

THE
COLLINGWOOD
LEGACY

H J Gaudreau

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Chapter 1

Detroit, September 1931

Anna Lademan ran an iron along the length of a man's long sleeve shirt. Not satisfied with the result she sat the iron on its end and picked up a tall glass bottle with a yellow Vernor's Ginger Ale label and a cork sprinkler head. She gave the bottle a shake and scattered small droplets of water along the sleeve. Again taking up her iron she finished the sleeve, placed the shirt on a hanger, and hung it next to a dozen similar shirts. After a quick glance at the remaining baskets of laundry she placed her hands on her hips, bent backward, chin to the ceiling and sighed. At five cents a shirt she could not afford to rest, but she had earned a quick stretch.

Anna then took a woman's floral dress from her basket and began to spread it on her ironing board. She did this with a bit of nostalgia. Her wedding dress had been a pretty flowered dress like this one. They had met in late winter, 1916. Her husband Abell had been a big man, with a full head of red hair and a broad back. He was also a romantic; he loved flowers and the spring. He had insisted they marry when the earth was new, crops were in the ground, and flowers were blooming. So, in the spring of 1918, two weeks after Anna turned nineteen they married.

He died the next November. She always thought that ironic, so many people were celebrating the end of the Great War, and her husband, who had fought in it hadn't been

there. Abell had gone off to war in January 1917. By the February of 1918 he was home, one leg left behind in France, but home. She had her man and they would be all right. Then came the Spanish flu. Abell left in the morning for his job at the post office, that night he came home with a cough, by evening he couldn't stand, and he died before morning. The speed of his death had always troubled Anna. She hadn't had time to tell him how much he meant to her, about their unborn child, to make plans. He hadn't seen his boy, didn't know how much his son looked like him; never tussled his hair. Anna's eyes began to tear.

In what seemed like the Almighty's ploy to drag her from the depths of depression a crash sounded from the small living room behind her. An instant later Anna's pride and joy, her son Ezra, exploded into the kitchen.

"David told me he needs help selling newspapers today," the boy announced.

There had been another murder; one of the Licavoli Squad had been gunned down by the Purple Gang. The Times had run an 'extra' edition.

"He said I'd get two cents for every paper I sell."

"How much does David get?" Anna asked with a knowing smile.

"He keeps three cents. He said it's because he's the official representative of the Times and he's responsible. Come on Ma, I can get us a half bushel of apples if I sell twenty-five papers."

Anna smiled a mother's smile and nodded at her boy. "Give me a kiss," she said and Ezra was out the door.

The fall of 1931 was cold and rainy. Today was no exception. David Puginwitz stood outside the Collingwood Manor apartment building and called to the pedestrians on

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either side of the street. In the last hour he had sold only five newspapers, and the day was turning old. David pulled his collar up and shoved his hands deeper into his pockets. It worked for a moment but the strap of his newspaper bag slid off his small shoulder and the bag fell to the wet sidewalk.

Worried the newspapers would be ruined, David uttered a curse he'd learned from his father, removed his hands from his coat pockets and hiked the strap back to his shoulder. He then blew on his clenched fists and jammed them back into his pockets. If he hunched his shoulder the bag held its position. Sadly, and to David's never ending annoyance, the moment he relaxed his shoulder it fell to the sidewalk and the process was repeated.

As David pulled the newspaper bag to his shoulder for what seemed the fiftieth time he heard his friend Ezra's voice. The two boys greeted each other and immediately fell into a detailed discussion of their mutual obsession, the Detroit Tigers. David was a master of recalling the details of each of the summer's games. And, what he didn't remember he could invent. Ezra was a walking almanac of baseball statistics. Today, the conversation quickly turned to how bad this season had been and which players their team needed to replace. After a few minutes of baseball David pulled the newspaper bag from his shoulder and handed it to Ezra.

"I'm going inside to get warm. Don't let the bag get wet. I can't sell a wet newspaper."

David got all of two steps when Ezra suddenly exclaimed, "I almost forgot! Look what I've got!"

With that, Ezra pulled a tin from his coat pocket and opened it. Inside lay a small stack of baseball trading cards; several packs of cigarettes lay on top of the cards, and candy wrapped in foil lay scattered in one corner of the tin. Ezra put

the newspaper bag on the sidewalk, causing David to grimace and handed one of the cigarette packs to David.

David examined the pack of Sweet Caporal cigarettes. “What do I want with these? I don’t smoke. And I ain't startin' now. Ma says it makes your teeth fall out.”

“Geeze, I know that. But, turn it over,” Ezra said with a proud grin.

David did as he was told. To his delight on the back of the package was the prettiest Ty Cobb trading card he'd ever seen. “Holy smokes! This is great!” he explained. All thoughts of a warm stove disappeared.

Immediately David began offering combinations of his cards in trade for one of the new Ty Cobb cards. A brief argument over the value of various cards, new cards versus old cards, gum cards versus dry goods cards, a round of potential deals in which both boys tried to dump hated Yankee players on the other and soon a deal was struck. A few minutes later David was examining his new card when the possibility that Ezra had stolen the cigarettes crossed his mind.

“Where'd you get the cigarette packs Ezra?” David said with newly found suspicion. “If you lifted 'em and my Ma finds out...”

“I didn't steal nothin'!” Ezra then began to explain how Mr. Kaczowski left two cartons of cigarettes and four shirts at his house. He was coming to the part about how a drunken Mr. Kaczowski tried to grab his mother, and what she had called Mr. Kaczowski when she hit him on the head with a frying pan, when a new, black four-door Chrysler coasted to a stop in front of the building. Instinctively, both boys ceased their chatter.

The front passenger door opened and a man with a

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dark gray tweed overcoat stepped to the curb. He took a moment to study the street. His glance passed over the boys, then both sides of the street in each direction. Finally, he studied the windows of the nearby buildings. Satisfied, he nodded in the direction of the car. Two men climbed out of the back seat. One reflexively skimmed his hand over his hip and said, "I didn't bring my gun."

The other glanced at him, "I told ya, ya don't bring guns to a meeting like this." Walking around to the trunk of the car he removed a brown briefcase. The three men gathered on the curb. The driver shut off the engine, got out and walked to the front of the car. As if on command the three men, in matching strides, approached the steps to the building. Their shoes making a rhythmic 'smack...smack...smack' on the wet concrete as they approached the boys. The driver hurried around the car and ran to catch up.

Ezra knew something about the street. These guys were going to take his baseball cards and maybe shake down David for his paper money. Realizing it was too late to slip the tin back in his pocket he pushed it to the bottom of the newspaper bag. Then he stepped behind David.

The three men swept past the two boys without looking at them. The driver, now only a step or two behind, turned and flipped a silver dollar in their direction. "You kids! Keep an eye on my car," he snarled. Ezra tried to catch the coin and missed. The man stopped. The coin rang off the step and rolled to the sidewalk.

"C'mon Sol!" one barked, and the men entered the apartment building.

Chapter 2

Harry Keywell stood silently at the window Collingwood Manor, apartment 211 and watched the street. After ten minutes he finally said, “They’re here.”

Irving Milberg and Ray Bernstein both joined Harry at the window. Harry Fleisher remained sitting on the couch.

“I don’t have any argument with Sol,” Irving said.

“I don’t want a witness,” Harry replied.

“Look, Sol’s alright. We leave him alone,” Ray announced.

Fleisher stood up, “You sure about that Ray? I hope Sol doesn't bite us on the ass.”

A moment later Keywell answered the door. Joe Lebowitz, Hymie Paul and Izzy 'The Rat' Sutker walked in. An awkward silence filled the room. Finally Bernstein broke the tension. “Boys, take a seat,” he said and pointed to an oversized couch and easy chair.

Ray’s eyes focused on the briefcase. Maybe this would go alright. Harry turned on Izzy Sutker. “I think we all know what this is about,” he said.

“Sure Harry, we know we owe you some money...”

“Not just some, you owe us a lot of money Izzy.”

“You know we’re good for it,” Sutker continued.

“I’ve heard that before,” Ray said from across the room. “You’ve promised, and you’ve promised. You came to us and asked for a loan and I gave it to you. It makes me look like a fool. But the worst thing is that you idiots went and tried to cut us out of the business. Then you guys had the moxie to ask for another loan...”

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“And we damned well gave it to you,” Milberg cut in.

Ray glanced at Milberg, then continued, “Now you're telling us you need more time. We already gave you more time. After all that, you tell us you can't pay.”

“What is this?” Harry demanded.

Hymie Paul concentrated on Harry's every move.

He glanced at Milberg and Bernstein then his partners Izzy Sutker and Joe Lebowitz. Finally he said, “I think we can work something out.” He patted the case. “I've got half of your money right here. It'll take us a little time, but we should have the rest of the money to you in three months.”

Keywell erupted, “Half? You come here with half? What the hell do you think this is?”

Almost imperceptibly Ray shook his head no.

Fleisher put his hands out as if to pat the air. “Boys, lets all be calm. Look, let's not get worked up about this. I've got some cold beer in the basement. I'll go get us some and we'll work out some terms.”

The decision had been made. Ray, Irv and Harry Keywell all looked at each other. A silent agreement was reached.

“Yeah, I think you're right,” Ray said.

Fleisher walked out into the hall and headed for the street. The car would be idling in back in three minutes.

“We need it all,” Irv said a moment later.

Harry Keywell moved to the next window, his hand slipped inside his jacket and gripped his pistol.

“Look, we ain't got that much, we're lucky to have this,” Hymie's throat had tightened; his voice was almost a squeal.

Irv grinned, “I don't think you understand. We employ you, we give you a good territory, and you knock over

our runs, you don't pay your debts, you steal from us!"

Irv's voice was getting louder, he took a breath then very slowly he said, "We...need...our...money...NOW." His fist slammed onto the table.

Lebowitz glanced at his two partners. "Look, Irv, I understand. We'll get you the rest. But it will take time, we'll need a month."

Milberg looked at Keywell and shrugged, "Seems like an awful long time don't you think?"

Keywell pulled his gun from his pocket. "Times up."

David stooped to pick up the silver dollar. Ezra had failed to catch it when Sol had tossed the coin. "Those guys look like gangsters, Ezra. We've got real life gangsters right here!"

Ezra was staring at the door where the men had disappeared. David sat down on the wet step, Ezra joined him. Still shaken neither boy said anything. After a few moments Ezra stood up and announced, "I'm going home."

"What! You can't leave. Neither can I. That guy gave us a dollar to watch his car. That's a lot of money. If we leave he'll come back and get us. We have to stay right here." David was older and so he must be smarter. Ezra sat back on the step.

"I think those guys were the Purple Gang," David said a few minutes later. "There was a story about them in the paper last week. I saw their picture. They're famous."

Suddenly a series of pops could be heard from a long distance away. Both boys jumped to their feet, eyes searching the street as they turned a slow circle. Another round of gunfire and this time the two friends could identify the location of the sound. A one they turned and looked to the

second floor.

A moment later the building's front door burst open and the driver of the car ran out carrying a brown briefcase. Taking the stairs two at a time he collided with Ezra and David knocking the boys over and falling to the sidewalk. The case flew from his hand scattering several bundles of cash on the sidewalk. The case slid across the sidewalk and under the big car.

"What the...," David cried. Ezra rolled across the sidewalk and came to rest against the Chrysler.

"Gimme that," Sol Levine shouted at Ezra as he jumped to his feet. Sol grabbed the newspaper bag and pulled. The boy was jerked forward and fell to the sidewalk, landing on the side of his face with a yell. Sol dragged the bag from the boy's grasp. Then he scooped up the bundles of cash laying on the sidewalk and stuffed them into the bag. After a quick glance at the door of the building he ran to the Chrysler. In a moment the engine roared and the car was turning the corner onto Grand Boulevard.

Seconds later three men tumbled from the door of the apartment building, each man carrying a pistol. They ran down the stairs, past Ezra and David and into the center of the street. The three men turned in circles looking for the car. It was too late. One man spotted the briefcase laying on the curb. He picked it up, looked inside then threw it back on the street. "The little shit! He took it all!" the man yelled.

"Ray, I'm gonna kill that little S.O.B.," another whispered.

The three men then walked back into the building. It was as if David and Ezra were invisible. Ezra dabbed his bloody nose and began to cry.

Chapter 3

Detroit was an ethnic melting pot. Poles, Czechs, Germans, French, Italians, and Jews. Each had their own gang. But the meanest and easily the most feared was a gang founded by four Jewish Russian immigrants, the Bernstein brothers, Abe, Joe, Raymond and Izzy. The boys began their life of crime with simple street jobs; muggings, purse snatching and “smash and grab” robberies. They quickly progressed to shaking down local merchants. Legend had it that the gang got its name after hitting a meat market. “Those boys are rotten, purple like the color of rotten meat,” the shopkeeper supposedly said. The name stuck.

The country should have seen the rise in violence the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution would bring. Michigan had instituted its own version of Prohibition, the Damon Act, a year earlier with disastrous results. With the Damon Act’s implementation the manufacture and distribution of alcohol became illegal everywhere in the state. Within months “rum running” was the fastest growing profession in the Motor City. As one newspaper complained, “the average citizen can make a year's wages in one month by becoming a gangster or bootlegger.”

After every arrest the rum runners invented an even more ingenious method for smuggling and distributing booze. The police tried to stop the flow of liquor to no avail. The money, the resources of the gangs, the corruption and the intimidation was too much. Liquor flowed from Windsor Canada across the Detroit River and into the nation's fourth largest city in quantities no one could imagine.

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The Purples knew a golden opportunity when they saw one. Soon they were the most powerful and feared gang in Detroit. Seventy-five percent of the illegal liquor coming into the United States from Canada came through Detroit. Its twenty-eight mile long Detroit River was just a mile from Canada and dotted with thousands of coves, boat yards, nooks and crannies - it was a smuggler's dream.

At first, the Purples tried to keep the Detroit river front to themselves. It was an impossible task. There were too many rivals; the Purples couldn't kill them all. But, they could impose a territorial system. Nothing moved along the docks of Detroit without the permission of the Purples. If it did, a savage lesson was taught. The Purples employed the new Thompson submachine gun as their business card. The 'Chopper' could cut a man in half in the blink of an eye. It ensured their rivals knew who had done the shooting and it left an impression.

The Purples dominated the Detroit underworld for years. No one went to jail. No one talked. The Purple Gang simply owned the police and killed anyone who complained. Business was business. The Detroit underworld flourished; the East Side Gang, "Singing Sam" Catalanotte, Chester "Big Chet" La Mare and the rest were, for the moment, happy with the arrangement.

The Purple Gang's lock on the waterfront and bootlegging couldn't last. The fall of 1931 saw an unprecedented opportunity for the competition. The American Legion was having its national convention in Detroit and the demand for liquor would surpass even the Purple's capacity to supply it. Now rivals from all over the country were slipping into the city. Worse yet, some of the gang's own associates began to moonlight. This didn't go

unnoticed by the Bernstein brothers.

Foremost among the moonlighters were three new members of the 'Third Avenue Navy'. The Navy was part of the smuggling operation of the Purple Gang. Equipped with some of the fastest boats produced on the Great Lakes and armed with Thompson submachine guns the Navy made the run across the Lake and stopped others from making the same trip. The Navy's running fights with the U.S. Coast Guard were big news and widely reported.

The Navy was a major part of the supply side of the Purple Gang's operation. It was highly paid work, members were lost as a result of the work and to arrest. New members were recruited continuously. With the coming convention the Navy had to increase its size. New recruits were brought in without proper vetting. Hymie Paul, Isadore "Izzy" Sutker, and Joe Lebowitz were three of those new recruits.

That summer, in a show of supreme stupidity the three began diverting portions of each run. The lightened loads were not unnoticed, but good fortune smiled on the three double-crossers. A negotiation was taking place with the North Side Gang of Chicago. The Gang was losing its power in Chicago and the Purples were exploring ways of moving in on Al Capone's Chicago Outfit. A partnership seemed possible. The Purples simply didn't have the time to devote to these relatively small losses.

Unable to stand prosperity the three made another incredibly bad decision. They decided to start 'making book'. They set the odds, took bets from all comers, including the opposition, and counted on the betters to lose. The scheme should have worked, but the boys were swimming with the sharks.

A great pastime of the day was motor boat racing.

Different categories of boats from sail to yacht, professional and amateur, were raced on the Detroit River to the delight of the populace. One of the more popular races was the “Gentleman's Motor Yacht” race, and the most famous of those racers was the “Volstead Act,” a 34 foot locally built Chris-Craft.

Not knowing the monthly river races were fixed Sutker, Paul and Lebowitz bet big on the “Volstead Act.” Unfortunately, they lost to members of Detroit’s Italian East Side Gang. The East Side Gang, with its heavy New York connections and Sicilian pedigree was not in the habit of overlooking debts. To say that losing a bet to the East Side Gang was bad business was like saying Babe Ruth was just a ball player. It didn’t come close to describing the reality.

Hymie and the boys knew of only one way out. Trading on their association with the rest of the Purple Gang they bought a hundred gallons of Canadian booze on credit. They then watered down the whiskey and sold it, undercutting the Purples' price for the same watered down booze. It didn’t cover the debt, but the boys figured to make the rest up through their gambling operation.

The big score, and their only hope of salvation, was the boat races. Hymie and his friends only succeeded in proving that stupid really can strike the same spot twice.

They again set odds on a river race, again the race was fixed, and again they lost big to the East Side Gang.

Forgetting the “First Rule of Holes”, the boys didn’t stop digging. Since the scheme had worked before they again approached their associates in the Purple Gang and again made a deal. A hundred gallons of Canadian whiskey were purchased, all on credit. Again they diluted the stock and undersold the market. It was one time too many for the

Bernstein brothers. Hymie and the boys had forgotten they were cutting into the Purple's trade. To make matters worse, they didn't make enough money on the watered down booze. They couldn't pay back the Purples and they couldn't pay off the East Side Gang. They had succeeded in provoking not one, but two of the most powerful criminal organizations in the United States.

Paul, Sutker, and Lebowitz were already dead and had simply been waiting for the Purples to tell them.

Chapter 4

April – This Year

Herman James Crenshaw preferred to be called “Jim”. It never became an issue, but this morning a new teller at the bank had insisted he show two forms of identification. Ordinarily this wouldn’t bother Jim; in fact, he was a big believer of better safe than sorry, but in this instance the young man knew Jim personally. Not only that, but Jim was putting money into his checking account, not taking it out.

He knew everyone in town, they knew him. Jim had umpired the kid’s Little League games and coached his pee-wee basketball team. He knew it was “procedure,” but knowing everyone was why he’d returned to a small town and not retired in D.C. or Boston or some other big city.

Plus, the whole idea of showing two forms of identification to put money INTO his account struck him as absurd. Jim didn’t care who put money into his account; he just didn’t want anyone taking it out.

Leaving the building he shook his head, smiled and started his truck. He had two more stops on his morning errands. He needed to stop at the dollar store and pick up five packs of suckers, five packs of number 2 pencils and a pack of colored paper. Apparently, Eve’s kids had earned a reward of a sucker and had also broken, stolen or sharpened to extinction the five packs of pencils he bought two weeks ago. Computers and the internet hadn’t made pencils obsolete, at least in Eve’s classroom. Next was a quick stop at the combination feed and seed store and grain elevator office

to check on the price of fertilizer. Here he parked his truck in front of the building, rolled both the passenger and driver's windows up to the two-thirds position and got out. His dog Molly watched him walk away from the truck with sad eyes, gave one bark, then curled up in Jim's seat to wait for his return.

April was a wonderful time of year, the snow was gone, there was always the chance of a tee shirt and shorts day, opening day of baseball season proved the Union would last at least another year, and best of all those fields around the house just looked anxious to get to work. Jim had planted corn the last three years and was beginning to think this might be a year for soybeans. Crop rotation was something he should pay attention to he knew, but he hadn't owned the farm long enough for it to matter. Now, for some reason he couldn't explain, it mattered. Jim had retired from the Air Force just six years ago. He'd worked for a defense contractor for a little while, found that to be an experience similar to a root canal without Novocain and quit. Four years ago he and his wife Eve had purchased their little sixty-acre farm. They'd taken a year to build a cottage style home, a barn and equipment shed and then planted their first crop. Jim grimaced as he recalled that first year. He termed that year's crop a "learning experience." Eve called it a disaster. Since then Jim had learned about seed depth, acid balance, seed spacing, nitrogen requirements, soil types, nematodes, a multitude of bugs, various fungi, and a host of other things that he'd never thought of before. He loved it.

Returning to the farm Jim parked the pickup in front of the garage, opened the truck door and moved aside as Molly rushed to be the first to the house. Jim walked to the rear of the truck, grabbed an armful of bags and headed for

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the house. Placing the bags on the kitchen table he filled Molly's water bowl, stood, then noticed the light on the telephone answering machine. Pushing "Play" he heard the welcome voice of his sister, Sherrie.

Chapter 5

The light turned red and Sol Levine braked the car to a stop. He checked the rear-view mirror for what must have been the fiftieth time. He had just witnessed three men murdered. He was on the edge of panic. What had he been thinking? In the confusion of the murders he'd grabbed the briefcase and run. He'd taken money from the Purple Gang; it was a death sentence.

His forehead was covered with sweat. He took off his brown fedora and wiped the hatband with his handkerchief. His hands were shaking. Sol had to get out of Detroit, he knew that, he just didn't know how. He checked the rear-view mirror again.

Sol had circled Detroit twice trying to decide what to do. Evening had turned to night; night was becoming morning. No one was behind him...for now. There would be. He thought he spotted a familiar Packard. Frantically he pressed the accelerator. Sol came to Jefferson Avenue and smashed the brake, attempted to downshift and missed the gear. The transmission gave a loud clatter and rattled the shift lever in his hand. He found third gear and accelerated as he turned left on Jefferson to parallel the Detroit River. He had to calm down.

Sol took a deep breath. He passed Owens Park, then Memorial Park. Suddenly Sol was inspired. He'd worked for Izzy Sutker before. A couple of times he'd helped Izzy unload booze at a boathouse just down the street. Once, Izzy had taken him on a run to Canada. They'd crossed at night, loaded the booze on the boat and come back all in one night.

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He'd made fifty bucks for one night's work. The more he thought about it the better Sol liked his idea. What better place to hide out than in the Purples own boathouse

He slowed when he came to the Detroit Water Works building. A little further and he'd found a small dirt path, more a driveway than a side street. The big Chrysler crept silently down the small two-lane path, coasting to a stop at the water's edge. Sol turned the lights of the car off and carefully studied his rear-view mirrors. Nothing moved. No one had followed him. Sol had never owned a gun, he wished he did now. This was not a totally safe place, but it was the only place he was sure they wouldn't be looking.

He stepped down from the car and allowed his eyes to adjust to the darkness. After a moment he was calm, well, as calm as he could be right now. Sol carefully examined his surroundings. He was alone. No, maybe not. Maybe they were waiting for him. He couldn't decide. He stood next to the open door, engine running. Again Sol checked his surroundings. No one was here. He was almost sure. He bent into the car to shut off the engine. If someone was going to grab him it was going to be now.

With a grimace Sol turned the key. The engine died. He listened to the night. A horn blared in the distance. Street noise filtered down between the warehouses and garages along Jefferson. Against Windsor's lights he could see a working boat making its way toward lake Huron. Sol relaxed just a little.

Nervously Sol fingered the newspaper bag. He glanced left, then right, took a deep breath and sprinted across the parking lot to a small boathouse and slipped inside. Happy that he hadn't been gunned down before he reached the door Sol sat down on the floor and caught his breath. He

started a nervous laugh. After a few minutes he stood up, cracked the door open, and peered into the night.

Nothing moved.

Sol turned and groped his way across the building. Eventually outstretched hands found a workbench. Reaching into his pocket he found a match box. Fishing one out he gripped it in his fist and flicked his thumbnail against the match head. It flared and Sol tried to get his bearings. Quickly the match burned down; he struck another. He fixed the layout of the building in his mind and began to work his way to the end of a long workbench. There, he searched the wall.

It took a minute, but soon Sol found what he was looking for. He struck another match, turned up the wick in an oil lantern and a quiet light illuminated the inside of the building. Across from the bench, resting peacefully at its moorings sat a beautiful Chris-Craft cruiser.

Sol didn't pause to admire the boat. Taking a small step stool from its hook Sol placed it on the edge of the dock. A moment later he was aboard the boat and opening the door to the small cabin below. There he slid into the cabin booth and emptied the newspaper bag on the table. Out fell a small tin, several newspapers and packs of money.

Sol was amazed. The sight of the money didn't erase stupid, but it did make Sol brave. He quickly counted the cash, twenty packs of hundreds. Twenty thousand dollars per pack, four hundred thousand dollars. He grinned. This was the big score. Sol would be sitting pretty the rest of his life, all he had to do was grab his girl and get out of town. He could easily get lost in Canada somewhere. He'd always heard that Toronto was a pretty town, maybe Montreal...the possibilities were nearly endless.

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Sol picked up the tin. It was a Blue Bird caramel container. Opening the top he shook out the contents. A pile of baseball cards, a few coins, several packs of cigarettes and a handful of caramels. He grinned, unwrapped a caramel and stuffed it into his mouth; this was perfect. Sol pocketed the coins, some of the caramels and two packs of cigarettes. He scooped the rest back into the tin. Pressing the cover onto the can he shoved it into the bottom of the newspaper bag. Still this was serious business. He had to think.

Gradually the grin returned. Sol got up from the bench seat and made his way to the boat's forward cabin. Here he removed a board from the floor to expose a small compartment. This compartment extended forward three feet and was specifically built to hold five cases of Canadian whiskey. Sol had loaded this very compartment when he'd gone on the trip with Izzy. Normally, no one would find it. But Sol knew that his friends were also his enemies and they knew about the compartment as well as he did.

Leaving the boat and returning to the workbench Sol took a few moments to find the tools he needed. He tied on a carpenter's apron, shoved the tools he'd selected in the apron and hurried back to the cruiser. Feeling better about his chances by the moment Sol sprinted up the small foot stool and bounced onto the cruiser's deck. Moving into the cabin, he pushed the compartment cover out of his way and lay on the floor. Then, turning on his back Sol wedged himself into the whiskey compartment.

He lay there for a moment, head and shoulders in the compartment, heels on the deck. The edge of the compartment cutting into the small of his back.

Reaching with his right hand he grabbed the lantern and sat it on the floor of the compartment above his left

shoulder. Now he had light. Removing a screwdriver from the carpenter's apron he reached above his head deep into the compartment and began removing the brass screws which held the end board.

After a few minutes he had all eight out and was able to pull the board away from its frame. Sol then took the canvas newspaper bag, wrapped it in newspapers, and wedged it into the bilge of the cruiser. Forty minutes later he had replaced the endboard and painted a fresh coat of shellac over the entire compartment. No one would find any evidence of his handiwork.

He crawled out of the hole, stood and rubbed his lower back. Then Sol took a bottle of Windsor Canadian from behind the captain's seat and sat down at the settee. A grin began to grow; Sol lifted the bottle, toasted the now dead "Captain" Izzy and took a long pull. He imagined his girl Dolly in the finest Chicago fashions; she'd look just like Greta Garbo. He pictured her leaning on a long bar and whispering, "Give me a whiskey, ginger ale on the side, and don't be stingy, baby." Just like Garbo herself.

He'd get himself a new suit and look just like Cagney. He had it planned. The grin broaden to a smile, things were looking up. Sol killed the light and went to the front of the boathouse. A narrow walkway extended along the wall to the opening and around the side of the building. It allowed operation of a large, garage-like door into the boathouse. Sol could just squeeze around the wall without falling in the river.

Sol liked this, it allowed him to see the surrounding area from a place no one would suspect. He studied the shadows between the buildings, the light was low, the morning sun was just peeking over Windsor. Satisfied that no one was watching Sol jumped to the shore then sprinted to

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the Chrysler. Starting the car Sol grinned again. “Who knows? Maybe Dolly Eleanor Grongoski would even become an honest woman,” he thought.

Chapter 6

Dolly Grongoski was not a shy wallflower. Raised on the poor, sandy soil of northern Michigan she was used to long days, hard work and hard people. Small, just five foot four inches tall and skinny, too skinny by her own standards, she had left the farm for a job in Detroit the day she turned eighteen. That was just under a year ago. She'd fallen in with hard people and lived a hard life, but she was proud of the fact that never, not once, had any of them been able to take advantage of her. She could out think them, and she wasn't afraid of a fight.

The one bright spot in the past year had been Sol. She didn't love him, he wasn't very smart and he could never make it on a farm back home, but he had a kind heart and he gave her lots of things and spent money on her when he had it. It was a good deal for both of them; she only worried about getting pregnant.

But Sol was not her dream. Dolly intended to be someone, she did not want to end up like her mother or cousins. Spending the rest of her life ironing someone else's shirts or feeding chickens was not her idea of a life. She would be a nurse or a school teacher or a secretary to some big executive.

To add color to the dream Dolly liked to take the bus all the way out to Ann Arbor on her days off. That's where she was this morning. She would walk across the University campus and pretend she was a student. She would sit on the benches, admire the clothes the girls wore, and dream about having something more than a tenth grade education.

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At noon Dolly began to get hungry. She used the engineering building's archway to leave the campus and made her way south on University Avenue. Soon she came to the East Quadrangle dormitory. She waited until several students were entering the building and joined the crowd.

A blond haired boy politely held the door and Dolly was in. Carefully she explored the building. It only took a few minutes and she'd found what she had come for, the cafeteria line. The line moved steadily along and Dolly closely watched the process at the door. A student sitting on a stool fought off boredom while checking each person's University identification card. Several of the students claimed they had forgotten their ID card or had otherwise lost it. The ID checker then consulted a list, found the name, then passed the offending party into the land of food and ice cream. Satisfied, Dolly gave up her position in line.

A few minutes later she was again outside the building's main entrance. She waited until one of the school's few women students approached, then leaned against a light post and began to cry. The young woman immediately came to her aid.

“Hi...ahhhh....are you all right?” she asked.

“Nooooo.” Dolly moaned. “I just broke up with my boyfriend, and I want to go home.” She tucked her chin down to her chest and gave a few silent sobs.

“Oh honey, that's tough.” The girl put a hand on Dolly's shoulder. “We've all been through it. Maybe you should go back to your room and lay down.”

“No, I can't, I've got to go to class,” Dolly sobbed.

“Well, you can't go to class crying like this. Come on, I'll walk you back to your room.” The girl gently took Dolly's elbow.

"Thank you," Dolly said and let herself be led along. After a few steps, in her most pitiful voice, Dolly said, "What's your name?"

"I'm Mary Ellen Bennett. What's yours?"

"I'm Debbie Williams." A few steps later Dolly shook herself, stood to her maximum height and in her most confident voice announced. "Oh, I'm alright. I'm not going to let him ruin my life. I really should go to class, it'll be fine."

Mary Ellen smiled, "That's the spirit. You'll have another boyfriend in no time, you'll see."

Mary Ellen didn't take a great deal of convincing and soon she went on her way. Dolly waited until the girl was out of sight then slipped back into the dormitory and rejoined the line for the cafeteria.

It wasn't such a pleasant day for Sol. He was on a frantic search for her. Nervously watching his rearview mirror Sol visited the diner where Dolly worked, checked her apartment and searched her favorite stores. The afternoon was slipping away and, afraid to return to his own shabby room, Sol took up residence in a bar on Fort Street. There he began calling her boarding house phone every thirty minutes.

At six that evening Dolly was back in Detroit climbing the stairs to her flat when Mrs. Boardman, the boarding house owner, stopped her.

"Dolly, a man's been looking for you. Wouldn't say his name. I don't approve of men in the building miss. You know the rules."

Dolly thought a moment, decided it had to be Sol, then examined the exceedingly large woman. Using her most charming smile Dolly said, "He's my cousin, I'm sure this is about my mother. She's very sick you know." The woman eyed Dolly. "I'm sure," she said, then slammed her door.

Shortly after Dolly had closed her apartment door the phone at the end of the hall rang. It was answered by one of the building's tenants. Seconds later the loud cry, "Dolly, ya got a lover on the line," careened through the house. A minute later Dolly was talking to Sol.

"Dolly, babe, where ya been?" he didn't wait for an answer. "Never mind, I've got some big news. We've hit the big time baby. I need to pick you up. I'll be there in ten minutes. Meet me in back of the building.' And, before Dolly could argue Sol had hung up.

They drove to Grosse Pointe just to get out of the city and let Sol explain what he had seen and done. Dolly at first panicked. She wanted out of the car and intended to run as far from Sol as she could. She was no fool and knew what happened to people who crossed the Purples.

It took a while, but eventually he convinced her to calm down. When he did, Dolly began to think the situation over very carefully. Sol said he had a lot of money, more than a lot. And he wasn't lying. He was too scared to be lying, she could tell. She asked a few questions and slowly it came to her. This was legit. Dolly was convinced; this was their chance for a big score and to get out of Detroit.

They ate an early dinner in Hamtramck, then headed to the river. Dolly insisted on stopping at her apartment for a change of clothes and to pick up some keepsakes she'd brought from home. Then they headed to Sol's apartment.

Chapter 7

Sol rented a room above a small meat market. Mr. Spadoff went home for the day at six, the market was closed, lights off. They circled the block twice. Sol was careful to keep his speed up and tried not to draw attention to the car. Nothing moved, no one sat in some dark car. It looked normal.

On the third trip past the store they slowed to a crawl and Dolly peered through the windows inside the market. A small red glow flared in the back behind the meat counter. Dolly spotted the cigarette just as Sol began to brake, intending to park next to the front door.

“GO, GO, GO!!” she yelled.

Sol stepped on the gas and the Chrysler lurched forward, caught its wind and sped off. The door of the meat market burst open and two men ran out. By the time they reached their car Sol and Dolly were ghosts in the night.

Thirty minutes later, certain they'd not been followed, Sol turned off Jefferson Avenue and coasted to a stop ten yards from the boathouse. Sol moved Dolly's two bags from the car to the Chris-Craft.

“We're all set doll. I just need one thing. Run up there to the market and get me a razor and some blades would ya? A man's gotta look presentable when we get to Canada.”

“Where's the market?” Dolly asked.

Sol walked Dolly to the door and pointed. “Around that shed, up the hill, between those two warehouses and down the street to the corner.” Dolly agreed and was on her way.

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Sol watched Dolly as she rounded the small tool shed and walked to the alley leading to the street. When she passed from sight he headed into the boathouse. Sol boarded the Chris-Craft and quickly checked the forward liquor hole. No one had tampered with it; the money was safe. He jumped to the side of the boathouse and grabbed a hose connected to two fifty-five gallon drums. The drums were on an elevated stand and gravity fed the hose. It took twenty minutes to fill the fuel tanks.

When he had finished Sol checked his watch and muttered, “Damn, bet she got lost. Where the hell is she?” Unfortunately, it was a question that Sol would never have answered.

Chapter 8

The setting west sun blinded Ray Bernstein as he peered at the street from his fifth floor apartment. It had not been a good day. They had hunted Sol Levine, they'd hunted him like the dog he was, and the game bag was empty.

They had come close. Somehow he'd spotted Ray's men in the market. Ray wondered if Sol had been tipped off. He shook his head. No time to think about that now. The trail had gone cold after that. They'd gone to his girlfriend's rooming house. Nothing. Some of the girls played cute, but none could say where Dolly and Sol were. Like a wounded animal the two had gone to ground. It would be hard to find them. Ray pulled the blinds closed just as the phone rang.

"Who the hell is that?" he spat. No one in the room answered, they didn't know, how could they? Ray picked up the receiver, "Yeah," he growled. Slowly his face grew hard. He listened closely to the little man on the other end of the line.

"A friend." Ray knew there was no such thing; this mutt was looking for a reward. Word had already gotten out. "How the hell did that happen?" Ray wondered. He slurped his drink then nodded his head. "All right, if it's on the level then twenty-five hundred, not a dollar more." A moment later Ray hung the receiver on the hook. "Some small timer spotted Sol down on the river. He's in the boathouse."

Milberg and Keywell each rose without saying a word. Milberg picked up his shotgun. The damn thing was a ten-gauge, sawed off to fit under an overcoat. It could blow a man in half. It had come to think of it. Ray hated that smell.

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Thirty minutes later Bernstein's Cadillac coasted to a stop outside the Detroit River boathouse. The three men got out, checked their guns and quietly closed the door to the car. Silently they walked to the boathouse.

Darkness was spreading across the eastern sky. It didn't change anything, the city was never quiet. The sounds of distant boats, cars, trucks and factory whistles were part of the background like a cicada's song in the summer. The men reached the door. Milberg took his position on the left and leveled his shotgun at the handle. Ray stood on the right and did the same with his Tommy gun. Harry prepared to kick in the door.

"On the count of three." Harry whispered.

Chapter 9

Dolly gave the kid at the store a dollar and a quarter and told him to keep the change. She was feeling lucky tonight and in a few hours a dime wouldn't mean squat. She nearly sprinted down the store steps. Then she remembered there were men after her, if she wasn't careful she'd be dead in the time it took to pull the trigger. It would happen, right here, right now.

She stopped on the top step and carefully studied the few cars parked on the street. Nothing moved, no glow from a cigarette. Then she shifted her attention to the windows and doorways overlooking her route to the alley. Nothing.

Satisfied, but not comfortable, Dolly took a deep breath. She knew she should walk, blend in, be part of the background. She couldn't help herself, she stepped off the shop step and began to run. To Dolly it took hours, but finally she reached the dirt path between the two small warehouses. Slowing to a careful walk she edged down the path. Sol's little shortcut would save her at least five minutes. Down a small hill, behind another warehouse, around the tool shed and she would pop out just thirty yards from the boathouse.

She was nearly giddy as she rounded the warehouse. She was going to be rich. Sol had told her and she could tell he was on the level. He wasn't acting. She knew that. Sol had been so scared he could barely light a cigarette.

She reached the tool shed, rounded its corner and stopped. About ten yards in front of the shed were two stacks of railroad ties and wood planks. Darkness had covered the

city, but lights from Windsor and boats on the river lit up the boathouse and the ground around it.

Crouching behind the two stacks of wood she could see four, no five policemen. “Where the hell had these guys come from?” She’d only been gone fifteen minutes. Dolly quickly ducked into the shed; panic grabbed her by the throat, and she started to shiver. “Buck fever, it’s just buck fever,” she muttered to herself. Standing in the dark she imagined the feel of bullets tearing into her body. “No, no, no...get ahold of yourself honey,” she whispered.

She’d gone to the market, just for some razor blades, maybe a chocolate. Then they were going to Rondeau, Canada. From there Long Point, Buffalo and finally Toronto. Sol had it all planned, no one would stop the boat, it was too fast. He said there was money, plenty of money, and it was all loaded on the boat. But there were cop cars parked behind the warehouse; “Shit, shit, shit!” she screamed to herself. She thought about running, but surely the cops would hear her, better to wait them out here. The building was small, a bench on one side about six feet long. A window on the other side covered in dirt and cobwebs.

Dolly stared out of the window. She moved to her right and looked along the edge of the parking area, she could see two policemen there. She thought she saw another to the far right of the woodpiles. She shifted to her left and, SHIT! There was a cop right there! She could see his outline through the window. He was standing with his back to the shed and pissing on a weed. Instinctively Dolly ducked. He hadn’t seen her. She wondered if he heard her open the door to the shed. Dolly was trapped.

Several minutes went by. Carefully she raised her head and peeked out of the window. The cop moved back to the

woodpile. Steam rolled off the weed. After a few minutes Dolly spotted more cops on the other side of the parking lot. She was sure there were more out there, but night was closing in, she couldn't tell. She knelt on the shed floor. She had to think; cops everywhere, Solly in the boathouse. Maybe they already had him? No, why would they be surrounding the place if they had him? They were going to shoot him, that was it, they were just going to pump the building full of lead and be done with it.

She wanted to run. Escape, that was it, she needed to escape. She could open the door and run, she'd be up the alley and down the street before... That wouldn't work. Dolly mulled the word around in her mind 'escape'.

She could picture a rabbit, safe inside a pile of brush. Her father would climb on top of the pile and jump up and down and pretty soon that rabbit felt like it needed to escape. It would come flying out of the pile and never, ever, did the rabbit make it past Daddy's shotgun. Dolly found a stool and carefully, silently placed it in front of the window. Putting her chin on her hands she positioned her eyes just above the window frame. She settled in to see what was going to happen.

She watched the cops. And they watched the boathouse. Dolly sat there for ten minutes, then twenty. She couldn't figure out how to warn Sol. Movement to her left surprised her and her head snapped up. Through the moist, heavy air she could see the outline of a big car. Its headlights were off. She couldn't hear the engine and thought that strange. Then she realized, the ignition had been turned off, it had simply coasted down the little hill and ghosted to a stop in front of the boathouse.

Three men got out; they all had guns, one carried a

machine gun. It was Ray, Harry, and that other guy, Millsomething.

She could picture his face, mean, deeply cut features and eyes that never smiled. They started walking toward the boathouse. Dolly's mind raced. They were here for Sol, they had to be here to kill Sol.

The cops. Surely they would stop the three killers. Silently she begged the cops to stop them. The cops didn't move. They just watched. How could she warn Sol? She tried to figure out what to do. She could scream, but it was too late. The men kept walking.

They were nearly at the door. She didn't understand. Sol? Where was her Sol? Suddenly two of the cops to her left lifted a spotlight and flipped it on. An instant later a second light exploded from behind a stack of crates lighting the three men up like strippers on a vaudeville stage. Then, nearly in unison, a chorus of voices shouted, "HANDS UP."

Men wearing Detroit police coats rushed at Harry, Ray and the other one. Dolly watched as Ray began to raise his gun, but someone shouted, "DON'T DO IT RAY! You'll be dead before you get a shot off."

Ray stared into the light. She could see him clearly. Ray squinted, held his hand up to shade his eyes. He was trying to see past the spotlights, trying to decide. The wet night air suddenly turned silent. Even the trucks on Jefferson had stopped their distant noise. The sea gulls, "rats with wings" Solly called them, had stopped their squawks. Out there, behind the lights the only sound was of men with guns. She watched Ray slowly raise his left arm and toss his Tommy gun with his right. A rush of feet and the three killers were swarmed with police officers.

The three men were slammed against the wall of the

boathouse. One yelled a curse, but she couldn't tell exactly what he said. A big man wearing a plain long coat handcuffed one of the prisoners then slapped him hard on the back of the head. She wasn't sure, but she thought it was Harry. Several police had the Purples by the arms, others held onto their coats. The big man pushed between the officers and put handcuffs on the other two.

She used to be afraid of them. She hated it when Sol took her to their clubs. Someone always got beat up or backjacked or shot or just something. Now...hell, now they looked like schoolboys she thought.

A patty wagon arrived. The three were marched, pushed, and shoved to the back of the wagon. One tripped and fell to his knees. The big man kicked him then pushed him to the patty wagon doors and swung them open.

Another cop tossed a crate on the ground. "Step up, get in and shut up," a voice said. All three climbed inside.

The police picked up the guns laying on the ground; one pointed at the car and another quickly ran over and got in. In a moment the car was driving away. She hadn't seen her Sol; maybe they hadn't found him. She began to hope.

Then two men opened the door of the boathouse. Sol, his hands cuffed at his waist, stepped into the light of the spotlights. A policeman, his hand under Sol's right arm walked with him to the back of the wagon. They made Sol climb in.

She wanted to scream; she wanted to stop them. She wanted to be rich and it had been right there, just one more hour and they would have been in Canada.

The truck backed up a few feet, stopped then lurched forward up the long two track driveway to the street. Sol was gone.

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Dolly couldn't believe what had happened. What was she going to do? Would the rest of the Purples come after her? She didn't know. They might think she helped Sol plan the job. They might think she knew where the money was. She peeked out of the tool shed window again. If the Purples found her she was dead, she knew that. The last of the cops were leaving.

Dolly sat down, she needed to think. They would come after her, she was sure of that. She made up her mind. She needed to leave. Not just this boatyard, she needed to leave the city. When the last of the police cars had rounded the corner Dolly slipped out of the tool shed and began to run. She didn't know where she was or where she was going, but she knew she couldn't stay here.

Chapter 10

The Collingwood Manor murder trial was big news. All of the Detroit dailies, the Chicago Tribune and the Cleveland Plain Dealer sent reporters. Wayne County Prosecutor Harry Toy himself argued the case.

Toy was anxious to perform well in front of the reporters and he needed a big win. It was only natural that he paid a visit to Sol Levine. They talked about prison. Sol didn't want to go to prison. Sol wasn't sure what he'd done that would send him to prison, but Toy explained what an "accessory" was.

To Sol it seemed like a cop's trick to convict him of something someone else did. Sol tried, but couldn't wrap his mind around the concept. All he knew was that it meant prison. Prison meant the Purples would find him, someone, sometime would kill him.

Toy offered to drop all charges if Sol talked. Sol wasn't sure what he would say, a detail which didn't seem to bother the prosecutor. Toy would tell him what he would say. It seemed like a good deal and less than two months after the arrests Sol was sitting on the witness stand delivering his lines perfectly.

The trial held no mystery. He did exactly what Harry had warned he would. Each day his suit was brought to his cell, after dressing Sol was marched to a waiting police car and soon he was on the stand. Sol was at his very best. He spilled his guts; he talked, he sang, his description of a bullet passing "just under my nose" was a masterpiece. Sol did everything but a reenactment.

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Prosecutor Toy was very pleased.

Through the entire ordeal one thing kept spinning around Sol's simple mind. He would play the scene in the boat salon over and over. He could hear the bundles of twenties as they fell from the bag on to the table; he could taste the caramels, his fingers held the cigarettes.

Sol knew. He knew where four hundred thousand dollars was hidden. All he needed was an eight hour head start. He could be down to the boatyard, on that boat and gone in no time. He could still take Dolly and to hell with her if she didn't want to come. They could still make it to Toronto.

He just had to get out of this damned jail!

The Purples did their best too. Every bookmaking operation in the city was assessed a two dollar a day "betting service" fee, each bootlegger was similarly assessed. The best lawyers in town were approached. Cops and court clerks were "talked" to.

The money didn't help. The best lawyers couldn't change the facts. No one could get to the jury and the Judge was incorruptible.

Judge Van Zile was all too aware that witnesses might suddenly change their story, that evidence could suddenly disappear and prosecutors have mysterious car accidents.

He pushed the trial hard. It only took a week before the case went to the jury. It didn't stay there long. After an hour-and-a-half of deliberations, the verdict was in. All three were guilty. A week later Judge Van Zile handed down his sentence.

Less than a month after the trial a specially assigned Pullman train arrived at the ornate Michigan Central Station. The three men, waddling in wrist and ankle chains were put

aboard.

Waiting to board they noticed the armed guards and armored plates on the engine and few cars. Moments later the train was headed for Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The ride was an express. They only stopped for fuel. Nothing and no one was going to stop the train from moving. In less than a day the Purples began serving life without parole at the maximum security Marquette Branch Prison.

The remaining Purples were livid. They hadn't been able to spring their brothers in crime, but they could get to Sol. And ol' Solly would pay.

The departure of Bernstein, Milberg and Keywell for the long winters of northern Michigan provided little comfort for Sol Levine. He had run the streets long enough to know the score. There were contracts out on him. Small time hoods and professionals alike all were looking for Sol.

He'd been warned by Detroit's finest, there was nothing they could do. This wasn't going to pass, Sol knew the remaining members of the Purple Gang would not rest while he was alive.

Sol had to figure a way to stay alive long enough to get to that boat, preferably, but not necessarily with Dolly at his side.

The danger was too much. In a surprise move Sol simply refused to leave police headquarters. He decided to live on the second floor. The cops weren't happy, but sympathized with poor Sol. Prosecutor Toy knew Sol would be killed too. But Toy wasn't going to turn the building into a boarding house.

It took a bit of effort, but Toy soon finalized a plan to rid Detroit of one more hoodlum. He offered Sol a deal. Leave the country now, under police escort or some charge

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would appear which would send poor Sol to Marquette.

It was a bitter pill. It meant he'd have to sneak back in a year or so to find the boat. But what choice did he have? Sol took the deal. He was sure Dolly would understand.

In a few weeks Sol was put on a ship destined for France. Toy's plan was a good one; it could have worked. But, the French weren't stupid either. They refused to let Sol get off the boat. On his own, penniless and without prospects Sol tried to go to Ireland.

The Irish and their British overseers weren't any more stupid than the French. After two years Sol ended up headed back to the United States. He died a bum on the streets of New York never having made it back to Detroit.

Chapter 11

Traverse City Michigan is located at the base of the twin forks of Traverse Bay. Begun as a shipping and lumber town it soon became a favorite haunt of a young Earnest Hemingway. The town passed through the lumber industry period, floundered for some years then found its footing when the Northern Michigan Asylum for the Insane was established in 1885. By the time the old Victorian hospital closed in 1989 the city's economy had moved on to tourism. The rest of the State, and the tawny folks of Detroit and Chicago, had discovered the jewel at base of the bay. Now, multimillion dollar homes lined the Peninsula between the forks of the Bay. A single vacant lot with a bit of water and sand and enough room to install a septic tank sold for more money than most people in "TC", as the town is called by the locals, earn in a lifetime.

Just northwest of TC is Leelanau County. Home to vineyards, orchards and the Sleeping Bear dunes. Here life is still a bit slower, though Hollywood types have begun paying outrageous sums for the privilege of losing money in the wine business. Here a few locals hang on. Here too, was the old family cherry farm where Herman James Crenshaw and his sister Sherrie spent the occasional long weekend and traditional mid-August week when their parents packed them up and shipped them off to the grandparents.

By the time Sherrie entered college, both of their grandparents had passed away. Mom and Dad quickly decided that if they were going to be empty nesters then the nest was going to move. Six months later they'd sold their

suburban house, bought out the bank's interest on the orchard and traded a hectic life in the city for the lakes and clean air of "up north" Michigan.

Jim had been in the middle of an Air Force career when the bad news arrived; he'd lost both his parents to a drunk driver. The will split the property in two, which meant that neither could live at the orchard. Jim, in exchange for a lifetime supply of cherries, gave his half of the property to his sister and resumed his Air Force career.

It was a bad move financially, but a good one morally, and Jim never regretted it. Sherrie and her husband Gerry immediately quit their successful but stressful careers in Chicago and moved north. Sherrie oversaw the restoration and expansion of the traditional field stone farmhouse and now proudly showed her home to various tourist magazine photographers as the essence of a northern Michigan home.

Gerry hadn't been idle during the home renovation. When not working on the house he renovated the cherry shed, added more processing space, and a small office. He reskinned and reroofed the barn then put new roofs on the smaller outbuildings. When the buildings were complete the two turned their attention to expanding and updating the orchards. Now, several years later they managed a very successful cherry farming business, supplying cherries to packinghouses and individual customers on-line.

It was this expansion of the farm that now had Gerry's attention. He and Sherrie had recently completed the purchase of an additional twenty acres of land, which bordered their orchard's southern edge. The property had been sitting idle for many years and was a bit of a mystery.

The property had been sold by the state, not by a bank or land company. While that did occasionally happen,

what really seemed odd was the lack of property records associated with the purchase. Each county in the state maintained a map showing ownership of every square inch of the county, the map, called a 'plot map' was periodically updated. Somehow, the twenty acres in question were missing from the plot map. A title search showed a dead man as the owner as of 1961.

Sherrie couldn't remember having ever seen anyone on the property when she had vacationed at "the farm" as a child. Being landlocked the property hadn't generated a great deal of interest when it went up for auction. It was a fairly simple thing for Sherrie and Gerry to make the purchase. Included on the property was a barn made of brick. The barn was of unknown age.

The lawyer who had represented the state had been unable to supply any information on the building or its contents and had insisted the purchase be made "as-is." Gerry half expected to find a barn full of cow manure.

The purchase complete, Gerry was now assessing the property, intending to lay out a new orchard. He referred to several pages of a soils report he held in one hand. In his other hand he held a soil pH test probe. He took several pH samples and began to walk the length of the orchard. Gerry only went ten feet and stopped. The task was impossible. Before he could begin, Gerry had to satisfy both his own, and Sherrie's, curiosity.

Here Gerry ran into his first problem with the new property. Try as he might Gerry could not find a way into the barn. For the third time he walked around the building. It was long, and somewhat narrow. There were three doors, all firmly locked. A set of, what appeared to be, steel garage doors on the narrower south side and an individual door

centered on both the west and east sides. Each door was constructed so that the hinge was on the inside of the building. Gerry found this a bit odd. Around the top of the walls, just below the tin roof and protected from the rain by the overhanging rafters were eyebrow windows. Spaced two feet apart each window appeared to be painted over with black paint. The paint was thin in some areas. Gerry wasn't sure, but he thought he saw heavy gauge wire mesh against the inside of a few of the windows.

Returning to the large garage doors Gerry examined the inset door lock. It was clearly a heavy gauge, solid deadbolt. Gerry thought that a bit odd for a barn. The lock stood out in a round circle of reddish orange. Even if he had the key he doubted the rusted lock mechanism would work.

Disgusted, Gerry returned to his pick-up truck and bounced across the back of the field, opened a gate, passed into the edge of his orchard, found the lane between trees and eventually stopped at his cherry processing shed.

Sherrie walked to the side of the truck and leaned in the open window. After a quick kiss she asked, "Well, did we make a good deal? Or, are we the proud owners of a toxic waste site?"

Gerry grinned. "The land is beautiful. I'm not finished confirming all the soil tests, but the reports are perfect. We're going to have a nice orchard in there honey. But, that damn building. I can't find a way in!"

Sherrie's eyes lit up and she started to laugh. "This is cool! It's like we're on a game show."

"With Bob Barker asking what's behind Door Number One?" Gerry laughed.

He parked the truck and they walked to the house. "I think the only way in is to cut a big hole into those doors."

Sherrie looked puzzled. “Why can’t you just break a window and climb in?” she said as the screen door banged behind them.

“Can’t. The windows are all at the top of the wall and, you won’t believe this, but I think there’s heavy wire mesh on the inside.” Gerry walked to the kitchen sink and began to wash his hands. Then, without turning around said, “Jim has an acetylene torch doesn’t he?”

“I have no idea...and don’t even think about using my clean towels to dry your hands. Use a paper towel.”

Gerry grinned, “Yes ma’am.”

Sherrie picked up her cell phone. “We haven’t talked to Jim and Eve in a few weeks. Let’s give ‘em a call.”

Chapter 12

Jim stood at the kitchen counter and listened to the phone message. “Hi guys, it’s your loving sister Sherrieeee...” He grinned, this woman was always excited.

“We need a favor pleeease. We just closed the deal on the twenty acres next to us with that big garage on it. If we were to cook steaks and make a nice cherry pie would you bring your acetylene torch up this weekend? We can’t seem to get into that stupid garage and Gerry figures the only way is to cut a hole in one of the doors. Let me know, love ya. Bye”

Jim considered himself to be fairly practical, and cutting holes in doors didn't sound quite right. Surely there had to be a way to get in that old building without destroying expensive doors. In any case a trip north was a good deal this time of year. Eve would be excited to visit family, and he and Gerry could get in a little trout fishing. Jim went to the barn to load his torch on the wagon.

Eve’s arrival home from work was always an event. Carrying a minimum of two large cloth bags, she would burst into the kitchen, simultaneously calling “I’m hoommmme.” Then, before Jim answered she would recite the details of her day, beginning with the funniest thing a child had said or done and ending with the stupidest thing said or done by a member of the school’s administration or a fellow teacher. The entire process interrupted by their beagle Molly’s excited barks and demands for attention.

Jim looked forward to this ritual, he rarely listened in great detail; it was the enthusiasm with which it was told that he loved. Tonight’s ceremony was no different, and to Jim it

proved once again that all was right with his world.

Eve was surprised and pleased that Sherrie had phoned and immediately returned the call. No one outside the family could tell the two were not immediate sisters, they were “like two peas in a pod” Jim’s mother used to say. Twenty minutes of one trying to out talk the other and somehow arrangements were made.

Friday was the beginning of the Easter break. Thursday night Eve left the school as quickly as she could. She hurried home and, upon entering the kitchen announced they would stop at “Cops and Donuts” in Clare for dinner. A quick change of her clothes and she was backing the Jeep up to the trailer almost before Jim had the barn doors open.

Ten minutes later, the Jeep Grand Cherokee, hitched to a small trailer loaded with an industrial sized acetylene torch and attendant tanks, along with two bikes and two kayaks slowly moved down a hundred-yard long driveway.

On the folded down back seat lay a large pillow where Molly sat calmly watching the scenery slide past. She would be curled up and snoring before they came to the end of the long drive. Molly would miss most of the three and a half hour trip north.

Chapter 13

Detroit and the Detroit River business soon returned to normal. The city forgot the Collingwood murders. Harry Keywell, Irving Milberg and Ray Bernstein were gone and quickly faded from memory. Sol Levin soon became the funny story of a scared rabbit who refused to leave the police station. Sol was quickly forgotten by everyone involved with or who had ever heard of the 'Collingwood Manor Massacre.' Everyone, that is, except Dolly Eleanor Grongoski.

Dolly slipped out of the city and moved to Michigan's west coast and the gritty little port town of Muskegon. The town's small waterfront was jammed with ships, large and small, making the run up and down the lake to Chicago. Some of the bigger ones even crossed to Milwaukee or north to Green Bay.

The sailors got hungry and Dolly landed a job at the Dockside Café. It wasn't the kind of café she had seen in the movies. Muskegon was not Paris or New York. The Dockside's walls were nearly as grimy as the coal fired ships whose crews it served.

Behind the building a small pigpen housed three large sows and their piglets. A large boar was kept in a separate pen to the side. The pen provided about half of the ham and bacon for the café and a good deal of ambiance.

Dolly worked four days a week. Five if she could talk Mel, the cheap bastard owner, into giving her the extra day. She made a buck fifty a day plus tips, which she split with the other waitresses and the cook. Sometimes she talked Mel into paying her to slop out the pigpen and that gave her an extra

seventy-five cents. She'd been raised on a farm and didn't mind the work, but she hated pigs.

The sows could be mean when they had piglets and the boars could be mean just because. And she thought about what Sol had told her. She thought about having a nice place to live and her hair done by a real woman's hairdresser. And the clothes. She dreamed about the clothes. She thought about warm soft coats, pretty dresses, the fanciest hats and real silk stockings. Mostly, Dolly thought about how close she'd come to being rich.

They had taken the bags into the boathouse and put them on the boat. Sol had said that they were all packed and would leave as soon as he finished fueling the boat.

But she hadn't seen the money, and of course they were packed, she had her two bags and Sol wasn't taking anything.

He'd asked her to get him some razor blades while he worked. She thought about that. He didn't need razor blades. Had he been trying to get her away from the boat?

Maybe he had intended to leave Dolly? But why had he driven all over Detroit to find her? Had he changed his mind? Sol had sent her away for some reason she was sure of it. What was it?

The money. Where was the money? Did he leave while she was gone, get the money and come back? But they were going to leave as soon as she returned from the market.

Dolly mulled the thing over and over. It had only taken her about eight minutes to walk to Jefferson Avenue, turn right and go another block. A store stood on the corner there. Then eight minutes back. If she added five minutes at the store...there was no way Sol could drive someplace and be back with the money. And...he said they were all packed.

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She thought about that. She thought about it every day, every time she filled a coffee cup, every time someone only left a nickel for a tip or grabbed her bottom or when her boss told her to take the diner's scrapes out to the pigs in back. They were all packed.

That November, as Sol was being loaded on a boat for Europe, Dolly got her first break in months. She was pouring coffee for a sailor on the railroad ferry.

Suddenly a man burst into the diner and yelled, "Lowel, you lazy sonofabitch, if you don't get your shit loaded now you ain't going to have time when we leave." The sailor didn't move, he just smiled and said, "Hoss, I loaded my gear last night."

Dolly didn't hear the rest of the conversation. The sailor's words hit her like a ton of bricks. It came to her. Just like that. It was so simple; she should have seen it months ago. The money was already in the boat.

Sol had picked her up about one o'clock. He said he'd been looking for her for two hours. They'd gone to Gosse Pointe, then Hamtramck for dinner. They'd stopped at her apartment to pack, drove to his apartment and gone to the boathouse. She'd gone to the market, but Sol hadn't gone anywhere. He didn't have time.

Sol was doing what he said he was doing, putting gas in the boat. He really did just want some razor blades. He must have loaded the money before he picked her up. She'd known it all along, only now she understood it. Sol had loaded it before he came to see her that day.

The boat. She needed to find the boat.

The world was beginning to change. The artisan was being replaced by the big company. The small car companies in and around Detroit were being consolidated. Willie Durant

and Charles Stewart Mott were building the biggest company the world had ever seen. Reliant Motor Truck, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Cadillac all had been taken over, it was just business.

It was just the same in the world of crime. The Purples were just as mean and vicious, but there were fewer of them. No new leaders had been groomed to replace Ray Bernstein or Harry Keywell. Gradually leadership fell to Abe Axler and Eddie Fletcher. Abe and Eddie were loyal soldiers, but they weren't very smart. They began to make mistakes. The loss of leadership, manpower and influence at City Hall was like blood in the water to a Great White shark. The competition began to move in and the Purples were helpless to stop it.

The biggest threat came from the Italians. The Eastside gang was tied into the New York Mafia and Capone's Chicago gang. Slowly they were becoming the dominant gang in Detroit. "Black" Bill Tocco had a special hate for the Purples and pressured them across the city. Muscling in on their gambling operations, prostitution and most of all the alcohol smuggling routes. Imports were down, hijackings were up and 'runners', the boys who delivered the booze to the speakeasies and beer gardens across the city were being killed, disappearing or quitting.

Dolly didn't know of the turmoil in the Detroit underworld that winter. She spent her time thinking about the boat. She'd have to find it. She was convinced Sol had hidden the money on the big Chris-Craft, she just needed time alone with the boat and she'd find it. But that was the issue wasn't it? How to find the boat. Dolly didn't know Detroit. She'd only been to the river once before that night and in their panic and the darkness she certainly hadn't kept track of

street names. All Dolly knew was that the boat was in a small boathouse on the Detroit river.

She got another break in mid-December. A truck driver stopped at the diner for breakfast before loading onto one of the ferries crossing the lake. He ate his breakfast, drank his coffee and paid his bill and drove down to the docks. Dolly cleaned up his table and found a packet of maps laying on the seat where the man had been sitting.

She picked the packet up and stuffed it down deep in her apron pocket. Then Dolly poured coffee and waited tables for the rest of the day, the packet totally forgotten.

That evening Dolly took off her shoes and her apron, counted her tips and began to think about making dinner. Suddenly she remembered the packet. Untying the string and unfolding the leather case she found road maps of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

There was also a detailed street map of Detroit. Dolly stared at this map for several minutes. This was important, this could help her. Dolly wasn't exactly sure why this was important, but the feeling was more than a suspicion, it was a certainty. She had never seen a map and didn't know how to use one, but she wasn't stupid and she could read. She would figure this out.

She cleared the small table which served as kitchen counter, dining room table, ironing board, and occasionally living room coffee table, and spread the map out flat. Carefully she examined the thing. Slowly she began to understand what she was looking at. After a while it began to make sense. It was just a big picture of the city.

Eventually she found the address of the old boardinghouse she had lived in. She placed her finger on the map. She closed her eyes and imagined walking down the

steps, turning left and walking to the corner grocery. She traced her finger along the map. Her finger came to a street intersection. If she was doing this right it would be Bagley Street. She searched for the street name. Bagley Street, she'd done it.

Excited, she began finding other places she knew from her year in the city. She found the library, the museum, the streets where she knew the clubs. Then the importance of the map came to her. She could find the boathouse.

Dolly quickly found the Detroit River and began to trace the streets that ran parallel to the river. She remembered a park and the city water works. She'd run past both. Her finger ran along the river. Jefferson. She had run along Jefferson Avenue. Past the water works and, there it was, Memorial Park. That meant the dirt road was somewhere...here. She stabbed the map with her finger.

That night Dolly lay in her bed deep in thought. She could find the boathouse. She was sure the money was in the boat, Sol must have put it on board before he came to get her. She had been in the boat and hadn't seen any bundles just sitting out; he must have hidden it. It wouldn't make any sense to just leave it laying out. Lots of boats were stopped by the Customs police; Solly must have anticipated that. He hid it. The only real question was how well had he hidden it?

It had been months; the Purples must have used the boat since. Surely they'd found the money by now. But, maybe not. Could she really afford to not look? She could spend the rest of her life feeding slop to pigs and waiting tables, the same things when she thought about it. Or, she could take a chance on being rich.

Chapter 14

The first morning of any visit to Sherrie and Gerry's farm was, by tradition and function, an exercise in choreographed confusion. The first person awake made coffee then, inevitably took a seat on the covered porch.

As each member of the foursome made their way to the porch the topic of breakfast gradually took over. It always ended with Jim and Gerry frying eggs, pancakes and bacon, while Sherry retrieved a selection of homemade cherry, apple and berry jams from her pantry. Eve produced a maple syrup from a friend's farm, and then she and Sherrie selected a tablecloth for the antique round eagle claw table, which sat in an equally rounded portion of the covered porch.

When all was ready the four descended on the food. The next hour was spent in a near continuous dull roar as each talked over the other and all laughed at the same stories which had been told countless times before. Jim enjoyed this noise more than anything he could think of. This was his definition of wealth. Finally, he asked Gerry why they had to cut a hole in a barn door. It seemed rather odd.

"Odd? That doesn't begin to describe this place," replied Gerry. "The building is made of brick, not terribly unusual, but still a little different. The windows are all eyebrow windows. They're all at the top of the walls."

"Are you sure this thing is a barn?" Jim interrupted.

"I mean, that sounds like a mechanics shop or something like that."

"You're probably right." Gerry took a sip of his coffee and continued, "There's a pair of steel garage type

doors on the south end and both sides have normal entry doors. Which is also a little odd, normally the long doors go on the long side of a building. The thing is that all those doors are made of heavy gauge steel. No door windows and the hinges are all on the inside. I'm assuming the doors open to the inside, but I can't be certain of anything with this place. I'm telling ya Jim, it's a weird deal."

"Are the windows big enough to get through if we can get that high?" Jim asked.

"Sure, but I think they're lined with a steel mesh on the back side. And, they're all twelve feet off the ground. We can't get a torch up that high and cut the mesh."

"We thought about our picking equipment. That could get us high enough, but we don't think they will hold the weight of your torch," Sherry added.

"You've got a front loader on your tractor don't you?" Eve asked.

"Sure, but that's not..." Gerry stopped for a moment.

"We use the bucket to put up Christmas lights," Jim said with a smile.

"That's a great idea! Let's get going," Gerry stood.

"No, lets not," Sherrie cried.

"You guys get the towels, we'll clear the table," Eve confirmed.

In moments the dishwasher was humming, the fry pans were being scrubbed and put away and the counters cleaned.

Gerry's tractor was equipped with a hydraulically operated front loader; an arm on each side of the tractor held a V shaped bucket approximately six feet long and three feet wide. Two levers mounted next to the driver operated the loader. One moved the two arms up and down; the second

tilted the V shaped bucket forward and backward.

Sherrie found some moving blankets and packing material in the processing shed while Gerry grabbed two coils of rope. They quickly made a cushioned bed for the tanks of oxygen and acydlene and then secured them in the bucket with chains. Satisfied the tanks would not roll or fall out of the bucket Jim, Eve and Sherrie piled into the pickup truck. Gerry climbed to the tractor seat and soon they were on the way through the orchard to the mysterious block building on the new property. Arriving at the building they surveyed the exterior for several minutes.

“This thing is a regular Fort Knox!” Eve exclaimed. All nodded in general agreement.

“I’ve always wondered about this place,” Jim said. “Did the title search tell you anything?”

“Its been owned by the state for the past thirty years. Apparently, the state got it because the property tax wasn’t being paid. When the title was transferred it seems that whatever office is responsible for government property was never notified. The lawyer told us the State of Michigan didn’t know it owned this land. No one knew about the property until an alert auditor found it during an inspection of the Secretary of State’s records. This popped up,” Gerry explained.

“How did the county not collect property taxes?” asked Eve.

“That’s a mystery to me too,” Gerry answered. “When someone figures out how to pull that trick off let me know.”

“From what we could tell this building isn’t on any tax role. And, the property owner in the sixties was a guy named William Tocco. Apparently he died and this piece

wasn't processed with the estate," Sherrie offered.

"Well, it's a nice piece of property," Jim said glancing around.

They all admired the view for a moment, then Jim said, "You ready to do this? Pick the window you want to replace."

They settled on a spot where the ground looked firm, Gerry squared the tractor to the building and tilted the loader so that the point of the V sat on the ground. Jim climbed in and knelt on one knee. When he was ready he signaled Gerry to lift the bucket. Slowly the bucket reached its highest point, Jim was just below the window. Gerry then tilted the bucket forward a few inches leaning the bucket against the barn's wall.

Taking a pipe wrench in his right hand, and covering his face with his left, Jim reached out and smashed the wrench into the window. Glass cascaded into the bucket. Behind the painted glass was a heavy wire mesh. Jim set to work on the remaining glass, removing it from the steel frame. After several minutes the frame was clean. He then lit the torch and began to cut the heavy-duty wire mesh, a few minutes later it fell away to the floor of the building.

Gerry lowered the bucket and Eve and Sherrie took a ladder from the back of the pickup and placed it in the bucket. Eve then climbed in next to Jim and the bucket was raised once more. Jim secured a rope to the top of the ladder while Eve tied the other end to the bucket. Satisfied with their knots, Jim and Eve pushed the ladder through the window then gradually lowered it to the ground.

"Ready?" Eve asked.

"Almost," Jim replied.

He finished tying a bowline knot, slipped the end of

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the rope around his chest and passed it through the knot.

“Loop it there,” he pointed.

Eve quickly looped the line around the hydraulic arm, then snubbed the line as Jim squeezed through the window, hung from the windowsill, and found the top of the ladder with his toes. “Okay, give me some slack,” he called.

Chapter 15

Dolly was determined to find the boat. Unfortunately, she was two hundred miles from where ever that boat was hidden. She needed to eat and the only way she could do that was to work at the diner. But, she needed time off too. Her boss was the problem. Mel rarely scheduled any of the diner's crew for more than five days in a week, but he never gave them two days off in a row.

That would not work for Dolly; she set about convincing him she needed her days off together to visit a sick aunt. Mel didn't believe it. He was convinced she had a boyfriend somewhere. He was certain she would be married or pregnant soon. At first, he didn't want her to leave and considered never scheduling her days together.

But Mel had a surprising soft spot for young girls in love. He pretended to buy the story about a sick aunt and soon Dolly had two days off a week, back to back.

It was perfect. As soon as her shift finished Dolly would hurry back to her room and pack a small handbag. It was a long ride from Muskegon and there was always the fear that someone from the Purples would recognize her, but Dolly was determined.

She stayed away from anyone or anyplace she had ever known or visited. She dyed her hair and tried to blend in with the other people walking the streets. She did her best to keep out of sight. She was certain that no one recognized her.

It took two trips and a lot of walking to find the boathouse. Finally, on a Tuesday morning, just before lunch,

she found the corner store. From there it was easy.

She retraced her steps from all those months ago to the tool shed. And there it was, the boathouse where they captured her Solly.

That first morning she had nearly been caught. She hadn't expected the Purples to post a guard on the boathouse. She had nearly blundered into him. Only the sound of a passing barge had distracted the lookout. But, she hadn't been caught and now she would bide her time and find that money.

And so it went. Dolly would travel to the boathouse almost every week. Carefully she would slip into the same shed and sit on the same stool from which she had watched Sol arrested. She would spend every minute she could in that damned shed. On the second day, about five o'clock she would slip out of the tool shed, creep low behind the wooden crates and race away through the alley between the warehouses. An all night train ride later and she was back home in Muskegon.

As summer began to turn to fall, Dolly began to plan for the coming winter. In late August she began knitting a heavy sweater, a new hat and heavy mittens. She visited the church and found a good winter coat in the charity box. She knit two pairs of wool socks and then, when no one was looking, stole a pair of men's winter boots. She was ready.

That winter she visited the Detroit riverfront whenever she could get away from the diner. She felt like she was hunting deer with her father. She would sneak into the tool shed and sit and watch the boathouse for hours. It was guarded night and day. She couldn't be sure the big cruiser was still inside.

She didn't see the boat at all that winter. But her

father had taught her how to hunt. She'd sat on a deer stand many, many cold mornings waiting for a big buck. She knew you could go an entire season without seeing a deer, but they were there. She was certain the boat was there too.

Dolly didn't have a plan, but she had plenty of time to think. She thought about how to search the boat once she made it inside the boathouse. Where she would look, how she would search. She thought about tools and saws and drills. But the more she thought about it the more she realized how long it would take to really search the boat.

Finally, her mind was made up. Searching the boat made no sense. Why not do what she and Sol had intended? She decided to steal the boat and go to Canada; just like Sol had planned.

She began to study boats. She visited the library and read everything she could about boats. She especially liked the magazines, they showed lots of pictures of Chris-Craft boats. She found one picture that included the controls and she familiarized herself with them all. It didn't look hard, she had driven the neighbor's tractor; she could do this. She talked to the sailors about boats. She asked questions about motors and steering. She showed them pictures of powerboats and asked about the controls.

Dolly figured it out.

One evening Dolly was in the town library reading about ships and sailing when the question of navigation began to nag. She'd not thought about navigation, Sol was going to do that. Dolly went to the card file and quickly found several books about maritime navigation. It was complicated, it took a lot of figuring and she felt as if she'd hit a stone wall. She wasn't good at math and didn't know the names of any of the stars except the North Star. Dolly began

to doubt she would ever understand latitudes and longitudes and sextants and all the other things associated with navigating a ship at sea.

A week later Dolly was pouring coffee for one of the sailors and decided to ask for help.

“Honey, I don't use none of those tricks. Hell, if I want to go to Chicago I go south until I run into it. If I want to go to Milwaukee I go west until I git there. Ain't that hard.”

Dolly thought about his answer the rest of the day. It made sense. She would be in a river or a lake, not an ocean. There's only two ways to go on a river, up stream or down. And on a lake, well, even a big lake like Erie, she would eventually come to the other side. Dolly had renewed hope.

One morning Dolly was sitting in the tool shed watching the comings and goings of the riverfront. The gang's boathouse guard sat on a stool, leaning back against the building's wall, and smoked a cigarette. Dolly watched the boats on the river. They always stayed between the colored buoys. That was it! There was a road out there defined by the colored buoys.

Back at the diner she tested this theory with the sailors. One, a sailor named Brian took the time to explain to her about the colored buoys. “Red, right, returning” is the saying he told her, “keep the red buoy on your right when in the river or the channel, it's where the deep water is.” Seemed simple enough. She kept repeating it to herself. “Red, right, returning.”

She found an atlas of the United States at the library and poured over its maps. After a while she decided that if she kept in the middle of the river, between the buoys and headed south, turned left when she got to Lake Erie and went

east until she was low on gas that should get her out of danger. She'd get gas wherever she ended up and continue until she got to Buffalo or Toronto whichever came first. She decided to buy a road map of Canada, at least she'd know where Toronto was.

There was only one problem. If she was going to steal the damn thing she had to know where it was. She hadn't seen it since the morning they arrested Sol and the others. She spent every minute she could in the tool shed. Sometimes, she spent the entire night in the boathouse, shivering and watching. Maybe it wasn't there; maybe she was a fool. She didn't know, but she was determined to get a look inside the building.

Finally, in late April she got her break. Mel had given Dolly three days off in a row in the middle of the week. She wasn't happy about it, the extra day off was a day without pay, she needed the money. However, it did give her an extra day to watch the boathouse.

That Thursday afternoon four cars - two Chryslers, a Ford and a Packard, arrived within minutes of each other. Several men got out and stood around the empty lot talking and smoking. One man from each of the vehicles went inside the boathouse.

Ten minutes later she heard the low rumble of a big engine. Not sure what the sound was she tried find a hole in the shed wall that would let her see further south. It was no good. Then, like an evil monster crawling out of the swamp, the cruiser crept north up the river, swung it's bow toward the shore and slid into the darkness of the boathouse.

A man came to the door and waved his arm.

Immediately all the "extras" standing around their cars dashed inside. In less than a minute they were back, arms

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full of cases of whiskey, gin, and vodka. Dolly watched it all.

As the last Chrysler drove away she scanned the area around the boathouse intently. No one. They hadn't left a guard. She waited; maybe he was inside. Five minutes passed. She eased herself through the tool shed's door, moved right to the edge of the water and knelt behind a stack of wooden crates. She carefully studied the boathouse and the shadows beyond. The building looked deserted. Moving around the crates she put two large barrels between her objective and herself, then crawled to the barrels. Peering between them she again studied the boathouse. No one was there. Now what? Inhaling deeply Dolly stood. Slowly she walked toward the boathouse, then veered to the water's edge. She knelt and picked up a stone, just an innocent girl at the river edge. She threw the stone into the river. Casually she glanced around; she was alone.

Chapter 16

Eddie Fletcher sat in the back seat of his Packard Light Eight. "That was a good run Fred," Eddie said. "We'll get the rest tonight."

"The boys said they didn't see anyone else on the water. Joey thought someone was tailin' em in Windsor. They got eyes over there Eddie, it ain't gettin' easier,"

Fred's eye's flicked between the rear view mirror, his boss' face and the street ahead.

The Tocco gang had hit two of the last five runs. Hijackings were up, the Purple's had competition and Eddie didn't like it. He reached for his cigarette case; it wasn't in his jacket pocket. He looked on the seat, then the floor. He felt his pants for his Zippo. Not there.

"Fred, turn around." Eddie said to the driver. "I lost my damn cigarette case and lighter on the boat."

Fred did as he was told and the new Packard did a U turn in the middle of Woodward Avenue. Ten minutes later Fred parked the car on the hardpack dirt outside the boathouse and Eddie got out. He took several steps and then stopped. A loud rumble erupted from inside. Shock then anger washed over Eddie. He screamed, "What the hell...!" and watched the big Chris-Craft slowly back out of the boathouse.

Eddie ran to the waters edge. The cruiser was already sixty feet into the middle of the river. Slowly the bow came round into the current as the driver increased the power.

"You son of a bitch!" Eddie yelled as he pulled his pistol from a jacket pocket. A short man in a heavy coat

stood at the boat's controls. The boat began to pick up speed and Eddie fired four quick shots with no apparent effect. The rumble turned to a roar, the stern of the boat erupted in white foam and the bow lifted. It seemed to pause, like the moment just before a sprinter explodes from the blocks. Then the Chris-Craft shot forward and sped south down the Detroit River.

Dolly let out a scream of joy, she had done it. She pulled her hat off and let her hair blow in the wind as the boat's motor settled into a content throb. She'd seen a man on the shore, he'd pointed a gun at the boat. She was certain he'd fired, she'd seen the gun flash. But she hadn't heard any gun shots and she certainly hadn't been hit by any bullets.

She headed toward Fighting Island. In a few minutes the island flew past and the passage at Stony Island appeared. The wind made her eyes water and the bouncing of the boat scared her, but she had never, not once in her life, felt this alive. She screamed at the wind, she punched the air.

Slowly Dolly began to relax. The adrenaline rush she'd experienced at the boathouse began to subside. She pulled an atlas from under her coat. Holding the atlas with her left hand and the steering wheel with her right she found Bois Blanc Island. Squinting through the sun and the spray she studied the river. Moments later she spotted the island. Lake Erie wasn't much further, after that Canada.

After his last shot Eddie knew he'd been had. He sprinted to the car, yelling at Fred. "Tocco! The SOB took the boat!" By the time Eddie reached the car Fred had the trunk open. Eddie grabbed a Thompson submachine gun and ran back to the river's edge. Too late, the big boat was too far away. Eddie was furious. Swearing, he ran back to the car yelling, "The Wyandotte boathouse! I'm gonna kill him! I

swear I'm gonna kill him.”

When Fred's confusion showed Eddie shoved the machine gun in his gut and yelled, “MOVE! Now, you fool!” Fred suddenly understood the urgency of his boss' demand and ran to the driver's door. Spraying gravel and dirt, the Packard shot up the hill, bounced over the curb and rocketed out of the side street onto Jefferson.

Fred dodged traffic and ignored traffic signals. Cops walking the beat blew whistles but no one gave chase. In twenty minutes they swung into a small riverside lot next to a large warehouse. Both Fred and Eddie ran from the car to a ramshackle boathouse standing some twenty yards to the south of the warehouse. Five minutes later a Gar Wood Runabout Model 30 launched from the boathouse.

Eddie turned south. He pushed the throttle as far forward as it would go. The little boat instantly began to skim across the water, the occasional wave nearly bouncing the two men overboard. He shot between Grosse Ile and Stoney Island and searched for his target. He tried to decide if the boat was south or north of him; he wasn't sure so he kept racing south. After ten minutes he thought he saw the big cruiser in the distance. He pointed, told Fred to get his Thompson ready and adjusted his course a bit to the east.

Dolly spotted the small speedster just as she turned east into the lake. It was coming fast and she knew; she knew deep in her heart that it was the Purples. They weren't going to let her get away. People like her never got away. Her father had died when their one horse had kicked him in the head. Try as he might he'd never been able to get off that damned, broken down, good for nothing farm. He was even buried there.

There really was no fighting it. She wasn't going to get

away from her hopeless life either. She screamed, she cried, she pushed the throttle forward so hard the metal bent and her hand and arm ached. Still the little runabout was catching her. She edged closer to the Canadian shore. The road map showed a small inlet to an area called Big Creek. If she could get in there she might have a chance, it would be dark soon. Maybe she could hide the boat in the cattails and bulrush.

The runabout was closer, the daylight was fading, she thought she saw the inlet and turned toward it. The Chris-Craft sped toward the narrow gap. Suddenly a loud bang, the boat slammed to a stop and Dolly was thrown forward onto the dash. It took a moment to clear her head and then to her horror she realized she'd missed the inlet, she'd hit a rock. She could hear water flooding into the front of the boat. The little runabout was fast approaching. The shore was just a hundred yards away, maybe she could swim for it.

Dolly ran forward and jumped into the cold water. A second later she shook off the cold and started swimming. It was a valiant attempt, but it wasn't going to succeed. The men in the boat saw her. They followed her, staying just ten yards away, not saying anything. It didn't take long. Exhausted she began to tread water, then she floated and tried to rest. The runabout idled closer. Eddie was a little surprised the thief was a woman, but business was business. Fred stood, took careful aim and fired the Thompson. Dolly's body slowly sank to the bottom.

Chapter 17

Jim balanced on the top step of the ladder. “Hold tight,” he called to Eve. Then, arms outstretched hard against the wall he balanced on one foot and lowered the other to the next step of the ladder. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead. The still heat of the building was oppressive. Some light leaked through the blacked-out windows, but it wasn’t enough to see anything more than vague shadows. He lowered himself one more step and stopped.

“You alright?” Eve called.

“Yeah.”

Jim considered. Then, after a moment he climbed back to the top step, “Eve?”

She leaned in the window. “You forgot something didn’t you?”

“Hon, ya got a flashlight?”

Eve thought a moment then said, “You climbed all the way up here and forgot a flashlight?”

“Yeah, well, I thought more light would come through the broken window.”

Eve grinned. “Good thing I know you.” She said and, reaching behind her back she removed a flashlight she had stuffed into her belt in anticipation of this very request.

“Thanks hon! Oh, I’ll need some tools too.”

“How did you expect to open the rusted shut doors without tools?”

“Eve, I was just going to look around, then I’d get the tool I needed. It’s a process, very well thought out and methodical. Don’t you see?” Jim did his best to look

innocent.

“Oh brother, it's getting deep and I'm ten feet above the ground!” Eve grinned back, turned and shouted:

“Sherrie...in the truck. Jim needs the tool box.”

Sherrie was back in a moment. Gerry lowered the bucket and Sherrie handed the box to Eve then climbed into the loader. “I want to see what's going on,” she said as she surveyed the inside of her metal steed.

Both women knelt on one knee, grabbed the sides of the steel box and gave Gerry a thumbs-up. He gently touched the control lever, raised the tractor arms, and set the box against the wall. Then Gerry watched as the toolbox was pushed through the open window and lowered to Jim.

A moment later Gerry was staring at the backsides of two women who had their heads thrust inside a broken window. He grinned, took his cell phone from his pocket and snapped a picture. “This will be a great Christmas card,” he said to no one in particular.

Jim stuffed the flashlight in a pocket and gripped the toolbox with one hand. Using the other hand he slowly climbed down the ladder, put the tools on the floor and scanned the building with the light. Immediately Eve and Sherrie let out a gasp. The flashlight illuminated a large wooden cabin cruiser.

“Are you guys seeing this?” Jim shouted as he moved closer to the boat. He flicked the beam of light across the craft as he walked. Finding a dusty metal name plate Jim used his free hand to wipe off a layer of dirt. Slowly the words ‘Chris-Craft Express Commuter’ emerged. He stepped back and tried to get some perspective on the large boat. The darkness was too much. He couldn't take it all in.

Jim slowly walked around the boat. Rounding the

bow of the craft his flashlight found a small stack of crates against the block wall. The crates were covered with dirt and he couldn't tell their contents. Jim suppressed his curiosity and began looking for the building's doors. Spotting the main doors he was about to pick up the toolbox when his light swept the bow of the cruiser. A hole had been smashed into the left forward area. The damage was about four feet long and two feet wide. It appeared to be fairly deep and Jim wondered at the story he would never hear.

Focusing on the immediate task Jim recovered the toolbox and went to the large garage doors on the end of the building. After a short examination he found two spring loaded latches, one secured the top of the door to the frame and the other at the bottom secured the door to the building's concrete floor pad. A chain extended from the top and Jim used it to release the latch. A bar extended up from the floor latch and he pulled it up and swung it out of the way, releasing that latch. Jim then pushed on the doors, but only succeeded in flexing them outward a few inches. He pulled on the doors and didn't do much better.

Examining the door handle he found a steel cylindrical lock. It looked completely rusted and Jim was certain it was unusable. Taking a flat head screwdriver and a hammer from the box he was able to knock the cover off the rusted lock. This revealed an inner steel cover plate and a portion of the lock's bolt as it extended into the lock plate on the opposite door. The bolt was covered with rust. This gave Jim an idea.

Removing the tray from the top of the toolbox he began searching through the larger items beneath. Eventually Jim selected a large ball peen hammer and a cold chisel. The chisel, designed for metal, not wood, would cut the rusty

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deadbolt. Placing the blade of the chisel against the bolt he set to work. Two sharp blows with the hammer and the bolt snapped. With a smile Jim pulled the doors open and the first daylight to enter the strange block building in years flooded past.

Chapter 18

Abe Axler and Eddie Fletcher stood in the wheelhouse of a large towboat. It was just after midnight and the current leaders of the Purples were staring hard into the night. Phil Bronski, the boat's owner, hadn't found a lot of work for his boat in the past two years. The heavily built craft had been designed for pushing barges and other workboats of various types around the construction sites of the new Detroit-Windsor tunnel.

That work was gone now. The tunnel, nearly a mile long, had taken just two years to build and had finished in November 1930, a year ahead of schedule. A fact that both the Purples and Phil bemoaned.

As the work had dried up Phil had been forced to work harder and harder to find fewer and fewer customers for his boat. Gradually he began to find the bottom of a bottle. Now, his tab with the Purples dangerously high, he was thankful for any chance to work some of the crushing debt off. Even if that chance involved a small invasion of Canada.

"It should be in here someplace." Eddie said.

"Ready your light," Phil called to his deck hand.

The boat coasted gently into the night. "How far are we from shore?" Abe asked.

"I'd guess about a hundred forty, maybe a hundred fifty yards. See the edge of the beach there?" Phil pointed.

Only a few brave stars shown in the black sky, but to Phil the night was bright. To Abe and Eddie it was dark as a coal mine.

BETRAYAL IN THE LOUVRE

“There!” Phil called and pointed. “Light to port, just off the bow. You got it?”

In answer a deckhand had shined the spotlight in a zigzag across the water, finally resting on the Chris-Craft. The boat sat with its bow above its stern and pitched on its left side twenty degrees. The surface of the lake strained to reach the stern rail but fell short by a foot. They quickly dropped anchor and tied to the wreck.

Few words were spoken. One member of Phil’s crew jumped to the stranded cruiser while another passed tools, a large tarp, and a long, wide-mouthed hose. Then they attached a line to the stern cleats and prepared to pull the boat off the rock that had doomed Dolly Grongoski.

When all was in readiness for the pull the tarp was lowered into the water and pulled under the boat with lines affixed to each side. These lines were then tied off on the boat rails so the tarp hung under the boat like a sling.

A voice from inside the Chris-Craft called, “Start the pump!” Another man, stationed at the bow of the towboat gave a sharp tug on a pull cord starting a small gasoline engine. The engine caught and soon a rhythmic clatter filled the air. An instant later the discharge hose of the pump filled, gushed water and settled into a steady stream.

Once Phil was satisfied the pump was working he backed the towboat’s engines. The Chris-Craft slowly slid off the rock. The stern nearly swamped, the bow bobbed up and down but the cruiser eventually settled bow down in the cold water. Immediately water tried to rush into the hole caused by the rock. They were ready for this. Two men ran from line to line and pulled the tarp tight against the hull. The pump caused a slight decrease in water pressure inside the hull, the natural displacement of the craft caused pressure outside the

boat and pushed the tarp into the hole. Immediately the gash was sealed.

The pump did its job and slowly emptied the flooded craft. Gradually the bow raised itself out of the water and the boat leveled. Both Abe and Eddie smiled and shook Phil's hand. "Impressive Phil," Eddie said with a grin.

"We ain't done until she's back in her happy little boathouse," Phil replied. He knew that his job wasn't done and they had a long way to go across a sometimes angry lake. More importantly, Phil knew that seeing the morning sun wasn't a sure bet until the Chris-Craft was back in the boathouse.

"Yeah, well...this is a good start ol' buddy," Abe replied.

They began the long tow back to the boathouse. Forty minutes later Abe leaned over to Phil and said, "Put in at Grosse Ile." Phil started to question the change, thought better of it and kept his thoughts to himself. Slowly reducing the throttle Phil gradually approached the haul-out bank.

Several men directed the Chris-Craft into position using a combination of ropes made fast to the bow and stern. Finally, the big cruiser was in place and a pair of lines were directed forward to a matching set of winches, began to tighten. Gently the boat was pulled forward until it came to rest on a wooden boat cradle. The cradle sat on a steel wheeled dolly, which rode on a pair of rails. A large engine turned a drum and a cable attached to the dolly pulled tight. Gradually the dolly was pulled up a shallow incline until the Chris-Craft sat in a cradle on dry land.

Phil was impressed with how efficient the operation had gone, but this was not terribly new or unusual to a man who had spent his life around boats and boatyards. Then the

unusual did occur. A large diesel powered crane roared to life and came rumbling toward the Chris-Craft. As it approached, a truck with an oversized flatbed trailer drove into position next to the crane. Men swarmed around the Chris-Craft. Six-inch wide straps were strung from side to side and over the top, culminating at a single universal hook, which was then attached to the crane's lift cable.

Moments later the cruiser lifted from its cradle, swung through the air and was gently lowered to a similar cradle on the back of the truck.

Abe Axler and Eddie Fletcher had left the towboat and were supervising the loading of the Chris-Craft from next to the cab of the truck. As the last cable was being secured to the side of the truck trailer Eddie grabbed the driver's arm.

"Forget what you've been told. I want you to take it to the orchard. One of the boys will have the equipment. Change the paint, I want the top blue. Change the name; call it..." He stopped, searched the yard for Axler then called, "Hey Abe! What the hell was that horse's name. You know, the Derby winner?"

Axler flicked his cigarette. "Eddie, how the hell could you forget a name like Burgoo King?"

"Have 'em paint Burgoo King on the back. Then put it in the shed and lock it up. We'll get back to it next spring." The driver nodded.

"I don't want anyone seeing it go in the shed, understand? That means you do all this at night. In fact, you drive only at night. Take the back roads, no state roads. You got all that?" Eddie jabbed a finger into the driver's chest. The man's eyes widened slightly.

"Yeah. Night, no state roads, backroads only. I got it Eddie."

“Good, don’t screw this up.” Eddie pointed and lifted his thumb, the universal sign of a gun. “Or...” His thumb flexed forward.

“Really, I got it Eddie, no worries.”

Eddie grinned and slapped the man on the back.

“Good” he said.

Several minutes later Abe and Eddie watched the truck leave the boatyard. “We all good here?” Abe asked.

“Yeah.”

“What about Phil?” Abe glanced in the direction of the towboat.

Fletcher thought for a moment, then decided, “He’s okay. Who knows, maybe we’ll need him again.”

“I’ll tell him.” Abe said, then turned and walked back to the towboat. “Phil” Abe yelled the name as he jumped from the dock to the boat.

“Yea...Yeah?” Phil could feel his chest and throat tightening.

“Phil, you know you owe us a good amount of money? We’ve extended a lot of credit.”

“Ah geeze Abe. Times is hard. I’ll pay you back as soon as I can, I promise I will.” Phil could feel his bladder convulse and wondered if he was going to wet his pants before they killed him.

“I don’t like debt Phil.” Abe stopped. The silence nearly crushed Phil as he shifted his weight from foot to foot. Abe was enjoying Phil’s discomfort. “Phil, I don’t like debt, yours or mine. And if I didn’t pay you for tonight’s work, I’d be in debt to you right?”

“No, no Abe. Really, consider it a favor, really.”

Phil could feel the warmth on the inside of his leg.

“Phil, I don’t do favors and I don’t want favors. You

understand Phil?"

"Yeah, yeah, sure Abe. But I was just considering this to be among friends."

"I don't have friends Phil." Abe studied the man. Several seconds passed, Phil began to shake. Urine began to run down his leg. Finally Abe said, "Well Phil, tell you what. You did us a favor tonight. We'll call it even."

Phil couldn't believe his ears. He could feel his heart pounding. He thought about his wet leg, then he smiled, and then he slumped back against the rail. "Thanks Abe. Thanks. Any time I can do something for you boys you just let ol' Phil know." His relief was palatable. Phil knew he could just as easily have ended the night as carp food.

Axler and Eddie Fletcher didn't get back to the Chris-Craft the next spring. The raging war among the Italian Mafia spilled into Detroit. The East Side Gang became the Detroit Partnership. As time slipped by Charles "Lucky" Luciano took over the New York organization and the Mafia war ended. Luciano formed 'La Cosa Nostra' from the nation's twenty-four most powerful Mafia crime families. The Partnership was one of them. The organization was too big, too powerful for the Purples or anyone else. In November, Abe and Eddie were taken for a ride. Their bodies were found in a car on an isolated country road. It was just business.

Chapter 19

Cole David Prestcott was, by any definition of the word, an exception. A man that, by breeding, intellect and disposition should have been a penniless leech on society was, from all appearances, doing exceptionally well, thank you very much.

Cole had barely graduated from Petoskey High School, located in the town of the same name on northern Michigan's west coast. No one was sure which was worse, his academics or behavior. Fortunately, Cole did have one talent. He was a hockey phenom. His grace, power and skill on the ice led to several scholarship offers by the top hockey schools in the upper mid-west. Eventually he chose Ferris State College, a school which always threaten a deep run in the national championship tournament.

School would have been a disaster had it not been for hockey. Coach Guy Boucher had strict rules about study hours and curfews. Woe be it to any player that ignored those rules. Suspension from the team was never considered. Extra hours on the ice, skating endlessly from one end to the other, stick in hand, puck constantly moving was.

The formula worked. Cole completed his Bachelor's degree at Ferris State College. Sadly, his size and a shoulder injury his senior year, kept him from the pro hockey game. Lost and adrift he attempted a Masters Degree at Michigan State University, but too much drinking, too many girls and not enough studying quickly put an end to that idea. After a year with a small parts manufacturing firm in the auto town of Dearborn he decided to move back to Petoskey. Cole

struggled. Jobs in northern Michigan are few and far between. Life was hard and dollars scarce. Cole was reduced to pan-handling when he couldn't pick up some sort of day job.

An old proverb holds that “sometimes even a blind squirrel finds a nut” and Cole David Prestcott proved the validity of that observation. A man from down state hired Cole to paint his lake cabin. In payment, Cole was given a jet ski. This was perfect, it filled his unemployed summer days and all the girls wanted a ride. Soon family, friends and then complete strangers were asking if they could rent the machine.

Cole purchased three more and began renting the speedy watercraft to the tourists who swarmed northern Michigan's lakeside villages from Memorial Day to Labor Day. It didn't take long before the business was expanding, then doubling, and doubling again.

He had found a niche. He rented ski boats, then large party boats. Cole bought out the competing Mom and Pop boat rental businesses. Those that would not sell found one of Cole's ultra modern, rental “salons” being built next door. Soon the family boat rental shops faced cut-throat prices and newer inventory. Within ten years Cole dominated the boat rental business from Houton Lake north to Mackinaw Bridge.

Life was good. Cole married the stunningly beautiful Elaine Mary Johannsen from Grand Rapids. He had it all and Cole was not afraid to show it off. The irony of the thing was not lost on him. Born to a typical middle class family Cole had been a disappointment to his domineering father and never-to-be pleased mother. His older brother's law degree had only added to the pressure. Now, they could all go to hell. Cole was the one with the multimillion dollar house and

business.

Elaine and Cole were cut from the same cloth. They met on a Wednesday night at one of the many East Lansing pubs catering to college students. She was a premed student who had been bested by the first test in her second semester of organic chemistry. She had been sitting alone at a table full of girls, contemplating a grade point average fading into the “we’re sorry, but you do not meet our academic standards” range. He was back in his favorite bar after a day looking at used boats. Elaine was drowning her sorrows in mixed drinks with words like “Fuzzy, Sunset, Pink, and Lady” in their name. She had spent the better part of that afternoon in a tear filled discussion with her less than honest roommate. By nine that evening Elaine had decided that a “Mrs.” degree was much easier to obtain than an M.D. degree. Her roommate readily agreed since she was also a pre-med student and there were only a limited number of students carried forward each year.

Cole’s timing couldn’t have been better. It had not been Elaine’s pre-med brain that attracted Cole. Which was fair since it wasn't Cole's brain that attracted Elaine. What attracted Cole was the fact that Elaine was a twenty-one year old gymnast and football cheerleader with a figure that had caused more than one out-of-bounds player to momentarily forget the game.

What attracted Elaine was Cole’s larger than average wallet. Time passed. Cole got his trophy wife and Elaine got her “Mrs.” degree.

Cole joined the local Chamber of Commerce, the country club, the Rod and Gun Club and was often seen skiing, boating and playing on the lake with various friends and associates from the local business community. To them,

Cole was a great guy.

To his wife he was a no-good, two timing SOB, who had imprisoned her in the uncultured hinterlands of northern Michigan. But she liked the money, had no skills outside of the bedroom and at the age of thirty-four had never earned a paycheck from anyone other than her husband. Elaine was not a fan of working for a living, though she had worked full time in the business until recently. She still did some occasional work for the company, but only when it suited her. And, it suited her only when opportunity presented itself. Elaine couldn't conceive of working for a living, so she stayed with him, or so Cole thought. But then, Cole didn't think too hard about people.

Cole's ego matched the size of the Great Lakes. In a few years he sold his home in Petosky and moved several miles south to the shores of Lake Charlevoix. Here Cole let his imagination and wallet run wild. Cole intended that everyone cruising those bright blue waters knew that Cole Prestcott had hit the big time.

He purchased seven acres of land jutting into the western end of the lake near the little puddle known as Round Lake and the canal which led to Lake Michigan. He tore down the nine hundred square foot cabin that had occupied the lot for seventy years and replaced it with a modest home. Modest only in the sense that it wasn't as big as Oprah Winfrey's Chicago home.

Built to impress, using the most eco-friendly technology available, it was a six thousand square foot Northern Michigan white cedar log cabin with gray slate roofing. It held six bedrooms, three massive stone fireplaces, one each in the living room, master bedroom and in front of the full length bar in the "man cave" basement plus a game

room, family room and formal living room. The home was, of course, professionally decorated in a dual logging and maritime motif that captured the heritage of the area perfectly. The fact that Elaine could stay at home, yet go days without having to see Cole had a certain appeal to her.

The "cabin" was truly beautiful. Elaine hosted several dinner parties each year; parties meant more to cement their role in society's elite than to fraternize with friends or each other. And, while Cole loved the status conferred by the most elegant house on the lake, he was less impressed with "his cabin" than he was with his boathouse.

The boathouse was massive. Constructed of white cedar logs to match the "cabin" it was two stories high, its east and west sides lined with tinted glass allowing the morning and afternoon sun to filter in and illuminate the space for the entire day. The building, actually two buildings, one on each side of a waterway covered by a roof, had been built on concrete pillars sunk into the lakebed. The walls were festooned with oars, paddles and fishing poles of various types. On the south, or land side, of the structure the left and right corners contained an office and machine shop respectively. Protruding some forty feet into the lake, the northern end contained storage and machinery rooms. A deck, with four docks forming berths stretched around the building in the shape of the letter U. Boats entered through the chain driven overhead doors at the open end of the U and rested comfortably in the eight cozy berths. Cole had dredged the lake bottom and designed the structure to allow his deep draft sailboat to be housed between the berths, lengthwise in the U. The mast extended neatly through an opening in the ceiling like a straw in an ice cream float. The docks were where Cole kept his current favorite watercraft ready to exit

through the “port” as Cole called the north opening; “door” as his wife called it.

While the floor plan and dock system were impressive, what Cole really counted on to impress his visitors was the hoist system. Cole’s people could lift a boat out of the water at four berths and suspend it over the water underneath. This allowed another boat to slip into the now vacant dock space. Cole employed two “deck hands” in the boathouse to complete the maintenance on the various boats, most of which were wood and required a considerable amount of care. The deckhands also maintained the boathouse and moved the boats here and there on the hoist. At present, Cole’s boathouse held six different boats, not counting of course the numerous kayaks, canoes and wave runners which were suspended from the ceiling or placed on racks along the shore side wall. Cole had everything from a thirty-foot sailboat to an eight-foot canoe under one roof.

His pride and joy however was a perfectly restored 1922 Standard twenty-six foot Chris-Craft speedboat which he used to visit friends, lovers and the grandiosely named small town of Boyne City at the opposite end of the lake. Cole loved everything about the boat and was a fanatic Chris-Craft boat owner.

That Cole was an expert on the Chris-Craft line of boats came as no surprise to the few childhood friends he had, emphasis on the past tense. Cole had always viewed a Chris-Craft boat as the definition of luxury. Movie stars, captains of industry and the rich and famous of all brands had once made Chris-Craft the definitive mark of success.

As a young man Cole had decided he would someday own one and it would be perfect. As Cole’s fortunes had improved he’d never forgotten that dream. He had often

taken the Standard to owner's conventions and shows around the country. Cole even had an enclosed trailer specially made to transport the boat from his home to boat shows across the country. Should someone question a part, finish or color on the Standard, Cole immediately accessed his large library of original drawings, parts lists, brochures and manuals. Cole's boat was perfect and he made certain that everyone knew it.

Chapter 20

Cole had certainly found the proverbial nut. Unfortunately, he had never heard of another proverb which held that “pride goes before a fall.” The Horton Bay Boat Company was a small, family owned firm located on the opposite side of the lake. The Schultz family began building wooden canoes during the post war boom years of the 1950's. The company was perfectly positioned as the auto industry created a huge middle class anxious to play on the hundreds of lakes scattered across the state. Soon easily operated, family friendly ski boats from the Schultz factory could be found on every lake in the State.

Otto Schultz had run the company since his father died in 1977. Otto had two children, both boys. Sadly, the oldest was one of the few Americans killed during the first Gulf war. Otto's younger son eventually married and had two children of his own. A plane crash took the family several years ago. Now, Otto and his wife planned to move to the Florida Keys and never shovel snow again.

In time he approached Cole about purchasing the business. The price was steep, but the business was sound and the idea of building boats began to consume Cole. Unfortunately, Cole was already saddled with a large debt from the construction of his home and boathouse. He had mortgaged his business and carried a heavy debt on the property. It all added up to a bad risk. Cole was turned down by several banks; he could not swing the deal.

There are no secrets. It's a law of nature. People who truly knew Cole for what he was knew the state of Cole's

finances. But bankers are as greedy as any scavenger and Cole soon found the perfect partner.

Alan Wisecup's career had stalled. He had begun working for the bank as a teller while he completed a two-year degree in accounting at the local community college. Upon graduation he had been promoted, the first of several. But now Alan had reached the top of the ladder, the top for a community college graduate in any case. As deputy chief loan officer of the Traverse Savings and Investment Bank Alan's only hope of moving up was to earn tremendous returns on his portfolio...or for the old bastard he worked for to drop over dead. Alan was a lot of things but he wasn't a killer. The boat building business was the perfect deal. The company looked sound and Cole Precott seemed to know his stuff. Returns from this deal were a sure thing.

Alan began making 'adjustments' to the Horton Bay Boat Company books. The debt load wasn't so much, the property suddenly became 'prime waterfront' and the tooling was new and could be depreciated...again. The asking price was a steal.

Cole's assets also underwent a transformation. Miraculously his debt load was gone and stores were expected to continue growing at a double digit rate. Cole's house doubled in value and his boathouse became a company asset. Only a fool would turn down this loan.

Cole sold his boat rental business, bought the Horton Bay Boat Company and began building boats. Cole's luck held. While he carried an unusually large interest rate on his loan and his payments were extraordinary, his boat sales were able to generate the income to service the debt and keep Cole and Elaine living the lifestyle they had only dreamed of. Cole's mistresses were happy, Cole was happy and his wife,

he thought, was kept out of the loop.

For the next three years the business thrived. The day to day operations and main source of income for the company was a line of sport fishing and ski boats sold to auto workers and lower level executives from the southern part of the state, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The fishing boats were strong, powerful affairs intended for lake trout miles off shore in the Big Lakes. Sales were steady and profits good. The occasional luxury yacht order spiced things up a bit and the boat yard and repairs filled any gap in orders for boats. It was a good business.

Best of all Cole was able to dabble in Chris-Craft restorations. The work was slow, tedious and didn't make the company a lot of money, but Cole loved it. His restorations were gaining a national reputation as being as close to perfect as could be achieved.

Unfortunately, when a group of junior geniuses at the world's largest banks decided to sell each other bundles of worthless mortgages, the global economy shuttered and nearly collapsed. Michigan's auto industry did collapse, taking with it hundreds of small business owners and executives from the Big Three. Brokerage firms issued margin calls in numbers not seen since 1929. Millionaires across the country found they weren't millionaires anymore.

The first thing to go were the orders for sport fishing and ski boats as the middle class saw their homes collapse in value and their jobs disappear. The highly paid skilled tradesmen of the auto industry were laid off. Tool and die makers, electricians, machine operators of all types lost their middle class life style in a matter of weeks. Not far behind were the once powerful executives. The yacht construction and Chris-Craft restoration business collapsed.

The boat repair and storage business disappeared as people abandoned the boats and invited banks to foreclose on the loans. Within six months Cole's business was on the ropes.

He was forced to lay off nearly all of his employees, except of course his secretary. She of the 36C cups, meager ability to use a word processor and skills in the bedroom that were truly amazing. Soon Cole found himself with no staff, nothing to sell and debt threatening to swamp his otherwise perfect life.

He considered selling several of his prize boats. Then realized the money received from the boats would not approach their worth. Besides, if he could sell those boats he should be able to sell new boats. He couldn't; so that was that. The cabin and boathouse approached his debt, but he loathed the idea of losing his most prized possessions. And, with the economy as it was, there was little hope of getting full value from the property anyway.

Cole David Prestcott was, in his own words, screwed.

Chapter 21

Gerry had already lowered Sherrie and Eve to the ground and the three now stood at the garage doors. Sherrie and Eve quickly blocked the doors open using two large fieldstones and the four began their exploration of the building.

The boat appeared to be over thirty feet long. It was sitting on a wooden cradle with its bow toward the large double doors. To the right, between the boat and the wall stood a small stack of crates. To the left of the boat was a bit more space; against the exterior wall and running the length of the building was a wooden workbench. Tools, cans of nuts and bolts and assorted implements lay scattered on the bench. Three stools were positioned at random along the bench front.

Jim climbed the ladder, untied the rope and then moved the awkward beast to the side of the boat. Soon the four had scrambled up the side and were standing in the command console area of the boat. Dark green cushioned benches lined the exterior walls and a galley way door hid in the center under the mahogany framed windows. The cushions were clearly the home of numerous mice.

"This is nice, well...it was nice!" Sherrie gasped.

"We could have a heck of a party on this couldn't we?" Gerry said as he examined the settee.

Jim ran his hands along the smooth mahogany wood, admiring the workmanship then moved to the bridge deck. Eve quickly followed and spotted the ship's wheel.

"Check this out! Look how this thing is flat," she said

to Jim. The ship's wheel was mounted parallel with the floor on a chrome column extending to waist level. A matching chrome drum stood on the console in front of and to one side of the wheel. It held the throttle mechanism. Jim tried to move the wheel, it barely budged. "It's stuck," he said to the group.

"Might be how this thing ended up with a hole in the front," observed Sherrie.

Eve then opened the door to the interior cabin. Dark green cushions, again the home of mice and what appeared to be sleeping berths.

"Nice boat once, what a waste it's just sitting here," Jim sighed.

"I wonder how it got here? I don't ever recall any mention of this thing when we were kids," Sherrie looked at Jim.

"I don't either. But, come to think about it, I really didn't know anything about this place. Dad just didn't want us crossing the fence and for some reason that was one of his rules that I never broke. This place always had bad karma, ya know what I mean?" Jim explained.

"I DO! I always felt the same way. Denise and I used to pick blackberries all up and down that fence, but I never would go on the other side."

No one could come up with an adequate explanation of how this boat ended up ten miles from Lake Michigan and soon they resumed their exploration. It was a cabin cruiser, obviously a high-end antique boat. Except for the damaged bow section, years of dirt, lots of mice and what appeared to be a mummified raccoon it appeared to be in remarkably good shape.

"This thing has to be worth a lot of money," Jim

remarked.

“I’ll bet you’re right,” Gerry said. “We’ll have to get it appraised.

Jim and Gerry climbed down the ladder and inspected the damaged left front of the cruiser. Gerry ran his hand along the gash, examining the damage in detail. “Jim, this looks like someone ran the boat onto the rocks. Look, the front part of this impact point splintered the wood, caved in several boards and then dragged back along the bottom of the hull.”

Jim studied the marks where Gerry pointed. “I think you’re right. And look here, this board is pulled the opposite direction. This boat was pulled off the rocks.”

“Wonder why it didn’t sink?” Gerry mused.

Jim grabbed a stool from in front of the workbench and sat looking at the damaged bow. Finally, he said, “Maybe it was being supported or floated somehow. I’ve heard of sailors wrapping a sail over a hole as a plug. But, to be honest, I have no idea.”

“Well, somehow somebody did it,” Gerry murmured as he tried without success to reach inside the damaged bow. “I’m wondering if we can fix this.”

“If the keel is sound...if it's just this hole and refinishing the old wood, maybe some motor work, yeah, we could do it. Shouldn’t be too hard.” Jim said with an ironic grin. “Going to be expensive; that’s mahogany. And “it ain’t cheap” as they say.”

They finished exploring the boat then climbed down to the barn floor. Jim edged over to the tool bench and began exploring the antique tools and other objects.

Sherrie and Eve found a broom and began clearing dirt from the boat. Gerry began surveying the building. Eve

appeared at the toolbox, removed a claw hammer and disappeared again. A few moments later a sad moan came from behind the boat. "Awwww...Darn, I thought we had something!"

Walking around the boat Jim and Gerry found the women sitting on two crates, another two crates were open and they were attempting to open a third.

"These are all Canadian Whiskey crates, but they're all empty!" Sherrie explained.

"You were looking for cheap booze weren't you!"

Gerry pointed an accusatory finger at his wife and laughed.

The group examined the whiskey crates. "Lots of empty booze boxes," Gerry said. "I kind of like the old wooden crates, they're sort of interesting. Think we could use some around the house as decorations?"

"I don't know, but I'll bet we can get rid of these in a garage sale in about a minute," Sherrie observed.

Jim had become fixated on repairing the boat. "I'll bet I can fix this," he said to himself as he studied the damaged bow. A moment later he was climbing the ladder and reentering the cabin. After several minutes Jim yelled, "Hey Gerry, do me a favor and bring me the tool box and flashlight."

Gerry grabbed the box and soon found Jim on his hands and knees in the forward cabin of the craft, his head and shoulders wedged under a small settee.

"I should be able to access the bilge from somewhere around here. If I can, we should be able to see the frame and the backside of that impact point. We should be able to tell how big a deal it will be after seeing that."

Gerry agreed with the plan and the two began looking for the bilge access panels. Soon Jim found the latch and

pulled a three-foot long by two-foot wide piece of cabin sole from its frame. The two examined the inside of the bilge.

Gerry looked at Jim but didn't say anything.

"That's odd," Jim said.

"What is that?" Gerry asked.

There was no bilge. Instead, another panel lay just under the cabin sole they had removed. Gerry shined the flashlight along the new panel. Finally, he spotted four large screw heads, one at each corner. Jim grabbed a screwdriver and they removed the cover. Inside they found six crates of Canadian Whiskey, only these were full.

It took a moment for Eve and Sherrie to climb the ladder and join Jim and Gerry in the boat. Soon the four had removed the six cases to the floor of the barn.

"I think this is a smuggler's boat. That extra little storage area must have been added to the boat after it was built," Jim said while climbing back up the ladder.

"You really think so? That's too cool!" Sherrie said.

"Bet there's more," Eve added.

"What makes you say that?" Gerry asked.

"Well, if I'm going to all the trouble to outfit this big boat to smuggle booze I'm going to take a lot, not a little. And let's face it, six cases is really not that much." Eve seemed confident in her guess.

Jim studied Eve for a moment, "You're right, that makes sense, let's keep looking." It took nearly thirty minutes, but they found five more compartments. All were empty save one, and it held an additional four cases of hard liquor. By now there was no doubt, this was indeed a bootlegger's boat. They loaded the ten cases of liquor in the bed of Gerry's truck and returned to the barn.

Jim and Gerry climbed back into the boat and began

to examine the false bilge. "This might give us a better chance to see the inside framing," Jim said to Gerry. He stretched out on the floor. Then, on his back, Jim slowly inched his head and shoulders inside the large compartment hidden in the bilge. The walls were made of pine boards with several coats of shellac to seal them from bilge water. Using the flashlight Jim examined the compartment interior. Solid walls. He would have to drill a hole.

Gerry sat on the settee next to where Jim lay. "See anything?" he asked.

"Nothing, we're going to need a hole saw to get past these walls."

Chapter 22

As the nation's economy sputtered Cole's days had become increasingly empty. There simply wasn't anything to do in the shop. He did his best to hide it. Each morning began exactly the same. Elaine, the master of the cutting remark, made some comment about how she wanted to move to Grand Rapids, Chicago or Ann Arbor and he pretended there was something important to do at the office. There wasn't. There hadn't been anything to do there in months, but Cole felt like he had to keep up the appearance. Normally he slipped out of the office about noon. He'd head to the golf course or take a turn of the lake on one of his boats. Although lately he'd spent more time on a sailboat than a powerboat. The days of burning a hundred dollars of gas in an afternoon were coming to an end.

This morning however he did have an important meeting. His banker, Alan Wisecup, seemed to be very concerned about Cole's loan payments. To Cole, Wisecup was the perfect banker. He wasn't young. He was youngish. Which meant that he should have been promoted long ago. He hadn't been which meant he wasn't very good and he was still young enough to be stupid. He seemed to be a bit of, well, he seemed like a pencil pushing geek. Cole always had to work at not laughing outright at the man. Young, pencil pushing geeks were good, they could be pushed around.

Cole knew Wisecup was coming with bad news. The loans were coming due in less than ninety days. But, he was certain he could either talk the tight wad sonofabitch into an extension on the loan or simply refinance the entire thing.

This was important. The small amount of cash the business generated from boat repair, storage and commission sales wasn't covering the note. Hell, it barely covered his house payment and the payroll for the four remaining employees.

At ten o'clock sharp Alan Wisecup, deputy chief loan officer of the Traverse Savings and Investment Bank walked through the door of Prestcott Boats. The secretary, Donna LeGrange, directed him to a seat in the waiting area in front of her desk. A move which annoyed Mr. Wisecup; he'd expected to be shown right to Cole's office. Donna offered him water, not coffee, which also annoyed Wisecup. Then she disappeared into Cole's office.

Alan hated Cole Prestcott, hated him more than anyone or anything in this world. A year ago his promotion looked certain, now this loan made him look like a fool. Worse yet the auditors might find how he had altered the books and made this incompetent show horse look like the second coming of Warren Buffett.

He had tried to force Prestcott to pay his bills, but it hadn't happened. Now all he could hope for was to break even. He opened his briefcase, a shabby, tattered brown affair and removed a multicolored spreadsheet. The payment history was bad, Prestcott hadn't made a full payment in the past five months. The cash flow looked worse, maybe if he took the house there would be enough there. Wisecup grimaced. He had to get this loan off the books before some auditor came snooping around. The house, the boathouse, the boats, the company. Maybe he could save his job and stay out of prison.

"Cole baby, the banker is here" Donna was a constant source of amazement to Cole. She knew the situation; she

couldn't help but know the situation. She had to know the business was in trouble. She had watched the parking lot empty itself over the past six months. Hell, she'd typed the lay-off notices. Now there were only five cars if you counted Cole's, four if Jim Abbot rode with his brother. But she never mentioned it, never asked Cole about it and never treated a banker any better than dirt.

Cole could only shake his head in amazement; either the woman was as stupid as a post or she simply didn't care. In either case, Cole liked it.

Today he was feeling cocky, he'd played the scene over and over in his mind, and he was certain he knew how the conversation would go. He pulled Donna to his lap and kissed her. "It's alright honey, send him in," Cole whispered as he slipped his hand under her white polyester blouse and squeezed her right breast. She smiled and whispered, "Later sugar."

Cole then lifted a knee and tipped her onto her feet. "Okay, send him in; I've got a few minutes this morning."

Donna smiled, kissed Cole once more and returned to her desk. "Mr. Prestcott will see you in a moment," she said. It was always best to let them wait a little bit. She settled herself behind the desk, studied the banker for several moments, took a measured sip from her coffee cup, then picked up the phone. She listened intently to the silent line for a long moment then said, "He's ready now." Donna then escorted Wisecup into the office of her boss.

Returning to her seat she opened the bottom drawer and pulled out a Barbara Cartland novel. Her day had begun.

Chapter 23

Elaine Prestcott stepped out of the shower, pulled the towel from the heated towel rack and began to dry herself. Glancing at her reflection in the mirror she smiled. She liked what she saw. Her stomach was flat and firm. Her breasts large, but not overly large and, she was happy to see, they didn't sag. She half turned and looked over her shoulder. No sign of cellulite.

Elaine had a secret. Not the kind of secret that brought down empires or ruined the lives of politicians that couldn't keep their pants zipped, but a good one nevertheless. She knew exactly what the bank, or more accurately Alan Wisecup, was going to tell Cole. It really didn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out. There wasn't a snowball's chance in hell that any legitimate bank would refinance Cole. Even the corruptible bankers whom Cole did business with had their limits, and they'd reached them.

An afternoon in a Petoskey bed and breakfast had not only relieved her 'tensions' but also given her all the information she needed. Elaine had seen all the documents, all the finances of her husband's business, and decided that now was the time to move on with the rest of her life.

The years since her marriage to the cheating SOB had been good to Elaine. She had her figure, her hair fairly glowed in the sun and the lines around the corners of her eyes were only just starting to appear. In the beginning Elaine had held out hope that this self-arranged marriage could become, if not a loving one, at least a tolerable one. She had envisioned children whom she could love, and possibly she

would come to accept Cole as a lover. The years had proven her wrong. Happy, or at least acceptable, endings only happened in second hand bookstore novels. She would have to endure or get out.

Thinking about it now she could pinpoint the exact day she decided to screw the bastard. It was a Wednesday, just six weeks after they had returned from a honeymoon in Key West. A normal morning, a normal day. But by lunch she had stumbled into Cole's hidden world. He had an early meeting and had rushed out of the house. Elaine had been dressing for a Pilates class when Cole left. Passing the kitchen table on her way to the garage Elaine spotted Cole's cell phone. Deciding to take it to him she scooped the phone, along with her keys and makeup, into her purse and left the house.

When the class was over she gathered her things from her locker and walked to her Firebird. The cell phone buzzed just as she opened her purse to find her keys. It was the phone's voice mail notification. Elaine swiped her finger across the phone then pressed the keypad. The cell phone immediately launched into a recitation of the date, time and phone number from whence the voice mail sprang. Then a woman's voice, dripping with honey, asked Cole when he was coming by again, mentioned the 'shivers' his touch gave her and dinner. Elaine listened and knew exactly what had happened.

The previous night Cole had attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting, or so he had said. He had come home very late and taken a shower before coming to bed. It wasn't the first bed Cole had been in that night.

Elaine opened the car door and got in. She sat there for several minutes letting rage and hatred build. Then, she

began to relax. If she really thought about it she didn't love Cole anymore than he loved her. This was a marriage of convenience.

Elaine then began a cold, dispassionate assessment of her life. She had failed at her dream of entering medical school. She had left college to marry. In truth she had married for money so it only seemed logical that she start getting it.

She knew from the first time he'd brought her to Petoskey that his business would be a cash cow. Even while they had dated she could see the business growing. It seemed to double every week in those days. Now, her husband of less than two months was sleeping around. Elaine had thought about that, he was a cheater. In truth she'd known from the start that he would, and she knew he would never stop. She had no prospects and she could see the business making them very wealthy, very soon.

Twenty minutes later Elaine had her plan. She drove home, opened Cole's side of the garage and drove in. She then placed the cell phone behind the car's front tire, got back in the Firebird and backed out of the garage.

When Cole came home that evening he would find the crushed cell phone and think he'd dropped the little unit that morning. All evidence that Elaine had listened to his voicemail would be gone.

The next day Elaine waited until Cole left for work. Then she drove to the home of a woman she had met at one of the numerous socials she attended. The woman, fifty-six years old, had divorced her husband, a modestly successful housing developer, six years ago. She lived in a large, seventy-five year old field stone mansion overlooking Lake Michigan, was a board member of two country clubs, a prominent

member of the local Democratic Party and known for her philanthropic giving.

This intrigued Elaine. The woman had never worked a day in her life and the husband's business hadn't been that successful. Two hours later Elaine knew why the business hadn't shown great profits. She left the big house and drove the sixty miles south to Traverse City. There she opened a bank account and visited her new friend's financial advisor.

A month later Elaine put the second part of her plan into motion. Over coffee and a bowl of Cheerios she mentioned to Cole that staying home while he was at work was boring. She thought it would be much better if she worked with Cole everyday. He resisted the idea at first of course, she knew he would. But she patiently explained what a bookkeeper would cost the company. Besides, she had the skills and they might as well keep the money in the family. Put that way, Cole couldn't resist.

Elaine quickly took over all the company accounting and purchasing. On every purchase Elaine padded the price, adding a few dollars to small purchases, a few hundred to larger ones. She then skimmed the excess from the company books and sent the money to Mr. David McFain of Growth Financial Management on Front Street in downtown Traverse City.

Mr. McFain, of course, used only the back door of the building, he being the same disbarred attorney who once held the position of budget director for the Detroit mayor's office. McFain had been convicted of violating Rule 10 of the Commodities and Exchange Act, trading based on insider information. Eighteen months of cutting the grass and raking leaves with Wall Street's best at Maxwell Air Force Base's minimum security prison earned David a Master's degree in

stock manipulation. McFain was now very good at avoiding detection, and still had his Rolodex. Elaine was very pleased with the results he was able to provide.

Chapter 24

Dinner at the orchard consisted of leftovers, beer, and chips. The barn, the boat, and the whiskey were the sole topics of conversation. Gerry and Sherrie couldn't decide if they were suddenly the proud owners of an antique treasure or in need of a dump truck and several cans of termite spray. Jim and Eve were excited for them and curious about the boat.

"We've got a mystery here," Jim said, sipping a bottle of beer from one of the local microbreweries.

Gerry nodded his head. "That's for sure. I'd sure like to know more about that building. I don't know anything about the property other than what the attorney said about it not being on the tax records.

And the boat! That is one cool boat. We should probably find out where the boat came from...and do Sherrie and I own the boat since it came with the building? I think we do but don't really know the law."

Sherrie handed him a cantaloupe and a large knife.

"I can't imagine you don't," Eve offered. "But I think you have two big issues. First, ownership of the boat. It seems logical that you own the boat, you own the land, and it was part of the deal, wasn't it? It should be yours.

Second, and I think your bigger issue, is the whiskey. It must be illegal to have all that booze? There aren't any stamps on the bottles. I'm betting it's moonshine."

"I think you're right hon, the boat is probably theirs. You guys better check with a lawyer though, which of course will cost you an arm and a leg. But still better safe than sorry.

You'd hate to spend money fixing the thing up, getting it to the water and then have someone come along and claim it's theirs. And, you'd really be in it if you sold the damn thing, then someone could come after you," Jim said.

"Ahhh...I hate lawyers, they charge so much for everything and act like they're doing you a favor! The regular guy can't afford a lawyer anymore," Gerry moaned.

"Suck it up buddy. It's the way of the world," Jim grinned. Turning to Eve he said, "Bet that isn't moonshine. Those labels all look professionally printed. All the bottles are the same, all have the same logos in raised glass. I'm going to guess that those are legit Canadian Whiskey bottles, but they were smuggled in from Canada. No U.S. taxes were paid on those bottles."

"Prohibition era booze?" Sherrie asked.

"Woo...we've got Al Capone stuff here!"

"Sure, why not?" Jim replied. "Hidden booze, no tax stamps, the boat is from the right era, you've got to admit it all fits. It could be the real deal."

Sherrie glanced at Eve, "You think he's serious?"

"He thinks he's Sam Spade but I must admit, he's more often right than wrong," Eve laughed.

Jim thought a moment then said. "Sherrie I never saw anyone over there when Dad and I hunted that side of the farm. Did you ever see anyone there?"

Sherrie traced her fingertip around the lip of her wine glass. "No I didn't. And I spent a lot of summer afternoons on that side of the orchard. We picked berries there and I played over there with my friends."

"I'll bet that boat has been there all these years," Jim said.

"I wonder who we contact about illegal booze?"

Gerry said.

“Gotta be the FBI,” Eve replied. “Prohibition was a national thing, it was in the Constitution, and the tax thing has to be the federal government. Is there an FBI office in Traverse City?”

Gerry shrugged. “I don’t know, probably not. Might be one in Lansing or Detroit, but I can’t imagine one in TC. I’ll go into town tomorrow and find out. I’ll stop by the police station and talk it over with them. Should be interesting, I’ll bet they’ve never handled bootlegger booze before!”

Conversation lagged as everyone tried to imagine the story behind the Chris-Craft in the barn. Finally Jim said, “It’s probably putting the cart before the horse, but I’d like to get a professional to look at the boat. It would be nice if it could be repaired. Maybe the engine can be started. But we may have to overhaul it. That cruiser would make a nice summer toy on the bay. The sooner we get a handle on the damages and the worth the sooner I can fix it up for you.”

“For us buddy, we’re going to run that boat together,” Gerry laughed. “I’ll check with the lawyer I had working on the land title about boat ownership on Monday. And, I’ll see if the state guy has any more information on the property, the barn and the boat.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jim said. “Know anyone that really knows boats?”

Gerry thought a minute, “Well, yeah, I do. I met a guy at a Chamber meeting awhile ago. He repaired boats or sold boats, something like that. From what we talked about the guy is really into antique boats. I’ve got his card someplace. I’ll find it, then let’s give him a call.”

Chapter 25

Cole sat alone in his study. On the walls were pictures of Michigan lighthouses, a picture of the Edmond Fitzgerald plowing through rough waters, its destiny not yet decided, and a marine chart of Lake Michigan. All were illuminated by subtle wrought iron picture lights. It was a beautiful room. Cole didn't see any of it. He focused on the two bottles of scotch sitting in the middle of his desk.

It hadn't gone like he'd expected; not even close. Wisecup had taken his seat, skipped any pretense of friendliness, opened a briefcase and began unloading a stack of papers. When the stack reached four inches he began reading parts of each document to Cole.

He spent several minuets on each and every one. He pointed to every place Cole had signed his own name, he pointed to dates, he highlighted past due payments, amortization schedules, current cash flow sheets, business expenditures and current billings. Then he went back to the sheet with payment dates, but no payment. After each and every paper the bastard would look Cole square in the eye and ask him if he understood what he'd just been told. Of course he understood, he wasn't stupid, but where was the money going to come from? No one was buying boats; the whole damn state was laid off or about to be laid off or had been laid off. They'd been out of work for so long they'd forgotten what a boat even was.

Wisecup then opened a laptop and showed Cole pictures of similar buildings and what they were selling for. He could sell this building for X. He could sell that building

for Y and the boats for Z. But X plus Y plus Z wasn't enough.

Cole pushed for an extension on the loan, but Wisecup wouldn't talk about that. Cole tried to refinance the entire load for a higher interest rate. Wisecup refused that. He kept putting that damned spreadsheet under Cole's nose. He kept telling Cole that the small amount of cash the business generated from boat repair, storage and commission sales wouldn't cover the current note. It barely covered the payroll and his house payment. There was no way it could cover a new note.

Cole argued. It did no good. He cursed. It did no good. He tried to reason. It seemed as if Wisecup enjoyed his pain. Finally, when there were no new forms, no spreadsheets showing the same debt in some different way, when all the contracts and papers had been examined, each and every one presented with just the right twist to pull the maximum humiliation from Cole's gut, only then did Wisecup stop. He told Cole that unless a substantial payment was made and soon it would all come crashing down, he'd lose the company, the house, the boats, everything.

Slowly, ever so slowly, Cole reached out for the scotch. Gradually the two bottles in front of him merged into one. He fastened both hands around the bottle, found his glass and recharged. Raising his glass Cole muttered, "To renting God-damned runabouts again." He slammed the scotch back in one quick, sloppy, shirt soaking gulp.

Chapter 26

In any war sacrifices are made for the greater good. At least that's what Elaine told herself as she inserted the key into a heavily tarnished brass lock face. Information, especially important, sensitive information, didn't come cheap. Margaretha Zelle, better known as Mata Hari, learned that. Still, Margaretha had been on to something, there were ways to learn things that didn't cost money.

The lock secured the entrance door to room number six of the Torch Lake Waterfront Motel. The motel, built sometime in the early 1960s, had been family owned for three generations.

Elaine entered the room, pulled open the window and, had her purpose here not been so utterly boring, would have enjoyed the beachfront view. Turning back to the room she dismissed the starving artist painting over the bed. Elaine studied the room with a practiced eye. It was apparent this generation of hotel ownership didn't believe in fresh paint or, for that matter, carpet. The floor was dark linoleum. Probably installed by the original builder so that housekeeping could easily sweep up the beach sand tracked in by waves of vacationers.

She walked to the bathroom, ran the shower, the water was hot; flushed the toilet, it didn't back up, then returned to the main room. The TV worked; sixty-five channels including the Adult Network. Turning to the bed, Elaine lifted the bedspread and stripped the sheets back to reveal the mattress. Then she inspected the mattress, sheets and pillows for bedbugs. Satisfied she remade the bed, picked

up the ice bucket and went to the ice machine. Five minutes later she sat in the room's one chair watching "Ellen," a bottle of Southern Comfort soaking in the ice and a six pack of Coke waiting.

Thirty minutes later, and fifteen minutes early, a gentle rap sounded from the door. Elaine took a large gulp of her second drink, steeled herself and opened the door. Alan Wisecup immediately pushed into the room, and, without closing the door wrapped his arms around her. He kissed her fully, his tongue exploring her mouth, his hand pulling her skirt up at the same time.

"Close the damned door first you idiot," Elaine hissed, pushing him away. The door slammed shut. Wisecup's shoulders slumped. "I'm just glad to see you," he whispered.

Elaine let disgust and triumph and pity wash over her for a moment then forced a smile. "I know, baby," she cooed. "We just can't let people see us and the door was open. Where did you park?"

"At the Quick Mart like you told me," Alan said.

Elaine turned and walked to the ice bucket. The idiot walked a mile to get here she thought and smiled. It was a her own little game. "Would you like a drink?" she asked. She poured two fingers into a glass, mixed in the Coke, deliberately skipped the ice and handed the tumbler to Alan. Then she refilled her own. She didn't make any move in his direction. "Why don't you take a shower baby, you're all sweaty."

Alan smiled and kicked off his shoes. He pulled his tie off then stripped his shirt and tee shirt off. Elaine sat and watched this strip tease and smiled. Alan began to dance; slow, jerky, uncoordinated and smiled back.

"You're an idiot," she said and grinned. Alan took it

as an expression of endearment. Elaine meant it for what it was.

He stripped off his pants and jockey shorts then headed to the shower, still wearing his black socks. Elaine watched him walk away. Alan was pale, almost white. His shoulders weren't girlish, but no one would call him broad chested or big shouldered. He was thin, Alan liked to run 10K races in the summer. He was in reasonably good shape, though not muscular. But most of all Alan was a nerd.

Ten minutes later Elaine sat on the edge of the bed and watched Alan towel himself off. "How are things at the bank?" she asked.

"Oh, you know, nothing much. Mark is still a jerk. The guy thinks he's God's gift ya know. Yesterday Debbie brought in donuts. I was out front for ten minutes. When I came back he'd eaten three. I didn't even get one."

She didn't care. "You met with Cole?"

"Yeah. Same old stuff." He said as he hung his towel on the rack.

Elaine unbuttoned her blouse, hung it up then slipped her skirt off.

"How does it look?" she asked.

"I really shouldn't talk about it. But I'll tell you this, you might want to get separate bank accounts."

"Could he really be this stupid?" she thought. "So it's that bad huh?" she said.

"Oh yeah, it's bad." Alan returned to the bed and began to stroke her hair.

Still in her thong and bra she kissed Alan. "I'll pour us another drink." Elaine picked up his glass and crossed the room. She poured more Southern Comfort into Alan's glass, then slipped a little blue pill from between her breasts and

dropped it into the drink. “Might as well enjoy the evening,” she thought. She picked up the TV remote, turned on the Adult Network and handed the drink to Alan.

She took off her bra and pushed the glass to his lips. “Drink up baby.”

Alan did as he was told, his eyes darting between the TV screen and Elaine as she slowly pulled off her thong. He drained his glass in one big gulp and laid back on the bed. “C'mer honey,” he coughed.

Elaine straddled his ankles, took him in her hand and bent forward. Then, her hair brushing Alan's thigh she said “Tell me more about your meeting with Cole.”