

**“YOU BETTER RUN.  
HE’S GOT A GUN!”**



**BY**

**JA.M.ES PAUL ELLISON**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To

All Law Enforcement

For

Protecting us from harm.

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# *CHAPTER 1*

Tom Whitman is a private investigator. He is a white male, thirty-five years old; stands six-two, weighs a fit 220 pounds, has blue eyes, and dark wavy hair.

Tom has been a private investigator for two-years. Before that, he was a police officer for ten years in his hometown of Tupelo, Mississippi.

His private investigative agency is 'TW PI Agency.'

Tom misses his military days in the U.S Army. He spent three--years in Germany as a military police officer.

He currently lives in Miami, Florida to be near his ill mother, Rita Whitman. Rita is age seventy, heavy set, and has medical problems. She has Kidney Cancer and takes different medications for her illness.

Tom moved from Tupelo, Mississippi to Miami, Florida two-years ago to help his younger sister take care of their mother. Sandy is married to John with two boys. Cory is eight and John Jr is ten. Sandy is a nurse and loves her job. Their last name is Bateman.

Tom and his sister take turns caring for their mother. Their dad, AJ, died in an auto accident when the children were young.

Today is Monday. It is Tom's day to pay their mother a visit over at the Shady Oaks Retirement Center.

Tom lives at 200 Lincoln Road in the Water View Building. He locks his third-floor, 2-bedroom condominium and rides the elevator to the lobby. He says hello to the guard, Anthony, and checks his mailbox. He then walks to his Silver Honda Accord with a cracked front windshield. The time is nine a.m.

Tom was on his way to perform a neighborhood canvas yesterday when a semi-trailer truck on Highway 95 threw a small rock, which struck and cracked his front windshield.

The private investigator drives over to his State Farm Office to file a claim. He waits in his car for the adjuster to inspect his windshield.

The adjuster exits his office and walks over to Tom's vehicle. He finds him asleep at the wheel. The adjuster taps loudly on Tom's driver-side window to wake him up.

He rolls down his window and says to the adjuster, "I have been working too many hours."

The adjuster replies, "State Farm will replace the cracked windshield at no charge."

Tom yawns and says, "Really, free of charge?"

"Yes, Sir, free of charge. It is a law in the State of Florida. The insurance companies have to repair or replace all cracked windshields free of charge for all policyholders with comprehensive insurance. You have no deductible to pay."

Tom yawns and says, "I like that law."

The adjuster writes down an address and hands the paper to Tom.

"Just go to this address and hand them this form. They will then replace your windshield for free. The company will mail me an invoice for their services."

Tom looks at his watch and says, "I have no time today."

"Sir, your cracked windshield needs a replacement. It is unsafe to keep driving in this condition. It will not take long for them to fix your windshield. I suggest you find the time."

Tom says goodbye to the adjuster and departs the area.

He drives over to a business called, “Joe’s Window Repair on U.S 1. He hands a man in a blue overall the insurance form.

“Please have a seat in our waiting room. It will only take an hour at most to replace.”

Tom enters the crowded waiting room and finds a seat. He sits between an elderly gentleman and a beautiful young lady with long hair. The woman is reading a People’s magazine.

Tom wants to make conversation with the pretty lady. He smiles and asks, “The magazine you are reading, does it belong to the window repair company?”

“Yes.”

“Can I read it when you are finished?”

“Yes.”

Tom reaches in his shirt pocket and pulls out his business card.

“In case you ever need a private investigator” Tom says to the attractive woman.

The woman takes Tom’s business card and replies, “My sister Becky may need your services. She believes her husband is having an affair. Do you have an extra card?”

Tom hands the pretty woman an extra business card and says, “Hello, my name is Tom.”

The woman smiles at the attractive man with no ring on his left hand and says, “Hi, I’m April.”

“I do surveillances, locates, background checks, social media searches, witness statements, and investigations. FBI statistics say forty percent of married spouses cheat on their soul mate.”

April starts to speak when a man in a blue overall says to the people sitting in the waiting room, “April Winters your car is ready.”

April stands up and says, “That is me. Here, Mr. PI,” and hands Tom the People’s magazine she was reading.

Tom takes the magazine and says, “It’s nice getting something done for free.”

April replies, “Yes, it is. I will have my sister call you when she needs your services.”

Tom watches April enter a red Toyota Camry and drive away.

He writes down her license plate as she departs the business.

An hour later a man in a blue overall says, “Tom Whitman your car is ready.”

Around ten-thirty a.m. Tom stops by The Shady Oaks Retirement Center to check on his mother. All the staff know he is a private investigator. The employees either wave or say hello when he enters the building.

Tom walks directly to his mother’s residence, number twenty-two and enters the corner room. Rita is sitting on her couch with another elderly woman he does not know, and smiles when her son enters.

‘Hi, Mom. Please introduce me to your friend.’

“Friend’s name is Barbara. She just moved into room twenty-one next door. Barbara, this is my son, Tom. He is a private investigator.”

Tom says hello and hands Barbara his business card.

Barbara looks at the card and says, “I wish I knew you forty years ago. Husband was cheating on me.”



Tom nods and says, “What happened to Betty, in room twenty-one?”

“She passed away suddenly. She died of loneliness is my guess.”

Tom says, “It doesn’t help if your kids live two-thousand miles away and never visit.”

Rita looks at her son and replies, “I am so thankful you and Sandy live close by and visit me often.”

“Wouldn’t have it any other way, Mom.”

“When will you get married and give me grandchildren like your sister has?”

“Waiting for the right woman. Looking every day, but it is hard when I am on the road doing surveillances.”

“Stop working so hard, slow down, and find time to date the lovely ladies of Miami.”

“Will take your advice, Mom. Have to train an employee first, then I will be able to slow down.”

Barbara says, “You can train me. Would make a great private investigator. No one would expect an old woman following them.”

Tom looks at her mom’s friend and says, “I have just enough work for me at the moment. Can have you ride with me to show you what we do on a surveillance.”

“Would love that very much. My favorite show was Magnum PI. He was good looking, just like you are young man.”

Tom blushes with her comment and says to his mother, “I will let you two ladies alone. Will come back later today.”

Tom returns to his Honda and calls his sister to update her on his quick visit with their mother.

“Hi, Sis. Are you busy?”

“No. I am just doing some ironing.”

“I just left mom. She has company, a new tenant in room twenty-one. Her name is Barbara. They were talking when I went into Mom’s room. Told them I would return at dinner time.”

“What happened to Betty? Did her family take her home to stay with them liked she wished?”

“No. Betty died.”

“So sad to hear the news. Betty prayed every day to live in Nevada near the mountains. How old is the new woman in room twenty-one?”

“Barbara looks to be about seventy years old. The next case I receive involving an elderly citizen, I will be calling Barbara to help me out. She wants to be a private investigator, she loves the TV show, Magnum PI. Mom looked happy when I walked into her room.”

“Was any of the staff around mom when you visited?”

“I saw employees at the front desk, but not in Mom’s room when I visited. Why?”

Sandy says with a concerned tone, “I have a feeling the nursing home is cutting corners with onsite staff. That worries me. I do not want mom getting less medical attention because Shady Oaks Retirement Home is trying to save money on staff hours.”

“Will talk with the employees on duty to see what they say about the hired help. Will also ask Mom if she knows anything regarding the nursing staff. The facility looked clean when I was up there.”

Sandy and Tom talk another five minutes before saying goodbye.

Tom calls Insurance Defense Lawyer Doug Baker to give him an update on his case.

“The Law Office of Attorney Doug Baker, Ellen speaking.”

“Good morning, Ellen. This is Tom Whitman. Can I speak with Doug, please? Tell him it is about surveillance on the Beverly Jones case.”

“Hi, Tom. It will be a minute. Saw him earlier walking around the office. Let me page him. Stand by.”

Doug comes on the line.

“Hello, Tom. Any good video on my claimant? Hope so, Ms. Jones is demanding a million dollars.”

“Yes, Sir. Have an hour of video of the woman working in her yard with no medical device on her neck. Then she drives to a strip mall and shops inside a clothing store. Have video outside and inside the store wearing no medical device. There is nothing wrong with her neck.”

“Tom, you, and I both know that nothing is wrong with her neck. Have to convince a jury that nothing is wrong with her neck.”

Tom asks, “When is your trial?”

“It is three months away.”

“Ask your client for a fourth go around on her. Will perform the surveillance on a weekend. What about mediation?”

“Mediation is in two weeks right here in my office.”

“Ask your client for more surveillance time. I just need a day with a second man. Will obtain video for you or the assignment is free.”

The attorney laughs and says, “I like the word free. Will ask my client for more time once I hang up with you.”

Tom says, “Then I will say goodbye.”

“Will let you know my client’s answer as soon as I know the answer.”

“Advise your client that surveillances saves them money. Video does not lie.”

“Will tell her. I think she will authorize at least one more day.”

Tom calls his sister.

“Hello, Sandy. Just letting you know I am heading back to visit with Mom.”

“Find out more about this Barbara in room twenty-one. Read online about a woman named Robin that lived in a nursing home doing a fraud. Robin would get the lonely old ladies to invest their savings with her. She would provide them with a false wealth statement each month.”

“Was this woman ever caught?”

“Yes. Robin went to jail for her crimes. Mom does have money, but what she has I want her to be able to keep.”

“Will find out more about Barbara, don’t you worry.”

“I keep forgetting to ask you, how is your dating life?”

“Very poor, nothing to brag about. On the road too much. I did meet an attractive woman in the waiting room of a window glass repair shop. We did not talk much; her car was ready, and she left. I did give her my business card and I took her license plate number down.”

“Tell me more, Big Brother.”

“When they called her name, April Winters, she stood up. She is very pretty. Wonder if she is married? She was by herself.”

“How tall, physical description, and her age?”

“You should be a private investigator, Sis. You ask so many good questions. April is five-foot-two inches, one-hundred and ten pounds with long blonde hair. I did not see a ring on her left hand.”

“She could be the one? You never know. Read somewhere that most people find their soul mate by accident, when they are not even looking for a mate.”

Tom laughs at her comments and says, “I hope she calls me. She did mention her sister may call me. Her husband may be unfaithful.”

“Stop working so hard. Turn down the cases that make you leave town and have a normal nine to five life.”

“I think I will take your advice, Sis. Have to hang-up. It is time for mom’s meal.”

Tom walks into Rita’s room again, but she is not alone.

“Hello, Mom. Hello, Barbara. Have you both eaten, yet?”

“No, Son, we have not. The kitchen brings our meals later and later.”

“Have two investigative reports to get out. I better leave now for my own home. Will stop at Taco Bell for a quick meal. Will stop by in the morning, Mom.”

“Give me a hug before you go.”

Tom gives his mother her hug, exits her corner room, and walks over to the front desk.

“Hi, Donna. Can you tell me what you know of the woman in room 21?”

“Hello, Tom. Her name is Barbara Calvert. She is seventy-one years old. She has two daughters. They live in Texas according to Barbara. They are coming here next week, along with her grandkids to pay her a visit. Why do you ask about her?”

“Barbara is in my mother’s room every time I stop by to visit. I just wanted to know more about her, that is all.”

“Tell you what I will do. When Barbara’s kids come to visit, I will call you. Then you can meet them when you stop by to visit your mother.”

Tom hands Donna his business card with all his phone numbers on the card and says, “I would like to meet them. Thanks ahead of time for calling me when they get here.”

Tom drives over to Taco Bell Restaurant located on Main Street. He uses the drive-up window and orders six soft tacos and a coke. He drives over to his condominium and turns on his computer.

Tom’s cell phone rings. He lets it go to voicemail. Today, he wants to finish his two reports, then relax with a recorded football game on his large flat screen television he just bought.

Tuesday morning, Tom makes his favorite breakfast, French toast. He pours himself a cup of coffee and reads the USA Today Newspaper he subscribes to.

Later in the morning he grabs his notebook. He wants to try writing lyrics for a friend’s band.

An hour later he calls his sister and says, “I have a friend that formed a country western band. They are asking their friends to write a hit song for them.”

“What is the name of their band?”

“They call themselves The Outlaws”

“Cool name.”

“I wrote lyrics, Sis. Tell me what you think.

As the train pulls out of Albany  
It hurts to leave behind.  
The memories of you and me  
That are on my mind.

Traveling through the countryside  
looking out the window at the view.  
The scenery is so beautiful  
It reminds me of you  
and all the traveling we use to do  
while we were together.

And while we were together  
how good life use to be.  
Till the sad day you packed your bags  
and said goodbye to me.

That is what I have so far, Sis”

Sandy says, “I like it so far.”

Tom asks, “Have you spoken to Mom this morning”

“Yes. I called the nursing home and spoke to mother. She was telling me about her new neighbor in room 21. She likes Barbara. They talk and play cards all day. The woman does not mention her finances at all.”

“You are reading into this too much, Sis. Not every woman that mom meets will be a crook.”

“Just playing it safe. So, Big Brother what are your plans today?”

“I think I will do a neighborhood canvas on the Jenkins Case. This involves a hit-and-run. The driver claimed it was dark out; the man wore dark clothes, and he was intoxicated.”

“What time was the accident?”

“Three a.m. The wife is suing for her husband’s wage loss over the next twenty-five years. Will be asking the neighbors if the victim drank alcohol, and if yes, how often did he drink.”

“Watch out for big dogs in fenced in yards. Remember what happened to you a year ago?”

“Cannot forget. The scar on my right hand will always be my permanent reminder.”

“The attack dog’s name was Killer, right?”

“Killer it was. Glad the owner came out of the house when he did, too.”

“You carry a gun, right?”

“I do now, ever since that dog attacked me. Wear my Glock 9-millimeter in a shoulder holster.”

“Call me this afternoon, Brother, when you finish your neighborhood canvas. I want to make sure you are safe.”

“Will do just that. Speak to you then, Sis.”

Tom finishes his late breakfast, then heads for his Honda parked on the third floor of the parking garage. The time is eleven a.m.

Tom drives over to canvas the neighborhood on his accident case. A hit-and-run driver struck and killed Mr. Joey Jenkins, age twenty-eight, and the father of three small children.



The PI knocks on the two-story home directly across the street from where the victim, Mr. Jenkins died. An elderly women comes to the door with a cane in her left hand.

“Can I help you, Young Man?”

“Yes, you can. I am a private investigator. Here is my business card. Investigating the death of Joey Jenkins; he was struck and killed right across the street from you.”

“Know the family well. Baby-sit the three children now and then.”

“Questions is, did the couple fight at all and if they did, was alcohol involved?”

“Joey and Donna never fought around me. Joey drank beer all the time. Remember Donna saying to me, I wish Joey would stop drinking.”

“What is your name?”

“Francis Horn.”

“Thank you for talking with me. Trying to prove or disprove that Joey was an alcoholic. The toxicology report showed that Joey was drunk.”

“Joey was always drinking his favorite beer, Coors. He came over to my place now and then and drank his Coors beer while playing chess with my husband, Steven.”

“Any other neighbors I should talk to about Mr. Jenkins?”

“I do not know. Keep to myself. Had a stroke two years ago. I mostly nit or watch television. I never take walks in my neighborhood. Too many wild dogs running around.”

“Is your husband home now? Can I talk to him?”

“My husband is taking a nap, but I can have him call you once he wakes up. His medication makes him sleep all day.”

“Yes, have your husband reach out to me. I will take both your recorded statements together.”

Tom says goodbye to Francis Horn and notes their address as 4821 Drake Road.

The PI walks next door to a ranch styled house. He rings the doorbell. A dog starts barking behind the front door. No one comes to the door. Tom leaves his business card in the house’s mailbox.

He knocks on the next house. There is a for-sale sign in the front yard.

A man comes to the door in blue jeans and with no shirt on. The man has a beard, looks about thirty years old, and has a Coors beer can in his right hand.

“Are you an agent?”

“No, Sir. Private Investigator.”

“What do you want with me?”

“Doing a neighborhood canvas. Represent State Farm Insurance in the hit-and-run case on your neighbor, Joey Jenkins.”

” Hope the police catches the driver who did this to my friend. Joey was my drinking friend. Hope the driver gets life for killing my good friend.”

“The hit-and-run driver has been arrested. I have no other details on the arrest. I see you drink Coors beer; the same beer Joey drank.”

“Coors is the only beer Joey, and I drank. We were known to everyone in the neighborhood as the Coors Brothers.”

“What is your name?”

“Sam Moore.”

“Can I come in? Want to take your recorded statement.”

“Know how this works. Your lawyer will have to subpoena me. Will give my statement to you then.”

Tom starts to ask a question and the man slams his front door.

Tom writes the man’s name down, his address of 4814 Drake Road and the license plate number on his damaged Buick.

Tom does not finish his canvas. He has confirmed that Joey Jenkins was a beer drinker.

Tom returns to his condominium to finish his report for his client. He opens his fridge and removes a cold can of Coors beer. He calls his sister to let her know he is ok, and that he was not going to the nursing home at mom’s dinner time. He turns his cell phone off.

At ten p.m. Sandy calls her brother’s cell phone, but it goes straight to his recording.

Wednesday morning over two pieces of toast and a cup of coffee, Tom checks his messages on his cell phone.

“Tom, when you get this message call me, This, is Harry Winters. Cell is 305-224-7659. Need you to find my daughter, again. She is back on drugs.”

“Need a private investigator. I suspect my wife is cheating on me. How much do you charge an hour? Name is Nick. Cell phone number is 305-435-2559.”

“Tom pick-up. Need to have you run my new babysitter. Want to make sure she does not have a criminal past. Love you, Brother.”

After breakfast, Tom calls his sister back and the two other people that left messages on his cell phone.

“Morning, Sis.”

“Since when did you start turning your cell phone off?”

“Started yesterday. Trying to slow down and have a regular life. You told me to slow down, remember?”

“Glad you are listening to me for a change. I am thinking of hiring a woman to watch my kids. Before I tell her yes, I want to make sure she is clean and has no criminal record.”

“Who is this woman?”

“Co-worker, Cindy, uses her. The woman’s name is Ellen Duncan, her date of birth is May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1992. Looking at a copy of her Florida driver’s license.”

“Give me her license number as well.”

“It is G3875518. OH, I went over yesterday at mom’s mealtime, and I met Barbara.”

“I am in a rush to meet a client. We can discuss mom’s new friend later. Give me thirty minutes, Sis. I will call you with what I find out from running data on her.”

Tom sits at his office desk and runs the woman’s information in his data base. The woman comes back clean and has no arrest or convictions.

Tom makes himself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, grabs his car keys, and exits his condominium.

He calls his sister but gets her voice message on his cell phone.

“Sis, no need to call me back. I ran the data on your babysitter, Ellen Duncan and she comes back clean. No criminal record. Mom’s happy with her new neighbor in room 21. I will keep an eye on their relationship for us.”

Tom forgets something and redials his sister’s cell phone number.

“Sis, let us get together soon. When I come over to your townhouse you can make me French toast. If you do not want to cook us a meal, then we can meet at IHOP by the mall. Let me know. Be safe. Bye.”

While sitting in his vehicle Tom dials a number, 305-224-2559. On the third ring a man answers. There is noise in the background.

“This is Nick.”

Tom shouts, “Nick, this is Tom, a private investigator. You called and left me a message to contact you.”

The background noise suddenly stops and in a clear voice Nick says, “I suspect my wife of two years in seeing someone and I need to know who.”

Tom asks, “What was all that noise in the background when we first spoke?”

“I own a welding shop on Pike Avenue, and we have no walls in the shop, so, the noise travels. My office is soundproof.”

“What is your wife’s name?”

“Johanna” She is very pretty, and she is a good mother to my twin sons. I suspect she has a lover.”

“You don’t know for sure she has a lover?”

“No. Every time I want to make love, she makes excuses about being tired all the time from taking care of Mike and Pete. My twins are one years old.”

“What about finding your wife a nanny?”

“I tried to hire a babysitter, but she shot that plan down. I work from seven a.m. to eight p.m. seven days a week. It is extremely hard to find good help. This COVID is a killer when it comes to keeping competent staff. I should have nine employees and I only have three.”

“I charge a hundred an hour and I will need a retainer of one thousand.”

“No problem. When can you come by for the money?”

“I can come now. I will need a photo of her, the make, model, color, and license plate of the vehicle she is driving and the name of your business and the address.”

“Nick’s Welding, 2465 Pike Avenue here in Miami. You will see my black in color Jeep out front. I will have all the info you will need when you get here.”

“What is your last name?”

“Connors.”

“I will be there in 15 minutes according to my GPS. See you soon.”

Sandy calls her brother.

“Hello, Tom.”

“Hi, Sis.”

“I just wanted you to know I was with mom earlier. I met her friend, Barbara. We all played a card game while waiting on mom’s meal.”

Tom says, “Mom has a nice woman living next to her, right?”

“Yes. I will call you back, brother after I return home. I am at Wal Mart doing my weekly shopping.”

Tom replies, “I am headed over to a new client, a divorce case.”

“I thought you said those type of cases are dangerous, and you were not taking divorce cases anymore.”

“Business is slow, and I have bills. I will be careful.”

“At least charge for a 2<sup>nd</sup> man and bring your cop friend along.”

“Good idea, I will do that. I wonder how my new client got my name. I will have to ask him. I must go, I will call you back when I finish.”

“Please call me back, I worry about you.”

“Just so you know, I am armed, and I will not take on any case, no matter what, if I feel it will be dangerous.”

“Good to know brother, speak to you soon.”

Tom pulls into a vacant parking spot in front of the welding shop. He reaches for a notepad and exits his Honda.

A young woman, about eighteen years old greets him as he walks in.

“Welcome to Nick’s Welding, I am Joan, how can we help you today?”

“Nick is expecting me. I am an old friend.”

“Your name?”

“Tom Whitman.”

Joan dials a phone extension and says into the receiver, “I have a Tom Whitman out front for you.” Joan nods her head and hangs up the receiver.

She looks at Tom and says, “Nick will be out in a minute. Can I offer you something to drink while you wait?”

“Yes, please. A cup of coffee with cream and sugar.”

Joan stands up just as Nick arrives at her desk. “I am going to get your friend a cup of coffee, do you want a cup as well?”

“Yes, please. No sugar for now on. I am trying to lose pounds.”

Nick sticks his chubby hand out for Tom to shake. “Welcome to my business. Let us go to my soundproof quarters. Follow me.”

Tom looks at all the welding going on with Nick’s three employees. They pay him no attention as he walks by. He enters a small office in the middle of the shop and Nick closes the door.

Nick says, “I had to build this small soundproof office to be able to hear and speak with my customers and vendors. “It is eight feet wide and ten feet long. After you add a desk, a printer, shelving, and an extra chair, I have little room to move around, but it does its job of keeping it quiet.”

Joan shouts, “Coffee.”

Nick opens the door and takes the two cups from his employee.

“Thanks, Joan. Bring me cookies while you are at it.”

Joan laughs and replies, “Some diet.”

Nick closes the door with his left foot after giving Tom his coffee.

“Where did you get my name from?”

“You placed an ad that read, Is your spouse really working late? Find out.”



“You are the first caller for that ad in four months. Why do you suspect your wife is cheating on you?”

Before he can answer there is a knock on the office door. Nick gets up from his leather chair and opens the door. There stands his employee with a container of assorted cookies.

Nick says, “Thanks, Joan,” as he reaches for the snack. “No more interruptions, please” as he closes the door.

“Here is a photograph of my wife” Nick says as he sits back down.

Tom holds a photograph of a young Latin woman playing on a living room floor with two twin young boys. “Very pretty.”

“Johanna and I have been together 4 years. We dated for two. We met in college. My twin boys are my life. My lawyer said the only way I can win custody in court is to show that my wife is being unfaithful. I hope she is not cheating on me. She is just too tired to make love like she claims.”

“Well Nick, “Cheating is more common than ever. There are hundreds of online dating sites to choose from. The FBI claims that forty percent of all married people in the United States cheat on their spouse. The number is higher when it comes to dating.”

“One night while my wife slept, I checked her smart phone and laptop. I found no suspicious activity.”

“The law your attorney is talking about is Florida’s Adultery Law. Cheating is a crime. Evidence of cheating will not automatically result in the award of custody of the children. It will give the judge an unfavorable view of your spouse.”

“I want to hire you to spy on my wife. In my heart I need to know if Johanna is really tired from watching the children or if she is being unfaithful to me.”

“What about a nearby relative coming over during the day?”

“Johanna’s family are all in Mexico, besides, she is not tight with any family member.”

“What does your wife drive?”

“Johanna has a blue Volvo S60. The license plate is Welder2.”

“What is your home address?”

“3235 Elks Street in Miami. It is a gated community. The gate code is 3434. There is a guard from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. 7 days a week.”

“Do you go home for lunch?”

“I did when it was slow in the shop. Not anymore. I have contracts that I have to fulfill, and most have deadlines. I am short six welders. No one wants to work, not even at twenty an hour. Most nights I am in a sleeping bag crashed out on the floor here in the office. Right now, I am 3 weeks behind my orders.”

I will need a second investigator to help me watch the residence and to follow her if and when she departs. I will only charge you forty an hour extra. I need a retainer of one thousand and when I reach that amount, I will contact you for a second retainer.”

Nick reaches into his back pocket and pulls out his wallet. He counts out two-thousand dollars and hands that amount over to the private investigator. “Here is two-thousand to start.”

Tom writes in a small notepad the amount given to him and hands his client the receipt for the money given to him. “Does the wife leave the house during the day?”

“Good question. Every time I called; my wife was home to answer.”

“I will start in the morning. Do me a favor and do not call home while I am working your case. Also, once home do not ask her any questions about her departing the residence. Just act natural.”

“I can do that. I hope you spend my retainer and find out she is always home with my two boys. I do not want a divorce. I love my wife. She is a great mother to the twins. I hate being at work 24/7, but I have no choice right now. I hope you find that my wife is home. This will mean she is only tired. My two boys are a handful I have to admit.”

“I will text you at five p.m. Tomorrow to call my cell. I will then fill you in on the events of the day. I may do evenings as well. I do hope you are right that Johanna is only tired.”

Tom finishes his coffee and grabs two cookies on his way out. He stops at the front desk and says to Joan, “Thanks for the coffee and cookies. See you around.”

Once in his Honda he contacts his sister.

“Hi, Sandy. I have a new client. He thinks his wife of two-years is cheating on him. When he does come home, she is too tired for the sex he wants. She blames it on no energy left after watching their twin boys, age 1.”

“She may be right. Raising two boys at that age are a handful. I know firsthand.”

Tom laughs and replies. “I am a single guy, what do I know about children?”

“Will you invoice your client for a 2<sup>nd</sup> man?”

“Yes, I will. Let me go, I have to call him for his help.”

Tom calls a number on his cell phone contact list. The man answers on the first ring.

“This is Dan.”

“Dan old buddy, this is Tom.”

Dan says jokingly, “Tom who?”

Tom laughs and asks, “Can you find the time to help me place a young woman under surveillance?”

“What amount an hour will you be paying me for my services?”

“I will give you forty an hour to cover your gas and time.”

“A local case I hope?”

“Right here in Miami at 3235 Elks Street.”

“Sure, sounds fun. When do we start?”

“Tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. I will come by your place, and you can follow me to the job. The woman drives a blue Volvo S60. The license plate reads Welder2. I will show you her picture when we hook up.”

“See you Tomorrow then, Buddy.”

Tom stops by the retirement home to make a surprised lunch visit on his mother. As he approaches her closed door, he hears an exciting voice say, “Gin.” He turns around and walks over to the front desk.

“Hello, Mr. Whitman.”

“Call me Tom, please Sally.”

“Hello, Tom.”

“Hi, Sally. How is my mother doing today?”

“Her and Barbara have been playing cards all day. They only take a break to pee or eat their meals.”

“The next time you go by my mom’s room tell her I stopped by and will see her Tomorrow evening.”

“I can do that. I have a question for you.”

“Shoot.”

“My younger brother, Trey, is exiting the Marines next month. I think he would make a great private investigator for you.”

“Have him contact me once he is settled. If I have no work for him, I will train Trey to start his own agency.”

“Wow, you just made my day. I will tell him when he calls.”

“Have Trey reach out to me when he is ready.”

“Will do. Thanks, Tom.”

“You welcome, Sally. I love Marines.”

Tom walks to his Honda, enters and departs the nursing home. He makes a call to his sister as he drives to his residence.”

“Hi, Sis. Are you busy doing something?”

“Hi, Brother. We are about to have lunch. Can I call you in the morning?”

“Sure, no problem.”

“It will be around eleven a.m. when I can call.”

“Sounds good.”

Tom stops by the IHOP Restaurant on Highway 1. He finds a corner table and has a seat. The middle-aged server walks up and asks, “Can I get you something to drink?”

“Yes. Black coffee and I am ready to order.”

“What will you have?”

“I will have the 222. Two eggs over easy, two slices of ham, and two blueberry pancakes.”

The server writes his request down, smiles, and says, “I’ll be right back with your coffee.”

Tom eats all alone and returns home. He turns on his bedroom television, changes clothes, and watches a crime show. After 2 beers he calls it a workday.

He changes into his swim trunks, grabs a towel, and heads to the ground floor to use the condominium’s indoor pool. He speaks with the day guard.

“Anthony, has the mailman been by yet?”

“Not that I know of Mr. Tom.”

Tom checks his mailbox, and it is empty.

He enters the indoor pool area, and it is empty of guest. He places his keys, cell phone and his white towel down on a chair and walks down steps till he is waist high in the lukewarm water.

After an hour of exercise, Tom dries off, checks his mailbox again, and walks by the empty security desk to the elevators.

Once back in his condominium, he turns off his cell phone, showers, puts on boxing shorts, climbs into bed, and falls asleep after watching two movies.

## CHAPTER 2

At 5:30 a.m. on Thursday, Tom pulls up to Dan's residence in his Honda. Already waiting for him in a brown in color Ford F150 truck is his police friend.

"What is the number of cases I have helped you on?"

"Let me count. Tom pauses then replies, 'This is your sixth one'"

Tom shows Dan the photograph of Johanna.

Dan says, "A very attractive woman."

Tom hands Dan a walkie-talkie and replies, "We are operating on channel three. I figure she is cheating. I believe this because the husband is stuck at work, she is pretty, and FBI stats show forty percent of spouse's cheat."

Dan hands the photograph back to Tom and says, "I believe you are wrong on this one."

As they start to depart the area Tom replies, "Only time will tell if Johanna is faithful or not."

Both men set up positions outside the guard gate to Johanna's neighborhood. Tom sits at a nearby gas station and covers the main road to the right.

Dan sits at a Catholic Church to the left of Johanna's neighborhood.

Tom speaks to his helper on the walkie talkie, "She drives a blue, VolvoS60 with license plate Welder2."

"I copy."

Two hours go by when Tom's walkie comes alive.

"Tom, our target just went by me. The windows are tinted. I do not know if she is alone or not.

"I'm catching up to you as fast as I can."

Dan says over his walkie-talkie, “She’s stopping at “Helen’s Day Care located at 2475 Seaway Road. Will you be taking notes, or will I be?”

Tom speaks into his walkie, “I will be taking the notes today.”

“She is opening the right-side rear passenger door. It looks like a small child is being removed in a portable car seat. Now she is walking around to the left rear passenger door. She is taking two children into the day care. She is carrying a portable car seat in each hand.”

After catching up to where Dan is at, Tom says, “I videoed her carrying the babies into the day care. I will wait down the road in case she departs the area to the right.”

A minute later Dan speaks into his walkie-talkie, “She is alone and coming your way. The target is wearing a green blouse and blue jeans.”

Tom speaks next. “I am behind her in the left lane. She is using her cell phone as she drives.”

The investigators follow the woman to a small coffee shop called, ‘Tony’s.’

Tom says, “I will go in with her.”

Johanna walks over to a corner booth occupied by a middle-aged man in a business suit and slides in next to him. They kiss and Tom gets this action on his hidden key-chain camera.

The man hands his companion a coffee in a large container. “Thanks, Love,” she says.

Tom stands in line for his own drink and sits at the table next to the two love birds; He strains to hear their conversation. He picks up words here and there. They are making plans of some kind.

The man says, “My car or yours?”

“Let us take your car this time” she says as they hold hands exiting the small café.

Dan videos the unknown male opening the passenger door for his woman. The PI writes the license plate down as the man backs out of his parking spot.



“The license plate number is WGF2406, from Nevada.”

Tom replies, “I copy the tag. I am running it now.”

A minute or so later and Tom says over his walkie-talkie, “It belongs on a gold in color Toyota Camry 4-door to a Joseph Dixon. His date of birth is March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1980. The address listed is 247 Orange Grove Drive, Carson City, Nevada.”

At the next traffic light Tom says, “She is sliding next to him. The time is ten:40 a.m.”

The investigators follow the couple to an apartment complex called Eagle’s Landing. This is a gated community. The address is 478 Mills Drive. The man uses a remote to open the gate marked ‘for residence only.’

Tom says to Dan, “Walk inside the sales office and see about a gate code so we can go into the complex to locate my target.”

“Will do.”

A minute goes by before Dan speaks over his walkie-talkie, “There are 12 Buildings, each with three floors with two units a floor. The visitor gate entry code is changed daily.”

Five minutes go by before Dan exits the model center. Once in his vehicle he says over his walkie, “Cute girl working the desk. Her name is Cindy and I have her phone number.”

“Did you get the gate code?”

“Yes. Punch in 1212. “

Tom says, “Good, go inside the apartment complex, find his vehicle, and let me know when they are leaving.”

“Will do. Go check Cindy out.”

“I plan to do just that, Buddy.”

Dan drives his vehicle inside the huge apartment complex. “Found a good spot. He is parked between the C and D buildings.”

“Alert tone me on the walkie if there is movement. I will go flirt with Cindy now.”

Tom puts his walkie-talkie in his left front pocket of his blue jeans and walks inside the model center and approaches a pretty young lady on the telephone.

She motions for him to have a seat.

Tom grabs a brochure of the apartment complex and starts to read the fine print when Cindy hangs up her telephone.

“Good morning. Are you needing a 1, 2, or 3, bedroom apartment?”

“I am looking for a 3-bedroom unit on the ground floor.”

“I am sorry, we are all out of 3-bedrooms. I rented the last available unit last month. I can put you down on our waiting list and I can call you when a unit becomes available.”

Tom smiles and replies, “I will just keep looking. I need one now.”

“Here is my card, call me if you change your mind about the waiting list.”

Tom looks at the business card the woman gives him. “I will call you if I change my mind. I have a sister named Cindy” lies the private investigator as he stands up to depart the office.

“Can I have your name, Sir?”

“Tom Whitman. I am a private investigator and here is my business card for your records.”

“TW PI Group. I may need you to run backgrounds for our apartment complex. How much do you charge for a background check?”

“Seventy-five dollars and you get your results within thirty minutes, or it is free.”

“My boss is Jack Green. I will speak with him later today. If I get a green light, I will be in touch.”

Tom shakes her hand and says, “My prices are fifty-percent less than most of my competitors.”

“The company we are using charges us two-hundred a background and they are slow.”

“Well, Cindy, I think I will be hearing from you later today.”

“Can I call you Tom, Mr. Whitman?”

“Please do.”

Tom waves goodbye, he exits her office, and walks to his vehicle. He picks up his walkie-talkie and says, “Dan, any activity?”

“Nope. What do you think of Cindy?”

“Cute. I love her smile and her long blonde hair.”

“Me too. I plan to ask her out. I showed her my police badge.”

“I gave her my business card. She may be using my pi firm to run background checks on her applicants. Her current company charges two hundred a background check. I told her I would do it for seventy-five.”

“What does a background check cost you?”

“Twenty-five dollars. So, if she orders six background checks a month that is a net of \$300.”

“That would be nice pocket money for you.”

“Yep. I will take you out once a month for a meal for making me go in to check Cindy out.”

Dan replies, “Sounds good to me.”

Thirty minutes later Dan says with excitement in his voice, “We have action. They are coming out with your target as the front seat passenger.”

“I copy.”

Tom dials a number and Cindy answers, “Eagle’s Landing, Cindy speaking.”

“This is Tom the PI. Can I trust you?”

“Yes, you can.”

“Do you have a Joseph Dixon renting a unit from you?”

“Yes. He is in c301.”

Tom asks, “What do you know about him?”

“He is engaged to a Kathy Anderson. She is in Europe with her folks. She returns next Monday I believe. Why do you ask?”

“He is cheating on her. I am following him now with my client’s wife sitting next to him.”

“He hit on me as well. The snake.”

“Next time you go out with someone get their license plate. I will run the man for free. My data will tell me if he is single or not.”

“Will do.”

“What is Joseph’s occupation?”

“He is a stockbroker with Charles Swab.”

“Thanks, Cindy. I have to go now. I must focus on driving.”

“You have an exciting job, Tom. Call me Tomorrow. I want to know what happens today with my tenant.”

“You have a deal.”

Tom picks up his walkie-talkie. “He is engaged to a Kathy Anderson. She will not be back in town till next week. He lives in unit c301.”

“How did you get that information?”

“Cindy gave it to me.”

“Cool.”

Tom says, “He is a stockbroker with Charles Swab.”

All Dan says is, “cool.”

Joseph arrives at the parking lot near Tony’s café.

They watch and video the couple kissing before Johanna exits Joseph’s vehicle, waves goodbye and enters her own vehicle.

Both investigators follow her to Helen’s Day Care on Seaway Road.

The mother of two children soon exits the building with her twins, places them in their car seats, and departs the parking lot.

Johanna arrives back at her gated community and enters a lane marked ‘residences only.’

Tom says on the walkie talkie, “Dan watch for her to depart, and I will catch up the notes.”

“Sounds like a plan, partner. What does the husband drive?”

Tom parks at a lumber yard parking lot to wait for more activity from his target. “He drives a black in color Jeep.”

At 5 p.m. Dan says, “I think your client just got home.”

“Good, I will text him to call me.”

Tom types, “You just arrived call me for an update.”

Dan says, “How about one of us do a food run. I am starved.”

“Good idea, you go Dan. I will wait for my client to call me about the events of the day. I will eat what you eat. Bring me back a coke, please.”

“Will do.”

Tom finishes his notes for the day and reviews the video of the day’s activity.

Nick goes to his car for his briefcase and calls his pi at the same time.

“Any activity from my wife?”

“Nope,” Tom lies to his client. “I never saw her leave in her Volvo. I will be on her Tomorrow as well.”

“She told me she is in the mood tonight. Soon as she puts the twins to bed. So, keep the two thousand and no need for Tomorrow. I will call you again if something is going on.”

“Good to hear your wife wants action. She was right, she is tired from watching the twins like an eagle. I spoke to my sister who also has twins, but they are seven years old now.”

“What did she say about twins?”

“The baby at age 1 is a little person who can walk, hang on to furniture, they can grab a spoon, a telephone, and a hairbrush. The wife will slowly stop breast feeding and get the children drinking from a bottle. So, your wife does have her hands full, that is for sure.”

“Nick says, “She might hire a babysitter for a couple of hours a day in the mornings, which will allow her to go to the gym, to go grocery

shopping, or to shop for clothes. If we hire a babysitter, I will call you to do the background. What do you charge for this?"

"I normally charge seventy-five dollars, but for you it will be at cost which is twenty-five dollars."

"Thanks for your offer. I must go in the house now for dinner. We are having meatloaf."

"Can I come? I love meatloaf."

"Afraid not, thanks again for helping me out."

"I was just joking, Nick. Have a wonderful night. Make sure you turn your cell phones off."

"I will do that now. Bye."

Dan returns from his food run. He pulls up next to his partner and says, "I bought KFC's 3-piece meal for both of us. They come with Cole Slaw, and fries. Here is your coke and your meal. Did the client call yet?"

Tom reaches out the driver's window for his meal. How much do I owe you?"

"I treated. Any news from the client?"

"Yes, he said the case is finished for now. His wife wants to make love tonight. He is a happy camper."

"What did he say when you told him about her being with another man?"

"I lied and said we had no activity."

"Why did you lie? We have video of them kissing."

"I want their marriage to work. In any case, let us sit here and have our meals. Thanks for treating for dinner. You watch, in a couple of months Nick will be calling me back. He will be tired of her excuses for no love making by then."

Dan nods his head up and down and replies, "I bet you are right. How is your chicken?"

"Tasty. Excellent choice this meal."

“The drive-up lines were longer at McDonald’s and Burger King.”

“Glad they were long. I love chicken.”

Dan and Tom sit in their cars side-by-side and have their meals.

Twenty minutes later they say goodbye to each other.

Tom drives over to his mother’s nursing home. He looks at his watch. The time reads 6:12 p.m. He walks into the lobby and is called over to the front desk by Sally.

“Hi, Tom.”

“Hi, Sally.”

“We have new procedures now. A staff member will be stationed 24/7 here at the front desk, and all visitors have to sign in and sign out. We also will hold your driver’s license till you are ready to leave.”

“I like it, but why the security all of a sudden?”

A sister nursing home in Atlanta let a patient walk right out of the building, and she was missing all day. Luckily, they found her at the local library sitting on a couch reading a book. The nursing home was instructed that the woman has major dementia, and she walked away from three other nursing homes in the past three years.”

“I think it is a great idea, but what happens when you are short staffed?”

“I do not know; it has been working all day today. Please sign the book and hand me your driver’s license.”

Tom does as he is told and walks down the hall towards his mother’s room. Barbara is exiting her own room and asks, “Looking for me?”

“Hi, Barbara, not today I am afraid. How was your card playing against my mother?”

“I let her win. Do not tell her that through.”

“It will be our secret. Good night.”

Rita’s room door is half opened. Tom knocks and walks in.

“Evening Mom and Sis. I just stopped by to see if you needed anything.”

“I am dying for a hamburger with fries and a coke.”

“What about you, Sis?”

“Bring me back a hamburger as well, plus an apple pie, and a small black coffee.”

“What do you think of the new security feature of signing in and out?

Both women say at the same time, “We love it.”

Sis, I will call you with your meals when I arrive out front, so I do not have to sign back in. Mom, I will see you for breakfast.”

Tom stops at the front desk. He signs the visitor’s book with an out time, retrieves his license, and departs the building.

Tom drives over to Burger King and waits in line to place his order at their drive thru window. Five vehicles are ahead of him in line.

Tom receives an unknown call on his cell phone.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Evening Tom, it is Cindy from the apartment complex. Do you have a minute?”

“Hello, Cindy, I am fourth in line at Burger King placing an order at their drive-up window.”

“I will not be long. Come in and see me. Once you fill in our 3-page Vendor form, you will be our new background company at seventy-five a background.”

“Sounds good. One question, what is the number of background checks you do a month?”

“Between our four properties across three States, thirty a week. It really depends on the number of people that apply to live in our facilities. We do a proper screening process on everyone that applies for a unit. By doing background checks on applicants, we have fewer problems. You also will do doing background checks on employees we hire.”

“How about ten a.m. Tomorrow.”

“See you then, have a great night.”



“You do the same.”

Tom pulls up to the speaker box, places his order, and slowly arrives at the cashier for payment.

The store clerk asks, “Two hamburgers with fries, an apple pie, one coke, and one black coffee. What size coffee?”

“Make it a large, please.”

That will be eight dollars and thirty cents.”

“I need 2 apple pies for me as well.”

“That will be ten dollars and seventy-five cents.”

Tom pays the woman and waits in-line for his purchase. He calls Dan.

“Hello, Dan, it is your favorite fishing friend. I have great news.”

“What is the great news?”

“Cindy gave me the background checking contract for four different properties her corporation owns. I am looking at thirty background checks a month minimum. Now treat Cindy right. If not, I may lose this new account.”

“She doesn’t know you and I are working together.”

“She will find out for sure. We play cards, go shoot pool, go fishing, so eventually she will know we are friends. So, treat her right. No cheating. You promise?”

“I promise.”

Tom picks up his Burger King order and drives back to the nursing home. He calls his sister to come outside for her meals, but her cell phone goes straight to voicemail.

Tom stops at the front desk to sign in and leaves his driver’s license with Sally. He then walks in his mother’s room to find the ladies playing cards.

“Here is your food, nice, and warm.”

“You are a darling” says Rita giving her son a hug.

“Enjoy your meal. I will visit you sometime Tomorrow.”

His sister says, “Thank you for our meals.”

“You welcome. I called you to come outside to pick-up your meals, but your cell phone went straight to voicemail. Have a good night.”

“Hi, Sally” Tom says as he signs out and picks up his driver’s license.

“Hello, Tom. I know it is a pain to stop by the desk to sign in and out each time.”

“It is for the better. My mother is safer with the new rule.”

“I understand from management we will be installing additional cameras around our property.”

Tom says, “Cameras can prevent crime if someone is watching the monitors. They are a great tool to have.”

Tom says good night to Sally and returns to his car. He sits behind the wheel and has his two apple pies. He then departs the nursing home.

Once back at his condominium Tom dials a number, 305-224-2559. A man answers on the forth ring.

“This is Harry.”

“Evening, Harry, it is your favorite private investigator. Tell me what is going on with your daughter, Linda?”

“She was doing really good in the hospital’s special rehab center, then she walked out, and did not come back. No call, no nothing from her since. I called all the hospitals, the morgue, nothing. I have been driving around searching for her. I am going out of my mind with worry.”

“I bet she met a male addict in the hospital’s rehab unit, and they left to start a new life together.”

“Well, the hospital will not release any information to me. I bet you can find that information out for me, right?”

“I can try. Where are you right now, Harry?”

“I am at The Moonlight Lounge on US 1. I needed a strong drink”

“Can you come by my condominium building with a good photo of your daughter?”

“I sure can.”

“Drop it off with security, and I will retrieve it in the morning before I head out to the hospital.”

Harry asks, “What is your address?”

200 Lincoln Road, The Water View Building.”

“Count on it being done right away. What is the cost this time to locate my baby, Tom?”

“Zero. I want to help you find her, and to get Linda back on the right track to recovery.”

“That is awful nice of you to do that for me.”

“No problem, Harry. I have to go to sleep now. Speak soon.”

“Good night, Tom. Thanks again for helping me.”

“Glad to help. I just hope we can locate her this time. I will devote all my time on this till we locate her, so do not worry so much, Linda has disappeared on you before, right?”

“This makes it the fifth time in 3 years.”

“Exactly, so get me the photo. Good night.”

Tom sleeps on his leather couch in his clothes. He is that tired.

On Friday morning at 8 a.m. Tom stops at the security desk to speak with Anthony. The guard is busy giving directions to a renter. When he is finished with the elderly woman Anthony says to Tom, “Morning Mr. Tom, someone dropped off this envelope for you about an hour ago.”

“Thanks, Anthony. I like it that you run a tight ship.”

Tom walks to his car, sits behind the wheel, and opens the envelope. Inside is the photo of Linda. There is a note as well, signed by Harry. ‘Find my Baby, Please.’

Tom drives over to the hospital’s rehab center and walks inside.

At the counter, a middle-aged woman asks, “Can I help you, Sir?”

“Yes, you can. I am a private Investigator and I need information on a lady that is a patient here. Her name is Linda Winters.”

“Have a seat in our waiting room behind you, please.”

About five minutes later a woman in her fifties walks over to Tom and says, “Are you the private investigator asking questions on someone?”

Tom stands and flashes a gold badge. He shows the woman the photo of Linda. “I understand from her father that she walked away from your rehab care center a couple of days ago. She has not called her father, and he is sick with worry. He hired me to find his daughter, Linda Winters.”

I cannot say one way or the other if she resides or resided here. We have strict privacy rules in place.”

“I understand. Can you at least fill me in on your program when a person is admitted into your care?”

“I can do that. Our drug rehab program is court ordered. You must have committed a crime and be sentenced to a stay at our facility. If you fail our two-month program, you will be returned to the judge for your jail sentence. We are the last-step effort for the people addicted to drugs or alcohol.”

“Do they just stay here and attend classes?”

“No, we require them to find employment, and to save their earnings, so they have funds once released from here.”

“Can you give me the name of Linda Winters’s place of employment?”

“Again, Sir I cannot say one way or the other, about anyone that may or may not reside at our facility. You will need a court order for any information”

“I understand perfectly. Can I have your name for my report?”

“My name is Brenda Johnson. I am the manager of this facility.”

“Here is my business card in case you need a background check performed.”

“Thank you, Sir for the card. I must get back to my other duties. Have a wonderful day.”

“You as well.”

Tom exits the building and sits behind the wheel of his car and waits.

About ten minutes later a young man wearing slacks and a blue-in-color shirt exits the building and starts walking down the street.

Tom follows him away from the rehab center and toots his horn. The man walks over as Tom flashes a fifty-dollar bill in the air,

“Are you in the hospital’s drug rehab program?”

“Yes, I am.”

“I will give you this fifty if you can help me locate a Linda Winters. Her father hired me to find her. He is sick with worry.” Tom shows the man Linda’s photo. “She is in your drug rehab program, right?”

“She left with Brandon Dixon. They both were addicts in recovery.”

Tom hands the man the money and asks, “Can you tell me more about them?”

“Sure. Can you give me a lift to work?”

“Hop in. Be glad to young man. Where do you work?”

“I work at the courthouse helping all the lawyers. I carry court files in boxes from the basement to the lawyer’s office, and I return file boxes back to the basement storage room once the lawyer is finished.”

The man enters Tom’s car and says, “I miss having a car. I wrecked mine in a chase with the police. I crashed my car and ran into the woods. The police sent a canine dog in after me. The German Shepard dog bit me on my right leg.”

Tom says, “I was attacked by a dog as well last year. It was not a police canine, but a German Shepard at a private residence.”

“I don’t know where Linda and Brandon are living, but I do know where Brandon works.”

“Where would that be?”

“The McDonald’s on the corner of Sloan and Manor. He works behind the counter. He works there during the business week.”

“Describe him for me?”

“Brandon is white, tall, and thin, twenty-five years old. He wears glasses and has a beard. You cannot miss him.”

Tom nods his head up and down and replies, “All this information is between you and me. Here is my business card. Can I have your name and a contact number. I will not get you in trouble?”

“I am Peter Cummings. You can leave a message at the Rehab Center for me. Say you are an employer, and I filled out a job application. I will for sure be given the message.”

Tom pulls up to the courthouse.

Peter exits Tom’s car, and says, “Thanks for the fifty and for the ride.”

“Thanks, Peter for helping me with Brandon.”

Tom drives over to the McDonald’s in question and goes inside. Right away he spots Brandon. A tall man, six ‘six.” Tom buys an ice cream cone from him and returns to his car.

Tom quickly drives over to Cindy’s apartment complex to sign the three-page contract to do background checks. Once finished he says to Cindy, “I am in a rush to get back on a surveillance. Thanks for the opportunity. I will not let you down.”

Cindy smiles and replies, “I have full confidence in you, Tom.”

Tom drives back to the McDonald’s and walks inside. Brandon is busy helping a customer. Tom returns to his Honda and waits.

At 2:30 p.m. Brandon exits the McDonald’s and starts walking South. Tom follows from a distance to Manor Apartments at 3766 Saxon Avenue. The man enters unit C.

Tom finds a good surveillance spot across the street at a different apartment complex and waits.

Forty minutes later Linda and Brandon exit the apartment holding hands. Tom does not follow but calls Harry on his cell.

“Hello? This is Harry.”

“It is me, Tom. I located your daughter.”

“That was fast, Where?”

3766 Saxon Avenue, Apartment C. She is living with a Brandon Dixon, a white male about six’ six,” with glasses and a beard.”

“I know him from a prior arrest with my daughter.”

“If you sit across the street like I am doing now, you will be able to see her exit unit C. Try to get her to go back to rehab. She is an adult. She can do what she wants.”

“Linda just turned thirty. I have been dealing with this drug problem for ten years now. Sad, she had a bright future. She was in college, had a job, had it made till Linda got mixed up with the wrong guys.”

“It happens,” says Tom. “Try to speak to her in a calm voice. Do not judge her, just ask her to return to the rehab center and leave it at that. Can you do that?”

“I will try my best.”

“Good. Call me after you speak with her.”

“I will. Thanks for finding her for me.”

“No problem, Buddy. Good luck.”

Tom runs April’s license plate and data shows she lives at 5825 McNeil Road in North Miami. His GPS shows he will be there in ten minutes.

Tom stops at McDonald’s for a hamburger with large fries. This will be his main meal all day. He arrives on McNeil Road and searches for April’s red Toyota Camry. He is in luck; she is still home.

The private investigator plans to accidentally run into her. He hopes a populated place like Edgewater Mall or a city park.

Tom sits on the road in front of a house for sale and waits. He does not have to wait long before April backs out of her driveway and heads out of the neighborhood.

April does not know what Tom drives, so he follows closely behind her in traffic. His dark tinted windows give him cover. He pulls alongside her at a traffic light and watches April talk on her cell phone. He hopes she is talking to a girlfriend or her mother.

Being a Friday, he knows she is not going to church. The time is 4:30 p.m. He is hoping she stops somewhere to grab a bite to eat.

April stops at a bookstore called 'Pop's Book Shop' on Connor Street. This is a stand-alone business, The next business close by is a Chevron Gas Station.

Tom drives over to pump number one and starts to slowly fill his gas tank. He is hoping she will not be long in the book shop, and spots him pumping gas and stops. To make it easier to be spotted, Tom opens his trunk, and replaces his black-in-color t-shirt for an orange one.

April exits the book shop with a purchase and walks toward her car. She has to look in Tom's direction while unlocking her car. He plays dumb and shows enough face for her to know it is him. Now the decisive moment.

April pulls up next to him and rolls down her window. "Hello, Mr. PI," she says with a warm smile.

"April, right?" He replies back as he continues to pump gas into his gas tank.

"You have a good memory."

"So do you, Young Lady. Do you have time for coffee or soda somewhere?"

"Afraid not. I am on my way to my mom's. We plan to catch a movie."

"A rain check, then?" says Tom with his best smile.

"Maybe. Let me call you. I have a busy schedule this week," says April pulling out a pen and notepad. "What is your phone number? I know you gave me your card, but just in case."

Tom gives her his cell number which is also his business number.

"Please find time to call me. It is fate that hooked us up today," he lies.

"I cannot promise when, but I will reach out to you."

"That is good news to hear. Do you want to ride along with me on my next surveillance for the insurance company?"

"Let us plan on that. This way we can sit and chat while waiting for your person to leave their home."



“I call the person the claimant, I call the home the residence, and the word leave we call it departing, so, we can sit and chat while waiting for the claimant to depart their residence.”

“Why do you use special words in your report?”

“We are dealing with insurance adjusters and insurance defense lawyers, and they are the ones that read our reports. We just do it to sound professional I guess.”

“I must go, I have an appointment I must not be late for.”

“What do you do for work?”

“I go to college online, and I am an animal pet sitter. My next appointment is watching three small dogs till the owners come back from their night out.”

“Cool. I will let you go. I hope you will call me.”

“I will try.”

“Try is all I ask. Bye.”

Tom continues to fill his gas tank as he watches his future date drive away.

Harry arrives at The Oaks Apartment complex at 4:30 p.m. and finds a parking spot to watch apartment C across the street. About one hour later he observes a tall, thin white male exit apartment C and depart in a beat-up Volkswagen bug.

Harry makes his move and drives across the street. He exits his car and knocks loudly on apartment C’s door. His daughter looks out the living room window and views her father. She has a look of shock on her face.

Linda opens her door and says, “Daddy, how did you find me?”

“I hired a private investigator. He found you. Why did you leave the rehab center?”

“I wanted to be with my boyfriend. I love him and he loves me.”

“Is it the tall, thin man I just saw departing in the Volkswagen just now?”

“How long have you been watching me, Daddy?”

“It does not matter. What I want you to do now is leave a note for your boyfriend that you are returning to the rehab center with your father, and you will hook-up with him when you complete your court-ordered rehab.”

“Nope. I love Brandon. We plan to get married and to find jobs and to....”

“Forget that dream. Come with me now. Finish your rehab. If this man Brandon loves you, he will stay connected, and he will wait for you.”

“Nope. I am an adult. You cannot make me go with you. I love you Daddy, but I am staying here with Brandon.”

Linda gives her father a hug, a kiss on the cheek, and steps back inside her apartment.

The last words he hears is Linda saying, “I will be fine.”

Harry, with tears in his eyes enters his car, and calls Tom on his cell phone.

“This is Tom.”

“Tom, it is me, Harry. I just spoke to my daughter. I waited for her boyfriend Brandon to leave in his Volkswagen bug. She will not go back to rehab. She says she loves Brandon, and they will be fine.”

“I ran Brandon Dixon in my data, and he has a long criminal record for stolen cars, and drug selling. It does not look good. This man is a career criminal.”

“I want to hire you to watch her for me.”

“Bad idea. Save your money. If Linda is into the wrong guys and drugs, then she will be in-and-out of jail herself. She has been on drugs ten years, right?”

“Yes, give or take a couple of months.”

“Harry, leave her alone. When she is ready, she will reach out to you. Linda always has before, right?”

“Right.”

“She will someday decide to quit drugs, and will go straight, or she will overdose, and go to heaven. That is reality, Harry. You just have

to walk away and hope the best. Do not give her any money or other support. Just offer her your love and hope for the best. I have other customers in the same boat as you. I know it is tough to hear, but you need to hear the truth.”

“I can’t sleep, I can’t eat, I am a mess worrying about my little baby.”

“I know you love her, Harry, but remember she is an adult. Try staying away and let her live her own life for better or worse. I know it will be tough to do, but you have to let Linda go. No money will change things. Any other private investigator would take your money. Me, I am telling you the truth. Let her go. Wait for Linda to come around.”

“I am leaving now. I will not return until she wants me. I am going to the store to buy a case of beer to get drunk.”

“Want company? I will join you.”

“No. You are right. I need to let her make her own life.”

“I am here for you, Buddy. Just call and I will drop what I am doing to have a beer with you.”

“You are a loyal friend, Tom. I will be all right. I just need time for all this to sink in. I will call you Tomorrow.”

“Make sure you call me.”

“I will call you.”

Tom dials his sister’s phone number.

“Hello, Brother. I know it is you from my caller I.D.”

“What are you doing right now, Sis?

“Doing dishes, we just had dinner and dessert.”

“Any leftovers? I am hungry and I want to talk.”

“No leftovers, but I can make you a sandwich or something. I do have a slice of Apple pie left. Your voice sounds down.”

“I am fine. I just hung-up with a client. I found his adult daughter for him. She left rehab with a boyfriend also in rehab. My client knocked on her door and begged her to return to rehab, but she said no. She was going to stay with her boyfriend.”

“Is he straight or on drugs as well?”

“He is a drug addict as well. I am worried about my client; he may harm himself. He sounded really down after talking to his daughter. He said he was buying a case of beer and wanted to be left alone.”

“Tom, you cannot save the world. Come on over for a slice of hot apple pie. We can have a cup of hot coffee and just talk.”

“I would like that. I can be there in twenty minutes.”

“I will be waiting. Do not knock or anything. I will be looking for you out the living room window.”

“Where are your kids and your husband?”

“They are in a backroom playing monopoly.”

“Good. I will see you soon. Need anything?”

“Just you, Brother.”

“See you soon. Bye, Sis.”

Twenty minutes later Tom pulls into his sister’s driveway. She waves from the living room window. He opens the unlocked front door and gives his sister a big hug. She motions for him to follow her to the dining room table where she has a pot of coffee waiting, along with a slice of pie.

“I forgot; do you take cream with your coffee?”

“I do.”

Tom and his sister chat while he eats his pie.

“I love apple pie. I remember mom always having some kind of dessert for me when I got home from school.”

Sandy nods her head at her brother’s comment. “I was into milk shakes. Strawberry was my favorite.”

Tom takes a bite of his apple pie and says, “My client is so down about his daughter refusing to return to rehab. Her lawyer warned her the judge is sick of seeing her in his courtroom. He will throw the book at her now. She faces jail time.”

“How long did you say this addiction has been going on?”

“At least ten years. My client always went out of his way to give his daughter what she wanted. He paid her traffic fines, rented her apartments, bought her cars, gave her weekly allowances, you name it, he has done it, and for what? She is still a drug addict.”

Sandy replies, “That is the problem. She knows all she has to do is bat an eye or say, “Daddy help me,” and he comes running. He needs to play hardball and refuse her demands.”

“I do not think my client can refuse her every wish. His love for her is too strong and she knows it.”

“How was the slice of pie? Can I offer you something else to eat while you are here?”

“Nope. That piece hit the spot. I will take more coffee.”

Sandy says, “I may need you to follow John. He has been acting differently lately.”

“Differently how?”

“In the love making department to start. He makes excuses not to hop in bed.”

Tom looks at his sister and replies, “If your marriage does not improve call me. I will place your husband under surveillance.”

Tom and his sister talk for about thirty minutes before he says goodbye.

While driving to his condominium his cell phone rings.

“This is Tom.”

“Are you a private investigator? I need a private investigator.”

Tom asks the female voice, “I am a PI. How can I help you and whom am I speaking with?”

“My name is Jackie Turner. I am calling you from Dallas, Texas. I need to hire you today. I suspect my husband, Chad, of cheating on me. He is on a business trip in your area or so he claims.”

“How did you get my name?”

“My sister is a lawyer here in Dallas. She made calls, and your name came to the top of her list.”

“I charge one-hundred an hour and I require a thousand-dollar deposit up front.”

“I can wire you the money right now. I only live a couple of minutes away from Wal Mart. I will give their cashier the money and you can pick it up at your end. Remember this code I will use, MOTR. It stands for Marriage on The Rocks. You will need that code to pick up your money”

“I have it down on paper, MOTR. Where is he now?”

“He is staying at a Days Inn at 2138 U.S 1. He loves to drive. He drove from Dallas to Miami non-stop in his black in color F150 pickup truck.”

“Do you happen to know the license plate number?”

“I had to look it up in our insurance documents. It is BTI468G, Texas.”

“Describe your husband for me”

“He is white, six ‘two,” weighs 220, is forty years old, bald with a mustache.”

“How long will he be in Miami?”

“He is a wine distributor for a large wine manufacture in Spain, and he covers the whole USA. I think another week, I am not sure. Miami is one of his largest markets.”

“Why do you suspect he has been cheating on you?”

“Every night I call his hotel room and there is no answer. I asked him last night where he was, and he told me he was out with clients. He has the perfect job to cover his tracks if he is cheating on me.”

“Has he cheated on you before?”

“I do not know. I never hired a private investigator before you. I suspect he is cheating on me right now, because he is not in his hotel room when I try to call him. I did suspect him of cheating on me with one of our employees. I just fired the worker instead of doing a surveillance on him.”

“What is the best phone number I can reach you at?”

“It is a MS area code. We just moved here from Gulfport. 228-437-3556.”

“I will go to Wal Mart and pick-up my retainer, then I will go to the Days Inn and look for his truck. If I have any news, I will call you.”

“Call any hour. I am a nervous wreck. I need the truth.”

“I understand. I will do the best job I can. Try to relax.”

“OK. I am pulling up to my bank’s ATM to get you your money, then I will be on my way to Wal Mart. Wait thirty minutes. Then your money will be waiting for you on your end.”

“Sounds good to me. I have to do food shopping anyway. I will head to Wal Mart now. Text me when you are all done on your end.”

Jackie replies, “Thanks so much for helping me. I hope I am wrong, about my husband, Chad. Our marriage has been rocky the last seven months. I do pray I am wrong. I love him, I do not want a divorce, I just need to know the truth.”

“I will know the truth over the next few days. If and when you speak to Chad, do not ask him questions about what he has been doing. Keep it short, make him think you are busy at work. Do you work?”

“I am a CPA. I will keep the conversations brief.”

“Good. I will text you when we know more about his activities.”

Tom drives over to the nearest Wal Mart on Cove Lane in Miami. He grabs a basket and starts shopping for food. First stop is to the fruit section, then on to pick up TV dinners.

Jackie texts Tom the four letters MOTR.

Tom stops by the cashier window. Two people are ahead of him in line. He calls his sister while he waits. Her phone line is busy. He calls Harry, next. His phone just rings and rings. Tom leaves a message for him to call him back. He walks up to the cashier window and shows identification to the middle-aged man.

“What is the password the sender is using for you to receive the money?”

“MOTR.”

The cashier asks, “How would you like your money? All hundreds?”

“All twenties, please.”

Tom watches as the cashier places in front of him his one thousand in twenty-dollar bills. “Here you are, Sir.

Tom texts Jackie the four letters MOTR.

Tom collects the pile of money and says, “Thank you.”

He finishes his shopping and heads home. Tom dials his sister’s number, but her line is still busy. Tom dials Harry’s number again and he does not answer, Tom dials the nursing home and asks for his mother’s room.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Mom, how are you doing today?”

“I am about to depart on the transport bus with Barbara, we are headed to the mall to take in a movie.”

“What is the name of the movie?”

“I don’t remember, I am just happy I found a friend to spend some time with.”

“Enjoy the movie. I will stop by in the morning if I can.”

Tom drives over to The Days Inn located at 2138 U.S 1. He checks the crowded parking lot for Chad’s truck. It is nowhere to be found. Tom parks at the entrance off busy Highway 1 and waits

At ten p.m. with the target not arriving at the hotel Tom calls it a night.



## CHAPTER 3

Saturday morning at six a.m. Tom's alarm clock rings loudly. He showers, has a cup of instant coffee along with two pop-up waffles, and heads out the door.

Twenty minutes later he pulls into the crowded parking lot of The Day's Inn on busy U.S 1. He searches for an F150 truck black-in-color with license plate BTI468G from Texas. He locates it parked out front in a handicap parking slot.

At nine a.m. Tom videos the target exiting the hotel with a suitcase and walking to his truck. He is walking fine. Chad backs out of his parking slot and heads North on U.S 1.

Tom follows the man to the IHOP restaurant. Chad sits at a table where a pretty redhead is sitting. He bends over and kisses her before sitting down. They have breakfast, laughing, and talking the whole time.

When Chad goes to pay, Tom exits the restaurant. He paid his waiter earlier when she brought him his food. He lied and said he was a doctor on call. Tom did this so he could exit the restaurant at any time.

Tom videos at ten-forty a.m. Chad holding hands with the unknown woman, opening her door to the pick-up truck, helping her in, entering his truck, and departing the area.

Chad arrives at a residence at 7492 Rodeo Drive. Tom videos the couple enter the house via the carport side door. Chad brings the suitcase inside the residence as well.

Tom runs the address. It belongs to a Cindy Day. Tom finds a parking spot down the road. He waits for his target to depart. He catches up on his notes while he waits.

Tom makes three phone calls. He dials Harry but the phone goes straight to voicemail. Tom leaves him a message to call at any hour.

The PI calls his sister next. It goes straight to voicemail as well. Tom asks Sandy to phone him back.

He tries his luck calling his mother. The front desk connects him to room 22.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Mom. I just wanted to call to make sure you are all right. How was the movie yesterday?”

“The projector broke in the middle of the movie. We were refunded our money. The bus driver drove us to the Sunshine Mall. We were free to visit the shops for two hours.”

“Did you buy anything?”

“No. I just shopped and had an ice cream cone in the food court.”

“I am glad you had fun.”

“We told the bus driver we wanted to visit the mall again.”

Tom replies, “I am on a surveillance. I have to hang-up and focus on the case. I do not want the man to get away.”

“Before you go, Son, what kind of case is it?”

“A woman in Dallas, Texas wanted me to watch her husband to see if he is cheating.”

“Is he?”

“It looks like he is. He met a woman for breakfast, and they are in her house now as we speak.”

“You have a job from a woman all the way from Texas?”

“Yep. Her sister is a lawyer, and they called a lawyer in Miami, who provided her with my name.”

“I hope you get paid from an out-of-state client.”

“My client wired me \$1,000 already. I am doing good. I have to hang-up now, Mom. I love you.”

Harry finally calls and he is crying.

“Why are you crying, Harry?”

“I am watching my daughter’s location. The van is gone and an unknown woman with short brown hair leaves in a hurry. I continue to

watch my daughter's place when an ambulance pulls up with lights and sirens. They kick down the front door and enter. I make it to the scene in time to see my daughter being placed in the ambulances. A police car arrives and secures the apartment. I am at Mercy Hospital. My daughter overdosed on cocaine."

Tom replies, "I am on my way, give me ten minutes. Where exactly are you?"

"I am in the emergency waiting room."

Tom dials his police friend's cell phone.

He answers on the second ring, "This is Dan."

"Dan, my good friend, Harry Winters, a client, is at Mercy Hospital Emergency Room. His daughter, Linda, overdosed on cocaine. Can you find out what her condition is for me?"

"I'll contact hospital security and I will call you right back."

Tom is only minutes from Mercy Hospital when Dan calls him back.

"Bad news I am afraid. It does not look good. She ingested a boatload of cocaine. An unknown female dialed 911 from the apartment, told the dispatcher to send an ambulance fast as her friend overdosed on cocaine, then hung up."

Tom replies, "Thanks, Buddy for the sad news. I am pulling up now to Mercy. I will call you back when I can."

Tom finds Harry pacing back and forth inside the emergency room. He takes his friend outside into the morning fresh air. Tom places his arm around him and says, "Have faith. Be strong. I will stay with you."

Harry nods his head up and down and softly says, "My Linda is my life. I love her so much."

Tom says, "Right down the hall is a coffee shop. Let us both get a cup of coffee in us while we wait."

"I don't want to leave my Linda."

"Once we have the coffee in us, I will go back to the emergency room to let them know where you are. There is nothing you can do now but wait."

Tom escorts his client to the coffee shop. “Wait here at this table while I buy two cups of coffee. How do you like yours?”

“Black.”

Tom quickly buys two cups of coffee and joins Harry who is softly crying into his shirt.

Harry is instructed to remain in the hospital coffee shop while his friend finds out the condition of his daughter.

Tom speaks with a nurse in the emergency room. She has good news. Linda will recover from her overdose and is being admitted to room 371 at this very moment.

Tom quickly meets up with Harry. “Buddy, I have great news. Linda will have a full recovery. She is being admitted to the hospital and is in room 371.”

Harry dries his blood-shot eyes with a napkin and sips the last of his coffee. “Take me to my Linda.”

Tom replies, “I will be happy to do just that. Let us go.”

Both men walk over to the elevator in the small hospital and ride it up to the third floor. No one stops them walking down the hall. They enter room 371 and Harry sees his Linda sleeping. He pulls up a nearby chair and grabs her left hand. “Daddy is here, Baby. Just rest.”

Tom quietly exits the room and walks to the nurse’s station. He informs two nurses that the father of the patient in room 371 is waiting by her bedside to wake up.

“What is the man’s name?” says one nurse as she grabs a chart.

“Harry Winters.”

“Visitors can stay thirty minutes a day. What is your name, please?”

“I am Tom Whitman. Here is my business card.”

The nurse looks at his card and says, “I need you to find my mother. How much do you charge for something like that?”

“If you let my good friend, Harry, stay in the room as long as he wants with his daughter, I will attempt to locate your mother for free.”

“You have a deal. What do you need from me?”

“I need you to visit my web site, click on the missing person order form and fill it out. Once I receive the order form, I will reach out to you. Since I am already here, do you happen to have a photo of your mother?”

“Yes, I have one.” The woman reaches for her purse under the nurse’s desk and hands Tom a photo of her mother. Will this do?”

Tom nods his head up and down and places the photo into his wallet.

“What is your name and what is your mother’s name?”

“I am Rachel King and my mother’s name is Pam.”

“Fill me in really quick with some back story.”

“My mother is divorced from my Dad. I have an older brother, his name is Sunny, and lives in California. My mother quit her job three days ago at Target for no reason at all. When I arrived at her house, her clothes, and all her jewelry were gone. Her Blue Honda 4-door Civic, is in the garage.”

“Where do you think she went?”

“My mother loves the game of Bingo. She is playing somewhere right now as we speak. When she reads in the casino magazines about a bingo tournament she just picks up and goes. Months ago, she went to Biloxi, MS. She went on a casino junket. They drove her back to her house upon her return from the bingo trip. I called the junket people, and they are out of business.”

Fill in my order form and I will work on it Tomorrow. If I locate her, what do you want to happen?

“I will go wherever my mom is at and bring her home.”

“Good. I will help you, Tomorrow. Tell me now about my friend’s daughter in room 371, please.”

“All she needs to do is rest. She will be fine. We pumped out her stomach and fed her medication that will make her sleep. Her vital signs are good. Anyone we treat for a drug overdose has to be admitted to the hospital rehab unit. So, your friend’s daughter will soon be discharged to that section.”

“Fantastic news. I will tell my friend, Harry, the news on his daughter, and then I will leave.”

Tom walks into room 371 with a smile on his face. He whispers, “You are ok to stay in the room with your daughter. I cleared it with the nurses. They fed Linda medication to sleep. They pumped out her stomach. The nurses just want her to rest. Linda’s vital signs are normal. Tom tells Harry about the new Florida law on mandatory drug rehab.”

Tom gives Harry the thumbs up and exits the room. He wants to get back on his divorce case.

He drives quickly over to Rodeo Drive to number 7492. The black F150 pickup is still parked in the middle of the driveway. The time is one p.m. Tom finds a good parking spot down the street and waits for activity.

At 4:30 p.m. Chad exits the residence alone, enters his truck and departs the area. He is dressed in a gray suit. Tom follows the man from a distance.

Chad stops at an Italian Restaurant called ‘Mamas.’ He exits his truck and removes a bottle of wine from a crate. He then enters the restaurant.

Thirty minutes later Chad returns to his truck empty handed.

Tom follows him to a 2<sup>nd</sup> Italian restaurant called ‘Dos Uno’s.’ Chad exits his truck with a bottle of wine and enters the restaurant. Twenty minutes later Chad exits empty handed, enters his truck, and departs the area.

Chad arrives back at 7492 Rodeo Drive, exits his truck, and knocks on the front door. The woman with red hair believed to be Cindy Day lets him in.

At eleven p.m. with Chad still in the private residence, Tom calls it a night. While driving to his own residence, Tom calls his client in Dallas with an update on her husband.

“Hello, Jackie, I am calling with an update.”

“Is my husband seeing another woman?”

Tom replies, "I am afraid so. I believe her name to be Cindy Day."

"A red head woman about 5'3 and looks about thirty?"

Tom says, "Yes. Do you know her?"

"She was our secretary back here in Dallas. I fired her because I suspected my husband was carrying on an affair with her in our office."

"She owns a house here in Miami. Chad is there now."

"Do you have video of them together?"

"Yes. I have them kissing, and of him opening the passenger side of his big trunk and helping her in."

"What? The snake never helped me into his truck."

"Do you want me to continue with my surveillance, or wrap it up and mail you a video disc along with my report?"

"Wrap it up. I will now hire a divorce lawyer and move on."

"You have a balance coming to you of two-hundred dollars."

"Keep it for helping me out on short notice."

"Thanks for the assignment, sorry he is cheating on you."

"I rather find out now he is unfaithful then years later after we started a family."

"I agree. A relationship does take two," says Tom.

"I look forward to watching the video and giving your report to my divorce lawyer."

"If I have to travel to Dallas to testify, I will only charge you for expenses."

"That is more than fair, thank you."

Tom and Jackie talk five minutes more before saying goodbye to each other.

Tom arrives back home and plays his messages. One is from his sister. Tom looks at his watch. It is midnight. He will call Sandy when he wakes up. He brushes his teeth, changes into his pajamas, crawls into bed and falls asleep.

Sunday morning around 8 a.m. Tom calls his sister.

Sandy checks her caller identification. and answers on the third ring.

“Morning, Brother.”

Tom asks, “Are you crying, Sis?”

“Yes. All night as well.”

“Why? What is happening?”

“I think John is seeing someone else.”

“Why do you say that?”

“A fellow mom at my son’s school saw him kissing my son’s teacher.”

“Which son, the teacher’s name, and which school?”

“Cory’s teacher, Ms. Alice Fincher. De Soto Elementary at 2995 Hawkins Road.”

“What does this Miss Fincher look like?”

“She is black, maybe five’-ten” with short dark hair.”

“What is her weight, does she wear glasses, and what does she drive, if you know.”

“Her weight is about 140, no glasses, and I believe she drives a green in color Toyota Celica.”

“Is she married?”

“I do not know. I have only spoken to her a couple of times. I work the afternoon shift most school days, so, John picks up the boys at their school.”

“How has your love life been lately, Sis?”

“Put it this way. It could be better.”

“Is John still the manager at that Home Depot on U.S 1?”

“Yes. He leaves here around 8 a.m. picks up the boys in the afternoon and stays with them till our babysitter arrives. He either stays home or goes back to work.”



“I will work the teacher, Tomorrow. I will run data soon on her. Where is John now?”

“He says he is working overtime over at Home Depot because of Covid, he is shorthanded.”

“What is John driving?”

“A Beige Jeep.”

“Do you have a license plate for me?”

“No.”

“I won’t call you; you call me when you are able to talk, says Tom.”

“Alright. I have another problem with my husband. John is on cocaine. I found a packet of white powder in his jeans when I did the wash the other day.”

“Dating a Black female, taking drugs, which is strange behavior for sure. I did not see this coming; you have marital problems. Now Sis, act normal, do not ask him any questions about work or his schedule. Ask nothing. I will find out what is going on.”

“Alright.”

“Dry your eyes, be strong. It could be a false alarm. I will find out the truth for you. You focus on your two boys and mom. I will focus on John and Ms. Alice Fincher.”

“You have a deal, Brother. I will call again soon.”

“Do you have the packet of white powder still with you?”

“No. I flushed it down the toilet.”

“Did you confront John about being on drugs?”

“No. He is under a lot of pressure at work, this Covid has caused many employees to quit leaving the store shorthanded.”

Tom says goodbye to his sister and turns on his computer. He runs data on an Alice Fincher and uses the school’s location as her address. He finds her quickly in his data search. Alice is twenty-nine years old, 135 pounds, five foot-four inches, and she drives a green in color Toyota Celica with license plate HAT376.

The schoolteacher lives at 4852 Winddance Avenue in North Miami. Tom's data shows the teacher as being black and divorced from a Rodger Fincher.

Tom calls Harry to check on his daughter's medical condition. The cell phone goes right to voicemail. Tom leaves instructions for him to call him back when he can.

Tom calls his sister who answers on the third ring.

"Hello, Brother."

"Hi, Sis. I ran the teacher and I have her vehicle and home address. The data shows her as a Black female, twenty-nine years old, five-four and 135 pounds. She owns a Toyota Celica with license plate HAT376. I will be on her from six a.m. on Tomorrow."

"Can I have her address?"

"Not at this time. When I am finished, I will give you a report with all the details. I do not want you driving by. Just relax. I am on him."

Tom runs data on Pam King. The data shows her residing at 3572 Milton Drive in Miami. The PI Googles the address, and he is only fifteen minutes away.

Tom has a bowl of instant oatmeal for breakfast. He then gets dressed and locks his condominium's front door. He rides the elevator to the ground floor. He is surprised to see Anthony working today as the guard on duty.

"I thought you worked Monday to Friday only, Anthony."

"I need the money to fix my car, so I told the boss to load me up with more hours."

"What is the make, model, color of your car, and what is wrong with it?"

It is an eight-year-old Chevy Camaro, beige in color and it is the starter that is bad, I think."

"Good luck. I hope the starter is the only thing wrong. You never know with an older car."

Tom enters his Honda, it starts right away, and he departs his condominium's ground floor front parking lot. He was too tired last night to park in his assigned third floor parking slot.

Fifth teen miles later, Tom drives by 3572 Milton Drive. The yard looks like it needs cutting. He knocks on the front door, but no one answers. He knocks on a neighbor's door posing as a lawn cutting service. He asks if they know where his client Pam King is.

The second neighbor says, "Pam went to Las Vegas. I drove her to the airport."

"Do you know which Hotel she is staying at?"

"No. She was excited to go, something about a Bingo Tournament or something."

Tom says, "Can I have your name and phone number for my boss?"

"Sure. My name is Tanya Cooper, and my phone number is 305-475-8346."

"Thank you for helping me. I will leave my business card in Pam's mailbox," lies Tom.

The PI contacts all the major hotels on the Vegas strip asking for the room of a Pam King. On Tom's ninth try the operator says, 'I will connect you.'

"Before you connect me can I have her room number?"

"No, Sir. You cannot for security reasons."

"I fully understand."

"I will connect you now."

"Hello?"

Tom lies and says, "Good morning, this is John in Maintenance, We will be cutting your water off for the next thirty minutes, and we just wanted to let you know."

"Thank you for informing me."

"My records show a Pam King but not your room number. I need your room number for my report."

"I am in room 407."

“We will be as fast as we can getting the waterlines fixed.”

“Thank you for letting me know about the water situation.”

“No problem. Have a lovely day, Ms. King. I have to hang-up as I have more rooms to call on.”

Tom calls his client next. He makes a note to ask the nurse about Harry’s daughter, Linda.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Rachel, this is Tom the PI.”

“Any news on my mother?”

“Yes. She is in Las Vegas.”

“Las Vegas!”

“Yes. She is staying at The Luxor in room 407. Their phone number is 1-800-366-2839. There is a Bingo Tournament going on.”

“I swear my mother has dementia. Thanks for helping me.”

“While I have you on the phone can you update me on how Linda Winters is doing?”

“She was sent to the hospital rehab unit. Her father went with her.”

“Thanks. I guess you will be on the next flight to Vegas.

“Soon as we hang-up I am calling the airlines for a ticket. Thanks again for your help. Crazy Mom.”

Tom returns to his condominium to finish his reports. He then has two beers, watches a football game, and falls asleep on his leather couch.

Monday morning Tom drives over to De Soto Elementary School and searches for a green Toyota Celica with Florida tag HAT376. He locates the car belonging to Alice Fincher on the North side of the school. Tom departs till the afternoon.

Tom calls his mom. The nursing home operator connects his call.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Mom. “How has the staff treated you lately?”

“I am happy with their treatment of me.”

“Do you see any changes going on with the staff?”

“I am getting my meals delivered late, that is the only change I notice. Why do you ask?”

“Sandy wanted me to ask you. Bring it up with her.”

“Fine. I will do that.”

“Are you coming to see me later?”

“Maybe. I am on a surveillance.”

“Barbara keeps asking me to ask you to bring her along.”

“I keep forgetting. I will make a note to bring her on a surveillance soon. I have to go, love you, Mom.”

At two p.m. Tom arrives at the school and parks right behind the teacher’s car. Tom climbs into the back seat so he would not be seen by anyone. Now it is just a matter of waiting.”

Tom sits there from two p.m. till the teacher departs at four p.m.

He follows her to Edgewater Mall parking lot. She exits her car and enters the jeep belonging to his brother-in-law. The windows are tinted very dark. Tom has to move where he can watch via the front windshield.

He videos the couple kissing. They talk, then start kissing again. The jeep departs and Tom follows from a distance as he does not know if John knows the kind of car Tom drives.

John pulls up to the drive-up-window of Burger King. Tom videos the man as he receives his order. The lovebirds park under a large tree in the mall parking lot. Tom calls his sister.

“Hi, Brother. Any news?”

“Yes. The teacher is with your husband as we speak. I have video of them kissing, and of John ordering their meal at Burger King. I want you to call your husband to see when he is coming home. Let us see what he says. Tell him to stop at a store on the way home and buy milk.”

Sandy calls her husband. It goes to voicemail. Sandy tries again and it goes to voicemail again. She texts her husband to call her regarding their son, John Jr. That does the trick. John calls her back.

“What is wrong with John Jr?”

“Nothing is wrong. I wanted to talk to you and both times I received your voicemail.”

“What do you want to talk about. I am busy at work, and I just cannot stop every time you call.”

“We are out of milk,” Sandy lies. “Bring a gallon home with you.”

“I can do that.”

What time can I expect you home for dinner?”

John lies to his wife, “I have a worker doing a food run at Burger King. We all have to stay and unload three semi-trucks. It will be late when I come home.”

“I understand, just bring milk home. Love you, Honey.”

“Likewise. I must get back to the unloading. Bye.”

Sandy calls her brother back and she is crying.

“I spoke to John. He lied to me. He said he was at work unloading three semi-trucks. He even said a worker was out on a food run at Burger King. The Snake.”

“Forty percent of married men cheat according to FBI data on the subject.”

“What do I do now, Tom?”

“If you love him and you do not want to break your marriage up, you forgive him if you can. Me. If I had a wife that cheated on me. Kids or no kids, I would divorce her. If not, every day she came home late I would suspect her of being unfaithful.”

“So sad to be in this situation.”

Sis, look at it this way. He is lying to you, he is messing around behind your back, he might catch some kind of sex disease, and pass it on to you. What is the number of affairs your husband has been involved in?”

Sandy says, “I do not know. It is dinner time for my kids. I must go. Will you stay on him till he arrives home?”

“Yes. I will text you when he is coming home.”

Tom hangs up and videos the couple kissing again.

John drives his lover back to her vehicle at Edgewater Mall. She gets back into her car and drives away. John follows close behind. They go to her residence. She opens her garage remotely, and both cars pull in. Tom videos the garage closing.

Three hours later at eight p.m. the garage opens, and John pulls his jeep out and drives away. Tom texts his sister to call him.

Shortly after sending his sister a text, she calls.

“Brother, what is going on. Did John return to work?”

“I wish. He drove over to the teacher’s residence and parked his car out of site in her garage. He just left. He is on the way home. He should be there in ten minutes. Ask him about work, catch him in a lie. Call me later to tell me the rest.”

“The Snake. How can he do this to me after a dozen years together?”

Tom leaves his surveillance and heads back to his condominium. Shortly after arriving he calls his sister.

“Hi, Sis, can you talk, where are you?”

“I am in my car. He forgot the milk. I am enroute to buy a gallon. He lied and said he just got off work but has to go back in at midnight. He is in our bed resting. The lying Snake.”

“I will be in your neighborhood from eleven p.m. on to see if he goes to work, or to the teacher’s house. I will let you know. Text me when he is about to leave.”

“I will do that. Thanks, Brother for helping me.”

Tom sets his alarm clock for ten-thirty p.m. and sleeps on top of the covers in his clothes.

The clock rings on time. Tom makes a pot of coffee, has a cup, and heads out the door. He arrives in the neighborhood of his sister just before eleven p.m. She texts her brother at eleven-thirty p.m. that John is in the shower.

Tom texts his sister, ‘I am outside waiting.’

Sandy texts, ‘John is high on cocaine, I caught him in the bathroom snorting up. He is not the same man I married. I worry when he is around the boys. He keeps telling me he is not an addict, and he does not need help, but he does.’

“People do change, sometimes for the worse.” texts Tom.

John exits his house and departs his neighborhood ten minutes to midnight. He does not go to work, but over to the teacher’s house and toots his car horn. The garage door soon opens, and John pulls his jeep inside, and the garage door closes. The time is 11:58 p.m.

Tom texts his sister. ‘The Fox is in the hen house of the teacher.’

“Sandy texts, ‘I will be seeing a divorce lawyer in the morning. Goodnight.’

Tom returns to his condominium. He watches the news, then falls asleep as soon as he hits the pillow.

Tuesday morning, Tom’s cell phone rings at 5 a.m. Tom looks at the caller. It is Harry Winters.

“Harry, is everything alright with you and Linda?”

“No. She walked out of the hospital rehab clinic. I went by her apartment we found her at, and I knocked and knocked. I looked in the window and the place is vacant. I spoke with a neighbor next door, and she confirmed they left in a rush. Now what do I do, Tom?”

“Let her go. She knows the dangers of taking cocaine and being around other addicts. It is a recipe for disaster.”

“Can you find her again for me? I will pay you for your services.”

“Alright, Harry. I will get back on locating Linda for you. I will charge you one thousand if I find her, and only five hundred if I come up empty.”

“Deal. Call me at any hour if you locate her.”

“Right now, I am going back to sleep,” replies Tom.

“I will keep driving around the town searching for her. I cannot sleep or eat. I am tied up in knots with worry.”



“I will work on your case after I have toast and coffee. Say nine a.m. I will call you soon.”

John comes home to an empty house at eight a.m. He calls Sandy on her cell.

“Where are you? Baby.”

Sandy shouts, “At a good friend’s house.’ I am leaving you. I gave you a dozen years of my life and for what? You are having an affair with my child’s teacher, and you are a drug addict. Give me a break. She is not even pretty.”

John replies, “Who has been feeding you lies?”

“I have it on video You are kissing her like crazy. You told me you had to work at midnight. Wrong. You went over to the teacher’s house and hid your car in her garage. You are a snake and I hate snakes.”

“Did you get your brother to follow me?”

“Yep.”

“Come back home. I will not see her anymore. I will not cheat on you again. I want you and the boys. Come back home.”

“What about your drug addiction? How long have you been using? I found a small packet of white powder when I washed your jeans, remember? Then last night I saw you in our bathroom snorting up a white powder.”

“Not long. I can stop. Just give me a chance. I love you and our sons. I will be a better man. Give me a chance. Where are you?”

“Nope. I do not trust you. I am going on my own. I plan to start over in life. Someday I will find my soul mate.”

“I am your soul mate, baby.”

“I am warning you, John. Stay away. Where is your gun? I do not want the boys to find in and play with it like it is a toy.”

“I keep it in my car in a locked box.”

“Please stay away from me and the boys.”

“Nope. No chance in hell. I will find you. I want my boys. When I do find you, and I will, the boys will come with me. Then I will move out of state. I will then....”

Sandy hangs up on him. She does not answer his repeated phone calls. She calls her brother instead.

“Hello, Tom. I just spoke with John. I told him I just moved in with a friend.”

“Which friend is that? Sis.”

“I lied to John. I am at the Holiday Inn next to Sunshine Mall. I parked by car in the rear, out of site of the road. I plan to homeschool the boys till I decide which city I want to live in.”

“Have you told mom?”

“No. I want you to break the news to her.”

“I will do that this morning. Call me if you need anything.”

Tom has his breakfast and drives over to the last address for Linda. One neighbor confirms the drug addict couple left at three in the morning. All the neighbors said, “Good riddance.”

Tom sits in his car and runs data on Brandon. He calls all the relatives of Brandon posing as a good friend from high school.

Tom says, “I landed at Miami Airport at eight a.m., and I rented a car. I went to the address Brandon gave me and he is no longer there. I want to see him before I drive to Atlanta, the city of my new employer. I want my friend to meet my wife and see my six-month-old daughter.”

Tom’s made-up story finally works.

Brandon’s Aunt Connie in Orlando says her Nephew is coming in by Grey Hound Bus sometime today.

Tom quickly says, “Do not tell him I called. My wife, our newborn baby, and I will be driving-up in a couple of days to surprise him.”

“I will keep it a surprise. Did you say if your newborn is a boy or a girl?”

“A girl, six months old. Her name is Vickie.”

“I can’t wait to hold her.”

“I cannot wait to see my good friend, Brandon. Remember, I never called.”

“It will be our surprise young man. What is your name?”

“Robert Jones, you can call me Bob.”

Tom asks Connie, “What is your address?”

“986 Las Flores Way.”

Tom replies, “I wrote it down. Remember this is to be a surprise on my friend.”

“My lips are sealed, Young Man.”

Tom calls Harry.

“Hello?” says Harry in a worried voice.

“Harry, you owe me one thousand dollars. I found Linda. Write this address down.”

“Fantastic, Buddy. It is worth a thousand to find my daughter again”

“I will not look for her again if she runs,” says Tom.

“What address is Linda at?”

“In Orlando at...”

“Orlando, why Orlando?”

“I do not know Harry. Her and Brandon are on a Grey Hound Bus as we speak. Brandon will be staying with his Aunt Connie at her place. The address is 986 Las Flores Way in Orlando.”

“How sure are you Tom of this address?”

“One hundred percent. Just start heading up to Orlando. It is only a four-hour drive.”

“I am on my way.”

“Say hi to my buddy Mickey Mouse when you hit town.”

Harry laughs at that comment. I will let you know what happens.”

“Please do. I have to run. Good luck, Harry.”

Tom quickly drives over to see his mom.

He stops at the front desk to sign in and to leave his driver's license with a clerk he does not know.

"Hello, I am the son of Rita Whitman in room twenty-two. My name is Tom."

"My name is Phil. I work here as a cook. Today I am at the front desk."

Tom shakes the man's hand and says, "My mom loves her meals. Keep the excellent work up."

Tom walks down the long hall to room 22. Barbara and his mom are playing cards.

They both are surprised to see him.

Tom says, "Mom, Sandy is divorcing John. She is in hiding from him. I cannot tell you where for her safety. John will be calling or coming by to ask you for her address. She is in fear of her life. For the next few months, I only will be checking in on you."

"I never did like that man, son. I had bad vibes."

"Well, Mom, Sandy just caught him snorting cocaine, and cheating on her with her son's teacher of all people. How long he has been doing this she does not know."

"I will not give him any information on my daughter, don't you worry."

"I will be on the road all day. I will come in the evening when I do come. Here is my business card with my cell phone number. Call me please after you speak with John."

Rita looks at her son and replies, "Give your mother a hug."

Tom does and waves goodbye.

Barbara says, "You are very lucky to have that man as your son."

"I worry for my daughter's safety. She married a mad man. He once said to her, 'if I cannot have you, no one will have you'."

Barbara looks at Rita and replies, “That statement doesn’t sound good.”

“I hope John doesn’t call here asking for me, or worse, showing-up here.”

Barbara pats her friend’s hand and replies, “I will stay around you as much as I can to keep an eye on you.”



## CHAPTER 4

Wednesday morning at nine a.m. Tom types away on his computer. He is behind in making videos and turning in his reports.

Tom types, 'Dear Attorney Baker. You will have to subpoena two people that are aware of Joey Jenkins drinking too much alcohol.

A good neighbor named Sam Moore said that him and Jess were known in the neighborhood as 'The Coors Brothers.' He would not give me a statement. He said he needs a subpoena. His home address is 4814 Drake Road in Miami.

Send a subpoena also to Jess's chess playing partner, Steve Horn, and his wife, Francis. They would play chess and drink Coors doing so. He resides at 4821 Drake Road in Miami.' His wife Francis babysat the Jenkins kids. She also observed Tom drinking Coors Beers.'

Cindy calls Tom.

"This is Tom."

Hi, Tom. Cindy here. I just wanted to know about the surveillance on C301 tenant, Joseph Dixon the other day."

Hi, Cindy. Joseph is a snake. He is a cheater. I have video of him kissing a client and spending time with her at his place."

"I want to go on a ride-along one day. Can I?"

"Sure. You are only the seventh person to ask me for a ride-along."

Cindy laughs and says, "Any day, any time, I am open to go on a ride-along."

"Good to know. I will put you down."

"I am about to go online at your website. I need two background checks."

"I will have them to you within thirty minutes."

"I will time them to see how long it takes."

"The time starts, Cindy, when my website confirms to you the order."

"Noted. Bye."

Tom is working on his reports when he receives a call.

“Hello? Tom speaking.”

“Good morning, Sir. My name is Trey. My sister said to call you about a job.”

“Yes, Trey. I want to hire you as my intern. When can you start?”

“I am released from the Marine Corps in two weeks. I need another two weeks to get settled. How about I contact you in thirty days?”

“Go to my business website and fill in the job application. I will save it till you reach out to me again.”

“Great to know I have a job once I am able to work. Is there any books to buy or equipment needed?”

“I supply everything. You can go to [www.pimall.com](http://www.pimall.com) to see what is out there.”

“I will do that now. Thanks for taking my call, Sir.”

“Call me, Tom.”

“Will do, Tom.”

Tom receives another call right after hanging up with Trey.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hi, Tom. Rachel here. I just touched down in Las Vegas. I am sitting inside my rental car as we speak.”

“What did you rent?”

“I rented a white-in color BMW 4-door. Now I am on my way to see my mother. Thought we both can play Bingo and come home with profits.”

“I hope you win. Thanks for calling.”

Tom gets back to typing his report on the Joey Jenkins case. He looks at his watch. The time is ten-forty-five a.m.

Tom receives a text from his website of a case that came in.

He checks his website. Cindy sent him five background checks. Four on tenant applicants and one on a new hire. She says on the new hire,



‘Need a work comp and a criminal check as well on all job applicants. You can charge me extra on job applicants.’

Tom calls Cindy.

“Hello, Eagle’s Landing, Cindy speaking.”

Hi, Cindy. Tom here. Do you have a minute?”

“Yes. No applicants are in front of me at the moment.”

“I will charge you 125 dollars on job applicants as you requested a work comp and criminal check performed in addition to a background check.”

“That price is very fare. The last company charged us 250 for a job applicant. My boss will be happy to hear that price.”

“I have to get busy. I only have thirty minutes an applicant.”

Tom saves his surveillance report and goes to his data company website to run his data. He use TLO which stands for ‘The Last One.’ Tom types in the information fast using two fingers. He finishes all four within thirty minutes.

He emails the four background checks on applicants to Cindy. Ten minutes later he forwards to Cindy the data on the applicant for employment.

Cindy calls Tom.

“That was fast.”

“No criminal on your job applicant, just a work comp from five years ago when he worked as a UPS driver.”

“Perfect. I am making sure the other cities are using your services from now on.”

“Thanks, Cindy. I will not let you down.”

“That is great to hear. Must go, someone is walking into the sales office.”

Tom’s phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hello, Sir. My name is Becky Walker Johnson. My sister April told me to contact you if I needed an investigator and I do need one.”

Tom is excited at the call. “Becky, just go to my website and fill in your request. Once it comes in, I will call you back to discuss your needs.”

“I am going there as we speak. Can you start Tomorrow?”

” I will look at my schedule and will give you my answer when we speak.”

“I am at your site now. I will hang-up and we will speak soon.”

“Sounds good,” says Tom.

Tom calls April’s cell. He gets her voice mail. He leaves her this message, ‘Hello, April. This is Tom. Your sister contacted me and is filling out the order form. When I go on her surveillance do you want to ride with me? Let me know. Bye, Tom.’

Tom returns to finishing his surveillance reports.

Ten minutes later Tom’s pager goes off regarding a job order.

Tom looks at his watch. It is noon. He checks his site. It is Becky wanting her husband Mitch placed under surveillance. Becky writes, ‘his work shirt smelled of a perfume I do not use.’

Tom calls Becky back.

“This is Tom. I see he works as a repair person. You requested Tomorrow. Why Tomorrow may I ask?”

“It is his birthday. I think that would be a good day.”

“Do you know the tag?”

“No.”

“I know on the order form you listed your address but give it to me now since I have you on the telephone.”

“13385 Seaway Road in Surfside.”

“I will do Tomorrow if your sister, April, rides with me.”

“I’ll tell her to call you now.”

Tom goes back to typing his surveillance reports.

About thirty minutes later he receives a call.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hi, Tom. This is April. My sister said I must ride with you Tomorrow, or she will kill me.”

“I do not want her to do that. You wanted a ride-along and I thought why not ride with me on her case.”

“What time do we meet?”

“I thought I would pick you up at five a.m., we get a quick coffee, maybe a donut, and then be on the job site at six a.m.”

“You need my address then, right?”

Tom laughs and replies, “That would help.”

April gives Tom her address, 5825 McNeil Road in North Miami, and says, “What do I wear?”

“Jeans and a top, a dark color if you have one.”

“Why a dark top?”

“So, it will be harder for someone to see you sitting in my car.”

“What type of car are you driving?”

“My silver in color Honda. See you at five a.m. Tomorrow.”

“I will be standing outside waiting for you next to my red Toyota Camry.”

“See you Tomorrow,” says Tom.

Harry arrives at 986 Las Flores Way. There are no cars in the driveway. Harry sits down the street. He waits to see if either Brandon or his daughter come outside.

Donna calls Tom on his cell phone.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Donna here at the nursing home. I just wanted you to know I spoke with a Mary Bowman. She is one of Barbara’s daughters from Texas.

She wanted me to know they are on their way. The two daughters rented a motorhome.”

“Thanks, Donna. I do want to meet them, so let me know more when you know more.”

“I will. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Tom takes a break from finishing his reports and making copies of his surveillance videos to call Becky. Tom looks at his watch. The time is 1:05 p.m. He wants to be finished with his reports by 5 p.m.

“This is Becky.”

“Hello, Becky, this is Tom the PI. Can you talk?”

“I sure can.”

“You didn’t attach a photo of Mitch when you filled out my order form.”

“Sorry, I will do it now.”

“While I have you on the telephone describe your husband for me.”

He is about six-two, weighs about 220, has a mustache and short brown hair.”

“Any glasses?”

“No. I wear glasses but Mitch dose not.”

“You left off race on my order form.”

“Mitch is white.”

“I spoke with April. She will be riding with me. I will be doing your case for fifty percent less. You are getting a discount because I like your sister and I want to get to know her better.”

“I hope you and her get along and have a fun date. I just hope Mitch is not having an affair.”

“Only time will tell. I charge my clients one hundred an hour, but like I mentioned, you will be billed at fifty an hour.”

“It is not the money. I just need the truth. Is my husband out working or is he messing around?”

“Do not ask Mitch any questions, just try to act normal. I will be on him from six a.m. What will he be driving?”

“Mitch has a black in color Ford F150.”

“Thanks. I will call you if I discover him with another woman.”

Tom sits backdown to finish his reports when he receives a text from his website that an order just came in.

Tom goes to his emails and sees a surveillance request on Beverly Jones again. His client is requesting two more days. The client writes in big letters, We need video of her alleged neck injury from an auto accident.

Tom calls his favorite client.

“Good Afternoon. Thank you for calling the law office of Attorney Doug Baker. I am Ellen.”

“Hi, Ellen. Tom here. Is Doug around?”

“He is in court. Can I take a message?”

“Yes. Advise him I will work the two days he just issued on the Jones case this coming weekend.”

“I will make sure he gets your message, Tom.”

“Thanks, Ellen. Have a wonderful day.”

“I will try.”

Harry spots Brandon walking to the mailbox at the end of the driveway. He places a letter inside and raises the red flag. Brandon returns inside the residence.

Harry calls Tom.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Tom. It is a good address here in Orlando. I just saw Brandon exit the residence with a letter for the post man.”

“So, Harry, what is your plan if Linda is at that address?”

“I am going to try to persuade her to come back to Miami with me. I want her to enter a drug rehab center.”

“I hope Linda does go back to Miami with you. Keep me informed.”

“I will. I hope she is inside that house and was not picked up by someone else at the bus depot.”

Tom replies, “Just give the surveillance time. They will go shopping or for a walk. Any dogs?”

“No. I only have seen Brandon.”

“Give it time before you knock on the door. Brandon could lie and say she is not with him anymore, and then you would leave not knowing if Linda is there or not. Just give the surveillance time. It is 1:30 p.m. I have to get back to finishing my reports. Keep me posted.”

“Will do. I cannot wait to see my baby.”

Harry does not have to wait long. An hour later a black-in-color Ford Escort arrives and parks in the driveway. Harry hears the horn blow.

Brandon exits the residence along with a man in his fifties. The occupants exit the car. One occupant is Linda. Harry watches as the two men carry groceries, a sack of potatoes, and a 12-pack of Coke into the residence. The women carry lighter items into the residence.

Harry is a happy man. He just observed his one and only child enter an address discovered by his PI. Harry calls Tom, back.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Harry, again. Good news. I saw Linda arrive back at the address you provided. I will wait to catch her alone. I want it to be her decision to stay in Orlando. I want her to tell me to go back to Miami without any boyfriend influence.”

“Smart move, Harry. You are learning. Linda is an adult. You cannot control her. If she stays with Brandon, so be it. I hope Linda is smart and returns to Miami with you.”

“Thanks, Tom, for finding my baby.”

“You are welcome, Harry. Just wait for the right time to approach her.”

“I will, bye, Tom.”

The clock on the wall reads two p.m. Rita is playing cards with Barbara when John walks into the room.

“Hello, Rita. Long time no see.”

Rita plays dumb and asks, “Sandy with you?”

John lies and says, “Home with the boys. I was with a client that lives near here. I wanted to visit before the drive back home.”

Barbara stands to leave the room when Rita stops here. “Barbara sit back down. John will only stay a minute. He has to leave pretty soon.”

Rita looks at John and says, “Bad time to visit, it is mealtime, so, come back the next time with my grandsons, please. I have not seen them in weeks.”

John says, “I will not lie to you. I was cheating on your daughter. Linda left the house with my sons. I do not know where they are staying. I was hoping you could tell me.”

Rita fakes a shock look on her face and replies, “That is my Sandy. She wants trust in her relationship. You broke that by cheating. How did Sandy know you were cheating? Did you tell her?”

“No. She had your son follow me. I told Sandy to give me another chance at our relationship and she said no.”

“John, I cannot help you. I do not know where Sandy is. If she calls me, I will tell her you stopped by to pay me a visit.”

John nods his head and leaves the room. Sandy turns to Barbara to fill her in on what is really going on.

“Listen, Barbara, I was warned by my children that John would pay me a visit. He is looking for Sandy and the boys. If he finds them, he may harm Sandy and take the boys. He has anger management issues and is on cocaine.”

“Thanks, Rita, for filling me in. I better stay with you as long as I can. You need to tell the front desk not to let him in again.”

“Good idea. I will do it right now. Come with me, please.”

Rita and Barbara exit the room and walk to the front desk.

“Donna, I do not want my last visitor to be able to see me anymore. He is my son-in-law, John Bateman.”

Donna pulls out a form from a desk drawer and replies, “Just fill this in, sign it, and give the form back. I will make sure all staff are aware of this man not being allowed to visit.”

Rita fills in the form, signs it, and gives it back to Donna.

Donna says, I will post the warning on the wall to your right. I will let my replacement know and that replacement will let her/his replacement know as well.”

“Thanks, Donna. I feel safer already. Can you dial my son’s contact number? I have to let him know that John Bateman stopped by.”

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Son, John paid me a visit just now. I played dumb. I pretended I did not know Sandy was in hiding. I just filled in a form at the front desk not allowing John to visit me again. Barbara will spend time with me as well.”

“Good to hear. I will call Sandy. I only will be visiting you for the next few months, Mom.”

“I understand, Son. I understand completely.”

“Good. I will call Sandy now. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

Tom calls his sister’s cell phone.

“Hello, Brother. Any news on my husband?”

“Yes. He just visited mom and she played dumb; she did not think anything was wrong at home. He finally confessed that you walked out with the boys, and he wants you back.”

“The boys and I are better off without the drama of violence or drugs, a clean slate.”

“Mom filled out a form the nursing home needed to block John from coming in to see her again. Barbara told me she will look after mom as well. I told mom I only will be visiting her for the next few months.”



Sandy replies, "I am about to take the boys with me to Wal Mart. We are running low on milk, cheese, bread, and other basic goods"

"Be careful, Sis. John must be searching everywhere for you. He wants the boys."

"He told me he has a gun in his glovebox. I will be careful. Love you, Bye."

"I love you, too."

Harry gets lucky. His daughter exits the residence walking a small dog on a leash. When she turns the next corner, a car pulls up tooting the horn. Harry exits the vehicle smiling.

"Baby, why did you leave the drug rehab center?"

"Daddy, how did you find me?"

"I hired a private investigator. He found you and he called me with your address."

"I told you in Miami I am not going back to any rehab center. I love my boyfriend. Where he goes, I go."

"I am not going to look for you again, Linda. You are an adult. Call me if you want to return home. Just text me each morning that you are safe, that is all I ask."

"I will do that. I will text you every day."

"Give your dad a hug, please."

Linda walks over and gives him a big hug. "Brandon loves me. He will take care of me. Just do not worry every minute, ok?"

Harry dries his eyes and replies, "I love you so much. I cannot help worrying about you doing drugs."

"Daddy, it is an illness. I am treating it my own way. I will text you daily. I have to walk the dog now."

"Can I walk the dog with you?"

"No. Brandon will join me soon. I do not want him to see you. We will fight again over you trying to come between us. I am an adult. Let me live my life, be it bad or good."

Harry walks back to his car. He turns to his daughter and says, “I love you.”

Linda smiles and says, I love you too, Daddy. Have a safe drive home.”

It is about four p.m. when Tom finishes his reports and making copies of his surveillances. He pours himself another cup of coffee. His cell phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hi, Tom, This is Harry.”

“You sound down. Are you all right, Harry?”

“I spoke to Linda. I waited till she was alone. I spoke to her when she took a small dog for a walk. She told me to go back to Miami. She loved her boyfriend and was staying with him.”

“How did Linda look?”

“A little thin. It was so hard to see her walking down the sidewalk after telling me to go back to Miami. I wanted to shake sense into her, but she told me she was an adult, and she wanted to live her own life.”

“Harry, you just have to leave her alone. She will call you soon for something. She always has, right?”

“Linda said she would text me daily to let me know she is alright.”

“That is a good start. Text her back every day, and when you do, just talk about you. Do not ask her questions. If you do, Linda will not text you anymore.”

“Thanks for your advice. I will do that. Speak to you when I arrive home,”

“Talk to you then. Drive safe, Harry. Bye.”

Tom sits back down at his desk to do the invoicing to his clients. The telephone rings two times in the next hour, but Tom ignores the telephone till he is one hundred percent finished.

Tom looks at his caller I.D. on his cell phone. One missed call was from his sister and the other one he did not know the caller. Tom dials a number.

“Hello, Brother. Thank you for calling me back. I know you are busy.”

“I had to finish my reports, make videos, and then do my invoices. I am all done. Why did you call?”

“I just wanted you to know we made it safely back to the hotel, and we had no problems at Wal Mart.”

“You didn’t run into anyone you know?”

“This part of town is new to me. I always shopped at the local Wal Mart by the house.”

“Has John tried calling you?”

“Ten times in the last hour. I just let it go to voicemail. Then I delete my voice mail, says Sandy with a laugh.”

“Knowing John, he won’t stop looking for his boys.”

“The boys miss him. They do not understand why we are at a hotel, that they cannot go back to their school, they miss their friends, they want to sleep in their own bed.”

“Sad to hear. They are the real losers in all this. Just be positive. Once your divorce is final, you can move on, hopefully meet a nice businessperson, and try your hand at marriage again.”

“I do hope I can find a good man. I loved my married life with John. He just got wrapped up into doing drugs and then messing around. He changed on me. I gave that man a dozen years of my life.”

“Just focus on finding a place to live. You cannot live in hotels forever. If you want, I can help you find a place.”

“Focus on your cases. I will be fine. Talk to you soon.”

John looks at his watch. It is dinner time for his mother. He decides to surprise her. He grabs his keys, locks his condominium door, and takes the elevator to the third-floor parking garage. Tom sits in his Honda and starts to close his door when John blocks it with his body.

“What are you doing here, John?”

“Waiting for you. Quit following me. I know Sandy hired you, but do not follow me again. Now where is my wife staying?”

Tom calmly looks at John and lies, “I do not know, she will not tell me. She says you are walking around with a gun.”

“I have one locked in my glovebox. Give Sandy a message. I will not stop looking for my boys.” John then walks away.

Tom starts his Honda and gets out of there. Once on the road he calls his sister.

“Hello, Brother.”

Tom replies, “John ambushed me in my parking garage. He wanted to know where you were staying.”

“What. The man is crazy.”

“Desperate is what I would call it, Sandy. He did not look well. Lack of sleep, not eating, his clothes all wrinkled, he must be going out of his mind looking for his boys.”

“I plan to hire a divorce lawyer Tomorrow, then move to Nevada, to Reno. I have a good friend out there. She is a real estate agent.”

“Just look around when you leave the hotel. I will look around more myself. I am going to see mom now.”

Tom stops at the nursing facility. He signs in and leaves his driver’s license with the attendant at the front desk. The woman says, “I am new here. My name is Mandy.”

Tom hands her his business card and replies, “I am Tom Whitman. My mother is in room 22. Rita is her name. I try to stop by in the evenings around mealtime.”

“I am the office bookkeeper. This is my part-time job three evenings a week.

Tom says, ‘Are you aware of a notice not to let in my brother-in-law, John Bateman?’”

“Yes, I am. Donna pointed it out to me yesterday.”

“Good to know. See you in thirty minutes.”

Tom walks into his mother’s room, but she is not alone. Hi, Mom, Hi, Barbara.”

They both say hello as they play cards.

Rita says, "Give me a hug, Son.

Tom gives his mother a hug and replies, "John has been calling Sandy, like twenty-times a day. He is going crazy looking for his sons. He ambushed me this morning on the third-floor parking garage at my condominium. I have a feeling he will be paying you another visit."

"I will tell him again what I told him last time, I do not know where Sandy and my grandsons are staying."

Tom nods in agreement. "I will not be stopping by the next few days. I have a couple of surveillances to do."

"Just be careful on your cases."

"I will."

Barbara says, "Gin."

Tom says, "Sorry I showed up. You lost your concentration, Mom."

Rita laughs, "This is only the third time today Barbara has won a hand."

Tom looks over at Barbara and winks. He knows her friend is letting his mom win.

Tom chats with the ladies for ten minutes or so and says,

"I will stop by again when I can. I love you, Mom."

"I love you too, Son. Thanks for checking on me. Now give me a hug."

Tom gives his mom a quick hug, then stops at the front desk to sign out, and to retrieve his driver's license. "Good night, Mandy."

Mandy replies, "I lost touch with a good college friend. What is the cost to locate her for me?"

"I will do it at cost. Twenty-five dollars. Just go to the website on my business card. Fill the boxes in with the information I need, and I will call you to confirm I have the information. You can then ask me any questions you may have."

"I will do that in the next few days."

“What is her name?”

“Gail DiCenzo.”

“That name isn’t very common, so I should have no problem getting you an address, an email address, and a phone number.”

“Good to know. I will fill out your form soon. Here is your driver’s license Mr. Whitman.”

Tom stops at the drive-up-window at KFC near his condominium and orders his dinner. He turns his cell phone off while he waits for his order. He retrieves his order, says goodnight to the window clerk and drives home.

Tom finds an opening in front of his building and parks his vehicle under a lamp post. He enters his building, says hello to the security guard, checks his mailbox, enters the elevator with his meal, and rides up to his floor.

Tom sits down on his leather couch and flips channels as he eats his chicken.

## CHAPTER 5

Thursday morning at 4:30 a.m. Tom runs a locate search on a Gail DiCenzo. He finds her living in Aspen, Colorado. He then departs for North Miami to pick-up April Winters.

Tom pulls up to 5825 McNeal Road and there waiting for him is his future girlfriend.

“Good morning, April.”

“Hello, Tom. I like a man that is on-time.”

He laughs and replies, “You look very pretty.”

“You are full of compliments.”

Tom and April make small talk while on their way to 13385 Seaway Road in Surfside. They drive by the residence and out front in the circle driveway is a F150 truck.

“That is Mitch’s truck,” says April with excitement in her voice.

“Correct. The license plate matches my data.”

“Thanks, Tom, for letting me ride along on my sister’s case.”

“You are welcome to ride along with me on any future cases. I love your company. We will park down the street and wait for him to depart,” replies Tom pulling out a thermos from a large bag in his backseat.

“Would you like a cup of hot coffee, April?”

“Yes, I would, thank you.”

“I have packets of powder milk, and brown sugar if you don’t take your coffee black.”

“Black is good.”

Tom hands April a large paper cup, and says, “This is hot,” as he slowly pours the coffee.

The couple sit and talk about their lives as they wait for Mitch to be active.

Tom explains, “On surveillances people are active and go non-stop, while others do nothing and never depart. Those type of cases are great if you have paperwork you need to catch-up on. If not, the surveillance tends to be boring.”

“Mitch told my sister last night he had plans today but would not provide any details.”

“We will find-out what Mitch is up to,” says Tom as he sips his hot cup of coffee.

“Did Becky tell you it is Mitch’s birthday today?”

“Yes, plus she smelled a strange perfume on his dirty shirt while doing their laundry.”

“I pray my future husband will be true to me and not fool around,” replies April as she takes a sip of her coffee.”

Tom asks the big question. “No boyfriend in your life?”

April looks at him and replies, “No. My last one cheated on me. I came home early from work and found Pete in bed with one of his co-workers. If I had a gun on me, I would have shot them both, I was so mad.”

“The FBI have stats on unfaithful spouses. The agency says forty percent cheat.”

“How long have your parents been married, Tom?”

“My dad died when I was young, and my mother never remarried.”

“Did your dad die in an auto accident?”

“Yes. A drunk driver going the opposite of traffic. He slammed into my dad’s car going eighty miles an hour. The police said our father died instantly. I was about eight when this accident occurred.”

“How sad. Both of my parents are together for forty years. I want to make sure my marriage last as long. I am honest, diligent, and I care for people. Why do they have to lie and cheat? I do not get it.”



“They lie and cheat because they feel they can.” replies Tom. “I am like you, April. I want a companion that wants only me, no matter what. I am seeking true love.”

April smiles and replies, “I am happy we are on the same page when it comes to a relationship.”

Tom gets up the courage and says, “April, will you go out with me on a real date. Maybe take in a dinner, or a movie, or both?”

“I would love to give our relationship a try.”

Tom smiles and says, “That is the best news I have had all month, heck all year. Tell me more about you.”

“My parents are Joey and Helen Walker. They live in Florida. They are in a condominium in Tampa. They love it. My sister Becky as you know is married to Mitch. They have no children. They are having marital problems, there is a big trust issue they need to get over.”

Tom looks over at April and asks, “Did you go to college?”

“I went to LSU for two years. My mom was sick with breast cancer, so I quit to be home taking care of her. I plan someday to go back to LSU.”

“What was your major?”

“Photography. I love taking pictures. I have a whole collection of albums I can show you if you want.”

“How about our first date be me ordering pizza, and us looking at your photo albums.”

“Wow. I would love to show you what I snapped.”

“Then it is a date then.”

“Tell me about you, Tom.”

“My father died when I was eight. My mom is named Rita. She has Kidney cancer and lives in a nursing home. My sister Sandy and I take turns visiting my mother. Sandy has two boys and is a schoolteacher. She hired me last week to follow her husband, named John. I caught him cheating with a schoolteacher at his son’s school. John also has a drug addiction with which he is dealing.”

“What is Sandy going to do about her husband cheating on her?”

“Sandy moved out of the house and is in hiding because John is looking for her. If he finds her, he will take the two boys away from her, and then move out of state. He staked out my parked car at my condominium building. When I went to leave, he stopped me demanding I tell him where his wife and boys are. He was high as a kite, too.”

“A combination of anger and drugs is not a good mix.”

“You are so correct, April. I have a crazy brother-in-law.”

Mitch’s F150 truck departs the residence.

Tom says, “Here we go. Put your seatbelt on, please.”

April asks, “Anything I can help you with?”

“You can take notes for me. I will tell you what to write.”

“Alright. I can manage that.”

“Write, ten-twenty-three a.m. The subject departs alone in his F150.”

April writes as Tom speaks.

“Write, ten-forty-one a.m. The subject pulls into the City Center Mall located at 3492 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue.”

April writes again what Tom speaks.

Tom watches Mitch drive around the huge parking lot.

“Is he seeing if someone is following him?”

“No, April. He is looking for a vehicle.”

Suddenly the F150 stops by a four-door Ford Focus.

Tom and April watch a pretty woman with long blonde hair enter Mitch’s truck.

Tom videos the love birds as they kiss. The F150 slowly drives away.

“Get out quickly, write her license plate down. I need to run it.”

April exits Tom’s Honda and writes the rear license plate number on her notepad. She quickly enters her ride and says, “I got it.”

Tom follow the couple to a Spanish Restaurant called ‘Dos-Dos.’

“Write this down, please. Eleven-fifth-teen a.m. Video. The subject and his unknown female arrive at Dos-Dos, a Spanish Restaurant located at 4967 Smith Street and enter.”

“Now what?”

“I run the license plate of the female. Then I go inside with my ink pen covert camera, and I sit near them to obtain video. If I am lucky, they will discuss their plans while they eat. You have to sit here and wait for my return. I am sure Mitch knows you, so you have to stay hidden. I will return before they exit the restaurant. Can I bring you out a meal?”

“Alright, nothing fattening. How about a chicken salad?”

“Anything to drink?”

“A coke, please, with no ice.”

Tom exits his Honda and says, “Lock my car doors.”

April does and then calls her sister with an update.

“Hi, Sis. I am calling with an update.”

“He told me he was going to his office for his birthday party.”

“Nope. He met a woman in a mall parking lot, the pretty woman with long blonde hair entered his truck and kissed him.”

“Really? What did he do next, go to her place?”

“Nope. They are inside the Dos-Dos Spanish Restaurant on Smith Street. The PI went inside to obtain covert video.”

“Who is this woman?”

“Tom has her license plate. He will run it soon and I will call you with the name.”

“The only pretty blonde I know is Jackie at our Gym. She works behind the counter.”

“I will call you back once Tom has her information.”

“What do you think of the PI?”

“Cute, good looking, and nice to talk to.”

“Is he boyfriend material? Your last one was a dud.”

“You are right. Pete was a dud. On a scale of one-to-ten, Tom is an eleven. I like him. He already asked me out.”

“I want to meet him after he finishes my surveillance.”

April says, “I will call you back soon. Bye, Sis.”

Tom asks the host to be seated at his favorite table which is next to Mitch and the woman.

A server comes over and asks, “The number of people in your party, Sir?”

“Just me for now. I am waiting on my girlfriend to join me.”

“What would you like to drink?”

“A coke, please, with no ice.”

The server returns with his beverage.

Tom says, “My girlfriend cannot make it. So, I will have your meatloaf with a baked potato, and a grilled chicken salad to go.”

Tom sits there and slowly drinks his drink. He strains to hear the conversation of the love birds.

The server brings Tom his meatloaf and his to-go-order.

Tom lies, “I am a Doctor on call so, can I have the check now? This way I can leave at any time if I am called in.”

“No problem. Here you go.”

Tom pulls out his Visa card and hands it to the middle-aged server.

“I will be right back.”

Tom hears Mitch say, “I have to buy myself a birthday present and have it wrapped. I told Becky I was going to my office birthday party.”

The couple laugh at Mitch’s comment.

The server returns with Tom’s check. He leaves a nice-size tip for the server and says to her. “Thank you for serving me so fast. What is your name? I will ask for you when I return with my girlfriend.”

“My name is Ginger.”

Tom says, "Do me a favor. I will take my meatloaf to go. I was paged to go back to the hospital."

The server picks-up Tom's meal and leaves.

She returns a minute later with the to-go-box.

Tom exits the restaurant with both to-go-meals and returns to April.

Once in his vehicle he says to April, "Write this down, please."

"The investigator enters the restaurant with a covert video camera and records the claimant say he has to buy a gift and have it wrapped. He will bring the gift home to your sister and say this was his office birthday gift."

April writes down what the PI said aloud, then says, "What a jerk my sister married."

"I will run the license plate now."

Tom pulls out his laptop and types away. He says, "The Ford belongs to Robert and Jackie Rodgers."

"While you were in the restaurant, I called my sister and described the women with Mitch. She said the only pretty blonde she knows is a lady at the Gym that works there. Her name is Jackie."

"What is the name of the Gym and what street is it on?"

"Gold Gym on US.1."

Tom googles for the phone number and calls the gym. He hands the phone to April and says, "When they answer ask for Jackie."

"Gold Gym. Donna speaking."

"Can I speak with Jackie, please?"

"She is off today."

"Thanks, I will call her later in the week."

April hands the cell phone back to Tom.

"Jackie from Gold Gym must be the Jackie, Mitch is with," says April.

Tom calls back the gym.

"Gold Gym. Stewart speaking."

“I need to speak with a Jackie Rodgers please.”

“She is not hear today. Can I help you?”

“No. I will call her back Tomorrow.”

Tom says, “This Jackie must be from Gold Gym. She is married as well.”

April and the PI eat their take-out-meals and make small talk.

Twenty minutes later the couple exit the restaurant holding hands. Tom videos the couple as they walk to the F150 truck. Mitch helps the woman in, and he departs the area.

Tom says, “The time is twelve-thirty-five p.m. Video. The subject and the woman, believed to be Jackie Rodgers walks hand-in-hand to the truck. He helps her inside his vehicle, and they depart the area. Note: Mitch is overheard saying he has to buy himself his own office birthday party gift.”

April writes every word down that Tom speaks.

They follow Mitch to The Days Inn at 2821 US.1. They watch as the driver pulls-up to room nine and enters with his companion.

Tom says, “twelve-forty-two p.m. Video. The subject arrives at The Days Inn located at 2821 US.1 and enters room nine with the pretty blonde.”

April writes every word that Tom speaks.

Tom dials a phone number and Becky answers on the third ring.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Becky. Tom the PI, here. I have news for you. I will have your sister give it to you.” Tom hands the cell phone over to April.

“Are you sitting down?”

“No. Go ahead and tell me the sad news.”

“Your husband this very minute is inside The Days Inn located at 2821 US.1 in room nine with Jackie Rodgers. She works at Gold Gym. She is married as well to a man named Robert. Tom overheard Mitch say he had to buy his own birthday gift from his office.”

Becky replies, "I know what I have to do now."

"Which is what, Sis?"

"I need to build up a savings plan, get credit cards in my own name, then file for a divorce. I thought he loved me." Becky starts to cry.

April replies, "You can move in with me. We will be fine. Clean him out at the bank and come stay with me. I have a second bedroom, remember?"

"No wonder our love life stinks. He is messing around behind my back."

"Sis. Move in with me Tomorrow. I will help with the move."

"Let me know when the jerk is coming my way."

"Will do, Sis. Be strong. Chin up."

April turns to Tom and says, "I hated that last call."

Tom nods and replies, "It is always hard giving a family member sad news."

"Do we stay here to see what Mitch does next, or do we go home since you confirmed he is cheating on my sister?"

"We stay. We need to let the spouse know how long her husband was in the hotel room with the woman."

Tom starts to yawn.

"Are you sleepy, do you need a nap?"

"I am trying to stay awake. I have been getting little sleep. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Since I knew, you were going to ride with me."

"Really?"

"I liked you since the window repair shop where we first met."

"Really?"

"I have a confession to make."

"What is that? Tom."

“I ran your license plate, went to your residence, and waited for you to depart. I followed you to the bookstore and pretended to get gas. I was hoping you would see me and come over and you did.”

“You have a new name now. I will be calling you Sneaky Tom from now on.”

Tom yawns again, but this time the yawn was longer.

When they exit room nine, I will tell you. Enjoy your nap.”

Tom reclines his leather seat and closes his eyes. Soon, he is snoring away. April snaps a photo of him sleeping.

Tom sleeps for over two hours when April shakes him awake.

“Mitch came out and put oil in his truck. They are about to leave.”

Tom rubs his eyes and says, “I needed that nap. Thanks, partner for covering for me.”

The pi grabs his video camera just in time. Tom records both Mitch and the woman exiting the hotel room. Mitch rearranges his belt, helps the woman into the passenger side of his truck, looks around the area, before entering his truck and departing the area.

Tom says, “three-ten-p.m. Video. The couple exit room nine together, he helps her into the truck on the passenger side, looks around and departs the area.”

April writes this all down on her notepad. “I wrote down what you said.”

“Thanks, April, for your note taking.”

Tom keeps his distance following Mitch in the Miami area. He sometimes looks at the GPS screen in his Honda as he drives. Mitch drives North on Miller Road. Tom does not follow but pulls over and parks.

“Why are we parking, something wrong with your Honda?”

“No. The GPS shows this road as a dead-end street. Cheaters sometimes do that; they drive down a dead-end street to see if someone is following them.”

“I will call Mitch, Sneaky Mitch from now on,” says April.



Ten minutes later Mitch drives right past them.

“You are right, Tom. There they go.”

“April, do you know what driving down a dead-end street means to me as an investigator?”

“No.”

“Mitch has done this cheating thing before. He knows from experience to drive down a dead-end street. Your sister has had previous surveillance on him. They were caught too.”

“No way. My sister would have told us, so we would not get caught either.”

“Get your sister on the telephone, please. I need to speak with her.”

April starts dialing her sister and replies, “I like that you say, please, when you ask for things.”

Becky’s phone goes to voicemail. Tom takes the cell phone from April and leaves a message for Becky. “Becky, call me when you get this message. I want to update you. The couple have departed the hotel.”

Tom turns to April and asks, “Will you give me a kiss, pretty please?”

April laughs, she leans over and kisses Tom. She replies, “You do not have to say pretty please. Please will do.”

Tom laughs at her comment on pretty please.

He follows Mitch from a distance. The cheater stops at Mike’s Deli drive-up window.

Tom says, “three-fifty-one p.m. Video. Mitch stops at Mike’s Deli located at 5883 Ballard Avenue and uses the drive-up-window to order. He then moves forward to a second window to pick up his meals and drinks.”

April writes this all down and replies, “I got it all down.”

Tom looks at April and asks, “I am going to order a sandwich and coke, do you care for anything yourself?”

“Whatever you order make it two.”

Tom pulls-up to the order window and says to the cashier, “Two chicken sandwiches and two cokes with no ice.”

Tom sticks out a twenty-dollar bill and the cashier says, “It is free, Sir. Nick is paying.”

Tom looks in the cashier window to see Nick waiving at him.

Tom says with surprise, “Nick, what are you doing here? You should be at your shop welding.”

Nick walks up to the cashier window and sticks out his hand. Tom shakes his stubby hand. Nick replies, “My family owns this franchise for ten years. I stopped by to get meals for my six welders.”

“I thought you had three welders.”

“I hired three welders from an ad I ran last week.”

“Good to hear. Thanks for the meal. I am on a surveillance, and I have to go.”

Nick replies, “I bet you are following Mitch in his F150.”

Tom looks at Nick with a surprised look on his face. “I am. How did you guess?”

“Mitch is one of my welding customers. He always eats here when he can. He loves the fries. I saw him and waived, and then you pulled-up, and I put the two together.”

“Do you have anything you can share with me on Mitch?”

“He has a different woman every week. This one is pretty. The last one looked like a dog.”

“Nice to know. See you around.”

Tom picks-up his order and sits five hundred feet from Mitch.

April and the hungry PI eat their meals.

“I hope you were hungry. I did not know if you wanted chicken or not.”

Mitch departs the parking lot and returns to his hotel room.

Tom says aloud, “four-nineteen p.m. Video. The subject departs the restaurant parking lot with a woman passenger.”

Tom follows the subject from a safe distance.

Tom says, “four-thirty-five p.m. Video The subject enters hotel room nine again with the female.”

April writes on her note pad every word that Tom says aloud.

April takes a bite of her sandwich and replies, “Good choice, thanks.”

Tom asks, “This Pete you dated, what did you see in him?”

“Good question. Most men start out to win you over with candy, flowers, gifts, and fancy diner joints. Then once you are his property, they cheat on you. I do not get it.”

“I will tell you right now if you become my girlfriend I will never cheat. I also will not buy you candy and flowers.”

“What will you give me, gifts?”

“Nope. I will give you honesty, trust, and my undevoted love.”

“Tom, you sound too good to be true.”

“I will take you to see my mother. You can ask her what type of man she raised. Rita is in a nursing home, and I try to see her every night.”

“Do you think Rita would like me?”

” I think mom will love you. If you have time, we can visit her before I drive you home.”

“I would like that.”

“We will go as if you are my new private investigator I just hired. Then once in her room I will step out to get something from my car giving you time alone with her.”

“That is the plan then, Tom.”

April calls her sister.

“Hi, Sis, what are you doing?”

“Putting my shoes on.”

“Where are you going?”

“I am going to knock on room door nine and say ‘housekeeping’.”

April laughs at her comment.

Becky says, “I am on my way. My babysitter just arrived. I want to have a talk with the jerk I married.”

Tom overhears the conversation between sisters and says, “Come on over, just bring no firearm. It will be interesting to see what happens if they open room nine’s door.”

“My GPS says twenty minutes.”

“Drive safe, wear your seatbelt and do not speed,” says April.

Tom says, “This should be fun to record as he picks up his video camera.”

April replies, “I hope Mitch doesn’t strike her.”

“Is Mitch violent?”

“I do not know. Becky never told me if he ever hit her or not.”

“Call her back and ask.”

April calls her sister. “Hi, Sis, has Mitch ever hit you?”

“No. He knows I would hit him with my favorite frying pan if he did.”

April laughs at her sister’s comment. “That is good to know.”

Twenty minutes later April says, “Becky just arrived, that is her car, the blue colored one.”

Tom videos Becky knocking on room nine’s door. Mitch comes to the door, then slams it quickly. Becky stands out front of the hotel room with her arms crossed.

Tom says aloud, “Video. Five p.m. The subject opens his hotel room door then closes it suddenly when he is aware it was his wife knocking.”

“Got it on paper,” replies April.

Tom puts down his video camera and calls Becky.

“What did Mitch say when he opened the door?”

“I said housekeeping. He opens his room door and says Oops. I told him we needed to talk.”

Tom replies, "I have you on video knocking and Mitch opening the door."

"Get video of the woman exiting room nine as well. I plan to use it against my husband in divorce court."

"Will do. Bye." Tom picks his video camera up.

Tom videos Mitch exiting his hotel room in jeans with no shirt. Becky and Mitch talk for about four minutes. Mitch reenters his hotel room and Becky departs the area.

Tom calls Becky. "What did he say?"

"How did you find me. How long was he being followed?"

"What did you respond with?"

"I had a pi follow you. I am done gathering evidence on you."

Tom replies, "I picked up my video camera and videoed Mitch exiting his hotel room and speaking with you."

Becky replies, "Make sure you video the woman with him in the hotel room. I am going home to have a good cry."

Tom turns to April and says, "Write this down, please. Five-zero-one p.m. Video. The subject exits the hotel room and speaks with his wife who knocked on the hotel room door. At five-zero-five p.m. the subject reenters his hotel room."

"Have my notes all caught up."

"Good. I just need to capture on video the woman with Mitch. Then your sister will have the evidence she will need to divorce him for cheating."

"The low life, cheating on my sister."

"This cheating on your sister is not his first rodeo. You heard my good friend, Nick, say Mitch is with a new woman every week."

The hotel room door opens. Tom reaches for his video camera and says, "five-twenty-two p.m. Video. "The subject exits the hotel room with his lover. He opens the passenger door of his truck for her, then enters his truck and slowly departs, Note: The subject looks around the area before entering his vehicle."

April finishes writing the information down and replies, “I have it all on paper.”

Tom follows Mitch from a distance.

The subject arrives at the City Center parking lot and lets the woman out. She waves goodbye and Mitch departs the parking lot. Tom does not follow him anymore.

“What is up? We are not going to follow my brother-in-law?”

“No. We need to confirm Jackie’s address. The data says 8652 Ford Road in Miami.”

The Ford Focus departs the mall parking lot. The driver drives to a large four-bedroom house at 8652 Ford Road and toots the horn.

Tom pulls into a driveway across the street and grabs his video camera. He says, “I want to get this on video. Watch the house we just arrived at and let me know if anyone comes out to challenge me.”

“I am watching. No one yet.”

Tom videos a man with a small child exit the residence and greet Jackie with a kiss. All three enter the house.

Tom says to April, “Write this down, please. Six-zero-seven p.m. Video. Jackie arrives at 8652 Ford Road in Miami and toots her car horn. A man with a small child exit the residence, the man gives Jackie a kiss, and they reenter the residence together. Surveillance ends.”

April stops writing on her note pad and replies, “Got it down. Now what?”

“You call your sister and update her, then pass me the phone, please.”

April calls Becky who answers on the second ring, “Hello?”

“Hi, Sis. Here is the final update for today. Tom has video of the woman leaving the hotel room. Mitch dropped the woman off at her car at City Center Mall and he drove away.”

“Where did he go next, as he is not home?”

“Tom did not follow him. He needed to confirm Jackie’s address. Guess what we have on video?”

“What?”

“Her arriving home and a man with a child greeting her. The man kisses Jackie and they all go inside as one happy family. We think Mitch went to buy his office birthday present and then he will come home.”

“Me and my largest frying pan are waiting for him to walk in the door.”

April hangs up laughing at her sister’s comment. April says to Tom, “My sister said her, and a large frying pan are waiting for him.”

Tom laughs and looks over at April. “I can take you home or I can take you with me to see my mother in the nursing home. Where do I take you?”

April says without any hesitation, “To your mother’s.”

Tom leans over and kisses April. “I like that answer.”

April replies, “You didn’t say please when you kissed me.”

Tom puckers his lips and says, “Please.”

April laughs and leans over and gives Tom another kiss.”

Tom asks April to call her sister back.

“Hello?”

“Becky, be honest with me. You hired a private investigator on your husband recently, Right”

“Yes. I am sorry I did not tell you.”

“I knew you did because your husband went down a dead-end-road to see if someone was following him.”

“I hired a company out of Fort Lauderdale. They were spotted following Mitch when he went down US 1.”

“Thank you for telling me the truth. My friend, Nick, owns a sandwich shop Mitch stopped at. Nick says your husband stops at his restaurant every week with a different woman. Text us once he arrives home.”

“I will do that. Bye.”

It is six-forty-five p.m. when Tom pulls up to the nursing home. He walks around and lets April out on the passenger side.

April asks, “Will you still be opening my car doors 40 years from now?”

Tom quickly replies, “Only time will tell.”

At the front desk Donna greets them. “Hello, Tom.”

Tom pulls out his driver’s license and signs the register book in front of him. He says, “Donna, this is my girlfriend, April.”

Donna says, “Welcome to our home.”

Tom asks, “How is my mom?”

“She is worried her son-in-law might come back so we moved her to room ten.”

“Good idea. Has dinner been served, yet?”

“Yes, and Rita hardly ate. If she is hungry now let me know. I will bring her something to eat.”

“Thanks, Donna. I will let you know.”

Tom walks into room ten with April.

Rita smiles and raises her stretched out arms and says, “Son, give me a hug.”

Tom does and ask’s, “How do you like your new room?”

“I like my old room. My corner room had an extra window.”

“Mom, this is April, my new PI I just hired. We just finished a surveillance so; we cannot stay too long.”

Rita stretches her arms out and says, “April, give me a hug, please.”

April laughs and says, “Tom always says please as well.”

The two women hug.

Tom says, “I have to get something out of my car. I will return shortly.”

He leaves room ten.



Rita asks, “Do you like the job?”

April replies, “Don’t tell your son but I only joined to be near him, he is a great guy.”

Rita says, “I raised my two children right. They were never in trouble, got good grades in school, and they moved to Miami to be near me.”

“Tom never mentions old girlfriends. Did he have one lately?”

“No. Since moving here from Tupelo he has dated some women, but never a second date, and none he has brought me to meet.”

“Good to know, Rita. I like your son very much. I could tell right away he was caring and thoughtful of others. He seems hard working, too.”

“My son made officer of the year three times when he was a police officer in Tupelo. I am glad he quit to be a private investigator. That line of work is less dangerous.”

“Do not tell him I like him. I want him to ask me out on a date, then another, then another.”

Both women are laughing when Tom reenters room ten.

He says, “Mom, I have to go. I will be in Tomorrow night. Just rest.”

“Barbara comes over to my room to play cards. I am on a winning streak. April enjoy your new job. Son, do not fire her.”

Tom laughs as they start to walk out of room ten.

Rita says, “Both of you give me a hug.”

Tom and April turn-around and give Rita a big hug. They then exit her room.

April says, “Your mother is proud of you. She says you are a diligent worker.”

“That is good to know. I can tell my mother likes you.”

Tom opens the passenger door for April and asks. “Do you want a bite to eat somewhere?”

“I could eat something.”

“Good, I know just the spot.”

Tom drives over to the IHOP Restaurant on US.1.

“Good choice,” replies April as she leans over to kiss him.

Tom closes her car door, locks it, and says while holding her hand,

“You didn’t say, please.”

“Please kiss me,” laughs April as they stop on the sidewalk to kiss.

The couple are seated right away at a corner booth. The young server walks over, smiles, and says, “What would you two like to drink?”

Tom waits for April to order her coke with no ice before he orders a black coffee.

April says, “I think I will have the 222-evening special.”

Tom laughs and replies, “That is what I want as well.”

The server brings their drinks order, pulls out her pad and says, “Do you know what you want to eat?”

April says, “Yes. We both will have your 222-dinner special.”

“How do you want your eggs?”

“We both want the same thing, over-easy. We want sausage links, pancakes, and potatoes.”

“I will get your order in now.”

Tom asks April, “What did you and my mom discuss?”

“We talked about if I liked you or not, about your awards as a police officer, and that she was happy you quit to be a private investigator.”

“Anything else?”

“Yes. She said you have been dating women, but never a second date, and none for your mother to meet.”

“It is true. There are women out there to ask out, but none I wanted to really get to know.”

“Maybe I will be a one-date girl, too.”

“No way. So, date one is you showing me your photographs, then dinner somewhere, right?”

“Yes.”

“Date two is dinner at a restaurant of my choice, and then we visit with my mother in the nursing home.”

“Sounds like a winner,” says April as she leans over to give Tom a quick kiss.

April asks, “What will we do on date three?”

“Stay in and watch old movies all night,” says Tom.

Harry calls Tom.

“Hello? Tom speaking.”

Harry is crying. “Tom, my baby overdosed. She is in an Orlando Hospital as we speak. The doctor says it does not look good. I am on the interstate driving fast to get to her.”

Tom shakes his head back and forth and replies, “I am praying for you, Buddy. Get there alive. Slow down.”

“I tried my best the other day to get her to come back with me. She said no to that idea. She wanted to stay with her boyfriend.”

“Where is Brandon at this time?”

“I do not know. The police were called to their house and found her on the bedroom floor. No one else was home. They checked her phone, and the police spotted my number in her contacts as Daddy.”

Harry starts crying when he said Daddy.

“Buddy drive safe. Wear your seatbelt and call me when you arrive at the hospital. How far out are you?”

“I am about thirty minutes away.”

“Not too long to go. Soon you will be with your daughter. She has dodged death before, right?”

Harry replies through tears, “Yes.”

“Be strong and focus on your driving. You are not sleepy are you, Harry?”

“No. Far from it. I am wide awake.”

“Good to hear. I am praying for you, Buddy. Call me when you are with your daughter.”

“I will. I just needed to talk to someone.”

“Call me anytime. Focus now on your driving.”

“I will.”

Tom turns to April and says, “That was Harry. He wanted me to find his daughter. I did. She was admitted to a hospital’s new drug ward for rehabilitation. She left with her boyfriend named Brandon, who also was in the program. I found Linda for Harry again in Orlando.”

“How did you find her?”

“I ran data on my database and his relatives were listed. I called each relative pretending to be a friend. A relative said he was on a Grey Hound Bus headed to her house in Orlando. Harry drives up there and waits for her to be alone.”

“Was she there?”

“Yep. He sees her walking down the street with a dog. He asks her to come back to Miami with him. She said no. She loved her boyfriend, she was an adult, and asked him to go home.”

“Sad,” says April. “This goes on everyday across the nation.”

“Drugs are addictive and more lethal,” says Tom.

“Where is her boyfriend? Is he with her?”

“Nope. I bet he freaked out on her, called the police officers, and left. If she survives, Harry has to just put Linda in his car and drive her to his place in Miami.”

“I will pray for your friend, Harry, and for his daughter to pull through.”

“That is kind of you, April. Truly kind.”

“I just hope our praying does them good.”

Tom replies, “I pray Linda goes home with her father this time.”

April takes a bite of her pancakes and says, “Thank you for bringing me to IHOP. It has been so long.”

“Didn’t this dud, Pete take you places?”

“Nope. We would order in and play video games all night.”

“Did you meet his parents?”

“One time, they met us for lunch. They were quite. They just smiled, ate their meal, and then they left.”

Tom turns to his date and asks, “Do you want dessert?”

“No.”

“You can order dessert to go, have it with coffee when you are hungry again.”

“No. I am trying to not gain weight. I normally would eat a whole pie.”

Tom laughs at April’s comment. He pays, leaves a nice cash tip, and holds April’s hand as they exit the restaurant.

“Thanks, April, for visiting my mom.”

“You welcome. She is a nice lady.”

Tom drives April home. They kiss for a while before April exits the Honda, says goodbye, unlocks her front door, and waves goodbye as she enters.

Tom calls her on her cell.

“That was quick,” she says.

“I wanted to confirm the date and time for me to come over to look at your photographs.”

“How about Tuesday around seven p.m.?”

“Bring a large pizza with you.”

“What kind of pizza do you want?”

April responds, “Surprise me.”

“I will bring my favorite, ham, and pineapple. See you Tuesday.”

“See you then.”

Harry calls Tom.

“Hello? Tom speaking.”

“I was hoping you would answer. I needed someone to talk too”

“What’s going on, Big Guy?”

“They pumped her stomach, gave her drugs, and now she is resting.”

“That is all you can do, is just wait. Your Linda is an adult, and you have no say in her decision making.”

“I know, but this waiting is killing me.”

“Keep me updated.”

“I will. Bye.”

“Bye, Buddy.”

Tom drives home. He takes a long hot shower, puts on his pajamas, crawls into bed, and falls asleep right away.

Friday morning at eleven-thirty a.m. Rachel King calls from Las Vegas.

Tom is having a cup of coffee and answers on the second ring.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

‘Hello, Tom. Rachel here in Las Vegas with my mom by my side.”

“Are you and Pam. winners, yet?”

“Afraid not, but we are having an enjoyable time. There is so much to do here in Vegas.”

“How do you like the Luxor Hotel?”

“Big, friendly staff, tasty food, and our room overlooks the Vegas Strip. At night, the view is breathtaking. Have you been to Vegas?”

“Nope. I have been to Germany, Kentucky, Georgia, Mississippi, and Florida. I was in the Army three years, went to Bootcamp, then to my specialty training as a military police officer, then when discharged I moved to Tupelo, Mississippi where I became a police officer for ten years, then I moved to Miami to help my sister take care of our mother at the nursing home.”

“What made you live in Tupelo, Mississippi?”

“I moved there as my girlfriend at the time wanted to move back home to be near her mother. I applied to join the Tupelo Police Department.

They accepted me because of my prior military police training. When Janice and I broke up, I stayed because of my police job.”

“When you get a chance fly out here and have fun. There are shows unlimited, every casino has a buffet, buy the unlimited transport ticket, and have fun visiting all the casinos.”

What is going on with you and your mom?”

“We have one more day left of the bingo tournament. We come in the money if we reach the top twenty-five, We need to move up thirty more places.”

“I hope you land in the money. I am happy you are with your mother. I will speak to you again when you are back home in Miami.”

“Great, see you next week.”

Tom calls Cindy over at the apartment complex.

“This is Cindy with Eagle’s Landing; can I help you?”

“Hello, Cindy. This is Tom. Can you ride with me on a case this weekend?”

“I would love to, but weekends are my busy days showing applicants the rentals. My best days are Tuesday and Wednesday, my days off.”

“I made a note of your days off. I will call you when I have a case that falls on a Tuesday and Wednesday.”

“Thanks for asking me. Come over from nine a.m. to five p.m. when I am here. We can have coffee with muffins, or cookies, and you can tell me private investigative stories.”

“I will make a note of that. See you soon. Bye.”

Tom calls his mother’s nursing home and asks for Barbara Calvert’s room.

“Barbara here.”

“Are your daughters in town? I would like to meet them.”

“At the last minute, my daughter Eva had to drop out of the trip from Texas to here by motorhome. Mary is here now with my three grandkids. Eva will fly in Tomorrow, then after our visit both of my girls will drive together back to Texas.”

“I would like to meet your family. I hope they are there when I come to visit my mother. See you soon, Bye.”

Tom sits home for two hours to catch up on current files and to run data on new cases. He is satisfied with his data base company called TLO. He found out the owner said no more data base companies. He always bought and sold them. TLO would be The Last One.

Tom is typing away when his cell phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Good afternoon, Sir. Do you remember me, Trey?”

“I sure do. The Marine getting out of the Marine Corps. You said it would be a month before asking for a job.”

“I reenlisted for four more years.”

“Why?”

“The Corps has a large reenlistment bonus going on. I will receive a ten-thousand-dollar bonus, and the next rank, which will make me a Sergeant. In the military I also receive thirty-days’ vacation time, free medical, and dental. I have one tooth I need to cap, and with my new rank I will be ordering the men around for a change.”

“Look me up four years later if you do not reenlist again. I will hire you, or I will train you to operate your own private investigative agency.”

“Thank you, Sir”

“Call me Tom, please.”

“Thank you, Tom.”

“Do you know where you will be stationed?”

“For security reasons I cannot tell you Sir. I mean Tom.”

“Mail me a post card now and then or email me. Do you need my email address?”

“No. I have it. My sister gave me all your information.”

“Thanks for letting me know your plans changed.”



“No problem, Tom. You be safe. Bye.”

Tom says, “Bye.” and returns to typing his reports.

There is a knock at Tom’s front door.

“Who is it?”

“Gloria Sanchez.”

Tom opens his door to see a woman standing there with cleaning supplies in her hands.

“Afternoon, Gloria. You are to start cleaning on Sunday. Today is Friday.”

“My family wants to drive up to Orlando this weekend to visit Mickey Mouse.”

“Sure. Come on in. Lucky for you I am just catching up on my reports.”

“Sir, I know you just hired me, but if you could pay me today as I need some money for our trip to Orlando.”

Tom pulls out his wallet, and says as he counts the money he has, “What amount did we agree on for the one day-a-week cleaning?”

“Seventy-five.”

Tom hands Gloria three-hundred and replies, “Here is three hundred. This is a month’s worth of cleaning.”

“Thank you, sir, very much. Now I can buy my grandchildren a couple of Mickey Mouse gifts?”

“Do you have grandchildren, Gloria?”

“I have three girls. Ages four, five, and seven.”

“Take the day off. Come back and clean next Sunday. Enjoy your family and your trip to Orlando.”

“You are sure, sir?”

“Yes. I am sure. Consider it a hiring bonus.”

Gloria picks up her bucket and other cleaning supplies and walks down the hall.

Tom goes back to typing his last report for the day.

Harry, while sitting in a chair down the hall from his daughter's room dials Tom's number.

"Hello. This is Tom."

"Hello, Buddy. This is Harry. Do you have a moment?"

"For you I do."

"My daughter is sleeping. I snapped a photo of her just now. I will email it to you. She looks like an Angel."

"Do that Harry. How are you holding up?"

"I hardly get any sleep and I am not eating much, but I do not care. I get to spend quality time with Linda."

"The nurses on the floor are letting you come and go at will, right?"

"Yes. I have no problems with the staff."

"Have you spoken to Linda?"

"Briefly."

"Did she ask for Brandon?"

"Five times."

"What did your baby say happened?"

"Brandon scored cocaine. They both snorted it with two friends. She inhaled too much and passed out. The friends called the Fire Department, and they were gone when the Fire Department, and the Police arrived. They revived my daughter, and the ambulance transported my baby to where we are now."

"When you are able to speak with her, you have to make sure she knows how close she was from death. Ask her to come back to Miami with you. Tell her that Brandon left her to die."

"I will make her aware of Brandon and how close to death she was. I have to go back in Linda's room. I will call you again."

"Bye, Buddy. Thanks for the update. Good luck getting your daughter back to Miami."

“Thanks, Tom, for being a loyal friend and a shoulder to lean on.”

“Any time. Bye.”

Tom dials his mother’s nursing home. Mandy answers.

“Hello, Mandy. This is Tom Whitman. Can you connect me please to room ten? My mother Rita is still staying in that room.”

“Right away.”

“Hello?”

“Hi, Mom.”

“Sandy and the boys just left. It was so good to receives kisses and hugs from my grandchildren.”

“By visiting you, Sandy risks running into her husband. If she does, John will take the boys from her.”

“I did not see the man she brought with her. He remained in the hallway. Sandy said he was her bodyguard.”

“For the next few days, I will only be able to check on you by telephone. I have a surveillance, then court.”

“I understand, Son. I have Sandy, the staff here, plus Barbara. I will be fine. Tomorrow, I get to meet Barbara’s daughter and her children. I will be fine.”

“That makes me feel better. I have to go. I love you.”

“I love you too. You owe me a hug.”

“I will give you a big hug when we get together. Bye.”

“Bye, Son.”

Tom checks his messages. He has one call. A person named Rebecca left her first name and a telephone number with a Boca Raton area code.

Tom calls the female at four p.m.

“Rebecca speaking.”

“This is Tom Whitman, a private investigator. I am returning your call.”

“I need an armed private investigator right now. I am scared of my husband. I have a restraining order on him. He just called. He said he plans to kill me, then commit suicide.”

“I am located in Miami. Your city is an hour away. Have you tried other investigative companies?”

“I have called at least a dozen. They do not want to get involved in a domestic situation where violence is involved. I need protection. I will pay your price. Please, help me.”

“Where in Boca do you live, Rebecca?”

“I live in a gated community called The Sanctuary.”

“I know it well. I did a job for one of your neighbors six months ago. You live in a small private enclave of custom luxury homes located on the intracoastal waterway.”

“Correct. Who was it that you helped?”

“Sorry, I do not give out that kind of information. That is private.”

“Will you help me?”

“It depends. Will you be honest with me with what is going on?”

“I will be honest with you. My husband Jack is on drugs. I kicked him out of the house one month ago.”

“How did you find me?”

“I saw your ad in the newspaper. It read: Is your husband working late? Find out.”

“What is your last name?”

“Salver.”

“Does your husband work?”

“He was fired last week. He is a CPA for a large church here in Boca. He was arrested for skimming the books.”

“Did you have something to do with him being arrested?”

“Yes. I called a tip line and told them what he was doing. Jack knows it was me that got him arrested.”

“Do you have any children?”

“None, yet. We were trying to have a child months ago before his drug addiction and stealing got him fired.”

“How old are you both?”

“I am thirty-three and Jack is fifty.”

“How long have you two been married?”

“Ten years next month. He was a good man till about four months ago. His addiction to drugs got worse and worse. I tried helping him, but it was no use. I got tired of him hitting me. I filed for divorce last week.”

“When did you obtain your restraining order?”

“Two weeks ago.”

“There are armed guards at your gated community, Right?”

“Yes. I tried hiring one of them. They all said no. They told me they only make sixteen an hour and did not want to get shot at any cost.”

“I normally charge one hundred an hour. To help you I will charge two hundred an hour. I have to drop my other cases if we agree on my price.”

“Please head my way. I have money.”

“How will you be paying me, Rebecca?”

“I have five thousand in my small safe here in my house, and if needed I can write a check from my bank.”

“My price is from the time I depart Miami till I return to Miami.”

“Fine with me.”

“Do you work, Rebecca?”

“No. I live off my inheritance. My late parents owned the Jubilee Restaurant in Palm Beach which my brother Henry runs for us.”

“I have never eaten there, but I have heard of the place.”

“When this is all over and I am still alive, I will give you a lifetime free pass to dine in my restaurant.”

“Wow, thank you. Why don’t you go into hiding till this blows over?”

“I do not like traveling. I do not like crowds. I like sitting home and reading an enjoyable book. Jack and I would go out every night to dine. Then we would run into a friend and go to their place to have fun. That was my life.”

“Do you have any family or good friends you could stay with?”

“No. The friends I do have Jack knows as well. I do not want to endanger anyone that would hide me.”

“My GPS says I will be there in about forty-five minutes. I drive a silver Honda Accord. What is your address in the Sanctuary?”

“Eleven Hundred Bay Drive. Once in the gate, I am the sixth house on the right. I have a for sale sign in my yard.”

“Rebecca, take the for sale sign down and call your real estate agent to freeze any showings till you say so. I do not want Jack getting by security because he comes in with an agent for the showing.”

“Good thinking, sir. I will do it now.”

“Please call me Tom”

“Will do, Tom.”

“One more thing. Notify security I am coming to visit you. Advise them no other visitors till you say so.”

“I will call security first, then the real estate agent.”

“Sit tight. I am on my way. Oh, one more thing. You live on the water so Jack may try to come in by boat.”

“I know he can. I have my house locked up.”

“Do you own a gun?”

“Jack does but I do not.”

“Where is his gun?”

“I do not know. He has his own small safe. It may be in there. I just do not know.”

“I guess you do not have his combination to his safe?”

“No, but he has mine.”

“You both have remotes for your garage, right?”

“Yes.”

“Lock your garage doors right now.”

“How do I do that, Tom?”

“Simple. At the end of each garage door there is a sliding bolt. Just slide them in place.”

“I will do that right away.”

“Rebecca, Do not answer the telephone anymore. Let it go to voicemail. I want Jack to think you are not home.”

“Good idea. I will not answer it. Please hurry.”

“My GPS says thirty-five more minutes. Your Knight is on the way.”

Rebecca laughs when Tom says, “Your Knight is on the way.”

“I have to make three calls. I have to hang-up. See you soon.”

Rebecca replies, “Thank you Tom for helping me.”

“No problem, Rebecca. See you soon. Bye.”

“Bye, Tom.”

The private investigator makes a call.

“Dan here.”

“Dan, I just took on a protection case for a woman in Boca Raton. I am on my way. She has a restraining order out on her husband. He just called her saying he was going to murder her and then commit suicide.”

“Why did you take that case on? That is how you get shot or killed.”

“I feel sorry for the lady. She seems very scared.”

“I would be scared if my husband called me and said he was going to shoot me, then commit suicide.”

“She lives in a gated community with armed guards. The place is the Sanctuary.”

“Dan says, “Very high-class residences. They must cost two million and up.”

“I want you to come join me. I will pay you one hundred an hour from the time you leave Miami till you return home. We both will take turns guarding her till her husband is located.”

“What is her address?”

“Eleven Hundred Bay Drive. It is the sixth house on the right once you enter the complex. What will you be driving so I can tell the guards?”

“A blue in color Toyota Camry.”

“Great. Thanks for helping me under short notice.”

“Money talks. Who can pass up a hundred an hour?”

“Thanks again for helping your fishing buddy.”

“Make sure you get the cash for the job up front. She cannot pay us if she is dead.”

“She has five thousand in a small safe right now, plus she can write a check from her bank.”

“Sounds like a good client. How did she know to call you?”

“I have an ad that is working. Three calls in two days. She told me she called a dozen pi firms and they all turned her down.”

“I wonder why. I will be there in an hour. I just got on I-95.”

“Every time I call you for help you are free. Don’t you ever work?”

“I work afternoon shifts Monday to Thursday. If you need me and I have to work, I just call the police station and call in sick.”

Tom laughs at that comment. “I did the same thing when I was on the force.”

“Captain Phillips has never called in sick in the twenty-seven years he has been on our police force.”

Tom laughs, “That is one record that will never be broken. I was on a year when I called in sick.”

“I was on five months. I called in sick because a friend had a boat, and we were to go deep sea fishing.”

“Did you catch any fish, Dan?”



“Nope. We just went swimming off the Miami Coast.”

“I don’t swim because I am afraid of sharks.”

“But not afraid of getting shot?”

“I have my police bulletproof vest in the trunk. I plan to wear it in ten minutes.”

“Smart man. I am speeding to get there. I am only forty-five minutes away.”

“I am about to pull up to the gated community. Have you heard of the restaurant called The Jubilee?”

” One fancy joint. I ate there once a long time ago.”

“Well Rebecca Salver and her brother Henry own it. She said when this is all over, I will receive a lifetime free pass for meals.”

“You have to survive first, Tom.”

“This will be easy. I bet this Jack never shows and just puts a bullet to his head and gets it over with.”

“You may be right. I hope so.”

“Hey, Dan, one more question. In your years on the force have you ever shot someone?”

“I shot out a tire once. And you?”

“In my ten years in Tupelo I shot a bank robber in the arm. I will tell you about it when you get here. I have to go.”

Tom pulls up to the gated community of the Sanctuary and says he is here to see Rebecca Salver.

An armed guard with a name tag of Rick says, “Who are you, sir?”

“I am Tom Whitman. She is expecting me.”

“Let me see some identification, please.”

Tom shows the guard his driver’s license.

“Yes. She said to let you in. Are you, her bodyguard?”

“Yes. I am here to protect her from her husband.”

“One word of advice. Her husband is pure danger. He is a man with a gun high on drugs.”

“Thanks for the warning. I am expecting my partner, a man named Dan Singer. He drives a blue in color Toyota Camry.”

“I will let the other guards know. Have a safe day.”

Tom counts the houses. When he reaches six, the address is Eleven Hundred Bay Drive that he stops at. In the driveway is a new, green Porsche convertible.

Tom exits his Honda and rings the bell.

Rebecca looks out the small side window by the front door.

Tom shouts, “My name is Tom.”

Rebecca opens her front door and says, “The guard at the gate just called saying you were here.”

“Nice car you have.”

“I drive my small van that is in the garage. The Porsche is too fast for me.”

Tom asks, “How long have you lived here?”

“Seven years. I plan to buy a condominium when I am finished with my divorce.”

“I live in a condominium in Miami. I like it. Just lock and leave. That easy.”

“Let me show you around. Follow me.”

Rebecca shows Tom her house. They tour six bedrooms, seven baths, a game room, an office, a library, and a huge back patio with a pool.

Tom says, “The view of the water is breathtaking.”

“Too much home for just a married couple,” says Rebecca. “This home requires children.”

“A big place to guard for sure. I have my partner, Dan, coming in an hour. I already let security know.”

“Is this Dan at two hundred an hour, too?”

“No. He is part of my price with you.”

“Let us go to the kitchen and have something to drink. I have my money there to pay you. What would you like to drink?”

“Iced tea will do.”

Rebecca replies, “Good choice. I will have a glass as well.”

She places an envelope in front of her protector and says, “Five thousand to start. That is about twenty-five hours at your price.”

Tom counts the money to verify the amount given to him. He then writes a receipt for the money and hands the receipt to Rebecca.

“I took this case not for the money, but to help you out. My sister is having problems with her husband as well. She is in hiding as we speak.”

“I am glad I found your ad in the newspaper. I was getting desperate with every firm I called turning me down.”

“Do you have a photo of Jack I can have?”

“Take any photo you find in the living room. They are all of him and I taking trips around the world.”

Tom walks into the huge living room with a bar, a piano, and removes two photos of Rebecca and Jack. He returns to the kitchen and says, “It is five p.m. When it gets dark stay away from the windows. I do not want you to be a target. I will go outside now for my bulletproof vest. I will also walk up to the security gate and hand them a photo of Jack.”

“There is no need to hand the guards a photo of my husband. They all know what he looks like.”

Tom replies, “I am doing it to play it safe. What if a new guard comes on later tonight from a different post? That guard would have no clue what your husband looks like. Let us stay on the safe side.”

“You are right. Good thinking on your part.”

Tom exits the huge residence, walks down the street to the guard house. Two guards are on duty. Tom hands them the photo of Jack and says, “Please post this on your wall for all the guards. Tell me, are there two guards on every shift?”

“A guard with the name tag of Tony replies, “Two guards are on duty for the day and afternoon shifts. One guard is on from midnight to eight a.m.”

Tom says thanks and walks back to his Honda. He opens his trunk, puts on his bulletproof vest, and returns inside.

“Make sure your telephone goes to voicemail. We want Jack to think you are not home. Call the guard gate first and tell them to tell anyone asking for you that you left early this morning and you have not returned.”

“Ok.”

“Do you have a second home?”

“No. Just this place.”

“Any boat?”

“Yes, but it is being repaired. Jack was drunk three months ago and crashed his pride and joy into someone’s pier.”

“What does your husband drive?”

“He owns a car dealership called ‘Salver’s Used Car Lot’ and takes a different car each month to drive. This month he is in a yellow Mustang.”

Tom’s cell phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hi, Buddy. I will be there in twenty minutes. Can you talk freely?”

“Let me step outside. Give me a second.”

Tom motions to Rebecca that he has to step outside to take this call.

She smiles and gives him the ok sign.

Tom steps outside and replies, “I can talk freely now. What is up?”

“Tell me about this Rebecca. Is she pretty? What is her age and weight?”

“You always got sex on your mind. Rebecca is about thirty-five, about five-two in height, about one hundred ten in weight. She has long brown hair and blue eyes.”

“Wow sounds like a knockout. On a scale of one to ten, what would you score the lady?”

“A ten plus.”

“Why did you say a ten plus?”

“Because she is very wealthy. That is why I said plus.”

“When I get there, I expect you will introduce the fox to me, show me the house layout, then what?”

“I figure we both do our rounds inside and outside the residence till it gets dark, then one of us sleeps while the other guards the upstairs landing. I instructed our client from when darkness hits to six a.m. to remain in her room.”

“Simple enough. Do you want me to watch the landing from darkness hits to what time?”

“Let us take turns and do three-hour shifts.”

“That works. I am ten minutes away according to my GPS.”

“I will stay outside and wait for you.”

While Tom waits for his partner, he checks his office answering machine. There are no new messages, just his sister calling.

Tom calls his mother’s nursing home.

“Shady Oaks Nursing Home, Mandy speaking.”

“Good Evening, Mandy. This is Tom Whitman. Can you connect me to my mother Rita, please? That should be room ten.”

“With pleasure Mr. Whitman.”

The telephone rings in room ten.

“Hello?”

“Good Evening, Mom.”

“Hello, Son. Sandy called me a short while ago and asked me to remind you to call her.”

“Let me call her now. Then I will call you back.”

“Alright. Bye, I love you.”

“I love you too, Mom.”

Tom calls his sister’s cell phone.

“Hi, Tom. Where have you been?”

“I took a rush assignment in Boca Raton.”

“What kind of case, an accident?”

“No. A woman hired me to guard her because her husband said he was going to kill her, then commit suicide.”

“Why are you taking dangerous cases like this one?”

“I felt sorry for her situation. She already had spoken to a dozen pi firms, and they all turned her down.”

“Remember what I told you? You cannot save the world?”

“I know you warned me. Dan will be here shortly to help. We will be fine.”

“I feel a whole lot better now that I know Dan is helping.”

“Any news from John?”

“He called a dozen times in six hours. I finally let him speak to the boys. I made sure they did not tell him we were in a hotel. I made them say we are staying at a friend’s house.”

“Good, when this case wraps, I will be on your case. Do not see mom with your boys till John is arrested. Remember, if he finds you, he will take the boys by force from you.”

“You are right. It was a stupid thing to do. I keep forgetting to ask you, any more lyrics for the Outlaws?”

“I have the chorus.”

“Sing it to me.”

“A winner and a lover I am not

A looser and a loner I am.

While I fell in love with you.

You fell in love with him.

A winner and a lover I am not

A loser and a loner I will be

Long as women fall in love, but not with me.”

“Wow, I love it. What will the title of the song be?”

“Not with me.”

“Good title. I would say the title should be a winner and a lover I am not.”

“You are right, Sis. I will change my song title to yours.”

“I know you are busy.”

“I am busy. One more thing, mom said you had a bodyguard when you visited her in the nursing home.”

“Yes. I hired an armed guard. It cost me three hundred dollars.”

“That sounds reasonable. I have to go, Sis. Bye.”

Rebecca exits the house and says, “There is a Dan at the gate for you.”

“Tell the guard it is alright to let Dan Singer into the Sanctuary.”

“Will do.”

Minutes later Dan pulls into the driveway and waves at his partner.

When Dan exits his vehicle Tom says, “Dan, this is Rebecca. She is the woman we are guarding.”

Dan sticks out his hand and replies, “Sorry we have to meet under these circumstances.”

Tom turns to his client and says, “If you have a maid or any yard personnel that may show up, tell them to stay away till you call them back.”

“I will make the calls now. Would you like something to drink?” says Rebecca sticking her hand out to shake Dan’s hand.

“Iced tea would be great, but I would like a tour of your property first.”

“Let us start on the outside,” says Tom. The two men start walking around the exterior of the property while Rebecca enters the house to make a pitcher of iced tea.

“Wow, she is gorgeous, Buddy. I could guard her every day of the week free of charge. How did she find you?”

“I have an ad running in all the newspapers within a hundred miles radius. In the first three months not one call, and then I receive three jobs in one week. Go Figure.”

“So, fill me in on Rebecca’s situation.”

“Her husband, whose name is Jack, is a CPA. He lost his job for embezzling funds from a church. He also is high on cocaine. He called his wife blaming her for his job loss. He told her I will kill you then kill myself.”

“Where does Jack live?”

“I do not know where. It does not matter. Let him come to us. Do you see this Glock nine mm I am wearing in my shoulder holster? I carry an extra ammo clip in my front left pocket.”

Dan walks over to his vehicle, opens his trunk, and removes his gun belt. As he puts it on, he says, “I love my department issued Smith and Wesson 357 Magnum.” Dan slips on his bulletproof vest as he speaks.

Tom hands Dan a portable walkie-talkie and says, “We are on channel three.”

As the two men explore the exterior of the house Tom says, “You have Cindy to hit on. Let us keep this case all professional. No flirting with my client.”

“I understand. Is that her Porsche in the driveway?”

“Yes. She does not like it, too much power under the hood. She likes her van in the garage.”

“Rich people have the same problems as the poor, finding someone they can trust. The only difference, the rich have nicer cars and homes.”

“Jack owns a boat. It is in the shop. He may come by water, so we have to keep an eye out on the dock,” says Tom.



“I think my first date with Cindy will be bowling.”

“Why bowling?”

“It gives us time to chat and get to know each other.”

” And what else?”

“I get a chance to watch her bend over all night,” laughs Dan.

“She gets to watch you bend over as well,” Partner.

While both men stand on the empty dock admiring the view Dan asks,  
“Tell me about you shooting a robber in the arm.”

“It was about five years ago. I was off duty in my car stuck in traffic when two police cars, and the bank robber’s truck stop right in front of me and have a shootout.”

“You are kidding me, right?”

“No. They start shooting at each other. I pull out my firearm, let down my driver’s window and shoot to kill. I hit the robber in his right arm, his gun hand, and he drops his weapon, and the police officers arrest him. I make officer of the month for my involvement.”

Both men return to the residence. Tom gives Dan a tour of the large six-bedroom house. Tom points at a room at the end of the hall to the right. That room is Rebecca’s. I told her to stay there when darkness hits to the following morning. This way Jack cannot shoot her from a ground floor window.”

“What about dinner for us.? I am starving.”

“Good question. Let us talk to Rebecca.”

The investigators locate her reading a novel in the living room.

Tom asks, “We are hungry. Can we order something in?”

“Sure. I do not cook, but you are more than welcome to explore my refrigerator.”

Dan & Tom go into Rebecca’s kitchen. They explore the fridge and pantry. They return to where Rebecca is.

Tom says, “We are going to order a pizza from Pizza Hut. Care for a slice or two?

“No thanks, but I will join you when your pizza arrives. I will have a bowl of cold cereal.”

Tom says, “Dan is a police officer with the City of Miami. He can have all the officers be on the lookout for your husband’s vehicle. Let me call the front gate. They should have his license plate.”

Tom calls the security gate.

“Security. Bob speaking.”

“Bob, this is Tom Whitman. I am guarding Rebecca Salver. Do you have the license plate for Jack’s yellow Mustang?”

“I will look it up, but I will not give you any information over the telephone. Show me your Identification in person.”

“No problem. I am walking to your guard gate now.”

Tom hangs up and turns to Rebecca and Dan. “Dan, stay here and guard Rebecca. I have to go to the guard gate for the license plate information. They want to check my identification. I will be back in ten minutes.”

Dan replies, “I’ll order the pizza we normally have when we play poker.”

“Great. I am hungry. Get the large.”

Tom walks out the front door, and as he does, Dan starts to flirt with Rebecca.

Dan picks up the telephone in the kitchen and calls Pizza Hut. He orders two large pan pizzas with everything on them, and a liter of coke. Dan tells the operator to hold it for a second.

Dan asks Rebecca, “Rebecca, what is your home address again?”

Rebecca tells him and he repeats the address to the operator.

“How long till I receive my pizzas?”

Dan repeats, “Twenty-five minutes. Great. Thank you.”

Dan walks back into the living room and begins flirting again.

“How old is your husband?”

“Jack is fifty.”

“You must be thirty.”

“Close. I am thirty-three.”

“You look twenty-five at most.”

Rebecca closes her novel and says, “Are you married, divorced, engaged, or single?”

“I am thirty-nine, never been married, divorced, or engaged. I have been a police officer for twelve years. I love being a police officer. I meet so many ladies out on patrol.”

Rebecca laughs and replies, “I bet you do.”

“Tom said you plan to divorce your husband, is that true?”

” Yes, I filed last week.”

Dan hands Rebecca his personal card.

“Keep me in mind when you are ready to date a new man. I would love to be one of the lucky ones.”

Rebecca opens her novel and places his personal card inside and closes her book.

“You will be my book marker for now.”

Tom returns from his visit at the guard house.

“I have a license plate for you, Buddy. Here is the information you will need to call out an alert for his car, also remind the dispatcher he is armed.”

Dan takes the piece of paper and walks into the kitchen.

Tom whispers to Rebecca, “I bet as soon as I left, he started flirting with you.”

“Nope,” lies Rebecca as she opens her novel to continue reading.

Dan returns from the kitchen.

“The Bolo is issued.”

Tom asks, “How long till our pizza arrives?”

“About twenty-five minutes,” says Dan. “I ordered two large pizzas.”

“Good. I am starving. I will walk the exterior of the property. I will be back.”

As soon as Tom walks outside Dan says, “How long have you been married to Jack?”

“Ten years. We were great together for nine. Then he started drinking, taking drugs, and hitting me.”

“Hitting you, what a jerk. I hate to hear when a man hits a woman. My dad did the same thing to my mother, God rest her soul.”

“More than once I carried around a black eye.”

“Tom told me you filed a restraining order on your husband.”

“It did me no good. He still comes around when he wants. I was so mad at him just showing up, I called a tip line reporting he was embezzling funds from his church. The police investigated and arrested him.”

“He knows it was you that turned him in?”

“There is no proof, but he knows it was me. They found a small baggie of cocaine on him, and more in his hotel room.”

“So, when did he threaten to kill you?”

“He told me on and off for weeks, but once released on bail, he called me and said, ‘listen.’ I heard a clicking noise. He said, that is the bullet I put in the chamber for you. ‘Listen,’ I heard another clicking noise. Then he said, that was the second bullet he loaded for him. His last words were, ‘see you in hell, Bitch.’”

“Who bonded Jack out of jail? Do you know?”

“I do not know, but I suspect his parents. They have money.”

“What are your future plans, do you have family around South Florida?”

“My family all live out West. I like it here. I plan to sell his Porsche, The one he gave me for my Birthday last month, and this house. I plan to buy a condominium overlooking the beach, then start over.”

“Happy belated birthday to you?”

Rebecca replies, "Thank you."

"Do you work?"

"I never worked in my life. I do not have to. I earn enough from the restaurant my brother and I own."

"Tom told me, The Jubilee. I ate there once with my parents. I remember tasty food and service."

"Jack was a good man. He was lots of fun to be around till he started doing drugs. Then he started embezzling from our church to support his drug habit. He is fired from his money-making job, I cut him off from using my credit cards, I kick him out of the house, so, he blames me for everything."

Dan and Rebecca are talking when they hear gun shots.

Dan pulls out his firearm and says, "Don't move, lay down on your couch and stay there."

Tom shouts as he enters the front door. "I just saw your husband by the ground floor office. He fired at me, ran to a small boat, and left the area,"

Dan says, "I heard five shoots."

Tom replies, "I shot one time as he left in the boat. I do not know if I hit him or not. It was dark."

Dan says, "I will call it in." He walks to the kitchen but gets no dial tone. "No dial tone now. He cut the house line."

Tom says, "Dan, have the patrol units check the parking lots at the different marinas in the area."

Dan shouts, "Will do. We all have to use our cell phones to make calls."

Tom calls The Sanctuary's guard house.

"This is bodyguard Tom Whitman. I am guarding Ms. Salver. Her husband came by boat, cut the phone lines, and escaped by boat. No one here is hurt. It is unknown if Jack Salver was hit or not. Any communication between us has to be by cell phones. Here are our cell phone numbers."

As Tom gives the guards their cell phone numbers, Dan walks back into the living room.

He says “All done. The police report is made.”

Tom replies, “The guard gate has been notified. Our pizza is here. Dan, walk up to the guard gate and retrieve our meals, please. Make sure the guards have both our cell phone numbers I just gave them.”

Tom says to Rebecca. “Close all the shades. He may return tonight. I just do not know.”

Rebecca starts to close her window shades.

Tom helps her. Tom says, “I will make sure all your windows are locked.”

Dan returns with two pizzas and a liter of coke.

Rebecca says, “That pizza smells good. I think I will have pizza.”

After the windows are secured, and the blinds are drawn, Tom joins Dan and Rebecca in the dining room.

Dan asks, “Where were you when being fired upon?”

“I was doing my exterior walk when I thought I heard a noise. I walk around the corner by where the office is, and I see a man dressed in all black trying to open a window. We see each other at the same time. He starts to fire, so I duck behind the air conditioner for cover. I get one shot off as he runs to the dock. I do not follow as I do not know if there are others.”

“Was it Jack?” asks Rebecca.

“For sure. I lit his face up with my flashlight.”

Rebecca looks at her watch. “My watch says eight p.m. Is that correct?”

Tom looks at his watch and replies, “Just past eight.”

Dan asks, “Do you think Jack will return tonight?”

Tom says, “I do not know.”

Rebecca replies, “I hope not.”

Dan says, "The Boca Police Department's crime scene unit will be here in the morning to process the shooting scene."

The three sit around and have their pizza. When finished eating Dan says, "I will patrol the exterior."

Tom helps Rebecca clean-up from their meal. He then hands her a walkie-talkie. "We are on channel three."

Dan calls on his walkie-talkie, "Tom come in."

Tom pulls his walkie from his back pocket and replies, "What is it, Dan?"

"Three bullet rounds are in the air-conditioner. See if it works."

Rebecca replies to Tom, "I do not use the air-conditioner. I like natural breeze, which is why all my windows are open."

Tom asks, "Can you turn on your AC just so we know it works?"

"Yes." Rebecca walks over to her wall unit off the kitchen and turns it on. Nothing happens.

Tom calls out on his walkie, "Dan, is the AC running.?"

"No."

Tom replies, "Jack shot and killed the AC."

Rebecca says, "You were lucky you were not killed tonight."

Tom looks at his client and replies, "You are right. I just remembered; I have to call my sister."

"Don't tell her you were shot at; you don't want to worry her."

"I will remember that, keep the call about her."

Tom calls his sister. She answers on the first ring.

"Brother, what took you so long to call me back?"

"Just been busy. I landed a new account. I am in Boca Raton bodyguarding a woman from her deranged husband."

"That sounds dangerous."

"It is, but Dan is here with me. I will be careful."

"You better."

“Mom says you visited her with the boys.”

“I had too. The boys were driving me nuts.”

“The boys talked to their father, right?”

“Yes. We might get back together and give our marriage a try again. John says he is clean and has found a job being a CPA for a large clothing store.”

“Give it a try, Sis, for the boys.”

Dan calls on his walkie. Tom tells his sister, “I have to go, Dan is calling.”

Tom picks up his walkie and says, “Tom here, what do you have?”

“A security guard riding a golf cart said there was a caller asking if Rebecca Salver was home or not. He told the caller Rebecca was out of town and has not returned.”

“Did the number show up on the guard’s caller identification?”

“It did. He called the number back. A woman answered. She said it is a payphone at the Shell Station on Carmen Way.”

Rebecca picks up her walkie-talkie and replies, “Carmen Way is just down the street.”

Tom shouts, “Dan, go to the gas station and review their video cameras. See if their cameras pick up the pay phone.”

“Will do. The phone number for the pay phone is 561-435-5333.”

Tom walks over to Rebecca and says, “I would feel better if you now went to your bedroom for the rest of the night. One of us will be stationed in a chair in front of your bedroom door.”

“I will make me a pot of hot tea and I will take the drink to the room with me. Care for a cup yourself?”

“No thanks,” says Tom.

Rebecca hands Tom the walkie-talkie back and walks inside the house.

Thirty minutes later Tom receives a cell phone call from Dan.



“Hello? This is Tom”

“Tom are you alone?”

“Yes. I told Rebecca to retire for the night to her bedroom.”

“I am at the gas station, and one of their cameras faces in the direction of the pay phone in question. The video shows it was Jack making the phone call. He hangs up and enters his yellow Mustang.”

“Wow. We better be on our toes till this man is behind bars. Contact dispatch, have them update the BOLO and get a copy of the video.”

“I am ahead of you. I have the CD and I am on the way back.”

“Warn the front gate guards about what you just found out at the gas station.”

“Will do.”

“When you return to the property, all future meetings have to be in the kitchen in the dark.

Rebecca opens her bedroom door.

“Tom, can you come up here, Please”

Tom dashes up the flight of stairs to the second floor.

“You called?”

“Yes. I am being one hundred percent honest with you, so, be one hundred percent honest with me. You took back my walkie, so what are you and Dan talking about downstairs?”

“I just do not want you to be alarmed. Jack made a phone call to the guard house just now from the gas station on Carmen Way. He is driving his yellow Mustang.”

“Now I am scared. I am so thankful Dan, and you are protecting me.”

“We have your back, Rebecca. Just follow my instructions and you will be safe. Stay in your room. I checked your bedroom and bathroom windows, and they are locked. One of us will be right outside your room sitting in a chair. From inside, we will check the office location to make sure Jack is not using a ladder to reach your windows.”

“Thank you. I feel one hundred percent better.”

My partner and I will be rotating duties every three hours. You are safe.”

Tom and Rebecca say good night to each other. He hears her locking her bedroom door.

Dan calls Tom on the walkie.

“I am back. Do you want to let me in? The front door is locked.”

Tom replies, “I am coming now to unlock.”

Tom opens the front door, and Dan hands his partner the CD he picked up from the gas station.

Tom pulls out of his backpack his laptop. He plays the CD. He watches Jack make the call from the pay phone, enter his Mustang, and depart the area.

“I confirm this is Jack making the call. Did you notice he is wearing all black?”

“Yes. I noticed what he is wearing. He means all business. Where’s Rebecca? She will want to watch the CD as well.”

“I made her stay in her bedroom till morning. Her life is in danger. Jack tried her office window, he shot at me, now he is making a phone call from a pay phone nearby. This man has a death wish. He will not stop till Rebecca is dead. We have to be on our toes.”

“Since all the bedrooms are on the second floor I will sleep on the couch.”

“It is almost ten now. Sleep till one a.m. and relieve me upstairs.”

Dan replies, “Rodger.”

“One more thing, did you update the Boca Raton police department about Jack?”

“Yes. I hope the police find him before we have to shoot him.”

Tom walks upstairs bringing a breakfast chair with him. He sits in front of Rebecca’s bedroom and makes a quick phone call.

“Harry here.”

“Harry, this is Tom, call me in the morning. I cannot talk. Bye.”

Tom places his cell phone on mute.

Dan picks up his walkie and says, “I will do a quick exterior check of the residence.”

“Tom replies on his walkie, “Good idea. Be careful. He may be on property waiting to ambush you.”

“I am an avid hunter, so are you. If he is on property, I will smell him before he sees me.”

“One mistake and you will be injured or killed, so be careful.”

“Will do. I am checking the grounds now so, stay off the walkie.”

Tom turns off the second-floor hall lights and sits in the dark. He hears a television playing behind him in Rebecca’s room. Tom is glad he is protecting Rebecca from her crazy, death-wish husband.”

Dan walks the exterior of the residence. He uses no flashlight to see. He checks the garage doors, and all the ground-floor windows to make sure they are locked. He checks the dock to make sure no boat is docked. Dan uses the house key Tom gave him earlier to unlock the front door. As he does, he whispers, “Tom, it is me, Dan. Can you confirm you heard me?”

Tom walks to the top of the second-floor stairs and whispers, “I confirm you are back. Rest now three hours, then relieve me at one a.m.”

“Will do. I am going to sleep in the living room on the large leather couch.”



## CHAPTER 6

Tom is wide awake when his watch alarm alerts him the time is one a.m. He hears Dan snoring away. He walks downstairs and wakes his partner.

“Dan, Buddy, it is your turn to cover Rebecca’s bedroom door.”

The active police officer stands right up. “I am ready for my shift.”

Tom replies, “Rebecca made a pot of coffee if you need a cup. Just use the microwave to heat it.”

“I am good.” Dan walks up the stairs to the second floor and sits in the chair guarding Rebecca’s room.

Tom walks into every ground-floor room and checks the windows to make sure they are locked. He then retires to the living room leather couch and falls asleep right away.

Dan sits in the dark and thinks of the fox of a woman just ten feet from him.

Three hours later Tom’s watch alarm rings him awake. He walks upstairs and is greeted by a sleepy, but awake, Partner.

Dan says, “It is four a.m. already?”

” Yes” whispers Tom.” Do a quick walk around from inside the house and make sure all the ground floor windows are secure.”

Tom walks downstairs with Dan. Tom heats up a second cup of coffee.

“I am going to do the walk around now. This sure is a big house,” whispers Dan.

“I had Rebecca cancel all her maid, and yard service personnel, till Jack is behind bars.”

“Good thinking, Partner.”

Tom walks upstairs with his coffee and has a seat in front of his client’s bedroom door.

Ten minutes later Dan climbs the stairs to the second-floor landing and whispers, “All the windows are secure. I am going to the couch now. See you at seven.”

Tom makes a note of what Dan told him. He starts to add up all the hours he has worked on this case. He started at four p.m. yesterday from Miami. The time is now 4 a.m. At five p.m. today his paid twenty-five hours are up.

At seven a.m. sharp Tom’s wristwatch goes off. He walks downstairs and wakes a snoring Dan up. “It is time to wake up. It is seven a.m.”

A sleepy Dan says “I could use a cup of coffee. Is there any left?”

“I have good news and unwelcome news for that coffee question. Which answer do you want to hear first?”

“Give me the bad, Tom?”

“We are out of coffee that was premade.”

“What is the good news?”

“Rebecca is up, and she is in the kitchen making all of us breakfast.”

Dan smiles at the answer just given to him. He stands up, combs his hair with his hands, and walks to the kitchen.

“Good morning, Rebecca. I thought you did not cook?”

“Good morning to you Mr. Snorer. I only make breakfast. The rest of the day you either cook something or you go buy fast food.”

“Friends say I do snore. Was I loud?”

“Yes. I heard you from my bedroom with the door closed. I have been reading since five a.m.”

“I got the snoring sound from my father. He picked it up in the Navy.”

“The coffee is brewing. I have orange juice in the fridge if you want a glass.”

“I do love orange juice.”

“Pour three glasses please if you don’t mind.”

Dan opens the fridge and removes the orange juice carton. "Where do you keep the glasses?"

"Head level to my right."

Dan opens the cupboard and removes the three glasses he needs. He cannot help but flirt. "You smell nice, Rebecca."

She laughs and replies, "Tom told me to watch out about you."

"What did my partner say about me?"

"You are Italian, and you are a heartbreaker. He mentioned you hitting on a young lady named Cindy."

Dan pours the orange juice and as he does, he says, "I am a heartbreaker. I cannot help it. I am single and free, so why not. When I have a committed relationship, I will be faithful and true."

"I have been married for ten years. I dated Jack for a year before we said our vows. He was fun, and we never had any issues, none at all. Then he started taking drugs, then lying to me, then having one affair with a woman I knew, then cheating on his employer, then hitting me when I questioned our marriage."

"When did his drug issue first appear?"

"I would say maybe four months ago."

"So why does he want to harm you?"

"I turned him into the police. He blames me for all his troubles. I told him I filed for divorce last week. He always told me, "If I can't have you no one will have you."

"Tom told me he was your last resort."

"I was scared to go anywhere. I slept with my bedroom door locked for three weeks. I called at least twelve private detectives and guard services, but everyone refused to protect me. Everyone said go into hiding. Your partner was the only one to help me."

"Money does not motivate Tom. It is how people treat him that matters the most."

Tom walks into the kitchen. "Smells good, just like home."

Dan asks, "You checked all the windows? They are locked, right?"

“Tight as a drum.”

Rebecca says, “We each get a glass of orange juice, two eggs, ham, and rye toast.”

Dan laughs and replies, “Beggars can’t complain.”

“Do you have jam?” asks Tom as he sits down at the dining room table.

“No jam, no potatoes, no yogurt,” says Rebecca as she serves her guest.”

Tom and Dan drink their orange juice while they check out Rebecca.

Tom says, “The five thousand you paid me earlier is up at five p.m. today. It will be one hundred-fifty an hour from five p.m. on.”

Rebecca gets up, walks over to Tom, and gives him a hug. “That is awful nice of you to lower your price.”

At eight thirty a.m. The Boca Raton Police Department calls Tom on his cell phone.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Is this Tom Whitman?”

“Yes, it is. Whom am I speaking with?”

“Officer Jenkins. You issued a bolo on a Jack Salver?”

Tom puts his cell phone on speaker and replies, “I sure did, any news?”

“We have him in custody. We found him at seven a.m. sleeping in his Mustang behind a closed business. We searched him and found a nine mm in his waistband.”

Fantastic news, Officer. How high is his bond?”

“It all adds up to fifty thousand.”

“Can you do me a favor and have your jail notify me if and when Jack makes bail?”

“I will make a note to tell the jail as soon as we hang up.”



“Great news you gave me just now. I am glad he is locked up. Have a good day.”

“You do the same.”

Tom looks over at his partner and says, “Boca P.D. have Jack in custody. We are all done here until Jack makes bail.”

Rebecca asks, “How much do I still owe you for your services?”

“Right now, you have a credit of seven hours or one thousand-four hundred dollars.”

Rebecca takes a bite of her breakfast and says, “Gentlemen, I cannot thank you enough for helping me. I am so grateful.”

Tom turns to Dan and says, “You can go home. I have to stay for the Boca Raton crime scene tech that is coming here to process the air conditioner. I will call you when I am back in Miami.”

Dan takes one more sip of his coffee and says to Rebecca, “It was nice meeting you.”

After Dan departs, Tom says to his client, “Does Jack have relatives that have money?”

“His parents in Jacksonville, why?”

“I am sure Jack is making calls to raise the five-thousand he needs to bail out.”

“The policeman just said his bond is fifty-thousand.”

“You only have to pay a ten percent amount on the bond to be set free.”

“That does not work for me. Is there anyone I can call to tell them to not let Jack out?”

“Call Jack’s relatives, and tell them not to bail him out, that once he is free from jail he will come right over and kill you.”

Rebecca runs upstairs, then runs downstairs with her address book and starts making telephone calls.

Tom stands around and listens in on the relatives Rebecca is calling.

Their responses are all the same. “Jack would not hurt a fly. He is all talk and no action.”

Rebecca says to all of Jack's relatives she calls, "He tried breaking into my house. Jack shot at my bodyguard. He put three slugs in the air conditioner my bodyguard was hiding behind."

All of Jack's relatives swear to Rebecca, they will not bail him out.

Rebecca looks worried after speaking to the last relative in her address book and says, "I fear Jack will soon be bonded out by his parents. They have money and good credit."

"I tell you what I will do, Rebecca. I will stay with you till after the crime scene tech is finished, then I am back on the clock, if you feel you still will need protection."

Rebecca gives Tom a big hug and says, "Thanks."

Tom sits down in the dining room and makes calls, first to his mother, then to his sister, and is speaking with Harry when Dan knocks on the front door.

Rebecca looks out the side glass panel by the front door and is surprised to see Dan back so soon. "Did you forget something?"

"No. I know my luck. I will just make it home when Tom calls me to come back. I do not think a five-thousand-dollar bail amount will stop your husband from getting released. He almost killed Tom. I want to help him help you."

Rebecca gives Dan a big hug. "Thank you for coming back."

Dan puts his hand on his partner's shoulder as he walks into the kitchen with Rebecca. Tom, still talking on his cell phone gives Dan the thumbs up.

Rebecca and Dan exit the rear door. They sit at a picnic table in the back yard underneath an Oak tree.

Dan looks at Rebecca and says, "Your husband is a fool. He had an excellent job, a beautiful wife, and an impressive house, and what does he do, he throws it all away."

Rebecca replies, "I tried to help Jack by finding a drug rehab facility and enrolling him. He lasted a day and walked out."

"Thank goodness I don't have any family or friends hooked on drugs," replies Dan.

Tom shouts as he walks out of the house, “Dan, what a surprise. Did you forget something?”

“No. I just told Rebecca, “with my luck as soon as I pull into my driveway you will be calling me back.”

“You are correct. The jail just called. Jack was released fifteen minutes ago. I called Officer Jenkins, and he confirmed the Mustang and Jack’s firearm, will not be released to him. They are evidence.”

Dan replies, “That is no good. Now we do not know what car he is driving.”

Tom shakes his head and replies, “Or what car Jack is a passenger in.”

Rebecca cuts in, “We have to inform the guard house that Jack is out of jail.”

Tom dials a number and puts the call on speaker.

“Guard House. Sam speaking.”

“This is Tom Whitman, the bodyguard for Rebecca Salver. Her husband, Jack, was just released on bail. So, be on your toes. I bet he will be coming back to finish what he started.”

“This is Harold. Is Jack still driving his yellow Mustang?”

“No.” says Tom. “We do not know what car he will be in. He may drive or be a passenger, so, be careful with all the vehicles pulling up to your guard house.”

“Thanks for the heads up. Remember, he can come by water,” says Harold.”

Dan says, “I will stay outside and watch for him to come by boat.”

Tom replies, “Here is your walkie-talkie, Dan. Here is your walkie-talkie, Rebecca. Make sure they are on channel three.”

Rebecca asks, “Where do you want me? In my bedroom?”

“You can stay downstairs but stay close to me or Dan.”

Tom carries the tray with the drink cups, while Rebecca carries the tea pitcher into the house.

Tom and his client are talking in the kitchen when they hear glass breaking sounds coming from the office.

Tom holds his finger to his lips and says to Rebecca, “Do not say a word, go to your bedroom and lock it. Once in your bedroom call Dan on our walkie-talkies. Warn him we hear glass breaking sounds coming from the office.”

Tom’s client walks quickly up the stairs to her bedroom and locks it. Tom hears Rebecca over his walkie-talkie say, “Dan, we hear glass breaking sounds coming from the office.”

Tom hides behind the leather couch in the living room with his firearm in his hand. He focuses his eyes down the long dark hallway where the office is and waits.

Jack stands up from crawling into the office from the broken window. He shakes shades of glass off his trousers. He walks silently and slowly toward the hallway with a firearm in his right hand.

Jack does not notice Tom’s head exposed behind the couch. Tom waits for Jack to be standing in the hallway before he points his firearm at Jack and shouts loudly, “Drop your gun.”

Jack sees Tom now and points his firearm in his direction when Tom fires four quick shots at Jack. Tom watches the intruder fall face first to the carpet floor. Tom waits as he does not know if Jack is alone or not.

Tom gets on his walkie-talkie and says, “I shot Jack. He is down in the hallway. He is not moving. I do not know if Jack is alone or not.”

Dan speaks next, “I am by the broken office window. I do not see anyone else.”

Tom says, “Cover me, I am coming your way, Dan.”

Tom walks over to Jack and takes his pulse. Tom walks into the office and sees his partner outside. Tom says over his walkie-talkie, “Jack is dead, both of you please meet me in the dining room.”

Tom unlocks the front door for Dan on his way to the dining room.

Rebecca walks quickly down the stairs to the dining room. She looks to her right and sees her husband dead on the floor. She starts to cry at the sight.

Tom says to Dan as he walks into the dining room, “Dan, take a tablecloth and cover his body please, but do not touch anything else, it is evidence.”

Tom dials nine-one-one and puts the call on speaker phone.

“Nine-one-one, do you have an emergency?”

“Yes. I just shot a man and killed him in self-defense. I am at the scene of the crime. I am located in the development called The Sanctuary. I am at Eleven Hundred Bay Drive. This is the sixth house on the right when you enter past the security house.”

“Your name, sir?”

“Tom Whitman. I am the bodyguard for Rebecca Salver. She hired me to protect her.”

The dispatcher says, “Please tell me what happened?”

“Jack Salver broke the office window located on the ground floor. He crawled inside and made his way down the hallway where I confronted him. He had a firearm in his right hand and pointed it at me when I shot him four times. He was also here yesterday where we exchanged gunfire. I am still waiting for a crime tech to process that earlier shooting.”

“I will have the crime tech process that A/C unit after she processes the second shooting. Where are the firearms at this time?”

“I have mine on the dining room table, Jack’s is on the hallway floor and my partner’s is in his glovebox.”

“Anybody with you at this time?”

“The homeowner, Rebecca Salver is with me. My partner, Dan Singer is at the security house to meet with your responding officers.”

Tom motions for Dan to go to the guard house.

Dan stops at his car and puts his firearm in the glovebox, before walking down the street to the guard house.

The police dispatcher asks, “Do you have a permit to carry a firearm, sir?”

“Yes. I was a police officer for ten years in Tupelo, Mississippi, and I have a nationwide permit to carry. I have my photo authorization card with me.”

“Show it to the responding officers, they are on their way.”

“Thank you, Operator.”

“You welcome.”

Tom walks over to a crying Rebecca and gives her a big hug. “Cry on my shoulder if you want to. Sorry I had to shoot him. He gave me no choice. I told him to drop it. I shouted for him to drop the gun.”

“I know you did. I heard you shouting your instructions to him from my bedroom.”

“Make sure you tell that to the responding officers, please.”

Rebecca nods her head up and down as she continues to cry.

Dan calls out to Tom to answer on his walkie-talkie. “Tom, pick-up.”

“Go ahead, Dan.”

“Two security guards are tied-up. A white BMW wagon is by the gate.”

Rebecca whispers to Tom, “The BMW belongs to Jack’s dad.”

Tom says, “Leave the guards tied up. All this is evidence. The white BMW belongs to Jack’s dad.”

Dan says, “I can see on the front seat a suicide note. It reads, I love you mom and dad. I plan to kill Rebecca now, and then turn the gun on myself.”

Tom replies, “Don’t touch a thing.”

Dan says, “I will not touch a thing. The police are pulling up. I have to go.”

Six police officers in three patrol cars exit with their firearms drawn.

Dan raises his hands in the air and says, “We called you. In the guard house are two security guards tied up. The sixth house on the right, Eleven Hundred Bay Drive is where the dead intruder is. He was shot and killed by my partner. I am a police officer in Miami. My partner

on this protection assignment is a licensed private investigator, and a former police officer from the State of Mississippi.”

One of the six officers says, “Are you armed right now?”

“No. My police issued 357 Magnum is in my car’s glove box. My car is in the circular driveway.”

Officer number one says to Dan, “You can lower your hands. Show me photo identification, please.

The other five police officers peer in the window of the guard house.

Officer number two steps inside the guard house and snaps photos on his cell phone.

The other four officers proceed to where Tom and Rebecca are.

Officer number two then unties the two guards and removes the gags from their mouths.

He asks, “What are your full names?”

Harold stands to his feet and replies, “My name is Harold Butler and the other guard’s name is Phil Anderson.”

The officer prints the names on his notepad and asks, “Tell me Harold what happened?”

Phil and I were staffing our post when a man drives-up fast and jumps out of the White BMW with his gun drawn. I recognized the man as Jack Salver, a resident here for seven years. His wife, Rebecca kicked him out of their house over a month ago and filed for divorce”

“Go on, but talk a little slower for me, please.”

“Jack tied Phil and I up, then removed our firearms from our holsters. Jack said to us, “I plan to kill my wife, then myself. He then gagged us and left.”

“Anything else you want to add?”

“Yes. The next thing we know, Dan, who is talking with one of your officers right now, came into our guard house, and said, being tied up is evidence, I cannot touch you men. I have to wait for the police, they are on their way.”

The four other officers pull up to Eleven Hundred Bay Drive and view a man and a woman standing in the driveway with their hands raised.

The four officers draw their firearms and Tom says, “Rebecca is the homeowner. I am her bodyguard. My name is Tom Whitman. I am a former police officer from Tupelo, Mississippi.”

Officer number three says, “Where is your firearm, sir?”

“My firearm is on the dining room table.”

“Anyone else in the residence at this time?”

“The dead intruder who is Rebecca’s late husband.”

“Have you two touched anything?”

Tom says to officer number three, “Yes. I only covered the body up. It was making Rebecca sick to see her late husband bleeding and dead on the floor.”

“Maybe he is alive, where is the intruder’s body?”

“He is dead. I felt for a pulse. The body is in the hallway next to his nine mm firearm.”

“Officer three says, “I will pat you down, sir and officer Jacob will pat Rebecca down, so do not move.”

The female officer goes first and does a pat-down of Rebecca. She says, “The woman is clean.”

Officer three goes next and does a pat-down of Tom. The officer says, “He is clean.”

Officers three and four remain with Tom and Rebecca while officers five and six enter the residence with their guns drawn. They can be heard on the police radio saying as they go from room to room, “Clear.”

When the two officers reach Jack’s deceased body one of the two officers says, “We have one deceased white male in the hallway covered with a tablecloth.”

Dan is escorted back to Rebecca’s residence and joins Tom and Rebecca out back sitting at the picnic table. They talk as they are being watched by the lone female police officer that responded.



Tom says, "We each will be taken to the Boca Raton police station for questioning. Just be honest. If the police start suspecting any of us of doing something wrong, just say, 'I want a lawyer'."

"Where do we meet once we leave the police station?" Asks Dan.

"Rebecca speaks up, "Let us meet at the IHOP Restaurant on Third Avenue. It is just blocks from where you will be released."

Tom shakes his head from side to side and says, "I was afraid of this outcome."

Four hours after all three were questioned by the Boca Raton Homicide Unit, they now sat together at their IHOP table discussing their time with the detectives.

Tom says, "I was polygraphed. How about you both?"

Dan and Rebecca both nod their heads up and down as they eat their breakfast.

Tom continues, "I was photographed and fingerprinted. How about you both?"

Dan and Rebecca both say "Yes, me too" as they take a swallow of their coffee.

"Once our polygraphs were taken, they believed our stories, and let us go," says Tom in-between bites of his pancakes.

"I felt like a criminal would feel sitting there being questioned," says Dan.

"The cops were just doing their job," says Tom while looking at his watch. "I have to visit my mother before my shooting Jack comes on the television. Thanks, Rebecca, for calling me to protect you. Dan, pick up this tab and let me know what I owe you."

Rebecca speaks next, "Tom, I want you to invoice me for your time today and at our originally agreed two hundred an hour."

"You sure?"

"Yes, I am sure."

Tom waves and says, "You two be safe."

Dan and Rebecca sit and talk for ten more minutes, before Dan pays the server.

Dan helps Rebecca into his car and drives her back to the Holiday Inn by the beach.

They sit and talk in the hotel parking lot.

“How long do you plan to stay in this hotel?” asks Dan.

“I hired a special crime scene cleaning crew given to me by one of the responding police officers. Once the cleaning crew are finished, I will return to my home.”

“I hated it when Tom had to kill your husband,” says Dan.

“I cried for my loss, but like it or not, life has to go on.”

Dan writes his cell phone number down and hands it to Rebecca. “Call me if you need to talk.”

Dan helps her out of his vehicle. He gives Rebecca a big hug and says, “I hope you call me.”

“Give me time. I will reach out to you.”

Dan watches his future girlfriend walk into the Holiday Inn.

## CHAPTER 7

At five-ten p.m. on Saturday, Tom walks into The Shady Oaks Retirement Center and greets a familiar face standing behind the front desk.

“Evening, Donna.”

Tom gives the nurse his driver’s license and signs in as a visitor. “Is my mother still in room ten?”

“Hello, Tom, yes, your mother is in room ten. You did not come around to visit Barbara’s daughters and grandkids. I texted you they were here.”

“I received your text. I was busy in Boca Raton bodyguarding a wealthy young lady.”

“Go see your mother. She has been asking for you. You can tell me all about your protection case later.”

As Tom walks away he says, “Watch the six-p.m. news. I am on it.”

“I will. Bye.”

Tom walks into his mother’s room. He is just in time to hear her say to Barbara, “Gin.”

Tom says to his mother “Give me a big hug.”

Rita laughs at her own line. “Yes, do give me a big hug.”

Tom gives his mother a big hug and says to Barbara as she stands up to leave, “Please sit. This concerns you as well. I have to tell you both something before you hear it on the news at six-p.m.”

Barbara sits back down in her chair.

“The reason I have not been calling to check on you Mom is because I was in Boca Raton bodyguarding a wealthy woman. I was guarding her from her own husband. Her name is Rebecca Salver, and her drug crazed husband is named Jack. To make a long story short, I killed Jack in Rebecca’s residence hallway this morning after he broke in armed with a firearm.”

Tom’s mom lets out a scream. ‘You what?’

“I had to kill a man today. It was me killing him or him killing me. I had no choice. He broke a window and crawled in armed and pointed his firearm at me. I fired only after I warned him to drop his gun. He had a death wish. He shot at me yesterday too, while I was making my exterior security check.”

Rita replies, “Please, Son, promise me no more being a bodyguard. We both know it can get out of hand. That is how you get shot or worse, killed.”

“It is quick money and I felt good coming to the woman’s aid.”

“No money can bring you back to life. One mistake is all that it takes. If money is what you need then just tell me. I have whatever amount you need.”

“I will not take on anymore bodyguarding assignment. I promise.”

Barbara comments, “You were lucky today. We could be hearing about your death instead of the intruders on the news tonight.”

Tom opens his jacket and shows Barbara his nine mm firearm. “I know how to use this. I practice on the firearm range every free minute I get. Last year I had no weapon, and a dog almost took my arm off.”

Tom asks his mother, “What is the latest news on Sandy and John?”

“Sandy called me today about two hours ago. She had a long talk with John. Your sister said he demanded to see his boys. Sandy said his tone of voice was threatening. She told him they needed to see a marriage counselor first. When she said that, John hung-up on her.”

Tom replies, “I told Sandy to try to work it out with John if she wanted to save her marriage. To me, it now sounds like John only wants his sons and nothing to do with my sister.”

Donna at the front desk screams, “You better run. He’s got a gun!”

Tom tells Barbara and Rita to lay down on the floor out of view of their front door. He steps into the closet, but keeps the door cracked to view into the room.

Within seconds John rushes into room ten with a firearm in his hand. He walks around to the other side of the bed and finds both women

hiding from him. John points the firearm at Rita and shouts, “You are coming with me. When Sandy gives me the boys, I will release you.”

Tom opens the closet door and shouts, “Drop your gun, John.”

John looks up to see Tom pointing his firearm at him.

Tom repeats his first order, “Drop your gun, John.”

John pauses five seconds before dropping his firearm to the ground.

Tom shouts, “Step over to the chairs and have a seat. Place your hands behind your back and do not move.”

John places his hands behind his back. He starts crying. “I just want my boys.”

Tom steps forward and carefully places his handcuffs on his brother-in-law.

Tom yells to the two women frozen in fear, “Get out of this room now. Call nine-one-one to come to room ten. Tell the operator I am your son and mention I am holding a man at gunpoint.”

Tom turns his focus back to John. “Sandy told her mom she wanted to go to marriage counseling first but you hung-up on her.”

John looks over his left shoulder to see Tom pointing his gun at him. “I just want my sons, simple as that.”

Both men can hear the police sirens getting closer.

Tom says, “What you just did was not smart. Sandy loves you; she loves her marriage to you. We all know you have a drug issue. I bet you are high on cocaine as I speak. Am I, right?”

“I am high.”

“I will make sure you see your boys. Just give it time.”

Tom hears his mother say, “My son is holding the man that broke in here at gunpoint. My son is wearing a blue shirt. He is in room ten. His name is Tom”

A police officer shouts into room ten, “Tom, the police are here. We are coming in slowly.”

Tom shouts, “I was a police officer in Mississippi for ten years. I just put my firearm back into my shoulder holster. The intruder is hand

cuffed. He is sitting at the table. His name is John, my Brother-in-Law.”

Five police officers move into the large room all pointing guns as they do.

For his safety, Tom has his arms in the air.

A police officer steps forward and commands Tom not to move. The officer then removes Tom’s firearm from its holster.

Tom says, “Thank you for getting here so quickly.”

Tom watches as the police cuff John with their handcuffs and hand him his.

An officer asks, “Do you have a permit to carry this firearm?”

“Yes, I do. My license is good in all fifty states.”

“Let me see the permit, please.”

Tom gently removes his wallet with two fingers. He then hands the officer the gun permit.

The police officer exams his nationwide license and hands it back to him.

“Thank you, sir” says the officer standing in front of him.

The police officer turns to Tom and says, “Have a seat.”

The young police officer pulls out his pocket notebook and asks, “Where in Mississippi were you a police officer?”

“In Tupelo, birthplace of Elvis.”

“How long were you on the force in Tupelo?”

“Ten years. I moved to Miami to help take care of my mother named Rita.”

“Yes. I will be taking her statement next, then her friend, then the lady behind the front desk.”

“Report writing is the one thing I hated in Tupelo. I wanted to be free to catch the criminals.”

“I feel the same way.”

“How long have you been on the Miami police force?”

“Six years next month.”

“Do you plan to do twenty years to collect your police pension?”

“That is my plan. What time did you arrive today at The Shady Oaks Retirement Home?”

Tom sits there for about twenty minutes giving his side of the events.

The officer says, “Sir, you are free to go. See Officer Robbins for the return of your firearm.”

Tom and the young office shakes hands. “Send in your mom, please.”

“Will do. Be safe.”

Tom walks over to his mother and Barbara. Both are sitting together on a sofa in the television room.

“Mom, the officer wants to take your statement in room ten. Just be honest and you will be finished in fifteen minutes. Barbara, you will be next after my mom.”

“Give your mother a hug.”

Tom gives his mother a hug. He then watches her walk down the hall and enter room ten.

Tom walks over to Donna, sitting in a chair in the television room.

“Was that you that said, “You better Run. He’s got a gun?”

“It happened so fast; I could not think of anything else to say. He pointed his gun at me and said, Do not lie to me. What room is my mother-in-law hiding? I had to tell him room ten. I am glad you got the drop on him.”

“Me, too. I am glad no one got hurt. It could have been worse that is for sure.”

Donna asks, “What will the cops want from me?”

“Just what happened. They will ask you who, what, where, when, why, and how type questions. Tell them what you remember. Everything will be quick. When this is all over mention to my mom, I will visit with her sometime Tomorrow.”

“Will do. Have a good night, Tom.”

“You as well, Donna.”

Tom walks over to a small group of police officers and asks, “Which one of you is Officer Robbins?”

“I am Officer Robbins,” says an officer with a huge tummy protruding over his police trousers.

“I would like my firearm back, please. I own a nine mm. My name is Tom Whitman.”

“Show me some identification.”

Tom does.

“Follow me, sir.”

The officer walks over to a police cruiser, opens the trunk, and hands Tom his firearm.

“Thank you, Officer.”

Tom places his weapon into his shoulder holster and walks to his Honda. He sits inside and calls his sister.

Sandy answers on the first ring. “Hello?”

“Hi, Sis. I just left mom’s room.”

“Mom told me all about you killing a man in Boca Raton and you saving her life today. I am thankful you did not kill my husband. I love him you know.” Sandy starts to cry.

“I know you love, John. I know he loves you and the boys. He will have to do time when this is all over. He will be off drugs as well. Give it time. I think you two can work it out. If not, just have your lawyer make John stay within a hundred miles for visitation rights.”

“When can I go see him?”

“Tomorrow on, I guess. Call the Dade County Jail and ask what their visitation hours are.”

“Call me tomorrow, will you?”

“Sure, Sis. I should be on the six o’clock news in a minute. The news crew was there at the Boca Raton address when I left. Talk to you tomorrow.”



Tom next calls April. She answers on the third ring. "This is April."

"Hello, Sexy. Turn on the six o'clock news. I will be on it. I had to kill a man today in Boca Raton. I will tell you all about it when we get together. I will call you tomorrow. Right now, I plan to go back to my condominium and sleep all night."

"You have to find a safer line of work if you want to be with me. I do not want to be a call away from sad news. Thanks for calling. Dream of me tonight, ok?"

Tom starts his Honda and departs the nursing home parking lot.

He makes one more call, but Harry's voice message comes on.

Tom says, "Harry, I hope you and your daughter are ok. I had to kill a man today in Boca Raton. Watch the eleven-p.m. news. I will tell you all about it when we talk Tomorrow. I am turning my cell phone off now. Bye."

Tom stops for gas and a cold Ham sandwich. He then drives to his building, parks on the third floor, and walks to his unit. He climbs into his king-size bed and falls asleep, clothes and all.

Sunday morning at six a.m. Tom wakes up, turns his cell phone on, and checks his messages. He has one message from Harry.

"Tom, call me when you wake up. I have great news."

Tom dials Harry's cell phone and Linda answers, "Hello?"

"Good morning, Linda. I am a good friend of your dad's. Tell him Tom Whitman is returning his call."

"I heard of you. You are the private investigator my daddy hired to find me."

"That is me."

"Here is my daddy."

"Good Morning, Tom. You know the great news is I have Linda next to me. We are going to search for a two-bedroom apartment together, one with a pool."

"In Miami or where?"

“Here in Orlando. Linda will do out-patient drug rehab therapy four days a week. I applied and was hired at Disney World as a driver. I start on Monday.”

Tom asks, “Where does Brandon fit into all this?”

“Brandon does not. He left my daughter to die in that last rental. We both have nothing to do with him anymore. I bought my baby girl a new cell phone. Linda wants a fresh start, and I am staying by her side to help her make it. I have to go now. We are pulling up to Linda’s rehab center for her first therapy session. Talk soon, bye Buddy.”

“Good luck. Stay connected, bye.”

Tom hangs up his cell phone and makes a pot of fresh coffee. He pops two slices of bread in the toaster and waits.

Tom pages Nick to call him.

Tom calls Dan. He answers on the first ring.

“Dan here.”

“Dan, I need you to find out what the final charges are on John, what his bond amount is, and is he released yet. Let me know. I am on my way to visit my sister and she will be asking me those questions.”

“I will do it right now.”

Ten minutes later Nick calls. “Hi, Tom. What is going on?”

“Hello, Nick. I was thinking about you as I made my pot of coffee. How are you and Johanna doing?”

“Life could not be better. My wife’s mother from Mexico is here watching my boys. I hired three more welders, so I have a full crew now. This gives me more free time to spend with my wife. We are rolling along. And you, how are you doing?”

“I found me a girlfriend. Her name is April. Good looking, never been married, and our first official date is this Tuesday evening. I cannot wait.”

“What kind of work does she do?”

“She is a photographer, a pet sitter, and does college online.”

“Bring her by one day. I would like to meet her and see you again.”

“I will. See you soon, bye Nick.”

“Oh, Tom, I saw you on TV last night. You killed a man?”

“Afraid so. I will talk about it when we see each other again.”

“Make it soon. Bye, Tom.”

“Bye, Nick.”

Tom pours himself a cup of coffee, has his toast, and starts texting his contacts to call him.

Jackie Turner calls from Dallas, Texas. “How is my investigator doing?”

“Getting in trouble.”

“Like how?”

“I had to kill the husband of my bodyguarding client. He was out to kill her and then kill himself. Then I stopped my brother-in-law from kidnapping my mother from the nursing home. He was going to use her as a bargaining chip with his wife to see his twin boys.”

“Stay out of trouble.”

“I will try, Jackie. What is going on with Chad?”

“He is still in Miami, still with his woman and still selling his wine to businesses. Me, I am selling my place and moving to California to be with my sister. I need a fresh start.”

“Please keep in touch, will you?”

“Of course, Tom, I will. Be safe.”

“Be safe, too. Bye Jackie.”

Tom is about to leave his condominium unit when his phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Rachel King here in Las Vegas. How are you, Tom?”

“I am good. How is your mother, Pam doing?”

“She is happy we are fling back home today. She was depressed earlier when we did not advance to the bingo finals. We were five people short”

“Tell her next year she will be in the finals.”

“Good idea, but she must fly out to Las Vegas with me next time.”

“Tell her, she is a winner in your book,” says Tom.

“I will do that. Let us do lunch when I return. I want you to meet my mother.”

“Let us plan on that, Rachel. Have a safe flight back. Bye.”

Tom locks his unit and takes the elevator to the third-floor parking garage. He enters his vehicle when his cell phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Morning Tom. Sally here. I am happy my brother stayed in the Marines another four years. The service has really good benefits.”

Morning, Sally. I told Trey he was doing the right thing. I told him to stay connected and to look me up in four years if he still wants to be a private investigator.”

“Are you coming in today to visit your mother?”

“Yes. Sometime today.”

“The tenants are calling her a hero because her son saved the day from the shooter.”

“We were lucky I was visiting at the time, and that I was armed.”

“The nursing home starting Tomorrow will have armed guards twenty-four hours a day. We had a supervisor meeting this morning, and that was what we were told.”

“I do not mind my mother paying an extra hundred or two in dues to be protected. That is a clever idea. Is my mother still in room ten, or back in her old corner room?”

“Back in room twenty-two. Your mom is happy to have her old room back. She liked the idea of Barbara in room twenty-one was next door to keep an eye on her.”

“Let my mom know I will be by in the evening to give her a hug.”

“I will tell her. Bye.”

Tom says, “Bye.”

Tom drives over to his sister’s house and rings the doorbell.

Sandy looks out her living room window to see her brother is visiting. She opens the door and gives her brother a big hug.

“I watched the news at eleven p.m. last night. You are lucky it turned out the way it did. You may have been shot or killed.”

“I realize that now, but at the moment it occurred I was protecting my client, which hired me to be her bodyguard.”

“Any news on John? Is he out? What is his bond amount? What are his charges?”

“I spoke to Dan on my way over here and this is what he told me; John is in jail on no bond. The State charged him with armed kidnapping and assault with a deadly weapon. His lawyer will be asking a Judge on Monday for Bond. We will know then what the Judge will do.”

“I have mix emotions. Part of me wants to prosecute and part of me wants him home with his boys.”

“You have till Monday morning to sort out your feelings. You can go in front of the judge and give him/her what you want to happen to John. Make sure he gets drug treatment and anger counseling as part of any plea deal.”

“You should be a lawyer, Tom. You have a calming effect on people.”

“I am thinking of attending law school. My girlfriend does not want me to be a private investigator any longer. She was mad at me for taking the bodyguarding job in Boca Raton.”

“I am mad at you for risking your life. There was no need for you to take the case in Boca Raton. If you need money, I have money, and mom has even more money than me. Please do not take any more bodyguarding job no matter the amount or who is asking you.”

Tom looks at his sister and says, “I promise no more bodyguarding jobs.”

“Who is your girlfriend, when will I get to meet her?”

“That is why I am stopping. Are you free for lunch Tomorrow?”

“I am free. Let me make your favorite meatloaf dish.”

“I still have to ask April if she is free Tomorrow.”

“What is her last name, her age, what does she do for a living, describe her for me, I want.....?”

“I want to surprise you. Her last name is Walker. I met her last week when I was getting my windshield fixed.”

“Call her right now. Do not tell her you are with me. Ask if she is available for lunch.”

Tom dials April’s cell phone number.”

“This is April. Who is calling?”

“It is your bodyguard, Baby.”

April laughs at his reply. Do you want me to ride with you again?”

“No. I want you to meet my sister, Sandy. I was thinking tomorrow around one p.m. we go to her house.”

“Why on Sunday? Don’t you go to church?”

“What is that?” laughs Tom. “I do not go now to church, but I do see you bringing me to your church every Sunday.”

“I would love to have lunch tomorrow with your sister. I will go on one condition.”

“I know, you want to bring your ten cats and four dogs.”

April laughs as Tom’s comment and replies, “I want you to choose a different profession. Your line of work is full of danger.”

“I was going to surprise you on my new profession, but I want you to hear it now.”

“Go ahead, I am listening.”

“Good Afternoon, this is Attorney Tom Whitman. May I speak with Ms. April Winters.”

“A lawyer. I love the idea. I will pay our rent while you focus on law school.”

“I am thinking of attending FIU.”

“That is where I went for two years,” says April. “I love Florida International University. It is really growing.”

“Be ready at twelve-thirty p.m. tomorrow. I will pick you up then.”

“See you soon, Mister Lawyer.”

Tom hangs up his cell phone.

Sandy says, “She seems sweet. I cannot wait to meet her. I know she is a knockout, or you would not look twice. Am I right?”

“You are. Where are the boys?”

“At a friend’s house down the block. Before I forget, how is your song writing coming along?”

“I have about four songs under development. Here is a sample of one called, Hot Dogs Are My Specialty. It was in November, December, I do not remember the month anymore. I was home alone, eating an ice cream cone, when my doorbell rang. I stepped on the cat, said sorry about that, then I opened the door. That is all I have so far.”

“Strange song title, Brother.”

“I have to leave. I must finish my reports between now and Sunday. Say hello to mom for me.”

“I will. Be safe Mister Lawyer.”

Tom laughs at that comment as he walks out the door. Tom calls his sister on his cell phone.

“One question. How is Ellen Duncan working out as your babysitter?”

“I love her, and the boys love her as well. Thanks for asking.”

“One more quick question, is John still seeing Alice Fincher?”

“I told him if he did, he would never see his boys again. I do not know one way or the other if he is still with her.”

“See you tomorrow, Sis.”

Tom sits in his Honda and reviews his to-do-list for today. He calls Mandy at the nursing home. She is off today. Tom calls her cell phone number, and it goes to voicemail.

“Mandy, I ran the data on your good friend Gail DiCenzo. She resides in Colorado. Call me for her address and phone number when you hear this message.”

Tom calls Dan back again. He answers on the third ring.

“Dan here.”

“I forgot to ask you when we last spoke, Have you dated Cindy, yet?”

“I have. We ended up going to her parent’s house, having dinner, and plying cards till midnight.”

“Any x or r rated things happen?”

“No. I walked her to her door, and we shared a good-night kiss under the stars. We are seeing each other tonight. Cindy is a really nice woman. I am taking it slow and easy with this one.”

“Me, too. I am dating April, and I am taking it slow as well.”

“Do you think you will be guarding Rebecca again?”

Tom says, “Nope. I am dumping this private eye stuff as soon as I finish what cases I have left to do. Then I will enroll at FIU and become a lawyer.”

“Really? I thought you told me you love being a private investigator. What happened with that profession?”

“April told me, find a new career because she did not want to marry a private investigator, and worry I might not come home. She worries another Rebecca type case comes in and I take it.”

“I think you being a lawyer is a clever idea. Are you a book worm?”

“I will have to be. Listen, how about we go on a double date with our women?”

Dan replies, “Let us talk about it later in the week. I love the idea.”

“Aren’t you worried about Cindy knowing we are good friends?”

“No. I will sell my company soon and focus on law school.”

“Be safe, Mister Lawyer.”



Tom laughs and replies, "I have eyes in the back of my head. Talk soon."

Tom calls Barbara on her cell.

"This is Barbara."

"Hello, Barb, Tom here. Do you have a moment?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"I am hanging up my private investigative boots after I work my next surveillance. I know you wanted to ride along. Do you still want to do that?"

"You bet. When will we go out?"

"Next weekend on the Beverly Jones case. I did her before. She is active, so it should be a fun case."

"What time next Saturday do you want me to be ready?"

"Six a.m. I will call before coming."

"Six it is. Be careful."

"I will be safe. I will call my mom now."

"Hello?"

"Hi, Mom. I have to be brief. I am quitting this profession. I plan to be a lawyer, like Uncle Craig."

"Whatever you do will be fine by me. I believe being a lawyer is so much safer."

"I agree. I will call you tonight. I love you."

"I love you too. You owe me a hug."

"One hug coming up. Bye, Mom."

"Bye, Son."

Tom makes another call as he waits in the drive-up-line at McDonalds.

"This is Becky."

"Hello, Becky. This is Tom. How are you and Mitch getting along?"

"I made him sleep two nights in a tent in the backyard. He finally came around about not seeing any more women. He is tired of lying to

me. We made an agreement. I get to polygraph him at any time for any reason. If he passes, we are together. If he fails, I get to hit him over the head with my biggest frying pan.”

“Really?”

“No. If he cheats again, I just will just divorce him. That simple.”

‘I am leaving the private investigative business. Your sister and I will move in together, and I will study hard at FIU to become a lawyer.’”

“My sister is crazy about you, Tom. I asked her to introduce me to you. She says she will very soon.”

“I am glad you and Mitch are back together. Forget the past and start anew.”

“Sound advice. You should be a marriage counselor.

Tom laughs and replies, “Hey, not a bad idea. See you soon. Bye.”

“Bye, Doctor Tom.”

Tom just laughs at Becky’s comment as he hangs up his cell phone.

Tom picks up his fast-food order and drives to his condominium. He parks on the third floor in his assigned spot. He rides the elevator to his third floor and opens his unit. He locks the unit, turns his cell phone off to take a quick nap.

Sunday evening at six p.m. Tom wakes up and calls his good police friend.

“This is Dan.”

“Hi, Buddy. I would like to sell you my private investigative agency. You can hire me as your office manager. I can train a future employee to run data, do locates, background checks, draft reports, do invoices, and anything else office related. You can do the investigations, and the surveillances. I can help you train your future surveillance staff if you want.”

“You really are getting out of the private investigative business?”

“Yes. I am crazy for April. This may be my only chance at a real relationship. We ‘clicked’ the minute we met. She does not want to

worry about me every time I went on a surveillance or an investigations.”

“You want to be a lawyer?”

“Not really. I might be a marriage counselor. I like the idea of helping people.”

“How much do you want for your private investigative business?”

“How about I receive twenty-percent of every invoice you generated for three years, then I drop to ten-percent for three more years, then after that you owe me nothing.”

“No money up-front, I like that. No risk to me if my company generates no income. Who will do the marketing for the company?”

“Hire me at four hundred a week for a year. I make money if you land work, so you know I will be marketing as often as I can.”

“How much do you want in weekly salary to run my office?”

“How about three hundred a week for a year? This way I make seven hundred a week salary for a year. This amount pays all my normal bills.”

“Get a lawyer to draw it up. You have a deal.”

Tom says, “Keep the company name the same for years, then change it to whatever you want after that.”

“How much do you want for your office computer, laptop, surveillance equipment, and office furniture?”

“How about five thousand one hundred total, and you can pay me at three hundred a week for seventeen weeks.”

“So, four hundred to market, and three hundred for running my office for a year, then three hundred a week for the equipment earns you one thousand a week for seventeen weeks. Then seven hundred a week for 35 weeks, as the equipment is already paid for.”

“Sounds right. I keep all current unpaid invoices up to the closing date, and you own any jobs in progress. Remember, Cindy just offered me four offices in her corporation to perform background checks. That is pure profit. Just service her company and you will have her business.”

“I foresee Cindy someday replacing you in marketing, I foresee Cindy someday being the office manager as well. That way we can spend more time together.”

“Your private investigative company can hire family for marketing, for running the office, and for doing the surveillances, and investigations when they comes in. Then someday, you can turn it all over to your children to run the company. This frees you to retire with a steady income.”

“You have a deal, Tom. Draw it all up, and I will sign on the dotted line.”

“Ok, I will find a business lawyer Tomorrow morning. I will say it is a rush sale. I will ask for a Friday afternoon closing, so be free from three p.m. on this Friday.”

“No problem. I will just call in sick.”

Tom laughs at that comment. “One more thing, never tell anyone you own the company one hundred percent. Let us have everyone think you came on board as my partner.”

“Deal, Partner.”

Tom laughs again at his friend’s comment. I am tired. Let us talk Tomorrow.”

“Sounds like a plan. Speak with you Tomorrow. Good night.”

“Good night, Dan.”

Tom calls his mother.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Mom. I am super tired. Let me call you in the morning.”

“Better yet, come in and give me a big hug.”

“I will do that. I love you, Mom.”

“I love you too, Son.”

Tom pops in a TV dinner, opens a beer, turns on his large TV and watches a soccer game from Europe. He then gets into his pajamas and calls it a night.

Monday morning at seven a.m. Tom wakes up and checks his cell phone for messages. There are no messages. He gets dressed and heads out the door.

Tom pulls into the nursing home parking lot and exits his vehicle. A security guard with a firearm on his hip approaches.

“Good morning, Sir. Can I help you?”

“Yes. I am here to visit my mother in room twenty-two.”

“Her name?”

“Rita Whitman.”

“Who am I speaking with?”

“Her son, Tom Whitman.”

“I need to see your driver’s license, please.”

Tom hands the man his identification.

The guard says over his walkie-talkie, “Unit six here. I have a Tom Whitman here to visit his mother in room twenty-two, a Rita Whitman.”

“Stand by unit six.”

“Unit six, that is correct. You can let the gentleman in.”

The security guard hands back Tom’s driver’s license. “Have a wonderful day.”

“You do the same. I am glad the nursing home beefed up their security.”

Tom walks into the lobby and is greeted by another man in a security uniform.

“Good Morning, Sir. I need to check your identification, plus you have to sign our entry log, and leave your driver’s license with us.”

“Tom presents his driver’s license and says, “I am here to see my mother in room twenty-two.”

“The guard takes his driver’s license and says, “I will return your driver’s license on your way out.

Tom signs the entry book and walks down the empty hallway to his mother's room.

"Morning, Son. Give me a big hug."

Tom bends down and gives his mother a big hug. Rita is shuffling a deck of cards when her son walks in.

"I guess you are waiting on Barbara?"

"Yes. She is finishing her call to one of her daughters and will be coming in shortly."

"Sandy mentioned you are a hero for stopping John from doing any harm to anyone here at the nursing home."

"That is correct. Different residents are doing different things for me as my reward for stopping John from hurting anyone."

"Give me your rewards?"

"The resident in room twelve does my laundry. The resident in room eight reads a book aloud to me. The resident in room nine brings me two fresh donuts every Monday and Friday."

"Why every Monday and Friday?"

"Betty works part-time in the bakery in the evenings. When getting off work she brings me two fresh donuts."

"Did you eat your two donuts this morning?"

"No, not yet. I have them in my fridge."

"Can I have them?"

"Only if you give me a long hug."

Tom gives his mother a big hug and says, "I am quitting my job as a private investigator this Friday. I have it sold to Dan, the police officer friend of mine."

"What kind of work will you do once your company is sold?"

"I might go to school to be a lawyer; I might become a marriage counselor; I do not know yet."

"Why the rush to change jobs?"

“My girlfriend, named April, she wants me to get into a new line of work, something less dangerous.”

“I like her already.”

“You met her once already, Mom. I brought her here one-night last week, and we pretended she was a new private investigator hire I just brought on.”

“She is not a private investigator?”

“She rode with me to keep me company while I followed her sister’s husband who she suspected was cheating on her.”

“Was he cheating?”

“I am afraid so. They are back together again and are trying to give their marriage a second chance.”

“Do they have children?”

“No. Just them two.”

Barbara walks into Rita’s room.

“Morning, Barbara,” says Tom.

“Good Morning to you as well. You are early today.”

“Yes, I am. I am selling by pi business, and as of Saturday I am just a marketing rep for the new owner.”

“Rita says you love being a private investigator.”

“I do love it.”

“So why quit then?”

“I am doing it for my girlfriend. She does not want to worry about me when I take assignments that might have danger in it.”

“Smart girl. You know she is right?”

“She is one hundred percent right. I will miss it that is for sure.

“What will you do for work?”

“I will work for the new owner for a couple of years. I will market him to new leads, I will run his administration till he hires someone to take my place, and I will train his new hires.”

“Have him hire me. I would make a great investigator.”

“His name is Dan, and I will mention it to him.”

“Please do. If hired, do I get a badge?”

“Yes, a gold shield with your last name on it.”

“A gold shield, wow, which would be cool to have and to show off.”

Tom says, “Ladies, I have to go. I have so much to do between now and my closing which will be Friday afternoon.”

Tom removes the two donuts from the small fridge and bends down to give his mom a parting hug, and a kiss on the cheek. “Buy Ladies.”

Tom calls one of the lawyers he works for.

“Good Morning. Simon and Becker law firm. My name is Vivian, How can I help you?”

“Morning, Vivian. This is Tom Whitman. I need to speak with Attorney Eastman.”

“Are you our private investigator?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Attorney Becker showed us a video of a claimant playing tennis with his bad left hand. We all laughed at that video.”

“I love following people.”

“I bet you do. Let me connect you to Attorney Eastman.”

“Attorney Eastman.”

“Hello, Chuck. This is Tom Whitman. I need your help in drafting a sales contract for my pi business.”

“Why? Because of the man you killed. I saw it on the six-p.m. news.”

“That is the main reason because my girlfriend gave me a choice, be with her in a new line of work or she would not date me anymore.”

“What happens if you break up? Will you start a new pi business again?”

“I do not plan to breakup with April. She is the one for me. We ‘clicked’ the moment we met.”



“I am ready for your information. How soon do you want the contract?”

I would love to come to your office this Friday afternoon, say four p.m. for my closing.”

“The timeline makes it a rush. I will have to charge you more.”

“I understand. Can you have it ready for both of us to sign?”

“No problem. Let me ask the questions and you give me the answers I will need.”

“Ok.”

“What is the buyer’s name?”

For the next thirty minutes Tom gives the answers the lawyer needs to prepare the sales contract.

“I have everything I need. Give me your contact information in case I need to reach you.”

Tom gives the lawyer his phone numbers. “Try my cell phone first.”

“I will call you back when I have it prepared.”

“Thanks, Chuck. I owe you one.”

Tom looks at his to do list for the day. He crossed out, visit mom, call Dan, hire Chuck, next on his extensive list is call the band Outlaw about his lyrics.

“Adam Slater speaking.”

“Morning, Adam. This is Tom Whitman. I am following up about my lyrics I sent over to the band.”

“Yes, Tom. You have one song we love. It is called ‘a winner I’m not.’ We just added the second verse. It is catchy. When can you come over for the band to play it for you?”

“I am busy all week. Call my office line and play the song to me that way. I can play it back a million times if I want.”

“Will do. I am waiting on the band to enter the studio as we speak. Talk to you soon.”

Tom crosses the band off his list. He next calls April.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Baby, did I catch you at an inconvenient time?”

“Who is this?” jokes April.

“It is your unemployed boyfriend.”

“Hello, my unemployed boyfriend. Are you out looking for work?”

“Yes. I am calling to see if we can have lunch today.

“It depends. Am I treating?”

“No, I am.”

“Then I am free for lunch from one to two p.m.”

“Great. Where do you want me to pick you up?”

“Meet me at Joe’s Pizza at 4781 Seasons Street. I am dog sitting just three blocks from there. I will meet you inside. How about a corner booth by the window?”

“See you at one at Joe’s Pizza. Cannot wait to see you.”

“Same here. Bye.”

Tom crosses April off his list and calls Harry next.

“This is Harry.”

“Harry, this is Tom. How are you and Linda doing today?”

“So far excellent. Linda is in her rehab class, and I am sitting in my car working a crossword puzzle, waiting for my baby to get out of her class.”

“Any luck in finding an apartment?”

“Yes, There are hundreds to choose from. We found one only blocks from Disney World. We have a nice two-two with a washer/dryer and a fireplace, not that you need one in Florida,” laughs Harry

“Good to hear you both are doing well. I have news of my own to share with you.”

“What news is that?”

“My last day owning a private investigative agency is this Friday. I will go to college to become a lawyer.”

“Really? I thought you were happy in your current profession.”

“I am happy, but my girlfriend told me if I wanted to be with her, I had to change professions.”

“You killed someone recently, right?”

“Yes, I did. It happened in Boca Raton. I had to kill the late husband of my client. He was going to murder her and then commit suicide.”

“What is the name of your girlfriend?”

“Her name is April Walker. We clicked the minute we met.”

“Go for it. It is hard today in finding a soul mate. I know.”

“I know I will miss the action, but my love life has to come first. I want April to have no stress once we get married. I do not want her to worry if I am out at night watching a married man cheat on his spouse.”

“It can get out of hand. He might spot you. He might have a gun.”

“That is right, Harry. Too many might’s or what ifs in my line of work.”

“Lawyer Tom Whitman, it has a nice ring to it.”

“I might be a marriage counselor instead of a lawyer. I plan to take weeks off to decide my next profession.”

“Who are you selling your company to?”

“A Miami police officer named, Dan. He worked cases with me. He wants to be a part-time private investigator till he retires as a police officer in about a dozen years.”

“I guess you have to help him for months, right?”

“Yes. I will stay on board. I will market for him, run his office till he hires someone, and I will train his new hires.”

“Please keep in touch with me.”

“I will Harry. Stay connected with me as well. I hope it works out for you and your daughter.”

“I hope it ends well myself. I have to go. Linda is exiting the rehab building. Bye, Tom.”

“Bye, Harry.”

Tom’s cell phone rings.

“Hello, this is Tom.”

“Hello, sir. I am a paralegal. I am with the law firm of Engle and Smith. My name is Tony Rodgers. I understand you locate people.”

“That is correct. Who told you about me?”

“My boss, he was at a deposition, and other lawyer mentioned you. I do not know the lawyer’s name that told my boss about you.”

“I can find that out later. What can I do for you?”

“I need to locate our insured. I need her to contact me. I sent a letter to our insured at the last address we had for her, and it came back.”

“No problem. Just go to our website and fill in the order form, or if you are in a hurry, I can take the information over the telephone.”

“We are in a hurry. We need our insured to contact us right away.”

“I am ready to take the order over the telephone.”

“What will this locate cost our law firm?”

“A locate is only two hundred dollars. Because this is the first time using us, we will only charge you one hundred dollars.”

“That is a fantastic deal. When can we have our results?”

“Within forty-eight hours. It all depends on how hard a time I have locating him or her.”

“Our insured is a female.”

“Alright, let me ask the questions and you provide me with the answers.”

“Sounds simple enough.”

“The first part of the order form is the client information, the second part is the case information, and the third part is on the person we are locating. Are you ready?”

“Yes. I have the full file in front of me.”

“Your name?”

“Tony Rodgers.”

“Your firm name?”

“Engle and Smith Law Firm.”

“Your address or your company post office box.”

“Our post office box is 2398 in Miami, FL with a zip of 39506.”

“Your client is?”

“Dunkin Donuts.”

“Your insured is?”

“Ellen Sue Major.”

“What is Ellen’s date of birth and social security number?”

“Give me a moment to look it up.”

Tom finishes taking all of the information he needs down.

“Alright, Tony I have the information I need. Let me get to work.”

One question, “Do we have to pay you first for your services?”

“No, because you are a law firm or an insurance company. If you were a private person, I would have to have my money up front first.”

“Why the difference may I ask?”

“Lawyers and adjusters always pays their invoices. A private client may try avoiding us.”

“Ok. I understand. What happens now?”

“Simple. I email you a confirmation of assignment. I run my data, make calls, and once located I will email you an address. Then you call me back confirming you have the information I emailed. Then I wait for your firm to pay my invoice.”

“I will make sure my boss pays you right away.”

“Thanks, which would be nice. It saves me from making reminder phone calls. With all the information you provided me, I do not think it will be difficult finding your client.”

“I hope you find her. We do need to speak with her.”

“Ok. I will do my best. Wish me luck.”

Tom runs the woman’s information into his data company software. The client list an address of 3367 San Fran Way in Miami. The data shows an address of 19982 Winddance Road in Key West, FL. Listed on the data is a phone number of (305) 437-2128. Tom calls the number.

“Hi,” says a young child’s voice.

“Can I speak with your mommy or your daddy, please?”

The phone hits the floor, and you can hear the child running saying, “Mommy, telephone.”

“Hello?” says a female voice.

“My name is Tom Whitman. I am a private investigator. I need to speak with Ellen Sue Major, please.”

“Speaking.”

“Ellen, my client, the law firm of Engle and Smith in Miami represent you in a lawsuit filed by a Donald Singer. There was a slip and fall in the Dunkin Donut Shop you worked at. Do you remember this case?”

“I do. It was a fake slip and fall. I saw the man just lay down on our wet floor I just moped. He started screaming in pain that his neck hurt. His wife was taking pictures on her phone. He did not see me. I was behind him coming out of the lady’s bathroom.”

“Did you live at 3367 San Fran Way in Miami?”

“I moved from that dump eight months ago.”

“Do you live at 19982 Winddance Road in Key West, now?”

“Yes. I own this house free and clear.”

“Do you have an ink pen? I need to give you a name to call at the law firm. They will represent you for free.”

“Yes, go ahead. I am ready.”

“Please contact Tony Rodgers at the law firm of Engle and Smith at this number, 305- 337-1886. Tell him your name and go from there.”

“You said they will represent me for free?”

“That is right, one hundred percent free. If you do not call them and this Donald guy continues to sue, you will have to hire your own lawyer to defend you. The reason it is free now is because Dunkin Donuts is paying the law firm to represent you.”

I will call Tony right now.”

“Do me a favor and give me five minutes to call him to tell him I located you, and you will be calling him today.”

“I can wait five minutes.”

“Thank you, Ellen. Have a lovely day.”

Tom calls the law firm.

“Thank you for calling Engle and Smith Law Firm, Helen speaking.”

“Hello, Helen. My name is Tom Whitman. I am a private investigator. I need to speak with Tony Rodgers, please.”

“Stand by I will connect you now.”

“This is Tony Rodgers.”

“Good morning, Tony. Good news. This is Tom Whitman, and I located your client, Ellen Sue Majors.”

“Wow, which was fast.”

“I spoke with her, and she will be calling you in about five minutes. I confirmed her new address of 19982 Winddance Road in Key West, with a zip code of 39509. Her house phone number is 305- 437-2128. I will be invoicing you \$100 dollars for my time.”

“No. Make it \$200.00 dollars, please. This was fast work.”

“Thank you for your business.”

“I will have about five more to locate later this week. I need to find my witnesses on a big death case where a child drowned in a pool. Do you also do investigations?”

“We do. What do you have in mind?”

“This death of a six-year-old in an apartment complex pool. We represent the property owner.”

“I do those type of cases. I was a police officer in Tupelo, MS. for ten years, Please fill out my investigative order form, and I will get right on it. My rate is \$100 an hour. Give me a minimum budget of three-thousand-dollars, please.”

“I will let my lawyer I work for know your rate.”

“What is the name of your attorney?”

“Charles Bothner.”

“I will wait for my order form. If you give the assignment to me today, I will start today, and have it back on your desk Friday morning.”

“I will speak to Attorney Bothner when he returns from court.”

“Let me know as fast as you can as I do have other cases to work. I will put all my cases on hold if I receive your death case today.”

“You should hear back from our law firm by noon, one way or another.”

“Do me a favor. Let the other lawyers, paralegals, and secretaries know about my private investigative agency, please.”

“I beat you to it. I sent an email ten minutes ago to our thirty-member law firm, add to that the support staff of at least seventy, and you could be a busy man in the next month or so. It will depend for sure on how this death case goes down.”

“Believe me Tony, I am an incredibly detailed type of investigator. I know what you need.”

“I like the cheerful outlook already.”

“I will wait your response, speak soon, bye,” says Tom.

Dan calls.

“Morning, Tom. Are you incorporated?”

“Yes. I am an LLC. I have a CPA as well. I am about to receive a big death case from a new thirty-man law firm. They have at least seventy support staff. I will have to raise my selling price now, ha-ha.”

“Really?”



“Just joking. If we market you right, I see you hiring at least four investigators this year. That is where the money is. In your staff doing the work at twenty and hour and you netting at least seventy-an-hour per man.”

“I like the sounds of this venture, already, Tom.”

“When I do go on this death case, please call off sick and tag along. Remember, this is a civil case, not a criminal case. We have a separate set of rules. I will teach you as you go. I am your mentor, remember?”

“I remember. It sounds too good to be true.”

“You are in the right place at the right time. I will call you if we land the job.”

“Text me instead. I may be on the job as a police officer. I do not want anyone on the police force knowing about me owning a private investigative agency.”

“Why not?”

“We have a new Chief. He may cancel all off-duty-work assignments. If he does, I will have to quit the force and become a full-time private investigator.”

“I understand. I will text you. I have to make calls. Speak to you soon, Dan. Bye.”

Tom calls his sister.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Sandy, how are you and the boys?”

“I miss my husband, and the boys miss their father. My lawyer suggested we drop our charges and ask the judge to give John another chance.”

“You will have to ask the nursing home if they will drop their charges as well. If they do, the Judge should place John on a long-term probation period.”

“I put a call into them already. I am waiting on Caroline Hunter to call me back.”

“Tell her to call me as well. I will tell her the truth; John is a good man. That you and the boys need him home.”

“I will tell her to call you. Wish me luck with her return call to me.”

“My toes are crossed, and I am walking funny.”

Sandy just laughs and replies, I will speak to you soon, Brother.”

“Ok. Bye, Sandy.”

Tony, the paralegals calls.

“Hello, this is Tom.”

“Hello, Tom. This is Tony. The witness you located is on the telephone with my boss. My boss said we can retain you to do our investigation into the drowning of the six-year-old. What do you need from our law firm?”

“I need you to go to my website and fill in all the information you can. If you have a photo of the victim, any news articles, then just attach them to the order form.”

“This file just landed in our lap. I have no clue of what Information I can provide you at this time.”

“Tony, give me the date of loss, the victim’s name, the parents address, and this is all I need to start the investigations. Will you be my contact person at the law firm?”

“Yes. Just call or email me and I will respond right away.”

“Do you have a budget for me to go on?”

“Yes. My boss said not to go over five thousand. If you need more than that to let him know.”

“The five thousand is fifty hours of time. I think that will do. I will update you nightly.”

“That works for me. Bye.”

“Bye, and thanks for the case.”

“No problem. I know you will do a fantastic job. I feel it in my bones.”

“Tony, I will never let you or your firm down. Speak soon.”

Tom calls Dan.

“Dan speaking.”

“Hey, Buddy can you talk?”

“Yes. I called in sick. I am sitting here with Cindy by my side.”

“Hello, Cindy?”

“Hello, Tom. Dan says you are selling him your company?”

“Yes. This Friday afternoon.”

“Dan asked me to be his secretary and bookkeeper.”

“Wow, which sounds like a good move.”

“I am just worried will work come in?”

“Sure, it will. I just landed a new account of thirty lawyers. I already did a locate for two hundred and the paralegal just gave me a death case with a minimum budget of five thousand.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I plan to start the case tomorrow morning. Do you and Dan want to tag along?”

Dan says, “I am calling in sick. I want to ride along to see how you do it.”

Cindy response, “I will call in sick as well.”

“Good. Cindy drive tomorrow to Dan’s place and I will pick you both up at nine a.m.”

Dan asks, “What should we wear?”

“Look professional. I am wearing dark slacks; an open white shirt and I will have shaved to look super clean.”

“Do I bring any equipment?” asks Dan.

“Nope. I have it all. See you both at nine, then we will stop for breakfast and coffee before arriving at the job.”

“See you then,” says Dan and Cindy together.”

Tom drives over to his condominium to do research on his new case. Tony’s job just arrived by email. Tom knows this because his cell phone alerts him with the name of the firm.

Tom runs data on the family of the deceased six-year-old boy. He runs data as well on the property owner. Tom places a thirty-five mm camera in his gym bag, a measuring tape, a thick notebook, an ink pen, and a cell phone charger. He prints the data on the case and an aerial view of the incident location and places all this information in the gym bag. Tom looks at his watch. He locks his condominium, enters his Honda, and departs the area.

Tom pulls up to the pizza joint and walks inside. April waves to him from a corner booth. Tom gives her a big kiss and asks, "What is your name?"

"April," she says with a sweet smile."

Tom sticks out his hand and says, "Hi. My name is July Whitman."

April laughs and gives her boyfriend a warm kiss. "You smell nice," she says giving him another kiss.

The waiter walks over and asks, "What can I get you Two Love Birds?"

Tom says quickly, "Two glasses of Coke, no ice, please."

The young waiter writes it down and says, "I will be right back with your drinks."

Tom asks, "Have you eaten here before?"

"I have. The food is good."

"The thing I hate when I eat out is bad service on top of unhealthy food."

"That is why on my lunch hour I either stay home and make something fresh or I eat at the same place that services you. Like this place. I consider the pizza joint as my kitchen away from home."

"Are you a good cook?" asks Tom.

"Not really. I want to take cooking classes soon. I want to be able to spread my wings and offer my friends something new when they come over."

"What do you serve your guest when they come over?"

April laughs, "Pizza."

Tom and April have a nice lunch with a slice each of apple pie for dessert.

“I took your advice, April. I will be unemployed come this Saturday. I am selling my investigative company to my friend Dan. We will close the deal Friday afternoon.”

“Then you plan to be a lawyer, right?”

“I might look into being a marriage counselor. So many people I know could use my help. The FBI says forty percent of spouses cheat on each other. Besides, I am not really a book worm.”

“I just want you happy Tom with your next profession. Just make sure it is not a job I will worry nightly if you make it home or not.”

“I agree one-hundred-percent with you, April.”

The two Love Birds finish their desserts, pay their bill, and walk outside.

“Where are you going now?” asks Tom.

“I have another dog sitting job to go to.”

“Is it far, can we walk together?”

“We can walk if you want. I am only four blocks from my job.”

“How do you find these animal watching jobs you go on?”

“Simple, go to [animalwalker.org](http://animalwalker.org) and sign up. I like the job very much. It pays well, plus I get my walking exercise in.”

“What does it pay an hour?”

“Twenty-an-hour with a three-hour minimum.”

“What do you make an hour?”

“I receive sixty percent of the invoice, plus I get attached to the dogs on my route.”

“I like dogs, too. I might sign up on a part-time basis. Has a dog ever bit you?”

“Not me, but some dog walkers have been bitten.”

Tom and April hold hands as they walk down the street.

April stops and says, “My next house is coming up. Give me a kiss goodbye here.”

Tom and April kiss. April says, “When I am working, I do not answer my cell. Text me if you need to talk, ok?”

The two love birds kiss again. Tom says, “You can call me when finished. I am going to go home and relax. I have a big investigative case I have to work tomorrow.”

Tom walks the four blocks back to where he parked his Honda by the Pizza restaurant. He still has calls to make on his list. He chooses to listen to Country Music instead.

Sandy calls her brother.

“This is Tom.”

“You must be so busy that you forgot we were to have lunch today with your girlfriend.”

“Shoot. I did forget. Let us have lunch one day next week when I am unemployed.”

” That works for me. Call me Monday to set the lunch up. Bye, brother.”

## CHAPTER 8

Tuesday morning at eight a.m. Tom's alarm goes off. He showers, gets dressed, grabs his gear bag, locks his condominium up, walks to his parked Honda, enters, and departs the area.

At eight-forty-five a.m. Tom pulls up to Dan's residence. He toots his horn as he pulls into the driveway. Dan and Cindy exit the house. Dan locks the front door, helps Cindy into the back seat, then Dan slides in next to her. "Morning, Buddy."

"Good Morning Cindy and Dan. Where can we get a quick cup of coffee and a bite to eat?"

"Just blocks down the road is Burger King," says Dan while trying to kiss Cindy.

"The plan today is simple. I will start my investigation on the death of a six-year-old child. Just tag along and observe. I will tell all the people we meet that you two are newspaper journalist doing a story on the child's death."

"That works for us," says Dan as he kisses Cindy.

Tom pulls up to Burger King's take-out window. He orders three coffees and three egg sandwiches. He pays with his company credit card. They sit in the lot and enjoy their breakfasts.

Thirty minutes later Tom pulls up to his address. A large four-story apartment building with eight units a floor. The pool looks very green. Tom spots a hole in the pool fence and takes photos. Tom walks over to the outdoor pool and takes a sample of the pool water.

He walks to his trunk and removes a large doll about two feet high. He asks Dan to video him pushing the doll underwater to evaluate the visibility. Tom places the doll in the water and pushes the doll underwater with a large pole. Within two seconds the doll was underwater and not visible.

Tom starts knocking on the apartment doors one by one. When no one answers he tapes his business card to the front door instructing the renters to call him. When someone did answer he would ask them if they knew anything regarding the child that drowned.

Some renters knew the child, and their kids either went to school with him or played with him or both. Some renters had no children or did not know about the death of the child.

Every renter had complaints about their property owner. They all called him a slum property owner. He never fixed the hole in the pool fence, never had a pool man clean the pool, or add chorine or other chemicals.

Some neighbors had a fridge that leaked, overflowing toilets, you name the problem this apartment complex had it.

The property owner would just collect the rent in cash and promise to send someone to fix the problem. The property owner never sent a repair person. It tuns out the renters are Mexican families that came to Miami to work the fields. Most were undocumented immigrants and hid when the police would arrive.

Tom interviewed the mother of the child that drowned. The woman spoke broken English and Tom spoke broken Spanish. Her name is Johanna Rodriguez. Her husband is named Jose and he was at work when Tom arrived. The child that drowned was named Alex. He did not know how to swim.

Johanna said on the morning of the incident she took a nap. She locked the front door before taking her nap with Alex next to her. When she woke up, Alex was not in her bed. She walked around the two-bedroom apartment calling his name. he liked to play hide and seek with his mother. After searching all the rooms, she found her front door unlocked.

A family member had come home to pick something up and forgot to relock the front door. Johanna and neighbors searched the apartment property for her child. A neighbor went wading in the dirty pool and found the child with his feet. He dived to the bottom and brought her deceased son to the surface.

After seven hours of interviewing the neighbors Tom, Dan, and Cindy left the apartment complex. Tom drove to the nearest pool service company and asked the clerk to evaluate the sample pool water he brought.



The clerk asked, "Who swims in this crud?" The clerk ran the water samples into her testing machines and handed Tom the report with the findings.

Tom paid the lady for her time to evaluate his water. He explained he was a private investigator working for an insurance company representing the property owner. That a six-year-old child drowned last week in that pool.

The clerk says, "My name is Bonnie Engle. I am a mother. That water was disgusting. The property owner needs to be shot for allowing any pool to get that bad. Please put my name down. I will show-up in court to testify against that slum property owner."

Tom stops at April's house and knocks on her front door. April opens the door and is surprised to see her boyfriend standing there with his thirty-five mm camera in his hands. She gives him a kiss and asks, "What brings you here?"

"Please take my camera and get the photos developed for me. Make sure each photo is four by six and call me to come back to pick the camera and photos up when you are finished."

"I will be glad to do that chore for you, Honey."

Tom replies, "I am investigating the drowning of a six-year-old in an apartment complex pool. I want to list you as the photographer on the case."

"When do you need the photos by?"

"Soon as you can. I have about twelve more tenants to interview and I have to draft my report as well."

"Who is in your car?"

"Dan, the buyer of my company and his girlfriend, Cindy. They are learning from me how to do interviews. I made the tenants think the couple were reporters."

Tom motions over to Dan to exit the car and come over to see him. When they do exit Tom says to April, "This is Dan and his girlfriend Cindy. Dan and Cindy this is my girlfriend, April." All three give each other hugs.

"April, please call me when my photos are ready."

April says to Tom as he walks away with his two friends, "I will. Are we still seeing each other tonight?"

"Yes. I will be over at six p.m."

"That works for me, bye Honey."

Once back in his vehicle he says, "April and I just clicked. I love that woman. Now let me drop you both off back at Dan's place. I will make a video copy of the pool doll in the water; type my report, and I will wait for the other tenants to call me."

"Pretty girl you have, Tom."

Cindy says, "What about me?"

Dan looks Cindy in her beautiful eyes and says, "April is pretty, but you are prettier." Cindy kisses Dan after that line.

Tom drops Dan and Cindy off at Dan's place. "Once my report is one-hundred-percent ready I will give you a copy Dan," says Tom.

"This date was fun, Dan," says Cindy as she exits Tom's Honda.

Dan says to his crime fighting partner. "Call if you need anything."

"I will," replies Tom as he drives away. Tom calls Tony at the law firm.

"Tony speaking."

"Tony, I spent all day at the family's apartment complex interviewing tenants. I have twelve more units to speak with. I evaluated the pool water; it was so green and smelled so bad.

The tenants are all Mexican. They work all the fields that are nearby. Your client is a slum property owner. I have statements from units that complain that nothing gets fixed.

The property owner is there on the first Friday of the month wanting his six-hundred-dollar rent money. Take thirty-two units x \$600 and that is almost twenty-thousand-dollars a month. Times that by twelve months and he is collecting over a quarter of a million a year.

The pool had a hole in it for months. The child woke up from a nap and worked his way to the pool and fell in. A fellow tenant went in the water wading and his feet found the boy at the bottom of the pool.

How much insurance does your client carry?"

"He carries one-million- dollars, why?"

"Settle right now for what you can get. If a good plaintiff lawyer took this case and if I were him, I would put each tenant on the stand and paint your client as a slum property owner. I would ask for six million, one million for each age of the deceased child. I am telling you not a dry eye would be in a juror's eye."

"I think you may be right. When can I have your report and photographs?"

"I will be in Thursday afternoon about four p.m."

"Let us talk when you come in on Thursday. I will make sure my boss will be in on our meeting."

"Speak to you on Thursday, Tony. See you then."

Tom starts driving to his condominium to catch up on his reports, and to make a copy of the video he shot of the apartment complex and pool.

Harry calls Tom.

"Hello, this is Tom?"

"Hi, Buddy. Are you busy? Can you talk with me?"

"I am just driving back to my residence. Let me put you on speaker in my car."

Tom pushes buttons on his radio in the car and asks, "Can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear. I just wanted to update you on Linda and I."

"Tell me, Harry how it is going? Are you alone now?"

"Yes, I am alone. I am waiting on Linda. She is in some kind of Rehab meeting."

"So how is it going?"

"I am not going to lie to you. It is really hard to keep Linda in line. She either wants to walk alone or have a man pick her up. I told her, no, I do not want you to relapse. I plan to watch you like a hawk."

“Tough love, Harry, is what Linda needs.”

“Believe me, I hardly sleep, but we are together, and my daughter is trying to not relapse.”

“Keep her busy, take her to an amusement park, have some fun, change up the daily routine.”

“Good idea. How are you doing?”

“Busy, I have a rush death case I am working, plus I am trying to sell my business at the same time.”

“Selling the company is still on, right?”

“Yes. I will be unemployed when I wake up Saturday morning to start a new day. I cannot wait.”

“Good to hear, call me when you are unemployed.”

“I will do that. Have a safe day driving in that crazy rush hour Orlando traffic.”

“I will. Bye.”

“Speak soon. Bye.”

Tom returns to his office located in his apartment. He turns on his computer and starts typing away about the death case he is working. He look at his watch. The time reads six-thirty p.m.

After an hour of typing, Tom takes a break. He calls his sister. Tom gets her message. After hearing that she is not home, he leaves a message for her to call him.

Tom starts dialing a number when he receives an incoming call. The caller sounds Mexican and in broken English says his name is Miguel and he was returning the call.

Tom says in broken Spanish that he will call him back tomorrow with a woman that speaks Spanish as well as Mexican.

After talking to Miguel, Tom hangs up and Googles a translation company. Tom dials the number.

On the third ring a woman answers, “Betty’s Translation Service, this is Betty”

“Hello, Betty. My name is Tom Whitman. I am a private investigator. I am calling because I need to hire you to translate from Spanish to English for me. I will be speaking with Mexican tenants at an apartment complex where a six-year-old boy drowned there last week. Can you or one of your staff be able to help me, Tomorrow?”

“I am available. I can do the translating from my office instead of going ten miles away to translate in person. I charge two hundred an hour if I have to go in person or only one hundred an hour if I translate remotely.”

“Remotely works for me. I will be knocking on apartment doors tomorrow and/or the Mexican tenants may contact me. You have to be ready when I call, and it could be at noon or seven a.m.”

“I will be standing by from seven a.m. on for you.”

“Do you need a retainer from me?”

“No. You sound honest.”

“My lawyer client wants everything by Friday. I will give you a check then.”

“Simple enough.”

I will give you the names and contact number for each. I want you to speak with each person in the residence when you call.

“Simple enough.”

Here are the names of the people interviewed. I am attaching their names and phone number. Give each one a call. Take their statement in English. I will also formulate the questions I need asked from each.

I need full name, age, address where they live, their occupation, their apartment phone number, how long has he/she resided there? I need the names of anyone seventeen of age or older to speak with

When you do speak with someone, always remember the who, what, where, why, when, and how. Those six words opens up so many questions to ask. Now I will forward the main questions I need asked regarding the drowning of Alex, age six.”

Betty says, “Working child death cases is incredibly sad. I have a daughter aged ten. I cannot imagine losing my child like little boy Alex.”

“This will be my last death case regardless of age,” says Tom. “It stays with me in my head.”

“This will be my last case as well,” replies Betty. “It stays in my head as well. No amount of money is worth the nightmares one might have with a tragedy like the one with the little boy just six years old. Can you imagine being his mother and waking from a nap and go searching for your son around the house in a hide and seek game, then discovering your loss ten minutes later?”

“Did you receive in an email I just sent you the list of names to contact?” asks Tom.

“Yes. I will start calling the people today. This is a rush case for you, right?”

Tom replies, “Yes. I am trying to be finished by Friday afternoon.”

“Rush cases cost more; you do know that, right?”

“Yes.” says Tom. “The insurance company is willing to eat the cost. Hey just need to know what the neighbors saw, heard, or did on the date of the accident. Google map the address for an unobstructed view of the apartment building and the swimming pool nearby.”

“Yes, I see the aerial photo of the building and pool. Why didn’t the property owner fix the hole in the fence and maintain the pool with a balance of chemicals?” wonders Betty.

“Because the property owner is cheap and greedy at the same time. He collects the rent and does nothing else. He knows his tenants will not complain to any regulating agency because they are illegals. He is taking advantage of the situation. It is just sad in this day and age to see this behavior.”

“Have you met the landlord?” asks Betty.

“No, not yet. I plan to in the next day or so. I want to see the look in his eyes when I tell him what his tenants said about him.”

Betty replies, “I bet he doesn’t care.”

Tom says, "He will when he has money taken from him. He will be facing criminal charges when I am finished with this case. The property owner has seven other properties within a two-mile radius. He buys the buildings cheap, makes them look nice to move into, then neglects the units, but collects the rent on time. I feel sorry for the Mexican families. They work hard in the fields to come back to a place that needs repairs, and nothing happens. Just pure greed on his part."

"What kind of criminal charges can he face?" asks Betty.

"I have proof already of the pool condition, the hole in the fence that resulted in death. I do not know what charges he will end up with, but remember, the police officers have families too. They will be on the good side of the law on this one. I would like to see manslaughter charges, a big fine, and jail time."

"You get him, Tom. I will spend the next two days and nights interviewing your witnesses and tenants. I think the other twelve tenants will be saying the same thing as the others about the living conditions."

"You are right, Betty. I will just email you the twelve names when they call me. I will tell them in broken Spanish that you will be calling them soon. It does not make sense to speak to them in broken Spanish, then to start over again with you interviewing them, Betty."

"You are correct, why do double duty. Just email me the names and phone numbers and I will keep calling them till they answer."

Tom says, "I have to go, I have an incoming call. It may be one of my twelve Mexican families."

"Hello, this is Tom?"

"Hola. I speak a little English, sad about the boy."

"What is your name and telephone number?"

"Jose Martinez. My phone number is (305) 658-2992. I work long hours in the fields."

"I will have Betty call you in Spanish today."

"Good. I feel better now."

"Bye, Jose. I will call Betty now to talk to you. Bye."

Tom calls Betty.

“This is Betty.”

“Hello. Betty. Sorry I am calling so late. Can you call right now one of my twelve tenants?”

“I can call him right now. What is his name and phone number?”

“Jose Martinez, his phone number is (305) 658-2992.”

“I am calling him now.”

Tom returns to typing his report on the drowning of Alex. Twenty minutes later Betty calls him.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hello, Tom. Betty here. I just hung up on the tenant named Jose Martinez. He filled me in on the condition of the pool, the hole in the fence, the conditions in the apartment units. I think he will make an excellent witness for the prosecution. He has three girls, ages 3,4, and seven. You need to hire a lawyer that speaks Spanish.”

“I will tell my client to settle right away. They do not want the defense to call every tenant in all his properties. This property owner needs to pay Alex’s family big bucks. It will not bring their son back, but life in the future will be better when they start a family again.”

“How true. I will start calling the families now. It is eight p.m. This is a suitable time to call. Speak to you soon, Bye.”

Tom calls April.

“Hello, Baby, sorry I could not make our date tonight. Can we do it Tomorrow?”

“What kept you from seeing me at seven like we planned?”

“I am taking witness statements from tenants of a building that had a hole in the fence around a pool. Well, a six-year-old boy drowned in it last week. His named was Alex. All the tenants are illegal Mexicans.”

“That is a good excuse to stand me up, and to not give me any notice. I forgive you this time, Honey”

“How about Tomorrow night at seven?”



“The date is now on for Tomorrow night at seven. See you then Mr. Lawyer.”

“I will make it up to you, my Fox.”

“With candy I hope.”

Tom calls Dan on his cell phone.

“This is Dan.”

“I forgot to tell you, but your first case as new owner has to be performed this weekend. I did the woman before. She is easy to follow. I have video I can show you. It is the Beverly Jones case.”

“I can work it; I just have to call in sick is all. I hope you will ride with me and show me how you do your surveillances. In the police department we have like eight vehicles and an airplane spotter.”

“I do not have access to an airplane, and it is only me and you that will be working the surveillance. You worked cases with me already, Dan. What are you talking about? You should be a pro by now.”

“It is different now because I am the owner and not the worker.”

“Just obtain video on all your cases, draft a good report and invoice for your time. Turn the video and report in as quickly as you can once the report is typed. Do that and the client will either issue you more work on the same case or issue your pi firm s brand new assignment.”

“You make it sound so easy, Tom.”

“It is easy for me. I have no problem on any case.”

“Someday it will be easy for me, but right now I am a lost puppy in a big city.”

On Saturday I will come by your house at five a.m. You can follow me to your weekend surveillance on Beverly Jones. I will turn over her file and all evidence I have on her. At that time.”

“Great. I will see you Saturday morning.”

“Don’t forget, Saturday morning at five a.m.”

Tom arrives at his condominium building. He parks on the third floor. Five minutes later, Tom is popping in the microwave a TV chicken dinner.

Tom's cell phone rings. He does not answer. He will let the caller leave a message. Tonight, he will relax and watch something on Television.

Tom does not last long. Thirty minutes into his movie he falls asleep.

## CHAPTER 9

Wednesday morning at nine a.m. Tom locks his condominium up, walks to his Honda, and departs the parking lot

Tom drives over to 4821 Drake Road in Miami and knocks on the front door. He is dressed in a brown suit and carries a briefcase with his right hand.

Francis Horn comes to the door. "Yes."

"Do you remember me? I am the private investigator that was investigating the hit and run accident that killed your neighbor, Joey Jenkins."

"I remember that you wanted to speak with my husband."

"Yes. I want to talk to you and Steven together. Is your husband home?"

"No. He is in Jacksonville visiting his ill brother. He will be back Monday evening."

"Can I come by late next week and pay you both a visit?"

"Yes, do that young man. Visit us one day next week."

"Can you give me your phone number, please?"

"We just changed it yesterday. We were getting strange calls in the middle of the night."

"What strange calls?"

"Deep breathing, laughter, talking religion, things like that."

"Good idea to change numbers. I will not give it out to anyone. You are miles away from where I live. I just want to call you to make sure your husband was with you."

"Our phone number is 305-343-7668."

Tom writes the number at the top of his Joey Jenkins file. He says have an enjoyable day to Ms. Horn, enters his vehicle and departs the area.

Tom calls April.

Morning, Fox. What are you up to today?"

“I am with Becky. She has a medical appointment today and did not want to go alone. I am her driver.”

“Well Miss Uber, how about lunch when Becky is finished with her appointment?”

“I like that name, Ms. Uber. We can have a quick fast-food break.”

“Where are you ladies at?”

2239 US 1, the Drake Building.”

“I will head that way right now. I will sit with you in the waiting room.”

“I would like to see your handsome face and beautiful blue eyes, so come on by.”

“My GPS says thirty minutes. I will see you in twenty.”

“Drive safe, Tom. If Becky finishes early, we will wait for you in the waiting room, so do drive safe, wear your seatbelt, and use your turn signals.”

“Yes, Mom.”

April laughs at Tom’s comment and continues to read the latest People’s Magazine in the waiting room.

Dan calls Tom.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Morning, Tom, are you free for lunch? Cindy and I want to talk about the sale of your business.”

“I am having lunch with April and her sister, Becky. Why don’t you join the group, and we can talk shop all you want after lunch?”

“That works for us. Where do we have lunch?”

“April and Becky are at a doctor’s office at 2239 US 1, go find a nice quiet place and we can join you both there.”

“Fantastic. We will call you shortly.”

Tom arrives at 2239 US 1 and finds a parking spot in the front row. He locks his Honda and enters the building. There in the waiting room is

April. He sees she is reading a People's Magazine. Tom sits down next to his love and says, "Is that People's Magazine you are reading belong to this medical center?"

"Yes."

"Can I read it after you are finished with it?"

"Yes."

"Here is my business card in case you need a private investigator."

April takes the card from Tom and replies, "My sister needs to hire you. She wants to follow her husband."

"What is your sister's name?"

"Becky, and her husband's name is Mitch."

Tom reaches over and gives his Fox a warm, quick kiss. "

Dan and Cindy are finding a restaurant to grab something to eat. I thought we could join them. How about it? Are you game?"

"Sure, as long as I don't have to buy everyone's lunches."

Tom and April kiss and talk for five more minutes when Becky exits the doctor's office and walks up to her sister.

"Hello, Sister. Introduce me to this good-looking man in front of me."

"Becky, this is Tom Whitman, he is a private investigator and also your sister's boyfriend."

"We finally meet."

Tom gives Becky a hug and replies, "Yes, we finally meet."

"Thank you for watching my husband for me. Now that the cat is out of the bag, Mitch wants to move back in and start our relationship over."

"What about you? How do you feel about Mitch moving back in?"

"Sixty percent of my heart says yes, thirty percent says maybe, and the last ten percent says no."

"Will you press charges on him?"

“That I am not going to do. I already contacted the State Attorney on his case, and I told him I do not want to press charges.”

“I think he knows what he did is wrong for a married man, plus taking illegal drugs is not going to work if he still is on drugs.”

“I told him to take a piss test with my doctor. If he is clean, he moves back in.”

“That was smart on your part,” says Tom.

“I read about that idea from a Peoples Magazine article.”

Tom’s cell phone rings.

“Hello? This is Tom.”

“Dan here. We are at Dairy Queen also on US 1 at 3032. Not too far from where you three are. We found a large corner booth.”

Tom says, “Good. We will be there in less than ten minutes.”

Tom asks, “Do you two ladies want a ride with a man that is armed with a firearm?”

Becky and April laugh at Tom’s comment.

“We would love for you to be our bodyguard.”

“I would love to bodyguard you.”

Tom drives April and her sister over to Dairy Queen to meet up with Dan and Cindy. As April is exiting the vehicle she says to Tom, “Why are you dressed in a suit for? Did you have court today?”

“No, nothing like that. I wanted to interview two people on a traffic death case, but the wife told me to return next week when the husband was back in town.”

Tom and the two sisters greet Dan and his girlfriend. The group of three slide into the booth and Becky comments, “I haven’t been to Dairy Queen in years.”

The group of five make small talk as they order and later have their lunch. Dan says, “Does anyone have room for dessert?” Four people all say they are full. Dan orders an ice cream cone.

Ten minutes later all five of the group are outside standing around. Cindy says to Dan, "You are always eating, yet you never gain weight. Why is that?"

Dan shrugs his shoulders and replies, "I do not know. Maybe running two miles each morning helps keep the weigh off."

Tom drops April and Becky off at April's car. Tom and his girlfriend steal kisses before saying goodbye.

Tom drives over to the nursing home parking lot. A uniform guard greets him as he exits his car.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Whitman."

Tom says hello and is impressed the guard from days ago remembered him. Tom says, "You have a good memory."

"It helps sir when your mother notifies us that you are on the way to see her. You told her and she told us. I remember your Honda."

"In any case, how is it going with the new procedures you have in place with the guest log, keeping the driver's license, rules like that?"

"No one has complained. They all love us being armed. With gangs stealing car converters, people stealing purses, robberies in business parking lots, they all love the idea of prevention."

"I love it that my mother has protection and strangers cannot walk around without someone questioning why they are on property. Prevention is the key. Let the criminals say to each other, 'stay away from Shady Oaks Retirement Center. They have security now'."

Tom stops at the front desk and shows the uniform guard his driver's license. He signs the guest book, hands he guard his driver's license, then heads down the hall to his mother's room.

Rita says, "Morning, son. Give me a hug. You sure look handsome in that suit. Did you have court today?"

"No. I was interviewing witnesses on a case. I wanted to look professional."

"You dress like a lawyer. I think you will make an exceptionally good lawyer if you choose that profession."

“I close on my business in two days. I will market for the new owner. I will run the office as well until they find an office manager, so I will still be in the office, just as a worker and not as the owner.”

“It will feel strange son, waking up as a worker and not as an owner.”

“True, Mom. Look at it this way, no more dangerous cases. Let someone else be the hero.”

Tom takes off his suit jacket and hangs it over a chair. Rita says, “I see you carry your gun in a shoulder holster. It is hidden when the jacket is on.”

“I go everywhere armed. To Wal Mart, the Gym, to a concert, you name it I am armed. You just do not know when crime will strike.”

“Son, I sometimes think what would have happened to me if John burst in here and took me away. What danger I was in that night. I am thankful you were armed.”

Tom visit is his mother for thirty minutes till her lunch meal arrived. Barbara comes into Rita’s room with her food tray and says to Tom, “You look good in a suit. Did you have court this morning?”

“No. I went to interview two people on a case I am working, and I wanted to look professional.”

“You look professional, Tom.” Right, Rita?”

“Just like he will look once he becomes a lawyer.”

“Ladies, I will leave you two alone to have your meals.” Tom gives Rita a big hug and exits the room. Tom signs the guest book with an out time and picks up his driver’s license.

Once back in his Honda he calls his sister. Her phone goes to voice mail. Tom leaves Sandy a quick message. “Sis, I just visited mother. She is looking fantastic. I met Barbara again, the women from room 21. She was going to have lunch with Mother. Call me when you have time. I want to hear the latest on your husband, John.”

Tom calls the lawyer drawing up his sale’s contract.

“Afternoon, Chuck. How is it going with my sale of the business?”



“I am finished with it just as you called me. I will email you the draft. Look it over, add or delete anything in the sale’s language, and email it to me back. I will make any changes and I will have the contract ready for you both to sign on Friday. Come in at 4 p.m.”

“Fantastic news. I will be in my office in an hour or so. I will check my emails for your draft.”

“I have a partner in my firm that needs your surveillance skills. He thinks his wife is cheating on him. He wanted me to ask you what your surveillance rate is?”

“Tell him, because you are working on my contract on a rush bases, I will do his surveillance for free. Have him go to my website, fill in the surveillance request and I will call him. What is the man’s name?”

“Wow, free. I will tell him to go to your website. His name is Peter Billingsley.”

“Perfect I will work his case this afternoon and all-day Tomorrow. Then my partner can watch his wife later in the month. What does the wife do?”

“His wife’s name is Tracey. She owns her own boutique ladies clothing store in downtown Miami called ‘Just Try it On.’

“Tell Peter to drop what he is doing right now and to go to my website. I will do a background check which includes social media, and I will start the case at four p.m. today.”

“Will tell him. Wow, for free. He will love that.”

Tom calls Dan on his cell phone.

“Dan speaking.”

“Hi, Partner. I have a rush surveillance on a lawyer’s wife. I am working it from four p.m. on today. Can you help me?”

“No problem. I will just go on vacation for a week starting today. I was scheduled to go in tomorrow at four p.m. The patrol division will not miss me. Call me where to meet you.”

“The lawyer is filling out the order form now. I will know around three p.m. all the information on her.”

“Great. Speak to you soon.”

Tom calls Rebecca in her house in Boca Raton. A cleaning crew member answers her phone. “Hello? Who is this?”

“My name is Tom Whitman. I am her bodyguard.”

“I will call her to call you. What is your phone number?”

“Give her this one, 305-452-7682.”

“I copy. I will call her now. Bye.”

Just as Tom reaches his third-floor parking garage, he receives a cell phone call. “Hello? This is Tom.”

“Hello, Tom. This is Rebecca. How are you doing?”

“I am fine. I am selling my business to my partner, Dan. You know him. He helped me bodyguard you. How are you doing, Rebecca?”

“I moved in with my brother in West Palm Beach. I just listed my house for sale. The cleaning crew and the painters will be finished today, and I can start showing the house tomorrow.”

“How are you doing emotionally?” asks Tom.

“I am getting stronger every day. Why don’t you and Dan come to my restaurant, have dinner and desert on me. This way you can meet my brother and we can catch up.”

“Great. I will ask Dan when he is available. Once I know the date, I will call you.”

“Let me give you my new cell phone number. Are you ready to copy?”

“I am.”

“It is area code 561- 366-0752.”

“Good to hear your voice, Rebecca.”

“It is great to be alive and walking on earth thanks to you.”

“I am very sorry it ended the way it did.”

“He was buried yesterday. I did not attend the funeral. I have good, and great memories of our life together. I want to remember those times.”

“Too bad he was using illegal narcotics and messing around with a different woman.”

“Yes, it is. People do change. I am living proof of that.”

“Let us stay connected. I will call Dan to pinpoint a time we can meet you for lunch or dinner. Speak to you soon. Bye, Rebecca.”

“Bye, Tom. Thanks, for calling. You made my day.”

Tom receives an alert tone on his cell phone. This means a new job arrived at his business website.

Tom enters his condominium and turns on his computer. The new job is from Attorney Peter Billingsley. His wife may be cheating after she closes her clothing store at six p.m. Her address is at 24365 Ellen Drive in South Miami. She drives a red in color Lexus SUV, white in color.

Tom calls his friend Dan on his cell phone.

“This is Dan.”

“Dan, the wife we are watching is Tracey Billingsley and she resides at 24365 Ellen Drive in South Miami. She drives a white in color Lexus SUV with Fl tag JUF329. She owns and works at her clothing store called ‘Just Try it On located at 341 Main Street in downtown Miami. The store closes at six pm. I will be there at three-thirty. I am about to exit my condominium now.”

“I will be there at four. Make sure you bring your walkies with a full charge.”

“Will do, speak to you soon, Dan. Wait, I almost forgot. I spoke to Rebecca. She moved in with her brother. She will be selling her home starting tomorrow. She wants you and I to have dinner with her when we can make it.”

“For her, I will find the time. I will not bring Cindy that is for sure.”

“Is it her wealth that turns you on to her?”

Dan laughs and says, “Her natural beauty and her gentle spirt. Like you with April, I connected with her the first time we met.”

“How about we make it next Thursday night at six p.m. at her Jubilee Restaurant?” says Tom. “We can ride together in one vehicle and save gas.”

“Thursday night it is. I will drive to your condominium, and we can ride together,” says Dan.

Tom calls Rebeca on his way to the Billingsley Surveillance.

“Hello?”

“Good Afternoon, Rebecca. This is Tom.”

“Hello, Tom. Did you speak with Dan?”

“I sure did, we agreed on next Thursday night arriving around seven p.m. at your restaurant in West Palm Beach.”

“I am slowly getting back to the real world we live in. Is Dan still with that girl, what is her name?”

“You mean, Cindy?”

“That is her. Is Dan spending time with her?”

“I know they get together now and then, but I do not think it is serious. Why do you ask?”

“I like him. He has a good heart, and it helps he is a police officer. He can protect me if I ever need help again.”

“You deserve a good relationship after you went through the threats of your late husband.”

“Do not tell Dan I like him. Make sure you do bring Dan with you when you come to see me.”

“I won’t tell Dan a thing,” lies Tom. “We will see you next Thursday evening.”

“Until then, be safe,” says Rebecca.”

“You do the same,” says Tom.

Tom starts driving toward South Miami. He calls Dan’s cell phone.

“This is Dan.”

“Dan., I have good news for you.”

“What is it?”

“I just got off the phone with Rebecca. She was asking about you, she wanted to know if you and Cindy were an item.”

“What did you say?”

Tom lies and says, “You and her were very tight and planned to marry in two months.”

“Why did you say that? You know I am crazy about her.”

“I was lying. I told her you were seeing her now and then, that you liked Rebecca more.”

“What did she say to that?”

“To make sure I brought you with me when I come to see her next Thursday.”

“I really do like her as a person. It is not a money thing. What is that saying, Money cannot buy you happiness. That is true.”

“Just do not break Cindy’s heart. You lose her and her background check account.”

“I will be careful. I will know after dates with Rebecca if she or Cindy is the one for me.”

“Now that I have you on the cell phone, I just drove by the Just Try it On clothing store at 341 Main Street, and her vehicle is parked out front.”

“I am on my way. I will be there at four p.m.”

“See you at Four,” says Tom as he videos the subject’s vehicle.

Tom is working on a crossword puzzle when Dan pulls up in a brown in color F150 truck.

“Who’s vehicle is this belong to?”

“Me. I bought it last week to conduct surveillances in.”

“I like the clean window tint job. Who did it for you?”

“Bobby’s Window Tint on US 1 by the Florida Mall.”

“When I buy my next vehicle, I will go by them to do it. What did it cost?”

“It was free for me. They have a deal. Bring them six customers in a month and they refund your money.”

“I have to remember that. Here is your fully charged walkie. I already have it set to channel 3. Here are the cases on which I am working. Just look them over and do them when you can. I have three locates, this surveillance, and two people to interview. They are Francis and Steven Horn. He is out of town till next Tuesday. Reach out to them after that. When doing any of the cases, just call me before starting. I can then brief you on how I would manage it.”

“Do you have a hidden camera for me to use today?”

“Yes. Here is an ink pen camera. Keep it since you own the company on Friday. Are you excited to be a boss of a 1-man company?” Tom laughs as he says it.

“I sure am. I might not last another year as a police officer. I hate wearing the body camera on all calls. Make one mistake and the video is now evidence if you did something wrong.”

“Being a private investigator is fun. Every case is different. If you work the case yourself, you are making one-hundred-dollars an hour. Pay a crew at twenty-an-hour and you make eighty-an-hour gross off them. Just get the word out to lawyers and adjusters and work will come in.”

“How much an hour will I make on this case?”

“I told the new client it was free. I do this to land new business. They see the quality of work and they issue you more work on the case you just worked, or they issue you a new case.”

“So, I am working the case for free?”

“No. I am. I will pay you fifty an hour. I treat my employees right.”

“I see I have a lot to learn from you over the next year.”

“There is a lot to learn, but it isn’t that hard with a mentor showing you the ropes.”

People start exiting the clothing store. A woman about thirty-five with blonde hair and matching the assignment sheet walks to the white Lexus and departs the area. Tom and Dan start to follow.

Tracey pulls into the Landings Apartment complex, parks her vehicle in a visitor spot and walks thru a pedestrian gate toward the rolls of apartments on the other side of the gate.

Tom grabs his walkie and follows the subject. The woman stops at building three and walks up the stairs to the third floor and walks to the back apartments out of view. Tom calls Dan on his walkie.

“Dan, come in.”

“Dan here.”

“I will walk by the vehicles parked in front of the building. Copy them down for me. I will run them upon my return to my vehicle.”

“I am ready.”

Tom reads to Dan about fifteen tags. Tom returns to his vehicle and says to Dan on the walkie.

“Watch for her to come out your way. I will drive around back to see if I can see the apartment doors on the rear side.”

“I am watching every vehicle that exits the complex,” says Dan over the walkie.

Tom arrives in the rear of building three and says to Dan over his walkie, “I have an unobstructed view of the front doors on the rear units. I will stay here to attempt to get video. I will let you know when I observe her.”

“I copy.”

Tom calls his client on his cell phone.

“Sir, this is Tom Whitman your private investigator on following your wife. Do you have time to talk to me at this time?”

“I have time now to talk to you.”

“Ok, Peter. Your wife left work at four-thirty and is now at building three in the Landings Apartment complex on Sterling Avenue. Do you know why she would stop here?”

“I have no clue. She called me thirty minutes ago. My phone was off at the time. She left a voice message that she was attending an employee’s birthday party and would be home late.”

“Does your wife mix with her employees like that?”

“Yes. My wife is very friendly with her loyal staff. Keep me updated, please.”

“I will do. Bye for now,” says Tom.

Tom videos Tracey exiting unit F with a young man in blue jeans. They are holding hands as they walk away and out of view,

Tom gets on his walkie right away.

“Dan, Tracey is departing with a white male in a blue shirt. They should be coming out any minute. I do not know the kind of vehicle they will be departing in. I will exit out the back gate now.”

“I copy.”

Tom says, “The client says his wife was attending an employee’s birthday party.”

“I copy. I have the subject and this unknown male driving a blue -in-color Volkswagen Bug with Florida tag HYY458.”

“Be right on their tale. This is rush hour time for the Miami Residents.”

“I copy. He is coming your way. He uses his indicators.”

“I copy. I am two cars behind them in the same lane.”

Tracey stops at a gift shop off busy US 1. She goes inside alone. Tom runs the man’s license plate.

“Dan. The tag on the Bug comes back to a Travis Jones at that apartment address in Unit F.”

“I copy.”

Tom videos Tracey exiting the gift shop carrying a greeting card. They then depart the area.

Thirty minutes later they arrive at a private residence located at 7761 Mills Court in North Miami. Tracey has in her hand the greeting card and Travis carries a large package wrapped in Birthday paper. There are cars in the driveway and on Mills Court. Tom videos the couple



arriving and going inside. There are balloons all over the yard and country music can be heard in the background.

Tom says over the walkie, “Dan, take a walk by the house. Ask someone who’s birthday party it is.”

“I copy.”

Tom can see Dan walking by the house, and he talks to a young couple standing in the driveway. Dan returns to his truck.

“Tom, the party is for a woman named Sally. This is a company birthday party.”

“I copy.”

Forty minutes later Tom says over his walkie.

“Heads up, The subject is exiting the residence with Travis. I have night vision video of him all over her as he escorts Tracey to his Bug.”

The investigators follow them to an Italian Restaurant called The Journey located on US 1. Tom gets video of the couple holding hands walking down the sidewalk.

Tom says, “I am getting video with the night scope. You can see them holding hands and kissing.”

Dan says, “I am going in to see if I can sit close to hear their conversation.”

“I copy.”

Dan exits right away and says on his walkie, “They are getting their food to go. They should be out any minute.”

“I copy. Yep, here they come. Be ready to take the lead.”

“I copy,” says Dan.

Tom videos Travis letting his date into his Bug and driving away.

Five minutes later Travis pulls into The Holiday Inn at exit 43 off Highway I-95. Travis walks inside to the front desk. Five minutes later he is entering his Bug. He drives over to room eight on the first floor by the ice machine. The couple laugh as they enter the hotel room.

Tom says over his walkie, “They entered the hotel room at eight-thirty.”

“Are you going to update the client now?”

“No. If I do the client may want to save money and end it now.”

“I thought you said this case is free?”

“It is. If I had a paying client, I would not call him right now. We are in the business of making money by billable hours, If you update too soon you risk a client shutting it down. Update the client with just hours left in the budget remaining.”

“I see what you are saying, Tom. Pick when you update the client.”

“Exactly. I will call him now and update him that his wife is with man, and they are attending one of her employee’s party. I will hold back for now that she is in a hotel room with the man.”

“That makes since on a business standpoint basis. I agree with that strategy.”

Tom says over his walkie, “Standby. I am calling the client now.”

The client answer’s his cell phone on the third ring. “This is, Peter.”

“Yes sir, Tom the PI with an update for you.”

“I am ready.”

“Your wife left the apartment with a Travis Jones. They stopped at a gift shop. Your wife went inside only. She came out with a gift card. Now they are at the birthday party for a woman named Sally. There are balloons all over the yard at the residence. I can hear country music playing in the background.”

“So far, she is doing what she said she was going to do tonight.”

“The night is still young. I will update you again Peter when I have more activity.”

“Call me at any hour. I need the truth. I was to take her to the party in question, but I am in a big trial. I have no time for any employee party.”

“I understand, Peter. I will let you know what happens after she leaves Sallies Birthday Party.”

Tom gets Dan on the walkie. "I spoke to the client. He was happy she was at an employee's birthday party. I told him I would call him when there is activity."

Dan replies over his walkie, "Wait till he finds out from us his wife is in a hotel room with an unknown man."

Tom says, "That is why I am in the hotel parking lot hiding in the backseat, I plan to video them exiting the hotel room together and leaving together back to his apartment complex. I call that the homerun shot. By hiding in the backseat, I can video out my front windshield that has no tint, allowing for better video light."

"I am learning from a pro, which is for sure."

"What happens in the surveillance business is, you have to play it by ear, and think outside the box."

Dan asks over his walkie, "What time do you think they will leave the hotel room?"

"It is just past Nine. They have a thirty-minute drive to her vehicle, and she has a thirty-minute drive home, so I project tonight is a quickie. They will leave the hotel in thirty minutes."

Dan says on the walkie, "I think they will spend at least an hour in the room. Hotel rooms are expensive for a quickie."

"Alright it is nine-twenty p.m. I say they leave by ten p.m., and you think they stay past eleven, right?"

"You are right."

"Let us wager a breakfast at IHOP on this time question."

"Deal," says Dan on his walkie.

At exactly nine-fifty-five p.m., the couple exit the hotel room. Travis walks his lover to the passenger side, and he kisses her before she closes the door. Travis enters as the driver and departs the hotel parking lot.

Tom says over his walkie, "I got closeup video of them both leaving the hotel room and I have video of Travis kissing her when she gets in his Bug. Oh, and I win our bet. They exited before ten p.m."

“Dan laughs and replies, “I bet you he paid at least seventy for the room.”

Tom replies, “Standby. I am calling the hotel for rates.”

As Dan and Tom follow Travis back to Tracie’s vehicle, Tom calls the hotel they just left.

“Good evening, thank you for calling the Holiday Inn. My name is Bonnie.”

“Yes, Bonnie, what is your rate tonight for a room?”

“Sixty-five. We have two rooms left.”

“My friend rented a room there earlier. I want to be next door if I could.”

“What is the guest’s name?”

“Travis Jones.”

“Stand-by.”

“I think he told me room seven.”

“No, sir. I have no room available on the ground floor. The best I can do is place you directly above your friend and I can reserve room sixteen for one hour.”

“No. Next time. Thank you, Bonnie, for your time.”

Tom says over his walkie, “The room rate tonight is sixty-five.”

“Are you free for your reward in the morning?”

“I sure am, Dan.”

Tom and Dan follow the couple to his complex for Tracey to pick-up her parked car. The time is now ten-thirty-five p.m.

Tracey toots her horn as she exits the complex in her white Lexus.

Tom calls his client on his cell phone.

“This is Peter.”

Evening, Peter. This is Tom with a final update for the night.”

“Go ahead, tell me what you found out for me.”

“Your wife left the birthday party early and stopped at a Holiday Inn, room eight with Travis Jones. They stayed in the room thirty minutes, then Travis drove your wife to her vehicle, and she is on the way home now.”

“Do you have video of them together as a couple?”

“Yes. I have them kissing, I have them exiting the hotel room together, I have the cheating evidence if that is what you are asking me.”

“My wife called me just minutes before you did. She told me all about Sallie’s Birthday Party and how much fun she had. She then said she was on the way home.”

“All Tracey did was leave off the hotel part of her night.”

“If you were me, what would you do in my shoes?”

“It would depend on how I loved her. If she were the only one in your life, I would not let her know you know what she did. I would make sure I went to all future events together and I would not work so much to be away from her.”

“That is good advice.”

“One more thing. Forget tonight ever happened. Bury the hatchet. We keep this our secret. Not even the other attorney in your office that knows I am here should ever know. I will edit my report to show her at the party only and I will not mail you a video. This way our story is the same. From work to the party, the party home at eleven.”

“Thank you, Tom for helping me tonight. Let me pay your gas and for your time.”

“No. A deal is a deal. It is free. What you can do for me is let everyone know of my business.”

“I will do that. Mail me business cards and stick them in with the report.”

“I will do that tomorrow. I will do your report and I will mail it in the afternoon. Let us have lunch sometime this month if you can find the time, Peter.”

“I am taking your advice; I am slowing now from tomorrow on. I will call you soon for lunch.”

“Sounds good. Good night.”

Tom says to Dan. Pull over and give me back my walkie. I also have eight hours of pay for you. Come get your four hundred.”

Tom and Dan pull over. Dan gives Tom his walkie and Toms gives Dan his money.

“It was fun collaborating with you, Dan.”

“Same here. I am tired. I plan to sleep all day.”

“Me too,” says Tom.

Thursday morning at eleven a.m. Tom wakes up. The first thing he does is check his cell phone and office line for messages. There are four messages. He jots down the numbers and starts returning the calls.

Tom calls on his first message about wanting to hire an investigator to video a wedding. The person on the other line says, “This is Kathy.”

“Morning, Kathy. My name is Tom, and you left a voice message asking about hiring me to video a wedding?”

“Yes. I am divorced from my ex-husband, Jay. We have two-twins that are eleven. They were invited to Jay’s wedding tomorrow, but I was not. I wanted to hire you to go to the wedding and video it for me. How would the cost be to do that for me?”

‘I charge one-hundred-dollars an hour with a four-hour minimum per case. It would cost you a flat rate of four hundred dollars.”

“I do not have four-hundred-dollars on me. Now I live paycheck-to-paycheck. Can I make instalments of fifty-a-week for eight weeks?”

“I have a partner. Let me check with him what our schedule is like for Saturday, and I will call you back within an hour.”

“Thank you.”

Tom calls Dan on his cell phone. His voice sounds tired when he answers.

“This is Dan.”

“Sorry if I woke you but I have a new client that wants her ex-husband’s new wedding filmed for her this Saturday. I quoted her a

flat fee of four-hundred-dollars, and she wants to make eight installment payments of fifty dollars at a time.”

“Where do you get these strange clients at, Tom?”

“I have several ads out there at different rates saying if you need a private investigator call this number.”

“A quick four hundred I can manage. I will take the fifty a week installments as well. Why not? I am a nice guy doing a good deed.”

“That is how you grow. Never turn down work. I will call her back.”

Tom calls the woman back.

“Kathy, speaking.”

“Hello, Kathy. This is Tom. We will take your case. Go too my website and fill in the order form. It will come to me, and you will receive a confirmation. When I have the order form, I will call you back to discuss your case in detail.”

Sounds of crying can be heard over the telephone. “Thank you so much. I will go to your site right now.”

“Do that, and I will call you back. Have an enjoyable day, we are here to help.”

Tom returns his second message on his list.

“Someone at this number is asking for a private investigator.”

“We were, but we changed our mind.”

“No problem. Call us back if you change your mind.”

“We will.”

Tom returns the third phone message. The message said, “I need a private investigator right now. Call this number.” Tom calls the number provided but the phone operator comes on and says, “This number is disconnected.”

Tom calls the fourth and last number that left a message on Tom’s phone.

“Hello?”

“Hello, my name is Tom Whitman. I am a private investigator, and someone called my office. I am returning the call.”

“Did the person leave their name?”

“No, just this number.”

“This number you called is for a dozen college students to use. Without a name I cannot help you.”

“I understand.”

The phone goes dead on the other end.

Tom takes a shower and has a lite breakfast of coffee and toast.

Harry calls Tom’s cell phone.

“This is Tom.”

“Morning, Buddy. I thought I would update you on Linda.”

“Please do.”

“Linda works at Disney World with me. We are both bus drivers. The people working here and the people we meet are so friendly.”

“Glad you are doing well, Harry. I am selling my business tomorrow. If I do, I might reward myself with a trip to Epcot.”

“If you do come, call me. I receive discount passes being an employee. Same for lodging.”

“That is a deal. Thanks for your update. Tell Linda I am proud of her for staying clean.”

“I am proud my daughter is on the right track this time. I hope to see you soon. Good luck on the sale of your business.”

“Thanks, Harry. I may come up and if I do, I will call you. Take care.”

Tom calls April.

“Hi, Baby.”

“Hi, Honey. Are you ok? Your voice is dragging.”

“I am fine, only tired. I plan to just rest for a week. So, if we had plans for anything, I have to cancel.”



“Nothing too big planned, just our first date,” says April.

“I have to take a rain check, Fox. Sorry.”

“I understand, but your sale of your business is still happening, right?”

“Yes, tomorrow at four p.m.”

“Go back to sleep. Call me after your business is sold.”

“I have to go pay my mother a visit, but after that I am going back to sleep.”

“Tom, call your mother. Lie a little and say you are not feeling well and tell her you will see her Tomorrow. That is what I would do. Rest and health come first in my book.”

“You are right. I will do that now.”

“Let me call her and say hello.”

“Alright. I will get back into my pajamas.”

Ten minutes later April calls her man back.

“This is Tom.”

“Honey, your mom just said she was fine and when you show up tomorrow, you owe her a big hug.”

“I bet my mom was surprised you called her.”

“She was. We had a nice talk about our relationship. I told her we were boyfriend and girlfriend, and we just click when we are together.”

“Anything else my mom said to you?”

“She was on a winning streak playing Gin with Barbara.”

“I am in my pajamas. I am turning my phone off till Friday Morning.”

“Have dreams of me, will you?”

“I will for sure,” says Tom turning his phone off.

Tom crawls into his bed, turns his phone back on and calls Kathy.

“Kathy, here.”

“Kathy. This is Tom. I am turning my cell phone off till tomorrow. I have to get rest. I have been operating on fumes. I will call you

tomorrow to talk about the video you need on Saturday. Speak to you tomorrow sometime. Bye.”

“Thanks for calling. I hope you have a sound sleep.”

Tom calls Dan and gets his phone message. Tom leaves Dan a short message, “Dan, let us do lunch at IHOP next week. I am too tired to go today to IHOP.”

Tom turns his phone off, crawls under his covers and falls asleep.

# CHAPTER 10

Friday morning at eight a.m. Tom finally crawls out of his bed. He feels like a new man. Being a private investigator working night and day finally caught up to him. He is glad he is selling his agency to Dan. Working for Dan will give him a steady paycheck for at least a year.

Tom calls FIU University inquiring on classes in being a marriage counselor. The operator connects him to The School of Counseling.

“School of Counseling, Mary speaking.”

“Hello, Mary. My name is Tom Whitman, and I am interested in taking your course online. Do you offer an online degree?”

“Yes, we do. You can obtain a bachelor’s degree in Counseling. We also offer a master’s in Counseling and Family Therapy. Can I mail you a pamphlet with all the information you will need to enroll?”

Tom says yes and gives Mary his condominium address.

“You should receive the pamphlet in three working days,” says Mary.

“One question for you, Mary. Does the University offer flexible online hours?”

“Yes. The professors all will help you during your academy time.”

“Thank You, Mary for the information. Have a wonderful day and be safe.”

“Thank you.”

Tom is tempted to turn on his cell phone but does not. He leaves his computer off as well. He pops in an instant oatmeal packet, turns on his television and goes to a list of movies he recorded in the last few weeks. He selects a war movie, retrieves his oatmeal, and sits back to watch the film.

At eleven a.m. Tom turns on his cell phone to check his messages. He has one from his mom, one from his sister, and one from Kathy. After he hears the messages, he turns his cell phone back off. He opens the fridge and selects a root beer soda. He opens the bottle and pours

himself a glass. Tom returns to watching his next movie, 'Falling in Love.'

After the movie ends, Tom takes a shower. After finishing getting dressed, he makes himself a pot of coffee. While the pot is brewing Tom checks the messages on his cell phone.

There are three additional messages. Two are from Dan and one from an unknown number. Tom calls Dan back.

"Dan speaking."

"Afternoon, Partner. I see I have two messages from you."

"I just wanted to make sure our deal is still on for four p.m."

"Yes. I will bring you my client list, and all my surveillance equipment once we close this deal."

"I decided to give my resignation letter to the department at three pm, clean out my locker, and say goodbye to my fellow officers."

"To me, Dan, that is the best course of action. You will be happier overall. There is nothing like being your own boss. Just find dependable staff, get results on all your cases, and work will flow in. I suggest you market in person. Place a name to a face is always best."

"I agree with you, Tom. I am glad you will be my mentor. I am a fast learner."

"I am a good teacher. See you at four. You do have the meeting address?"

"I do. See you at four, Tom."

April calls her boyfriend.

"Hello? This is Tom."

"Good Afternoon, Mr. Unemployed. Ready for your big day?"

"Hello Fox. I sure am. I know you are right about not staying up late waiting for your mam to come home. This profession can be dangerous at times."

"Make sure, Dan does not become you, and take on dangerous assignments. You need to teach him to turn jobs down."

“Dan’s first case as the new owner is tomorrow. He has to crash a wedding to video the groom marrying his bride.”

“Really?”

“Yes. The ex-wife was not invited, just her two boys were, and she wanted to see how the bride looked.”

“Have her save her money and have the children video the wedding.”

“The two boys are twins, and they are only eleven.”

“Now that could be a dangerous assignment if the groom challenges Dan.”

“He will be wearing a WXYZ television shirt and a matching baseball cap. He will blend right in. He just needs to act the part.”

“Where did you pick-up a WXYZ television shirt at?”

“I have a friend that works at a dry cleaners. He stole it for me. It cost me two hundred. It was well worth it. I have gotten into closed doors because of the logo shirt.”

“What other logo shirts do you own?”

“As of four p.m. I will own zero company logo shirts. I will be a new man taking college courses online.”

“I bet you will miss the job, risks and all.”

“I hope not. I want to give my new profession a chance. To do that, I need to be all in.”

“Positive Thinking, which is what I love about you, Tom.”

“What will you be doing today?”

“I have six different dog walking assignments in all parts of Miami. I will be busy. Please call me after you close the deal today.”

“I will. Be safe, Fox.”

“Like you I have eyes in the back of my head. Bye.”

Tom calls his sister.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Sis, is everything alright at home?”

“I am about to take the boys to visit their father in the Dade County Jail. The children understand their will not be any hugging. I instructed the boys to be ready to speak to their father on a telephone type setup.”

“Sis, how are you holding up?”

“I am a nervous wreck. I need my man. I spoke with John’s Lawyer, and I agreed to drop all charges as long as John take marriage counseling classes with me. We need to be a team if we want our marriage to work.”

“What about his drug addiction problem?”

“I found a rehab center near our house. John will reside there.”

“For how long?”

“The program is six months long.”

“Can he work, leave the rehab center when he wants?”

“John can hold a job, do what he wants, but if he leaves the rehab center he will be tested upon his return.”

“Sounds like you will soon have John at home, with your boys, and being a family again. I hope it last.”

“Me too. John says positive things over the telephone.”

“The question is does he mean it or just saying what you want to hear. I hope he is not faking all this to get his boys and move out of State like he wanted to do a few weeks ago.”

“I just have to trust him and to take life one day at a time.”

“Tell John this: If he flees with your boys, I will track him down.”

“I will tell him. Are you still planning to sell your investigative business today?”

“Yes. It is still on for four p.m. I plan to go see mom on my way to the closing.”

“That is what mom, and I were trying to do the last few days. We were trying to reach you to tell you mom is going on a bus trip with Barbara and some other residents to Sea World in Orlando. They will be gone five days. They left this morning at seven a.m.”

“I had my phone off. I played back my messages from you and mom and all you both said was call me.”

“Normally you called back right away, so that is why we said call me instead of leaving a detailed message.”

“I turned my phone off. I needed to get some sleep. I am rested now.”

“Let us plan on having lunch over at my house on Sunday to celebrate your unemployment.”

“I look forward to having a solid meal in me for a change. I have been surviving on oatmeal and TV dinners.”

“Bring your girlfriend, too.”

“I will ask April to come. She is a dog walker and has a crazy work schedule.”

“Let me know one way or the other about April.”

“Will do. See you Sunday.”

Tom calls April on her cell phone.

Tom gets her voice message instead.

“Baby, sorry to bother you, but We are invited to my sister’s house this Sunday. Can you make it? Let me know. I love you.”

Tom puts on a blue in color suit, grabs his briefcase and exits his condominium. He takes the elevator to the lobby and checks his mailbox. Nothing in there related to his business, just ads.

Tom says hello to the guard on duty and takes the parking garage elevator to the third floor, Tom places his briefcase on the passenger seat and then departs in his Honda.

The private investigator stops at McDonalds and request a fruit yogurt.

“That will be three dollars.”

Tom pays cash, collects his yogurt and parks in the restaurant’s parking lot to enjoy his snack.

His cell phone rings with an unknown number. Tom says, “Hello. This is Tom.”

“Have I reached a private investigator?”

“You have, my name is Tom Whitman, how can I help you?”

“I am wanting to locate an old girlfriend I dated two years ago.”

“Why?”

“I have had a few dreams about her being with me. I am going on vacation next week and I want to look her up.”

“Why did you breakup in the first place?”

“It was me, stupid me. I cheated on her and she found out.”

“You think if you contact her, she will be receptive to seeing you again?”

“I sure do hope so. We had a lot of good times before I cheated on her with her best friend.”

“You should have told her best friend no, and you two would still be together.”

“That is why I need you to locate her. I need to know if she still has feelings for me, like I have for her.”

“I charge two-hundred dollars for a locate. Can you pay that amount?”

“Yes. I can meet you today if you want.”

“Today is out. I will have my partner contact you tomorrow, but first you have to go to my website and fill in the request form.”

“I am at your website now. I see the locate request box.”

“Click on the box, fill in the form, pay online or pay cash when you meet in person with my partner. His first name is Dan.”

“I will fill in the form now and pay online.”

“You will receive a confirmation and Dan will reach out to you. Just double check that your phone number is correct.”

“I hope you can locate Donna for me.”

“We will try. I just hope that you can find out one way or the other does she still have feelings for you.”

“I am dying to know. I was a fool to cheat on her. A stupid fool.”

“If she takes you back don’t be cheating again.”



“Believe me, I will not cheat again on any woman I go out with.”

Tom pulls up to the lawyer’s address of his closing at one p.m. He walks into the lobby carrying his briefcase. He walks up to the receptionist.

“Good Afternoon. My name is Tom Whitman. I have a closing at four p.m. today. Is Chuck in?”

“I believe so, let me check.”

“Yes, Sir, he says have a seat in our conference room. He will join you shortly.”

“Where is your conference room?”

“I am sorry, I didn’t tell you where it is. This is my third day working here. The first door on your right going down the hall. Can I get you anything to drink?”

“A bottle of water if you do not mind.”

“I will bring you a bottle right away.”

Tom walks down the hall to the conference room. He looks around the room at the photos of the lawyers working for the firm. He finds Chuck’s photo in the second row at the end.

The receptionist brings Tom his bottle of water.

“Thank you. What is your name?”

“I am Angela.”

“Thanks for the water, Angela. You are doing a good job, just relax.”

“Thank you for the vote of confidence.”

“You welcome.”

Chuck walks into the conference room with a beige file folder. “You are three-hours early!”

“I wanted a place to relax without any phone calls or people to go see.”

“I won’t tell anyone at this firm that you are here.”

“I wanted to go over the sale contract with you before Dan arrives.”

“It is really a simple sale transaction. You have all the risk. If Dan sits on his butt, you receive no income because he will be out of business, therefore, no payments to you.”

“Dan and I go back a few years. I trust him; besides I will be marketing every weekday for a year. I can bring in business. I will also teach Dan how to follow, write reports, do an invoice, anything he will need to satisfy clients.”

“If you do all you say you will do then this will work. I know our law firm is satisfied with the quality of work you do for us.”

“Good to hear. The key is making sure none of my clients know I sold.”

“True.”

“I will let some clients know I sold and that I am a mentor to the new owner. I will make sure Dan works every case for every client the right way. I wouldn’t sell my business to Dan if I felt he would not service the clients.”

“Look over the sale contract. Here is a pad and pen. Write down any questions you may have. When finished have Angela in reception contact me to come back to the conference room.”

“I like Angela. She is new I know, but I think she will work out,” says Tom.

“Angela is the daughter of this law firm’s founder. She can do no wrong.”

“Does she want to be a receptionist all her life?” asks Tom.

“Angela is in law school. In two more years, she will be a lawyer at this firm giving Dan assignments.”

“I hope she makes it as a lawyer.”

“Call me when finished.”

Chuck leaves the conference room. Tom reads the contract for the sale of his private investigative agency. Tom calls Dan on his cell phone.

Hello? This is Dan.”

“Hi, there Partner. Guess where I am at this moment?”

“You are with April walking five dogs.”

“Nope. I am at the closing in the conference room reviewing our contract. All looks in order. I was wondering if we could do the closing now.?”

“Good idea. I can be there at two p.m., do the closing, then visit the police station at three p.m., to give the Chief my resignation letter. Then I can stay if the guys want to have a beer somewhere, my treat.”

“See you at two p.m. I will tell Chuck the closing is at two now and not at four.”

Tom walks out of the conference room and walks up to Angela.

“Can you let Chuck know I am ready to see him again in the conference room.”

“Yes, I will Mr. Whitman. Care for a hot cup of coffee? I just made a new pot.”

“Four creams and two sugars, please.”

A few minutes later Angela walks into the conference room with a cup of coffee for Tom. “I told Chuck you are finished checking the closing statement and are ready to speak with him.”

“Thanks for the coffee, Angela. Chuck told me you are in law school?”

“Yes. I am at The University of Gainesville.”

“When do you have to go back to the university?”

“Not for two more months.”

“A great school. I plan to attend Florida International University. I plan on being a marriage counselor.”

“I looked at FIU, but it was too close to home. I wanted my freedom.”

“I agree. Who wants parents breathing down your neck day and night?”

“I didn’t. That is why I am attending classes in Gainesville.”

“If and when you start dating boys, you call me first. Let us run a background check for you.”

“How much does that cost?”

“For you, it will be free. My gift to a future client.”

“You are a smart man. Wine and dine a future lawyer.”

“I received all ‘A’s in high school.”

“I bet you did. I better get back to the reception desk. It was nice talking to you for two minutes.”

Tom laughs at Angela’s last comment.

Chuck walks into the conference room and smells the hot fresh cop of coffee in Tom’s hand. Chuck holds up his finger and walks out of the room. He returns thirty seconds later with a hot cup of coffee of his own. Chuck turns to Tom and asks, “Is the sale contract in order? Did I miss anything?”

“It is all in order. I have a favor to ask of you.”

“What kind of a favor?”

“I need to make this closing happen at two p.m. today instead of at four. Can you arrange that?”

“You are one lucky young man. I had things to do in my office till the scheduled closing at four, but you helped my sister out last year, and you didn’t charge me, so I will come back when Dan gets here. I want to give him a locate, so please remind me during our closing.”

Chuck picks up his cup of coffee and exits the conference room.

Five minutes later Angela escorts Dan to the conference room. She asks, “Would you care for something to drink, sir?”

“Please call me Dan. Sir makes me feel old and I am only thirty-three years old.”

“What would you care to drink, Dan?”

“A coke will do, thanks. No ice.”

Dan watches Angela exit the room. E urns to Tom and asks, “Is Angela single?”

Tom laughs and replies, “Lesson one of being an owner. Never mess with your clients. You loose their work when the romance is over.”

“I hate lesson one,” says Dan as Angela brings him his drink.

Tom says to Angela, “Can you please let Chuck know we are ready to close this sale?”

“Chuck is on a long-distance call at the moment, but as soon as he is off the telephone, I will let him know.”

“Thanks,” says Tom.

“That woman has a killer walk,” says Dan.

“She will be a lawyer at this firm in two years. She is going to college in Gainesville. Her father is the head lawyer at this firm.”

“How do you know all this?”

“I ask questions. You should do the same.”

Chuck walks into the conference room and shakes Dan’s hand. “So, you are the new owner of Tom’s private investigative agency.”

Tom says, “Dan, this is Attorney Chuck Eastman. Chuck this is Dan. Let us get this closing over with. I have a girlfriend to go see.

**THE END**



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*I was a military police officer for three years in the U.S Army.  
I was a police officer in Miami Beach, Florida for eleven years.  
I then became a private investigator.*