacy and confidentiality." His tone was even enough, but his words were downright condescending.

"My captain wants to know if there are gas mains, or pressurized containers or tanks, or radiological sources that are at risk on a basis of

public health, not patient individuality," she told him. Once more, credible and straightforward.

"Please tell him that all our systems are safe. I became concerned not too long ago this morning, that renovations we have been doing have contaminated the filtration system delivering medical gases to patient rooms and operating spaces. They will need to be serviced—put under pressure and bled and then tested with appropriate agents to ascertain the lines are clean. The measurements will demonstrate secure lines and no leaks, no worn gaskets, and the like. Then, new filters must be placed in-line, the current ones discarded, with any decontamination required. Lastly, the specific gases delivered by those lines need to be run through and tested for proper pressure and purity."

LeClerc saw she was still not convinced, but he was getting her there. "Usually this is done partially, systematically sequenced, one or two areas or lines at a time, without disabling a complete hospital or facility operation. But there's been a disturbance by renovations, and we must address the entire system, facility-wide. It will take days and patients are at great risk potentially until it is accomplished. Clearly evacuation is the safest thing for patients, and it protects the clinic's medical practices liabilities most thoroughly."

"Do you need fire department assistance?" Hammersmith inquired.

"No thanks, we are under contract with trained and insured contractors to do the job." He thought he was done and was about to beg he be excused to get on with the patient relocation.

But she just would not go away. She came right back at him, stating this was her captain's position on the matter. "Have you called that contractor yet? When are they due to be here? I'd like to talk to their foreman. I want to make sure they know what they are doing and won't blow anything up in our town."

"I'll go call them now and get an estimate arrival day and time. I'll give them your name and contacts. I'll tell them they can not start before checking in with you at your stationhouse, officer." And then he went for the intimidation jugular, to test her veracity. "What should I tell him is your captain's name?"

“Why don’t I come with you when you call, and I’ll tell him my captain’s name directly.”

LeClerc lost his composure. “Get your goddamn patrol car out of my emergency lanes. You call your captain and tell him if he wants to talk to me, he can come over here. You’ve wasted enough of my patients’ critical time.” He walked away.

Maura was so pleased that he broke. She now knew his evacuation was a front. For what, she did not know. But her captain sure had his notions of what they were. She got in her vehicle and saw that LeClerc was watching her from inside the emergency room intake desk, which was also now his disembarkation station. She picked up her radio handset and called into the station and asked for the captain. “He’s hiding something for sure, Captain. But I don’t think there’s any danger here to patients or the public. If you come over here in fifteen minutes and ask for him, I should have it figured out by then. But don’t look for me, just him, when you come.”

She replaced the radio handset. She turned off her light bar. She left the emergency department entrance slowly, without looking in at LeClerc.

Out back, far away and not visible from the emergency department, was a rear door loading area. It was on ground level for gurneys and the like, so it technically was not a loading dock. Stuck on the double door was a sign. Hanging somewhat crookedly, it announced an asbestos abatement was in progress. But it was either being done illegally or it was a hoax. There were none of the machines with hoses at windows that she was accustomed to seeing, blowing air out of the building. And there were no vehicles for the workers or company trucks with supplies and materials parked near the entrance. If they were not working, they were required to use a chain and padlock on the entrance. There were none there.

Maura took a tire iron out of the trunk, after driving up and tucking her patrol tight in to the wall. The fitted metal edges of the double doors protested, but they were no match for the breaker bar and her persistence, here or in the weight room. The doors sprung because they did not have a center post. The doors only locked into each other, so a full-size stretcher or Hospital bed or an emergency gurney could be rolled in through the opening. When she spread them with the tire iron, they submitted and opened.

Inside there was no removal set up. There was equipment stored in one sizeable break area. But it was just staged for use and not operational. She radioed in and had her dispatcher put her through to the phone number on the equipment labels.

"Asbestos Removal," said the operator.

"I am police officer Maura Hammersmith. I am calling from an oncological center on Long Island on the south shore. You have abatement gear her. Are you scheduled to do a removal?" she waited.

"Wait, please, I'll get a schedule supervisor." He put her on hold. Music. FM radio station, Not too abrasive.

"Hello. This is Artie. How can I help, officer?" He had a good desk operator for sure.

She repeated the site address and the question about doing a removal.

"We did have one scheduled. But Doctor LeClerc called it off Sunday night. We rerouted some gear and the crew first thing Monday. What we did not need at the other place, we left there in a back storage room, and we posted that door. He said he had run out of money, and we had to wait a month to do the job."

She marveled at how much cops continued to learn on the job by letting nervous people shoot off their mouths. She thanked him and moved further inside the facility.

Down a short hallway she opened a double fire door and found she was in some kind of large space. From the windows it looked like a community sunroom. But the furnishings were sparse and inappropriate. One corner away on her right was set up with a hospital bed and monitors. Immediately in before her, on her left, was a seating area with a couch and chairs. A blanket was folded on the couch and there was a bed pillow, not a sofa bolster, there too.

The service area behind that seating area was augmented. In addition to the countertop sink and microwave she would expect to find in a sunroom, there was a dorm fridge and extra portable cabinets, filled with individually

wrapped snack cakes, chips, pretzels, and cookies. There was only one kind of drink in the fridge, but almost a dozen bottles. Two empty bottles were in the sink, rinsed out.

One table with seating for four was nearby. But with just one place setting. The other table was piled high with jigsaw puzzles, magazines, and dime store novels.

Down a narrow hallway heading into the rest of the clinic there was a private room. But it was not equipped as a hospital room. It was a private apartment, with its own bathroom, shower no tub. There was a bed, neatly made, a desk with a writing pad, and a copy of a police detective novel in paperback. But the book bore a stamp from the local library on the inside front cover. It was superimposed with a handwritten heading of DONATED BY. The pocket was still glued to the inside back cover, but there was no ticket with a due back date stamped on it.

The drawers of the dresser had about six sets of women's underwear, hospital grade for wearing under scrubs. Hanging in the closet were four pairs of scrub pants and three V-neck woman's scrub shirts. The sizes were either small or medium.

Only an inspection of the hospital bed corner of the room remained to fill in the gaps of her captain's intuition.

Everything looked in order, except the bed was stripped and there was no patient chart in the grey metal flip chart in the vertical tray affixed to the outside of the foot of the bed.

One closet was locked. It was not hard to open. It wasn't a security locker and there were no narcotics stored in it. The closet floor supported a folded wheelchair, a collapsed walker, and a collection of three or four canes of different stature and bulk. The cupboard-style wall storage unit held a variety of men's and women's hairpieces and wigs. An array of men's and women's hats were stored there as well. White Styrofoam heads, some with wigs, and some nakedly unsuitable for use because there were pieces chunked out of them stood at parade rest along the top shelf, practically too high to reach.

None of this was indefensible in a clinic for patients undergoing radiology or chemotherapies. But the array was incriminating, especially since it was guarded by doors posted for an ersatz asbestos removal.

It was about fifteen minutes. She'd walk through the posted interior door and look for her captain. LeClerc, the sexist chauvinist, could explain to him. Maura was going to lock him up if he didn't tell her immediately the name of the facility to which she was willing to bet he had moved Myles Lowry sometime earlier that day.

288

Danny Hart and Dominic Corredor secured the faxed search warrant and presented it to Beatriz Grey. Dominic explained it in one sentence: "As an NYPD Detective, I am serving you a search warrant concerning missing persons Linda and Rosalyn Lowry, which warrant tells you we can go anywhere we want and look for anything we think is important."

Danny took another approach. "Do you wish to help us or not?"

She said, "I'll do what I can." So, they told her what she could do right away was bring her to the Lowrys living quarters and let them in. She complied. They had her write her office phone number on a pad they retrieved from the kitchen.

Danny spoke to Grey on the doorstep while Dominic was inside the dwelling. "For now, Administrator, please consider yourself excused from this dwelling. Do not enter it unless one of us asks you to do so. Since your office is within walking distance, please return to it and wait for us by your phone. Please call here if you need us. Have our colleagues call us here if they come back to your office and need us. We will call you for anything we might need. We appreciate your cooperation, Please excuse our demeanor. We fear for the life of a child whom we have grown to care for very much."

Dominic couldn't guess at first why there was a closed suitcase in the master bedroom, standing on the floor next to the dresser. Had Rosalyn not left for her trip? Danny was without an opinion either. But they let that stand for now. Instinctively, they did not want to touch it on the outside. And they

did not want to look inside, until Howe clarified the search warrant for them. Telling Grey something to get her out of the way was much different than arguing in a court of law about the validity of executing a search warrant and losing evidence inadvertently.

Ultimately, it did not appear time critical. It was Linda they were looking to find.

Danny followed Dominic into what they properly considered to be Linda's bedroom. The furnishings were too young for Rosalyn, and they were for a female. As far as they knew, only the mother and daughter were living here. They would have to ask to make certain, but that was their operating assumption, at the moment.

"Why would she put the train set on the top of her bed?" Danny asked.

"I suspect she was going to play with it instead of going to school. But I don't get that shredded paper item. There, on top of the train set box," Dominic told him.

Then Dominic saw that the window was open a crack. "Danny, I'm doing a sweep outside, you do inside. I want to find out about that window. Let's do this before we get any company over here." With that he left.

It was the chance Danny was hoping to have. He went immediately back into the master bedroom. He opened a dresser drawer. Sure enough, just like in the Jersey apartment, there was a large envelope taped to the bottom underside of the drawer. He carefully removed the envelope and took it into the bathroom, which had no window Dominic could see in through. He used a nail file he found in the medicine cabinet to pry the envelope flap up, without tearing it or ruining the glue. It was an old package, and the flap loosened easily, once he was able to start it.

Inside there were many sheets of odd feeling paper. He slipped them all out so he'd be able to slide the whole group back in again. He was astounded to see he was holding a packet of bearer bonds. They had a paper strip wrapped around them to keep them together. They were individually numbered, and the sixteen-digit numbers were in sequential order.

He did not have the time like he did back in the apartment, but he imagined these were the same, or identical, packages. He wanted Dominic and Howe to be free of compromising knowledge about these bonds. He put them back hurriedly, just as they were. He would come back to them later.

The big difference of course was that he did not know Myles was researching stolen bonds when he found the cache in the apartment. But now he had reason to be concerned about both Lowrys when it came to these stolen bonds—if indeed that’s what they were. And then, in the back of his mind, Hammersmith’s question through Dominic echoed . . . “long shot” . . . “husband and wife meeting in Philadelphia?”

He finished just soon enough. He heard Dominic coming back in the front door and took up a position in the living room. They talked about the window that was cracked open. Corredor brought Hart back into the small bedroom. He raised the window very carefully, using a washcloth from the linen closet to avoid leaving prints. “Look at the ground,” he told Danny. He could still see in the afternoon light. “In the flower bed, there are footprints. They point away from the house. That warrant might get us a forensic team here to print the window and check those shoe impressions. It looks to me like Linda might have gone out this window, not that someone broke into the apartment from the outside. And there’s only one set of tracks.”

Danny looked in the closet and then said, “Dominic. Look here. What do you make of this?” Neither of them one touched the bag right away.

There was a knock on the front door. Dominic saw Danny reach for his pocket. It told him what he suspected, but had not decided about yet. Now he knew Danny was armed. There was a young woman standing on the front step. She looked happy before she saw them. When she did see two men, she turned as if to run away. It was only when Dominic said quietly, “Stop. I’m police. NYPD,” that she did.

“Who are you, Miss?” asked Danny. She stood, shaking visibly on the step. They brought her inside.

“I’m a tutor and substitute teacher here. The kids call me Miss Alex.” she was very scared. She went from feeling frightened for her safety—though they didn’t look like burglars or rapists—to being concerned about Linda’s.

“Why are you here right now, may I ask?” again it was Danny. And she was calming down, now that she sat on the Lowry’s living room couch and had half a glass of cool water. Dominic had brought the drink over silently, so as not to interrupt what Danny was working upon. Alexandria also noticed when they brought her inside, they did not close the front door. It was still open all the way. That made her feel better. Danny knew it would.

She answered his question. “I am finished my teaching assignment for the week. Mrs. Lowry went on a field trip to Philadelphia to study their public library. It’s for her job. She’s the new librarian here. She left this morning after Linda started her classes. I am going to stay with Linda, here in their place, until her mother returns Sunday night.”

Corredor asked, “Is that your suitcase in the master bedroom?”

“Yes, I left it last night after we had dinner together and went over everything for the weekend.”

A young voice called out, “Hey there, Miss Alex. How are you doing?” It was the red head. Howe and Flynn were behind her.

“No luck at the library or the cafeteria—they call it the dining hall here.” said Flynn.

Howe spoke up, addressing Alex. “You’re the weekender Grey told us to expect?”

“Yes, ma’am.” She said out of respect and a little apprehension at the protective vest.

The red head squeezed in between Flynn and Howe. She used her thumb to indicate the two women now behind her, as she told Alex, “This is Flynn and the cop is Howe, like it says on her vest. Don’t worry, they’re nice. And, Miss Alex, they get it.” So much for introductions thought Angie Flynn.

“What’s happening here, guys?” asked Howe.

“Just starting,” said Danny.

“Miss Alex, did you hear? Nobody knows where’s Linda.” Her freckles were dancing with excitement and her voice was flying back to street chatter. Her mother still hadn’t arrived from work, so Clementine was feeling pretty pleased with how things were going.

“I am afraid what I also heard, Red, was that you had a fight with Deirdre. I thought you two were finally getting along, with the library games and such,” said Alex.

Danny made a huge mental note to go back to that topic later.

“She had it coming. She bullied Linda again today.” The police and the investigators perked up at that. They were finding out that Red, or whatever one wanted to call her, was perhaps more the main event than a side show.

Howe took over, firmly. “Red,” for some reason they all had begun calling her that. Maybe because Clementine was too many syllables. Or they didn’t think she liked being teasingly called ‘darlin.’ One way or another, she seemed okay with ‘Red.’ They’d find out what her mother thought about it when she showed up, thought Howe.

Howe forged ahead. “. . . why do you think there was bullying?”

“Linda could read from a book the first day she showed up here for school . . . about a week after school started. Rest of us couldn’t do that yet. Course, that’s all changed ‘cause her mother used library books to get us help and make reading fun.” She saw a chance to earn some points, “And so does Miss Alex.” She smiled at the teacher across the way.

“Anyway, the bully had her friends snatch Linda’s book. Bullies don’t do their own sh . . . stuff themselves. They get other kids to do their dirty work. See, I couldn’t take it and I got into a fight with them. I won big. But I got . . . uh . . . suspended. Again! Sent home for two days! Miss Alex over there, she helped me get back into class. She didn’t let me fall behind in reading.”

“Things settled down when Linda’s mom treated everyone equal, but each person different. Hard to explain. But things got better. That’s the idea. Everybody seemed to be reading by two weeks after the fight.”

Red seemed to like the attention she was getting from adults. She tried to talk better. “Just this week, she —Mrs. Lowry, not Miss Alex—borrowed a great idea that Miss Alex had. Miss Alex took books and made a group game out of reading the *Adventure* books. She did that with a bunch of girls that were Deirdre, the bully’s, gang. They read better and she got left behind. That made her angry.” They were listening so she kept at it.

“Then Mrs. Lowry took a new group of books and teamed me up with Deirdre. Not just with books. She fixed us a library room to play a board game called *Insecta*. Deirdre whopped my . . . she beat me pretty bad the first times we played. But Tuesday after Linda helped me know the game better, I finally almost beat Deirdre in one round of *Insecta*.”

A school bell signaled the end of the day’s class time. “We were going to play again, but we couldn’t, until yesterday afternoon. I finally won. Deirdre got angry again. Before that, she wasn’t angry for a week or so. No bullying. No being followed around by the girls in her club. But losing to me set her off. She blamed Linda for helping me.”

And then she got to it. “That bookmark you found inside has been missing for weeks. I think Deirdre took it and kept it back then. I bet she ripped it up because she was mad that she lost yesterday’s *Insecta* game. This morning when I went to my cubby there were pieces of it, part of the picture she liked. That marker was special for Linda. She got it from her dad. It had trains on it. A locomotive. I think Linda ran away again. I think she left me the pieces so I would know.”

“Again?” asked Corredor.

Linda pointed at the back wall of the house. She had never told anyone she saw Linda going there once—where Dominic had just seen there was a stand of woods and an upward slope of the land toward a copse of old growth.

Eleanor Quatrane followed their directions. She heard Mike Riley’s voice and followed it. He was in the backyard near his dog, who was off his

leash. Mike was bent over picking up after his dog. He didn't hear Eleanor coming up behind him. She reached out to touch him on the back to say hello.

Her hand made it only halfway to his back. She heard the dog before she saw him lunge. By the time she turned to look, and Mike sensed the trouble and stood up straight, the dog had Eleanor's forearm in his mouth. She went down on one knee and bumped into Mike. That kept her from falling all the way flat onto the ground. She was too frightened to do anything but scream. But not in pain, just surprise. Mike's dog did not bite down through her coat sleeve or even break skin. He had her in what Mike called 'hold'—and the dog looked over his snout at Mike for a command.

In all the phone calls and discussions, no one had ever told Eleanor what to do, and what not to do, around Mike's dog. Now on command, he let go, backed up, and sat at four paces from them both. Riley was all apologies. Quatrane assured him she was okay, just badly shaken. She noted that Mike did not scold the dog. He had done what he was meant to do.

They went up to his apartment and she used Mike's bathroom to straighten herself out. When she came out into the living room, she saw the dog was prone on the floor in what looked to be his spot, judging from the relaxed way he held his head down on his extended forelegs and paws. Mike had the coffee he offered set out for her. He was reading over the search warrant for the building and grounds at **HAPPYDALE**.

"Looks like they've got it covered. Are we going out there?" he asked.

"Only if the school fights the faxed warrant and the local police require this original to enforce it. I must call Karidja to find out. May I?"

The person who would have benefited most from witnessing Eleanor and Mike's dog in the back yard was blocked from seeing it. Sitting in her parked car directly across from the apartment, Marie Aello's mind was racing to form a plan. She was still frustrated by her phone call with Godfrey Mellon over her morning coffee. Mellon assured her he would challenge Ned's estate audit Monday. He wanted her to be there to confront Thomas Bruce and

Karidja Soro. He wanted her to make a strong, personal appeal to include her scholarship Trust in Ned's assets and her inheritance claim.

But as long as that twenty-year-old paper was in the basement storage room, she was very vulnerable. Marie Aello had often told despairing defendants in her law practice, 'I don't do vulnerable, I act.' As far as she had known back at Columbia Law, only she and the missing Roz Young—who was not invited to Monday's challenge—were aware of the envelope's contents. She was banking on that still being true.

Several cars stopped next to hers and blocked her view of the apartment entrance. In her rear view, she saw an FTD floral delivery van was waiting to turn left and head up the street toward the vest pocket park two blocks away.

That was precisely the inspiration she needed. She started the car, pulled out, and began her drive back home. The people who would have been able to identify her car were all otherwise occupied, so her plotting went undetected.

291

Dominic and Danny ushered the others out of the Lowry's place, after asking them to be as careful as possible not to touch anything, in case fingerprinting was something Detective Howe and her superiors judged desirable. The open window in Linda's bedroom was of some moderate concern. The idea of an intruder was downplayed, but not entirely ignored.

Freed of those distractions, the two men headed out behind the apartment block and began following—they hoped—Linda's muddy shoe markings. They did not last long. But they served to point out the path to follow. Danny walked ahead, but Dominic said, "Wait. Come back."

Corredor asked Hart, "Did you ever go ocean surfing?"

Danny was almost irritated at the non-sequitur. "What are you talking about, Dom?" he almost demanded.

"Just answer me, please. Have you?" Danny saw that Dominic was not looking at him.

"No. Why?" he felt obligated to say.

"Long time ago there was this famous documentary. *The Endless Summer* it was called—"

Danny interrupted, "Yeah. Seen it. But so what? Come on, Linda may be out there."

"Danny, really good surfers just don't jump in the water. No matter how anxious they are." He pointed out. "Since you don't surf, at least remember the movie. Those two guys would put their boards on the sand and then sit, sometimes on the tops of dunes. Looking out at the water. Great photography for the documentarian. But necessary for the surfers." Danny was recalling the movie scenes and hearing better the cadence of Dominic's voice.

"They were looking for wave patterns, movements, tides, currents, undertows, riptides. They'd sit and learn the best place to enter the water and the best place to wait for the perfect wave. Only when they knew would they go in confidently, so it wasn't just a matter of luck." He let some time pass as he kept looking at the land before them. "Okay? Understand?"

"I think so. Not completely sure," Danny answered.

Dominic did a knee bend. Squatting he kept looking. "Linda's probably about this tall, judging from the clothes in her closet," he said. He never ceased to amaze Danny with his powers of observation and concentration. "From her point of view, I'd say she'd go into the woods right about" . . . he pointed somewhat to their left . . . "there. Between those two littler pines, with the snapped-off branches." He stood and patted Danny twice on his shoulder.

"Guess I'm bigger around than Linda. This is a bit tight here," Danny said as they went carefully along, and he followed Dominic. Corredor found he had to duck a few times himself, to go under branches a child's head would not reach. They moved through varied growth of rhododendrons and mountain laurel sparsely taking hold in and among thinner-trunked trees.

Then they came to an area where the trees thinned out and there was little or no undergrowth. They heard Canada geese honking off to their left and followed their ears as well as their eyes. A grass expanse appeared farther away on an upward slope toward more trees. When they stepped out of the tree line, they found the squawking geese. A brown and green carpet of grass led up to a pond of considerable size, at least to a child's eyes, if not to theirs. Dominic placed his arm out across Danny's chest, now that they were walking two abreast. When Danny stopped, Dom pointed down at an array of geese dropping to avoid stepping in. Danny thanked him and as they made their way to the pond's edge, he kept an eye on where he was stepping.

This time it was Danny whose arm went out and whose voice came up. "Dominic?" he said calmly. Both men halted. "What's that in the grass?" he asked.

Danny bent over and picked up what looked to be a key fob. It was made of reflective metal, which was why the sunshine alerted Danny to its presence. It was forged in the shape of a train locomotive.

They smiled and shared hopeful glances. They called out her name. There was no answer. So, they went further along, and nearer to the water. Dominic froze. Danny caught on and stopped short. "What?" he asked.

Corredor pointed to the water's edge. He looked all around in the grass. When he saw there were no prints to ruin, he went forward slowly. At the slanted edge of the soil down to the water there was a smear of mud. The smear was made by a shoe, whose print was angled at forty-five degrees to the grade, where the pushed-up mud stopped its slide toward the water. He looked closer still. About another two feet into the pond, there was a çin the pond bed. It was longer end-to-end than it was edge-to-edge, like a foot turned sideways would make.

"She stepped in here, Danny. More of a slip than a step." He picked up a stone or two from the shallow water. "Danny, go over there about ten feet. Skim these stones slowly, one at a time, when I ask you. I want to see how your feet would point." And then he thought, "But walk over slowly and look for more signs she was here. I'll go about ten feet this way. We're looking to see if she slipped in and needed a few steps to get straight before stepping out again."

And then, his voice dropped. “And Danny, see if it looks like someone walked in and whether there’s a disturbance of stones and weeds on the bottom, if somebody dragged or forced her in deeper.”

The sun was still out, but each of them felt a chill at Dominic’s words.

Five minutes later, their spirits improved. All their efforts assured them they were still looking for Linda—they had convinced themselves they were following her—on dry land.

Ahead of them up the rising slope was a horizontal stand of weeping willows. It looked as if they were a planned planting some long time ago and not an arrangement of nature’s hand. To walk through them, they parted the dangling fronds, whose autumn splendor was colored from green to silver to golden yellow.

When they parted the last curtain of trailers, two rabbits leapt out and hopped across the large meadow in front of them. Danny grabbed Dominic’s arm in amazement. Dominic didn’t need the alert. For as his eyes chased the rabbits and he looked up, he saw what Danny might have thought was a mirage, if they had been in a desert somewhere else on the planet.

Before them, detached from all reality except the abbreviated section of rails and ties upon which it rested, was a perfect specimen of an old classic Baltimore and Ohio railway caboose. Of course, it had been painted red some years before. It sported the numerical identity of 458.

The two men covered the width of the meadow with long strides, almost tripping in the long grass that whacked and grabbed their shins and calves. There were rocks and runnels in the meadow they stumbled upon, but neither went to the ground in a fall. They called out but received no answer. Undeterred, halfway to the caboose Dominic yelled to Danny, “You’re left, I’m right.” The investigator understood and their paths forked away from each other. From overhead, any of the Canada geese they heard just then, who looked down, would see as neat a v marked out in the grass as the path they lettered across the cloudless sky.

Each man ascended the metal stairs to the platform at his end of the car. The doors to the inside were not locked and welcomed the visitors. The explosive heat that surged out in their faces was not so friendly. The stale air

would soon be refreshed by the meadow's fragrance. Dominic was not hopeful that there had been another entrant recently. Danny looked around and saw no trace of their young, intended rescuee.

Danny turned and said, I'll look around outside. Partly, he did not want to taint Dominic's spirit with his sudden feeling of depression and crushed hope.

Dominic stood stock still in the center of the caboose, with his eyes closed. He re-imagined his times riding in boxcars. There was no movement in this idled relic. No swaying to and fro. No lurching forward or braking backwards. And yet there was something. Perhaps it was the product of the heat and the old wood. He set the sense of traveling aside. He favored his other senses.

Mostly first he smelled the car, the air and the scent of its paint and varnish. And from the unfinished wood, he inhaled the barely remaining and long forgotten taint of honest sweat that imbued the clothing of conductors and railmen. Yet, there was a newer presence, a human one, not belonging to him or Hart.

He listened, though this was harder. The bugs and birds from outdoors sent zinging anthems into through the open doors. But there was something more. He inhaled and held his breath. He was unsuccessful at making a shallow respiration disappear from his innermost ear. He opened his eyes and looked out the caboose window. He saw Danny fifty yards away searching the meadow and knew it was not his breath he heard.

He scanned every interior surface he could discern in the old rolling shanty. What he didn't see had more effect on him than what he did see. There was no ladder. No way to open the hatch and enter the roof canopy. He went out on the metal end-shelf of the car and hailed Danny.

When he came back in, Dominic told him. "I need a boost."

Danny said, "I'm feeling a little down, myself."

"No. Not that," replied Dom. "This!" he said. He held his two hands with his fingers interlocked to make a step to put a foot in.

"Oh. Right," realized Hart. "Where?"

"Over here. Under the coop hatch," he said looking straight up to the ceiling.

Danny boosted him up and Dominic tried to force the hatch open. It moved partially, but there was too much weight on top of it for him to push it aside. Dominic yelled to Danny fiercely. "Outside, now!"

Dominic grabbed the rungs and rails of the exterior ladder to access the roof of the caboose. "Hold this so it doesn't fall. It's pretty rusted through." Danny held it tightly while Dominic climbed the shaky stairway.

He scurried and scuttled his way up onto the roof and crawled over to the cupola windows. They were coated with soot and aged dust. He could hardly see, no matter how much he wiped them on the outside. "Danny," he shouted. When Hart answered, Corredor demanded, "Give me that handgun in your pocket. Now!"

Stepping into the grass to be away from the caboose at the correct angle, without dispute or argument, Hart checked the safety and then flung the gun upwards for Corredor to catch. Dominic sat up on the roof and braced the soles of his feet against the wall to each side of the window. He placed his arms, with slightly locked elbows, in front of him. He discharged the firearm twice, directly into the glass. Both projectiles went through the coop and exited out the window on the facing wall side. It was very loud in the quiet afternoon. He hoped it was heard back at the school. He reversed the weapon in his hand and used the butt end to smash the weakened glazing. More heat poured out than when they opened the caboose door.

On the floor of the caboose attic space, a small body was curled in a fetal position of heat exhaustion. Dominic leapt down from the roof. Danny saw him midair and prayed he'd land safely without snapping any bones in his legs. But it was a practiced move for the rail rider, and he was up on his feet and heading to the rear of the caboose in seconds.

"Danny. Here!" Corredor yelled. At the detective's direction, the two men yanked and tugged. Decades of rusted metal protested with an agonizing screech. The ladder gave way in their hands, almost propelling them off the platform and to the ground. But they held their stance.

Danny followed Dominic into the caboose and watched in awe as he angled the ladder upwards and jammed the end into the opening he had made by sliding the ceiling panel during Danny's boost. "Don't let this move, Danny," exhorted Dom. The detective scaled the tilted ladder and struggled to shift the panel back and forth until there was enough space for him to fit up in the compartment next to Linda's dried-out, red face and drenched clothing.

They worked together and they lowered her down from above.

Dominic carried Linda over his outstretched arms. Danny cleared the way of willow branches, so they did not slap her in her upturned face.

Running toward the sound of gunfire, from the other side of the pond, Howe and Flynn charged out from the tree line and into the grass sward before the pond. They saw the two men bounding down the sloped hill on the far side of the pond. Dominic Corredor did not stop running. He plunged in up to his waist and laid a body, they could only assume was Linda Lowry's, so it floated on the surface of the pond. Danny was at his side. Cupping his hands, he drizzled pond water across her forehead.

Howe told Flynn. "Go back. Get one of their maintenance four-by-fours that can forage back here, with a bed we can lay her in. Blankets and bottled water, too. And call an ambulance." Flynn knew the drill for heat stroke and didn't need any more instructions.

When the detective got to the caboose side of the pond, the men were out of the water and Linda's legs and torso were flat on the soft grass. Her head rested on Dominic's lap. As her body cooled down, she began to wake in a heated dream. Fearful of where she was, and who this man was, she struggled to get free.

Howe felt the hot little wrist for a pulse and counted the beats. She tried to be a calming, if not even maternal, presence for the six-year-old, but her uniform sent out a contrary message. Danny saw Linda's fright and yelled "Vest!" to the detective, even as he squeezed pond water out from his own removed shirt, to lay across the girl's forehead. Howe immediately jettisoned her vest and stripped off her uniform blouse, so only her gym logo blue tee shirt confronted Linda's blurred vision.

As she came around, Linda cried out for her father and mother. She challenged Dominic. "Who are you. Leave me alone. I want to go home."

He took a hand away from her arm and reached into his outstretched pants pocket. He withdrew a sacred talisman from the recent past. Along with his lock pick, this was the only thing he kept from his grimy heap of laundry that first morning and shower in Danny's home. He handed Linda her father's cigarette lighter. She clutched it to make sure it was real. It was. She looked at his shaven face and shorn head, "It's you. You came back. You promised and you did." She gave him the longest and hardest hug Dominic Corredor had felt in over four years. And then she went limp in his arms.

To be continued next month.