
Death On Campus

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Prologue

Chapter 1

Martin Aslet did not take long to decide what to do. Pawn to King 4. He always started the game that way. Having pushed the King's pawn forward two squares, he leant back in his chair and picked up his cigarette.

"Your move," he said.

Jonathan Clark didn't take long to decide either. Pawn to King 3.

"You always do that. The French Defence is the only defence you ever play," Martin moaned.

"It's the only one I know. Besides you don't always win. So shut up and play." And Jonathan settled back in his chair and picked up his cup of tea.

The two men sat in the living room of a small house, close to a roaring fire, while rain and sleet beat against the house and windows, reminding them how cold it was outside. Inside, it was warm. The fire gave an orange color to the room, and the small room, filled with chairs, tables and bookcases, seemed cozy.

Martin Aslet was a young man, about thirty years old. He'd been a police officer for almost five years, but that is the last occupation that you'd guess for him. He was thin, and his face was tanned and dried as if he had spent most of his life sunbathing on the beach. His hair was blond and his eyes blue. His lack of weight did not make him look frail, but wiry and springy, a tough fellow who could run ten miles at a fair clip without getting tired. He was dressed casually since he had no plans to go out that evening, but even casual clothes for Martin were expensive. He wore the latest fashion in designer clothes.

As you looked around his living room, it was easy to tell he was unmarried. There was a care and an obvious sense of skill in the choice of furnishings. The paintings on the walls were gifts to him from his friends. There were large plants in simple earthenware pots in the corners, a zebra skin rug close to his desk, and native carvings that he had picked up in his travels around the world. If you were the kind of person who rushed into quick judgments about people, you would have guessed his occupation to be writer, artist or college teacher. But he was a police officer, a fact that was made more understandable when you learned that Castine was a college town and the college dominated the town. The people who lived in Castine were wealthy and educated, and although they thought their local police chief was strange, they liked his strangeness. It suited their image of the town and their image of themselves as educated liberals.

Jonathan Clark was more easily placed. He was a college teacher, or to be exact, a former college teacher. He had come to Castine College many years earlier and taught psychology. He

had done well. His students liked him, and the college administrators thought that he was a fine contributor to the governance and prestige of the college, and harmless enough in addition. But Jonathan had always wanted to write. First and foremost, he liked the business of planning scholarly papers and books, writing them, sending them off to publishers, and handling all of the secretarial chores involved. He wrote and wrote, and his reputation as a psychologist grew. Eventually, he began to write college textbooks, and again he was successful. Soon his income from textbooks vastly exceeded his income from teaching, and he retired from the college and the age of thirty-two to devote himself full time to writing.

But he never could leave the college. He had bought himself a house in town, and most semesters he would teach a course at Castine College as an adjunct instructor. The college had always valued him, and so they were happy to hire him and let him remain as a member of the faculty. His life resembled that of a college professor in all respects except that he rarely taught and rarely got paid by the college. But his lunches, his evenings, his walks and his leisure were all closely bound up in the life of the college.

His looks contrasted with Martin's. Jonathan was fair skinned, with a few freckles. His hair was light brown with a reddish tinge, and it tended to be wavy and wild. He was tall and somewhat clumsy. And he rarely took much care with his clothes. He felt most comfortable in old clothes. His jeans were torn, and his sweaters had leather patches on the elbows. From time to time, he would be walking along the street, and he would suddenly feel that his clothes were making him look like a clod. Then he would throw out the worst of them, buy a few new ones, and then for a few days he would feel sharp and dashing. But he would eventually switch back to comfort.

The chess game proceeded. They followed the McCutcheon variation and avoided swapping pawns, promising a complex and occasionally tedious game, the kind of game that lasted a whole evening and allowed time for conversation and food.

Jonathan sipped his tea. "That was a magnificent dinner. You're an excellent cook, Martin. Damn! How can I develop the King Bishop? There must be a good way." Maybe he should simply push the King's pawns forward and attack on the King's side. He'd never really tried that. The game and the evening wore on.

Martin looked at him. "Are you glad you quit Castine College?" he asked him. "You weren't sure about it. You've been out of college life for almost two years now. What's it like trying to be a writer for a living?"

"It's difficult," Jonathan replied. "Luckily my parents somehow developed a need in me to be productive, and so I manage to keep my guilt level down by working hard. I write a few pages every morning, dutifully. And, if the mood is right, in the evening too. My afternoons are free for me to laze around and entertain myself. It's nice to be independent. Not to have to do anything. To be able to do things because they're fun."

"Don't you miss being a psychology teacher?"

"God, no!" Jonathan said emphatically. "Anyway, teaching isn't being a psychologist. It's being a teacher, and that gets awfully dull after a time. All those sleepy bored faces looking at you. Making you wonder what the hell you're doing up there lecturing to them. Why not just write out your lectures, or record them on videotape and then just leave? No. I like writing. The one good thing about a college is the friendship. I like having fifteen hundred students around and over a hundred fellow teachers. That's a lot of potential friends. But the actual teaching?"

Yuck! By the way, what did you think of my last book, the one on murder? You never gave me an opinion."

Martin replied a little diffidently. "Oh. Didn't I? Actually, I found it pretty interesting to see what you psychologists know about murderers. All those facts, like murderers having less verbal intelligence than arithmetic intelligence. And those theories. I remember one that says murderers are punished by one of their parents and cared for by the other, whereas suicidal people are punished and cared for by the same parent. It was very interesting."

"But useless to the police officer? Jonathan asked.

"Well, of course, I mean it's all very well that business about intelligence. But I don't think you'll ever find the reasons why people murder. Murder is so rare that, when one occurs, your psychological theories won't tell us who did it. I want a psychologist who can look at the body and the crime scene and tell me something about the person who did it. And knowing his intelligence test scores or who punished him as a child isn't going to help me. I can hardly give everybody in this town an intelligence test, can I? It's your move, by the way."

"I know. I haven't forgotten." Jonathan thought for a while. "I was thinking. What I'd like to do next is to follow a detective as he works on a murder case, or some crime of violence, and write it up. What does it involve? Not fiction, but real life. I would like to see whether psychological knowledge really helps in solving a crime. It'll have to be murder. That would make it more interesting for the reader. And me too. After all, I'm supposed to be an expert on murder."

"Sounds like an interesting idea." Despite the words, Martin's voice did not convey much interest. "Hurry up and move. Come on. We haven't got all night."

"All right," said Jonathan with a sigh of resignation. And he pushed forward with his King's side attack. "Try to worm your way out of this threat. How come you didn't offer to let me use your next murder case as the topic for my book? What's become of our years of friendship?"

"Is that what you had in mind? said Martin looking at Jonathan. "I should have guessed that you were trying to get something out of me. You've always got some ulterior motive. Let me get some white wine."

Martin got up and returned with a bottle of a sweet white Sauterne to suit Jonathan's taste.

"Well, you still didn't offer," Jonathan persisted..

"Come on, Jonathan. This is Castine, not New York City.

There's hardly one murder a year here, and most of them are uninteresting. You know the picture. Some drunken and enraged boy friend shoots his girl friend's lover. Or some vagrant who is passing through town knifes an old lady for her purse and twenty dollars. And anyway, you're going to be a pain in my arse, following around after me during an investigation. Damn it! All this talk is muddling my head. It looks like my King is trapped. I reckon you've been keeping up this stream of conversation just so that you could beat me at chess for the first time. There has to be a way out of this trap for me." And Martin hunched over the chess board looking for the solution.

Jonathan looked pleased. "It looks like a moral victory. You're giving up."

"Moral victories don't count," muttered Martin, and he returned to studying the chess pieces.

Tuesday

Chapter 2

He stood in the bedroom, breathing heavily. The moonlight gave a pale illumination to the bed in front of him and the nude body of the man lying on the bed. The body lay on its stomach, with the head turned on its side.

He clenched his teeth, and his breath whistled between his teeth as he breathed out. His hands were clenched, and he held his arms rigid by his sides.

He hated the man in front of him. Hated him with the intensity that always accompanied his anger. A sudden urge grew in him. He considered it and decided to follow its bidding.

He turned and walked quickly out of the room, down the stairs, and into the first room he came to. It was the living room. He looked around. The moonlight enabled him to see everything quite clearly. His gaze moved over the objects in the room, back and forth, until he noticed the fireplace for the second or third time. He grunted, as if in approval. He strode across to the fireplace and reached down for the poker hanging by the hearth. He picked it up and brandished it.

He was satisfied. It would do.

He turned and walked quickly out of the room and up the stairs.

Wednesday

Chapter 3

The weather got colder in January, and the sleet turned to snow. Soon Castine was covered with snow crystals, and a good New England winter set in.

One day, in February, at about nine in the morning, the seed that Jonathan had planted germinated. Jonathan was working at his desk, putting together an undergraduate textbook on abnormal behavior, when the telephone rang. It was Martin.

"Jonathan, is that you? Are you up yet? Say, I've been thinking about your idea of being in on a murder investigation. It might be interesting at that. Are you still interested?"

Jonathan suppressed his retort to the insinuation that he was a late riser. "Yes, sure. why?"

"Well, you're in luck. Castine has a murder. And it looks like the kind of thing you'd be interested in. And also, you might be able to help, Mr. Psychologist."

"Where, where?"

"You won't believe this, but here at the college. I'm calling from the President's house. The President of the college is dead.....Are you there? Good. Well, get right over here. As you quick as you can. Before we have to move the body. I'd like you to see everything just as it is."

Jonathan hurried. He rushed into the bedroom of his little Cape Cod house and pulled on his rubber boots. He grabbed his scarf and put on his parka and was out of the door in a minute.

Outside, the air was very cold. The sun was out, but the wind made the temperature seem far below freezing. He opened his Volkswagen and got out the scraper to chip away at the ice on his windshield. It took a while to clean the glass, and he was breathing heavily when he had finished. He got into the car and cursed his lack of foresight. He should have started the car immediately he had reached it. It started on the fourth attempt and, after a brief pause, he steered it slowly out of his driveway without skidding and down the road toward the college over the packed ice. He could see that the driveway to the President's house was full of cars, so he turned from the country lane into the Faculty Club and parked his car there. He then walked the few hundred yards around the lake to the house.

The snow crunched under his boots, and he liked the feeling of being the first person to step on the snow there. To his right, the lake was frozen and covered with several inches of snow. In front of him, inside the house, he could see a good deal of activity. It looked like a fair number of people were moving around there.

The President's house was grand. It stood all by itself at one end of the large lake. Facing the lake was a large expanse of windows and doors, in front of which was a stone patio. Steps led down from the patio to the grass which sloped gently toward the lake. The house had two stories, and the roof was pitched high enough so that it had dormer windows in the sides. The house was made of an off-white stone that had over the years accumulated green stains from mosses and lichens in the cracks. The house was elegant, and its isolated location made it seem aloof.

Jonathan walked around to the side of the house and up to the front door, where a patrolman stood.

"I'm Dr. Clark," he said firmly. Jonathan always used the Dr. to get better treatment, and usually it worked. "I think Chief Aslet is expecting me."

"Just a minute, Sir. Let me check," and the patrolman disappeared into the house. He quickly came back and said, "Ok, Sir. The Chief's upstairs. Go on up."

Jonathan entered through the heavy dark-stained wooden door and into the wooden panelled entrance room. The wood was ornately carved and stained a very dark brown, almost black. The room was impressive, but gloomy. Ahead of Jonathan were the stairs, and he walked up them quickly, listening to the murmuring of voices upstairs. The upstairs hallway was much brighter. The walls were painted white, and the windows at each end of the corridor let in the sunlight. Jonathan could see men in the front bedroom, and he went in.

Martin looked up as Jonathan entered and walked over to him.

"Hi. Let me introduce Dr. Harvey here, Dr. Leonard Harvey from the State Police Forensic Department. Len, this Dr. Jonathan Clark, a psychologist."

The thin bony man walked over to Jonathan and shook his hand firmly. "Glad to meet you. A psychologist huh? Well, you're just the man we need."

As he spoke, he turned around toward the bed, and Jonathan turned to look with him.

The room in which Jonathan stood was large and spacious. The little furniture in it was against the walls, and there was a large amount of empty space in the room. There was a chest of drawers in one corner, a couple of old arm chairs next to it, and along the opposite wall a bed. The room had windows on two sides, and the winter sunshine reflected off the white walls of the room, producing a dazzling light. Almost like a movie set illuminated with strong lamps. And on

the bed, from which the sheets had been pulled back, lay the nude body of the President of the college. He was laying on his stomach with his head turned toward the center of the room. His arms lay by his sides. But the riveting focus of the scene was a large brass poker that was sticking up at an angle between the President's legs. Jonathan would have sworn that the poker was inserted into the President's arse.

Douglas Dalziel, the President of Castine College, was a short man, no more than five foot nine inches. He had fair hair that he wore too long, and the longer it got the curlier it became, so that it hung around his head like an unwashed fringe. His cheeks were chubby, as if they had become scrunched up from supporting spectacles in front of his eyes, though he was never seen to wear spectacles. His skin, even when alive, had seemed phony, more like the skin of a wax mannequin than that of a real person. In life, he had an unnatural look, and in death the look had not changed. Except that in death the look was appropriate.

Martin and Len Harvey had walked over beside Jonathan. They let him take in the scene, and then Martin spoke to Jonathan.

"It's what it looks like. It is a poker, the kind of tool you use to push logs around the hearth of your fireplace."

"Is it just resting between his legs," Jonathan asked, "or is it actually stuck into his arse?"

"It's stuck in," replied Martin. "A good nine inches."

"Was he killed with it?" Jonathan asked.

"No," said Dr. Harvey briskly. "He was killed by a blow or blows to the back of the head from a blunt instrument. The poker was probably inserted after the fellow was dead. so you see why we'd like to know what a psychologist thinks about it. Why the blazes should a murderer stick a damn poker there after killing the victim? It's rather unnecessary, you know."

Jonathan reflected for a while. "The only association that it brings to mind is King Edward the Second of England." Martin and the pathologist looked at him, and Jonathan continued. "He was killed in 1300 or thereabouts by some thugs hired by his wife, the Queen, and her lover. Old Edward was commonly thought to have been a homosexual by choice, though he did father a son who became the new King. It was the way he was killed that was bizarre. The thugs heated a poker until it was red hot, and they killed him by thrusting it up his rectum."

"Ouch!" said Martin, and the group remained silent for a few minutes.

"And that reminds me of something I read once when I was writing a book on sexual behavior," Jonathan continued. It was about tricks played by homosexuals on one another at parties. You get one of the party drunk, and you persuade him to bend over in the expectation that you're going to have anal intercourse with him. And then you pop in a shot glass with the narrow end first. The sphincter muscle contracts over it, and there it stays."

"Good Lord!" said Dr. Harvey. "What does the gentleman do then?"

"I read about it because often the poor fellow has to go to an emergency room to have the shot glass removed. And some doctor thought to write about it in a medical journal, where I read it."

"Amazing!" said Dr. Harvey. "The ingenuity of man always amazes me. The incredible things people do."

Martin seemed less amazed. "Then what is your first thought, Jonathan? Off the top of your head."

Jonathan considered. "There were rumors that he was a homosexual. I know he was married and had two children. But from time to time, some student would ask whether it was

really true that old Dougie Dalziel was queer. And occasionally the old stories would be brought out for airing. It would fit. Maybe his homosexual lover, or a jealous heterosexual lover, put the poker there, after his death. A symbolic act of hostility."

The pathologist was suddenly energetic. "Symbolic hostility? Well whoever killed him did not worry about symbolism. He beat him over the head till he was dead. That's direct hostility. Anyway, I've finished here. I'll wait for him at the laboratory, Martin, and get to the autopsy as soon as I can. Nice to meet you, Dr. Clark." And the doctor picked up his bag and walked quickly out of the room.

Jonathan looked around him and noticed the two arm chairs on the other side of the room. Martin followed his gaze and suggested that they sit down. Jonathan thought how unreal everything seemed. This wasn't a bedroom with a corpse lying on the bed there. It was a wax museum, and they were merely two visitors who had paid a few dollars to walk through and who were now resting their weary feet. Was death so ordinary? Where was the feeling? Disgust, nausea, fear, the sharp realization that you will die too? Could your own death be as neutral and unfeeling as this?

Martin got out a pack of cigarettes and took one. After lighting it, he looked up at Jonathan. "Let me tell you about it. He was killed some time last night probably, Tuesday night. He was hit on the head with a blunt instrument. There's a marble vase lying on the floor of the living room that may be the weapon. We took it away to the laboratory for examination. It looks as if he was murdered in here. His clothes are laid tidily on the chest over there, as if he himself had taken them off."

"Has he been sexually assaulted?"

"We don't know yet," replied Martin. "Len will tell us later."

"Where's his wife?" Jonathan asked.

"We don't know. I've called up his secretary over at the administration building, and she doesn't know. The President didn't tell her on Friday last that his wife was doing anything special, and there's nothing in his calendar to indicate where she might be. No one has slept in the master bedroom or in the children's bedrooms, or if anyone did they made the beds. I may just have to leave a man to wait for his wife's return."

"Any sign of forced entry?" asked Jonathan.

"Nothing," replied Martin with a hint of exasperation. "No forced entry, no indications of who the murderer might be. There were no footprints in the snow around the house, so the murderer probably walked up the front path which had been swept clear of snow. I have the State Police checking over the house for fingerprints and anything else of interest, but until we can fingerprint the other people who lived and worked here they won't tell us much."

"Who found him?"

"The maid. She comes in daily on weekdays to clean the house. She arrived at 8.30 this morning as usual and noticed nothing unusual. The house seemed quiet to her, so she looked to see who was in and whether they'd got up yet. She found him in here and called the police immediately."

Martin finished. The two men sat there, quietly, each apparently lost in his own thoughts. After a long pause, Martin looked across at Jonathan and asked, "Does it interest you?"

"A lot," replied Jonathan. "It's just what I wanted. A murder, with some psychological symbolism. And what is better, someone I know, or knew for ten or eleven years. I have so many memories of him and of the tales that were told of him. And there he is, the bastard, dead."

Martin raised an eyebrow. "Bastard?" he asked. "You didn't like him."

"You know how it is," said Jonathan. "He was the head of the college. He was the boss, and he ran the college absolutely. He was master, and there was no doubt about it. So if you worked here, you focussed all of your anger, all of your resentments on him. You held him responsible for every frustration, every rebuff, every annoyance. I don't say he deserved most of it. Probably very little. But he served as the whipping boy as far as the faculty were concerned."

"You're interested," Martin continued. "How do you want to handle it? Do you want to dog my footsteps? Or go off on your own? You know this college far better than I do. You can probably learn or remember events and rumors far more easily than I could. And then we could check in from time to time and fill each other in."

"That's fine," said Jonathan. "I'll call you or drop by this evening. Ok?"

"Sure. Coming?" Martin asked, but Jonathan shook his head.

"I'll stay a while if it's ok."

"Of course," replied Martin. "Don't touch anything. The men should be here soon to take the body off to the laboratory. Take care."

Martin stood up. As he walked by Jonathan's chair, he put his hand on Jonathan's shoulder and squeezed. And then he was gone out of the door.

Jonathan stayed in his arm chair, looking out of the window at the icy countryside. He turned around toward the dead President, and he let his eyes wander over the naked body. The flesh was pale, and he noticed the contours of the back and buttocks and the hairs on the legs. He got up and walked over to the body. He reached into his pocket and took out a handkerchief and gingerly touched the tip of the poker. The brass handle looked shiny, with none of the tarnish that quickly forms if you touch brass. He moved the end of the poker and, as he did, it pivoted about the entrance to the President's arse. He watched the skin stretch and distort.

And then he walked back to his arm chair by the window and gazed at the dead body until the van came to take it to the State Police laboratory.

Chapter 4

Jonathan Clark left his car in the parking lot of the Faculty Club and decided to walk over to the main cluster of buildings of the college. It was about a mile, the road winding through the uncultivated meadows. The walk and the cold air refreshed him and cleared his mind of the morbid thoughts that had risen up as he had contemplated the body in the President's house.

He walked through into the quadrangle that lay in the middle of the cluster of buildings and into the library. He went over to the reference section and found the volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica that he needed. He looked up Edward the Second, King of England. The article did not have what he wanted to know. It said that the King had been deposed by his wife and her lover, and his son made King in his place. He had been imprisoned and humiliated and then killed.

Jonathan left the library and walked over to the Arts and Humanities building, a modern building, made of brick, with large expanses of glass that contrasted with the old stone walls and lead-bounded windows of the other buildings around the quadrangle. He went in and up and the staircase to the third floor and was pleased to find Mike Smith, Professor of Literature, in his office.

Mike Smith was a large man, with a full beard that looked more bristly than most beards, and with a fine head of similarly bristly hair. He wore spectacles with wire frames and dressed casually in trousers and a sweater. Mike Smith was enthusiastic. He was enthusiastic about everything, but in particular about literature. He spoke loudly and with force and was the kind to slap you on the back to reinforce a point that he was trying to make.

As Jonathan walked toward his office, Mike was just getting rid of a small frightened student who had missed the first examination in the freshman literature course. Mike was being hard on her, making her feel sufficiently guilty so that she would not miss any other exams in her four years at the college, but also paternalistic and giving her a time and place to take the make-up exam.

"And mind you don't forget this exam, my girl," Mike shouted after her as she hurriedly left his office and made for the staircase. "Well, if it isn't our long-lost unlamented ex-colleague. Jon, you rogue, how are you? What brings you up to the literature department. You want some lessons on how to write perhaps?"

Mike got up from behind his desk and came around it, stepping between piles of books stacked on the floors, in front of the floor-to-ceiling bookcases which were chock full of books. He shook Jonathan's hand vigorously.

"Actually, I'm trying to check up on whether Edward the Second was really killed by having a red-hot poker rammed up his backside," Jonathan said.

"Oh, dear me. Poor old Edward Two'th." Mike grinned as he recalled the incident. "Yes, there is a rumor that it happened. Though historians are still reticent about discussing it. Not the kind of thing that you focus upon when you're dealing with a King of England."

"Wasn't there a play by Christopher Marlowe that dealt with the incident?" asked Jonathan.

"Yes, there was. Now let me see if I can find it." Mike placed one hand on his hip, stroked his beard with the other and gazed at his shelves of books. "Let me see. Here it is," and he pulled a paperback book off a shelf on English Renaissance drama. Just as he handed it to Jonathan, the telephone rang. "Excuse me a minute, Jon. Hello....," and he dealt with another make-up exam for a student who had missed the mid-term exam.

Jonathan turned to the play by Marlowe and found what he wanted to read.

Lightborn: I know what I must do. Get you away.

Yet be not far off, I shall need your help;

See that in the next room I have a fire,

And get me a spit, and let it be red-hot.

and a little later

King: Oh, spare me, or dispatch me in a trice.

(Matrevis brings in a table.)

Lightborn: So, lay the table down, and stamp on it,

But not too hard, lest that you bruise his

body.

(King Edward is murdered.)

and to further clarify the killing, the editors of the textbook had added a footnote that quoted the historian Holinshed.

.....with heavie feather beddes, (or a table as some write) being cast upon him, they kept him downe, and withall put into his fundament an horne, and through the same they

thrust up into his body a hote spitte.....the which passing up into his intrayles, and being rolled to and fro, burnt the same, but so as no appearance of any wounde or hurt outwardly might bee once perceyved.

When Mike had freed himself from the student and put the telephone receiver down, Jonathan asked him, "But wasn't the choice of method for killing chosen because they were offended by his homosexuality? The quote from Holinshed makes it seem that they chose the poker to avoid having an obvious wound?"

Mike considered the question. "Who really knows?" he said. "Edward was particularly close to his advisers. First, Pierce of Gaveston and then Hugh Spencer. But it is difficult to be sure about the facts when it's 650 years ago. We are left with mere speculation."

Jonathan seemed to reflect on this information.

Mike waited and then said, "But why all this concern over a dead King? You must have heard about our dead King?" His eyebrows shot up, and he snorted. "Our good President is dead. The news is being passed throughout the college with wonder and excitement. We are all agog, but you concern yourself with some old dead King."

Jonathan grinned. "Yes, I've heard. In fact, I know the police chief in charge, and he let me into the President's house. I've even seen the body."

"How about that?" said Mike with surprise. "How was the old bastard killed?"

"It looks like he was hit on the head. And there are no immediate indications as to who did it," replied Jonathan.

"It sure isn't any problem to find a whole list of people who might have the motive." Mike picked up his pipe from the desk and lit it from a cigarette lighter. "He was disliked by almost every faculty member in this college. What an abomination! An idiot. No, that's unfair. An idiot savant. After all, he did a pretty good job handling the Board of Trustees. But a man with no idea about education, no interpersonal skills." Mike shuddered at the recollection of the man. "But tell me what you saw."

Jonathan told him about his visit to the house, and Mike listened intently. Jonathan noted that this was probably the first time that Mike had ever listened so intently. Normally, Mike preferred to talk and seemed always to be waiting for you to stop talking so that he could take over the conversation again. So he listened, grunting in surprise now and then. He's probably imagining himself re-telling the story himself to others at lunch, Jonathan thought. Jonathan was surprised that he held back the detail about the poker. Usually, he told his friends everything.

Mike leant back in his chair, apparently content with the information he had received. Jonathan considered leaving but decided to explore one additional topic.

"How are things in your department? he asked. "Didn't you have a good comparative literature person who you thought would turn out really well?"

"Richard Meredith, yes," Mike answered. "Trouble was, his personality was too abrasive. He managed to be short-tempered most of the time, and he was a depressive. He moaned and complained, and then some. Everything about this college was bad. The students were unmotivated, the administration unhelpful, and so on. It was depressing to be around him. Now, at a major university, with thousands of faculty, you can afford to have someone like that around, assuming he's brilliant. But in a small college like this, someone like Dick is too much of a negative influence. His mood begins to affect, and infect, everyone, and you have a morale problem. So we decided not to give him tenure. He leaves in May."

"Is anyone getting tenure this year?" asked Jonathan.

"Let me think. I should know since I'm on the College Review Board that has to sign each recommendation. There's a woman in biology who is getting tenure and someone in your department. What's her name now? Mike frowned as he tried to remember her name.

"Ann Latimer?" suggested Jonathan.

"That's it. A bright, lively little thing. I really admire her. She's sharp. Then there are three who got turned down. Dick in literature, a political science chappie, Fred Welford, and a woman in Chemistry, Marian Schwartz. It wasn't too bad considering that in a college this old you don't expect to have much room for new faculty. But we've had a couple of retirements recently, and a couple of the old guard have taken up administrative positions. So we can tenure a couple of the new faculty."

Jonathan rose to leave. "Well, I'll be seeing you. By the way, what do you call Edward the Third? Edward Three'th?"

Mike grinned. "Yes, Edward Three'th. But only when I'm in a playful mood."

Jonathan said good bye and walked down the stairs and up to the heavy glass doors that looked out onto the quadrangle, covered with the crisp, almost ice-like snow. The scene looked bleak. A large white expanse, with the bared branches and trunks of the trees. In the background the fine old buildings of the college, with creeper around the windows of the buildings, looked as if they held the dampness in the building. The buildings looked cold, and even if you thought they were architecturally fine, inside they had a gloomy institutional appearance. The floors had polished concrete, or were covered in brown linoleum. The walls were tiled for the first half with a dirty cream-colored tile and then painted with gloss paint of the same color for the upper half. Inside those buildings, you could imagine yourself to be in an old high school or a mental hospital. Some type of institution.

Jonathan stayed inside the glass doors for a while, as if he was debating whether to go outside. He felt like he did before he dived into the swimming pool in the summer. Telling himself that he didn't really want to make the plunge. But eventually he did. He pushed through the doors, faced the cold air that greeted him and walked briskly across the quadrangle toward his old office building.

He walked to the front entrance, which was on the second floor of the building and built on a small incline. He pushed open the heavy doors and went through into the corridor. He walked up one flight of steps, as he had done many times in the past, listening to his footsteps echo in the stairwell. Up to the third floor, through the swinging doors, past the library and down the corridor. He went past the secretary's office, on around the corner, and stopped at Ann's office.

Ann had a small office, no more than seven feet wide, but about twelve feet long. The same linoleum and tile covered it, but she had a window at the far end of the office that looked out from the back of the building over a large expanse of meadow and across to some of the student dormitories. The door to the office was wooden with a large glass window in it that was frosted over so that it was opaque. The door was ajar, and Ann was looking intently at a scholarly journal on her desk.

"Hello, Ann," he said quietly.

She looked up. "Hello, stranger," she said. Ann was a short vibrant person. She had chubby cheeks and a red coloring that went with her reddish hair. She wore spectacles that were a little old-fashioned, more suited to retired old ladies down in Florida than to a modern

professor. She dressed conventionally in well-tailored skirts and dresses. And she spoke with what Jonathan thought was a charming southern accent.

He walked up to her, feeling a little awkward, and kissed her on the cheek. They had been lovers once. They had been hired at Castine at the same time, and for both of them it was their first teaching job. They had had offices opposite each other. They had faced the anxieties of the college together, going to department meetings and faculty meetings together, discussing their fears of the classroom and their frustrations over their failures, and becoming close friends.

At the end of their first semester, Ann had invited Jonathan over to her college apartment for a drink to celebrate their survival. They had gotten quite tipsy. Ann had been in the kitchen, fixing them a little snack, and he had walked up behind her and put his arms on her shoulders. She had turned, quickly, as if she had been expecting this. She kissed him, hard and hungrily, as if she were punishing him for taking a whole semester to do this.

In a few minutes, they were in bed, making love. Jonathan liked to recall his impressions of that evening. She lay surprisingly passive, hardly moving, certainly not directing him. The smell of gin on her breath. Her small breasts with hairs around the nipples. He hadn't known that women might have hairs on their breasts. Her wiry pubic hair, another surprise. And so he had, not made love to her. That would not have been a good description of how he had acted with this pale white motionless woman, whose only response to him was to suck at his mouth as she kissed him. No. He had fucked her. And he astonished himself by doing so a second time an hour later.

They had made love only a couple of more times after that evening. Jonathan felt that it had been a mistake and would not have happened that first time if he hadn't been tipsy. Ann was also ambivalent about their relationship, wanting him, but afraid to trust any man too much. And he sensed that, if he ever breached her distrust, he would be engulfed by a dependency that he couldn't handle. So they had drawn back, survived the awkwardness of ex-lovers, and become good friends. Their moments of love-making had given them a bond, a secret that bound them together, them against the old guard, and they had always acted with, and indeed felt affection toward each other.

"Hello, stranger," she said, and the words were long and drawn out, almost seductive, though Jonathan would have regarded anything said to him in a southern accent as seductive. "It's nice to see you." She looked at her watch. "It's almost lunch time," she said. "You will stay, won't you?"

Jonathan sat down in the other chair, the hard one meant for any student who might visit. "Of course," he replied.

"What brings you here? What mischief are you up to?" Ann leant across her desk and took a cigarette from the pack lying there.

"I'm detecting," confessed Jonathan. And he told her about the murder that morning of the President, again omitting the detail of the poker. She listened to him quietly and then laughed. The thought of Jonathan investigating a murder amused her.

"What fun." She giggled. It was as if her little boy was doing something adventurous. And Jonathan wondered whether he had been her lover or her child. He always felt a little submissive toward her, following her whims rather than his own, bowing to her suggestions. But then he had told himself before that there was something fragile about himself that made women want to take care of him. His students made him tea in his seminars, while they had drunk coffee. They found out what cookies he liked best. They offered to help him grade his exams and told him to

relax when he was anxious in class. In fact, the maternal responses he elicited in his students always surprised him. He expected teaching at a girl's college to be an erotic experience. And there were those elements there. But the maternal attitudes had been the surprise.

"What fun. What have you found out?"

"Not much," said Jonathan. "What I want to find out at this stage is who might have had a motive for killing him? You're close to the circulating gossip. Do you have any ideas?"

Ann, indeed, was close to the gossip of the college. She was friendly and well liked. She was talkative and fun to be with. So she had made many friends among her colleagues, and she tapped them for news of the college. The college was also small. With just over a hundred faculty, it was easy to keep track of what each was doing. It was hard to do something privately in the college. If you went to a party, people noticed. If you went out on a date, your neighbors in the faculty housing noticed, or someone would see you in line for the theater or in a bar having a drink. When you went shopping, you ran into colleagues in the supermarket. The college was much like a large extended family. And Ann knew most of what went on.

"Who might have had a reason for killing them?" Ann mused. "Well, the most obvious characteristic of our departed leader that could lead him into trouble was his, shall we say, bisexuality."

"That had occurred to me," encouraged Jonathan. "Was it true?"

"Who knows for sure? Ann continued. "But there were lots of rumors. There was some instructor over in the Arts Department who supposedly was having drinks over at the President's house one evening, with the President and a couple of his friends. While the President was out of the room on some errand, one of the friends suggested adjourning to the bedroom for some sport. Our effeminate but heterosexual artist declined. When the President returned, the party broke up almost immediately. Tony, that's the artist, assumed that the President's friend had made the proposition while the President was out of the room so as to spare the President any embarrassment. If Tony had agreed, Tony reckoned that the President would have come out in the open."

Jonathan seemed to be thinking. "I always wondered about him," he said, "just from looking at him. The texture of his skin, his manner, everything suggested the middle-aged queer."

Ann interrupted enthusiastically. "But he was so clever, if he was. Because all there was was rumor. Nothing definite. He didn't proposition Tony. He never did anything overt. Just hints of it. He was at a conference with the Assistant Director of Admissions who thought that Dougie might have had some man in his hotel rooms for drinks late at night. Or he had an assistant who looked somewhat gay. But nothing definite. And although you might have to lick his arse to get on in the college, it was never certain that you had to penetrate it."

They laughed. "I wonder if his wife knows?" asked Jonathan.

"It would be hard not to, if the rumors are true, " replied Ann. "Besides, maybe she murdered him having been cuckolded, or would 'adulterated' do, too often? Or for that matter, maybe he picked up some queer in a bar and was murdered by him? A homosexual version of Looking For Mr. Goodbar. I envy you being in one the investigation. You have to promise to let me know everything you find out. Promise me!"

"I promise," Jonathan said, smiling fondly at her. "But, I haven't congratulated you yet on getting tenure. I always knew you were certain to get it, but you must be pleased?"

"Of course. Thank you. I'm really relieved. Everyone told me that I shouldn't worry, that it was a certainty. But how could I not worry? And now it's settled, I'm relieved and excited. This is such a haven. The students are so good, the area beautiful, my colleagues pleasant. Sometimes I'm sure that I shall stay here for my remaining thirty-five years as a college teacher. Occasionally, I think that it's too soon to settle down for life and that I should experiment more in the world, but then I say to myself why bother? I like it here. Why should I leave?"

Jonathan agreed with her. He asked her about her teaching and her research, and Ann talked with enthusiasm about her work, until it was time to walk over to the Faculty Club for lunch.

Chapter 5

When Martin walked out of the President's house, he went over to his car and got into the driver's seat. He sat there for a while. He felt tired. Not physically tired, but psychologically tired. Another job. Another crime to investigate, and he had no energy. He had no idea of what to do next, and no motivation to do it. He got himself a cigarette and sat there while he smoked it.

He made an effort. He sighed, and then he arched his back. He started his car and drove along the same road that Jonathan was later to walk. He went up past the cluster of administrative buildings and turned sharply to his left up a hill that went behind them. He went past the Psychology and Physics Departments and pulled into a parking space at the top of the hill. The next building was the one in which the President had his office, and it formed the adjoining side of the quadrangle next to the psychology building. Like this latter building, it was built of brick and had a fair amount of creeper decorating the walls. There was a door at the side of the building that led directly into the Presidential suite of offices.

The reception room of the suite was large and comfortably furnished. The carpet was thick, and there were luxurious arm chairs positioned around a coffee table for visitors. There was a modern teak desk which fitted in with the wood paneled walls of the room. Seated at the desk was the kind of secretary you expected to find in a President's office. She was dressed stylishly, with an expensive dress. She wore a good deal of makeup, and her hair was elegantly set. When she spoke to Martin, her voice was pleasant and indicated education, or at least care.

Martin had called up and informed her of the death of the President earlier in the morning. He was spared having to tell her now. She didn't look as if she had cried, but when he identified himself now her eyes filled with tears.

"I'm Chief Aslet. I called you earlier." Martin paused and waited for her to nod. "You are?"

"Andrea Hoskens," she replied.

"Well, Miss Hoskens, I need to examine the President's personal effects, appointment book, that kind of thing. Were you his personal secretary?"

"Yes. I handled his telephone and some of his work. Any extra work went to the administrative typing pool along the hall."

"Maybe you could come into his office with me and help me if I have any problems?" Martin asked, and she nodded her head to agree.

The President's office was a spacious room. The walls were paneled, and one wall was taken up with large windows that looked down from the hill up which Martin had driven, across to the meadows and pond and to a neighboring hill on which the biology and chemistry building sat. The window was made up of small panes of glass with lead strips holding them together. The effect was to give the room bright light and an air of the previous century. The walls had several recessed bookcases and cupboards. The bookshelves were full of books, with assorted ornaments placed on them to break the monotony. The wooden desk sat in the center of the room, with a modern tilting and rotating chair behind it covered in a glaring orange fabric. Antiquity gave way to comfort. There were several spacious arm chairs and a couple of end tables, but the room seemed empty.

A great room for working in, thought Martin. Jonathan would love this. You could work a little and then get up and pace. You could walk over to the window and look out or walk around the room, stopping at a shelf here and there to tinker with some book or ornament. The carpet was as thick as that in the reception area. Jonathan would take off his shoes and socks and wriggle his toes in the pile of the carpet as he walked, and Martin smiled at the thought.

He reminded himself of his task. "Please sit down," he said, and watched her move toward one of the comfortable arm chairs.

He walked over to the desk, rolled the chair out from it and sat down. He tipped and rotated and then pushed himself toward the desk. He reached over for a large appointment book and leafed through the pages.

"Have you been able to find out where Mrs. Dalziel might be?" he asked her.

"No," she replied. "I've asked the Vice-President and the President's special assistant. Neither knows."

"Where has she been in the past?" Martin pursued the topic. "I mean, she must have gone away before. Did the President make any references to her trips?"

Andrea considered the question. She reached over to the coffee table and took a cigarette from the box there and lit it with the lighter on the table beside the box.

"She has a sister in Newport, Rhode Island, that she visits occasionally. And her mother lives in New York City."

"Would you mind calling them? Don't tell them about the murder. Just say you're trying to locate Mrs. Dalziel. Thanks."

Andrea left the room, leaving Martin to continue leafing through the appointment book. All of the names were strange to him. During the previous week, however, on Wednesday morning, the book indicated an appointment in downtown Boston with the well-known Jefferson Insurance Company. Martin made a note of the name under the entry, Harrington Jones. None of the other names helped him. He opened the left hand desk drawers and looked at the row of files. He did not like the idea of searching through them by himself, so he closed them. In the middle drawer of the desk, he found an address book, and as he was about to open it, the telephone rang.

"Mr. Aslet," Andrea was speaking to him. "I have located Mrs. Dalziel, at her sister's in Newport. She is holding on line 310."

"Thank you," Martin answered, and he pushed the flashing button above the number 310. "Mrs. Dalziel?"

"Yes. Who is this?"

The voice was dignified and very restrained. Mrs. Dalziel was not warm to those whom she suspected of working under her husband.

"I am Chief Martin Aslet of the Castine Police Department. I have some unpleasant news for you."

Martin paused, but no immediate response came from the other end of the line. The pause grew, and eventually Mrs. Dalziel said, "Yes."

"It's about your husband. I'm afraid....," And Martin hesitated. "I'm afraid he has died."

Martin heard Mrs. Dalziel take in a quick breath, and then there was silence, as if she was holding the breath in. Martin waited.

"What had happened?" said Mrs. Dalziel, letting the air escape from her lungs.

"It appears as if he has been murdered, Mrs. Dalziel. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, especially over the telephone."

"I understand," she responded, sounding as if she had taken a grip on her behavior. She sounded tightly controlled, saying no more than was necessary.

"It might be wise if you could return as soon as possible," suggested Martin.

"Of course, of course," said Mrs. Dalziel. "I'll return at once. Where can I find you?"

"Check with the President's secretary. I may still be in the administration building here. If not, I'll leave a telephone number where I can be reached." Martin paused. "I'm most sorry, Mrs. Dalziel. Is there anything I can do for you?"

She did not need time to consider. "No thank you. I'll be fine. I'll look for you later today. Goodbye, Mr. er."

"Aslet. Goodbye."

Martin pushed the extension button next to 310. Silence. He tried the others. Eventually, pressing the small button alone by itself at the end brought a voice to the telephone.

"Hello."

"Hello, Andrea. Can you get hold of the President's assistant and both of you come in here? Thanks."

The three of them spent the next hour going through the appointment book and the address book, and the files in the President's desk, identifying each one and checking its contents. The result was reasonably productive. Once faculty and relatives had been eliminated, there remained about a dozen unidentified names in the address book and a couple of files.

One of the files seemed to be concerned with the sale of some three hundred acres of land at the edge of Castine. The correspondence indicated that President Dalziel had been inquiring into buying the land. His secretary remembered typing the letters but could add nothing to what was contained in the letters. The President's assistant, a small quiet unassuming young man, about thirty years old, also could add nothing.

The second file concerned the loan of around one million dollars that the President had been trying to arrange and held mostly correspondence between Mr. Harrington Jones of the Jefferson Insurance Company and the President. Again, neither Andrea nor the President's assistant could add any information.

Martin thanked the secretary, and she took the hint and excused herself, returning to her desk in the reception area. After the door had closed behind her, Martin turned to the President's assistant, Neil Young. Martin had already taken a dislike to him. He had no verve, no energy. He was unassuming to the point of being a bore. A bore of the kind who has nothing to say rather than one who says too much. He had a boyish air, a permanent smile. Nauseating!

"Mr. Young," said Martin with a tone that implied some impatience at the outset, "Mr. Young, are you sure you know nothing about these transactions?"

Neil Young hesitated. "Well, no. Not really....," and he stopped.

"Mr. Young," and Martin's voice grew firmer. "You are the President's assistant. Mr. Jones has visited the President here at the college twice this month, and the President has visited Mr. Jones in Boston. You must know something of this. The President has been murdered, and we need information about his life. Now tell me what you know."

Mr. Young was clearly not a man who had much initiative. But he was used to responding to orders. Indeed, that was why he had been selected for the position as assistant to the President. A President's assistant needed to be meek and mild and good at following orders. He swallowed.

"Well yes. I see," he began. "Actually, the President, you realize, never took me into his complete confidence. But as far as I was able to pick up details, it seemed that there was this parcel of land in the town that was undeveloped, and the President had it in mind to purchase it. He had already contacted the real estate company that is handling the sale, and he had put down a small sum of money as an expression of interest in the property. However, the asking price was very high, I believe, and the President of course did not have anything like the funds available for its purchase. And so, I believe, he was trying to negotiate through Mr. Jones the loan of sufficient funds to finance the purchase."

Mr. Young stopped, almost out of breath.

"What did he want the land for?" Martin asked.

"I'm not really sure, you know," Mr. Young replied nervously.

"Guess!" ordered Martin harshly.

"Well, there were rumors that the rapid transit authority might be adding another couple of stations to the line out here, and that little piece of land would make an ideal location for the station." Mr. Young seemed nervous as he divulged this information. His face did not show his emotion, but his voice trembled, and he tripped over his words as he answered.

"I see. Thank you," Martin said, and indeed he saw. He had heard the same rumors. The rapid transit authority had been considering expanding its lines for many years, and Castine had often been mentioned as the route for a possible expansion. It looked like the President had had an inside tip and was planning to make some money if the route had been established.

Martin rested his chin on his hands, with his elbows on the desk. "Thank you, Mr. Young," he said. "I guess if I need you, you'll be in your office?"

Mr. Young said that he would and left the President's office. Martin sat back in the chair and sighed. His tiredness was coming back to him, but to forestall it he called the secretary and asked how he could get an outside line. She told him to dial 9 and then the number he wanted. He called his office and told them to have his next-in-command, Detective James Wilson, call him at the President's office, and he left the number. He replaced the telephone receiver, got up and walked over to the window, where he stood looking out over the meadows. He wondered what Jonathan was doing. Maybe he'd see him at lunch? He thought about how tired he felt. It was much easier for Martin to act decisively when others were around. His own staff or strangers. Left to himself, he idled. He needed the company of others to act and to think.

He had given Jim Wilson some orders before he left the President's house, and he wanted the answers. He rocked back and forth on the heels of his leather boots. "Come on Jim," he muttered. And he was soon rewarded by a call. He walked over to the telephone and picked it up.

"Jim? Great. Tell me what's new."

"Right. I checked with the people in the houses just along the road from his house. I found a lady who took her dog out for a walk last night around ten o'clock. She can't place it much closer than that. She does remember seeing lights on in the President's house, and she thinks that there were maybe a couple of cars in the driveway, but she's not sure. She was walking her dog along the grass verge by the road, and she wasn't paying much attention. I asked her if she noticed anything about the cars, and she said that they were ordinary cars. I reckon she means expensive. She has a Cadillac in her driveway, and the President had his Lincoln parked in his driveway this morning. She probably means a car like that. Then what?"

Jim Wilson paused to check his notes. "Oh yes. I went over to the Faculty Club. The President had supper over there around seven o'clock, in a private dining room on the first floor,

with a friend. The manager of the club has seen the friend several times over at the club but did not know his full name. He remembered his first name as Andy, and I got a description. I'm at the club now, and I've run out of ideas. I was going back to the office. Any suggestion?"

"No. That's fine Jim. That's helpful. I'll be in touch. I'm still at the college. Look after everything at the office for me. I'll call in from time to time, if you need me. Bye."

"Andy, Andy, Andy," Martin muttered as he checked his list of unknown names from the President's address book. "There it is. Andy!"

He dialed the number, and no one answered. He picked up the two files he had been examining, the address book, and his notes and left the room. He told Andrea, sitting at her desk, that he'd be back later, and he walked out to his car. He drove down the hill and out toward the exit of the college.

Along the road he saw Jonathan and a well wrapped-up lady walking, or more accurately trudging through the snow by the side of the road. He stopped and opened the door. He tipped the front seat forward, and Jonathan and Ann climbed into the back.

"Hi," said Jonathan. "Ann, this is the Chief of Police, Martin Aslet, my friend. Martin, this is Ann Latimer, Associate Professor of Psychology here. Where were you going? Why not join us? Come to the Club."

Martin parked in the Faculty Club lot, and the three of them entered the Club. They hung up their coats and scarves in the large closet to the side of the entrance hall, and Ann led them into the spacious dining hall on the first floor set aside for faculty and their guests. They chose a table next to the window, looking out onto the frozen lake, around which Jonathan had walked earlier that day.

Chapter 6

The Faculty Club at Castine College was a good half mile from the classrooms and dormitories. It was set back about thirty yards from the lake, and in summer the faculty could dine on the terrace between the club and the lake. During the academic year, the faculty dined upstairs by themselves, unless they had guests. Then they were required to use the dining room downstairs.

Lunch was a buffet-style meal. Jonathan filled his plate with a little of everything. A piece of roast chicken, one stuffed pepper, some deviled sea food, potatoes, noodles, two vegetables and bread. He also took a cup of soup. And he noted the jello and fruit salad for desert. Martin helped himself to the salad bar. Ann put three slices of cold roast beef on her plate and, when they had returned to their window overlooking the terrace and lake, ordered a scotch on the rocks from the waiter.

Martin looked surprised. "Roast beef and scotch?"

"It's my diet," said Ann. "All week I limit myself. And I lose about two or three pounds. Then on weekends I eat what I fancy and put the weight back on. It's a constant struggle."

Jonathan turned to Martin. "You look a little down, Martin. I would have thought you would have been excited by this investigation."

"So would I," replied Martin. "But I'm not. At least not right now. Sometimes I think I'll go crazy because of the tedium of this small town, and I long for some more interesting activity. Then, when it comes along, I feel overwhelmed. I think that I won't be able to cope. I get so

nervous thinking about everything that has to be done that I get paralyzed. I make lists of things to do, and that helps me to calm down. And then there is this fear that I simply won't find out who is the criminal. In other words, I will fail. And in this business, there is no partial success. You either find the criminal and succeed, or you fail. This morning, I was excited, full of energy and enthusiasm. But about mid-morning, I lost it all. Right now the crime seems unimportant. I just want to sit here by the window, eat lunch and idle the day away."

"Be my guest," said Jonathan, and he smiled at Martin. "You're allowed a time-out."

"But not to forget about the murder completely," said Ann. "Or else I will be most irritated. Tell me about the possibilities. Let's list them. I'll start. First, maybe the President is gay, and it was one of his homosexual lovers. Or his wife because she was jealous or offended by his homosexuality. What's third?"

Jonathan took over. "Well, it could be one of the three people upset about tenure decisions that just came out. Three people got turned down," and for Martin's information Jonathan listed them. "Richard Meredith in LITT, Fred Welford in POLS and Marian Schwartz in CHEM."

"What is POLS?" Martin asked.

"Political Science," Ann answered. "At Castine we talk in acronyms. What other possibilities?"

Martin told them about the land deal he had found out about. "Dalziel was trying to arrange financing for a loan of a million dollars to buy a piece of land that adjoins the college campus. I wondered why, and his assistant, a Neil Young if I remember correctly, told me that the Rapid Transit Authority plans to extend its railway line and might want to buy that piece of land."

"So, shady business dealings." Ann smiled. "It gets murkier. Love and sex, academic politics, and now the corrupt world of finance. The murder could be anyone in New England at this rate."

Martin pretended to frown. "I certainly hope not. By the way you two, tell me about the President's assistant, Neil Young. A real nerd. I didn't know how to deal with him at all, except to bully him."

Jonathan reflected. "I know Neil. He's very unsure of himself. The President here at Castine typically chooses a faculty member to be his assistant. It's a way of balancing the power. The faculty think that they have a representative in the President's chambers. However, no President with any sense would choose a strong assistant. The President wants no trouble from his assistant. Neil is a quiet unassuming fellow, who teaches mathematics here. As I said, he is shy and seems unsure of himself. He often avoids eye contact with you when you're talking to him. And he certainly would never disagree with, let alone fight with the President. But he's a nice person. Friendly, while being distant and reserved. He and I are on good terms."

"Well," said Martin, "he's the one who told me about the President's business deals. Finally. After a little persuading."

"So, is that all?" asked Ann. "Do we have any more possibilities?" She reached out and touched Martin's arm. "I hope you don't mind me inquiring so much. But this is exciting, you know. I really do want to know who did it, and here I am. A friend of Jonathan's and now having lunch with the Chief of Police. I can't suppress my inquisitiveness."

Martin smiled at her and removed his arm from her hand. "No, it's fine. I won't tell you anything I think you shouldn't know. There is one final tiny scrap of information. The President

had supper here last night with a person named Andy. He lives in New York, but there was no answer when I called the number just now. I plan to find out more about him."

Jonathan went to get his jello and fruit salad. "Well," he said on his return, "I'm a novice at this, but that seems a lot for a morning's work. Lots of possibilities, even if there is nothing definite yet."

The conversation seemed to have come to an end, but no one seemed ready to leave. So Jonathan, who hated silences in conversation, asked Ann about her latest research.

"How's your study on obscene telephone callers coming along?" he asked. "How are you going to collect any information on them? They must be hard to locate and interview."

"There are lots of telephone counseling services all over the country these days. Some group gets organized, finds some money to pay for the operation, and they're in business. You train a group of non-professionals to be telephone counselors....."

Martin interrupted. "Wait a minute. You mean they put non-professionals on the telephones to counsel sickies?"

"Yes. We call them paraprofessionals. Gives them a little status. You take high school graduates, college students, housewives, occasionally nurses and social workers, or graduate students in psychology and give them twenty-four hours of training. Then you put them on the phones."

"The blind leading the blind," commented Martin.

"To be fair, they do pretty well. Some research shows that they do better than the professionals. They are more free and less inhibited by some preconceived and misguided notion of how a social worker ought to behave. If you choose people with some sensitivity to others, they can be pretty effective."

"So what are you going to do?" Jonathan asked.

"Well, you get a lot of weird calls. For example, you get a lot of people who call up and say they must have dialed the wrong number. And you get chronic callers, people who call every day and won't get off the phone. But what I'm going to study is the masturbators. Some men call up these telephone centers so that they can masturbate while a woman talks to them."

"You're kidding?" Martin was surprised.

"No. Seriously. Some call up, and all you can hear is heavy breathing. Then maybe they ask the woman who's the counselor if she knows what they're doing. She usually says no, poor thing. The woman may think that he is crying, and she sympathizes with him about his depression for twenty minutes before he lets on that he is jerking off."

Jonathan grinned at Ann. He liked her. There was something charming about an elegant woman using crude phrases like 'jerking off'. He liked that.

Ann continued. "Or they may ask the woman to help them. Like, they'll ask whether she can picture their penis. How big it is. Or whether her legs are open and whether she's masturbating too."

"And you're going to study them?" Martin asked.

"No. Actually, I'm going to study the women."

"Come again." Martin said.

"The women who get these calls become very upset. Some get frightened, some get embarrassed, some get angry. You can't prepare them. You can warn them, but they still go to pieces when they get their first masturbator. So I'm going to study their reactions. I'll give some psychological tests to all of the women during the training. And then I'll categorize the ways that

they go to pieces when they get a masturbator. Then I'll see if there is an association between the personality of the woman and the way she goes to pieces. Then maybe I'll give them special training and see if they improve in their handling of the masturbators."

"How are you going to collect the data?" Jonathan asked.

"It's easy. I may tape the telephone calls. As you probably know, Martin, you can tape calls legally as long as one party knows they're being taped. Or I'll sit at the center and watch the counselors or listen in on an extension." Ann smiled. "Actually, it's fun. I've listened in to a lot of calls from masturbators, and it is amusing. The women just can't handle them. 'Really.....gasp.....I don't.....gasp.....I don't think I'm here to do that kind of thing.....gasp.' The men must get such a kick out of it. A voice on the telephone usually sounds so nice, and it's very intimate. The voice is close to your ear, very close. It can be very arousing."

Ann leaned back in her chair, smoking a cigarette, smiling at Martin and Jonathan. Jonathan smiled back at her. 'What a cherub' he thought. Martin looked blank. He seemed to be having trouble assimilating all of this. Eventually, he aroused himself.

"Oh, well," he said. "I must be getting back to the office. Thank you for the lunch and for the pleasant company. I hope I'll be seeing you again soon," he said to Ann. "Bye, Jonathan."

Jonathan watched him walk out of the dining room, and then he turned to Ann.

"You rogue!"

"Who me?"

"Yes, you. I know you too well. I know your tricks and your style."

"I can't think what you're talking about," she said, but she grinned at him.

"You were flirting, and you know it. All that talk about sex. That's how intellectuals flirt."

"So, what if I was?" she said. "And, anyway, you set me up, didn't you? You asked me about my research."

Jonathan leant across the table and kissed her on the cheek.

Chapter 7

Jonathan walked Ann back to her office in the Psychology Department and then decided to drop by Neil Young's. On his way there, he realized that he was passing close to the office of Richard Meredith, the instructor who had just been turned down for tenure. So he changed his route and passed by Meredith's office. The door was ajar, and Richard was inside.

Jonathan knocked on the door and walked in. "Hi, Dick. I heard the bad news. I'm really sorry."

Richard Meredith was about thirty-five years old. No, more like forty. He was going bald, and yet his skin still had the look of teenage acne. His face was frozen into a worried frown, and as he talked to you he continually pushed his glasses back closer to his eyes by applying one finger to the bridge. He was stopped over, even when sitting. He had been laughed at, behind his back of course, and ridiculed by his colleagues, but the unhappiness he radiated seemed independent of the low esteem in which he was held by his colleagues. In the controversy over the nature-nurture issue, it was clear that Richard Meredith had been born bald with a worried frown and glasses that wouldn't stay up on his nose.

"Hi. Hello, Jonathan. Yes, the bastards got me. You work your butt off, you crawl to those in power, and they still kick you out. Those alcoholic spinsters who run this place and their handmaiden, the President. At least he got his reward. I suppose you've heard?"

Jonathan sat down in the hard chair and leaned forward. "Yes, I've heard. People are talking about nothing else today. What are you going to do, Dick? Do you have any leads on another position?"

Meredith had, in fact, one and a half years to look for a new position. At Castine, tenure was decided well in advance of the final date so as to give those denied tenure a good chance of finding a new position.

"Actually, I'm probably going to leave academia, Jonathan. As you probably know, I've been dabbling around with computers. Learning how to program them and setting up programs for language drills and teaching the basics of grammar. A couple of years ago, I took a year off, and Castine supported me while I went back to graduate school for a year to learn how to do it all. In fact, I got a master's degree in library science. The library schools have decent computer courses these days, by the way. So dear Castine has paid for my re-training. I'm exploring a couple of jobs as a computer specialist with some companies in the Boston area. I'm close to coming to terms with one, at almost double my present salary, and so I may thumb my nose, as it were, at Castine before the year ends."

This news sounded excellent. But to judge from Meredith's expression it wasn't good. The frown had not left his face; the bitterness was still in his voice. Bad news, good news, Meredith was the same.

"That's great," said Jonathan. "You must be happy. You may even enjoy the work more than teaching undergraduates."

"I think I will. I like playing with computers. I find it very satisfying. But, I will be very pleased to leave Castine and let them know how little I needed them."

Richard Meredith was not one to ask how things were with you so, once Jonathan stopped asking questions, the conversation died. Jonathan took his leave.

Neil Young's office was at the other end of the building, near to the President's office. It was a small room, but Neil Young's living habits made it look very small indeed. The wooden bookcases were full with books, stacked in front of each other, with more lying sideways on top of those lined up neatly. Piles of paper were stacked on the floor, but even the stacks had toppled and this added to the confusion. The desk was several inches deep in papers of various kinds. Jonathan could see an examination blue-book there, with inter-office envelopes over there, a book lying face down opened, with its spine cracked here, a checkbook right in front of him. Neil had admitted that once he had cleared off his desk and found a pay check that was nine months at the bottom of the pile, uncashed.

Jonathan stopped examining the desk and looked up at the man seated behind it. Neil was small, pale, balding and plump. He smiled, steadily, and spoke with a quiet voice. He dressed in plain suits with cream shirts. Neat and tidy as a person. No extravagances. Except for the office. A tidy man in an incredibly untidy (but clean) office.

"Hello, Jonathan. It's good to see you. How are you doing? Is your writing coming along well?" Neil sounded very interested in Jonathan's life.

"Hello, Neil. Yes, I'm fine. How are you doing?"

"Pretty fair. Yes, pretty fair."

Jonathan avoided answering Neil's questions. "I had lunch with a friend of mine, Martin Aslet, the Chief of Police, and I got the impression that you and he had not gotten along well."

"Oh, that man!" Neil shuddered. "Yes. What an obnoxious man. Oh, I'm sorry. I mean, I don't mean to offend you. After all, you said he was a friend of your, but really! He was most aggressive. It was really quite difficult. I mean, what is one to do? This man is a police officer. He demands information from me, and there is no one I can check with as to whether to divulge it or not. The President is dead, murdered I believe. Such a terrible shock. And this police officer demands to know certain things, private things. It was most upsetting."

Neil twittered on. And Jonathan listened. The man was eccentric. But he had no malice in him, no evil. He was a thoroughly nice person. Jonathan liked him.

Jonathan told Neil that he knew about the land deal.

"Now that is most unethical of him to tell you that. A police officer should not go spreading information to the public like that. Someone really ought to complain."

"But, Neil. Actually I'm helping Martin in this case." Neil looked startled. "Yes," Jonathan continued, "I'm helping him. I'm an expert on murder, remember? So we're collaborating on this, Martin and I. The psychologist and the detective will together unmask this murderer."

"Oh." Neil was flustered. "Well, that's different. I can see that. Yes."

"Martin mentioned to me," Jonathan went on, "that the President had supper last night with someone named Andy over at the Faculty club. He's trying to locate Andy right now."

"Oh, dear me. That's terrible. I mean, I know Andy quite well. He's a good friend of the President, the late President I should say. He's staying in Boston. I ought to tell him. Do you think I ought to tell him that the police chief is looking for him? What do you think, Jonathan?"

Neil appealed for direction. Jonathan gave it. "I think that is a splendid idea." Jonathan heard himself talking like Neil and tried to correct himself. "Do that."

"Well, I am seeing him tonight, you know. I could tell him when we meet." Neil leaned confidentially across the desk toward Jonathan. "We're going out for a drink at DJ's. Do you know the place? It's rather fun."

"Yes, I know DJ's." Jonathan thought for a brief moment. "Neil, would you mind if I came along? I haven't been to DJ's for a while, and it might be interesting for me to meet Andy whoever, without the town police chief around. More natural, you know."

"That would be nice. Oh, please do come. We plan to get there at about ten. Oh, yes. Do come. That would be nice."

And so it was decided.

Chapter 8

Martin Aslet spent the first hour back at his office in the Castine Police Station clearing up some accumulated work. Letters to sign, meetings with town counselors to arrange, answering some questions from his administrative assistant about the budget proposal for next year.

He had asked his most experienced detective, James Wilson, to get in touch with and arrange a meeting with Mr. Harrington Jones of the Jefferson Insurance Company, and the two

of them drove in on the Massachusetts Turnpike to downtown Boston, where the Jefferson Insurance Company had its main office.

The Jefferson Building was fifty three stories high and was surfaced in brown-orange reflecting glass. Martin looked up at the building and saw the clouds in the clear winter sky reflected down to him. If the glass had not been colored, it would have seemed as if the building was not there. The distortions produced by the reflecting glass could have been explained away as disturbances in the air. A solid structure that seemed so insubstantial. A mirage. Yes, thought Martin, that's what it must be like. It exists, but yet takes up no space at all.

But as he entered the marble foyer and headed toward the directory board in order to locate the office of Mr. Jones, Martin reflected on the brashness of insurance companies. Insurance companies charge heavily. He knew from the amount he paid for car insurance, home insurance and life insurance. And if you dared claim, up went your premiums, or perhaps the company refused to insure you any more. And then they used their immense profits to build these conspicuous buildings. You suckers, they seemed to be saying. We overcharge you and give you poor service, and then we flaunt our huge profits. But, let's be fair. We do provide an observation deck on the top of our skyscraper that we let you visit for only two dollars. How can you say we have no civic responsibility?

By the time the elevator had reached the forty-seventh floor, Martin was quite incensed. He was ready to deal with Mr. Harrington Jones. The elevator opened into a vast room, with a receptionist sitting at a large desk located in the center of the room. Martin went across to her.

"I have an appointment to see Mr. Harrington Jones at 2.30. My name is Martin Aslet."

The receptionist dialed an extension and announced the visitor. "Mr. Jones will be down shortly," she said.

And within a couple of minutes Mr. Jones descended a staircase to the side of the receptionist's desk. "Ah, Mr. Aslet, delighted to see you. And Mr. Wilson. Welcome. Do come with me."

They ascended the staircase, perhaps some fifteen feet wide, with open sides, that spiralled upwards in the center of the receptionist's area. At the top, the corridors, carpeted in a thick burgundy carpet, led past prints and paintings elegantly on the walls, doors that led into suites of offices, and large alcoves that enclosed comfortable lounges.

Mr. Jones was tall and lean. He was dressed precisely in a dark grey suit. He was undistinguished, or rather unremarkable in these surroundings. After meeting him, you had an impression, but it was one of a business executive. And nothing more. It isn't true, Martin thought, that all blacks or orientals or whites look alike. It's people like these who all look alike.

The three of them entered the suite belonging to Mr. Jones and walked through into his office. They sat down in arm chairs set around a coffee table to the side of his desk.

"Would you like some coffee, Mr. Aslet? Mr. Wilson? Good. Carol," he said to the secretary who had ushered them into the office. "Would you get us three coffees? Thank you. How was the drive into town? Probably not too much traffic at this time of day. And parking was no problem, of course. With a police car, parking presents fewer problems than for us ordinary citizens. Ah, thank you Carol."

Carol had brought in three mugs of coffee, sugar, milk and two plates of cookies. An American version of high tea. They sipped and nibbled.

Martin began the business of the day. "I think you know why we're here, Mr. Jones. The President of Castine College has been murdered. Detective Wilson here informed you, I believe?"

"Yes, he did. But I'm not sure why you have come to see me." Harrington Jones seemed to focus his attention more on his cookie than on his guests.

Martin looked Harrington Jones in the eye and held his look when he eventually looked up at Martin. "Mr. Dalziel was hoping to purchase a parcel of land near Castine College. About three hundred acres. And you were helping him obtain financing for it, I believe?" Martin raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, that is true. But what has that to do with Douglas's murder? Is there some connection?"

Martin continued to hold Harrington Jones's eyes. "I really don't know. But I'm trying to piece together Mr. Dalziel's life. All the components of it. Mr. Dalziel as President of Castine College. Mr. Dalziel as...er...husband and father. Mr. Dalziel as business entrepreneur. We found a good deal of activity around this business transaction, and so we felt we ought to investigate it."

"I see. Well, what can I tell you?"

"Mr. Jones, you are a vice-president in charge of planning and development here at Jefferson. Correct? I thought so. To someone like me, who has little knowledge of the financial world, it seems odd that Mr. Dalziel came to you here rather than a bank for financing. Perhaps you could explain this to me?"

Harrington Jones again turned to his cookie. A new cookie. "Many institutions look for ways to invest their money, Mr. Aslet. Banks of course. But insurance companies have a great deal of cash to invest. And property is an excellent investment."

Martin allowed a momentary silence to lengthen. "But surely an insurance company would buy up the land for, itself to hold onto, develop or resell? You wouldn't help a private individual make money, surely?"

Harrington Jones gave this question some thought. "You're correct. Not usually. Actually Douglas and I are good friends. We have served on the same boards as directors, and we have met socially a great deal. In fact, Douglas was not planning to actually borrow the money from Jefferson. We were working together to obtain a consortium of sources to lend us.....to lend the money for the purchase of the land near Castine."

"So Mr. Dalziel was not to be the sole owner?"

"No. In fact, he and I and another partner planned to be the purchasers. Each of us had chipped in a little contribution, and we planned to finance the rest."

"Who was to be the third partner?" Martin asked.

Harrington Jones hesitated. "Andrew North, a television executive from New York."

Martin pursued the topic. "What was the status of the financing?"

"Actually, we were having some difficulty. The banks I had approached seemed a little reluctant to provide support. To be honest, Mr. Aslet, I was surprised at the resistance I was encountering. It was unusual."

"How did you learn that the Transit Authority was planning to extend its line out to Castine?"

"Mr. Aslet, that kind of information is very confidential. Let us say that a friend of mine who is in a position to know hinted at the possibility."

"Would other people have heard of the possibility?"

"You know, perhaps that is the case. As soon as word gets around of the Transit Authority's plans, then everyone will try to buy land speculatively, and financing will become difficult. The people with money to lend would do better to purchase the land themselves. Perhaps that could account for the resistance that I was encountering?" Harrington Jones turned his chair toward the window and gazed out at the sky, considering this possibility.

"So you might have had competitors for available money?"

"Yes, perhaps."

"Why is this group composed of just you three people? Yourself, Mr. Dalziel, and this Mr. North? By the way, might I get Mr. North's address and telephone number from you?"

"Surely. My secretary can get it for you. Oh, the three of us have been acquaintances for a long time. We have participated in several other ventures together. We now naturally turn to one another when a new opportunity arises. Mr. Aslet, do you really think that this has anything to do with the President's death? It seems so unlikely to me."

"Mr. Jones, I have no idea. I'm simply trying to construct a picture of the President's life in the period before he died. I shall have to talk to his family, his colleagues at the college, his business friends, and his social acquaintances. I want to get a sense of what situation Mr. Dalziel was in prior to his death. What concerns, what problems, what tensions? That will help me get a sense of who the murderer might be. Then, together with any evidence, as we say, from the commission of the crime, I may be able to propose a solution to this crime. May I leave you with a couple of tasks? I would greatly appreciate a list of other ventures that you and Mr. Dalziel had been involved in and their outcome. Also a list of institutions you had approached for financing the land purchase. Would that be possible? Good. Oh, and one thing more. Could I have a list of recent meetings, telephone calls and written communications you've had with Mr. Dalziel, as far as you can reconstruct them. My assistant, Detective Wilson here, has some tasks to do downtown. He could stop by in a couple of hours to pick up the lists if that is convenient?"

Martin stood up and turned to face Harrington Jones.

Harrington Jones hesitated once more. "Er....I suppose so. I am rather busy, but you need this information. Yes. I can have the information you need by five o'clock, say."

"Goodbye, Mr. Jones. Thank you for your help." Martin turned and walked out of the office, followed by Jim Wilson.

"Goodbye, Mr. Aslet." Harrington Jones waited until the office door was closed. Then he picked up his telephone receiver and dialed out. "Is that the Boston Garden Hotel? Could you connect me with Mr. Andrew North's room please. Thank you."

Chapter 9

Jonathan was dancing around his living room. He had the record player on very loud, but he could hear the sound of his front door opening above the noise. His wife was home. He stopped, somewhat embarrassed. Did she know he danced by himself to his records? If she were to know, what would she think? He walked into the hallway to greet her.

They kissed, and he followed her into the kitchen. He went to the refrigerator, got her a light beer and poured it into a glass mug for her.

"How was the day?" he asked her.

Claire sunk into a director's chair by the kitchen table, dropped her briefcase by the chair and looked exhausted.

"Dreadful," she said.

Yet Jonathan knew that she loved her work. It was tiring and demanding, but it was her life. It alone provided her identity. His wife was director of personnel at an insurance company. She had risen through a variety of less important positions to achieve her present job, and she had aspirations of moving even higher. She was a business woman. She was dressed today, as she always was, in an Evan Picone suit, a suit with a skirt of course. Her blouse was one of many she had, light in color; today's was white, with a few frills and ruffles. Her hair, light brown, was waved and still in place after her grueling day. Her make-up was subdued, but clearly present. Her shoes had a moderate heel, not too high and not too thin. She exuded professionalism, and that excluded a lot of other qualities often found pleasant in people, such as warmth, humor and sociability.

"Mark is thinking of closing the office in Worcester," she said. "So I have to work on a proposal for dealing with the personnel relocations, firings, lawsuits, and union protests that will result. I'll probably have to spend the whole weekend working on it."

"If he closes the Worcester office," Jonathan asked, "will that mean a move for you?"

Claire considered. "I could go to the Boston office. But Mark is getting restless. I think he may look for a position in another company. And he would probably want me to go with him."

Mark Kirkland had moved a good bit in his career as a business executive. Claire had gone to work for him in Boston several years ago, and, as he had moved to higher positions in each new company, he had taken Claire with him and given her a position under him. Since he had risen in status, Claire's successive jobs had involved more and more responsibility, with much higher pay along with the increased responsibility. Claire was Mark's protege, and she would probably move with him again. Jonathan had wondered, and occasionally it had been discussed, what would happen if Mark moved out of the New England area and asked Claire to go with him. Since Jonathan worked at the college only part-time, he had little to keep him here. He could easily move to wherever Claire wanted to go. But would he?

Claire shuddered. "Ugh. I've so much work to do. Starting tonight."

"Can you work on it here?"

"Oh yes," Claire replied. "I've brought all the necessary papers and figures home with me. Oh, what a job! I hope you don't mind being deserted for the evening?"

Jonathan grinned at her. "You love it, and you know it. Even if it is killing you. No, I'll be fine. I'll call up someone and go out for a drink or something. I've been busy today, and I need to relax."

Claire smiled at him. But then frowned. "This place is a mess again," she said, looking around at the papers and books piled on the chairs and stacked on the floors in the dining room across from the kitchen. It was true. He hadn't tidied the place up and hadn't vacuumed the house for about a week. He had washed the dishes that day though.

"So what?" he said. "Did you eat supper?"

"No, I didn't get a chance. And I was too tired to eat on the way home."

"Shall I get a pizza from around the corner? Or thaw a steak? What would you like?" Jonathan asked her.

"A pizza would do."

So a pizza it was.

Most of Jonathan's friends disliked Claire. Hating her would be more accurate. And hating her, they couldn't see why Jonathan had married her or why, having married her, he stayed married to her. She was cold and unfriendly. She put him down in private and also in public. She saw herself as superior to him and to all of his friends. Her work was serious. Their work was play and useless. She believed in the adage "Those that can, work; those that can't, teach." College was for Claire a way of keeping kids off the streets for four years and out of the job market.

Jonathan did complain about her to his friends on occasions. But mostly he said little. Once he and Martin had been drinking, and Jonathan had said, "Once I thought that the relationship with Claire was the best I could ever hope for. After all, people on the whole are yucky. They let you down, ignore you, hurt you. They leave you to initiate and suggest and pursue, while they sit back and passively respond. Love and marriage just don't happen in real life like they do in the movies.

"But just once I thought I'd met someone who was different. Who seemed to provide the hope of a relationship just like I wanted. Who seemed perfect. But as I got to know her, it turned into hell. When Claire treats me like shit, it's ok. I expect it. She's a bitch. So she acts like a bitch. But when my lover acted even a little bit rejecting, it was overwhelming. She wasn't supposed to act like that. A hint of rejection from her was far worse than complete rejection from Claire. From my lover, the pain was too great to bear. And I got terrified at what the loss of her would mean. If she were to leave me? If she were to change someday into a different person? I found that I couldn't deal with something as precious as what she offered. I was too scared. And my anxiety helped destroy the relationship. I settled for what was safe, predictable and whose loss I could endure."

Jonathan and Claire ate the pizza in the kitchen, and they told each other about their days. Jonathan listened to the difficulties that Claire faced as a result of the closing of the Worcester office. He asked questions, and his interest stimulated Claire to discuss the problems in more detail. She showed enthusiasm and energy as she told him of the tasks that were in store for her. Eventually, she asked him how his day had been, and he told her about the murder of the President.

For once she was really interested in Jonathan's day. His teaching and his writing bored her. But the President had been an important person in the college community. Claire had liked him. She liked important people. But he had also been her type of person. He was concerned

with management problems, cost effectiveness, personnel decisions. Claire and the President found that they had a lot of common interests, and they had liked each other. They were on first name terms, and the two couples had socialized on several occasions. Claire and Jonathan were frequent guests at the President's dinner parties, and they had occasionally gone to the orchestra or ballet with the President and his wife.

Claire was shocked by the news. She found it difficult to accept. She showed no grief. It wasn't that she mourned the President. But she was shocked at the death of such a person. College Presidents do not get murdered. Common people do, not those with position. She asked about details, the evidence, the speculation.

Jonathan told her about the poker. He was surprised at himself. He was aware that he had not told anyone at the college about the poker, sensing that he should not. But his wife, even in this only moderately intimate marriage, was different. He had few secrets from Claire, and he didn't want to have secrets from her. But he was continually surprised at how open he was with her.

"It has to be one of the faculty," Claire concluded. "Who else would do such a bizarre thing? Or one of their pathetic little wives."

"Perhaps it was one of the forceful, dominant wives?" Jonathan teased. "Or one of the pathetic little husbands."

Claire smiled at him. Sometimes the man had spirit, and that she liked.

Chapter 10

Jonathan drove over to East Dormitory, and he walked into the entrance located in the central part of the building. He entered into a formal lounge and gave his name to the freshman at the front desk, asking her to call Terry Morant. He sat down in an armchair and waited. In a couple of minutes, Terry came running down from the staircase.

She was out of breath. "Hi," she said.

"Hi. Are you ready? Let's go."

They walked out to his car. He opened the passenger door for her, and she got in. He went around to the driver's side, while she leaned over and unlocked it for him. He got in, closed the door, and since it was dark turned to her and kissed her.

"Hi," he said again. "You look wonderful."

She said nothing, but sat there looking at him. He kissed her again. They had been lovers for two months. Terry had been in his class the previous semester and had been more outgoing than the average Castine student. She asked him questions, criticized him on occasion for skirting issues that he didn't want to discuss, dropped by his office to say hello when she was using the Psychology Department library, and so made herself noticeable. During that semester, he had invited her to lunch a couple of times at the Faculty Club, and she had invited him twice to the dormitory dining rooms on Tuesday nights when students were allowed, and even encouraged, to invite faculty members for a meal and coffee afterwards.

The meals were formal. The professor sat with four or five students for a meal that was served by freshmen and sophomore waitresses. Afterwards, everyone retired to a lounge where

each professor sat surrounded by the students who had invited him. The students typically sat on the floor, at the professor's feet, and thirty minutes of desultory conversation ensued.

Except when Terry had invited Jonathan Clark. The first time, he entertained them with anecdotes. Even if his own life had been dull at times, he had read enough case histories of deviant individuals to provide material for such times. He would tell of strange sexual deviations, or psychopathic personalities who had tricked others, or whatever had struck him as weird in his recent forays into the psychiatric journals. And his admiring students laughed.

The second time Terry had invited him to dinner, she had attacked him for being a sexist because of his presentation of Sigmund Freud's theory of human development. Castration anxiety, the Oedipal complex and other concepts were all sexist, and so the theory was limited. Jonathan was surprised by her attack - and pleased. He so rarely met a student with spirit and who could demonstrate the intelligence that all of the students clearly had, but seemed to hide except on their examinations.

He began to think about her more, and more. And as he thought about her more, he noticed her more. She was attractive, with long straight black hair that lay thick down her back. She was both pretty and glamorous. She wore make-up, which was unusual for the Castine students, who typically looked like wrecks all week, dressing themselves up only for their weekend dates with men from neighboring colleges. He used to wonder what she looked like without the make-up, in the morning as she woke up. She wore jeans a lot, and she complained about how overweight she was. He always told her that she looked fine, which he truly thought.

As she dropped by his office again and again, their conversations became more friendly, more personal and more intimate. He learnt of her boy friend back in her home state. He learnt about her friends on campus and the dramas in their lives. He even learnt about her urinary tract problems. She spoke in direct, harsh and crude language. She seemed so frantic and tense that again he would wonder what she was like when she was no longer acting in public. Was she the same in private, or did a different Terry reveal herself? Eventually, after the final exam had been graded, she came by his office to find out how well she had done. She was such a good student that he couldn't believe she was worried, but she was. Like good students, she was anxious about her performance, and she was truly concerned about her grade. He had teased her.

"Oh, come on! You know you did all right. You know you got an A."

"Thanks a lot," she snapped at him. "I stayed up and studied till two in the morning the night before the exam. I hardly slept afterwards. I took your damn fucking exam. And all you can say is not to worry. You'd better never become a therapist, Dr. Clark, because you'd be no fucking good!"

He really liked her.

After he had apologized to her, she stayed and talked. He was sitting on his desk while she sat in his office chair. He placed his hand on hers. They looked at each other. She left her hand under his, and he pushed his office door closed with his foot. And their affair had started.

In public, they still remained discrete in their behavior, though they knew that, in a small college like Castine, an event like their affair would be noticed and reported, watched and analyzed by everyone. But Castine also valued appearances. Affairs were fine as long as the participants behaved themselves. Only unseemly affairs were punished.

Kissing in the car was not seemly. But it was dark, and the icy night had misted the windows inside the car. So Jonathan kissed her.

"Where are we going?" Terry asked him as they drove out of the college.

"We're going to DJ's, a disco in downtown Boston," Jonathan replied, waiting for her response.

"DJ's," she exclaimed. "That's a gay disco. Have you gone queer without telling me?" She leaned over, kissed his ear and put her hand on his crotch. "You seemed all right to me yesterday evening." She leaned back in her seat and smiled.

Jonathan explained things to her. They were meeting Neil Young there, and he was going to introduce them to Andy, the late President's friend. Terry was thrilled. For all of her frenetic behavior, her pretended coarseness and her apparent worldly sophistication, she was a relatively ordinary girl who had been raised a Catholic and who had only one boy friend in her life, for the last five years, but who fought against the confining nature of her past and present existence. Her joyfulness was a protest against her potential dullness. Dullness was what she feared. It was close to deadliness for her. So a visit to a gay bar and disco was an adventure. Something that would prove to herself that she was alive and not mildewing in a suburban existence.

And DJ's was an experience. It was set in a row of downtown stores, most of which had been abandoned. The street was pretty much deserted except for the traffic in and out of the disco. Each time the door swung open, the sound of the music burst forth and then disappeared as the door closed. Inside, the place was crowded. To the left was a bar and tables for people to sit at. To the right was a dance floor. The dance floor was raised up and had lights bordering it. People danced up on the floor, while others stood and walked around the dance floor, talking to each other and watching the dancers.

The music was loud, very loud. The beat, amplified to the maximum limit of the speakers, seemed to engulf you. Jonathan's chest vibrated with the sound. The special versions of the music, made for discos, always seemed to Jonathan so superior to the records sold to the general public. The beat was more insistent, the climaxes longer and more potent, the music unending.

As they entered the dancing area, people turned to look at Terry. Not because she was a woman, for there were a few women scattered among the crowd. But because she was different. The women, mostly lesbians, but including a few girl-friends of men, were drab. It wasn't the style here to dress grandly or wear make-up. Army fatigues or workman's overalls were in fashion here, and Terry seemed as out of place here as at the college. But she liked that. And Jonathan liked it too. They climbed up to the dance floor and danced. He danced in the style of sixties, with sharp movements and jerky steps. Terry danced in the style of the seventies, with grace and flowing lines, weaving and floating. He loved dancing, but also hated it. He would watch the flow of her movements and try to break them down into components, so that he could imitate them. He wanted to dance in synchrony with her, but never could. He jerked while she flowed. But soon, he stopped caring. The music deadened his hearing but gripped him even more by its rhythm until it began to isolate him from the others. He danced as if it were a meditation, a solitary exercise made legitimate by the nearby presence of a partner.

They danced, and danced again, and then fell into each other's arms, sweating. "A drink, a drink. My kingdom for a drink," he gasped as they pushed and slid between bodies into the bar.

He saw Neil at a table with a couple of other men, and they made their way over. The air in the bar seemed fresh compared to the sweaty and sexual odor near the dance floor.

"Hello Neil. This is Terry. I don't think you've met."

"No. Hello Terry. This is Andy, and this is Roger." Neil seemed ill at ease, as if the presence of Terry was unsettling, or perhaps at having to introduce men who were possibly

lovers to a heterosexual couple. But Jonathan knew that this was simply Neil's style. His shy reticence would have been cute in a woman, but made him seem gay to the college community, which he was.

As the small talk progressed, Jonathan studied Andy. He was a large, somewhat overweight man. His extra weight did not distort his body, but simply made him seem larger. He was jovial and clearly at ease in social settings. As they talked, it came out that he worked in advertising in New York City, mainly making television commercials. He had travelled, he was well informed and he was sure of himself. An ideal lover for Douglas Dalziel, the urbane and suave President of Castine College. Conveniently out of state, too. The right type and the right location.

Neil mentioned that Jonathan was from the college, and so the conversation drifted to the murder of the President.

"I vaguely remember Douglas mentioning your name, I think," said Jonathan. "Could that be right?"

Andy hesitated and then admitted, "Yes, I had met him on several occasions, when he was down in New York on college business. We had mutual friends."

Terry leaned forward, with a confidential air. "Tell me," she said. "All the students are convinced he is gay. What do you think?"

In the college environment, Terry could shock by being noisy and boisterous. Here, her boisterous would not have stood out so much, so she had chosen a different tack.

Andy hesitated again. "Well.....er.....I wouldn't know about that. It's not the kind of topic that came up, would come up iner.....the meetings we had, you know."

Terry pursued her point. "But one can tell. You know that. By the mannerisms, the style, those subtle cues. You must be sensitive to that. You must have formed some opinion."

One either took a dislike to Terry, or one liked her. Opinions didn't take long to form, a few minutes at the most. And they tended to be extreme. A few minutes had passed. It appeared that Andy liked her. He smiled at her.

"Well, all right. Yes. He seemed gay to me. But I knew that he had a wife and two children. So you hesitate to form a definite opinion. But I also know so many gay men with apparently straight lives. So you can discount the family. The mannerisms clinch it. The clothes, the voice, the cadence, the gestures. They were all gay."

"Did you take him places in New York." Terry continued her probe, smiling confidentially at Andy.

Andy was captivated by her. He smiled back and admitted, "He asked me to take him to some gay clubs, and so I obliged. I'm a member of a couple of exclusive clubs, and it was safe enough to take him to those. Anyone he met there and recognized would clearly be as discrete about his presence as they would want him to be about their presence."

"His death must have been upsetting to you," Jonathan commented.

"The death of someone you know is always a shock. It makes death seem more real than the death of a stranger, even if you see it in minute detail on a television screen or in a movie. A person you knew and talked to is now dead. I'm old enough to fear the presence of death in people I know. But, you see, I never knew him that well." Andy smiled.

And the conversation changed course. They ordered more drinks, and Andy even asked Terry to dance.

"What did he talk about?" Jonathan was intrigued and quizzed her as they drove back to the college.

"Oh, fashions, styles. That sort of thing. He admired my earrings and my clothes. He treated me a little as if I were an objet d'art. A specimen to be admired and appreciated and perhaps valued."

"There are many gay men who really like women," Jonathan said. "They like to go out with them, be seen with them, and act completely at ease with them. I have a friend whose bathroom wall is covered with photos, including dozens of him with various women. Maybe it's like a night out with the girls for them?"

"Huh," was the comment from the passenger's seat. "They can find somebody else. I want to be treated like a woman. Not an accessory. Speaking of which," she leant across the car toward Jonathan, "I want you. Tonight."

So they drove to the Psychology Department, and he led down darkened corridors, illuminated only by the occasional emergency light, to the Psychology Laboratory.

Thursday

Chapter 11

Jonathan awoke when the radio came on at seven to arouse Claire, but he lay snug in the warm bed listening to Claire take her shower, make breakfast and prepare for the day ahead. The door opened and closed as she went out to collect the newspaper. In a little while, she brought him a cup of coffee. She set it down on his bedside table and leant over and kissed him.

"Here's your coffee, Jonathan."

"Thanks, love," he replied. The morning ritual. The moments before sleep and those on waking were often the only times of intimacy and warmth for them. "Have a good day."

"Bye, Jonathan."

Jonathan dozed until he noticed the alarm clock flashing 8:01. "Actually," he thought, "it's not the numbers that flash on and off. It's the colon separating the hours and minutes. Interesting. 8:02. Hey! Why don't I join Martin and Jim for breakfast?"

He flung the sheets off and sat up. He walked to the bathroom, gingerly testing his right ankle. These days it was always painful in the morning. The result of those silly shoes he had worn on that trip to Greece. He sat down on the toilet to pee. And sighed. Electric razor. Shave. Shower. Head and Shoulders. Rinse under the arms and between the legs. Mustn't leave soap there. Water Pik and brush teeth. Deodorant.

He dressed in jeans, shirt and sweater, and his Trax running shoes from K-Mart. Ski parka, a scarf carefully covering his neck, gloves and in the car by 8:27.

He drove through the town which looked clean and bright in the cold winter sun rising in the clear blue sky. Just past the traffic light in town was the Midway Diner. Jonathan often

wondered what the diner was midway between, but he had never asked. He saw a Castine police car parked by the diner, and he went in and sat down next to Jim and opposite Martin in the booth.

"Hi guys," he said.

"Fancy that! Our forensic psychologist has got up early today," Martin teased and smiled at Jim. "Murder stimulates him."

The waitress brought a cup of tea for Martin and a cup of coffee for Jim. "The usual?" she asked.

Martin and Jim both said yes.

"What do you want?" she asked Jonathan.

"Two scrambled eggs dry, toast and coffee, please."

Jonathan liked this place. The same people had breakfast here every day. They sat in the same places and had the same breakfast. The waitresses knew them and sometimes didn't bother to ask them what they wanted for breakfast. The repetition of the pattern was comforting, and Jonathan liked to join them now and then. It also gave him an excuse to have a large breakfast.

"So what do we do now?" Jonathan asked eagerly. "What did you find out yesterday, Martin?"

Martin considered. "Well, Jim and I went to visit a Mr. Harrington Jones at the Jefferson Insurance Company. Jones is a partner of the President in his business deals along with an Andrew North." And Martin related the conversation of yesterday.

Jonathan asked, "What was your impression of the man, Martin?"

Martin turned to Jim. "What do you think Jim?"

Jim seemed pleased to be asked for his opinion. "I feel sort of out of place with people like that," he said. "The whole setting and the style of the people there makes me feel socially inferior. So it's hard for me to judge things accurately." He paused and, when Jonathan and Martin kept looking at him, continued. "Jones was what I expected. Cool, calm, aloof, cautious. But I felt maybe he was crooked. I mean, that he had something to hide. He seemed too cautious. But for me, it's hard to know for sure."

Martin agreed. "No Jim. I felt it too. Which is why I pushed for those lists. You got them ok?"

"Yes," said Jim and got them out of his pocket.

The first was a list of previous business deals of the President and his friends.

1972 purchase and sale of 300 acres in Hyannisport on

Cape Cod

1974 purchase and development of five acre site in

Medford for a shopping plaza

1977 incorporation of the First Bank of Medford

1979 purchase of Downtown Motor Inn in Boston

1980 purchase of four Wendy's franchises in Boston

1981 merger of First Bank of Medford with the Market

Street Bank of Boston

1981 sale of Downtown Motor Inn

1981 sale of Wendy's franchises

"Well, that's obvious enough." Martin sat back.

Jonathan was puzzled. "It is? Not to me. What do you see?"

"The bank deal is critical," Martin explained. "They start a bank, and then they have a ready supply of cash. As the deposits build up, they can loan themselves, or stand-ins, money for their projects. Then they merge. I'll wager they were investigated and were told to get out. The Market Street Bank takes over and calls in the loans. So Dalziel and his associates have to refinance or sell their projects. They sell the hotel and fast food franchises. This Castine land deal was their first venture since then. Jim, get in touch with the President of the Market Street Bank. Find out why they bought the First Bank of Medford. Also call the State Banking Commission and see what they can tell us. I wish we could find out what Harrington Jones's reputation is around town. I wonder how long he's been at Jefferson?"

Jonathan had an idea. "Claire works in insurance. I could call her and ask her to see if she can find out what his reputation is."

"Great," said Martin. "Just what we need."

"By the way," Jonathan added, "I met the other fellow, Andy North, last night."

Martin was surprised. "You did. We haven't met with him yet, though I've arranged to have lunch with him today. How did you meet him?"

Jonathan told them about going to see Neil Young and going to DJ's where he met Andy North. "He's gay. But not so you'd notice. He is educated, upper middle class, involved in television somehow. Worldly. Sure of himself. Discrete. If you met him elsewhere you'd never guess he was gay. If you want a wild guess, I'd bet he was Dalziel's lover."

"Steady?" asked Martin.

"When in New York," Jonathan replied, "Andy probably has other lovers too. Dalziel has his wife. Strange how we keep using the present tense," Jonathan remarked. "He's dead, but we talk as if he's still alive."

"He is," said Martin. "He is present, in a sense, until this case is solved. Physically he is dead. But he lives on in our puzzle."

"Hmm," said Jonathan. He finished his eggs and spread his second piece of toast with apple jelly. "What about the body, by the way? Did the pathologist have anything to say? On television, the pathologist contributes a clue."

"Clues! You amateur!" Martin smiled. "But you're lucky. Len did discover something. You tell it, Jim."

Again Jim looked pleased to be called on. He cleared his throat. "The President was killed by a couple of blows to the back of his head. A blunt instrument that didn't cut the surface skin. There was a subarachnoid hematoma that led to pressure on the tissues in the brain stem. That in turn interfered with the body's involuntary functions. In fact, the President stopped breathing."

Jim paused. "There was one other finding. Len found semen in the President's rectum. So it looks as if he had intercourse prior to his death."

Martin and Jim began to talk about Len Harvey, the pathologist, telling anecdotes about him. Jonathan thought. A couple of blows to the head. Calm or angry? Then later a poker is inserted. Calm and deliberate. He wasn't beaten with the poker. It was inserted carefully. The blows to the head could have been impulsive. By luck, the murderer grabbed something close at hand that wasn't sharp. That wouldn't cut skin. The marble vase found on the living room floor. Jonathan waited for the end of Jim's story about Len Harvey.

"Doesn't a cut on the scalp bleed profusely?" he asked.

"Yes," Jim answered. "A head wound always looks so much worse than the actual damage because of the bleeding. A little cut, and you look like you're dying."

"What about the marble vase you noticed downstairs? Was it the murder weapon?" Jonathan asked.

"We don't know," Jim replied. "There were no substances on it to rule it in or out."

Jonathan went back to his thoughts. If he were going to kill someone with a blow to the head, what would he use? A sock full of sand. No that probably wouldn't work. But wait a bit! Those blackjacks that crooks use. He had been over at Fred's once for supper. Fred Welford. He taught about organized crime at the State Police Training Academy and had become friendly with some of the police officers out there. He went out drinking with them. He'd even helped get the daughter of one of them admitted into Castine College. And they had given him blackjacks when they found them on criminals because they knew he liked to collect them.

Fred had brought out a grocery bag full of them. Mostly leather, with heavy metal weights inside them. They felt as heavy as lead, but they were well padded by the leather.

Jonathan heard Martin address him. "What else did I find out? Oh, I went and talked to one of the faculty turned down for tenure by the President. A Richard Meredith. Miserable fellow. We used to call him brown nose behind his back."

"Why?" asked Jim.

"Why brown nose? Oh because he always licked the Department Chairman's arse." Jim still looked puzzled. "He'd get shit on his nose," explained Jonathan.

Jim laughed, but looked embarrassed that he hadn't understood the phrase.

"Anyway," Jonathan went on, "he's almost settled on a new job. He's looking for a computer job in industry, and he'll be gone by May. Jobs are plentiful in the computer field. I haven't run into the other two yet." Jonathan paused. "How's Mrs. Dalziel doing?"

"I don't know," Martin answered. "I'm off to see her this morning. Would you like to come along with me? I'm due over at the President's house at ten. Why don't you meet me there?"

"Ten. Sure. I'll be there."

Martin and Jim stood up to leave. "See you at ten."

Jonathan moved closer to the window, to sit in the sun. He asked the waitress for more coffee and got out the book he always took with him to read in unfilled moments.

Chapter 12

The telephone rang. "Hello. The Massachusetts Insurance Group. Can I help you?"

"Extension 386 please."

"Hello."

"Is Mrs. Clark in?"

"Who's calling?"

"Ellen, this is Jonathan, her husband."

"Hello. I'll put you through."

"Yes?"

"Claire? This is Jonathan."

"Oh, hi. What do you want?"

"I had breakfast with Martin. He met one of the President's business partners yesterday. Harrington Jones, a vice president at Jefferson. Martin wanted to know what is said about Jones in the business world. His reputation. Any rumors. Things like that."

"Why? Is he a suspect?"

"I'm not sure. He was a business partner of Dalziel's, and they may have been involved in some illegal transactions. Martin can find out the official records on the transactions. But he wants the more informal feeling about Jones in the insurance world. Can you find out?"

"Yes. Easy. I'll talk to you this evening when I get home."

"Oh, Claire. Don't forget the party tonight at the college. Joyce Greenfield invited us. Remember?"

"Right. See you tonight dear."

"Bye."

Chapter 13

Miriam Dalziel opened the door herself to Jonathan and Martin. Such a splendid house seemed to require a servant to open the front door. And in the evenings when the President and his wife had been entertaining, they always had someone on hand. But today, there was Miriam. She hadn't changed much over the years. When Jonathan first came to the college, someone had organized a square dance, and the Dalziels had put in an appearance. Jonathan and Claire had been in an eightsome with Miriam and Douglas Dalziel. As Jonathan had swung Miriam around, he had noticed how carefully she held herself. It was as if she was a precious piece of bone china, and she had to hold herself carefully so she wouldn't fall and break.

She hadn't changed. Stately and elegant. Not a beautiful woman, but fine looking. Her face often seemed frozen into its socially appropriate expression. Jonathan had rarely seen hints of Miriam's true feelings show through that expression. Occasionally, after a few drinks, at the end of the evening, when Douglas was off talking to Claire and others, Miriam would look authentic.

Today, she had her usual expression. Self control.

"Jonathan! How are you? I didn't expect to see you here."

"I'm working with Martin here as a psychological consultant on the case. Do you know Martin?"

"I believe we have met, Mr. Aslet. Won't you come in?" And she led them into the lounge. A large room with dark wood panelling, just like the entrance foyer. Several chairs and two sofas were situated on a lush rug in front of the fireplace. They sat down, Miriam and Martin in chairs and Jonathan at the end of one of the sofas.

"How can I help you, Mr. Aslet?" Miriam asked him.

"I'm trying to reconstruct the last few days of Mr. Dalziel's life. When did you last see your husband?"

"Let me see. Today is Thursday. I went down to my sister's on Monday. I saw Douglas at breakfast on Monday. He went over to the college, and I drove down to Newport that morning. I talked to Douglas on the telephone that day, in the evening I believe. And again on Tuesday evening."

Martin, who was making notes, looked up. "What time Tuesday evening did you call your husband?"

"Around dinner time. About 6.30 pm. I found him at the Faculty Club."

"Do you know what your husband had planned for Tuesday evening, Mrs. Dalziel?"

"He was eating at the Club. After that I have no idea. I assumed he was coming home here."

"Do you know who he was dining with?"

"A friend. Andrew North. They were having drinks when I called."

"Mrs. Dalziel, do you know anyone who might have wanted your husband dead? Anyone who bore him ill will? Who was angry at him?"

"Mr. Aslet, an administrator usually makes decisions that upset some people. And we all have those who dislike us. My husband was no different."

"For example?"

"Well, there were a couple of trustees of the college who disliked my husband's handling of college affairs." She turned to Jonathan. "You know Pardo and Rossman. They wanted a more dynamic modern college than the other trustees wanted. Then there was a good deal of upset over the recent tenure decisions. It's all done by committees, but Douglas makes the final decisions. Well, actually the Board of Trustees does, but they leave it to Douglas of course. Even if your department committee rejects you, you look to the President to save you. But that is all I can remember Douglas mentioning in recent weeks."

She paused. "Mr. Aslet, what kind of murder is this? Is it a burglar, some criminal? Or someone who knew Douglas? Do you have some sense of this?"

"Mrs. Dalziel, it doesn't seem to be the kind of murder committed by a burglar or intruder. Nothing was stolen. There was no sign of damage to the house at all. No signs of force entry. And," Martin hesitated awkwardly, "the state of the body suggests a more personal motive. If you'll excuse me, but a poker was inserted into the President's rectum after his death."

Jonathan watched Miriam's face closely as Martin related this detail. It remained frozen, the eyes firmly fixed on Martin's.

Martin went on. "We haven't mentioned the detail to anyone yet. So please don't talk of it yourself. But that detail strongly suggests a personal motive at work. That's why I asked Jonathan her to help me."

"I see," Miriam said, even more tightly controlled now.

"Who is your lawyer, Mrs. Dalziel?"

"Er....Bonner and Bonner here in town. We recently updated our wills and decided to use a local firm."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dalziel. That is all for now. I'll keep in touch with you." Martin got up to leave.

Jonathan remained sitting. "I'll stay, if I may Miriam?"

She smiled at him and escorted Martin to the front door. She walked back into the room and breathed out noisily. She walked over to the coffee table and took a cigarette.

"Want one, Jonathan?"

"Ok." A non-smoker, he never bought a packet of cigarettes, but he often took one if they were offered to him.

Miriam breathed out noisily again, this time blowing out smoke.

"You know what it means, Miriam?"

"What?"

"The poker."

"No."

"It suggests homosexuality, Miriam."

"Oh, God no! Is that going to come out?"

"It'll have to. Eventually the details of the poker will be public knowledge. And you know everyone suspected and talked about Douglas's sexual preferences. It's been an exciting topic for years."

Miriam looked disgusted. "I know, damn him!"

"How are the boys taking it?" The President's two sons were thirteen and fifteen and off at a private school in New Jersey.

"They're coming home tomorrow. My mother is driving down to Princeton to collect them. They were shocked, but it's hard to predict with teenagers. Especially boys. They may act very calm during the funeral." She lit another cigarette. "Do you want some coffee, Jonathan?"

"Yes, please."

Miriam walked out of the room to the kitchen and came back in a couple of minutes with a tray and two cups of coffee. They drank in silence.

"Is there anything Claire or I can do?"

"No thanks, Jonathan. Everything is going smoothly."

Another silence.

"Do you have any idea what might have happened, Miriam?"

Again Miriam held his eyes. "No. Of course a lot of people got angry at Douglas. As I said to Mr. Aslet. But murder? No. It seems so inexplicable. If you're angry, you scream. You yell. You leave. But you don't murder."

Jonathan could not imagine Miriam yelling or screaming. And nice people do murder. And catch venereal disease. And do all of the things we pretend that only nasty people do.

Jonathan broke from Miriam's look and said, "But someone did in this case." He got up. "Let me know if you think of anything we can do. Even if you simply want company." At the door, he gave her a hug. "Take care."

Chapter 14

"Well, I'm not sure that I learnt much from that," Martin Aslet reflected as he drove down the President's driveway. He turned left into the town of Castine. "If she did it, I have to find out how she did it. She was down in Rhode Island at the time of the murder. So I have to check if she really was there, and what she was doing at the critical time on Tuesday evening. It's not far from Newport to Boston, just seventy miles at the most up Interstate 495. She would need about three hours."

He turned into the entrance to the Massachusetts Turnpike and headed for Boston. "And if she didn't murder him herself, she may have a good idea who did. But how could I get that out of her? I don't think I could if she wasn't willing. Jonathan could help me there. But what could she know? About his lovers, his business deals, his college hassles. Unless I have an idea of what kind of person did it, I don't know where to probe. I'm treading water, but I don't really know where I'm heading. I must talk to Jonathan this evening. That poker!" Martin shifted in his seat. Thinking about it made his bottom itch. "If it's been inserted into this case as a red herring, it's a waste of time to reflect on it. But since we can't be sure of that, we have to assume it has significance. If Jonathan is right, it suggests homosexuality. The murderer wants to tell us that Dalziel was gay. Or maybe not us. Maybe others. But we haven't told anyone yet. I wonder if Jonathan has. I must ask him.

"So if the murderer wants to tell people that Dalziel was gay, does that mean the murderer was gay? Or that he is straight? I don't know. I must ask Jonathan. That's three things to ask Jonathan."

Martin was close to downtown Boston, and he looked for his exit. He saw it and soon found a space to park his car. The Boston police never ticketed official police cars from the

surrounding communities. He entered the Boston Garden Hotel and asked the receptionist to call and tell Andrew North that he had arrived.

Andrew North was down in two minutes. "Hello, Mr. Aslet. Let's go and have something to drink in the coffee shop, if that's ok with you?"

The coffee shop was not crowded, and they found a booth in the corner away from the other customers. But they nevertheless kept their voices soft.

"Mr. North, you had supper with Mr. Dalziel on Tuesday evening. Could you run through the evening for me?"

"Certainly. I drove over to the college at about four o'clock. I went to Douglas's office and waited for him until his meeting was over. He came in at five or thereabouts, and we drove to the Club for a drink. We ate at the Club, and I left at eight-thirty or nine to come back here."

"Did you go over to the President's house at all?"

"No."

"So you were at the President's office in the college and the Faculty Club?"

"Yes."

"What was Mr. Dalziel planning to do after you left the Club?"

"We went back to his office after the Club. I had some papers to pick up. When I left, he said he was planning to work a little in his office and then walk home."

"And that was the last you saw or heard from Mr. Dalziel?"

"Yes."

"So let me see if I understood you correctly. You drove straight to his office at the college at four, waited for him there, drove with him directly to the Faculty Club at five. Drank and ate there. Drove back to his office. And then you left him in his office and drove back here at nine. Right? Good. How long were you at his office the second time?"

"About an hour."

"An hour. Good." Martin ordered a second cup of coffee and a chef's salad. Andrew North ordered a turkey club sandwich. Martin excused himself and went to the rest room. He arrived back at the same time as the food. He watched Andrew North put the sandwich in his mouth and asked, "How long have you been Douglas Dalziel's lover?" And he casually fed himself from his salad plate.

After a momentary silence, Andrew North replied. "About ten years. How did you know?"

"My inquiries led me to suspect it." Martin felt relieved. He had been tense as he had planned the question, and his stomach had been nervous. Now he relaxed. "Is this generally known," he asked.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Does Mrs. Dalziel know of this?"

"Yes, I believe so, but I have never discussed it with her, nor heard it mentioned in her presence. I understood that Douglas had told her."

"What gave you to understand that?"

"I remember Douglas fussing on occasions that Miriam was upset over his...er...activities. Or rather, she seemed more upset over the rumors circulating in the community. It upset her that people always gossiped about Douglas's possible sexual preferences."

"Did you feel welcome when Mrs. Dalziel was home? Or did you sense any personal hostility?"

"No. Miriam is a very controlled person. She was always most cordial when we met. And on my part, I took great care to be discreet in her company."

"Did you ever stay at the President's house?"

"No. I stayed in town. I have stayed over at the Faculty Club on occasions, though, if it was late. Or the weather was inclement."

"Did you and Mr. Dalziel have relations on Tuesday evening?" Martin was sure of the correct answer this time, though he wasn't sure he would get it from Andrew North.

"Yes."

"At the Club?"

"No. Later at the office."

"Were you Mr. Dalziel's only lover?"

"I think so."

"Is that a guess? Or was the issue discussed between you and Mr. Dalziel?"

"It had been discussed. And I understood that I was his only lover."

"Was Mr. Dalziel your only lover?"

"No. I have others."

"Did Mr. Dalziel know this?"

"Yes."

"Would Mr. Dalziel have searched for...er...casual partners? One time interactions?"

"No. Absolutely not. I do occasionally like such evenings. But Douglas's position made it impossible. He could not run the risk. He had in fact chafed at the restriction, Self-imposed though it was."

"I'd like to move on to the partnership you had with Mr. Dalziel and Mr. Jones. Could you tell me what your group has been involved in?"

Andrew North seemed to relax a little. He shifted his body on the seat, put his elbows on the table and leaned forward a little.

"Let me see. We own a small shopping plaza. It has about six stores. We did own a motel and some fast food franchises, but we recently sold them." Andrew North paused, and Martin waited. The silence grew.

"Wasn't there a bank too, Mr. North?" Martin finally asked.

"Yes. We started a small bank too. But it was hard to maintain it. Many small banks are being founded these days, and competition is quite intense. So we merged with a larger bank."

"You financed the motel and restaurant purchases with money from the bank." Martin stated this as a fact rather than a question. "Who were the people to whom the bank actually loaned the money?"

Andrew North leaned back in his seat. Aslet was a formidable adversary, and Andrew found himself submitting to this police officer. He had been wrong to assume that this interview would be easy to cope with. Aslet's small town post and the present setting had reassured Andrew that nothing too searching would be asked. But Aslet was well informed, damn him. He knew those issues that Andrew would like to have left hidden. Andrew admired his opponent.

"I see you know what happened," he replied to Martin. "Yes, we borrowed some of the money by having associates apply for loans. Mrs. Dalziel and her sister took loans. Harrington's wife too. A few friends. When the auditors came in, they caught it and threatened a possible prosecution. That, combined with a failure for the deposits to grow as fast as we had hoped,

made a merger with the Market Street Bank most desirable. We merged and decided to sell our interests in the motel and restaurants rather than refinance them."

"I would like the details of the loans that your bank made for those two purchases. Could you get them for me by tomorrow? How much the bank lent and to whom? Thanks. Did you know what you were doing in lending yourselves the money was improper?"

"Oh yes. Much that is improper is done in the world of finance. But to be caught at it is what makes it improper. You see, we were outsiders with few connections in the banking world. Otherwise we would have borrowed from the banks of friends and they from us. And it would all have been proper. And if the deposits had grown at a faster rate, nothing would have been noticed. We didn't defraud anyone. No one lost their money. The loans were as safe with us as if they had been made to any other borrower. Safer in fact. Our investments were good ones. We wouldn't have gone bankrupt and defaulted on the loans."

"So now you had money to invest, and the purchase of the land near Castine College seemed a good idea?"

"Exactly, Mr. Aslet."

"Had you made any inquiries about financing the Castine land purchase?"

"No. Harrington and Douglas were handling that. I live in New York City, and I've been tied up recently with work there."

"What exactly do you do, Mr. North?"

"I produce films and videotapes for television and other outlets."

"For example?"

"Let me see. Right now, I'm producing a film documentary for the National Heart Association on heart attacks and how to prevent them. My company has several projects like that in progress at any one time."

The coffee shop had filled up and was now emptying out again. Martin stretched his legs. "Thank you, Mr. North. That's all for the time being. Are you going to be in town for much longer?"

"Until after the funeral, I think. Then I'll return to New York. Here is my card if you need to get in touch with me there."

Martin left Andrew North sitting in the coffee shop and walked to the hotel lobby to the telephones. He dialed Jonathan's number and let the telephone ring. No answer. He hung up the receiver and stood there a while, hands in his coat pockets, thinking.

Chapter 15

Jonathan decided to stay around the college as much as he could, so he went to the Faculty Club for lunch again. This time he went upstairs to the room reserved for faculty. The room was smaller than the downstairs room for faculty with guests. It held a dozen small tables and one long communal table. The room had windows on one side that looked out onto the lake, just like the downstairs room. There were two people at the communal table, Fred Welford and someone Jonathan did not know.

Fred stood up and slapped Jonathan on the shoulder. "Jonathan, how are you? It's good to see you, old buddy. What's new?"

Fred was dressed in faded jeans that seemed to have brown paint stains on them, with a bunch of keys hanging from the belt loop. He was young, but his long wavy hair was partly grey. Although he was standing up, he was stooped over as always, and he had his characteristic grin. To be honest, he hardly seemed the type of person you'd expect to find teaching at Castine college. He seemed more the type you'd find on a construction site, at a truck stop or in a rural bar. But in fact he had a degree in political philosophy from Dartmouth University and could discuss important issues with fluency. An intellectual masquerading as a blue collar worker.

"Do you know Michael Morano here? He's new in mathematics."

They said hello, and Jonathan went and filled his plate at the buffet. He really ought to get some exercise, he thought, if he was going to eat like this every day.

"So how goes it, Jonathan?" Fred continued when Jonathan returned. "Jonathan here is a writer. He used to teach here but left to make money. Eh? What are you working on?"

"Oh, several projects. A revision of my Abnormal Psychology text and a new text on Correctional Treatment. You know I always have a dozen projects going."

"Jonathan could be attacked by wolves on the way home from the Faculty Club and write an article on it. I call him Magic Clark, he's so prolific." Fred chuckled as he ate and talked. "How much do you make on the texts, Jonathan? A revision. The Abnormal Psychology text must be doing well."

"Not too bad. But publishers like revisions every few years if the book sells. The revisions kill the second-hand book trade. If you don't revise, sales go down as more and more old copies get sold to the recycling book dealers. Foletts, Missouri, etcetera. Of course, we say we are revising to make the text better than ever. But psychology as a field doesn't change that fast."

"So how much do you make? See how cagey he is, Michael? The man is rich."

Jonathan laughed, but didn't answer. Last year his texts had sold sixty thousand copies. With a text now selling at thirty dollars and a ten percent royalty, that was one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. He was not about to tell that to an Assistant Professor making twenty-five thousand dollars. And he, Jonathan, was not among the best sellers. Far from it. The writers of Introductory texts were millionaires. Donald Newman's Introduction To Criminal Justice, Samuelson's economics text, Hilgard's in psychology. These days there was more competition. There were over sixty Introduction To Psychology texts, and each publisher carried several, with different orientations. In the old days, a publisher would have only one. Now your own publisher gives you competition.

Jonathan changed the topic. "So what are you doing, Fred? I heard the bad news."

"Yes. The bad news. Or good news maybe. I've applied for a few jobs. But political science is tough these days. Few jobs open. I may have to take a position teaching criminal justice somewhere, together with the other out-of-work social scientists and the retired cops."

"You don't look too upset by it all."

"No. You left voluntarily. You know there is life after Castine. I've got a year and a half to look. Something may turn up, and it may be more fun than teaching here. You are my model, Jonathan lad."

"And how's your love life these days, Fred? Last time I saw you, you were going out with a lovely looking woman. What was she? A graduate student in Boston?"

"Yes. A student here first and then went to graduate school at Tufts University. That ended. Maybe I'm not the marrying type. Not like you, Jonathan."

"So you have no one right now?" Jonathan was surprised.

"Not really. No."

Then other faculty arrived at the table, and the conversation became more general, with Castine politics the main topic of discussion. Jonathan participated, but one part of his attention remained on Fred. An active man. Jonathan knew he ran and played squash. And he never sat still. He always fidgeted, unless he was drunk. Yet he wasn't thin and wiry like a marathon runner. He even had a bulging stomach. If he ever stops exercising, Jonathan thought, he'll really get overweight. A bachelor. But not confirmed. Fred would be happy married. It would give his life stability and a routine that he would like. Fred never complained. He was always cheery and bustling. But it seemed false, as if it was covering up a deeper discontent.

As Jonathan prepared to leave, he remembered the blackjacks. "Hey, Fred. You have a collection of blackjacks, don't you? You showed them to me once. Could I come by and look at them again sometime? I need some background for a piece I'm writing."

"Of course. Are you going to Joyce's party tonight? Come by beforehand for a drink. I'll get them out again. We can celebrate my firing. Like a wake. The death and rebirth of Fred Welford. Come by about eight. You can even bring Claire."

Chapter 16

Martin decided to drive to Newport himself to interview Mrs. Dalziel's sister. The drive down Interstate highways did not take long, but it was boring. He put a tape of Vivaldi concerti into the cassette player to occupy his mind during the drive. Of course, he could have sent Jim instead, or even asked the Newport Police Department to interview Miriam's sister. But Martin liked to do things himself. It wasn't that he didn't trust the work of others. But if someone else had interviewed the sister, Martin would have missed all of the impressions he would get from interviewing her personally. Her expressions, the tone of her voice, her posture, all these would help him form a judgment of her evidence and give his intuition information to work with.

In fact, then, this reluctance to have others do some of the work for him made his work more time consuming than it need have been and created resentment in his staff, who interpreted his interference, as they saw it, to mean a lack of confidence in them.

Martin parked his car near the entrance to Goat Island and walked across the bridge to the small island on which was situated a hotel, a small store and a block of apartments. He found apartment 6A easily enough and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Susan Youngblood opened the door and, after he had identified himself, allowed him to enter the apartment.

The apartment was luxurious. It was spacious, and the windows in the living room, stretching from floor to ceiling, overlooked the expanse of water separating the island from the mainland. Several sailboats were moored to buoys, and beyond them sat the quaint shops of the town. The living room into which he had been escorted was carpeted in a thick rust-colored rug, and the room was furnished sparsely. A large connected sofa arrangement bent around a large coffee table. The table had one empty dish on it. Behind one side of the sofa stood a chest. The walls were bare, save for one large Japanese print. The back of the room, opposite the windows, had a fireplace, with mirrored doors on each side of the fireplace behind which were closets. The

room looked oriental mainly because of its barrenness, though the Japanese print clearly labelled the style.

"This is a beautiful room. A magnificent view, and you have furnished it elegantly." Martin's admiration was obvious.

Susan Youngblood was pleased. "Thank you, Mr. Aslet. Do sit down."

Susan Youngblood was much older than her sister. And looked it. Her hair was grey, and her flesh was beginning to show signs of old age. She was a little plump, perhaps, but not overly so. She was dressed in red knickers, gathered around her ankles, a matching red sweater, and black cloth stockings with stitched on soles.

"Would you care for a cigarette, Mr. Aslet? No? I hope you don't mind if I smoke? Now, how can I help you?"

"Mrs. Youngblood, as I explained over the telephone this morning, I am investigating the murder of your brother-in-law. I am presently simply trying to chart the movements of everyone involved with Mr. Dalziel, including himself. I want to know exactly where his family, his business associates and his college staff were on the day of his death. I've talked to Mrs. Dalziel, and she was most helpful. However, I hated to press her too much for fear of upsetting her." Martin paused. A lie, he thought. No one could possibly upset the poise of Mrs. Dalziel. But still, how else could he set this scene?

He continued. "I would like you to go through for me the details of Mrs. Dalziel's visit to you here."

"You surely don't suspect Miriam, do you? That's absolutely absurd."

"Mrs. Youngblood, I don't have a suspect yet. If I could eliminate some candidates, I might be able to narrow the field down. I'm not asking you to give evidence as to Mrs. Dalziel's guilt. I'm asking you tell me about her visit."

Susan Youngblood was uneasy. She inhaled the cigarette smoke deeply and strove to keep calm. "To be frank, Mr. Aslet, I find this interrogation rather...er...how shall I say it, rather offensive. I'm not at all sure whether to permit it."

Martin, in his turn, said nothing. He sat back against the sofa and looked steadily at Susan Youngblood. She eventually broke away from his gaze and shifted uneasily. She was conscious of Martin's continuing gaze. The silence grew.

"Well," she said eventually, "Why don't we begin? Let me see what it is you want to know."

"When did Mrs. Dalziel arrive here?"

"Oh, on Monday, in time for lunch. I remember now. We ate lunch here that day."

"Could you tell me what you and Mrs. Dalziel did on Tuesday, the following day?"

"Let me see. We went shopping in the morning. We looked around some antique shops in town. We had lunch in town at a delightful vegetarian cafe which has recently opened." She realized that the "delightful" had slipped out, and she became more careful again in her choice of words. "Then we went for an afternoon of bridge at the Yachting Club. We had a light tea there and returned here. My husband, Alan, arrived home, and he and I had a dinner to attend. It was being given by Alan's colleagues to celebrate the retirement of one of the senior partners in the firm. Miriam decided not to come with us. So Alan and I left at six o'clock for the affair and returned here well before midnight, I'm sure."

"Was Mrs. Dalziel still up when you returned?"

Susan Youngblood hesitated. "Yes."

Her voice was halting. And Martin knew that she was wondering what her sister had said. Martin wondered whether she had tried to call Miriam that morning after he had told her that he wanted to visit her that afternoon.

"Yes?" Martin contrived to sound dubious.

"Yes. Actually she came in a few minutes after we did. She had gone out for a stroll to clear her head after reading all evening."

Susan Youngblood was nervous. She considered her sister a possible suspect for the murderer, thought Martin.

"How did your sister seem?"

"She appeared to be fine, of course. We sat around and had a liqueur together and then went to bed. About midnight I would say."

"How did Mrs. Dalziel respond the next day after I had called her. She seemed remarkably calm when she heard of her husband's death."

Susan Youngblood smiled. "Miriam is very calm. At all times. She told me what had happened, went and packed her clothes, and left. I was concerned about her and offered to drive back with her. But she refused and drove back herself. That afternoon in fact."

"It must have been a difficult marriage for Mrs. Dalziel?"

Susan Youngblood lit another cigarette. "Why do you say that? Miriam was very happily married. There were no problems of any kinds that I knew of." She looked at Martin, and he knew that she was not going to discuss her sister's marriage with him. What else might Susan Youngblood be able to contribute? He really didn't know. Had Susan Youngblood tried to contact Mrs. Dalziel during Tuesday evening? Had they talked that night, or the next day. Oh well. He couldn't fish. She wouldn't bite.

"I think that is all, Mrs. Youngblood. Thank you for your time."

Martin got to his feet and walked toward the door of the apartment. Susan Youngblood followed, a little unsure about the impression she had left with him. What was he thinking? At the door, Martin turned and recognized the anxious look that she had. Well, Mrs. Youngblood would have to live with the anxiety. Martin Aslet had no intention of reassuring her. He shook her hand, said "Thank you," and left.

Chapter 17

Claire got home at half past six, and she and Jonathan went through their early evening ritual. A light beer. Feet up. Relaxed in the arm chair, Claire told him about her day. Office intrigues, her successes, the incompetence of others. Jonathan actively listened.

"Oh. I did ask around about Harrington Jones. And I got a very interesting reaction. It was very hard to get anyone to say something definite about him. But nearly everyone had a "Oh, Harrington Jones" followed by a smile in response to my inquiry. It was hard to get them to go beyond that. However, I got the impression, but nothing more definite than an impression, that he was thought of as an operator. Nothing illegal. But he takes risks, hints at future rewards, implies promises. The sort of thing a forthright business person would never do. And yet, I also picked up a possibility of envy. That they wouldn't mind being as successful as he is. Of course, Jefferson is so much larger than our company. A vice-president there has a much better position than a lower ranking executive in our outfit."

"I get the picture. There's a psychologist in England like that. Hans Eysenck. "Oh, Eysenck" psychologists say here, and they tend to regard him as a fool. But he has published more than they ever will, had many more creative ideas, and stimulated huge amounts of research. Those who put him down would love to be as famous. Or infamous."

"Yes. That's it."

"To change the subject," Jonathan said, "we have a party at Joyce's tonight, and Fred has invited us over for drinks at eight. Is that ok with you?"

"Sure. Only don't let's stay too late. I'll rest a while and then go and take a shower. Would you mind getting me another beer, Jonathan?"

A little before eight, they drove off in Claire's spacious Buick over to Fred's house. Fred lived in a small faculty house owned by Castine College, and rented cheaply to college personnel. There was hardly any more room in it than an apartment would have had. It had only one floor, with a living room, kitchen and bedroom. Living alone, Fred had no need to cater to the whims of a partner, and so he used his living room as a study. Books were piled on brick-and-plank bookcases, papers littered the floor in piles, and the dining table was employed as a desk.

"Come in folks. Mind the books there. Let me clear this chair off for you Claire. Right. What can I get you? Jack Daniels for you Claire? On the rocks? Right. And you Jonathan. A beer? Good."

Fred busied himself, clearing papers and books out of his way to the kitchen. He disappeared into the kitchen and prepared the drinks.

"How are things, Claire?" he shouted. "It's been a while since I've seen you."

"Oh, fine. Nothing too exciting has happened lately."

"Are you still with the same old company? Or moved on to greener pastures?"

"No, I'm still with the Massachusetts Insurance Group."

"Your boss has stayed quite a while this time, hasn't he? I thought he'd move on in a year or two after he arrived and take you with him."

"Perhaps he's getting older, Fred. Slowing down. But frankly, I wish he'd move on. I'd like to tackle something different."

Fred came back into the room. "Here are your drinks. I wonder what this will be like tonight? I hope not too dull. You know what Castine gatherings are like," he said to Claire.

Jonathan intervened. "They're like parties everywhere. Shop talk. Fred, remember I wanted to look at your blackjack collection." Jonathan turned to Claire. "I wanted to see a real blackjack again for a chapter I'm writing. I remembered Fred had some. Where did you get them, Fred?"

Fred had gone into his bedroom and was rummaging about in his closet. "Oh, cops that I have taught and gone out drinking with gave them to me as presents. They know I like to collect them." Fred came back into the living room with a brown paper bag with string handles. "It's like an apple for the teacher. Once they get to like me, they bring me gifts. Some bring pictures of murdered people. They sneak them out of the Department because they think I'd like to see them. So I let them know I collect blackjacks, and they occasionally give me ones they confiscate from people they arrest. I used to have lots more. But some were stolen from my office at the College. The janitors find them too tempting."

"What do you keep them at the college for, Fred?" Claire asked.

"Oh, I bring one out now and then and thump it on the desk to startle the students. Fred seemed to think this was a reasonable pedagogic device.

He reached into the bag and pulled out a blackjack. It was six inches long, made of black leather, with a long loop of leather attached, which you could put your hand through so that the strap was around your wrist. The end of the blackjack was a leather container, much the shape of a dildo, with a very hard solid metal rod inside. The rod seemed to be attached to a very tight resilient spring, but this, if indeed it was a spring, was covered with woven leather straps so that it was completely hidden.

Jonathan took the object from Fred and held it by the woven part. He thwacked the solid end onto his palm, and the pain lasted for a minute. He was surprised.

"Good Lord! This is so small and yet so heavy. No wonder you could kill a person with one of these."

"Oh yes," said Fred cheerfully. "A blow on the temple, or at the back of the head. You could crack the skull easily. They're deadly. And this is a slapjack."

He pulled out a flatter object, almost twelve inches long, once again with a heavy metal core at one end. It had the brand name "Texan" indented into the leather and a mark indicating that it was made by Buchmeimer in Frederick, Maryland, established in 1884.

"I'm surprised," said Jonathan, "that they are made so well. I thought they'd be home constructed efforts and rather crude."

"Oh, no," replied Fred. "These are well made. I've seen custom-made ones with crafted leather too. Very decorative. And here is a pair of gloves."

The black leather gloves, small enough for a woman's hand, had heavy pieces of metal sown into each palm.

"Do you slap the person with your open hand?" Claire asked.

"Mo. Just punch. The metal inserts give your punch extra power. So you can knock the person out more easily. Police use them a lot. Say you have to go into a bar to break up a fight. You need to establish your authority quickly. If you knock the first person out cold with one punch, the others quieten down. Immediately!"

Claire shuddered. "Hadn't we better be on our way to Joyce's?" she said. "Remember dear, we don't want to stay too late."

And the boys did as bid. They put away their toys and got their coats on.

Chapter 18

Joyce Greenfield lived in a house in an obviously wealthy middle class suburb. The houses were large, spreading outward over the half-acre lots rather than reaching upwards. With two-car garages, lawns with sprinkler systems, back patios and wooden decks. The kind of house Claire would like, Jonathan thought, as Claire drove them through the estate to Joyce's particular manifestation of the basic model. Hers was pleasant enough. Brick facing over the wooden frame, large windows with a contemporary appearance. Jonathan studied it. What made it contemporary? It was the broken surfaces. A roof with parts at angles to one another. This surface crossed that one, intersected with this one and bisected that one. A room on the left that extended beyond the basic cuboid frame. A porch roof with one side extending down further than the other. A cathedral ceiling in the family room. Skylights in the roof. Definitely contemporary. They rang the doorbell.

Joyce greeted them. "Welcome, chez moi," she said.

Jonathan noted that she truly gushed. The only person he had met in his life who fitted the concept of gushing. Joyce was plump, the typical American female blimp. Pudgy head, pudgy arms, pudgy legs and tremendous hips and thighs. A parenthetical figure. Making love to hips like those had always figured prominently in Jonathan's day dreams, but whenever he was presented with the actual body he was surprisingly unexcited. Such a body was more erotic in fantasy than in reality. Jonathan smiled as he thought of what Ann Latimer would call Joyce. Pudgette.

Joyce had glasses, blonde hair pulled back behind the ears, a close fitting sweater and slacks that highlighted the body with its fatty folds and pleats. But, Jonathan thought, no clothes could hide such a figure. He felt his own waist. He was eating too much. He thought that he might have put on an inch around his waist. He really must watch his diet. And this murder had upset his exercise schedule. He hadn't jogged since the President was murdered. He must jog tomorrow.

Joyce took their coats and scarves and put them away in a hall closet. She then led them to the left, down some steps into an enormous family room. One whole wall was of boring grey brick, with a stone ledge in front of it to sit on and a fireplace in the center. Insipid wallpaper, a padded bar with stools in one corner, a sofa in front of the fire and arm chairs scattered around.

George Greenfield was behind the bar. "Greetings, Jonathan and Claire," he said. A nice soul. Worked in lawn care. Or was it hardware? Difficult to remember. But not an academic. "What can I get you folks?" he asked enthusiastically.

Jack Daniels for Claire, wine for Jonathan. Several people were already in the room, and more arrived in the next hour. The party had begun.

Ann Latimer waited until Claire was busily engaged in a conversation with George Greenfield about the insurance needs of small businesses and then walked over to where Jonathan was sitting on the stone ledge. She sat down beside him and put her arm through his.

"Hello, Jon. You look as if you'd like to be elsewhere."

He turned and showed his pleasure at seeing her. He let his body lean close to hers. "How nice to see you here," he said. "I was beginning to regret that I had come. Sometimes I simply

cannot get into the right frame of mind for these gatherings. I feel so alienated, an outsider. And yet I know that at other times I can fit right in and enjoy myself. I'm not sure what makes the difference."

"Alcohol. You need more wine," Ann replied, and she went and filled his glass to the brim. "Drink. And tell me the news of the murder."

Jonathan told Ann of all that had happened since he had last seen her at lunch with Martin on Wednesday. He told her of meeting Neil Young, the President's assistant, and going to DJs to meet Andrew North. And of the interview with Miriam. "Tell me about Miriam, Ann. Does she play it straight? Or does she have a lover? Knowing her, it seems unlikely that she would have a lover. She seems such an iceberg. But I've been with her when she's had a few drinks, and then she becomes a woman., A real woman. Warm and sensual. The kind who would have a lover while the busy homosexual husband attends his errands. There must have been some rumors."

Ann had slipped her arm through his again and was talking intimately close to his ear. "Surprisingly few rumors really. Most of the campus gossip concerned Dougie. And mostly about his sexual leanings. Miriam has been surprisingly discrete. But I think she has a lover. They are simply very careful."

"Who? I have no idea who he might be. He must be from the campus. That's where she'd meet men."

"Jonathan, I'm not really sure. I just have a suspicion."

"Come on, Ann. Tell me. I'm dying to know, and it may be relevant to the murder."

"All right. I was out walking one night, and I was walking past this particular faculty member's house. There were no cars outside, but the lights came on and the curtains were being closed. Just before they closed, I saw someone who might have been Miriam. That's all I have. Nothing more concrete."

"So whose house was it, you tease? Tell me." And Jonathan snuggled closer to Ann.

"Fred. Fred Welford."

Jonathan shook his head from side to side slowly. "Hmmm. But you know, it makes sense. Dashing young bachelor. Has a girl friend usually. So he's known to be paired up. Thus, he's safe. People wouldn't wonder whom he is screwing. And the President's wife is a great experience. Here am I, screwing the President's wife. I could see him enjoying the idea of the affair. As well as the more concrete aspects," Jonathan added. And he and Ann giggled.

They were interrupted by Martin, who had just arrived. By now the crowd was so large that he had not been greeted by Joyce, but had simply come in, thrown his coat on to the pile already sitting on a chair by the entrance, and entered the living room. He pulled up a chair in front of Jonathan and Ann.

"Hello Jonathan. Hello Ann."

"Martin, I didn't expect to see you here," Ann said. "Do you know Joyce?"

"Not at all. I have no idea who the host is here." Martin looked around and then back to them. "No. Jonathan invited me. He thought it would be a good idea for me, the investigating police officer, to unsettle the academic suspects by sitting in their midst. I think he expects the anxiety-ridden murderer to give himself away."

"You never know, Martin. You never know. Excuse me." And Jonathan got up and walked to the bar to fill his wine glass.

Martin turned to watch him cross the room.

"You seem to be very good friends," Ann said.

Ann's question brought Martin's attention back to her. "Yes. I like Jonathan a lot. We have spent a lot of time together, especially since he retired from the college. We talk a lot, play chess." He fell silent.

"I like him a lot too. We were lovers once." Ann watched Martin out of the corner of her eye as she looked past him into the crowded room. He showed no surprise. She looked at him. "You know, very often two people who are very good friends of someone else do not like each other. I wonder if we will like each other or not?" She smiled affectionately at Martin.

"I think we will like each other," Martin said, and Ann liked him for his direct honesty. Others would have played games to avoid making an honest communication, but Martin did not. In that respect, he was like her Jonathan.

"So who did it?" she said to him, her impish manner taking over. "Tell me whom you suspect,"

Jonathan had filled his glass of wine and noticed Claire engaged in conversation with George Greenfield and two others in front of the fire. He looked around and saw Fred leaving the room and heading for the kitchen. He followed him. When he got to the kitchen, Fred was helping himself to a couple of hors d'oeuvres from each plate.

"Good idea," said Jonathan and did the same.

"Not too many off each plate. You'll give the game away." Fred munched some more.

"You sneak."

"Come on. A few little hors d'oeuvres."

"No, not that. I've been finding out about you. Your secret life."

Fred groaned. "What now? What campus gossip have you heard? Rumors about Frederick Welford, naughty man on campus."

"About you and Miriam."

Fred stopped biting, leaving the piece of brown bread with shrimp salad on it half in and half out of his mouth. He opened wide and took it all in. He chewed. "Really. They are saying that? Who is saying it?"

"Oh, only one person. Who saw you two by chance. And probably hasn't told anyone but me."

"Really. The things people make up on very little evidence." Fred took another piece of bread with shrimp salad.

"Is it true?" Jonathan persisted.

Fred looked around. They were alone. "Yes."

Jonathan laughed, and Fred joined in. Jonathan patted Fred on the shoulder. "How the hell did you manage to keep it hidden? In this small town. With this incestuous campus. It's incredible."

"Not so incredible. Someone saw us. We failed." Fred grinned. "It wasn't so hard. Miriam drives to a shopping center just outside of town. Parks at the edge of it. I drive up, and she gets in my car. We drive to my house. Tiny, but with a convenient garage attached to the house. We drive into the garage and walk in through the inside entrance. Where were we seen?"

"Through the window, when you turned the light on, but before you closed the curtains."

"Shit!" And Fred grinned again.

"Are you in love, or just having fun?"

"Are they exclusive?" Love? Who knows? Maybe. But she's married. Or was. There was never any chance she'd leave her husband. Miriam is far too materialistic to leave Dougie. She wants a nice house, a large income, status, security. I have nothing like that to offer. But clearly she didn't have love in her marriage. It's a high price she pays. As for me, sure I can find women to take out. But Jonathan, they are so young. So very young. Pre-orgasmic, post-pubescent freshpersons. No life experience. No suffering. Oh, they think they suffer. A pimple on their face causes agony. Daddy forgets their monthly check, and they are anxious. Their problems are all so trivial. It is so nice to be with an adult. Someone who knows where you've been and where you are. It's been hard at times. Girl friends I don't respect or admire. A lover whom I do but can't have."

Fred looked pensive, and Jonathan could sense the conflict Fred had lived with. Though perhaps he felt more sympathy for Miriam. Hadn't he stayed with Claire and flirted with love?

"Come on," said Fred. "Let's go back to the party, I need to be distracted."

"And who is this gorgeous hunk of man?" Joyce demanded of Ann.

"Martin, this is Joyce, your host for the evening. Joyce, this is Martin Aslet, the Chief of Police of Castine."

"How exciting!" Joyce's voice rose in pitch and volume. "Listen everyone. Hush! Hush!" The crowd hushed as bidden. "Guess whom we have in our midst? The Chief of Police. Mr. Aslet, tell us all about the horrible murder. What have you found out? Do you know who did it? Have you arrested anyone?"

The others were quiet and in conflict. There was embarrassment. Why did Joyce have to behave so flamboyantly? So artificially? Yet they were interested to know. What would Martin Aslet answer? So they stayed hushed.

Martin paused. Not for effect, but because he was considering the situation. Perhaps it was a potentially useful opportunity as Jonathan had suggested?

"No. We haven't arrested anyone yet. We don't even have anyone under suspicion. It could be anyone. Perhaps the murderer is here tonight in this room?"

Joyce expressed the feelings of those present, while managing to disguise them by her style. "Oh, Mr. Aslet, what a thought! It certainly wasn't me. And I'm sure it wasn't dear Ann here either. You'll make us all feel nervous, talking like that. So what have you found out? Was it a burglar, or someone he knew? We don't even know how he was killed. The Boston newspapers were very discreet. They had so little information. You told them nothing. Most of their articles were about the life of the President and not about his grisly murder."

"Why doesn't she shut up?" Richard Meredith muttered just behind Jonathan.

"Actually Mr. Dalziel was murdered by a blow to the head. By our famous blunt instrument. But we haven't even found that yet." Martin paused. This time for effect. "And then something interesting also." Martin paused again. The silence was complete now. "The murderer killed the President, and then he inserted a poker into his rectum."

Mike Smith was standing next to Jonathan. "That's incredible!" he said. Then he turned to Jonathan. "So that was why you were interested in Edward the Second. You knew about the poker. Jonathan, you are a dangerous man. I must watch myself when I'm in your presence."

"Mr. Aslet," Joyce said vehemently. "How grotesque! That is sick." And then to everyone's disappointment, she decided to end the entertainment, and she ordered George to put

on some music. George did as he was bid, and the crowd split up into its smaller groups again, most of them now discussing the murder of the President.

Jonathan walked over to Richard Meredith. "So what do you think of that, Richard. A poker up the arse."

Richard laughed. "No kidding. The old bastard got it in the end, after all. How bizarre, Jonathan."

"I don't know. One of the Kings of England was killed that way. A hot poker was stuck up his arse. Edward the Second."

"Otherwise known as Edward the Unlucky," added Richard.

"Really?" asked Jonathan.

"No, not really. But he ought to have been," added Richard, and he laughed again. "Actually, you know, the Spanish poet Federico Lorca was killed that way too. In the Spanish Civil War. He was captured and machine-gunned up his arse."

"I didn't realize killing symbolically in that manner was so common. Amazing that homosexuality or suspected homosexuality should upset people so, don't you think?"

Richard grunted. "Well, I'm not surprised. Such a disgusting habit. I mean, at least with women it is more.....With men it is so dirty."

Jonathan sipped his drink. "So the President was gay. The murderer seems to want to tell us that. I really can't quite figure out why he would do that though. Unless he was extremely angry at the man."

"Well don't ask me," Richard Meredith responded. "I deal only in fiction."

Jonathan and Claire left the party at eleven o'clock. It was a Thursday, and Claire had to work the next day. As they drove past the college on the way back to their house, Jonathan noticed the lights on in the President's house.

"It looks as if Miriam is up. I wonder if she is all right?" he said. "I told her to give us a call if there was anything she thought we could do to help."

"Miriam can take care of herself." Claire sounded unsympathetic. "They were virtually separated before. Far apart psychologically. The only difference now is that they are not in the same place physically."

"Let me drop you off and visit her. I'd like to see if she's ok. People often don't like to call on others when they need them. I'll feel better if I check."

"That's nice of you, Jonathan. I'll go to bed. I'll leave the back door unlocked for you. Don't make too much noise when you get back. Good night," and Claire leant across to the driver's side of the car and kissed Jonathan.

On the mouth, he thought. Not completely indifferent. He backed out of his driveway and drove to the President's house. He parked outside the front door. He got out and rang the bell. He heard someone walking toward the door. Somewhat hesitatingly. He heard a crash and then an "Ouch". The person inside fumbled with the door and appeared to be having trouble opening it. Perhaps they would fail to solve the puzzle and Jonathan would be left out in the cold? No. Finally it opened. Miriam peered around the door.

"Who is it?"

"Miriam, it's Jonathan. I came to see if you were ok."

"Oh, Jonathan. I am glad to see you. Do come in," and Miriam swung on the door handle as she pulled the door open. She was very drunk.

She bumped past Jonathan as she closed the door. "Oops. Sorry. Do come in and have a drink, Jonathan." She put her arm through his and held on tightly to him as they walked into the living room where he had sat earlier that day.

"What did you say 'ouch' for? Did you hurt herself getting to the door?"

"You hit me Jonathan."

"No I didn't. I was still outside. Remember."

"Oh." Miriam looked around, raising her eyebrows and lowering them, frowning and then relaxing her face muscles, looking as if she was trying to fathom out the mystery. But she wasn't. "What would you like to drink?"

"I'll get myself some wine." Jonathan laughed. "I don't trust your steadiness."

"Now Jonathan. I am not that drunk. I have had only a little bit to drink." A half empty bottle of Tia Maria stood on the coffee table.

Jonathan poured himself some wine from the carafe in the cocktail cabinet in the corner of the room, and then came back to the sofa and sat down. Miriam sat down heavily beside him, spilt a little of the liqueur on her dress and swatted at the spot.

"Damn." She leant against him. "Jonathan, I'm glad you're here. I really am glad. You know I like you, Jonathan? I trust you. Now don't answer right away. I want your opinion. Your honest opinion. Am I old and ugly? Don't answer yet. Think carefully. I want the truth. Don't try to spare my feelings. I will still like you whatever you say?" She swayed back and forth as she talked, swinging her glass of liqueur dangerously. "So the truth now. Am I old and ugly?"

"Miriam, you dear." Jonathan put his arm around her. "Of course you aren't. You're not old, and you are very attractive."

"Then why the hell didn't that son of a bitch love me? Jonathan, do you realize how crushing it is when the man you love prefers some sexless faggot over you? Do you realize what that does to your self-confidence. I mean, it's bad enough if your husband fucks some secretary at the office. But at least she looks good. I mean, she is a sexual woman. I got rebuffed for some sun-tanned leathery queer. That son of a bitch."

"You really loved him?"

"Hell, yes. Why do you think I stayed with him? Oh, I know. Probably people say I liked the position of being the President's wife. But Jonathan, that ain't worth much. It's a lot of work and trouble being what you don't feel like being. Happy, sociable, friendly. When you really just want to get away from everyone and go home to bed. No. I stayed because I loved him. Damn his eyes. I loved the bastard. Maybe he would notice me again?" She looked through the wall ahead of her, into the distance of her memory. Then she turned and leant closer to Jonathan. "Do you think I'm attractive still?"

She leant still closer and kissed Jonathan firmly on the mouth. He sat firm and watched the liqueur glass tip. "Watch it," he said, drawing his head back. He reached out, took the glass from her and sat it down on the coffee table. She watched him and then kissed him again. This time she forced her tongue into his mouth. It was hard, and she moved it like a gardener digs her trowel into the earth. Dig, dig, dig.

Jonathan could smell the scent of soap on Miriam, and her breath had the smell of digesting alcohol. Sweet and intoxicating still. What the hell should I do, he thought. And yet without thinking, he began to take control. If he was going to be sexually assaulted, he may as well shape the experience. So he put his arms around Miriam and pulled her closer to him. He

kissed her, forcing his tongue into her mouth. And he leant forward and pulled her back onto the sofa. He half turned his body and lay down on top of her and kissed her again.

As Jonathan pulled back, Miriam began to unbutton his shirt and tugged uselessly at the belt to his jeans. He stopped her and began to undress her. He took off her sweater and unbuttoned her blouse. She lifted herself up from the sofa a little and undid her own brassiere. Her clothes fitted tightly around her body and, when they were off, her skin was white. She looked much fleshier than Jonathan had expected. He stood up and undid his belt, removed his jeans and took off his underpants. He was nude, except for his socks. Those would stay on. It was Winter. He pulled at Miriam's skirt and, taking the hint, she unhooked the skirt at the side, lifted herself up and slid it off. He took off her white underpants, noticing the little stain on the crotch.

He lay down beside her on the sofa and began to kiss her and rub his right hand over her body, vigorously. He squeezed her breasts and stroked her body. He kneaded her buttocks and moved his hand around to her crotch. He licked the fingers of that hand, slid them between her legs and slipped them inside her. She moaned. "Yes, yes." He pushed one finger all the way inside and, as he pulled and pushed it, in and out, she became slick. He put his right knee between her legs and forced them apart. He licked his fingers again and wet his penis. He forced himself inside her. Miriam had shifted from her side to her back, and so now he was on top of her, thrusting hard.

She held him tight, kissed him hard and moaned. "Wait," she said. "Get off. Stand there," and he did as he was told. Miriam sat up and began to suck his penis. It hurt. She was being too rough. So he forced her back down and laid on her again. She didn't protest. He slipped into her and pushed as deeply as he could.

Jonathan tried to be a good lover. He endeavored to find out what pleased his partner, and he tried to do what they liked. But Miriam was drunk tonight. It was unlikely that anything would arouse her to an orgasm, or that she would remember if she had one. So Jonathan decided to attend to his own needs. He put his hands under her buttocks, and she lifted up from the sofa, pushing harder against him. He thrust harder and harder until he was pounding against her body. And then he came.

They lay there for a while. Jonathan on top, breathing heavily, his heart beating furiously. Miriam seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

"I need some coffee," she finally concluded, and she tried to get up. Jonathan, still lying on top of her, eased himself out of her and moved from on top to beside her and then gently let himself fall onto the floor. Miriam stood up and stepped over him, dripping semen onto his legs.

"Shit," she said. She picked up her underpants, stuffed them between her legs and went out of the room. Jonathan sat up and searched for his underpants and shirt. He put them on and sat back down on the sofa. Miriam appeared in a few minutes, with a dressing gown on and slippers and two mugs of black coffee.

She put the mugs down on the coffee table with an unsteady hand. She was still intoxicated. She sat down heavily on the sofa next to Jonathan, picked up her mug and looked at him.

"I hope," she said, "that you feel all right. I really am glad you came over. I really am glad. I don't want you to be upset by what happened. You do feel all right about it, don't you?"

"Sure. I feel fine." Jonathan patted her leg with his hand. "Everything's fine. How are you doing?"

Miriam sighed. "I'll survive. I had so much anger toward Douglas, and now the bastard is dead. And I kind of miss him. So it's anger and grief. And my sister called, from Newport, you know. Your friend, the police chief, was down to see her to check on my whereabouts at the time of the crime. She's worried because I was home alone there at the critical time, with no witnesses."

"Why no witnesses?"

"Susan and Alan were out all night at a dinner. I could have gone along with them, but I wasn't really invited. Anyway, I wanted to stay home and read."

"So, you could have waited for them to leave, hopped in your car, driven back here, killed Douglas, driven back to Newport and been home by the time they arrived back?"

"Yes, and I expect Mr. Aslet is trying to see whether I did."

There was a long silence as they sipped their coffee.

"Jonathan?"

"Yes."

Miriam paused. Her facial muscles contracted in various combinations, reflecting the thoughts in her mind. Then she relaxed. "Are you sure you feel all right about what happened here tonight? I don't want you to feel guilty or anxious or.....I needed someone to make love to me tonight. To give me hope, perhaps. I'm grateful to you."

"Hey. Shush. don't you worry. It was nice. And now I must go. It's late."

Jonathan stood up, put the rest of his clothes on, and walked with Miriam to the door. He pulled her toward him and kissed her. "Don't you worry either. Take care. And call me if you need me. Goodnight."

Friday

Chapter 19

The telephone rang and woke Jonathan out of a deep sleep. The bed was empty. Claire must have gone. Jonathan squinted at the clock. Eight-thirty. He struggled to get out of bed and hobbled to the telephone in the kitchen.

"Hello."

"Jonathan. Ain't you up yet? This is Martin. I was hoping you'd be over for breakfast. We're at the Diner. Jim and me. How long will it take you to get here?"

"Has something special happened?"

"Yes, damn it. You mean you wouldn't come just for the pleasure of our company? Something special has to have happened?"

"Give me thirty minutes. I'll be there." And Jonathan hung up the receiver.

And in thirty minutes he was sitting down to breakfast with Martin and Jim. As Jonathan drank his coffee, Martin asked him about the party.

"What did you think, Jonathan? Did anything significant happen at the party?"

"Maybe. I'm not sure. I need to think about it all. Nothing definite happened. I got several intuitive feelings. But I can't fit them together."

"Talk about it then. Maybe it'll clear your mind."

"Well," Jonathan said thoughtfully, "the murder doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't seem right for a murderer to kill the President with a blunt instrument and then stick around to insert a poker in his arse. The two actions aren't consistent. One is explosive; the other deliberate. Of course, it could be that once the anger is dissipated, after the killing, then our murderer could be calm. And decide to be bizarre. And something happened at the party last night relevant to that. And I can't place it..." He paused and sipped his coffee some more. "People were surprised by the detail of the poker. That's right." Jonathan struggled to remember. "But something was out of place. I wonder what?"

Martin looked at his watch. "Well, Jim and I are off to the department to interview a possible witness. I think it'll be useful if you came. You may be able to help us. Come on. Drink up your coffee."

"Who's going to be there? Tell me."

Martin hesitated, to heighten the tension. "Why, Richard Meredith, of course."

"Meredith! Why him?"

"Jim here spent yesterday afternoon trying again to see if there were any witnesses near the President's house on the night of the murder. He found a neighbor, lives right next door, with the house nearer the road than the President's house, who saw Dr. Meredith walking out of the President's driveway that night. What's her name, Jim?"

"Mrs. Goode. She lives alone and probably spends a good deal of time looking out of her window. She says she was just seeing if it was raining, and she saw Richard Meredith walk by."

"How did she know who it was, Jim?" Jonathan sounded skeptical.

"She says she has attended lectures at the college and helped Miriam when the President had at-homes. So she is quite familiar with many of the faculty at the college. 'Such an interesting man, Dr. Meredith. Don't you agree, Mr. Wilson.'"

Martin and Jonathan laughed at Jim's imitation of Mrs. Goode.

"Well, that is interesting. Let's be on our way." And Jonathan got up from his seat.

When they got to the Police Department, Richard Meredith was waiting in the lobby. He got up as they entered. "Hello, Jonathan. So they have you down here too. What's all this about?"

Martin responded to Richard Meredith's question. "Ah, Dr. Meredith. I'm glad to see you. I am hoping you can help us with the investigation into the murder of the President. Dr. Clark here is helping us on this investigation. He is our psychological consultant," Martin said, as if confiding a secret. "I hope you don't mind if he joins us?"

"Consultant. Huh. Oh well. I don't see any problem."

Martin led them into his office. He went to sit behind his desk. Jim Wilson sat in a small arm chair off to one side. Jonathan sat on a table off to the other side, pushing some papers aside to make room. Richard Meredith sat on the remaining chair, another small arm chair in front of Martin's desk.

"Now, Dr. Meredith, I'd like to find out where you were on the night of the President's murder. Tuesday wasn't it?"

Richard Meredith was annoyed. "Why on earth do you want to know? Are you asking everyone at the college? Why am I here this morning?"

Martin leaned his elbows on his desk and rubbed his index fingers along the side of his nose. He looked at Richard Meredith. "Dr. Meredith, why don't you just tell me where you were?"

"Now look here. I'm just one faculty member at the college. I don't see what justification you have for asking me to come here and answer your questions. Why should I need to establish an alibi?"

"We don't want you to establish an alibi, Dr. Meredith. We want you to tell us what you saw going on at the President's house when you were there on Tuesday night."

Richard Meredith deflated. "I wasn't there. I mean I wasn't in the President's house. Who told you I was?"

"Dr. Meredith, let's start again. Let's calm down. We have witnesses who saw you in the vicinity of the President's house on Tuesday night. That makes you an important witness. You may have seen something that could help us with our investigation. We need your help. Now, were you there on Tuesday night?"

Richard Meredith looked and sounded grumpy. He was, perhaps, annoyed with himself for having sounded so defensive.

"Let me see. I was home that night. Grading some papers from my students. I decided to go out for a walk. I walked through the college grounds, and I came out by the exit near the President's house. I turned right and walked past it."

"What time was that?"

"Oh, probably about eleven o'clock, I'd say."

"Good. Our witness says it was eleven ten. Would you tell us what you saw at the President's house?"

"Nothing. I didn't see anything."

"Let's try to explore this. Were there any cars in the driveway?"

Er...no..wait. One was parked off to the side. The big one that the President drives. The one provided by the college. You know the one, Jonathan." Jonathan nodded.

"Were there any lights on in the house?"

"Let me think. Yes. I think there were. Er...downstairs. Maybe one in the entrance hall."

"Did you see anyone inside the house, or outside?"

"No. No one."

"Did you pass anyone during your walk?"

"No. Not that I remember."

"Our witness says you were walking out of the driveway. Where were you coming from?"

"Out of the driveway. Um...I guess I was. I walked up a little way and then came back."

"Why?"

"Why? Just to see if anyone was home."

"Did you plan to go and call on them?"

"No. I was just being nosey."

There was a brief pause.

"Was he dead when you got there, Richard?"

Jonathan's question sounded no more harsh than a raindrop falling into a pond. Richard turned his head with a jerk, though, as if thunder had sounded.

"Dead?" His body shuddered. He held himself completely rigid. "Yes." His body relaxed, and he was out of breath.

"Tell us about it, Richard."

Richard Meredith waited until his breathing was normal. As he spoke, he alternately looked at Martin and at Jonathan, trying to talk to them both.

"I was out walking, as I said. And then when I got close to the Faculty Club I thought about going over to Dalziel's house and telling him what I thought of him. I have a lot of resentment over the tenure decisions? So I walked out of the college grounds and around to his house. As I walked up the driveway, I could see that only his car was there. So I thought I might catch him alone. I went up to the door and rang the bell. There was no answer. I tried the door, and it was open. I went in. The house was completely silent. I called out his name but there was no answer. I looked into the living room and the dining room and the kitchen. All empty. Then I went upstairs. I saw him lying on the bed. He was nude and quite still. I walked over to the bed and listened. There was no sound of breathing. I held his wrist and felt for his pulse, and there was none. He seemed dead."

Richard Meredith stopped.

"And then you went and got the poker, Richard." Jonathan sounded as if he were reminding him.

"Yes...I was angry, you see. Angry over his decision to fire me. Non-retention they call it. I was *fired*. And I've hated him all the time I've been at the college. He was an idiot. He knows nothing about education. He's a mere manager, managing a college instead of a business. He always had a smooth answer ready for questions, but his answers told you nothing. It was insulting to have that fool for a President."

"And you detested his homosexuality," Jonathan prompted.

"Of course! The disgusting swine. They never ought to have appointed a homosexual to the Presidency. It's incredible that they did." Richard shuddered as he talked of this. "A disgusting habit."

"And you remembered Lorca. And Edward the Unlucky," Jonathan said.

"Richard snorted. "Yes. I stood there, and the idea came to me of inserting something into him. I looked around, and there was nothing. I went downstairs, and there in the living room I saw the poker. It was the ideal object. So I took it and went back upstairs and pushed it into him."

Richard leaned back and rested his head on his hands.

Martin took over. "Let us go back, Dr. Meredith. Did you see anyone as you walked over to the President's house? No. Did you see or hear anything inside? No. Did the telephone ring while you were there? No." As Richard shook his head to each question, Martin put the answer into words. Richard seemed emotionally exhausted.

"Did you disturb anything in the bedroom where the President was lying? Did you touch anything in the house besides the poker? Why weren't your fingerprints on the poker?"

"I used my handkerchief to pick it up, and I wiped the front door when I left. I think that is all I touched."

"Did you move the body at all?"

"No."

"What did you do after inserting the poker?"

"I left the house and walked back to my place."

Martin decided to end the interview, temporarily. "Thank you, Dr. Meredith. I think that is all I need for now. If I think of anything else to ask you, I'll be in touch."

Martin got up and escorted Richard Meredith out of the room. Martin returned almost immediately, walked over to Jonathan and patted him on the shoulder.

"Not bad, old man. Not bad. How did you guess that?"

Jonathan smiled. "Well, the murder didn't make sense to me, as I've been saying. Why was that poker inserted? I think that, at some level, I had decided that the murderer and the inserter were different. But I hadn't consciously realized it yet. And at the party, now I remember, Richard expressed his disgust, his loathing of homosexuality. He knew about famous deaths of people who had been killed by having things inserted into their rectums?"

Jonathan explained to Martin and Jim the deaths of Lorca and Edward the Second.

"So," he continued, "it seemed to fit. And when I sat here listening to the story of Richard's walk, it clicked. It made sense that he was the inserter of the poker. Now all we need to find out is who's the murderer."

"If it isn't Meredith," said Martin dubiously. "We do know the time more precisely now. If Meredith was out of the house at eleven ten, the murder must have been committed, say, by eleven at the latest. And Mrs. Dalziel called at 6.30."

"Where do you go next, Martin?"

"Oh, next on the agenda is to explore the connection with Harrington Jones. I'm interested in finding out more about the business side of the President's last few days. I have an appointment with an expert on business fraud who works for the Boston Police Department. And then I have an appointment with Mr. Harrington Jones this afternoon. What are you doing for supper, Jonathan?"

"Nothing. Why don't you come over? I'll make something for dinner. And then we can talk."

"Right. See you around six."

Chapter 20

Jonathan left the police station and tensed his neck and shoulder muscles as he felt the cold, icy air. The sun was low and pale yellow and seemed to have no impact on the cold at all. Jonathan forced himself to relax his muscles because he had decided long ago that walking along crunched up like that didn't make it easier to stand the cold.

He was about to get into his car when Richard Meredith walked up to him.

"Can I talk to you, Jonathan?" Richard looked nervous, as well as cold, though the two states were hard to tell apart in this weather.

"Sure." Jonathan got into the car and reached over to unlatch the passenger door. "How about some coffee? I was going over to the Midway Diner."

"Fine."

"I'm sorry to have had to play the heavy-handed detective role today, Richard. But Martin recruited me to help out with his investigation. And so I'm involved. But I don't like harassing people, and it felt like that to me. I'd much have preferred to discuss it with you privately. I didn't even know it was you I was coming to see questioned."

Jonathan sounded pathetic even to himself, and he inwardly cursed. 'Please don't be mad at me' was the essence of what he was saying. Yet maybe that was the right approach to win Richard's confidence. But that thought didn't reduce Jonathan's irritation much at all.

Richard sat bunched up in the car, buried in his parka, looking straight ahead. "I felt angry at you, Jonathan, as I left. Very angry. But then I realized that it wasn't fair. If I had to be

angry, it should be at Aslet. After all, he's the detective in charge. Or really at myself. What I did was stupid and unnecessary. I'm under enough stress as it is without adding to it."

He paused. Jonathan pulled into the parking lot of the diner and turned off the engine. Back again, thought Jonathan. Richard made no effort to get out, so Jonathan waited.

"I'm worried, Jonathan. And the trouble with talking to you is that you're really close to Aslet. But I can't go and talk to others about it. I don't really want the whole college gossiping about it. I don't know what to do."

"Richard. It's true I'm working with Martin on this murder. I want to find out who did it and have him or her arrested. I don't think you did it. I said that to Martin. If you did, I won't cover for you. But if you didn't, it might be useful for you to talk to me because I'm involved in the investigation, as well as good for you to have an ear. Let's go in and warm up."

Jonathan got out of the car, and Richard followed.

As they held their coffee cups, warming their hands and sipping the hot coffee, Richard looked up at Jonathan. "What does Aslet think?"

"Oh, he still has you as a suspect. But I don't know how seriously. He has a few other lines of investigation to pursue yet. But, look, you didn't murder Dalziel, did you?" Richard shook his head. "So let's move on. You were there just after the murder. so you might have seen something that could help us. And you and I both know the college well. We should be able to think of motives and people who might fit the crime. Let's work on it."

Richard seemed to find energy for this. He lifted his head from his coffee, straightened his back a little, and showed some animation.

"First, then," continued Jonathan, "let's go over everything you saw and did on Tuesday night. You said you were out walking, and you went by the President's house. Mrs. Goode says she saw you. Did you see her light on?"

"I don't really remember. I was preoccupied with my thoughts. Thinking about the college and being angry at everyone. The tenure committee in my department, the administration, Dalziel. I was walking, feeling angry and bitter, watching my steps in the snow, looking up now and then. And then I saw I was right by the President's driveway. You heard the rest."

"Now let's take it really slowly. You were probably the first person in the house after the murder. If something was there to be seen, you had the opportunity to find it. So take me through it. Slowly, as you entered the house."

Richard liked the task. He tackled it as a scholar might, looking for clues in the footnotes of an article or the marginal entries of a diary.

"I went up to the door and knocked. It seemed proper to knock, even though I was angry. No answer. So I knocked again, really loud this time. Then I pounded with my fist on the door. Useless dramatics that, of course. The knocker was louder than my fist. But pounding a fist is more satisfying. No answer. So I turned the door knob and pushed. The door was unlocked and opened."

"Wait. Let's be sure. The door was closed, but not locked?"

"Yes."

"And it has a handle. What type?"

"A cylinder. You grasp it and turn. The key fits in the middle of it."

"Huh. So whoever left, closed the door but didn't lock it. The President's wife would lock it, wouldn't she?"

Richard looked directly at Jonathan. "So everyone is a suspect? Yes. I would think so. It would be a habit."

"Go on."

"I went inside. I stood there and called 'Douglas! Miriam! Hello!' I called a second time. Silence. I hesitated and then walked in. I looked in the room on the left that leads right off the entrance hall. It was empty. Then..."

"Stop. Picture that room. Did you actually go in it?"

"No. I stood at the entrance way. Chairs, sofas, etc. It seemed tidy. No litter. Almost as if it had been cleaned up." He paused. "The chairs and the sofa were uneven. No. That's not it. They looked as they would if people had just sat in them and not as if the maid had just tidied up." He paused again. "That's all."

"Anything on the table?"

"I don't remember."

"Go on."

"I turned and went in the kitchen."

"Describe it. Carefully."

"Well, absolutely tidy. Not like mine or yours. The counters were clear, the sink empty. Like the model kitchens you see in stores."

"Ok. Go on."

"So then I thought, what the hell. I'll go upstairs. I was angry, remember. It seemed, what's the word, clever, satisfying, I don't know, to go and look around his place while he wasn't there. Invading his territory perhaps? Voyeurism. So I went up the stairs and into a room that was open and lit up a little by light coming in through the window. I went in, as I said, and there he was."

"Anything noticeable on the tables.....the chair.....the floor?"

"Good Lord! A button." And Richard reached into the back pocket of his jeans and pulled out a button which he put on the table. A square button, with smoothed corners, pearl, with two holes in the center.

Jonathan smiled. He could see Richard, as he had so often, walking down the corridors of the college, stopping to pick up objects. A paper clip, an elastic band. And into his back pocket. He and Ann and others had often laughed at Richard, when he wasn't around, because of the habit. And Jonathan had especially noticed it, because he himself was too shy to have done such a thing. Even when he passed coins on the sidewalk, he was too inhibited to pick them up, much though he wanted to.

And that proved to be all. Chairs people had sat in and a button.

Jonathan ordered refills and asked Richard's opinion. "Who at the college has a motive for murder? The faculty angry at him for his decisions. You, for example, or the others just turned down for tenure, Fred in Political Science and Marian in Chemistry. Or their spouses, lovers, friends. What about the sexual element?"

Richard reflected. "You mean a lover or a rejected lover? What about Miriam?"

"Miriam?" asked Jonathan.

"Yes, the rejected wife. A husband who prefers men. Or her lover?"

"Her lover?" Jonathan's body reacted to this suggestion. He knew Fred was her lover. But now he was too. He worried whether the slight perspiration was visible.

"Yes, her lover. There have been rumors about her for years."

"Any names?"

"No. It's curious. On the one hand, at social gatherings, she's known for coming on so warmly, so friendly to the men. Yet no one has ever connected her with a particular man. Either she has no lover, or she is very, very careful."

"What about you, Richard? Did she ever make an approach to you?"

"Not overtly. You really can't tell. She stands really close. She touches you a lot. Holds your arm. Puts her hand on your shoulder. Has such a warm tone to her voice. It's suggestive. But she's never suggested anything to me, like meeting for coffee or some activity by ourselves."

"And you have no ideas who he might be?"

"There's nothing definite." He looked at Jonathan with a slight smile. "You've been suggested as a possibility."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Sweet Jonathan with a, how shall I put it, excuse me for coarseness, but with a bitch of a wife. A shrew is the most common term used. And then Mike Smith, I think, because of all the time they put in together on the scholarship committee."

Jonathan recalled that Miriam was the President's representative on the committee for awarding the various scholarships, and Mike Smith was chairman of the committee.

"And Fred, who just got turned down for tenure. Now there's a double motive for you. You know, almost everyone has been suggested at one time or another for the role of Miriam's lover."

"Hm." Jonathan thought. Himself as Miriam's lover. Himself as Dougie's murderer. Strange how accurate idle gossip could sometimes be.

Chapter 21

Jonathan stopped at the college on his way home. Although he wasn't teaching, his mail was delivered for him at the Psychology Department. And he liked to stop by to socialize. If he stayed in the house all day or simply did chores, he felt as if he were in solitary confinement by the end of the day, and Claire would tell him that he was acting crazy.

And now he had a real purpose in dropping by. Guided by that purpose he sought out Neil Young. Neil was busy on the telephone when Jonathan entered his office, but he motioned Jonathan to sit down. Jonathan sat in the comfortable chair facing Neil's desk and idly scanned the books on the shelves by the wall. Latin texts mainly. Neil had been a Classics Professor before accepting the job as the President's Assistant, and he would return to that position when he had had enough of administration.

Neil ended the call and came around the desk to greet Jonathan.

"It is nice to see you, Jonathan. We had such a nice time at DJ's Wednesday. Terry was really a darling girl, I thought. And I must admit I've been wondering how the investigation was coming along."

"I think we ought to close the door, " said Jonathan, beginning to rise from his chair. But Neil jumped up from the corner of his desk where he had rested and closed the door.

Jonathan summarized the case. "There are at least four possibilities. Someone at the college, angry over some decision or set of decisions, like rejection for tenure. Someone from his family, such as Miriam."

Neil interrupted. "Miriam! Really! That is so unlikely. I can't imagine it."

"Unfortunately, it's all too likely. Spouses and other close relatives are the most likely suspects. To go on with the list, someone involved in the President's homosexual life. And, finally, someone involved with his financial affairs."

"The President does sound like a devious and wicked man when you list the possibilities that bluntly. It's hardly the man I knew."

"I agree with you, Neil. Perhaps we could all be summed up like that, though. We all have enemies. But then again, we're alive. The President has been murdered." Jonathan paused. "You do know I'm helping Martin Aslet in the investigation? There is one area you could help me with."

"Oh, I'll help in any way I can."

"Well, excuse my bluntness, Neil, but were you the President's lover?"

Neil clasped his hands together and held them to his closed mouth.

"I know this is a difficult moment," Jonathan added. "But unless the murderer confesses today, these questions are going to come up."

"I know. Oh dear. Actually no. I never have been his lover. I suppose the college gossip has speculated a good deal on the possibility?"

"Of course, Neil. Did you and the President ever discuss his homosexuality?"

"Yes. Quite a lot. I think that is why he chose me as his assistant, Jonathan. He wanted someone he could talk to if he needed to. I would understand. And he came to trust my discretion." Neil sighed again. "I suppose my discretion is not needed now?"

"What was he concerned about? Was he afraid of his sexual orientation getting known?"

"Not really. He knew people talked, but he was careful in his choice of lovers. So he didn't have an excessive fear of exposure. But the possibility added a little to his feelings of stress."

"Did he have casual lovers at all? Many gay men like one-night stands?"

"I know. No, not at all. On his trips to New York, he might have done so. But he kept to a very respectable group of friends. So even a casual lover there would not be someone off the street. I suppose you might compare it to middle-class wife swapping. How sordid it sounds."

"How did Miriam take all this. I assume you know?"

"Oh yes. That was the President's major problem. He had come to terms with his sexual preferences. After his marriage and as his interest in Miriam declined, he increased his homosexual activities. He had always felt both desires, and the gradual shift in emphasis did not create any identity crises. But Miriam gave him hell. She really resented his shift of interest. She quite naturally felt rejected and was jealous of his lovers. She could barely tolerate Andrew North in the house, you know. And then partly out of revenge and partly out of sexual need, she began to have lovers. Douglas was always concerned that she would be indiscreet and thereby make it difficult for him to remain as President here. He worried a lot about that, I felt unnecessarily. It didn't seem likely to me that Miriam would risk losing her style of living just for revenge. And she wasn't stupid. Far from it. As far as I can see, she was very discrete. As discrete as Douglas. But the whole situation meant that home was no haven for Douglas. Home meant hostility, fighting, stress. A place to dread going back to."

"I can imagine. Did Douglas have many lovers? Or was Andy his only lover?"

"No. For a long time now, Andrew had been Douglas's sole lover. At least from what he told me. He liked, perhaps even loved Andrew. And the stability made life much smoother."

"Do you know anything else about the homosexual side of his life that would give you a clue as to a motive for murder or to the murderer?"

"No." Neil puzzled over the question. "Nothing at all."

"No blackmail, no sexual jealousies or rivalries."

"No. Nothing."

"What about his financial dealings, Neil? What do you know of those?"

"No more than you Jonathan. Douglas told me little. Probably Andrea, his secretary, knows more since she handled his calls and mail. Douglas tried to disperse his confidences. I was his listener for his love life and the college crises. He told me little about his financial affairs. There I relied as much as anyone else on college gossip."

"If you had to choose a murderer, Neil, who would be your choice?"

"Really! That is hard to answer. I would hesitate to stigmatize anyone."

"Neil, we've mentioned several names today. One of them could be the murderer. Andrew North, Miriam, any faculty member here. Someone murdered him."

Neil sighed again. How he wished this whole business would disappear. Be over with. But it wasn't. "To be honest, Jonathan, I'd choose Miriam. It doesn't make sense. She'd jeopardize her position and her life style. Maybe it's my antipathy to women that sways me. But she did feel more anger toward Douglas than anyone else I know."

"That makes sense. Oh well, Neil, I must be off."

"Jonathan, before you go, what are you doing tonight? I'm having a little Friday-night party. Supper at seven. Do come. Bring Claire, or," and Neil regarded Jonathan with raised eyebrows, "Terry if you'd prefer."

Jonathan smiled at Neil. "Thank you. I'd be delighted. I'll be over at eight with Claire."

Chapter 22

Martin Aslet's first stop was at the Boston Police Department's administrative headquarters. He had delegated this task to his assistant, Jim, but he had reconsidered and come himself. He had telephoned ahead and arranged to meet a former colleague of his, David Dover, who was now assigned to the fraud unit. Dover specialized in investigating crimes in the business community and spent much of his time checking company accounting records and computerized banking printouts. Martin had enlisted his help for this part of the investigation.

He found Dover in a small office on the third floor. Dover was sitting behind a grey metal desk, tilted back in a grey metal chair with his feet up on the desk. The room was painted in a glossy cream paint and had a brown linoleum floor. The room was made bearable by the window that ran the length of the twelve foot wall.

"Ah, you've arrived. I was hoping you would, so that I'd be spared having to get back to work. For the last ten minutes I've been "waiting for Chief Aslet of the Castine Police Department." You have to be busy doing something in this department at all times."

Martin walked over and grasped the hand Dover offered him. "It's good to see you again, David."

"You too. Pour yourself a cup of coffee from that pot over there, sit down and tell me your problems."

David Dover was a short man and thin. His pale face was topped by thick black straight hair of medium length, counterbalanced by a neat mustache.

Martin sat down with his coffee. "As I told you over the telephone, David, I've got a murdered college President who may have been involved in illegal financial activities. I'm trying to find out how illegal and whether they might provide a motive for murder. Shall I lay out the facts?"

"Go ahead."

"Dalziel ran a bank, the First Bank of Medford, with two friends, Andrew North and Harrington Jones. They made some questionable loans to friends and associates and were forced to sell out to the Market Street Bank. They also had plans to buy up some land near Castine, speculating on the possibility that the MTA would build a line out that way. They were trying to put together a loan of two million dollars to enable them to buy the land."

This piece of information excited David. He swung his feet to the ground, sat forward, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"How did they know that? That has been kept under tight wraps. This begins to sound interesting. Where were they trying to borrow the money?"

"Harrington Jones told me that he had approached Perone Brothers."

"I wonder if Jones told them why he wanted the money. If he did, then the Perones would know that there'd been a leak. Therefore, someone on the committee would be suspected of being the source of the leak."

"Why would the Perones lend Jones the money to buy the land if they knew it was for the possible MTA deal? Why wouldn't they buy the land themselves," Martin asked.

"You must remember that the whole deal is speculative. The MTA might change its mind. Re-route the line. Put the terminal elsewhere. For example, you don't have to house your trains at the end of the line. You can store them any place you want to along the route. The MTA could simply extend their present yards. They would need a little parking space and access roads in Castine, but they could get by on a few acres. Or they could decide to buy a lot of land which would allow for future expansion of their facilities.

"There are speculative and conservative investors," David continued. "Perone Brothers is conservative. They'd arrange the loans, take a commission and guarantee themselves a fixed income. Jones and associates take the risks. They might make mucho bucks, but they might lose."

David sat back again and put his feet back on his desk. He picked up his telephone and dialed. "Carter, take a minute and find out for me who is on the governing committee of the MTA. Thanks." David replaced the telephone. "People don't murder in the financial community, Martin, Emma Lathan notwithstanding. But a leak. If someone leaked that kind of information, that could ruin a reputation, a career, a life. That could give you a motive. Have some more coffee."

And as soon as they had sat down again, Carter Little entered with two sheets of paper. "I xeroxed the list of directors and committee compositions from the last Annual Report, David."

"I'm impressed," said Martin. "That was quick."

"We have a good filing system, Martin. Take this and see if any of the names mean anything to you."

Martin read the names.

"Anything?"

"I'm not sure. Something almost clicks. Can I keep these."

"Sure. What next?"

"I have an appointment with William Perone in an hour. I'd hoped you could come with me. I feel a little lost with these financial people."

"I'd be delighted to. Another excuse to avoid work."

Martin laughed. "But won't that inconvenience you, David? Won't you be swamped with work tomorrow?"

"Martin, really! There are people who are always rushed and frenetically working no matter how little you give them. And at the other extreme, there are people like me who get their work done with plenty of time to spare. I think it depends on your personality, as much as on the amount of work you are given. Let's go."

Chapter 23

Jonathan stopped by the Psychology Department to collect his mail and then visited Ann Latimer. They drove over to the Faculty Club and sat at a small table upstairs in the faculty dining room.

"So what is new, Jonathan? What have you deduced?"

Jonathan made an effort to keep his voice low. "First, the murderer did not insert the poker. The poker was inserted later."

"How bizarre! Was that the result of biochemical analyses and other scientific procedures?"

"Not at all. Pure intuition on my part. Someone was seen near the President's house the night he was killed. Martin interviewed him and..."

"Who? You're not going to hold out on me are you?"

"Richard Meredith. But don't tell a soul." Jonathan succumbed once again to a lover's wishes.

"Just the type of person I'd expect. Repressed and all that. Go on."

"I've lost my train of thought. Oh yes. Martin interviewed him, and he admitted finding the President's body. But no more. I guessed he had inserted the poker, and, when I assumed out loud that he had, he agreed."

"So why not the murder?"

"Intuition again. If he had committed the murder, I don't think he would have admitted entering the President's house."

"I don't agree. I think he would. Meredith seems to me to be the type to murder. He got turned down for tenure. He's a repressed person with a virulent abhorrence of homosexuals."

"How do you know that, Ann?"

"It's come up a lot. At lunch here, for example. When we've dissected some of our colleagues. Male and female. He always uses pejorative terms. Fairy or queer, rather than gay or lesbian. I rather like him as the murderer in fact. Hello Fred."

And she switched gears as Fred came and joined them. He set his plate down and went back for soup.

"Don't deny you're discussing the murder," he challenged them.

"How could we be talking about anything else after the revelation last night about the poker," replied Ann.

"You must have known about that already, Jonathan. You're working with Aslet, aren't you?"

"Of course. But that made it interesting to watch people's reactions. You see, the person who inserted it would be the only one not surprised."

Fred raised his eyes as he held his head low over his soup bowl. He grinned. "Good Lord! We'll have to be careful of you laddie. You're playing psychological games with us. When is an arrest to be made? Joyce could hold another party for the occasion. It would be the talk of Castine for years."

"Seriously, Fred, I don't think Martin is close to an arrest yet. He doesn't even have a suspect." Jonathan looked up to see Ann raise an eyebrow at him. He smiled at her.

The dining room was getting crowded. Jerry Frankel, the new person in Fred's department joined them at the table, and others soon filled the remaining tables. Jerry was introduced to Jonathan. He already knew Ann.

"So why weren't you at the poker game this week, Fred? We missed you." Jerry turned to Jonathan. "We need people to provide our winnings. Chickens to be plucked."

"Dream on," Fred retorted. "You're balder than any of us, my plucked young friend."

Jerry smiled. "He's right. It takes a while to learn about a new group. How they play. What risks each takes. I'm only up to breaking even after a semester here. Anyway, where were you Fred? We missed you. The pots were a lot smaller."

"I had some things to do for the next day and decided to miss it this week."

"I didn't know you played poker, Fred," Ann said.

"A few of us play every week. It's our mid-week mood enhancer. You should come, Jonathan."

"Not me. I never gamble."

"Why not?" Jerry inquired.

"My father was a gambler. I liked to watch him, and I would bet on horse races if he gave me the money. But I never could risk my own money. Maybe the gambling impulse will skip a generation, and my children will be wastrels?"

"Wastrels, indeed!" said Fred and frowned across at Jerry.

Chapter 24

Martin Aslet and David Dover walked over to the offices of the Perone Brothers. William Perone had chosen a house on Charles Street for the offices of the partnership, rejecting the modern spacious office blocks where financial institutions are typically found. After David Dover had rung the doorbell, announced himself, and waited for the buzzer indicating that he could open the door, they passed through a pair of high wooden doors into a hallway. The hallway was painted a darkish brown that, even with the high ceiling, gave the space a cramped feeling. The floor was carpeted so that the sound was muffled. David walked to the end of the hall and looked in an office on the left.

"Hello, Miss. Hatton. I'm here with Martin Aslet who has an appointment with Mr. Perone, I believe."

"Good morning, Mr. Dover. It's a long time since you've been here. It is nice to see you again."

As the formalities continued, Martin sat on one of the chairs provided along the wall and noted the antique sideboard, from which classical music was emanating, and the original oil paintings on the wall. Why did people buy dull and uninteresting old paintings by obscure artists rather than bright and attractive prints or something modern? And why did people like antiques? They reminded Martin of the house his grandmother had lived in, full of ugly furniture and ornaments, now the delight of antique collectors (and dealers). Martin had always found her house depressing. Seeing antiques would often remind him of the musty smell of her house, and even the smell of the eau de cologne that she sprinkled on her handkerchief. Martin was roused from his reverie by David.

"We've been summoned. Come on Martin."

They climbed the staircase at the end of the hall, up to the second floor, which at least had hallways and rooms of modern height. The second floor was also better illuminated. More windows perhaps, and the higher elevation got them out of the shadows cast by the neighboring houses. Martin followed David into a room at the front of the house, where the lighter mood held. The furniture did not seem to Martin to be as old and decrepit as the sideboard downstairs. It might even be a modern reproduction, thought Martin. And he wished he could at least tell the difference between authentic antiques and modern reproductions. Though why he wasn't sure, since he bought modern Scandinavian furniture himself.

A desk was placed against a side wall, and William Perone rose from the chair to greet them. A large man, about fifty years old, a Hitchcock profile, but not excessive. A pleasantly

rotund shape that with his height looked good. On someone else thought Martin, but God forbid that I was ever that size! Bald head, glasses and a mustache not quite as neat as David's.

"Good to see you again, David. And I'm pleased to meet you Mr. Aslet."

They shook hands. William Perone returned to his chair, while Martin and David sat down in two comfortably padded arm chairs nearby. The placement of the desk against the wall meant that all three sat close to one another, with no desk between them, thereby creating a feeling of intimacy.

"Martin consulted me about the problem he has and invited me to come along to help him in his investigation. I hope you don't mind, Will?"

"Certainly not. It's a pleasure to see you again, David. What is the investigation about?"

Martin leaned forward. "I'm investigating the murder of Douglas Dalziel, the President of Castine College. He was killed last Tuesday. The investigation has uncovered some of his financial affairs, including the partnership he had with Harrington Jones and Andrew North. Mr. Jones informed me that the group had been seeking to borrow some money in order to purchase some land in the town of Castine and that they approached you as a possible lender. Is that true?"

"Yes, that is so."

"Did they tell you what plans they had in mind for the money?"

William Perone turned from Martin to David. "Hmmm. It does make a difference having you here David. Were I with Mr. Aslet here alone, I could be vague and noncommittal. Stall and volunteer as little as possible. But you are an expert, David." He sighed. "Are you informed about this matter?"

"Oh yes," said David brightly. "You need have no secrets from me. That's why I'm here. The leak interests me greatly."

"Leak! I might have known you would know. Oh well, let us be frank. Yes, they did want to borrow some money, and yes, when I insisted on a clear delineation of their plans, I learned of the possible MTA expansion into Castine. And of course I couldn't fail to realize that they had access to information that is not generally available."

"So there had to have been a leak?" Martin asked.

"Yes, I presume so."

Martin pulled a folded sheet a paper from his jacket pocket and handed it to William Perone. "Who do you think leaked it?"

Perone studied the sheet. "I really don't know. I agree it had to be one of these people. I even looked up the list just as you have:

Paul Borski
Robert Catona
Ralph Coombs
Michael Denham
Russell Hampton
Samuel Litzie
Noel Price
Sidney Glass (ex officio)

Of course, there are secretarial staff involved. But like you, I thought about the staff. Borski, city councillor; Catona, engineering consultant; Coombs, banker; Denham, state senator; Hampton, MTA lawyer; Litzie, MTA manager; Price, public watchdog, a store owner isn't he?; and Glass, ex officio, special assistant to the Mayor."

"Did you make any inquiries, Will?" David asked.

"None at all. I kept it to myself."

Martin thought out loud. "Assume that one member of this committee did leak the information. If he found out that the knowledge was spreading, then he might have murdered to keep the leak contained?"

Perone disagreed. "But Jones knew the information. And probably North too. And now I knew the information. One murder would not silence the leak. He would have to murder all of us."

Martin inwardly scolded himself. He should have thought of that.

"And it's hardly likely," Perone continued, "that he planned mass murder in the financial community. He might conceivably get away with one. But half a dozen? Never. And he would have no idea who might else know. No, Mr. Aslet. I think the motive would have to lie elsewhere in Mr. Dalziel's affairs."

Martin withdrew into silence, but David pursued the theme of the leak. He discussed the various members of the board with Perone and their potential as untrustworthy individuals, while Martin gazed out of the window at the wintery sun.

Eventually, David stood up. "By the way, Will. Would you have lent Dalziel and his associates the money?"

"Probably. It was a secure investment. The land in Castine will gain in value, MTA station or not."

"You were quiet, Martin," David said once they were outside and walking back to the office.

"Oh, I was thinking that I should have realized that the financial motive for murder was unlikely. Killing one person would not have hidden the leak."

"Maybe."

"What do you mean 'maybe'?"

"I don't think that the financial motive is ruled out, Martin. I can think of a murderer and a motive."

"You can? Who? No, don't tell me. Let me think. Who now? The person who leaked the information is ruled out. He would have to be a mass murderer. Who else might suffer if the leak was discovered? No. Who might gain from the leak? Dalziel and his partners. But one of them is dead. So the deal falters. Unless Jones, maybe with North, plan to continue the deal. But that is greedy. A half share isn't much worse than a third share. They wouldn't kill a business partner for that. They had stuck together for many years already. Who else might benefit?"

He saw the answer. "Perone."

David smiled. "Of course."

Martin was pleased. "Perone kills one of them. That throws the group into disarray. They forget the deal. Meanwhile, he can buy up the land. But then, when Jones finds out who has bought the land, he will suspect Perone as the murderer?"

"He may not find out. Perone can have anyone of a number of corporations or individuals buy the land for him," David explained.

"Damn! I wish I could rule out some of the suspects instead of keeping them in as possibilities. I want to eliminate them until I am left with but one."

"Poor man! Think yourself lucky. At least you have suspects. Some crimes leave none."

Chapter 25

When Martin Aslet arrived for his second visit with Harrington Jones at the Jefferson Insurance company, Jones already had coffee waiting for him, along with Andrew North. He apparently had thought that reinforcements were necessary this time. Coffee was poured, seats taken and the silence that followed was tense. For Jones and North, that is.

Jones spoke first. "I gave the list of recent meetings with Douglas to Mr. Wilson. Was that what you wanted, Mr. Aslet?"

"Yes. That was most helpful," Martin replied. "And also the list of bank loans that I asked you for Mr. North. Thank you both."

There was a silence again. This time Martin broke it. "Let's move this along. I'm investigating a murder. So anything that might be pertinent interests me. But I'm especially interested in events that provide a basis for crime, especially events that others would like hidden. Both of you and Mr. Dalziel once owned a bank that made questionable loans to its chief officers for personal gain. The bank was investigated and forced to merge with a larger bank, and the chief officers had to disassociate themselves from the bank. You were among the chief officers.

"Next, I find the three of you in partnership trying to purchase some land in Castine. You were speculating that the MTA might expand its rail lines out to Castine and that the land might increase greatly in value. In the memorandum you gave to my assistant, Mr. Jones, you included the Perone Brothers among those you approached for financing this project. I have talked to Mr. William Perone.

"There seems to be agreement, Mr. Jones. There was a leak. You had access to inside information that was not yet generally known. Someone on this committee," and Martin took a copy of the list from his pocket and handed it to Jones, "Someone on this committee in all probability leaked the information to you. I don't know, of course, whether any of this has relevance for the murder investigation I'm working on. But you can see that I have to explore it."

He waited until Jones and North had both nodded agreement as he looked at each in turn.

"So I'm interested in the next step. Who leaked the information to you, Mr. Jones?"

"I really don't know. Douglas was the one who acquired the information and discussed the implications with us. I wish I could help you. But I'm afraid I can't."

He met Martin's eyes and held them. Martin was glad he had already worked out his next move.

"An impasse, it seems," Martin said. "But maybe we can break the impasse? Could I ask your secretary, Carol, to make a couple of calls for me?"

Martin hoped that Jones' curiosity as to the nature of the calls would provide the access. He was correct. After a slight hesitation, Jones buzzed Carol.

"Carol, would you please step in here."

Carol entered the room. "Carol, would you place two telephone calls for Mr. Aslet? Thank you."

Martin turned to her. "I want you to get me Bob Courtney. He's on the editorial staff of the Boston Inquirer. And also David Dover who heads the fraud section of the Boston Police Department. Thanks."

"Wait a moment, Carol," Jones said quickly. He turned to Martin. "What is the purpose of those calls, Mr. Aslet?"

"Surely it's clear, Mr. Jones. You won't help me bring these matters to light. You leave me no choice. I need the assistance of the press and the Boston fraud squad. Even though the weekend is upon us, I'll have the information I need by Monday." Martin got up. "And you'll most likely be out of a job. I'll take the calls in Carol's office outside."

"Wait..... please," Jones added placatingly. "Let's discuss this."

Martin stopped. "No discussion. I want information. Now. No obfuscation, no half truths, and certainly no lies. You're in trouble. Perhaps legal. Certainly your reputation. You cooperate or else I'll spread your name all over the newspapers." He paused. "Are you cooperating?"

Jones turned to Carol. "Let's forget those telephone calls, Carol. That'll be all." After she had left, he turned to Martin. "I found out about the MTA plans. I know most of the people on the committee. They are very careful about secrecy. But I entered into an arrangement with one of them to find out about the plans." He noted Martin's raised eyebrows. "A share of the profit. It was Borski. We play squash together occasionally, and he keeps me informed of the discussions "

"Then you might warn him, " Martin said, "that news of the leak is getting around, and he would do well to cover his tracks."

After the meeting had ended, Martin walked down Essex Street to Boylston Street and into the Boston Commons. He wandered along the paths, hardly noticing the people, the empty lakes, the squirrels scavenging for scraps on the frozen ground. What was he doing? He felt that he was doing what he ought to be doing, but also wasting his time. Nothing tied together, even though he was getting more of the facts surrounding Dalziel's life. But which facts pointed to the murder and which did not? Why couldn't this have been a simple family killing? Son comes home and shoots his parents.

The walk in the cold air had refreshed him. He walked back to where he had parked his car and drove back to Castine. He drove into the college grounds and made for the President's office. The secretary, Andrea Hoskins, was still there, and she let Martin into the office. Martin sat down again at the desk. When had he been here last? Wednesday morning. Only two days ago. Leaded glass windows, cluttered bookshelves, the orange desk chair. He sat down and began going through the appointments book. There it was. The detail that had almost surfaced when he was in David Dover's office this morning. The week prior to the murder, an entry. 'Lunch with H and PB.' Paul Borski. Maybe it was coming together. He opened his file on the case and looked at the list provided by Andrew North on the loans made by the bank they had owned. Several pages of single-spaced entries. There, the name again. \$100,000 loaned to Paul Borski. And on Harrington Jones' list of communications with Dalziel. The week prior to the murder. 'Lunch with Douglas.'"

Click.

Four o'clock. Time to stop by the office, and then supper with Jonathan.

Chapter 26

Jonathan decided to stop by and see Miriam Dalziel after lunch. He was worried that she might feel depressed in general and angry at herself for what had happened last night. So he let

Ann Latimer drive herself back to the Psychology Department, and he walked around the lake to the President's house.

When Miriam opened the door to let him in, she seemed her usual self. She was impeccably dressed, with carefully applied make-up, and apparently quite calm. "Oh, hello Jonathan. Do come in."

"I dropped by just to see how you are. I hope I'm not disturbing you."

No. It's nice of you to call. Come in and sit down. Can I get you something?"

Jonathan declined. "I've just come from lunch at the Faculty Club. By the way, where are your sons? I haven't seen them around."

"We decided it would be best for them to stay with their grandmother. And better for me too." She smiled at Jonathan.

Jonathan watched Miriam light herself a cigarette. How could he bring up the topic of last night? This was going to be very awkward, he thought.

"Jonathan, I hope you feel all right about last night. I was worried that you might feel bad this morning. I hope you don't. I would be upset if last night changed our friendship for the worse."

"That is strange. I was worried about how you were feeling. And I came round partly to see if you were feeling all right and to reassure you. I didn't know how to bring the topic up, and now you've done it." They smiled at each other. Jonathan continued. "I'm fine. And I'm happy to find out that you are too."

The awkwardness was dissipating, but he still was aware that he didn't feel as close to her as he was to other lovers and ex-lovers. She was still Miriam, a friend, but formal and reserved.

"I try to keep a perspective on things," Miriam explained, "by asking myself how I will feel about this or that when I am lying on my death bed forty years from now. Then I realize that events which seem quite catastrophic today will seem trivial then."

Miriam inhaled the smoke from her cigarette and breathed out. "I must admit," she said, "that I don't remember too much about last night. I hope I was, er, satisfactory?"

Jonathan smiled at her. "I thought you were just right."

"I've been trying to recall what I said, and I have only a fuzzy memory of it. What did I talk to you about, Jonathan?"

"Mainly about how rejected you felt by Douglas's choice of men as lovers and how angry you were."

"Yes, of course."

"I wasn't aware how deeply you felt. Actually, I wasn't even sure how much you knew."

"Christ! Do people think I'm the innocently betrayed wife? The whole college knows but she. That's rather funny. I assure you, Jonathan, if you live with a queer, you know it. And as for not showing how I felt, to have shown my hurt would not have been appropriate given my position. But more than that, I'm not at ease with being emotional. Not at all. I prefer to be in control of my feelings."

"To talk about them rather than show them? Except when you drink. Then your control is less?"

"Yes. I've always been more able to express feelings when I'm drunk. At least," she reflected, "that's usually the case."

"So you have been very unhappy for a long time?"

"Yes, indeed. It has become worse each year. And I've rarely had anyone I felt safe talking to about it. It's been a terrible strain." The cigarette helped her keep control of her emotions. "And I've worried a lot about the effect it would have on the children."

"I'm surprised you never left him."

"I thought about it, day-dreamed about it, longed for it. But I was too scared. What can I do? How would I support myself? I'd been his wife too long. I used to hope he would die, and that life alone would be forced upon me."

She lit another cigarette. "What does your friend think about the murder at this point? Or you yourself? You're helping him, aren't you?"

"Martin is investigating the financial dealings of Douglas today," Jonathan replied. "And I really don't know what he thinks. Myself, I think it was probably someone here. At the college. It wasn't a burglary. And if it was someone connected with his financial affairs, I think the murder would have the marks of a professional killing."

Unless they wanted to disguise it as an ordinary crime of anger. Jonathan sighed. It's all so complicated, he thought. He continued out loud. "It's interesting being involved in a murder investigation, but without clues or fingerprints or forensic analyses and so on, it's hard to discover what my intuition is trying to tell me, if anything."

"Let's have some coffee, Jonathan," and when he agreed, Miriam went out to the kitchen to make some.

But a professional would be most likely to disguise the murder as a break-in. After the murder, he would force an entry, knock things over, take jewelry. It would be far easier, Jonathan thought. Much more efficiently deceitful.

Miriam returned with coffee and insisted they change the topic. "Tell me about your writing," she requested.

And they chatted safely for the next half hour.

After he left her, Jonathan began the walk back home. As he turned left at the end of the driveway, he ran into Fred. Fred was startled, as was Jonathan. They greeted each other and decided to walk back into town, toward Jonathan's house together.

"Were you coming from the President's House, old man?" Fred asked. "How is Miriam doing?"

"Pretty well, all things considered. She's holding together very well."

"But?"

"But what?"

"You sound as if you have doubts," Fred said. "I can tell from the tone of your voice."

"Well, yes." Jonathan hesitated. "I'm beginning to think that she has the best motive for killing Douglas. And that worried me."

"Miriam! That's crazy. I can't see her killing him. What makes you think she might have?"

"The murderer is usually a close relative. You know that as well as I do. Spouse, child, parent, lover. So with Douglas, you have the possibility of a gay lover or his immediate family. His children are too young, and they were away at school."

"If you ask me, the gay lover is a much more likely candidate. The poker in the arse indicates that surely."

"That wasn't inserted by the murderer. We found that out, at least."

"It wasn't? Who put it there, then?"

"I can't tell anyone, Fred. It's officially secret."

"Come on."

"No. I can't. The poker is a red herring. And an accidental one, not planted deliberately to fool us. I think that Miriam really is the most likely suspect."

"Really!" Fred's emotion showed in his vigorous movements and gestures. "She's not the type. And besides, she was away that night."

"I know. An alibi. So that leaves me completely at a loss. Thank goodness I'm only a consultant and not responsible for solving the case. I'd hate my job effectiveness to depend on solving this case."

They had reached Jonathan's house.

"Well," said Fred, "I must do some shopping in town. Are you going to Joyce's party on Sunday night?"

"She's just had a party? Why is she having another?"

"She decided it would be fun. And everyone is so caught up in this murder that they seem to want to be sociable. Congregate and talk about it. Come too. And bring Martin with you. I'll tell Joyce I invited you both."

And Fred loped off into town.

Chapter 27

When Jonathan got home, he called Claire at work.

"We've been invited to dinner at Neil's tonight. At seven."

"I can't make it Jonathan. I have to work late. I was just about to call you to tell you. I'm behind on the McKinley account, and I can work better here than at home. Anyway, you know I can't stand that man. I find him disgusting." Jonathan could visualize her shudder of dislike. "You'll have to go alone. All right? I'll see you around eleven then? Bye."

It was later in the afternoon, as he was sitting at his desk, that Jonathan remembered he had told Martin that he would meet him for supper. Jonathan called the Police Department, but Martin was out. For a while he paced through the house, cursing himself for being so careless. Finally, a plan began to form. He called Ann.

"Ann, I've done something silly. I've arranged to meet Martin at my house at six for supper and to be at Neil's at seven for supper. I can't get hold of Martin to explain. Would you like to come here and meet Martin at six and have supper with him? And explain my stupidity."

And so it was arranged that Ann would come over at five thirty and wait for Martin.

And Jonathan went to Neil's with Terry.

Neil's house was close to the edge of a cliff, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. From the road, wooden steps led down a sandy slope to a flat area. Across this was the house, its wood siding weathered silver grey. The house was surrounded by a deck, and the front door was on the side facing the ocean.

Jonathan and Terry were the last to arrive, and no sooner had they entered than Neil took Terry into the kitchen to advise him on whether the lamb was cooked. Terry had hardly ever cooked and certainly not lamb. Jonathan reflected that there was, after all, no reason why homosexuals shouldn't be sexist.

The others in the large single downstairs room introduced themselves. Nick taught history at the college, Winston was an Australian stock broker, and John was an antique dealer from Provincetown, whom it became clear as the evening wore on was Nick's lover. John had a typical masculine manner and was the husband to Nick's wife.

Neil began the meal with a Danish ale soup, thick with rice, milk, ale, sugar and lemon rind, piping hot and wonderful for a chilly winter's night. The lamb was served with mint sauce and roast potatoes.

The conversation first turned to travel. Jonathan made a slight grimace across to Terry as the others played games. Which restaurant do you think is best on the Left Bank? Where do you buy leather in Madrid and stay in Athens?

Jonathan and Terry let the game play itself out rather than trying to ridicule it. It ended by the time the lamb appeared. The entree was taken up a discussion of an old Fellini movie. All the reviewers had agreed that *The Ship Sails On* was full of symbolism, but few reviewers had tried to explain it. The group now did, exhaustively. As dessert was served, a rich carrot cake with cream icing, Winston asked,

"What news of your Master's murder, or whatever you call him here?"

"President," responded Nick.

"So many Presidents," Winston murmured, but Nick continued.

"And please, let's not discuss it tonight. It's all I've heard talked about all week. It's become boring."

"Fancy that! Murder boring," Jonathan said. "In primitive times, such a murder would have formed the basis for a story that would have been passed on from generation to generation, become a myth, with plays written on it by Sophocles and Jean Anouilh. But we're bored within a week."

"Anyway, it's obvious who killed dearest Dougie," Nick said, ignoring his own admonition to avoid the topic.

"Who?" asked Jonathan.

"His wife of course," Nick answered. "I've watched her. It's obvious she loved him, and it was obvious she found his sexual preferences and the talk about it a torment. Private and public humiliation."

"Either her, or her lover perhaps," contributed Neil. "A Sir Galahad saving his Lady's reputation. What about you Jonathan? Who do you choose?"

"If we're playing a game, then it has to be someone quite unlikely. The Dean of Students, perhaps," replied Jonathan.

"Poor old Gladys?" said Nick. "Why, she's so old and decrepit, she'd fall over backwards if she were to lift a cudgel to hit him with. And as for pokers, she wouldn't dare look at a naked man."

"But she was aiming for his mouth," Neil answered. "Out of modesty she closed her eyes and missed."

They all giggled.

"And now you Terry," continued Nick. "Your choice."

"Oh, I think it was Jonathan of course." And she squeezed his arm. "He's conducting a psychological experiment on the college community. And actually Dougie isn't dead. He's on vacation in Curacao. But the story about the poker is, however, true. He put it there himself."

They giggled again.

"Well," said Terry on the way home, "that's the first time I've ever been with couples and been the only woman!"

"The sex roles were amazingly clear, weren't they? And you know what? Even in gay couples I prefer the woman."

They passed his house on the way back into the college, and, as he approached, he saw Claire's car leave the driveway and head away from him.

"That's odd."

"What?" asked Terry.

"Let's stop a moment so I can check the house."

Claire had left the outside and inside lights on, and Jonathan opened the door and went in first. He closed the door behind Terry and looked around. He went into the kitchen and saw a note on the table. Terry stood in the kitchen doorway as he read it.

Dear Jonathan:

I hoped that you'd be home. I apologize for telling you with this note, but I want to be on my way. I've decided to leave. It must be as clear to you as it has been to me that our relationship has deteriorated. We have gone our own ways and grown apart. We have little left to say to each other and share few interests any more. We've talked around these issues again and again, but never resolved them. To be blunt, I'd prefer to end it rather than try to work at the relationship. I have a place to stay. Let's leave it alone tomorrow and talk over breakfast on Sunday. Say 10 am?

Claire

"She's left me."

Terry, standing behind him, moved toward him and hugged him from behind. He turned and held her in his arms.

"Fucking hell. Do you want some coffee, Terry?"

"Yes please. Decaffeinated. Are you surprised Jonathan?"

"Yes. And yet no. Look, read the note." And as she read it he put on water to boil and got mugs out. "She's right. I knew all that. I knew our marriage was one of habit. That we made no real contact. I day-dreamed a lot about finding and being with someone else. So no, I'm not surprised. But I never thought that I would leave her. I was too scared. Could I make it alone? Would I find someone else? And I didn't think she would leave. I thought we'd stay in a dull unrewarding housemate relationship. So yes, I'm surprised. And I'm scared."

He poured the boiling water into the mugs.

"Terry, can you stay tonight?" And he held her in his arms.

"Of course. Let me go and call Alice to sign out for me."

It was in bed, after they'd made love, that he lay in her arms and cried.

Chapter 28

Martin walked into the Faculty Club at 6 pm and found Ann Latimer waiting for him.

"You got my message then?" she asked. (Ann Latimer was not about to meet Martin in Jonathan's house as he had suggested. She had called the Police Department and left a message for Martin to meet her at the Club.)

Martin nodded.

"You know, Jonathan calls that the Aunt Ida phenomenon. You dial Aunt Ida's telephone number, the telephone is picked up, and Aunt Ida's voice says "Hello" in just her style. And yet you say "Aunt Ida?" with a question mark, as if you're not sure."

Martin stood and smiled at her.

"I mean, obviously you got my message. You're here. Come and get a drink. I've already started." She led Martin into the lounge by holding his arm. "Another Bloody Mary for me, George. What'll you have Martin?"

"That sounds good. The same. I've always envied you, the faculty here, for the club. It's a beautiful setting, good food, excellent service. It's comfortable."

"Do you know," added Ann, "that if I got out a cigarette, the maitre d' over there would come over to light it for me. Even I find it quite amazing."

"And you even get alcohol here when the town is dry."

"But it's a private club, so it's exempt," Ann said.

"Oh no. Private clubs are included in the prohibition. It's that they don't sell the alcohol here," Martin explained. "No money changes hands. You simply give them slips of paper. That exempts it. It's the only place in Castine where you can get a drink, if you belong that is."

"It's a treacherous place," Ann said. "It's a wonderful place to teach and live. Good students, a beautiful town, this club, cultural events, amiable colleagues."

"So why is it treacherous?" Martin asked.

"Because it's like a retirement village. You need never leave the town. You can forget the world outside of the campus. You can turn off and tune out. And that's fine if you're sixty-five. But not if you're thirty like me. Then it's frightening. You're seduced by the security here and scared by your willingness to be seduced. Jonathan felt it too. That was why he half broke away. A gradual weaning. We'll have to see if he makes a complete break. Let's go eat."

Dinner was noteworthy for the fact that the murder was not discussed. And also for the fact that Ann consumed four more Bloody Mary's. As she signed the check for the meal, she refused Martin's money.

"That's not allowed. It's forbidden for guests to pay us for meals. But you can drive me home since I'm in no fit state to drive."

So he did and was invited in for coffee.

In the kitchen, Ann, standing beside Martin, poured the water into the percolator, then turned and kissed Martin. Martin responded. She led him into the bedroom, and they undressed and made love. Like Jonathan in earlier times, Martin noticed how wiry the hair between her legs was and that she had similar hair around her nipples. She didn't respond much. She moved, but she was too drunk to be emotionally involved.

"I'm sorry," she said, her voice extremely slurred. "I can be much better than that. But I'm too drunk." Moments later she was asleep.

Saturday

Chapter 29

Jonathan woke up surprised. Surprised that he had slept so well. He lay back to back with Terry and reflected. This was it. How did he feel? Scared. But also expectant. What would happen? He suspected that having his lover in bed with him cushioned him from a really strong emotional reaction. But there was a lover in his bed. And turning over, he hugged her, waking her up in doing so. She resisted kissing him, worried about her stale mouth. But he was insistent. And so they made love.

And then breakfast.

"I have to go and work on a paper today, Jonathan. Would you like to go out this evening?"

"Yes. Let's. How about a movie? I'll buy a newspaper and see what's playing."

He drove Terry back to the college, bought a newspaper and then went back home. He called Martin's house, but there was no answer.

He spent the morning being restless. He roamed around the house. If Claire was gone, it could be his alone. What would he do with it? He looked at her possessions and wanted them gone. Then his mood would switch, and he would feel acute anxiety. What could he do to make her change her mind? And then he would switch back again. He made no effort to work. He put on records, changed them after half of one song, switched to the radio. He collapsed on the sofa. He got up and paced again.

He called Martin several times and finally got him at eleven.

"I've finally caught you. I've been calling you all morning."

Martin sounded hesitant. "Oh. I was out."

"Martin! Claire's left me." Jonathan shouted the news.

"Good Lord. I'm shocked. Are you all right?"

"I'm ok. I'm ok. I'm scared I guess."

"Jonathan, I'm lost for words. Look, I was about to call you to invite you round for brunch. Come on round, and we can talk. About everything.?"

So Jonathan walked through the bitter cold to Martin's and soon was sitting by the roaring fire in Martin's living room. Martin was moving between the kitchen and the living room, arranging foods and bringing them to the coffee tables he had placed near the fire. Bowls of hot potato soup, a soft creamy brie with crusty French bread, glasses of sparkling Moscato wine. He smiled at Jonathan.

"You see? I feel so bad that I even bought a wine that would normally never enter this house. But you are still such a pagan where wine is concerned. So Moscato it is. Now tell me about Claire."

Jonathan told Martin of coming home last night and discovering Claire had just that moment moved out, leaving him a note. Jonathan showed Martin the note.

"What a bitch she is, Jonathan. I know I should be careful in what I say. She's just left you. But you know what I think of her."

"Yes, I know. But there is another side to her. Others never get to see it."

"So you've always said. I wonder what she wants to talk about tomorrow?"

Jonathan looked into the flames. "Probably the financial arrangements. I'm sure she already has a proposal to set before me."

"Were you ok last night?"

"Yes. I had been over at Neil's for supper with Terry, and she stayed the night. She's coming over this evening to take me to a movie. Oh, it slipped my mind? Again. I'm sorry I stood you up last night. I hope dinner with Ann was fine. So much has happened that I forgot I had screwed up my arrangements. I'm really sorry."

"Don't worry, Jonathan. Everything was fine. She called my office, and we met at the Faculty Club for dinner. I really like it over there. And she was pleasant company."

"She was probably quite drunk, wasn't she?"

Martin nodded.

"Did she try to seduce you?"

"Yes. In fact, she succeeded."

"Oh." Jonathan could think of nothing to say. That's my ex-lover, he thought. But she was an ex-lover. So what did it matter if she had other lovers? But Martin! Martin was his best friend. Martin was gay, wasn't he?

Martin let the silence grow. Then, "Does it upset you?"

"No," said Jonathan, too hastily. "No, I don't think so. It was, it was a surprise." He looked away from the fire and at Martin. "No. It's ok."

"I thought you and Ann were no longer involved. You aren't still involved, are you? Right. I didn't think it would matter now."

Jonathan had looked back to the fire. "I bet you had to drive her home."

"Yes."

They smiled at each other.

"Try the brie, Jonathan. It's really outstanding. Even with this syrupy wine. You know, I don't like to change the subject, but there is this murder we're investigating."

"Oh, the murder. I knew there was something else. What has been happening, Martin?"

Martin gave Jonathan the file on the investigation and, after he had looked through it, recounted the events of yesterday, his meetings with David Dover, William Perone and Harrington Jones.

"What do you think of the financial angle, Martin? Do you think it's connected with the murder?"

"I really don't know. I kept pursuing it yesterday. But I also kept thinking that I was wasting my time. This afternoon, I have an interview with Paul Borski. So I'm still following it up. None of the routine inquiries, which are being coordinated by Jim, have turned anything up. There is no evidence pointing to any one yet. I keep returning to Richard Meredith and whether he murdered the President and then inserted the poker. At least we can place him at the right place, at around the right time, and with a good motive. And he's obviously bizarre enough for murder."

"Do you have enough to charge him with murder?"

"No, not really. The prosecutor would be unhappy. I have him admitting to inserting the poker, but I hadn't read him his rights. And then I have no evidence linking him to the murder except his presence there. I wouldn't like to bet on a jury convicting him. But I prefer him over the financial area."

"What about the gay scene?"

"We've turned nothing up. Dalziel had a stable partner. There is no evidence that he went out cruising that night and picked anyone up. It looks as if he knew whomever killed him, since he let him into the house, assuming it wasn't unlocked and the person just walked in. Do they lock the house, Jonathan?"

"I don't know."

"I must check that. So even if it were a lover, it was one he knew. Andrew North? No. It doesn't seem likely."

"Then there's Miriam."

"Yes, the wife. She has an alibi that is really no alibi. Her sister and brother-in-law were out so late that she could have driven up here, killed him and then sped back to Newport in time. It would have been risky. Her sister might have been home early. But as things were, it could have been done. What do you think, Jonathan?"

"I'm a friend of Miriam. So this is hard for me. But I rank her the top suspect. She has the opportunity, if your thinking about her driving here and back is correct. Except she may not have known that her sister was going out that night. She gets down there and finds out she'll be alone for the evening. Then she decides to drive back and kill him. When did she find out that she'd have the evening alone?"

"I don't know. I'll check on that too."

"So, a possible opportunity. She's also got a good motive. I've been talking to her, and she really was upset over Dalziel's homosexuality. She was angry, hurt and felt rejected. Her emotions are very strong. On the other hand, she is tightly controlled. Her intellect governs her emotions. She admits that it's only when she's drunk that her emotions get expressed. So to kill him, she'd probably have to be drunk. And if she was drunk, then the murder wouldn't have been so neat, and how would she drive up and down Interstate 95 without any incident? I wonder if she was drunk when her sister got home? She's got opportunity and motive, but it doesn't feel quite right to me." Jonathan hesitated. "Oh, I can't explain it. The pieces almost fit together, but don't quite."

"But that is it. Richard Meredith, angry faculty member..."

"And Ann reckons," Jonathan interrupted, "that he loathes homosexuals. So he has that to add to his anger over the nonretention."

"Interesting. Meredith; Miriam Dalziel, rejected wife; possibly someone from the financial world; or persons unknown. Do you want this last morsel of brie? There. Take it. Now for the ice cream and strawberries. You'll have to forgive their lack of freshness. But it is midwinter. I have to go out soon. How about coming over tomorrow for a game of chess?"

Jonathan remembered Joyce's party, so they decided to visit the party and then come back for a chess game.

Jonathan walked back home after lunch and made himself a mug of coffee. Almost immediately the telephone rang.

"Hello."

"Hello Jon. This is Claire."

"Oh." He was silent. He could think of nothing to say. His mind blocked.

"Are you all right?" Claire asked him.

"Er...yes. I'm fine."

"I'm sorry I left before you got back. But I waited, and it was getting late."

"I saw you drive out. I just missed you." He sighed. "You said something about meeting tomorrow."

"Yes. That was what I was calling about. How about ten o'clock?"

"Yes. That's fine. Where shall we meet?"

"I thought at the house."

"No," said Jonathan. "No. Let's make it the Midway Diner. I'd prefer that."

"Oh, all right," Claire agreed. "Ten o'clock then."

And the conversation was over. It had made Jonathan anxious. He drank his coffee in the kitchen, sitting on a stool, but then he began to pace in the house like a caged animal. Into the living room; back into the kitchen; he threw himself on their bed, his bed; but then got up quickly and walked back into the kitchen.

"I have to get out. I'll walk over to the department."

So he bundled up again in boots and his warm jacket and walked toward the college and then through the grounds. Moving, doing something eased his anxiety. In his mind, he replayed the telephone call with Claire. He tried other variants. Pleading. Anger. He rehearsed tomorrow's meeting. What was his goal? What did he want?

He let himself into the Psychology Building and walked up to the Department. He was going to let himself in the secretarial office, but Ann Latimer was already there.

"Jonathan! How nice to run into you. But wait a minute. You look terrible. Has anything happened?"

"Claire has left me." He sat down on the edge of the desk.

Ann walked over to him and hugged him close to her. "Oh, sweetie. How terrible!"

He held her tightly and buried his head in her shoulder. The way he used to when they were lovers. He had tears in his eyes, but he held back from sobbing.

"I'm scared Ann. Really scared. I'm going to be alone. How is it going to be? Am I going to be able to cope with it?"

"You won't really be alone. You'll have us, your friends. But it will be different. And hard."

"Yes. Even though Claire and I were apart and busy most of the time, still she was there. Even when I was home alone, she was there. Her clothes, her make-up, her papers. Hundreds of reminders of her presence. And when she was home, it was comfortable having her there. To have her sitting reading, listening to music, playing Scrabble. She gave my life a focus. Already, in a few hours, I feel aimless, diffused. The focus has gone. How have you lived alone so long?"

"It can be hard, Jon. But it can also be fine. I have developed my own solitary routines and rituals. I structure my time and find a focus. But it took me a long time to arrange my life this way. And there were periods when it was very hard going."

"What gives it a focus, Ann?"

"My work, my vacations, my friends. My friends are very important. They give my life some continuity. I keep in touch with all my friends. I write to them a lot, visit them. And my vacations give me a future. The next trip. I like planning it, reading about the country I'm going to visit, reading novels set in the country, sometimes learning the language a little. And my work is important too. It gives me a sense of growth and advancement. My record grows. It never decreases, and it can't leave me. I write another article, teach another course. I keep adding to it. It gives me a feeling of security."

"Maybe I should come back to Castine College full-time?"

"Maybe. But you shouldn't do anything until you've given yourself time. Claire has only just left. Your feelings will change from day to day for a while."

"Hourly."

She smiled. "Exactly."

Jonathan pulled away from her a little, and then kissed her. "Hey! That reminds me. You've been unfaithful to me."

Ann looked startled. "What do you mean?"

"You and Martin."

"He told you?"

"Of course he told me."

"Shit! You two are close, aren't you? Anyway, me unfaithful? You've been getting into the pants of your students for quite a while now. You were unfaithful to me first."

"Don't use the plural. It's just one student. And you know it. Anyway, don't get annoyed. I don't really mind. It's just, well, I felt momentarily jealous. You know? I felt possessive of you."

"I know," Ann said softly. "I felt the same about you. And thank you. I'm pleased you felt jealous. It would have been terrible if you hadn't cared. What did he say?"

"Not too much. He was worried that I'd be jealous. He did say you were a little drunk."

"I wasn't. I was completely drunk. I don't remember a thing about it. My usual way the first time, eh?" She giggled. "I always get drunk. And then in the morning he didn't seem interested. So we just had breakfast. He seemed withdrawn."

"To tell you the truth Ann, I always reckoned that Martin was gay. I was really surprised to hear that he had gone to bed with you."

"Yes, I wondered too. At the Faculty Club I was watching him closely. Then, even though my memory is vague, the night in bed changed my opinion. But the morning changed it back again."

"Maybe he is gay, but not exclusively?"

"Yes. Maybe that's it? Come to my office and have some tea."

They walked down the hall to Ann's office. She got out her electric kettle, went out into the corridor to fill it from the water fountain, came back and plugged it in.

"I have all fruity flavors: orange, lemon, blackberry and apricot."

"Lemon, please."

"Has anything new happened with the murder investigation?"

"Martin has been investigating the financial dealings of Dalziel. He's uncovering a lot, but neither of us really feel that the murder was motivated by all that. I'm getting more and more convinced that it was Miriam. But I feel guilty about suspecting her."

"Why do you feel guilty?"

"Well, she's a friend, and," Jonathan hesitated and then told Ann of his evening with Miriam. She thought of teasing him, but then decided against it. He wasn't in a strong enough emotional state to cope, she thought.

"Why do we have to get drunk to do it?" Ann asked, as she put water into the mugs. "It's as if we feel guilty about it and need the alcohol as an excuse. It really is silly of us. We ought to be honest with ourselves." She removed her tea bag and added sugar. "So, she was really angry and hurt over Dougie's homosexuality. And her alibi is really no alibi. She does seem to be a good candidate. I agree. But I still like Meredith. After all, he admits to inserting the poker. And he hates homosexuals, and he was angry at Dougie."

"I'm beginning to think that it is amazing that the police solve any murder." Jonathan sipped his tea. "And I wonder how so many murderers get caught. They must be stupid or careless enough to leave clues around. Or just have bad luck and get identified at the scene of the crime inadvertently by someone. Because in this murder, with no clues, it is really hard to decide on the basis of motives and personality."

"Yes, it does seem that way." Ann decided to change the subject. "How is your new book coming along? Is it a new book or a revision of an old one?"

Chapter 31

Waltham was a lower class town west of Boston. The town was Italian, with the addition of a few French Canadians. Forty years earlier, a Jewish university had been established on the outskirts of the town, past the watch factories and near the Boston and Maine railroad tracks into Boston. Two thousand students had changed the flavor of the town. Most lived on campus, but many rented apartments in town. The town, therefore, experienced a mild internal conflict. In the sixties, for example, the draft board exempted all students, but drafted all of the French Canadians and any Italian boys who wanted to serve.

Paul Borski lived officially in Boston, where he was a councilman, but his parents lived in Waltham in a house he had bought for them. Martin Aslet parked in front of a large wood-frame house with darkly stained siding, large enough for three apartments, he judged. Which was almost true. Borski's parents lived downstairs while Borski lived on the second and third floors. Borski had never adjusted to the forced integration of the Boston Public Schools and, since his daughter was not overly gifted, she officially lived with her grandparents in Waltham and went to school there.

The door was opened by an elderly woman, with a thick European accent, who eventually realized that the visitor was for her son.

She shouted up the stairs in Polish. "Paul, a man's here to see you."

"Send him up, Mama," a voice shouted back, also in Polish.

Martin climbed the stairs, admiring the beautiful wooden paneling. These old houses were often so richly finished compared to contemporary houses. Sculptured ceilings instead of sheet-rock, hardwood floors instead of fitted carpets installed over plywood, paneling assembled piece by piece instead of the four-by-eight prefabricated sheets. Beautiful!

The second floor, however, was tastelessly furnished. Someone had painted a climbing plant onto the bricks around the fireplace. Why not have a living ivy growing there, Martin thought? Expensive but gaudy sofas and chairs, covered in plastic to protect the fabric. Lamps

with hanging crystals. A wedding photograph over the mantelpiece. Not a book in sight. The lower classes aping the rich without, of course, ever having seen how the rich really live. Americans are right in saying that America has no class system. There are only lower class people, with a sprinkling of the rich and the educated. As soon as he thought this, Martin chided himself for his snobbery.

Paul Borski was waiting for him. A short man, with an enormous stomach, about as thick as his trunk was long. Short black hair, a mustache and glasses. He shook Martin's hand.

"Welcome, Mr. Aslet. Come in and sit down. This is Tony, my assistant. We are trying to finish the week's work. A rough life, eh? Sit down Tony. But you must be working too, Mr. Aslet, on a Saturday? How can I help you?"

Tony's presence unnerved Martin. He preferred to interview people alone. But Borski had told Tony to sit down. Martin had to proceed anyway.

"I'm investigating the murder of Douglas Dalziel, President of Castine College." He hesitated, but Borski did not move or say anything. Not a twitch. "Since he had some business-related dealings with you, I need to check with you."

Still silence from Borski.

"Dalziel, together with Harrington Jones and Andrew North, was seeking a loan to buy some land in Castine. They believed the MTA was planning to extend its lines out there."

More silence.

"Mr. Jones indicated to me that he had access to inside information on the MTA plans and that you were the source."

The silence was broken.

"I know. The son of a bitch told me he'd told you."

"It's true?"

"What if it was?"

"Is it?" Martin persisted.

Paul Borski glared at him. He picked up a cigarette and lit it. "Why do you want to know?"

Tony's presence was inhibiting Martin. Could he ask him to leave? Damn it! "Look, Mr. Borski. I'm investigating a murder, not a leak from some MTA committee. I don't care if you leaked information. I care only if you murdered Dalziel or can help me find out who did. If you won't answer me, we won't get anywhere. I'm here because Harrington Jones implicated you. Let's assume the answer to my question is yes, that you did pass on the information. You had lunch with Dalziel a week and a half ago. Would you tell me about it? When, where, and so forth?"

"Lunch with Dalziel? You're wrong. I've never met the man."

"His appointment book lists you as having lunch on January 3rd."

"I don't give a damn what his appointment book says. I didn't have lunch with him."

"Where were you at lunch-time on January 3rd then?"

"Tony, where was I?"

Tony searched through papers on the coffee table and extracted a book. "January 3rd. Lunch. You were with me and Carlo Rossi at the Copley Square Deli."

"So," said Borski, "No lunch with Dalziel."

"And last Tuesday night. Where were you then?"

"Tony?"

Tony looked at the book. "Last Tuesday. You were here. We were going over your accounts, remember?"

"Can I see the book?" Martin requested.

Borski shrugged, and Tony handed it over to Martin. It did have the lunch note with Rossi and a note on Tuesday last saying Waltham. Martin scanned the pages. No mention of Dalziel or Castine. He held the book at an angle to reflect the light from the window. Nothing erased as far as he could tell.

"When did you last meet Jones?"

"I haven't seen him for a couple of months."

"But you've talked on the telephone?"

"I talk to a lot of people." Borski relented. "Maybe. I don't keep a record."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Borski," for nothing, Martin added to himself. "Though I wish you could have been more cooperative."

"Why should I?"

"A man has been murdered."

"So, many men are murdered. They don't concern me."

And on that note, Martin left. Tony escorted him down the stairs and to the door. When Tony returned to the second floor, Borski had relaxed. He puffed at his cigarette.

"Not bad, Paul. You gave him nothing."

"Yeh. Let's hope it dies now. That damn Jones!"

Chapter 32

Jonathan walked away from the Psychology Building toward home. But as he passed the Faculty Club, his need for company drew him there. His aversion to being alone was strong and, though he thought he ought to examine it and perhaps force himself to spend time by himself, he also wanted company. Any company.

So he walked across to the Club and found Richard Meredith having coffee there. Jonathan ordered coffee and sat down with him.

"Hello Richard. How are you?"

"The same as usual. How about you?" Without waiting for Jonathan to reply, Meredith continued. "Jonathan, do you know how that police friend of yours feels about my role in the incident, you know?" He ended hesitantly.

"Your role?"

"Yes, you know."

"No. I'm not sure what you're asking me."

"Well, does he believe me?" Meredith began to sound annoyed.

"Oh, I think so." Jonathan pulled himself together. He would not talk about Claire. Meredith was not a friend, and he wouldn't respond fittingly. "He believes you did what you said you did. But....but I think he also believes you did more."

"What do you mean?"

"He thinks you're the most likely suspect for the murderer."

"But damn it, why?"

"Come on Richard. You are the only person known to have been at the scene of the crime. No one else saw Dougie after supper at the Club at eight o'clock." Jonathan omitted to mention Andrew North's presence. "You were there. You admit it. So maybe you murdered him too."

"But then why would I have admitted putting in the poker?"

"You didn't admit it. I guessed, and you were surprised. Also it's a good way of seeming innocent. The real murderer wouldn't have admitted that, so since you did admit it, you're trying to divert suspicion."

"That's diabolical logic!"

"And you have a good motive. You were angry at being turned down for tenure. And it's known all over campus that you loathe homosexuals. It's a major topic of gossip now."

"I...I guess you're right. I wish now that I'd kept my damn mouth shut about my feelings. I do seem to have the motives, don't I? I go to confront him, have a fierce argument, and then hit him. There's no one else suspected?"

"Oh yes. But no one else Martin can pinpoint at the scene of the crime."

"Stop saying scene of the crime, for God's sake! People really know I loathe homosexuals?"

"Of course! You've made no secret of it. And you've always made it clear that you knew Dalziel was one and that you despised him for it. People have assumed you feel so strongly because, perhaps, you have strong unconscious homosexual desires yourself."

Meredith's agitation grew. He poured himself more coffee.

Jonathan continued. "There's no rumors about you sleeping with students, and you've never been married either, have you Richard?"

"Well, actually, yes. I have."

"I never knew that."

"I never talk about it." But talking about it now seemed to calm Meredith down. "It was ages ago. A long time. I married right after college. And we broke up at graduate school. We were both graduate students. That's why I went to Michigan State University instead of somewhere better. That's where Emily got admitted. In physics, you know. Anyway, we broke up in the second year. There was someone else. At the University. The Dean of the Graduate School." He looked up at Jonathan to see his reaction and was surprised to see tears in Jonathan's eyes. "What's the matter Jonathan?"

Jonathan drank some coffee. "Oh, it's just that Claire, my wife you know, walked out on me yesterday."

"Hell! I'm sorry Jonathan. It's going to be really hard on you. And no one else will understand. They'll all say 'Oh, you'll find someone else soon. Cheer up' and other similar nonsense. But only those who've been left know what it's like." Meredith looked up. "Even Fred is here. All the bachelors are assembling here this afternoon."

Fred walked over, slapped Jonathan on the back and greeted Meredith. "Hi, Jonathan. Hello Dick. What's up? This can't be politics. You're part-time, and you're leaving."

"Tactful," murmured Jonathan looking at Meredith over his coffee cup. "What have you been up to Fred?"

"Oh, working in the library. After two hours there, I decided enough. So I came over here for a break. I have less and less tolerance for library research as I get older. The smell of those

musty old books gets to me after a while. I wonder if I'm getting allergic to them. That would put an end to my scholarly life."

"I had a friend at graduate school," said Jonathan, "who ran rats and got an allergy to them. By the end of her research project, she had streaming eyes and a stuffy nose all the time."

"I wonder if you can claim occupational injuries for that? Injured by the dust on books. Brown lung disease in academics."

And with Fred there, the conversation turned light and inconsequential. Jonathan stayed another half-hour. As he left, he stopped by the reception desk of the Club to write himself a note. 'Who was the Dean of the Graduate School at Michigan State University? What year did Meredith get his BA and PhD?' He walked home, and almost as soon as he entered, before he took his parka off, the telephone rang.

"Dr. Clark? This is the Police Department. I have a message for you sir. From the Chief. Chief Aslet wants you to go over to the President's house at the college immediately."

"What's happened?"

"The President's wife, sir. She's killed herself."

Chapter 33

The same vehicles were parked outside the President's house this Saturday as were there last Wednesday. Police cars, ambulance, private cars. Jonathan was directed into the living room downstairs, where he saw the pathologist, Len Harvey, kneeling beside the body of Miriam laid on the carpet in front of the fireplace. Martin was sitting on the sofa, and Jonathan sat beside him.

Len looked up briefly. "Hello, Jon," and he turned back to his examination.

Martin explained the situation to Jonathan.

"We got a call from the woman whom the college hires to clean the house. She found the door unlocked and came inside. Mrs. Dalziel was hanging from a rope tied to the central light up there." He gestured to the main light hanging in the center of the room. "The rope was tied to that central hook which is bolted into a cross-beam, I would reckon. So it is firm. There is the stool she must have stood on." A bar stool from the kitchen stood just off center from the light. "It looks as if she killed herself."

"Is there any suicide note?" Jonathan asked.

"No. We haven't found anything."

"So, if she killed herself, then maybe she was the murderer?" Jonathan seemed to be thinking out loud.

"She killed Dalziel, and now she kills herself? Out of guilt perhaps?"

"When I talked to her, both times," Jonathan continued, "She didn't seem anything but angry. She talked of only how much she was hurt and angry at Dougie's sexual orientation. She didn't seem upset at his death, or guilty, or distraught. Just mad."

"Maybe she killed herself because she couldn't face the future?" Martin speculated.

"She didn't seem hopeless either, though. Or depressed. She was probably financially secure, and though she had lost Dougie, she had really lost him many years ago. I would have expected her to feel relief that he was dead. Then her life could continue unencumbered. But what would she have done? Where would she move? We didn't discuss that, come to think of it. I wonder if she had any plans for the future? Maybe you're right, and she was feeling hopeless about the future. She was certainly drinking a lot. I wish there was a suicide note."

Jonathan turned to look at Miriam, lying on the floor, by the sofa on which they had made love on Thursday night. He had knelt over her in much the same way as Len Harvey was kneeling over her now. Her body, warm then, was now cool. Jonathan shuddered.

Martin noticed the movement. "Are you all right, Jon."

"Yes, I'm ok."

They turned to look at Len. Jonathan continued. "Well, you have a convenient solution to the crime, Martin. You can decide that she was probably the murderer and close the case as tentatively solved."

"Maybe. But I would like evidence. A confession. Evidence tying her to the house at the time Dalziel was murdered. Something more."

They continued to watch Len, who finally straightened up. He stood up, stiffly, grunting a little as he did so. He sat down in one of the arm chairs. He turned to the attendants. "You can

take her to the laboratory now." He turned back to Martin and Jonathan. "I need to make a more thorough examination of course. But I don't think she hung herself."

"What!"

"I think she was strangled and then placed in the noose. It's hard to tell here, without a microscope and my sets of comparison slides. But the marks on the neck do not look like those made by a rope to me. They look much like those made by a scarf or something placed around the neck and pulled tight. The abrasions seem to be lateral, like a scarf pulling tighter, rather than vertical, like a rope jerking under the chin. But I need to examine the marks much more closely, and I want to examine the spinal cord to see if there is evidence of a trauma that would result from her body being jerked by the noose once she jumped."

"But wouldn't a strangulation produce more signs of bruising?" Martin asked. "Wouldn't she have struggled? People don't cooperate with a strangler."

"You probably would, especially if the strangler used a scarf, rather than a wire. But if she was drunk or drugged, then it would be easier. The stomach and blood analyses will tell us if she was intoxicated."

The attendants had placed Miriam on a stretcher and carried her carefully through the room and out of the house. Each man left in the living room seemed lost in his own thoughts. Eventually Jonathan broke the silence.

"If she was murdered, why was she murdered? Because she knew something? Who the murderer was, for example. And she was killed to prevent her ever telling, or making a slip sometime that might give his identity away."

"Or maybe," replied Martin, "She was murdered for some completely different reason. I know that makes it more difficult for me. But the two murders, if there are two, may be completely independent of each other."

"But we don't know of any other motives for Miriam's murder," Jonathan protested.

"We haven't looked, Jon. We've been concentrating on Dalziel. Miriam was a suspect for his murder, not a prospective victim."

"She had a lover, Martin." Shit, I was her lover too, Jonathan thought. He breathed deeply to calm himself. "Fred Welford, a faculty member in Political Science. He was at Joyce's party, but you might not have noticed him."

"I noticed him."

"And another thing, Martin. He has a collection of blackjacks."

"How do you know all this?"

"Well, Ann told me about seeing him and Miriam together. And when I told him I knew, he admitted it. His collection of blackjacks is well known to anyone who visited him. He's often shown them off. I think he even keeps one in his office at the college."

Martin grimaced at Jonathan. "Now you tell me!"

"Well, I wasn't sure it had any relevance. Until now."

"Sure. You were hoping to solve the murder yourself and show me up."

Jonathan smiled. "Maybe. But I really thought Miriam was the most likely suspect. I told you so. Now that she's dead, her lover steps into the spotlight. That's Fred."

"So let's think. Miriam borrows a blackjack from her lover, drives up here on Tuesday night and kills her husband. Then she drives back to Newport, arriving a few minutes after her sister and brother-in-law. Or her lover kills Dalziel. Or both do it together. Then Fred begins to worry that she will reveal his part in the crime, and so he kills her to protect himself, trying to

make it look like suicide. That way, he sets her up as the murderer, who later commits suicide. It's all very neat. I wonder which one killed Dalziel?"

"Where do you go next, Martin?"

"I want to go and see Miriam's sister, Susan Youngblood. I want as much as I can get before I see Mr. Welford."

"Hmmm. Can I stay here and putter around, Martin?"

"Sure. The forensic people have finished. Why?"

"Oh, just to see what I can find."

"You'll tell me if you find anything, won't you?"

"Sure."

"Sure! What are you doing this evening?"

"I'm meeting Terry and probably going to a movie. I'll call you when I have a free moment."

"Do that." And Martin stood up, squeezed Jonathan's shoulder and left the room.

Chapter 34

Martin left and, with him, took all of his minions, leaving Jonathan alone in the house. Jonathan liked being alone in this strange house. He felt like a burglar, but without the fear of being caught. He could do what he wished. He could steal, destroy, and defile at will. Not that he would. Of course not! But he could. He could pry and delve into the lives of the occupants. Usually, his curiosity had to be satisfied with a brief inspection of his host's medicine cabinet during trips to the bathroom when he was visiting. There isn't much to be learnt from a medicine cabinet. The type of contraception used and perhaps prescriptions for various minor ailments. Preparation H and a diaphragm were the highlights. But today he could search thoroughly.

However, he found the living room unnerving. The events that had taken place in it inhibited him, so he left to go to the kitchen. Once there, he put the kettle on and made some coffee. Even that was fun. He sat on a stool in the kitchen and waited. He ran through in his mind the kinds of places he used for hiding things. He sipped his coffee and went upstairs.

The master bedroom was uninteresting. Nothing under the rugs; nothing between the mattress and the box spring; none of the electrical outlets were wall safes. He went through the drawers of clothes. Anything under Miriam's clothes? Yes, here, under the sweaters was a battery-powered vibrator. Strange. Jonathan kept his checkbook under his sweaters. His sexual toys were under his socks. Other people were weird!

Jonathan searched through the house. Thoroughly. He found little of interest, and nothing relevant to the murders. Even the study revealed little. Dougie clearly did most of his work at the college. Miriam kept various bills and notes on file in a small desk in the study, but her charge accounts were of little interest. And the telephone bills.....Wait a minute! Telephone bills. Damn it! Calls made in the last week wouldn't be here. He picked up the telephone and called the Castine Police Department. Martin was not there, but Jim Wilson was.

"Jim, an idea. Can you get a list of the telephone calls for Dalziel's house for the last week? Great. Oh, and one other idea. Can you get a list for Susan Youngblood's house in Newport?"

"I'll try. I'll see if the phone company will cooperate or whether we'll need a court order."

Jonathan ended up back in the kitchen, drinking a second cup of coffee. He talked out loud to himself.

"Nothing! The kitchen is the last room. Where? Cannisters; the freezer; saucepans at the back of the cupboard."

He looked up at the ceiling and was inspired. In his house, the kitchen cabinets did not reach the ceiling, and he had the space above them open so that he could store things on top of the cabinets. The Dalziel's kitchen cabinets, as in most houses, were fitted close to the ceiling. But rather than have the ceiling built lower above the cabinets than it was in the center of the room, they had simple wooden slats fitted over the cabinets that blocked in the space between their tops and the ceiling. It would be easy to have one those slats loose and to hide things behind it.

He had noticed a flashlight in one of the kitchen drawers, and he retrieved it and climbed on a stool. This one seemed firm; this one too; and this one; but this one came away. Hah-ah! A folder. He pulled it out and laid it on the kitchen table. He opened it. Letters, notes, cards. Miriam and her lovers.

Jonathan read them. And sat thinking.

He reached over for the telephone directory and looked up Ann's telephone number. He dialled.

"Ann. Am I glad I found you at home. I need a favor. Can I borrow your master key for the college?"

Ann had obtained a master key for the college some years back when she needed to get into several buildings after hours. The college would never have given her the master key just to get into the Psychological Laboratory. They would have given her the key to that building. But Ann needed to get into the Biological Laboratory too for supplies, and the administration building because she was chairing a Vice-Presidential search committee. And so, rather than give her a bunch of keys, they relented and gave her the master key. She had never given it back.

"Why do you want it? What are you up to?"

"I want to get into a couple of faculty offices, sweetie."

"Sweetie am I? Of course you can borrow it. Only I come attached to it. A deal?"

"A deal. Pick me up at the President's house."

"I'll be there in ten minutes."

During those ten minutes Jonathan continued to puzzle. He called information. "East Lansing, please. Bernie Goldman. Thank you."

He dialled again. "Bernie, this is Jonathan Clark. No joke. It's me. How are you?" And they exchanged the typical comments of people who haven't talked for a year. Jonathan finally got down to business.

"Bernie, I need information, and I need it quickly. We've had a murder here at the college. The President was killed. Have you read about it?"

"Of course! It made the New York Times. Front page!"

"One of the suspects is a faculty member here, a Richard Meredith. He has his doctorate from Michigan State University, probably about five years ago. He just got turned down for tenure here, and I think this was his first job. So about five years ago. In literature. His wife left him while he was a graduate student and ran off with the Dean of the Graduate School. Can you get me details of Meredith, his wife, that affair, and anything else you think is of interest?"

"Gulp! What are you looking for?"

"I don't know. A connection maybe. I want to see if there is anything from Meredith's time at Michigan State that connects up with this murder. Do you still have the New York Times report?"

"Yes. I can find the issue with the article and read about the murder again to give me some background information. But why are you involved, Jonathan?"

"I'm a close friend of the Chief of Police, and I'm helping him in the investigation. He thought that, since I knew the college community well, I could discover information that he couldn't."

"Of course. Sure. How soon do you want this?"

"Tomorrow morning?"

Bernie laughed. "I'll try. Say, when are you coming out to visit. Jill and I would love to have you. We haven't seen you for years."

"Maybe this Spring. Yes. That would be nice. I'll try to come out when the weather breaks. I really will. Thanks Bernie. Anyway, I'll talk to you tomorrow. Say noon. I'll be home at noon. Do you have my phone number? See you."

Ann beeped her horn, and Jonathan left the house and got into her car. As they drove over to the campus, he told her what had happened to Miriam. Ann pulled in behind the Political Science building and turned the engine off. She was crying. Jonathan leant across the car and hugged her.

"This is so different," she said. "Miriam!" She sniffed and took Jonathan's handkerchief to blow her nose. "Somehow Dougie's death didn't touch me. He never seemed real to me, and so maybe his death didn't seem real. But Miriam. I knew her. I'd talked to her. I liked her. Poor Miriam."

It was a while before Ann was calm. They got out, and she let them into the building.

"Where are we going, Jon?"

"Fred Welford's office."

"Why?"

"An idea. You'll see."

They went up one flight of stairs and along a corridor until they got to a door with a plaque announcing 'Mr. Welford'. Ann let them in. Jonathan got out his handkerchief, now a little damp, and pulled open the drawers in Fred's desk. The blackjack was in the central drawer. Jonathan looked closely at it, remembering not to touch it.

"Don't touch anything, Ann. But that may be the murder weapon, the one that killed Dougie."

Ann stood there frozen. "Jon, I need to sit down."

"Let's go to the secretarial area, Ann." He put his arm around her, and they walked out of the office and along to the secretarial area. He sat Ann down in a chair and knelt beside her, holding her.

"Let me make a call, love."

He called the Castine Police Department again and found Martin in.

"Martin, I think I may have found the murder weapon."

"Whose? Where? Where are you?"

"Dalziel's murder. I'm at the Political Science Department at Castine. Can you send someone over to pick it up?"

"I'll be over myself. Where do I go?"

Jonathan gave Martin directions and told him that he'd meet him downstairs to let him in. He stayed with Ann for about five minutes, talking about Miriam and how Ann felt.

"I have to go and let Martin in." Jonathan stroked her hair back from her face and tucked it behind her ears. "You wait here. I'll be back very soon."

He walked quickly back down the corridor and down the stairs. He stood in the doorway to the building until Martin and two assistants arrived. He led them back up and along to Fred Welford's office.

They looked at the blackjack. One of the assistants took the blackjack out using a pair of forceps and laid it on a clear plastic sheet.

Martin turned to Jonathan. "What makes you think it is the murder weapon? There was no blood on Dalziel's head."

"No. A hunch. Dalziel wore huge amounts of Brylcreem on his hair. Look at the end of the blackjack. There is a little dried goo on it. Maybe even a hair or two there. See."

"Huh. Maybe. Take it back, Wes, and see what you can find. Lou, you stay here and see if you can find anything else. Is there anything else, Jonathan? Did you find anything at the Dalziel's house?"

Jonathan hesitated. And Martin noticed.

"Come on, Jonathan. You promised."

"All right. I found these." Jonathan pulled out the love notes from his pocket. "Letters and notes between Miriam and her lovers."

"Damn. I have to rush. I want to get down to Newport. Let me take these. Jim told me you suggested getting telephone records for the Dalziels and her sister. You want to see if they called each other?"

"No. I want to see if either phone was used during the evening of the murder. And who called whom. If the phone at Dalziel's house was used when he was dead, that would be interesting. And did Miriam call anyone from her sister's?"

"Clever. I must see if I can get the list before I go down to Newport. You're going out tonight with Terry, right? Call me at midnight if you're free. Let's talk then."

And he left, Jonathan shutting the building door behind him. Jonathan climbed back up the stairs and along to where Ann was sitting, calmer now, staring out of the window.

"Thanks for not letting Martin know I was here, Jon. I didn't want to have to deal with him right now."

"I thought not. Can you cope with some more searching? I want to get into Dalziel's office."

"Yes. I'm better now. What are we looking for there?"

"His appointment book."

They left Ann's car by the Political Science building and walked across the quadrangle to the administration building, unlocked the door and made their way to Dalziel's office. They went through the reception area and into the office. The desk hadn't been touched since Martin had sat there. The appointment book was open on the desk. Jonathan sat in the chair, and Ann sat on his lap.

"See, here is the appointment the week before Dalziel was killed. He had PB down for lunch. Let's see. Here is his Roladex file with phone numbers. No Borski. Let's see. Andrea Hoskens. Here we are."

He picked up the phone, dialled the code for an outside line and dialled Ms. Hoskens' number. She answered the telephone.

"Ms. Hoskens. This is Mr. Clark, working with Chief Aslet on the President's murder. I have a question for you. Last week, before all this happened, the President had a lunch appointment, let me see, on the Wednesday of that week. January 3rd. The note in his appointment book says 'PB'. do you remember who that was?"

"Of course. I had to remind him of it and keep that part of the day free. It was Mr. Perone."

"Mr. Perone? But it says 'PB'."

"That's for Perone Brothers."

"Oh, of course. Thank you Ms. Hoskens. That's all. Sorry to have bothered you on a weekend."

Jonathan turned to Ann. "Martin thought it was Paul Borski. But it was Will Perone. The picture is changing Ann. It's not what we thought at all."

Chapter 35

Martin timed his drive to Newport. One hour and a half driving carefully. The time could be easily cut with a little speeding. If the Youngbloods had left at six and returned at midnight, that would have given Miriam Dalziel six hours. But let's see, Martin thought, Meredith was seen at the President's house at ten past eleven. Let's say Dalziel was killed between nine-thirty and ten-thirty. That would give Miriam Dalziel plenty of time to get back at just past midnight.

The apartment door was opened this time by Alan Youngblood. Martin was surprised, for Alan Youngblood was about twenty years older than his wife. Or more. Almost a doddering old man, with fleshy folds on his face and neck. Well groomed, clean shaven, and with a wonderfully educated and cultured accent. Thinning hair and a slight stoop. Decidedly distinguished.

Alan Youngblood escorted Martin into the sparsely furnished living room with its oriental ambience, where Susan Youngblood was seated on the L-shaped sofa.

"Good evening, Mr. Aslet," she said in greeting him while remaining seated.

"Please sit down," her husband added. "Can I get you something to drink, perhaps?" Mr. Youngblood seemed to quiver with the effort and excitement of being a host.

"Perhaps a Dubonnet?"

"Certainly. I trust red will be acceptable?"

"Certainly." Martin noted the exquisite courtesy of Mr. Youngblood.

Alan Youngblood poured the drink and brought it over to Martin, now sitting on the other limb of the sofa to that occupied by Susan Youngblood. Alan Youngblood sat in a chair with his back to the magnificent view through the large window. By day, Martin had seen the town shops and sailing boats. By night, the lights of the town were reflected in the water, and the moon lit up the boats moored to their buoys. The water was a changing pattern of light as the ripples disturbed the reflections.

Martin turned his attention back to Susan Youngblood. She was not dressed as garishly as she had been on his previous visit. This time she was in black. However, the clothes were

similar, pants and blouse rather than knickers and sweater, making her as dumpy as ever. She broached the question.

"We have been wondering why you were coming, Mr. Aslet. Perhaps you could enlighten us?"

Martin looked out of the window, letting the silence develop a little. He then cut it.

"Your sister, Miriam Dalziel." He paused. "I'm afraid she is dead."

Susan Youngblood gasped. She dropped the cigarette she had been holding into the ashtray and jumped up. "Are you serious?"

Her husband too had risen, and he walked over to his wife and put his arm around her waist.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you such news. But indeed it is true."

"How? What happened? When?" Susan Youngblood broke away from her husband and returned to the sofa, lighting another cigarette before realizing that her old one was still smoking in the ash tray. She nervously crushed the old one. "Alan, your handkerchief please." She dabbed at her eyes that had teared at the shock of the revelation.

"This afternoon. As for how, we think she was murdered."

"Think! Don't you know?"

Martin's anger grew. "Yes, Mrs. Youngblood, we know. But we don't know why yet. And we don't know because of people like you. When I was here last, you were most unhelpful. You answered my questions with as little information as you thought you could get away with. You were trying to protect your sister, Well now she is dead. Murdered. And you might have saved her. Rather than getting angry at me, perhaps you'd like to atone and help me solve the murder of your sister and, before that, the murder of her husband?"

"Mr. Aslet," Alan Youngblood said, "You forget yourself."

"Oh no, Mr. Youngblood. I don't. Your wife played games when I was here last. She denied that her sister had marital problems. She tried to hide the fact that your sister was out when the two of you got back from the dinner party last Tuesday night. She was doing her utmost not to help me. So I particularly resent her becoming angry at me this evening." He turned to her. "Are you prepared to help me tonight, Mrs. Youngblood?"

The dumpy Mrs. Youngblood subsided. The brief moment of anger she had flicked at Martin died. The shock of the news brought more tears to her eyes. She wiped her cheeks and clung to her cigarette. She breathed deeply. "I'm sorry. Yes, I will help you all I can."

The group relaxed. Alan Youngblood returned to his chair. Martin sat back.

"We found your sister this afternoon. Her death had been arranged to look like suicide. She was hanging from a noose. However, it appears that she had been strangled and then placed in a noose."

"Do you have a suspect?" Susan Youngblood asked him.

"No." It was Martin's turn to breathe deeply. "Let me be frank with you. And I really do not mean to upset or antagonize you. Why would Miriam Dalziel have been murdered? It has to be connected with her husband's murder. Or let us assume that it is. Then there are two possibilities. She was killed for the same reason that her husband was killed. And that we don't know yet. Or she was killed because of her husband's murder. Why the 'because'? Because she knew something. Perhaps who killed him. And let's go even further. Perhaps because she was there when he was killed? No, wait!" he said to Susan Youngblood before she could translate the tensing of her muscles into action. "You and your husband were out from six until midnight, you

told me. And that Mrs. Dalziel came home after you did. She had six hours to herself. Plenty of time to drive to Castine and back."

Martin continued. "Now that you see my problem and my possibilities, I want you to help me. They could be false possibilities. They could be true. Will you help me? Will you answer my questions?"

Susan Youngblood settled back into the sofa. "Yes. I'll help you as best I can."

"First then, when your sister arrived here last Monday for her visit, was there anything noteworthy. Was she angry at her husband, depressed, agitated? Anything out of the ordinary, or that I should know?"

"No. It was like her typical visits. Nothing was out of the ordinary at all." Alan Youngblood nodded in agreement with his wife.

"Did she know you would be out on Tuesday evening before she got here?"

"No," replied Susan Youngblood. "I hadn't had time to warn her before she came."

"What about when you got home after the evening. You said she came home after you?"

"Yes," Susan Youngblood responded. "We got home close to midnight. The lights were on, and we were surprised that Miriam was out. We searched the apartment and then had a drink while we waited for her. She came in about ten or fifteen minutes later, around twelve fifteen."

"How was she?"

"Wound up. Yes, that's it. Wound up. When we asked her where she had been, she said she had a headache and had gone for a walk to clear it. But she looked - you know - like children who are overtired. They're wound up, but they can't relax and go to sleep."

"Was she drunk?"

"No. Not at all."

"What did she do when she got back?"

"She poured herself a drink, and she kept moving. She couldn't settle down. We chatted a while, and then we went off to bed, leaving her up. I don't know when she went to bed."

"What about the next day. Did she say anything to you?"

"No. Let me think. I was eating some breakfast when she came into the kitchen that morning. She sat down and had some coffee. She seemed fine. Actually a complete contrast to the previous night. She was relaxed. Calm."

"At peace?"

Susan Youngblood prepared to defend her sister and then remembered. "Yes, I guess you could say that."

"Did she talk about her husband? Or her life?"

"No. She didn't. Actually we didn't discuss her life that trip. It was as if she wanted to forget it for a day or two."

"And she was calm when I called about her husband's death?"

"Yes. She is always calm, as I told you last time. But she was surprisingly calm."

"Would you have expected grief or relief? I do know a little about her life with her husband, you know," he added as an answer to Susan Youngblood's look at him.

"Perhaps relief. But there wasn't really that."

"Could it be as if she already knew?"

"Yes, it could have been. But I don't know."

"Mrs. Youngblood, did she tell you anything that might have led you to think that she was planning to kill her husband, or had killed him, or knew who might have killed him?"

"No. Honestly. I was shocked at the news. Much more than she was. She gave me no clue to what was going to happen."

"I'd like to turn to her personal life. I know her husband was gay. And that she was angry and hurt over this. Did you know?"

"Of course. She had talked to me a lot about the situation. Her pain, and how she seemed to be stuck there, both by her love for him - yes, her love refused to die - and by her fear of striking out alone. You know who his lover was? Andrew North. I have met him several times. Actually, I rather liked him. A charming and attractive man. She loathed the man. I could see her killing him rather than Douglas."

"What about her lovers?" Again he caught Susan Youngblood's sharp glance. "I know she had lovers. What did you know about them from her?"

"I was foolish, wasn't I? Why did I think that all this would stay hidden. I was protecting her, and here it is all out in the open." She sighed. "Yes, I knew about her lovers."

"Tell me about them."

And what she told Martin matched the letters that Jonathan had found on top of the kitchen cabinets.

Chapter 36

Jonathan was tired. He often was in the late afternoon. But today had been especially busy. He lay down on his sofa as soon as he got back home and reflected on his guilt. 'I ought to work. Or at least clean up the place. I don't have time to take a nap.' But it was to no avail. He drifted off to sleep, lying awkwardly on the sofa, an accomplishment he often couldn't achieve lying in bed at night at the proper time for sleep.

He woke up an hour later to the touch of a stranger. He started and opened his eyes to find Terry sitting beside him on the sofa.

"You scared me! Did I leave the door unlocked?"

"No. I picked the lock with my burglar's tools."

"I'm too sleepy to be teased. Be nice to me."

"Poor grandpa. Shall I make some tea?"

"Mmmmmm. That would be nice."

"How has the day been, Jon?" she called from the kitchen.

"Fine. It's been so busy, I haven't had time to think or work or do much else."

"What's happened?"

Jonathan told her of Miriam's murder and of his discoveries and his new hypotheses about the crimes. Terry brought in mugs of tea, and he furtively slished the tea around in his mouth to try to clean away the bad taste left from his nap. Terry was excited by his tentative solution to the crimes.

"It really does look like the lover, doesn't it?" She shivered. "Ugh! It's scary to think of him killing her just to protect himself. What happened to chivalry?"

"I guess he's scared, if I'm right about him. We must get going. Let me go take a shower, and then we'll go to eat. What movie are we seeing? Did you look at the newspaper?"

And while he showered and changed clothes, they

discussed the possible movies in town. They settled on *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, a film set in Botswana about a family of Bushmen who find a coke bottle and believe it to be a gift from the Gods. They stopped for dinner at a new Vietnamese restaurant that Jonathan had discovered. He had eaten there the day it opened, and its delicious food (and cheap prices) had led him back often. They shared a crab and tomato soup and followed it with lemongrass chicken.

Jonathan hated looking for parking, so they walked from the restaurant to the theater, a brisk walk that refreshed them after the large meal. The theater had a long line waiting to buy tickets, and they got a seat off to the side, but not too far forward.

"Jonathan, look! Over there. See. There's Neil Young and that other person."

Jonathan looked across to the center of the auditorium and saw Neil sitting with Andrew North. They were talking with an ease that suggested a close friendship. Jonathan's solution of the crimes began to crumble, and new possibilities began to suggest themselves. But his speculations were cut short by the previews and then the film they had come to watch.

And it turned out, surprisingly, to be a wonderful film. The bushmen were a healthy group whose view of the world and the events they encountered was naive and amusing. The whites were presented as foolish figures, almost to the point of slapstick. So they laughed and felt warm toward the bushman who finally did return the coke bottle to the Gods.

As they were leaving, Neil Young and Andrew North saw them. If they felt awkwardness, they covered it well. They greeted one another, and Jonathan declined their invitation to join them for a drink.

"Neil, Joyce Greenfield is having a party tomorrow night. Had you heard? She's at the college," Jonathan explained in an aside to Andrew North. "Why don't both of you come? I think that we will probably reveal the solution to the murders during the party. I'd like you both to be there."

"How dramatic," said Neil, seeming not to notice the command implied in Jonathan's invitation.

"Murders?" Andrew North asked, astutely noticing the plural that Jonathan had used.

Jonathan took Terry's arm and began to exit. Over his shoulder he said, "Yes. Haven't you heard? Miriam was murdered today."

And after noticing that they stopped and looked at each other with expressionless faces, Jonathan left the theater.

"I'm supposed to call Martin and discuss the murders with him tonight. He said for me to call him before midnight. Do you want to come along and join us, Terry?"

"I'd love to."

So Jonathan drove directly to Martin's house and found him home in front of his roaring fire. Martin made everyone hot egg nog, and they sat holding their mugs on the carpet in front of the fire.

They exchanged information. Jonathan heard about Martin's trip to Newport and found out that Susan Youngblood knew about Miriam's lovers.

"What about the analysis of the blackjack, Martin?"

"Yes, the substance is haircream. But the hairs on it weren't Dalziel's."

"Maybe they're Fred's?"

"Maybe, but we don't have samples to compare."

"I'll see if I can get you some samples tomorrow for comparison."

Martin shook his head. "I've so much evidence obtained illegally that I hope we can get some I can use in court."

Jonathan continued. "I keep thinking of all these loose ends. I made a list. Let me see." He pulled a piece of paper out of the back pocket of his jeans and unfolded it. "Oh yes. Did you check on whether the Dalziels kept the front door unlocked?"

"Yes. I tried to. The housekeeper said that often it was open. She rarely had to knock."

"What about the State Banking Commission? Did they add anything new?"

"No. Jim did check with them and the Market Street Bank, and they simply confirmed what we knew. They were aware of what the problems were at the First Bank of Medford, and they helped arrange the transfer of ownership of the bank to the Market Street Bank of Boston. They also forced the re-financing of the loans that Dalziel and Jones had made to themselves and friends."

Then Jonathan told Martin of his discoveries, apart from the packet of love letters. "Martin, I found out that PB on Dalziel's appointment was the Perone Brothers, not Paul Borski."

"How?"

"I called Dalziel's secretary, Andrea Hoskens."

"What an idiot I am! Why didn't I check? I'm out of my depth here. I should have checked. So Dalziel met with Will Perone. That's very different."

"Calm down and go get some more egg nog for us." And while he was gone, Jonathan hugged Terry sitting beside him. "Are you ok, sweetie?"

"I'm fine."

Martin brought in a pitcher of egg nog. "What other follies of mine have you exposed, Jonathan?"

"Enough self-abasement! Nothing. I did call a friend in East Lansing who teaches at Michigan State to find out some information on Richard Meredith for me."

"Why? What information?"

"You don't know about that, do you?" And Jonathan told Martin about the discovery of Meredith's marriage and its break up at graduate school. "I want to see if any of the people there are connected with the murders here."

"A long shot."

"True. But worth trying, I thought."

"Of course."

Terry spoke up for the first time. "You forgot to tell Martin that we ran into Neil Young and Andrew North at the movie tonight, looking quite like old lovers."

Martin was interested. "I wonder how long they have been friends?"

"We can ask," Jonathan said. "Martin, I have an idea. Joyce is having a party tomorrow night. I want all the people connected with the crime there. Then we'll confront each of them, in a group. I've invited Neil and Andrew North. The college people will be there. I thought of calling Joyce to give her a list of everyone we'd need from the college. She'll get them there. No one can resist Joyce's bullying. What do you think?"

"I think you're crazy. It might be a complete fizzle. And then we'd look like fools."

"True. But maybe we'll get a confession. We're almost there. You know it. One more piece of evidence and we'll be home. It's that close. And the stress of the occasion may clinch it. So you have to call Harrington Jones, and we should call Will Perone and Paul Borski too."

"Oh no! It's too embarrassing for me to face that. I'll think about it."

Sunday

Chapter 37

Jonathan woke up on Sunday morning alone. He had driven Terry home from Martin's and come back to his home by himself. He peered over at the clock, and it flashed 9:03. That was lucky. He didn't have too much time to kill before his meeting with Claire. He got up and began to get ready.

Make tea. Turn on the radio to the FM rock station. Bathroom. He showered and dressed, aware that he was taking great pains to look his best. Anyone would think this was a date, instead of a business meeting with his to-be-ex-wife. Or was it? Would she come back? Did he want her to? He was nervous. What did he want? He thought that he was scared both that she would want to come back and that she would not want to. Damn! He always seemed to be in these lose-lose situations, where he wasn't sure that wanted either outcome. How do you get into win-win situations where any outcome is great?

Time to go. He drove to the Midway Diner, getting there about five minutes early. But Claire was already there, sitting in a booth. He sat down opposite her and said, "Hi."

"Hello, Jon."

Was this his wife? A woman he had lived with for close on eight years. She seemed like a new acquaintance. He felt awkward, and she seemed so untouchable. What had happened to the eight years of intimacy? Could it be transformed so quickly?

Jonathan turned to the waitress. "I'll have pancakes and coffee. What about you Claire?"

"Just coffee for me please."

"Well, what do we have to talk about Claire?"

"The splitting up of the money and property really. But I also wanted to explain this. I felt guilty leaving you without giving you any warning."

"Are you decided? I mean, there's no doubt in your mind?"

"No, Jon. There's no doubt. I don't think we can work out a better relationship. And to be honest, I've found someone else with whom I think I can develop a good relationship."

Jonathan's stomach registered the physiological sensation of acute anxiety. "From work?"

"Yes, from work. But I don't think we should discuss our personal lives. It might be too painful."

"Yes." He put butter between his pancakes and poured syrup on them. Was he going to eat at a time like this? Yes, it seemed that he was. They tasted good. Was this real? Eating pancakes with your newly-departed wife?

"What if I want to try," he asked Claire after swallowing.

"It's not possible Jon. I don't want it. I'm no longer motivated to try."

"And there's nothing I could do to change your mind?"

"No. Nothing. It's hard to say this, but I don't love you now, Jon. I don't think I've loved you for a while now. My feelings for you changed a long time ago. Yours changed too."

"Maybe. So what about the settlement?"

"I have a proposal drawn up here."

Claire reached for her briefcase beside her, the leather briefcase that he had bought her as a present. She took out some sheets of paper and handed Jonathan one and kept the other, a copy, for herself.

"I think this is an appropriate arrangement, Jon. We'll split the bank accounts and investments fifty-fifty. Then, the house. I don't want it. If you do, it's worth about fifty thousand on the market today, and we owe about thirty thousand on the mortgage. So it's worth twenty thousand. You owe me half of that for my share, ten thousand. If you don't want it, we can sell it."

"I'll keep it," he said quickly. He had to keep hold of some of things in his life if others were slipping away. Whether it made sense for his new life or not, Jonathan had to hold on.

"As for what's in it, you can keep the furniture and household effects. I'll buy new things. Most of the stuff is pretty old and needs replacing anyway."

Not so, Jonathan said to himself. There's plenty of use left in the carpets, furniture, sheets, everything. That's her trouble. Always changing for the sake of changing. Never wearing things out. Waste! Have she and I worn out, he wondered?

Claire was going down the page. "Except I want my rocking chair and the antique chest of drawers. That's all right with you, isn't it? I didn't think you liked antiques."

"No. That's fine."

"And my personal things of course. Clothes, jewelry."

"Of course. When do you want to pick them up?"

"How about next Sunday? Tell me if that is inconvenient. Be honest. I can come another day."

"No. That's fine. What about the divorce?"

"Let's wait and file under no-fault."

"Anything else?"

"No."

The waitress came by and filled up their mugs of coffee. He added sugar and milk and drank. "I don't know what to say Claire. I feel there ought to be lots of things to say or discuss, but I can't think of them."

"I know. Perhaps I should go. I'd like to stay friends Jon. I'll try if you want." He nodded agreement. "I'll be in touch," and she stood up and left, dressed as if for the office. Suit, blouse, coat, gloves, boots.

Jonathan sat on, eating his pancakes. 'I'd like to stay friends, Jon.' He would have said it if she hadn't. Whether it was possible or not. But she had said it. Bitch! How did she stay so calm? How did he? He looked at the last pancake, half uneaten. He never had finished a stack of pancakes. Today was no different.

Chapter 38

Jonathan decided to go and talk to Joyce in person. When he arrived, she was cleaning the house. She was wearing a t-shirt and slacks, clothes that once again highlighted the voluptuous folds of her overweight body. Not even a bra under the t-shirt. 'Here is your

opportunity, boyo,' Jonathan said to himself. But no. Luckily her husband George was around, muttering a curt 'Hello' as he passed from the kitchen through the hall on his way somewhere.

"George can never remember who everyone is, poor dear," Joyce confided, though it was hardly a confidence. "Come in, Jonathan. To what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?"

'Knock it off, Joyce,' was what Jonathan thought, but what he said was, "Joyce, I need your help. I have a plan for the party tonight. Let me tell you and see what you think."

"Come into the kitchen and tell me." Joyce led him into the kitchen where Jonathan sat down at the table. Joyce got out a plate of sticky buns and poured boiling water from a faucet into mugs of coffee. She sat down, pushed sugar and milk across to Jonathan and pulled off a large sticky bun which she then devoured. Jonathan looked at the raisin sticking to her lower lip and explained.

"It seems as if we have almost solved this murder, Joyce." He ignored the gasp and went on. "What I'd like to do is to gather everyone together and confront them with the evidence to see what happens. Some of the suspects, I really have no grounds for approaching and accusing. But if they just happened to be here, at a party, well then I could talk to them about it."

"How exciting. Just like a detective story. I have just finished such an exciting one. Where is it?" Joyce moved piles of letters and newspapers around the table and located a small paperback. "Here it is. Holy Disorders. Gervase Fen. Such a fascinating character!"

Joyce transferred a sticky raisin and a few pieces of walnut to the book and then put it down amidst her unholy disorder.

Jonathan continued resolutely. "So I need you to invite the right people Joyce. And Joyce, you mustn't, repeat - MUST NOT - let anyone know why they're being invited. You mustn't mention anything about the murder or my plan. Nothing." He thought he was being over-emphatic. After all, Joyce had a Ph.D. She was a Professor. Hard to remember while watching her gigantic breasts heave up and down as she wheezed and ate another sticky bun. "Help yourself, Jonathan." But true nevertheless. She ought to be trustworthy.

"I understand, Jonathan. I won't mention a word about your plan."

"But I need all the people here, so you have to be forceful. Here is the list," and Jonathan took out a sheet of paper with all the Castine people he wanted at the party. "There are some others I want to come. Martin and I will invite them, but here is the list so you know who to expect at your door.

"Then, can I use your basement room. I want to get everyone involved down there and keep the others out. So can you keep it closed until I'm ready to use it?"

"Can I come, Jonathan?"

Jonathan had known she would ask, and he had decided that he had no choice but to agree. He watched the syrup from her buns make its way down her t-shirt, and he suppressed the lascivious thought that the sight aroused. "Yes, of course Joyce. But you must let Martin and I run the session and not interfere. After all, you're not a suspect."

Joyce giggled. "Of course. I'll be quiet as a mouse."

It always shocked Jonathan to find that people with Ph.D.'s could be so ordinary, foolish and sometimes stupid. He felt that getting a Ph.D. was a challenge that only a few intelligent and motivated people could meet. So many started graduate school and failed or dropped out for personal reasons. Yet when you met some of those who succeeded, it was astounding how little they resembled the image of the dedicated and persistent scholar.

After he had left Joyce, Jonathan got back into his car and looked at the IBM card on the back of which he had written a list of things he had to do. He crossed Joyce off. Next was the call to Bernie in East Lansing. He drove home to make the call.

"Bernie? This is Jonathan. What did you find out?"

"Not much. His career here seems typical. He got out in four years, and he is remembered as a good, even brilliant, but humorless student."

"What about his wife and her affair with the Dean of the Graduate School?"

"Ah, there we have something interesting."

"So, tell me."

"The Dean of the Graduate School is well remembered by those who were around at the time of the affair. You see, she was a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes. Meredith's wife left him for a woman."

After the telephone call to Michigan, Jonathan sat a while and reflected. Would a lesbian wife make you hate male homosexuals too? He didn't know. The telephone rang.

"Jonathan? This is Martin. I have the search warrant. Come and meet me over at the building."

Jonathan left his house and drove over to the college. He met Martin and his assistant and, using Ann's master key, let them all into the building. They were lucky. The occupant of the office kept a jacket there, probably to help cope with the cool temperatures produced by the antiquated heating system still in operation. In the jacket pocket, Martin found fluff and dust and hairs, and he took some more hairs off the collar.

"Well, that'll do nicely. Are you coming Jonathan?"

"No. I have a little more snooping to do. I'll see you later."

"Hmmm. By the way, Len confirmed that Miriam had been strangled. And that she was very drunk when she died."

"Did you check whether any telephone calls were made from Dalziel's house on the night of the murder?"

"Yes. Interesting. There was a call to the Marriott Hotel in Newport. Just before ten o'clock."

"The Marriott?"

"Yes. I checked. That was where the Youngbloods were attending the retirement dinner. I called Susan Youngblood, and she confirmed the location. But neither she nor her husband were called to the phone."

"It sounds as if Miriam was checking on them, doesn't it? It's fitting together nicely, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Martin and left.

Jonathan walked over to the next office he was going to search. He had a lot to do and to think about. Which was good, because it kept his mind off his personal life. His wife gone, an uncertain future. He was really quite scared. Maybe he ought to be home alone, quiet, experiencing the fear? Yet what good would that do? He could only imagine the future. Eventually it would come, and then he would have to deal with the reality of it. Why was it

better to anticipate it rather than distract himself? Anyway, for today, he had no choice. The party was tonight and he, and Martin, had two murders to solve.

Chapter 39

Joyce's basement room was large, taking up about half of the house. It was carpeted and filled with sofas and chairs covered in black plastic. In the corner, to Jonathan's left, a tall counter, padded with matching black plastic, enclosed a bar. The walls were covered with white paneling which helped to brighten the inevitable gloominess of a basement room with no windows, but which looked cheap. The rest of the decor was lower class hi-tech. The K-Mart equivalent of tubular steel and laminated plastics. Jonathan picked up a plastic lamp that was covered with a silver reflecting substance. It resembled steel, but it wasn't steel. And you could tell that without having to inspect it closely.

He put the lamp down on the table beside him and looked around the crowded room. They had done well. They were all here. Martin, Joyce and himself had been successful in first getting all the people to the party and then getting the important group down here. Each had been approached quietly and told where the door to the basement was located. And now they were here. Looking at him and occasionally across to Martin, waiting.

Jonathan sat in a chair just inside and to the left of the door. Will Perone sat in another arm chair on Jonathan's left. Then came the corner where the bar was. Andrew North was leaning against the counter, and Joyce was sitting on a stool at the back. Then around the next wall came the first sofa, with Mike Smith and Richard Meredith from the literature department sitting on it. Completing the L was another sofa with Fred Welford, Harrington Jones and Ann Latimer rather crushed into it. Completing the square were two arm chairs containing Neil Young and Martin, who guarded the right of the door.

Martin began the proceedings. "I'd like to thank you all for coming tonight and for agreeing to come down here. Let me explain what this is about. At the beginning of the investigation of Mr. Dalziel's murder, I invited Jonathan Clark, whom most of you know, to join me in the investigation. Not only is he a member of Castine College, with information about the college that I don't possess, but he is an expert in forensic psychology. I thought he could help in both of his capacities. Mr. Dalziel was murdered on Tuesday evening, and now five days later we have a great deal of information. Indeed, we have several possible suspects. Jonathan thought it would be most useful for him to gather everyone together and thrash out some of the possibilities in a group. He hopes that one or two of the possibilities may become probabilities and perhaps certainties. So, since it is Jonathan's show, I'll turn it over to him. Jonathan?"

All eyes turned from Martin toward Jonathan, including Joyce's whose whole body seemed to orient itself toward him from its precarious perch on the stool by the bar. Jonathan hated this moment. It was the same in a lecture. The first words. If you hesitated, then you were lost. The silence would grow and grow. The trick was to make a noise right away.

"Thank you, Martin. As Martin said, we have several suspects. But let's be more precise. We have several motives. Areas of activity that could provide a fertile field for murder. For example, there are Dougie's business dealings."

Jonathan noted a phenomenon which was to occur several times during the evening. A relaxation in those not involved and a tensing of those involved. You could almost hear the change, just as you can hear a house creak as different parts cool after the summer sun has set.

Jonathan explained. "Dougie was thinking of buying a piece of land here in Castine. He thought the MTA was going to expand out here and that he would turn a tidy profit. Didn't he, Harrington? Andy?" Both Andrew North and Harrington Jones squirmed as the attention of the group focussed on them. "The three were involved in it together. Dougie, Harrington Jones and Andrew North. Only they had to involve others. They had to have a source of information about the deliberations and decisions of the MTA. So they invested in pay-offs to one of the members of the governing committee. Allegedly to Paul Borski. Which gives us the first motive for murder Perhaps Mr. Borski didn't trust his confidants. Wisely so it would seem."

Jones stirred. "Damn it. I cooperated with the law. When Mr. Aslet pressed me for the source of the leak, I told him. I resent the slur Clark. And what is more, here you are accusing Borski, and he's not here to defend himself. Why not? The rest of us are having to suffer this distasteful evening?"

Martin looked over at Jonathan, but Jonathan was looking at Jones. "Harrington, I would have liked him here, but other considerations precluded his coming." He turned and grinned at Martin, who grimaced back. "But I'm not seriously proposing that Borski planned to sequentially wipe out the people to whom he had leaked information. Sorry, allegedly leaked information. No. I'm proposing something a little different. What is it called now? A double-cross, isn't it Martin?"

"Yes." All heads turned, as after a ball is hit at a tennis match. Martin had their attention. "The three of you, planned to buy land in Castine, wait until the MTA needed land to expand, and then sell it to them at a large profit. But only a modest profit when split three ways, and after the interest for the loan had been paid. It would have been much better if only one person had conceived of the idea, wouldn't it Jones? I was talking to Mr. North this afternoon, and he tells me that Mr. Dalziel had called him last week to discuss why your group was having so much trouble getting the loan from Perone Brothers. Dalziel wondered whether Perone was going to buy the land directly, and he also wondered whether you were going in with Perone."

Andrew North was standing up at the bar, leaning on the counter. He looked over to Jones on the sofa, wedged in with Fred Welford and Ann Latimer. "It's true, Harry. Douglas thought you were trying to exclude the two of us."

"What nonsense!"

Jonathan sensed Jones' muscular tension as he prepared to stand up. He halted the incipient attempt to rise and leave the room by turning the attention to Perone. "Let's ask Mr. Perone. Will, tell us. Were you going to ally yourself with Jones here, and try to cut Dougie and Andy out?"

Will Perone was sitting in an arm chair between Jonathan and the bar. "Of course it's nonsense. Perone Brothers has not earned its reputation by undercutting its clients. We rely on trust, without which financial deals would never be possible."

Martin stood up. He held up two sheets of paper in his hand. "Then maybe you could explain why you have paid \$100,000 interest money to the L&M Real Estate Agency for a piece of land in Castine?" Martin gave one to Harrington Jones and walked across to give the other to Perone. "The Boston Fraud Squad got this for me today."

Jones was furious. He did leap up, but not with the intention of leaving the basement room, but rather to confront Perone. "You were going to cut me out too! Grab all the profit for yourself. And moments ago you were talking of trust in the financial community. I trusted you, Perone. Christ! You murdered Douglas simply to get rich. Was I next?"

Perone looked shaken. He could find no words.

Jonathan intervened. "Sit down, Harrington. It looks as if you're ready to murder Will here. Will certainly doesn't look murderous. Anyway, Andy was probably next. You would have been third."

Perone was finally gaining control of his vocal apparatus. "But it's preposterous to think I murdered Douglas. How could you think it?"

"Oh, I agree," said Jonathan. "If you had, you would have killed all three together and made it look like an accident. Think of that Harrington. You could have shared a plot of land in Castine. Though rather smaller than the piece you had planned. What do you think about this Andrew? What are your reactions?"

North sipped from his glass of scotch on the rocks. "I'm shocked. I'm really a minor influence in the partnership. I was shocked by Dougie's call when he told me of his suspicions. That was why I came up here, by the way. We had decided to confront Harry. And now to discover that Perone was cutting Harry out too."

"I know," Jonathan agreed. "There should be more trust in the world. People who are reliable. Fidelity. Even you Andy." Andrew North looked up at sensing danger. Jonathan continued. "Here you were, Dougie's lover and having an affair with Neil Young here. Right under Dougie's nose. Metaphorically, of course." Jonathan sniffed.

"What do you mean?"

"You want me to spell it out?" Jonathan asked him. "You know what I mean. You and Neil were involved. Have been for quite a while, haven't you?"

"How did you get such an absurd idea? Just because you saw the two of us at a movie doesn't justify your conclusion that we have had a long-term passionate affair. After all, Dougie is dead now."

"Precisely," said Jonathan. "Actually I learned of it from Neil."

North turned to Neil, sitting in an arm chair in the opposite corner of the room. "You fool. Why couldn't you keep your damned mouth shut?"

"But Andy, I didn't tell him anything."

"But now you've admitted it to us, Andy," said Jonathan smugly. "To be honest, Martin and I have both been very busy this afternoon, preparing for this meeting." Jonathan scanned the faces turned toward him. "We're not fools, you know. This wasn't meant to be a quiet little chat. We mean business." He turned back to North and got a piece of paper out of his jacket pocket. "Let me see. You met five times last month. Twice in New York and three times up here. That was risky, you know, Andy. And then you met just last week. Up here again. You must have known Dougie would eventually find out."

"Neil, you idiot. You must have told him."

"But I didn't."

And Jonathan knew that Neil was correct. When he sat in Neil's office at the college this afternoon, going through Neil's appointment book and personal correspondence, Neil had been at home with Andy. But Jonathan was not about to intercede in this marital quarrel.

"So," he continued, "when Dougie confronted you, on Tuesday, you had a fierce row and in the heat of the moment you killed him. You know, I realize that there are extenuating circumstances, Andy."

North seemed at odds with himself. "Damn it! I didn't kill Dougie."

"But you had a fight."

"Not a fight. A discussion." Andy, in order to deny the murder, had admitted the fight. "It was all very amiable."

"Amiable! Do you think I'm a fool. Amiable! The manager at the Club certainly didn't describe your conversation as amiable. And if you were that uncontrolled in public, what were you like in private?"

North looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry. Amiable was the wrong word."

"Exactly. And Dougie was found murdered naked. Do you know what that means? Most murderers do not strip their victims. They leave them lying as they ended up after the murder. So Dougie was naked just prior to his death. And you know what else, Andy? There was semen inside him. Yours. Right? So you have a row, pretend to patch it over, and then you screw him. And after you've screwed him, while he's lying there, you hit him on the head and kill him."

There was a crash as Joyce fell off his stool. Her elbow had slipped off the bar counter as a result of her overexcitement and overintoxication. Everyone turned to look, except Jonathan and North, who remained oblivious of the disturbance.

"It wasn't like that. It wasn't. I didn't kill him. We talked, and we realized that we were very important to each other. It didn't matter if we had other lovers. We still wanted each other. And we made love because we wanted intimacy. And afterwards, I left."

"Did you know that, Neil?"

Neil was sitting in an arm chair in the corner of the room opposite Andrew, who had sat back down on his stool. Neil was rigid and had his hands clenched on the arms of the chair. His teeth were gritted, and the muscles of his face twitched with tension.

He made an effort to relax. "Yes, of course I did. I knew that Andy and Dougie were lovers. How could I fail not to? I told you Jonathan. Douglas talked to me about it."

"But wasn't it hard to be involved with Andy, knowing he was also involved with Douglas?"

Neil had tensed, and he tried to relax again. "Well, yes. A little. I really care for Andrew. Working for Douglas made it additionally hard. I really liked working for Douglas, and so it was only the jealousy I felt that made it a problem. He and I became rivals for Andrew, and yet I couldn't discuss it with him, because he wasn't supposed to know. I was scared what would happen if he found out."

"Like what?"

"He might have fired me from the position."

"So you were jealous and scared. Not bad motives for murder."

"But I didn't do it."

"It seems as if no one did it," said Jonathan, "Yet Dougie certainly did die."

"But you told me yourself, Jonathan, that you suspected Miriam."

"That's not quite true, Neil. I asked you who you suspected, and you said Miriam. But it is true that she was, in many ways, the most likely murderer. Until she herself was murdered. Her murder may be unrelated to Dougie's, but that is unlikely. They are almost certainly related. And so she is no longer a suspect. Which brings us back to you Neil. And the others. Like you Dick."

"Not me! I've told you what I know," Richard Meredith said peevishly. "I've admitted what I did. Leave me out of it."

Mike Smith spoke up from the sofa. "I wondered why you were here, Dick. What did you do?"

"You tell them Jonathan. I'm tired of it all."

Jonathan explained. "Richard tells us that he was passing Dougie's house last Tuesday night and that he decided to go and tell Dougie exactly what he thought of him. So he went up to the house and, when he got no answer to his knock, went inside. Eventually he found Dougie, naked and dead in the bedroom. It was Richard who had the neat idea of inserting the poker into Dougie's arse."

"Good Lord! That was you, Richard?" Mike smiled. "That was indeed clever. An artistic touch. Maybe we should have granted you tenure after all?"

Jonathan continued. "And we have thought about your confession a lot, Richard. Was it the whole truth? Or were you confessing to that in order to cover up the fact that you also killed Dougie? After all, you might have reasoned that we would think that the real murderer wouldn't even confess to inserting the poker. So that if you did confess to it, we would think you weren't the murderer. Therefore, you, as the murderer, confessed to it. Especially given that I had guessed it was you who had inserted the poker."

"But why would I then murder Miriam?"

"Exactly. Which brings us to Fred."

"Jonathan!" said Fred from the end of the sofa on which he sat next to Harrington Jones. "Are you really going to include me?" He rolled his eyes upward in feigned resignation.

"Of course, Fred. You are the ideal suspect. First of all, you were Miriam's lover."

This aroused a great deal of interest in the room. Half of the group assembled were apparently unaware of this, and they perked up. Here was information. Here was dirt. And of the kind that let them off the hook.

"Second, you own the murder weapon."

"I do?"

Martin reached into a briefcase leaning against his chair. He removed a clear plastic bag that contained a blackjack. He stood up and walked over to Fred. "Don't open the bag, Mr. Welford, but look at it. Do you recognize it?"

Fred took the bag, and turned it this way and that. "It looks like one of mine. But they're not easy to identify. This doesn't mean I killed Dalziel. Other people have blackjacks. And I've lost several of them. People take them out of my office, and even when they're visiting my home."

Jonathan took over again. "But this one was found in the drawer of your office desk, Fred." Fred looked dazed. "Let me tell you what happened, Fred. Miriam drove home that Tuesday night from her sister's in Newport. She arrived home and got into a fight with Douglas. You arrived on the scene. Maybe she called you and asked you to meet her there? Then either you or Miriam killed Douglas. You put the body back on the bed and both left. But then you began to worry that Miriam would break down and tell. You weren't sure she would keep quiet. She drinks too much for one thing. Who knows what she would say if she were really drunk? And you couldn't watch her too closely because you wanted to hide the fact that the two of you were lovers. So you panicked and decided to kill her to safeguard yourself. You strangled her and then lifted her into a noose in her house to make it look like suicide. Right, Fred?"

"No. No. That isn't true. I didn't do it. I really didn't."

All eyes had turned to watch Fred, who sat shaking his head in shock. All except Martin's and those of one other person. Jonathan turned from Fred to face that other person.

"Actually, I believe you Fred," he said as he turned toward Mike Smith sitting on the adjacent sofa. "Because I know it was Mike."

"Me?" Mike Smith's voice had a ring of authority to it. "Me! Oh, come now, Jonathan. I wondered why I had been invited here. I thought it might have been because of my literary expertise. I hardly thought I was a suspect for murder."

"Oh, but you are Mike. And not just a suspect. You are the murderer."

"Would you care to explain to me how you arrived at that conclusion?"

"You killed Douglas with that blackjack, and later you strangled Miriam and hung her from the noose, Mike."

"But you've just told us that the blackjack was found in Fred's office. How do you reconcile that?"

"You put it there, Mike." Jonathan introduced surprise into his voice. "You know that."

"And who saw me do this?"

"No one. But you left evidence that it was you." Mike Smith's posture changed perceptibly to those watching him.

"What evidence?"

Jonathan smiled. "You planned it so nicely. You knew that Fred kept blackjacks in his office. He brought them out on so many occasions to slap the desk and startle people. So you used your master key to go into his office and steal one. Then after the murder, you let yourself back in and replaced it in his drawer. On Saturday, in fact."

Mike Smith began to tense even more. "Who is your source of information, Jonathan?" He turned and surveyed the group as if looking for the source.

"You Mike."

"Me?"

"Yes. We found your hair on the blackjack. And particles from your old jacket that you wear around the office. You see, when you hit Douglas with it, it picked up some lotion from his hair. Then when you put it back in your jacket pocket, a couple of your hairs adhered to it and some fluff from your pocket. We matched the fluff on the blackjack to that in your jacket pocket."

Mike clutched at his jacket.

"No, Mike. Not that one. The one you keep in your office. To wear when it gets cool in the buildings at the college. that one. And we found the button that's missing on the shirt you're wearing. Yes, that one," he added, as Mike's hand went to the collar of the shirt. "It was in Dougie's bedroom."

"But why would I have done such a thing?" Mike was still fighting.

"Because you were Miriam's lover."

"Christ!" said Fred.

"And how do you know that?"

"Because Miriam left your letters around, and we read them."

Again Martin reached into his briefcase and got out a package of letters. He held them in his lap.

"Would you like to see them, Mike?" Jonathan asked him.

The fight had gone out of Mike Smith. He gently shook his head.

Jonathan continued. "Here is our reconstruction, Mike. Miriam was furious at Douglas, and she planned to catch him screwing someone in their bed. There's no greater insult, you know. If your lover is unfaithful, that is bad enough. But if they have sex with someone else in your bed! Between the sheets on which you lie. That is unpardonable. She called you, and you went over to the college to get the blackjack. Did you plan the murder then, or did you want something for self-defense?"

Mike did not respond. He simply looked at Jonathan.

"Perhaps Miriam found him with Andrew? Were you there Andrew?"

"No. I didn't see Miriam."

"So it was soon after. But there was Douglas, in bed, naked. Perhaps with Vaseline and other substances on the sheets. Maybe she took the blackjack from you and hit Douglas or perhaps you hit him, Mike? I think it was you. It was in your pocket. It would have been hard to give it to Miriam without Douglas putting up a fight.

"He turned to Miriam, and you hit him. Hard. And then Miriam rushed back to Newport, and you went home. Along came Richard and inserted the poker. And the next day, Douglas was discovered. You loved Miriam, Mike. But you also knew her. You knew she was selfish and impulsive. You knew she drank a lot. You began to worry. Here were Martin and I interviewing her. She was drinking heavily. What might she say? Inadvertently, especially when drunk. Perhaps you had seen her drunk in the last few days, and you thought her nerve was going? So you decided you had to kill her to safeguard yourself. Probably you were angry at her too. Even though you loved her and had killed for her. Perhaps *because* you had killed for her. Here was one more stupid thing you had been sucked into because of her. You knew of her other lovers, like Fred here. You wrote to her about the pain you experienced," Jonathan gestured toward the letters in Martin's lap. "So you murdered her. To protect yourself, and perhaps to avenge yourself for all the pain she had caused."

Mike had tears dripping from his eyelashes. "I hated her for the power she had over me. She was always asking me to do things that risked my career. To meet there or here. Right now. To cancel my class with five minutes notice just so that she could have someone to talk to. And I did. Again and again. I loved her and hated her. I possessed her now and then, and yet I mourned because I never really did have her. She was married to Dalziel and had other lovers. She told me about them. Joked about them. She told me I was special. But that wasn't enough to cover the pain. And then when I got involved in the argument with Douglas, I was so stupid. They were screaming abuse at each other. And he lifted up a glass from the bedside table to throw at her. And I was so angry at him because I loved her that I reached into my pocket for the blackjack and hit him. Again and again. And then he was dead. And the nightmare of loving Miriam turned into the nightmare of fearing she would betray me. It wasn't that I feared she might slip, Jonathan. It was that she would accuse me in order to protect herself. She was treacherous, Jonathan. Treacherous."

Jonathan nodded. "Perhaps. But Miriam didn't make you kill Douglas, Mike. It was your love and your anger that made you kill him. Maybe it is love that is treacherous?"

Chapter 40

It was midnight again. Jonathan was sitting with Martin on the floor in front of the fire in Martin's sitting room. Mike Smith had been taken to the police station, charged with murder and lodged there for the night.

"I was wondering what would have happened if he hadn't admitted the murders, Martin. Would you have had enough evidence?"

"At least I made you wait till I got a search warrant to go into Mike Smith's office! That evidence would have been sound. And the letters you found in Dalziel's house would have been useable. Yes, I think we could have built a sound enough case to convict him."

"I feel rather sad for him, Martin. I can't imagine being driven by love in that way."

Martin looked surprised. "Haven't you ever loved someone so much that you'd do anything, or almost anything for them?"

"No. I guess not. I certainly didn't love Claire in that way. It was a cool love. It was as if there was always some part of me holding back. Not fully engaged with her. But then she was such a cool person herself. It was hard to engage her because she was so disengaged."

"And before her?"

"Oh, there were people I was attracted to. But those relationships were so superficial, so minimal, that I can't compare them. I don't think you can call a feeling love until you've told the person you love them and seen how it felt to say it to them. Did it sound all right? Can you say it again? Did you really mean it? You have to hear yourself say it to them to know that. And then you have to be their lover. And finally, you have to wait a year or so. And then if you can say you love them, you probably do. Only Claire met those criteria for me."

"Well, in some way, I hope you never do experience the other kind of love. Let's call it 'hot' to contrast with your adjective 'cool'. I hope you don't, because if it isn't reciprocated life becomes hell. Let's play chess, Jonathan."

Martin pulled the chess set across the carpet and slid it between them. "Your move, Jonathan."

Jonathan moved the pawn to Queen Knight 3.

"You've never done that before, Jonathan. I'm astounded."

"I guess it's time I made a new move."