

Chapter 1

Murder is a heartless crime one person executes on another. With all the modern equipment our law enforcement agencies have at their disposal, you would think that this crime would be useless to commit. It seems, though, that the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is the murder capital of the United States. With so much bloodshed on the capital's streets, you would think the District of Columbia was a combat zone, not one of the nation's beautiful cities. This is the chief reason why the homicide division of the Washington, D.C. police department is one of the busiest in the country. You earn your money on this force.

The homicide department, located on the second floor at police headquarters, is composed of ten working detectives, four lieutenants, one department captain, and a dozen clerical service workers. The team of Ciminelli and Hannigan is one of the best in the whole department. Steve Ciminelli, a Yankee from Boston who joined the D.C. force after serving three years as an Air Force special cop at Andrews Air Force Base, is a veteran with nine years on the force, with the last three as a homicide detective. He earned his promotion the hard way—by hard work on the job.

Linda Hannigan is a second-generation police officer on the Washington force. Her father was a cop, her uncle was a cop, and her two brothers now serve in the Secret Service and FBI, respectively. She became a detective in four years, and many of her male co-workers resent her ability to achieve her rank so fast. Every day she must fight wise-ass sexual remarks made by her colleagues, but she handles them in an expert manner.

The squad room is always active, with people working at their desks or hurrying to other destinations in the building. The captain doesn't like to see anyone stand too long near the water fountain or have more than two cups of coffee. He believes that with all the workloads our department has to deal with, no one has the luxury to be idle unless he or she is out of his sight.

Steve Ciminelli is over thirty years old and a Yankee transplant from New England. Born and raised in the East Boston area, he attended Boston University for four years. After serving three years in the Air Force, mostly at Andrews Air Force Base outside of Washington, he decided to join the D.C. police force to stay in the area. The Secret Service or the Bureau couldn't promise him that. Why did Steve wish to live in the capital? Her name is Maureen Stevens, co-anchor on one of the local TV stations. Steve and Maureen's relationship goes back to his Air Force days at Andrews.

Maureen is from the Long Island area of New York and attended the University of Buffalo School of journalism. She worked in some minor jobs in Buffalo until she earned her co-anchor post at WKWL. She met Steve at a student beer party at the U.B. campus when he traveled to Buffalo with an Air Force buddy. His buddy was getting married. Steve was his best man, and Maureen was a college friend of the bride. Their romance has flowered for the last ten years, with off-and-on periods.

"Ciminelli and Hannigan. In my office immediately," the captain shouted from behind his office door. The sound of his voice brought the movement in the squad room to a halt, and everyone knew something big had happened. As Steve and Linda walked through the door, the captain ordered it closed. With his unlit cigar in his mouth, he picked up a message sheet and handed it to Steve.

"This is a big one, Steve. A prominent socialite by the name of Laura Smith-Hughes was just found murdered in her condo bedroom. I want a very complete and thorough investigation of this, and you report to me directly with everything. Understand?" the captain commanded with a tough voice.

"Laura Smith-Hughes? She's the top of Washington society, boss," Steve remarked after glancing at the name on the message sheet. "She's loaded with dough—one of the top five hundred in the nation," he continued.

"Get over to the murder scene and make sure that none of our people screw this one up," barked the captain of the homicide division. With that last order still ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda left his

office and moved out of headquarters quickly. The drive to the condo residence of Laura Smith-Hughes didn't take too long, but traffic in Washington during the work week is horrendous. The streets are just filled with drivers who don't know how to drive.

The Smith-Hughes condo was located in the Watergate Complex along the river. The condo itself was worthy of the status of its occupant. It overlooked the marina basin and received gentle breezes from the water side of the complex. When Ciminelli and Hannigan arrived, the area had already been roped off by police tape. As our dynamic duo entered the Smith-Hughes apartment, the appreciation for elegance was immediately observable. The furnishings were elegant and suited the status of the Smith-Hughes name.

As Steve walked through the apartment, the I.D. and forensic boys were busy trying to retrieve evidence from the furniture and items situated in the living areas of the condo. As Steve approached the master bedroom, the intensity of the investigation increased. This was the actual murder scene, for Laura Smith-Hughes lay on the bed in a bright red pool of blood. The victim was clothed in an elegant, expensive teddy, and she was sprawled on a king-size bed covered with silk and satin sheets. Ms. Smith-Hughes was a very attractive woman for her age, but today her body had been punctured over a dozen times by a sharp object—probably a knife.

"For Pete's sake, close her eyes," Steve complained as he viewed the body. The victim's eyes were still open and seemed to glare at the activity around her. One of the coroner's men complied with Steve's request.

"A shame that someone so attractive could end up like this—a shame to waste such a body," replied the coroner as he worked on it. "This wonderful lady had sex before she became a pincushion, Steve," he commented.

"Give me an analysis of the pubic hair you retrieved and any info on the sperm you sucked out of her. Maybe our records will show a match," replied Linda as she examined the body of Laura Smith-Hughes closer.

"Already accomplished, detective," the coroner proudly proclaimed. Linda gave him a smile of thanks for that remark.

"The patio doors don't show any signs of forced entry, so our sweetheart here must have invited our culprit in through the front door. Having a roll in the hay shows that she knew him and trusted him, too," Steve mentioned to his partner.

"Nothing in the room looks disturbed, and our boys believe only her prints are on most items. This looks like a love murder to me," proclaimed Linda as she turned the sheet covering the body to one side. "No great bruise marks on the body. I think our lady was surprised by her lover when he hacked her to death." She then flipped the bloody sheet back over the body. "I want the carpet cleaned for everything we can find, fellahs," Steve ordered the guys on the forensic team. "Especially at the door entrance."

"The lady was the only one who had a drink, for only her prints are on this glass. The cleaning lady who discovered the body didn't touch or move anything," declared one of the I.D. team. "It seems her boyfriend came to pump her, not enjoy a cocktail, Steve," commented one of the investigating officers. Steve walked out of the bedroom, entered the great room in this unit, and glanced out of the patio doors. He noticed that it faced the opposite side of the Watergate Complex. He slid the patio doors open and walked onto the balcony patio outside. Because the apartment was on the third floor, the view to it was enjoyed by several dozen other tenants in the complex.

"Linda, do you think someone across the marina is a peeping Tom? Maybe someone witnessed something about Ms. Smith-Hughes and her lifestyle that would help us. Send some of these blues over there to check it out," observed Steve as he leaned on the rail of the balcony.

"No forced entry, Steve. We're looking for one of her lovers. We're going to have to check her friends out." As she stated this, she opened a fancy-looking phone directory. "This book contains several hundred names. Some of these people are of high status, including the First Lady herself," Linda revealed with surprise.

"What did you expect from such a lady, my dear?" remarked Steve. "High society reaches out to high places in this town . . ."

"Can we remove the body, detective?" the coroner's assistant asked.

"If the boys are through taking their pictures, take her away. Remember, I need your report as soon as you have it ready. OK?" Steve replied back.

"Steve, we found something on the patio," Linda reported.

"It may be a lead." The item found on the patio floor behind a flowering plant pot was a cigarette butt. It was from a special, private English brand of smokes. "We'll send it down to the lab and check it out," barked Linda, as she carefully placed the cigarette butt into a plastic bag.

Steve checked with the other investigators in the apartment and realized that nothing new was uncovered to reveal or shed any light on this bloody crime. "Lock it up, boys. We may have to return later," he ordered. He was a good detective who did his job very well. Some said he was the best in the department. Everyone in homicide respected his work. Steve rarely missed anything.

"Want me to drop you off at headquarters, Linda?" Steve asked as they returned to his car. "I'm having lunch at the Old Post Office."

"A cheap lunch with Maureen again? Someday you had better treat her to a fancy meal, Steve, my boy," Linda jokingly remarked. "Maureen's got simple tastes, but she's a great judge of men," Steve commented with a sense of bravado. They both chuckled and laughed.

"Drop me off at the bureau. I want to check something out with a special friend of mine concerning the LaRue case," Linda replied. As Steve turned the corner and stopped in front of the J. Edgar Hoover Building, she declared, "Have a good lunch, buddy."

The Old Post Office, a mall with fast food places, was always crowded during lunchtime because many of the government workers found it an excellent place to eat their lunch. Steve grabbed the first open table, and not too much longer, Maureen came walking up to him.

"Hi, sweetheart. Sorry I'm a bit late," she apologized. He reached out and pulled her to him for a greeting kiss. It tasted good, so Steve planted another kiss on her dry lips. "I'm hungry, Steve, not horny. A hot roast beef with gravy will satisfy me for now."

"Two hot beefs and two Bud Lites, right?" Steve asked. Maureen nodded in agreement as Steve left the table to retrieve their order.

Maureen Stevens, a very attractive brunette with a very sexy-shaped body, landed her job at WKWL News Center by her good looks. Born and raised on Long Island, she attended the University of Buffalo School of Journalism in Buffalo, New York. She worked there briefly on several of their local news staffs until the position at WKWL became available.

Her career had always been the stumbling block in their relationship. Their romance had its ups and downs, and it was up just now. It had been tough trying to keep a romance going when Steve had to leave her apartment in the early morning just to get ready for work, so weekends were the only times to enjoy sex and a comfortable relationship.

When Steve returned with their two hot beefs, they sat down and enjoyed a hearty lunch. These small meetings in the middle of the day allowed the two to exchange idle chatter and touch each other before the evening hours. Steve tried several times to convince Maureen to move in with him, but each time her excuse was the same. She didn't want to be tied down at this time. Steve always thought this was a crappy excuse.

"Remember, Steve, we still have that cocktail party at the Kennedy Center tonight. Pick me up around eight. I can't wait to see who will be there," proclaimed Maureen, with a bit of excitement in her voice.

"I'll be there with my tux and on time, darling," Steve replied with a touch of frustration, despite his expectancy about the night's events. He finished the last bite of his sandwich and downed it with the rest of his brew. The two slowly cleaned up their table. As they were leaving the eating area, Steve gave Maureen a hard hug and kiss and left through the west door of the building.

Steve found himself back at the Watergate Complex. He walked around, checking out the outside of the complex on the marine side, especially with the view of the Smith-Hughes apartment balcony. The area around the marina revealed nothing—nothing unusual. Our boy sure knew Ms. Smith-Hughes and knew her well, Steve thought. As Steve was ready to leave, a female occupant of one of the docked yachts in the marina came on deck and flirtily started a conversation with him.

“Haven’t seen you around these parts before,” she stated with a smile. This woman was dressed in a scanty bathing suit and was in the mood for some companionship. Steve, being a handsome-looking guy, was a good target for her advances.

“Well, hello,” he greeted her with a broad smile. “Did you know the lady in 3B West? Was Ms. Smith-Hughes a friend of yours? I wonder, did you see anybody strange or suspicious hanging around her apartment?”

The answers to all the questions were a cool no, and as Steve leaned against the railing of the ship, his new female friend came forward and leaned over to face him. The view of her well-shaped breasts hanging there in front of him was a tempting sight to his eyes. Steve knew she wanted to show him her charms somewhere below the deck, but Steve decided not today. He reached up and caressed her breast and reminded her that he would take a rain-check for today. She grabbed his hand, placed it on her chest, and smiled, agreeing to wait for him. Steve wondered as he walked away from the marina how interesting this broad would be if he had accepted her invitation. Maybe she did know something but didn’t wish to say anything at this time.

When he arrived back at his desk in the squad room, Linda was busy making phone calls from the telephone directory she recovered at the murder scene. “Here, good buddy, start calling,” she stated as she handed Steve a couple of sheets of paper. Steve plopped into his chair and slowly started to dial the first number on the list.

After going through the first twelve numbers on the list, Steve hit the jackpot on number thirteen. The person on the other end of the phone was a close friend of Laura Smith-Hughes, an Elizabeth Johnson, the wife of one of America’s industrial leaders. He quickly made an appointment to talk with this Ms. Johnson because her estate was located in the Mount Vernon area of northern Virginia. It took Linda and Steve about an hour to reach the Johnson estate, which suited the wealthy status of its occupants. Steve had seen people and places of wealth, but the Fair Oaks Estate of the Johnson’s was one that had to be seen. The ride from the main gate to the mansion took several minutes, and the grounds were elegant and beautiful. Everywhere you looked, it smelled of money in large amounts.

The two detectives were guided into a high-ceilinged room called the reception room, but it was big enough to be an apartment for two working people. Steve looked around and marveled at the elegant furniture and wonderful use of Italian marble. The walls were covered with paintings of people who probably were descendants of the Johnsons. After a wait of about ten minutes, Ms. Elizabeth Johnson entered the room. She was a woman in her early fifties with blond hair, and her slim figure showed her constant fight to hold her weight down. Dressed in shorts and sneakers, she was carrying a tennis racket in one hand and a towel in the other. She had just played her afternoon tennis match and decided to see us immediately instead of changing and freshening up first. As she wiped the sweat off her face, she politely introduced herself in a ladylike manner.

“How can I help you, Detective? This terrible crime about Laura must be solved,” she remarked as she sat in one of the room’s chairs.

“How well did you know Ms. Smith-Hughes?” Steve asked. “Did she have any enemies or people who would wish her dead?”

“She was on everyone’s social list. Sure, she ruffled a few feathers since she separated from Jonathan, her husband, but her close friends include the First Lady and the President. Even William Anderson was a frequent visitor to her events,” exclaimed Ms. Johnson.

“How did she get along with her husband, Jonathan?” questioned Linda, as she busily copied the information into her notebook.

“Jonathan Farnsworth Smith-Hughes is one of the wealthiest men in the country. He controls the Winn-Dixie and Publix fortunes, plus several others. Laura had it made when she married Jonathan, but I knew it wasn’t going to last. Laura liked to control her men, and many came and went at the Smith-Hughes estate. Laura and I went to college together, and we were both determined to land the right man. I got my Henry, and she married Jonathan. But Laura wanted to live the high social life, and Jonathan was the quiet, business-first type of man. Parties and social life in this area didn’t satisfy him at all. He

tolerated Laura up to a point, I guess,” she commented, as she again wiped her brow with her towel. She then ordered one of the servants to get them some cool drinks.

“Did Ms. Smith-Hughes and her husband ever fight, or did he ever threaten her or cause any harm to her in any way?” Steve questioned, as he sipped on his cool lemonade.

“Jonathan didn’t like what Laura was doing behind his back, but he’s not the violent type, Detective. The man put up with a lot before he temporarily moved out of their home in Maryland and moved to Washington. Laura was killed in his apartment, not hers. She lived at Fairborn Estates, the Smith-Hughes mansion in Maryland,” Ms. Johnson related.

“But everything in that apartment indicated that she lived there, Ms. Johnson. No men’s clothes at all were found there,” replied Detective Hannigan.

“Strange,” she pondered. “Maybe Laura did a swap and moved into the city to be closer to her men friends, especially Mr. Anderson.”

“William Anderson, the Vice President, was one of her male friends?” Steve asked in a surprised tone.

“She knew him when he was a senator, but I can’t truthfully say that he was one of her lovers,” Ms. Johnson related.

“Our Ms. Smith-Hughes was a very busy woman. She kept good company. I’ll bet this could drive any man nuts,” responded Steve as he glanced at Linda for agreement. She nodded approval with her eyes. “Ms. Johnson, can you make a list of the men friends you can recall that were friendly with our late Laura Smith-Hughes? We would deeply appreciate your help, madam.”

“Surely, Detective Ciminelli,” she replied. “I would be delighted to do so. I’ll have my secretary fax it to you as soon as I can,” she continued. Steve and Linda rose from their chairs and both personally thanked Ms. Johnson for her help and then departed back to Washington.

The drive back was a quiet one as Linda occupied herself by studying the landscape and daydreaming. Steve hummed to the music on the radio and wondered how boring the night ahead of him was going to be. Maureen attended these social events only to make contacts with people to enhance her self-esteem and her job. She acted like entertainers usually do. For Steve, a good roll in the sack would be more satisfying and enjoyable.

When they arrived at the office, the memos on his desk informed him that the coroner’s report would be ready tomorrow morning. Forensic lab reports were a day or two away.

“Linda, our friend Jonathan has been located in Chicago and is flying home tonight. Let’s see him tomorrow as soon as possible,” Steve stated as he closed the case folder and placed it in his desk drawer. “See you tomorrow, partner, or we could do some ‘special homework’ at your place tonight,” he jokingly remarked.

“No thank you, Romeo. Your Juliet is waiting for you.”

Chapter 2

Steve picked up Maureen on time, and they proceeded to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts. Steve was very handsome dressed in his tux with matching accessories. He looked like Tom Cruise, except he was taller and stockier. Maureen looked absolutely beautiful in her black cocktail dress. It was sleeveless, held up by spaghetti straps and her full-figured bust.

When Steve arrived at her apartment, he tried unsuccessfully to convince her that maybe they should forget the Kennedy social and enjoy each other with some hot sex. Maureen’s reply was later, not now. That was the typical answer Steve was getting these days.

The crowd at the Kennedy Center was large both inside and outside. Tonight’s event was a charity auction to raise money to feed the homeless, but the auction actually consisted of male escorts putting their looks and bodies on the auction block for some female to bid on. Maureen, a member of the organization committee, had volunteered Steve to be a contestant. All the unmarried males—usually the cream of the area’s bachelors—had volunteered to help raise money for this function.

This was Maureen’s brainchild and she was determined to raise a record amount this year. Even the Vice President, William Anderson, was in attendance, supplying moral support to the male contingent in

the audience. The champagne and hors d'oeuvres were tasty. (What do you expect at two hundred bucks a head?) The main lobby was filled with people. This was typical of such an event in the nation's capital. Anybody who was somebody was there.

Steve and Maureen looked terrific as a couple, and they socialized with many people as soon as they entered the center. As they were sipping their glass of champagne before the auction, Steve wondered if someone besides Maureen would bid on him. He wondered who would be the lucky lady to have a date with him. Overall, he started to enjoy the festivities.

"Maureen, guess who wants to talk to you at this time about some big-time programming on prime time?" came the voice of her station manager as he approached them. "Peter Jennings and some of the ABC News staff want a word with you."

"Excuse me, darling, I'll be right back. Socialize and enjoy yourself," she suggested to Steve. As she walked away and disappeared into the crowd, Steve slowly glanced around to see a familiar face.

"Hello, stranger," a voice from behind could be heard. "Nice seeing you here."

As Steve turned around, his eyes glanced upon the sexy lady he had met at the marina earlier in the day. She was wearing a white strapless cocktail dress, and she filled it attractively. It gave you the impression that her body wanted out of that dress.

"Well, nice to see you again, but you have me at a disadvantage here. I'm Steve, and you're . . ." he asked in a flirting voice.

"The name is Vanessa, darling. I live in that floating apartment down by the marina. We met this afternoon..." she stated in a sultry voice. "Are you a contestant in the auction, Steve?" she asked with some excited anticipation in her voice.

"Sorry to say, yes, my fair maiden," Steve jokingly voiced, "but I won't raise much."

"Don't be surprised, my love. You're the best here tonight," Vanessa replied. She walked closer to Steve, grabbed his arm, and pleaded for him to take her over to the bar for a drink. He complied with her wish.

As they walked toward the nearest bar, Steve noticed that Maureen was approaching him. The look in her eyes showed signs of jealousy about Steve escorting someone who wasn't afraid to act sexy in public, and Vanessa filled the bill completely.

"I see you found yourself a friendly hand to hold, my love," Maureen remarked.

"Don't be jealous, darling. You did order me to socialize, and I did," Steve came back smartly, but with a smile.

"Well, I'm glad you found someone to talk to, for I'm going to have to leave for the station. It seems the head of the ABC News staff wants to view some of my work. Just think, Steve! ABC News wants to consider me for their Washington bureau. I would be working with Peter Jennings and Sam Donaldson!" she stated excitedly. "I'll get home safely. I'll see you at the Hard Rock Cafe for lunch tomorrow at one, OK?" she pleaded, as she planted a good-bye kiss on his wanting lips.

She then looked at Vanessa, turned to Steve, and kissed him hard again. She then turned and walked toward her friends at the other end of the room. Steve ordered his drinks and proceeded to make the best of the night with Vanessa.

Just as Vanessa had predicted, it seemed that when Steve walked onto the auction stage, the bidding started to climb. Women who desired a date with this attractive white-tuxedoed stud were bidding dollars in a state of frenzy, but Vanessa was determined to win this prize. She was happy to write a check for over three thousand dollars to ensure her date with Steve. The look in her eyes told Steve what she desired that night. She grabbed him off the stage and planted a moist kiss on his surprised lips.

"I want my date tonight, Stevie," she whispered in his ear. They walked to the bar for more champagne. Steve needed a drink at this time.

As Steve ventured over to the nearest bar, he noticed some unsavory characters standing near the cashier's office. As his drinks were being made, a shot rang out, and Steve immediately turned toward the office. He reached into his vest and then remembered he wasn't carrying his piece tonight. Two men came charging out of the cashier's office with guns in hand and several bags of cash. Two more shots rang out,

and the man with the cash bags fell to the floor. The other man, now in a frightened state, grabbed one of the guests and used her as a shield to move through the crowd.

Steve quickly darted out the side door of the center, and as he moved to the other end of the building, he borrowed a pistol from one of the outside security guards. As he approached the door to enter again, he was now behind the man with the hostage, and Steve recognized her to be Vanessa. She was scared and in tears, and the guy with the gun had it pressed hard against her head.

“Move back or I’ll blow her head off,” he shouted.

“Stop right there, scumbag, or I’ll splatter your brains all over this room. Drop it now, before my itchy finger makes a move. Do it now,” Steve yelled. The man was so frightened that Steve would kill him that he dropped the gun but held onto Vanessa, holding her so tight that her breasts were popping out of her dress. Steve slammed his gun on this joker’s head and dropped him to the floor. Several local cops plus center guards immediately rushed up, and Steve ordered the man ‘cuffed and taken away.

Steve immediately picked Vanessa up in his arms and helped her rearrange her dress. He wiped her tears and held her to stop her sobbing and shaking. “Take me home, Steve, please,” she cried, and draped herself around him. Steve handed one of the officers his gun, gave them several orders to clean up the mess, and then proceeded to take Vanessa home.

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When Steve arrived to work the next morning, the squad room was a beehive of activity. Several local television news reporters were waiting for Steve to arrive because he was the hero of the day for his actions last night at the Kennedy Center. “Steve, what did you do?” inquired Maureen as she greeted him at his desk. “You weren’t home last night when I called. Where were you?”

Before Steve could answer her questions, the cameras were now turned on, and the group of reporters were pushing upon him and throwing questions at him.

“One question at a time, please,” Steve stated calmly as he took a seat at his desk. “First, how’s the condition of the guard that was shot, and second, how is the scumbag I slammed last night? I haven’t read any reports on it yet,” he wondered.

“The guard was operated on and is in guarded condition, but it looks like he’ll survive. The ‘scumbag’ you clobbered is resting comfortably in the D.C. holding center,” Maureen answered quickly.

“What happened to the female hostage? People at the scene stated that you left with her,” a reporter asked. Maureen’s ears perked up as she heard that statement. She wanted to know about this woman. Who was she?

“The woman was shook up, so I did what any good, decent person would do. I assisted her home safely and made sure she was okay. She didn’t want to be involved in this matter, so don’t ask for her identity, please,” Steve told the reporters present.

One reporter yelled out a question: “Detective, how does it feel being a hero and saving someone’s life?”

“I did my job. What I’m trained to do, nothing special,” Steve replied, and with that statement he excused himself because he had an appointment with the coroner. As he passed Maureen, he told her he would see her for lunch as planned. She nodded, and the camera lights were shut off.

Steve rushed out of headquarters and walked the short distance to the coroner’s office. He was joined at this time by Linda, who patted him on the shoulder and congratulated him for his brave move the night before.

“There’ll be a commendation in it for you, Stevie-boy,” she remarked. “You know how the captain loves this kind of publicity.”

“Don’t make a big thing of it, please,” replied Steve as they entered the coroner’s office. They were quickly taken by the coroner into one of the examination rooms, where Laura Smith-Hughes’s body was kept. It was a cold room and smelled of chemicals and rotten eggs.

“You have my report in your hand, Detective Ciminelli. Ms. Smith-Hughes died from stab wounds to the chest and abdomen, but the chest wounds were fatal. She was killed sometime between midnight and

three in the morning, and a sharp, thin blade was used. Our man has brown hair, and he had sex with the lady before he killed her. Sperm specimens were sent to the Norwood Lab for DNA testing. That'll take about three to four weeks," the coroner related to the detectives.

He then flipped the cover sheet off the body and lifted her right hand. "Our lady here gave our boy a good scratch, for we recovered some blood and skin from under her nails. Outside of that, I have found nothing extraordinary. Some alcohol in the stomach before death, and our Ms. Smith-Hughes was a user of cocaine, too, but not a heavy one," finished the coroner as he covered the body up.

They left the examination room and returned to the coroner's office. "You place the time of death sometime around one or two A.M. Our lady was keeping late hours with visitors," commented Steve.

"Was she doing drugs last night before she died?" asked Detective Hannigan.

"All she had in her system is a week old. Her stomach revealed only her dinner—fish, probably lobster—and some alcohol. The lady liked vodka and lemon," replied the coroner after glancing at his report.

"No major bruises to relate to a struggle except that she scratched the bastard, either during love-making or as he knifed her," replied Steve.

"I would assume that to be correct," related the coroner as he settled in his chair. "Our boy—and I'm assuming that a strong man did this, for the stab wounds are deep—enjoyed screwing her, and as she was relaxing on the bed, he did her in. He probably killed her with the first blow—that way, no sound or resistance from her. He caught her by surprise. She didn't expect it. That's why her eyes were open," commented the coroner.

"Thanks Pete, the info is very helpful," replied Steve as they left the office and headed back to the squad room at headquarters.

"Linda, when is her husband due in town?" asked Steve as they entered the police headquarters.

"He should be home now. I'll call and set up an appointment to see him as soon as possible, like this afternoon," replied Linda.

Steve sat at his desk and started to glance over his notes in his report file, wondering how many of Laura's friends attended last night's function at the Kennedy Center. She would have loved that kind of event, just like Vanessa did. Just the mention of Vanessa's name, and Steve reminded himself of last night. What a night he had with her. Not bad for a broad her age.

"Jonathan Smith-Hughes will see us at his estate around three this afternoon, Steve," announced Linda. "Forensic and I.D. reports are here, too." Steve checked them out with Linda to see if something new would shed some light on this murder. "Nothing new here," Steve told his partner. "Only one set of prints that weren't the victim's. The FBI is searching for its name right now."

"That cigarette butt was an English brand called 'Dukes and Lords,' sold in every tobacco shop in town," Linda chimed in. "Not too much to go on. Many people in this town, foreign and American, smoke that brand."

"Looks more and more like a love triangle killing, but we don't have all the parts to the triangle except one," replied Steve. "Any report from the blues checking out the apartments across from 3E?"

"No peeping Toms yet, Steve. These people sleep when Laura Smith-Hughes entertains. She wasn't the noisy type. Very quiet and genteel, like most rich bitches are," Linda sarcastically stated.

"Wow, it's nearly one. I have a lunch date to be at, partner. See you back here before 2:30, OK?" Steve commented as he grabbed his suit coat and headed out the door for the Hard Rock Cafe to meet Maureen for lunch.

When Steve entered the cafe, he found out that Maureen had arrived earlier and was seated in a booth in the rear. When he approached the booth, he leaned over and gave Maureen a very passionate kiss. She enjoyed receiving it. Steve could see it in her eyes.

"I have already ordered BLT's for us, honey, with a draft to wash it down," Maureen stated as she reached to grab Steve's hand.

"How did your interview go with ABC News last night? Have they offered you a job?" questioned Steve, hesitant to know the answer.

“They want me to start after the first of the year. Steve, I’m going big time, nation-wide on ABC,” Maureen stated with much excitement. “I’ll be doing the weekend news for now, but who knows? Maybe someday prime time with Peter Jennings.”

“I’m happy for you, sweetheart,” Steve gestured as he kissed her hand. “Of course, this’ll put you in a higher tax bracket. Maybe you’ll think of living together with someone special, maybe even marrying him. Connie Chung is married,” he continued.

“Is this a proposal, Mr. Ciminelli?” Maureen replied with a smile.

“It sure is, beautiful. Make me an honest man and a stay-at-home type of guy,” he replied. “Well, do I get an answer?”

“You’re serious?” queried Maureen. She was very surprised, and her face showed it. “Well?” Steve asked.

“It’s yes, you wonderful hunk, but I want some time to have a proper wedding, OK?” she replied.

Steve smiled and reached across the table to kiss her. “I can’t believe you said yes, Maureen. What brought this change in you?”

“Darling, I may be blind sometimes, but I’m not stupid. After seeing you with that woman last night, it made me think about what I could lose. You’re a great guy, Mr. Ciminelli, and I realized this morning how much I love you,” said Maureen with a loving smile.

Steve looked at his watch, stuffed the remains of his BLT in his mouth, and excused himself to get back to work. “I’ll see you tonight, sweetheart. Your place around eight.”

“Don’t have dinner. I’ll make something special for tonight. Just bring your toothbrush and razor,” she suggested as Steve reached over and kissed her moist lips hard. She returned the kiss the same way.

Steve rushed back to headquarters to pick up Linda and found her waiting by the door. The drive to Fairborn Lea Estate near Annapolis, Maryland, took a while because the outbound traffic from Washington was very heavy today. They arrived at the Smith-Hughes estate about thirty minutes late. Steve and Linda were rushed to the mansion library, where Jonathan Farnsworth Smith-Hughes was anxiously waiting for them. “Sorry we’re late,” Steve commented as he introduced himself and Linda to Mr. Smith-Hughes.

“Take a seat, Detectives. Now, how can I help you in solving this terrible crime? Laura didn’t deserve to die that way,” he replied with a sense of compassion. “I have been in Chicago on business until your people contacted me yesterday.”

“This may be hard for you at this time, but we need to know who your wife was having an affair with? Who were her gentlemen friends that were her lovers too?” asked Steve.

“First name on that list is William Anderson,” Jonathan Smith-Hughes quickly remarked.

“The Vice President?!” Linda stated in surprise.

“It started when he was a senator, and winning the second seat on the ticket with Patterson didn’t stop it. She’s been seeing him on a regular basis the last four years,” commented Smith-Hughes. “We separated several years ago because of that affair and her relations with other men in Washington. I hate this area and always will.”

“Besides the Vice President, who were her other men friends in this area?” asked Steve politely. “You can put Senator Klausburger near the top. He introduced Laura to the First Lady and that social group on Pennsylvania Avenue,” Mr. Smith-Hughes remarked.

“How come your wife was living in your residence in Washington instead of here?” questioned Linda.

“Laura requested the change four months ago so that she would be closer to her friends. I like the quiet of the country, so I moved back here,” answered Jonathan Smith-Hughes.

Steve checked with Linda and discovered that they had covered all the bases, so they decided to leave. As they approached the door to the library, Steve asked the following question: “Do you smoke ‘Dukes and Lords’ cigarettes, Mr. Smith-Hughes?”

“No, I don’t. I don’t smoke at all,” he replied.

Chapter 3

The ride back to D.C. was a slow one. The traffic on the northern beltway was extremely heavy today, and the weather was becoming bad as an easterly brew was moving over the peninsula area. Linda was reviewing her notes on the interview with Smith-Hughes, and you could see the frustration in her face.

"It seems our Mr. Smith-Hughes has covered his ass well. Being in Chicago at the time his wife is being murdered is an excellent excuse. I'm going to check out this trip and find out why he was in Chicago at this time. Too convenient, if you ask me," Linda stated as she flipped her notebook closed. She then slammed it into her bag and looked at Steve as he drove.

"He may have hired someone to do the deed. He has the resources to pay for the hit," Steve chimed in. "He didn't look too distraught for a man who just lost his wife, and why didn't he fly home early yesterday? He could afford a private jet—instead, he arrives by a commercial flight."

"And then he implies that the Vice President is in his wife's cadre of lovers. Tell me, how do we handle this one? Do we just go to Anderson's home and question him like any other suspect, or do we speak through a third party?" wondered Linda, while she glanced at the rain as it started to pour onto the highway.

"We handle him carefully; and if he's our boy, he goes down, no matter who he is. Richard Nixon showed us how to handle such people," interjected Steve. "Even the 'heart-beat from the Presidency' can't be accused of wrongdoing. He's just another citizen, in my mind."

When they arrived back at the squad room at headquarters, Steve hadn't settled in his chair at his desk when the captain opened his office door and called for Ciminelli and Hannigan. As they walked into the captain's office, they noticed that the captain had a visitor. A glance at his three-piece navy blue suit indicated that he was either from the FBI or a "company man"—a member of the CIA.

"Take a seat," mumbled the captain quickly. "Mr. Anders, these are Detectives Ciminelli and Hannigan, our investigative team on the Smith-Hughes murder. People, Mr. Anders is from the Bureau and has some information to relate to us. We now have a name to those prints we found on the glass from the murder scene," related the captain, as he sat in his chair and chewed on his unlit cigar.

"We have a problem here, folks," remarked the man from the FBI. "Our man is someone we must handle in a delicate manner. All material related at this meeting is to be considered confidential and for your eyes and ears only." His voice was very stern as he stated this to Steve and Linda. "From this point on, your files on this case are to be locked up in the captain's personnel file."

"Captain, why the hush-hush on this? The news media people have already been swimming around with several possible leads, such as the relationship between Ms. Smith-Hughes and our flamboyant vice president," Steve commented with some sincere interest.

"The prints on the glass do belong to the vice president, and it places him at the murder scene on the night Ms. Smith-Hughes was killed," replied Mr. Anders. "When he arrived is a calculated guess of sometime between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m."

"Are we going to be able to question him on this case, boss?" questioned Linda as she stared at Mr. Anders.

"We are advising you to do it discreetly and secretly. No way is this to leak to the media. Understand, Mr. Ciminelli? Don't do anyone a favor on this matter," warned Anders as he looked right at Steve.

This angered Steve because he knew that his relationship with Maureen was being questioned. "I don't bring my job home or to bed, Mr. Anders. You can count on it," Steve now rose up from his chair to make this point, "and second, Maureen would always check a lead out so as not to jeopardize any of our investigations. Look elsewhere for leaks."

"Cool it, Steve; no one is casting shadows on your professional abilities," the captain quickly interjected, and with an angry look, gave Agent Anders the following message: "Set up the meeting with Anderson. It can't be avoided. His official statement must be made to these two detectives, and they're personally responsible to me. If you have any problems with that, have President Patterson call me directly. Understood?"

"I'll set up a time and place, but the vice president must be assured that it's done discreetly. His office will deny any meeting if it leaks out," said Agent Anders. He then politely shook Steve and Linda's hand, and as he was about to leave, he asked Linda a personal question: "Any relation to agent Vincent Hannigan at the bureau?"

"My brother, sir, and George Hannigan on the Secret Service staff is another one too," replied Linda with a smile. "My dad was Harvey Hannigan, a forty-two year veteran of the District Homicide Department."

"You mean Inspector Harvey Hannigan," remarked the captain with pride as he pointed to a picture of Linda's dad that was hanging from the wall in his office.

"I take everything back, Captain. Your team here is undoubtedly the best in the department. You have a great partner there, Detective Ciminelli," commented Agent Anders with a warm smile on his face. With that last gesture, he walked out the door.

"Steve, I have one last question for you," remarked the captain. "First, congratulations for the great job you did last night at the Kennedy Center. I'm recommending you for a Commissioner's Medal of Merit Award. You earned it, my boy." He smiled at Steve, patting him on his back as he walked back behind his desk. "Second, who was this mystery woman you helped to get home? We need her name for our records."

"Her name is Vanessa MacGyver," Steve related in a soft tone. "She lives at the marina, just below Ms. Smith-Hughes's condo at Watergate. I have a feeling that they might have been friends, even though Vanessa denies it."

"Check it out and see where it leads us," ordered the captain. "Remember, check with me early in the morning about our questioning of Anderson." With that remark ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda walked back to their desks.

"Look, partner," Linda suddenly stated as she pulled Steve by the arm, "don't hold info back on me. You said nothing about this MacGyver person. We work together, fellah, as a team." Linda was mad, and she was trying to relate a stern message to her partner.

"I'm sorry, Linda," said Steve calmly and sincerely. "I should have told you, but Vanessa didn't want to be involved with last night's publicity, and I tried to grant her wish. The captain's right. She probably knew Laura Smith-Hughes more than she leads on. We'll pay her a visit tomorrow."

Linda smiled at him and gently tapped his arm in a friendly gesture of understanding. Just then, the phone on Linda's desk started to ring. After answering the phone, Linda sat in her chair and started to jot some notes on her answer pad. After a few minutes of conversation, she hung up and slowly wheeled around in her chair.

"That was my brother Vinnie. The bureau identified a second set of prints from the murder scene. Guess whose they are, Stevie-boy?" she questioned as if playing cat-and-mouse with him.

"Don't tell me the president is involved with Ms. Smith-Hughes?" joked Steve. "Close, my boy," Linda remarked. "Try the first lady instead. Nancy Patterson herself was in that apartment the day of the murder. Any other time the cleaning lady would have wiped them clean."

"Our lady traveled in high circles, Linda. You were right in your assessment of her earlier. She could cause the Patterson administration a lot of grief, and you know, we'll be hearing from Agent Anders again—soon." Steve made these remarks as quietly as he could, as he and Linda kept their conversation private and discreet.

"Well, Steve, my friend, I'm calling it a day. I have a concert date tonight. We have tickets to the Elton John gig at the Civic Center," Linda commented to Steve.

"How dare you go out with someone else," joked Steve with a warm smile. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do on a date."

"You're terrible," Linda replied with a shy smile on her face, "and if I do, eat your heart out." And with that remark ringing in Steve's ears, Linda grabbed her jacket and headed for her car in the parking lot. "Don't be late for dinner tonight, Stevie-boy," she remarked as she passed his desk. He smiled in agreement.

Steve sat back in his chair and started to slowly scan through the Smith-Hughes file. Several items just didn't seem right. If the first lady and the vice president were the last to see Laura Smith-Hughes alive, did they know of each other's visit? These loose ends had to be connected, yet Steve realized that these people were easy to attack publicly but extremely difficult to talk to in person. What was Laura's connection to these people that they would pay her a visit at such late hours?

Steve scratched his head and wondered if he had missed something. Had he and other members of the department missed something when they checked out her residence? Steve jotted down a personal reminder to return to the 3C condo at Watergate soon to check something out. What connection was there between Vanessa and Laura? Were they friends? They both screwed men for power and wealth. Maybe they crossed paths, Steve wondered, realizing that another visit to Vanessa was necessary. After checking out some leads with the airlines at National Airport and making a call to the Smith-Hughes corporate headquarters, Steve completed his work on the file and proceeded to lock it up in the captain's office. His work day was finished, and now his mind started to think of Maureen and what she had in store for him tonight. He realized that his surprise proposal and her jealousy over Vanessa had her in a mood. It made Steve smile in expectation of the night ahead.

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When Steve arrived at Maureen's apartment, she was busy working in the kitchen making a delicious meal of breaded veal chops and spaghetti with sauce. She knew that Steve still loved his Italian heritage, and this was his favorite dish. It smelled good as Steve walked into the kitchen, and he embraced Maureen as she was preparing the spaghetti over the hot stove.

He hugged her tight and gradually raised his hands to embrace her firm breasts as he kissed her on the back of her neck. Maureen gently protested, but as she turned around to face him, he placed her face in his hands and started to kiss her lips passionately. Her hands flashed inside his shirt as she lovingly grabbed him and started to kiss his face amorously.

"I'm not going to spoil this dinner, darling. I want you just as bad, but I worked too hard on this meal; so go take a shower, my love," Maureen stated as she bit Steve on the ear. Steve nodded in agreement as he held her closer and caressed her buttocks into his body. With a hard kiss on her lips, he slowly separated from her and walked toward the bathroom.

"Sweetheart, pour the chilled wine before you bathe. We could use some about this time." Steve uncorked a cold bottle of ruby chardonnay and poured it into two wine goblets. With some soothing music playing on the stereo, Steve started to peel off his clothes. As he started to feel the waters of the shower, Maureen entered the bathroom with the two wine goblets. They sipped the wine, and Steve kissed her wine-wetted lips.

As Steve placed his wineglass on the counter, he entered the shower and discovered that Maureen had entered it too. "I put the dinner on low, darling, because my love for you wants to burst out," she exclaimed as she hugged him, allowing their naked bodies to act as one. The warm water made the movements of their bodies more fluent and sensual. Steve held Maureen tight as he penetrated deep, and their sex was torrid. His mouth was constantly moving from her luscious lips to her hard nipples on her firm breasts. The water of the shower cascaded down their bodies and acted as a lubricant, making their movements easier and enjoyable to perform.

Steve continued to put out as he was still in a strong, sexy state. He grabbed Maureen by her buttocks and again penetrated as he sat on the shower stall seat. Maureen stretched her arms around Steve's neck and held him very tightly, digging her nails into his back as she swayed with her sexual emotions. After experiencing a great sexual session, the two just held each other tightly and kissed for a lengthy time, with the water adding a touch of pleasure to both of them.

After several minutes, they both emerged from the shower and proceeded to dry off. Maureen grabbed her towel, placed it over Steve's shoulder and back, and hugged him dry. As she dried his back, she started to plant kisses on his neck and back. Steve turned around and started to wipe her dry with his towel, and he too started to kiss her, from her forehead to her firm breasts. Suddenly, Maureen started to

tickle Steve, and the bathroom was filled with shrills and laughter. Maureen wrapped her arms around Steve's neck and planted her soft lips on his, and Steve's hands pressed her body tightly against his.

"I love you, Steve," she uttered as Steve planted kisses on her moist mouth.

"I adore you too, sweetheart." Maureen then took her towel and finished drying Steve's back and chest. After rubbing the towel over his back, she turned to Steve and apologized for scratching his back during their sexual session in the shower. Steve grabbed her and kissed her as a sign of forgiveness. Maureen reached for her bathrobe, kissed Steve gently, and headed for the kitchen to get their dinner ready.

After she left the bathroom, Steve wiped the mirror clear and glanced at his back. There, to his surprise, were three short parallel scratches and several fingernail marks. He wondered, did Vanessa do this the other night? He shrugged it off. After sipping the rest of his wine and wrapping himself in his robe, he headed toward the kitchen.

"Pour the wine, darling, and sit down. Get some salad and start eating," Maureen exclaimed as she placed the main entrees on the table from the stove. The two started to enjoy the meal, sitting across from each other dressed in their bathrobes.

"You were just terrific tonight, honey. Absolutely the best we have ever experienced," remarked Steve as he poured more wine into his glass.

"It was because of your proposal this afternoon and my jealous feeling I had this morning. I wanted to show you how much I loved you. I discovered as I entered that shower that I wanted you very badly and still do," she remarked as she rubbed his leg with her bare foot.

Steve reached over, grabbed her head in his hands, and kissed her gently on her luscious lips. "I love you, Maureen. I always have and will in the future. You stole my heart, honey, back in Buffalo long ago."

"Leave the dishes on the table, darling. I want you now," Maureen reached for his hand and guided him into the bedroom. When they reached the bed, she unwrapped his robe and her own and then slowly caressed his face and chest with her soft hands.

She started to kiss Steve on the face and then slowly pushed him on the bed and crawled on top of him, rubbing her naked, sexy body against his. She kissed his lips, then his neck and chest. She then worked her mouth down onto his stomach, and her tongue played with his belly button. Steve reached for her hair, and as he did so, Maureen started to have oral sex with him. This surprised Steve, for she never had done this before, and the great sexual sensation Steve experienced caused him to stretch out and grab the bed supports. Maureen buried herself in this sexual fantasy, and she realized that she had given Steve a sexual experience that he vastly enjoyed. After she brought Steve to a climax, she reached up and he kissed her until they slipped into sleep from sheer exhaustion.

Several hours later, Steve woke up, politely covered Maureen with a bed sheet, and proceeded to wash in preparation for a day at the office. He quietly dressed, and as he was ready to leave, he amorously kissed her. As she opened her eyes, he informed her of his day's plans. She grabbed him by the neck and kissed him hard with great feeling.

"I love you, Steve. Call me at the station this afternoon around three."

"I adore you, beautiful. Go back to sleep and I'll do just that this afternoon." With that remark, he kissed her and pulled away hesitantly.

Chapter 4

As Steve was driving to headquarters, he marveled how terrific Maureen had been the night before. Had the threat of jealousy planted by Vanessa's sexy attitude made her the woman Steve always wanted her to be? As he glanced in his rear-view mirror, he looked into his eyes and realized that she was the only one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. His proposal yesterday afternoon might have been a Freudian slip, but in his heart he now realized he only loved Maureen. She was his girl, and now she illustrated the same loving feeling that he exhibited in his heart for her. From the first day he met her at the University of Buffalo, he desired to have her forever as his wife. It always had been Maureen's career that held their romance in limbo. Maybe now, with new conditions and circumstances, the Ciminellis may have a start. Steve smiled at that thought—a nice home in the 'burbs to raise a family.

Linda was busy at her desk when he entered the squad room. She was busy on the phone. As she looked up and spotted Steve, she waved for his attention.

“Our appointment with Anderson is set for today at five this afternoon. A White House staffer will clue us in on the meeting arrangements sometime today,” she whispered to Steve as she hung up the phone. Steve nodded his consent and proceeded to pour himself a fresh cup of coffee. When he settled into his chair at his desk, he noticed a fax on his desk from the corporate headquarters run by Smith-Hughes. He motioned Linda over to his side.

“This is the answer to several inquiries I made yesterday afternoon. Look, the corporate jet flew Jonathan Smith-Hughes to Chicago the day before the murder, but its log states that it returned to Washington National that night. The captain reported no passengers on the return flight. The jet stayed here for a maintenance check and didn’t make plans to return to Chicago to retrieve Smith-Hughes. Funny operation,” Steve declared with a frown on his brow.

“Did you know that Jonathan Smith-Hughes was an experienced licensed pilot, Steve? Our boy sometimes flew that Lear jet himself. The people at Washington National stated that he piloted the jet to Chicago to complete his monthly FAA flying requirement,” remarked Linda.

“He could have rented a plane in Chicago, returned home to knock off his wife, and came back. Let’s see if that happened, Linda, by checking the rental companies in Chicago and around the Washington-Maryland area.”

“You could have something there, Steve,” she agreed. As Steve looked up from his desk, he noticed that the captain was waving for him and Linda to come to his office. When they entered the office, the captain placed their case folders in front of them. He then closed the door and shut the window shades too.

“People, we have a new problem developing in this case. As you know, I.D. dug up somebody that matched those extra prints. They just happened to belong to the first lady, Ms. Nancy Patterson. We believe that they are fresh prints, which places her on the scene the night of the murder, but we don’t know why,” the captain explained in a calm manner, as he leaned back in his chair and chewed on his unlit cigar.

“Our victim sure knew some high-profile people in this town. It’s beginning to look like L.A. or Hollywood,” Linda stated in a disgusted manner. Steve sat in his chair and tried to be comfortable as he glanced through the Smith-Hughes file.

“Boss, we have three bona fide suspects in this case right now. The vice president of the United States, the wife of the president of the United States, and the victim’s husband. I’m willing to bet that several more will surface as we dig deeper into this mess. This lady played around with some high and mighty people in our government, and I don’t intend to bury her death under the carpet for anyone,” Steve commented to the captain, who was now chewing harder on his unlit cigar.

“Will Anders be back to arrange an appointment for Nancy Patterson?” questioned Linda.

“Your meeting this afternoon with the vice president will be held at the Quantico FBI Training Center. He’s there to review a new batch of bureau trainees, and after that, you will have a chance to question him for less than thirty minutes. Make your questions count and don’t waste his time. And please, no mention of the first lady to him on this matter,” said the captain as he placed his cigar in an ashtray.

Steve again was concentrating on the murder file. He picked up the sheets containing the listing of people from Laura Smith-Hughes’s phone directory. He slowly started to scrutinize the names on the list, and as he traveled down the sheet, his mind reached a conclusion. “Linda, we need addresses for some of these names, especially the ones who no longer live in this area.”

“We had trouble with a few dozen names on that list, Steve. They lived in D.C. but are now elsewhere. Our lady changed her affiliation of party with each new administration. She was determined to be the social giant of the Washington scene, or close to it,” Linda remarked as she closed her folder and placed it on the desk.

“Someone silenced our lady because she either knew too much or was a danger to someone high on the ladder of this administration. This isn’t a common mugging or sexual attack. We’ll just have to work harder, and I want this case closed as soon as possible,” ordered the captain. “Because of the high profile

on this case, all interviews with the media will be channeled through this office. You two will not, I say again, will not utter a word to them. Send them to me.”

With this warning and explanation ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda returned to their desks and tried to plan their future moves. Steve picked up his phone and dialed Vanessa’s number. It rang for several minutes, but no one answered the call. She must be sleeping the night off in someone’s apartment, Steve rationalized.

“Let’s head over to National Airport and pry some answers out of the Smith-Hughes’ pilot. I want to know why he didn’t fly back to Chicago to bring his boss home,” Steve mentioned as he locked up his notes on the case in his desk.

The ride to National was uneventful, and it took a while to find the hangar where the Smith-Hughes jet was parked. As they arrived, they noticed that a maintenance crew was still working on the plane. A few chosen questions revealed that the plane was getting readied for a flight to the West Coast later in the day. One of the maintenance crew pointed to an office in the rear of the hangar where the pilot and jet crew were at that time.

Upon entering the office, Steve and Linda discovered several members of the plane crew relaxing, watching TV, and drinking what looked like to be beers. The captain was located at a desk checking out weather charts for this evening’s flight to San Francisco.

“Captain, I’m Detective Ciminelli, and this is Detective Hannigan of the Washington Police Department. We would like to ask you a few questions concerning the Smith-Hughes murder that occurred a few days ago,” commented Steve as he and Linda flashed their badges and IDs to the captain.

“Captain Pollard, at your service. How can I help you, Detectives?”

“Last Monday, you flew Jonathan Smith-Hughes to Chicago. May we have a look at the flight log of that trip, please?” Linda asked politely. After glancing at the flight log, they discovered that the Smith-Hughes jet departed National Airport at 2:35 p.m. Monday afternoon and landed at Midway Airport around 4:20 p.m. It also indicated that four passengers were on board.

“Did Jonathan Smith-Hughes pilot the jet on this flight?” asked Steve. “And who were the other three passengers on the trip?”

The captain lit a cigarette and took a deep drag before answering the questions. “Mr. Smith-Hughes clocked his required air time by flying the jet himself. He’s well qualified as a pilot. The three passengers, two men and one woman, were members of his corporate office. I don’t ask questions about who they are before I take off, especially of the boss of this operation. He pays well, sir,” said the captain as he flicked his ashes into an empty coffee cup.

“Any names to go with these passengers, captain?” questioned Linda, as she glanced to find them on the flight log.

“Mike, over there, has them listed on his flight report,” the captain commented. Mike, one of the flight attendants, handed Linda the flight report, and she jotted the names down in her notebook.

“Captain, why didn’t you stay in Chicago and be at Mr. Smith-Hughes’ call if he needed you?” Steve asked.

“The company was scheduled to have its federal regulated maintenance here in this hangar on Tuesday. Mr. Smith-Hughes had scheduled a return flight on Thursday. I notified him Tuesday that the jet couldn’t be used until the maintenance repairs were finished, probably sometime Wednesday afternoon. He informed me that he was taking a commercial flight back,” answered the captain.

“You and the crew were the only people on the plane for the flight back to Washington Monday, right?” inquired Detective Hannigan.

“As far as I know,” replied the captain. “Mike, did we carry anyone back with us from Chicago?” as he turned toward Mike for an answer.

“Yeah,” answered Mike. “One of Mr. Smith-Hughes’ Chicago office staff, a Mr. Peterson, flew back with us.”

“Can you describe him to us, Mike?”

“About five-foot-ten, and he wore a jogging suit with a baseball cap and dark sunglasses. He told me that he was scared of flying, so I let him sit in the rear, and no one bothered him. When we landed at National, he quickly disappeared,” answered Mike.

“You couldn’t recognize him or identify him? Did he ever fly with you before?” questioned Linda.

“With that outfit on, he was a stranger to us, Detective. He had official clearance from the Chicago office to be aboard for the flight. They called and told us that we should expect a Mr. Peterson to be a passenger for our trip back to D.C.,” remarked Mike.

Steve looked at Linda. Both wondered who this Peterson guy was and where he went after the plane landed. “Thanks, gentlemen. You have been very helpful. If we need more, we’ll contact you,” Steve remarked as he and Linda left the hangar office. As Steve closed the car door, he turned to Linda and made this observation: “This Mr. Peterson becomes suspect number four.”

“This case is getting muddied, Steve. More suspects than leads.”

“We need to check out that condo again,” replied Steve, as he proceeded to head for the Watergate Complex. “There must be something that we missed when we were there earlier. Our boy can’t be this clean and perfect. He left something behind; I’ll bet on it.” The drive back in to the capital was silent as both detectives tried hard to rehash all the evidence they knew in their minds.

“I’m hungry, Stevie-boy. How about some buffalo wings and a salad at Pizza Hut?” stated Linda, with a hungry tone in her voice.

“Sounds OK to me, partner.”

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After getting the complex superintendent to open up the Smith-Hughes condo, Steve and Linda stared at the walls and pieces of furniture in the residence. “I’ll take the bedroom and bath, and you take the living room and kitchen,” stated Steve. As he entered the bedroom, the bed was now bare of its bloody sheets, but a large stain still appeared on the mattress. Steve opened the closet doors and walked in to check it out. All of Laura’s dresses and clothes were hung in an orderly fashion, and nothing looked out of place. Steve checked out the dressing table in the bathroom, which was connected to the closet by a sliding door.

Everything on the table seemed to show the style and type of woman Laura Smith-Hughes was. Everything was in large bottles and very expensive; even the combs and brushes were sturdy and large. Steve picked up a comb that women use as a hair pick to style their hair. He noticed that the long, sharp end of the comb had deep scratches on it. He looked at it, and suddenly a thought entered his mind. Could this be the murder weapon? It was long enough and sharp enough to do the damage to the murdered victim’s body.

He showed it to Linda, and she gently wrapped it in tissue to take back to forensic for analysis. “It may be something, Steve. It may be the murder weapon. But if it is, I’ll bet it’s clean. Again, a lead that points to no one,” Linda said in a frustrated tone.

They both walked back into the great room of the condo. Steve sat down in one of the comfortable chairs and started to stare around the room. Linda picked up the phone and made a call. As she made her call, she toyed with the items on the desk. After having a short conversation with someone she personally knew on the other end, she turned to Steve and made the following observation: “Our lady was busy in the activity of high society in this town, but there’s not a single letter—either on the desk or inside it. I’ll bet she received plenty of mail each day.”

“You’re right, Linda; that’s strange. We found no mail on her desk or in it,” recalled Steve. “Let’s check this out with the post office. Her mailman could tell us about the volume of mail our lady received.” Steve glanced at his watch and suddenly rose as if he was late for an important meeting. “We’d better leave now, Linda, or we’ll never make it to Quantico by five.”

“Relax, Steve. I just got off the phone with my brother George at the White House. I got him to arrange two seats on the presidential helicopter that’s carrying Anderson to the meeting at Quantico. We leave at 4:15 from the South Lawn.”

“Let’s head back to headquarters and recheck that forensic report. I think we missed something in it that could help us break this case.”

“We need motive, and the only one we have now is the ‘lover-triangle’ one. That leaves us with only Jonathan Smith-Hughes as a suspect,” Linda answered.

The two detectives were ready to leave when Steve walked out on the balcony and looked down into the marina. He spotted Vanessa’s yacht and noticed that no activity was on board. Steve figured that they could check to see if she was in at this time. A few minutes later, the two detectives were quietly approaching the MacGyver boat. They noticed that it was closed up and looked locked up, too. It was. No one answered Steve’s knock on the cabin door.

“We’ll be back tomorrow,” Steve mentioned as he walked off the yacht and the two proceeded back to their car.

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When they returned to their desks at headquarters, Steve and Linda retrieved the case file and closed themselves in one of the interrogation rooms. They started to examine the evidence and reports comprising the file.

“The body was discovered at around eight in the morning by the cleaning lady. This places her demise sometime around one and two in the morning. No forced entry was discovered, so our killer was invited in by our victim,” started Steve as he flipped through the file.

“We’ll have more definitive knowledge when we find out the time both Anderson and Nancy Patterson paid Ms. Smith-Hughes a visit,” remarked Linda as she slowly examined the file reports.

“If forensic could establish that comb as the murder weapon, we’ll have a part of the puzzle, but it may be a useless lead. What kind of evidence could we retrieve off of it? Maybe nothing,” Steve fumed in a frustrated tone. Steve rose from his chair and left the room to purchase two cool cans of Diet Pepsi from a dispensing machine in the hallway. As he re-entered the room, he flipped one can to Linda, who caught it in one hand like a first baseman.

“Thank you, Steven. You read my mind.” After drinking their refreshing drinks, they placed the case files in the captain’s cabinet and locked it up.

At that time, the captain informed them that Agent Anders wanted them to be on the press helicopter traveling to Quantico to cover the proceedings of the vice president this afternoon. They both acknowledged the message and headed for the White House South Lawn.

When they arrived at the White House, George Hannigan escorted Steve and Linda to the presidential helicopter and found them two seats in the rear of the chopper. George introduced himself to Steve, and Linda greeted him with a sisterly kiss on the cheek. He sat with them on the trip to Quantico Marine Corps Base in northeast Virginia. It was a short twenty-minute ride, but the procedure of landing lasted longer. Upon landing, the vice president and White House staff were whisked into limos and sped away to the area of the base where the FBI training center was located. Everyone else, including the press, climbed aboard two buses and followed the limos.

The ceremony lasted only thirty minutes, and it was over before you knew it. George Hannigan escorted Steve and Linda into a private conference room somewhere in the training center. They waited there for twenty or more minutes, and finally Vice President William Anderson entered the room with Agent Anders by his side. The vice president politely introduced himself to the detectives and calmly seated himself at the head of the table. Steve and Linda sat on one side, with Agent Anders and a White House staffer on the other. They were the only ones in the room.

The vice president placed a cigarette in his mouth and lighted up. Steve noticed that the brand was “Dukes and Lords,” the same brand discovered on the murder scene. The silence lasted for several minutes, and the two sides stared at each other.

“Mr. Vice President,” Steve opened, “what was your relationship with the late Laura Smith-Hughes, and when was the last time you saw her alive?”

The vice president leaned forward and puffed on his smoke. "Our relationship started six years ago, while I was serving in the Senate. In the beginning we were lovers, but in the last two years, our affair was cooling down. Two months ago, I informed Laura that we were through . . . finished . . . but she never conceded to this decision."

Steve turned and looked at the vice president straight on, wondering why people considered him a great shot to be our next president. "Mr. Vice President, can you describe to us the events of last Monday when you visited Ms. Smith-Hughes's condo? Start by telling us the time you arrived."

The vice president butted his cigarette, exhaled the smoke in his lungs, and then faced Steve and Linda. "Laura contacted me on Sunday and demanded that I see her sometime Monday evening at her condo at Watergate. She made the invitation threatening. I arrived a little after ten and left before eleven. She was alive when I left, Detective."

"Did you have sex with Ms. Smith-Hughes that night, sir?"

"I think that's kind of personal, detective," the vice president stated as he turned to Linda with a frown on his face. "What we said or did was personal. I told you that she was alive when I left the condo."

"No sir, that answer won't cut it, unless you want to be considered our number one suspect in this case. We need to know why you were there and what went on while you were there," Steve blurted out to Anderson and Agent Anders.

"Look, Ciminelli, the vice president has given you his statement, and that's all it is. Understand?" shouted Anders as he rose from his chair.

"Then we may have to go to a grand jury to get an indictment. Which way do you want to go, Mr. Vice President?" Steve retorted. "And when that happens, it goes public." The White House staffer reached over and spoke softly into Anderson's ear. After a moment, the Vice President declared that he would answer the detective's questions.

"When I arrived, Laura was ready to renew our love affair, wearing only a night robe. As she closed the door, she disrobed and threw herself at me. I'm sorry to say that she succeeded and we had sex in her bed, but I realized then that our affair was over. That's when she threatened me if I didn't do as she demanded," he related as he took another cigarette out and lit up again.

"How did she threaten you, sir?" Linda questioned.

"Laura stated that our affair would go public if I didn't officially divorce my wife and make plans to marry her. You see, Detectives, my wife and I live together for political reasons only. Laura believed that I might someday soon be president, and she wanted desperately to be a first lady," the vice president stated nervously. The member of the White House staff was even worse than that, indicated by his uneasiness in his chair.

"Did you have a drink or smoke while you were there?"

"Laura had some wine poured, but I can't remember if I had a smoke. Maybe I did, but I just can't remember," the vice president mentioned as he butted his cigarette out.

"Did you walk onto the balcony at any time that night?" asked Steve.

"No, Detective. About that I'm sure. I stayed inside in fear of anyone noticing my presence. The drapes were closed at all times. As a matter of fact, I never ventured onto the balcony at any time, even during the last and only other time I was at her place," the vice president commented as he pushed his statement across the table toward Steve. "Any other questions, Ciminelli? We have given you more time than we intended to," stated Agent Anders angrily.

"One more, sir," remarked Linda, as she looked straight at Vice President Anderson. "How did you arrive at the Smith-Hughes condo?"

"I drove my own car, Miss. I still have a license to drive," he replied.

"Mr. Vice President," interrupted Steve, "How did Ms. Smith-Hughes react to your decision to turn her down? Did she scratch you in any way?"

"She was very angry and distraught. I told her to do her worst because her threats meant nothing to me. This angered her more, but no, Detective, she didn't scratch me anywhere. In fact, I had to push her back onto her bed when she tried to drape herself on me as I was ready to leave. Again, as I stated before, she was alive and well when I left," the vice president answered.

"One last question, sir," blurted Linda. "Do you know of anyone who would wish to harm Ms. Smith-Hughes or want her dead?"

"To be honest, Detective, Laura was a threatening figure to many people in this town, but if she would try to blackmail me, who else did she do it to?" he stated bluntly.

Steve and Linda stood up and both thanked the vice president for his cooperation. They shook hands as a sign of friendliness and cooperation.

"Glad to help in any way," Anderson stated as he was whisked out of the room by his two companions. As he left the room, Linda's brother George entered and escorted Steve and Linda to the president's chopper for the ride back to Washington.

Chapter 5

When Steve arrived at the squad room the next morning, he found Linda working at her desk. She had reported in an hour early and had already checked on some valuable leads. She had been on the phone with officials of American Airlines based in Chicago's O'Hare Airport. She wanted to confirm Jonathan Smith-Hughes' flight out of Chicago to Washington on Tuesday, the day after the murder.

"Something's fishy here, Steve," she commented as she sat on the edge of his desk. "American Airlines in Chicago confirms that a reservation for a Jonathan Smith-Hughes on Flight 512 to Washington was made by someone in Smith-Hughes' corporate office and was picked up by a messenger an hour later. They can't prove whether our boy was on that flight or not, but the seat was used. They gave me the name of the flight attendant, and she's here in Washington today on a layover from the Chicago flight last night."

"Do you think our boy, Jonathan, might be the Mr. Petersen who returned on the corporate jet?" questioned Steve as he turned in his chair to face her.

"I called Mr. Smith-Hughes' office in Chicago yesterday, and his secretary can't remember calling the jet crew to tell them to expect a passenger named Mr. Petersen. She isn't even sure that a Petersen works for the firm in that office, but she's checking it out," replied Linda.

Steve rose from his chair and poured two cups of coffee from the pot that was steaming on the coffee-maker. As he finished adding cream and sugar to them, he returned to his desk and handed one to his partner. He sat next to Linda and softly stated what was on his mind. "We need a break in this case, for as of now, we have to accept the words of two people who may be our killer. The only suspect we can pressure at this time is Jonathan Smith-Hughes. But I have a feeling that he's not our man." He then took a few sips of coffee and looked at Linda.

"Our VP has a lot of explaining to do if the DNA results match him," whispered Linda in return. "If we thought the meeting yesterday was too difficult, just think of asking for a sample of blood and skin tissue."

"Right on, partner," remarked Steve as he settled back into his chair. "What we need now is to finalize Laura Smith-Hughes' movements last Monday. All we have so far is that the cook and maid were excused early, around two in the afternoon. Our girl was expecting someone who she didn't want seen or identified, but who was the mystery guest?"

Detective Hannigan looked at her partner and nodded her agreement to his statement as she walked back to her own desk. She picked up the phone, made a call to the American Airline flight attendant, and arranged a meeting with her that morning. She was residing at the Arlington Holiday Inn, and she was preparing to work an afternoon flight back to Chicago.

"Steve, I'm going to Arlington and check our girl out to see if she can identify Smith-Hughes as one of her passengers on that flight last Tuesday."

"Fine, partner," replied Steve, "and if you don't mind, I'll check Ms. MacGyver out if she's home."

"I trust you, Steve," Linda chuckled as she passed his desk to leave. "I trust you with anyone, my boy. Just keep your pants on while you're with her," she jokingly stated.

"You're the only one who can make me cheat on Maureen, Linda," returned Steve with a broad smile on his face. The two laughed as Linda left the squad room to hunt down her witness. Steve checked out a few items in his file and proceeded to lock it up and head for his car. The ride over to the Watergate Complex was a little slow this morning, but the sky was blue and the weather was just great. As he

approached the MacGyver yacht, he noticed that Vanessa was on board. He slowly walked on board and gently knocked on the hatch door.

"Hello, handsome. Long time no see," was Vanessa's greeting. "Come on in and make yourself comfortable." As Steve entered the cabin, he noticed that Vanessa was wearing a two-piece bathing suit with a thin lace beach coat over it. She was lying on the sofa next to the bar and phone. Upon seeing that Steve was alone, she settled down into a seductive posture. As Steve entered the cabin, she rose from her seat and draped herself on him, pressing her near nude body against his.

"Did you miss me, lover?"

"Not really, Vanessa, but a woman with your talents must be appreciated," Steve coolly stated as Vanessa was planting kisses on his face. She then pushed Steve down on the sofa and then stood in front of him. She slowly took her beach coat off and unsnapped her bathing suit bra. She then straddled Steve and leaned over him to kiss his wanting lips. Her large breasts pressed hard against Steve. His hands soon found them and he sexually played with them. Vanessa started to undress Steve and he calmly complied with her actions. Vanessa quickly slid down his body, unzipped his pants, and proceeded to have a serious oral sexual session. Steve enjoyed this very much, and he placed his hand on her head, holding it down until she had caused a climax to occur for him. After this sexual-session, Vanessa tried to grab Steve and kiss him, but he pushed her off him.

"You lousy bastard," she declared, as she straightened up and placed her beach robe on. "All you men are bastards. You use me, but you aren't serious."

"Hey, lady, you pushed your charms on me," Steve softly interjected, "but you are one terrific whore, lady. You're just great." Steve reached out and planted a soft kiss on her cheek.

"What do you want, Detective?" Vanessa sadly stated.

"Again, did you know the late Laura Smith-Hughes in any way?" questioned Steve as he poured himself a glass of soda water.

"Stevie, my love, Laura and I crossed paths a few times, but we were competitors, so we rarely talked to each other. We shared or had similar lovers the last three years. She was a total bitch with them, and when she dropped them, I was there to pick up the pieces. I always had her men on the rebound. I hated that bitch," remarked an angry Vanessa as she plopped herself back on the sofa. "Did you ever pay her a visit in her apartment?" questioned Steve as he pointed to the building.

"No, I didn't see her or talk to her last Monday, Steve. All day Monday I was entertaining a male friend of mine," she replied.

"Who can verify your story, hon?"

"Steve, if I tell you who he is, my social status in this town sinks. Please, don't ask," she pleaded.

"I'm not asking, doll, unless you want to be a suspect in this murder?" Steve returned.

"The bastard was Otto Klausburger, Senator Klausburger. Is that all, you bastard?"

"Vanessa, sweetheart, were there any people who would want Laura dead?"

"Do you want a list of Who's Who in this town? Both men and women had a hate for her. Some high-positioned people, Stevie," she replied with anger.

"Be nice, my love," Steve remarked as he leaned down and kissed Vanessa on the lips. He then picked her up, kissed her hard again, and caressed her breasts with his hands.

"You have helped us, and I won't forget it. I'll call you if we need to speak again." She smiled as he placed her back on the sofa.

As Steve drove back to headquarters, he pondered the remark made by Vanessa that many people had a dislike for Laura Smith-Hughes and were glad to see her dead. If she had this type of influence on people's lives, there must be a list or journal or diary of some type where she recorded this material. Did the investigation team miss it at the murder scene? As he ventured onward toward headquarters, Steve wondered why he succumbed so easily to a tempting woman. He knew inside that he loved only Maureen, but why was he so easy to indulge in a sexual session with a wanting woman? Was it the mannerism of the Italian stallion that his father instilled in him since childhood? It was a hard habit to break and Steve knew it.

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Upon walking into the squad room, Steve found Linda busy on the phone. "How did you make out with the stewardess from Flight 512?" asked Steve as he poured himself a cup of coffee. He politely offered a cup to his partner but she had one on her desk at the time.

"She was unable to identify Jonathan Smith-Hughes as a passenger on that flight, but she was sure that all scheduled passengers were on board. Every ticket for that flight occupied a seat," she commented as she checked her notes. "We can't say he was or wasn't on that plane. Someone could have taken his place and given him the used ticket, allowing him to be our Mr. Petersen returning on the corporate jet on Monday."

"Until we locate this Mr. Petersen, our boy Smith-Hughes becomes suspect number one," declared Steve. "How was your interview with Ms. MacGyver, Stevie?" Linda interjected with a sarcastic tone. "Was she home today?"

"Our lady, Ms. MacGyver, was an associate of Laura Smith Hughes. They covered the same social circles and shared similar bed partners. From her tone of voice, I pictured a hint of anger and hatred toward the late Ms. Smith-Hughes," related Steve as he relaxed in his chair. "She stated that our victim had many people in this town who wanted her dead. This probably means that Laura had something on these people. Maybe she wrote this stuff down."

After finishing her coffee, Linda declared, "Maybe the apartment has a hidden place where our girl hid such a book."

"I think we'll go to lunch and then check that apartment again. This time with a fine tooth comb, but before we go, I want to call Maureen and make arrangements about tonight."

"Sure, Steve, I want to visit the lady's room anyway," Linda remarked with a wink in her eye.

Steve dialed Maureen's office and politely waited for her to answer her phone. It seemed like an eternity, but seconds later, Maureen answered the phone-. "Steve, I maybe a little late tonight, for I have to cover for our co-anchor on tonight's newscast. Let's eat at Dominico's, say around eight. OK?" she related to him.

"Fine with me honey," Steve replied briskly, "I'll meet you there at eight. Hey, beautiful, did I tell you I love you today?"

"No, but it sounds great to hear it," she replied with similar feelings. "See you tonight."

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The Watergate Complex superintendent was surprised to see the two detectives again so soon. As he opened up the apartment, he informed Steve that a large amount of mail had accumulated for Ms. Smith-Hughes in her mailbox. Steve asked him to retrieve it immediately. The detectives entered the apartment and were greeted by a gentile smell of lilacs.

"Smells nice, Steve, but was this smell around last week?" questioned Linda as she sniffed the air. "Now, if you were our lady, where would you hide something you don't want found by nosey people?"

Steve looked around the great room and there just wasn't a hiding place in sight. The fireplace looked like a viable place, but Steve checked it out methodically. Linda ventured into the kitchen and started to check out possible hiding places there, even in the freezer compartment of the refrigerator. In the closet, Steve started to open all the boxes that were on the top shelf, but nothing but hats and shoes were found. The two detectives checked everywhere, from possible loose tiles on the fireplace to under the lid of the toilet water closet. Nothing.

Steve plopped into the sofa and had an exasperated look on his face.

"If she had such a book, she sure hid it like an expert," remarked Steve. At this time the super came in with a large paper bag filled with Laura's mail for the last week. Most of it was junk mail and several bills from local Washington establishments. "You were right, Linda. Our girl sure received plenty of mail, but this apartment contained nothing when we were here last Monday."

Before they called it a day, after two hours of checking every nook and cranny in that apartment, they collected everything that was needed to be checked at Police Headquarters. They emptied everything in the desk, including Laura's checkbook and boxes of stationery.

"I don't believe our girl was the type to build or make a hiding place by remodeling this place. A man would but not our genteel lady. It's not her style," remarked Steve as they were ready to leave.

"I think we had better retrace our steps, partner," commented Linda, "we need to re-question Jonathan Smith-Hughes again. We need more answers to new questions."

"Let's set it up soon. He may be on the west coast or he may be back for the funeral that's scheduled for tomorrow," Steve replied. And with that thought, they headed back to Headquarters. On the drive back to Headquarters, Steve noticed something strange. A navy colored auto was following behind them and Steve noticed the Virginia plate number as the same as an auto that was behind them when they left Headquarters earlier.

"Partner, I think we have a tail wagging behind us, and it's either a 'Bureau' man or a 'company' man. The license number is Virginia 2575AZ. Got it?"

"Right on, Steve. I have this joker in my make-up mirror and it sure looks like a tail to me. He's wearing those dark glasses and drives like a 'Bureau boy' to me," replied Linda as she pretended to powder her nose.

"Why are they following us? This looks fishy to me Linda and I think maybe we're getting too close to something. I'll bet you that agent Anders has something to do with this," remarked Steve as he tried to shake his tail off by turning left and then right. "He's still with us. Linda, sometime today, try to reach your brother Vinnie and squeeze some info out of him." Several minutes later, Steve parked his car in the parking lot at Headquarters and the auto following him continued up the street. Steve glared at it as it drove off, and he wondered why the 'tail' was done so sloppy, as if they were sending a message to the two detectives.

"This pisses me off Linda," Steve remarked angrily as they entered the Captain's office for a conference on the case. "These bastards are trying to cover someone's ass, but who's?" Steve closed the door and then related the tale of surveillance that the government had on them. The Captain sat down in his chair and chewed on a new cigar.

"What do you expect when some of our suspects are the Vice President and the First Lady. Maybe President Patterson may be involved in this. Who knows?" The Captain then placed his cigar down and looked straight at his two detectives. "I don't like people kicking my ass."

"When can we question Nancy Patterson on this case, boss?"

Linda blurted out. "We need to know when she was at the Smith- Hughes apartment and why she was there."

"Anders informed me that a White House staffer would contact me soon, but as of now, nothing. I'll keep the heat on it," replied the Captain. "Let's put the heat on Mr. Smith- Hughes and see if his story cracks. Do it, Steve."

, Steve nodded in agreement and as he closed the case folder, he looked up and started to ponder on several outside leads. "We need to establish a strong motive for her death, besides this 'love triangle' shit we have been working on it."

"The murder was done by an amateur, not a professional. A pro would have whacked her once and that would have done the job. Our lady was hacked by someone who was full of hate for her," Linda commented.

Steve agreed as he walked over to the water bottle for some water. After drinking a few cups, he turned to Linda and stated, "What was going through his mind. "It is hard to believe that our friend, Jonathan Smith-Hughes, iced his wife. Why? What did he have to gain? All he had to do was what he had been doing for four years. Nothing."

"We need a new motive, people," chimed in the Captain. "This is starting to resemble an Oliver Stone movie, with government agencies involved in committing crime."

The two detectives looked at him and agreed that high level pressure was being applied to this case. Just then, the phone on the Captain's desk started to ring and the Captain reached over and answered it. The call was from someone of importance as the Captain was completely involved in his conversation.

"No way," he blared, "Set up some type of meeting for our detectives to see her, n her special time and place." After a few minutes, he politely said good-bye and hung up the phone.

"That was Sara McFadden, White House staffer to the First Lady. She wanted to give us a written statement but I convinced her that a personal meeting was most important to all parties involved. She's setting up a meeting with Nancy Patterson as soon as possible. Handle this with care, please."

"Sara McFadden is the legal aide to the President," commented Linda as she rose from her chair.

"Start putting the pieces of this puzzle together," blared the Captain as he picked up his cigar and proceeded to chew on it. Steve and Linda picked up their files and headed for their desks.

"Linda, I'm calling Jonathan Smith-Hughes down as soon as possible. I'm tired of traveling to these people. He comes here now," remarked Steve. Steve picked up the phone and dialed the Smith-Hughes estate number. Jonathan Smith-Hughes was out of town, but a message was left that he was to report to Room 320, Police Headquarters tomorrow upon his arrival. with the phone placed in its cradle, Steve jotted the time and place for this meeting to remind the Captain of their progress.

Chapter 6

When Steve arrived at Dominico's, he discovered that Haureen had not yet arrived, so he ordered a table in a quiet corner of the non-smoking section. As he settled in his chair, he ordered a cold draft from the bar and informed the waitress that he would make his order when Maureen arrived. Dominico's was a family-style Italian restaurant, with the checkered table-cloths and Italian landscapes hung on the wall. The aroma of good food filled the air and aroused your appetite.

Half way through his second beer, Maureen was seen entering the room and upon discovering Steve's table, proceeded to it quickly. He rose from his chair and greeted her with a warm, hard kiss on her moist lips. She held it for a few seconds, so as to enjoy its meaning.

"Thank you, darling, I needed that badly. I wish I could have you around every minute of my day," Maureen commented as she Slowly sat in her chair opposite Steve. "I need a stiff drink right now. I'll have a Tom Collins with a twist of lime, please," Maureen remarked as the waitress took her bar order.

"Tough day, honey, or do you just want me to feel sorry for you and your nice new job?" joked Steve as he reached out and caressed her hand softly.

"Sympathy I don't need, Steve. I asked for this job and John is taking advantage of me because he knows I need to look good or I blow my big chance with ABC," Maureen remarked as she sipped on her mixed drink. Steve kissed her left hand and smiled at her as if he could solve her problems with a smile.

"You're a darling for being a good and compassionate listener."

"It'll be tougher at ABC in the beginning, Maureen. They will use you here and there, even out on the streets to cover some stories," Steve commented as he tried to relax his lover. "I'm hungry tonight and this eggplant lasagna with-seasoned vegetables sounds great to me."

"I think I'll have the Sicilian antipasto with a side order of Italian style Buffalo wings. Will you help me finish the wings, my love?" Maureen declared as she placed the menu down. The waitress took their orders and replaced their drinks with refills. Before Maureen could tell Steve something, the waitress returned and placed some hot rolls and bread sticks on their table. They started to devour them as if they hadn't eaten in weeks. Steve fed some of his food to Maureen and she returned the same. They laughed and chuckled as they shared their food like they shared their love.

Steve cleaned his dish and not a crumb of his eggplant lasagna was left. He ordered another beer and Maureen started to enjoy her chocolate marshmallow parfait with hot fudge and whipped cream. "You'll have to spend an extra two hours in the exercise room for that, darling," as he chuckled about her weight problem.

"Don't tease me, Steve. You know I just love hot fudge arid whipped cream," as she proceeded to place one spoon after another into her mouth, and her smile showed her enjoyment. She finished her desert

and sipped on her hot cup of coffee. "Steve, I'm going to warn you of some possible trouble ahead. It may cause you and Linda some grief."

"What trouble, honey?" Steve commented as he sipped more of his beer.

"As you know darling, the Smith-Hughes funeral is tomorrow and I have been ordered to cover it live. My producer, John Hanks, has ordered me to follow it up with a full report on a lead story in the Washington Post. In their afternoon edition, the Post will declare that Vice President William Anderson is being considered by the Homicide Department of the Washington Police Department as the number one suspect in the Laura Smith-Hughes murder case. They are stating that Vice President Anderson had been questioned and grilled by detectives of the Homicide Department and that critical evidence at the murder scene implies that Anderson is their number one suspect to be indicted," Maureen declared with some seriousness in her voice. "Maureen, sweetheart, all media information will be released by the Captain of the Homicide Department. I can't say anything beyond that statement," Steve remarked.

"Steve, I had a terrible argument this afternoon with John Hanks that I couldn't report that story unless we had a confirmation from the Captain or any Homicide detective. The Post is printing a non-confirmed report. Hanks ordered me to follow the funeral report with our version of the Post lead. He threatened to fire me if I didn't." Maureen was rambling a little at this time and Steve reached out to caress her arm and hand to console her in some way. "The gutless bastard. I would like to punch his lights ' / out and I may the next time I see him," declared Steve as he finished his beer with a hard swallow. "If I report it on my newscast, it'll look like you leaked the story out. I won't hurt you that way, Steve," she mentioned as a tear started to roll down her cheek. "You do as your ordered, honey, and don't worry about me or Linda in this matter. We'll cover our buns. Thank you for relating this information to me at this time. I may be able to use it to our advantage in one way or other," Steve softly replied as he reached over and planted a gentile kiss on Maureen's soft mouth. "It's nice to know that your girl would put her job on the line for the man she loves."

"I told John that to report the story without a department confirmation was callous and unprofessional. All he worried about was that everyone was going to report the Post story, so we had to also, to protect our ratings. I'll report it, Steve, but if t isn't confirmed by air time, I'll state so. If the Washington Post wishes to be so un-professional, so be it," Maureen declared as she grabbed Steve's arm and caressed it.

"I love you very much, beautiful. Right now, I want you t badly. Let's go to your place and I'll show you how I feel at this time."

"Steve, you read my mind," and she rose from her chair Steve paid the bill} and they hurried out of Dominico's and hurried to Maureen's apartment. When they arrived, the sexual fantasies that each dreamed about were created into real passion. The love that each had for another was demonstrated openly and frequently. They ended up lying in bed, both exhausted and worn down. Sleep was a splendid reward to their night's journey into fantasy land.

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Upon awakening the next morning, Steve found Maureen next to him, lying on her stomach. He slowly reached over and started to plant kisses on the back of her neck and started to caress her breasts with his hands. He was attempting to arouse her to have sex again, but she turned her head and stated. "I need some sleep, darling, or I'll be a mess today. I'll take a rain-check until tonight, please," and with that remark, she plopped her head back down into her pillow. Steve kissed her on the nape of the neck and then he slowly uncovered her body and placed a hickey on one of her buttocks. All she did was wiggle a little and try to return to slumberland. Steve chuckled and politely covered her up, and kissed her gently on the head. He then washed and had some breakfast before he headed off to work.

When he arrived at Headquarters, Linda, as usual, was working at her desk. She was already working on the case and t had made several calls to cover a few leads that were discussed yesterday.

"Let's see what hits the fan today. This case is going to make a lot of noise before the day is out, partner," Steve remarked as he poured himself a cup of hot coffee. As he was stirring his sugar in his cup, he glanced at the Captain's office waiting for his impending call, but the door was closed for now.

"Smith-Hughes' attorney called and notify us that his client would be here at 10:30 sharp for our interrogation appointment. We're scheduled to use Conference Room 320," Linda reported as she turned in her chair to look at Steve. "I have a hunch that Jonathan Smith-Hughes may be our man if he can't prove he's not our Mr. Petersen."

"He's still suspect number two, but nailing him may be difficult. You can't be in two places at the same time. He could have the perfect alibi—being in Chicago at the time of the murder," interjected Steve. "This leaves us with you-know-who and his story still has to be checked out completely."

"Let's schedule some time and go over the whole file again, Steve. There's something we may have missed or skipped over."

"Linda, this case is growing as each day goes by—" Steve was interrupted by the phone on his desk ringing. He promptly answered it and jotted down the message that was related to him. "Well, our meeting with Jonathan Smith-Hughes has been pushed back to three this afternoon. His attorney does not wish to rush Mr. Smith-Hughes through his wife's funeral this morning. She's being cremated and her ashes are to be spilled somewhere in Chesapeake Bay by her sister and her family. Our boy Jonathan must be really shook up over her demise." Steve chuckled as he stated the last remark, and Linda agreed with a smile. The two were then summoned into the Captain's office.

"I presume you have already heard the news, boss," Steve exclaimed as he closed the door.

"Maureen had the decency to call me yesterday for a confirmation and when I declined, she explained the circumstances to me, the Captain stated with a growl. "We didn't leak this story, so someone from their side sure did, and this piss's me off."

"I'll bet you, boss, that Anders is on his way here at this time, ready to accuse us of, this," commented Linda as she turned in her chair.

"Let the little bastard try. I'll kick his ass right down Constitution Avenue and right into the White House," roared the Captain as he chewed harder on his cigar. He then looked at it and threw it down on the desk. "How are we doing with Mr. Smith-Hughes in this case?"

"We have an appointment to see him here at 2:30 this afternoon. This time, he's coming prepared to defend himself," replied Steve as he glanced through his case folder. "If we can prove he was the Mr. Petersen who returned on the corporate jet from Chicago, then we have something. If not, he has a good alibi."

"Let's not close the book on him yet, partner," chimed in Linda. "Captain, we may need some time to go to Chicago and check out his story. I have a feeling that he isn't telling us the whole truth."

"Say when and the money can be arranged," replied the Captain with an agreeable nod of his head. Just as he made that reply, a knock on his door was heard. Steve rose from his chair and opened the door to reveal Agent Anders waiting patiently to enter the room.

"Look what 'the cat dragged home, boss?" Steve remarked sarcastically. Agent Anders entered and calmly sat in a chair near the Captain's desk.

"We have a problem here, people, and it's not of our designing. I have faith that no one from our departments has leaked this material out. We have nothing to gain from it," interjected Agent Anders.

"Well, if our people didn't do it, who did?" fumed the "Captain. "Let me guess," replied Steve as he rose from his chair, "I'll bet some one in the White House leaked it out."

"I believe your are right Ciminelli," Anders returned with anger in his voice. "The Bureau believes that a White House staffer revealed the meeting the detectives had with Anderson several days ago to a favorite press associate at the Washington Post. The White House has shown before that they have little love for the Vice President."

"Is President Patterson involved in this matter in any way? Does he have a finger in this case?" questioned Linda as she straightened up in her seat.

"As you know, Nancy Patterson is involved in some way with this case. The White House is only protecting her ass by setting Anderson up as the sacrifice, thus all attention is moved away from

Pennsylvania Avenue," remarked the Bureau agent with a frown on his face. "The President doesn't want his wife connected to this case in any way at all."

"Is that why the Bureau placed a tail on us yesterday?" questioned Steve.

"It didn't come out of my office, detective, but I wouldn't be surprised if the President has the C.I.A. involved in this matter," replied Anders.

"This may muddy the waters for us if we are ever to catch the killer of Laura Smith-Hughes," remarked Linda in a sad voice. "This interference from the White House can put this case on the shelf forever, like Congress does to measures it doesn't want to work on."

"Sorry to say you're right, detective Hannigan. All we can do is to keep searching for the truth and I'm one guy who wants it done, II remarked' Agent Anders as he looked sympathetically towards Linda.

"Well, I can tell you this, the story the Post prints today will not, and I say again, will not be confirmed from this department," the Captain declared with anger in his voice.

"The same goes for the Bureau, unless the Bureau Chief himself wishes to reveal the material. My section has been ordered to deny it," Agent Anders replied. They nodded agreement and shook hands on their understanding of what to do in the future days ahead. With everyone in agreement, Anders politely walked out of the Captain's office and disappeared into the movement of the city.

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Steve and Linda decided to take a lunch break together today and they ended up in a local Pizza Hut. Steve ordered sausage pizza and Buffalo wings and Linda had a salad with an order of wings, too. They enjoyed each others company as they consumed their food and continued to make friendly chatter.

"You know, Linda, it's strange that in the two years I can't remember a time that I have tired to come on to you."

"You just don't remember, partner, Linda replied as she paused before biting into some salad on her fork. "You tried Steve, believe me, you tried. Why do you ask now?"

Steve chuckled a little and then finished off his lunch and chased it down with some Pepsi. "I don't really know but as I was watching you eat your lunch today, I realized what a beautiful woman you are. I guess you put me down so many times, I think of you differently than the other guys in the department do. I wonder, am I making a mistake with Maureen."

"No, Stevie boy, you are not making a mistake with Maureen. Sorry, fella, when I think of you, no bells, no light bulbs go on, nothing. I like working with you. Sorry."

Steve smiled as he placed his share of the bill on the t table and blew a kiss toward Linda and silently saying, "Eat your heart out, sweetheart." Linda frowned with a smile and tossed a crumbled napkin at him. They left the restaurant and looked up at the blue skies. "Good day for a funeral," Linda remarked.

They arrived back at Headquarters ahead of their scheduled appointment with Jonathan Smith-Hughes so they decided to go over the Forensic and I.D. reports again. They retraced every move and item of evidence they had. Nothing extraordinary, no mistakes in judgment and yet, Steve wasn't happy with their progress. "We need a solid motive for this murder. It's here but we don't see it," he remarked as he placed some papers back into the file.

"If Jonathan killed her—Why? Her life style wasn't a danger to him. She wasn't demanding lots of money from him, so why would he do her in?" remarked Linda.

"Where does this lead our dear friend, Mr. William Anderson in this mess?" inquired Steve as he placed Anderson's fact sheet on the desk in the Conference Room. "His motive would be to silence the voice of his pld or current mistress. In political circles, that kind of scandal could ruin a person—just ask Gary Hart."

"He looks like the most logical candidate with a logical motive for this case, but all the evidence isn't in on him yet," answered Linda. As she was looking through some of the I.D. material, a knock on the door reminded her that Jonathan Smith-Hughes had arrived. He entered the room with his attorney right behind him.

“Good afternoon , detectives. Sorry if we are a bit late, but the services ran a bit over this morning,” he politely stated as he entered the Conference room and Steve instructed him to take a chair at one end of the table. His attorney sat next to him and opened up his briefcase and placed a legal pad in front of him. “I would like to introduce my attorney, Mr. Robert Stidwell.” Steve and Linda shook his hand and gave him a courteous greeting.

“We'll be taping this interview Mr. Smith-Hughes, for this will be a formal statement. Understand?” Steve remarked as he started a tape recorder that was on the table. A microphone was placed in front of Smith-Hughes and his attorney and another in front of Steve and Linda. Mr. Stidwell nodded his approval. “Let's start from the beginning, sir. Please, list your movements starting last Monday, July 11th.”

“I boarded my corporate jet around 10:00 or 10:30 in the morning for a flight to Chicago. I personally piloted the craft to clock in my required monthly hours of flying time. We arrived at Midway Airport around 2:30 in the afternoon, and my limo then took me to my suite at the Chicago Hilton. I made some personal calls and then prepared for dinner that night in the banquet room of the hotel.” Smith-Hughes reached for his glass of water and took a few sips. “What's next, detective?”

“Who did you have dinner with and-when did you leave your guests?” Steve countered.

“I dined with the people who flew to Chicago with me and two of my Midwest corporate officers., My attorney has their names for you. Our dinner ended at about 7:30 in the evening and I retired to my room. I made some phone calls from my room and I called it a night sometime around 11:00PM. I was notified , of my wife's death by my butler sometime around 8:00 the next morning. These times can be checked with the phone company,” Jonathan Smith-Hughes related calmly into the microphone.

“If all that checks out, sir, you were in Chicago when your wife was murdered—sometime between 11:00 and 2:00 in the morning. Your corporate jet flew back to Washington that Monday evening and a mysterious Mr. Petersen was on board. Mr. Smith-Hughes, do you know a Mr. Petersen and who gave him permission to be on board? Your Chicago office denies such an order, but your flight attendant received one,” questioned Linda carefully.

Jonathan glanced at his attorney and then answered the questions. “As you realize, .bur plans for the jet were not planned with Laura's murder in mind. Our scheduled maintenance check was planned at this time because I wouldn't need the plane until Thursday, the latest. As for this Mr. Petersen, I know no one by that name and I definitely didn't authorize someone to be on that return flight. I was in my room relaxing and calling business associates when our jet returned to Washington.”

“We are still checking on that lead, sir, and we'll let you know when we find him. Maybe one of your flight crew gave a friend a free ride or someone knows your corporate habits Mr. Smith-Hughes,” Steve remarked and studied Jonathan's response to it. Nothing. “Mr. Smith-Hughes, we're going to have to take a sample of your blood, for testing purposes against blood samples left at the murder scene. Also, may we see your back to varify scratch marks we believe our murderer may have incurred.”

“Is this really necessary, detective Ciminelli?” Mr. Stidwell remarked as he looked up from his writing pad. “Are you saying that Mr. Smith-Hughes is a suspect in his wife's death?”

“Yes, if you want to put it that way, Mr. Stidwell. We have so few leads and we must check all aspects and people in this case. Does your client have something to hide, or do you wish we get a court order to accomplish this simple request?” Steve blurted toward the attorney and his client as they conferred privately as Mr. Stidwell placed his hand over the microphone in front of him.

“Alright, detective, we will comply with your request. Let us know when you want the blood and the unveiling of his back,” the attorney replied smartly.

“How about now for both. Linda, call one of our forensic boys to come up here and draw some blood samples. And, now Mr. Smith-Hughes, would you mind removing your shirt please,” Steve ordered smartly. Linda immediately called for a lab assistant to come to the Conference Room and retrieve some blood from Jonathan Smith-Hughes. While they waited for him, Smith-Hughes undressed to the waist and upon inspection of his back, no scratches were found.

“Thank you, sir, you can put your clothes back on,” Linda politely ordered. The lab assistant arrived nd in a few minutes, adequate samples of blood were retrieved and he was ordered to process them for identification toward the blood samples found at the murder scene or in the DNA testing.

"Mr. Smith-Hughes, you came back to Washington on Flight 512, Tuesday. Is this correct, sir?" Linda questioned. His reply was "yes".

"Sir, the flight attendant on that flight couldn't recognize you as the one in your seat. Why is this so,?" she asked. "Detective, here is my cancelled flight ticket for my return to Washington." Jonathan's attorney handed a cancelled flight ticket to Steve and he checked it out. "Also, I wanted to do some work and rest, so I switched seats with another gentleman and I sat in the front of the plane. Check with Beverly, the other flight attendant, and she'll verify my story."

"Anything else, detective?" Mr. Stidwell replied.

"No, that's all for now and again, thank you for your help sir. We'll do our best to catch the person who murdered your wife," replied Steve as he rose and shook Jonathan's hand. He looked straight into Smith-Hughes's eyes as if trying to find an answer to something. Smith-Hughes then slowly left the room with his attorney. As he left, the Captain entered the room and closed the door.

"Well, how did we do Steve? Catch a fish or did he slip off the hook?" the Captain questioned. Linda closed her file and rewound the tape on the recorder. She shook her head as she did this task.

"Not much, boss, not much," she replied.

Steve looked at the two, and then stated what was on his mind. "Our murderer just walked out of this room." The Captain and Linda looked up with a startled glare on their faces.

"How do you figure it, Steve? He has his ass covered," Linda blared out. "It's too well covered, partner. I have a hunch he planned this murder and he thinks now that he pulled it off. I believe he made a mistake some where and I'm going to find it," Steve, commented as he patted the backs of the Captain and Linda as they left the room.

Chapter 7

As the evening newscast, headed by Maureen Stevens, was coming across the TV screens of the D.C. area, Steve was located in his favorite bar with a cold beer in front of him. Steve noticed that Maureen looked tense as she performed as the head anchor of the WKWL News Center-News at Six. She headed into the news story from the Washington Post article just as she had stated she would—that it was an unconfirmed report. The station had sent Maureen to the Vice President's home, but with several dozen television crews and news reporters hanging around, the Vice President wasn't to be found for comment. He somehow had managed to leave Washington for a scheduled trip to his home in Texas. Using the home of the Vice President as a back-drop, Maureen performed beautifully, with her long hair blowing in the breeze. Her report on the story was done in a professional manner and was praised later in the morning papers, even the Post mentioned her good job. Steve was extremely proud of her and he loved her more for the great job she did.

When Maureen arrived at the bar, Steve was beaming from ear to ear and as she approached him, he reached out and placed his arms around her and kissed her hard. "I'm proud of you, sweetheart. You were just great. Boy, did you put it in Hank's ear with that great performance," Steve exclaimed as he continued to hug and kiss her.

"Thank you, lover. I thought the report ranks up there as my best so far and maybe, I say maybe, puts me in line for the 'Best Anchor Award' in October," Maureen replied with a little bit of a cheer in her voice. "The people at ABC called before I left the studio and they were extremely happy with my job tonight. They reassured me that they still wanted me in the Fall."

"Just great, hon. Let's celebrate tonight and make a big time of it. Where do we start?" cheered Steve as he hugged her again.

"I'm happy right here, in this place and in your arms, darling. They have good food here too, you know." As she stated this, the bartender chimed in agreement and placed complimentary drinks in front of them as he congratulated Maureen on her performance tonight. She smiled a deep sense of pride and in turn thanked everyone who told her of the great job she had done. Steve was so proud to be with her this time and he showed it.

Before the night was over, Steve didn't have to buy an order of drinks as their friends celebrated with them all evening long. That night, in Maureen's apartment, Steve held a very beautiful woman in his arms and he showed her how much he loved her. He enjoyed taking her clothes off, one piece at a time and with passionate enthusiasm. His kisses started at her forehead and traveled down to her firm breasts, especially her hard nipples. As Maureen joined in this amorous showing of love, she gently kissed Steve all over his face and especially placing a great amount of attention to his nipples on his chest.

When they had finally unclothed each other, Steve allowed Maureen to climb on top of him and allowed her to perform the sex act to her satisfaction and style. She moved and swayed from one side to the other, enjoying the orgasm she was accomplishing. Steve laid there and enjoyed every minute of it. When she finished, exhausted, he reached and pulled her lips onto his and kissed her until they both found sleep claiming both of them.

When morning finally came, Steve realized that he was late for work, so he called Linda at Headquarters and told her that he would be there by eleven. She understood and stated for him to take his time.

Linda was working at her desk when Steve finally arrived, and he found her chatting with several of his male colleagues who were relaxing, having a coffee break at her desk. "OK, wise guys, the head man is here so get back to work," Steve greeted them as he demanded his chair back. "Trying to make out with my partner, shame on you fellas," he continued as he smiled with a sneer on his face. They all gave him a high-five and congratulated him for his award. "What award?" he stated as he turned to Linda.

"You have been given the Commissioner's Award For Merit for your gung-ho actions at the Kennedy Center last week," Linda commented as she handed him a cup of coffee. As Steve reached for his coffee, the voice of the Captain could be heard as he summoned our dynamic duo to his office.

"Close the door Hannigan and take a seat. Well, people, the White House has set a date for you to interrogate Nancy Patterson. I just got word from Sara McFadden this morning that the meeting takes place tomorrow at the White House," the Captain related. "Tomorrow?" questioned Linda. "Aren't they having the Commissioner's Awards ceremony tomorrow?"

"Yes, they are," the Captain retorted, "and the Awards are being given out by President Patterson himself in the Blue Room tomorrow at two in the afternoon, followed by a reception hosted by the First Lady."

"How does this affect our interview with the First Lady?" returned Steve as he leaned on the Captain's desk. "You, Ciminelli, are there to receive your Award, and Hannigan will be allowed in the audience since she's your partner. When the Awards ceremony is over, your brother George will escort you Linda to the library on the second floor. At the same time, a member of the White House staff will accompany Steve to the same place. The First Lady will excuse herself for a few minutes later from the reception and join you shortly," explained the Captain as he leaned back in his chair. "How long do we have to our job, boss?" questioned Linda as she leaned forward from her seat. "Will Nancy Patterson have counsel there or will it be only the three of us?"

"Dream on, sweetheart," the Captain replied as he laughed a little at her request. "Sara McFadden probably will run the whole show and she'll give you as few minutes as possible. So, guys, make your questions short and to the point. Don't be afraid to ask personal ones, too. Cover what has to be answered by her for our investigation."

Steve walked over to the window and glazed down on the street and the traffic below. He seemed as in a dream world or as if he was occupied with something other than this murder case. "Steve," Linda stated in his direction, "does this situation cause you a problem? Steve, are you alright?"

Steve turned toward her and tried to give the impression that he heard her question. "Sure. I'm OK. Just some deep thinking. Sorry."

"Steve, this means formal blues and show them that our department has the best people in this area," stated the Captain as he rose from his chair and patted Steve on the shoulder. "You deserve this Award, my boy."

“Sure, but not for the incident at the Kennedy Center, Chief,” replied Steve. “You get shot at or beaten up and that goes down as normal, but save a rich bitch's life, and that's Award time. It doesn't make sense.”

“What does in this rotten job, Steve. What does?” returned the Captain. “Come on, partner, we have work to do,” Linda stated as she grabbed Steve by the arm and lead him out of the Captain's office. “Let's check some of the evidence we retrieved from the smith-Hughes apartment. Maybe we can find a motive in some of it.” Steve and Linda gathered up their case folders and headed for an empty interrogation room. Steve stopped by the beverage machine and purchased two cold cans of Pepsi-Cola and closed the door as he entered the room.

“Thanks, Steve,” Linda stated as she smiled a-s he offered her a can of Pepsi. “Let's see where we should go from here.”

After taking a slug of Pepsi, Steve commented, “I think we had better get back to our buddy, the Vice President, and check his blood and back also.”

“I'll call Anders and make arrangements for another visit, and this time, Anderson must be ready to answer more questions,” replied Linda as she jotted down Anders number on her pad.

Steve picked up Laura Smith-Hughes's checkbook and started to glance through it. As he flipped through the pages, he started to become more interested in what he was viewing. A puzzling look came over his face. “This is very funny, Linda.”

“What do you have there, partner?” Linda remarked as she looked over his shoulder.

“Look at these check entries. Laura' Smith-Hughes wrote checks to some very prominent people, even the First Lady of the United States. She made out a check for \$325.74 to Nancy Patterson; another for \$129.52 to Vice President Anderson; and another for \$1072.12 for Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes. What was she paying for?” questioned Steve as he flipped through the checkbook.

“It doesn't make sense, Steve. Why would she be writing out these checks to all these people?” stated Linda as she scratched her head and then sipped on her drink. She then sat down and jotted down the names of at least fourteen prominent ‘people of the Washington area and the amounts listed in the / checkbook. “Why would she send these people money?”

“Maybe they were checks to someone's special charity, but why write it out to the individual and not to an organization,” commented Steve as he finished his Pepsi and dropped it in the trash can. “Why are the numbers so crazy, Steve? If you were contributing to charity, wouldn't it be in an even number? Did she owe this money to these people and she was paying her debts?” Linda interjected as she studied the names and figures on her pad.

“That sounds more like it, partner, but a woman with her resources, why would she borrow money from these people? This doesn't look right to me,” Steve declared as he dropped his pencil down on the table.

“You call Anders and set up another visit with Anderson and I'll go over to the Chemical Bank and look into this checking account. I'll see you back here after lunch,” Linda remarked as she started to place papers back into her case folder and took her note pad with her.

“You have a deal, partner,” Steve chimed in, as he glanced at his watch and decided to call Maureen to set up a lunch date for this afternoon.

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Steve walked into the Hard Rock Cafe, he spotted Maureen at a back table. She already had ordered a cool draft for him, and after greeting her with a warm kiss, he sat in his seat and took a couple of swallows of the cold beer. “This hits the spot, sweetheart, and you sure lighten my day.” He reached across the table to hold her hands, and he gently laid a kiss on one of them. “I love you too, Steve,” replied Maureen with a loving smile. “Any sparks fly this morning at work?”

“I told you yesterday, sweetheart that this matter wasn't a big thing with us. We'll keep searching under the rocks until we come up with Laura smith-Hughes's murderer. No big thing,” Steve commented calmly. “Keep doing your great job of reporting the truth. It helps, believe me.”

"Latest story we have is the District Attorney wants an indictment as soon as possible. I interviewed him this morning for our newscast and he stated that an indictment is pending, but refused to mention names. Steve, he gave me the impression that he was being pressured into this. It's my gut feeling," remarked Maureen, as she made room for her lunch as it arrived at their table.

"Off the record, darling, we are not ready to indict any one at this time. You're right. Someone is pushing him and I think I know who," Steve stated as he plunged into his BLT and showed enjoyment in eating it. He washed it down by ordering another draft. After consuming their lunches, the two love birds gave each other a kiss and hurried back to respective jobs.

When Steve arrived back at his desk in the Squad Room, he had a telephone message to call Agent Anders as soon as possible. He quickly dialed his number and coolly waited for the call to be answered by the Bureau agent.

"Anders, Steve Ciminelli returning your call. How did we do on setting up that special appointment?"

"It'll be done here in the Hoover Building on Saturday morning at 11:30. I'll meet you at the main entrance and we'll handle this as discretely as possible. The V.P. has enough bad publicity at this time," Anders calmly reported to Steve. "Oh, by the way, congratulations on the award you're getting tomorrow. Good work, Steve."

"Thanks, but I don't think I deserve it at this time," remarked Steve, "we'll see you at 11:30 Saturday. Have a good day." He slowly placed the phone down and Steve wondered if he really earned the upcoming honor. Suddenly, the phone rang and Steve answered it promptly. As he did this, Linda entered the room and noticed how tense Steve was with his caller. She overheard him tell his caller "not today, I'll have to think about it", and "I'll get back to you later." He wasn't too happy as his face illustrated some anger on it. "Problem, Steve?" Linda politely stated';"

"No," Steve suddenly turned to her with a smile, "just some future wedding plans from my darling fiancée." They both laughed a little and Linda pulled her chair next to Steve. "Steve, I found some mysterious answers at the bank," Linda reported as she opened up her note pad. "After waiting a while to get the proper official to answer my questions, the responses surprised me. First, the bank has no evidence of those checks ever being cashed or even written out. The check numbers for those entries in Mrs. Smith-Hughes' checkbook were never put through the system. I would think she never wrote them out even though she entered them. Second, the bank official stated that her checkbook balances was way out of line from the actual one."

"This is strange, Linda. Why would she enter those checks in her book and not write them out? Strange," remarked Steve as he chewed on his pencil a little bit.

"Another strange thing Steve, is that Laura received a \$25,000 check from her husband each month which she deposited into her savings account. Why would Jonathan send her that money? They weren't divorced or separate legally," commented Linda as she closed her note pad. "Laura's savings account was in seven figures and her balance to her checking account was over \$45,000. Our girl was making money, but how?"

"Maybe blackmail, partner," chimed in Steve as he tried to digest this new disclosure. "What if our sweet lady was blackmailing all the people on that list? What amount could she be bringing in each month, and how many enemies did she really have?"

"We need more answers Steve, and now we have a list of people to ask for them, and one of them is Nancy Patterson, the First Lady. I wonder what did she have over her head?"

"The people on that list Linda are the high levels of Washington society and our government structure. Except for Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes, everyone has a high position in the government. Our lady sure was traveling in the fast lane," commented Steve.

Linda reopened her pad and studied the names and numbers after them. She glanced at them again and then stated: "I'll bet these entries are code numbers to where the blackmail material is stored, but where?"

"There're all different, some four or five numbers and some over seven digits in length. It could be a code as you stated," mentioned Steve as he glanced at the list.

"Notice one thing, Steve," Linda questioned, "we don't see Jonathan Smith-Hughes on that list. Yet, he paid Laura 25,000 each month for the last nine months by personal check."

"We need answers to that, partner," Steve agreed as he scratched his head. Suddenly, the phone rang on Steve's desk and the caller was Maureen reminding him to pick up several items for tonight's dinner at her apartment. He smiled as he agreed to do so and lovingly stated good-bye.

"You better not forget, honey boy," laughed Linda as she joked with Steve at this time. "Your lady has whistled, chum." She giggled as she walked back to her desk. "And don't forget, wear clean socks for tomorrow." They both then proceeded to toss crumbled wads of paper at each other.

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The weather in Washington the next day was terrible. It started raining in the morning and by noon time, it was still pouring. Steve was neatly dressed in his policeman's blues and Linda was beautiful as usual. A black and white escorted them to the North Front of the White House and allowed them to exit the vehicle under the portico. They were directed to the Blue Room by members of the Secret Service and Steve was told which chair to occupy in the front row. Linda's brother George kept her company as they stood in the rear of the room. A few television cameras were stationed in the room and their lights were blazing. By two o'clock, the room was packed with people and on cue, President Stanton Patterson and his wife entered the room. Everyone rose and applauded them and they waved back graciously and shook hands with several leaders from the Police Department, one being the Captain.

The President walked up to the podium and made a short speech on "law and order" and "bravery beyond the call of duty." It all sounded fishy to Steve as he sat in his seat trying to feel comfortable. A short speech lasted over thirty minutes, but that may be short for a politician. They then started to hand out the Awards and when Steve's name was called, he rose sharply and walked firm and tall to the podium to receive it. As the President placed the medal around Steve's neck, they both shook hands and posed for the news photographers. Linda could hear Steve state: "Thank you, Mr. President," as he shook his hand. The Commissioner of Police also thanked Steve and shook his hand, and the ceremony was officially over by three sharp. The First Lady then made the announcement for everyone to venture to the Red Room for the reception. At this time, George took Linda up the hallway and onto the elevator for the second floor. A few minutes later, Agent Anders approached Steve to congratulate him and also instructed him to accompany him down the hallway to the same elevator. A few minutes later, the two detectives were then proceeded to wait patiently for the First Lady to arrive. After about fifteen minutes, the President and his wife walked into the room accompanied by White House Legal Counsel, Sara McFadden.

"Please be seated and let's get this matter over with," the President stated as he seated himself next to his wife. Linda's brother George excused himself and left the room, closing the library doors gently behind him. Agent Anders sat next to Sara McFadden.

"Mrs. Patterson," Linda calmly proceeded, "we discovered your fingerprints on a wine glass in the Laura Smith-Hughes' apartment the day she was murdered." Linda paused as if she expected a response to her opening statement. "Mrs. Patterson, would you please inform us of the time you arrived and the time you left the Smith-Hughes' apartment."

"Before the First Lady answers your questions, this meeting and what transpires at this time is not to be revealed to the press without my permission," Sara McFadden stated to Steve and Linda sharply. She then nodded to the First Lady to respond to Linda's questions.

Nancy Patterson sat in her chair in a lady-like poise, seated on the edge of her chair and straight in her chair. She spoke very slowly and picked her words carefully. She was neatly and properly dressed for a woman of her age, sixty-one, and her slightly grey hair made her look majestic in her appearance.

"Mrs. Smith-Hughes and I have been friends for several years. We work on the same charity committees and have jointly sponsored several of Washington's most famous social events," she stated calmly. "Last Monday, Laura called and asked if I would drop by her place to discuss the upcoming plans for our Tidal Basin Cotillion. She begged me to see her because her schedule was so very tight, and I

arrived a little after 6:00 that evening. She offered me some wine and we chatted about the Cotillion plans." At this time, her mouth must have felt dry, so she reached over and sipped some water from a glass on the table next to her chair.

"Take your time, sweetheart, don't rush," President Patterson stated as he patted her arm with a sympathetic hand. "Please, don't rush, madam," repeated Steve to the First Lady.

"Thank you, gentlemen. I'm going to be alright," Nancy Patterson stated as she sat back in her chair and slowly wiped her lips with her hand. "Detectives, it is very painful for me to even talk about Laura Smith-Hughes. I considered her a close friend and I'll deeply miss her." she again sipped on her water glass.

"So, you talked about the plans for the Cotillion and that was all that happened?" questioned Linda politely.

"We went over some of our plans for this summer's event, and she was smiling and full of life. We chatted for a while and I sipped on my wine. I believe I left Laura sometime before 8:00 in the evening. I think it was closer to 7:30, but my driver would be able to tell you the exact time. He's good at such things," the First Lady related slowly.

"The chauffeur stated that Mrs. Patterson left the Watergate Complex at 7:40 sharp Monday evening," stated Ms. McFadden to the two detectives. "I can have a sworn statement from him if you desire one."

"No, that won't be necessary, Ms. McFadden," Steve remarked as he turned in his chair. "One last question, Mrs. Patterson. Was Laura Smith-Hughes, your close friend, blackmailing you in any way?" The question was asked and it hit the room like a thunderbolt. Everyone's eyes instantly turned on Steve.

"Detective, how dare you insinuate that my wife had such problems with Mrs. Smith-Hughes. It's uncalled for and improper," interjected the President as he was deeply disturbed by Steve's question.

"Detective Ciminelli, what are you insinuating? The First Lady and Mrs. Smith-Hughes were social confidantes and Mrs. Patterson has nothing to hide," snapped Ms. McFadden as she rose from her chair.

"Mr. President and Mrs. Patterson," Steve replied, "I'll be the first to apologize about this problem, but we have a strong feeling that Mrs. Smith-Hughes was blackmailing high officials in the government. The First Lady may be one of them. I'm not asking what the matter is about, but the First Lady being blackmailed?"

The First Lady was undoubtedly shook up by Steve's question and she patted her face with her hanky several times. "No, I'm sure, no she was not doing that to me. We were just friends."

"Mrs. Patterson," Linda asked quickly, "was Mrs. Smith-Hughes alive when you left her apartment and did she in any way scratch you?"

"I know for sure Laura was alive when I left at 7:30 and, no, she did not scratch me, detective," the First Lady quickly stated.

"Thank you, madam. You have surely helped us and I hope we haven't disturbed you in any way," Steve politely stated as he rose from his chair. The President stood and extended his hand to shake Steve's and the hand shake was a courteous one.

The President and First Lady left the library to rejoin their guests at the reception. George Hannigan entered the library and informed Steve and Linda that they would leave in about ten minutes. Sara McFadden had a short conversation with Agent Anders and then left the room. Before she left, she had a few words for Steve. "The First Lady's health is very sensitive at this time and I hope if you discover any further information on this case involving her, please call me immediately at this number." She then handed Steve her personal card. "The President worries too much about his wife's health and his health could be hampered detective if rumors or damaging information about Nancy Patterson leaks to the media. Agent Anders is my connection at the Bureau and believe me, this murder case can cause great harm to our national well-being." She stated that as if Steve's silence would save the nation in a time of peril. He nodded to her that he understood. So did Linda. She then shook their hands and departed for her office.

"Some tough cookie there, Steve," Agent Anders stated, "she sure knows her job and in some way, loves the First Family like her own. They treat her like a daughter and one of the family."

“Hey, partner, how do you like dealing with the people on the top? We met and talked to the President and First Lady of the United States and we have to be quiet about it,” mentioned Steve as he slapped Linda on the back.

“Well, Steve, don't wash your right hand from now on. You can always say, it last shook the hand of the President,” laughed Linda. Linda, George, and Agent Anders laughed as they walked to the elevator to leave the White House. Steve looked around him and stated: “Looks just like my uncle's house in Boston.”

Chapter 8

The next day, the sun was shining brightly and the rains from the day before had sweetened the air that was hovering over the Capital. The air was fresh to breathe and the sun made the day enjoyable. This ranked as a good day for Steve as he walked into Headquarters ready to put his nose to the grindstone in solving the Smith-Hughes murder case. “Good morning Linda. I'm ready to crack this case, how about you?”

“What did you dream about last night? What magic potion did you drink this morning?” chuckled Linda as she relaxed in her chair. As Steve sat at his desk, fellow colleagues in the Homicide Department approached him and congratulated him on his award. He was a celebrity for the day, and today, he enjoyed it. After drinking his second cup of coffee, he sat down at his desk and started to go over his notes on the case. This case was now ending its second week and Steve wondered how much longer would he and Linda be allowed to work on it. Most cases are solved in about three weeks and this one was still without an indictment. A memo from the D.A.'s office reminded Steve that the D.A. was getting impatient waiting for the word from Steve and Linda to name the suspect to be indicted for Laura Smith-Hughes's murder. Steve and Linda used the large conference room next to the Captain's office for a work session on the case. They spread the case material out on the table and even used the chalkboard to list things and people.

“Let's list our suspects, from first to last,” remarked Linda, as she wrote their names on the chalkboard. “Number uno is our illustrious Vice President, William Anderson, who was on the scene before her death, followed by the First Lady of the United States, who visited our lady early that evening and left before Anderson came onboard.”

“You have to placed Jonathan Smith-Hughes next even if he has a good alibi for his wife's murder,” Steve interjected, and Linda placed his name on the list. “Who's next?”

“From our list of people in her checkbook, I would place Senator Otto Klausburger next, followed by this Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes,” replied Linda. “How about our mysterious Mr. Petersen, Steve? Where do we place him?”

“Maybe at the top or maybe no where,” remarked Steve as he took a clean sheet of paper out and started to jot down some of his thoughts. “Let's do some projecting Linda. Let's make our Mr. Petersen our killer.”

“How Steve, we know nothing about this guy. Nothing at all,” Linda threw back as she sat down across from her partner. “But we do have something on him. First, he was authorized to board Smith-Hughes's corporate jet in Chicago and landed at National Airport around eleven or twelve that Monday night. We know this much about the guy, right?” Steve projected as he charted this on paper Linda nodded in agreement. “Now, presume for a moment that our mysterious Mr. Petersen was in reality, Jonathan Smith-Hughes. He gives the authorization to the flight attendant and then sneaks out of the hotel and boards the jet before it leaves for Washington. Wearing those sweats and dark glasses, he sits in the rear of the craft and acts like he's sick. When the plane lands, he scudded away to the apartment at the Watergate Complex.”

“Go on, Steve, it sounds good,” Linda replies with interest.

“He arrives at the apartment either after Anderson leaves or just before he leaves. Since this was his apartment, he has a key to enter freely. He confronts his wife and he decides to kill her by using her as a pin-cushion. Why he commits this deed,,” we must still do some searching,” Steve comments as he rises from his chair and has Linda jot more facts on the chalkboard. “He then leaves the apartment and

ventures to some airport nearby and rents a plane and flies to Chicago. Lands there and hurries back to his room and awaits for his butler's call in the morning."

"Sounds good, Steve, but it has several loop holes in it. Mr. Stidwell could drive us right out of the water unless we plug them up," replied Linda. "One, if he made those phone calls as he stated he did, he was in Chicago at the time of the murder. Second, as of now, we don't have a motive for him killing his wife. Third, renting a plane is too easy to trace. I don't think he's that stupid to make this mistake, and also, either he had help or he planned this to the minute and pulled it off with clock-worth order."

"I think he has that ability Linda. He reminds us of the guy who is smart enough to make this scenario work, but, like you stated, why? What turned him into a killer?" Steve remarked as he sat in his chair.

"Right now, partner, let's check our buddy the Vice President out and believe me, he may force you to throw all this projection out the window."

"Anderson is a stuffed high class stud, but I can't picture him as a killer. He just gives me the impression that he doesn't like to dirty his hands to do such a task," remarked Steve as he tossed his pencil on the desk in disgust.

"Looks can be deceiving Steve. I work with the facts, and "

believe me, you know better. You know anyone can be a murderer," she replied.

"I believe Laura Smith-Hughes was blackmailing these people and one of them decided to silence her forever, but until we find out the material that was hung over their heads, we are just spinning our wheels," Steve remarked. "My gut feeling is that the scenario I just drew up makes the most sense, but again why?"

"We need to know that 'why,'" Linda commented as she glanced at her notes. "Those numbers in her checkbook must be the key to this case."

"Those numbers unlock something, but what? If you were Laura Smith-Hughes, Linda, where would you hide something that you wouldn't want anyone to find?"

"Being the genteel lady that she was, I would use a place where I wouldn't be out of place. Like a safety security box in a bank, or a locker at the health club. Those numbers may be locker numbers that we'll have to check out," Linda stated with deep thought. "She didn't have a large number of keys in her purse but I'll check again."

"We are sure of one thing, she was blackmailing certain people and benefitted from it. One of these people is a murderer, but which one? The numbers in the checkbook are too strange to be anything but a code to where the blackmail material is stored, but again, where? I believe we can now list the motive for the murder to a victim of a blackmailer," Steve stated slowly and in a way to emphasis meaning.

"I agree whole-heartedly Steve," chimed in Linda as she closed her folder and erased the chalkboard. "We have a lot of work to do partner,' from checking out those blasted numbers to verify parts of your theory on Jonathan. "I'll need a cup of coffee. How about you?" replied her partner.

"I'll get it," Linda stated as she headed to the coffee table and Steve to his desk. His phone was ringing and he hurried to answer it. As Linda approached his desk with his coffee, she noticed that he was exhibiting an angry tone over the phone. He was extremely mad at who ever was on the other end, and when he finished his conversation, he slammed the phone down onto its cradle. "Problems, partner? Can I help in any way? "Lousy cleaners. They lost my best suit and now they are trying to blame me for it. The gall they have..." Steve blurted out with anger, but he politely changed his face and smiled and thanked his partner for the cup of coffee. He then sat in his chair and started to work.

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When Steve returned from his lunch, he had several maps and a list of plane rental agencies in Maryland and Virginia, and also in Illinois and Indiana. He also had a list of the car rental companies and taxi cab companies that work out of Washington National Airport. He started calling the car rental agencies at the airport, and the third one he contacted, stated that a Mr. Petersen rented a car around ten Monday evening. The attendant at the rental agency stated that the car had over a hundred miles on it for

that rental, and was dropped off at the company's outlet at the Baltimore airport. "Now, we're getting some where," shouted Steve as he called the Baltimore airport for more information."

Upon calling the Baltimore airport, Steve was informed that one plane rental company operated out of the airport area, the Maryland Aviation Rental Company. As Steve dialed their number, his heart started beating faster as he was anticipating a positive answer from them to his questions. The voice on the other end of the phone revealed that a Mr. Petersen had indeed rented a twin engine Cessna and made out a flight plan to Chicago's Midway Airport. The flight was from 3:00AM to 6:00AM Tuesday morning. The plane had successfully arrived at Midway Airport around 6:15 that morning and released to an affiliate of the Maryland Aviation Company stationed there. Steve was elated with this information, and he informed the company people in Baltimore that he was going to be there personally tomorrow to have them try to identify his suspect, Jonathan Smith-Hughes.

"We have something, Linda," Steve remarked as he approached her desk. "Maybe my projection may be true after all." He then showed her the information he had compiled on Petersen and she patted his back and was as happy as he was.

"Only one problem, Steve," she cautioned, "you have to connect this Mr. Petersen to Jonathan Smith-Hughes. If the two are a match, we have a possible murderer."

"We definitely have to visit Chicago and check out parts of your theory Steve," Linda commented as she started to place her folder in order. "I'll see the Captain and set up arrangements for us to leave this Sunday and be able to advance our investigation as soon as possible."

"OK, with me," Steve replied, "I think the sooner we go the better to solve this case. It'll get the D.A. off our asses and put this murder in the solved category."

"Are we going to Baltimore together, or do you think you could handle it by yourself?" Linda questioned calmly. "There're a few leads I want to check out and we won't waste the whole day to follow up on one lead. OK?"

"I think that's an excellent idea. I guess that's why you are so smart, lady," Steve jokingly mentioned to Linda with a broad smile on her face. "Maybe, I'll ask Maureen to come with me and we can enjoy some great fish and crab cakes at a great waterfront eatery know of." They both picked up their case folders and slowly walked into the Captain's office to secure them in his file cabinet. They then parted ways as they both started to leave the building and another day on this case was over. That night, as Steve and Maureen were laying in bed, he held her in his arms and they chatted as they relaxed after having a hot sexual session. "I'm going to Baltimore tomorrow, so how about coming with me and we'll enjoy a great fish dinner?"

"Sorry, darling, I have a very busy day tomorrow, but I sure would love it this weekend, probably Sunday," Maureen 'replied as she pressed her body closer to him.

"I won't be in town Sunday, darling. Linda and I are flying out to Chicago to check some leads and I'll be gone for a few days."

"Anything you could relate to your little sweetheart at this time, Steve?" she begged as she was trying to pry information out of him.

"I have nothing to tell you, hon, but when we have something to release, you know where you rank in my heart." He reached over and started to kiss her moist lips and around her lovely face. His amorous attention soon lead to their favorite pastime, sex.

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It took Steve nearly two hours to drive to Baltimore and he arrived at the Maryland Aviation Rental Company hanger a little after noon. The owner of the company had complied with Steve's request to have the men who worked that Monday or Tuesday morning to be available to answer Steve's questions.

They informed Steve that Mr. Petersen wore a red and gold sweat suit with an Oriole baseball cap. He wore dark glasses, even though it was night time. He showed adequate credentials and signed the required papers. When Steve showed them a picture of Jonathan Smith-Hughes, they just couldn't

identify him as Mr. Harold Petersen, the man who signed for" the Cessna twin engine craft. "He's a southpaw, detective. He signed our contract left-handed," one of the men stated.

"Anything extraordinary about this guy? Was he carrying any luggage with him?" questioned detective Ciminelli.

"Like I said before, he wore a Redskin sweat suit with an Oriole cap and he had a simple plastic bag with him. Mr. Petersen said very little as I can't even recognize his voice, but he sounded like one of us, no southern accent, when we communicated with him over the radio as he prepared to take off," the Aviation Company clerk attested.

"Detective, this guy sure knew how to fly. He had that plane in the air so quickly as if he was late for an important meeting in Chicago," one of the Company attendants declared. "I swear he took it off the ground on two wheels. He used only a short part of the runway. Mr. Petersen was some pilot."

Steve received a copy of the flight contract with Mr. Petersen's signature on it and he thanked everyone and decided to head back to Washington. It was after five o'clock in the afternoon when he arrived in the Squad Room and his desk. A few minutes later, Linda strolled in and she caught Steve on the phone. Again, as before, he had an angry look on his face and she could catch the phrase, "I'll see you later about this" and he hung up the phone hard. When Steve spotted his partner nearby, he smiled at her and proceeded to fill her in on his trip that morning.

"It's starting to fill in Steve, but again, we have to connect Petersen to Smith-Hughes or it's useless. This Mr. Petersen may be our man or we could be blowing smoke out the wrong end," she commented.

"How did you do today?" chimed in Steve as he took a drink from his can of Pepsi.

"A brick wall, partner. I checked at the bank to see if those numbers were safety deposit box numbers and the manager stated that in no way could they be. Also, Mrs. Smith-Hughes didn't have any deposit box keys in her bag. Only car keys and keys to the apartment," Linda interjected with a sense of sadness. "I even checked if she was a member of the local health clubs, but again, she had no locker assigned to her. It didn't even work at the Bus Terminal."

"A whole day's work and all we get is a goose egg for our efforts. Nuts," exclaimed Steve as he settled into his chair. "Maybe we'll do better tomorrow with our buddy Anderson," Linda replied, "and who knows what we'll find in Chicago."

"I'm getting frustrated, partner, real frustrated," Steve stated as he finished his Pepsi with a long swallow. "Remember, the meeting is at 11:30 in the morning at F.B.I. headquarters.

Has Vinnie revealed anything the Bureau boys have on this case or are they playing dumb with us?"

"To tell you the truth, Steve, the Bureau has done very little on this case. Some how, they don't want to be involved and don't wish to cause Anderson or Mrs. Patterson any grief. Vinnie believes that pressure from on top is being applied, and applied heavy."

"We need someone to hand over to the D.A.'s office or our asses are in a sling, but, right now we have really one true suspect and he's a person we have to tread easy on," remarked Steve with a little anger in his voice.

"If your theory works out, we'll have two suspects," Linda added, "but we need to find a better motive than what we have. If only we knew what Smith-Hughes had on these people."

"She hid her blackmail material somewhere, but where? It's not in the apartment and as you discovered, not in outside areas that she frequented. A genteel lady like her would not bury this material. I just can't see her dirtying her hands in any way."

"That's for sure," Linda replied. "If only one of these people would admit to the blackmailing, but to do so would involve them as suspects in this case. It's put some heat on these people when we return from Chicago."

Linda returned to her desk and she noticed that Steve was phoning someone, probably Maureen. The way he was acting, like blowing kisses into the phone, Linda realized that it surely was his lovely Maureen on the other end. The day was a long one for her so she put her materials away and slowly decided to head for a hot, comfortable bath to relax her tired body. Steve later put all the files away and he too headed for some rest at home.

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Saturday morning was sunny and the air was fresh and clean. Arriving at the J. Edgar Hoover Building at 11:15 in the morning, Steve was able to park his car in a special parking area. When he walked under the entrance cover, he discovered that the main door was locked and the Bureau guard had to call for a special agent to accompany him. He was led to an office on the fourth floor and when they entered the room, Steve was joined by Linda and her brother Vincent. After shaking hands with Vinnie, Steve sat next to Linda and as he sat down, she pointed out that his pants had been cut. "That dog I encountered when I jogged around the Mall this morning must have caught my pants. I thought I dodged him," Steve replied as he noticed the cuts. As they waited for the Vice President, Steve, Linda, and Vinnie talked about the upcoming NFL football season and each praised their favorite team. Steve was wearing a Redskin wind breaker so you knew which team he liked. Linda liked the Miami Dolphins.

After about twenty minutes, the door opened and Agent Anders entered with Vice President Anderson and another distinguished gentleman. Vice President Anderson had brought legal counsel with him this time. "Good morning, Mr. Vice President," greeted detectives Ciminelli and Hannigan. "We are very sorry to bother you in this manner, sir, but we must make sure that you are either our chief suspect or no suspect at all. We didn't start these rumors about you in the press and well try very hard to put an end to them," Steve stated as he faced the Vice President and his attorney.

"I'm here to settle this problem and to inform you again, that when I left Laura that night, she was very much alive," stated William Anderson, the Vice President of the United States. He had settled into a leather chair and his attorney was next to him. Across the table sat Steve and Linda, and Agent Anders and Linda's brother Vinnie took seats near the table.

"You stated earlier that you arrived around ten in the evening. Am I correct, sir?" Steve stated. "Yes, detective Ciminelli, I arrived near ten and left before eleven. I told you this before, and I told you what happened there. Do I have to repeat my story to you?" he replied to Steve. His attorney reached over and whispered some advice in his ear and Anderson nodded his head in agreement. "Mr. Vice President," Linda commented, "can we have a look at your back, sir?"

"Why, detective? Is this necessary?" the attorney related to Linda. Linda informed him that it was. The Vice President informed his attorney that he was going to comply and cooperate. He removed his shirt and showed his bare back to his questioners. In the upper right hand corner of his back, the fresh scars of three scratches could be seen. Steve looked at Linda and tried to communicate with his eyes as he pointed at them. "Mr. Anderson, how did you contract those scratches on your back?" Steve questioned.

As the Vice President started to put his shirt on, he answered Steve's question. "As I was trying to leave Laura's bed after telling her that this was our last time, and that I wasn't afraid of her threats, she reached at me and her nails scratched my back. At that time, I didn't care about it. I just wanted to leave and get out of her life and her definitely out of mine."

"And you didn't get angry and decide to end the relationship permanently?" blurted Steve as he looked the Vice President in the face. "She was a threat to your future and a burden to your career. It would be so easy to just silence her mouth forever."

"No, no, I didn't kill her. I couldn't do such a thing. Sure, I hated her, but I couldn't kill her. You have to believe me," Vice President Anderson shouted across the table.

"Mr. Vice President," Steve returned, "was Laura Smith-Hughes blackmailing you in any way?"

His attorney quickly bent over and whispered some advice into his ear and after a few minutes of consultation, the Vice President was ready to answer Steve's question. "Laura's threats were bad enough but I don't consider them to be blackmail, detective. Was Laura trying to hold something over my head, the answer is no. All she had was our affair and she intended to destroy my marriage or my political ambition or both. Now, if you consider that blackmail, so be it."

"It would be a good motive to kill someone, sir," Linda answered. "People have killed for less."

"My client has cooperated to the best of his ability, detective, and he has declared his innocence. You don't have enough evidence to charge him. No murder weapon and his motive is very weak. Come on, you're dealing with the Vice President of the United States, not a common hood from the neighborhood,"

interjected Anderson's attorney as he stood up to make his little speech. His voice was calm and his words very professional. He was probably one of Washington's best.

"Bad love affairs some time lead to murder, counselor," replied Steve as he tapped his pencil on the table and he looked at the well-dressed attorney.

"The Vice President is guilty of having an affair with the murder victim, and that's not uncommon in this town for officials in government. An adulterer he is, a murderer he isn't," remarked the attorney.

"Well, sir, the Vice President is the last person to see Laura Smith-Hughes alive. His fingerprints are located in various areas of the apartment and he admits to having an argument with her at the time. Anger can sometimes lead to violence. Wouldn't you say so?" Linda commented.

"Mind if I smoke?" remarked Vice President Anderson as he proceeded to light up a cigarette.

"Detective, I didn't kill Laura, and if you don't wish to believe me, I can't stop you. You can check my clothes and search my home, but you'll not find a murder weapon or bloody clothes. When I left that apartment, Laura was still alive. Mad, yes, dead no." Steve and Linda looked at each other and after conferring for a moment, Linda turned to her brother Vinnie and asked him to call for the forensic attendant who was on call that morning. "Mr. Vice President, we'll have to draw a sample of blood to check against samples found at the murder scene. If they don't match, you're home free, sir."

The Vice President and his attorney nodded their heads in consent and agreement. A few minutes later, a lab assistant arrived and the blood sample was taken. Vinnie Hannigan instructed him what to do with it.

"I guess that's it, Mr. Anderson. We can call it a day, for we're finished with our interrogation," Steve remarked. "We will submit our findings to our Captain and to the District Attorney's office. It's up to him if an indictment will be forth-coming."

The Vice President rose from his chair and listened to some more advice from his attorney and he then thanked Steve and Linda and shook their hands. They then left the room and after they left, Agent Anders looked at Steve and commented: "The bastard didn't do it, Steve. He's too much a lady's man, not a mean bull or an individual to hack someone to death. If he did it, he would have shot her."

"I think you're right," Linda replied, "but this makes William Anderson our chief suspect. It's up to the D.A. to ask for an indictment."

"Our case is not too strong, partner," Steve remarked with a dejected voice.

"You're right, Steve," viewed Anders. They then slowly all left the room and went their separate ways. "See you in the morning at National for our flight, Linda," stated Steve as he walked down the steps of the Hoover Building. Linda waved and nodded her reply.

Chapter 9

The flight to Chicago that Sunday was an uneventful one as the skies are clear and the sun shined through the plane windows clearly. The plane was flying above the clouds and every-so-often, a patch of farm land would reveal itself, like a well-sewn quilt. Steve was staring out of the window, searching the ground below for some mysterious feature. His eyes were open but his mind was thinking of something besides what was surrounding him.

"Steve, do you want a drink?" Linda remarked over the noise of the engines. When Steve didn't react to her offer, she poked him and he turned as if surprised by an intruder. "Do you want something to drink, a beer, Pepsi, or coffee?" she stated.

"Excuse me, partner," he replied in an awakening tone, "I must have been day dreaming for a while. I didn't sleep well last night."

"Well, do you want something to drink?" persisted Linda. He suddenly realized what she was trying to do and asked for a cup of coffee. It helped keep him awake for the rest of the flight. Before they knew it, the plane was setting its wheels down on the tarmac at O'Hare Airport. They picked up their luggage and hailed a cab and headed for their hotel in downtown Chicago. Steve was surprised by the tall structures that made Chicago streets look like canyons of stone and brick. To Linda, she was looking up and was excited by the size of the city and its skyscrapers. Their hotel rooms at the downtown Holiday Inn were

very comfortable, and Steve joked how they put him on one floor and Linda on another. "I thought we would have adjoining rooms, so that we could communicate easier."

"Dream on, lover boy," she laughed as he left the elevator to journey to his room. The view of the city from his window was a pleasant sight. His room being on the fifteenth floor, the view from his window of the traffic on the street below looked like ants moving here and there. Strange, Steve thought, how little they looked and how small their world seemed to be. He unpacked his bags and decided to relax and watch local TV for awhile. The bed felt comfortable and sleep gradually claimed Steve and he enjoyed an afternoon nap.

The ringing of the phone woke Steve up and upon answering it, he was conversing with his partner who had a room on the eleventh floor. "Are you ready for some dinner, big guy? We can eat here at the Inn or we could see what Chicago has to offer?"

"I hear Holiday Inn has a great menu for their dinner trade, and we don't have to fancy up for it either, but, if you prefer some fancy place, I'll take the time to put a tie on for you, my dear," Steve playfully replied as he was still laying on his bed. "I have already checked out the dining room and the menu looked great and the lounge here has live music after eight. I'll meet you in the lobby in thirty minutes. OK?"

"Great, I'll see you downstairs," answered Steve. He then hung up the phone and freshened up. As he was changing his clothes, he wondered what a time he would have if Maureen was with him. They would be ordering food to be delivered to their room, and they would enjoy each other along with satisfying their hunger. The ride down on the elevator was quick and when Steve walked across the lobby, he spotted Linda and she was radiant and looked very attractive. Her perfume was very sexy to his senses and he liked it.

"You look great partner. Mind if I take you out to dinner tonight?" greeted Steve as he grabbed her arm and escorted her to the hotel dining room. They had to wait about ten minutes for a table, but the smell of the food made the wait worthwhile. They both ordered prime rib dinners and their meals were just delicious. Steve ate everything on his plate and ordered another basket of fresh rolls to munch on. Linda's smiling face showed her delight in her meal. They smiled at each other and made silly chatter and joked as they enjoyed their meals as well as their company. After dinner, they walked out into the lobby and the sounds of music from the lounge attracted them like a magnet. They walked into the lounge and sat at a little table in one corner, and Steve ordered two drinks.

"You are just wonderful to be with, partner. I never realized what a great gal you are," Steve remarked with some warm feeling.

"Don't try to smooth-talk me, Ciminelli. I have been working with you for nearly two years, so don't get mushy on me now," Linda stated with a smile. She then sipped on her drink and smiled some more. The small musical group on the stage played some soft, dancing music and Steve started humming to it.

"How about sharing a dance with your partner?" he pleaded with a hand extended across the table.

"Sure, as long as I lead," Linda joked as she rose from her chair and the two started to dance across the floor. Steve held her in his arms and Linda placed her cheek on his shoulder. Her perfume and the smell of her hair were moving Steve's senses and he proceeded to hold her tighter to him. He could feel her breasts pressing against his chest and could feel the beat of her heart. She looked up and stared into his eyes, and the glance lasted for several minutes, so it seemed. Linda enjoyed being held in Steve's arms and for one fleeting moment, she wanted Steve to kiss her wanting lips. Instead she pushed back suddenly and placed her head on his shoulder again.

"Be careful there, girl," she softly said to herself. "You can sure charm a gal, partner." Steve smiled and realized that Linda was a very attractive woman, with a slim body and good looks. She wasn't as well-built as Maureen, but a good looking woman in her own right. They returned to their table and the two enjoyed talking about anything but the murder case. It was like as if they had met on a blind date and were enjoying each other. At the end of the night, on the ride on the elevator, they looked into each other's eyes. Steve wanted to grab her and kiss her moist mouth, but he could only touch her hand as she departed on the eleventh floor. "See you in the morning, Steve. Breakfast at 7:30 in the dining room." As the elevator door closed, Steve wondered how it would have felt to make love to her, instead when he reached his room, he called Maureen who he missed greatly.

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At breakfast, Linda was dressed in a suit and wasn't as soft and sensuous as she was the night before. She looked like a business woman with her mind on her job and Steve realized that she was his partner's fellow cop. The cab ride over to Midway Airport seemed to take forever, and if they thought traffic in Washington was bad, Chicago's busy traffic made them adjust their thinking. Also, the cab fares in Chicago were ridiculous and Steve was tempted to arrest the bastard for charging so much. "Relax, Steve. What do you expect from Chicago cabbies? Honest fares?" chuckled Linda as she pulled Steve away from the cab and they proceeded to the office of the Northern Illinois Aviation Company, Inc., the affiliate of the Maryland Aviation Company at Midway Airport. The man in charge had the clerks who worked that Tuesday morning waiting in a small room, that was used by the staff as a lunch room.

"Good morning, gentlemen. I'm detective Ciminelli and this is my partner, detective Hannigan," greeted Steve to the two clerks. "We're here in Chicago to check on the arrival of a Cessna, flight 1050 from Baltimore last Tuesday morning... excuse me," Steve exclaimed, "two Tuesdays ago."

"Can you tell us anything about this Mr. Petersen who flew that plane? What did he wear and how did he look?" questioned Linda. They described this Mr. Petersen as wearing a sweat suit and sneakers and he had a baseball cap with dark eyeglasses on.

When shown a photo of Jonathan Smith-Hughes, they couldn't make a clear cut I.D. on him. Steve even tried to draw dark glasses and a baseball cap on him, and the two clerks couldn't remember too clearly to make a definite identification at that time. "He looks like him, but I can't be really sure. I didn't really pay that much attention to him, as the flight was normal like so many others," one clerk stated. "Have you ever seen this man in the photo here before?" questioned Steve as he placed Jonathan's photo in front of them again. "Well, he looks familiar but in this business, you meet so many people and you only remember the odd-balls that show up," the other clerk related. "Did Mr. Petersen sign any documents when he landed?" added Linda. "Surely, he had to release the plane to our care and he signed a release form," the clerk replied as he handed the form over to detective Hannigan. "What was Mr. Petersen wearing that morning? I mean describe the outfit, to the best of your ability," returned Steve as he wanted a more definite description of our Mr. Petersen. "He was wearing an Oriole baseball cap. That I'm sure of," one clerk replied. "I think the sweat jacket was a Philadelphia Eagle outfit, with those large white eagles on the pants."

"Was he carrying any bag or luggage with him?" questioned Linda.

"No. He had only his flight pad," one clerk stated and as he looked at his fellow worker. "Yes, we're sure, he had nothing with him. That's strange and I believe we noticed that when he arrived."

"Did he have someone pick him up or did he take a cab from here to get into the city?" replied Steve.

"No one picked him up and he didn't have a car, so I think he walked over to the cab stand and hailed one. I really couldn't swear to it," the clerk mentioned. He pointed out the window and down the road to the main building at Midway Airport where the cab stand was located.

Steve looked at Linda and wondered if there was anything they had not covered. She nodded her head and they both thanked the people from the plane rental company and proceeded to walk to the cab stand in the main building. When they arrived there, they discovered that only one cab company operated out of that facility. They immediately notified the chief official in charge and started to ask questions. All they could find was that a cab was used by a passenger that morning and the destination was a hotel four blocks from the Chicago Hilton Hotel. "Very interesting," mumbled Steve as he jotted this information down. He thanked the cab company official and he then ordered a cab to drive the two back to their hotel.

On the ride back to their hotel, Steve mentioned to Linda how a definite I.D. of the mysterious Mr. Petersen was a stumbling block to his projected theory.

"Also, Steve, the Mr. Petersen who flew to Washington on the corporate jet wore Redskin sweats with an Oriole cap, and our Mr. Petersen who arrived at Midway wore an Eagle outfit, but the same cap," remarked Linda.

"Maybe the Redskin outfit was splattered with blood, so he changed," replied Steve. "What outfit did the people at Maryland Aviation say he wore? Let me check my notes. Here it is. They say he wore an Eagle outfit. He did change his clothes."

"Steve, are you thinking the same thing I'm thinking?" returned Linda sharply. "Do you think we can find traces of blood in that rented car?"

"As soon as we get to the hotel, let's inform the Captain to have that car impounded and checked."

"While you're doing that Linda, I'll check the hotel for the phone records of those calls Jonathan Smith-Hughes swears he made from his room," Steve replied as their cab approached their hotel. Linda climbed out and Steve ordered the cabbie to take him to the Chicago Hilton. When Steve arrived, he discovered the elegance of the Chicago Hilton to be far superior to the Holiday Inn, but he probably thought the food was over priced like the room. He quickly was escorted to the Hotel Manager's office and after showing his credentials to the man, the phone records for that Monday evening were secured and brought to his office.

The records revealed that Jonathan Smith-Hughes made six long distance calls from his room, from 8:00PM to 11:00PM. The records indicated the times and numbers called. The Manager had a copy of these calls made for Steve. Steve looked at them and wondered how Jonathan could be our mysterious Mr. Petersen and still be in his room making long distance calls. As he and the Manager walked into the lobby, Steve was informed by him that the hotel had over eight entrances from the street and four sets of elevators. He stated that someone could sneak into the building at six in the morning and not be noticed. This raised Steve's spirits up a bit. He thanked the Manager and his staff and quickly walked out the main entrance and had the doorman hail a cab for him. On the ride back to the Holiday Inn, Steve kept thinking that his projected theory may now be the method in how Laura Smith-Hughes was killed, but, and this was a big but, how does he link Jonathan Smith-Hughes to being our Mr. Petersen. "Did the bastard pull off the perfect murder?" he mumbled as the cab sped through the streets of Chicago.

When Steve arrived back in his room, he plopped on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He was thinking of his lovely Maureen and he tried to visualize her sensuous body being there in the room beside him. He missed her badly and he realized that her happiness was the only thing he had in his life. While he was relaxing thinking about her charms, the phone rang and Linda was on the other end. She informed him that the Captain wanted them back in Washington as soon as possible.

"Well, we can leave tomorrow. I don't believe we need to be here any longer. That plane Petersen flew is back in Baltimore and I know we may be wishing for miracles but I'm going to have that craft checked out by our I.D. boys for fingerprints. Maybe, just maybe, Jonathan left a print on that plane. It's our only hope to link him to our Mr. Petersen," calculated Steve as he tried to think of ways to solve this case.

"The Captain revealed some startling news to me when I called him, Steve. He stated that something important came down after we left town," revealed Linda to her partner.

"Like what? Another murder?" remarked Steve.

"You read my mind partner. Sunday afternoon, the body of Vanessa MacGyver was discovered on board her yacht. She was murdered and just this morning, Senator Otto Klausburger committed suicide and indicated that he killed her," replied Linda to Steve over the phone.

"So, that stuck up bastard drowned her and then couldn't handle the heat. How did the coward go out?" remarked Steve in a sarcastic tone.

"He blew his brains out with a .22 in his office in the Longstreet Building, sometime between ten or twelve, Sunday morning. He left a hand written note that related that Vanessa was having an affair with him and she was ready to blow the whistle on him."

"I'll bet D.C. is hopping with this scandal and I'll call my little darling and get the latest from her. Where are we going for dinner tonight? I feel like a big steak dinner with all the trimmings. My treat, partner," Steve remarked with some joy in his voice. His spirits had been lifted and he was showing it.

"Fine with me. I'll be ready by six-thirty, and this is suit and tie time. I do hope you packed one, Steve?" she questioned.

"I'll even bathe for you and will look my best. I'll meet you downstairs at 6:30." Steve was in a good mood as he strolled through the lobby wearing his grey silk suit and he looked around and couldn't find

Linda anywhere. After a few minutes, Linda, dressed in a black cocktail dress, with her hair pinned up and wearing short heels, had Steve burning his eyes into her as she strolled up to him. "Hey, lady, you are one gorgeous woman."

"Handle the merchandise with care and don't touch, big boy" Linda remarked back in her best initiation of "Mae West". They both had a good laugh and arm in arm they walked out of the hotel to hail a cab. They were going to a premier steak house over on the Southside of Chicago. Diamond's Steakhouse had a national reputation for having the best steaks in North America, or so they say. Steve and Linda were going to enjoy the best this metropolis could offer, and they weren't disappointed. The food was just fabulous.

As they ate their meals, Steve just couldn't keep his eyes off of Linda. With her hair up and styled a certain way and that sexy dress she wore, he wondered why he hadn't thought of her in a romantic way. Maybe he missed Maureen after two or three days, and any attractive woman would excite his eyes and his sexual appetite. For now, he was enjoying his meal and he gazed on Linda as dessert, but he knew that friends they would always be, lovers never. So it was dinner, drinks, and conversation, followed by an empty bed and sleep. Tomorrow, he will be in his sweetheart's arms.

Chapter 10

When the wheels of the American Airlines jet touched down at Washington National Airport the next day, Steve and Linda immediately headed for Headquarters and a meeting with the Captain. As they entered the Squad Room and placed their luggage next to their desk, the Captain was summoning them into his office. As they entered his office, they discovered that the District Attorney of the Judicial District of Washington, D.C. was seated in one of the chairs. The captain introduced everyone around and the District Attorney proceeded to speak to the three of them.

"You guys are doing a great job on this case, but I need a name for an indictment. The public is getting restless and many people are feeling insecure over this murder. Detectives, believe me, I want a case I can win, so don't feed me a sacrificial goat," Mr. Lucius H. Marco, the Washington D.A. stated. "I want the killer of Mrs. Smith-Hughes just as bad as you do, but don't hesitate to nail someone, no matter who they are." This Steve and Linda knew referred to Vice President William Anderson.

"How did your trip to Chicago go, people?" the Captain questioned as he sat back in his chair. He wanted to hear positive trends to make the trip worth the money spent.

"We have a strong lead, Captain, but our suspect has yet to be identified," Steve commented. "Our Hr. Petersen looks like a good suspect but unless we can connect him to Jonathan Smith-Hughes. As of right now, the connection has not been made."

"How about Anderson in this case? Where does he fit in this scenario?" the D.A. questioned Steve and Linda.

"He was there at that time, but swears he left her alive. He can't prove his innocence, but, we can't prove that he's our killer. Do you wish to indict him on such weak evidence and circumstances?" Steve asked the D.A. with a stern face.

"Unless we have more evidence, like a murder weapon with his prints on it, we don't stand a chance in court," the District Attorney declared. "We need a suspect who has evidence linking him to this murder."

"We need to find the blackmail material that made someone a killer," remarked the Captain, as he turned in his chair behind his desk. "That material will allow us to circle in on our killer. You know, I thought we might have had our killer in this recent murder at Watergate, but it too lacked vital evidence."

"You mean the MacGyver murder, chief?" Linda asked.

"That suicide note left by our illustrious Senator Klausburger put that case to rest real quick," the District Attorney stated, "he's a slime-ball Republican this town won't miss, but it did reveal that at least two women living at Watergate liked to screw government officials and blackmail them too."

The Captain rose from his desk and started to chew on his cigar again. "So far in that case, our people haven't linked Klausburger to the Smith-Hughes woman, even though he was on her probable blackmail list."

"What kind of a woman was this MacGyver girl, Steve? You had some contact with her," the D.A. asked Steve.

"She was a mover and from her social actions, she maybe played the same game Laura Smith-Hughes played but at a lower level," detective Ciminelli replied.

"That case was a simple scenario of a man who found himself trapped by his mistress and decided to end the affair permanently. The case goes no further as of now," the Captain interjected to the people in his office.

"Well, Mr. Marco, are you going to indict Anderson for the Smith-Hughes murder?" questioned Linda, as she wanted a definitive answer to it.

"As of now, no, but if a new viable suspect isn't handed to me by next Friday, I'll have to make a decision about an indictment on the Vice President and let a trial jury free his ass," was his reply. "Well guys, this gives us about ten days to come up with a suspect to pin this murder on or our best suspect for now goes before the Grand Jury. So, let's burn the midnight oil and turn over every stone," ordered the Captain to Ciminelli and Hannigan. The detectives nodded that they understood the challenge, and they reassured the District Attorney that they would do their best to give him Laura's murderer. Before they left the Captain's office, Linda retrieved the complete case file on the Smith-Hughes murder from the Captain's cabinet. "Let's go over this material and try to see if he can match some of it to your projected theory Steve." They moved into one of the interrogation rooms and closed the door. Steve proceeded to retrace the material and evidence on the case, from the beginning.

"First, our murder victim was the wife of one of the wealthiest men in this country. She was unofficially separated from him and lived in his apartment at the Watergate Complex. She was a wheeler-dealer and a prime mover in this town, having affairs with some highly prominent people. We believe she was also blackmailing some of these people. She received a large amount of money for her endeavor. Even her husband was giving her a personal check for \$25,000 each month. We don't believe this was for support for she still had access to her husband's wealth." Steve took a breather by taking a sip of his coffee. "Second, on the night of her murder, Laura Smith-Hughes was visited first by the First Lady, Nancy Patterson, herself, to discuss plans for a late summer social. Mrs. Patterson states that she was alive when she left the apartment before 7:15PM. Our lady then gets herself ready for her lover, the Vice President, William Anderson, who arrives around ten. She forces him to have sex and when he informs her that their affair is over, she scratches his back in anger. Our Mr. Anderson relates that Laura was angry, but that he didn't kill her or strike her and that he left the apartment at eleven. He swears on the Bible that she was alive at that time, but, outside of our killer, he's the last person to see Laura Smith-Hughes alive." Linda starts to look through some of the evidence they have on the case. Steve pulls out the photos the I.D. boys took of the murder scene. They start checking out the photos, step by step, refreshing their memories of the murder scene. "In this one, the victim is laying dead in her bed, stabbed over six times and only wearing her night gown. This doesn't favor Anderson's testimony on her being alive when he left," comments Steve as he points to the body on the bed. He then threw the photos on the table.

"Fingerprints at the murder scene matched those of the Vice President and the First Lady of the United States. The First Lady, Nancy Patterson, can be scratched from our list of suspects because she left Mrs. Smith-Hughes alive. We can't be one hundred percent positive with Vice President Anderson. His prints and his admission that he was with the murder victim from ten to eleven that night makes him a viable suspect for her death," admitted Steve as he read from his notes.

"That leaves us with at least two other viable suspects,"

replied Linda, as she looked up from her case file, "and that is the murder victim's husband and this mysterious Mr. Petersen."

She reached across the table and looked at her list of suspects.

"We can scratch Senator Klausburger too at the same time, Steve."

"Yeah, his suicide eliminates him as a suspect," remarked Steve.

"You were correct on that one, Steve. He was having an affair with Vanessa MacGyver and decided to end it by drowning the MacGyver woman in her bathroom sink. Stupid, he left his prints all over the place, and then he blows his brains out because he doesn't want to face the music of this scandal," continues

Linda as she leans back in her chair. "Klausburger's one of our holier than thou type of conservatives and to be caught screwing another lady was too much for him."

"The pompous ass could not stand being on that high cloud and the emptiness of his life had to end in the way it did," remarked Steve. "It's a shame Vanessa had to act like the Smith-Hughes broad. They both got snuffed out for it."

Linda nodded in agreement and reached over on the table and started to glance at the I.D. photos again. She moved them around and tried to study their importance. Suddenly she spotted something and she sat up straight in her chair. She pointed to one photo and stated loud and clear: "This is it, Steve, I've found it."

"Found what, partner?" Steve asked excitedly. "The place where Laura Smith-Hughes hid her blackmail material," exclaimed Linda as she picked up the photo. "Look at this shot. What do you see?"

"It's nothing but a shot of Mrs. Smith-Hughes's autos in the Watergate garage."

"Look at the license plate on the Bentley, Steve. Read those numbers out."

"The number is 1-0-7-2-1-2," Steve stated as he read the license plate on the photo.

"That's the same as the check stub for one Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes. It's a match and I wonder if these numbers are the plate numbers of the other cars in that garage," remarked Linda with excitement in her voice.

"I think you cracked it partner," Steve replied as he reached over the table and kissed Linda on the forehead. "Let's go over to the Watergate Complex and check those cars out. I'm willing to bet the material we're looking for is in those cars." Before they left Headquarters, they checked with the Captain and related their findings to him. He, too, showed some excitement in his voice as he ordered them to check it out as quickly as possible. The ride to the Watergate Complex was slow as the traffic was building up at that time. Steve tried to move from one lane to another but some of the other drivers were doing the same thing and they nearly caused a severe accident involving our dynamic duo.

"I wonder why our I.D. and forensic boys didn't find anything when they first checked these autos out?" Steve remarked as he moved his vehicle ahead of some buses who were slowing down the traffic on that street.

"They checked for blood and hair samples chiefly, and for items in plain sight. They didn't strip the cars down," replied Linda as she held on as Steve moved the auto from one lane to another.

"I'll bet the material is in the trunk of the car," Steve interjected. "Our lady wouldn't hide it so as to dirty her hands. I'll bet on it."

"You're probably right Steve, for I believe the trunks were only checked for content, not stripped down," Linda replied. As she stated that, Steve's auto was moving quickly into the Complex parking lot and to a screeching halt.

The superintendent of the Complex must have thought that Steve and Linda wanted permanent residence at the 3C apartment when he had to open the Smith-Hughes garage. The garage contained four automobiles, all belonging to Laura Smith-Hughes. She had four car keys on her key chain and Linda opened the trunk to the Bentley. It was empty and when Steve lifted the trunk carpet up, he proceeded to remove the spare tire cover. On top of the spare tire was a plastic envelope containing the spare tire manual instructions. Steve checked under the spare tire and the whole trunk area. He even looked for rips in the carpet cover and came up empty. "I was sure she hid: it here in the "trunk," he stated. "Look, the plates of the other autos match the numbers in her checkbook. That material might be in the other car trunks."

"Let's check them out to be sure," stated Linda, as she opened the trunks to the other three cars in the garage. Steve checked one and Linda the other, and again, all they found was a plastic envelope with spare tire manual instructions. All four car trunks revealed the same thing, nothing but spare tire instruction envelopes.

"We can't be drawing a blank here," Steve remarked, as he looked at the four plastic envelopes. "Each one of these envelopes contains materials on the spare tire." He proceeded to open one and pulled the material out. Suddenly, he made a howl and pulled a plain envelope out of the instruction papers and when he opened it, there in front of him was the material he was looking for. "We finally have it Linda.

This is it. Look at this material.” He started to identify each plain envelope they found to the license number from the car it came from.

“This is heavy stuff, Steve. Let’s go back to Headquarters and place this material into their respective places in this case,” Linda remarked as she glanced over the material as Steve drove the two back to Police Headquarters. “This lady had some hot stuff over these four people, Steve. Some of this material is serious enough to cause someone to kill her.”

“Babe, I think “we may be able to nail our killer with the help of this blackmail material,” Steve remarked as he parked his car in the Headquarters parking lot. They entered the Squad Room and headed for the Captain’s office, and upon entering the office, they informed the Captain of what they had uncovered. Steve closed the door and Linda placed the material on the Captain’s desk, one envelope at a time.

“Our lady was surely blackmailing these people, chief. She had some control over some very powerful people,” Linda related as she started to go over the material in the envelopes. “First, Laura states that Nancy Patterson had an abortion when she was attending college, and if that was known to the public, her husband’s conservative political views would be seen in a serious negative mode. But, since President Patterson may not run for re-election, I really don’t know how effective this was on him.”

“But what if he wanted to run for re-election, Linda, that material would destroy him politically,” Steve related as he settled into a nearby chair.

“Steve’s right, Linda, but I don’t picture the Pattersons committing murder to stop this woman’s blackmail hold on them,”

J remarked the Captain as he chewed on his cigar.

“So, we can scratch them off our list of probable killers in this case. This leaves us with William Anderson, our chief suspect in this scenario. The material Laura had are photos of him in bed with her and this Senate office memo of Senator William Anderson causing a young member of his staff to be pregnant. The memo, signed by him, authorizes that funds from his office account be used to have her pay for an abortion,” Linda rattled off as she read the material in the Vice President’s envelope.

“Enough material to politically destroy the bastard,” remarked Steve. “This makes an excellent reason for committing a murder, and this is enough to have the District Attorney hand out an indictment on him.”

“Vice President or not, the jerk has gotten himself into so much hot water. It’s hard to believe that some people believe he should be our next President and lead this country. His sexual appetite is worse than some previous Presidents, and that’s saying some,” Linda remarked as she tossed the Anderson file on the Captain’s desk. “This character is our best bet to hand over to the D.A.”

“How about Senator Klausburger’s material?” the Captain stated with a slight smile.

“We can forget about him in this case,” Linda was quick to state. “It was rumored that the ex-Senator had an affair with a young sixteen year old several years ago, while he was on vacation in South Carolina. It’s statutory rape there as well as here in D.C.”

“He probably thought that Vanessa had the same information over his head, and it scared him into murder and suicide. He did Laura Smith-Hughes’ dirty work when it had to be done. I’ll bet he paid a good amount to keep her mouth silent, but I don’t believe he killed her. Vanessa was another story, for she was a ticking time-bomb and her threats to Klausburger’s well-being drove him over the edge,” replied Steve as he closed the file on Senator Klausburger.

“This leaves us with Claude Benjamin smith-Hughes,” the Captain interjected, “and where do we stand on him in this case?”

“Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes is the older brother of Jonathan Smith-Hughes, and he goes by the name of Claude B. Hughes. Claude B. Hughes is a school principal of an elementary school in Mount pilot, North Carolina. He is a leader of his church and the community. A good family man and churchgoer,” related Linda as she read his file. “Fifteen years ago, he was a Sunday School teacher in Peekskill, New York, and he was accused of sexually abusing some young girls. He was never prosecuted on the charge and he eventually moved from New York to North Carolina and changed his name and his life. It nearly

destroyed him personally. The notation in this file by Laura states that Jonathan will protect his brother at any cost. She has noted that Claude is mentally disturbed when confronted with this old scandal.”

“Nice sister-in-law she was,” related Steve as he chewed on his pencil, “and that explains the monthly check for \$25,000. It also is a good reason to commit murder. What do you think?”

“A very good motive Steve, but Jonathan has his ass covered. Unless we can prove that he was our Mr. Petersen, he's committed the crime but can't be touched by us,” returned Linda as she placed the papers on the table.

“Linda's right, Steve, unless we hook Smith-Hughes to our mystery boy Petersen, he's home free and he knows it. His smartass lawyer would dump any indictment right out the window. With this knowledge you just uncovered, we can now identify the killer and the reason for it, but this doesn't look too good for Vice President Anderson. The D.A. may still want to indict him for the murder and let the system run its course,” commented the Captain as he leaned forward over his desk.

“Well, we have one suspect with circumstantial evidence which could lead to an indictment, and we have another suspect who we can't prove as the murderer to this case. It seems we can see the guilty man walk away and can do nothing about it,” replied Linda as she rose from her chair. The Captain rose from his chair and walked over to the window and stared at the street below. He chewed on his cigar and after a few moments of thought, he turned to Steve, “Steve, do you think we can scare Smith-Hughes into confessing for the murder of his wife?”

“That play could be used, chief, but I'll need the results of the I.D. check on that rental car and plane first. I don't mind bluffing our case with him,” Steve encountered sharply. This new tact interested him and he was eager to perform it. “Linda, when did the boys say they would be ready with their results on the car and plane?”

“We can expect their report sometime tomorrow or the next day,” Linda replied. She and Steve then proceeded to put all their case papers and reports in their proper places and locked the files in the Captain's cabinet.

“Steve, try to put this case to bed as soon as possible. The department needs you two people on other cases for the workload is starting to mount up again,” the Captain interjected as Steve and Linda were leaving his office. They nodded in agreement, but they both knew that the Laura Smith-Hughes murder was far from being solved.

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That evening, Steve and Maureen were found lying on a picnic blanket at the base of the Washington Monument listening to a concert put on by the United States Marine Corps Band. From marching music to current melodies, the Band put on an enjoyable concert and the price was right—it was free to everyone. As Maureen propped herself in a beach chair, Steve laid his head on her lap and took a few z's as the band played. The early evening sun was hot enough and the only cool place in Washington was on the Mall or by the river basin. As Steve made himself comfortable, Maureen was jotting some notes down in her notebook. This was personal business not the normal reporting material she usually filled that book with.

“Steve, wake up darling. I'm trying to figure out how many people to invite to our wedding reception. Counting my relatives and friends, my list is close to or over a hundred. How many do we expect from your side?” Maureen remarked as she was busily writing names down in her book.

“It doesn't matter how many come from my side, sweetheart,” Steve mentioned slowly as he turned over to another side of his face. “The bride's father pays for the reception, so let's invite as many as we wish.”

“Steve, be serious, please. Daddy isn't going to object over the number, but he would like to know how many are going to be there from your side of the aisle,”

“Are you inviting the News Center crew and the big shots from ABC?” Steve returned as he leaned on his arm to look her in the eye.

“Yes, and several of my college friends too,” Maureen replied. “As I stated earlier, I want this wedding to be the type I always dreamed of—big and fancy. If my daddy doesn't mind, why should you?”

"You're right sweetheart," Steve remarked as he reached up and kissed Maureen hard on her lips.

"Now that's the way for my lover-boy to behave," she remarked as she patted his head. "I'm going to have this wedding at the National Cathedral and if I know John Hanks, he'll have prime coverage on it. I know him and my wedding is big news to him and the station." Steve slowly turned over and tried to go back to sleep. This wedding stuff was starting to tire him out already.

Chapter 11

The pleasant aroma of baking cinnamon sweet rolls and the meaty flavor of sizzling pork sausages were tickling Steve's nostrils and his flavor buds were excited. Maureen was determined to make her sweetheart a superb breakfast and she was busy in her kitchen producing a magnificent morning repast. She was dressed in her teddy and her low-heeled slippers. She looked so sexy with her scanty nightgown with a kitchen apron and her heeled slippers, just like a Playboy centerfold. Steve rolled over in bed and slowly opened his eyes and enjoyed the view he was gazing on. Maureen looked so much like the little housewife she so much desired to be, and at the same time, showed the attractiveness of her sexy body.

"Wake up, darling. Breakfast is nearly ready and you really need all the energy you can get to start your day," Maureen stated as she leaned over the bed to gently wake Steve up. As she did this, her sexy body was a pleasant sight to his awakening eyes. He reached up and placed his arms around her and dragged her down on top of him and he started to plant kisses on her moist lips. His hands caressed her firm breasts and he encouraged Maureen to desire his sexual advances as much as he wanted.

"I love you, babe," Steve uttered as they rested in the bed. Steve gently passed his fingers through her hair and caressed her mouth with his lips. He smiled as he gazed into her green eyes. "This is what I want to do every morning for the rest of my life. I could just lay here beside you and enjoy a wonderful life with the most beautiful woman in the world." She kissed him hard for that compliment and then pulled away and rose from the bed. "I have a wonderful breakfast planned for you, my wonderful one, so, take your shower and meet me in the kitchen."

Steve reached out and let her hand slip away as Maureen rearranged her night gown and proceeded to the kitchen to finish preparing a delicious breakfast. Steve slowly rolled out of bed and walked into the shower and the cool waters on his face were enjoyable and awakening. As he was shaving, the smells of the sweet rolls and the sizzling of the cooking sausages were making his taste buds savor and he hurried a bit to join Maureen in the kitchen.

"That sure smells great, gorgeous," he stated as he gave Maureen a passionate hug and a hard kiss on the back of neck. With his hands caressing her breasts, he drew her close to him and bit her on the edge of her ear. She then convinced him to sit down and she started to serve him a great morning meal.

"Steve, wear your nice tie with the red stripes on it today. It'll look very good with your dark blue suit you're wearing. Hanks has us visiting Headquarters this afternoon to file a report on the progress on the Smith-Hughes case, and I have permission from the Captain to interview Detectives Ciminelli and Hannigan who are coordinating the investigation."

"I'll be honored to be your subject for tonight's broadcast, but please show my best side, doll," he replied as he chewed on the delicious pork sausages on his plate. After asking for a refill of her great coffee, he proceeded to clean his plate of every morsel of cinnamon sweet roll and sausage on it. He smacked his lips to show his delight. "Just great, sweetheart."

"Steve, is there anything new in the Smith-Hughes case or will the interview be a waste of our time? I don't want to rehash the same material we were given last week," questioned Maureen as she sipped on her coffee.

"Darling, if the Captain allows us to open up, I'll gladly give you a great scoop, but I don't know at this time what I can reveal publicly. We're close to an indictment and ... putting this case to rest," he remarked as he gently placed his hand on her arm and blew a kiss to her. She smiled and planted an understanding kiss on his hand.

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The Squad Room was very active this morning, as many of the detectives of the Homicide Department were busy attempting to solve their cases. When Steve arrived, Linda had already finished some work and was at her desk doing some preliminary work on the MacGyver murder case. As Steve approached her, she closed the file and proceeded to put it away in her desk.

“Did our reports arrive yet, Linda?” questioned Steve, as he calmly checked his phone calls on his desk.

“They promised me that they would have them here before noon,” replied his partner. Linda then walked over to the coffee table and poured herself a hot cup and offered Steve one, too.

“Thanks, but I just had two cups already this morning,” replied Steve as he slowly relaxed at his desk.

“You look sharp this morning, Steve. How come?” Linda commented as she placed her coffee cup on her desk.

“WKWL will be here sometime this afternoon to interview the two of us on the Smith-Hughes case. If you want to return home to pt on something different, I'll cover for you,” Steve replied with a smile.

“Hey, partner, my outfit is just fine for TV. I'm not going to put on the fancy look just for the camera,” Linda returned sharply. “Is Maureen doing the reporting on this interview?”

“It's my sweet darling's show and she would like us to relate more than the Captain related last week, but I informed her that it was up to him, not me.”

“You know the Captain will only allow us to give the normal line -unless he changes his mind on the possible Anderson indictment,” Linda remarked as she finished her coffee. Just then, Agent Anders entered the Squad Room and walked briskly toward the Captain's office, and as he passed Steve and Linda, he signaled them to join him.

“This meeting includes the two of you, Ciminelli and Hannigan. You're part of this matter,” Agent Anders bellowed as he marched past them. The three of them proceeded to the Captain's office and entered it and sharply closed it's door. The Captain greeted Agent Anders and shook his hand and the four claimed a chair and made themselves comfortable.

“What can we do for you today, Mr. Anders?” the Captain opened the conversation and at the same time started to chew on a new cigar.

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“The word is out that you are near to solving this Smith-Hughes case, and that an indictment will be coming out sometime this week,” Agent Anders muttered as he ran his fingers across his mouth. He stared at the Captain so as to analyze his body movements, trying to uncover some untold secret on the case. The Captain stared back at him and slowly chewed on his cigar, and then he placed it down on the ashtray in a deliberate manner. “Anders, I know what you really want and why you're here this morning. All I want to know is how in the hell did the White House know about it? Who's the big mouth in this building “that leaks material to you people so quickly?” the Captain sternly stated.

“You're right, I'm here for the President and believe me, there are few secrets in this town. You know that, Captain,” Anders replied. “I have been instructed by President Patterson personally to retrieve any blackmail material Laura Smith-Hughes had on Nancy Patterson.”

“What makes you think we have uncovered any blackmail material that the murder victim controlled?” shot out Steve as he leaned forward in his chair. “We know you retrieved some envelopes from her cars parked in the Watergate Complex garage. What was in them?” he replied.

“You guys have been tailing us, you bastards,” blurted out Linda with some anger. “C.I.A. bullshit. You put that tail on us and have watched every move we make.” She was really mad and she rose from her chair and walked to the window to let off some steam.

“Look detective, when you rattle the cage of the President of the United States, what did you expect? Roses and chocolates in a gift box?” Agent Anders replied sharply. “Nancy Patterson was being blackmailed by Laura Smith-Hughes, not for money but for political pressure. She didn't want the President to run for re-election. She hoped to marry Vice President Anderson and become the First Lady herself.”

“That bitch sure knew how to manipulate people in this town. What would have happened if she had succeeded instead of being rubbed out like she was?” Steve conjectured as he had a puzzling look on his face.

“Oh, I think someone would have iced her before she got even close to those plans of hers,” the Captain replied. “Linda, give Agent Anders the material we uncovered on Nancy Patterson. We don't need it and I want this spying eye off my department.”

Linda went into the cabinet and withdrew the blackmail material Laura Smith-Hughes had on Nancy Patterson. She handed the folder over to Agent Anders and was tempted to hold on to it, but she-quickly changed her mind.

“Thank you, detective Hannigan,” Anders stated as he accepted the folder. “I'm only doing my job folks, just like you would if the Commissioner had ordered you. My boss orders me to do things I don't relish or enjoy, but I have to do it. Forget what you read in this folder. You don't remember anything.”

The Captain rose from his chair and walked over to Agent Anders and patted him on the back. “I'm glad it's in your hands now. I wouldn't want that garbage here any longer than it has to be. It's your problem now, my friend.” He smiled as he stated these words and Steve and Linda could see the strain on Anders's face as he heard them.

“Again, thanks to all of you for your cooperation. I hope we stay friends,” Anders interjected as he was ready to leave. “I hope you close this case soon, for the pressure on the Vice President is starting to show. Even if he isn't indicted, his career here in Washington is through. You can count on it.” He shook the Captain's hand and extended it toward Steve and Linda. They shook hands and Linda wondered when would the F.B.I. stab her in the back again. With her brother Vinnie working there, the mistrust hurt even more.

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When Steve and Linda came back from an early lunch, the , much anticipated I.D. and forensic reports were lying on their desks. Steve quickly glanced over the results of the reports and Linda did the same.

“Damn,” Steve exclaimed, “the best they could find from that plane are partial prints. They are useless in court.”

“The car rental had been cleaned several times but it still revealed some traces of blood, but too small to be used for analysis,” remarked Linda as she studied one of the reports. “I think we batted zero on this, Steve.”

“Maybe not so,” Steve answered as he guided Linda into one of the interrogation rooms and closed the door. “How can we match Petersen to Jonathan Smith-Hughes with this flimsy evidence here?” returned Linda as she leaned against the table in the room.

“We know it's flimsy but Jonathan doesn't,” Steve remarked. “What if we issue a warrant for his arrest and charge him with his wife's murder, stating that we have discovered his fingerprints in the car and plane rentals. We also inform him that traces of Laura's blood was uncovered from that car rental that Petersen drove that night. Maybe, just maybe, we may be able to flush a confession out of him.”

“It might work, but if that Stidwell character has him clammed up, our bluff goes for naught. It's worth a try, Steve. Let's go for it.”

“Inform Charlie and Jerry to retrieve an arrest warrant from the D.A.'s office and have Jonathan picked up immediately. I'll give the Captain the low-down on our plans,” Steve replied as he opened the door and headed for the Captain's office with the reports in his hand. Upon hearing of Ciminelli's plan of action, he agreed whole-heartedly to it. “Go for it, Steve. Bluff the bastard into a confession, and don't hold back any punches.” He then patted Steve on the shoulder and praised him for his effort. As Steve was leaving the Captain's office, he spotted Maureen and the WKWL camera crew entering the Squad Room. As Maureen walked up to him, she gently planted a kiss on his wanting mouth and greeted her lover in a professional manner. “Good afternoon, darling. We're on time just as I said we would, and I hope Linda and you are

ready for our telecast," Maureen related to Steve as she grabbed his arm and guided him to an open part of the Squad Room.

"Hello Maureen," greeted Linda as she joined the two in that area. "Congratulations on your engagement to this ugly hunk, but if you don't want him, let the rest of us girls know please." Linda's voice was laughing as she stated that remark and Maureen thanked her and held Steve's arm tighter.

"Not in a cold day in hell am I going to let him leave me. I'm stuck to him like glue, so tell the other girls that he's taken," Maureen remarked in a joking tone and with a very possessive smile.

The interview in itself took only fifteen minutes to accomplish under the hot lights of the camera, but it took nearly an hour to set up. Maureen's questions were meaningful and Steve and Linda presented themselves in a very professional manner, even though they related very little that was new to the case. Steve looked so sharp and handsome, that Maureen was excited to think that he was her man, and Linda complemented the two so beautifully that Hollywood couldn't have done better. An hour and a half of moving here and standing there for just a five minute spot on the News Center at Six presentation. Maureen explained how a thirty minute News report could take over six hours to prepare before anyone faces a single camera.

As the telecast was being done in one corner of the Squad Room, everyone in the room stopped or slowed down to witness the event that was occurring before the cameras. Several times the cameras would turn and focus on their audience and illustrate that the Homicide Department was a team process, not just individuals working for themselves. Before Maureen left the Squad Room with the camera crew, she thanked the Captain for allowing her to hold this interview and she then thanked Linda again for her cooperation. Steve grabbed her arm at this time and walked her into one of the interrogation rooms. He closed the door and as he turned to face Maureen, she draped her arms around his neck and proceeded to plant kisses on his wanting lips. Steve wrapped his arms around her and pressed her tight to his body and could feel her firm breasts pressing into his chest. Her heart beat could be felt and his lips were locked with hers.

"Steve, I love you very much. You are just what any woman would desire in her man and I'm glad I'm the girl who controls your heart," Maureen whispered into his ear. She then kissed it and nibbled on it with her teeth. Steve laughed and kissed her passionately and he wanted to have sex on the table. His hands reached down and searched for the top of her panty hose, but as he did this, Maureen pulled away and informed him that he could have anything he desired that evening, but not now. "I have too much to do sweetheart and a quickie would only louse me up for the day. See you tonight, tiger" Steve kissed her hard and released her from his grasp.

As they were leaving the interrogation room, Linda walled over to inform Steve that Jonathan Smith-Hughes had just been brought in by the two detectives who were sent out to arrest him.

The camera crew had already departed and as they walked passed Steve and Maureen, he informed her that what she had just witnessed was not for publication, at least not yet. She understood and gave Steve a loving kiss and left the Squad Room. The detectives escorted Jonathan into the empty interrogation room and placed him in a waiting chair. He was not in cuffs as normal suspects would have been and when Steve entered the room, he rose from his chair and asked why he was there.

"Detective Ciminelli, why was I arrested for my wife's murder? You know I didn't do it. I was in Chicago at the time," Jonathan declared calmly and deliberately.

"Mr. Smith-Hughes, we have enough evidence to charge you with your wife's death. You may have your attorney present at this time because anything you say from now on will be used against you," Steve commented as he turned to inform Linda to call the District Attorney's office of Jonathan's arrest. Smith-Hughes nodded his head that he understood the warning. "Detective Ciminelli, I don't intend to say anything to you until my attorney arrives," he replied, and he then sat down in his chair. The Squad Room now started to become very active as several people proceeded to put the material in place that was needed for this very important interrogation. Linda walked out of the Captain's office with a large folder and she stopped to chat with the Captain on an important matter. As she did so, she pointed toward Jonathan and the Captain would nod his head in agreement. After a wait of about forty-five minutes, Mr. Stidwell, Jonathan Smith-Hughes's attorney arrived and joined his client in the interrogation room. Soon

after that, Lucius Marco, the District Attorney showed up to join the group. Steve was the last person to enter the room, and before he entered, he conversed with another detective and requested some needed material. As he closed the door, he walked to the head of the table and placed his folder down next to Linda's. The room now contained Steve and Linda; Jonathan and his attorney Mr. Stidwell; the Captain and District Attorney Lucius Marco; and a fellow detective operating the video equipment. Jonathan Smith-Hughes had just returned from being finger-printed and his mug shots taken and was wiping his hands clean of the ink on them. He sat next to his attorney and received counsel as he leaned toward him.

"Jonathan Smith-Hughes," declared Steve with a sharp tone to his voice, "let it be known that you are now being charged with the murder of one Laura Smith-Hughes."

"Detective Ciminelli, on what charge do you hold my client? I believe it to be impossible to be in two places, a thousand miles apart, at the same time," attorney Stidwell declared as he rose from his chair.

"But he wasn't, sir," interjected Linda in a deliberate voice. "Your client was in Washington at the time his life was being killed."

"Can you prove that detective? My client has an alibi for that night," Stidwell remarked in return as he slowly sat down. Jonathan was leaning back in his chair and placed his head in his hands, carefully listening to all these procedures. "Let us explain how your client accomplished this crime and then the District Attorney will indict him for Laura's murder," returned Steve as he rose from his chair and opened his file. He flipped a few pages and then straightened up and proceeded. "On Monday, July 11th, Jonathan Smith-Hughes scheduled a flight to Chicago with his corporate jet. He piloted the craft himself and four other people accompanied him on that flight. He arrived at Midway Airport at 2:30 Washington time, but 1:30 Central time. He was then taken to the Chicago Hilton Hotel and booked into one of their suites. His corporate jet was scheduled to return to Washington that evening, so that a scheduled maintenance check could be done." At this time, Steve reached for a cool glass of water that was placed on the table .. and moistened his throat. He looked at Jonathan who was seated in his chair showing no emotion to any of the proceedings so far. "Mr. Smith-Hughes entertained several of his corporate officials at a dinner held in the Hilton dining room. That dinner lasted until 7:30 that evening, when Mr. Smith-Hughes retired to his room for some much needed rest."

"Yes, detective Ciminelli, and he stayed there and he made several, phone calls that the phone records at the hotel will verify," blurted out Mr. Stidwell sharply.

"This places Mr. Smith-Hughes in his hotel room and makes it impossible for him to reach Washington in time to murder his wife, unless you can prove him to be Superman." Jonathan Smith-Hughes showed a little emotion after his lawyer made that statement by leaning over and whispering some message into his ear. He then looked straight at Steve and supported his chin with one of his hands. The man was showing very little feeling for what was going on in the room at that time. He just stared at Steve and Linda or he just closed his eyes.

"Let me continue Mr. Stidwell and we'll see what kind of alibi your client has," commented Steve coolly and sternly.

"It's true Mr. Smith-Hughes retired to his room after dinner and he made several calls to several people that the hotel phone records will verify, but can this be done without being in the hotel room. The answer is yes," Steve slowly looked at the reaction this had on Jonathan's face, and it resulted in Smith-Hughes raising his eyes to stare at him. "There are phone machines that will allow tape messages to be sent out over a phone line at specific times. As a matter of fact, one of Mr. Smith-Hughes's subsidiary companies produces the mechanism for AT&T. His phone calls could have been rigged in such a way as to allow him to be in Washington at the time of the murder."

"That's absurd detective. His calls were made and received. The hotel phone records verify the length of time for each call. He couldn't have done it as you just described, and..."

Mr. Stidwell was promptly interrupted by Linda. "Counselor, we checked those calls. When we were in Chicago last week, we dialed those same numbers at the exact time Mr. Smith-Hughes did and all calls reached an answering machine on the other end. No one, no human being answered those calls and when I called the people he called, their answering machine tapes on three of them had the exact same message

as if it was a recording being transmitted. The other call had wiped out their tape." A pale now could be seen on Smith-Hughes face as he straightened his head to this new revelation.

"You see Mr. Stidwell, Mr. Smith-Hughes before dinner had contacted his flight attendant on his jet to expect a passenger named Petersen for the return flight to Washington. After setting up the SBX-10, the automatic calling machine, he slipped out of the Hilton and hailed a cab to Midway Airport. Dressed in Redskins sweats with an Oriole baseball cap, he boarded his corporate jet and sat quietly in the rear. With the baseball cap and dark glasses, the flight attendant didn't recognize him and they left him alone in the rear of the plane on the flight back to Washington National that night," Steve 'elated very carefully and in a firm tone.

"Mr. Marco, if this is the evidence you are going to base your indictment on, well, I don't believe you'll get it pass the Grand Jury," replied Mr. Stidwell as he placed his pencil down on his legal pad.

"Mr. Stidwell, why don't you allow detective Ciminelli and Hannigan to finish their presentation and then we'll see if it's strong enough for the Grand Jury," District Attorney Marco answered quickly. "Continue Steve."

"When the corporate jet arrived at National sometime around 10:00 or 10:30PM, Mr. Smith-Hughes or our Mr. Petersen left the plane quietly and quickly. He then rented an auto from Arlington Car Rental and drove to his apartment at the Watergate Complex. We don't know -what the exact time he arrived at apartment 3C, but he had a key to enter the premises. I wouldn't be surprised that he arrived as Laura's visitor was leaving," Steve projected with a stern tone. He stopped a t this time to take a few sips of water and as he did so, he noticed that Jonathan Smith-Hughes was starting to play with his fingers on the table top. "Upon entering the 3C apartment, he discovered his wife dressed in her night gown and probably showed his disgust with her behavior. She probably laughed at him and this probably incensed Mr. Smith-Hughes to murder his wife at that time. He then drove the rental car to Baltimore National Airport and rented a twin engine Cessna from Maryland Aviation Corporation under the name of Mr. Harold Petersen. He had disposed of the murder weapon, probably a knife, and his Redskins sweatsuit, probably covered with his wife's blood and replaced it with an Eagle sweatsuit, but he still had the Oriole cap on."

"Detective Ciminelli. May I kindly inform you that thousands maybe millions of people wear Redskin's sweatsuits and wear a Baltimore Oriole cap," Stidwell remarked sharply. "This doesn't make them a chief suspect for murder."

"Again counselor, may I inform you that your client is a die-hard Oriole fan. He has owned a private suite at Camden Yard since it opened and he regularly attends Oriole games. This is documented, sir," comments Linda. Jonathan looks up at Linda but continues to be silent and plays his fingers on the table again.

"After renting the plane, Mr. Smith-Hughes then flew it to Midway Airport in Chicago and returned to his room by cab and "disconnected the SBX-10. He disposed of it and his Eagle sweat suit and his Oriole cap and then rested waiting for a call from Washington informing him of his wife's death."

"Beautiful, detective, just beautiful," clapped Mr. Stidwell as he rose from his chair, "but Mr. Smith-Hughes is not Mr. Petersen. Go catch him for this crime."

"We have., counselor, we have connected Jonathan Smith-Hughes to our Mr. Petersen. You were sloppy Jonathan. You left your fingerprints in the rental car and on the rented Cessna. We also found traces of Laura's blood in that car, sir," Steve coolly remarked and he stared hard at Jonathan but he could only receive a mild reaction to his statement. Mr. Stidwell slowly took his seat and turned to look at his client .

"What motive would Jonathan have in killing his wife? He tolerated her affairs and he could have just divorced her. Why would he kill her?" questioned attorney Stidwell.

"Blackmail is the motive, sir," Linda replied sharply.

"Laura was blackmailing him."

"You're joking, detective," remarked Jonathan's attorney. Jonathan now looked up and sat straight in his chair. "Why did you write a check for \$25,000 to your wife each month for the last nine months Mr. Smith-Hughes?" asked Linda.

"She asked for it and I sent it to her," answered Jonathan, speaking in his own defense this time.

"But why a personal check and not money transferred to her bank account, sir?" returned Linda. She wanted him to answer that question personally.

"I don't know. I just decided to write her a check out of my account. I really don't know why, detective," he answered. "You did it to pay her blackmail demands and that kept it private, sir," projected Steve.

"What blackmail, detective? What could Mrs. Smith-Hughes have on her husband to blackmail him with?" questioned Mr. Stidwell.

"It wasn't on Jonathan Smith-Hughes but on a Claude Benjamin Smith-Hughes, sir," replied Steve. This remark made Jonathan turn quickly and face his attorney and he was ready to state something but he stopped and then stared at Steve. "We have uncovered the material Laura Smith-Hughes used to blackmail her husband. It was damaging material that would destroy his brother and his family."

"All that's nice to hear detective Ciminelli," Mr. Stidwell remarked, "but this whole scenario would be hard to prove in a court room, sir."

"Well, Jonathan, it may be hard to prove this in a court room, but sir, if this goes to trial, the blackmail material on your brother would have to go public, and what would that do to him personally You silenced Laura because she continued to threaten you with it, but if you fight this in court, it goes public any way," Steve related as he looked straight at Jonathan.

"We'll see you in court Mr. Marco and believe me..."

Stidwell was interrupted by Jonathan's arm on him as he rose from his chair. "No, Bob, please. I don't have the right to destroy Claude's life," Jonathan remarked to his attorney. "Detective Ciminelli, when I first laid eyes on you, I knew you could see through me. You're right in your theory and I'll sign a confession to it."

The Captain smiled as he heard that last remark.

"What happened at the apartment when you arrived Jonathan?" Steve questioned with some compassion in his voice. Jonathan sat back in his chair and continued to silence his lawyer. "When I arrived, that bastard Anderson was leaving and when I entered the apartment, Laura was as angry as hell. She asked why I was there and I informed her that I wanted to buy the blackmail material on Claude, but she only laughed at me I. and said I won't come close t her demands. She still needed me to do some of her dirty work against Anderson. She taunted me and all I could remember is that I grabbed the letter opener on the desk and followed her into the bedroom and I..." He paused for a movement. "You know the rest."

"What did you do with the murder weapon, sir?" questioned Linda. The camera and recorders were busily working and every one was excited at the latest results.

"The letter opener and the Redskins sweatsuit are somewhere at the bottom of Chesapeake Bay, between here and Baltimore. Don't ask me where, for it was at night and I don't know the location," Jonathan Smith-Hughes replied.

"Mr. Marco," Stidwell remarked sharply, "let's make a deal. Involuntary manslaughter for his signed confession, based on mental incapacitation."

At this time, Jonathan sat back and relaxed for the first time, as if a huge weight had been lifted from his back. The Captain was smiling as he turned the case over to the District Attorney and he then shook Steve's and Linda's hands. "Great job people. Great job."

"Thanks boss," returned Steve as they all started to leave the interrogation room. Linda walked out and slowly headed for her desk and sat down and buried her thoughts in some work on her desk. Steve was busy chatting with other members of the department.

Chapter 12

"That was an excellent piece of detective work Steve," Maureen commented as she curled up to him on the sofa in her apartment. He reached out and wrapped his arms around her and held her tight, caressing her breasts and planting kisses on her neck and ear.

"It was just a hunch when I first saw all the evidence in the case, but there was something about Jonathan Smith-Hughes that made me suspect him the first time I met him. He had that look of anger in

his eyes, but he tried so hard to show a façade of grief over his wife's death. It didn't work and wondered why he acted in that manner," Steve remarked as he reached into Maureen's blouse to caress her breasts.

"You're the star of the department darling. This for sure puts you on the list for department lieutenant or even a replacement to the Captain's chair when he retires, which may be soon." She reached up and pulled his head down and planted a hard compassionate kiss on his wanting lips. She french-kissed him and Steve pressed his mouth on hers harder. She turned around and laid on top of him, and she then started to run her hands over his chest. Her kisses were warm and moist, and the beat of her heart was beginning to rise and her sexual arousal was being reached. She slipped one of her hands down and unzipped his pants and reached in and pulled his penis out. She then sat on her knees and pulled his pants down, and proceeded to have oral sex with her lover. Steve stretched out and enjoyed the sexual thrill he was experiencing. He raised his arms as Maureen caused him to have a climax and went beyond it. She made him moan and howl a bit in ecstasy. When, she was done, she quickly undressed and climbed on top of Steve and had sex with him. She had the energy to keep going for a long while, and Steve enjoyed being the recipient of her sexual advancement. After these torrid sessions of sex, Steve held Maureen in his arms and they slowly fell asleep on the sofa.

They truly loved each other deeply.

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The morning was a bright, sunny day in Washington and the skies were clear and deep blue. A slight breeze was blowing up the Potomac and this made the weather in the Capital enjoyable. As Steve parked his car in the parking lot at Headquarters, he no sooner got out of his car when his fellow officers were congratulating him for cracking the Smith-Hughes case. The shaking of the hands and pats on the back were a continuous occurrence as he entered the building. When he approached his desk, a bowl of flowers and a heart-shaped balloon were in place congratulating him on the job well-done. They were from his sweetheart, Maureen, and the note that was attached to them stated that the flowers were for Linda too. On Linda's desk, several bouquets of flowers were decorating it, as the Hannigan family showed their appreciation for her talent and effort.

"Ciminelli and Hannigan. Into my office immediately," bellowed the Captain from his door. "This is where we came in three weeks ago, Steve," exclaimed Linda as she slowly walked toward the Captain's office. The look on her face was a sad one when she faced Steve and he wondered why. She tried to smile, but it didn't work as a tear came to her eyes as she did this. Something was bothering her and Steve couldn't think what it was.

"Congratulations you two. You did a wonderful job on the Smith-Hughes case and now this town can get back to normal. I mean normal for the politicians not the normal folk who have to live here. Between the Smith-Hughes woman and the Mac-Giver broad, this town was a nervous wreck,' the Captain remarked as he started to chew on a cigar, but instead, he looked at it and then tossed it into the waste basket. "You know, I really don't need these lousy cancer-sticks any more. I'd rather have a mint instead."

"Captain, we couldn't have done it without your help and guidance. You are the guiding leader and your forceful encouragement helped break this case," replied Steve with a broad smile on his face.

"The work you guys did to break the two famous murders in this town, the Smith-Hughes and Mac-Giver women, was just terrific. The praise we are receiving for this department is due to you and Linda," the Captain stated as he patted both on the back. "I'll bet the two of you will soon be promoted to lieutenant and I'm sure that after that, Steve, you could be heading this department. You have the tools."

"Thank you Captain," replied Steve. As he stated this, he looked at Linda and she still had a sad look on her face. "Maybe Linda deserves it instead of me."

"Are you kidding, Steve. You are more able to handle the pressure than I would and you have more time and experience than me," Linda stated as she agreed with the Captain's evaluation of Steve's work.

"Get out of here you two and take the day off. You both deserve it," the Captain ordered as he closed his office door as they left.

As they walked back to their desks, Steve asked Linda if she was feeling alright, for he wondered why she looked so "strange at him.

"I'm OK, Steve," Linda remarked. "I just have been feeling sort of sad since I examined the lab evidence on the Mae-Giver case." As the words rolled off her lips, Steve's muscles in his face tightened.

"What's the problem with it, partner? Maybe I can help," he replied in a cheerful tone. He could see that small tears had started to roll down her cheeks. He immediately guided her over to an empty interrogation room and closed the door. "Now, hon, hat's the problem? You can tell me," he stated as he placed his hands on her arms to demonstrate some type of support.

"Steve, I have been examining the lab evidence on the Mac Giver case and there are somethings that cause me to question the conclusion of it," Linda stated as she wiped her tears with a tissue. "Who do you think killed Vanessa Mac-Giver?"

Steve looked at her with a startled look on his face. "We closed the case with Klausburger being our boy. He even wrote a confession to it before he killed himself. Why do you ask about it?"

"Steve, Klausburger didn't do it," she commented as she stared into his eyes. "Well, partner, if he didn't do it, who did?" Steve asked and the look on his face was one that didn't want an answer. "I can't prove any of this, Steve. Nothing, but the lab evidence eliminates Klausburger as the one."

"What lab evidence are you talking about Linda?" Steve questioned as he slowly sat on the edge of the table. "The lab boys found brown strands of cotton cloth under the fingernails of one hand. The threads are the type used to make Haggar pants. Also, the little Redskin's emblem that is sewn on the sleeve of the Redskin's sweat jacket was found at her feet.

She had ripped it off the killer as he was drowning her in the sink. No one thought these items were important until two days ago. I checked with Senator Klausburger's widow and she allowed me to check the Senator's wardrobe closet. No rips in any light brown pants, a matter of fact, no Haggar pants at all, and no Redskin's jacket also. The Senator was a Falcon fan." Sbepaused. "The morning Vanessa was murdered, you arrived at F.B.I. Headquarters with light brown Haggar pants and your Redskin's jacket. I even mentioned to you about the rips in the pant leg and I noticed the Redskin's logo emblem to be missing on the jacket. You said a dog jumped you in the Mall that morning."

"Linda, the D.A. has accepted that Klausburger was her killer You'll need provable evidence to change his mind. Do you have any?" Steve seriously questioned as he looked straight at her.

"No," she softly stated as she wiped a tear from her eye. "I only have a questioning theory and I don't like it one bit." She stopped to blow her nose and compose herself. She then looked Steve straight on. "Steve, please answer me honestly." She paused as she got Steve's attention. "Did you have an affair with the Mac-Giver woman?" She tensely waited for her partner's reply.

Steve was at first startled by the question, but he slowly placed a hand on Linda's shoulder, and then answered her request. "No," he stated very bluntly. He looked at her and continued, "No, I did not have any type of sexual encounter with that woman. She wanted me to. She tried to seduce me but, can you believe a Ciminelli would turn down an offer for sex from a sexy I broad?" he paused. "The Ciminelli men would throw me out of the family if they knew of it. No, Linda, I didn't screw that woman. Why do you ask?" Steve questioned as he stepped back from her. "Do you think I killed her, partner?" Steve stated sharply. "I told you I was attacked by a dog on the jogging path on the Mall. Believe me, please," he pleaded. "I am sorry that I can't produce the pants and sweat jacket, for I discarded them in the clothes barrel at the Homeless Center. I don't keep damaged clothing in my closet, partner."

Linda turned and walked to the window and gazed out of it at the sunlight outside. He walked up behind her and placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Linda, there's only one woman that would make me cheat on Maureen, and that woman is the one I'm holding onto at this moment. Please, believe me, I didn't kill the Mac-Giver woman." He placed a gentle kiss on the top of her head.

"Steve," as she turned around to face him, "all this circumstantial evidence can cloud one's mind, and dogs aren't allowed on the jogging path at the Mall."

"This animal was loose and decided to chase after the first runner it came upon, and by the time I had given it a smack on the suit, it had done the damage to my clothing. The Redskin's logo was hanging by a

loose thread so I ripped it off and discarded it in the first trash barrel I came upon." Steve paused. "Believe me partner, an affair with that woman wouldn't drive me to murder. Maureen doesn't trust me with any woman, especially you. She still thinks that we have something going on between us. Believe me, I didn't kill that woman." He finished with a smile on his face as he faced his partner. She slowly looked up at him and a smile started to appear. "Get out of here. See you in the morning." She then gently kissed Steve on the cheek.

"Thanks partner," Steve remarked as he slowly proceeded to leave the room. "I love you too, partner. Try to relax and get some rest. I'll see you tomorrow." He proceeded through the Squad Room and down the stairs to the main entrance. When he arrived outside the main entrance, he looked up at the skies which were a deep blue. He stopped and took a deep breath. He started to relax, for a heavy weight had been lifted off his mind and body. He was sure that Linda had believed his story. He then proceeded to cross the street from between two parked cars, and his mind was on his lovely Maureen, and not on the speeding truck that was bearing down on him.

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