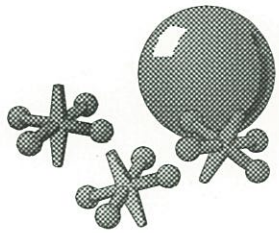
A Gay Crime Novel By
MICHAEL SCOTT CURNES

He With The Most Toys

Inspired by a True Story & the Suspicious Death of a Toy Tycoon



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He With The Most Toys

This is a novel based upon and inspired by an actual crime that resulted in the sudden and mysterious death of a wealthy, gay toy executive, in the predawn hours of May 15, 1991 somewhere in North America.

Both the potential crimes of suicide and homicide were meticulously investigated by the local police department, insurance companies, the family, private investigators, and this author in the months and years that followed.

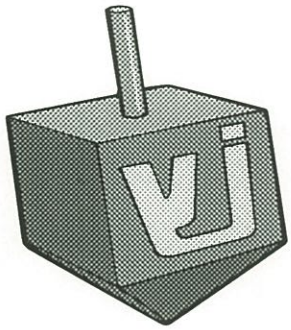
Despite overwhelming physical evidence, failed lie detector tests and a number of potential motives and suspects, charges have not been established, arrests have not been made, and a criminal inquest has never occurred,
—but for some equally inexplicable reason, the police file has been closed.

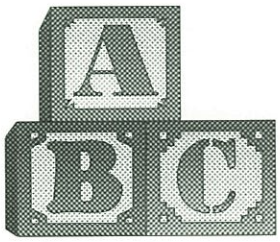
This Novel is dedicated by the author in memory of

M.G.M.

who, despite his magnificent collection of toys,
—still died...somehow.

December 21, 1955 - May 15, 1991





He With The Most Toys

MICHAEL SCOTT CURNES



Part I

Batteries not included.



Tuesday, May 14, 1991 – 8:15 am

"Look Steiner. I've got forty-eight cargo containers of those inflatable hockey sticks on the water at this very moment from Taipei. Now is not the best time to tell me we didn't renew the fucking NHL license agreement!" In his exasperation, he released all the lead from his mechanical pencil to spill on top of the spread sheet he'd been re-working for a nine o'clock presentation. "Shit!" he blurted out. He thought to lower his voice, vigilantly aware that his office proximity to his father's office next door, his brother's office ever so appropriately positioned at the *right hand of the father*, his sister's office just the other side of his own and his snoopy brother-in-law's office across the hall, were all much too frightfully close for comfort, even for family; —no, he thought again, *especially* for family. He tugged nervously at his moustache then began to reload his pencil. "Okay, here's what you do. Call New York. Tell

them we just found the agreement, that we thought we'd sent it back to them in, in...when did it expire? —April?" he repeated what he'd just been told as a trademark and heavily dimpled Morgan family smile stretched across his boyishly handsome face. "Beautiful. Steiner, I love ya. *Banjo's* covered under the inventory sell-off clause. 'No need to panic, Norman. That's right. Shabbat Shalom to you too," he offered automatically, not thinking that the Sabbath wasn't for another four days yet.

He hung up the phone and before he had time to focus on the spread sheet, their administrative assistant poked her head inside his office door. "Mark, Mr. Morgan would like to see you in his office right away."

"Which Mr. Morgan, Jackie?"

"Your father," she smiled, knowing full well he knew which *Mr. Morgan* she referred to.

"Is he in a good mood today or a bad one?" he asked sheepishly, raising his eyebrows into bangs that had already come un-moussed.

"Between you and me, and these paper thin walls," she lowered her voice to a whisper, "I haven't seen him in a good mood to compare his bad moods to, at least in the two years I've been here." She leveled with the youngest vice president in the family hierarchy. She paused an extra few seconds inside the doorway to work a smile out of the company bachelor but abandoned the effort as she recalled the latest

lunch room rumour that *Banjo Toy's* most attractive bachelor, was hardly eligible, —well, not for women anyway. *What a waste* she thought to herself. Mark had returned to his spreadsheet and ignored her as though she had evaporated or something. She mouthed the word 'okay' and backed out of the office to return to her cubicle.

Mark pondered whether he had time to call Scott but just as he picked up the telephone, his father's inherently feared, public address voice came barreling out his office to do the job his leggy secretary had obviously failed to accomplish, -or at least not quickly enough for his demanding satisfaction. She was a common secretary and as far as the founder of *Banjo Toys International* was concerned, not a very good one at that. "Coming Dad," Mark hollered through the wall between them. He spotted his ten-fifteen appointment with his therapist in a day planner designed to account for every minute of his breathing life, which incidentally, he either spent working for the family or lying his way out of it. Therapy was working too, if at least now he could finally differentiate between the two.

His older brother, Donald, —President of *Banjo Toys*, his attorney brother-in-law, Paul, —Executive Vice President, and his sister, Eliza, —Chief Financial Officer, were already seated across the desk from the Canadian entrepreneur that had made them all filthy rich. Mark bid an insincere *good morning* to each of them, thinking just

as greedily as they probably were, how much richer they stood to become the moment *av Morgan* was under the British Columbian soil he had built his 40 year empire upon.

"I'm sorry," Mark offered. "I didn't have this meeting written down in my day planner or I would have been on time," he added a bit too sardonically to get away with it. His siblings smirked, realizing as he did, that the meeting, like all family meetings, hadn't been scheduled in the first place. None of their meetings were established with a gram of forethought or preparation. It was crisis management at *Banjo Toys International.* It always had been.

"Now listen here," his father nearly stood upright to lecture. "I didn't build this business into one of the top 100 privately held companies in Canada by holding my nose in some fucking appointment book! I started out on the streets of Vancouver, selling balloons on a stick in the Fifties. I didn't have to write it down to remind myself I needed to make money now did I?" His voice raised into the crawl space above the tiled drop-ceiling to surely carry throughout the entire second floor as his voice usually did, puncturing the otherwise professional appearance that adults occasionally worked there.

"Dad. —Dad!" Mark interrupted him with a stern voice. "Your angina," he reminded him more reverently, to the obvious consternation of his brother, sister and

that blood-sucking in-law, who just as soon preferred someone provoke the final agitation so they could get onto the real money and quit dabbling in the petty cash they were allowed to handle. The redness slowly left his father's cheeks and the meeting shifted to the direction of the company's president, certainly the favorite of Banjo Morgan's two sons. Not a day went by that Mark didn't recall or wasn't subliminally reminded of his place in the Morgan family —if he chose to remain financially endowed by the Morgan family, that is.

It happened to have been on the same historical day five years ago in 1986, that the World's Fair opened in Vancouver, Mark admitted his homosexuality to his parents, Banjo and Louise, and his father made the subsequent announcement that Donald was heir apparent and the new president of *BTI*. Shortly after, and it had all been one giant blur for him, Mark was shipped off to Toronto to run the shipping and receiving end of the east coast distribution center. Meanwhile, Expo 86 was to skyrocket *BTI's* annual earnings off the record charts as it had been chosen the sole novelty merchandiser for the event. The disclosure of Mark's sexual orientation was to aid his father's doctors in pinpointing their diagnostic conclusion of acute angina. And the elevation of Donald to the president of the family corporation was to forever change the blood that flowed between them. To every action there was an equal and disastrous reaction. At least that had been Mark's physics and not-to-mention, life

experience.

His brother cleared his throat and straightened his back in the chair. "We have no choice but to send Mark back to the Orient. The plush skins coming out of Thailand now are so completely inferior. Kim says she can't even use them. We've got hair falling out of the weave during assembly for Christ's sake! Some kid's going to think his teddy bear came from Chernobyl." Don looked to his younger brother who could only roll his eyes in defiance. This would make the fourth trip to the East this year and it was scarcely May. "I'm sorry for that, Mark, but we would have been ahead of the game by sticking with our manufacturers in Shaghai and Qingdao. We need to let Thailand know, in a very strong way, I might add, that they need to upgrade or bow the hell out of the game. Their crap is fine for amusement park quality but it won't cut it in retail and you know it as well as I do."

"I can't stake my reputation on cheap skins!" Banjo wailed like a three year old about to burst into a tantrum, —quite possibly the secret behind his toy company's success, —the sixty-seven year old man never really grew up.

"Don't worry, Dad. I'll talk to my reps." Mark placated him. "I'll fix it again. When should I go?" he asked his president brother.

"Next week before they ship. We have no choice."

"I have a first class upgrade certificate you can use if you're flying British

Airways, Mark," his sister Eliza offered, practically consolatory. It broke her heart to see him manipulated out of the operational picture so often. She had never accepted their parent's condition based response to her brother's homosexuality but she wasn't about to alienate her inheritance with a formal protest now, regardless of how many risks Mark was willing to take with his own share of the loot.

"Thanks Bette," Mark responded using her nickname from their youth, —before she had gotten uppity and changed it on them, that is. Well, before she changed period, he reflected. Money affected people differently but it mostly made Eliza bitter and controlling. She did have to wrestle with the expenses and investments of the family business and probably had reason to be more uptight than the rest of them, but Mark longed for the old times, before any of them had chosen to make an issue of anything. Money had transformed his now-former boyfriend, Scott Barry, into something altogether unmanageable and as the *former* prefix to his title was of Scott's choosing and not part of Mark's ingeniously crafted and manipulative design, the loss of control was unbearable for him. Mark schemed night and day to get him back, and with money clearly not an obstacle, —to get him back at any cost. As a courting rule, Mark bought the presents and paid the bills and when things got boring and not one minute before (and typically for Mark, months after), he did the leaving. That's just the way it was. He glanced down at his loafers and

sent a wet finger to the dried splash of mud on the toe, smiling as he recounted the adventure into Stanley Park after work last evening where he had met the charmingly endowed *Christopher* inside a hollowed-out old growth tree trunk off the infamous *Lees Trail*. He brought the soiled finger ceremoniously back to his tongue. Eliza detected his devilish smile and leaned into him whispering:

"I think the Orient agrees with your fancy," she suggested nastily.

Mark smiled even wider but by now it had more to do with his developing plan to either get Scott back or get back at him than it had to do with the world-famous Thai male prostitutes he had once told his naive sister about one evening after too much port, honesty and cocaine; —the three vices in this life, along with a compulsive drive for sex, that would surely be his eventual undoing.

Seeing Mark smiling, Donald changed the subject and expressed his concern over the recent anti-Semitic graffiti that had appeared on the front retaining wall of the office complex, noting that Banjo had received a threatening phone call at home the previous evening.

"I personally don't feel that somebody who can't even spell Auschwitz, should be taken too seriously," Mark threw in his deliberately agitating two cents worth feeling particular provocative today for some reason.

"Well he certainly didn't have any trouble saying it!" the company and family

founder came unglued with his quick-mouthed son, reacting altogether more animated than he needed to be.

"Your angina, Pop..." Mark reminded him, this time with a Machiavellian grin. "Fuck my angina!" the old geezer screamed adolescently. "Nobody threatens me or my family," he stammered, nearly teetering on the edge of his chair *and* a breakdown simultaneously. "Maybe you don't give a shit about what happened at Auschwitz, but I do!" he mumbled while Donald tried to calm him down.

Mark chuckled out-loud to further aggravate him. "I take a double hit on that one, Papa. Gays were killed at Auschwitz too, remember?" Mark seemed to need the last work on this matter; —all matters really.

"Oh they were not," Banjo argued with him, instantly disgusted by the thought of having to share the Holocaust.

"Will you two settle down?" Paul interjected his fragile in-law status bravely. "Death threats need to be taken seriously, for the family and for our employees," he ventured.

"Fuck the employees!" Banjo hissed emphatically, not knowing enough to lower his tantrum. "It's probably one of those bastards who spray-painted the wall and made the phone call in the first place. Can't trust a one of 'em. Trouble is most aren't even Jewish."

"Dad. —Dad," Eliza offered a defusing voice. "When we are barely one per cent of Canadian national demographics, and even less than half that here in Vancouver, you're going to have to deal with a few gentiles." She looked around the room with raised eyebrows, satisfied that she had momentarily repaired the ice; the family's very own Zamboni machine. "If it is an ex-employee, and Dad's probably right," she conceded turning to face him, "you should alter your work schedule and leave here before sunset, every night," she stressed. "Not just on Sabbath either."

"Mark looked at his watch and jumped. "Jesus! I have a nine o'clock presentation with Warner Brothers in the conference room. Let me know what I missed." He bolted out the door and into his office triumphantly, collapsing into a leather high-back swivel chair to revel in the ten minutes he had just bought himself. He picked up the phone to dial Scott but heard the familiar tone signaling he had messages. He elected to retrieve them just in case Scott had already returned the message he'd left for him from the Saab driving in to work during his 18 minute commute earlier. As usual, when he hadn't found Scott at home on his first try, he had automatically dialed that wench of his, —Jenny, whom he'd caught Scott in bed with several weeks back. He had made a point to call her telephone number a few times a day for terrorist sake, thinking he would eventually catch his ex-boyfriend in the hetero-act again. He had even told Scott once or twice, when they first started

having problems, that he might tell Jenny all about their gay relationship one day if he thought Scott had ever lied to him again, but Mark realized that Scott Barry probably had never stopped lying from the moment he'd met him and likely never would.

He didn't have much of a view from his second story Burnaby warehouse office window but he gazed longingly into the early summer morning sunshine of another glorious day in the City of Rain. *Stanley Park should be drying out nicely*, he thought looking down at his shoes and wondering if he'd get a moment to venture back again later today. The familiar computer voice squawked in his ear.

You have one new message, four saved messages. To listen to your messages, press one. —First message, left today at 8:45 a.m. "Mark. Hi, it's Jackie." Mark hit the phone with the palm of his hand, distressed that Scott hadn't phoned. *"I set the Warner folks up in the conference room. They are coffee'd and ready when you are." —Message erased. First saved message left February 27 th at 8:21 a.m. "Good morning, Mark. This is Scott. I know I am going to reach you on your mobile next but you'll check this later in the day and uh, you'll hear a message from me saying good morning and I hope you have a great day and I will give you a call from Calgary. Oh, and thinking very much about you. Talk to you later. Bye."*

It was a clinical habit that Mark always replayed the messages he had received and saved from Scott, just to hear his voice on days he otherwise might not, and since

the break-up four weeks ago, those had numbered several bitter and lonely days. Still, he listened to every word and wondered if he were obsessing like his therapist had suggested. Of course he was. He pressed the *nine* botton to re-save the message to obsess again at a later time. This was love and he had been jilted. That would be unforgivable even if it weren't reconcilable, —a game point he was not yet willing to concede.

Next saved message left April 9 th at 12:08 p.m. "—Hello Mark. This is Scott. Um, you wanted me talk to you, so just give me a call. I'm going to be home. Give me a call later probably like 2:30, 3:00 at home if you get this message. Talk to you later. Bye-bye." Message re-saved.

Next saved message left April 22 nd at 8:53 a.m. "Hi Mark. This is Tina. Just giving a call to say hello and to see when maybe we could schedule to meet for lunch or something. Why don't you give me a call. I get out of here at 5:00 so if you could give me a call that would be great. Thanks. Bye." —Message re-saved. Then here was the infamous Tina messages reserved in evidence to remind Mark of the games Scott could play, though to be honest, he didn't play them well.

Next saved message left April 26 th at 3:23 p.m. "—Hi Mark. This is Scott. It's 3:30 and I'm just trying to catch up with you and I'll try your home. Bye."

Mark pressed the *nine* button again, amazed as usual at how much had

changed between them from February to April and how the indignation of their breakup still consumed him. Nobody had treated Scott as well as he had, certainly not his precious and lamenting wife, which he had *not* gone back to as he had first claimed, well, not according to the private investigator Mark had hired to keep tabs on Scott last week and not by Mark's own surveillance outside the house Scott shared with his two roommates, where indeed, he still spent the majority of his time when he wasn't installing carpets. Mark shook his head to break the recurring trance he had allowed himself to sink into at least six times a day, grabbed his presentation spreadsheets and plush character samples and jogged down the hall past the file cabinets and copy machine to the conference room, leaving tufts of neon colored hair in his path.

One of the company employees met him at the top of the stairs and lobbed Mark's car keys into the air. "All gassed and sparkling, Boss," he reported with an eager grin.

"Thanks Alan. I really appreciate it," he spoke with his head turned back over his shoulder trying to balance the stuffed toys after catching the key ring.

"I've got the petrol receipt—" he added loyally, waving it in the air.

"On my desk, Alan. Thanks again."

Inside the glassed conference room, he could see that the folks from Warner

were already fidgeting beyond patience, and he was even early. Such were the Americans from Burbank, altogether patronizing and clearly seeming put-out by having to do business out of bounds. Mark had always sensed that from them no matter how much smoke they blew where it tickled him most, —on the signature line at the bottom of another lucrative agreement. But Mark had been a regular Richter of animosity readings with anyone coming to his side of the 49th Parallel. The *Border Fags,* as he liked to refer to the hordes of Seattlites and Porlanders who scooted across the line on American long holiday weekends to get a quick, meaningless piece of Canadian tail, gave him that impression too, but then smoke wasn't all they were blowing. He wanted to distrust them, lumping them into that international jet set who dipped their toes in a dozen ports around the globe disregardless of safe sex in the Nineties, —too hung up in their manifest destiny to realize they could get AIDS and more likely spread it way up here in the pure, white, innocent and vulnerable North. He was constantly finding himself in the shadow of their ignorance, though he never found it endearing and less than seldom amusing, but he did find it; under every log and behind every stump along Lees Trail in Stanley Park. How the Yanks ever found out about the locally infamous male cruising trail, as old as the former century lumberjacks who had first exchanged sexual favours there as Vancouver was being stripped for the city she was to become, should have been a testimonial to their

ingenuity, but Mark never extended that much credit to anyone. The Americans wandering into Stanley Park served to perpetuate his anonymity which he really couldn't afford to gamble away in some public sex scandal. He *manufactured children's toys for Christ sake.* Well, that had been his father's argument over the years since he had come out to his parents. That was why his homosexuality should be driven as far underground as possible if he wanted to maintain any role in the family business which translated definitively into a paycheck and an inheritance, -the two things more life giving than the blood trickling through his own veins. The park, ironically in this age of AIDS, was the only safe haven in Mark's closeted world, something he could walk away from as anonymously as he had ducked into it. From the parking lot at Second Beach, because it was nearly a quarter of a kilometer away from the trail head and usually beyond general suspicion, he would stake his sweep of the fauna, his reconnaissance for heavy breathing lifeforms. But all precautions taken, he had still barely escaped some close calls in his day, often from out-running or out-thinking the occasional vacillating heterosexual pursuer who maybe thought he wanted male sex when he poked his head(s) inside a quivering bush, only to change his mind to violent aggression the moment he had gotten his rocks off. It was funny, but Mark didn't think twice about his life and death safety but obsessed around the clock about surviving the humiliation that would surely accompany the exposure of

this sordid lifestyle.

After an uneventful but ass-kissing meeting with the licensing guru's from Warner, Mark walked them downstairs to the parking lot, picking pink fuzz from his suit lapel as he passed the PBX operators at the front desk in the lobby below. He gave them a raised hand when they tried to snag his attention, mouthing the words that he'd be right back. When he returned from the parking lot, one of the front desk employees informed him he had a visitor in the sample showroom. Mark could see the back of Scott's thinning head towering over the display case to the right of the front desk and completely forgot his normal courtesy of thanking the employee. Hell, he nearly forgot to breathe, Scott's effect on him was so Mark-altering.

"Hey You," he called, walking through the double doors into the showroom.

"Hiya." Scott put a troll doll back on the glass shelf and walked around the aisle to meet him. Mark smiled very tentatively never quite sure what to make of his former boyfriend who always seemed to have two hands on the rug at all times. "—You said I could stop by to pick up the keys for the Jeep," Scott reminded him.

"Of course." Mark answered, trying to remember which lapse in judgement had provisioned that offer. "The keys are in my office. Do you want to come up for a —" Mark trailed off.

"No. I'll just wait down here if that's okay." Scott turned away as if to

dismiss him. Mark hopped up the staircase taking steps two at a time. It was good that Scott still needed him, he reasoned. That was, after all, part of the plan to get him back. Mark whistled along with the easy listening music piped throughout the second floor offices above the giant toy warehouse. He grabbed the spare set of keys from the desk drawer. He pocketed the petrol receipt Alan had placed on his desktop so his no-good brother-in-law, who seemed to be on some equity quest of late, didn't discover that Banjo paid for Mark's fuel and not his. In the hallway leading back toward the stairs, Jackie snagged him.

"Mark, Mr. Morgan wants to see you," she chimed like a robot programmed to say those very words at least twenty times a day.

"Would you tell Dad that I'll be there in five minutes. I'm walking the Warner people out," he fibbed, turning down the stairs.

The PBX operator held out her hand to stop him while she took another call. Mark rolled his eyes for Scott's benefit. "Mark, I'm sorry to interrupt you but I have Tory Bowman holding for you. What should I do with her?"

"Send her to voice mail, would you Kim? Thanks." Mark took Scott by the arm and led him outside into the sunshine. "Jeep keys," he announced placing them in his hand. You're still planning on coming over for dinner tonight, aren't you? I have the biggest news to tell you."

"Sure. We made plans didn't we? I just need to drop padding by that new office on Granville Island and then I can grocery shop for tonight. What do you feel like having?"

"I don't know. Pasta maybe. A salad, some wine." Mark reached inside his breast pocket for his wallet.

"That's okay, Mark. I can stop by a money machine and get cash. Don't worry." He started his usual stalling explanation as to why he didn't happen to have any cash on him and Mark interrupted, as he always did, putting several bills into his hand. Mark recognized the pattern too, but tonight was important. Mark believed in paying for the important things.

"I left a house key for you under the garbage can in the garage and I have the security system on a temporary code, —6969. Think you can remember that?" Mark grinned facetiously. I'm going to stop by the gym but I'll meet you at the house no later than 8:15." Scott unlocked his freshly washed, red Mazda RX7 and climbed inside. "Call me." Mark's voice trailed off as he watched him drive out of the parking lot. His mind raced ahead to the evening's plan of attack. He ambled back inside.

"Mark, Mr. Morgan just had me page you on the all-call and Signey Porter is holding.

"Voice mail, Kim. Thank you."

Mark didn't want to face his father today. It was not something he usually relished and seldom did they meet alone, mostly because Mark figured his father was disgusted by his mutated presence. They never discussed personal matters and kept the conversation to the barest business minimum. Mark had been back from Toronto for three and a half years since the initial banishment from his father's sight and the total of all personal conversations his father had attempted with him since his return could not have amounted to more than ten minutes. But today he had a feeling his father wanted something, —another chunk of his personal time perhaps, like the last time he wanted something and Mark ended up chairing the *Boats Afloat Christmas Parade* for mentally retarded children. Today he didn't feel like fighting. Anyone could have anything they wanted from him today, even Scott, —even his father.

"You wanted to see me Dad?" he asked sticking his head inside the corner office.

"Yes, come in." His father shuffled some papers and acted as though he had previously been engaged in some activity when everyone in the family knew he stared at the walls for the balance of his business day. "I talked with Rabbi Winnerman this morning and he says that you haven't returned his calls. He wants a member of our family to sit on his board at *Canadian Action for Soviet Jewry*. Donald and I are

already on two boards a piece. We agreed that you should take this one." At last his father looked up from the mounds of invoices and correspondence on his desk top, if indeed there were a desk beneath all that rubble. He squinted in Mark's direction and looked away almost as instantly as he'd made eye contact. "Please call Rabbi Winnerman this morning," he added rather sternly, shuffling more papers around. Mark nodded his head, not that his father saw him do it, turned and left the office looking at his watch. "You'll call?" Banjo raised his voice to reach his retreating son.

"Yes, Dad. I'll call. I'll call." He was already late for his therapy session and decided to give a courtesy call to let his doctor know he was running a bit behind but on his way. Her answering machine picked up...

Hi. This is Doctor Catherine Hallock and I am in session now. Please leave a message for me and I will call you back. If this is an emergency, please hang-up and dial my pager at 944-1962.

Mark fumbled for his day planner. What day was it anyway, he suddenly wondered. "Shit!" It was only Tuesday. His appointment was for Wednesday. Always Wednesday unless he was in crisis. —as he'd learned to identify for himself with the help of Dr. Hallock. And while he may not have always known Tuesday from Wednesday, Mark knew crisis from stability. He had been turned over to Dr. Hallock four months ago in January when his former shrink had decided she needed

to sabbatical in the Dominican Republic for a few years. Mark could have that effect on people. He knew it was cyclical behaviour on his part. He'd read the books that had been recommended to him and he tried to work through these phases but Mark loved hard and so he fell hard. Well, *crashed* really. He wish he hadn't mentioned his thoughts of suicide to Dr. Hallock three weeks ago after the breakup with Scott, though. Mark didn't need the attention. He needed love. Much of what he told her amounted to dramatizing his situation anyway. His disclosure, like his life sometimes, didn't seem too terribly exciting to him and he wanted to keep those around him entertained and more importantly, —attached. The truth was always in there somewhere but more often than not it came out with a lot of frills and bangles. Mark treated everyone like ravens assuming they would only be attracted to the shiny parts of him, the attributes that glittered in the sun, so he made sure there was plenty to catch the eye. He had his jet black Saab convertible to impress them on land, his Bayliner 2400 cabin cruiser to dazzle them on the water, his four story townhouse on English Bay, a $20,000 wardrobe to look great anywhere, and a bottomless wallet to lure them all as he shuffled them in and out of his life in crisis, from one toy to the other. He had pooled everything to keep from losing Scott, but it hadn't been enough. In the end, his twenty-five year old pretty boy had been attracted to the shiny stuff but he had not been held by it. All Mark had to do was think about those blue

eyes or his naked body wrapped around his to go momentarily insane by abandonment. He may have been out of crisis but he had his heart pointed up the express ramp and could merge back into mental oblivion at any moment. He had expected to tell Dr. Hallock all about his plan to resolve the Scott Barry matter once and for all during his session this morning, but it would have to wait now.

Mark spent the next forty minutes on the phone with friends in Toronto who tried to understand why he had ever left the big city for the untamed frontier of B.C. in the first place. So what if a six year relationship had blown up in his face and the city had more than a few sentimentally piercing memories for him. He had at least felt alive and part of the national gay agenda. At least he was *out* and a country away from his domineering, homophobic family and at least he was surrounded by good friends. It made little sense to those who cared about him. It made even less sense to Mark now that three years and a string of dry-runs at love had only managed to profit him one more scar gorged clean across his heart, one more moment entrenched in crisis and one more name scribbled on the list of men that had tangoed with Mark G. Morgan and, —here was the rub, had survived to inconceivably dance again. They hadn't loved him. They had pretended, they had acted and they had lied. This infuriated him as he hated being misled, but this time, this time he had lied to himself. He could think of no worse transgression in the universe. He had made himself

believe that Scott Barry loved him and Mark had done such a convincing job, he simply could not accept that in the end, he did not. Scott hadn't exactly done him any favours when he had claimed that he loved him back, in front of Dr. Hallock last month, only to take it back 24 hours later in a private session. In the grueling process, Mark had learned to take things back too. He had already recovered the BMW he had purchased for Scott after he caught him in bed with Jenny the first time. But he would take it all back tonight, including the moment he first told Scott he loved him. There would be nothing left between them when Mark was finished, least of all, regrets.

It was as good a time as any to grab lunch. Though he had no plans and wasn't even particularly hungry, he didn't need an excuse to get away from the office and family lately. Paul badgered him for an impromptu lunch date in the hallway between their offices which Mark smoothly declined with the bogus claim of going to the gym, —the one place he knew his pudgy brother-in-law would never follow him. He needed time to think through the evening ahead and thinking was not something he could usually manage whenever Paul was fidgeting anywhere around him. Paul had ADD, —Attention Deficit Disorder with hyperactivity, and popped *Ritalin* easily seven times a day to control it and maintain some sense of corporate and family viability. The entire family was well-medicated, as a matter of pharmaceutical

fact. And those who weren't readily popping pills to cope, were busy smuggling them back from the Orient to maintain the family medicine chest. So typical of post-war families, the Morgan's stockpiled medicine like they hoarded money. Banjo was from that early Twentieth Century school where they drilled the understanding that only he alone could take care of his own, which led, however indirectly, to distrusting most everyone else, including in-laws, who tried. And so they rallied around the battle cry *what money can't do for the clan, drugs surely can.* And when *just pills* and bundles of money fell short in treating the bleeding conscience of parents and the simple minds of offspring, an army-sized squadron of therapists (dispensing *Prozac* like gumdrops at a concession counter) stepped-in to make everything right, —or at least fuzzy again. There were six of them, to be exact, on the gray matter dream-team, which should have been clearly indicative to anyone with or without a doctorate that this was a family that couldn't work together or speak to each other and probably shouldn't try. But the shrinks, their divining rods surely quaking as they pointed them down the throat of that bottomless financial well, polished their elbow joints and hooked-up copper fittings and prepared to suck the co-(unselor) dependent Morgan family fossil-dry. Only Sandee and Mark saw a common therapist which seemed somehow appropriate that the family's two outsiders could find solace in a single source; —Mark of Morgan blood but non-Morgan sexual tradition and Sandee of

non-Morgan blood which was incidently riddled with a rare degenerative platelet disease, and even worse, non-Jewish tradition. So the fag and the Gentile, as haphazardly coupled as the *Owl and Pussycat,* went to sea in a beautiful pea green straight coat. They weren't crazy really, just commiserating-ly insane for sticking around all this time. Reminiscing now about his longtime fantasy of one day escaping the Morgan trappings, brought a smile to Mark's face and peace to his soul as he negotiated his Saab, convertible top retracting, out of the *Banjo* parking lot. He headed for Willingdon Avenue and the Lougheed Highway.

It was a total top-down and sunglasses Spring day that had beckoned him away from the office all morning. Tingling nostrils full of Rhododendron, Azaleas, Camellias and Star Magnolias inflated his lungs and whipped through his hair that he combed with the fingers of a free hand at every stop light, just in case somebody of consequence was watching. Rows of Crocus and Daffodils still outlined the walkways of a hundred *Vancouver Specials* that had been thrown-up on either side of the thoroughfare in the late 80's, like cracker boxes on a grocery shelf. His own home had been built in '85 and while it may have looked to some like the same cracker box standing on its end, at least it was different.

It was days like this that made Mark long for his boat and the freedom to tour around Burrard Inlet and out into the expansive Straight of Georgia. He daydreamed

now about hugging the shore particularly close to Wreck Beach where dozens of nude sunbathers spent half the morning climbing down the steep cliffs from the University of British Columbia Campus to tan their wares. Mark could always count on one or two of the more resilient specimens braving the northern waters to swim out to join him for late afternoon cocktails and such aboard the *Boy-Toy*. It may have been a bit early in the season for sunbathers but good ol' Stanley Park could pack 'em in on a *manna* day like today. Mark grinned, automatically building an extra thirty minutes into his lunch schedule to investigate this theory further.

The Lougheed Highway spilled into Broadway as he sped west in the direction of downtown. He didn't know what he felt like eating but he knew precisely where he felt like eating it. He'd been casing *Picasso's* for several months, not necessarily for the food, which wasn't bad, but for the adorable chef instructor who taught the kitchen trade to street kids there. He'd been begging an introduction from the extroverted hostess for a solid month and it would either come today or never. Mark fantasized that once introduced, the chef and he would steal away to Barbados, just for the afternoon maybe, and Mark would call in sick or at least fitfully distracted for the rest of the week, perhaps the rest of his life. Mark checked his face in the mirror and grimaced. Things never happened quite the way he fantasized. He snatched his mobile phone from its holder further converting the convertible into an office on

wheels.

"Rabbi Winnerman, please. —Mark Morgan." He drove through one of Vancouver's flashing green traffic signals and pondered for the first time in his adult life why some of them flashed while others didn't. "No. Just leave a message that I returned his phone call. Thank you."

One down, he thought to himself as he passed Nanaimo Street. He tapped his fingers on the steering wheel debating whether or not to phone Scott in the Jeep or to leave him hanging until dinner. Just when he decided not to decide that moment and to wait another block, the phone rang. It was his brother with a list of Bangkok flight options for next week. For five minutes Donald droned on about how he'd go himself if he thought they'd listen to him but that Mark had established the relationships there and Mark had the experience in Thailand and Mark this, and Mark that, until Mark finally said, "—Look, Donald. I've got a lunch appointment waiting inside the restaurant. I need to let you go," and hung up, turning decisively right on Kingsway to catch Dunsmuir, then Georgia Street straight into Stanley Park. Family could provoke the strangest reactions from Mark. Their encroachments gave him permission to outwardly reward himself which almost always contorted in a guise of masochistic irony to involve some method of punishing himself so he could blame them for that too. It would do him good, he decided, to scare up an appetite and

nothing could be more scary than a daylight excursion along Lees Trail.

He was initially discouraged to find his usual parking lot virtually empty but for a child daycare van. A few Washington State license plates could have lifted his spirits significantly on a day like today. Did he dare count on the locals that may have ventured into the woods from their apartments and condos in the West End for a quickie? That premise was risky as a rule but during the day he could at least count on the waiters and bartenders and hotel desk clerks to be killing time before their night shifts. *What the hell*, he thought parking next to the van. It was a nice day for a walk and you only live once, he reasoned. His hunch paid off within the first hundred metres as the city, his job, the Orient, his family, his jilting boyfriend, —all vanished from compulsive, 24-hour dwelling thought. He spun around in anticipation when a whistle sailed toward him from behind a moss draped boulder. He tried to recover more nonchalantly when a much older man stepped out from behind his lurking place with his pants and underwear down about his ankles, beating himself into agonizing climax. *Thanks for waiting, Pig*— Mark mumbled under his breath and kept walking, decidedly not that desperate, —yet. Around the next bend in the trail, a rather large man in leather jacket, leather pants and a leather cap stood between two trees, looking rather *old growth* himself. Mark wondered if perhaps he might be the daycare supervisor somehow separated from his charge and smiled. He

glanced down at his dress shoes and decided he wasn't quite dressed for the part, expensive leather though they many have been.

"Hey Mr. Executive," the leather man grumbled. Mark rolled his eyes as the stereotype before him jerked into animation like an automated pony outside a grocery store. "Looking for something to cuddle?"

Mark nearly sprayed saliva through clenched lips that parted in spontaneous laughter for which he instantly apologized. "You dressed like that to cuddle?" he asked him.

"No *Wall Street*." He slowly unzipped the wide silver zipper of his coat to liberate two massive pecs smothered in truck driver hair. "I undress to do that." Mark walked into his space and the man wrenched his fingers on Mark's nipples that protruded from under his striped white dress shirt like chromed metal thimbles trying to hide under silk. The leather man was a good half foot taller than Mark's five foot, eight inch frame and he palmed the back of Mark's head like a basketball, forcing his face inside the leather coat where Mark's lips innately sought the man's giant nipple. He nibbled gently at first and then more aggressively as the leather man groaned pleasurably. "Ahhh, Daddy likes that." The giant slobbered into his hand that reached down to slime the bat he had extracted from his pants when Mark pretended not to be looking. The toy maker could only tremble where he stood. The quivering must

have been obvious to the leather man, he thought, like the smell of fear to a rabid German Shepherd, so he tried to control it which of course only made it worse. "Daddy wants to fuck *Wall Street*," the giant announced. Mark tilted his head upward to meet the seething, brown eyes of the cuddler-gone-mad and shook his head from side to side. The leather man placed his hands on Mark's shoulders and muscled him to his knees forcing his mouth onto the length and breadth of his threat. The back of Mark's head slammed with a thud against the tree behind him and for several seconds adrenalin washed over his brain to neutralize his resistance. This was precisely what he had wandered into the forest to get and this was precisely how he preferred to get it. Mark figured everyone had their quirks, some stranger than others and some, at least a small quotient he regularly justified, had to carry more risk than this foray. After a few, well-intentioned thrusts, the leather man pulled Mark to his feet and started to turn him around. Mark planted his feet, set his body weight, and nearly withdrew his head back inside the starched collar of his button down, plumb refusing to expose his soft underside to anyone.

"You know what?" Mark toyed with his dance partner. "We're not going to do this here. What do you say we hook up later tonight, —my place where you can be as rough as you want. Say midnight?"

"Yeah, right." The leather man packed himself back inside his pants and

shrugged to get the zipper up and over his prominent mound. "I suppose you're going to tell me just where you live too, huh? Maybe give me my own key to the front door?"

Mark took a stray piece of paper from his wallet, showing a bit more cash than he might have intended, took the pen he always carried with him from his suit pocket and jotted down his mobile phone number. "Sure I will, —if you call me at this number in a half hour." *Real stupid, Mark.* He gave himself a belated pep talk, sticking the wallet deep in his back pocket. "My name's Mark. I'm serious. It really is." He held out his hand to the leather man. He took the slip of paper from him and grabbed Mark's crotch to see just how serious he was.

"Yeah, you might be serious." He held up the telephone number in the hand with his car keys. Mark spotted a keychain with a bright yellow baby duck and the words *Little Duckling Day School* arching over the logo. "I guess we'll see, won't we?" Mark smiled, nodding his head, then turned to leave. "Later, *Wall Street.*" Mark waved and made tracks for the car.

Glancing at his hair in the marvelous sun glare reflecting off the passenger van next to his Saab, Mark fumbled for his keys. He noted that his stomach, now over it's queasiness following another efficient park encounter, was finally ready for lunch. He finger-combed his moustache in the rear view mirror as he backed out of the lot and

headed for Picasso's. The leather man was just emerging from the trail as Mark whizzed past him. He'd see just how serious Mark Morgan could get. He winked at himself in the mirror and picked up the phone to dial his other car phone in the Jeep.

"Scott? —Mark. How are ya? Fine. Gorgeous day, eh? What's that—? Oh, just finished up a meeting downtown. —My banker, if you must know? Why do you suddenly care who I meet with? —It doesn't matter to me. You're the one cooking. No, we can talk about that tonight. It will just have to wait, that's all. We have a few other things to discuss first. I'm not just going to give it back unless there's something in it for me. Yeah? Well, we'll see about that." Mark changed lanes rather abruptly. "Oops! I just cut her off and she's not happy about it either. Gotta scoot. I'll talk to you later if I can, or I'll see you at the house around, —uh, let's say 8:15 just to be safe. You know how the gym can be. *You* drive carefully. You're not insured. Bye." Mark checked the rearview to make sure the woman he'd cut off was fine. At that moment a vehicle that looked remarkably like his Jeep Cherokee, two cars behind her, ducked off onto a side street just before the approach to the Granville Bridge. In the next seconds that transpired, Mark felt flush, afraid he might have been caught in a lie, but he soon recovered. *As if Scott were smart enough to tail him*, he dismissed the notion with a muffled giggle, popping a fresh stick of gum into his mouth. He craned his neck to see over the bridge railing and down into False Creek

Marina where *Boy Toy* was moored. He needed to remind himself to finalize the dates for this summer's boat trips so he could let Marge know when the slip would be empty. Summer was a busy time for the *Snot Club* with vacationers sailing in from all over the world, all wanting, well *demanding* temporary moorage in their mostly foreign tongues. That was fine with Mark since every night they could fill the slip with somebody else's boat, he didn't have to pay for it, which almost begged the necessity and expense of a boating vacation in his Morgan-rationalizing mind. Suddenly distracted by another memory of great sex, Mark recalled the all night session he had at the marina one night with a supposedly straight model he'd met at the bar. When untimely house guests preempted his normal practice of bringing the trick to his palatially impressive home, Mark had suggested they walk instead to his boat. The straight cover boy turned out to be less than inexperienced when it came to gay sex and more than just forgetful when he hurried off the boat leaving his whole portfolio behind. Mark had comically redecorated his boat with the 8 x 10 glossies believing the little stud would come back for his photos and an encore boat-rocking. He never did and Mark hadn't gotten around to taking the trophies down.

He dialed *Banjo Toys* to check his voice mail for messages and while he had the boat in mind and no messages, he phoned the Residential Building Office to check on his permit to add a boat port next to his garage. He arranged for a copy of the

permit to be faxed to his office where it would surely drive his brother-in-law mental if he happened to see it laying on the fax machine outside their offices. Like Mark, Paul used to have tons of disposable income to fetter away on projects and man toys but then in a quest for greater wealth, he married Mark's sister and acquired three little terrors from her first marriage all of whom syphon the earnings right from him. Mark couldn't feel sorry for Paul though, despite the many curses that seemed to be plaguing him. Early on, his brother-in-law had turned on him just when Mark thought they had achieved an undeniable bond. In Mark's unforgiving mind, Paul had just used him to get closer to his sister, a typical ploy among those he knew, now that he dwelled on it. Scott had used him to get closer to his money after all.

He turned right on Broadway and began searching for a parking spot having initially gone there two weeks back to follow-up on a tip he'd received from his closest friend, the ever-vigilant Gilles, about the adorable chef in residence there. Of course, this so-called friend only turned over the tips that he'd investigated first and failed at, for whatever reasons and excuses. It then became a contest and veritable point of contention between them whenever Mark picked up the torch and ran with it again.

What Mark knew about the restaurant and its single chef, he had picked up from Shannon, the chatty hostess who always acted eager to see him. Mark had

learned that the restaurant doubled as a vocational school where Vancouver street kids went off federal assistance to learn the cooking and restaurant trade. *Three cheers and a hooray for intrinsic social value* Mark cheered disinterestedly. What he really cared about the territory he staked was that Stephen Ashton existed there fifty to sixty hours a week. Mark had done the math. If Joe-Blow slept 56 hours each week and worked fifty more, Mark was only asking to be admitted to the remaining third of Joe's life. He wasn't negotiating for voting privileges or ownership rights. He just wanted to be a full-time companion without the overtime, without expecting further compensation, without fail. That's all he'd ever wanted, period. The rest of the toys he had accumulated in his thirty-five years of playing around meant nothing to him. Truth was, Mark was sick of toys.

"Hello again," the hostess beamed at him as she turned away from a conversation in progress with two of the waiters. "Dining alone today?" she tried not to make that sound empathic.

"Unless you're ready for lunch, I guess I am." Mark gave her a full dental smile and turned to follow her to a table.

"Oh go on. You're not interested in me you big flirt." She whispered softly in passing so only he could hear. Mark knew he was blushing. She sat him at a table next to the wall of vintage electric toasters, *—from the personal collection of the*

Chef, Shannon had told him last week. He checked his hair in one of them as the hostess returned to the podium. *No worse for park-wear* he deducted, dabbing a napkin at the corners of his mouth. He commenced stalking and eagerly told his order to the attending waiter, but when a house salad arrived instead of the grapefruit number he'd ordered, he signaled Shannon to the table.

"I ordered the grapefruit salad and got this" he exaggerated his despair. "I demand to speak to the Chef!"

She removed the salad. "It's his birthday. *Your highness* isn't here today, Sweetheart. Pity. You should have phoned ahead." Her heavily mascara-ed brown eyes drooped an apology. "I'll be right back and I apologize for the misunderstanding, —both of them, actually." She hurried away realizing she'd probably spoiled his entire day; well, at least his lunch.

Mark ate the new salad and left without much ceremony, reaching the Saab just in time to take a call from his leather man. Feeling somewhat discouraged by a lunch hour he would have more enjoyed had he stayed in the park, he pressed his trick for a telephone number where he could reach him later. He scribbled it on the backside of his credit card receipt from *Picasso's*.

The remainder of his afternoon was consumed in a flurry of small projects and errands that needed to be pulled together and while he wished to leave the office early

to get a jump on the gym, he ended up staying an hour late to wrap things up and shuffle some paperwork off his desk for good. There would be new projects, more paperwork and a dozen lousy trips to Thailand ahead so he took a deep breath, turned out the lights and called it a day.



Wednesday, May 15, 1991

First message left today at 9:41 a.m.

—Mark awake up. It's Scott. We need to go get my car. Hello—? You're probably in transit. I don't have your mobile number. Anyways left a message for you at work, which you probably won't get. Call me. Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 11:21 a.m.

—Hi Mark. This is Mindy with the Stanley Park Zoo Jungle Party. I am crushed that you missed my presentation last night and now this is two in a row and I especially did it because I thought you were going to be there. So now you're going to force me to do something totally goofy at the next board meeting. Well anyway, give a ring if you get a chance. I'm just checking in with you and wanted to harass you a tiny bit. Have a lovely day, Mark. Bye-

bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 4:30 p.m.

—Hi Mark. This is Dad. Please call me at your convenience. Good Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 4:32 p.m.

—Hey Mark. It's Mitchell and I was thinking about you today. Sorry I haven't phoned in a while. Some shit's going on but I thought I'd call. So call me back when you get a minute will you? 642-4235. See ya..

End of message. Next message left today at 4:54 p.m.

—It's about five o'clock and I'm just calling to find out what you were doing today, this evening. Give your sister a call. Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 5:04 p.m.

—Hi Mark. It's Catherine Hallock. It's about ten after five and we had an appointment today. I was wondering what happened to you. Would you call me when you get a chance? Thanks. Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 5:08 p.m.

—Hi Mark. It's Catherine Hallock. I'm getting kind of worried about you. I called your work and they said you hadn't been in all day and I called your mobile number. Would you call and let me know that you're okay? It kind of isn't like you not to make an appointment, so I'm a little bit concerned.

Talk to you later. Bye-bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 6:08 p.m.

—Mark. This is Mom. Where are you? I called you at the office earlier. I thought you were out to lunch or something. Then when they said you weren't in, I had no idea. And I called your car and I didn't even get the recorder, so I know I dialed right. So would you get back to us. We want to know what you're doing. Talk to you later, Honey.

End of message. Next message left today at 7:45 p.m.

—Hi, this is Tim. I'm at home. I got a message from Erin. I'd like some clarification. If you would call me here. Mom or Dad or Paul or somebody— we're at 783-7436. Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 8:27 p.m.

—Mom or Dad? This is Erin. Are you there? If you get this message will you call me? Bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 9:35 p.m.

—This is Bruce Paragon calling. Mark, if you're there, call me. If this is family or friends, I'm at 764-3847. I live near mark and if I can give any help, ah, please give me a call. Bye-bye.

End of message. Next message left today at 9:39 p.m.

—Hi Mark. This is Mitchell calling. Ah, 9:30 and I just got home from today's temp job packaging sunglasses. Real fun, let me tell you. Call me if you get in within the next hour or so. I'd really like to talk. Otherwise, I'll just talk to you some other time. Bye. Hope all is going well...

End of new messages.

Paul Tamorin pulled his mostly black, 1983 BMW, into the driveway, churning out exhaust and driving just like the mad man most people thought he was. His father and mother-in-law were standing next to their Mercedes and his brother-in-law and boss, Donald, was trying keys in the front door of his brother's four level house overlooking the inlet. It had been a harrowing day at *Banjo Toys* and while everyone seemed to ask about Mark's absence throughout the day, nobody could remember if he had said he was going to be away from the office or not and the consensus to become concerned really hadn't materialized until early evening when the women in the family grew nervous from his silence. Mark had been characteristically unpredictable but usually surfaced for attention from time to time. Mark's mother, Louise, rang her white, white hands and paced one or two steps in each direction as she waited for either of her two sons to open that front door, —Mark from the inside or Donald from the porch. She was on the verge of

admitting that she could sense something had gone terribly wrong, but earlier soundings of this premonition had been met with a reprimand from her husband for being *too damn dramatic*. She held her tongue between her teeth until she was sure she'd draw blood there.

"You know he had the locks changed not too long ago. I doubt if you have a current key," Paul shouted to his brother-in-law, commenting as much on the relationship between two estranged brothers as he was on Mark's stringently protected privacy. He slammed his car door shut and walked toward the front door putting on his wrinkled suit jacket en route.

"I've already phoned his housekeepers and asked them to meet us here. They should have been here by now though." Donald was business inside the office and out. Potential family tragedies didn't change that. This was hardly the first time Mark's antics took on the ramifications of a cry for wolf. If he remained calm, level-headed, —even logical, everything would be fine, he reminded himself. "Damn-it!" he tried the last key on his ring before shoving the tangled mess in his pockets where he left his hands to wait. His father broke away from his distraught wife and stormed up the steep drive to join him and Paul on the porch. Donald noticed his father's forehead was red with rage, the epidermal thermometer all his children had learned to read at a very young age. None of them had been particularly good at waiting and

suspense was a novelty they usually paid underlings to endure for them, —something they'd read about later on any number of spreadsheets reflecting the family's resounding success.

"Are you sure Mark didn't tell either of you about his plans for today? I almost remember him mentioning he was going to meet with Rabbi Winnerman. Maybe that was today." The patriarch rambled on, having mastered the obliteration of silence to his superior advantage long ago. As long as he was speaking, he figured, his subjects couldn't hear themselves think of a way to oppose him. It only served to reason then that the louder he spoke, the greater submission he'd achieve. He raised his voice. "Break the goddamn door down! We don't have all night."

"Dad. *Dad*," Paul stressed, "the housekeepers are on their way with a key to the door. It will be just another minute."

Donald didn't realize he was doing it but he stared at his sister's second husband with an expression comprised of equal parts disdain and disgust. He couldn't exactly boast of his own relationship with his father but to hear this outsider tossing around the title of *Dad* like he had some unalienable right to it, made his stomach sick. He didn't know how to disarm his father's nerves or to calm any of their fears. It wasn't as though a group hug on the stoop would carry any weight with a family that showed its wallet long before it gave away any of its vulnerabilities, emotions

being the most despicable liability on this short list.

"Anybody smell that?" Tamorin winced. "Is that exhaust?" he suggested. The three men sniffed voraciously at the air as though someone might be printing fresh currency in the vicinity. Then suddenly they all noticed what each of them had secretly suspected, —distinct, unsettling carbon monoxide; Mark had tried suicide again. Not one of the three men on the porch, with their own personal reasons and individual grudges, had to think twice before hoping he had indeed succeeded this time. To them, Mark was a miserable man, cursed with unhappiness and depression and saddled in this life with the burden of his homosexuality, which incidently, they all feared could blow like a powder keg at any minute anyway. After his last suicide stunt a year or so back, they had hoped to have impressed upon him that suicide was not the way to go if Mark desired the company and the family to be looked after financially when insurance sorted things out. But knowing Mark's spite, as he had made damn sure each of them did, it wouldn't surprise them at all if Mark had staged the most obvious suicide imaginable.

In the next several minutes that passed before the housekeepers pulled in front of the house, nobody seemed to sense any urgency in reaching Mark if he were inside the garage as they now deducted. Even the tantrum-prone Banjo seemed settled somehow and content to wait. A few more minutes of fumes for good measure

seemed the final respect they could bestow their beleaguered brother and son.

The fifty-nine year old housekeeper with his wife in tow, coaxed his crippled knees up the steep incline of the driveway, telling himself each step of the way that he had gotten too old for this nonsense. Luanne Hart paused when she reached Louise Morgan unsure whether to exchange greetings or the anticipated condolences. Everyone seemed to know how volatile Mark could be, even the hired help. Tentatively, always aware of her station in life, as a domestic and as a female, she touched Mrs. Morgan's arm lightly, the one the millionairess held by the elbow with the other, a hand clutching her husband's handkerchief firmly over her mouth poised to catch the scream she would surely issue, the moment the awful truth was revealed. "I'm sure everything is just fine," the housekeeper said vacantly, all the while knowing that more than likely, everything was not.

Ron Hart extracted a giant ring of keys from his trouser pocket and unlocked the front door, not exchanging a single word with the Morgans, whom he outwardly resented. He had been privy to Mark's view of the family world during the past six years he had worked for him and loyally, he adopted and upheld that view.

Still without words, Paul Tamorin entered the household first, perhaps because of his previous history as a junior barrister in the crown attorney's office where investigations and criminal scenes such as this one, had been common place.

Donald followed, motioning his father to wait in the entry as he prepared to confirm their suspicions. His brother-in-law had already disappeared up the stairs before he had unlocked the latch and opened the door leading into the double car garage. Donald held a sleeve to his face as the invisible smoke escaped around him and he walked inside. Again, he had to motion Banjo back, this time more insistently. The smell burned his eyes but still they focused and darted about the dark space, down by the wheels of the Jeep Wagoneer, inside the driver's side of each of the two cars parked there. He reached the midpoint of the room and walked between the cars to where he could look inside each vehicle where he was certain to find his brother, slumped, unconscious and dead. There was no body. Donald suddenly realized there was no dog and for a moment, he almost caught himself hoping the two of them had taken a walk along the shoreline in front of the house. He walked around the back end of the Saab to inspect the far side, just to be sure. Banjo had wandered in when his eldest son had given no indication of immediate discovery and coughed into his hand, almost having to turn back. Donald continued around the sportscar until there, next to the dog ramp that led to the pet door, he saw his brother laying motionless on his back, an arm across his chest and his face turned to one side on the concrete floor. He was wearing only his underwear briefs and a single sock and looked to be more at peace than Donald could ever remember him. Donald straightened his posture from

it's investigative crouch position and backed into his father.

"Dad, he's here. You don't need to see him this way. Go inside and call the police."

Banjo did what he was told and Donald walked to his brother and knelt down at his feet. Closer, he looked pretty bad, like maybe Mark didn't do this to himself after all. *Jesus*, he muttered to himself as he reached his hand the length of the body to touch his brother's neck. He was cold and Donald couldn't feel his heart beating. Instinctively, he withdrew his hand before he could really be sure and ended up having to talk himself into trying to feel for a pulse again. Donald hadn't had any experience with death. If Mark were dead, he was the first dead person his brother had ever touched. Definitely not any pulse this time, Donald took his hand back and stared. That was all he could take back. All the years of withholding love from his brother and standing alongside the rest of his family in the whipping line they had convened to punish Mark for being different, had escaped without the apology Donald always thought he could one day make and everything would be forgiven. In the end his younger brother had cheated him out of that and Donald wanted to blame him. Instead, by his side, he whispered the words *I'm sorry* and *I love you* and asked both God and his brother to let this suffice.

The sounds of his wailing mother on the other side of the thin garage door,

brought Donald to his feet and senses. He hurried out of the garage and tripped over Mark's Boxer as it cowered in the entry. "Dexter!" he called the dog by name, lavishing it with the affection he had reserved too long for his brother. "What's wrong, boy?" The dog that was normally too hyperactive for anyone's tastes, poured out the front door and onto the porch like it was filled with honey instead of bone and muscle. Upon seeing the dog, Louise Morgan gasped mid-scream on the chance her husband had been wrong about their son.

"Is he okay, Donald?" Her words cracked over lips strung together with mucous and tear.

Donald shook his head and braced for her reaction but she crumpled into Banjo's arms without further sound. He rushed to his parents as the sound of a siren began screeching its way down the curvy Marine Drive that ran parallel to the waterline of Burrard Inlet in front of the home. Just before the squad car from the West Precinct pulled up, Banjo left his wife in his son's care and rushed back inside the house needing to see Mark for himself before he could really believe it.

The Hart's who had phoned the police from the telephone in the kitchen on the second level of the home, now waited in the driveway below the Mercedes to intercept the police to provide them the details of what they had encountered inside. The family was in no condition to provide rational information and as far as they were

concerned, they probably knew Mark better than his family did anyway.

Adequately briefed, the two police officers cordoned off the front yard with yellow plastic ribbon and made their way to the front porch only to find their carefully defined crime scene possibly contaminated by family members still roaming about the house. Officer Ron Strailey challenged the elderly man inside the entryway to the garage. His partner slipped around them and entered the garage.

"Sir, we'll take over the house now if you don't mind." Banjo glared at them as if to say *how dare you expect me to leave this house purchased with my money*. "You need to leave the residence, sir," the officer added more sternly. "We cannot process the scene until you have left the house. I am going to ask you kindly, one final time, to leave the residence and wait outside beyond the tape. I'll send someone out shortly to take your statement."

"My son's been murdered you ignorant son of a bitch. That's my fucking statement you bumbling asshole!" Banjo exploded in a rage that sent spittle flying onto the badge of deputy number 0728, who had taken just about all he was required to take from any civilian. He took the victim's father firmly by the arm and turned him toward the front door.

"With all due respect, I will not have you compromising the integrity of this crime scene, sir. I am going to require you to wait outside with the rest of your

family." Strailey muscled him through the front door and onto the porch just as the automatic garage door began opening to reveal the victim's body to everyone now assembled in the driveway. Banjo's recuperating wife, who had wisely chosen not to follow her husband back into the house, threw her hands over her mouth and returned to wailing as only a mother could at the sight of her dead child. Huge gasps for air punctuated her sobs that roused neighbours of this upscale West Vancouver suburb from their televisions and homework to windows and front porches for the best view of the spectacle in progress. Banjo wrestled out of the officer's gasp to attend to his wife who suddenly collapsed into her eldest son's arms. For a minute, there was silence before new red and blue prongs of light circled the neighbourhood like hungry vultures as the day passed dusk into night. Strailey hollered for some assistance from the fire and rescue team that had rushed into the garage to attend to the body laying on the garage floor. A paramedic ambled down the driveway to attend to Mrs. Morgan. Catching Strailey by surprise, Paul Tamorin appeared behind him on the stairs.

"I think there's something you ought to take a look at, Officer." the victim's brother-in-law said, looking rather flushed.

"I beg your pardon. Who are you?" Strailey removed his hat in frustration and slicked his hair back.

"Paul Tamorin, Crown Attorney's Office," he announced from habit. "Formerly," he added with a crooked grin. "I used to be an attorney with the Crown A's Office, that is. Now, I appear to be the brother-in-law of the deceased."

"Mr. —Tamorin, is it? This is supposed to be a sealed crime scene. The RCMP will be here any minute. Let's not try to do their jobs for them. That tends to make them a little uptight. Do you have any idea what it's like to have to answer to uptight Mounties?" Strailey winced for effect, clearly running very short with patience.

"Look, Officer Str-ai-ly," Tamorin sounded out the name above the badge. "After years of prosecuting these circuses, I know what it takes to build a case against a suspect and it's lying all over the bedroom floor upstairs." Paul began to gnaw the hang nails from his fingers, a project he worked on continuously throughout each tension filled day at *Banjo Toys International*.

"Mr. Tamorin, I will then deduce that you also know what it takes to lose a case when a crime scene has been improperly preserved. You of all people should have respected that and left the house immediately instead of poking around the place as though you'd all been invited over for a goddamn Easter egg hunt. My ass is going to be in a world of hurt with the RCMP over this as it is."

Tamorin continued to chomp at his nails having played and won the

intimidation game too many times to surrender to this novice.

"Well," the beat cop finally caved. "What is it?"

Tamorin turned to head back up the first set of stairs and Strailey followed. As they reached the landing on the third level it became apparent that a struggle had indeed occurred there. The bedspread was pulled onto the floor next to a pair of blue jeans and a wallet. Lamps were knocked off the bed stands, a small table had been moved from its normal indentations in the deep white carpeting and the french doors to the balcony were open facing Marine Drive below. From this vantage, Strailey could see beyond Ambleside Park that stretched along the seawall for several kilometres, to the lights of downtown Vancouver but he had grown accustomed to such opulence working the domestic response unit along this posh and expansive north shore between Horseshoe Bay and Lions Gate Bridge. It took a lot more to impress him and so far, Tamorin wasn't coming up with much if anything significantly valuable. The same disarray could be equally indicative of distress before a suicide.

"Yes—?" Strailey egged him into a better argument of his case. "A struggle may have occurred here. Is there anything else?"

"Here," the pudgy yuppie pointed to the floor.

"It's a wallet," Strailey answered in exasperation.

"It's an empty wallet," the former attorney cross examined.

"Jesus! Did you touch it?" Strailey's hand flew to his forehead pushing his cap further back.

"Officer Strailey, we are millionaires, every last one of us. We can recognize an empty wallet from a full one. Look—" He took his finger out of his mouth to reach for his own billfold, spreading the long flap to expose an impressive stack of large bills. "It's a family trademark. We always carry large amounts of cash. We can't be handing over the family profits to credit card companies. Go downstairs. Ask to see Banjo's wallet, —and Donald's. You'll see. This here is an empty wallet." He pointed to it, noticed his index finger was still glistening with saliva and instantly returned it to his teeth. "My brother-in-law was murdered," he proclaimed around his hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Tamorin. We'll be sure to get that conclusion in your statement. Now if you wouldn't mind—" he extended his arm and the egomaniacal attorney started down the stairs. Tamorin reached for the stair railing with his slobbery hand. "Don't touch that!" Strailey barked reflexively.

"Just teasing ya," Tamorin chuckled. Strailey narrowed his eyes, not amused.

His partner, Tom Zane, yelled up the stairs at them. "Mounties are here, Strailey."

"We're on our way down," Strailey answered him, reviewing his tablet for the

notes he'd use in briefing the newly arrived experts from the senior force. "Can you take Mr. Tamorin here, outside and start collecting statements. We'll be turning over the scene now." Strailey looked at his partner cross-eyed to indicate the clown he thought Tamorin to be. Zane nodded his head and intercepted Tamorin at the bottom of the stairs. As he crossed the threshold, Paul reached for the doorjamb and Strailey let out a final whoop.

"Gotcha again," Tamorin chanted, retracting the hand without making contact and returning it to his mouth. "It was murder, I say." He bumped into the RCMP detectives on the porch without excusing himself.

"Who was that?" the arriving constable asked.

"The victim's brother-in-law," Strailey said embarrassed as Zane shuffled him down the driveway. He had long been positioning himself for an RCMP interview and slip-ups like this weren't going to get him noticed among the ranks.

"Does he have anything on that murder claim of his?"

"Let me show you what we've got and you can take it from there." He led members of the homicide team inside the house and through the entry to the garage where the body still lay in plain view through the double-wide open door.

"Can we maybe get some sheets from a linen closet upstairs to curtain off this area. The man deserves some respect," Constable Chris DeBord suggested. Strailey

bounded back upstairs wishing he had thought of that first.

DeBord called after the other West Van cop, "You've got statements happening then?"

"Affirmative," Officer Zane shouted back, licking the tip of his pencil as he prepared to write out his own report while the rest of his witnesses used the dash of the Mercedes, the hood of a BMW and the roof of the patrol car as desktops to provide their personal accounts in a written format. Zane began filling in the standard police department form in triplicate:

On 05-15-91 at approximately 1935 hours, I was working a two man 2-C-02 with my partner, Officer Ron Strailey when we responded to an assault call at 1115 Marine Drive. Upon our arrival, we were met by the victim's father and brother who showed us the location of the body in the garage. It was very apparent that the victim was, in fact, deceased but I still had arriving medics check the body which was positioned on the ground between the east wall of the garage and the car parked on the east side of the two car garage. There were definite signs of trauma to the body at that time. As soon as the medics confirmed my suspicion, I had them exit the garage. I then had all witnesses present exit the victim's house and I secured the scene and gathered witness statements while waiting for RCMP Homicide back-up.

Further down the driveway, Ron Hart asked his wife Luanne how to spell the

big words as he wrote down a statement for both of them:

I am a house cleaner and house sitter for Mark Morgan. My wife Luanne and I cleaned his house yesterday between 10 o'clock and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, When we left yesterday, the house was in order and nothing was amiss. There was no hole in the stairwell wall, no blood on the carpets, no dishes were left out in the kitchen, nothing was on the dining room table, and the television set was off. We did not return to the house until tonight at about seven-thirty in the evening in response to Mr. Banjo Morgan's request. Apparently, Mark did not got to work today and the family needed to get into Mark's house. Since I have a key, I let the family members into house. The first thing I noticed was what looked like dried urine in the entryway; it wasn't there when we left yesterday. Then I noticed in the room to the left that there were pills on the floor and a glass on the floor and that the coffee tables (also the cushions) were not in order. When Donald Morgan found his brother on the floor in the garage, I had Luanne telephone 9-1-1 and I tried to comfort Banjo and Louise. Everything I saw was in complete disarray which is quite unlike Mark. There are glass table-tops throughout the house all of which we cleaned with glass cleaner yesterday so any fingerprints are from yesterday after three-thirty in the afternoon to today...

Across Marine Drive, Mark's neighbour, Drew Tatterson, read his statement

aloud to his wife to make sure he hadn't missed anything.

"I am a neighbour of Mark's and I live across the street from him. At approximately five to eight last evening, I was about to go outside for my short run when I heard a dull, loud thud, similar to that of two pieces of wood coming together, coming from the direction of Mark's house. I thought something had fallen over in Mark's house. I then looked up and I saw the third story bedroom window door open to Mark's house and I saw a man standing just inside the window looking at the street. He was a white man in his thirties. Actually, he looked older than mid-20's but no older than mid-30's. I believe he had glasses and his hair was brown to light brown. I couldn't tell his height but he had a medium build. He looked normal, well groomed like most of Mark's friends. I then came back into my house and stretched and when I went back out for my long run it was 8:07 p.m. I looked up and noticed the window still open but I did not see Mark or his guest. I did my run and returned to my house at 8:29 p.m. and the window was still open but I didn't see anyone. The next time I noticed Mark's house was roughly around midnight when I was awakened by some noise, —possibly a car door slamming. I put on my glasses and looked out my bedroom window. The door was still open on the third floor of Mark's house and I heard music and it appeared as if people were still up. I am not sure if the music was coming from Mark's house or his next door

neighbour's. I went back to bed and the next time I saw or noticed Mark's house was at 7:15 this morning. The window was still open, which I thought was somewhat unusual because he never left the window open during the summer as the breeze off the inlet can be quite cool at night, but I didn't give it much thought. Then I left for work and you guys were here when I got home."

Tatterson stood up, brushed off his running shorts and walked his statement across the street to the officer.

Officer Zane raised his voice to public address level. "Thank you for those statements people. You're free to go home now. We will call you if we need anything further and don't hesitate to call us or the RCMP if you think of anything more." Officer Zane flashed a very polished smile which had earned him the nickname *Ponch* after the 1970's American cop show *Chips*. His partner emerged from the house and joined him in the driveway. Mark's dog Dexter walked over to the officers and laid down at their feet.

"Nice pooch, eh?" Zane asked his partner who had already started jotting down the facts on his report. "Seems kind of out of it for a Boxer though," he continued. "I wonder if dogs get messed up when their owners die? —Never had pets myself. Allergies," he explained without having been asked.

Strailey looked up at his partner and smiled at Zane's perseverance, still full

throttle at the end of a long day. "Beats me. Maybe the dog was in the garage with the fumes," he suggested.

"Not according to these statements." Zane bent to rough house with the muscle bound canine but the dog wasn't very responsive. "Finished your report yet? I'm starving!"

Again, Strailey could only smile at his partner's impatience. He had to wonder at times like this if the rumours he'd heard about Zane being hooked on *Speed*, were possibly true. He finished up his report and suggested they hit *Tim Horton's* on the way back to their tiny sub-station in the basement of the municipal hall not far from there.

The scene and the neighbourhood transformed into a well-lighted, tightly organized investigation as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Homicide Unit rolled into West Vancouver to set up crime shop. Out-ranked, out-numbered and frankly out-classed, the local beat boys turned over the residence along with their paperwork and egos and got out of their way.

The RCMP was notorious for stealing thunder from the local precincts and it gave Constable Detective DeBord a reason to walk a little bit taller whenever he was called over to the north side of the Burrard Inlet. He had been born and raised around Sechelt on the Sunshine Coast just north of there and struggled most of his life for the

respect of his father, himself a retired Mountie of distinguished record. Filling those riding boots proved a daunting challenge for the younger upstart whose disappointing high school transcripts had been rejected by the Canadian Police College, not once but twice, even after he had tried to augment his grades with a few community college credits. In the end, he transferred to Simon Fraser University to acquire a criminal justice degree. Seven years ago, when the RCMP was fractured to create the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the junior DeBord washed into a recruiting flood plain of applicants and was finally selected, this time because of his scholastic achievement and not in spite of it. In fact, college had afforded him a higher entry ranking and after two years of accelerated performance at the Crime Detection Laboratories in Ottawa, he hopscotched his way back through the Provinces, including a six month appointment to Interpol and a highly visible stint on the Honour Guard during the Calgary Winter Olympics in 1988, to snatch the very next detective grade position that opened up within his home province of British Columbia. After a courageous battle with prostrate cancer, his father died within the first year his son was back. He had left specific instructions not to be buried in the traditional scarlet tunic in order to leave behind his uniform and a 1930's standard Mountie issue full length beaver lined coat to remind his son of the respect he had earned within the *Gendarmerie* and the legacy he would inherit.

Video camera rolling, Polaroid flashing, 35mm camera clicking, Chris DeBord headed up an impressive team that made it's systematic way through the house. It was no secret to anyone, including a few of the witnesses who were able to quickly deduct, that Constable DeBord wanted this case wrapped up by midnight, suspect or no suspect, motive or not. England's Prime Minister, John Major, was due at Vancouver International at dawn for the G-Seven Summit and DeBord had drawn dignitary chauffeur duty charged with picking up P.M. Mulroney at the Pan Pacific Hotel at Five-Thirty-five to retrieve Major at the airport at Six-ten. He couldn't well afford to be up all night with some fairy case stumper. In fact, he had been called to the scene out of bed. Promising his newly wed wife that he'd be home by midnight was a lot like telling her that being the wife of a Mountie was going to get easier with time. —She'd stopped believing that a few steps from the altar.

"Let's start at the beginning gentlemen, —and lady," he acknowledged Detective Maggie Shaw, who had just arrived with Sergeants Roes and Chang to assist with the investigation. "Let's review what we know so we can get this on paper and get the hell out of here. Can anyone tell me if the Medical Examiner is en route?" DeBord handed off the convenience store sub sandwich he had been chewing on, realizing it would be tough enough to squeeze into his dress scarlet uniform come morning, without adding waistline-directed junk food now. Never mind going to the

dogs, his thirties had gone to his gut and no matter how many times in a day he thought to suck it in, he caught it, more often than not, spilling over his belt. He brushed sandwich crumbs off it now, turning red in his embarrassment. A voice in the group replied that the ME was about ten minutes away and that voice happened to belong to the late arriving Detective Elias Hern, somewhat of a celebrity among the ranks.

"Detective Hern, —it's very nice of you to join us this evening," DeBord looked up from his notes and acknowledged his overdue replacement with a dash of sarcasm, followed by a handshake. Elias revealed the Yukon Territorial smile that had made him famous and desired, appearing without a shirt on the cover of this year's *Mountie Dream Calendar*, a national fundraiser for Children's Diabetes. "Don't feed me that rugged look, Hern" DeBord grimaced, that much more aware of his own physique in Hern's presence. "It may work with the ladies, —hell, it might even work with some of the victim's friends," he gestured brashly toward the covered body and garnered a few laughs, "but you're wasting it on me. Where have you been?"

"Outside in the driveway, doing my job. Say, aren't you supposed to be up at the *crack* driving Miss Daisy or something?" Again the young detective smiled, this time perceiving he may have interrupted proceedings long enough. "Okay, okay. First, I interviewed the victim's brother, Donald Morgan, who told me that our victim

was a homosexual, that he had been having an affair with a man by the name of Scott. He didn't know anything about this Scott but suggested I phone," he looked down at his notepad, "Catherine Hallock, the victim's psychiatrist, which I did," he added parenthetically with a raised glance toward his superior, "and a couple of his close friends including one possible ex-homosexual lover named *Gilles*. Morgan told me that from what he had been able to find out, the victim had dinner last night with this Scott and that he would have been the last person to see him alive. He also said that the victim had been having a problem with his relationship with Scott, that Scott was trying to end it, but that the victim was not anxious for it to end. Victim's parents are aware of Victim's homosexuality but chose to ignore it as long as he didn't flaunt it or bring it around them or the grandchildren. —Tough love," he editorialized for his listening audience. "I then placed a phone call to the answering service for the victim's psychiatrist and left a message for her to phone me on the mobile phone in the Homicide van. Next I phoned a telephone number handed to me on a slip of paper that the housekeeper had picked up off the kitchen counter."

"Jesus! Why didn't he just clean the place up while he was at it," DeBord asked hoping the local precinct cops were still lurking within earshot.

"The paper had the name *Scott Barry* written on it in pencil but I got a recording and left no message for him to return my call." Detective Hern paused,

letting DeBord think for just a moment that was all he had gathered. Then he took a quick breath and continued. I then phoned a *Gilles Eiswine*, one of the friends and possible lovers suggested by the victim's brother and he was able to confirm for me that the victim had been seeing this *Scott Barry*. He gave me directions to Barry's residence and though he didn't know the telephone number, he was able to describe Barry's apartment house. He also told me that Michelle Caetano, the victim's weight trainer at his gym might be of some assistance as she sometimes doubled as his second string therapist." Hern flipped the cover closed on his book, having once again become the darling of the moment. Nobody on the force could touch his looks, his popularity or his perfect service record having solved every homicide he had worked on since making detective grade three years ago. "Oh," he remembered. "Catherine Hallock returned my call a few minutes ago and said she had an appointment with the victim at 1700 hrs today. He missed the appointment so she got in touch with his sister-in-law, Sandee, who also had not heard from him all day. Ms. Hallock then told me she had a problem with confidentiality since she had seen Scott Barry as a client and was therefore reluctant to provide any more information. By the way, I called RCMP dispatch and had them check reverse directory for the Barry number on the kitchen counter, but it came up dry." Elias Hern tucked the notepad inside his double-breasted jacket pocket and clasped his hands behind his back as though he

were now *at ease*. Everyone who knew him and even those seeing him for the first time could tell by his mismatched 501 jeans and clearly expensive suit jackets, that this Mountie was always at ease. Nothing intimidated or ruffled him and dirt certainly never stuck to him, though his partner of two years did. Roger Uwajimaya, one of only a dozen Mounties of Asian descent in the Vancouver Detachment, was amused by his co-star and more than happy to lend him his share of the limelight. It didn't bother him in the least that over half the facts *Calendar Boy* had just rifled off to the chief, were gathered by him while Hern worked the gathering crowd like a rock star. They were respected as a team by those who noticed such things and that's all that mattered to Uwajimaya.

DeBord rubbed his eyes demonstratively. "I must be sleepier than I thought. I was almost impressed by that report, Elias. Nice job, Roger," he acknowledged the stage hand. "Well boys, —and gal. Sorry Maggie. It takes some getting use to," he offered the female detective who obviously wasn't forgiving. "Looks like we've got ourselves a suspect. Hern, you and Uwajimaya check out the Barry address. See if we can get a statement while he's still shaking." DeBord looked at his watch and glanced back toward the garage in time to spot Paul Tamorin lifting up a corner of the sheet covering the victim. "Somebody tell me that's not Tamorin." DeBord demanded an explanation with his command.

"Tamorin was the victim's brother-in-law, Chief," Roger piped up. After he left the Crown Attorney's Office last year, he joined the family toy company as independent council where the deceased also worked, sir."

"Tamorin!" DeBord barked. "You're way off limits," he strode toward him, his entourage of detectives filling in the wake behind him.

"Well if it isn't Detective DeBorg," Tamorin smiled, reaching out his hand to shake with him.

"That's DeBord, —with a *D*. And this is scene, with a crime, which means you're off limits. Step behind the yellow tape, Paul."

Tamorin raised his hands to indicate he was backing away. "Old habits, Chris. What can I say?"

"Anything you have to say we'll be happy to get into a statement. Now, please let us do our work." DeBord turned to walk away.

"Let's hope you do your work right too. This time it's family, DeBorg. I won't be quite so understanding if you boys botch this case. I want to know who killed my brother and if you don't find that out, you can be damn sure that I will." Tamorin walked backward in the direction of his BMW, not breaking eye contact with his longtime adversary. DeBord scowled back at him, reducing their pettiness to beneath playground antics but then they never had played above board in the half a

decade they'd opposed each other. Tamorin had never been a good attorney, more of a spur beneath DeBord's saddle, and while this had been a professional difference of opinion and nothing personal between them, Tamorin had caused a number of solid convictions to be lost in the courtroom under technicalities having to do with investigative procedure or tampered evidence. DeBord only had to be reminded of the suspects that got away to make sure his resentment for Tamorin never did.

Each floor of the house, including the garage was processed for evidence, photographed, sketched and videotaped. Possible footprint evidence was preserved in the main entry and twelve items of evidence were seized from the residence. It was noted that the keys to both vehicles were in the ignition and in the *on* position. The batteries to both cars were drained and there was no key to the house on either of these key rings.

Finally, at 2:40 in the morning, after the body had been removed by the Medical Examiner and half the detectives had gone home to bed or back to the office to file their reports, Officer Norfleet from the Patrol Alarm Unit arrived to install a VARDA alarm on the premises with four activators. The crime scene secured, Chief Detective DeBord, went home to get ready for work.



Thursday, May 16, 1991, 12:05 a.m.

Incident #91-207871, Cont. 05-16-91 0005hrs: Detective Uwajimaya and I followed the instructions I had received earlier from Constable Detective DeBord and found Scott Barry at 1149 Lynn Valley Road in North Vancouver. We woke him to get him to answer the door. I told him Mark was dead. He did express some emotion and immediately stated "He can't be dead!" I let him know that we were aware of his relationship with the Victim. I even asked him if they had sex after dinner. He said they did not. Rather than interview him at home, I asked if he would mind coming to the Homicide Office at 6635 Deer Lake Avenue to talk to us. He readily agreed. I explained to him that he was not under arrest, and not suspected of a crime, but that we believed that he was the last person to see the Victim alive, and we needed to talk about that. I gave him the option of driving his own vehicle

downtown. He did so, and followed us into the Justice Building parking garage. After arriving at the Homicide Office, Mr. Barry went immediately into the washroom where he became ill and threw up. He was on the verge of becoming emotional once or twice during the interview, but never did break down or cry. Regarding the events of the evening before, he says he arrived at the Victim's house around 8:00 p.m. as pre-arranged. He drove there in the Victim's Jeep which he had used that day. He was returning it and parked it in the Victim's garage. He later drove home in his own car, a Mazda RX7. He said that they (he and the Victim) cooked the meal together. They fixed fettuccine, baked potatoes and salad. Dinner took quite awhile, probably 2 - 2½ hours to prepare and eat. They sampled food while preparing dinner as well as drinking. They drank a lot of wine, one bottle with dinner, and mixed drinks. The mixed drinks consisted of rum and cokes, Smith & Currans, and plain Bailey's. I asked him if he went into the Victim's bedroom that night. He replied that he did, but only to get the "bong" pipe and some medication for the Victim. He says he got 3 tablets for him out of the bathroom from a Tylenol-type bottle. He brought those to him in the kitchen. He did not see him take them but assumed that he did since he asked for them. He described the medication as something that Mark's father brought him from out of the country. (This may explain the three 222 tablets on the floor in the living room). He said the tablets

were sort of aspirin type, only larger. He says he did have a key to the Victim's house, but that it was an old key and that the Victim had the locks changed 3 weeks to a month ago and had not given him a new key yet. There was a problem between them. Mark wanted his full attention but Scott insisted on going out with girls. Scott was seeing one girl in particular, —Jenny. There was an incident about a month ago when Mark came over and caught Scott in bed with Jenny at Scott's house. This did cause a rift between them. Scott says he has been going through the process of divorce with his wife for about two years. Her name is Tamarie Lynn Barry. He says that he was going through some emotional and financial problems which Mark was helping him with. His car was about to be repossessed and his wages attached. Mark bought a BMW in his own name and Scott says he was making payments to Mark with the agreement that it would be Scott's and in his name when the bankruptcy thing was over. The car is described as a white BMW hard top 318IS. He says that the car is now being stored at "Gilles Somebody's" house. He also says that the car became a "bargaining tool." That Mark used it, or the promise of Scott's ownership of the car to control him or keep ties with him. Mark had tried many times to get Scott to move in with him, but Scott refused. Scott said that Mark had a private investigator follow him and at one time, Mark even showed him a report in which Mark pointed out to Scott where he had lied to him about making

contacts with women. He also said that Mark had a police friend who would check by his house and run license numbers for Mark. He did not know the officer's name. He said that Mark tried to keep him from having a relationship with anyone else, and when Mark caught him in bed with Jenny, he took the BMW away. He said that during the dinner or after, they discussed the car, and they agreed that Mark would give Scott the car back the following day. The arrangement was for him to call early in the morning, then they would take an early lunch and he could pick up the car. Scott says that they got "really messed up" meaning greatly affected by the drugs and alcohol that they ingested. He said that they both passed out on the "L" shaped couch in the living room, and that he woke up with the TV on (which it was when West Van PD arrived) and the digital clock read 2:15. This would be 0215 hrs of Wednesday morning, the 15th. He said today at about 6:00 he was having dinner with a girlfriend, and was having fainting spells which resulted in his going to Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver to the emergency room for treatment. He says the doctor examined him and told him to get lots of sleep and that he would be OK when the effects of the drugs and alcohol were out of his system. He did say that there was no altercation between them. They were on good terms, no punches thrown, not even a shoving match. We prepared to take a taped statement from him.

"Have a seat, Scott. Can I get you some coffee? I won't promise it's any

good." Hern smiled, trying to bring a deceptive degree of hospitality into the windowless, colourless, interrogation room. In truth, he wanted the room, hell, the whole RCMP establishment to reign intimidation down upon the resolve of this confused little homo. That's why he had moved the questioning venue to headquarters, away from Barry's comfort zone, in the first place. He anticipated a full-blown, tear-filled confession before they left the room. Hern hadn't actually seen the victim's body but had discussed the particulars with the Medical Examiner by phone on their way to Barry's residence. Someone had beaten the shit out of Mark Morgan. It was Hern's job to prove that that someone was Scott Barry. He had cleaned up his share of domestic altercations in the gay-saturated West End, so much so that he had his theory about homosexuals and their relationships. He reasoned that with so much time spent emulating what they didn't have and couldn't get legally, there was bound to be friction when they discovered, sometimes on a daily basis, that square pegs wouldn't fit into round holes no matter how much they shoved. When the shoving turned to pushing and the pushing turned to violence, it was simply a matter of coaxing them back to their sensitive female sides and peace was restored or justice was served. Unfortunately, his success with this sector, like his success with women, had little to do with his understanding of their personal dilemmas, and everything to do with his charm and desirability. There was something about that

face and that body and his image that exuded masculinity like honey from a beehive and gays and women couldn't help but entertain any number of sticky fantasies.

Barry declined his offer of coffee which might indicate that he was going to be a tougher egg to crack than Hern had anticipated or maybe he was too young to even drink the stuff. He was only twenty-five after all, going through a divorce and supposedly still screwing around with women. His female side was likely buried under heaps of macho pretense and Hern braced himself for a long first round. Detective Uwajimaya poured coffee for the adults and joined them at the interrogation table.

"Now, Scott, we just want to have a conversation with you. I am going to ask you questions and I want you to give me all the information you can think of that you believe might be pertinent in helping us determine the circumstances that resulted in the death of Mark Morgan. Do you understand and do you have any questions?"

Scott nodded his head. "No questions," he said.

"Okay then," Hern positioned the microphone equidistant between them and pushed the record and play buttons. "We'll get started." He cleared his throat and mimicking him, perhaps already idolizing him, Barry cleared his throat in turn.

HERN: Today's date is May 16, 1991. The time is 0140 hours. This is regarding West Vancouver Police case number 91-207871. This is an interview between RCMP Detective Hern, RCMP Detective Uwajimaya and Mr. Scott Barry. Scott, do you understand that we're

tape recording our conversation?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: And do I have your permission?

BARRY: Yes you do.

HERN: Do you understand that you're not under arrest?

BARRY: Yeah

HERN: And you're here of your own free will, in fact you drove your own car down at our request is that true?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: You're not a suspect, do you understand that?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: Okay. And I informed you tonight of your friend's death?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: Before we told you that your friend was deceased, did you know about it?

BARRY: No.

HERN: Okay, you're going to have to speak up just a little bit okay?

BARRY: No, no.

HERN: You told me earlier that you've known Mark for a couple years, that you guys became friends.

BARRY: Uh-huh.

HERN: There was a, —Mark made some advances toward you, in fact he would like to have had you move into his house with him is that true?

BARRY: Correct, yeah.

HERN: And he tried to get you to do so. He found out that you were having a relationship with Jenny right?

BARRY: Right, right.

HERN: And did he get mad?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: And when you were going through the divorce with your wife and your bankruptcy and what not, Mark bought you a car is that true?

BARRY: In other words, yeah. I was paying for the car but it was in his name.

HERN: Okay. And the reason he did that was because—?

BARRY: So that I didn't lose my car in the bankruptcy.

HERN: Okay. And eventually you were to have the car in your name?

BARRY: Yeah. When my bankruptcy was done then the title would transfer back to my name.

HERN: Okay. And you told me earlier that, I'm sorry, told us earlier that he kind of used the car as a bargaining tool, kind of to maintain some control over you?

BARRY: Yeah, he attempted to. It didn't make much difference because at the time I didn't have much money into it and I didn't care.

HERN: And...

BARRY: But yeah, he did try.

HERN: Had he been trying for some time to get you to move in with him?

BARRY: Oh yeah, he's been trying for about five months.

HERN: And you had, you had dinner with him last night?

BARRY: Yes I did.

HERN: At his home?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: And the two of you cooked dinner.

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: You said you had fettuccine and a salad and baked potato and some wine?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: Did you drink very much, you and he both?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: Did you smoke marijuana?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: Did you and he use any other drugs?

BARRY: No.

HERN: You said earlier that you went up to the upstairs bedroom to retrieve the bong, actually the bathroom upstairs to retrieve the bong?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: And to get him some medication?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: What kind of medication was that?

BARRY: I think it was like aspirin. It was out of a Tylenol bottle type, looked like Tylenol. It was just three tablets.

HERN: And did he take that medication?

BARRY: I didn't see him take it. I just handed it to him and went back to what I was cooking.

HERN: And where did you hand that to him?

BARRY: In the kitchen.

HERN: Were you drinking anything or either of you drinking anything other than wine?

BARRY: Oh yeah. We drank all kinds of stuff.

HERN: Like what?

BARRY: Mark said we had reason to celebrate. We had rum, we had coke, milk, Bailey's, Tangerai. We had all kinds of stuff.

HERN: What was the cause for celebration?

BARRY: Oh, that turned out to be another of Mark's manipulation tricks. Later at dinner he told me this story about a rich lesbian aunt who supposedly just kicked off leaving him two million dollars. I guess he thought the money would bring me back or something.

HERN: And this story about the aunt, you have reason t believe Mark made that up?

BARRY: After awhile, you had to take everything he said with a grain of salt. I didn't believe anything he told me in the end.

HERN: In the end?

BARRY: At the end of our relationship.

HERN: Okay. How long did dinner last?

BARRY: It seemed like four hours cause we were so out of it. I'd say two, two hours. Well, we started cooking like 8:00 so we didn't eat until 10:00. So yeah, probably two hours.

HERN: While you were having dinner did, was there any disagreement between you?

BARRY: Uh-uh.

HERN: That's no?

BARRY: No.

HERN: Okay. What time did you leave the house?

BARRY: I left the house at approximately 2:00 or 2:30. Right around that and I'm not positive.

HERN: I'm sorry?

BARRY: At 2:00 or 2:30. I'm pretty sure that's about the time I left.

HERN: When you left the house where did you go?

BARRY: I went home.

HERN: You went straight home?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: Were you driving?

BARRY: Yes I was driving.

HERN: Were you affected by your alcohol intake or marijuana or anything like that?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: Do you think you were affected. Do you think he was affected also?

BARRY: Well I, I woke up on the couch and I don't even remember what time. The TV was on. I woke up. Mark was on the couch and I said I'm leaving. It was, I think it was like 2:15 on the clock there and I knew I was an absolute mess at the time.

HERN: Now you said the couch. Is that the couch in the...

BARRY: In the living room.

HERN: Okay. And you said Mark woke up or you woke up?

BARRY: I woke up.

HERN: What was Mark doing?

BARRY: Mark was passed out.

HERN: Where at?

BARRY: Right there on the couch. It's the big sectional couch.

HERN: Okay. Was the TV on?

BARRY: Yeah. TV was on.

HERN: Did you guys watch a movie or were you watching anything in particular?

BARRY: No, I don't even remember what the TV was doing on. We were both passed out at that time.

HERN: So dinner had been a long time before that?

BARRY: Yeah, yeah.

HERN: Now you said before there were times when Mark tried to get you to, get you screwed up so that, what, so he could take advantage of you?

BARRY: Yeah, yeah.

HERN: Things like that?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: At any time last night did you two have any disagreements?

BARRY: No, we only had a discussion about the Jenny issue for about three seconds and that was, it was one sentence. Deal, and that was it.

HERN: And what was the sentence or the deal?

BARRY: It was, he asked me if I'm still going to be seeing her and my response to him was Yes, I'm still going to see her and I'm still going to see all the other women that I see.

HERN: Did that upset him?

BARRY: Not really, no, he didn't seem to even, just kind of, not much of a response.

HERN: At the time while you were over there did you see Mark have any kind of bruises on him? Or marks?

BARRY: Bruises and marks?

HERN: Yeah, like he'd been punched or fallen or anything like that?

BARRY: No, he'd just gotten back from working out. He looked fine.

HERN: When you left the house, did he have any marks on him?

BARRY: No, he was just laying there on the couch.

HERN: Okay. What was he wearing?

BARRY: He had blue Levi's on and I think it's a shirt almost like yours, a white button down type.

HERN: Striped shirt?

BARRY: I think so, yeah.

HERN: How about shoes?

BARRY: He had his white tennis shoes on.

HERN: When you left?

BARRY: When I left, yeah.

HERN: Did he see you to the door when you left?

BARRY: No.

HERN: You let yourself out?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: Okay, last night were you in the garage at all?

BARRY: Yeah, I put the Jeep in and stuff.

HERN: Okay. You drove the Jeep there. What did you drive home?

BARRY: My Mazda. I had picked up the Jeep earlier in the day. I needed to

use if for some work stuff. When I came over that night I just drove the Jeep in and my Mazda was there so...

HERN: Earlier you mentioned something about Mark having threatened suicide in the past. Tell me about that.

BARRY: From the time I've met him actually, he'd always been very depressed about his family situation, his relationship situation, and just completely unhappy with himself. And has always talked about killing himself for one reason or another. Frequently talked about how he'd like to do it.

HERN: Did he discuss how he would do it?

BARRY: Yeah, he had a couple different ways he would like...one was to sit in his car which he did that in November when I took him out of his car and he's like in the last four months he talked about doing it with his sleeping pills. He was getting some kind of great sleeping pills from his dad from out of the country, something like that.

HERN: You mentioned an incident in November whenever...

BARRY: I came over to his house and he was in, —I came into the house, went into the garage, his car was running and we was asleep in his car.

HERN: With the garage door locked or shut or open or?

BARRY: No, the garage door was closed up.

HERN: Which car was it?

BARRY: It was in the Saab.

HERN: Was there...

BARRY: And Dexter was in the car with him.

HERN: Dexter's the dog?

BARRY: Dexter was the dog.

HERN: Were the windows open or closed?

BARRY: They were closed.

HERN: Then what?

BARRY: I pulled him out, I woke him up and pulled him out and he started coughing all that and I kind of freaked cause I thought he was trying to kill himself and he said he just fell asleep and he was going somewhere. So, I mean...but then as I got to know more, I found it really hard to believe. I would say at least 20 occasions he told me that he won't be here tomorrow morning or told other people.

HERN: Did he tell you that last night before you left?

BARRY: No.

HERN: You mentioned earlier that he had mood swings.

BARRY: Huge mood swings.

HERN: From real high to real low?

BARRY: Yeah.

HERN: Did it depend on the amount of drugs he took or?

BARRY: I don't...He hid a lot of his drugs, his other drugs from me other than the marijuana and alcohol. But I knew that they were present all the time.

HERN: What other kinds of drugs do you know that he's used?

BARRY: I know that he uses cocaine. I know that he uses some kind of...I don't even know the drug, LSD or something. I don't know. Something that makes him freak out for two days at a time. I'm not

even sure.

HERN: And had you seen him under the effects of these drugs at other times?

BARRY: Well I'm sure I have but haven't recognized it. I mean I have a hard time telling when someone's touched a drink. But even if you just, if you know him and just looked at him, you know he's using, you can just tell it. His eyes are dark and...

HERN: Did he talk about suicide last night at all?

BARRY: No.

HERN: And when you left he seemed okay?"

BARRY: He didn't talk about it last night. He was such a mess last night he didn't talk about hardly anything.

HERN: What was the gist of the conversation that you did have?

BARRY: We talked at dinner about how good the dinner was cause it took us so long to make it and that we were full before we even got to the table. How baked we were getting. By the end of dinner not much of anything was said. In fact the first thing he did after dinner was get up and walk over to the kitchen and stick his head in the fern and he just stayed there for like five minutes with his head in the fern.

HERN: Kind of like he's transfixed or?

BARRY: Yeah. And then after that we just kind of bummed around the house here to there. Let's watch, watch a movie, let's watch, you know, TV or whatever else. I mean, honestly, I can't even remember a time in my life when I was so messed up and I don't know why. Today, I couldn't even...today, I got up went to work, came home and went back to bed. Tonight I went out to dinner and I had to go to the hospital right afterward.

HERN: Tell me about that.

BARRY: At dinner I was leaning across the table and a gal that's with us, I saw two of her and I couldn't even walk out of the restaurant. It was like I was completely hallucinating,

HERN: Where did you go to the hospital?

BARRY: I went to Lion's Gate.

HERN: Were you treated in the emergency room?

BARRY: Yes.

HERN: What were you treated for?

BARRY: Well, they'd asked me if I had taken drugs and what not and I said I hadn't drinken anything today. I said, I had a lot to drink last night and marijuana so. And they said it was just a fainting spell or something, that's why I got it.

UWAJIMAYA: Did he give you any medication or just release you from emergency?

BARRY: Just told me to get lots of sleep.

UWAJIMAYA: What time was that?

BARRY: See still right now I drank way too much. I think it was 6:30 or 7:00.

UWAJIMAYA: You said earlier that Mark kept a pretty immaculate house, pretty clean house.

BARRY: Yes. Yes.

UWAJIMAYA: And that you had gone upstairs, up and down the stairs to his bedroom?

BARRY: Yes.

UWAJIMAYA: And that you hadn't seen any damage in the house?

BARRY: No, there was nothing different than what is always there.

UWAJIMAYA: In fact you inferred that if there was something wrong with the house prior to your coming there he probably would have pointed it out or...

BARRY: Yeah. Was something broken in the house?

UWAJIMAYA: Well, there was a little bit of signs of you know, something could have fallen down or something like that.

BARRY: Like a hand railing broke or something?

UWAJIMAYA: Just some damage on the stairwell.

BARRY: I didn't, no there was, it was fine when I was there.

UWAJIMAYA: When he would get mad and have fits of anger, would he ever hit the walls or anything like that? Have you ever seen any kind of emotional outburst like that?

BARRY: No.

UWAJIMAYA: Kick the walls, hit the wall?

BARRY: No.

UWAJIMAYA: Was he pretty proud of his house?

BARRY: Yeah, it was his royal fantasy that he always wanted, yeah.

UWAJIMAYA: Did he have any problems financially? Would you know of?

BARRY: Mark Morgan? Not that I know of. I think he was pretty much taken care of by the family. I mean that's the impression he gave me.

HERN: Did you ever borrow money from him?

BARRY: Yeah, he's helped me out a couple times with a few things. But I mean I've always, he's always had his money back. I was paying him for my car. He helped me out though during my supposed divorce which is now all messed up.

HERN: Is there anything else that you think we aught to know about?

BARRY: I don't. I'd talk to Gilles and maybe Sam. Those are his best two buddies. I don't know what else, I guess I was the last person to see him. I don't, I don't know what to say.

HERN: Was there any company or phone calls that occurred while you were over there?

BARRY: Somebody called, I don't know who. I have no idea who.

HERN: Did he spend a long time on the phone or...

BARRY: Well, he spent a fare amount. He said, yeah, he spent a fare amount, you know, like ten minutes on the phone.

HERN: Was he upset at all after his phone conversation?

BARRY: No, no. He's always in this, I mean he's always in the state of mind of he's always in a depressed state of mind.

HERN: From what we've told you and what you know of him, what do you think happened?

BARRY: Well I don't know. You said he was beat up so I don't, I have no idea. Him being with the car doesn't surprise me if he was trying to kill himself. But he wouldn't beat himself up. I don't think he could have. He wasn't in the shape to do that. I mean, I couldn't beat myself, I mean...

HERN: Really messed up?

BARRY: We were a mess, yeah. So, I mean, if he had a visitor or, I don't, you know, it's pretty late in the night.

HERN: You don't think anybody else came over after you left?

BARRY: I don't think so.

HERN: He didn't mention anybody else coming over?

BARRY: No, cause he thought I was staying the night. So he didn't. I don't know what else to say.

HERN: Is Jenny aware of your relationship with Mark?

BARRY: No. Of course not. I mean she knows a little bit. But...

HERN: Okay, I'm going to turn off the tape. It's 0200 hours.

"All right, Mr. Barry. That's all we're going to need for this evening. We have to apologize for keeping you up so late. I know you weren't feeling particularly well." Detective Uwajimaya closed his notebook and stood to walk him to the door.

"That's okay. I don't imagine I was any help. I'm still real out of it." Scott Barry pulled his hair back until it was off his forehead. "Anything else then?" He made deliberate eye contact with Detective Hern who had given the impression that he was running things.

"Just that should anything come to you once you're feeling better, please give us a call right away. Here's my card with a pager number where you can reach me anytime day or night." Hern forced a smile which gave away more courtesy than he

might have intended. He was very disappointed that he hadn't gotten Barry to crack. His experience was it became progressively harder to get them to crumble the more time they'd been allowed to think about the circumstances. Scott Barry must have been more on the heterosexual side of the fence than he had anticipated. There would be other chances with this one. Gut feelings bases on many years of investigative service could be uncannily accurate. He'd take another swing at the piñata tomorrow. For now, there was still more paperwork. He sipped some cold coffee, made an unpleasant face, rewound the cassette tape and began the Suspect Information Report. He'd have Jerrie transcribe the interrogation first thing in the morning and then review what he missed so he could bring Barry in again. Tricky thing, this questioning business. Hern knew he needed to hold back as much information about the scene as he could hoping that he could lure Barry into describing something only the murderer could have known, but Barry was good or maybe he really was out of it like he claimed. But save the vomit number in the bathroom and at the restaurant earlier for someone whose buying the dramatics. Anxiety attacks—that's what these were. He'd stake his badge on it! He made a note to get a release for the emergency room records at Lions Gate. His little fairy had a nervous stomach and he'd wring it out with his bare hands if he had to, to get to the truth.

He ejected the cassette tape, labeled it and made for the light switch to the

interrogation room when Detective Uwajimaya suddenly surprised him in the doorway.

"I waited in the garage just out of sight and watched Barry. It was nearly ten minutes before he started his car and left. The kid's sure thinking about something, that's for sure." His eyes disappeared in a smile.

"We should have been able to nail him tonight. I'm surprised he didn't trip up," Hern admitted. "I intentionally asked a couple of questions several times to see if I could get him flustered, but he stuck to his story. Let's see if he can remember it later on today when we call him back in for Round Two." Hern threw his arm over Uwajimaya's shoulder and the two of them walked down the shiny tiled hallway toward the elevators. "We had better catch some sleep. We're first up in the morning which is only..." he looked at his high tech gadget watch, "shit! ...only a couple hours from now."

"That's right," Uwajimaya recalled. "DeBord's got celebrity detail. I woulda kind of liked to have landed that assignment. Mulroney and Major in the back seat yakking away at each other."

"I don't know. Sounds like a yawn-fest to me."

"I seem to remember you voting and politicking for Mulroney in '84, Elias."

"It was either Mulroney or that bleeding Liberal John Turner and I'd be

damned if he saw another term." The two exchanged radio batteries at the communication centre just short of the elevator. "Nah, ever since that Meech Lake thing, it became pretty clear to me that ol' Brian would spend the rest of his political days bowing to special interests, —his! Look at him nuzzling up to Bush's free trade agreement now. Two peas in a rotten pod and Major just makes it a threesome." Hern punched Uwajimaya in the arm, singing "*Goodnight Sweetheart, well it's time to go. I really hate to leave ya but I really must say...*"

"Yeah, yeah. Good night to you too already."

"*Good night...*" Hern ducked into the stairwell continuing to hum for a flight or two of stairs before emerging into the officer's parking level of the garage. Something about Barry's statement wasn't sitting quite right and aside from the obvious fact the kid had to be lying through his teeth when he said Morgan was fine when he left him, Hern couldn't yet pinpoint a single conclusive nail the prosecution could use to put him away for Murder One. He heard Uwajimaya's vintage Indian Motorcycle rev on the other side of the structure and he got that feeling that he wouldn't be able to sleep if he tried, and especially if he tried. He looked at his watch again. It was already 2:30 in the morning and he knew that Detective DeBord wouldn't be up and stirring for another hour if he'd managed to fall back asleep when he got home. Hern needed to process through the information he had gathered but

more immediately, he knew he needed more of it. Sometimes it helped his restlessness to eat and this time of night there was only one place he could think of with decent food. Every cop in Vancouver knew the best hot and sour soup in all of Canada could be found 24 hours a day at *The Green Door*. There was no address to pass between friends, no sign to look for, in fact Elias Hern didn't remember ever seeing a menu, —just a single green painted door beyond two dumpsters on the right had side, tucked in a back alley off Carrall Street in the heart of Chinatown. Once you found that green door and opened it, for it was always closed, —*whoosh*, you were enveloped by an invisible humid blanket of classic Cantonese aromas: Pineapple Chicken Balls, Garlic Spare Ribs and the finest chop suey in all of North America. But nothing compared to *The Green Door's* hot and sour soup prepared daily with loads of ginseng and tender bamboo shoots, —a magical broth that packed more kick that a pot of java or a fistful of speed. It was on his way to the Lions Gate Bridge anyway. He had made a tradition of returning to the scene of the homicides he investigated shortly after everyone packed up and went home to see if he could catch any ghosts lurking around the place. After that he might even head to the gym before meeting Uwajimaya back at the station by Eight. Such were the medicinal, metabolism altering powers of *The Green Door's* hot and sour soup. Such was the obsessive, home-avoiding mind of Detective Elias Hern.

There was a stubborn fog seemingly content to waste half the morning at the southern edge of English Bay if the sun would only allow it to get away with that. Louise Morgan stared deep into the obscurity of it from an expansive bay window in their million dollar living room along Point Grey road in Kitsilano, wringing her hands and wondering if someone out there might be able to explain to her why her youngest son was dead. A mother doesn't sleep when her child dies, —at least that had been Louise Morgan's limited experience gained in the past twelve hours, and while she was emotionally exhausted, she knew she couldn't sleep now, no matter how badly her body wanted to give up.

She didn't care how it happened, unlike the rest of her family who had spent much of the night and had already reassembled at the first light of that foggy day to work the pieces of the puzzle. —She only needed to understand *why*. "Why?" she asked again as Banjo squeezed the muscles on the back of her neck. Unable to answer or console her, he returned to the formal dining room to join the discussion he had only momentarily abandoned.

The phone had been ringing almost continuously for the past hour as the family members took turns answering the extension in the dining room and passing it around the table to conduct toy business on the fringe of the family crisis. It really

was no different than any other day at *Banjo Toys International*, just a change in office scenery and one less player at the table.

"If it comes back a suicide, we can surely kiss the life insurance policy away," Paul, the brother-in-law on probationary ground, still not having been totally accepted into the Morgan dynasty, spoke his puny mind."

"Well, it's not going to be suicide, is it? Not with all those cuts and bruises. Somebody killed my brother!" Erin shouted at her lame husband, sending Louise into the next round of quiet, shoulder shaking sobs. "Somebody killed him," she repeated in a softer, more convincing tone.

"Well how much insurance did we have on him anyway?" Banjo was back in the debate, especially if there were money to be made from the debacle.

"Dad, how could you—?" Eliza reprimanded him, even though she waited to hear somebody's take on the question that entertained them all.

Don slowly rocked forward in his chair, looking around the table. "Same as my policy," he confirmed. "Two and a half mil when it's all totaled up. Two and a half," he repeated greedily, pondering the affect that would have to the bottom line of the profit and loss statement, temporarily disregarding what the family's personal loss statement amounted to this morning.

"What about a will?" Eliza's husband and executive wannabe queried, having

just passed the Canadian Bar Exam with a specialized focus in family estate planning.

"There is a will," Sandee announced while her president husband, -the deceased's own brother, looked on in amazement. "I can tell you that. There is a will. I helped him with it myself last year. Finding it may be tricky, but it exists. Aside from the structure imposed by *BTI* to protect the corporation, Mark's million, and he was entitled to one," she added the caveat with an all purpose glare around the table to every member of the ruling family who had maintained some stake in keeping Mark outside of it, "—is to be divided into quarters. There are very specific legal instructions regarding the administration of this money," she assured the vulture family she had married into, just in case certain eyes around the table thought they might have detected a meaty bone on the desert floor.

"So that makes a million-five back to the family trust, then?" Paul clarified with a huff, looking a bit flush as though a cool million had just been extracted from his own veins.

"Less Revenue Canada's fair share," Eliza reminded them with a scowl. Sandee rose from the table in growing disgust and managed to escape Donald's arm that tried to snag her. She needed some air and thought to ask Louise if she cared to accompany her for a short walk. The two selected jackets at the closet and left the house through the waterside glass doors. There were no words as they negotiated the

stepping stones along the path and then the stairs down to the water's edge. Somewhere, across the soupy way, past the tip of Stanley Park, none of which she could see in this fog, her youngest son's house perched empty but for a faint tinge of exhaust probably still wafting around the garage where they's found her boy's body. She shook her head frantically trying to rattle the image from her skull but it was there, his curled up body in undershorts and a sock, more helpless than she'd ever seen him, more helpless than she'd ever felt herself, until now. She had raised all four of her children right here in Kits between Vanier Park and Jericho Beach. It had been an ideal place to raise children, with domestic staff to take care of the seven bedroom house so she could spend time with her kids while she carted them off to every private school in the city. Mark hadn't wanted anything as a child, always quiet, always content, —always surrounded by his sisters now that she thought about it for the very first time. Donald had been an athlete ever since diapers and coached his son's little league team to this day, but Mark had been different, so fragilely different. He had never been unhappy that she could recall but now she wondered if maybe English Bay wasn't the only thing lost in the fog bank that surely claimed half of the lower mainland today. "I don't think I was a bad mother," she blurted out. "I'm sorry," she followed, touching Sandee's hand lightly before withdrawing into her deep jacket pockets. "I'm thinking out loud, trying to understand." The words choked her up

and a hand wrestled free of the pocket to cover her mouth with a used tissue.

"I know, Mom. I know," her daughter-in-law nearly whispered back to her. "This doesn't have to make sense to us today. We'll let the police do their work and come up with the answers our hearts are struggling for." Sandee put an arm around the matriarch's quaking shoulders and for a moment they paused on the trail. Donald's wife had a precarious vantage as Mark's closest friend and a long list of answers she would have liked to feed the grieving woman and her unaccepting, unloving husband, but she held back. It didn't much matter what the RCMP dug up in that garage. Mark was capable of suicide, he was a disciple of revenge and despite what Louise wanted to conjure up in her shameless head, he was very, very unhappy. She would have loved to have spent the day beating herself up over it too, but she accepted she was powerless to stop him and found it rather fitting that the city was fogged in today, —God, finally humiliated to show His face after what He had allowed. She almost smiled. Banjo and Louise would suffer today for turning their backs on their son, not because he was gone, but for what they had denied him while he was still here. *We don't grieve for the dead,* she thought to herself. *We grieve for ourselves,* and who more deserving. Sandee's back was aching today, a symptom of her lousy blood disorder, and while the rest of the family haggled inside over Mark's final will and testament, she truly wondered who would get his drugs, that is if he'd

left any behind. He had always been there for her, usually with a Percocet in one hand and a Darvon in the other. But he had been there. This time she did smile, the fog masking her pain too. The family may be scrambling for its sanity on the floor of that garage, but Mark was finally released from the angst and suffering this life had crammed into thirty-five years. For Mark, there was never a dull moment unless the drugs he took made it that way, —never dull, she reflected, until now that is, for the rest of them left behind. She would miss him most. The family would argue over money and they'd exhaust themselves placing blame but nobody could dispute that she meant more to Mark than any of them. Regardless of anything else that was taken away from her, that was her's to keep. She squeezed Louise's hand and they kept walking.

Elias Hern looked up from the fourth page of the second section of *The Vancouver Sun*. "Well, that isn't too terribly scathing." He spoke out loud in a crowded break room. "I wonder if the family's money had anything to do with Morgan's homosexuality not making the story." Nobody, as a rule, listened to Hern's break room rambling as he had a tendency to say things that mattered to no one else. Today was no different and he returned to his fourth cup of Starbucks. Detective Uwajimaya sauntered through the door in full animation.

"Three and a half hours of sleep and fresh as a daisy!" he exclaimed with his arms spread wide.

"Yeah, Daisy was a cow, too," someone shouted back to elevate the level of wit to a new morning high.

Roger walked to his partner and began reading the newspaper over his shoulder. He spotted the Morgan article and leaned hard onto Hern's back to get closer and even more irritating. This closeness prompted the observation that his partner hadn't shaved which indicated to the man who probably knew him best, that he hadn't made it home since they last saw each other. "You didn't go home, did you? You stayed up all night again just to prove that you are still as young as you were in college. Am I right?"

Hern nodded his head and suddenly dropped his shoulder to throw his partner off balance. Instead, Roger recovered, snatched the section of newspaper from under his nose and the fresh muffin on its way to Hern's mouth. "White flour oatmeal, —my favorite. Yum!" Roger taunted him.

"Hey, *Waj*—you didn't happen to catch an odometer reading on Barry's car last night in the garage did you?"

"Yeah and I happened to notice his mother's maiden name too," Uwajimaya answered sarcastically, speaking around at least half a muffin he had just stuffed in his

mouth. "Plus, I learned where his sister's birthmark is."

"What did the car say?" Hern asked, hearing only what he needed to hear. The officers in the break room paused only long enough to allow the brunt of Uwajimaya's joke to dawn on Detective Hern. "Well?" he asked again, looking up from the remnants of his newspaper just as the men realized they could no longer contain their amusement. Debris of chewed muffin along with their raucous laughter, flew about the cramped room.

Uwajimaya held an expressionless stare for ten seconds before reaching into his shirt pocket for a notebook. "When we got to the garage, I walked him to his car, faked interest in his RX-7 and asked if I could take a peak inside. The odometer read 28,487. I assume it's already turned over once being that it's an '84. His mother's maiden name was O'Reily and his sister's birthmark..." he paused to let the anticipation build, "...is classified information."

Hern did some quick math in the margin of his paper. "Then our nervous little friend didn't go straight home after he left here last night."

The duo had earned their skeptics and one spoke out. "Come on, you two. Who's to say he didn't get lost on his way home. Some folks never make it across the big water you know, —live their whole lives on the side they were born."

"Not likely. I clocked it myself using Trans-Canada 1 from the station across

the Second Narrows Bridge to the Mountain Highway and then a straight shot to Lynn Valley Road. —7.74 kilometres. The exact same route by which he followed us down here." Hern looked up from his figures. "I checked his odometer a couple hours ago and the boy went 30 miles out of his way at 2:00 in the morning. That's pretty lost."

"Besides," Uwajimaya chimed in, "his meal ticket worked in Burnaby two kilometres from here. He knew his way across the water all right. Ventured to this side plenty. I imagine it was the lure of cash and prizes that got him over the water in the first place."

"And his greed kept him coming back too, but we're going to hold his head under until his lungs give out and he sings. Come on *Waj.* We have a fairy to de-wing." Hern rose from the table and his partner followed him out of the room. "Grab the keys to that new Mustang if they're in." Hern hollered after Roger who was already headed for the transportation desk. At his desk, he grabbed his sunglasses and checked a few addresses in a telephone directory before wandering back down the hall to catch up to his partner. He popped his head inside administration to say good-morning to Jerrie.

"Hey Sugar!"

"Hi, Honey," she answered him back dryly as though she were hung over.

"Why the long face? I'm the one who didn't get any sleep last night," the perpetual martyr spoke.

"Then we can start a support group. I haven't slept either," she admitted as though her face hadn't already given that much away. My bitch, Syrus, cranked out eleven puppies last night, or I should say this morning to be exact." Jerrie lowered the glasses a little further down her nose and contorted her eyes into piercing, evil slits. "And the glorious moment I get my hands on the proud little stud that knocked her up, will be a day for manual castration history!"

Hern chuckled.

"You laugh, but I have the lab working on DNA samples as we speak. They should have a feces match by Noon. I only hope his free-range advocating owner tries to stand between me and the beast so I can make it a two for one special." She pushed the glasses back up the bridge of her wide nose, talking now into her paperwork. "Syrus and I had an understanding that this wasn't to happen again. Syrus knew what that goddamn, two thousand dollar fence was for and still, the beast got to her. Don't ask me how!" she huffed in her chair and shook off the rage.

"I left the Barry tape for transcription on your desk," Hern thought he'd slip in timidly, cupping his own crotch protectively in his hands, waiting for her to look up at him.

"I've just started it." She looked at him and laughed. "Don't worry Darling. Unless you have some underground hankerin' for Border Collies that I don't know about, you still have a recreational sex future. But keep it in your own yard!" she warned sternly.

"I'm defenseless!" He raised his hands and began to back out the door.

"Oh Darling, you have a penis. You're hardly defenseless. You've done some damage behind enemy lines yourself, I'd wager. Now, leave me alone so I can work." She offered one last cautionary smile, replaced the earphones on her head and continued to type.

"Good morning, *Banjo Toys*. This is Jackie. —No, I'm sorry he isn't. Would you like his voice mail?" It was already considerably past her normal coffee break and her hair that had started the day pulled up on top of her head, already flopped back and forth across the front of it. The offices were an absolute mad-house today. Not one of the normal, ranting executives was anywhere to be seen and Mark's office door was pulled shut and locked. Donald had instructed her that the police preferred to have all calls for Mark going straight into his voice mail, so she offered it to every caller, like a flight attendant with a beverage cart. With a very limited explanation of what had happened to Mark, Donald had given her a list of callers she was to transfer

directly to the senior Morgan household in Kits, mostly detectives and few Warner folks, but for the most part, everybody was *hush-hush* and she wasn't learning anything about Mark's sudden death. It was no secret that the rumour mill fiercely depended upon her to keep the cogs and gears in motion. So far this morning, she had fielded calls from BCTV, CBUT, CBUFT, CKUV, KVOS, *The Sun* and *The Province*. She nearly felt like leveling with one of them with the promise to tell all she knew if they would do the same, but her loyalties to Mark got in the way and besides, she didn't really have any information to bargain with. The family had been very tight lipped as it was regarding all things personal, —even happy things like births or bar mitzvahs. This silence didn't surprise her as much as it frustrated her.

"Good morning, *Banjo Toys.* —No! Have you? Ah, drats. Listen, I've got the newspaper article from *The Sun* this morning if you want to stop by my desk. No, it doesn't say that he was gay," she reprimanded the caller though it had been the first thing she had looked for when scanning the brief herself. "Kelley, of course I have a key to his office but they fingerprint everything you know. I'm not about to touch that handle. —Yeah, right. Gloves went out in bible School. Okay. See ya in a bit." She began to tidy up her cubicle when the ever-loving phone rang again.

"Good morning, *Banjo Toys.* No, I'm sorry. He will not be in the office today..."

As aggressively as he attacked any case, Elias Hern threw his body weight at this momentarily perplexing riddle. Fag meets fag who isn't, who first fancies being kept but later doesn't, wants out more desperately than he wanted in, eventually figures out the key to his confinement and springs himself leaving the trapper dead in his own trap. It should have been a classic scenario of prey turning on the predator except the killer didn't seem all that smart and the victim practically laid down on the garage floor to play dead in the first place. Pepper the soup with players not thrilled to find themselves or the family in this rancid broth and things start to simmer.

To his fellow detectives, Hern had a seemingly moronic habit of assigning numbers to people in a scenario like this when a logical solution eluded him. Always reserving the number two for himself, he factored the riddle into the digits *zero* to *six*. In the Morgan case, *six* meets *three* losing favour with *zero* and *one*. *Six* ends up dead, a relief to *zero*, *one* and *three* but stumping *two*. *Four* and *five* have yet to be identified, he had already noted on the file cover with question marks following each numeral. The equation went that if Hern, always the common denominator, could identify the six highest profile characters in each case, determine their motivations to profit or lose from the criminal act and then eliminate the doubt surrounding their roles as either accomplice, witness or suspect, he could usually break the case. Aside

from the RCMP textbook rules for criminal investigation which framed each premise by the needs to identify suspects, determine motives and eliminate doubt, Hern's divination was more personal hobby than professional process. And as his notoriety grew and his crime solving success soared for whatever reason, the question he was most asked could be answered with a single explanation, —*he did the math*. And that was all he ever said.

From time to time Uwajimaya would espouse new theories about Hern's coding system, claiming he had broken it or was on the verge of exposing him as a fraud but Detective Elias Hern was an enigma among criminal investigators. He reveled in this self-perpetuating glory which usually manifested in a nasty, workaholic syndrome that accomplished two very important byproducts: his service record and dedication ensured nobody would think to pry into his over-shadowed personal life and his round-the-clock obsession with crime solving ensured number *Two* was always too busy to even have a personal life.

Jerrie, for one, would have loved to dive into Detective Hern's personal pond but could not seem to find a jumping-in spot deep enough to avoid breaking her neck on entry. He flirted with her every chance he got which incidently coincided with the volume of transcribing he needed to have done on any given day, though she failed to draw the connection. Her job duties didn't include typing for the detectives who

were supposed to prepare their own reports and correspondence but she had a soft spot for Elias and truly believed it would eventually pay off romantically. She and Snow White would keep good company. She proof-read the latest batch of typing while animated song birds and cuddly forest creatures surely sang and danced outside her office window.

Incident #91-207871, Cont. 05-16-91 1050hrs: Det's Hern and Uwajimaya went to the BC Medical Examiner's office and met with Doctor Adam Siegel. He described the victim's cause of death as carbon monoxide poisoning. The percent of C/M found in the victim's blood was measured at 83% (anything over 50% is considered lethal). Dr. Siegel informed Det's that the victim also had black eyes which are similar to injuries which a boxer would receive and that the black eyes were caused by separate blows. Dr. Siegel did not believe there was enough force by either of these blows to cause unconsciousness. The victim's left side 5th rib was cracked and rug burns and bruises were located on the victim's arms and knees. There was an abrasion located on the victim's lower back and some bumps and bruises to the scalp area were identified. Dr. Siegel stated that many of these described injuries may have been caused by the victim falling down. A toxicology report will be forthcoming. The stomach contents were examined and the only identifiable food products were potatoes and vegetables. No undigested

pharmaceuticals were located.

051691 1900 hrs: Scott Barry came back to the Homicide Office for another interview as requested by us. He brought with him his friend, Jenny Brandly. We had her wait in another area while we interviewed him. We covered several subjects as follows: KEYS TO THE HOUSE. Scott says he arrived at Victim's house first (before Mark) Tuesday night. In response to how did you get in the house, he said Mark left him a key under the garbage can and gave him a temporary code to disengage the alarm system. After entering the house, he left the key in a drawer under the kitchen counter. WEEKEND SEX. When asked about the last time he and Mark had sex together, he replied "It's been so long I can't even remember." When asked specifically about sex on Saturday, he said he did spend the night with Mark in his bed. He said they watched movies in bed and that Mark "whacked off" but he (Scott) took no part in it. MONEY AND GIFTS. He says that Mark did buy him presents consisting of clothing. Mark took him shopping in all the stores along Robson and bought him things if they found something he liked. Money, or the lack of it, was never a problem for Mark. He always had plenty. He usually carried cash but wasn't afraid to use his credit cards. He says that money was an issue with Mark in that he believed most people took advantage of him and used his friendship to get

money from him or to have him spend money on them. He made it a point to let Scot know several times that the one attraction he had to him was that Scott never asked for anything. He told us that Mark had loaned some money, he thought $15,000 to a man in Squamish who professed to be in financial difficulties but that when the man got the money, he went out and blew it on a car. He also did not pay any of it back. This bothered Mark. When asked about his own financial background, Scott told us that he comes from a family of some means himself and they are always willing to help out. REGARDING THE MESS IN THE KITCHEN. He says that when he left it was 2:00 or 2:15. He didn't know where he saw the time, it could have been on the clock in his car. As he was preparing to leave, Mark said "You're not going to spend the night?" He thinks Mark's intent was to clean up the kitchen when he left. He says that they were entirely "too messed up" to clean it up earlier. He agrees that it was out of character for Mark to leave a mess after dinner. CONFRONTATION ISSUE. He insists that during the evening there was no discussion on any confrontational issues. They had no problems between them. There was no hitting, pushing, or shoving match between them. He says that neither he nor Mark are violent persons and that they have never physically fought or had any kind of confrontation. He did say that Mark was pushy, and wanted everything right now. The strongest language ever used between them was after the Jenny

incident, Mark told him on the phone "We're not friends. We're at war." He also says Mark told him constantly that he loved him and kept trying to get him to move into the house. He says Mark wanted to spend the rest of his life with Scott. When we told him that the Medical Examiner says that the Victim had to be punched to blacken both eyes that way, he insisted "I never hit him. If he was punched it would have had to be someone else that did it. He was fine when I left the house." REGARDING THE DELILAH'S INCIDENT. He says this was another in an ongoing series of head games played between them. He says his roommate, Blake Brettman came up with the idea. They had a female friend of theirs, Tina, go to Delilah's Restaurant where Scott was supposed to meet Mark. She made advances toward him and let him know that she was sexually attracted to him. He says that Mark saw right through the act, that they exchanged business cards, that Mark thought it was funny, and they laughed about it later. He says Mark also told Dr. Catherine Hallock about that incident. When asked if Scott knew Mark had hired a private investigator to follow him, he replied "that figures."

"Can you see what I'm trying to tell you?" Scott asked the detectives holding his hands palm up in front of him on the table. "That's the way Mark was. He had to control all of a person. He was used to getting his way and making people do what he wanted them to. He didn't understand the word or the concept *no*."

Hern allowed for a moment of silence, then closed the file. "All right, Scott. I can't think of anything else we needed to talk with you about today." The detective scratched his head and forced the muscles in his cheeks to flex by pressing his teeth together. He had picked that up from Tom Cruise who did that same jaw-thing throughout his favourite movie, *Top Gun*. It had since become a habit he didn't even think about anymore but it was irritating to most everyone around him because it made him look even more rugged and more attractive than normal, —though Tom Cruise, he still was not; or so his partner continuously reminded him. Uwajimaya once accused him of having gills that had been covered up with plastic surgery. He caught his partner doing it again and smiled into his raised hand.

"Uh, have you thought of any new information that might be helpful to us?" Roger intercepted the wrap-up.

"Not really. I'm still sort of coming out of a daze over the whole thing." Scott looked up without making eye contact with either of the detectives.

"Well, you have our numbers if you think of anything." Roger told him. "Oh, we need you to sign this medical records release form so that we can follow-up with Lions Gate Hospital as a matter of routine procedure.

"Sure," Scott answered quickly, confidently.

"Do you consider yourself a bisexual then?" Hern suddenly blurted out as

though the line of questioning had never ended.

Scott looked at him a second. "I suppose. To be honest though, with a divorce on one side and a dead..." he stopped. Let's just say I haven't had a lot of luck with either side of the fence. Will that be all then?" Scott pushed back from the table. Hern nodded and Scott Barry left the room.

"What was that all about?" Roger asked him once the door had closed behind their suspect.

"I don't get bisexuality to be frank. I thought if I maybe I saw one or knew one, I could understand it better, that's all."

Uwajimaya shook his head, adding his signature beneath the scrawl of their suspect on the medical records form. Now they were armed with the document that would pry Dr. Catherine Hallock's lips apart. After all, they couldn't get inside the head of a killer without the guided tour a shrink could provide.

In the hallway, outside the interrogation room, in the maze of cubicles and offices that was the Homicide Division of the RCMP, Scott Barry and Gilles Eiswine passed each other. Scott had just finished another in a series of questioning while Gilles was arriving for his first round. At first the two said nothing, letting their recognition settle a moment before tearing in to each other like two Bantams in a cockfighting ring. Not surprisingly, it was Gilles, the least timid of the two, who

pecked first.

"I would have thought they'd have you behind bars by now."

"Well, the bartender would know best, wouldn't he?" Scott fired back. "Fuck you, *Swine*. I didn't kill Mark anymore than you did."

"The hell you didn't, and not all at once neither. A little at a time until the big finale in the garage. I saw it coming."

"If that were true and you didn't stop me, I guess that makes you an accomplice, doesn't it? Maybe we'll do time together, give you that prison fantasy you've long held about me." Scott was quick though he wasn't particularly clever. "You should know, by the way, that Mark secretly despised you, saw you for what you were, a big fat nothing-leech. He used to curse you behind your back, you know."

"As if I'd believe anything a soon to be convicted killer would say. Mark adored me and I, him. We had more going for us platonically than you two ever had intimately."

"You mean your Kyle and Mark had more than you and Kyle ever had, don't you?"

"Rot in jail. At least there you'll have a chance to bone-up on your homosexuality, maybe get it right this time. Well, you'll *get it* anyway, that's for

damn sure."

"At least I had the sense not to bring children into my confusion. You weren't going to be happy until it was a whole fucking party, were you?" Scott tapped his finger aggressively into Gilles chest. "Raising your own kids to be ashamed of you, it's pathetic! Kyle screwing anything that'll hold still. Yeah, you better watch that boy of yours. He's getting to be Kyle's favorite age, that one. Just after the testicles drop and that smell starts to germinate behind them. Drives Kyle mental it does. Like catnip. I'm telling ya."

"Fuck you, Barry! I can smile just knowing you deserve everything that's about to cave-in on top of you. You're wretched. I told Mark that since the day I first met you."

"You mean you told Mark that since the day you first blew me, don't you? And you know, between friends, I've had better blow jobs from my cat."

This time, Gilles pushed back and Scott momentarily lost his balance. "I'd be embarrassed that my dick fit inside a cat's mouth, personally." Gilles spouted just before Scott threw himself at him, knocking him against the flimsy wall of a cubicle, that collapsed under their weight. The commotion sent Elias Hern and his partner into the hall and Jerrie, practically into cardiac arrest.

"Hey! Hey! What's happening out here?" Roger screamed at them.

Realizing he'd just screwed up, Scott appealed to Hern. "He called me a *killer* and I came unglued. I apologize. I need to get some sleep to take off this edge."

"Go home, Scott," Hern instructed. "And you are—?" he prompted the man he didn't know.

"Gilles. Gilles Eiswine. You called me down here to talk about the Morgan *murder,*" he stressed.

"In this room," Roger demonstrated, hoping to quickly separate the two. Jerrie clutched her bosom, her dictaphone equipment still dangling from her ears, as she surveyed yet another barrier in her life that hadn't held intruders out. On second thought, she realized these were the only men who had fallen for her in years and that this episode would make for a good coffee room anecdote during the late afternoon break of the secretarial pool. She tried to conceal a smile while garnering as much attention from Elias Hern as she could before the moment was gone.

"Not the violent type?" Hern couldn't resist barbing his suspect one last time. "Get on home," he warned. "We'll be in touch," he told his number *Three*.

Back inside the interrogation room, Roger exchanged tapes in the recorder while the next act tried to calm himself down. Hern joined them at the table, took a sip of his lukewarm coffee and felt the first drag of the day that followed a night on adrenalin without sleep. He would have let Roger take this one himself if he weren't

so desperate to finger his numbers *Four* and *Five*.

"Gilles, we'll get started here." Hern cleared his throat. "We are Detectives Hern and Uwajimaya. This is regarding the RCMP incident number 91-207871 concerning the death of Mark Mogan. Mr. Eiswine, do you understand and do we have your permission to tape record this statement?" Hern signaled his partner to record and take over the questioning.

EISWINE: Yes, you do sir.

UWAJIMAYA: Gilles, you're a white male and you were born 2/1 of 56?

EISWINE: Yes.

UWAJIMAYA: And you reside at 5747 Mathers Avenue in the West End?

EISWINE: Uh huh.

UWAJIMAYA: And do you live at this residence alone?

EISWINE: No. I live with my gay partner as well as my daughter and son from my first marriage.

UWAJIMAYA: I see. And how long have you known Mark Morgan?

EISWINE: I've known Mark fairly well for about the past two years/

UWAJIMAYA: And while you dance together quite well, I have to ask how long have you known Scott Barry?

EISWINE: Scott I've known since about mid December, give or take.

UWAJIMAYA: Give or take what?

EISWINE: You know. Months. Give or take a few months.

UWAJIMAYA: And why don't you tell us a little bit about the relationship between Mark and Scott.

EISWINE: The relationship started off where Scott, having recently gone through a divorce, was interested in Mark's friendship and it started getting involved in more than just a friendship, especially from Mark's perspective. The relationship continued on where Scott would more or less set the times for when they were going to get together, more often than not, the meetings would get cancelled.

UWAJIMAYA: Now you told me earlier by phone that Scott and Mark have known each other for approximately two years, which is the time you say you've known Mark.

EISWINE: I would say a little over a year. I believe that they first met at the Special People Christmas Cruise of 1989 and then a year later this last Christmas, they kind of started becoming serious about each other. Apparently, they had been speaking to each other periodically over the year between events and Mark's interest was peaking at that point and time.

UWAJIMAYA: And since this past December, was it not common for Mark to buy or give gifts or give money to Scott?

EISWINE: It was too common.

UWAJIMAYA: Do you have any idea of the nature of gifts that Mark gave Scott?

EISWINE: He had given him a watch, I believe it was a Rolex. I believe there was a leather coat involved.

UWAJIMAYA: How about cash? Do you know if Mark was giving him cash or loaning him money?

EISWINE: Yes, he was loaning him money.

UWAJIMAYA: Do you have any idea how much?

EISWINE: I do not know the exact amount. I would not know because of Scott's reported financial condition which was fairly bad after his divorce, I would say it was several thousand dollars.

UWAJIMAYA: Okay, you don't know for sure?

EISWINE: I don't know the full amount.

UWAJIMAYA: And there was a vehicle involved in this situation between them, isn't this true?

EISWINE: Yes. Mark had purchased a 1991 white BMW coupe. It was, I'm not sure of the model numbers but I know it was one of the lower end BMW's. And he purchased that with the idea of giving it to Scott.

UWAJIMAYA: I see. And so Scott was driving around this BMW purchased by Mark and I believe it was also registered in Mark's name.

EISWINE: Yes it is.

UWAJIMAYA: Now during this time, since this past December, they've had some problems?

EISWINE: Right. Well, December was sort of the catalyst for the start of things as far as any sort of real relationship was concerned. It was tenuous at best in the beginning and appeared to be growing somewhere. By around February 1st it seemed like the coupling process was getting fairly much established. Shortly thereafter it looked like it was falling apart and I think it wasn't long thereafter that Mark started to believe that Scott was lying to him quite a bit about his activities.

UWAJIMAYA: And these activities are saying he was going to be somewhere else and Mark believing that he was actually seeing other people, other women?

EISWINE: Yes. Yeah, and in several instances finding him with women.

UWAJIMAYA: And earlier you told me that approximately April 17th or 18th Mark drove the BMW in question over to your house.

EISWINE: Yes, he had done that after he had found Scott in bed with a woman at Scott's house. He demanded the keys to the car at that point and drove the car over to my house that evening.

UWAJIMAYA: And since that date and time in April, Mark has had that BMW?

EISWINE: Yes. It was in front of my house for about a week I believe it was and then he moved the car and put it into storage in a friend's business garage.

UWAJIMAYA: What happened now in the interim between, after the 17th of April or the 18th of April?

EISWINE: After that Mark was insistent that this was it, this was over. He was just going to wash his hands of the whole thing.

UWAJIMAYA: And did they go for some counseling?

EISWINE: They, yes. They ended up getting, I don't know who called whom, but they ended up getting together and they went to go to Mark's counselor together.

UWAJIMAYA: And since Mark had taken back the BMW Scott had kind of rekindled the relationship back?

EISWINE: Yeah, it seemed like, well he, Scott had told Mark that the car meant nothing, that it was just Mark that he cared about. Of course, I knew better. I would have hoped that Mark knew better too, but...

UWAJIMAYA: Okay. And was Mark eventually talking about giving the car back to Scott then?

EISWINE: He was thinking about it until he caught Scott in a few more lies.

UWAJIMAYA: Okay. And then you were telling me that his mental attitude towards Scott changed?

EISWINE: Yeah. He finally started putting some stuff together with people who had been in contact with him. One young girl in particular, and I don't remember her name, but she had been, all indications pointed to that she was actually acting as sort of a spy for Scott to see what Mark was up to. When Mark started discovering or believing what Scott was doing to him as far as the lies, he began to take the attitude of wanting to get revenge on Scott for lying to him and for fooling around behind his back.

UWAJIMAYA: And Gilles, when you talk about revenge, you're talking about setting him up, setting Scott up with expectations that he'd get the BMW back and then pull the rug from under his feet?

EISWINE: Yeah, basically. There was never, —Mark had never indicated any physical harm but that he just wanted to emotionally damage him as he felt he had been damaged emotionally by the experience of knowing him.

UWAJIMAYA: And you mentioned you had information about a friend of yours who had talked to Mark, perhaps as recently as the night of his death?

EISWINE: Yes. Well there were a couple of conversations that happened the night of his death. First was that well he'd been seen at the gym before he went home and that he was very focused on getting back for an 8:15 appointment. But before that, he'd also been seen, well spotted really, inside Stanley Park where he used to go. I know for a fact that he and Scott went out this past Saturday which would be May the 12th.

UWAJIMAYA: Okay, May 12th was Sunday, Mother's Day.

EISWINE: Oh excuse me. You're right.

UWAJIMAYA: And which friend did you hear this from?

EISWINE: From Shane Mullin, actually.

UWAJIMAYA: And what did Shane tell you that Mark had done or said to him?

EISWINE: Basically, that Scott had come over to Mark's place on Saturday night and that Mark was particularly rough on Scott sexually and emotionally that night. And short of divulging all the details, or rather he did not divulge all the details to me, I did not ask them. But apparently, Mark, it sounded like he was into almost a sexual punishment where he was going to hurt Scott sexually and emotionally for having been hurt by Scott.

UWAJIMAYA: I see. And do you have any idea when or if Mark was leading Scott on stating, you know, "I'm going to give you the car tomorrow or the next day," or anything like that?

EISWINE: That was one of the ploys that Mark had told me that he was going to be using on Scott to hurt him. He had told Scott that the car was at one of his friends places and that he was going to give the car back to Scott...or he was going to tell Scott that he was going to give the car back to him and then at the last minute, change his mind and just say, "Well, I decided not to—"

HERN: Do you consider yourself a bisexual, Gilles?

EISWINE: I was married at one time. I have two children that I'm raising. But I am in a committed relationship with a man and we all live under the same roof.

UWAJIMAYA: Okay. These are the facts, Gilles, as you know them, and you'd be willing to testify to these facts?

EISWINE: Yes, of course. Anything to help.

"Gilles, thank you. Can you find your way out?" Roger was most dismissive.

Gilles nodded and left the room. Uwajimaya waited five seconds then drilled his

partner. "What is it with you and that question?" he demanded.

Elias Hern didn't answer him but smiled, tracing the large number *Four* on his notepad.



Friday, May 17, 1991 – 8:15 am

The Vancouver Sun Thursday, May 17, 1991 —**D9**

Mark G. Morgan

Age 35, of Vancouver, Beloved son of Banjo and Louise Morgan, Brother of Donald Morgan and his wife Sandee, Erin Tamorin and her husband, Paul and Eliza Fleisfield and her husband, Tim and grandson of Jan Treckleson. A funeral service will be held today, Friday, 11 a.m. at the **Wright and Arthur Funeral Home** (Riley Park), 520 St. George Street. Internment to follow in the Mountain View Cemetery. In lieu of flowers remembrances are suggested to the Stanley Park Zoological Society, P.O. Box 31665, Vancouver V6J 1X6 or the False Creek Special Peoples Cruise, 2001 Pacific Blvd., Vancouver V6G 2E9.

Louise rushed around in her stocking feet checking her hair and make-up one final time as she placed fabric over each of the mirrors in the house in preparation for *Shiva* which was to follow the funeral service and burial to last for seven days. The Morgan's considered themselves to be Jewish Reform and belonged to the Temple Shalom but life tests, such as this, called for Orthodoxical intervention and they reverted back to the traditions of their parent and their parents before them. Louise didn't know where the morning's strength would come from but hoped it might originate from her recitation of the *Shema* which she whispered over and over again as she bumped about the house. *"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One..."*

"Louise, have you seen my *tallith*? I can't find it anywhere," Banjo screeched down the stairs from their bedroom.

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." She rolled her eyes and started all over again, fearing she might collapse in a heap like the Second Temple of Jerusalem, if she didn't concentrate that very moment on the cornerstone of her faith. She still hadn't slept, trying desperately to recall the last moment she had spent with her son and more specifically, if she had told him that she loved him. She had become so guarded with that phrase during the last several years that she honestly didn't know the last time she had said it. He had crushed her with the news of his lifestyle choice

six years ago and only now as she mourned, did she realize that there was at least one alternative worse than being a homosexual.

Yesterday at Mark's house, picking out clothes for him to be buried in, or more specifically, —buried under, as it was Jewish tradition not to disturb the body by wrestling it into clothes it wouldn't need but rather laying the clothes on top of the body, had been particularly traumatic for the mother of the deceased. It was horrible enough that the body had to be subjected to an autopsy but arguing with her son in law over the Jewish appropriateness of a double breasted suit, about did her in. Paul's father was a Rabbi in Toronto and one should have acquiesced in light of such authority but she felt Mark would have been distressed by his pushy insistence to go with the traditional white burial robes without pockets or hems in order that the dead could take nothing with them. *What was he going to take?* she wondered. Mark had style and class, and his mother would be damned if he couldn't take that where he was going, but it wasn't as though he was going to smuggle a *Daytimer* in one of those pockets. She almost felt as though her stubby son-in-law believed the expensive looking suit could be tailored down and out to fit his awkward, pear-shaped body. In the end, she did concede to no embalming, a closed casket and the placement of the *Trikhen* shroud across his chest, all in accordance with the dictates of the Rabbi's son. But she would serve *Shiva* in its entirety, regardless of the rest of the family who

would likely rush back to the toy company immediately following the Sabbath to make up for time lost to this buggered inconvenience.

It seemed appropriate to Donald to close the corporate offices for a few hours during the services that happened to coincide with the sunniest day of Spring on that hillside facing the steeply sloped backdrop of Mount Seymour. But none of the family really expected the hundreds of BTI staff to actually attend the funeral, but then they had always underestimated Mark's distinction as a Morgan with values and a sense of humour; —a Morgan with a conscience and an understanding of humanity. The obituary had only appeared in the morning's newspaper by request so that Banjo and Louise could grief in private without it turning into some homosexual free-for-all. But when their Mercedes pulled through the gates of the funeral home and into the parking lot where they had to search for an empty space a full thirty minutes before the scheduled service, they looked at each other with registered panic. Banjo became instantly infuriated and abandoned the car in the fire lane next to the chapel.

"For as much as I am paying for this circus, I can park anywhere I damn well please," he huffed, slamming the car door with Louise still inside. She squeezed her eyes shut and her lips began to move through the normally comforting *Shema* that for some reason or another, didn't seem to be delivering much condolence today. Her surviving son opened the car door to help her out as it was taking Banjo considerable

time to squeeze between the car and the buttress of a stone wall at least as old as he was.

"Is another service just finishing," she thought to ask Donald by way of gaining an explanation for all those cars.

"They are all here to say good-bye to Mark, Mother." He watched her eyes grow large. "I know, I know. You wanted it small. It shocked me too but there are a lot of employees here and well, it seems one of Mark's friends found out about the service today and made some phone calls." He put an arm around her waist to give her extra support. She was a short woman, not much more than five feet and a few inches though the heels she chose to wear brought her into a normal stature today.

"All these cars are here for Mark," she repeated in disbelief to her wedged husband who was finally able to nudge himself through with the help of a few explicative remarks. He tried to take his wife's arm but she was brushing the debris from his suit pants.

"Stop it woman! I'm fine. Let's just get inside," he grumbled. Rabbi Winnerman intercepted them at the door to the sanctuary as a load of folding chairs arrived from a storage barn on the other side of the parking lot.

"They tell me there's already 250 people here already," the Rabbi boasted, thinking it might lessen their grief. "Come, let's go into the ante-chamber room."

The head of the Temple and a friend of the family, led them into an adjacent room where they could momentarily avoid the throngs. Inside, the family stood about with arms crossed in front of them, staring out the smoked glass windows at the crowd that was assembling in the pews before Mark's standard, gauze wrapped *Levi* casket, —all pinewood, no metal hinges or screws according to the dictates of Mark's suddenly conservative Jewish handlers. Paul stepped forward to place his arm on Banjo's shoulder.

"Dad, you remember my Father, don't you? —Rabbi Tamorin. He has flown in to act as *cantor* for today's service." The men shook hands as Louise noticed how particularly shabby her son-in-law looked today in a suit clearly beyond its years. "I have asked my Father to recite the *Kaddish* grave side if that's all right with you and Louise. Rabbi Winnerman certainly does not object," he explained eagerly, having already served as the family appointed *shomer* for the past forty-eight hours, as part of the requirements of their faith. After working all those years in the prosecuting attorney's office, it stood to reason that Paul would be the most likely candidate to remain with and watch the body around the clock until burial. He still finagled regular access to the attorney's office and the medical examiner's facility, just in case he ever elected to return to public service, —privileges of old crony association. Not so coincidently, he had tossed around the idea of running for the Prosecuting Attorney's

seat should the current PA, Storm Nailor, be elevated to the leadership of the B.C. Conservative Party in preparation for the forecasted '92 elections. Victoria had been characterized by the media to be in political shambles lately and Nailor and Tamorin were ready to clean up the Province. Paul didn't waste an opportunity to nuzzle up to his campaign treasure chest of a father-in-law and jockeyed for position even now, at the funeral of a fallen heir. It all came down to a divisibility factor and with Mark no longer standing in the soup line, the ladle suddenly became that much deeper. Paul wrenched two fists on the left breast of his suit coat and pulled until the weave gave way into a vertical tear the length of his forearm. "Your grief is my grief and your loss is mine," he declared to the mourning parents as the small room twisted into an obligatory frenzy of ripping garments. This was the Jewish rendering of clothes, symbolic of their hearts torn in two by the senseless and unexplainable loss of their loved one. The ritual was seldom done anymore except by extremely well to do families or instigated by those who had worn older garments expressly for the occasion. Eliza's eyes narrowed as she assessed the value of Tamorin's *Value Village* get-up, her own, brand-new Halston bought especially for her brother's funeral, now destroyed by the adolescent demonstration that Paul's grief was bigger than everybody else's when in fact it was just that his suit happened to be cheaper, —a lot cheaper. Erin and Sandee collapsed in sobs all over again and were ushered to the

far side of the room by Eliza who was about to lose patience with their uncontrolled outbursts.

"Didn't Mark give you some of his prescription not too long ago to help you relax?" Eliza asked nearly tapping her foot on the floor. Sandee blew her nose into a lace handkerchief already beyond saturation and nodded her head, trying to focus through puffy red eyes. "How about if you take a pill each then," she suggested somewhat undiplomatically. "And why don't we try some fresh mascara while we're at it, Ladies. You know how particular Mark was about his sisters looking like regal women." Her eyes revealed a poison that accompanied her acidic tone, almost an apple she dared each of them to bite, to become just as bitter as she was. "I think it best that we hold off this tear-fest until the *Shiva*, when we are back in the privacy of Mum and Dad's home. We need to stand together as a family right now. We have employees out there who need to see us in control. Otherwise, we can expect full anarchy by Monday." She gave a little chuckle to indicate that maybe she wasn't all that bad. "Now come on." Eliza extracted her own compact foundation and blush kit and held the tiny mirror mercilessly to her sister Erin's bloated face. "We're sisters," she trilled. "We're stronger than this."

Erin took one look at her older sister and became suddenly nauseous. It was clear to her that, like everything else in her world, Eliza had reduced this unbearable

burden to a simple recalculation of figures on some spreadsheet. Indeed her soul-less sibling had spent her entire life producing and justifying answers to the family's most prevalent and compulsively asked question, —*yes, but how will this look on paper?*

It didn't seem necessary at this particular time in family crisis to acknowledge the hundreds, in fact the nearly half a thousand friends and employees who had crammed inside the funeral home for this morning's service, but as Sandee took her seat in the front pews with the rest of Mark's immediate family, she glanced all the way back to the uneven and cramped rows of folding chairs that had been added at the last minute, and tried to smile as though that smile could comfort the masses and lend a benediction for all that confused them. She fidgeted nervously with the fresh tear in her dress and sat down next to Donald, her stone-worthy and reliable shell of a husband. Her dearest friend in all the world, lay dead just inside the pine box before her and as badly as she needed to avert her eyes, they fixed on those limiting dimensions and endlessly traced the Star of David draped on a white shawl over the top and down both sides. Her vision blurred and her nose ran. The chapel became instantly silent. Rabbi Winnerman cleared his throat from behind a gentle fist and looked out over the multitude that had assembled.

"On behalf of the Morgan family and the Temple Shalom, I would like to

welcome you to this hallowed place where we will join in this brief and simple service, this *yekara d'schichba,* to pay tribute to the life and to the soul of Mark Gregory Morgan. I shall read from the Book of Psalms, Verse 23." Again, the Rabbi cleared his throat and opened his Hebrew Bible. Rabbi Tamorin rose from the bench he occupied behind the casket and walked to the edge of the dias to echo his passage with a simultaneous Hebrew translation. When the Rabbis were finished, they said *A-men* together and Rabbi Tamorin reclaimed his seat, backing away form the casket, his body facing forward in respect of the dead at all times. Sandee nudged her husband to take his mother's hand, the gesture of which caused Louise to momentarily release the bite she had been holding on her lower lip, to force a maternal smile. Winnerman continued.

"O Lord, what is man that You regard him, or the son of man that You take account of him? Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow. You sweep men away. They are like a dream; like grass which is renewed in the morning. In the morning it flourishes and grows, but in the evening it fades and withers. The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of special strength, —fourscore, yet their pride is but toil and trouble. They are soon gone, and we fly away. So teach us to treasure our days that we may get a wise heart. Observe the good man, and behold him upright, for there is immortality for the man of peace. Surely God will

ransom my soul from the grave. He will gladly accept me. The Lord redeems the souls of His servants. None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned. The dust returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God who gave it." Rabbi Winnerman paused, allowing time for Rabbi Winnerman to take his position as *cantor* once again. "Let us pray. —O God, full of compassion, Thou dwellest on high! Grant perfect rest beneath the sheltering wings of Thy presence, among the holy and pure who shine as the brightness on the heavens, unto the soul of Mark ben Morgan of Banjamin av ben Morgan, who has gone unto eternity, and in whose memory charity is offered. May his repose be in paradise. May the Lord of Mercy bring him under the cover of His wings forever, and may his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life. May the Lord be his possession, and may he rest in peace." And together, the Rabbis said *A-men*.

Some of the folding chairs rattled in the back and intermittent coughing rivaled sniffles for background noise honours. Sandee looked over her right shoulder to observe that the other side of the chapel was filled predominantly with clean cut men, men who could have been her brother-in-laws friends, may have been her friend's lovers, but she knew none of them. Directly behind the family, she had recognized several employees from her husband's company as they walked down the aisle to take their seats in front of them. *How apropos that Mark would manipulate the*

perpetuation of separate lives at his own funeral, she thought to herself, understanding that his friends were on one side of the church while the family and the company, forever synonymous, occupied the other. *—Just how Mark lived his life too, and never the twain shall meet.* A sad smile snuck onto the side of her face but she caught it in time and closed her eyes. *Would that this day were over*, she prayed. *Would that Mark were still there, for both sides.*

"We are gathered here today, all of us, to pay *hesped*, —tribute to the man that was Mark Morgan." Winnerman improvised to lend a human touch to his sometimes robotic service. "Clearly, by the size of this gathering, Mark was a very important part of all of our lives." He removed his glasses and wiped his forehead with a sleeved forearm. "I had the fortune and blessing in this life to know Mark personally and to share in the love of his extraordinary family. He was not the least bit shy about his interests and compassion for others..."

At that observation, there was some audible shifting and a few whispers from the friends side of the chapel. The Rabbi continued.

"...as evidenced by his concern and involvement for the welfare of animals at Stanley Park Zoo and by his selfless work to make the Special People's Cruise a humanitarian success year after year. It is my understanding that Mark lobbied long and hard for the release of the aquarium's two Orca whales to their native Pacific

environment, voicing his outrage that a Northwestern zoological society would foster the inhumane captivity of such a delicate and local treasure for well over a decade now. Working diligently from the inside as a dissenting member of the aquarium advisory board and mounting an offshoot organization known as *No Whales in Captivity Period!* Mark was very close to realizing the day when such a release might indeed occur. And when it came time for the holidays and the Special People's Cruise every year, it wasn't only Mark's festively decorated boat that lead the parade but his gigantic heart that went out to float the dreams of so many less fortunate than you and me. And Mark was active in his faith and with the Temple, phoning just last week to sit on the board of directors for *Canadian Action of Soviet Jewry.* This is the legacy of Mark Morgan. This is Mark's challenge to his friends and family as we try to make sense of this loss and pick up the important work he left unfinished." The Rabbi bowed his head, took a moment to compose himself and then stepped forward.

"Now, in accordance with the *Torah* and the instruction it provides us in Deuteronomy, *ki kavor tikberenu*, —though shalt surely bury him. Please join the family of Mark Morgan in the short procession to his final resting place just beyond these walls." The Rabbi motioned to Donald that it was time for the family selected pallbearers. Donald, Paul and Tim rose from the front pew and were joined at the casket by three men from *Banjo Toys.* Mark's best friends were somewhat put off by

the family who tried to explain, or rather justify at the last minute, that Jewish law dictates that only those from inside the faith may handle the casket. Surely, Mark would have seen that excuse for what it was, —just one more attempt by the family to deny him his homosexual existence. That much was clear to Gilles and Shane who sat together on the left side of the chapel toward the front, in their disbelief and outrage that their friend had been cut down before them. Gilles Eiswine ultimately heard everything at his professional post off Seymour and Davie Streets where he worked at *Over the Rainbow Travel*, and gossip trickling in as early as this morning had that Scott Barry had been taken in for questioning yet again and could be arrested and formally charged by sundown. Personally, Gilles had never trusted the little breeder-turned hobby queer and he wasn't the least bit surprised to see that he hadn't shown his pretty boy face at today's funeral service. That marked his guilt as far as Gilles was concerned and he would make sure, especially after their exchange at the RCMP office yesterday, that everyone he talked to, convicted him in their minds too.

The well-maintained facade that Gilles booked airline and hotel rooms for a living was secondary to his primary purpose as a West End information broker. In fact, his double breasted *Nino Cerutti* shoulders carried the weight of a gratified conscience today as he could easily take credit for the number of mourners on his side of the chapel having phoned most of them personally from his Roladex at the office.

He would have relished the honour and visibility of carrying Mark *home* in front of this crowd, so much so, he almost admitted to being Jewish, though he'd reversed the confining results of his *brisk* three years ago while dating a plastic surgeon from Montreal. In the end, he feared some diddling Rabbi might want nether proof of his faith, so, for once in his life, Gilles Eiswine kept quiet.

The casket passed them on the shoulders of family and three strangers and everyone in their pew stood up to join in the procession behind the immediate family. Gilles leaned into Shane and whispered "I'm sorry I got you messed up in all this, but who knew? Who knew?" he repeated as Shane shrugged his shoulders and followed him into the center aisle.

Once outside the chapel, the procession stopped every few feet and Gilles explained to his gentile entourage that they would stop seven times between the chapel and the burial site for each of the seven vanities of Ecclesiastes. As usual, when Gilles spoke, everyone listened and as usual, everyone was outwardly impressed with what he had to say until they had a chance to verify the information to the contrary later and behind his back.

Rabbi Winnerman finished recitation of the Ninety-first Psalm just as the large crowd reached the mound of fresh dirt on the slope just inside the Jewish section of the cemetery. With a view nearly as impressive as the expansive sight lines from

Mark's front windows at his home across the Inlet, the mourners donned sunglasses or held their hand above their brow to block the sun's glare. It was a beautifully peaceful day in Lotus Land. The Coast Mountains with its jagged Seymour, Grouse and Lions Peaks, seemed to bow almost reverently above a thin line of clouds that skirted the tree line like an ancient veil. This was Mark Morgan's city and he was about to be buried under it, but that wouldn't be the first time he had been *underground* as Shane recalled, daydreaming and reminiscing now in the sun's warmth. The best local gay night spot in all of Vancouver, at least this month, happened to be called *The Underground*. That's where Gilles had introduced Mark to Shane, getting him *messed up in all this*, barely three weeks ago.

Rabbi Winnerman positioned himself at the head of the casket with Rabbi Tamorin at his attending side. Kleenex and handkerchiefs dabbed at eyes and emptied noses around the black huddle as the rabbi prepared to deliver the *tzidduk ha'din.*

"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all His ways are judgement. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He. The Rock, perfect in every work, who can say unto Him, 'What workest thou?' He ruleth below and above. He orderth death and restoreth life. He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up again..."

It's not that Shane regretted having met Mark Morgan. He was charming

enough and while his death came as a complete shock to everyone, Shane included, he certainly wasn't nearly as invested as the others who grieved here today. He was relatively new to Vancouver, recently transplanted from Winnipeg with a relationship that had gone from bad to immediate worse two months after their arrival in the destination that was supposed to make everything wrong about their seven year relationship, right again. But despite the gargantuan efforts to resolve irreconcilable differences with a career cop, of all mate choices, Shane decided he had taken enough and given enough that he should have had more to show for it, so he left him.

"*Just art Thou, O Lord, in ordering death and restoring to life, in whose hand is the charge of all spirits, far be it from Thee to blot out our remembrance. O let Thine eyes mercifully regard us. For Thine, Lord is compassion and forgiveness. If a man live a year or a thousand years, what profiteth it him? He shall be as though he had not been. Blessed be the true Judge, who ordereth death and restoreth to life...*"

Shane had met Gilles, through the travel agency of course, where he had gone to book his passage and gay wrecked life on a *non-stop* home to Manitoba where he hoped he could still recover his recently abandoned position as the high profile director of volunteers at the Manitoba AIDS Project. Gilles had asked him a few questions beyond *window or aisle* and inside four minutes had nearly every detail of

Shane's break-up. Gilles was very good at that. Extracting may well have been his true specialty. He convinced Shane that he had just fallen on some bad luck with men but that Vancouver was definitely the place to sort it all out. Shane became his poster child, —his cause du jour even, and went to dinner that very night at the house Gilles shared with his two kids and a partner who introduced himself as *Calgary Kyle*. In the course of one meal, and meatloaf at that. —Alberta style, nearly twelve men had dropped by their pad. Shane had learned later that same night, over *Port* and with Kyle sitting particularly close to him on the love seat while Gilles put his kids to bed, that each of the evening's twelve contestants had been single, avid world travelers with frequent flier miles to burn and each of them desperately clambering for a boyfriend.

"*...We know O Lord, that Thy judgement is righteous. Thou art justified when Thou speakest, and pure when Thou judgest, and it is not for us to murmur at Thy method of judging. Just art Thou, O Lord, and righteous are Thy judgements...*"

When Gilles had returned to the living room that night, Kyle had just planted a kiss on Shane's astonished mouth, and had promptly left for the washroom. Gilles sat down and without missing a beat, asked what Shane had thought of the men he'd met that night. Shane tried to explain that none of them were really his type then bungled the explanation of what his type really was, but Gilles considered the

information, *and truly you can never have enough of that*, according to Gilles, and declared that he had the perfect match in mind and would set about making the arrangements at once.

That *match* now lay inside the casket that was being lowered by hand into the ground while the mother and sisters gushed into distraught animation, making sure that some in the crowd got precisely what they came for and then some. The Rabbis were the first to shovel earth on top of the casket using the back of the shovel to demonstrate the distinction of burial as opposed to the ordinary use of an otherwise normal garden implement. Then the family, one member at a time, each pushed a few pounds of earth into the hole, the larger clods making a most disturbing thud. They replaced the shovel in the dirt pile each time without passing it hand to hand. This symbolized that each of them respected and loved Mark so, that they would go to the personal effort of ensuring his burial. Banjo and Louise untied a linen satchel with shaking hands and released dirt from the Holy Land to mix with the British Columbian soil as Rabbi Tamorin began recitation of *Kaddish* in Hebrew, while Rabbi Winnerman echoed this sacred prayer for the dead, in English. The sun dashed behind an enormous cloud, surely the first to tempt its brilliance all day. In the distance, the choppy wake of a water taxi crossing the inlet, glistened like ten thousand stars in a sky that was water, —in a day turned black as night.

Yisgadal v'yiskadash shmai raba.

Magnified and sanctified be His great name.

B'olmo deev'ro chir'usai,

In this world which He created in accordance with His will,

V'yamlich malchusai, b'chayechon u'vyomechon,

May He establish his kingdom during your lifetime,

U'vhayai d'chol bai Yisroel,

And during the life of all the House of Israel,

Ba'agolah u'vizman koriv, v'imru amen.

Speedily, and let us say, Amen.

Y'hai shmai rabah m'varach, l'olam u'lalmey olmaya!

Let His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity!

Yisborach v'yistabach v'yispa-er v'yisromam;

Blessed, praised, glorified and exalted;

V'yisnasai v'yishadar v'yisaleth v'yis-halal,

Extolled, honored, magnified and lauded,

Shemei d'Kudsha, b'rich Hu.

Be the name of the Holy one, blessed be He.

L'aila min kol birchasa v'shirasa, tushbechasa v'nechamasa,

He is greater than all blessings, hymns, praises and consolations,

Da'amiron b'olmo; v'irmru, Amen.

Which can be uttered in this World; and let us say Amen.

Y'hai sclama raba min schmaya,

May abundant peace from heaven descend upon us,

V'chayin alenu v'al kol Yisroel; v'imru amen.

And may life be renewed for us and for all Israel; and let us say, Amen.

Oseh shalom bimeromav, Hu ya'aseh shalom,

He who makes peace in the heavens, may He make peace,

Alenu v'al Kol yisroel; v'imru amen.

For us and for all Israel; and let us say, Amen.

"Amen."



Friday, April 26, 1991 – 11:30 p.m.

"I said, —what makes you think he's going to like me? —Jesus! Is the music always this loud here?" Shane covered his ear closest to the speaker as tall as he was on the floor beside him.

Gilles just smiled and yelled "the music isn't getting louder as much as we're getting older, that's all." He raised his Dubbonet and Orange in the air and clanked it with Shane's beer bottle. "You're just Mark's type, that's all. He likes them clean cut, rugged, build, adorable...Jewish, but that would be too much to ask for, and sensible. You're definitely someone he could finally bring home to his conservative family and say, —*see, we're normal. Accept us.*"

"That rigid, huh?" Shane scanned the room to see if he could pick out this so-called perfect match for himself. He and bars, as a cardinal rule, didn't exactly get

along; sort of a polar bear in the Serengeti phenomenon, he figured, —usually overdressed and sun sensitive that one. But he could hold his own despite a small town prairie shyness which sometimes made sure that's all he held at the end of the night, —his own...

"I don't suppose I mentioned that Mark came from money, is practically made of the stuff, did I?" Gilles' eyebrow disappeared into his short-cropped hairline.

"Is that supposed to make a difference?" Shane asked sheepishly.

"Good answer," Gilles congratulated him. "No doubt Morgan'll like that, but of course it makes a difference you fool! Money's everything if you don't have it. Need I mention full coach fares to Manitoba to remind you that you need to succeed here? Face it. You could use a sugar daddy just now, my friend." Shane feared enough to cringe at both thoughts. A sugar daddy, he'd had once too recently and outgrown. Gilles as a friend? He could do worse, he imagined.

The music changed awkwardly to *Frankie Goes to Hollywood* and spotlights trained on a raised platform framed in chain link fencing, nearly seven feet high in the center of the dance floor. Inside that chromed web, a stripper began gyrating to the beat, though the beat, at least in Shane's estimation, was not nearly as staccato as the dancer was interpreting it.

"Over there," Gilled nudged him. The stripper had begun to un-do his ripped

501's one button at a time, without his hands. Gilles nudged harder, this time nearly assaulting Shane. "I said, over there, by the stairs." He pointed with his chin and Shane looked away from the fence. "Look like you're having a good time!" he snapped. "Now look away..." Shane glanced back at the stripper as coached, just in time to see the denim pants, now bunched down about his ankles. If he had to use his hands now after such a waist and crotch liberating feat, Shane thought, it would be a crying shame. "And snag! You've got him. Reel him in, Shane." Gilles proclaimed, clapping his empty glass with a ringed finger. "He's making his way across to us now.

Shane zeroed in on the man Gilles was monitoring. "Moustache? You didn't say anything about a moustache. How San Fran," he droned, pretending he was no longer interested.

"It covers up a hideous lip scar. It can stay, trust me." Gilles pierced his lips, his little goatee contorting into a look that was unmistakably Mephistopheles. Suddenly to Shane who was being closed in upon, it seemed safer to concentrate on the caged anomaly with two left feet, wiggling out of his clothes than acknowledge the diminishing distance between him and his mystery mate.

"Ouch! Is that a pierced navel? Of all the gimmicks," Shane whined.

"Hey Gilles! Whatsup?"

"Mr. Morgan, how are you this evening? You're looking well and recovered," Gilles complimented the millionaire. Shane felt the energy in his personal space suddenly change and deducted the two men must be hugging behind him. He cocked his head and waited for his cue. "Michael of Winnipeg, meet the recently eligible Mark Morgan of Vancouver." Shane turned around smiling and shook the extended hand. "I need another cocktail," Gilles announced victoriously, already en route to the bar in another section of *The Underground.*

There was a respectable moment of silence between them while the stripper arched into his unveiling, as it were, and the look on every many's face turned into squeals of confirmation for what each of them had secretly suspected, hoped or knew firsthand, beforehand.

"If you like him," Mark wagered, "I could arrange an introduction. His name is John McCutcheon. He's a porn star from San Diego. I've had him out on my boat."

"Not without appetizers first, I hope." Shane grinned, turning back to face him. Mark raised his club soda or Seven-up or gin and Shane tapped his glass with a long-empty beer bottle. "Thanks, but he's not my type." Shane kicked himself on the inside for opening himself up again.

"And you're type would be..."

Shane was unsure but thought Mark's eyelashes had unintentionally fluttered just then, but maybe twitched instead. He bit his lip and miraculously prevented a smile. "It might be a more thorough study to tell you what my type *isn't* as I seem to have plenty of experience in that discipline."

Mark stroked his moustache with a thumb and forefinger, merging into a smile which he held with his raised hand for a moment as though it were something entirely fragile, something Shane could take advantage of or possibly break. "There's something about you..." he started then struggled to elaborate but realized he had no idea where he was going with that opener. "I guess I don't know what I mean by that."

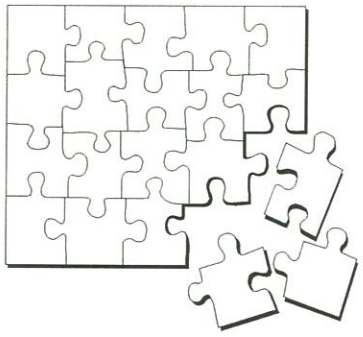
"Look," Shane prepared to level with him, taking his hand from his chin and holding it at his side. "I don't play the regular games and I'm not too terribly difficult to figure out." He paused a moment, then added "but it will require use of a brain, which I've discovered more times than not, men can indeed come packaged without. You wouldn't happen to have your list of contents available for inspection, would you?"

"Sure I do. I keep it tucked right in here, —beside my brain that is." He tapped on his forehead.

"That's a relief. Let's go inside some time and take a look around."

"I'd like that," Mark winked, scribbling his phone numbers on the back of a business card. He looked up from his writing with a killer smile. "Yeah, I think I'd like that a lot."

Part II



Some assembly required.



Monday, May 20, 1991

"It doesn't seem right that our boy would have to go into Stanley Park for sex. All that money and not a bad looking bloke to boot. Are you sure that's what Eiswine told you, Waj?" Hern flipped the siren and merged their Mustang into the intersection against the traffic light as he had simply tired of waiting.

"That's what the travel agent said. 'Told me he even went in there with him a couple times last year. Lees Trail just off Second Beach is supposed to be the ticket if you're looking for the anonymous stuff." Uwajimaya spoke frankly as though it had been from experience. Truth was, Roger had spent his fair share of weekends inside North America's largest inner city park, running the 22 km of typically muddy trails with a group called the *VanAsian Marathoners*. He'd noticed men along Lees Trail before but hadn't really given it much thought until talking with Gilles Eiswine, he

suddenly realized, they probably weren't botanists.

"Say, maybe you and I should go in there with a photo or two and see how many memories we can jog. Are you up for it?"

Detective Uwajimaya scrunched up his face and knocked his head back into the headrest of the sports car turned undercover surveillance machine. "Ah, Hern. I've got a fiancee to worry about and we're in civvies today. Let's do it tomorrow and I'll wear my uniform, okay?"

"Why not press your Scarlets and polish your boots, Mountie, if you want to stand out in the crowd. We're undercover detectives, you goon! Besides, I bet the boys will really go for that smooth Asian look. Whadyasay? Let's go for a little stroll, eh?" Hern slugged his partner in the arm and turned in front of Canada Place to scoot down Burrard toward Stanley Park.

It was business as usual come Monday morning for the men of the Morgan family while the women held *shiva* and commiserated at the family home in Kitsilano. Eliza stopped by with fresh fruit and kosher muffins, gave them each a hug, then drove out to the Burnaby warehouse offices by herself. It was to be a big day of re-posturing and delegation and she wanted to ensure that she wasn't stuck with any short stick ends by surviving in absentia with the rest of the bleeding hearts. Donald

had called a pow-wow for 8:30, knowing full well that their brother-in-law Paul, wouldn't roll in until closer to Nine. That would definitely work to the family's benefit as they had about twenty minutes of family business they needed to iron out before the currency sniffers and ambulance chasers arrived to stall the process.

Donald instructed Jackie to hold his calls "—and tell Gina to tell Paul he should join the meeting at 9:00," he soft talked into the intercom on his phone.

"Uh, Don...Gina quit over the weekend. Left a note explaining she just couldn't work for Paul anymore." Jackie gritted her teeth and raised her shoulders anticipating the response her little bomb might have and from behind the already closed doors of the president's office, she heard the muffled falsetto screech of Banjo's voice.

"Well, I can't work with the little money sucker either, but you don't see me quitting over it!"

"Dad, Dad!" Donald tried to pacify his father. "Jackie, let Norma know to get a temp out here as soon as possible and you'll handle Paul when he gets in? —Thank you." He replaced the phone in its cradle and took a defeated breath. "It is down to us," he acknowledged, twisting the phone cord around his index finger. "Un-believable," he exclaimed, offering his trademark expression.

"What we need to be damn sure about is that insurance policy," Banjo snarled.

"If this comes back..." he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and continued. "...if this comes back a suicide, we lose everything, not just Mark," he thought to add, "but everything."

"That would have been Mark's way too. Just one final twist of the wrench he's held on this family since the day he was born!"

"Donald!" Eliza reprimanded. "It's still *shiva*. Respect, respect," she trailed off in silent, consuming thought.

"Well, we still have that hidden ghost policy which is a duplicate of the policy that everyone else knows about. It provides for another two million dollar payoff to the benefactor, which of course is *BTI*. Paul and Tim don't know about that do they?" Donald became agitated by his own fidgeting and pushed the phone away from his normal reach.

"I don't see how they could know. *BTI* holds accidental death waivers on each of us and pays for them from a protected fund source. Paul hasn't seen the paperwork. I'm sure of that," Eliza boasted about her flawless record keeping, above board and below it. "Or—" she remembered suddenly, "he would have surely mentioned it yesterday at the house. No, he doesn't know," she reaffirmed.

"Well, I don't need to remind anyone that we need to keep it that way," Donald looked to his fatehr, then his sister. "And we definitely need to get a private

dick on this investigation just in case the RCMP buggers this." He exclaimed.

"What's to bugger? You've heard the reports. Mark was beaten pretty badly," his sister interjected. "Everyone keeps throwing around the term *boxer-type punches.* We don't have anything to worry about."

"Don't forget who we're dealing with here, Bette. This is your brother who threw himself of the top of a twenty foot playground slide to get attention when he was eleven. If you want us to respect the dead during *shiva*, I'd suggest we'd also do good not to underestimate him. —Not when there's three and a quarter million dollars at stake."

"What about Tinsel, then? We used him during that embezzlement investigation with your cousin, Felix, remember?" Banjo asked excitedly.

"Bill Tinsel?" Donald practically squeaked in falsetto. "That idiot couldn't figure out who the fucking prime minister is!"

"But he was a persistent cuss and did turn up that paper trail that eventually put Felix away, as I remember it." Eliza folded her arms across her tiny breasts; breasts which she had augmented twice before finally, in a fit of hypochondria, she had the pesky silicone sacks removed, terrified they would spring a toxic leak at any moment. "He represented well in the courtroom, I'll say that for him."

Jackie buzzed Donald's extension to let him know that Paul and Jim had

arrived in the building.

"So are we decided then?" Donald went for the wrap-up before they ventured into the next stage of the day's meetings. "We'll bring in outside counsel and investigators to ensure we get a homicide determination?"

"Absolutely murder!" Banjo bellowed.

"Tinsel, then?" Eliza asked nodding her head.

"Why not?" Donald conceded, rising from his chair to open the office door. "I suppose he is the only ace we've got. Besides, someone with brains would only be a novelty at this point. We'll give him a crack at it." Donald stepped outside the office to invite the hyenas inside but only one of his brothers-in-law was waiting. "Good morning, Tim. Come inside." Don looked at his secretary who looked back with the face of someone with information.

In Mark's office, she lipped.

Donald's eyes widened and he marched around the corner of her cubicle to find his brother's door ajar. "Paul, what are you doing in here? You know this office has been sealed by the RCMP."

Paul spun around, whiter than his normal Jewish self and began at once to gnaw at his finger and accompanying hangnails. "I, I had given Mark some figures for a report that Warner needs on last year's royalty and guarantee payments. I figure

I'd need to finish it up now. They are nagging us for it," he countered. "Don't worry, I wouldn't touch anything. Don't forget I had a real job as a prosecuting attorney before I started this volunteer work." When Donald smiled and turned away, Paul snatched a piece of paper from Mark's desk drawer and followed him out.

"We're having the family meeting now in my office, —if you care to join us that is." Donald spoke over his shoulder in a way that dismissed Paul Tamorin as innocuous, —without power, really without a life of his own if it weren't for the Morgan Family. Paul felt that way himself sometimes. It drove him crazy. He re-draped the yellow investigative tape over the doorway and passed Jackie's desk.

"Gina not in yet today?" he mumbled, not quite believing that anyone could actually get away with being later than he usually ran.

"She quit, Paul." Jackie snapped at him curtly as if to say, *and why not*.

"Hmm," Paul contemplated the news. Four secretaries later, he still didn't comprehend how it had anything to do with him. Jackie shook her head as the door shut behind him.

Inside, Eliza offered Paul the second half of her white flour blueberry muffin which he accepted gluttonously. She was thankful as the garbage can would have required a longer stretch and besides, it really wasn't any good.

"Let's stop wasting time and get Tinsel on the phone," Banjo snorted

impatiently.

"Bill Tinsel?" Paul asked with clear objection. "Why are we dragging him into this?"

"Because," Donald caught him, "we need to be ready to mop up after the RCMP if they botch this investigation, that's why. I believe each of us in here believes that Mark was murdered and murdered by his friend or whatever we want to call him. Am I right?"

"Of course he was," Eliza's husband Tim, chimed in, desperate for acceptance, anxious for advancement now that the balance of family power had been shifted.

"Sure," Paul agreed, dropping a chunk of muffin into his lap.

"Then you should know that Dad, Eliza and I think we need to be prepared in case someone feels the need to argue Mark's instability and force some suicide theory into the investigation on account of his, his you know, his homosexuality. Tinsel can keep better track of the evidence than we can and he has some connections we need," Donald explained.

"Pl-plus he's Jewish!" Banjo stuttered. "Remember *tzedaka,*" he cautioned them.

"Sedaka?" Tim asked innocently and naively. "Neil Sedaka? What's he got to do with any of this?"

"*Tzedaka!* you idiot. Taking care of our own...we have to stick together and know who we can trust." Banjo practically launched across the room at his newest son-in-law.

"Dad, that wasn't necessary," Eliza reprimanded him in her husband's defence.

"Sorry," her father mumbled.

"Look, we've already got connections in high places," Paul argued like the attorney he was. "My experience can get us anyplace we want to go. And as for *tzedaka,* this is a Jewish town as far as we should be concerned. We've got Storm Nailor in the DA's office, destined for Victoria. We'll get through this. There are over 11,000 Jews in Metro Vancouver and let's not forget the father of this city, David Oppenheimer, —the city's first mayor. Put this whole town together, he did. Organized a water supply, built sidewalks and bridges, established what...uh, the lighting company, the street railway company. What am I forgetting? He, he created the parks board and procured Stanley Park for the city." He discovered the crumb in his lap and suddenly stopped, having lost his concentration.

"Did you just make all that up?" Eliza challenged him in jest.

"Of course I did. I make everything up," he answered facetiously though half the room instantly wondered about the truer nature of that particular confession.

Banjo was silent a moment, pondering the information he had just heard about

Oppenheimer. If he had heard that before, he had forgotten it, but it reassured him now. Perhaps Vancouver did own some debt to the Jewish Community and it might be time to collect on some of those favors. "Let's bring Tinsel into the loop anyway," Banjo finally agreed, pushing his son's rolodex across the desk where he could better reach it. Donald dialed and pushed the speaker button so they could all hear the phone ringing.

"Tinsel, Callen and Scone—" the receptionist answered.

"Sylvia, it's Donald Morgan. How are you?"

"I'm fine, Mr. Morgan. Do you need to speak with Bill?"

"Yes, thank you. Say how's that baby boy of yours?" he remembered to ask, one to always maintain allies on the second line. At the rate they went through executive assistants at *BTI*, it was imperative he hald as many irons to the coal as possible.

"He's fine, Mr. Morgan. Thank you for asking. I'll connect you now." There was a pause.

"By the way Paul, you need a new assistant. Your latest quit over the weekend."

"Bill Tinsel," the attorney announced himself.

"Bill, Don Morgan here. How are ya?"

"Don, I'm fine. Listen my condolences to the whole family. I was at the service on Friday with half a thousand others and couldn't get close enough to the family to tell you how saddened I am by this tragedy."

"Thank you for that sentiment, Bill, —from all of us. Listen, I've got my father Banjo, sister Eliza, her husband Tim and Paul Tamorin with me on the phone this morning. We were hoping we could bend your ear, maybe twist an arm for a few minutes if you can spare the time." Don smiled and took a sip from his now lukewarm cup of Starbucks.

"You know I always welcome arm twisting from the Morgan Family. Good morning everyone."

The family greeted him in unison. "Bill, we were hoping you would consider some involvement in the investigation of Mark's death." Eliza took the lead in the conversation having worked very closely with Bill during the embezzlement sting. "We're positively certain Mark was murdered but it has been slightly doctored to possible look as though he might have attempted suicide. It's important to the family, because of our faith and do I say this, —because of the pending insurance policy, that we are able to demonstrate foul play here. Of course, paramount to any of this, we would like to see justice done and the murderer held accountable for this, this..." she suddenly couldn't finish the sentence.

"The family has a suspect, Bill, that warrants some investigation and we will eventually need counsel to take this through the court system on the family's behalf," Paul added. "What does your case load look like?"

"Well," the attorney on the phone pondered. "I'm sure you heard about the Sulfur Phosphate Trials which just wrapped, but other than a few post-decision filings, I'm wide open and would be honoured to help the Morgan Family again."

Paul made a gesture indicative of masturbation to demonstrate the strokes this lawyer was giving them. Eliza was within reach and slapped his hand as well as his imaginary penis knowing from discussions with her sister that he only wished it were that big.

Donald gave his brother-in-law a sick and disgusted look, then broke into a mischievous smile. "Bill, if your schedule will allow, I'd like to make arrangements for you to meet with Paul so that he can bring you up to running speed on this case."

Paul threw his head back mouthing the words *oh man*, before he thought to claim his own schedule was booked for the day. He thumbed frantically through the pages of his pocket appointment book, reminiscent of some annual bank giveaway, and shook his head. "Today's honestly not good for me, Don," he said, puckering up his face in feigned regret.

"What about right here at Two," Eliza pointed to the page, looking past his

shoulder and straight through his make-believe penis.

"Oh, what am I saying? No, Two o'clock is fine for me today." Paul shot her a nasty stare but transformed it into a brown-nosing smile for the company president. If Donald needed a new whipping boy now that Mark had been removed from the picture, Paul would make damn sure it was going to be him.

"We need to make sure this was murder," Banjo blurted out, unable to deviate, even for one procedural moment, from the desired end result, especially when it carried a price tag.

"What Dad means to say," Eliza jumped right in, "is that we have a pretty good idea who did this to mark and we want to make sure than none of the evidence gets mishandled or misinterpreted. As Paul will no doubt effectively explain to you this afternoon, this situation is just a bit touchy for the family. Mark was a homosexual, Bill, and we would prefer to keep that much of this under raps. I don't need to remind you that we are a toy company and that just doesn't play well with parents of small children."

"I completely understand, Eliza. You can count on my utmost discretion. So then, Paul? Shall we meet in the lobby of the Provincial Court House like last time? I hear they have a new espresso cart down there now. —My treat," Tinsel baited the cheapskate.

"That's fine with me. In fact, I'll probably go for a *double* short Americano this time if you're springing. The offer seems to good to waste it on drip coffee."

"Exactly. Well then, thanks everyone for thinking about me. It's always a pleasure to defend the honour of the Morgan Family."

Donald released the line as everyone in the room exchanged an uncertain glance that seemed most unanimous in its observation that their shield of honour may no longer be the mighty deflector it once was.

Under the tutelage of Gilles and in spite of the roving hormones of his determined boyfriend Kyle, Shane dismantled his past and forged a new western image sure to stop the B.C. beasts in their ever-clomping tracks. This renovation included a haircut to rid his head of that look affectionately known in finer gay circles as *hockey player hair*. So the natural auburn curls dropped off at the whim of a number two clipper guard and onto the floor of a barber shop in Gastown. He joined Nautilus on Richards Street and proceeded to drop 18 Winnipeg beef fed pounds from his frame. He slowly weeded out any of the primary colours or more complicated patterns from his wardrobe, paring down to a few select pairs of sadistically worn out jeans and a gaggle of ribbed turtlenecks on the basic black theme. Of course, he maintained a respectable corporate wardrobe in the very back of his closet for job

interviewing and funerals, which Mark's withstanding, he happened to attend a lot of in this age and business of AIDS. Eventually, he began believing that Vancouver was probably his destiny and started to remove the handwritten price tags from the furniture he intended to sell in haste during a West End overnight sale before his freedom flight of desperation back to Manitoba. But that was two months ago and thanks be to the omnipotent Gilles, Shane was manipulated back to his senses. Now, he would either come to own this city or be perpetually indebted to it, but he wasn't going back to *Whip-an-egg*, —or Ottawa or Toronto or Montreal or anyplace else he had once searched for love and purpose only to be dismayed, duped and dumped.

One of the first items on Shane Mullin's agenda, after Gilles' balls to the wall pep talk, was listing with *CanWest Staffing Services* with the hope that he could string temporary employment gigs together until something permanent came along in AIDS services. This strategy worked well and while he worked full time at it, he quickly discovered that those companies hiring temps happened to have tasks that needed done that they couldn't talk any of their permanent staff into doing. The challenge for him became not the work but maintaining the drive and sanity to keep doing it. Economically, his car payment and the eventual need to pay rent, (once Gilles and Kyle decided to kick out their newest charity border), hadn't taken hiatus to grieve the failure of his last relationship, so he decided he was finally through

pouting about it too. After his first temp assignments packaging sports sunglasses, assisting with the dynamics of recording inventory in a cotton swap factory, and telemarketing more products than were on the shelves of *Eaton's* and *The Bay* combined, he broke down and phoned *CanWest* for a position with teeth.

"Hello Donna. It's Shane Mullin."

"Hello Sweetie. How's my employee of the month?" —It was true. Shane had received the distinction of receiving the most customer feedback of any temp employee on the register last month; —not something that would make it to his resume mind you, but there was a trail of satisfied customers nonetheless.

"I'm burning out," he admitted. "Can't you give me something *perma-temp* so that I don't have to drive new places and meet new people every morning? I've started making up outrageous things about myself to tell these people so that I don't totally lose it."

She paused on the phone line, clearly at the end of her day's rope, though it had nothing to do with Shane. "You mean like a real job?" she teased him. He laughed, seeing her point. She removed the post-it note from her telephone. "I do have a client who is looking for a three week commitment..."

"I'll take it!"

"Wait. I have to level with you. I've sent nine temps to this company in the

past four months. They've managed to hire two permanently but the rest have walked out asking to have their names permanently removed from *CanWest*. It's not a cakewalk."

"What's the position?" Shane asked eagerly.

"Executive assistant at a toy manufacturing company—" she waited for him to decline, especially after his sunglasses stint.

"Toys?" Shane asked, more amused than despondent.

"Yes, toys. *Banjo Toys International* headquartered out in Burnaby."

Shane reached for the wallet in his back pocket and rifled through a growing stack of business cards he'd filed there. "Toys." he said again. "*BTI*?" he had located Mark Morgan's business card.

"Yes, why?" Donna asked, fearing the company's reputation had preceded them.

"I've heard of them, that's all." Shane considered how he might actually get away with this as he hadn't actually met any of Mark's family before or at the funeral. So what if it might be a little sick to go hang out in the workplace of a dead date, but he repeated his earlier offer. "I'll take it. I want this job." Besides, they hadn't actually dated.

Incident #91-207871, continued...05/20/91 0830hrs. Det's Hern and Uwajimaya went to Lions Gate Hospital and presented the medical release signed by S. Barry. Medical records were turned over and indicate a diagnosis of SYNCOPE meaning a loss of unconsciousness possibly caused by dehydration or a combination of recreational drugs patient believes he may have consumed at an all night party previous evening which affected blood flow to the brain. (Patient said he maybe took 2 of something the previous night, -maybe a sleeper and maybe a hallucinogen). In discussing possible scenarios with attending physician, it was opined that if patient were under an extraordinary amount of duress or anxiety and not eating and drinking properly as a result, the brain might have indeed shut the body down in order to take care of itself. This is the typical cycle of what is often referred to as an anxiety attack.

0900 hrs. Met at the crime scene with the technicians from the RCMP ID section. They printed numerous areas of concern in the residence including several items in the kitchen. The photo lab responded and took photos of the palm print on the Saab in the garage. Footprints in the carpeted entryway were also photographed after having been protected by paper taped over them.

0910 hrs: Phone call to Paul Tamorin. Informed him that Dr. Catherine Hallock insists on a signed release from a family representative allowing her to talk

to us about the Victim and Scott Barry. He will handle that and see that she gets it. He also informed me that Victim's brother Donald is the executor of the estate. He also mentioned that their records indicate that Scott Barry was heavily in debt, $70,000 according to a recent credit bureau check. He says that the Victim told his hair stylist that he had invested heavily in Scott Barry though at this time is was unknown whether Victim meant financially of physically.

1020hrs: Returned a phone call to Kim Alder. He is a long-haul truck driver and has been a friend of the Victim for about 7 years. He says the last time he talked to Mark was about the first of April. He also says that about a year ago, Mark told him he was considering suicide, and that if he decided to do it, he would take the dog with him, meaning to kill the dog also. He mentioned that he was also aware of the problems between Scott and the Victim, that Mark was Barry's first love affair with another man and that he wasn't oriented sexually as to what he really wanted or who he was.

"What's that?" Detective Uwajimaya practically yelled into the mobile car phone reciever. "A bloody recording saying Barry's number has been disconnected!"

"We just called him at that number yesterday. Certainly not the behaviour of an innocent man. We have a second number for him in the file don't we?"

Roger went through his working file on Barry and then reached for Hern's folder in search of another number. In the meantime, he dialed the old number again to make sure he'd dialed it correctly. Again the recording. "I'll be damned."

Hern pulled into Stanley Park and rounded the first curve toward Second Beach. "You better check your hair. We're going in," he goaded him.

"I'm telling you, Hern. I'm not going in that park at—" he checked his many faceted wrist watch, "at 10:40 in the morning. —on a Monday for Christ's sake! The raccoons aren't even up and around this early."

"But the early bird gets the —"

"Don't you say it!" Uwajimaya held his arm out while he left a message with the service that answered Barry's second number. Hern parked the Mustang, grabbed the appropriate map and left the car to strategize the best trail route on the hood. Roger joined him after his phone call.

"Here's what we do. We split because we'll be too intimidating if we travel as a pair. I'll take Rawling's Trail west to where it joins Lees and you take Bridle Path east to where it meets Cathedral Trail, then double back on Lees and we'll meet somewhere in the middle, unless we're lucky."

"Yeah, luck this time of day will be if we see one other human being in the entire 1,000 acre park." Roger inadvertently placed his hands on his hip affecting a

very effeminate pose.

"That's good," Hern referred to his body language. "Sassy, even."

"Shut-up."

Hern folded up the map and secured the car. "Remember, we're trying to establish behavioral patterns and the frequency of Morgan's visits here. If we come out empty handed, we may have to come back late at night, in the dark," he tried to spook his partner.

"Don't you worry them. I'll get something even if I have to make it up myself. Hey, I just got a couple photos of Morgan this morning before we left the office. I suppose those would help us, wouldn't they."

"We have *Kodak* on this guy? I didn't know that," Hern suddenly realized. He squinted up and into the sun blasting through the tree limbs. The map on the hood had all been show for his partner. Hern had been to Stanley and particularly Lees Trail plenty of times during his vice days on the local police department a few years back. He knew where to look, he knew how to act and he knew how to entrap the homos that came onto him. What he didn't know was how to explain the strange fascination all of this held for him every time he went on the prowl. It was a very predatory sensation that got his adrenaline flowing not only to his brain but into the lower registers as well even arousing him sexually on more than one occasion. He

didn't know whether to chalk it up to some bizarre genetic memory or some latent yearnings from his experimental teens but the experience at once confused and thrilled Elias Hern. He still found it coincidental that his career kept inventing, even accommodating ways for him to continue coming back, to tempt the old growth groves once again. He ran his fingers through his hair. It was time to rattle some bushes.

Roger emerged from the car and handed his partner a copy of a newpaper photograph of the successful Morgan Family that had appeared in a back issue of a business magazine. "There he is," Roger pointed to the moustach-ed man supporting a stuffed superhero, with his fingers ironically positioned between the muscle-defined legs of the male doll. "DeBord had rushed us out of the house so quickly the other night, that we didn't even get to catch a glimpse of who we are working with here. Nice looking fellow though," Roger spoke off the cuff. "Listen to me!" he self-reprimanded. "What would I know?"

The two detectives split up as discussed and Uwajimaya wandered onto the trail somewhat apprehensively. He would never jog this park quite as comfortably as he had before. That was for sure. He couldn't help but think how his gay roommate from UBC six years earlier, would have gotten quite a kick out of the day's assignment if only he could see the big, bad, straight Mountie poking around the

bushes in Stanley Park now. Roger knew he hadn't been overly understanding nor supportive of his best friend in college when he had suddenly decided to drop the charade and switch from sorority girls to frat boys back in the mid-Eighties. They had double-dated a hundred times. His roommate Tyler had even talked chicks into covering for him; some going as far as to start sizzling rumours about how great he was supposed to be in the sack. All that time, Roger felt intimidated by the legend that was Tyler, fearful he wouldn't measure up and might even disappoint him or pale by comparison. But things should have become glacier clear the moment Ty dreamt up, then stubbornly followed through with that first annual *Sigma Tau Delta Greek Streak* during finals week their junior year. But as the requisite Canadian virtues of innocence and naivety went, Uwajimaya knew he had been double blessed by his Japanese landed immigrant parents. It wasn't until the entire frat reached the end of Greek Row, where they had pre-stashed their clothes in the bushes beside the UBC Museum of Anthropology, that Tyler turned to him privately with a full erection and said *don't you see what you do to me?* It had been weeks before Roger agreed to talk about it and even then, Tyler claimed it had actually been the result of running naked through all those girls that excited him and not Roger at all, but by then, Uwajimaya was catching on and managed to pry the truth out of him. They stopped double dating after that.

The Japanese-Canadian detective veered left onto Lees Trail and paused, allowing his feet to set firmly in the mud. He took a giant breath. He should have gone to medical school as his father had instructed him, he thought just then. A few meters down the path he heard twigs break but found it impossible to isolate where the sounds came from within the tall trees and dense brush. Wisps of residual morning fog had been imprisoned inside the vertically barred cage that was fashioned from hundreds of stories-tall cedars, some growing out of the abbreviated tops of others and some reaching taller than the encroaching apartment buildings not far from there in the more established sector of the West End, north of Denman Street. A raccoon scampered onto the trail to investigate the visitor but quickly determined Uwajimaya was not food-bearing and vanished down the slight, mossy embankment on the other side. There was a whistle, distinctly human, and the detective caught a glimpse of a bald man, early fifties, crouched beside a fallen and decaying tree. In that second of recognition, the older man raised his forehead in a propositioning gesture and motioned Uwajimaya over to where he balanced nearly camouflaged, on the backs of his own legs. The reserved Mountie looked both ways on the trail and saw nobody, momentarily forgetting that this particular forest was purported to have eyes *and* hands. He walked toward the man who raised to the detective's height and smiled somewhat nervously before turning to disappear through a doorway in the

brush. Uwajimaya thought that behaviour odd and stood there not knowing whether to follow him into the trees or to remain on the trail. His police training told him to pursue cautiously with drawn weapon, but that seemed a bit drastic given the circumstances and the word *weapon* seemed open to a variety of interpretations at the moment. There was a *pssst*, and the bald man, looking remarkably like one of the prominent citizens of *Munchkin Land*, displayed his insistent face. Uwajimaya felt as though he had come to the magical entrance of some troll world deep within the forest and caught himself, almost enchantingly. His very next thought was that the whole RCMP detachment was concealed behind some duck blind having the ass laugh of their careers at his expense.

"Look," he said in a normal speaking voice. "I don't know what—"

"Shhh! Shhh! Keep your voice down. Word has it there might be a cop working the other end of the trail.

Uwajimaya straightened his posture and nearly gave away a grin. "Word has it?" he whispered, intrigued.

"Didn't you just hear that whistle a short while ago?" The undercover detective nodded his head and slightly furrowed his brow. "That traveled all the way from Second Beach. It's code. When the trill goes up on the end, there might be a cop working the east end of the trail. You'll remember it by sun-up in the east, sun-

down in the west. It's the same with the whistle code. Are you from out of town then?" The old man smiled sincerely, clasping his hands in front of him, as though he had been ordained responsible for the newcomer's park orientation series.

"Why don't you leave the park if you think there's a cop working it?" Uwajimaya needed to know.

"If there is a copy now, he's clear down on the south end," the bald man smacked his lips as he spoke, likely indicative of a loose dental bridge. "Besides, when you hear a whistle, you know not to make the first move on someone. It's not illegal for a citizen to be in the park, to climb a tree, to feed the raccoons. If there is a whistle, you just know not to touch first, that's all. There, now I've given you all our secrets." The man eyed his catch up and down with a certain gleam in his eyes.

"So let me understand this. Since we both heard the whistle. —if you don't make the first move and I don't make the first move, aren't we at an impasse?"

"Not necessarily," he smiled broadly.

"I see," Uwajimaya said, tucking his hand inside his windbreaker pocket and extracting his Mountie credentials. "Whistle and I'll shoot you in the foot." This time, it was Detective Uwajimaya who had the gleam in his eyes. He was much more comfortable being a Mountie than he ever was being himself. "I don't care what you're doing here. I'm not here to arrest anybody. I just want to know if you can

identify the man in this photograph." The detective unfurled the newspaper photo of the *BTI* executives. Initially, though somewhat reluctantly, the bald man pointed to Paul Tamorin in the picture.

"He might look a little familiar to me actually. What's he done?" the old man asked.

"No, not him! This one," the detective corrected him pointing to Mark in the three person grouping.

"Nah, can't say as I do," he smacked again.

"All right then." Uwajimaya refolded the photo and tucked it back inside his jacket. "Oh," he thought to mention as he turned to walk away, " —thank you for the information on the whistle code. It has a few glitches you might want to work out amongst yourselves." Uwajimaya smiled at the bald man and rejoined the trail feeling much more in control of the environment and his situation in it. He continued on his appointed way. Not more than 50 feet further, he spotted a large man dressed entirely in what looked like black motorcycle riding leather, leering at him from the top of a stump at the trail's edge. As Uwajimaya drew closer, the man revealed a smile from under a daunting moustache in the shadow of his leather cap brim. The detective kept walking.

"Hey *Mister-I'm-in-a-rush*," the man said in a deep baritone voice. "What's

your big hurry?"

Uwajimaya glanced back at the man but didn't speak as he kept, maybe even quickened his pace some.

"Hey, Daddy don't bite," he chuckled aloud as the tight-ass Japanese detective made tracks down the trail.

Detective Uwajimaya decided he wasn't *that* much in control after all.



Wednesday, May 22, 1991

Shane Mullin checked his hair in the rear-view mirror of his 1980 Toyota LandCruiser. What there was to check since he'd lobbed it all off, didn't amount to much more than a centimeter or two brushed into a perfect flat top, but he was still particular about his appearance; something he hadn't yet factored off his list of prairie habits to break. The more worry-free and less encumbered he could become, according to his handlers, the more his raw attributes would stand out and get noticed. Shane didn't know how much raw-er he could become without letting himself go completely, but apparently that was the plan. He played along. Gilles claimed he usually wasn't wrong about such things and Shane knew enough not to doubt him, to his face anyway.

Pulling into the parking lot at *BTI*, he suddenly realized he had gotten cold

feet about the whole issue of entering Mark Morgan's former domain. He hadn't even been able to tell Gilles he was so nervous about it. He didn't normally think of himself as superstitious or easily spooked, but this bothered him. He'd known dozens of men who had died in the past but he hadn't exactly had the opportunity to climb inside their former lives and poke around. Shane supposed the fact that Mark represented a missed opportunity for him as they had never actually gotten around to that date they had spoken about, provided an irresistible lure; —that and the chance he might actually gain prime information first that *he* could share with Gilles, the undisputed *Master of Espionage*, took him right up to the front steps of the corporate headquarters and through the front doors.

"Hello, my name is Shane from *CanWest* and I'm here to see..."

"Paul Tamorin?" the receptionist ventured a guess and buzzed upstairs.

Shane was shown to his desk by his cubicle neighbour, Jackie, who sat him directly across from a closed office door with yellow police trespass tape. When she caught him staring at the door, she entered his cubicle and knelt down to whisper to him.

"I don't know if I should be telling you this on your first day but," she paused long enough to have a second thought, before dismissing it, "Mark Morgan, who used to work in that office, died last week. "Well, actually, and you didn't hear this from

me," she bargained parenthetically, "—we think he was murdered." She closed her eyes, not so much out of reverence as she did out of a need for high dramatics. Shane's eyes grew large and she nodded her head as a sort of verification that I'd heard her correctly. "Murder," she whispered again. "He's still getting phone calls so I just take messages saying that he's not available until someone tells me otherwise. You should do the same thing. This is your phone. Have you worked this type before?"

Shane nodded. After a month with *CanWest* a temp-er had pretty much seen every type of phone and photocopier made. She left him to fend for himself, even though she was only inches away through the cubicle wall. For an hour, Shane just sat there, staring at the door across from his desk and daydreaming about the date with Mark Morgan that had been as doomed as he was. He had thought about calling him after that first meeting in *The Underground* but Shane preferred to think he could raise his interest and the stakes involved if he didn't race after him. Mark Morgan was hardly a man without resources. He could have called Shane, getting his number from Gilles, if he tired of waiting. In the end, Shane had to realize that Mark probably wasn't the type that waited around for someone to call. —Mark Morgan, it turns out, couldn't wait around at all.

Jerrie opened her middle desk drawer to pop another icing sugar donut from the mini-pack of a dozen she had smuggled in there. She was tired lately. Her teenage kids had rebelled, she was up to her knee-highs in puppy-doo, and her only reason for punching a time card day after day, was to exchange innuendo-loaded flirtations with Elias Hern. But it wasn't adding up. She had been challenged by the secretarial pool to lose ten pounds by the first of June to boost her self image and she'd gained four. She dropped hints to Elias, even bought double tickets to events on the off chance he'd break down and attend one of them with her, but he was cut and dry when it came to work and after work. *Very tricky that one*, she realized. He never really stopped working as far as she could tell and that made it difficult for her to gauge his availability, never mind his moods and interests. She wolfed another donut vowing to make it the very last one and if she shed the fourteen pounds as she'd been challenged, she was going to pin Elias Hern down to the mat and ask him straight out if he'd consider going out with her. *As if that was ever going to happen.* She thought again and opened the middle drawer.

Just then her *objet d'art* strutted into view and plopped a file and a cassette tape on her desk top. "Barry just flunked his polygraph," Hern announced. "I need this transcribed ASAP. We may be able to bring him up on charges this afternoon." Her calendar boy was pumped full of some adrenalin-testosterone cocktail as yet

another *homicide-solved* began to edge its way onto his personal statistics page. Her desire for him at that precise moment was nearly unbearable. She felt sweaty and dizzy and flush all at once. He leaned down on muscular forearms and stretched his chiseled face across her desk top. Her mouth opened slightly as if this were the long-awaited prelude to their courtship. She had always sensed he felt the madness between them too.

"Jerrie, are you doing cocaine?" he whispered in a concerned, almost official tone. He brushed her upper lip showing her the powdery result of his inspection on his fingertip. She felt then she might faint in embarrassment. When she didn't faint and Elias still swayed there in front of her, she abandoned fainting and prayed she'd die on the spot instead. When words didn't assemble the way they should, she slowly opened the middle drawer to reveal her stash.

"Do you care to join me in a line——of icing sugar donuts?" she finally asked. Hern reached into her desk drawer and stuffed two at a time into his smiling mouth.

"Listen," he leaned in again. "I have another favor to ask and I realize I'm pushing it, but I need this request for reassignment typed and I'd appreciate keeping it just between us for now. If you're up to it, maybe we can stop out for lunch later this week and I can explain why I need to get out of this racket, but in the meantime, I need to get this on DeBord's desk as soon as I can."

"Lunch?" she asked almost in a daze as though she hadn't even heard or processed the news that he wanted to leave. "I'd like that," she accepted, taking the forms from his outstretched hand.

"You've been so good to me," he reflected. "Maybe we'll make it dinner instead."

"And a movie," she negotiated, going for broke. Once he'd walked away she took the remaining package of donuts and threw them in her trash. She might not ever eat again if he were actually leaving. She wouldn't have a reason to come to work, that much was for sure. Things weren't adding up for her just now. She inserted the cassette and began typing her life away...

Incident #91-207871, Continued. 052291 1300hrs: Barry in for his polygraph. I had prior discussion about the case with the polygraph operator in which we discussed what questions he should ask. The basics were: 1. Did you hit Mark in the head or face? 2. When you left Mark's house, did you leave him in the garage? These are the issues that would be of no surprise to the subject. Barry answered no to both questions during the exam. When the test was finished, detective Taylor called me and informed me that Scott Barry had failed the test, that he had every reason to believe he had been deceptive with his answers. He had not

yet informed him of the results. When we confronted Barry, he expressed surprise about not passing the test, had no explanation as to why he didn't. We took him to the third floor where he was printed (major case prints). We then interviewed him again. He insists that there was no confrontation between him and Mark. He did not hit Mark, nor did Mark hit him. He said it was a pleasant evening and there was no violence, then or ever between them. He says Mark did tell him that he was to inherit 3 to 5 million dollars, that the amount depended on whether or not anyone would be able to locate his cousin. He says he would not be surprised to find that Mark was playing another head game with him about that. Suspect was released pending further information.

Det's Hern and Uwajimaya went to the office of Dr. Catherine Hallock. The original RCMP medical release form as signed by Scott Bary was given to her. Dr. Hallock had already received written permission from Donald Morgan to release any information regarding Mark. Dr. Hallock stated that she had been treating Mark since January, 1991. That Morgan had been referred to her by Dr. Eve Thompson. Mark had been a weekly patient until recently which was more frequent. He would contact her in person or by phone. Dr. Hallock informed Det's that Morgan was open about his sexuality which caused problems with his family. That his main goal was to find the perfect male which his family could accept. Dr. Hallock last saw

Morgan eight days prior to his death and that he had an appointment to see her on 051591. Dr. Hallock informed Det's that the victim had talked about suicide on several occasions. Further, that if he were to take his own life, the method of suicide would be carbon monoxide poisoning because there would be no pain. Dr. Hallock confirmed suicidal tendencies with Dr. E. Thompson. Dr. Hallock stated Morgan would fantasize about his own funeral wondering who would come and how they would feel. Morgan believed that Scott could be the man he could spend the rest of his life with and would buy him gifts (car, leather jacket, down comforter, Rolex watch, trips and dinner, etc.) That during their relationship they came into the office for a joint interview on 042591. During this interview, Scott expressed his emotions for Mark and stated that he did want to make the relationship work. Later that same day, Scott contacted Dr. Hallock and requested a private session with her next day. At this time, he told Dr. Hallock that he wanted out of the relationship and that he was afraid of Mark. That he was fearful that Mark would talk about him and the relationship they had (revealing the homosexual aspect) and that Morgan would threaten to commit suicide. Scott was adamant about getting out of the relationship. Dr. Hallock informed him that he had to be honest and up front with Morgan, that the mind games between them were not healthy. Dr. Hallock understood that on 042691 Scott and Mark got together and talked out their relationship. That during

that weekend she received numerous calls from Mark who seemed to work his way through the situation. At one of the last sessions, Mark called himself a "whore dog" for going out and having anonymous sex with so many people. Dr. Hallock was informed of the last known meetings between Scott and Mark (051191 and 051491) and of the details of the meetings. She was informed of the cause of death and the injuries Mark had received. Dr. Hallock hypothesized that in Mark's emotional state (his emotions for Scott and the desire to make the relationship work) that if they were involved in a physical/verbal situation, it could trigger a suicide response.

Went to the scene at 1115 Marine Drive and was met by Mr. Bob Horrigan from B.C. Alarm Company. The family of the victim had requested he check the system and re-set the alarm to a new code. Horrigan said the system was working properly and the new alarm code is 3687-ENTER.

While at the scene, Bernie Reynolds from Province Towing arrived at the house as requested by Paul Tamorin. Reynolds changed the batteries in the cars and got them running without problem. The gas gauge in the SAAB read full. The needle was exactly on the line that marks "full." The gas gauge on the Wagoneer read 5/12 of a tank. Mr. Reynolds was not surprised the cars still had gas. He said it would not be unusual for the engines to choke out and stall under the described

conditions.

Mr. Tamorin then arrived at the scene with family lawyer Bill Tinsel. The key to the home was given to Mr. Tamorin and the VPD Varda alarm was removed. While at the house, Mr. Tamorin requested we fingerprint the dog access door in the garage. The door was taken by Det's and placed into evidence for print exam. On the kitchen floor, Tamorin pointed out a blue pharmaceutical marked "UPJOHN-17" next to the refrigerator. The Physician's Desk Reference was checked and the tablet is HALCION which is a hypnotic used commonly as a sleeping pill. Tablet placed into evidence. Home returned to custody of the family.

Went to Medical Examiner's Office where ME Seigel reviewed autopsy findings. Of interest is the victim's blood toxicology which again received negative readings for alcohol. Pathological diagnoses are listed as asphyxia due to carbon monoxide with scattered cutaneous bruises over the head, extremities, and trunk with bilateral per-orbital ecchymoses and laceration of the skin of the right zygoma. The autopsy also lists 27 indicators of external injury and four indicators of internal injury unrelated to the asphyxia. ME opines that victim either experienced an altercation with a suspect, self-inflicted these injuries or sustained them as a result of a fall or falls that may have occurred the night of the asphyxiation. Of interest, oral and anal swabs revealed no spermatozoa.

Jerrie turned off the Dictaphone at that point, retrieved a donut from the top of her trash can and couldn't help but think how this victim had been no more lucky than she'd been lately. And now with her *Elias* chomping at the bit to get out of Dodge, and Mark Morgan six feet under, it didn't look as though this drought spell was about to change for either of them.

The phone on Shane's desk rang and he answered it. His new boss had been out of the office most of his first day and a neat little stack of messages sat at the edge of his redecorated desk. "*Banjo Toys International,* Paul Tamorin's office, this is Shane." He adjusted the telephone to match the same angle he had positioned everything else. "No, I'm sorry, he's out of the office this afternoon. —No, I can take a message but I don't have a cell phone number for him. Can I tell him who phoned? I understand that your call is urgent, but Mr. Tamorin—" Shane thought he heard somebody in the background yell for *Scott* and the phone clicked. The caller was gone. Shane wrote the name down on a message slip with a question mark. Maybe it would mean something to his boss.

Mark's father had walked past Shane's desk a dozen times, smiling each time but making no effort to introduce himself or ask his name. Jackie had been pretty good about putting names with faces for him but so far, he'd only met Mark's brother

Donald and his own boss, Paul, as he flew out the door. Jackie swooped around the corner to sit on the edge of his desk now, displacing the stack of messages and altering the angle of the phone; minor points, he supposed, but when it was all he'd had to work on for eight hours, he had invested a disproportionate amount of pride to have it all undone by one unwelcome thigh.

"Feel like a walk? I could show you the warehouse," she offered or she flirted, Shane wasn't quite sure.

"What about the phones?" he asked responsibly.

"Lanni can grab 'em. It's almost quitting time anyway. I got you a badge and everything." She extended the laminated card with the pocket clip on one end.

"We need badges? How big is this place?"

"It's not how big, it's how paranoid. Come on, I'll show you."

Shane straightened the phone and message stack and caught up to her.



Monday, June 3, 1991

Nearly two weeks into a three week suburban incarceration smack dab in the middle of beautiful, downtown Burnaby, Shane felt as though he were clearly serving a temporary penal sentence in gentile humility. The Morgan's had made it very clear that though circumcised, he was nothing at all like them. For starters, he didn't wallow in money. Okay, so he spotted that distinction for himself early on during the course of that first week. He supposed in the everyday corporate jungle and at first glance, money or the lack thereof would not have automatically separated him from the pack as the weaker and lessor of two species, but undeniably his position beneath the lowest rung on the hierarchical ladder at *BTI* as the assistant to Paul Tamorin might as well have classified him in the gastropod family and tied his butt (or a slug's equivalent posterior side) to the chair just inside the perpetually agitated salt shaker

they called his cubicle. And each time Paul beckoned him *come hither* it was always the same..."Uh— (and he'd try to come up with his difficult-to-remember name) —Shane, can you come in here please?" and a little salt would sprinkle down on his sensitive membrane skin and he'd disintegrate just a bit more.

He began this week at *BTI*, the last in a masochistically self-serving foray into the eventual world of gainful employment, with a new outlook and a bare bones objective to learn as much dirt as he could about the Mark Morgan Murder. Sure, his ulterior motive was to get back in Gilles Eiswine's good, but oftentimes fickle, graces —especially after that compromising incident where Gilles had caught Kyle visiting the guest futon in the living room, the shock of which had accelerated Shane's search for an apartment to call his own. That latest transgression against the sanctified church of omnipotence which, in the West End for everyday survival purposes, *was* Gilles, called for a sacrifice just this side of human and Shane struggled to uncover the *Holy Grail* of gossip on the Mark Morgan investigation. Appeasing Gilles, despite the allegation from his boyfriend that Shane had been the innocent victim of his sleep-tricking, was not going to be easy and frankly he didn't have a swastika's chance of showing up on a gay pride parade float, that he'd win him back entirely, but Gilles was his only friend of consequence and he had to try.

Shane could safely say, inside two weeks, that he found Paul Tamorin to be

a sloppily drawn caricature of all things bad in Corporate Canada; —greed, deceit, ego, bank accounts, car keys, eyes, nose, mouth... All right so maybe all those executive types seemed exactly alike to the lowly slugs caught in the shadow of their impending path of destruction but Tamorin had mutated. The experiment had gone bad and probably should have been responsibly aborted by someone in control long before now, but the family had allowed this monster to dwell among them. After all, what was one more mouth (with seventy rows of jagged incisors) to feed anyway? Needless to say, Shane was confident that with only one week of sleuthing to his credit, he had at least uncovered the secret location of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. "*BTI* Good Morning, Paul Tamorin's office—"

The daily routine was unyieldingly painful. The sporadic ringing of his cubicle telephone was the only reliable human intervention he could hope for, which incidently managed to keep him upright and seemingly coherent without letting him drift off into some irretrievable boredom-induced bender for the greater part of the day. For the most part, he arrived promptly at eight, unlocked Tamorin's office door, turned on his lights (though nobody was home, —literally and figuratively) then sat at his desk and read Tamorin's entire *Globe and Mail* without lending it that annoying already-read-look. Jackie was usually the next human to arrive around half past eight and she flew in the executive offices predictably late, (also due on the clock at eight)

and fluttered in place for thirty or forty seconds in front of Shane's cubicle, just long enough for him to pry the remnants of some day old rumour like a half-digested earthworm from her chirping beak to sustain him for the next several hours of the day. This morning, no doubt fresh from a frenzied weekend spent on her phone tree, she blurted out that the murder suspect may have been Mark's ex-boyfriend. *Well who didn't know that already,* he wondered nearly aloud. There wasn't a queen in all the West End that hadn't split-leap to that daring conclusion two weeks ago.

"Kim downstairs on the PBX board said that Mark's ex-boyfriend was actually here at *BTI* the afternoon of the murder." Just then Jackie's phone extension rang. "Gotta fly," she announced not so metaphorically. "Don't breathe a word of this," she reminded him over the top of the fabric upholstered wall that separated them. She was so naive. Humans couldn't keep secrets and she of all people should have had enough daily experience in gossip trafficking to know better. Shane had always believed it to be a physiological limitation that they simply could not carry the weight of a secret and that it fell to their instinctual obligation to immediately tell at least one other person to automatically reduce this unquestionable burden at least by half. You can bet that *PBX-Kim*, in confiding to Jackie, had recited the same warning *not to repeat this to anyone*. Poor Jackie couldn't make it up the steps and down the hall before the sheer strain on her wish-bone forced her to un-clutch the nugget into

Shane's outstretched wheelbarrow.

"Good Morning, Shane." Paul nearly glistened with morning cheer like some glazed donut Shane wanted to gobble up whole until he paused to consider the fat and preservative content that would leave him acidic and generally miserable for hours to come. Paul was not an unattractive man and by snooping through the family files, Shane had learned Paul was only two years older than he was, though he already had four perfect children, three from his wife's first marriage, and a gazillion dollars to his young credit to raise them all in pampered indulgence. He had great dark hair, brown eyes that occasionally crossed in a lazy stigmatism and a dimple-n-perfect-teeth combination that began to explain his superficial success in business, at least with the lady clients. He was slightly overweight in a classic though stereotypic Jewish way that pronounced his waist, ass and hips as the widest median of his body that included a square head, sled-down sloped shoulders, stubby fingered hands (with gnawed off nails), the aforementioned mid section that practically qualified for it's own weather system and short legs connected to ankles that were attached to the smallest of man feet Shane had ever seen. He could have easily passed as the official *D'anjou Pear* mascot, had it not represented an infringement of licensing rights, which coincidently, would have fallen under his legal jurisprudence as corporate counsel for *BTI*.

Paul would characteristically shuffle papers for the first twenty minutes of his

day which on top of his desk amounted to a formidable land-slide threat. Shane regularly imagined his boss suddenly buried by a shift in the plates that would one day result from one shelf of correspondence and memos slamming into and up-heaving another shelf of telephone messages and discarded mail. And there he'd be, rifling through the roladex on his desk for the dispatch number of a local St. Bernard rescue team or perhaps he'd ask Jackie if she cared to join him for a mid-morning vending machine soda in the break-room, depending on his perceived sense of urgency at the given moment.

It would not be difficult for Shane to shine amidst such infantile chaos though he was tragically over-qualified and over-principled for this assignment. He realized that he had an opportunity to make the Morgans drool over his skills and organizational sense. This, he could easily demonstrate even though in their eyes he may have appeared to run a deficit in personal affluence, he could more than compensate for it with untold class; —something they couldn't license, buy, takeover or knock-off in their cheap factories in the Orient. But did he have the energy to make this personal statement in three weeks time? It would depend on what Shane could get out of this arrangement; a stipend, to be sure, but the true test of his endurance would be driven by his appetite for information, intrigue and suspense.

Maybe what Gilles had said was true and Mark Morgan *was* dying to date him.

Shane found it tragically unfortunate that he failed to realize this until Mark was dead, but rather than let that connection go, he realized that if there was a story there, he could endure. It was as ravenous and bone-picking as all that. Shane would like to have thought of myself as a vigilante caught up in the tattered social fabric of his generation. He would have liked to think of himself as a lot of things aside from being 30, single, functionally homeless and working a temporary stint for millionaire heathens, hostage inside a Jewish toy company. *Okay boys, roll in the cliché*, he thought. *There's got to be more to life...*

"...than this, don't you think?" Paul and Donald emerged from Mark's sealed office with an armful of dress clothes. "I mean, this doesn't seem like evidence to me," Donald whispered, unloading his bundle on the edge of Shane's desk. Paul shot him a confidential reprimand and he scurried off to his president's office.

"Uh, —Shane? Can you find a plastic bag for these? I need to leave for an appointment in about twenty minutes. You can put the bag in my office when you're through."

"Sure," his temporary assistant answered ever so obediently. Paul walked down the hall toward the accounting department as he stared at the heap of laundry on his desk. Suddenly he felt his eyes were not alone and he jerked his head around to catch Jackie on what must have been her tip-toes, gawking over the cubicle wall.

Those were Mark's clothes, she mouthed silently. He stood against the wall and she upgraded to a whisper. "Mark used to change his clothes here every night before leaving for the gym." Her brown eyes grew inhumanly large.

"Jackie! Can I see you in here for a minute?" Banjo warbled and Jackie jumped.

"Certainly, Mr. Morgan." *Bye*, she lipped to him with a quick raise of her eyebrows.

Shane sat back down and proceeded to remove the fresh trash liner from his waste basket. He placed the dress shoes in the bottom of the bag before making demonstrative folding efforts with the two piece suit which allowed his hands to slip inside each of the pockets. Forget the cat in the body bag, curiosity was about to get the best of Shane too. From the first trouser pocket he managed to extract a Petro Canada slip and from the other a credit card receipt from...he turned it right side up to read the name, *—Picasso's Cafe...05/14/91...13:45...$14.75* plus a three dollar grat. He jotted down the information on his notepad including the address of *1626 West Broadway* and guided the receipt deep into the pocket. He wondered if $14.75 represented lunch for one or lunch for two. He tied a loose knot with the ends of the plastic bag and walked it into Paul's office before the sudden, crawling urge to clean his hands sent him down the hall to the washrooms.

Elias Hern emerged from the *Starbucks* not more than a kilometer from RCMP headquarters. He'd spent another night at *The Green Door* huddled over a cauldron of hot and sour soup that had almost added hair to his chest if not years to his face from lack of sleep. It had been a full week since he'd submitted his request for re-assignment to Constable Detective DeBord. His superior had virtually laughed off the first request until Hern had expressed his frustrations, his fears, — his faith. Even he had to admit it was awfully late for the one time alter boy to have found religion, but Elias had become meditative with his prayers lately and had strengthened his personal relationship with the church and with God. Something was telling him that there were bigger, more intrinsically valuable things in life than being *Number Two* in a series of seven. He had to get out of the force. He suddenly felt the walls of the RCMP closing in on him and simultaneously sensed the hand of God reaching through the ceiling to lift him out of the crushing mess he'd made of his life. He'd made a career of disregarding conventional thought, disobeying superiors and taking risks with his life, but he couldn't ignore God, because now, that was all he had left.

"Uh, —Shane?"

"Yes, Paul."

"Uh, —could you come in here a minute?" Shane rolled his eyes which was

a cynically nasty habit to have developed so quickly, and walked into the heathen's office. "I have a favor and let me know if you had other plans, but we uh, have a family meeting tonight down the hall in the conference room that I think I'm going to need you for. If I gave you two to three hours of this afternoon, do you think you could come back her tonight at 7:00 for a couple of hours? We shouldn't run any later than nine-thirty." He raised a finger to his mouth and began deforestation of his multiple hang nails.

"Sure," Shane answered without really thinking. "That's not a problem."

"Gre-e-at!" Paul sounded so insincere. "It will give you a chance to meet Erin and the kids. You know Erin just goes on and on about how pleasant you are to speak with on the telephone. She says that hands down, you give the best phone she's ever heard."

"I give the best phone?" he scrunched up his face for clarification.

"That's what she says. Trust me. She has never been happy with anyone I've hired so this is a major break-through for me." He aimlessly moved a few papers from one stack to another, almost sure to trigger the avalanche he'd been waiting for. "Okay, then. Uh, say, why don't you take your lunch now and uh, just come back a little before seven then."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Go! Have a great afternoon. I'll see you tonight." Paul flashed a transparent smile that should have revealed hang-nail debris in his teeth as obvious as *spinach florentine* but Shane looked away already unsettled by the man's nervous mannerisms.

Back at his cubicle, packing up his brief case, he figured then was as good a time as any to launch his own parallel investigation into the death of Mark Morgan. It seemed crazy to keep all that ancient *Hardy Boys* mystery solving experience locked up inside his cranial closet. Besides, it would help the final week sail past and it wouldn't be long now before he could get on with the real world aspects of his new *make or break* existence in LotusLand. He fully expected at least one of two interviews in the coming week to yield an offer he couldn't refuse so in the meantime he figured he'd *work a few clues, get to know the Jews, —what was there to lose? Hey, might even make the news*, —or take up poetry.

Picasso Cafe was wedged along the south side of West Broadway between a cake decorating bakery and a barber shop, nearly in the middle of nowhere except for the fact that downtown loomed like a giant pin cushion just the other side of Granville Bridge. Shane found meter parking within half a block, jumped out of his truck, a dirty white 1980 Land Cruiser, tossed on his suit jacket which was a throw back to his more stylish days and jay-walked across four lanes of traffic to arrive at

his destination. He stepped inside an empty dining room and double-checked his watch simultaneously clearing his throat for attention. But nobody responded. He busied himself by glancing through a menu laying open on top of a podium and was about to deduct that $14.75 might have fed two people when a woman's voice startled him from behind.

"Well, well, well Stranger. We missed you around here the last few weeks," she said just as Shane turned to face her. "Oh," she giggled awkwardly. "I'm sorry. I thought for a second that you were somebody else, -one of our regulars." Shane half smiled, closing the menu. "Just one for lunch today," she tried to recover.

"Just me," he admitted, somewhat curious about her regular customer. "Should I be flattered or insulted that I look like somebody else?"

"Ah—" she giggled again, pulling the hair off her face. "How do I get out of this one? Let's see, flattered I think. Yes, definitely flattered," she decided. "Though you don't have a moustache and now that I see you plainly, you really look nothing like who I thought you were." She suddenly remembered to release the menu she had carried with her. "It's just that we don't get too many nice looking suits for late lunch this early in the week." She smiled and waited to be released or engaged or something.

"Oh so now it's my suit that should be flattered?"

"Oh, go on!" she laughed. "Can I bring you some wine?"

"This regular," he ignored her offer, "was his name Mark by any chance?"

"Yes," she shot back. "You know Mark?"

"Yes, I —do," he struggled with tense. "So he comes here often?"

"At least twice a week except I haven't seen him around for two weeks at least, maybe more now."

"I see." It was clear this hostess would talk but he would have to give her something in exchange to seal her trust. "What is your name, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Shannon," she said almost eagerly, shifting her weight to the other leg.

"Shannon, Mark is dead," Shane leveled with her. Just then the chef walked from the kitchen into the dining room, saw her talking with him, saw Shane, saw Shane noticing him and seemed to smile as he nervously shuffled the menus in the podium rack for no apparent reason. He caught Shane's eye once more before ducking back into his kitchen.

"He's dead?" Shannon broke decorum and sat at the table with him. Shane nodded his head.

"Do you remember the last time he was in here? It would have been three

weeks ago."

"Sure, I do. He asked for the chef like he always did but it was Stephen's birthday, —May 14th it was."

"You're right," Shane confirmed her recollection against the receipt he had seen. "Do you recall if he ate alone or if anyone was with him?"

"I don't think it would have improved his chances with Stephen if he brought someone else along," she chuckled. "Always came in here alone. Ate like a bird but tipped big."

"When you say he always asked for the chef, what do you suppose he was after?" (As if that question hadn't just been answered by Shane's own appraisal of the handsome man in the white, vertical collared coat with black buttons).

"I guess what every gay man is after," she answered quite matter-of-fact.

"And what's that," he queried her obvious expertise in the matter.

"A date, that's what. Hell, it's what we're all after frankly." She giggled and patted Shane's hand. Her face suddenly returned to somber. "I can't believe he's dead."

"Look, my name is Shane and —" she cut me off.

"And you want to meet the chef too, I take it?"

Shane was afraid he couldn't conceal his proprietary interest and blushed

slightly. "And," he repeated through a give-away smile, "I was a friend of Mark's. Well, an acquaintance really and I am just trying to piece together a few of the details about the day he was killed. There was a credit card receipt from Picasso's in his suit pocket." As Shane laid out more than he probably should have to this restaurant hostess he realized he was every bit as bad as Gilles. He supposed that until he could claim that he was every bit as *good* as Gilles, he still had some more rookie footwork to do. But perhaps this rumour monger-ing was a bit like investments and one had to spend money to make it.

"Killed? Oh my God," she gasped. "Let me get you a nice glass of Chablis. I'll be right back." In a twirl of her calf length dress she vanished around the corner giving Shane a chance to survey his surroundings. He could overhear her talking behind the cloth wall that separated him from the kitchen and leaned to examine the antique toasters along the shelf in order to hear even better.

"No that's not him," he heard the hostess whisper. Then a man's voice responded.

"I was gonna say if that's the guy you've been going on about you should have kicked my butt out into the dining room long before now."

"Shhh, your voice carries!" she reprimanded him.

"Wait!" he volleyed.

"Here we are. On the house," she added, gliding around the corner. "There is no better wine than wine that's on the house. That's what I always say." She smiled graciously and plopped right back down at the table. Shane must have looked startled by her degree of comfort with him because she bounced right back up. "Can I get the kitchen started on something for lunch?" Now she looked as though she felt she may have been too familiar and he moved to counter that perception.

"You're fine sitting there. Now help me decide between the Manicotti and the Full Caesar," Shane commanded.

"Oh my God!" she exclaimed again. "That's exactly what *he* used to order. I'll be right back." Another twirl, more whispers. Shane checked his hair in the chrome of an adjacent toaster and awaited her certain return. *So Mark was actually casing this place because of the chef* he pondered. He questioned if Gilles knew anything about the chef, if perhaps that was where Mark had gotten his tip to check him out in the first place. Perhaps Shannon would come through for him with an introduction so he could walk away from Picasso's with more than he had snooped for and suddenly maybe this had nothing to do with Mark's death at all. He could almost accept that as an appropriate consolation prize after losing out with Mark. He sipped his wine purposefully.

Shannon popped her head around the cloth wall and smiled. A young guy and maybe his girlfriend walked in the front door and the hostess shrieked in recognition. "Adam, Darling, you've come home to mama!" She transversed the dining room to embrace what must have been an ex-employee, chewing on something from the kitchen en route. As they hugged Shane watched her pick briefly at her teeth and had to smile straight into his wine glass, looking away. She was not a small woman. —He thought *big-boned* might be the term used these days. Her hair was now pulled back from her round face and held in place by an elastic fabric band. She had eyes that were constantly moving as though they needed to note the minutest of details in order for her brain to make any sense of the situation. In a man's head those same eyes would have been shifty, but with Shannon, they were sensitive, almost empathic and definitively intense. Shane could somehow sense that she was a very disarming woman, able to give others the impression that they were the most pressing interest in her life at that moment regardless of the personal disasters she had to put on hold to accommodate them. It was no wonder to Shane whyMark Morgan spent so much time in there. Whether she did or not, Shannon made a person feel that she cared. Some might say this was the quintessential quality and watermark of a *fag-hag*. Shane had always allowed those endowed with this mantle to wear it and wear it well because, honestly, he didn't know where he'd be without the straight women

comrades who had fought along side him in the trenches and ghettos of gay life? Shannon's warmth and personality made him miss them now, —quite possibly for the first time since leaving Winnipeg.

She seated the *Adam-couple* and pulled a chair from an adjacent table and sat down with them, once again, —making them feel as though they were the most important people in her life at that moment, even though Shane's food, (and he wasn't even entirely sure what he had ordered anyway), was probably sitting under a crusty old heat lamp somewhere in the back. He tipped his wine glass to empty the last of its contents when the chef of the hour scooted around the corner with a plate in each hand earmarked for his table. He placed a mini-version of the Caesar Salad on the right with a piping hot casserole dish of manicotti on the left. "It's not good if it isn't hot," he offered shyly. *You're telling me?* Shane nearly blurted out, looking as deeply into the large blue eyes of the chef as he was allowed to wade in public.

"Thank you," he somehow managed his mother tongue. *No wonder Mark Morgan spent so much time here*, he repeated in his head.

"Hey," Shannon protested from across the room. "You know you aren't allowed out here among the humans," she shooed the chef back from Shane's table for which he could have easily maimed a fag-hag. The chef turned into her ear and whispered rather loudly.

"Yeah, well evidently nobody is allowed to work out here either because I never see anyone doing it." He turned back to Shane. "Enjoy your lunch —and the complimentary floor show," he emphasized. Shane smiled, which seemed a decent trade on his instincts which would have been to openly molest him until he broke.

"Don't worry, he'll be back. He thinks he likes you," Shannon confided after he'd disappeared..

"And on what does he base this?" Shane made a couple of fork cuts in the manicotti to release some heat. She boldly reached across the table for a chunk of romaine from his plate and began explaining one of her many theories, licking the dressing from her fingers.

"Stephen is somewhat complicated but he seems to believe he can size somebody up from the outside before he's ever gotten the chance to explore what's on the inside." She was eyeing his salad plate and thought this time to ask permission. "May I?" He smiled, pushing the plate more within her reach. "The complicated part about Stephen is that he's too stubborn to realize that this gamble probably accounts for ninety-six percent of his failures with men. People aren't what they seem on the outside otherwise I'd easily have twelve dates a night. Do you see what I'm saying?" Shane nodded with a suspicious smile. "He falls for a hard body and a pretty face and assumes the lug can grow a brain if he doesn't happen to have one at the ready. Well

all I can say is with some of the men I've known, there isn't enough *MiracleGrow* at Monsanto or wherever it's made, to pull off that feat. Are you thirsty. I'm thirsty." She jumped up and disappeared into the kitchen.

He thinks he likes me, Shane repeated silently, hoping the chef wouldn't be disappointed or at least too surprised once he found out he came with a brain. Shannon soon returned nudging an employee toward the Adam-couple. "All my weight staff are in the back room in a life skills seminar right? Well I walked in there and said *whaddya think I am, a waitress?* They all shouted *NO-O* very sardonically in unison. Lucky for them I'm not one of those sensitive women prone to breaking down at the first insult." She poured me more wine from the bottle and a splash for herself into an empty water glass. "Do you find the Caesar a little salty today? Maybe it's just me. Anyway where were we?"

"Uh, you were explaining that Stephen's past boyfriends have come with the disclaimer *some assembly required*." He grinned.

"Yes, yes. —But he thinks he likes you. Did I mention that?"

"Twice now, but I don't mind hearing it." He egged her on.

She fingered the garlic toast that he had moved from the manicotti plate to the salad plate. "Too much garlic?" she inquired. "I've told that chef that he uses too much garlic for my tastes. Do you know what he told me? He told me my tastes

don't pay the bills around here. Sometimes I swear I'd slap him if he weren't so damn adorable. Don't you think he's adorable?" Shane tried to nod enthusiastically but had a string of mozzarella stretched from his lip to my chin. "I think he's just adorable." She said, boldly nibbling an edge off the garlic toast. "You definitely have the look he's after— *Shane*, is it? I knew that Mark Morgan probably wouldn't quite cut the mustard for Stephen with that moustache but I could never get him out in the dining room to disqualify him, but the chef wasn't exactly having any luck on his own with other candidates so I persisted for hobby-sake. I get these feelings about people that should be together. Real metaphysical stuff, you know. Now that he's dead..." Shane could tell by her pause she had spun herself into deeper thought, "...Well I guess I'll have to back off that campaign won't I? —Killed, huh?"

"That's one theory." Shane scooted his chair back from the table. "Boy am I stuffed." That seemed to be the only signal she required as she grabbed her own fork from the table behind them and polished off the salad.

"I'm sorry," she tried to address his surprise. "It's not on the employee menu and I sometimes have a craving. Too salty today, but overall not bad. Don't you worry. It's on the house too, by the way, -like the wine."

Shane thought about mentioning that it rather appeared to be *in the house* but because he mostly liked that she felt that comfortable with him, he let his somewhat

automatic profit and loss analysis slide. Then again, if he thought she could broker his introduction to the chef, he'd buy her a full Caesar of her own! Just then, Stephen walked back into the dining room toward the Adam-couple. He *is* adorable, Shane concurred in his mind, squinting his green eyes into across-room-vision. He mentally upped Shannon's ante to a full Caesar and a bottle of wine *a day* for a whole week.

"If you promise me you have a sizeable brain, I'll let you meet him but I warn you, I'm not usually this easy." Shannon bargained, turning to get his attention. "By the way, he does think you dress funny."

"Well, not everyone gets to wear starched work attire with fancy black embroidery headlining their birth name in flowing script," he rattled off in defense of his double breasted and at one time, quite pricey suit.

"Don't let that fool you. Check out those kneecaps!. I don't think they've felt the weave of fabric since I've known him." Sure enough the chef was only wearing black jeans beneath his kitchen coat and both knees were sufficiently exposed to the elements. I must say I liked that though it did position us on opposite ends of the fashion continuum. "Oh Chef?" she beckoned. "We have a problem at this table." For a horrifying moment Shane thought she was going to dredge up the Caesar salad for which he probably should have fronted some *hush money*, but she clarified the predicament. "It seems the two of you haven't met. Shane —this is Stephen.

Stephen this is Shane." He half stood to shake the chef's hand, snatching the napkin before it fell off his lap. Shannon promptly cleared the dishes and backed away from the table. "Here, sit, sit." She spoke to her kitchen counterpart as though they'd been through some recent Barbara Woodhouse obedience training course. He sat, to Shane's concealed delight. "Talk!" she snapped next before retreating to the kitchen. Shanel, for one, jumped at the sound of her command. Stephen, apparently, was used to it and waved her off.

"How was your lunch?" he asked, remaining well inside his professional bounds.

"It was very good," Shane told him.

"Shannon told me you were asking about a customer of ours—."

"Yes. Mark Morgan. Did you know him?"

"I may have heard the name before but I couldn't pick him out of a crowd." The chef wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Well you could now," Shane joked macabre. "He's labeled for easy identification, but the crowd he hangs out with, well— let's just say they're not real animated."

"What do you mean?" he wrinkled his forehead playing with the gold ring on his finger.

"I mean he's dead. —You know, Mountain-View-Cemetery-dead," Shane added just to be sure.

"It wasn't my cooking was it?" He started to smile but pulled back into a serious inquiry when Shane added,

"He did have a Picasso's lunch receipt in his suit pocket the day he died." Stephen suddenly turned white as his fancy coat probably realizing that if Morgan had died from eating at his restaurant and if Shane happened to be from the Provincial Health Department, this wasn't liable to be quite the promising introduction he had originally anticipated. Ever since that room temperature Hollandaise scare, there was absolutely no joking with chefs these days. Stephen knew it had spoiled his sense of humour altogether. There was a charmingly reticent side to Stephen. Shane could see that much already and as much as he hated to admit it, he probably needed that trait in a partner to make up for his own care-free, sometimes reckless approach to things. It was too early for him to have known that this reticence in Stephen came from rigid British ancestry scarcely one generation removed but suddenly more so it seemed tragically presumptuous to accept the generally agreed upon notion that he *needed* a partner in the first place. Gilles had sensed this to be obviously apparent. Shannon automatically zoomed in to the rescue. Shane's own mother professed that a mate was really all he needed to make his life finally complete, (though she preferred

he find one in the vaginal accessories aisle of his local supermarket. He had never bothered telling her he had strung a triple barbed wire, electric embargo fence around that particular stretch of no-man's land). And though the chef looked very appealing, and many of these attraction feelings he was experiencing were familiar, Shane still wasn't convinced he needed a partner. He needed a real job. He needed a home of his own. He needed corrective orthodontics to fix a slight gap between his front teeth. These were the things he *needed* and for some reason, he couldn't prioritize a partner among them just yet.

He assuaged the chef's fears and paid his lunch bill, less the salad and wine of course. The chef handed him his business card with the tentative understanding that they should aim for dinner together on Friday, and Shannon hugged him good-bye.

"I have a feeling," she reminded him.

Detectives Hern and Uwajimaya hadn't exchanged more than a dozen words with each other in two days which prompted Roger to suspect his partner was depressed over something. He'd seen the mood changes in him before and usually he was the only one Elias allowed to see him in a state less than top form, but others were beginning to notice and this concerned him. If it were something personal, it could take him days to get Hern to open up and talk about it. Unfortunately, the

technique that worked most often was to say nothing and let him decide if he wanted to bring it up for discussion. If Roger so much as asked if something were wrong, it could plunge him into denial and set the whole process back several days.

"Here you drive," Hern tossed him the keys over the hood of the Mustang. "You get car sick reading," he reminded him.

"Yeah, but you have a lousy reading voice." Roger tossed the keys right back at him and walked around the backside of the vehicle. They both waved to Paul Tamorin as he backed out of Mark's steep driveway in his beat-up BMW that quickly vanished around the corner of this winding stretch of Marine Drive.

"Does he come across to you as the least bit cocky?" Hern asked, scooting the manila file across the dash toward him.

"He comes across as rich. The whole family does. It tends to put me off a little, yes." Uwajimaya began sorting the papers they had just printed from the victim's computer.

"I don't know but he just makes my skin crawl. There is something about him and I can't put my finger on it but if I could, I think I'd squash it. You know what I mean?" Hern backed onto the street in a notorious blind spot for oncoming traffic. A horn sounded and a car swerved. "Yeah, yeah," he talked back to the driver, turning on his headlights.

"Would you get a load of some of these computer bulletin board handles? *Stud-Muffin...Leather-Lurker...Lo-Hangerz...Top-Gun...Milkman...Wild Willy...Thumper...Big Floppy...Cheshire Chaps?* Come on!" he laughed to himself.

"What was Morgan's handle?" Hern asked.

"—*Mark 480*, one of the tamer offerings I'd say."

"Read some of that mail we printed out. That looked like it might be interesting."

Uwajimaya cracked the window for some fresh air in an attempt to ward off his motion sickness, which could be quite sensitive. "Let's see, here's one to *Mark 480* from *Pizza Boy 549*."

—Hi. Mark, Wish I wasn't a mute so we could chat better yet you can give me a call if you'd like we could talk. My number is 426-6883. I also think your bio sounds interesting. SEE YA BILL.

"A Mute?" Hern raised his eyebrow. "Do we have Mark's bio in there someplace?" He asked.

"I don't think so, but I'll keep looking. "Here's another one from *Manhandler 544."*

—Welcome back! I had some friends in from Arizona and we took the Princess "M" over to Victoria...that's as close as I have gotten to a boat trip. Hope

all goes well. In case you want to contact me, my phone number is 626-4263. Hope to hear from you soon! Delphi. P.S. Hugs to you and Dexter!

"Ooo, he knew about the dog? How anonymous is that? These guys must have gotten into quite a bit of detail." Hern thought out loud.

"Well it is the Nineties. You can't just sleep with anyone. Here's another one."

—Yes I think it's great to match up like that but would we get along? Guess we will have to find out. My phone number is 426-4673. Will have to get you to change out of your jockeys when you sleep! Hope to talk to you soon. Ian.

"Uh, let's see here. Here's one from *Jeff 354."*

—Hiya. If the Fair ends on the 24th and I don't leave until the evening of the 1st, we should be able to find time to meet within that week. My schedule isn't usually very busy, and I'm not exactly going to be really busy getting ready for my trip. I'm planing on traveling light, so let's get together then! So I must go. Pet DEX for me, pet yourself for me (I'll leave it up to you to decide where) and take care of yourself. Talk to you soon."

"He doesn't actually know any of these guys, does he?" Hern glanced alternately between the road and the open file in Uwajimaya's lap.

"Eiswine told us he'd find guys on this bulletin board thing and arrange to meet

them for sex. These messages must just be that ground work." Uwajimaya suggested.

"Well, they're not very juicy, if you ask me," Hern stated.

"Do you want me to talk dirty to you Elias? Is that what you want?" Uwajimaya ribbed him in the side with his finger. "Let's look through a few more of these." He shuffled through the papers. "Here's one from a *Rick*.

—Sounds wonderful and I really would like to meet you too! But I hope you realize the complexity of my schedule and I hope we will be able to work around it. Glad to know I'm not the only person who has gone through the dating trauma. And like you, I do hope to find someone, but I'm not going to just jump into anything right away. I guess I'm kinda an old-fashioned guy, I believe in dating, and have fairly traditional values. I'm a definite cuddler and kisser, and sometimes a hopeless romantic. I hope that kind of stuff doesn't scare you away, but I thought I'd warn you. So if you would still like to get together...GREAT! Just let me know when is convenient for you that jives with my schedule. Have a good week and I'll be talking at you later. TTFN. Rick."

"What's TTFN mean?" Hern asked.

"*Tah-tah-for-now*." Roger answered automatically. "Doesn't it sound as though Mark was really putting himself out there, not sitting at home obsessing over Scott, contemplating suicide like some would like us to believe, namely Scott

himself." Uwajimaya looked further into the printouts. "Now these look more interesting and I think they are some kind of two-way conversation and not just postings on a bulletin board. It's written out almost like dialogue. Listen."

—Excellent. Well, I guess we should meet also.

—It would probably help.

—Okay. I am pretty free and I can get around on my motorcycle easily. Let's drop mail in each other's box and set aside a good time and place.

—OK. I am not sure what my schedule is. My dog who is the love of my life got hit by a car Thursday morning. He has been in intensive care and might be able to come home tonight. That is the call I have been waiting for. So I don't know exactly what is going on right now. However, my phone number is 426-3323 and you would be welcome to call me.

—Sorry about your dog. Hope he/she gets well soon. Thank you for the offer. I am living with a friend, but I'm sure if you made it over to this side of the water, you are welcome. He is almost NEVER home. My phone is 529-8466. My first name is Tim."

"Wait, was that Mark talking about his dog?" Hern reached over to tap the folder.

Uwajimaya re-checked the conversation. "Yup, looks like it. That's Morgan's

home phone number isn't it? I wonder why nobody told us about the dog being in a car accident? We'll have to find out when the accident was."

"No matter," Hern said. "It sure backs up his shrink's theory that Mark would have taken the dog with him or made provisions for him somehow. *Love of my life*? Come on! I had a pet dog once," he reflected. "I wouldn't have left him behind like that." Hern almost turned sentimental, something he normally wouldn't have even let Roger see.

"You've got a point there. So what should we do with this stuff? I suppose we could check the phone numbers some of these guys left in their messages. See if any of them hooked up with Mark before he died. Establish that this is how he lined up his sexual encounters maybe?" Uwajimaya closed the folder and rolled down the window another few inches.

"Nah, nothing really conclusive in that. We're just building our own hunch is all. So far we have nothing substantial we can take to the Crown Attorney's office." Hern pounded the steering wheel. "As a matter of fact, I'd even venture that unless we can get Barry to crack, we won't have a case at all."

"So what do we do? Bring him in again?"

"We may have to let this one go, Waj. Write it off as a suicide."

Roger didn't respond. He'd never seen Hern suggest defeat and suddenly,

despite the case-solving record they had achieved together, his partner was letting out all the string as if he wanted to see just how high he could get before letting go completely. Roger couldn't help but wonder if perhaps it might not be a good time to re-evaluate his role as the kite's tail.

Shane rolled his chair as far into his cubicle corner as it would go with him in it. "Come on Gilles. You know everything! Tell me what you know." He hated that he was reduced to begging for morsels over the phone from what amounted to a very temporary roommate at best. He didn't want to think he were desperate enough to consider Gilles his only friend though he was somewhat indebted to him at this point. With Gilles, he knew that it was more advantageous to stay on his good side rather than be caught socially dead-in-the-water on his particularly vicious bad side.

"Shane, Darling," he placated him. "You don't have the background it takes to understand the delicacy of this situation and you didn't know Mark Morgan like I knew and loved him. The man was a saint to me. Okay, a saint with some severe emotional problems," he conceded, "but tops in my book, absolute tops. I said my piece to the Mounties when they interrogated me and I'll tell you what I told them. I don't know anything about Mark's death. I never even met his so-called boyfriend. Hell, Mark never asked me over to his house in the two years I knew him. For all

Mark did for me, for retarded kids or the whales for Christ sake, despite all the toys and money his spoiled rotten life afforded him, in the end he was a confused and miserable little rich boy who probably committed suicide just like they say he did. Now Doll, listen to me. Don't go poking into something that doesn't concern you or it just might poke you back. Thanks to me you had one chance with Mark Morgan and you blew it, but you've got to trust me on this one, one chance is all you got. Leave him alone. The boy is gone."

"Suicide?" Shane asked rather incredulously. There had been so many rumours flying around that funeral, most of which he was certain could be accredited to Gilles, that he was sure somebody would have to call-in an air traffic controller.

"Suicide," he repeated sternly. "Now, I have a bushel of airline tickets to run before I trot my cheeks home tonight, so I need to let you go. Suicide, Shane. You leave it at that. I'll talk with you tonight."

Shane hung up the phone and sat there, momentarily dumbfounded. There was nothing devious or exciting about a suicide. He looked down at his hands and almost expected to find wild goose feathers.

"Uh, —Shane?" Paul suddenly surprised him. "You haven't met my wife."

"We've talked on the phone though, haven't we?" she practically squealed with familiarity. "Hi, I'm Erin." She looked a bit like Marlo Thomas which made Shane

smile, even if the distinct pleasure of meeting more of the heathen's family, didn't. He couldn't have anticipated how much he didn't want to be back at the toy company after dark so the whole episode became an exercise in endurance, especially now that he had Stephen to think about and fuss over, —not to mention the job offer that had come in late that afternoon from the Provincial Health Department's AIDS Response Unit. With his introduction to Stephen, a faint whiff of a real job, and an emerging suicide theory, he could suddenly care less about *BTI*, Mark Morgan, or this Marlo Thomas look-a-like that was taking him by the hand to meet the rest of her family. *What did it matter to me who killed Mark Morgan* he suddenly asked himself. *I never had any feelings for the man*. Why then was he having to meet all of these people that couldn't bring any relevance into his life? What if Stephen was trying to reach him at the number he had given him? His mind wanted to bust out of the body and situation it found itself trapped inside, but could not. He met Louise, Banjo's tiny wife. He met Eliza's husband Jim, who was at least attractive though a bit lanky for his former, pre-Stephen tastes. He met Donald's wife, Sandee, who had some difficulty walking, at least this evening. Erin explained that her brother's wife struggled with a degenerative blood disorder not unlike MS but that she was simply the nicest person he'd ever want to meet. He didn't *want* to meet any of them, he felt like screaming until his larynx caved in, but he smiled and nodded his head with a vast

demonstration of enthusiasm that could certainly be judged no less sincere than their gestures toward him. He imagined that at least by meeting each of them and placing a face with a slew of names would be helpful if he were to be taking the minutes of this family meeting, as he'd assumed his task this evening would be.

"You know Shane, Paul just raves about you." Erin patted his hand gingerly. "I can't tell you how many assistants he has been through this last year. I must tell you in case you haven't discovered on your own," she raised a doubting eyebrow, "but he can sometimes be, well, how can I say this? -Not the easiest person in the world to work with." Shane made no facial objections and still she acted as though he might disbelieve her or doubt her candor. "No, no," she protested. "I've known him far longer and I can say without any reservation, he takes some maintenance. But in speaking with you over the phone for the last two weeks and by seeing how refreshed and happy Paul appears when he walks through the front door at night now, I can tell that you are precisely what he needs in this office." She had literally walked him into a corner back by the washrooms and the drinking fountain with nobody else around.

Shane spoke up. "It's too bad that this is only a temporary assignment for us but maybe now, Paul will have a better idea of what he needs, what he should be looking for in an assistant." It felt good to draw that line between them but Shane instantly recognized that he probably should have used something much more indelible

than sawdust. She exhaled dramatically scattering his measly line to the four winds.

"Shane, it should be no secret that Paul is going to offer you this position permanently."

Shane shuddered on the inside and hoped his shoulders didn't quake as a result. "That's very flattering but this isn't my work, Erin. I've worked in social services for the past couple years now, AIDS work to be specific. As a matter of fact I was just offered a job this afternoon with the Provincial Health Department." It felt like he was explaining to his prom date why he couldn't keep seeing her; *I like boys that's why*. It all came back to him. Her lanky brother-in-law, Tim ducked around the corner for a quick slurp at the fountain.

"Tinsel and Dersch are here so I think we can start the meeting Erin," he said before filling up with a second gulp.

"We haven't finished this conversation, Shane," she said tapping her fingernail against my chest.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Did I interrupt something?" Tim asked embarrassed.

My prom date has decided to claw her way back, Shane wanted to say.

"Don't be silly," she told him. "We're all family," she said, putting her arm around Shane's waist.

The hell we are! the speakers inside Shane's head blared.

We were intercepted by Paul and their four kids whom Shane met in chronological sequence: Taunia, Noel, Alec and Derrin. "Uh —Shane, I don't know why we didn't think to do this earlier but can you make us ten copies of this and staple them. We're about to get started." He handed Shane a packet of papers with a nearly blank cover sheet that simply read *Morgan Family Meeting, June 3, 1991.* Shane went to the copy machine down the hall, children now in tow.

"I want to press the buttons," little precious Derrin demanded, clearly the crown princess among this pack of royal brats. Shane lifted her to reach the buttons.

"Press the 1 button...good. Now press the zero button...no, that's the 1 button again. That's okay. We'll make eleven copies. Press the green start button." Shane pressed the collate button not up to explaining that function to a two year old and soon white sheets of paper began to eject into the sorting tray.

"Cool!" Alec announced.

"Duh," his older brother Noel mocked him. Taunia rolled her eyes just like Shane had seen her mother do, trying to be so much above the others, in both mother and daughter instances.

"Taunia, can you hand me that stapler?" No sooner had he asked than her brother Noel, bullied it out of her hands. Shane allowed it assuming his bullying days were probably short lived with a name like *Noel.* They stapled ten copies and stacked

them.

"I want to take them back to Daddy," Alec stammered. Shane placed them in his grubby hands and followed him out of the copy nook with the other three children. They were ambushed in the hallway by Donald and Sandee's two kids and detonated into a juvenile explosion on impact. Paul smiled, obviously proud of his acquired brood.

"Uh, —Shane. Why don't you take the kids down to the toy showroom and play for an hour or so. The meeting shouldn't last too long." The children screamed with delight and raced down the stairs in front of the temporary assistant. Shane looked back in disbelief but Paul had already retreated inside the windowed conference room and closed the door between them. He fumed all the way down the stairs as the sounds of screaming Jewish children loomed nearer and any restraint he had to keep from throttling them evaporated. At the bottom of the stairs was Paul and Erin's oldest daughter, the lowly butternut squash in a family of shapely pears.

"Do you remember my name?" she quizzed him on the spot.

"It's uh, —Taunia, isn't it? I'm uh, —Shane." He imitated her brainless step-dad, realizing there was probably no excuse for that but at least now he had reached his intellectual level, and it felt not surprisingly as though he had just descended into a playroom full of brats.

"Do you think I'm fat?" she asked, her pre-teen, extra-extra large Looney Tunes sweatshirt jiggling as she spoke.

This is why I am gay, he thought taking a long breath before helping her analyze her self esteem. "No, Taunia. I don't think you're fat. And I bet there are a lot of people out there in the real world who won't think you're fat either. Do you know how I know?" he asked her, his voice disappearing in some exaggerated falsetto register. She shook her head and her eyes suddenly glossed over, she had held her stare too long, as kids sometimes do. "I know because I am different too and when I was growing up I didn't think there was anybody else who looked like me or acted like me, but you know what? There are people just like me all over the place, only they were hiding too." He fought the sensation to let his eyeballs roll back inside their sockets.

"How will I find these people?" she asked with the most dire urgency.

For a split second he thought about that low-impact aerobic class at Nautilus, the one that usually worked out just after two o'clock in the afternoon after everyone had enjoyed an ample lunch, —but she seemed too young to handle directions downtown just yet. "I tell you what, let's go inside the toy room and I'll teach you to play the real game of hide and go seek. What do ya say?"

"All right!" The slightest dimples managed to pucker inside her bright red

cheeks and she stood up. "Shane?"

"Yes, Taunia."

"Do you think I'm pretty?"

Come on kid, I said I was different but I'm not that different... "Taunia, I think you're gorgeous! Let's go!"

When Shane emerged from the showroom red-faced, with sweat-wet hair and heaving two hours later, he was sure Taunia and he had lost twenty pounds a piece. He couldn't possibly know then that she had discovered a hiding place just behind the pixie sticks and baseball card chewing gum packs, and had maintained herself on a static caloric balance the entire evening.

Erin herded her kids into the Range Rover and Paul took Shane upstairs to his office for a quick chat. He said good-night to the various family members that passed him along the way, feeling somehow inducted beyond return.

"I just wanted to take a minute to thank you for the great job you've done for me these past several days. Go ahead and have a seat." He sat opposite Shane behind his desk in a giant gray leather chair that made him look like a single, over-ripe pear in an empty packing crate. "I have had nothing but compliments from Banjo, Donald, Eliza, Tim. They've all noticed your professional presence and great attitude. Most

important though, my wife Erin simply thinks you are the greatest thing to happen to me, since her of course," he took a moment from his hang-nail snack to chuckle, "—and I couldn't agree with her more."

"Thank you, Paul."

"Now, we haven't really had the chance to visit but Erin tells me that I can't come home tonight until we have had this little talk. By the way, could you empty this in the bathroom on your way out tonight. It's about half full. Thank you." He nudged a paper coffee cup toward Shane who crossed his legs as he felt a full body purge coming on. "Like you, uh, —Shane, I have aspirations and I don't plan to be at *BTI* the rest of my life. You don't know this, but it has long been a goal of mine to break into politics and I think now it is entirely conceivable that I will run for a conservative party MP seat within the next one to two years. I have been looking for an assistant this last year that I thought I could take all the way to Ottawa with me but they have all been disasters, one right after the other." He began doodling on the yellow legal pad in front of him, first drawing an angular shape and then colouring it in, adjoining the next shape to the one already colored. "The chance to do something for the People is what appeals to me most about politics. Erin tells me that you have been a public servant as well, that you were working with AIDS patients or something..."

"People with AIDS, yes." They seemed to both notice his bleeding hang-nail on his index finger of his drawing hand at precisely the same time, but he dispatched it to his mouth with lightning speed to apparently drain the wound of it's juices or cauterize it with spit, Shane couldn't be sure from where he sat.

"I know that you're here on temporary assignment from *CanWest* and that you're interviewing for jobs around the city but Erin and I were wondering what your thoughts might be if I were to make you a permanent offer to stay here at *BTI* as my executive assistant. Now I don't want to insult your intelligence and preparation. I realize that this job is not what you've gone to school for and probably not even where you'd like to see yourself a year from now but I figure we could help each other realize some of the important goals in our lives."

Shane looked at his watch and thought about Gilles taking all those messages surely pouring in from Stephen, and cut into the conversation. "I appreciate your consideration Paul and the compliments you've passed along from the others. I just feel that you and I are fundamentally different and this would not be the best match for either of us right now. I am happy to work out the term of this assignment but this is not the work I want to be doing long-term."

"Fundamentally different? How?"

Shane smiled, looking away from him. "Can I be blunt with you Paul?"

"Of course you can."

He sat more upright in his chair, even leaned forward a little. "I'm not a secretary," he told him. "I am a gay Socialist. You're a Jewish Conservative. I don't see how we could work through those ideological differences and achieve anything, do you?" Shane's strategy had worked and he tried not to grin when a look of utter contempt swept across the square and righteously Right face of his temporary boss. Paul started to speak but stopped himself. He tried again.

"You're, you're a —Democrat?" he finally asked, clearly hoping he had mis-heard his assistant.

"Yes, a Democrat," Shane laughed, admittedly amused by his approach. "Aside from that Paul, I need to do AIDS work now at this point in my life. It feels good to me. It helps me process through a lot of loss I've experienced. Erin probably told you that the Provincial Health Department made me an offer this afternoon. I accepted."

"She told me," he acknowledged, putting down his pen and his bleeding hang-nail long enough to talk some sense into him. Somehow he knew that *sense* must carry a price tag. "I used to work for provincial government, in the senior crown attorney's office. It's important work, I know. But they can't possibly pay you what I'm prepared to offer."

"Paul, it's not the salary." Shane bit his tongue. The health department's offer had come in nearly eight thousand dollars less per year than he had walked away from in Winnipeg, —and he accepted it. He accepted it knowing that Vancouver was one of the most expensive cities in all of Canada. He interviewed for the position as a newly single man without romantic prospects. It seemed an endurable cut-back to get his feet on the ground and his name around the community. But he had undersold himself and having come from provincial government himself, Paul probably knew it too.

"If it's not the salary, then you need to ask yourself the question, -is the provincial bureacracy where you want to continue your work? It nearly buried me to be honest with you." He went back to doodling and Shane tried to determine if that pastime signified control or loss of it with him. Shane knew he was easily posturing toward negotiations on a matter he had deemed non-negotiable. He needed to tighten the reins before this horse broke loose.

"I'll be honest, Paul. I would have preferred to waltz in the doors of *AIDS Vancouver* and snag a position like the one I had in Manitoba, sure. But I had to remind myself that it took me a while to break in with that agency and I needed to demonstrate my capabilities and tenacity at a lower level."

Again, Paul laid down the pen. —Control. "Let's consider this then." Shane

shifted in his chair. —Loss of control. "Erin and I understand AIDS. She happens to be on the board of directors at *AIDS Vancouver*. Erin's brother recently died of AIDS..." —He kept talking but Shane listened to nothing he said. *Her brother died of AIDS?* He had read the company literature and the family profile. Erin only had two brothers, Donald and Mark. *Died of AIDS?* —No control. Shane had met Mark. Attended the funeral. He heard the rumours. He rubbed his temples and Paul's voice began coming back into his conscience. "...Let's say you work with me a year and a half, two years and decide you still want to dedicate your life to AIDS work, Erin and I will see to it that you are placed in any position in any agency in this province. This is what I'm saying to you. We can help each other realize our goals. We have connections in this town, Erin and I. It would be crazy if you didn't take advantage of that. You have organizational skills and polish. I'd be a fool to let you go without a fight. Sleep on it tonight. Will you do me that favor? In fact, take a day or two. We can talk again on Friday, -see where your head's at then. Okay. That's enough for tonight. Just help me get out of here." -Which is what he had said to him every night for the past ten, *help me get out of here*. What did that mean?

Shane grabbed his jacket and prepared to walk his boss out of the building. In passing the copy machine he heard it still humming and thought to turn it off for the night to keep it from overheating. Paul kept walking. There in the sort bin was

Derrin's eleventh copy of the family meeting notes. He snatched it and tucked it under his jacket.

MORGAN FAMILY MEETING

JUNE 3, 1991

CRIME SCENE

Mark was found in his home at approximately 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 15, 1991. He was found in the far corner of the garage of his home face up. He was in his underwear and one sock. Mark's shirt was found partially under the Wagoneer in the garage and the other sock was apparently found somewhere in the garage (needs to be clarified). His face was bruised and bloodied; there was an abrasion on one knee and some bruises on arms. The Medical Examiner has determined that Mark received boxer type blows to his head. Both of Mark's car's were in the garage--his Saab and his Wagoneer. The keys were in the on position and the batteries were dead. The cars were unlocked. The front door of Mark's home was locked; it has keyed deadbolts on both sides and both of the deadbolts were locked. When you entered Mark's home, the door from his foyer leading to the garage was also deadbolted. From the inside of the house, that is from the foyer, the deadbolt was simply flipped. From the inside of the garage, to lock that deadbolt one would have to have a house key. Two duplicate house keys were found in the ashtray of the Saab. The smoke detector in the foyer of the home had been pulled down and unhinged.

The house itself showed evidence of a struggle. In the bedroom on the third story of the house lamps were knocked over and there was a small bloodstain on the railing of the balcony. The door to the balcony was open. The blankets on the bed were on the floor. Mark's jeans were crumpled next to the bed with his house keys in them in the pocket. There were various bloodstains on the stairs going up the two stories and also a small hole at knee level in the wall at the base of one of the staircases with a small amount of blood found in the hole. The kitchen was a mess, especially for Mark who was extraordinarily meticulous to say the least. Pots full of food were on the stove, the plates had not been cleaned off of the food, partial bottles, coke cans, and a marijuana pipe were around. There was a cloth napkin crumpled up underneath the kitchen table. Downstairs across from the foyer in a small room there was a glass with two 222 pills on the floor scattered near the glass.

BACKGROUND OF TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1991

Statements by neighbours given to the police indicate that sometime between 11 and 12 p.m. on the night of Tuesday, May 14, loud music came from Mark's house. This was noticeable because it was very uncharacteristic of Mark who was quiet and never played loud music let alone late at night. Mark had told a number of people that he had an appointment that evening at his home at 8:15 with Scott Barry.

MEDICAL EXAMINER FINDINGS

1. Mark died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

2. Did not find evidence on body of drag marks.

3. Best guess on time of death was between 12:00 midnight and 1:00 a.m. but that there could be a variance of 3 hours on either side.

4. The maximum amount of time Mark was alive after eating was 4 hours.

5. Mark had definitely been hit with boxer type blows. Dr. Seigel says while it is possible that these blows rendered Mark unconscious, it is extremely doubtful.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Mark was gay. About three years ago he ended a relationship of about six years. From that time forward he has had a steady string of relationships. None have worked out and Mark has been depressed about the situation. Over the past year he has become more depressed and has discussed with his friends and his psychiatrist the possibility of suicide. Over the past five to six months his behaviour in these relationships has been unusual and contradictory. Though Mark was fearful that people wanted to be with him because of his wealth, he nevertheless began to shower wealth on some of his new found lovers. For example, he loaned a person in Whistler who he had been seeing around the first of the year $20,000. That person's name is Ted Dickson. He loaned someone else named Marty Griffen who lives in Squamish about $3,000. (He called us within one week of Mark's death to make sure we knew about this note). Recently with Scott Barry he went so far as buying him clothes,

jewelry, giving him approximately $3,000 and purchasing for Scott a brand new BMW costing around $22,000. In recent weeks his relationship with Scott became extremely resentful on both sides. Scott is in the process of getting a divorce and no one in his family knows of his "secret life". It appears that Mark is the first person that he had a homosexual experience with, and he claims not to be attracted to men, but says he was to Mark. Scott is also deeply in debt. A credit check reveals that he is about $70,000 in debt. It is perhaps the worst credit report that I have ever seen. He owes bank cards, gas cards, store cards, every credit card imaginable. He also has an extreme fear of being exposed. On one occasion Mark brought Scott to his psychologist, Dr. Catherine Hallock, and on another occasion Dr. Hallock met with Scott separately. Scott signed a waiver to the police and my understanding is that Scott reiterated to Dr. Hallock that he is extremely fearful of being exposed. There appears to have been a mutual resentment growing in both Mark and Scott. Mark began to resent Scott because he began to realize that Scott just wanted his money. Scott began to resent Mark because it appeared to him that Mark was just using him for sex - almost in a prostitute situation and for getting him into this situation. Mark, for example, after he discovered Scott recently in bed with a woman, took back the BMW then promised that he would give it back to him. Mark was extremely upset after he found Scott with the woman (Jenny) in bed and very despondent. Within a few days to a week he seemed noticeably better and depending on who Mark talked to was either (1) Going to forget about Scott, (2) Get even or revenge with Scott - possibly through exposure or with money, or (3) Going to work things out with Scott -some people have said he was obsessed with Scott. Everyone, including his psychologist, who Mark talked to within one week of his death and definitely within the last days says he was upbeat and feeling good and that he had also started pursuing a couple of new possible relationships that he thought had potential. He also had planned a number of boating trips that he was looking forward to. Mark and Scott had spent part of the weekend immediately preceding his death together and did have sex then. Scott had the Wagoneer on Tuesday the 14th. It's not clear why; possibly he was going to fix it and possibly he was simply borrowing it for the day but he had it for the day.

SCOTT'S STORY

Scott was contacted a few hours after the police arrived at the scene on the evening of May 15. His story at that time was roughly as follows. He was supposed to meet Mark at Mark's house for dinner at 8:15, that Scott was going to make. He had

arranged with Mark that he would pick up a key that Mark would leave for him under a garbage can. He met Mark; they didn't eat until about 10:00; they smoked some marijuana and drank quite a lot of alcohol. Again at the scene they found half empty wine bottles and some Bailey's, but we don't know exactly whether Scott was referring to wine or hard liqueur. Scott said that they did not have sex and that at some point later in the evening they were in the living room and they both passed out. Scott then woke up at 2:15 and he left and Mark was still passed out. He denied hitting Mark or being involved in Mark's death in any way and upon close inspection by the police showed no signs of bruises, cuts or swelling on his body. On Friday, May 17, the police met with Scott again. This was after the Medical Examiner, Dr. Seigel, had told the police conclusively that Mark had been hit, that these injuries could not have come from Mark stumbling down the stairs by himself. Scott at that point said that it may have been 2:00 or 2:15; he was not sure when he left, but he absolutely denied the fight and said that when he left Mark got up also and began cleaning the kitchen.

Scott told the police that he went to Lions Gate Hospital on Wednesday because he had a hangover and was not feeling well. A check with Lions Gate Hospital verifies that Scott went Wednesday evening, that is the night after his dinner with Mark, to Lions Gate complaining of dizziness, etc., was actually examined at 10:00 p.m., and then released.

The police scheduled a polygraph for Wednesday, May 22. Meanwhile over the weekend and Monday and Tuesday the 20th and 21st the police finished all their fingerprinting of the house. There is one very makable print, a palm print, on the Saab next to where Mark was found. Other than that the police aren't sure what came out and what didn't. Obviously, we are extremely interested in the smoke detector and anything else in the garage. The deadbolt lock that goes into the garage from the foyer would be of interest except that a number of people touched it in opening the door looking for Mark. In meeting with Detective Hern on Tuesday, May 21, we determined that the second question on the polygraph in addition to "Did you hit Mark?" would be "Was Mark in the garage when you left?" The idea at that time was to pin a question down that would be unambiguous and where simple guilt feelings would not play into an ambiguous question such as "Do you feel responsible or are you responsible for Mark's death?" Scott flunked the polygraph on both questions and the tester indicated to Detective Elias Hern who is handling this investigation that he believes the test was reliable. Scott apparently told them that he had only had an hour's sleep that night before; however, the tester's observations were that Scott

looked fine and fit to take the test. Scott called Detective Hern on May 29 and asked him if the fingerprint results were in yet. They were not.

MISCELLANEOUS STRANGE OR UNEXPLAINED ISSUES

We are waiting for the results of the fingerprint tests, especially on the smoke detector in the foyer and on the Saab next to Mark. The Saab had been washed on Tuesday (the day of Mark's death) and the print is next to the body on the passenger's side.

Mark's house was a mess and as I said before he was unbelievably neat and clean and it is inconceivable that he would not have cleaned up the place prior to killing himself. His friends indicated that even when they were "wasted" with Mark, he would never lose sight of being neat and tidy, and was still neurotic about cleaning up everything before he went on to the next activity. For example, he would clean the salad serving bowl before eating the salad.

The toxicology report came back indicating that Mark had not consumed any alcohol at all. This is directly contrary to Scott's assertion that Mark and Scott were both really loaded that night. It came back showing that Mark had traces of cocaine and marijuana but negative on any other sleeping medicines such as codeine or halcyon. Next, a halcyon pill which is a very tiny blue pill was found next to the dog dish in the kitchen. That dog dish had been cleaned that day and the pill was not there that day. The house had been thoroughly cleaned that day and everything was spic and span so none of the messiness predated this incident.

Of the front door deadbolt locks, one can simply be flipped from the inside. The other can be locked only with a key. There was no key found in the door. Mark's house keys were found in his jeans upstairs. Therefore, if Mark was running downstairs, he would not have been able to have gotten out the front door and would have had to go into the garage. The only way out of the garage would be through the garage doors which could be opened by pushing the electric garage door opener or back out through the foyer door which he would have gone through. That door was locked and since the only keys to that were in the ashtray of the Saab and duplicates it seems strange that Mark would have locked that garage door.

Based on Scott's story of eating at 10:00 p.m., the maximum amount of time from eating until death of 4 hours, and the estimated time of death between midnight and 1 a.m., it would seem that if Scott did not leave until 2:00 - 2:15, he was there when

Mark died.

One of the mind games that Scott had played on Mark recently was about five or six weeks ago, Mark had arranged to meet Scott at Delilah's, a restaurant in Gastown. Mark didn't want to go; he said Scott is always late, but Scott said no, I'll be on time. Mark was there at approximately 8:15 and Scott was not there. But Mark was approached by a woman who struck up a conversation and appeared to be interested in Mark. She called him up, etc., afterwards the next day at work and Mark wasn't very interested but she was very persistent. Mark finally called her up one time and pretended that he was Scott and she fell for it and so Mark realized that Scott had put her up to this and Mark felt very resentful toward Scott after that. The police have not questioned Tina.

Another time Mark found Scott in bed with a woman named Jenny who was apparently a very attractive woman and it was at that time a few weeks before his death that Mark took the keys to the BMW back from Scott and took the BMW away. Mark later hired a private detective to follow Scott and the police have the private detective's report. The police have not questioned Jenny.

All of Mark's friends that we have spoken with including the psychologist, Dr. Hallock, and from what we understand from Dr. Hallock it is also agreed by the prior psychologist who retired, that Mark would never have committed suicide without making arrangements for Dexter. There were no arrangements made for Dexter of any kind. In fact Dexter was found running around upstairs in the house and had not been let outside at all. This really makes us think that Mark, regardless of what eventually transpired, did not actually intend to die Tuesday night.

The garage has a dog run door. This is a sliding fiberglass door, that opens out of the house that is always left open so that Dexter can run down in place in the garage during the day or he can run outside. It was closed at the time that Mark was found. However, we are not optimistic about fingerprints since it was touched by a man named Ron who was with Banjo and Louise when Mark was found.

A Volkswagon Rabbit was seen in Mark's driveway on Monday morning, May 13. This was seen by Marco, Mark's hairdresser and a friend of Erin and Paul's who drives by Mark's place every day. Marco had never seen the Rabbit before and the Rabbit looked, just from the film on the outside of the windows, as if it had been there overnight.

Mark had apparently received some threats from a man named Sampson who was the companion of this Ted Dickson from Whistler who Mark had an on again, off again relationship with. Ted said he spoke to Mark on Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. and Mark was feeling great. They were talking about the summer together and also the fact that at some point they would be together. Ted has not contacted us about the $20,000 note he owes Mark.

On Wednesday, May 15, Scott made three calls to Mark. He called Mark at 9:49 in the morning, and again at 5:13 p.m. The transcripts of those conversations are attached. These were found on Mark's voice mail at the office. In both conversations Scott was upbeat and acted as if nothing was wrong. Scott also left a message on Mark's home voice mail that morning as well and again his voice according to police sounded normal.

Mark apparently had a phone conversation Tuesday night at roughly 11:00 p.m. with Marty Griffen, his friend from Squamish. Scott apparently told the police also that Mark received a phone call around 11:00 Tuesday night and talked for five or ten minutes. We are not exactly clear if the call with Marty actually took place Monday or Tuesday evening. If it was Monday, it is strange no one has called to say they talked to Mark as late as 11:00 p.m. the night he died.

While the lack of any alcohol in Mark's blood or urine is obviously indicative of another lie by Scott, Dr. Seigel has explained to me that it is possible that if Mark only had one or two drinks, that they could have been worked off in the next few hours before he died. However, one of the wine glasses that was found on the kitchen counter (there were two wine glasses with wine in them found) was tipped over. I am curious as to whether one could actually tip over that wine glass on that hard surface without it breaking. In other words, perhaps it was placed there.

Mark's wallet was found on the floor of his bedroom next to the bed. It had all his credit cards but did not have any money in it. Mark always carried a lot of money in his wallet, certainly three or four hundred dollars. It is a Morgan family trait, and Mark always, always had money in his wallet.

Mark had apparently been purchasing a number of cellular phones through a company on behalf of friends of his. It is not clear who all these friends are; it is also not clear if these people reimbursed BTI for these expenses, but it is certainly clear that these are people we don't know.

The carbon monoxide found in Mark's body was 83% and 50% is lethal. Dr. Seigel has indicated that this does not indicate whether someone is conscious or unconscious when they begin to inhale the carbon monoxide, rather simply the percentage of monoxide in the exhaust fumes. A more well tuned car will give a higher percentage of monoxide. Mark had a very well tuned car. Dr. Seigel has told the police that, based on the contents of Mark's stomach, he could not have been alive for more than four hours after he ate.

One of the police theories based on finding a little bit of blood on the balocny at roughly knee level in Marc's house is that perhaps Mark opened the door and looked out the window at the Burrard Inlet and thought about killing himself before he did so. We don't think this makes sense because it appears to us as though there was no break between the fight and the death based on a lot of other things in the house, such as the messiness of the house. If Mark was stone cold sober as he appeared to be and decided to kill himself, it is inconceivable to us that he would not have taken care of Dexter, cleaned up the house, put some clothes on, and perhaps made other arrangements as well. Incidentally, Mark was very modest and did not undress in front of other people so the idea of him going downstairs in his underwear also seems inconceivable. The police have indicated that often the person can become disoriented. If they are walking around in the garage with carbon monoxide, they begin to breathe in the carbon monoxide and there is no oxygen going to their system, they can become disoriented and take off clothes. However, Mark obviously came downstairs without his pants. If the theory is that when someone is irrational right before committing suicide, then why would the smoke detector be pulled down, the door between the house and garage deadbolted and the house keys in the Saab ashtray--all of which seems to be very conscious and planned actions.

The garage was thoroughly cleaned on Tuesday; however, milkbone pieces were found in the garage, but Dexter was not in the garage when we found him. So the question is, when was Dexter in the garage? Also, Dexter was very quiet when we found him. The gardeners stated that when they were at the home between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m. Wednesday it was very strange because it was very quiet. They were right in front of the garage; they did not hear any cars on, but more important Dexter wasn't barking and Dexter always barked. So of course we wonder whether or not the halcyon pill that was next to his dog dish was part of some halcyon that was used to drug Dexter for some reason.

Mark had told Sandee a story about Scott intentionally breaking his roommate's leg

during a basketball game - then helping him off the court but continuing to play basketball before taking him to the hospital.

The blood samples in the house have not yet been run to be matched to Mark's.

Scott in either the first or second meeting with the police said that he previously on one occasion had discovered Mark sitting in his car in the garage with the motor running. Scott claimed he had to pull Mark from the car.

Plan to explore with Dr. Seigel the various ways that Mark could have been incapacitated or unconscious to allow someone to place him in the garage.

One of Mark's platonic friends Gilles has done a number of peculiar things such as telling acquaintances of Mark (1) that any information they had about Mark should go through him, (2) conditions of the way Mark was found and the nature of the house that we don't think he should have known, and (3) details of Mark's sexual and social habits. Gilles was extremely helpful during funeral preparations and seems genuine - it is possible he is just a big gossip. However, he had a key to Mark's house, knew of Scott, Mark's suicide thoughts, had met Scott twice and Mark had apparently previously had an affair with Gilles' significant other and roommate Kyle. Gilles is probably unrelated but may warrant investigation later.

Mark had very recently added deadbolts to his front door and changed the locks and alarm security code to his house.

Is there any way for a voice mail analysis to judge the credibility of Scott's messages? Could Scott have possible have kept the garage door closed by putting his car up to it, thus keeping Mark in the garage during the time the cars were on? About two weeks before Mark died, Banjo gave Mark a bottle of about 97 halcyon pills--the bottle held 100 pills originally--where is that bottle and how many pills are left? We have not checked the medicine cabinet in the bathroom of Mark's home. Could a stick of some kind have jammed the garage door opener so it would not function? Could the carbon monoxide have fogged up the garage so much that Mark could not have found the garage door opener and, if so, why did Mark end up at the opposite end of the garage from the garage door opener? More specifically, with regard to the place in the garage where Mark was found, everything else aside, it is the hardest place to find something in the garage if you were looking for something. About 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Luanne, Mark's housekeeper who is the wife of Ron, saw a red sports car

(Scott owns a red Mazda RX-7) stop outside where Mark's Wagoneer was parked. He put something in the Wagoneer and drove away in Mark's Wagoneer. Were the buttons of Mark's shirt in the garage torn off or are they still on? Does Scott have a police record?

By the dome light of his LandCruiser, sitting in the abandoned parking lot at *BTI*, Shane read through the entire eight page document, bowled over by alternating waves of confusion, surprise and frustration. It had started raining the moment Paul pulled away in his *beamer* and that seemed to set the mood. *Died of AIDS*? *Where did that come from?* he kept asking himself. Shane knew the first line into those notes, that he couldn't possibly wait long enough to get home before tearing through them in detail. And the biggest shocker of the whole document had been that Elias Hern was heading the RCMP investigation. "Of course!" Shane exclaimed out loud upon seeing the familiar name. He wondered why in the world he hadn't considered contacting Elias before now? Elias had been the only RCMP detective introduced to him by his former boyfriend when they worked Homicide together, shortly after they had arrived from Manitoba. Once or twice it had occurred to Shane that he could phone his *ex* if he wanted inside information on the Morgan investigation badly enough, but his pride would ultimately prohibit that. It had been Elias who eventually chose to level with Shane about his slimy boyfriend's extracurricular antics that eventually brought about the break-up between them. With his effort, at considerable

risk, Elias had revealed the true markings of a friend but in the outrage and vacuum that followed the break-up, Shane hadn't been able to phone Elias to thank him, in fact he hadn't seen him since. Grateful though he was, Shane knew the psychological strain of returning to the RCMP huddle, especially after spending seven years hiding on the outskirts of the organization for fear their relationship would jeopardize his ex-partner's career standing, —was far too much to undertake this soon after Armageddon and even now, he didn't know if he could bring himself to face Elias without inviting the whole suffocating establishment to tumble down upon him. It was a shame, he admitted. Elias would have been a good friend to have, if only he had pursued a career other than law enforcement or worked for anyone but the RCMP.

Shane guessed that these notes and observations had been compiled by the family, —no doubt Paul being the primary scriptwriter as it read the way he spoke. He hadn't recognized the names of Tinsel and Dersch when he heard them mentioned in conversations but he could assume they were lawyers or detectives the family wished to bring up to speed on the case tonight. Through a rain-streaming windshield he glanced up to the darkened second floor office windows of *Banjo Toys International*. The temptation to pry and to maneuver himself into a position where he could snoop with the big dogs overwhelmed and excited him. His own roommate

Gilles, was now implicated after all. Gilles had told him that very night on the phone that he'd never met Scott Barry, that he'd never been to Mark's house. Just that afternoon Shane had met Chef Stephen Ashton, one of the more recent targets of Mark's affection. And now, Elias Hern, —the bow on the package. The circle of happenstance widened. Suddenly it mattered a great deal to Shane to find out who killed Mark Morgan and more immediately why Scott Barry, Paul Tamorin, —even Gilles, needed to lie about what truly happened that morning, sometime after midnight.



Tuesday, July 16, 1991

"Stephen, hi. —It's Shane. I just walked in to hear your message." Shane took a deep breath and tried to sound a bit less excited or at least so it didn't appear as though he might be trying out for some cheerleading squad. "Yes, I'm looking forward to Saturday. I really had a great time with you the other night. Good. I'm happy to hear that. So Saturday then? —Well, I'm not entirely ready to share you with a whole gym of sweating *homos* but I'll bring my gear. Okay. You too. Bye."

Stephen Ashton...Stephen Ashton. Shane couldn't stop saying his name. He felt a bit like Barbara Streisand in *Funny Girl* as she lamented *Nicky Arnstein...Nicky Arnstein.* He was so thrilled to get home, to his own home, after a hellish day of working for the Heathen, to hear that wondrous, pulsing tone on his telephone indicating he had messages, he had a life and he had potential. For nearly a week he

had prayed to the voice mail gods for a sign that the chef might still be interested after a slightly awkward and posthaste *trick* night, —for lack of a more descriptive or socially appropriate term. That's right. After a month of dating and petting and sweet name calling, they finally tricked, —and evidently survived with the relationship still in tact. Sex had always been the false test for Shane. Many a time he'd mistaken sex for love and devotion until one day he decided he would no longer *make love* with other men, he would instead *trick* with them; in other words have cheap, non-committing, unprincipled sex. If they could get back up on their feet and face each other after that, there might be a future, but certainly, not until. *Trick!* That was Shane's answer to love in the Nineties. It certainly separated the men from the merely queasy.

Call him *Mr. Banjo Toys International* but Shane took the job. During the final hour of negotiations which had ensued the remainder of his final week of temping, Paul Tamorin, in a desperate maneuver to appease his wife and his conscience, finally told him to name his price, and conservatively, Shane did —at ten thousand above what the Province was prepared to pay for his indisputably valuable, not to mention *noble*, AIDS experience.

Shane would never understand why Paul had lied to him about Mark dying from AIDS but now that he was a permanent fixture on the payroll and in the

executive office ranks, he had no choice but to stick with that story and maintain it tirelessly almost on a daily basis. The story had evolved some to include extenuating circumstances but the premise of the lie remained in fragile tact. Jackie and Shane compared notes so long as it served his investigation but he knew far more than he let on which not only gained her confidence but also that of every member of the family in that *L*-shaped enclave on the second floor above their multi-million dollar toy operation. Shane learned quickly and shattered the norms they had been conditioned to expect. He dressed in his best suits every day, except Fridays when they donned that costume charade so typical of their neighbours south of the border, and wore jeans. But even on Fridays, Shane sported a shirt and tie tucked into his provocative denims. He dressed like the execs. He talked like them. He thought like them. There wasn't one among them, inside this first month, that didn't know Shane was capable of so much more which is why it became an unwritten corporate mandate that Shane be kept very happy doing far less. The company president had told his brother-in-law in no uncertain terms that if it came down to it, Paul Tamorin would go before Shane Mullin would get away. Relationships were quickly fostered to brace this bridge that had suddenly appeared before them, spanning the chasm between the kingdom and the peasants. Donald Morgan went further out of his way than anyone, stopping to shoot the breeze with Shane with greater frequency than he paid his own

particularly needy assistant, Jackie. He asked personal questions about his work experience and seemed endlessly impressed with his manner and entertained by his sense of humour. Shane could tell that Donald shared his growing disdain for Paul Tamorin. It was not uncommon to catch his eyes rolling back in his head whenever Paul approached with some mundane request. With Don, Shane knew he had the respect and permission to feel like one of those rare equals and as his disclosed homosexuality must have spread through the stodgy timbers of *BTI* like wildfire, Shane couldn't help but feel as though he might be helping Donald unlock the mystery that was his brother while Donald assisted Shane with the flip side of the same riddle.

Banjo was a bit too removed from reality to pay much attention to Shane though he greeted him by name each morning and wished him a good evening each night. The company founder could count on Shane to remain calm and not to panic during his daily emotional tirades which must have provided him a railing to grab onto when things got shaky. Shane learned from both Paul and Don that Banjo held a great deal of trust and respect for him but didn't understand how he could put up with Paul. Even Paul admitted to a degree of amazement over that one as well. Shane didn't work much with Mark's sister, Eliza though their encounters were always familiar and kind. He had observed her interaction with other employees who approached her and watched as she never once looked up from the spreadsheets or

the computer monitor during an entire conversation, but she always stopped what she was doing when he came into her office. That was a distinction he could be proud of though perhaps, she too saw a bit of her brother in Shane. Shane hoped so, for Mark's sake.

The police tape had been taken down from Mark's office door and Shane found it open to him on a more regular basis as Paul prepared for his big move that would move him closer to the vortex in the circle of power. Shane had been sent in their once or twice on official business to retrieve a binder or file from the family library but he was also making a regular early morning habit of snooping around the catacomb before anyone else arrived. After only his second week of full-time employment, Don had sent him to his sister's office to be issued his own key to the front office door after he caught him one morning waiting in his LandCruiser for somebody to arrive with keys. *If we can't trust you with a set of keys, who can we trust?* he had asked him that morning. —Words to thieve and embezzle by, but Shane acted grateful.

Incident #91-207871, Continued. 07/16/91 1515hrs: Met with Paul Tamorin at the Victim's house. The house has not been cleaned up and appears to be in the same condition that it was when we turned it over to them. He showed us

a spoon on the kitchen counter which appears to have some powdery substance with it. We collected the powdery substance, the spoon, and a small bottle containing 2 Halcion pills from the upstairs master bathroom. I later entered these into evidence, with a request for analysis.

07/16/91 1935hrs: At the request of the family, I went to the evidence unit along with Det Uwajimaya and examined the Victim's shirt and socks. The shirt is soiled, however it is not damaged at all. The sleeves are both still buttoned, and the buttons down the shirt have been loosened prior to removal. There are no tears to the buttons or the button holes. The socks are somewhat soiled also, but are unremarkable. The bottoms of the socks appear to have absorbed some of the liquid which was on the floor near the entry. There is no evidence on them at all of any dragging across a floor.

071691 1115hrs Received a phone call from Dr. Seigel. The last analysis of the victim's blood came back. They detected 3 to 4 times the therapeutic dosage in his system of Halcion. He informed me that Halcion is a very potent sleeping pill. There is a rapid absorption rate when it is ingested. He also says that comparing the scene with what we now know, the Victim could have easily taken the medication, gone to the garage, started up both vehicles, then collapsed, being unable to go any further.

07/16/91 2015hrs: Had Scott Barry back into the office. He still insists that he NEVER punched or hit Mark including the night before his death. He says there were no punches thrown, he did not hit or strike him in any way, nor did he trip him at all. He was surprised about the toxicology report on the alcohol. He says that they drank lots of different drinks that night, as well as a bottle of wine with dinner. He says that Mark mixed most of the drinks, but he thinks he may have mixed 2 drinks, one apiece. He says that they drank the following: Tangeray, Tia Maria or Kaluha, wine, rum and cokes. He says that they had dinner around 9:00 p.m. and sat at the kitchen counter having drinks after dinner till they went into the living room where they both fell asleep. He says that he thinks Mark poured the wine for dinner.

Regarding the money: Scott agrees that Mark should have had some money in the house. He says Mark did not give him any money that night, but that he did give him $80 or $100 earlier that day to buy the makings for dinner. He also says that he did not take any money from Mark, and that Mark did not give him any money that night. Regarding the Halcion: Scott says that Mark has abused Halcion in the past. He says that he either took them with liquid, or just swallowed them. He has never seen Mark crush them to take them. He says he has no idea about why Halcion pills were crushed on the kitchen counter. He says he didn't crush any, and

did not see Mark crush any. He is familiar with Halcion because Mark has given them to him in the past, and has given them to his room-mate when he broke his foot, as well as giving his room-mate pain killers. I asked him about the dog, and whether or not Mark ever gave the dog Halcion. He described the dog as having been hit by a car, and having a problem with his hip. He says that when Mark did give the dog medication, that the dog took the medicine easily, i.e. he would eat the medication out of his hand, that you would not have to crush up the pills and put them in his food, or force them down his throat. Regarding the items upset in the room in the house where the computer was: Scott says that they tried to watch a movie on the big screen but that they were too "screwed up" to operate the TV. He says they could have spilled a drink there, and that Mark did break a record, and could have knocked something off of the table next to the couch, i.e. the candle holder. We released Mr. Barry and told him that we may be calling him again.

Regarding his "gay relationship with Mark", he says that some of his friends are now aware of that. That this could have represented a threat to him in the past but that some of them are already aware of it.

07/16/91 2300 hrs: Consulted the North American 1990 Physician's Desk Reference (PDR) regarding Halcion. See the copies of material on that drug under section 18 of this file. They specifically caution against prescribing this drug

to patients with signs or symptoms of depression, indicating that suicidal tendencies may be present in the patients, and that intentional overdosage is more common in patients with those symptoms. Contacted Dr. Larry Eastland. After discussing this case with him, I requested that he contact Dr. Seigel for any particulars that may be of assistance to him in trying to help us answer some questions about Halcion. He did say that he would need the level of Halcion in Mr. Morgan's system, in order to figure the metabolic level and the halflife to determine the amount of time from ingestion til the time of death. He did say that it takes ½ an hour for Halcion to reach maximum effectiveness after ingestion.

"I'll race you on the treadmill," Uwajimaya challenged his partner snapping him on the butt with his workout towel.

"Let me finish this set and I'll be right there," Hern replied. "Say, you could throw an extra twenty on the bar and give me a spot." Uwajimaya lapped at the drinking fountain and returned to the incline bench where Hern was shaking out his muscles in preparation for a final push.

"So this is how you keep your boyish calendar figure." Uwajimaya added jokingly, placing a ten kilo weight plate on each side of the bar before positioning himself in front of Hern where he straddled his mid-section.

"You should get yourself a public relations image too. Then you'd have a hobby just like I do." Hern pressed the bar above his chest extending his arms while his face turned red.

"A hobby? It's more like an ego obsession with you. Image, image, image. Who needs it? I just want to do my job, -let the public relations department in Ottawa do theirs. Besides if the blinding white-ness of last year's Mountie calendar is any indication of what image is all about, this Asian-Canadian is plenty happy blending into obscurity, right here in the Orient-rich spoils of Vancouver. —Come on Hern. You can give me one more." Hern struggled with the bar but managed one final extension before clanking it back to it's resting place.

"Treadmill?" he asked pathetically.

"Treadmill!" Uwajimaya shouted, thrilled to be moving onto his event in their daily workout. They walked across the hall in the converted basement of the Justice Building to the cardio equipment and selected adjacent machines. Uwajimaya programmed his for hills and intermittent sprints while Hern selected a moderate speed quite decidedly on the flat only because he couldn't figure out a downhill setting. They ran facing a wall-size mirror which facilitated their conversation as long as Hern could keep air in his chest.

"Did I tell you that the Morgan's have hired an attorney-detective to start

checking up on our work?"

In the calmest voice, as though he were sitting in an easy chair, Uwajimaya replied "You're kidding me?"

"No. 'Name's Tinsel. Bill Tinsel. Like the Christmas tree stuff. He first started calling a couple weeks ago but I told Jerrie to tell him I was out on vacation. He's pinned me down for late this afternoon."

"What are you going to tell him?" Uwajimaya reached across to Hern's machine and increased the incline of his run.

"Japanese Nazi," Hern mumbled. "I'm going to tell him that I think the fairy committed suicide and happened to be vindictive enough to try and frame somebody else on his way out, that's what I'm going to tell him."

"You're what?" Uwajimaya exploded in falsetto.

"The private dick wants my opinion, —that's my opinion," Hern panted, already clutching his side.

"Since when?" Uwajimaya was practically running sideways on the conveyor belt.

"Look." Hern pushed the stop button on his machine and jogged to a walk and then a standstill. "We're not getting anywhere on this case. Morgan talked to his friends and family even his shrink about offing himself. He did it the way he always

said he would. Wasting any more time on this uptown homo is not going to make either one of our careers. I say we tie a ribbon on this one. Let the family attorney take the baton and run clown laps and turn cartwheels around their bank account if he wants to. There's nothing in this for us, Roger." Hern mopped his face with a half towel. "Let's hit the showers."

"What about the lie detector test? What about the 35 mystery kilometers on Barry's car that night? What about the black eyes and the broken rib, huh? And the dog? He didn't provide for his fucking dog!" He pressed the stop button on his treadmill and hopped off to block his partners exit. "Fag or no fag, Hern, this case isn't solved. We have a job here."

"No, Waj. You have a job here. You get off on the heroin gang hits on East Hastings and the gay bashings in the West End, the burglaries on the rich side of the Inlet. You belong here. You said it yourself. You even blend in with everybody else. I stick out like a black olive on a wedding cake and I'm just waiting for my ticket out of this fucking lotus wilderness." Hern pushed past him, looping the towel about his neck.

Uwajimaya caught up to him in the locker room. "So the rumour is true, huh? You put in for that Interpole slot didn't you?"

"I put in for it, yeah. I've put in for a lot of things this past year and been

overlooked because I've wasted half my career chasing fairy killers and rounding up dope fiends. There's bigger stuff out there Waj. There's extraditions and international travel..."

"And fame, Calendar Boy. I wish you all the luck in your screwed up little world!" Uwajimaya grabbed a towel and slammed his way into the first available shower stall. He couldn't get beyond feeling wounded and suddenly abandoned by his longtime partner in crime-fighting, —however petty those crimes may have been. But as the hot water needled deep into his elastic joints and his head began to float in the trapped and billowing steam, his feelings of self pity turned to questions of confusion and then suspicion. He'd never known Hern to reverse a hunch like that. As recent as a month ago, you would have thought Scott Barry's days walking the streets of Vancouver a free man, were as numbered as the hairs on Uwajimaya's Japanese chest, according to Detective Constable Elias Hern. No. This didn't make any sense at all, now that Roger began to think about it. —Absolutely no sense.

It was crunch time for Bill Tinsel. With his interviews completed and the Morgan Family pushing for a legal recommendation they could bank on, he set out to synthesize his findings in a series of documents they would hopefully find useful. He couldn't help but feel particularly proud of his objectivity even though he had

never lost sight of where his pay cheque would be coming from. Recalling his original assignment to forward a conclusive homicide theory, he poured the first of several cups of coffee and began to type.

INTERVIEW MEMO

TO: Frank Dersch

FROM: Bill Tinsel

RE: Phone conversation with Constable Det. Elias Hern
Royal Canadian Mounted Police Homicide Unit
Vancouver, British Columbia

Constable Det. Hern didn't come back from vacation until July 16, 1991. He was assigned to swing shift along with his partner, Constable Det. Roger Uwajimaya. Hern was busy when he first returned to work that evening at 4:00 p.m. and couldn't speak with me until 10:00 p.m.

After explaining to him that I was simply trying to help the family understand what had happened at the crime scene and to help explain Mark's death, he discussed his theory of the case. Hern did not process the house. When they found out Scott Barry was the last one to be seen with him, he focused his time on Barry.

He characterized Barry as a very accomplished liar, but said Scott told him Mark had popped five or six Halcion pills on the evening of his death to get to sleep. He said Mark frequently popped Halcion pills to the extent that he was abusing them. This one comment is what Hern chooses to believe from Scott's story about the day Mark died.

Hern firmly believes Mark killed himself with a combined overdose of Halcion and carbon monoxide asphyxia. He said he would follow up with the toxicologist at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Eastland, to try to determine what effect it had on Mark on the evening of his death.

Other friends told Hern about Mark's fantasy of dying with carbon monoxide. That, coupled with Scott's statements about Mark overdosing on Halcion that night, convinced Hern that Mark's death was a suicide.

He said he's busy working on other cases and he had no plans to do any additional lab work even though the wine glass with powdery residue was taken into evidence as requested by the family.

He also said that since Dr. Seigel has classified the death as 'undetermined', it is not a chargeable case.

Constable Det. Hern is transferring to the Interpole Office in Ottawa on September 17, 1991.

INTERVIEW MEMO

TO: Frank Dersch

FROM: Bill Tinsel

RE: Interview with Dr. Catherine Hallock, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist
509 Bowser Avenue, Suite 1339
Vancouver, B.C. V2G 2E9
474-4162

My interview with Dr. Hallock was on July 15, 1991 at 10:30 a.m. Dr. Hallock inherited Mark Morgan as a patient when she took over the practice of Dr. E. Thompson in January 1991. Dr. Thompson is now in the Dominican Republic with the International Peace Corps. Dr. Thompson retained her notes from Mark's sessions.

Dr. Hallock has been interviewed by RCMP officers concerning not only Mark's mental health, but also about the sessions she had with Mark and Scott Barry jointly and with Scott Barry separately.

She said Mark spoke with her about suicide most recently two or three weeks before

his death. Mark was closest in the family to Don's wife, Sandee.

Mark was in a crisis when he and Scott broke up. They came in for counseling jointly on April 25, 1991. In this session, Scott expressed how much he loved Mark and how much he wanted the relationship to work. However, when she saw Scott Barry separately the next day (April 26, 1991), he confided that what he'd told Mark the previous day was a lie. He confided he was afraid of Mark exposing him and said he wanted the relationship to be over. Dr. Hallock encouraged him to leave Mark alone and quit messing with his head. In this same session, Scott told her that he had previously saved Mark's life when he pulled him from a car in a garage during an apparent suicide attempt. He also claimed Mark was hooked on sleeping pills from Japan and that he was regularly abusing them.

Dr. Hallock next saw Mark on April 30, at which time she confronted him with Scott's comments. Mark assured her the incident about the suicide attempt was false and he also denied taking any pills in order to sleep. Dr. Hallock believes Mark was being truthful with her because he had shared dark things about his life and there would have been no reason to lie about something as trivial as whether or not he was still taking sleeping pills.

The weekend of April 27 and 28 was a crisis time for Mark because of the breakup of his relationship with Scott. Over that weekend, she got several phone calls from Mark and that was the weekend she called Don and Sandee Morgan to alert them of Mark's situation. However, Mark got through that weekend, and even though she had given him Dr. Thompson's phone number as backup, she did not say she had gotten a call from Mark. After Mark got through the weekend, he was looking forward to the summer and becoming actively involved in the gay Jewish club, as well as the gay yacht club.

Mark had problems with rejection and each time he got rejected, he would go into crisis. However, once the crisis was over, he'd get on with his life and other things. She described him as sexually active but never got the impression he brought people home with him. He'd recently become interested in a chef named Stephen who worked at a restaurant downtown, whom he'd met at the beginning of April through a mutual friend. A friend of Mark's named Gilles may have known about this attraction. A former lover named Tim Dixon lived in Whistler. Tim owed Mark money and still had an on and off again relationship with Mark.

She commented that Scott was Mark's obsession and that he was very taken with him. After Mark got through the crisis weekend following the breakup of his relationship with Scott, he was sleeping well, making plans for the future, and looking forward to summer and working on his boat.

Her notes reflect a phone call on April 30 and my notes don't reflect whether it was in a phone call or a counseling session on May 5, but Mark was doing well. He was working on his boat and he was extremely angry with Scott. He characterized Scott as "the lowest form of life" and he was contemplating prosecuting Scott for fraud. Mark hired a private investigator to try to document Scott's history of dishonesty and the fact that Scott was lying to him on a daily basis. Dr. Hallock did not think the P.I. was very successful in documenting Scott's lies. Scott was seeing a woman named Jenny while he was seeing Mark. Scott now may be living with Jenny. In fact, Mark caught Scott and Jenny in bed together and Scott lied to him about the seriousness of that relationship.

As an example of Mark's resentment or retaliation at being rejected, in Toronto he caught one of his lovers stealing from him. Evidently he dusted money and caught the guy red-handed. After he caught him, he convinced the guy that everything was okay and forgiven, and then they went to bed. Once in bed, Mark then physically kicked him out of bed. Mark wanted to get the goods on Scott in a similar fashion so he could then dump him and get his ounce of revenge. On the evening of Mark's death, Dr. Hallock feels Mark may have been trying to entrap Scott in a similar fashion to dump Scott.

Her notes show the last phone call she got from Mark was on May 7, 1991. He had a late appointment scheduled on May 15 and when he didn't show up, Dr. Hallock placed phone calls to his work, home, and car phones.

I asked Dr. Hallock pointedly if she thinks Mark could have taken his own life. She said it's certainly possible but the thing that keeps coming back to her is that no efforts were made to take care of Dexter. Mark had similar thoughts of suicide when his relationship with Mitchell broke up, but once he got over his despair about Mitchell, Mark went on with his life.

The police shared with Dr. Hallock the fact that Mark's sock was off and he was found in his underwear. It's her impression that none of that fits his personality, nor does the fact that the house was a mess. She doesn't think he would have died in that

manner without attending to Dexter or cleaning up the house. She described Mark as a very fastidious person who wouldn't have let himself be found in the manner in which he was found.

Not only does she feel Mark would have provided for Dexter, but since he loved Dexter so, he probably would have taken Dexter with him in death.

At that point in his life and his relationship with Scott, he was not depressed or upset. He was angry and wanted revenge. In counseling sessions when he talked about death and what he perceived as "everyone's right to die," Mark always laughed about the difference in the way gays and straights taken their own lives: Gays are never messy when they commit suicide but straights kill themselves with guns.

In Mark's revenge plan to get back at Gary, he was going to tell Gary he'd inherited three million dollars from a lesbian aunt and that it was too bad that Scott couldn't go off with him and retire on the inheritance. Mark was then going to lull him into a false sense of security about the relationship and the financial security of it, and then he was going to dump him.

Dr. Hallock described Scott as very afraid of exposure and very narcissistic. The fear of being exposed as a gay man would have been devastating to him.

When Scott lied to her and Mark on April 25, he did so with cold, calculating aplomb. She was shocked the next day when he told her that he wanted out of the relationship with Mark.

Even though Mark said he would commit suicide with carbon monoxide, to her knowledge, he didn't do any research on its effects nor did she provide him with any books on death and dying. He was very clear about not messing himself up if he committed suicide.

She described Scott as no match for Mark intellectually but Scott would have been physically stronger than Mark. If Mark was tantalizing Scott with exposure, it's possible Scott would have gone into some kind of rage at the provocation.

According to Mark, Scott did a lot of marijuana. So much so that Mark was concerned about his usage. Dr. Hallock even posed to Mark the suspicion that Scott may not really be gay and that the only time they ever had sex was when they were

both loaded on marijuana.

She feels confident Mark would not have staged his own death in the ultimate revenge to get back at Scott.

In her opinion, Dr. Hallock feels Mark did a lot of dramatization to get attention and his discussing suicide with her, as well as friends, may have been in part just that. There is not doubt in her mind that he was in despair over the loss of the relationship with Scott at the end of April. However, he'd gotten over that and she repeated several times that Mark was into anger and not despair.

Mark hated the gay lifestyle but the irony and the tragedy was that he was attracted to men. He'd pursued a fantasy that he would meet a man who was successful and good looking and who would be acceptable to his family. He thought Scott was that individual.

It was Dr. Hallock's impression that they never went anywhere as a couple other than Mark's house. Although Scott didn't say where he'd pulled Mark out of the car, she assumes it was at Mark's house. The only other time they went out of Mark's house was one time when they went to San Francisco. In referring to her notes, Dr. Hallock found that the day Mark walked in on Scott in bed with Jenny was on April 24 at Scott's house.

Mark also talked about the possibility of confronting Jenny at some point. (Note: There were two calls to Jenny's number on 5/14: one in the morning and one in the evening.

Mark figured out how to get into Scott's answering machine and that's how he found out Scott was seeing Jenny. Scott's roommate, Blake, may have also told Mark about Scott's relationship with Jenny.

Her notes also reflect that Mark discussed suicide on April 15, but she doesn't think he was serious and was only trying to get attention. It was at this time when she made a pact with Mark that if he felt he was about to harm himself, he promised he would call her. Her notes on April 26 reflect that "suicide was the last thing on Mark's mind. He was mad and wanted to get back at Gary."

Mark gave phone numbers for Gilles and a truck driver friend named Kim to Dr.

Hallock as support people.

Her notes reflect that on April 29, he didn't want to ever talk to Scott again, yet on April 30, Mark went to lunch with Scott. Dr. Hallock's impression was that Mark bought love and that's why he had given Scott presents including a BMW. He'd also given other lovers presents and she described him as a very caring and loving man who just wanted to be loved in return. She feels Mark honestly loved Scott and if Scott had been honest with him, Mark would have taken care of him. He simply didn't want to be lied to and Scott's lies to Mark were very hurtful. Those lies included Jenny, a bankruptcy, his whereabouts, and the fact that Mark was being stood up for dates and Scott claimed he had to be laying floors at midnight.

When she met with the police, she told them all of these things and doesn't know how they came away with the impression that she feels Mark killed himself. She simply told them that was a possibility, but in light of all her other observations about Mark and Scott, she thought it would be doubtful.

INVESTIGATIVE MEMO

TO: Frank Dersch

FROM: Bill Tinsel

RE: Interview with Dr. Donald T. Seigel
British Columbia Medial Examiner
467-8433

I met with Dr. Seigel at 1:30 p.m., July 15, 1991. The medical examiner's case number for Mark's death is 91-530. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Department case number is 91-207871.

Dr. Seigel responded to the scene himself, arriving on May 15, 1991, at 11:48 p.m. He shared with me photographs of the scene as well as photographs taken at the time of the autopsy on May 16, 1991, and the autopsy report.

He said he cannot call this death a suicide. It could be, but he simply needs a lot more information. At this point, the death is classified as 'undetermined' and he has not

issued the death certificate. He said Constable Det. Hern is proceeding with the theory that the death was a suicide, but Dr. Seigel is troubled by a lot of the physical evidence at the scene that suggests someone else was responsible for Mark's death.

I asked him whether, if the case developed to the point where charges were filed, a defense attorney could pin him down with the 'undetermined' classification. He said he's testified in other cases before where he's changed his opinion on the classification of death when additional information was uncovered. He referred specifically to a case that he and I worked together (The Ruth Hernandez murder by her husband, Tony Hernandez) and reminded me that he had held off on the classification of death until after additional information was learned from the civil suit and subsequent investigation.

Mark's death could have been a suicide but he simply has too little information to go on at this point. There is no doubt as to what the cause of death was and that was carbon monoxide asphyxia.

There was no sperm detected about the body. The level of triazolam was 39.3 MG/ML. When I asked him if Dr. Eastland at the University of British Columbia could make a determination with any specificity as to the time of death from analysis of the Halcion, he said we should proceed with caution in trying to use any of Eastland's extrapolations. He said UBC professors sometimes get overly aggressive in interpretations from the data they have. He said the best source of data for the metabolization of Halcion would be the studies already conducted by the Upjohn Company, manufacturers of Halcion.

One of the other things Dr. Seigel cautioned about is the potential buildup in Mark's system of Halcion is an unknown factor at this point, but would be something the Upjohn people might have the answer for.

Mark's injuries included abrasions on his right elbow, abrasions on both knees, two black eyes, a cut below his right eye, a cut and abrasion over his left eye, and broken right ribs. His shorts also had a smear of blood on them, as did his right bicep. He had no petechial hemorrhaging in his eyes.

Dr. Seigel would welcome any additional information from the circumstances surrounding Mark's death and said the only guy who would know these answers is the last person who saw him alive, evidently Scott Barry. In Dr. Seigel's experience with

suicide deaths, he is always conservative about people trying to interpret what the deceased would have done under normal conditions. A psychologist's analysis of where a person's mental condition is might not be accurate, and if Mark were very disoriented or in distress, almost anything is possible.

And now for my final trick, Tinsel announced to the empty office building at nearly Three in the morning...

Frank Dersch
Attorney at Law
845 Canada Way
Vancouver, B.C. V3D 2BO

RE: Mark Morgan's death investigation

Dear Mr. Dersch,

After examining Mark's house, meeting with Mark's psychologist, and discussing the case with Constable Det. Elias Hern and Dr. Donald Seigel, I feel physical and circumstantial evidence refutes the belief held by Constable Detective Elias Hern of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Homicide Unit that Mark took his own life. By taking an independent, objective approach to the scene of July 16, 1991, I feel I can also speak for Merrill Curtis, forensic scientist, in stating there are simply too many factors which point toward a homicide, perhaps at the hands of Mark's friend, Scott Barry:

1) Blood was found on all three levels of the residence. It's unclear to me at this point where the fight began, but it could be argued equally as strongly that it began over dinner and/or it began in the master bedroom. In any event, more than heated words were exchanged between Mark and Scott on the evening of Mark's death;

2) According to Dr. Seigel, Mark received boxer-type punches to his face and also had broken ribs on his right side;

3) Portions of the house were in general disarray, inconsistent for Mark but consistent with a struggle. The lamp was knocked over in the master bedroom and the master bedroom door was left open. The kitchen was left a mess with no apparent effort made to clean it up;

4) The dead bolt from the entryway into the garage was thrown with a finger latch from the entryway side, thereby prohibiting anyone in the garage from getting back into the house. However, a switch for the garage door opener could have activated the door;

5) The blood pattern near the front of the Saab is additional evidence of violence;

6) The crushed Halcion found on the counter top would not have been consistent with a suicide attempt by Mark;

7) The powdery residue observed in the wine glass on the counter-top may have been consistent with crushed Halcion tablets put in suspension for ingestion;

8) Halcion levels amounting to overdose proportions were found in Mark's blood (39.3 MG/ML);

9) One of the caretakers, Ron Heart, found Mark's dog, Dexter, running loose inside the house when he found Mark's body. Dexter appeared to have been drugged or lackadaisical. A Halcion tablet was found beside Dexter's dog dish on the kitchen floor;

10) The smoke alarm in the entryway had been pulled down;

11) Mark's jeans were found upstairs on the master bedroom floor. There were no abrasions or blood on the pants. One white sock was on Mark's left foot when he was found; the other sock was under one of the cars;

12) A large sum of money was missing from Mark's wallet. It may have been as much as $400;

13) The phones in the master bedroom and living room had been unplugged;

14) Mark's house keys were found upstairs in his jeans. Two house keys were

reportedly found by the police in the Saab;

15) "222" pills were found on the floor of the TV room off the entryway;

16) The chicken wire roll which was found behind Mark's body had been rolled up underneath the dog ramp in the garage;

17) Spots which reacted positively for blood, which were destroyed due to insufficient sample by Merrill Curtis in testing on July 16, included the following locations:

a) the couch cushion in the living room;
b) the driver's side door of the Jeep;
c) the corner of the wall on the stairs near the kitchen;
d) a weak sample on the entryway room floor (it was mixed in with fingerprint powder. A test with luminol chemical agents will be conducted on Tuesday evening, August 6, 1991, to determine if this splotchy pattern may have been smear marks in an effort to clean up blood);

18) Casual shoes found on the stairs may have been the ones Mark was wearing on the evening of his death. Several prints similar to the pattern on the bottom of the shoes were found in the entryway as well as in the TV room off the entryway. The prints may have been from spilled wine or another substance;

19) The loud music heard by neighbors could have been coming from the cars to mask the sound of the engines running in a confined garage.

SCOTT BARRY

The police file reviewed by Paul Tamorin indicated Scott was less than truthful with the police in his explanation of the events on the evening Mark died:

1) Scott claimed they had no fight at all at the residence and he flunked the polygraph on that issue;

2) Scott claimed they were both "boozed up", yet there was no sign of alcohol

found in Mark's blood at the autopsy. Depending on the burn-off rate of the alcohol and the time Mark may have had wine, that may account for the fact that he could have ingested Halcion in wine yet there are no traces of wine in his blood;

3) Scott claimed he left at 2:00 a.m., yet, according to Dr. Seigel, the death could have been as early as 1:00 a.m. given Scott's other story that they ate at about 10:00;

4) Scott claimed that when he left, Mark was busy cleaning up the kitchen, however, there are no signs that any attempt had been made to clean it;

5) The one thing Scott did claim to the police, which they choose to believe but yet what is refuted by Dr. Hallock, is that Mark was abusing Halcion routinely to sleep. Mark had assured his psychologist that he was not taking Halcion any longer;

6) Scott, in a joint counseling session with Dr. Hallock on April 25, assured Dr. Hallock and Mark that he loved Mark and wanted their relationship to work. However, when Scott saw Dr. Hallock alone on April 26, he told her that comment was a lie and that he was fearful of Mark and wanted nothing to do with their relationship;

7) On April 26, 1991, Scott also shared with Dr. Hallock a fear of being exposed as gay by Mark, since their relationship had come apart;

8) Also during this meeting, Scott claimed he'd pulled Mark out of his car when Mark had attempted an earlier suicide with carbon monoxide poisoning;

9) Scott also claimed in this meeting that Mark was abusing some Japanese sleeping pills. Dr. Hallock now thinks Scott may have been sharing this information with her in an effort to set up the later "staged" suicide of Mark;

10) Scott had a history of lying to Mark about where he was and who he was with, while maintaining an intimate relationship with "Jenny";

11) Neither Dr. Hallock nor his previous psychologist, Dr. Eve Thompson, who is now in the Dominican Republic in the Peace Corps, felt that Mark would

have been in enough crisis over Scott to take his life. He had gotten beyond the anguish of the termination of the relationship and was into anger and trying to get back at Scott. In fact, he'd shared an elaborate scheme with Dr. Hallock to set Scott up over dinner and then reject him. This rejection, if it had played out the way Mark described to Dr. Hallock, could have been what triggered the fight and led to Mark's death;

12) Mark's revenge of Scott would not have gone to the extent of staging his own death to try and make it look like Scott was the killer.

SUICIDE THEORY

An examination of the death scene and the circumstances surrounding Mark's death would not be complete without examining the suicide theory. The possibility could also be argued that his death was accidental. The elements that point toward a suicide causation include the following:

1) Mark's history of depression at the end of relationships;

2) The relationship with Scott was over;

3) Death was due to carbon monoxide asphyxia. Mark had frequently discussed with friends, family and his psychologist his fantasy about how he would cause his own death;

4) According to Constable Det. Hern, there were no marks on Scott's body consistent with a struggle or "boxer blows";

5) The overdose level of Halcion in Marc's blood could certainly be viewed as a suicide attempt. When that failed, he lived out his fantasy of a carbon monoxide death.

Enclosed are separate interview memos outlining conversations with Constable Detective Hern, Dr. Hallock, and Dr. Seigel.

Sincerely,

Bill Tinsel cracked each of the knuckles on his chubby fingers before affixing his signature to his detailed report in letter form. Despite the pervasive notion of foul play he hoped to impress on the family attorney, despite the assurance he needed to provide the family and despite the explicit understanding he had been given from Paul Tamorin that his job was first and foremost to eliminate any and all shadow eluding to a suicide theory, Dr. Seigel's final comment came back to him over and over again somehow seeming to capsulize the certainty of all uncertainty:

...and if Mark were very disoriented or in distress, almost anything is possible.



Monday, July 22, 1991

Not a regular consumer of caffeine as a general health rule, Shane had quickly discovered there were indeed mornings, usually Mondays, when he simply could not physically or mentally bring himself to face the *Heathen*, as he referred to Paul Tamorin, without some cosmic altering fix. Today was to be one of those Mondays. Fortunately, at least a dozen *Starbucks* lay between his new apartment on Nicola Street in the West End and *BTI* in Burnaby. Throwing on a tie in front of the steam hole he'd frantically wiped on the mirror with the sleeve of his button-down, a yellow sticky-note caught his eye, reminding him to phone Gilles today. Shane had put him off for nearly two weeks now, ever since he had moved from his safe house. Overnight, he suddenly realized that he was teetering on that fine line in friendships where he could be dismissed and forgotten or still fall back into Gilles good graces,

but he'd have to make nice to him today, maybe even invite him over to see the new digs, no matter how much he feared Gilles would be critical of them. Gilles was a homing mechanism that found the *bad* in everything no matter how good it was,

He grabbed his leather soft-side briefcase making sure it contained enough sustenance to keep him entertained throughout the grueling day of executive-sitting ahead. He paused in the hallway at the front door from where he could survey, for at least the thousandth time, his neatly appointed living room, bedroom and kitchen. Shane smiled for no other reason than it felt good to be settled again and it felt good to know that his dependence began and ended with him for the first time in nearly seven years. He filled his lungs with sea air drifting through the open window that overlooked a very jade *English Bay* morning. That full whiff of sanity would have to last him the next ten hours. He grabbed the sticky note from the mirror and headed off to the asylum.

Elias Hern stared out the narrow slit of a window in Constable DeBord's cozy office. He knew this meeting amounted to a dressing down but he could only treat it as another aggravation in a growing string of delays that seemed to be thrown onto his path that lead out of Vancouver to Interpol. "Has it occurred to any of you that it just might be in the Morgan Family's best interest to make sure we don't rule this

a suicide? Everyone knows there isn't an insurance company in North America that will cut lose a settlement if the victim off-ed himself." Hern looked back out the window but raised his hand without giving up his turn to speak. Uwajimaya rolled his eyes, resigned to his inability to coax his partner back across the fence he'd hopped. Their superior began to tap the eraser end of a pencil on his desktop. "—Sure," Hern almost exploded to make his point. "Sure the family is going to put pressure on his to find a murderer. They're bound to call in their personal lawyers and bloodhounds to beat the bushes for suspects. They're desperate people and I wouldn't be surprised if one sweet bundle of *loonies* weren't riding on this. Look. The victim an emotional cripple who role-played his own suicide in vivid detail with his therapist less than a week before the very scenario played itself out. Come on!"

"Whether this turns out to be the case or not isn't really open for discussion gentlemen," DeBord had finally had enough of Hern's early morning posturing and decided to reel this one back in. "Luck of the draw I suppose, but you two have a case to break here. I'll level with you, Elias. Roger here feels you're trying to shake this sticky stuff off your hands because you want them freed up to grab for the Interpol ring the next time the merry-go-round spins your way." Uwajimaya let his head fall back on his shoulders after the constable betrayed his confidence. "I'm sorry, Waj, but I'm not going to pussy-foot around this. Hern has all be been handed

this Interpol position but I have their commitment they won't seize one of my men mid-case. So you have every right to be feeling your short-timer's disease, but I'm telling you, you need to take a couple aspirin and buck up 'cause I'll be damned if I let you use this excuse to spoil this investigation. I have a lot of face to save here, especially now that we're starting to feel pressure from the family and Christ! —from the Crown Attorney's office to boot." DeBord pointed his finger alternately at both of them. "I don't think this was a suicide and neither do the two of you." The senior detective reached for a manila file on his organized desk. "With that said, let me thicken the plot a bit, —just to keep things interesting for the two of you as I know how easily you can get pored with routine police work." Uwajimaya scooted his chair closer to DeBord's desk thinking this altercation would be behind them, while Hern pushed his back from it in defeat. "West Van PD has filed this report just in the past hour and faxed it across to us. If Morgan killed himself," he played into Hern's hands, "then he's still on the clock. Take a look." DeBord handed a copy of the report to his finest detectives and waited for the eyebrows to launch off their foreheads. He knew this dead-end case would suddenly become a viable full-fledged intersection once again for the both of them. He'd seen their frustration before on the faces of all his subordinates and sometimes when he looked int he mirror. The majority of cases they were handed were open-shut. Like a mechanic looking under

the hood of a car, good detectives could generally find something wrong with the crime scene just be looking at it. It's when they had to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty, that this frustration usually manifested on their brow. But what these junior grease-monkies couldn't appreciate was that Constable Detective DeBord had been humiliated not once but half a dozen times by none other than oil-slick Paul Tamorin when he worked the criminal courtrooms for the Crown A's office. He'd be damned if he let his men lay down on this case now when Tamorin stood to win at this blame-attributing game once again. For the four long years that Tamorin had worked the bench, investigation after indictment after inquest after conviction were thrown out of court on trumped up technicalities or procedural error at Tamorin's belligerent insistence. In each case, DeBord had been left holding the check for the mistakes of his men. His men were not about to slip up this time. It was one thing to hypothesize a suicide theory but DeBord so very badly needed it proven conclusively so he could relish the look on Tamorin's face when the life insurance company denied the Morgan clan of swindlers their bereavement compensation. For the time being, as he watched the lips of his detectives race through the document, he was content to watch the noose come together, even if it was just one jute threat at a time.

Uwajimaya, looking for an inroad to his partner's good side, if he still had one

after being ratted out, began to read the narrative of the report out loud. *"On 07-22-91, Officer Frank Peru and I responded to a possible burglary in progress at 1115 Marine Drive. Witness Drew Tatterson lives across the street at 1112 Marine Drive and says he was asked by the family to watch the residence following the death of its occupant several weeks ago. At approximately 0420 hours this date, Tatterson saw unknown subjects inside the deceased's residence. The suspects had arrived in a small blue compact vehicle, unknown BC licence. The subjects opened the garage door with the automatic door opener to exit, but Tatterson did not see how they gained entry. There appears to be no obvious damage to premises and no usable evidence was recovered at the scene. Officer Peru and I checked the outer perimeter and found the north kitchen door ajar. We entered and checked the premise for suspects. The house checked clear of suspects and the garage contained only one vehicle leading us to believe the Victim's black Jeep Wagoneer may have been stolen. We were careful not to disturb the crime scene and touched only those areas necessary to clear the premise. It appears that a stereo may be missing from the living room area as a cabinet is empty and there is a dusty shelf where an item used to be. Witness Tatterson reports that both the Jeep and a small blue compact vehicle, unknown licence, appeared to be "loaded down". Vehicles left east bound on Marine Drive. Tatterson managed to contact Victim's brother-in-law, Paul*

Tamorin who arrived to inspect the premise and reports that the house had been "cleaned-out" and confirmed a vehicle, among other possessions, had been stolen. Tamorin also claims that a number of items that should have been processed as evidence in the original RCMP homicide investigation, were discovered to have been left behind and remain in plain view in the deceased's house."

"As if—" Hern protested.

"I guess that means we're up," Uwajimaya asked more than stated. Hern shifted then stood. He waited for Roger to leave the office first and began to follow him out.

"Hern—" DeBord detained him. "Prove this a suicide and I'll drive you to Interpol myself." Elias forced a smile that disappeared a little too quickly to have been sincere.

Shane set the *Starbucks grande*-size paper cup with the yellow sticky note on top of his desk. The toy offices were still dark and stale which was usual for a quarter of Eight, before the orgy of human smells, (primarily Jackie's top counter perfume which she must have spent an hour marinating in before arriving at work each day), took over the nostrils and ventilation system. He reached inside a spare ceramic coffee mug still in its box, probably an unwanted Secretary's Day gift he figured, and

chased around the spare office key to his boss's door with stretching fingers. The *Heathen* liked to have things warmed up when he strolled in sometimes just before Nine. By then, as a matter of routine, Shane was already so bored with his office day that he had engaged in rumour trading with the heavily accessorized Jackie who always wore more make-up when she was menstruating (hence today's toxic cover-up spill caked on her face like plaster of Paris) —and reviewed his ongoing notes in the Mark Morgan case, supplementing them when possible, with regular pre-business forays into the *Heathen's* office to sniff through the family archives. Today, as a matter of discovered fact, he had learned that Paul wasn't quite the prolific breeder he had made him out to be. Of his four darling brats, only the youngest came from his loins. The other three, documents this morning revealed, were sown by Erin's first choice in the mate department who ultimately decided that eleven thousand dollars a month was a petite price to pay, and to keep paying until the last of his children turned eighteen, as long as it got him out of the Morgan quicksand. And get out he did, to remarry and to re-breed. The *Heathen*, Shane realized to the contrary, would have paid to wade into the deceptive Morgan oasis, had he had any money to dicker with. But being the son of an all too common Rabbi and his simple wife, wealth was very much an acquired taste and not one he was about to spit out of his mouth, no matter how much it sometimes made his eyes water or his lips pucker.

With the Tamorin adoption file sprawled open on his cubicle desk top, the phone rang sending Shane into a cover-up of his own. He hit the speaker button to allow his hands to shuffle papers back into the file. "—Paul Tamorin's office."

"—Uh, Shane? Good morning. It's Paul."

Shane's eyes crossed at the intrusion. "Good Morning Paul," he said a little antiseptically.

"Are we on speaker phone? It sounds like you've got me on speaker."

"Yes, hold on." Shane grabbed the receiver to ease Paul's perpetual paranoia that his conversation was being monitored or overheard by the enemy. "Sorry about that. The phone made me jump and I spilled some coffee," he lied.

"Oh. Those things happen. What's going on, anything?"

"Nothing yet. Quiet as usual," Shane's pat reply to a question Paul asked a dozen times each day.

"Uh, let's see. I'm just turning off Lougheed and should be there in let's say fifteen minutes. Oh, but I'm dropping my car off at the BMW dealership to get the brakes checked. I was wondering if you'd mind popping out to *Starbucks* for me. I'll take a double short Americano with room for just a splash of non-fat and one *Equal*. I think there's some change in my middle desk drawer."

Shane took a deep breath. "Sure. It's no problem," he lied again.

"Great, then if you can stop by the BMW dealership and pick me up there."

"Of course." Shane hadn't ground his teeth since puberty but there was dental friction now. Coming off Lougheed and down Wilingdon, Paul would drive right past the *Starbucks* in question. And the BMW Dealership was less than two blocks from *BTI.* They would pass each other on the road which of course started Shane thinking about the weight and size ratios between his Toyota LandCruiser and Paul's BMW. By the time he started his truck, he was decided he could survive a head-on impact, if he kept his speed under 50.

Donald Morgan pulled into the parking lot as Shane was pulling out and signaled for him to stop. Shane rolled down his window and raised his RayBan's.

"Is it five o'clock already?" Don asked him, looking up into Shane's vehicle.

"Since when have I gotten out of here at five?" Shane shrieked. "I'm running errands for Paul." He smiled, giving more information away.

"*Starbucks* errands?"

Shane's grin widened.

"Would you mind—black?"

"Not at all." He let the sunglasses fall back on his nose.

"Hey, let me take you to lunch someday this week," the president of the company offered.

Yeah right, Shane lipped, turning left out of the lot. He lowered the sun visor where he had tucked a newspaper photo of Mark Morgan taken with his executive family. *You definitely had the looks over your brother* he told the smiling black sheep with a sudden regret they hadn't connected when they had the chance.

Shane took his place in the caffeine cue and reveled in what was likely to be his only human contact for the day, —not believing for a second that any of the Morgan's actually qualified for the species of Homo Sapiens. He glanced down at his own empty coffee cup that he'd carried with him, the yellow note still adhered. It was moments of pause like this that made Shane wish he had one of those cell phones the Morgan's seemed so physically dependent upon as though it were a mechanism by which life sustaining elements entered their bodies. Shane was an efficiency fiend and knew it. Not only did he accept this idiosyncracy but he'd spent his life monitoring what it did to those around him and it wasn't always pretty. That's why standing in a coffee line for somebody else's gratification seemed to push him so far beyond his organizational limits. If only he had a cell phone, he imagined, he'd first call Gilles. Then he'd check his answering machine for fresh mush from Stephen. Then he might phone into *Morningside* to add his two cents to Peter Gzowski's segment on the Quebec separatist issue. Then Shane realized all the people who could be phoning and reaching him while he stood idle in the *Heathen's* line, and it decided the issue for

him. He would phone for rates and phone estimates as soon as he returned to his cubicle. He remembered the comment in the Morgan Family Meeting notes about Mark's arranging for cell-phones for all his friends and wondered if any of those were still laying around. He wouldn't be surprised if Mark weren't buried with one to help him manage his own *down-time*. At the funeral alone, while sitting next to Gilles behind a significant contingent of mourning drag queens draped in black rhinestone up to their protruding Adam's apples, Shane had counted three telephone calls received on the little gadgets by the front rows on the family side during a ten minute eulogy. One of those calls dispatched Mark's father into the wings of the synagogue, that's just how handy they were.

Shane finally reached the counter and a gal so perky she had to have been drinking the stuff since three o'clock in the morning, asked what she could make for him today. Shane gave his order, recycling his coffee cup to be filled again. It was still Monday after all and the fun hadn't really even started. He gave the cashier the *Heathen's* order and reached for his wallet. He'd stopped looking in Paul's desk drawer for loose change inside the first week he *temped* for him realizing that Paul never had change. Shane discovered quite early that Paul never carried currency period. His boss was continually hitting him up for a *twenty* he could borrow long enough to get him through a scheduled lunch appointment he hadn't prepared for. He

always paid his assistant back on the big loans, but Shane had fronted plenty of *Starbucks* green that was bound to add up if he didn't watch it more closely.

"Will that be with room for cream?" The cashier smiled so wide as to distort her face into a caricature of her former self.

"Make that room for arsenic, please." Shane tried to break her plastic mood. The line behind him came to even more of a standstill before shifting into laughter at what they had interpreted to be a joke on his part. "Make that two," he suddenly remembered Donald's request.

With the coffee tray balanced behind the gear shift, Shane pulled into the driveway at the German car dealership where Paul climbed up into the front passenger seat. "Good morning, again." He offered, settling into the seat. Long past amused, Shane offered a smile. "Did you get hung up at *Starbucks*? It took a little longer than I would have calculated."

The gift horse turned his head wanting to trample the little sod under hoof, and said "Nine o'clock, Monday morning, *Starbucks* is more active than the TSE."

"I'm sorry," Paul offered, helping himself to one of three cups in the tray. He removed the sticky note. "Is this message from Gilles for me?"

"Actually, that's my coffee, marked with my note to me." Shane stressed his possessiveness.

"Oops," he lowered it from his mouth and placed it back in the tray. "Gilles who?" he asked inspecting under the lids of the remaining two choices.

"A friend of mine. I doubt you know him. He's another gay socialist."

"I might. I know a *Gilles*. Who gets the other coffee?"

"Donald."

"Uh, he knows you went to get me coffee?" Paul asked a little embarrassed.

"Yep, asked me to get him one too." Shane's tone of voice communicated so much more than his boss would ever perceive, which was a disappointment to the efficiency fiend who had to accept he was wasting his time, —again. But then, lost causes seemed to be his obsession lately.

The *Heathen* noticed the sun in Shane's eyes and fumbled to make it up to him by reaching across the seat to lower his sun visor. "There you go," he evened the score, favour for favour. "What's that? A picture of us?"

Shane scrambled for an explanation for the newspaper picture he had tucked there and given his proficiency with lying when it came to serving this family, his lips began moving almost effortlessly, though convincing all the same. "Jackie gave me the photo with everyone's name listed so I could learn names and faces quickly. I had forgotten it was even up there."

"Why is Mark's face circled?"

"Jackie told me I didn't need to worry about learning his name anymore. Of course, you have already explained that Mark died of AIDS," Shane drilled him.

"Uh, yeah. I see. Listen, when we get inside, why don't you grab your pad. I want to tackle several things this morning."

"Shane grumbled without letting it surface. That was going to jam up his personal agenda.

Jackie heard rustling in her neighbour's cubicle and poked her head over the top. "Want to grab a vending machine coffee?"

"I've got *Starbucks* and besides, —Duty calls." He motioned toward Paul's office.

"Yeah, *Howdy*-Duty, that is."

Shane winked at her and stuck his head inside the president's office to deliver his coffee. He wasn't at his desk so Shane set it next to the phone, rationalizing that he'd find it there faster than anywhere else given the family worship of the speaking device. Shane gaped at the family photos in crystal frames and at Jackie's note requesting a vacation so she could get married. That was a surprise. She hadn't told him that juicy tid-bit which led him to believe she had been holding out. He would have to constrict the flow of information she had been getting from him until she could match the crude, barrel for barrel.

"Okay. Uh, Shane. Let's do a fax to Ron Standler at Shazam Entertainment. Just the cover page of a fax is fine and I'll attach a few documents." Instantly, Jose Feliciano's *Take a Letter Maria* bounced into Shane's head and the tune would surely stick there too, for the remainder of this unforgiving Monday. "So, let's see. To Ron Standler...from Paul Tamorin...*re* Shazam Entertainment Agreement." It absolutely made Shane's skin skooch every time his boss said *re* for regarding as though it were self-ordained *Heathen*-speak or something. "Dear Ron. Attached are the key pages for your review in regard to the estoppel and cross collateralization issues we discussed by phone. I can also confirm that we have not received a notice of Termination. In fact, I am still receiving normal mailings and updates like any other licencee in good standing. I will call you shortly to discuss. —VTYPT," which he always pronounced as *vee-tee-why-pee-tee.* Very early on in their relationship, Shane had been trained to interpret this as *very truly yours, Paul Tamorin* to which he always tagged his recently earned *EVP.* (Executive Vice President). So recently, Shane was told, that Banjo had pulled him aside during *shiva* at the house following the burial, to bestow upon him, not only Mark's title, but Mark's office as well. And the fancy Danish import chair behind an oversized mahogany desk wasn't even cold. Shane was annoyed by their crassness and amazed by it at the same time. Organizationally, Paul had not been able to get his act or his office together to make

the move but Shane could sense another last minute shuffle in the works that would likely plunge him into overtime. So far, Shane wasn't objecting. His overtime was amounting to another couple hundred dollars on every paycheck.

Paul's office phone began ringing and he looked at it. Then he looked at Shane looking at it. Then, as usual, he watched Shane lean far over his desktop to answer it while he began gnawing at his hang-nails in anticipation of learning the identity of the caller. Then he would reach for the receiver with residual slobber running down his fat fingers leaving Shane to wonder why he ever held Paul's phone that close to his own face. Shane would then sit there for the duration of the conversation, not having been dismissed, reviewing his shorthand which of course amounted to painfully fast scribble as he had never been classically trained to be a secretary. So he corrected his spelling and deciphered words, acting as though he were several planets removed from Paul's conversation in progress when he actually hung on his every drooling word. Paul had already exclaimed *Oh my God* three times so Shane could reason this call would have ramifications that would buy him some personal time while Paul had emergency consultation with his brother- or father-in-law, unless of course the crisis were the result of Paul's screw-up in which case he'd dig in and act buried in his work for the remainder of the day.

"Banjo!" he didn't even place his hand over the mouth piece when arresting

the hallway flight of his constipated father-in-law who everyone knew was experiencing his first post-caffeine movement of his morning and should not be detained this crucial time of day.

"I'll be right back," the old codger whispered in a voice that cracked desperately.

"Uh, Shane—get me Donald right away," he ordered. Like a golden retriever who had been forced to fetch the blasted stick one time too many, Shane trudged out of the office and into Don's to catch him enjoying his *Starbucks* mid-sip.

"Wha-da-I owe ya for this?" he slurped.

"Lunch!" Shane feigned impatience as he had forgotten his own bargain waged in the parking lot. "Paul needs to see you right away in his office. Something about a phone call he just took." Shane raised his forehead to indicate his personal opinion that this was simply a show of dramatics on Paul's part. Don concurred with resistant body language of his own, but rose to attend to matters.

Shane peeled off to his own cubicle to sneak a drink of his own coffee and to phone Gilles while the two *execs* kick-started their daily crisis management session sure to raise blood pressures, voices, cholesterol levels and basic human intolerance throughout the building.

"Hey *Swine*, it's Shane. Happy Monday!"

Just that moment, the *Heathen* bellowed. "Uh, Shane—"

"Hold on Gilles..." He jumped up and stuck his head inside the office.

"I'm going to need a lift across town. Something's cropped up that I need to take care of plus I have a flight to New York this afternoon. Would you mind driving me around a bit and then to the airport? I'll be out of your hair for a couple days?" he sweetened the pot.

"Sure, I'll get the truck and meet you out front." Shane dashed back to Gilles left hanging on the phone. "Sorry about that. I wondered if you had plans for tonight—good. I thought maybe you could come over to see the new place and we'd grab a bite, catch up, you know? China Town's fine with me. That's no problem. Tswassen Ferry Terminal, around 5:00? I'll be there. See ya then." He grabbed his keys and his coffee cup, crinkling up the yellow post it note for the trash, and made for the front door.

He and Paul pulled out of the parking lot en route to the BMW dealership so Paul could get his suitcase out of the trunk of his car being serviced. Shane wondered why he hadn't brought it with him when he picked him up earlier and then wondered why he wondered anything about the man at all. Paul Tamorin was as forgetful as a day at *BTI* was dreadfully long. After getting the suitcase, Paul instructed him to drive downtown and began prying into Shane's personal life now that they had a

moment alone and Paul found himself, however tritely, indebted. It started out with car talk...

"What year's the Cruiser?" and decisively evolved into "Erin and I were wondering if you were seeing anybody at the moment."

"Oh really?" Shane smiled to let him know that he doubted what business it was of theirs if he were and then answered the question anyway. "I'm doing the dating thing right now. No commitments for a while, if I have my way."

"That's what I told Erin I thought you were doing. We have this friend..." Shane observed that he didn't pause to take a breath between these two phrases which led him to believe it was indeed part of the same plot to fix him up with quite possibly the only other homosexual they knew on the continent, regardless of the personal tastes and chemistries that were bound to screw things up. Straight people were odd this way and at least to Shane, seemed to boldly assume that homosexual options were gravely limited. At least it had been his experience that as soon as a straight person discovered he was gay, they instantly *outed* this closet friend of theirs like some flash card they were convinced would be a perfect match. It's what Shane called the *Noah Syndrome*, —gather two of every kind...they're bound to fit together and thrive.

"He's Italian, extremely successful and single." Shane had always taken that

combination to translate to *ugly and nobody to spend his money on*. Still, he humoured his boss.

"What's his name?"

"Marco. He was Mark's hairdresser."

"He's a hairdresser named Marco? Isn't that a cliche or something?" Shane spoke his mind which was actually shouting *Turn back! Turn back!*

"He's nothing like you imagine. We'll have to invite you both over for dinner. I'll phone Erin from the airport and she'll handle the caterer. We can do it as soon as I get back."

"Whatever, Paul," Shane dismissed him, for a change.

His boss fidgeted quietly, chewing his hang nails until Shane finally had to ask where they were going. He explained that Mark's house had been broken into overnight, (Shane acted shocked) and that he had to meet the family lawyer and the RCMP detectives there. Shane went flush, worried that he'd find himself face to face with Elias Hern without the decency of a forewarning. It would be awkward at best, but more likely catastrophic. Shane tried to drive somewhat tentatively so as not to reveal that he had purposely driven by Mark's house, knew the way, even looked in the lower windows and around back on a few occasions of sleuthing on his own time. All the while, both of their minds were spinning so frenetically they could have jointly

powered a sizeable turbine. Eventually, Shane pulled the LandCruiser up the steep driveway at 1115 Marine Drive. There was a light blue sedan, possibly an Oldsmobile, parked along the curb in front. Shane recognized the man on the front steps from the Morgan Family meeting and was momentarily relieved that the car didn't belong to Elias. Paul instructed him to wait a moment in the car until he could determine how long they might be there. Shane offered to double back to the *Starbucks* by the Lions Gate Bridge and Paul thought that was a good idea. Shane drove off with Paul's briefcase, immediately rifling through it for his cell phone the second he was out of view. He knew the RCMP Homicide phone number by heart and just hoped luck of the draw wouldn't find his *ex* answering the phone.

"Hi Jerrie," he said familiarly. "It's Shane Mullin—long time no speak. Listen, is Elias Hern there? Good. Thank you." His adrenalin raised to bathe the heart drumming inside his chest. "Elias...Shane Mullin. I'm fine, you? I know. I should have phoned. It's just that the stove still seemed hot and I wanted things to cool off a bit, you know? —Can you talk a minute? Well, I'm in a bit of a sticky wicket and surprise of all surprises, I find you're in it with me. I know you're working the Mark Morgan case. Hold on, I'll explain. I knew Mark Morgan, just before he died but that's not the half of it. I took a temp job working at *BTI* right after the funeral and the position went permanent. I work for Paul Tamorin and

Donald Morgan. Wait there's more...I've just dropped Tamorin off at Mark's place over here in North Van and he mentioned he was going to be meeting the RCMP detectives there. —I'm glad I caught you then. I just wanted to give you a head's up. We can meet later and talk about this but I wanted you to know that I won't let on that I know you. Just tell me that you're not working this case with *the Fed.*" Shane seemed to have pet names for everyone. *The Fed* was his *ex,* whom he hadn't spoken to since the day he walked out on him and he certainly had no intention of speaking to him now. "Thank god. I'll phone you at home later or tomorrow, then? No problem, well it is a problem but you can count on me you know. I sort of owe you one. We can talk about that. Okay." Shane pushed the *off* button on the cell phone and tucked it back inside the *Heathen's* briefcase. When the telephone bill came in for that call, Shane figured his boss wouldn't remember when he had phoned the RCMP. *Hell*, he reasoned, his boss wouldn't remember to look at the phone bill anyway. Shane visited his third *Starbucks* in three hours and thought he might see about getting himself on some retainer contract with the coffee giant to perform spot checks at their holdings around town. He returned to Mark's house and delivered coffee to the front doorstep.

"Uh, Shane, —this is Bill Tinsel. He is an attorney for the family overseeing the handling of Mark's estate. We're just going to poke our heads inside to see if we

find anything out of the ordinary. You don't mind waiting in the car do you?" He told Shane more than he asked him.

"Actually, I could use directions to the nearest washroom," he thought to say, hoping it would force his invitation inside the house.

"Sure, uh—there's a washroom just inside the front door you can use," Paul said, looking at Tinsel who seemed to have no problem with the gesture.

"Great! Don't worry, I won't touch anything. I won't even lift the seat if it's down," he joked, instantly realizing it wasn't the place. He was halfway inside before they could think to rescind their offer. "I should have gone before we left *BTI* but we were in such a rush," he added somewhat innocently, attributing the blame to his boss.

"No, no," Paul picked up his cue. "It's my fault for taking you away. Please," he motioned Shane into the room on the left inside the entry.

It was like Shane had walked into a room full to his neck in honey, he sensed the altered Karma so. He knew that such a voyeuristic and macabre fantasy come true would make the sturdiest of homosexuals disintegrate with acid-like envy. Over his shoulder he ID'd the door leading to the infamous garage and once inside the washroom, he stood before the toilet with the door slightly open to the entry so he could hear the conversation while his eyes darted back and forth taking inventory of anything personally distinguishable. He'd spent his lifetime snooping through other

fag's washrooms in order to size them up. It was a foregone conclusion that if you invited gay men into your home, you needed to stash all prescriptions, athlete's foot powders and, Zeus-forbid—generic shower products moving only the exclusive name brand hair and skin accouterments, colognes and the requisite two-ply to the front shelves for full viewing from the crown throne of personal disclosure, —known as the Queen's loo. Unfortunately, this downstairs utility washroom did not hold the curriculum vitae Shane had hoped for and he emerged slowly into the front entryway to hear the two men discussing the alarm system.

"When you armed the security system yesterday, Bill, do you remember if the door was open or closed?" Paul was an expert at accessing blame. It was a lawyer gimmick that usually succeeded in keeping him just above reproach.

"I, uh, —to the best of my recollection, it was open, Paul." Tinsel assumed he was giving the wrong answer even as he spoke it.

"Watch," Paul invited. He proceeded to heighten the older man's obvious humiliation with a demonstration in front of Shane no less. "The alarm was *not* active when we just entered. Uh, Shane—go outside and come back in when I tell you. Shane reached for the door knob to do as he'd been told. "Don't touch that!" Paul yelled as he pushed the door open with his elbow. "Okay, you can come in now," he hollered through the closed door. Shane, on the porch, looked first to his elbow then

his hand.

"I can't come in without touching the door," he tested him.

"You can touch the outside handle," Paul clarified. Shane did and the alarm screeched and the panel inside the entry began flashing. "You see, Bill, the door needs to be closed when you activate the system. So," he dug in, "anybody inside this house would not have tripped the system last night."

"I don't know what to say, Paul. I thought I understood the system but clearly, I didn't." Tinsel just kept shaking his head. Shane would have preferred to have stayed in the Cruiser if he knew he would be called to witness such brutality.

"Uh, Shane—why don't you grab your pad and we'll just jot down a few observations," which was to say to the family attorney that he could not be trusted again so soon after such a critical slip-up. Shane went to retrieve his things but already questioned how these so-called intruders managed to pick the one night the alarm wasn't activated to conduct their operation. It struck him as unusually lucky but then again, he was getting the chance to comb through Mark's house, one room at a time. Who was he to knock somebody else's streak of good fortune? Before they had finished, Paul and Bill were able to determine that four VCR's, two TV's, one stereo system, some artwork, a rechargeable battery that belonged to Mark, his Jeep Wagoneer, his computer and possibly some documents from his bureau had all

been stolen. Two hours had passed poking around the house and the RCMP still hadn't arrived. Shane began to sweat that he and his warning phone call may have been the reason. Finally, Paul and Tinsel tired of waiting and closed up shop.

The remainder of the day with Paul blossomed into a virtual thicket of thorns, spiked with one disturbing errand after a chauffeured other before Shane finally got him on an Air Canada flight to La Guardia a little before five. Of course that meant Shane was just in time to thread the commuter needle which amounted to four lanes of rush hour traffic squeezing into the George Massey Tunnel that dipped ever so precariously beneath the Fraser River. Fortunately, Shane had taken advantage of Paul's offer and cell phone, to contact Jackie for any messages that may have come in while they were away. Otherwise, he and Gilles might have missed connections as they were both now running behind. As it turned out, Gilles and some of his travel agent cronies had been flown to Victoria via *Helijet* for High Tea at the Empress Hotel as part of a travel agent promotion, and typical for the limousine day Shane had just experienced, he had been dispatched to pick him up at the Tswassen Ferry Terminal where the maiden voyage of the Victoria Clipper was due to dock, with his friend aboard, twenty minutes before six. It had long amazed Shane how Gilles managed to exist without a car of his own, but he supposed when one could rely on helicopters and hydrofoils to get from point A to B, and then Shane to eventually get

him home again, why would anyone bother with car keys?

Gilles seemed pleased if not drunk to see him, and they began the hour long procession back downtown. Shane glanced at his odometer and quietly computed the hundred kilometers he had traveled while Gilles bragged about his cushy and of course, enviable lifestyle. After his third or fourth *wow*, Shane remembered just how effortlessly two weeks had managed to slip by without contact.

"You're kidding me!"

"Open bar coming and going. I kid you not." His head wavered slightly as his lips drew to a punctuating pierce and his eyes fluttered shut for dramatic pause. His trendy goatee in profile gave him the stony appearance of Lenin in Cubist relief. Shane suppressed a smile mostly out of exhaustion and began at once to curse the yellow post it note that was responsible for his immediate distress. "So don't tell me you're still doing the temp circuit. I worry about you, child. I really do."

Shane knew with Gilles, it was best to edit as you went or else get mired down in debatable details he was sure to wrangle the logic out of until you collapsed in defeat. "Oh, what's it matter? We all have to make a living." Shane wisely shook the snapping dog from his rump.

"You should go back to school to become a travel agent." Gilles advised him.

Shane took advantage of the twilight sky to roll his eyes in the dark shadows

of the cab. Shane had earned a Masters in Social Work and felt a little pushed that Gilles would intimate that he could do better.

"No, I'm serious. Tourism Victoria brought all these sponsors together to showcase their goods and there is an unwritten competitive rule that each one must simply out-do the other. It's the law of survival. I don't think I even left the house with more than thirty-five cents this morning." (Which in effect, told Shane he was springing for dinner). "That reminds me, we should try to find an ATM machine between here and the restaurant."

Cue the driver: "Dinner's on me tonight. It's the least I can do after all you've done to get me on my feet."

"Okay." That was vintage Gilles.

They wove through a rainy China Town looking for parking, an exercise in futility that neither of them had the patience, well, Gilles—the experience for. A LandCruiser was hardly a compact you could tuck anywhere. In the end they opted to park illegally in the alley that concealed the entrance to one of Gilles favorite China Town dives, *The Green Door*. They splashed their way down the alley and ducked in just as a cook opened the door to dispose of a pan of fishy smelling dishwater. Shane shook the rain from his dark red hair as Gilles peeled immediately left for the washroom hidden somewhere within the kitchen. Shane selected a table along the

wall in the corner and took the chair that would have his back to the room, in honour of Gilles whose seniority and regal status would dictate his need to command the view. Craning his neck to read the oversized menus posted on the walls Shane found himself squinting, which should have warranted a goddamn post it note to get his eyes checked. He'd try to remember to make an appointment tomorrow. With Paul out of town, he stood to accomplish everything he ever wanted to do on work time but never got around to accomplishing.

"Has Fay been over yet to take our order?" Gilles squawked his arrival and took his throne, freshly primped after a day of jet-setting.

"Not yet, but if she comes by while I'm in the washroom, I'll have the Hot 'n' Sour soup and the Pineapple Chicken Balls."

"Yum yum, Sugar" he ratified Shane's selection in an Oriental drag voice. Shane left the table heading in the general direction Gilles had arrived from.

"—Hello, Stranger." A hand grabbed Shane's forearm; a wholly unsettling experience as he was still relatively new to Vancouver and the number of people who could get away with that in a public restaurant were likely people he'd wasted no time in alienating as a result of his midnight break-up with *The Fed*. But when he turned around, he was instantly warmed by the smile of a fellow-fed who wasn't foe but friend, and a trusted friend at that for leveling with him about the many infidelities that

were playing him for the fool.

"Elias—this is a bit strange," Shane grabbed his extended hand and shook it fondly. "I have thought about you so much and couldn't decide how to reach you without upsetting the balance of things."

"I know, me too. How've ya been?"

"Well. Very well and you."

"Can't complain. Well, actually I could," Elias rethought his work situation. "You're looking, — uh, how should I say? — fully recovered from your unofficial RCMP career."

"Thank you," Shane smiled nodding his head. "I am, thanks to you."

"Ah, I had nothing to do with it. You came around all on your own." His dimples revealed his modesty and Shane was afraid his blush revealed his attraction to the man who had been singled out as the Mountie's Calendar cover boy.

"What happened to you today? I realize my call probably caught you totally off guard—" Shane admitted.

"I was a bit surprised, but you know the RCMP motto—"

"Guardienne les droits" they spoke in French together.

"We need to get together for dinner or a drink in the next few days. I'm anxious to learn about your involvement with the Morgan Family. Of course it

catches me totally straddling the fence here, but I trust you. I always have." Elias leveled with him. "You obviously have plans for tonight, and good for you too."

"Oh, Gilles' just a friend I owe a favour or two," Shane replied a bit defensively, needing to extinguish any delusion he might have that Gilles and he were *seeing* each other.

"Gilles, Gilles," he said the name over and over. "Do I know him?"

"Gilles Eiswine—" Shane gave him more to go on. "I doubt it, though I shouldn't. Gilles claims to know everyone. Listen, I have to pee, but I should give you my new home number." Elias reached inside his jacket for a pen and Shane wrote his number on the edge of the paper table cloth. "Call me," he said sternly and winked.

When Shane returned from the washroom, Elias was gone, his untouched bowl of soup still steaming. Shane couldn't help but notice that his telephone number was still on the tablecloth. He wanted to not act hurt but he would be ecstatic to discuss the Mark Morgan stumper with him and stove or no stove, Elias Hern would make a very attractive catch, —if the more perfect Stephen weren't already part of the equation, Shane reminded himself. He re-joined Gilles.

"Why ya running off all the cute men, Sugar?" Gilles arched an eyebrow almost reproaching in its sharpness. "Who was that?"

"Oh him?" (Shane could never pull off nonchalance). "He's a friend of *The Fed's* I hadn't seen since the break-up." Shane tried to busy myself by blowing on the spoonful of piping hot soup that had just arrived.

"I would think one would make every effort to keep that one in one's sights," he voiced his approval. "I ran into *The Fed* by the way, -yesterday or the day before, walking Robson like he owned the strip, he was. I'd swear he cruised me though I'd also expect him to deny it."

"Was he looking dejected, —wounded, even lost, maybe?" Shane wanted confirmation of what he nightly prayed would amount to the ultimate in human suffering and regret.

"Actually," Gilles smiled unevenly, "I'd say he looked rather enterprising, almost opportune. He asked for my number," he tried to drop casually except at that moment, after Shane had decided his soup had been brought to the proper mouth temperature, he learned quite by accident that it was still much too hot. He gasped in reflexive shock which Gilles interpreted to be his reaction to his cheesy bit of gossip. "I didn't give it to him," he moved to reassure him. He smiled, realizing it wasn't worth explaining how much he really didn't care anymore. Suddenly Gilles looked at him very directly and said, "I told him I was in the book, of course! Who carries a pen on Robson anyway? God knows I *should*," Gilles launched into giggle

fits sure to rouse the Reclining Buddha in the corner of the restaurant. Shane raised a concealing hand to his forehead and decided to pick a bit at his flourescent red chicken balls while his soup cooled. The rest of the meal's conversation centered around Shane prodding Gilles for details concerning his fidelity with Kyle and vice versa. Not only had Calgary Kyle definitely made the moves on Shane, he distinctly recalled the section of the Morgan Family Meeting notes that insinuated that Mark had explored a one-time affair with Gilles boyfriend as well. If this were true Shane noted, Gilles neither confirmed nor denied it. Interestingly enough though, when asked what he thought of Mark's house on Marine Drive, Gilles proclaimed he had never been there as it was too far to bus. The Morgan family notes, on the other hand, claimed Gilles had a key to Mark's house and as for the bus? Well as far as Shane could tell, Gilles only ever bussed out of morning necessity as he chronically ran late for work though he religiously walked the same eight blocks home to take full advantage of the Davie Street flesh pressing opportunities that abounded on any given afternoon. This was the same man who would turn around and crank out five or six 4 by 4 medley relays at the Aquatics Centre four nights a week in order to keep himself fit for those very afternoon walks home. Shane had a feeling that asking Gilles about fidelity was like asking Charles Manson about the *Ten Commandments.*

The next morning seemed particularly brutal for Shane who was experiencing his first hangover since, —his last hangover. He and Gilles had traveled the club circuit until they were as looped as it was. "Paul Tamorin's office, this is Shane—" He motioned Jackie into silence while he took this call. She had been unusually agitated into a twitter this morning and true to form, Shane's desk phone had been ringing non-stop since 8:00. With Paul on eastern time, he could finally take advantage of his assistant's punctuality by phoning every five minutes while the rest of the west coast still slept or wove their way through traffic. Each time Jackie had started to tell him the latest development in the rumour mill, which Shane was convinced she secretly pedaled with gears installed beneath her desk, they were interrupted by another call for Paul or from him. This time the phone was for Shane. "Uh— sort of. Not really. Can I call you back in five?" Jackie held up ten fingers indicating she would require more of my time. "Ten minutes, rather? Good. You're at the restaurant then? I'll call you there. Bye."

"Who was that?" Jackie considered the boldness of her question but more the boldness of who might dare to interrupt a good nattering session. "It's none of my business, is it?" she asked, expecting Shane to deliver an answer she could live with. "Oh, hell. What of any of this is my business anyway?" She laughed at herself. "So did you hear that Mark's house was ransacked yesterday morning?"

Shane nodded, instantly reprimanding himself. He had tried to make a mental reminder to actually sound surprised by Jackie's very next attempt to shock him with privileged information. The fact was he had arrived at *BTI* well over a month an a half ago, with more information than Jackie had foraged in her two previous years of working there. In the narrow center drawer of his desk was a faxed copy of Tinsel's latest report on the break-in which he was dying to read if he could get a minute alone. He was an insider now, trusted by the P.I. to wait by the fax machine for sensitive documents, or to relay detailed messages from the RCMP working the case to Donald of Paul. He feigned a respectable disinterest in what he saw and maintained his autonomy in the strictly amateur gossip circuit that was regularly rippled by the other executive assistants in the pool. He was the assistant to confide in, just another one of the guys despite his hierarchical deficit, who happened to have a brain and a valued opinion from time to time. Donald recognized this more than anyone and the respect between them was mutual as was their apparent, deeply ceded distrust of the brother-in-law that was muscling in as the liaison in the now concurrent investigations of homicide and theft. Tamorin may have out right lied to Shane about Mark's death but he had raised Donald's suspicions three years earlier when he swooped in from nowhere to marry his eldest and most sinister sister, Erin. Money and wholly gobs

of it had to be the only reason anyone would ever consider putting up with that self-created princess of a sister, but Donald knew that even the money hadn't made her first union palatable for the now-estranged, debut suck-up, — not to mention the father to three out of four miniature versions of the original monster. Donald knew that Little Derrin had been hastily planted by Paul who quite possibly realized that no one had bought the true love charade at their wedding and somehow believed his sincerity might be bolstered by legitimate progeny. Even Mark, who had flown across the country from Toronto to be at his sister's second wedding, was said to have made the off-colour observation that evidently, money can buy his sister anything she desired, while affording him diddle squat in his family's ledger of acquisitions. It was no coincidence to Mark that Derrin's birth happened to coincide with Banjo's offer for Paul to become corporate council for *BTI*. At least it had appeared to Mark, if to no one else, that his father had finally gotten the second son he'd always wanted. *Why interfere*? So he didn't.

Shane's head throbbed a snappy little hangover beat that his eyes could scarcely keep time with. It had been a late night and early morning of carousing with Gilles and despite the absence of Paul in the office, which should have been the signal of a banner day at *BTI*, Shane wondered how he would be able to fake his way through the day. There wasn't enough *Starbucks* in the Province to make things

better. He carefully concealed the Tinsel fax under an arm and bummed a few Midol from Jackie asking her to cover the phones until he returned. Making certain that Banjo had returned from his morning consitutional, Shane scooted down the hallway to the washrooms.

Sitting on the toilet in one of four stalls, he carefully arranged the fax pages on his lap and began to review the private dick's notes on yesterday's enlightening reconnaissance, while building up enough saliva to down the cramp killers. Cleverly, his attendance during the investigation had been eliminated by Tinsel who even failed to minimally acknowledge his assistance in note taking. —Once again, Shane had been overlooked and under-valued as the invisible backbone of the organization.

He heard the washroom door open and the sound of dress shoes making their way along the tiled floor. They didn't exactly shuffle, so he ruled out the elder Morgan who wouldn't be making his second ritualistic dash of the morning for another thirty minutes. Those steps could belong to the lanky and eye-glassed *other* brother-in-law, Tim, or to the much more easy-going stride of Donald, or he supposed they could be made by the simple-minded blonde stud from accounting, whose body language hadn't given him the time of day since he'd started working there. He waited. Of three available stalls, the black wing-tipped Oxfords, chose the stall adjacent to his. The feet weren't proportionately large enough to support the junior

lawyer well over six feet tall, and the accounts payable clerk wasn't yet into the full business executive drag, so Shane deducted in horror that they must belong to the company's president. He held his spit. Minutes past and it dawned on him that the prez might question the efficiency of his employee in the adjoining stall who didn't sound like he was making the best of his time management training. Shane popped the tiny 'M' initialed beauties and swallowed hard, shuffling the pages back in order.

"Shane? That you?" Donald's voice echoed in the stall like a master of ceremonies in a roofed sports stadium.

"Yes," he answered a bit put out, needlessly flushing his toilet but for effect.

"Do you have today's *Sun* in there?" he imposed.

"Sorry." He stood to fasten my pants. "Empty handed, I'm afraid."

"Well, at least I know you're not playing with yourself then." He chuckled in spite of himself. Shane smiled, threading a belt through its buckle. In the slowest of motion a few of the slippery thermal pages slid from under his armpit and glided to the tiled floor between them. Shane's knees popped as he crouched to the floor to collect the contraband but their hands met on the same mission and Shane had no choice but to concede he'd been caught.

"Well, that's a bit embarrassing," Shane cleared his throat. "I was actually on my way into your office with this. You might as well have all of it now." Exposed,

he passed him the bulk of the fax under the partition. "Well, then," he stammered not knowing what to do or say next. Donald didn't respond. Shane left the stall and the washroom. He wanted to keep walking all the way to his truck and then drive all the way to the West End, never once looking back over his defeated shoulder at *BTI* again. But he was trapped and while the tiger circled him deciding what he was going to do with him, Shane began to devour myself with anxiety. Back at his desk, he tried to appear as though he had purpose while deciding how he was going to let this play out. Was it best to let it roll off his back as though nothing had occurred, or should he own up to his snooping and come clean? Or would that look as though he had something to hide? Did he have something to hide? Clearly, he was fully capable of questioning himself to death before the tiger ever finished licking his chops and *wiping his butt*, he was reminded of their compromised position. Finally, Donald walked up and put the fax down in front of me.

"You did the walk-through with them yesterday didn't you?"

Shane looked up and nodded probably too eagerly.

"Is it at least accurate?" the president of his immediate universe asked.

Shane looked down at the fax and back up at him from where he sat. "Except for where it says Paul tested the alarm system, or where he writes that Paul asked him to try the combination on the locked fence, or where it says Paul drove to the north

precinct... I did all those things for them and didn't even rate a mention." Shane was regaining control of his very involuntary stomach muscles and a smile slowly returned to his face.

Donald grabbed his shoulder and squeezed out his forgiveness. "Oh, the curse of the starving class." Shane couldn't tell if with that comment he envied or pitied him, but he released his captured lungs and let his shoulders relax under his grip. "Listen, look through this again and let me know if anything seems out of the ordinary or doesn't make sense to you based on what you learned yesterday. If you're free, we can do that lunch I owe you today and discuss this a bit further." He winked and made this clicking noise with his tongue and teeth as though he were calling Trigger the horse. Shane, thankful and weakened by the experience, decided it was endearing and confirmed he was indeed available for lunch. His brother-in-law, Tim, walked up to them and apologized for interrupting, but he needed to see Donald in his office. Shane's washroom partner turned back. "I can't get away until 1:00-ish. Is that still okay?" He nodded his head already entrenched in his assignment, since made official.

The rest of the day was to be cake crumbs as far as he was concerned, —a bunch of minor annoyances— a few phone calls from New York and a Jackie-dodging here and there but compressed together, over the course of his eight hour hangover, it had still been a delectable heathen-free treat all the same. Shane came to life in his

absence. He laughed, he joked, he spoke his mind and for the first time in two high strung months, he relaxed.

In the end, Donald had to stand him up for lunch and Shane hadn't been able to get a hold of Elias Hern though he tried throughout the day. He slid the faxed P.I. memorandum into a white envelope marked with the words *rain check* and a question mark, before he sealed and placed it on Donald's office chair. He'd eventually ask him for his thoughts if he thought they were valid or he'd dismiss him as just another line employee to watch his correspondence around. It suddenly made very little difference to Shane at the end of the day.



Monday, July 30, 1991, 04:44 a.m.

"Drew, come back to bed. I swear you are worse than the neighborhood bitty who has to know everyone's business." His wife turned over and mumbled into her pillow. "You're do-gooding is going to get us killed someday. We should just mind our own business and stop trying to land some cameo appearance on *Canada's Most Wanted."*

"I can't sleep anyway, and something's definitely going on over there, I tell you. First, Mark gets killed then thugs start moving his things out and now this prowler." Drew Tatterson spoke to himself as his wife had already dozed back to sleep. He squinted at the licence plate but couldn't make out the numbers of the strange vehicle on the street. "I better call the cops." His words fogged the window on the other side of the mini-blind and he had to change positions to continue his

vigilance. He reached for the bedside phone and dialed *911*.

...On 07/30/91 at approx. 0444 hours, officers received a call to respond to the beige house across the street from 1112 Marine Drive, —possible burglary in progress. Caller reported that a suspect vehicle had been driving up and down Marine Drive for approximately 20 minutes with two people. That same car was not parked across the street, only one person got out.

Officers arrived within one minute, and located suspect Hector Mercure sitting behind a metal screen covering the front porch of 1107 Marine Drive smoking a cigarette. When asked where he lived, Mercure pointed to the house at 1115 Marine Drive. Officers arrested Mercure and charged him with criminal trespass as he obviously did not live there. Witness Tatterson stated that after suspect got out of vehicle, he first went over to 1115 Marine Drive, walked around the perimeter of the house and spent some time out of sight. Suspect denies entering the property at 1115 Marine Drive, where the owner died approximately two months ago and where a burglary had occurred the previous week.

Suspect was taken to the North Precinct where, due to the large amount of cash on him which would allow him to bail out immediately, subject was cited and released instead of being taken to correctional detention. Suspect cited for

Possession of Marijuana and Criminal Trespass. When released from the North Precinct, subject's money was counted out for him in his presence and he stated that the sum of $4,121.00 cash was correct..." A yellow adhesive note was attached to the fax that noted Mercure had in his possession at time of arrest a broken knife, a rubber glove, a key to a Saab and $4,000 in one hundred dollar bills.

Elias looked up from the faxed report that fellow detective, Dave Floyd had just handed him. *How considerate,* he thought, since Dave hadn't really spoken to him cordially since he'd labeled Elias the informant that led to the nasty break-up between he and Shane some months back. And now, he runs into Shane in the investigation and at the *Green Door* where he's having dinner with Gilles Eiswine, of all fags. He felt his world closing in around him and all he could do was vow to get out somehow, and fast. He'd been too many things to too many people and it seemed they were all lining up to hold him accountable for it now. It didn't exactly help his sense of objectivity that Mark Morgan's photo had actually looked familiar to him when his partner sprung it on him in the park. On top of all this, it looked as though his suspect ordinal system was about to fail him after an unprecedented run of convictions. He had awarded Gilles position *Four* for reasons that became apparent after Uwajimaya's interview with him but he was still missing a *Five* and while he was inclined to stick Shane in just to hold the equation together, it was falling apart for

him and now seemed as good a time as any to bow out if he could just get someone to pull the curtain cord. Elias simply wanted to coast into his prime with his pension, his record and his mystery in tact. The longer he drew things out, the sooner someone would eventually get around to figuring him out. This terrified him. Elias Hern didn't have a lot of experience being afraid of anything but a quick waltz with the truth would change all that.

It didn't sit particularly well with Paul that his assistant seemed to be getting along much better with his brother and sister in-laws, even his wife (and nobody routinely got along with his wife), than he was managing with him. It seemed every time he turned around somebody was telling him how they didn't understand how Shane put up with him or more importantly, why—? It never occurred to him that Shane was asking the same questions, himself. All Paul knew was that he wasn't getting the company credit anymore. Universally, the kudos these days, went to Shane for —saving the Warner account, smoothing things over with Shazam Entertainment, getting that boat load of hockey sticks through Canadian Customs, even remembering his wife's birthday *and* selecting the gift. His efficiency expert could do no wrong and not surprising, coming from the man who couldn't manage his own shoe laces, Paul wasn't sure how to handle his resentment that was growing

for this golden boy of BTI. Everyone who missed Mark Morgan saw Mark in Shane. Shane was the new poster-pansy as Paul saw things and everyone, including Banjo, poured the love, adoration and attention they had withheld from Mark, into his post mortem stand-in. Just this morning as Paul readied for his pre-dawn flight to London, Erin sat up in bed and announced from a dead sleep that Shane would have been the perfect life mate for Mark, before erupting into a fit of tears that eventually floated her back to sleep. Paul hadn't bothered to blow her a kiss on his way out and superstitiously regretted breaking with tradition as he drove his *Beamer* along the nearly deserted streets between Kits and the Burnaby Office. He glanced at his watch and returned his hang-nails to his mouth. Five-ten in the morning. He was going to be cutting it close for his Six o'clock nonstop but he had forgotten his Roladex print-out and *To Do List* at the office and simply could not travel or function without them. He had already phoned his *Fag Friday* to see if he could meet him at the airport with these things, but at three-thirty in the morning, Shane's answering machine had picked up and he could only leave a sketchy though disappointment laden message. He suddenly remembered to check for his *Ritalin* in the side pocket of his briefcase and exhaled dramatically when the plastic pharmacy bottle rattled with contents. He had to admit that phoning his assistant that early in the morning had to be pushing the bounds of their professional relationship, but so far, Shane had never said *no* to Paul

and the more he drew the respect and adulation of the family away from him the more Paul wanted to discover just how far he could be pushed before he started pushing back.

He pulled into a dark *BTI* parking lot. Even Andy, the company handyman and custodian had not yet arrived for his ritual morning sweep through the thirty offices and cubicles that comprised the sizeable infrastructure of the Morgan dynasty. He left the car running outside and ambled up the staircase from the first level lobby toward his office. He fumbled through the collection of empty coffee mugs on his assistant's file cabinet for his spare office key and then rooted through the mounds on his desk top for the papers he needed almost as dependently as his pharmaceuticals. He realized he should have taken a pill before he left the house as a break-down now loomed on the edge of his child-like frustration. He stormed to his assistant's desk outside his office and turned the computer on, convinced he would have to extract the copies he needed even though he knew little less than nothing about computers. The screen reflected the *EVP's* square face and a message appeared inside a rectangle box. He read the prompt aloud like a third grade primer.

Windows did not exit properly during its last use. A back-up copy of your Word document has been saved. Open it now?

Paul leaned back in his assistant's chair and stared at the screen until he

realized he was rapidly running out of time. He moved the mouse around until the computer gave him an option to print. He clicked and surveyed the meticulously kept cubicle space while the printer began to eject sheets of the document. He found Shane's copies of the Roladex and *To Do List* and left him a hand scribbled note explaining he had taken them. He grabbed the short stack of pages from the printer tray, turned off the computer and dashed to the airport.

Looking out the airplane window from his seat in first class, after he had just made it to Vancouver International in time to catch his flight, he waited for his phone call to connect. "Sylvia. Paul Tamorin phoning for Bill. Is he in? — Thank you. ...Bill. Good Morning. Yes, I'm on a plane headed for London. Listen, I came across something this morning at the office that merits some attention. It seems my executive assistant has been most industrious. Well, I intercepted notes from a report he seems to be writing on company time about Mark's death. Needless to say, it is not terribly flattering for the family. I think there's a strong chance he might be an RCMP plant. Is that possible? —No, you're probably right. Well then, according to this report, he knew Mark or had met Mark or maybe dated him or something. He supposedly knows Gilles Eiswine too. —I don't know. Okay so if he isn't working for the Mounties, he already has a bit too much information to be a harmless hack. Maybe you're chasing the wrong suspect, Bill. Maybe there's a perfectly good reason

Shane Mullin knows as much as he knows about Mark's death. We should definitely look into this though. I'd like to shut him down to be entirely honest with you. Move him out you know, before he does any real damage. So maybe it turns out he wasn't involved in Mark's murder but it would sure help our case to have another suspect in the works just in case Scott Barry disappoints us. Well, see what you can come up with on him. I'll be back in the Province on Friday evening and you're always welcome to phone me at home if you have something. Oh, and Bill, let's keep this between the two of us for now. Donald or Eliza don't need to know about this yet. Thank you." Paul disconnected the call, took another bite of the croissant and flagged down a flight attendant, who really amounted to nothing more than his traveling assistant, to get him more coffee. By the end of the week, the precious Golden Boy was going to be reduced to common pyrite.

The briefing room erupted into hoots and hollers as Elias walked through the door. His partner whistled enthusiastically with his thumb and index finger tucked inside his lips. Elias stopped, sincerely dumbfounded by the sudden display of attention toward him. Someone lobbed the *British Columbia* section of the day's *Vancouver Sun* at his feet and he bent to pick it up. There, just below the masthead and the headline *RCMP avert Penticton youth riot,* as a photograph of some 30,000

concert-goers with a shirtless and considerably buff Elias Hern, dancing in the foreground. "Shit!" he exclaimed, letting the paper fall to his side. He made his way through the jostling corps and took a seat next to his partner, burying his pretty-boy face in his hands. Chief DeBord entered the room and the jeering stopped. DeBord cleared his throat.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen, —and *Hard Rock Miners* fans," he added pointedly, causing Hern to slouch even lower in his chair. "I want to thank those of you who volunteered for the Penticton duty this past weekend and for your valiant efforts in keeping Elias Hern and his 30,000 cohorts in line. Hern, I expect to see you in my office immediately following this briefing.

"Yes, sir," Hern mumbled. Roger slugged him in the arm. As DeBord breezed through a number of general announcements, Elias could only stare in amazement at his image on the page at his feet. *Not a bad picture* he thought to himself even though the chief's wrath was only the prelude to the shit he was in if Shane happened to see today's *Sun.* At the eleventh hour before their hastily arranged dinner engagement on Friday night, Hern had decided the line between career and personal endeavors was thinner than he cared to walk, and despite the fact he would have enjoyed a relaxing evening catching up and making amends with Shane, the stakes had become too high. He hopped the RCMP bus to Penticton to join 175 other

RCMP officers from around the Province and Alberta to squash the riot plans that had been anticipated for the BC Day Long Weekend celebration. But once he got there, he realized he had forgotten not only his service revolver but his officer credentials. The detail chief advised him to *dress down* and enjoy the event, —that they had all bases covered without him. The weather had been glorious and Hern had been aching for an excuse to bolster his fleeting youth, so he dressed down, literally. He had a tan and now this fifteen minutes of fame to show for it, —and a host of explaining to do.

"That's it for today, Mounties. Dismissed. —Hern?" The chief reminded his playboy.

"I'll be right in, sir." Hern rolled up the newspaper as a matter of preservation but ended up using it to bop his partner on the head after he'd jabbed him in the side one time too many over the incident.

"You told me you weren't up for the Penticton detail, that you had plans," Uwajimaya confronted him.

"I did, but they got canceled. Lay off me, will ya? He walked into DeBord's office. "Shall I shut the door, sir?"

"I should think with your keen sense of exhibitionism, you wouldn't mind an audience, Elias."

"I can explain, sir" he offered emptily.

"Not necessary." DeBord placated him. "I want to discuss your Interpol transfer and get a read on your commitment to the force until this comes through."

"Look," Hern interrupted him. "About this weekend, —"

"It's not about this weekend, Elias and it's not about you. Sit down," he motioned him to the chair. "You seem to be willingly deadlocked on this Morgan investigation, content to be stuck, if you don't mind my assessment. Now I've tried to impress upon you how important this is to me to land a conviction here." Hern took inventory of the Captain's desk top while he spoke. "—I don't know what it's going to take to build a fire under your ass to turn this one over so you can get the hell out of here, but I'm open for suggestions."

"Sir, I'm not entirely sure how to put this, but in the course of the investigation, it has been revealed to me that a friend of mine is now working for the toy company where the victim worked. I was afraid that if I came right out and asked for a re-assignment, you'd think I was dodging my responsibilities. The fact is, I am having some difficulty managing this conflict in interest."

"Well, I suppose I could turn this one over to Floyd. He's been barking for a stint in Homicide," the captain spoke his thoughts out loud. Hern audibly objected before he had a chance to formulate his reasoning. "You see something wrong with Floyd handling this?" DeBord raised an eyebrow as though Hern had no right to

question him.

"No, it's not that, Chief." It was that, but Hern didn't know how to gauge interference without sounding ungrateful for DeBord's willingness to relieve him of this burden. "The fact is we are deadlocked, sir. We have nothing to go on. We have a weak excuse for a suspect, a pushy family that practically forbids us from investigating the likelihood of suicide, compromised forensics that don't point to anything conclusive, — well, except that the suspect was at the victim's house the night he died, but the suspect freely admits that! With all due respect, sir, all we have here is your hard-on to nail Paul Tamorin and the Crown Attorney's office. There's not enough substance for two officers. Roger can juggle this with another assignment added and still keep your need for a conviction alive."

"I think the sun baked your brain this weekend, Hern, — what was left of it anyway." DeBord shuffled a few papers and Uwajimaya appeared at the door with a knock on the frame.

"Pardon the interruption sir, but we just got results back from the Crime Lab on the Morgan case, —when you're free," he directed the invitation to his reticent partner.

"Pull Floyd in on this, Roger. Mr. Hern here, is on his way to Interpol."

Uwajimaya's face fell expressionless while Hern's eyebrows bolted to the

ridge of his stylish hairline.

"Yes, sir." Roger sank back into the hallway.

"Sir?" Elias asked like a kid before Santa Claus.

"You'll have your transfer papers by morning. Spend today briefing Detective Floyd and Hern— ," he cautioned, "keep the going away party low profile." He smiled, revealing his respect for the man whose actions he had no choice but to publically denounce.

"Thank you, sir. Does that mean, you do or don't want to be invited?" Hern smiled back.

"Get out of here before I change my mind!"

Hern jumped from the chair and raced down the hall after his wounded partner. "Waj!" he yelled, throwing his arm around his partner's shoulder. "No hard feelings, man. You promised," he reminded him. Uwajimaya wriggled out of Hern's hold. We can talk about this later. Let me break it to Floyd, will ya? We can meet in your office in twenty minutes." Roger nodded his head as he clenched his teeth together inside a closed mouth. His eyes narrowed and he diverted his walk outside to get a check on his emotions.

Hern continued down the hall to the Warrant Division. "Dave, can I have a word with you?"

"Sure girlfriend." Floyd snapped back. Hern closed the door and sat across from the square chinned, moustached subversive.

"Dave, we've had our differences in the past but I'd like to ask your cooperation on something I think we both still care about. I've asked to be taken off the Morgan homicide—suicide, oh whatever-the-hell this case is. Shane's now working at the toy company where the victim was one of the vice presidents. In a short matter of time, this whole thing's about to blow up in our faces and I didn't want to put Shane through that. He's not the one who chose to be a Royal Canadian Mountie against his better judgement. We did."

"So why are you telling me this? Do you need my permission to screw around with my ex?" Floyd asked a bit exasperated.

"You think that is what this is all about?" Hern squealed before lowering his voice. "No, Dave. I tell you this because the chief has decided to assign you to the case in my vacancy and I would think you might have a larger conflict here than I did."

"Look, you feel some chivalrous need to defend and protect Shane, that's your hang-up. In fact, you've always made it your business, haven't you? But I can take care of myself long after you've taken the Interpol all the way up your skinny, white ass, so good riddance, Hern."

Elias stood, scooting the chair backward. The red was back in his cheeks. He'd said his piece.

Down the hall, Roger Uwajimaya pored through the crime lab results trying to convince himself that Hern's decision didn't matter to him, to this case, to the city of Vancouver or the Province of British Columbia, but it did.

Item 29, a drinking glass with dry, pink-coloured residue on the inner surface. A sample of the pink residue was analyzed by Fourier Transform Infared Spectroscopy (FTIR). The spectrum obtained was consistent with cellulose. An ethanol extract of the inner surface of the glass was evaluated by Gas Chromatography and Mass Spectrometry (GSMS) and by High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC). Triazolam, the primary ingredient of Halcion, was detected by both methods.

Item 27, including a Halcion pharmaceutical bottle containing two blue tablets, a small sample of blue powdery material and a metal spoon with visible residue adhering to the surface of the spoon bowl. Conclusive identification of the drug Triazolam was obtained for each of the three items

NOTE: The Halcion bottle from Item #27 was examined for latent fingerprints. The bottle was treated with cyanoacrylate followed by magnum powder.

NO prints were observed on the cap or the bottom of the bottle. Three partial prints were observed on the main portion of the bottle, two on the label and one on the back. The entire circumference of the bottle was lifted as a unit and transferred to a finger print card. Twenty-four of thirty-two cards of lifted latent prints are of comparison value in one set though the results of this comparison with both the victim and Scott Barry are negative. In the following set, twelve of seventeen cards of latent prints are of comparison value. At the request of Det. Hern, only those latent lifts obtained from both vehicles, the hand railing outside victim's balcony and the smoke detector in the downstairs vestibule were compared with the inked fingerprint impressions of the victim and Scott Barry. A match was made of the left index and left middle fingers (#7,8) of Scott Barry on the driver's wing vent exterior of the Jeep Wagoneer. A match was made of the left ring finger (#9) of Scott Barry on the driver's door exterior of the Jeep Wagoneer. A match was made of the right thumb (#1) of Scott Barry on the right front door window interior of the Saab 900 Turbo. The results of the comparison with the victim's fingerprints is negative.

Stephen hadn't said two words since getting on the ferry and Shane's heart waffled between love and weekend overload. It had been an amazing getaway. Stephen had said all the right things. Shane had said all the right things. All

indicators were that they were indeed the match of the millennium and yet Stephen was silent. Shane had secretly hoped a declaration of love would emerge from their magical weekend on Salt Spring Island and while there were moments plenty, the words never quite seemed to string themselves together in the proper order. The closest call of all came their last night while soaking in the outdoor hot tub at the *Blue Ewe*. The sky was cloud free and reminiscent of a sheet of black construction paper, poked with pin holes and held up to a source of light bright enough to lend brilliance to the experiment but not too bright to give away the illusion. They could see their breath when they spoke. Shane could have read or touched the words coming from his mouth. He could have inhaled the steam of their sweet perspiration the rest of his days but the moment disintegrated with the arrival of another couple bearing cheap champagne and a ghetto blaster spewing some Enya derivative they announced as *Claanad. Mind if we join you*, they had asked provocatively. *Not if you don't mind water borne herpes,* Shane had felt like responding, but didn't. Stephen suddenly betrayed the night by recognizing one of the romance pirates as an interior renovator that had done design work at the restaurant. *Renovator*? Shane had wondered. *What ever happened to the more universally recognized* decorator *on the list of acceptable gay vocations?* Evidently, *Kelly* had managed to evolve from the tar pits of mainstream swill to the monarchy of exclusive taste, though Shane felt he exhibited

none of it by barging in on their once in a lifetime moment. They scooted to the corner of the hot-tub to allow them squatters rights while Kelly and Stephen replayed the events that comprised their acquaintance. Boldly and without the slightest inhibition, Kelly had stood buck-naked before them, letting his ankles get accustomed to the water temperature, while his date had slipped into the circulating water like a river otter at the edge of a slippery bank. Shane did his best to keep his eyes to himself though they threatened to roll straight back to his brain stem with the impertinence of the intrusion. Then Kelly had dropped the name of the company he worked for and Shane practically splashed straight up in the tub. "B.C. Trends?" he squawked. "Do you know Scott Barry?" Shane asked very bravely.

"Yeah. Lays carpet for us. As a matter of fact, he's watching my Dalmatians for me while I'm away this weekend. Do you know Scott?"

"Indirectly," Shane admitted. "We had a mutual friend."

"By your use of past tense, I'll assume that friend was Mark Morgan—?"

"Yes," Shane answered tentatively. "Small town, isn't it?" he offered superficially, wondering how long Kelly was going to stand there..

"I'll have to tell him I ran into you. How did you know Mark?"

"We used to work together at *Banjo Toys*. I'm still there," Shane clarified, just in case he wondered which of them was still punching a time card.

Thankfully, in fact -erotically, Kelly soon took up interest in his skinny date as though Stephen and Shane weren't even there, which they quickly wished they weren't as the two escalated into virtual reality porn for those on the passive side of the tub.

The ferry whistle blared, followed by an announcement for all passengers to return to their vehicles as they were nearing the Horseshoe Bay Terminal. Shane nudged his silent partner who had dozed off in the last twenty minutes and they made their way back to his '66 Thunderbird on the vehicle deck. Shane was thankful to have the rest of the day off so they could nap the afternoon away, lazily recounting their very special weekend of sunsets atop Mt. Maxwell and the strolls through the Ganges Farmer's Market for picnic rations supplemented by the green granny apples they had stolen from a neighbour's tree between their B&B and the beach at Cusheon Pointe. Before they knew it, it would be time to let go of Salt Spring Island to retreat to their separate abodes in preparation for the work week, albeit abbreviated, that loomed ahead. Fortunately Shane had successfully milked the heathen for Monday off, plus Paul was to be in London the rest of the week, an added bonus, so Shane looked forward to plenty of time to focus on his investigation. Already he regretted having waited until Saturday to begin their weekend together but he had been under the apparent hallucination that Elias Hern and he had dinner plans for Friday night and

while he had been most anxious to discuss the Morgan case with him, he had been stood up. He didn't know how he could have been wrong about that but hopefully a message of explanation would be beeping on his answering machine when he finally got back home.

Hern hadn't felt entirely right about the Interpol transfer since the moment he had first put in for it, although it had outwardly appealed to his senses of high profile and intrigue. Now that his RCMP duty had been suspended and the move was actually given the *okay*, he was infected by second and third thoughts that mounted to severe his resolve into two distinct entities, neither of which had any intention of cooperating with the other. He had once toyed with the idea of one day becoming a priest and wondered now, though it were possibly too late, if perhaps that wasn't his truer calling. Hern decided then and there to drive out to Spanish Banks after work to catch the sunset and sort things out. The thought had occurred to him to pray over it but in the end he decided that maybe it would be best to narrow down his goals in order not to confuse God just now in case he really needed him later. First though, he would make his peace with Uwajimaya, —not quite Saint Peter, but an important station of his cross just the same.

On the way back to their offices, he intercepted his partner at the water

dispenser. "Hey, Waj— whaddya say we grab some lunch, -my treat," he bargained.

"Already ate," Uwajimaya answered back wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"How 'bout we take a walk outside then? Or did you already breathe, too?"

His partner conceded with a smile. "We can walk."

They headed in their accustomed direction of Deer Lake outside detachment headquarters. The path that edged the lake's circumference had always seemed an appropriate distance for mind clearing and apology making. Hern had used this urban greenbelt for both activities during his tenure, and didn't hesitate to travel that dirt path again. Roger often ran his lunch hour around the lake; ten times for a 5K and fifteen laps for a full grudge workout. He had toyed with running earlier but opted to meet his fiancee for sushi instead. One look now at his partner's self-edified face and he realized he should have ran.

"I screwed up, Roger. I grew careless and full of myself and I screwed up. I disgraced the force by my behaviour in Penticton and I've shafted you on this investigation for much of the past month. It's time for me to leave." Hern stopped walking. "And it's time I apologize. My heart's not in it anymore and I'm sorry."

Roger shifted the weight on his feet and couldn't decide whether it was more appropriate to hug him or hit him. "You can level with me Elias. It wasn't Penticton

and it's not your heart. It's this case. Come on. I've known it all along."

"All right." Elias grew uneasy. "I'll admit to you it's about to present a conflict, yes." Hern didn't raise his head from the stare he'd waged at his feet.

"Conflict?" he squealed. "Your whole life's been a conflict, Hern. You know, you're a helluva lot harder on yourself than you need to be. You should take an accounting of the people around you who truly care about you and then share this burden of yours. Try not to carry it all by yourself for a change. You'll find the road a lot easier, I'm telling you." He grew tired of standing in one spot and began walking again. Hern followed him, a bit taken back by Roger's confidence in having identified what ailed him. He wished it were that easy.

"I'm not gay, if that's what you're thinking," he suddenly blurted out. "I'm not," he added for emphasis which ironically emphasized that he was more likely lying. He realized that Roger was about to dismiss him for psychotic. "I don't know what I am, to be completely honest. I wanted to be a Mountie. I want to be a Priest. I *don't* want to be gay, but maybe—"

"Maybe you are, is that it?"

"What do you want me to say? That I knew Mark Morgan? That we slept together?"

"If that's your truth. If that is your conflict, Elias." This time Roger stopped

walking.

Elias caught his glare and feared he was growing most impatient. "Well, we didn't sleep together. He uh— he blew me in the Park once. Oh, I don't know how long ago. Six maybe eight weeks before he died. He gave me his home number and I phoned him once or twice. When I felt that maybe he was starting to invest a bit too much hope in cultivating a relationship with me I finally put the skids to it."

"When, Elias? When did you break it to him?" Roger was a meticulous investigator which made Hern wonder how he ever thought he was concealing anything from him in the first place.

"I— I phoned him the night he died. May 15th."

"Let me guess," Uwajimaya toyed with him. "Between ten and eleven that night? Talk for what — ten minutes, did you?"

"Yes."

"Why in God's name did you ask Barry if Mark took any phone calls or had any company during their date that evening when you knew there was a very good chance Mark had told him who called?"

"Because I had to decide for myself whether or not I could investigate this case objectively. As long as my identity wasn't compromised, I figured nobody was the wiser, right?"

"Yeah, right," Uwajimaya replied sarcastically.

"Besides, it didn't reason that he would confide in one boyfriend about what he perceived to be another, waiting in the wings. We were a lot alike, Mark Morgan and I. We could certainly be trusted to guard our indiscretions at all costs."

Uwajimaya flipped a rock he'd picked up a few yards back and it skipped twice across the surface of the lake. "Do you think your phone call was particularly rough on Mark?"

"Hey! It was nothing like what you're thinking, Roger. I've never been the heart breaker you make me out to be. I simply told him that my line of work didn't allow me to pursue or be comfortable in a gay lifestyle; that in fact, a rather rigid, macho stereotype was expected, even adhered to and that was the choice I had made for myself both personally and professionally. He seemed to understand."

"I don't. Why would he?"

"What do you mean?" Hern scoffed.

"I don't understand why a gay man would get off pretending he was straight. Seems a bit Jekyll & Hyde to me." He picked up another flat rock.

"I didn't say I got off on it and I didn't say that I was gay. You did!" he responded defensively. "Look," he decided to change his tone. "Mark Morgan was an attractive man. He was also the first and only man I have had an adult sexual

involvement with. I hit my experimentation phase late in life, that's all. I wanted to know and now I know."

"Know what?"

"I know that I think I want to be a priest. —I, I think that I could be a good priest."

"Why? — Because you're a lousy homosexual?" Roger smiled for the first time since they'd started this conversation.

"Maybe." Hern grinned back. "Maybe not," he decided he couldn't decide. "Waj, I've known you for six years," he said, nearing exasperation with himself. "I've never known you to lose perspective on anything you believed was important to your life, to your career. I respect that so much I have tried to model my aspirations after your example. That's why I contacted a seminary several weeks ago to find out what my options were. This thing with Morgan was a total fluke. Came out of nowhere. I hadn't made the connection myself until you showed me his picture that day in the park. I was shocked to discover that Mark Morgan was dead and I'll always be a little bothered that I was one of the last human beings he talked to, but that's it. I'll tell you that Scott Barry is not your man, Roger. I understand what it was like to get momentarily caught up in Mark Morgan's cyclone. It takes you a while to spin out of it. Barry was made dizzy from it, that's all. Dizzy from the money, dizzy from the

attention, and dizzy from Mark's refusal to take no for an answer. But he's no killer."

"If not Barry, then who?"

"Morgan himself, like I've been telling you for weeks now. Only problem with making that stick is that his greedy family, who can well afford to buy anything, isn't about to buy a suicide theory no matter how attractively you package it. To heighten your impasse, DeBord won't rest until the Morgan family is denied any chance for settlement. I leave you this legacy but you have to accept that there isn't any more to this than what I've told you." The two walked a bit further, nearing their first full lap around Deer Lake. "Oh, there is something else. I discovered last week that I know someone working at *Banjo Toys* and while it no longer has any bearing with my involvement, your new partner might have a bit of difficulty reconciling his former dealings with this same person."

"Floyd?"

"You didn't hear this warning from me but his *ex* is now working for Tamorin."

"Jesus!" Uwajimaya cried. "Oh, sorry Father," he thought to add for the priest-to-be's benefit.

"I can't absolve you yet so you don't need to apologize."

"You know, I could accept it if you turned out to be gay, but a priest?" his

partner asked skeptically.

"I believe I'm sensing a calling and this time I really feel it has nothing to do with hormones." Hern tossed the rock he'd been carrying.

"Be true to yourself, Elias. My grandfather once taught me an old Japanese proverb. A grain of rice is nothing but a grain of rice but that is enough."

Hern pondered the possible significance of such a proverb out of respect for Roger's grandfather but ultimately had to question "what in the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Of course he used to say it in Japanese. 'Loses something in translation I'm afraid." Roger shoved his partner off the path. "So when's your last day?"

"That's up to DeBord. After this weekend's escapade, he could be scraping together the going away festivities right now." Hern and Uwajimaya left the path and headed back in the direction of the Regional Judicial Center where they were headquartered.

"Interpol then?"

"Or Seminary," Elias answered quite frankly, already leaning toward his calling if indeed he was truly having one. "I'll take some time to myself before I'm to report to Ottawa. I'll probably meet with the Dioceses of Montreal to determine my suitability for the priesthood."

"Hey," Uwajimaya interrupted him. "You've gotten a blow job from another guy. I'd say you've covered the prerequisites nicely." He ruffled the calendar boy's hair and fought the strangest urge to embrace him.

"Look, I didn't slam your grandfather's rice dogma, so hands off my Catholicism, okay?" He automatically fixed his hair and the two entered the building, friendship repaired.

Two objectives off his task sheet and one to go, Hern kept track of the score as he dialed Shane's home telephone. This grain of rice was about to come clean even if it was confessing to an answering machine.

"Hello, Shane. Elias Hern here. Listen, I have to apologize for standing you up Friday night. At the last minute I got called out to Penticton for some riot watch detail. Turns out I wasn't needed after all and today's Vancouver Sun caught me killing time until the bus brought the team back. You may have seen my picture there and I wanted you to have the full story along with my apologies for Friday. Anyway, I'd like to make it up to you with dinner tomorrow night at my place. Say seven o'clock if that works for you. Leave me a voice mail here at the office if you miss me in person. See ya."

This message will be erased. Press 9 to save it. Press 1 to replay.

Shane switched the machine off and tossed his back-pack on the bed. He had hoped to be in for the evening but of course now he had to march right back out to get a copy of *The Sun* before the racks were cleared for tomorrow's edition. *What was Elias talking about?*

Shane rationalized that Safeway on Davie Street would be his best bet. As he walked down Nicola Street, he dissected the diverse West End community into three basic sectors: the Total Fags who kept the trashy *Province* in circulation, the Brain Homo Professionals who were guaranteed to be noticed with the *Globe and Mail* under one arm and *The Wall Street Journal* under the other, and then their was the Social Set who lived and died by *The Georgia Strait*. This being Tuesday and not a traditional night out, he cooly calculated he'd encounter a rack of *Suns* still left at Safeway.

Not quite dusk but pushing the sunset, he noticed a man standing outside his apartment building that looked lost but familiar. Since his brain was still marinating in the thickly sweet sentimentality of his weekend with Stephen, he didn't place him at first, but later, in the checkout line, leafing through the pages of *The Sun*, it struck him that the man outside his apartment could have been that attorney, Bill Tinsel but that wouldn't have made any sense. He hurried home from the store but the man had already left. Shane spotted Hern's picture in the second section of the paper while

riding the elevator to his floor in the building. *What a stud*, he had to admit.

Elias jumped into his custom white Bronco with burgundy pinstripes, interior and a matching plexi-glass bug screen. He was proud of that truck and gloating over the loophole that had gotten it in this country in spite of the U.S. Canadian Auto Pact that prohibited the import of American vehicles. It had happened during an extradition of a U.S. fugitive to Bismark, North Dakota a few years back. The truck had belonged to the runaway but under Canadian law, assets seized in Canada could be returned to Canada so Hern made the prisoner an offer just under Blue Book and personally drove his new truck home for re-licensing.

He spun the radio dial to catch the CBC news at the top of the hour and gauged the sun's position in the sky ahead of him to determine he still had time to swing by his townhouse to pick up the day's mail before the sunset.

This is Raffie Viga with a news break from Vancouver. RCMP officers are being heralded as heroes for helping to avert riots expected from some 30,000 concert goers at this weekend's B.C. day celebration in Penticton. 175 RCMP officers from around the Province made over 300 arrests in three days and are credited with the virtual incident-free success of this event. Thank you cakes flooded into the local police detachment as residents expressed their gratitude to police

officers for preventing a repeat of the hooliganism that plagued this Okanagan city a week ago.

Elias gritted his teeth, glancing again at the photograph in the newspaper that lay on the seat next to him. He had to say it was not a bad photo, though he'd been told by plenty of photographers in his lifetime that he simply wasn't capable of a bad shot.

A U.S. man is furious about treatment he says he received at the hands of an abusive Vancouver Policeman during a routine traffic stop on Pender Street over the weekend and is said to be lodging a formal complaint with the internal investigation division. Joel Brandstein, 36 of Chicago, claimed police stepped on his head and jumped on him as he lay handcuffed on a sidewalk as they searched his car for a gun they suspected was concealed there. When their search failed to produce a weapon Brandstein said they tried to slap him with unfounded immigration charges. An investigation of this incident is pending.

Meanwhile, while thousands of people celebrated at Vancouver's 14th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Festival during the holiday weekend, neighbors of a Nelson homosexual who was beaten twice in his own home voiced their concern over a rash of gay bashing incidents in their community. Mitchell Chassidy, 43, who was released from hospital Friday after spending 10 days in intensive care following the

second beating, is said to be on the mend and is staying with friends. So far, two men and a youth are being charged in connection with these beatings.

Finally, weather in the lower mainland region is expected to change tomorrow with a Pacific front moving in from the coast. High wind warnings have been issued for many coastal areas.

This has been a news break from Vancouver."

Hern slipped into his False Creek neighborhood pondering the lifestyle choices that loomed before him. Somehow he knew he was through being a law enforcement officer but the trials of the gay community didn't exactly beckon his immersion. He left the Bronco running as he dashed up to the entrance of his pink stuccoed condo building. A beige envelope slipped out of the box and slid onto the dark granite floor. He reached down to pick it up and noticed the return address of *Le Gran Seminaire du Montreal*. He dashed back to the truck and after some momentary debate, decided to build suspense over the envelope's contents until he reached his meditation spot at the Spanish Banks. He looked into his eyes in the rear view mirror and decided to finally allow God to direct the needed changes in his life through the news contained inside that envelope. He was definitely ready for a change and actually prayed while he drove.



Wednesday, August 7, 1991

It had been most unusual not to hear from the heathen the entire day but Shane wasn't complaining. It certainly gave him ample opportunity to assemble some notes and start piecing events together. Don hadn't ever really treated him the same since the bathroom stall incident a couple weeks back. He remained cordial but no longer familiar and this disturbed him. To add to what he could only attribute to a growing paranoia, this morning when he turned on his computer, it automatically opened to his Morgan case file. He was horrified to think anyone could have turned the computer on to discover the by-products of his employment and vowed to increase security measures with an end of the day checklist to ensure that such carelessness didn't happen again. A lot of good it had done to password lock the document with the code word *mud* which he was sure his name would be if ever he

was revealed to be an inside perpetrator. He decided at that moment to transfer everything incriminating on his harddrive to disks which he'd ferry back and forth from home in his briefcase. It was the only way he could be entirely certain he wouldn't get caught with his pants down again.

He had phoned Elias Hern from home the night before and left a voice mail on his office phone reconfirming his availability for dinner which had already been rescheduled twice since his original offer to meet. It was strange to be dialing that all too familiar but conveniently forgotten number. The exercise managed to resurrect a host of archived feelings, mostly jumbled and painful, and Shane worried that opening the lines of communication with Elias bordered dangerously on repeating old mistakes and disregarding recent lessons. He thought that he had put all feelings for Elias to rest after that nasty business of rebounding so soon after his breakup. That night when he had reached out to Elias in desperation, and horniness, would never be forgotten, but Shane had Stephen now. At least he thought he could claim mineral rights on this new territory. *Yeah*, he decided, Stephen was in the bag and he'd make a point to bring that development up the first chance he had during his dinner with Elias. It was the only way he could trust Elias, trust his own penis and in the end, trust himself.

The drive to Granville Island was refreshing with the smell of new rain on

concrete and Shane was thankful to be making it without tears in his eyes, which was the last method of navigation he had employed to reach Elias' house. How he hoped he'd have modernized his decorating scheme. The last time Shane was there, distraught though he had clinically been, he caught myself grinning at the definitively novice decorating techniques Elias had employed such as the peacock feathers tucked behind the corners of framed posters in the living room, or the darkly stained wooden waterbed complete with mirror, stereo, big screen TV and reading lights in a towering headboard that doubled as a wall unit entertainment center when the pillows were situated at the foot of the bed, or the red bandana draped over a lamp shade arranged with an assortment of framed family photos on the kitchen counter that divided the front room. Some things about Elias were so straight he truly defied classification and yet these same characteristics were what made him remarkably irresistible. But in this package that seemed to reach out almost in desperation to be loved, was a man who communicated in a dozen different ways that he could not be impressed and most likely would never be kept by love. Shane knew all about him. He'd spent nearly four months studying the complexities of Elias Hern from inside the glass cage of a relationship running very short on oxygen. Shane had chosen to see Elias as his respirator, the one who would breathe life back into him, bringing him back from the very doorstep of unconsciousness after the relationship had expired. But when he

appeared before him, gasping for his attention, he reverted, as men so often will, to the only nurturing response they can count on in an emergency, —sex. It had been a bit mechanical, as sex goes and Shane was willing to chalk it up to inexperience which only endeared Elias further but then things changed, as things often will, post-orgasm, and the spell had been broken for both of them. At least that's what Shane had deducted when Elias didn't phone and Shane no longer swooned.

And so the RCMP had been surgically removed from his life. In the process, he had learned a great deal about crime and the human response to it; about the people who commit it; about the people who solve it; but especially about the victims left to carry on in the wake of it. He had been one of those victims, really through his sacrificial role as a policeman's spouse. Their relationship had become the poster victim of crime over the course of its seven years. Beepers and telephones sounded at every hour of the day and seven or eight guns were stashed about the house as a bookmark reminder of what things could come to if either of them grew desperate enough. In the beginning Shane didn't think about it much. In the beginning it was exciting and he accepted that a late night detail was a late night detail and an undercover sting was just that. In the beginning, he believed his mate's integrity when he said he didn't know what time he'd be home at night. In the beginning, he was young. And then it was as though someone had made the proclamation *let the games*

begin, and they begun. Suddenly *the Fed* became quite vocal about his so-called passive interest in other men. He'd go as far as *cruising* someone out loud and commenting that he'd *do him* in front of Shane. He had removed all demonstrative signs of his affection toward him which had been nothing more spectacular than a weathered billboard once every four thousand kilometers in the first place. But Shane kept his eyes on the road, while *the Fed* kept his ever vigilantly focused elsewhere. Finally, Shane asked what he hoped to accomplish by driving him away from him and that's when Shane came to understand the criminal psychology that *the Fed* applied like a textbook to everyone in his life. He believed he could make anyone do anything, that anyone could manipulate any set of desired results from someone else. He used to tell Shane that he could make him think the fall of their relationship was his fault. And Shane did. He'd tell him that he could make him doubt the intentions of his closest friends. And Shane did. He once said that he could make Shane hurt himself for his attention. Shane said, *too late*. And Shane left.

Sandee hadn't spoken about Mark since the funeral. She had found very early on that speaking with any of her family about her brother-in-law was an invitation to minimize and ridicule Mark's purpose and contribution to this life. She physically ached for his friendship though she had stopped blaming herself for his death. Mark

had been quite adamant about his emotional state and how only he could claim ownership for his actions and reactions. He realized and made no small apology for his emotional shortcomings. She brushed some recently cut grass from his headstone and wiped her eye with the same hand. She would make a point to bring Dexter to the cemetery tomorrow. It may have done nothing for the Boxer but she liked to think it helped Mark with his transition. She straightened her skirt in the breeze where she sat, her uncooperative legs jutting out from beneath the cotton fabric. She traced the letters of Mark's name with a tear wet finger and recalled the last time she spoke to him; how he was so full of hope about his future; how things were about to suddenly improve for him. She wondered now, in light of all this talk of suicide, if perhaps he was about to make his peace with a universe that had been particularly unkind to the both of them. If she chose to believe this and she was still very much undecided, she knew she would have to likewise accept, even admire his bravery; —a trait she knew would always elude her. Mark was no coward. His was not the easy way out by any means no matter how he left this world. Those that would deny him the glory and honour of a sound mind, in the end really didn't know Mark at all. Sandee toyed with her cane while she watched the sun dip behind the blackest rain cloud she'd ever remembered seeing. She watched the last of the day's shadows fade into darker shades of grey just as her life had done ever since she was left to face it

alone. *In loving memory*. The letters blurred as her lips moved to form the words written there but she couldn't coax a sound from the empty shell that was left of her disease ravaged body. Skin and bones. Mark had figured out how to travel without them.

He straightened up the living room and set the lights for the evening's desired mood. Elias was full of the world after taking a personal leave day from work to prepare for Shane's visit. He had risen early despite the fact he'd stayed on the rocks praying and thinking until well after midnight just as he'd done every night for a week. He'd beat the merchants out of bed who had yet to open the Granville Island Farmer's Market. After a brisk walk from his condo he selflessly fed stale bread to the masses of seagulls while nursing a latte until the stalls began to open where he could buy his produce and chicken breasts for the recipe he was planning to undertake. He worked out at his gym in near isolation, giving himself the added treatment of a sauna and whirl pool, two fluff features his schedule usually didn't afford him, even though the steep membership fees did. He deep cleaned his townhouse and squeezed in a wonderful two hour power nap on the sectional couch in his living room while the sun took alternating turns bathing him in indulgent warmth in between the building rain clouds scheduled to dowse the climes. He had struggled with his mother's

handwriting on the casserole recipe card and decided to phone her in the middle of the afternoon, just to chat and clarify ingredients. With the cheesy dish on slow bake, he made a last minute dash to *Top Drawers* on Davie Street to select a new shirt to go with his knee worn Levi's. And now, as he waited for the intercom to sound the arrival of his special guest, Elias Hern stood in the center of his home content to be in control of the present, reconciled with his past and decidedly confident about his future. He couldn't wait to share the new developments in his life with the one person he had decided he really cared about. Something was not quite right though, he felt as he looked about the candle lit room. The peacock feathers! He collected the dusty fronds and stashed them in a coffee table drawer just as the intercom squawked. He gathered a deep breath in his chest and prepared to take his fate by the neck.

The door opened and they simultaneously panicked. Did their friendship/one-night-stand warrant a hug, a hand shake, a head nod? For Shane it was genuinely good to see him and he looked picture-perfect of course, which made him want to drop all fact finding pretense along with his trousers. For Elias, Shane was the devil standing before him, the last temptation he had to face, accept or decline. At last they hugged and Shane felt him nuzzle his neck familiarly. Shane glanced around the room for the usual touchstones and instantly noticed the peacock feathers had been retired. "I like what you've done with the place," he immediately reinforced.

"Thanks. You look wonderful, Shane. You really do," he repeated as though Shane hadn't bought it the first time or as though it weren't a regular feature of his being.

"Thank you." Shane walked toward the kitchen and took a dramatic whiff. "Smells like you've been taking cooking lessons," he kidded him. Elias had long promoted the rumour he had been the inspiration for the *Hungry Man* TV dinner series. Everybody who knew Elias knew him to live from one restaurant to the next which not only fed the flame of his well touted playboy image like butane, but also caused them all to wonder why they even bothered to maintain their steady regimens of health food and health clubs just to look half as good as Elias Hern did without any effort at all.

"It's just a casserole," he admitted, using a word nearly as offensive to the trained homosexual ear as *polyester*.

"Really?" was all Shane could say.

"Have a seat. Can I get you a beer?" he offered. Shane accepted, sitting on the boxy sectional furniture. It was a good thing he had Stephen tastefully tucked away, he suddenly thought to myself. He honestly didn't think Elias was trainable to ever walk upright among them, which had to be number one thousand and thirty-seven on the *cute things about Elias Hern* list.

"So I've wrangled myself into a bit of hot water over this Mark Morgan mystery," Shane decided to cut to the chase before the beer had a chance to substitute another agenda.

"About that, Shane—" he paused to check on the oven. "You don't need me to tell you to keep your nose clean on this one. Frankly, I was completely surprised to learn you were working at the toy company."

"I knew Mark Morgan," Shane thickened his perception of the greater plot. "Well, I'd met him and we were going to date, until—"

"Until, he showed up dead?" Elias thought to finish his sentence for him. "Trust me, this cookie was more messed up than Dave Floyd. You're better off single."

"Oh don't say that. It sounds so much like a curse."

"Well, you know what I mean. But before we get into this, there's something I should tell you." He paused appropriately, giving Shane hope he might turn out to be a highly skilled homosexual after all. "I've decided to leave the force. I've already been taken off what is left of the Morgan case. In fact, my last official day in the *Gendarmerie* is Friday."

Shane was shocked and realized he probably looked it, too. "Elias Hern, not a Mountie?" he asked in disbelief. Elias was one of those obnoxiously perfect

extroverted creatures that was totally defined by the structure around him, —a chameleon who happened to look exceptionally striking in scarlet. With the possible exception of his discreet pension for men, (which the RCMP had taken great historical pains to eradicate in the early Sixties and probably ever since), Elias Hern *was* the quintessentially dashing Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman. He made the cover of the Mountie Calendar for Christ's sake. He'd received an honorary letter from the Queen for distinguished service and his embodiment of the Mountie ideal. What could he possibly be without the tunic?

"I'm going to be a priest," he blurted out, admittedly well ahead of his personal schedule for disclosure during the evening.

"God help us," Shane exclaimed a bit insensitively. "I mean that, Elias. That face and your body, in a collar and robes? They'll have to rewrite post-pubescent fantasies around the globe. You'll be on the cover of the Vatican calendar next. When will this torment end?"

His reddening cheeks caved into bottomless dimples and his eyelashes flashed involuntarily. Part of Elias wanted to elicit precisely that response while the other part of him realized he would have to shepherd those momentarily distracted sheep back into the flock of God.

"Your flattery is not going to make this very easy on me." His blush grew to

neon proportions.

"I am sincerely happy for you, Elias. —Personally devastated and inclined to mourn the collective loss of your adoring fans everywhere, but happy. Thrilled actually, to be able to say I slept with a Catholic Priest, but then, who can't claim that one these days?"

"Hey!" he felt obliged to protest. "Let's eat," he added disarmingly. Shane sat at the dining room table across from him, two flickering candles, two crocheted hot pads and a bubbling cheddar casserole dish between them. "Now about this Morgan case," he resumed the original topic. "There simply is no case. A troubled boy committed suicide and a wealthy family can't accept that. Classic denial. Happens everyday." Elias spooned a clump of the entree onto Shane's plate and the requisite bachelor ingredients slid out from under a cheddar slick: chopped broccoli, cream of mushroom soup, diced chicken and *what was that*? —tater tots?

"Then how do you explain all the cuts and bruises and the signs of struggle apparent throughout his house?" Shane asked most skeptically.

"Hold out your hands," he instructed. Shane did. "He took them in his and examined them. "Here. See this cut?" Shane nodded. "That is a cutaneous abrasion. And here," he pointed to a blood blister on the side of my thumb. "This is a subdermal hematoma. And here," he pointed to his own hand. "This is a laterally

directed paper cut. Would you consider these indicators of foul play? Of course not. It is natural for us to grope for other causes when the truth seems too simple, too avoidable."

"Okay Dick Tracy," Shane blew on his fork of goop, "explain the broken ribs and the black eyes." He took his first bite. "Hey, this is really good." And to his surprise, it was.

"And where did you get a hold of the medical examiner's report?" Elias asked suspiciously.

"It's all come across my desk in the last six weeks working at the toy company. And under my desk," Shane hastened to add. "I'd be surprised if I didn't know as much as you do," he admitted confidently.

"Well, that wouldn't be much, I'll tell you that. I've investigated more exciting traffic violations than this suspicious death turned out to be. Shit!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I completely forgot the crushed potato chip topping. I could add it now," he offered gingerly.

"I'm fine," Shane assured him.

"The boy was loaded with booze and pharmaceuticals. Likely fell down the stairs on his way to the garage and never felt a thing. I'm telling you, follow my lead and don't waste anymore of your time on this."

"Let me tell you what I know and we'll see if it changes what you think you know."

"All right," he gave his dinner guest a chance.

"My boss, —Paul Tamorin— have you met him yet?" Elias nodded, so far unimpressed with his argument. "Tamorin told me Mark died from AIDS. And my friend Gilles, who I was at the restaurant with the other night? —Told me he'd never been to Mark's house even though the Morgan family notes claimed he had a key to it and house sat when Mark was away. Then you have Scott Barry who flunked a lie detector test when asked if he left Mark in the garage or if he caused him any physical harm and lastly the most convincing evidence of foul play are the voice messages Scott left Mark at work the morning after he died."

"Hold on a minute. Voice messages Barry left at Mark's work?"

"See, you still care," Shane teased him. "I think I have a copy of them in my brief case." He left the table to grab his bag. "Don Morgan, Mark's brother had me transcribe them from tape over two weeks ago. I assumed he turned them over to you. Here—" He extracted the paper clipped pages from the envelope he had intentionally marked *resume copies*. "I've highlighted the two messages Scott left Mark at the office in addition to the message he left for him at Mark's house. The first at 9:41 a.m. on 5/15."

Mark. It's 9:30 and you were going to call me by 9:00 to go pick up the car. I need it. I have a meeting with Gordon at noon, so I bet you slept in, you jerk. OK, I'll try to reach you at home. Bye.

"Of course I have to ask what's wrong with the Mazda RX7 he drove the day before? And then there's the second message left at work on the 15th at 5:13 p.m."

"Hello Mark. This is Scott. Uh, I just want to know what's going on— where are you? Must have a long day — I don't know what's going on. Anyway. Give me a call. I thought we were going to hook up here later today but I guess not. Uh, talk to you later. Bye.

"Now what I find interesting about this one is not only did he make the call about the same time he was supposed to be at the Spaghetti Factory having his fainting spells, or whatever it was, but it sounds to me between the two messages that he and Mark had made plans to meet at least once early in the day to pick up the BMW and maybe a second time on the 15th if we're to believe Scott's message that he thought they were *going to hook up here later today* wherever *here* is supposed to be and yet he didn't mention these plans during his questioning by you. Seems to me that if you wanted to clear yourself of wrongful suspicion, you would mention the fact that the deceased stood you up twice in one day. And if you were truly as hung-over the morning after as Scott claimed he was, isn't it a bit odd that he wouldn't

reference these ill feelings even once in three messages to the other party responsible? He told you he went to work that day and had to come home because he was feeling so badly. When did he go to work? Did he make it to his noon appointment with Gordon in spite of the fact that Mark failed to make good on his promise to retrieve the BMW?"

"Whoa, slow down will ya?" Elias finally laid his fork down and reached for the voice mail transcripts.

"And why didn't Scott swing by the house on Marine Drive that day to check on Mark when he couldn't reach him at any of his numbers?" Shane spoke with his mouth full of casserole that was no longer hot. "And why didn't he show up at the funeral to pay his last respects?" Shane washed it down with a swig of beer. Elias made a sound in the back of his throat indicating that he should give him a minute to read. Shane didn't. "And then there's the sudden appearance of evidence on the kitchen counter top and in the bathroom medicine cabinet after the, and I'm sorry—*coincidental* burglary of Mark's house a month after he's found dead on the one night the alarm system has accidentally been left off. Did the RCMP homicide investigation team actually leave a wine glass in the kitchen or pills in the house after they swept it for evidence? Come on."

"Eat!" Elias finally commanded. Shane managed one more bite of the now

congealed substance and chewed until he felt he had the slightest chance of not choking to death if he attempted a swallow. "There's cheesecake for dessert if you finish all your dinner."

"Mmmm," He managed to squeeze enough air past the slowly descending mass in his esophagus to form sound. He feared he might have to graduate from beer to Drano if there was to be any hope of keeping the pipes open. "Then there's Dexter don't forget. Even Mark's shrink said he would have provided for his dog. And why hasn't anyone spoken with Scott's roommates who would surely notice a change in his behaviour following an obvious scuffle with Mark?"

"The RCMP has a vacancy to fill if you think you could do a better job," Elias finally offered a bit too defensively to be kidding with him. He emptied the rest of his beer on the way to the refrigerator where he retrieved two more cans.

"I never meant to imply you hadn't done your job and I am being a bit presumptuous when it comes to second-guessing the investigative process. It's just that I have all these questions rolling around and nobody to really discuss them with and here you are affixing the final stamp of suicide before I've had a chance to impress you with my homework."

"Is that what this is all about? Impressing me?" He passed an open beer to Shane's side of the table.

"In a twisted way I guess it is. I mean, I spent seven years with *the Fed* who never gave me the credit of understanding such things and I somehow see this as my one big chance to set the record straight, — except you're not the one I have to prove anything to are you?"

"Nope Shane. You already won my heart and my mind long ago. I just wish we could have commuted that into something a little more meaningful before I got this spiritual calling of mine. But there's no sense mopping up spilled milk with the cat's tail. You're asking good questions. The only problem is you're building your case on feelings and courts don't work that way. We've been to the crown attorney's office twice with everything we've got and they've told us it wouldn't fly until we landed something stronger than circumstantial arguments. I'll tell you, at first I was as convinced as you are that Scott Barry had a sloppy hand in Mark's death. I mean he told us the first night that Mark was completely passed out when he left the house at 2:30 in the morning. The next night we questioned him he claimed Mark had asked him if he was going to spend the night when he was getting ready to leave and then the story changed again with Mark cleaning up the dinner mess in the kitchen when he left. No matter what we thought though, it always came down to the one question that would surely come up in a court case: *Could Mark Morgan have staged all these aspects of his death himself?* As long as we can still answer *yes* to that

question, we don't have a case against anyone."

"But what about the black eyes and the broken rib? How could anyone do that to himself?" No doubt Shane was having a difficult time abdicating his power to solve this riddle when nobody else could seem to break it.

"Mark spoke openly about his contemplation of suicide and the precise means he would use to accomplish it. He confided in his therapist about wanting to get even with Scott and even shared details of a plan he'd cooked up to lure Scott into thinking he was about to inherit several million dollars before dumping him. Barry told us Mark had talked about this inheritance the night he died which all but establishes Mark's state of vindictiveness in his final hours. Mark was so unsatisfied with life that the only reliable affection he could count on came from tricks he landed in Stanley Park." Elias realized the hypocrisy in his voice and made sure he didn't pause too long on that last thought. "Could Mark Morgan have cooked up this elaborate scheme. The answer is still yes, Shane. The answer we all need to become comfortable with, is yes," he drilled for Shane's benefit.

They hugged good night and Shane thanked him for a wonderful dinner thirty-five minutes later after hitting two walls in one evening. He hadn't exactly counted on the prospects of sex with Elias Hern though he hadn't ruled them out either, taking an intentionally much longer precautionary shower than normal. Who would have

predicted divine intervention could solder those zippers of opportunity shut? And Shane hadn't expected a lot of new information about the Morgan case but he hadn't expected to find it closed either. He sat several minutes in the LandCruiser before pulling away from the curb. It was twenty after eight and he was all dressed up with no place to go.

Investigator's Notes

8/7/9 17:45 p.m. Followed subject from BTI to 2757 Johnston Street where he entered a five story townhouse building. Surveillance through the glass entrance revealed he boarded the lobby elevator and rode it to the fourth floor. A foot inspection of the building occupant directory revealed the following five surnames in residence on the fourth floor: Clark, Monte; Hern, E.; Lowry, Timothy; Traficanti, Pamela; and Zamora, Vincent.

Subject left the building just before 20:30 p.m., entered his vehicle, a Toyota Land Cruiser, B.C. Lic 9275 AM, and doubled back to the on-ramp for the Granville Bridge heading into downtown. I lost visual contact with subject's vehicle on Davie Street but remembering subject's address. I drove past his apartment on Nicola toward Pacific Street. Subject's vehicle was not found outside his apartment so I

continued on to Denman via Pacific and spotted subject at a stoplight. I resumed surveillance following subject into Stanley Park. At Second Beach, subject parked, turning off his engine and headlights. I parked some distance away but kept subject's vehicle within sight. After approximately 15 minutes, subject left his vehicle on foot and wandered into the trees at a trail head marked Lees Trail. I waited inside my vehicle electing not to pursue subject inside the park. Thirty minutes later, subject emerged from the trail and walked toward his vehicle. Shortly after, I observed another male emerge from the trail apparently following subject. Subject walked passed his vehicle and continued walking toward the beach. The other male disappeared out of sight behind him and I found it necessary to leave my vehicle to continue surveillance. As I smoked a cigarette walking north on the asphalt path paralleling the beach, I noticed subject sitting on a large log facing the water. The other male was not observed. I walked a distance beyond subject before leaving the path for the beach where I changed direction to return between the subject and the water. As I neared subject, I realized the other male was on his knees between subject's legs apparently engaged in some sexual act. As my direction was committed, I walked with my coat collar up within some half dozen metres from them. It was then the subject looked up at me and I realized he was not who I thought he was. He yelled at me and I left.

"Buzz off asshole! We're not selling tickets here." Gilles finally hollered at the persistent voyeur, holding his companion's head in place. He adjusted Shane's jacket about them to better conceal the blow job in progress and the curious man hurried away. It had been quite a shock to run into his old roommate in these particular stomping grounds but as he had underestimated the evening's temperature and his former roommate said he was just leaving, the borrowed jacket had come in rather handy. Gilles suddenly arched his pelvis to cum deep inside the trick's throat.

It's hard to pinpoint when Shane first thought he might have been followed but he distinctly remembered thinking he saw the *Heathen's* private eye on his way to Safeway the week before and then leaving Hern's place he noticed the same car on his tail or a few cars back for several kilometers. When he tried to ditch it in the West End, he noticed he couldn't seem to shake it so he ventured into the Park. Shane wanted to know just how far this guy would take it so he parked and watched him park some distance away. After a while Shane hopped out of the truck and disappeared into the trees. As far as he could tell, Tinsel didn't follow him. Running into Gilles walking the trail was a bit compromising but he didn't let on that he thought he was being followed. Instead, Shane just made the comment that Gilles must be freezing without a jacket and considerately loaned him his for the evening.

Shane left the trees by way of another trail and snuck past the car that had been tailing him. The driver was gone but he made note of the license plate and scooted home. Shane couldn't figure why the *Heathen* would have him staked out. Shane wondered half the night unable to sleep. Why were the police about to settle for a suicide theory and what made Elias Hern ever think he had the makings of a Roman Catholic Priest? He finally got out of bed and made some herbal tea, instantly irritated by the constant scattering of debris underfoot on his hard wood floors. He had always wanted hardwood but never dreamt it could be so much maintenance. Shane brushed off his bare feet and wished for a low pile magic carpet, while waiting for his tea to cool. Carpet! That was the definitely the route to go.

Shane arrived at work the next morning, anxious to set up crime shop. He could anticipate another two days without a boss and Hern's overnight indifference to this atrocity only egged him on. He wondered what Mark would think of his meddling persistence. He imagined him as a celestial cheerleader inspiring him to dig deeper and knock louder until the truth was revealed and they scored one for the homo team. Shane stared at his office door sometimes until his eyes watered. Paul had since taken over the executive space which had to be enough to make a cheerleader's head spin. Shane was always full of reverence whenever he entered and

always cognizant of the recently departed. It was only right.

He waited patiently until 9:00 before he began asking questions. "Where is everybody?" He poked his head over the cubicle wall to catch Jackie doing her nails in almost a trance like state. "Earth to Mary Kay. Earth to Mary Kay." She broke out of it on his second attempt to reach her.

"Oh, good morning Darling. I didn't see you when I came in," she explained by way of an apology for not acknowledging him earlier.

"That's because you came up the back stairs and probably arrived in the last five minutes if I know you when the cat's away." He gave her a knowing glare. "What is with everyone today?"

"You're not Jewish are you?" she stated more than she asked. Shane shook his head. "Donald proclaimed today the end of *avelut* which is the formal mourning period following Mark's death." Shane exhibited a blank stare. "First there is *aninut* which is the period of mourning between death and burial. That lasts a day or two depending on who you know and how fast you can get the deceased in the ground."

"That's putting it delicately. Then what?"

"Then the next period of mourning is called *shiva* because it lasts for seven days. *Shiva* is observed by parents, children, spouses and siblings supposedly all together in the deceased's home if they can stand each other. Don't laugh" she

warned him when it looked as though he'd break a smile. Then there is the mourning period known as *shloshim* which lasts until the 30th day following burial. During that period, mourners don't attend parties or celebrations, they're not supposed to shave or cut their hair or even listen to music. Last, but not least is the *avelut* which is usually only observed by the parents of the deceased for twelve months following burial. After *avelut*, the family of the deceased isn't allowed to continue mourning but because you aren't supposed to go to parties, theater or concerts during *avelut*, and because the entire Morgan family has very expensive dress circle seats for *the* opening of *Phantom* tomorrow night at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Donald asked the family rabbi to proclaim a special end to *avelut* after thirteen weeks. I guess Louise is a huge Andrew Weber fan and wouldn't miss this show for, well, for sake of tradition. They're all in synagogue this morning."

"I see. Thanks for the crash course."

"Say, someone just called Norma for a job reference on you. You're not job hunting already are you?"

"What?"

"I was just in personnel and Norma took a call. Raised her eyebrow I'll tell you. The only reason *BTI* has a personnel director is to process the comings and goings of Paul Tamorin's assistants." Jackie laughed at herself. "But it's true. You

lasted eight weeks though. I have to hand it to you."

"I'm not leaving," Shane tried to convince her. "What did Norma tell the caller?"

"That you'd been here eight weeks and had a good work record in a difficult environment. Whoever it was must have asked what you did before coming to *BTI* cause it sent Norma to your file in search of a resume. I heard her mention Winnipeg and AIDS before she shooed me away."

"Oh really?" Shane's telephone extension rang. He could tell by the LED display that it was Kim on PBX in the downstairs lobby. "Hi Kim," he answered standing up. "For me? —I'll be right down." He hung up the phone. "There's a Hummingbird delivery for me," he announced out loud, still commanding Jackie's attention.

"Probably your new job offer package," she teased as he left his cubicle to retrieve it."

It was hand marked *personal and confidential* so Shane had to sign for it. There was no visible return address on the envelope so he waited until he was half way back up the stairs before opening it, seeing as Kim was one of Jackie's faithful subversives. It was from Elias. A short handwritten note paper-clipped to a stapled packet of papers read

Shane—

> *You're friendship is invaluable to me as well as your recommendation. If you wouldn't mind spending a few minutes on the attached, I would be most*
>
> *Gratefully yours,*
> *E. Hern*

Shane looked beneath the note to find a recommendation form from a seminary in Montreal and tucked the packet back inside the envelope. He immediately began to wonder what he would say, —that Elias was a bit mechanical in bed though he showed remarkable enthusiasm? He had no more reached his cubicle and people seemed to jump out of hiding from everywhere yelling shouts of surprise. A Polaroid camera flashed in his eyes and when his vision returned he saw a bouquet of balloons tied to a desk leg and a stuffed *Sylvester the Cat* sitting in his chair. Shane took off his glasses and rubbed the flash from his eyes. Norma was the first to speak.

"Congratulations newcomer! You are *BTI's* employee of the month for August."

At first, Shane thought it was a put on, something Jackie had talked Norma into doing, but it quickly became clear that the award was legitimate. Norma took another Polaroid to be sure she had a photo that turned out. Jackie leaned over and whispered in his ear.

"Kinda makes you want to stick it out here, huh?"

"Shut-up," he told her, instantly reminded that somebody had still attempted a reference check. He had no job interviews pending and the last application he submitted anywhere was at least a month old. It didn't seem rational that someone would be phoning to check up on him now. He couldn't exactly ask Norma to tell him who had phoned without betraying Jackie's confidence, though anyone relying on the sanctity of that, was a damn fool. Shane parted the balloons and resumed his day inside the suddenly festive cubicle. After the excitement died down, and Jackie had left with Norma for the break room, he picked up the phone to tackle the items on *his* to-do list for the day. "Hello, BC Trends? —My name is Shane and I am looking to carpet my apartment in the West End while I'm waiting for my high-rise condo to be completed. That's right. You were recommended to me by someone who had used you in the past and who knows Kelly. I really had you in mind for the interiors of the condo but that won't be ready for finishing for another six months. In the meantime, I'm living in a dreadful little place that could use some help. What's that? —Oh, in the Duke Ellington Building. You know the one that looks like it has giant cereal bowls for balconies? I know, but they aren't ready for occupation. Until then I have to slum it. So can I get you to send someone out with samples to take measurements? Today's fine. Say 1:00? Wonderful. The address is 1270 Nicola. Apartment 803. Telephone? 683-3626. And can I ask who you're sending? —

Scott? Great. I'm looking forward to working with you too."

Shane hung up checking his watch, —*synchronizing* his watch, as they say in the espionage business. He had three hours to psych himself up for an introduction to the only suspect he knew that could have killed Mark if Mark didn't kill himself and he had no idea what he was going to wear. Who was he kidding? Shane knew precisely what to wear.

Five minutes later, his telephone rang and he answered to hear the heathen's long distance voice. "Uh, Shane? Can you hear me okay?"

"Yes, Paul."

"I wanted to phone to congratulate you on being selected Employee of the Month," he spewed tainted honey. That couldn't possibly be the needless reason he phoned long distance from his extended stay in London but Shane thanked him graciously.

"I was very surprised," Shane admitted. "Thank you for your input."

"Well it is deserved. Listen, what's going on there?"

"Actually, not much Paul. No faxes or messages that can't wait for you to get back." Paul hated when Shane made that determination for him which was precisely why Shane did it. His assistant prepared to run through the short stack of message slips as he surely wouldn't accept his judgement, but to Shane's surprise, he didn't ask

for them.

"If you wouldn't mind," —here came the trans-Atlantic favour... "I need to have Mark's car picked up from the BMW dealership and let's see," he paused to give Shane the impression he didn't know what to suggest next, though it was clear it would involve some major imposition. "Do you have secure parking where you live?"

"Underground, —yes," Shane answered tentatively.

"I don't suppose you could drive his car and keep it at your place for the next few days? I don't think it's safe overnight in the *BTI* lot."

"I could," Shane interjected, "but then what would I do with the Cruiser?" Shane knew it would be just fine overnight in the *BTI* parking lot, but he wanted to hear Paul say the words that would once again delineate the value of Shane's life compared with his affluence."

"Well, your *Employee of the Month* parking space is right up front between two lights if that makes a difference?" he offered.

"Paul, I don't mind putting Mark's car in my garage until you can get back. Really—"

"If you're sure," he breathed dramatically. "Well, that's it from here then. Take care—" and the line clicked. Shane couldn't remember him being so short by phone before which only aggravated a growing paranoia that what he was doing

covertly, only slightly concealed behind his cubicle blind, may have somehow snagged his boss's attention or suspicion. Why else would his private dick be following him? He knocked on his computer screen and warned it not to tell on him while he was away. It was then he noticed a card envelope with his name on it. Shane opened it to find a certificate signed by Donald Morgan granting the *Employee of the Month* a half day off with pay. How convenient, Shane pondered, considering his mission in the works for the afternoon. He jotted a thank you note to leave on Donald's desk explaining his work absence following a few errands phoned in by Paul. He tracked down Stephen at the restaurant to share news of his newest honour and to let him know he'd be out of the office the rest of the day. No sense in giving Jackie a new voice to add to her repertoire of storybook characters, Shane felt, —especially now that he may have inadvertently piqued a little interest. He tidied up his desk and propped the new stuffed toy next to the others that had gathered there over the years like boxed coffee mugs. Without employee exception, every work area at *BTI* looked like a playpen at *KinderCare*. Everyone had toys to play with, display, redesign, corporeally abuse if need be, but they came with the territory. He shoved his personal computer disks in his briefcase.

He thought to check-out with Norma on the way out as she was the senior ranking official in the building given the family's synagogue to-do, but as he

approached her windowed office, he noticed through the pulled mini-blinds that she had someone in there. He waited long enough to recognize Jackie's voice and sensed by her hushed whisper they were nattering again. He moved daringly closer.

"All I know," he heard Norma say, *"is Paul phoned this morning asking all these questions about Shane. Next thing I know he told me to make Shane Employee of the Month and he'd explain everything to Don when he returned."*

"Does that seem odd to you," Jackie asked in venom-sweet tones.

"Congratulations, Shane," Tony from Accounting slapped him on the back on his way to the washrooms. In Shane's shock, it didn't immediately dawn on him that that was the first time the blonde accountant had acknowledged him since he'd started working there. He had no choice now but to interrupt them by stepping into the open doorway, in case they'd heard them in the hall. Shane knocked on the jamb, making demonstrative efforts to thank Tony though he had long disappeared inside the washroom door.

"Excuse me ladies—Paul has phoned in some errands he wants me to run for him and since he's out of town, I thought I'd take my half day off this afternoon after I'm through, unless someone objects?"

"No, no." They both answered automatically which made me wonder if they might be a bit too anxious to be rid of him.

While walking down the street to the BMW dealership on the corner, after moving his truck into preferred parking, it occurred to Shane that the job reference Jackie had reported overhearing earlier, must have been Paul or Paul's lackey inquiring into his past. He couldn't make any sense of Paul's insistence to have him made employee of the month though. On the surface, nobody would argue that Shane was certainly deserving of a Victoria Cross for putting up with Paul but under the circumstances, Shane felt a slight tug of guilt.

At the car dealership, where he deducted they also performed tune-ups and repairs on other car brands, a simple introduction to the floor manager netted him the keys to Mark's Turbo Saab which Shane proceeded to drive from the lot with the realization that it was quite possibly fueled by his nerves alone. His sensory perception ignited with the awareness that he was grasping Mark's steering wheel, shifting Mark's gear shift, turning on Mark's car stereo, adjusting Mark's rear view mirror, —in short, driving Mark's machine. There were few things more personal in a man's life and Shane felt privileged and cursed simultaneously. At the first stoplight the urge to snoop sent his hand flying for the glove compartment. Under an owner's manual Shane spied a small, baby blue address book. He had to pull the car out of traffic to the curb where he let it idle softly, like an almost imperceptible vibration coming from the core of the earth and not the scarcely humming engine. He opened

the address book and realized his hands had turned ice cold. Stephen had the circulation problem in the extremities, well Mark too *now*, but not Shane as a rule. Page by page he reviewed the names and numbers and limited addresses. *Scott Barry,* right off the bat! *Byron Burnside*, *Gilles Eiswine* with a notation beneath his number for Shane and for Kyle. Shane didn't remember giving Mark his last name, and certainly not its spelling. He must have inquired with Gilles after that night. "Hey, maybe you were interested in me after all," Shane spoke to his spirit which was still very much in residence inside the leather interior. *Jeffrey Forrester, Scott Gambuti, James Getty*... "what?" *E. Hern?* "I'll be damned!" Shane hit the steering wheel. "You little devil," he cursed him out loud. Of course, he recognized Elias' number from having called it recently himself. He held a finger on that page and continued. *Jack Jackson, Russell Campbell, Ken Esthus, John McCutcheon*, —who Shane recognized as the stripper Mark had known at the Underground the night he met him, *Miguel Paredes*, a whole section of first names under the heading of *Toronto*, *Wolfgang Winkler* and *Brent Zuchowski,* followed by a few blank pages, before Shane reached the back cover full of scribbled first names and phone numbers which Shane deducted to be Mark's *hall of shame* entries. He flipped back to the page with the cutout *H*. He could now add Elias to the growing list of acquaintances, who Shane had once considered friends, who now had some mysterious reason to lie to him about

their involvement with Mark Morgan. Shane flipped to the *S* page looking for his own name to find, not proper entries but columns of initials followed by a simple number code. He stared at the page a minute and then it suddenly came to him. Mark must have recorded penile length under *S* for SIZE! Shane went for the obvious initials that were easy to figure out and verify. *GE*-7, *EH-8.5* —On those two he could at least concur though he felt Mark might have been overly generous with Gilles. *BB-10.5* (Yikes!), *MP-8, SG-9, SB-6? My Mr. Barry, is that all*? Shane scolded his only suspect. *Scarcely a dwarf among giants*, Shane scolded him. "Look at this page!" Shane talked to himself and to Mark's surely amused spirit, giggling out loud at his triumphant research. *SH-7, L-M-9UC,* (uncut, Shane further deciphered) *JF-6.5, KL-8, NP-8.5,* and at the bottom of the page, *PT-4x4.* Now there was a new code which Shane could only deduct, with a mind lowered to the same gutter elevation as his dead mentor, to be length & circumference. Interesting composite. Shane scanned the page. "Well, what do you know?" There were Shane's initials followed by two question marks. Shane smiled, reaching for a pen in his brief case. Mark shouldn't have to guess about that anymore, he figured. Shane proudly filled in his statistics looking at his watch. "Shit!" He was about to be late for a very important date.

It wasn't as though this was his first estimate call to the West End but after two years in the carpet laying business, Scott knew to dread this section of the city. His roommates had long accused him of laying more than carpets anyway and while he certainly had his opportunities to branch out, as it were, he could claim a proud record of strict dedication to his professional trade. New Westminster was just as bad as far as the various neighbourhoods of Vancouver went, but there at least it was frustrated old house wives who came on to him and not dizzy, has-been queens. He didn't know which was worse to be truthful. For a recovering heterosexual, after a disastrous stint at homosexuality, the West End wasn't exactly Methadone but it usually doubled as affirmation-enough to keep him on the wagon to procreation. He checked the address on his notepad and searched for a parking spot. Gordon had told him to cater to this one. *Thought this one had bucks to spend.* Well, everyone in the West End *says* that, Scott figured, though their credit cards were usually maxed out beyond the millennium or worse. Even the Bella Pizza delivery-studs had memorized the bad addresses in the West End where notorious trolls lurked behind closed doors with their clothes off and passed those orders off to the female drivers. The carpet layers and the social workers were about the only two professions still left that could be expected to take a West End home visit at face value, but Scott was becoming wearily jaded.

He gathered up his tape and samples and walked to the door to buzz *803*.

"Hello—" the box squawked.

"B.C. Trends," he announced and the door clicked.

Shane hadn't made an entertaining practice of inviting suspected murderers into his private home, so he was a bit rusty when it came to protocol. Shane jumped back on his divorce-acquired *Soloflex* for one last legitimate set of his workout before converting it into one of my many props for the afternoon. He had actually managed to work up one of those glossy pec sweats you see on TV a lot and his tank top sagged in all the proper places. If there were a gay bone left in the carpet layer's body, Shane was about to X-ray it. There was a tap at the door that Shane had left ever so slightly propped open. "Come in. I'll be right with you." Shane punched out six more incline presses, grabbed a towel and ambled into the entryway. "Hi, I'm Shane—" he offered an intentional sweaty palm.

"Scott. B.C. Trends..." he shook his hand.

"I think we're looking at about 900 square feet here but I'd like to keep a foot hardwood border throughout. I'm just going to jump in the shower to get out of your way. I figure we can look at samples after you've sized things up." Shane couldn't have packed it with anymore innuendo had he been writing script for a porn movie, so he just smiled to seal the introduction.

In the shower he hastened to admit that Scott Barry wasn't all that bad looking. In fact, he could see what Mark had seen in him, except for maybe the stony end, that is. Shane didn't dally in the bathroom as he wanted to present himself as the antithesis of West End common mill. He did, however, wander out into the hallway with a towel around his waist, just in case anyone thought he might have skimped on cheapness too. Scott was in the bedroom with his tape unfurled. "I said I was going to stay out of your way, didn't I?"

"That's all right. I don't mind," Scott said trying to smile past the pencil he held in his dangerously white teeth. "Work out a lot?"

Well, it wasn't *would you care for a back-rub?* which was how all the low grade porn movies depicting tradesmen started out, but they had to start somewhere. "Every now and then," Shane answered a bit too modestly to be believed.

"Every now and then," Scott repeated with a suspicious grin. "Right." Shane pulled his Levi's up under the towel and left them purposely unfastened, tossing the towel aside ala dance of the seven veils. He added a t-shirt to rival Scott's teeth and accentuated the tuck-in procedure.

"There. That's more business like," Shane droned. Scott looked up from the floor and smiled, one dimple deployed and a sparkle in his eyes. *How did he do that sparkle thing*? Shane wondered.

"Well you know what they say, all work—" Scott cut himself short. "You know what they say," he repeated safely.

Shane's turn to smile. "I'll wait in the other room." Shane could see it was going too easily and needed to be jammed up with a heightened sense of pursuit. Within moments Scott was in the hallway double checking his figures. "Can I get you something to drink? I've got juices, Calistoga, milk—" Shane offered.

"Nah. I'm fine. Thanks." He went to his pile of things on the counter and carried them over to Shane on the couch. "Now, with the hardwood border, you'll probably want to stay away from patterns and you'll want to monopolize on the airiness of the flat by keeping it a lighter color, perhaps one of these off whites," Scott suggested, lifting back the sturdy cover on his sample binder. "Depending on your price range, I'd say anywhere from this one to," he fingered through the carpets, "to this one."

"Gordon may have told you that I'm actually moving into the Duke Ellington in another six months. Without sounding cheap, what are my chances of using what we put down in here, for my new place? Keep in mind that the new place is almost 1,400 square feet."

"Hardwood there too?"

"Yes," Shane answered decisively, wondering if perhaps he's answered too

much so to be believed..

"Overlooking the Bay or the skyline?

"False Creek Marina, actually."

"Really? I have a friend who keeps his boat there." Scott looked away suddenly as though his eyes might not have stopped communicating where his tongue left off. "Well, it's mostly out this summer, -the boat that is." He shifted on the couch next to Shane.

"I wonder if I know your friend. After my first novel was published earlier this year, I seem to have been thrust into the jet set so to speak." *So to lie,* was more like it.

"So you're a writer?"

"How else do you think I could keep my afternoons free to entertain?" Scott smiled uneasily at first and then relaxed. "Don't worry. I'm mostly kidding," Shane said as though that might exempt him from playing this entire charade.

"What do you write?"

"Gay crime fiction," Shane blurted out, having waited half the day to get this little burr under his saddle."

"And there's a market for that?" Scott asked seemingly un-rattled.

"Sure, life after *The Hardy Boys,*" Shane told him. "Someone had to provide

a sequel to pubescence," he joked, most likely over Scott's head.

"So why don't I leave this sample book with you and you can bring it by B.C. Trends when you've reached a decision. Chances are anything you like we have in stock and we almost always can install within a week." Scott stood, closing a pocket notebook where he tucked his pencil in it's wire coil.

"It was nice meeting you, Scott."

"You too. I look forward to working with you." He backed out of the room as he spoke. "Bye." Shane closed the door.

Shane put his shoes on in front of the living room window, watching Scott get into his RX-7. Nervous suddenly, that one.

Shane stopped by the building manager's apartment on his way out to make sure his considerable move-in offer to split the cost of any permanent apartment improvements, was still good. He wasn't in. Shane hopped in the Saab he'd hidden two blocks away, for a spin out to Mountain View Cemetery. He figured Mark might get a kick out of having his car revving about.

Crossing Burrard Bridge heading for West Broadway, Shane couldn't resist the car phone mounted on the floor next to his right leg. He picked it up and was surprised to get a dial tone. *Yippee*! He thought. Free phone calls should be a perk for having run this errand for the *Heathen* and so he dialed away. "Hi Shannon.

Stephen there? —Hi Darling. Guess what I'm driving," he sang to him. "Better yet, pop out front of the restaurant in four minutes and I'll show you..."

"Hello Paul. Bill Tinsel here. Did I reach you too late?"

"No Bill. I was just thinking about going to bed. -Thanks for returning my call. I had hoped you'd phone earlier in the day but I guess you were busy, huh?"

"Actually, I've been on the trail of your assistant and I think we may be onto something. In fact, I'm sitting across from the *BTI* lot now with my eye on his vehicle waiting for him to leave for the day."

"Well, Bill, that's what I had phoned about. I intentionally asked Shane to pick up Mark's Saab at the BMW dealership and drive it to his apartment garage for safekeeping until I get back. You'll want to follow him in the Saab from the dealership. Any minute I imagine you'll see him begin walking up the street toward there."

"That's interesting, Paul. What did you hope to establish with this exercise?"

"It's a test really. I want to know if he is the type to carry out my request to the letter or if he will take liberties with Mark's car once he gets inside it."

"Ahhh," Bill uttered as though he'd just figured out the punch line to a joke.

"So why do you think we're onto something with Shane, besides the computer

file I found, that is?"

"Well, it may be nothing but I have a hunch. Last night," he emphasized, "I tailed him to an apartment in the False Creek area where he must have gone for a dinner engagement of some kind. He didn't stay long and drove from there into Stanley Park. He left his car for one of the trails leading off the parking lot and that's when I lost him."

"You didn't go in after him?"

"I have my limits," he admitted frankly to his newest employer, "and I didn't think I would look authentic enough to pull it off," he thought to add. "I went back into the park today to become familiar with the trail system so that if it comes to a foot pursuit in the future, I'll understand the trail network better."

"Any idea who he was visiting in False Creek?"

"Well, I've narrowed it down to five possibilities, none of which immediately stand out as significant to this case."

"Forget the case, Bill!" Paul snapped. "Just get something on him. I want him out of the company but he's a bit of a sacred cow right now. We need to arrange for him to fuck-up big. Slight the family, breach of confidentiality, conspiracy to interfere in an ongoing investigation. I don't care what it is, just find it! My hunch is he won't be able to resist the call of the road once he gets inside that Saab, but just in case, we

need something to fall back on. I'll call you again tomorrow. Good-bye."

Shane had never been much for cemeteries. They were designed expressly to give you the creeps, as far as he was concerned. Daylight was good. He put the Saab in first, set the brake and cut the engine. Shane's first thought was to make the visit quick. The last thing he needed was for someone in the family to spontaneously feel like grieving in person in spite of Donald's moratorium. He already had a sneaking feeling he was a sitting *schmuck*. He reached for the address book and stepped out of the low-riding machine. The sun had returned following yesterday's late afternoon rain shower. Shane gazed out and across the inlet up to the mountains. It really was a spectacular piece of real estate if you were into basement dwellings. He almost walked past Mark's flat headstone. It was uncovered now, the cheesecloth removed sometime following the service, he imagined. He knelt down and traced the simple inscription with a finger. *Forever in our hearts*. What was the big deal, Shane wondered? Usually when you kept something covered up, it was to build suspense for the grand unveiling. It seemed a bit plain, after all, for a fag with a boat, two cars, a waterfront home, millions of dollars and no one to share it with. Shane considered the plain pine box casket and quickly deducted the whole shebang must have cost them a whopping $39.95. *Was that Jewish, or what*?

Shane opened the address book and took to speaking out loud to the headstone. "So help me with some of these initials, will ya?" He held the open booklet face down for Mark to see. "You'll note I filled in my dimensions, to end the mystery of it all." Shane chuckled, a bit too comfortably. "By the looks of some of these names, I'd say we had more in common than either of us recognized when we met, —Gilles not withstanding. And Elias Hern, you little whore-dog. How did you bag that catch? But who is this *L-M-9UC*? Shane flipped back to the last page of the book that had been glued to the back cover and filled with first names and phone numbers. There in red were the circled words *Leather-man* and a number. Shane's face went flush. "Thank-you," he mumbled "Let's try another one," he bargained with the dead. "Here, *KL-8*." He flipped through the pages as though it were a three dimensional Ouija board, waiting for the next answer. When it didn't come, he started rattling through men's names that began with *K*. Kevin, Keith, Karl, "—Kyle!" he shouted, "Kyle Lonegarten, Gilles boyfriend! I'd almost forgotten that little indiscretion of yours, Marcus. Eight inches eh? I should have figured that the way he talked that night he'd visited me on the couch. No wonder Gilles keeps him under wraps." Now, where was the other stumper, Shane went back to the *size* page. "Oh yeah, this *PT-4x4* entry at the bottom of the page?" At that moment Shane was nearly bowled over by a dog that whizzed past him like some poison tipped arrow.

His heart stopped sure as Mark's, which he didn't find particularly amusing given his surroundings and when he finally was able to focus through watering eyes, he realized the dog was a Boxer. "Dexter," he whispered, instantly gripped with panic. He looked back over his shoulder to see a dark coloured BMW parked behind the Saab. *Tamorin*? Shane knew he was in deeper shit than Mark at that moment and with Mark's own car sitting there like a goddamn billboard, it would do Shane no good to scramble into the bushes. Now was not the time to admit that his investigating prowess may have taken one risk too many, and on the day the family commemorated the end of *shiva*, no less. He tucked the address book inside his back jeans pocket and decided to make the best of the worst possible scenario. "Come here, Dexter," Shane yelled playfully. The dog bounded back in his direction and he rose to love him familiarly. Fortunately, the Boxer cooperated with his impromptu scheme and they played while Donald's wife approached them cautiously and expressionlessly. When she reached a safe fifteen foot distance she stopped, gripping her cane with one hand and attending to her puffy eyes with a handkerchief in the other. Shane looked up from rough-housing with the dog and put his hands in his front Levi pockets. "Hello, Sandee," he offered.

"Oh my God," she gasped. "I hardly recognized you out of a suit. *Shane* isn't it?"

"Yes. I work for..."

"Of course. We met some months ago and we've spoken by phone. It's just, well—Mark's car here threw me and watching you just now playing with Dex—" she stopped short. "I, -I would have sworn it was Mark. I would have sworn—" she convulsed into tears and Shane approached to steady her as he was obviously beyond comforting her. She reached out then took her hand back. "No! No." she repeated sternly. "What are you doing here? Why do you have Mark's car? How do you know his dog? Why do you look so damn much like him?" she sobbed, asking her questions rapid fire.

"I can explain. Let's sit here." She reached for the ground as though it would rise up to swallow her. That's what she wanted after all. Something to snuff out the pain of losing Mark, halt the deterioration of her body. Shane took her hand and together they sat on the grass. "I knew Mark, or I should say I met him just before he died. We had made plans to see each other and next thing I knew—"

"Of course, you're the Shane he spoke of meeting!" She looked up, relieved to have another piece of the puzzle that was her brother-in-law and best friend.

"I don't know about that," he responded sheepishly.

"No, he told me. He told me about meeting you and looking forward to seeing you again. He told me," she enunciated, "that finally, he might have met

somebody genuine and he described you. He did," she nearly smiled. "He said you were built but who would have guessed that under your suit?"

Shane smiled graciously. "Paul phoned from England this morning and asked me to pick Mark's car up from the shop and bring it to my home garage for safekeeping until he got back to take care of it. I hadn't been out here since the memorial service and felt that Mark was beckoning me somehow." Shane realized that sounded a bit too hokey and he amended. "Maybe I was beckoning him. Isn't that what we do? I mean, —the living? Isn't that what we do when we try to make sense of it all?"

She reached for his hand and patted it with the other. "So you're Shane," she said with eyes welling up all over again.

"Listen, Paul, not even Donald knows that I knew Mark. It came as quite a shock to me, to be completely honest, when I first got assigned to *BTI* from the temp agency. For some time now, I thought about coming clean with it, with them I mean, but I couldn't figure out how to tell them without cheapening it somehow. Without minimizing the effect Mark had on me. It just seemed more appropriate to keep it special, between Mark and me."

"I understand. Believe me, with this family, I more than understand."

They both sat there and listened to the breeze topple over the ridge behind

them to scoop down the slope where Mark lay facing the mountains. After a moment, Shane said "I should be going. Get Mark's car home before dark."

"He liked you, you know?"

"Thanks Sandee, for saying that. It helps." He stood and left her sitting. Shane rolled his eyes and exhaled long and slowly as he walked away. That was too close, he acknowledged, which should have been the dowsing equivalent of a cold bucket of water but once inside the car he was back at it all over again. Pulling out of the cemetery, his hand was on the phone dialing *Leather-Man*. No answer.

Dave Floyd sauntered into Uwajimaya's office, lanky, attractive, but slightly undone in a way that only accentuated his authenticated dopeyness, which he played like a one eyed Jack in a fixed poker game. The truth was, he was an intelligent man who simply lacked the ambition to ladder climb. And why not? Sooner or later, opportunities came his way. No sense chasing them, he felt. This latest transfer was case in point. But he had given some thought to this door into Homicide and in the end decided he wasn't yet prepared to face his *ex* so soon after being dumped. He talked big, it was part of his image, but when it came right down to it, he wasn't much for confrontation which was why he was perfectly suited for the paper pushing grunt work of serving bench warrants. Roger couldn't have cared less one way or the

other. He was too busy scratching at the earth, trying to raise a stink of foul play in the Morgan case, more than anything to prove to that now since departed partner of his, that his hunches could play out too; —that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police didn't live or die on the merits of one flimsy pin-up calendar boy.

"Howdy Pardner," Floyd announced. "Just wanted to make sure there were no hard feelings about turning down the chance to work with you on this one."

"Nah, I understand," Roger replied without looking up.

"Here, I brought you this, —sort of a parting gift." Floyd tossed an advance copy of next week's *Newsweek* Magazine on Uwajimaya's desk.

The Asian detective read the cover out loud. "*Halcion. It's the Most Widely Prescribed Sleeping Pill in the World. But Is It Safe*?"

"You're welcome," Floyd said in a mock salute before walking backwards out of the room. Roger flipped inside to the cover story: *Sweet Dreams Or Nightmare?*

...The most popular sleeping pill in the world faces a mounting challenge over its safety. Roger read rapidly underlining with his index finger as he went. *...Sold in more than 90 countries, Halcion is Upjohn's second biggest money maker...It has annual sales of $250 million...The U.S. Food and Drug Administration declared Halcion safe and effective in 1982, and many doctors and patients obviously liked it...Halcion's critics say there is no question it poses special hazards.*

They claim it is more likely than similar drugs to cause such nervous-system disturbances as amnesia, anxiety, delusions and hostility. And they charge that neither Upjohn nor the FDA has done enough to protect the pill-taking public...1990: FDA analysts compare numbers of violent acts associated with 329 prescription drugs. Halcion ranks first...In television appearances and letters to medical journals, one Dutch psychiatrist described seeing some of his own patients become depressed or chronically anxious while taking the drug. He also described instances of amnesia, hallucinations, paranoia, and verbal and physical aggression...A researcher at the FDA tracked Halcion's adverse-reaction reports during its first year on the U.S. market, and he perceived a troublesome pattern. The nervous-system side effects reported for Halcion "appear to have a singular intensity," he wrote in an unpublished manuscript in early 1984. Americans were receiving only half the dose first approved in Holland. Yet their experiences, —ranging from "purposeful activity without recall" to "personality changes," "inappropriate emotional expression" and "unaccustomed aggression" —had a familiar ring...Halcion's high complaint rate wasn't unique to the United States. Alarmed by similar reporting, French and Italian regulators forced the half-milligram tablet from their market in the spring of 1987...If Halcion's role in bizarre behavior is still mysterious, its role in violent outbursts is more so...In British

Columbia a 63-year-old taxi driver with no history of mental illness ransacked a schoolhouse while taking Halcion. Uwajimaya scratched his head and asked himself if he remembered that. *A San Diego man started setting fires. A woman in Virginia Beach, Va., shot her husband when he rebuffed her. And Ron Petty, of Kalamazoo, Mich., a police officer with no criminal record, stabbed his wife in the heart, nearly killing her...Petty recalls taking two half-milligram Halcion tablets (twice the dose his doctor had prescribed) at about 11 p.m. on February 24, 1984. He also recalls getting in his car at about 2 a.m. and driving 30 miles to the Battle Creek apartment where Jennifer Petty Bradley, then his wife, was staying while they were separated. But he says he has no recollection of breaking down the door with a tire iron, finding her with another man and attacking her...After seeing a television magazine show in which Cincinnati pharmacologist Martin Scharf described Halcion's possible side effects, Petty grew more convinced that the drug had fueled his middle-of-the-night rage. He contacted Scharf, hired a lawyer, got a retrial, and eventually won his freedom...Scharf who has served as an expert witness in several such cases, has little doubt that the drug sometimes turns repressed anger into homicidal rage.* Uwajimaya put the magazine down and grabbed a blank legal pad. What if Mark had ground up the Halcion and placed it in Barry's wine and food? Could Barry have reacted homicidally or violently? Certainly this would play into their suspect's claim

that he simply didn't remember much from that night. It would also explain his anxiety attack as some sort of reaction or detox from the medication he had taken as well as his sketchy performance during the polygraph. He looked again to the cover of the magazine and noticed a loose leaf photocopy now sticking out of its pages. He pulled it free from the magazine. Floyd had copied an article appearing in today's Wall Street Journal. Again, Uwajimaya read through the piece. *A closely watched liability suit against Upjohn Co. over its Halcion sleeping pill was settled just two weeks before the case was scheduled for trial...Flo Marie Grundberg of Salt Lake City sued the Kalamazoo, Mich., pharmaceutical company, claiming that she became violent after taking Halcion and shot her mother to death. Criminal charges against the 61-year-old woman were dropped after doctors testified that Halcion can cause violent fits.*

Of course, Uwajimaya remembered, the only lab tests they had were indicative of what Mark had ingested. No work-up had been done on the suspect. Even the emergency room report from the following day didn't include lab work though the doctor's notes had indicated that Scott felt he may have taken a *sleeper* or a hallucinogen. There was no way to substantiate that the powdery residue, the Halcion tablets on the floor, or on the spoon, somehow were intended for or in fact made it into Barry's system. The Halcion in Mark's body was three to four times the

prescribed dosage so somebody had made a habit that night of using the substance quite freely. Add to that the cocaine and marijuana found in Mark's system and the general social belief that nobody parties alone, and presto! He could have his first major break in this screwball case. Already he knew the bigger trick would be to substantiate any of this without lab results. Something Hern had once said came back to him time and time again. If they could prove Barry hit Mark once, they could prove he hit him twice and if they got that to stick, the polygraph could be rolled into support that he likely left him unconscious on the floor of his garage. First, though, Roger knew he needed to overcome his suspect's amnesia. And that wouldn't be easy.

It was coming up on five o'clock and Shane knew he was about to be tangled in rush hour traffic so conveniently, he ducked into Stanley Park. He reclined the driver's seat back as far as it would go and extracted the address book from his back pocket. That reminded him! He pushed redial on the mobile phone and this time got an answer from the *Leather man.*

"Hey, I understood from a friend of mine that if I called this number, I'd be talking to a hot man with a nine inch, uncut dick." Shane had never been very good at talking dirty.

"Nine and a half hard, and whose asking?" The man on the other end of the line played along.

"Nine and a half? —An admirer, that's who. I'm sitting inside my car just inside Stanley Park wondering what it would take to get you to pack your attributes my way?"

"I was actually thinking about wandering down there myself as a matter of fact."

"Well, I'm wearing levi's, a white T and a black leather jacket."

"Not for long, hotshot. Not for long. I'll meet you on Lees then, say fifteen minutes?"

"You got it." Shane hung up the phone, as a chill raced around his back. "Shall we make it three in common, Marcus?" He tapped the blue book and checked his hair in the mirror. Fifteen minutes? He breathed deeply, trying to coax his heart back into its normal rhythmic function. He re-inspected the glove box to see if He'd missed anything and spotted the ashtray, simultaneously remembering the set of house keys that were supposed to be inside. He slid the tray and saw a flash of silver. Did he dare? He made a pact that if I survived the Leather-man, He'd brave the house. But he had to check his messages first, just in case there were a more sane option waiting for him. Becoming increasingly more dependent on a mobile phone, he dialed

while he killed some time.

You have one new message. To listen to your messages, press one.

Hi Michael. I hope you don't mind that I've phoned you back but this is Scott Barry, you know—from B.C. Trends. I just wanted to apologize for rushing out of your place this afternoon. I'm not sure what came over me but, well, I wouldn't mind getting together sometime, maybe for coffee or something, just to talk and you know, tackle the regular get-to-know-you things. Ahh, I'm really not very good at this so I'll hang up now. Oh! My number at home is 784-5429. You've got my number at work. I hope to hear from you."

To erase this message press 7. To save it press 9.

I'll be damned, Shane thought to himself. *Now what*? He clenched his teeth and dialed Scott's home number. "Hello—" a woman's voice answered.

"Uh, is Scott around?"

"I think he's still at work if you want to try and catch him there. Can I tell him who phoned?"

"Nah, I'll try him there. Thanks." Shane re-dialed the phone while his adrenalin was up. The number for Scott at work, was conveniently found in Mark's blue address book.

"B.C. Trends, Kelly speaking." *Well isn't this a small world*, Shane thought

but didn't say.

"I'm looking for Scott. Is he still around?"

"Yeah, he's standing right here, hold on."

"This is Scott."

"Scott— Shane here. I just picked up your message."

"Oh. Hold on just a minute." Shane checked his teeth in the mirror and popped a stick of gum. "Hi. Sorry about that. I'm glad you called. Did my message even make sense?"

"Sure it did. I'm glad you left it."

"So, would you like to get together to talk about something besides carpet samples?"

"I would actually. What does your schedule look like?"

"Well, I'm free tonight. I live on the West Side but I can meet you anywhere."

"No, West Side's fine. Feel like taking a walk, say 7:00*ish*?" Shane prompted him.

"That's good. Where?"

"How 'bout Lighthouse Park? We could walk out to the Atkinson Lighthouse. You know, off Marine Drive past Sandy Cove." Shane had wandered

there himself some nights past after casing Mark's house from the outside.

"Of course. Turn on Beacon Lane. I've been there before. Seven, then?

"Seven's great. See ya then." Shane powered off the phone and grabbed his jacket. *He* needed a secretary!

Shane found he was much more comfortable with the contour of the park during daylight. It lent such a tactical advantage over groping around the old growth in the dark. And now that he could see the men hunched under trees just off the trail, he could see just how *old growth* they truly were. His strategy was to get far enough along on the trail to turn around and double back toward the car so that he could confront the *Leather Man* head on, as it were, but when he turned around to reverse direction, the *Leather Man* was right on his heels and Shane virtually ran smack into him. He grabbed Shane defensively and shuffled him off into the bush. He was a huge thing and smelled of cheap aftershave splashed on leather. Shane would know too, with his nose pressed between his hairy pecs.

"Daddy's been following that tight ass of yours for a hundred yards or so and now Daddy's hot." He pressed his gorilla hand over a sizeable protrusion inside his leather pants. Shane watched, nearly dizzy from the sudden exodus of blood from his brain. The Leather giant unsnapped his crotch and to Shane's hygienic surprise, he wasn't wearing underwear. He placed both hands on Shane's shoulders and muscled

him to his knees until he was face to— well, face to fate, he was afraid. This wasn't what he had in mind. He'd been looking for a spot of witty repartee, perhaps a cup of tea. Shane thought he might have misread the party invitation, as he opened his mouth just in time to take his hairy prod into the back of his throat. He was all groans holding Shane's head in place, driving, driving. With the premonition that conversation would follow, Shane humored him. "Daddy wants to fuck pretty boy," he grunted sadistically. Shane suddenly became more animated in his performance and the Leather Man moaned euphorically, turning the forest into a veritable jungle cacophony. As it neared deafening proportions sure to raise unsafe risk factors, local interest, and perhaps the Titanic, Shane pulled himself off of him which dispatched his monster sized hand to finish the task just as Shane dodged out of the way. The Leather Man watched with delight as Shane's own pants had long abandoned the harboring of any secrets therein. Shane's conscience scrambled to justify his only infidelity to date. He hadn't been touched so far, he debated with his morals and in the end, no points were taken away. Leather Man flicked his still hard dick sending petroleum thick droplets of his essence to fertilize the broad sword ferns thrusting out of the decaying forest floor about them. He reached a hand toward Shane to assist him to his feet. Shane brushed off the pine needles and moss from his butt, avoiding eye contact with the ogre in his midst.

"I don't suppose you'd like to stop by my place for coffee. I live just outside the park on Comox," he added.

Shane smiled. "Maybe some other time. I have your number," he reminded him.

"Like you'll call," he taunted him, shoving him in the shoulder with a jab of his fingers.

"You'd be surprised by what I might do," Shane cautioned him before turning away to re-join the trail. He left him behind to secure his cargo, and hurried down the path toward the car. He spit every few yards, thinking he might actually expel the entire experience from his system. It had been fun but Shane wasn't sure what he had hoped to learn by it. He jumped into the Saab and sped away. The knuckles of his hands on the steering wheel turned white as he contemplated just how deep he would go to get at the truth, or at least his satisfied perception of it. He reached for the spare house key. —Just a little deeper, he promised.

The security code wasn't going to be at all hard to remember after watching Paul test it time and time again for the detective's benefit last week and the garage door opener worked like a dream. He tucked the Saab inside the double wide garage trying to avoid the chalk line that hadn't faded on the cold concrete floor. He depressed the opener and the door shut behind him. He couldn't risk being seen by

the nosey neighbour across the street, though it seemed he was prepared to risk everything else. He examined the plywood tacked to this side of the missing pet door and the ramp that led to it. The roll of chicken wire that Mark was found laying on top of, was still depressed from his weight and still resided partly in and partly out of the chalk outline. Shane walked to the door leading into the house and opened it before thinking about the fingerprints he had just left. In the next second he laughed at his paranoia, realizing his prints were already all over this house from the day he first walked through it with Tamorin and Tinsel. Then he stopped laughing. *My prints* he thought. His prints were now in the car, in the house, in Mark's office, on Mark's file cabinets, shit—on his tombstone. What hadn't Shane touched quickly became the shorter of two, very incriminating lists. *What the hell*, he thought, punching in the security code to silence the low tone that had sounded when he opened the door. He immediately walked upstairs to the kitchen on the second level of the house and noticed a leather notebook sitting on top of the kitchen counter. It suddenly occurred to him that someone else might be there, though he had purposely noticed that there weren't any vehicles outside the residence. He walked very quietly to the notebook and opened the cover. It was Tinsel's, no doubt left behind in his already more than established state of perpetual absentmindedness. And on top of the stack of papers were two new memos, one dated as recently as today, that Shane had

not yet seen. Boldly, he pulled up a barstool and had a gape at the document that began with *re*: *Examination of Mark's residence with Luminol to detect blood.* Shane read through the page quickly noting that nothing had come of these tests. The next page was a letter from *Forensic Services,* almost a letter of recommendation from a forensic scientist disputing the theory of suicide. Shane reviewed each bullet point, learning nothing new.

Just then Shane heard what could have been a car door in the driveway outside. He shuffled the papers back on top of the notebook and looked around for a place to hide. He heard a key in the front door and ducked into the pantry closet in the kitchen, pulling the door closed very slowly until the hardware clicked. He stood there in the dark, a shelf jutting uncomfortably into his back.

Bill Tinsel waited for the security alarm to sound, announcing his presence, but it remained silent. He closed the door behind him. "Don't tell me—" he exploded, moving closer to the alarm panel. What was wrong with him, he had to wonder, after completely losing track of his subject somewhere between *BTI* and the BMW dealership and now, leaving the alarm un-activated a second time. It was introspective to question if maybe he wasn't getting too old for this business, but he didn't know how he could face Tamorin with more bad news. Tamorin seemed to be waiting in anticipation of his next fuck-up anyway. He'd never liked that bastard. He

had been a no good addition to the Morgan family. He couldn't understand how a family could be so obsessed looking to the outside for enemies, when clearly, in his estimation, they lurked right there among them. But it wasn't his place to say.

Shane heard footsteps climbing the stairs to the second level, shuffle across the carpet to click on the kitchen floor, the same surface his own feet shared in the closet just inches away. He'd forgotten to notice if Tinsel was following him today, as though the change in vehicles had not only elevated his attitude but concealed Shane from recognition at the same time. He heard a male's voice exclaim *Jesus*, and he held his breath inside seized lungs.

Tinsel grabbed his notebook from the counter and headed back down the stairs. He might still be able to get back to the West End to sit on his subject's house in time to see him drive home in Mark's car. He could use some extra credit points about now. He looked at the notebook in his hand and muttered "Jesus!" again, as if he had any hope left of impressing anyone with his forgetfulness. He was slated to present this case to the crown attorney in two days for his prosecution consideration and he couldn't even hang onto his investigation notebook. He set the alarm and paused, staring at the door that led to the garage. "Was there something else I was supposed to do while I was here," he asked himself? The alarm panel beeped which was his signal to leave. "Guess not," he answered himself with a shrug of his

shoulders.

Shane heard the front door close, then lock, but he didn't move for another ten minutes. His hunch that it had been Tinsel was confirmed when he eased the pantry door open and noticed the portfolio missing from the kitchen counter. Tinsel didn't stick around long enough to have followed him all the way across town so Shane figured he must have remembered leaving the notebook and simply came back for it. That reasoning did not minimize the closeness of that call and he began to identify with the criminal set that justified the eventuality of being caught against their need to do one last heist or knock off one last enemy before hanging it up for good. So this was it, then, he promised; his very last gamble for information that shouldn't have concerned him in the first place. It was then Shane remembered his date with Scott Barry and all he could do was smile. He was habitual.

Shane made his way through the house to the washer and dryer on the third level. Something about Tinsel's luminol report had disturbed him. It was the blood under the lid of the washing machine. Was it Mark's or somebody else's and what needed to be washed so desperately in the middle of a murder? He found the appliances tucked inside a walk-in closet between the master bedroom and the guest bathroom at the top of the stairs. He opened the lid of the machine. A load of whites? Shane pulled out several hand towels and placed them in a pile on top of the

dryer. They smelled musty and he reasoned they could not have been washed or the blood on the lid would have been rinsed away. Likewise old blood from an unrelated cut during a previous injury, would have been washed away with one load of the machine. Who used this many hand towels? Could they be sex clean-up towels—*trick rags* as they were commonly referred? There was no disputing that Mark had lots of sex and it would stand to reason that such implements of a healthy trade would accumulate, but why wash them after a struggle, especially after blood was drawn? Mark had made no attempt to clean any other portion of his home and yet this load of laundry rose to the top of somebody's priority list, except whoever it was, didn't think or bother to start the machine. Unless, that is, something bloody was taken out of the machine. That must be it! But what? He checked his watch and realized he needed to get moving along if he was going to make his next appointment. He quickly retraced the *path of blood* that Tinsel wrote about in his Luminol memo, following the chemically stained areas down the stairs and into the garage. It seemed simple enough that Mark either fell or threw himself down the stairs or somebody else pushed him as the spots were consistent with rolling or tumbling and if he were in motion in this fashion, it would make sense that the walls at the bottom of each landing would have stopped or slowed his fall, hence the incidents of blood documented on each of these walls. And then in the garage, Shane's theory evolved

as he noticed the position of the Saab he had just parked. The blood stains on the wall in the *step up* progression that Tinsel wrote about seemed to be the result of somebody lifting Mark's body over the hood of the Saab to place him on the far side beneath the pet door. Shane was swinging back toward foul play again even though he had seen a glimpse of an intriguingly meek Scott Barry and was no longer quick to finger him as his prime suspect. The hinging evidence had to swing on the injuries that Mark would have been bleeding from to determine whether Mark could have realistically left his own trail or if someone else painted the trail with his lifeless or unconscious body. Shane's recollection of the medical examiner's report had him bleeding from his forehead, his right elbow and possibly from his right foot. And then there was the question of the bloody washing machine lid and what was apparently missing from the inside. Shane started the Saab and depressed the door opener. It fascinated him that there were most likely people alive who had the answers to these questions, people he knew. The challenge was not going to be finding who those people were but creating an environment where they might willingly let go of the answers.

He'd driven a few kilometres heading west on Marine when he suddenly realized that Scott was bound to recognize Mark's Saab. He didn't have time to run out to Burnaby to switch with the Cruiser and he couldn't stand him up on their first

date and expect a second crack at it. Shane jumped on the mobile phone.

"Stephen! It's Shane. How was your dinner crowd? —Good. Listen, I'm in a bit of trouble and could use your help if you're available... Well, I'm on my way to Lighthouse Park over in West Van in Mark's Saab to meet—you won't believe this but to meet Scott Barry, you know, the guy that supposedly killed Mark. I didn't think about it until just now, but he'll recognize Mark's car and blow my cover, possibly putting me in more danger than I've already put myself. No, I'm not just being dramatic! *Blow my cover* is what they call it in this business. Listen to me! I put an extra set of my truck keys in the ashtray in your T-bird last weekend in Salt Spring. Don't ask me why—I, I thought we needed to exchange something material and car keys were as close as I could come to precious metals. Never mind. I need you to run out to the toy company, grab my truck, leave the T-bird in my parking spot, -you know the one marked *Employee of the Month*," Shane bragged. "Yes, you congratulated me earlier. Drive my truck out to West Van and exchange it with Mark's Saab while we're walking out to the lighthouse. You can take the Saab back to my place, keys to the garage and apartment are on the ring," he reminded him. "I'll meet you there and we can run out to get your car later on. Now let me tell you how to get to the toy company. —What? And just how do you know that? I've never taken you out there. —You told me you couldn't pick Mark out of a crowd?" Shane

argued with him. "Why didn't you tell me you'd met him for lunch? Did you sleep with him too? —Well, everyone else did and I'm starting to feel like I had leprosy or something for not rating a trick with him. Honestly, you didn't? —Okay, so you'll do this? And take the Second Narrows Bridge. It's faster. Yeah, yeah I'll thank you later," Shane toyed with him. "Listen, I'll call your home machine and tell you where I've parked the Saab so you'll have to stop at a payphone before you get all the way over here or you'll never find it. Well you should get one. I don't know how I've lived this long without it." Shane told him good-bye and powered-off the life-saving mobile phone in question.

Ten minutes later he turned down Beacon Lane and began looking for parking that wouldn't be particularly obvious but would still be easy for Stephen to find. There were *no parking* signs along the road until it dumped into a parking lot. Shane drove to the spot as far West as he could get and parked Mark's car fortuitously behind a Caravan. He phoned Stephen's voice mail and left instructions including how he'd find keys to the Saab behind the driver's side rear tire. Shane added that he was very close to earning the *L-word* from him, though he reminded himself he still wouldn't say it first this time.

Shane quickly stashed the keys and scrambled away from the Saab to take a seat on a park bench at the trail head leading to the lighthouse. He was about fifteen

minutes early which had cut it too close considering the car swap, but he saw no sign of Scott's red RX-7, so he tried to relax. A family ran squealing past him to barrel into the Caravan that had been the perfect camouflage. Shane bit his lip as the van reversed and rolled away leaving the Saab exposed. He opted to move to another bench further east and sat higher on the bench back with his feet on the seat hoping to create an optical distraction for Scott when he entered the lot. He smoothed out the leather jacket on his lap acknowledging that it had turned cool enough to wear it though he looked cooler and more visible without it at the moment. Shane had to remember to think *date* and not *interrogation* if he was to pull this meeting off. He had been completely surprised when Scott phoned back after he was certain he'd blown their first contact. Shane had only ever intended to have a chance meeting with him in the first place, brief by preference, just to size him up as a killer or a cuddler. Shane never dreamed he'd need a contingency plan to address Scott's possible attraction to him so he decided it was best to play it by ear while it still served his interests.

Seven straight up, Scott Barry's red car roared into the parking lot and as hoped, he spotted Shane straight off, waved and parked near his post. The sun had thrown long shadows across the lot and his transportation secret would be safe in another fifteen or twenty minutes by daylight standards, though he calculated that

Stephen would at least need a full hour for his end of the assignment. Scott ambled toward Shane in that straight way, looking every bit as worthy of Mark's attention but now commanding his. Shane stood to greet him with a handshake.

"Thanks for meeting me again," he said.

"Pleasure's mine. Shall we walk?" Shane suggested perhaps a little too hastily.

"Actually my leg's acting up tonight. Old basketball injury. I don't mind talking here if you don't—" Shane thought the story went he intentionally broke his roommate's leg (though he could never figure out how one went about that procedure) and kept playing the game. What was with *his* basketball injury? Shane wondered in panic.

"Our first date? —In a parking lot? I'll carry you when you can't go any further," Shane promised.

"All right then," he conceded with a wince.

"Basketball injury?" Shane mocked him. "Nobody has an old basketball injury unless it's a bent nail after dunking the ball. You might want to butch-up that line with a change in sport, say football or rugby, if you want someone's pity."

"And if it happens to be something else that I'm after, what should I do then?"

Shane smiled at him and they started walking. "Depends," he said. "on what

your desired outcome is. Take me for instance. I called a carpet company because I was tired of walking barefoot on a gritty hardwood floor. When you showed up with samples and dimples, my objective changed and I could have cared less if carpet got laid as long as I did."

"I see," Scott laughed.

"But then you ran off. Now I want to know more about you and going barefoot on a gritty hardwood floor by the way, seems something I can live with for the time being."

"And what is it you would like to know?" Scott asked him.

Did you kill Mark Morgan? Shane wanted to blurt out but he needed to stretch this meeting for a good hour or so. "Oh, I don't know," he stalled. "How about —are you gay? How's that for openers?"

"Bi-sexual, actually. Does that bother you?"

"Hmm, I don't know yet. How bi-sexual are you?"

"Right now, not very much, I'll be the first to admit. But as a regular operating practice, I'd say forty percent, give or take a five point margin of error."

"Forty percent gay and sixty percent straight or vice versa?"

"It depends on what my desired outcome happens to be." Scott grinned cleverly.

It was much darker inside the trees that arched like a train tunnel leading toward the point. Fortunately, thanks to the Atkinson lighthouse, there was indeed light at the end and they continued walking.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Shane asked not so innocently?

"Do you have a boyfriend?" he returned the question.

"Okay, next subject—" Shane acknowledged their awkward impasse.

Scott was intelligent, innocuous even. He understood what had attracted Mark because the same things were attracting him. The fact that he was no more available for Scott than Scott was for Shane, seemed to defuse things considerably. Shane swatted at a mosquito.

"How about your relationship history with men?"

"Short and disastrous," Scott answered honestly.

"And with women?"

"Long and disastrous," he half-grinned, arching an eyebrow. "I'm just climbing out from under my first divorce."

"Interesting choice of terms. Most people would say they were coming out of their first marriage."

"My divorce has been more stimulating, I assure you." Scott patted him on the lower back, his arm seemingly content to stay there had his conscience not called

it back. "A couple years ago I met this guy who seemed to have all the material makings I stood to lose in the divorce settlement including the shirt on my back and I figured at least this way I wouldn't need to start completely from scratch. But to make a long story short, he came with his shrink. It was a package deal. In the end, things got a bit too clinical for me and I bowed out."

"Nasty break-up?" Shane baited him.

"Sloppy really. I could have handled things better but then hindsight is everything they say. Anyway, how about you? One hundred percent homo?"

Shane nodded, scrunching up his face somewhat apologetically.

"Lucky you. I'd give anything to be one hundred percent anything but confused."

"Since I was fourteen anyway. I don't remember much before pubic hair, I'm afraid. My relationship history is much the same...*long and disastrous* as you put it? I've recently started up with this new guy and I'm being completely vigilant of my past mistakes, but after two months he still hasn't said the *L word* which causes me to question if he even can. I don't know, maybe humans were just supposed to enjoy each other like a good book. You know —an intriguing, well-written beginning full of suspense, a little time-passing substance thrown in the middle before a climatic and well staged end, —and then we head back to the library. It's when these books turn

past due, we get into trouble and rack up the life fines. You know what I mean?"

Scott nodded genuinely. They both walked in silence, contemplating the practicality, if not the spontaneity of Shane's analogy. The trail made an illogical turn east before emptying onto the rocky shore where the five story white lighthouse stood at the entrance to English Bay. They sat on a rock and gazed out to the lights at UBC across the choppy water. It was a wonderful hazy evening, trapped particles of orange and pink light in the atmosphere above the horizon. After a moment, Scott reached for Shane's hand tucking it along with his inside his jacket pocket.

"I don't suppose you'd be up for a *short story* for a change would ya?" He broke our silence.

"Short stories are the best," Shane whispered, gripping his hand a bit tighter. Shane watched his eyes smile as they scanned the distant shore where the majority of Mark's family lived and from where they had hunted him mercilessly. Shane could help but feel sorry for him, singled out as the lone scapegoat from a sizeable herd of potential enemies to wear the shackles of their paranoia and the manacles of Morgan greed. As sure as Shane sat there on that pointed rock, digging into his butt, Scott Barry hadn't killed Mark but it was no wonder why Tamorin and Tinsel were scrambling to frame him. Scott held Mark's life insurance policy in his rightfully trembling hands. It was almost as though he were waiting to be asked that one

question that would provide him an alibi with the authorities so he could drop the Morgan puppet strings through the grate where they'd be washed away forever along with every reason he ever thought he could squeeze-in and blend within the Morgan Family Dynasty in the first place. The only problem was, like the authorities, Scott was having a spot of trouble identifying that one exonerating question.



Tuesday, August 20, 1991

Bill Tinsel adjusted the desk light next to him and reviewed his scribbled notes as the late summer rain slapped at his office window in a most distracting patter. While he maintained an admirable degree of determination and confidence in front of the Morgan family and especially in the company of the overbearing Paul Tamorin, he knew his case against Scott Barry was crumbling apart. Still, his retainer and any hope the Morgan's had to collect a penny on Mark's life insurance policies, rested in the persuasiveness of his presentation to the Crown's prosecuting attorney in less than a week's time. He needed to regularly remind himself that his job was not to convict Scott Barry or even prove that Scott Barry killed Mark Morgan. Tinsel was hired to substantiate the belief and advance the theory that Scott Barry *could* have and most likely did kill the Morgan millionaire. It sounded easy enough. But the truth of the

matter was Tinsel had come up with more questionable information about Tamorin's assistant than he could scrape together on Barry, and he figured that Shane was just poking around, same as him. The seasoned detective knew that all of Tamorin's new accusations and scenario chasing schemes wouldn't make a difference in this case. Hell, he could probably find more cause that Tamorin's mother killed Mark than he had on Scott Barry or Tamorin's assistant —combined. But he re-worked his notes, refining and sharpening the points he would have to make before the Crown Attorney. Whether or not these points still succeeded in convincing Bill Tinsel would have to be wrestled under the surface of his first duty for the time being.

"Bill, I have Paul Tamorin here to see you."

Tinsel let his pencil fall on the pad and took a deep breath. "Send him in Sylvia and hold my calls." He didn't understand why a man who had a mobile phone and a cell phone didn't have the courtesy of phoning ahead when he wasn't expected, and then he remembered who he was dealing with. Arriving without notice and full of pretense was just another of Tamorin's many ploys to intimidate him and keep him productively nervous.

"Hello Bill." He entered the room and extended his stubby hand. "I meant to phone but found myself in the neighbourhood and thought I'd take a shot at finding you in your office."

"I was just working on my notes for the crown presentation next week as a matter of fact." He couldn't escape the feeling that he'd been caught picking his nose and eating it. At least that's the way Tamorin made him feel.

"Good. What do we have so far? I feel so out of it after being in London all last week."

"Well, the way I see it, we have three options if the Crown's office turns us down. We can either go to a Coroner's Inquest which is usually requested by a judge, we could demand a police review by the Attorney General or if all else fails, we could file a civil suit against Scott Barry ourselves and take our chances."

"Wait, wait, wait. What do you mean if the Crown turns us down? Don't forget I worked for the prosecutor's office for four years. We won't be turned down. This *will* go to trial."

"It's not that I disagree with you Paul. I just wish we had something more significant than circumstantial evidence. We have nothing we can substantiate."

"Uh, we didn't have but we might now. I realize you already told me that you screwed up with the surveillance of the Saab last week," he made sure to get his little jab in, "but I just got a copy of the telephone records for that day, and I was right-on the money when I ventured a hunch my assistant would take the car and run with it. Take a look at this." He reached into his briefcase and extracted a sheet of paper.

"This is every call made from the Saab mobile phone on Tuesday, last week, while it was in my assistant's possession. We just need you to run your reverse directory thing and we'll find out who he knows."

"All right, I can do that." Tinsel placed the sheet on the side of his desk. "But that won't help us with our case against Barry."

"There are eight calls on that sheet. We may not need Barry when I'm through with this little spy of ours. Do the reverse directory now. Do it now!" He taunted him.

Tinsel picked up the receiver on his phone and pressed his speed dial button. "Yes this is agent TIN736 and I have eight numbers, make that seven for trace please."

"Hey can I use that code and trace numbers myself?" Paul asked impatiently like a kid told to wait in the corner while adults worked.

"Not legally," Bill shook his head and gave the operator at Cole's the first number. "If it's easier," he added, "I can give you all seven numbers and then hold while you get the information." The operator evidently agreed to this procedure as Tinsel went down the list reciting the seven digit combinations. Paul sat across from him and harvested his hangnails in anticipation. After a minute's time, Tinsel began to reveal the results out loud as he wrote them down next to the numbers on the

be connected to Detective Hern please."

"Constable Detective Hern has recently left the RCMP to pursue an appointment to Interpol," the jilted partner explained for at least the dozenth time.

"Well that hardly seems possible. This is Paul Tamorin phoning. He is working on a homicide case involving my family. That's the *Morgan* family," he stressed.

"I am very aware of the case and the family as I am, I should say, I *was* Hern's partner. We were working the case together. I have full charge now."

"Oh, I do recall meeting you now that I think about it. I had forgotten you were working the case with Hern. Well, what were the circumstances surrounding his departure, if you don't mind my asking?"

As I already mentioned," the detective said as politely as he could, "former Detective Hern has left to assume a new position with Interpol, which is the international policing agency overseeing crimes involving two of more countries or the citizens thereof." Now, that sounded a bit textbook, Roger had to admit, though it was the quickest way to address the transition. Personally, he would have liked to have sold his former partner down the river by announcing the more likely truth that he'd left the RCMP to find God in some seminary back east, but that required even more explanation so Interpol was an easy demise of the subject.

"I see, transferred eh? I'm surprised we wouldn't have been notified. This seems a rather significant development during a very critical investigation and I would like to have some assurances that we haven't fallen through the cracks."

"Well, I'm not sure how to interpret that Mr. Tamorin. I've been on the case since the body was discovered and my badge happens to read Constable Detective too and just because my name is a bit more difficult to pronounce than Hern, does not mean that I do not command a working knowledge of the facts of this investigation."

"No, I'm not questioning your ability to assume the lead in this investigation." Tamorin scrambled from the somewhat racist perception he'd given, which only served to label him further. "I am questioning the breakdown in communication that has obviously occurred here to have a change this potentially damaging go unreported to the victim's family." Tamorin covered the phone with his slobber glistening fingers. "Hern bailed out on us. Uwajimaya is handling the case now." Tinsel raised his forehead putting his top and bottom teeth together.

"Well, with that established, is there something I could help you with?" Uwajimaya felt he was being jerked around.

"No, —Roger, is it?"

Uwajimaya answered nonverbally.

"I was just phoning to share some information with you regarding a rather sensitive development. It seems the assistant I have working for me at the toy company has some interesting affiliations I think you should check into." Again, the detective attended to the conversation without words. "Well, I have good reason to think he knows our suspect, Scott Barry, and I recently came across some documents in his computer at work that have to do with the ongoing investigation and some of Mark's more peculiar habits. It's possible that this employee also knew Mark in some capacity, though the family was not aware of it until now."

"And is there anything else, Mr. Tamorin?" Brevity was a time honored tradition in Asian culture.

"Well that's not all," he stammered. "I have a very strong premonition that you'll find his fingerprints at the crime scene."

Roger glanced down at his file on the case and dropped the name of Tamorin's assistant which not only set the record straight about who was in control, but took a hunting knife to the sidewall of Tamorin's over-inflated radial ego. "We're speaking of Shane Mullin then?

"That *is* his name! How did you get that?"

"I phoned Gilles Eiswine about the family's perception that Gilles was meddling in Mark's affairs since his death and Gilles came back with the name of your

assistant if I wanted to talk to someone obsessed with the investigation."

"Oh really? Well, I'll assume you're already following up on this then? That's good."

"Now, just so I have my facts correct, you hired Mullin after Mark's death, is that correct?" It was good to remind those he worked with of the beds they often made for themselves, especially when they started blaming the short sheets on someone else.

"—Yes, I hired him, but my feelings have changed considerably based on what I'm learning."

"What do you feel his motivations might be?"

"I'm not sure what his motivation is, to tell you the truth. He reminds me of one of those criminals who sticks around to see how the authorities, the family and the media react to what he's done."

"And what do you think that is?"

"That's your job, detective, isn't it?"

Roger held his tongue for the few seconds his professional etiquette commanded and then he said "would you like me to question him, then? He is your employee," he reminded him of the sensitivity of their working relationship.

"Yes!" Paul squealed. "Drag him in and lock him up if you think he had

anything to do with my brother-in-law's murder."

"But I don't think that. Not yet anyway. Right now I'm focusing on the possible side effects of Halcion on Scott Barry which might account for some of his amnesia regarding his accounting of the events from the evening of Mark's death. I will, however, dedicate some resources to your assistant. I have already run him for priors and his record is spotless. Not even a traffic violation. But I'll speak with him and I'll re-examine the house if that's your desire."

"Thank you and while you're at it, someone should take a look at Mark's boat at False Creek Marina. As far as I know, nobody's even been there to check it for evidence."

"And can I arrange to get keys to this boat," Uwajimaya asked pleasantly.

"They'll have a set at the marina office. I'll phone them to let them know you'll be stopping by.

"That would be appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Tamorin." The two concluded their conversation.

Tinsel looked up, swallowed his pride and announced "We may have a bigger mystery here. I just realized that one of the five names on the fifth floor of the condo building Michael visited the other night was *E. Hern*. —Elias Hern. I wonder if you just thought he was working for you? Your original theory that Mullin might have

been an RCMP plant, may hold merit" he suggested tacitly.

"I don't appreciate the tone in that statement Bill. I'm not a child and I won't be spoken to like one." Paradoxically, he promptly stuck his thumb in his mouth to soften a hangnail nearly ready for processing. "We have a duty to responsibly investigate any leads we develop and it doesn't serve either of us to mix cynicism with conjecture. With that in mind, I have a feeling Hern didn't just leave the RCMP. He either was let go or he fled the RCMP for what he knew or for who he knew. We should look into the relationship between Shane and Hern independently. Do we have any profile of his sexuality? His preferences perhaps?"

"No, not to my knowledge." Truly it was like working for Hitler, Tinsel paralleled. There was no telling who would offend the fuhrer next. It was all he could do to ensure it wasn't him that lost favour, at least not until his retainer had been met. Still, he felt it was his obligation to warn Tamorin that training his dogs on his assistant was bound to backfire as it would only be interpreted as a unilateral frame job. They had escorted Shane through Mark's house, intentionally had him touch things. Paul had loaned him Mark's car for safekeeping. Of course there would be prints there. If anything, Tinsel thought he should sit down with Shane to compare investigation notes but he certainly didn't see him as a threat nor a suspect to be pursued. Unfortunately, a very desperate Paul Tamorin, felt otherwise. He

reached into his bag of tricks and produced two Polaroids of BTI's employee of the month and his suspect of the hour.

"Let's make sure, the RCMP gets one of these for their file and it wouldn't hurt us to do a little crowd work ourselves to see how famous my little secretary is. Let's press the Mounties for an official explanation on the investigator shuffle. Throw in Hern's conflict of interest if you have to, providing we establish there was one."

After another six or so directives, Paul Tamorin packed up his portable humiliation kit and left the attorney's office. Tinsel searched his computer hard-drive and elected to polish his written report to the Honorable Storm Nailor. Surely, that would help process some of his steam and align his accustomed and systematic approach to crime investigation.

Roger had taken orders most of his life from his father to the chief to his fiancee. It was usual for him to jump and then ask *how high* later but he wrestled with his better conscience on his way to False Creek Marina. He had established a serious angle with the Halcion documentation and yet he had walked away from it to check on some boat. He almost turned back but realized his former partner wouldn't have let him cut corners. The general rule was, if someone handed you a lead, you thanked them and you followed it or more likely you assigned it a number from zero to six and

made those around you believe there was something to that system. Roger laughed as he parked the Mustang. Elias Hern had indeed enchanted them all the way to the cleaners.

Uwajimaya flashed his creds and introduced himself at the marina office and was handed keys to Mark's boat, -*The Boy Toy* in slip 34. Roger didn't relish working solo and wouldn't readily admit he missed his partner, but Hern had certainly made the mundane things like these routine checks seem interesting. Roger didn't much care for the sensation of the floating dock underfoot, didn't like being this close to deep water. It gave him a bit of an anxiety jolt and he quickened his step to get it over with. He climbed onto the back of the Bayliner and inserted the key into the cabin door. The boat rocked from his weight and Uwajimaya felt dizzy. Inside, it took his eyes a moment to adjust to the diminished light but when they focused, the Mountie was confronted with a shrine erected to his former partner. Black and white head shots of Elias Hern were papered all over the place and Roger spun around to see if it might not have been a trap. He was still alone, on a boat, over deep water that had just gotten deeper. He backed out of the cabin and made his way back to the payphone by the office, more shaky than ever. Hern evidently wasn't getting out of this case as easily as he may have liked.

"I'll have to call you back, Sweetie. It sounds like the *Heathen's* back from his appointment." Shane cradled the phone softly and gathered Paul's messages to take them into his office. He had been acting entirely different toward him since his return from London and that coupled with the not-so-covert fact that his detective had been tailing Shane for a week, was all he needed to anticipate that the axe was about to fall and this Employee of the Month was reigning on borrowed time. Professionally, Shane could not have cared less as it was a dead-end job anyway and his ongoing contacts with the Provincial Health Department and the AIDS community practically guaranteed that he could land on his work boots regardless of the mutilating designs Paul Tamorin might have on his character. Personally, Shane would have liked to have seen this story resolve in order to pay some homage to the date he never had with an accurate accounting of Mark's tragic if not muddled demise, but he had to be simultaneously prepared to let this cause slip off his plate. Mark was gone. I'd certainly know other men in his life. Paul Tamorin couldn't hurt him irreparably and Shane supposed this gave him a pseudo-super-hero invincibility that may have rushed his investigation and encouraged a number of shortcuts that in the end, he'd always suspected, might catch up with him. Facing the axe wouldn't be hard in the end. Waiting to face it was another exercise entirely.

"Here are your messages Paul. And Erin phoned regarding the art auction

tonight for the AIDS Vancouver Development Fund. She said, and I'd only use her words, you're dead meat if you're late." He half grunted and Shane thought his impression of his bitchy wife wasn't half bad. Erin was that way. She didn't want Shane to stick a written message in front of Paul that was going to get lost in his cesspool of a desk. She wanted Shane to serve as her hologram or something, beamed in front of him for maximum threat effect. "I asked if she was planning to bid on something to, you know—memorialize Mark. She thought he might appreciate the symbolism in that, so to be safe, you might want to leave your credit cards here at the office." Shane made small talk while the cyanide pellets teetered on the edge of the tank. Paul didn't look up so Shane turned to leave. His blasted telephone rang which prompted him to look up, Shane to stay, him to stare, and Shane to answer. "Paul Tamorin's office. —Speaking. Uh, one moment please." Shane covered the receiver with his hand. "It's the RCMP. They want to speak to me?" he almost asked instead of announced.

"You can take it in here. I need to speak to Don anyway." Paul was out of his chair and on his way past his assistant before he could object. Paul even closed his office door which told Shane he'd expected the call and probably had requested it in the first place, whether he'd ever admit that to him or not. Shane lifted the phone, exhaling heavily.

"All right. I'm free to speak."

UWAJIMAYA: Shane, this is Constable Detective Roger Uwajimaya and as I stated before, I'm with the Homicide division of the RCMP. We're investigating a suspicious death involving a member of the Morgan family. Do you mind if we record this conversation?

MULLIN: No, I don't mind.

UWAJIMAYA: Are you familiar with this case?"

MULLIN: Yes.

UWAJIMAYA: Can you take a moment to tell me what you know or what you've been told?"

MULLIN: Well, I can tell you that I was told by my boss, Paul Tamorin, that his brother-in-law Mark, officially died of AIDS."

UWAJIMAYA: Did you know Mark, personally?"

MULLIN: I'd met Mark. I wouldn't say I knew him, though I knew him enough to know he didn't die from AIDS and probably wasn't even HIV-Positive. I was at the funeral. I knew Tamorin was lying to me from the start.

UWAJIMAYA: How would you characterize your relationship with the Morgan Family?

MULLIN: In a word? —Subservient.

UWAJIMAYA: Would you care to elaborate on that?

MULLIN: I take it you'd care for me to elaborate on that so I will. Our relationship should have been strictly a professional one, but from the moment Paul Tamorin lied to me about his brother-in-law, the relationship became very personal for me. It was entirely coincidental

that the temporary employment agency I had listed with, sent me to Banjo Toys shortly after the funeral. Like I said, I'd met Mark through a mutual friend. We made tentative plans for a date at some point in the future. We didn't talk again.

UWAJIMAYA: And you're a homosexual?

MULLIN: And I'm a homosexual.

UWAJIMAYA: You went to work for the toy company. Did you tell anyone that you knew Mark?

MULLIN: Like I said, I don't feel I knew Mark. I know more about Mark now that he's dead than I did when he was alive, but I didn't tell anyone at BTI that I'd met him. It didn't seem appropriate or relevant.

UWAJIMAYA: You say you know more about Mark now than you did when he was alive. Can you tell me more about that?

MULLIN: Mark and I were a lot alike except that I'm not near as manic as I think he was. I mean I don't have my own therapist and I don't take any drugs to get by. I guess I understood what motivated him, what made him angry and what may have helped him to get even. More importantly, I know Mark's family and the business they run, and if I ever felt trapped inside these things as I'm sure he did, I would have probably been a pretty unhappy captive too.

UWAJIMAYA: "I don't mean to interrupt you here, but what do you base this knowledge of Mark on, if as you say, you didn't know him in life?

MULLIN: In my position here at BTI, I've handled documents concerning the investigation, I've listened to the office gossip and read most of the RCMP and private investigator reports that have come across my desk en route to someone else — to Tamorin and Don Morgan mostly.

UWAJIMAYA: And would you characterize your access to these documents as privileged or proprietary?

MULLIN: Interesting way to look at it. I have to answer that two ways I suppose. From a professional standpoint, my access is privileged and is, or I should say *was* trusted. But because I chose to turn this into a personal quest, I have assumed a great deal of this information for my own understanding.

UWAJIMAYA: You said or implied that you were trusted. Are you not trusted anymore?

MULLIN: I don't think I'm being presumptuous but of course Tamorin has clued you in to focus some attention or heat as it were, on me. I happen to interpret this as my slip-up. I obviously have become a little too involved or a little too careless in my probing if I've started to draw attention away from what really matters in this case.

UWAJIMAYA: Which is to say, you don't feel that you have any bearing on this?

MULLIN: I think I'd like to unravel this mystery just as badly as you do, Detective. I didn't have anything to do with Mark's death unless you count waiting too long to phone him as accessory to depression but even I don't value myself that highly.

UWAJIMAYA: Do you know a gentleman by the name of Gilles Eiswine?

MULLIN: Yes. I stayed with he and his partner, Kyle, for a few weeks before getting my own apartment. Gilles is the one who introduced me to Mark Morgan.

UWAJIMAYA: Would you be surprised to learn that Gilles is also the one who told the RCMP that if we wanted to talk to somebody with an unhealthy obsession with Mark Morgan's death, we should contact you?

MULLIN: No I wouldn't be surprised. That sounds like Gilles. He's angry with me for not providing him an alibi to use with Kyle when he didn't make it home last Friday night.

UWAJIMAYA: Would you agree or disagree with his use of the words "unhealthy obsession?"

MULLIN: Well, I'm not laying awake at nights and I'm not losing or gaining weight over this. I am curious, perhaps aggressively so, but it was not my intention to interfere in an ongoing investigation.

UWAJIMAYA: Do you know a gentleman named Scott Barry?

MULLIN: I know of Scott Barry through the documents I've read concerning this investigation.

UWAJIMAYA: All right. These things you've told me, are they true and accurate?

MULLIN: Yes.

UWAJIMAYA: And would you be willing to testify to these facts if asked?

MULLIN: Yes.

"Okay Shane, we're off the record now. I would like to add that I know that you know Elias Hern and Dave Floyd, so I hope I didn't come across as too insulting with this line of questioning. Obviously you have some knowledge of how these things work."

Shane stood from the lean he'd waged on Paul's desk. "I may have overstepped my bounds here at *BTI* and I probably should have listened to Elias when he told me to let this one go. Curiosity is a pretty powerful elixir when you are aspiring to solve the unsolvable."

"Well, as one investigator to another, is there anything I should be looking

for?" Uwajimaya had grown weary of the case and would take the first easy out if someone offered it to him.

Shane wasn't entirely certain that Paul hadn't jumped on the line from another extension, even though he had been listening very carefully for his intrusion. "Uh, can I phone you right back? I would like to switch to the payphone in the break room."

"I'll stand-by. You have the number? Of course you have the number," he answered his own question.

Paul grew impatient. "Don, you'll just have to trust me on this but I don't want to bring Banjo in on this right away. We go up before the Crown Attorney within the week and we can't have him jeopardizing our strategy with one of his tantrums." Paul walked from one end of his brother-in-law's office to the other. He made it a habit to avoid sitting across from the company president in that tiny chair that made him seem so much smaller than he was in stature and status. "I should have cut our losses and fired him the moment I found that file in his computer but I was on my way to London and decided to hold off. I had Tinsel follow him for the week and while Tinsel didn't know it at the time, he followed Michael straight to Constable Detective Hern's townhouse in False Creek where he met with him for over an hour and a half. Now Hern is off the case and on his way to Interpol. Then I had him pick

up Mark's Saab at the dealership and put it in his apartment garage until I got back. Over the course of six hours during that first day, he made seven phone calls including one to the store where Scott Barry works and another to his girlfriend's house where Barry's staying, and Shane drove over 75 kilometres in Mark's car."

"Well, where did he go?"

"Tinsel lost him. We don't know."

"Tinsel lost him," Donald mimicked in a manner that indicated he was not surprised.

"We took Polaroids of Shane under the auspices of his Employee of the Month award and showed the photo to Drew Tatterson. Drew says that he could well be the man he saw standing on Mark's balcony the night he was killed. Dark hair, neatly cut, medium build, wearing glasses..."

"You think Shane killed Mark then?" Donald asked in exasperation.

"Gilles Eiswine told us that Shane knew Mark. We never knew that."

"Mark knew lots of people. Why should we be surprised to find out that he knew Shane and what difference would it make anyway?"

"Think about it, Don. Shane knew Mark. Shane calls B.C. Trends. Shane meets with RCMP. The RCMP Dick quits overnight. This could be a conspiracy against us, against Mark."

"Why would the world conspire against us? So Shane knew Mark. I'm sorry, Paul. I'm just not buying this one." Donald stood.

"Shane slept with Mark," Paul blurted out.

"Keep your voice down! How do you know that?"

"Here," Paul tossed Mark's address book on his brother-in-law's desk. Not only will you find Shane's name listed under Gilles Eiswine but under the letter *S* you'll find a page of intitials followed by numbers. Gilles tells us that this is the page where Mark recorded the penis size of the men he slept with."

"You've got to be kidding me?" Donald chuckled, bearing down to examine this page carefully.

"Shane's intitials are there, first followed by two question marks in black pen scratched out in blue with a blue number next to it."

"Well, I'll be—" Donald remarked, scanning the page. "*GE*?"

"Gilles Eiswine."

"*SB* is obviously Scott Barry. *KL*?"

"Uh, that's Kyle, Gilles boyfriend. Yeah, Gilles was pretty upset about seeing that one."

"Say, why's the bottom of this page ripped out? Is this the way you found it?" Donald asked disappointedly. Defending his dead brother's prolificacy, he naturally

wanted to see a more substantial listing of his accomplishments.

"Yup."

"Has the RCMP seen this?"

"I just spoke to them about it from Tinsel's office this afternoon. The RCMP is taking a statement from Shane by phone in my office now. I told them I wouldn't be surprised if they found Shane's fingerprints all over Mark's house."

"Come on Paul. You took him there yourself. Walked him around the whole place after the burglary. Shane told me, himself. In fact," Donald remembered the circumstances of that conversation, "now that I think about it, I did happen to catch Shane reading one of Tinsel's reports in a stall of the employee washroom a while back. I didn't think much of it at the time."

"He's been reading all the reports. Don't you see? He's so many steps ahead of us we might not have ever caught up with him, if it hadn't been for my discovery in his computer. This is a sick kid, Donald. I mean, you've heard about those psychopaths who commit a murder and then slink back and watch how the authorities and the victim's family react to it. He took that one step further and got himself hired to sit across from Mark's desk among us. He's gotten-off on our every move. I'll tell you that."

"I think you're way out there, Paul, I'll be honest with you. I agree that Shane

warrants a closer look and we should definitely take steps to move him out of the company, but you're sounding a little fanatical. In fact, you're reminding me of Banjo. Let's sleep on this tonight and we'll meet first thing in the morning with our attorneys and decide how we'll go about this."

"I just want him out of here, Donald. He's giving me the creeps. I feel like I've got crabs or something."

"Maybe you do," Donald joked with him. "We're sleeping on this Paul," he felt the need to remind his hot-shot brother-in-law.

"I know, I know." Paul opened the door and left his office. Jackie stared him down, almost as though she were reading what they'd spoken about all over his body. He'd like to move her out of the company too. She was nothing but a goddamn gossip who happened to type 70 words a minute. She could trade secrets even faster, but Donald wouldn't listen. *Banjo favours her*, he'd told him once. That had been the end of that discussion too.

Jackie could tell something was brewing. First Shane takes a call in Paul's office, then Paul conferences with Donald behind close doors. Now, Shane was on the payphone in the employee break room. It was something big, she could tell.

Donald had stewed over his conversation with Paul the entire commute home which was part of his office stress management routine, but his promise to Sandee to have office matters resolved or tabled until the next business day before he pulled into the driveway each night, was about to be tested. When he arrived Dexter came charging out of the garage door that he had opened remotely and another of his thousand routines was about to engage his basic tolerance. He would spend the next ten minutes chasing that damn boxer through the terrorized neighbourhood to coax it back into the garage where it could access the backyard where it would bark incessantly until he was fed. That reminded him of Banjo, too, come to think of it. Tonight, he simply wasn't in the mood and ended up bribing his son with five dollars, to chase their inherited dog.

He kissed Sandee on the cheek, nuzzling her from behind as she hustled to pull dinner together. A regular barometer of atmospheric pressure, she could always tell by that kiss whether he'd kept his driveway promise to her or broken it. "Do you want to talk about it?" she asked perceptively. Her husband grunted. "Monica, come stir this pasta while I talk to your father."

"Hi Dad," his daughter announced, dragging the stretched telephone cord practically hard-wired into her teenage ear, behind her. She took the wooden spoon and stirred disinterestedly. Her body language, albeit awkward at this tender,

developmental age, informed everyone that her peer conversation in progress, seemingly perpetual at times, would not, could not be compromised by domestic chore and therefore, no one who had ever glimpsed a preview of the consequences, dared challenge the time she spent preoccupied there. As far as Donald was concerned, the fifty to sixty bucks he expended each week in five dollar increments to keep his son active elsewhere and the twenty dollar basic telephone service he religiously paid on time every month to keep his daughter wired for sound, were the smartest economical programs he had going for him on either side of the driveway.

"It's Paul again," he set the recurring theme for their nightly debriefings.

"What now?" she asked suspiciously, no longer surprised by the far-ranging antics of her husbands brother-in-law.

"It's Mark's death. He now thinks that his assistant, Shane, had something to do with the murder."

"Shane?" she practically squealed. "Shane didn't have anything to do with that and you know it." She leapt almost illogically to his defense.

"I know. It's just that Paul had him followed last week and he seems to know some key players. I don't know." He ran into trouble removing his tie and Sandee helped him. "The P.I. followed him to one of the homicide detective's homes where he supposedly spent a couple of hours and when he had Mark's car the other day, he

evidently made some telephone calls."

Sandee recalled their chance meeting at the cemetery but didn't reveal it at first. "Paul stuck him with that car for reasons God doesn't even understand. I'd be surprised if Michael didn't take advantage of the phone after being inconvenienced with that errand. Even you didn't understand why he had Michael get that car."

"Well, now it seems to me that Paul wanted Michael's fingerprints inside of it so he could build his case against him."

"Well that's just stupid," she pacified him.

"Don't forget who we're dealing with here," he cautioned her. He changed into his Levi's and tucked his work shirt, since liberated from tie and collar restraints. "Paul came across this report or diary that Shane is keeping on the investigation on his computer at work. I normally wouldn't have thought anything of it if I hadn't caught Shane reading a fax Paul had received from Bill Tinsel a few weeks back."

"Shane's an executive assistant to all of you. He's bound to read the correspondence he's asked to deliver."

"He was reading it in a washroom stall." He didn't necessarily want to escalate Paul's case against their Employee of the Month, and quite possibly the greatest thing to happen to that company administratively in its history, but this did seem a bit underhanded to him.

"Honey, I happen to know that Shane knew your brother. Mark talked to me about having met him. It was one of the few things he actually looked forward to. He told me that if he couldn't land the respect of the family with Shane in his life, he would give up trying. Not that he would give up, but that he would give up trying," she emphasized.

"Why didn't you tell me this?" Donald's spirits improved.

"I didn't make the connection from Mark's Shane to your Shane until just the other day. I ran into him at the cemetery last week. We talked briefly."

"The cemetery? He was at the cemetery? God, that's a shame, don't you think? I mean, until Paul started gathering sticks for his witch burning, Shane had more than earned our respect. Mark was right about that one all right. I won't say much for his taste in the others."

"You're right. It's a shame," she agreed. "It's a shame Mark had to broker his family's respect in the first place." She scolded her husband's exclusive brood. "Maybe Mark could have concentrated on building a relationship if he hadn't been wasting all his time dodging and anticipating your judgements."

Donald couldn't respond to her charges. He sat on the edge of their bed. She took his hands and he lowered his head. He missed his brother but more he missed all the opportunities he should have taken to support him and love him more. This

was his punishment, or his *Haskalah* as the family Rabbi preferred he look at things. *Consider yourself enlightened by this awareness and direct your mourning toward seeking atonement from your dead brother*, he had counseled him on several occasions. So far, this approach hadn't changed much.

"Hey Leather-Man, it's me phoning again. We hooked up last week in the park after talking on the phone. Remember?"

"I remember doubting if you'd call me back," he reminded him.

"Well, here I am." Shane announced.

"Are you ready for tea?" he asked sarcastically.

"I could be." Shane closed his eyes, instantly regretting this method of information gathering. There were surely more respectable ways to get at the truth, but those, he maintained were probably why the RCMP hadn't gotten any farther in this investigation than they had. "I'd like to talk," Shane focused his intentions.

"That's kind of hard to do with your mouth full, isn't it? he laughed at his joke.

"Indeed." This wasn't going to be easy. "Do you mind if I come by tonight?"

"Mind? I was going to insist on it. I'm at 1895 Comox in the West End, Apartment 204."

"Is eight o'clock too late?"

"It will give me time to bring the tea and other things to a right hot boil," he replied.

Shane rolled his eyes. "I'll see you then."

Storm Nailor had loaded a lot of pressure on the broad back of Lee Gates to avert the meeting that crack-pot Tinsel managed to get on their books for next week. It was a delicate cake walk for the wantabe politician who was about to announce his last minute bid for an unopposed M.P. seat with an optimistic eye on the Premiere's name plate before he was through. He didn't want to jeopardize the considerable contribution coffers of the Morgan family who happened to live within his conservative Point Gray riding by slighting their request for a Crown Review of their case, but he didn't have the time in his seriously abbreviated campaign window, to hand-hold one of his former employees. Paul Tamorin had always been a renegade pain in the ass and most everyone in the Crown Attorney's office knew that while Storm always received him with a smile, he was clawing at the underside of his desk for a way out of dealing with him. Lee Gates knew better than most in the office, having often been the first line of interference the city's lead attorney called upon. Lee had become about as fed up with the Morgan demands as his parliament-bound

boss, especially after the meeting he was forced to sit through today. Now, he'd sacrificially stay up all night working on two versions of the same memorandum if he had to, to stop Tinsel and Tamorin in their misdirected tracks.

Shane adjusted his shirt and grabbed his jacket from the passenger seat. His heart drummed nervously as the cloth tape tugged uncomfortably at his skin. He'd come this far. He'd be cheating Mark and himself by bailing out now. He walked up the sidewalk to the intercom panel next to the front door where he buzzed Leather Man's apartment.

"Hello—"

"Tea-time," Shane announced. The door buzzed and he entered. There wasn't an elevator as he lived in a particularly old building so he sought the stairwell. The odor of cats nearly took over the oxygen content in the air and as he harbored a number of pet allergies, he could only hope the Leather Man stuck to his principles that the only good animal was a dead and leather tanned one, or Shane would be one sneezing, wheezing mess. He knocked on his door. He answered wearing an open leather vest, a leather head mask, leather chaps that exposed a bulbous black underwear clad crotch, and biker boots. For those in the know, he looked as though he might have walked right out of the cartoon frame of a *Tom of Finland* wet dream,

though the look did little more than intimidate Shane.

"Come in," he beckoned through the air hole in his mask. Shane looked around the apartment predominantly done in black except for the graying walls which he figured were attributed to neglect rather than intention. As Shane walked through the door, the Leather Man grabbed him from behind in a bear hug that forced the wind to sail from his chest and he coughed.

"Put me down you bruiser. And take off that ridiculous mask." Shane purposely provoked him.

"Maybe you ought to wear it," he said stretching it off, over the top of his head. "Maybe while I fuck the daylights out of your tight butthole, huh?" He smacked his lips and every last one of Shane's muscles clenched, least hesitant of which were his gluteus maximus. "You look so shocked and innocent, but that's what you came back for isn't it? That's what you want Daddy to do to you. Admit it!"

Foolishly, Shane smiled which didn't communicate what he wished it to. "First you tell me about the strangest, kinkiest sex you've ever had. I'm curious."

"Oh yeah? Talk gets you hot?" he asked grabbing a deliberate handful of the front of Shane's jeans. Unfortunately, for some reason, Shane had the workings of a hard-on which also didn't communicate what he needed it to at the moment.

"Obviously," Shane admitted, considering the evidence he held in his hand

might be interpreted as more than coincidentally circumstantial. "So what would it be and I want details? Don't leave anything out."

"The strangest? Uh, why don't you get my tea boiling and I'll see what comes to mind." He pressed Shane's shoulders downward until he was in the familiar and now redundant position of communicating man to man, his style. The smell of sweaty leather was beyond heady, —it was hallucinatory and Shane voluntarily buried his head to goad him on. "There was this guy once. Oh, maybe a month or two ago. Called him *Mr. Executive*. I ran into him in the park and we played some. He gave me his number and told me to call him later that afternoon. Well, I did and he asked if I'd be interested in earning a chunk of cash for having what he called *rough sex* with him. I've helped people work through a number of their fantasies, sort of a sideline of mine, so this didn't seem all that strange. I asked how much cash since my car insurance payment was due—" he paused to unsnap the chaps around his thighs and waist and they dropped to the floor. Shane was sweating but he didn't dare take off his bulky leather jacket.

"Yeah?" Shane asked, lowering the beast's satin bikini briefs.

"And he told me it would depend on how rough I could get."

"Really," he asked amazed. In his own subtle way, the Leather Man silenced him and continued to tell his story as he rocked his pelvis back and forth.

"Said he'd call me later that night to arrange the place and time. So I waited half the night, ended up falling asleep during some re-run of *Anna of Green Gables*, and finally around one o'clock in the morning he calls back. He gave me instructions to this house in West Van that he said he was house-sitting and told me to meet him there, but to park a block or so away. I almost blew him off I was so tired, but I figured he had my number and he had mentioned cash. Besides, he woke me from my sleep and since I had a raging hard-on that I didn't want to go to waste, I jumped in my car." He chuckled as he thrust an exclamation point down Shane's throat. Suddenly, he pulled out of Shane's mouth and said "we'd better slow down if I'm going to last until we get to my part in this deal." He pulled Shane to his feet and started to take off his jacket.

"I'd rather leave my leather on, if you don't mind," Shane insisted, arresting his hands and purposely lowering them to his belt.

"I like that," the giant decided. He plunged his hands down the front of Shane's jeans. "So I get to this house, beautiful three story number overlooking the Bay and he answers the door. He seemed pretty out of it. I mean he had trouble with the stairs leading up to his living room. I asked if he was okay, you know. He said that he'd taken a few tranquilizers so that he could take it as rough as I could give it. Then he led me up one more flight of stairs to the master bedroom. He reached for

his wallet and took out a wad of cash. I remembered seeing he carried a bunch of money when he gave me his number in the park earlier that afternoon. I figured he was dealing or something. Anyway, he said something like *see this cash? Two thousand dollars in fifties. I'll give you a thousand for each black eye you can score and then we'll have the sex of both our lives*, he promised. I remembered looking at my hands not sure I could do this. I mean, I hadn't really fought since I was in the Royal Navy. He turned up the stereo until the music was pretty loud and stuffed the money in my jeans pocket. I have to admit, I didn't even think about why he wanted to be beat up. I'm afraid the cash went to my head as quickly as two jabs of my hand went to his. Except after the second punch, he collapsed backward on the bed. I kind of freaked out then, but thought to make sure he still had a pulse before I got the hell out of there."

"That's not sex," Shane objected, stepping back from his dance partner. "You know, I'm not into this anymore."

"What?" the Leather Man exploded.

"No. This isn't working for me. I'm sorry. I'll phone you again sometime." Shane pushed out of his way and made for the door. Once he had safely ducked into the stairwell he lifted a flap of his button-down and spoke clearly. "He's all yours, guys."

Shane had dreaded going into work. If anyone was going to have an anxiety attack, it was likely to be him. It was definitely a *Starbucks* morning and on the off chance he could appeal to Donald's sensitive side, it was going to take every prop he could muster. Shane walked straight into his office with an *Americano* in each hand and to his surprise, found the president's office door open and the lights on. "Good morning. I'm surprised to see you this early."

"Hello Shane," he acknowledged rather coldly.

"I brought you a *Starbucks* hoping it would soften you up for what I had to tell you—"

"Sit down. Thanks," he added. You know, I feel like we spent the night together," he admitted with a poor choice of words. "Paul managed to get me all worked up about you yesterday afternoon, I took it home where Sandee and I took another swing at the Piñata, so to speak, and then it kept me awake most of the night."

"Me too," Shane confessed. "Listen, I need to come clean with you about Mark's death."

"I wish you would." He leaned back in his reclining office chair and put his arms behind his head.

"It's like this." Shane scooted the small office chair closer to his desk and placed his coffee on his side of the president's desk. "I knew Mark before he died, —not as well as I feel I know him now, but we had met and planned to date. When he died, I attended the funeral. I sat behind you on the other side of the chapel." I half smiled at him and he fought the urge to smile back. "I had been working one week for *CanWest* Temp Services when they assigned me to Paul. I had no idea, or I hadn't made the connection until I got here, that *BTI* was the company Mark had been a part of, but of course, a second glance at the business card, still in my wallet, and I had realized the complete coincidence. Within the next week or so, Paul lied to me and said that Mark had died of AIDS." Donald looked genuinely shocked.

"What?" he barked before getting up to close his office door. Shane could have told him that at fifteen minutes before eight, they wouldn't be bothered or overheard for at least another half hour by anyone on his payroll.

"That's what he told me. Well, of course I knew better but couldn't figure out why he was lying to me, so I chose to stick around. I should tell you that my former partner is RCMP and after living with him for seven years, I figured I could handle an investigation about as well as anybody, so I started paying attention to things that came my way."

"Hern?" Donald interrupted me. "Elias Hern. Was he your partner?"

"No. No. Just a good friend." Shane realized that tidbit must have been kicked up by Tinsel's surveillance of him last week. "When I approached Elias with what I'd learned about Mark, he suggested that I back down and leave things alone. He was already on his way out and said the case had reached a dead-end anyway. I could have almost bought that except for Paul's lie. For some reason that kept me going. Sometime in the last two weeks I must have slipped up or given him cause to suspect my activities, because he put your detective on me and yesterday, I was questioned by the RCMP regarding my knowledge of Mark's death."

"You left something on your computer. Paul found it," he added emotionlessly.

"Of course. How stupid of me. Anyway, I leveled with the detective working the case and I am now working with him to fill a couple gaps. I *turned evidence* as they say on an important witness last night." I noticed Mark's address book sticking out from under a few papers on Donald's desk. "Mark's address book," I pointed. May I?"

"Be my guest," the president answered, choosing to look out his window at the thunderclouds forming on his horizon. "According to this, if you listen to Paul, it says you slept with my brother."

"Well, I didn't," Shane confessed, flipping to the *S* pages. "I wrote the

numbers in last week," he said tapping on his initials. "I wanted Mark to finally know what I imagined he'd only been able to wonder about in life. It's silly, but I wrote that there." Shane stopped suddenly.

"What is it?" Donald noticed.

"This page wasn't ripped like this before," Shane said coldly.

"Really?" Donald reached for the book. "Paul said that's the way he got it."

"Maybe, I'm just not remembering that clearly," Shane lied as another piece of the puzzle fell snugly into place. "Don, there is one more exercise I'd like to try, to proof another of my theories for the RCMP in this case. But I need your help."

"If I can help, I will."

"I need you to place me on administrative leave today. You can tell Paul and Norma that you came in early to talk with me. You can say you felt that my mishandling of company documents should be met with disciplinary action."

"That will be easy," he admitted. "I'm not entirely sure they shouldn't."

"Fair enough. Fair enough." Shane agreed with him. "The second request won't be so easy, but it is crucial to my plan. The RCMP and I need the use of Mark's house tonight. On the advice of your A-1 investigator, we'd like to recreate the night of Mark's death."

Donald fiddled with his hands clasped in front of him, indiscriminately

cracking knuckles as he looked out the window in silence. Ultimately, he reached inside his middle desk drawer and extracted a ring of keys. "I'll trust that you already know your way around the place" he stated with a raise of his eyebrows.

"The house is in good hands and the RCMP will be standing by," Shane promised accepting the keys. "One last thing—"

"Yes," he asked impatiently before he smiled.

"I need you to phone Paul at his home tonight at precisely 8:00 p.m. Tell him that you just got a call from Drew Tatterson who told you a red Mazda RX-7 is sitting in the driveway of Mark's house and the lights are on inside the place."

"That's it?"

"That's all it will take," Shane assured him, taking the keys. He thanked Donald and told him he'd be in touch. When he left his office, he noticed that Paul had arrived uncharacteristically early as well. He paused outside his office as he heard him speaking. He quickly determined that his boss was in the middle of one of his tape recorded dictation sessions though Shane didn't know who he would find to transcribe his babbling today. For all practical purposes, like Mark, he was finally out of there.

Bill, I trust Sylvia can type this out from the tape so I'll speak slowly and let you add the particulars. It should be addressed to Standard Life at 2121 Wharf

Street in Victoria...

Several minutes later, Paul turned off the miniature tape recorder, satisfied that the time was right to present this letter attesting to Mark's homicide and called for his assistant to get it couriered over to Tinsel's office.

"Uh, Shane? —Shane?"

There were certainly fringe benefits to being an honorary RCMP Homicide detective though hazard pay, as it amounted to, was hardly worth the time Shane had invested and the risks he'd taken in this case. He was being paid as an informant, incidently, —a tattle tale, and not a detective which is what he discovered he truly aspired to. Shane couldn't help but think how Gilles would turn shamrock green when he discovered Shane was being paid for what Gilles readily gave away for free when he had it. Shane stopped at the payphone in the employee break room and dialed B.C. Trends. Detective Uwajimaya had given the okay to underwrite Shane's apartment carpeting as he'd led him to believe it was crucial to proving his wrongful death theory. After Shane had handed them the Leather Man, he could have named his price, but for some reason, carpet was all he could come up with. "Hello Kelly," Shane acted as though he didn't know him, of course. "I phoned last week and had someone come out to measure my place. I wondered if he might be available. I'd like

to place my order but I had a question about the durability of the carpet I chose."

"Hold on. Scott's sitting right here. I'll let you ask him."

"This is Scott."

"Hi Scott, it's Shane."

"Well I wondered when you might call? I was beginning to think it was something I said." He spoke in a whisper, obviously trying to avoid the suspicions of his eavesdropping co-workers.

"The same could be said for you. You have my number too."

"I just assumed my bi-sexuality thing turned you off. It has a tendency to do that with both sexes. I guess I should get off the fence, huh?" Shane laughed at him. "It's good to hear you laugh," he added. "At least you're not screaming at me or demanding things from me, or threatening me. I'm not sure how to react though."

"Well, you can start with getting your bisexual butt over to my apartment with enough square footage to end my hardwood woes."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I'm off today and I'd like to see you —work, that is. I'd like to see you work."

"Funny guy," he commented. "I happen to have the carpet you liked in stock. I could cut it here and drop it by your place inside an hour. Of course, I'd need most

of the day to install it and I could use a hand. I suppose I could bring somebody from here—"

"No, no. I want to help and I'd hoped it would take the whole day. I'll see you in an hour." Shane hung up the phone just as Jackie walked in. He looked at his watch in amazement. *What was happening with this place*? he wondered. *Had Daylight Savings Time come early?*

"Hel-lo," she enunciated. "I'm surprised to see you here. I was just upstairs and Donald told me to cover for you today if Paul needed anything. Said you were taking a leave. That was his word, not mine. Not vacation, not day off but *leave*."

Shane smiled. If he kept quiet she'd develop her own rumour on the spot. She had that talent. "I am on leave," he confirmed. She moved closer. "I'm on leave, Jackie. If I knew anymore I'd tell you."

"That's a crock and you know it. You know plenty more. You've always known more. I sensed that about you when you arrived. Just promise me we'll talk first when you get back."

"If I come back," he stated confidently, "you'll be the first I seek out. Now I have another call to make."

"To your attorney?" she begged for a nugget she could flap up to Norma in personnel.

"Sure," he rewarded her.

Shane immediately dialed Stephen at the restaurant. "Hi Sweetie. It's me. It's happening. I'll meet you at Mark's house at five like we discussed. Don't forget the dry ice and about a dozen hotel pans. — What's that? Ah, Darling. I love you, too. See you at five."

Hey, how about that? Shane didn't have to say it first after all.

Roger stared at the phone until it rang. He had debated for ten minutes whether or not to phone his former partner to let him know how his little protégée was pulling the Morgan case out of obscurity, and almost clairvoyantly, Hern had phoned first.

"I was just about to phone you," Uwajimaya admitted

"And beg me to come back?"

"Only if you want to mop up after us?" Roger gloated.

"Oh, you and your new partner are getting along just fine, is that it?" Elias divulged a tinge of jealousy.

"Yeah. My partner is Shane Mullin. You know him by any chance?" he asked cynically.

"Oh really? In what capacity?" Elias was dying to know.

"Turned evidence on the thug that roughed Mark Morgan up the night he died. Practically handed him to us in one of the most brilliant sting operations we've ever conducted in Homicide."

"You're using him?"

"He's volunteered for duty. Claims to have the whole thing figured out and I wouldn't put it past him after last night. We've got our fingers crossed that he can deliver again tonight. He's come up with this scheme to recreate the night of Morgan's death, right down to getting Scott Barry to participate. He's even talked Don Morgan into letting him use Mark's house." Roger knew he was making great strides in bridging the sexuality gap between he and his partner, whom he really held as his friend.

"You've got to be kidding me? That little rascal!"

"I checked with DeBord and being that you're not officially off payroll yet, and I'll never understand how you managed to drag that out, he said it would be alright to have you suit up for the kill, as it were, and stake the house with me tonight, if you're feeling up to it. I know with all your plans this is bound to seem small turkey and all."

"I miss it Waj, I really do. I'd be honoured and on my best behaviour, to sit next to you tonight, —in the Mustang!" he demanded. "Anything else just wouldn't

be cool."

"I'll pick you up in the Mustang then around 6:00. Bring your credentials in case we have to dance with the municipal dicks."

"Righto. I'll see you then, and Waj— thanks for thinking of me," Hern turned sentimental if not regretful.

"Ah-h, don't mention it," Roger smiled larger than he'd smiled in a long time. "I've got one or two pictures of you around here to make sure I don't forget you," he hinted without showing his cards just yet.

Shane heard honking on the street below his apartment and walked to the window. It was Scott in a panel van waving up at him. Shane motioned that he'd be right down. It was with a host of mixed feelings that he had pushed for this last resolution to a death that should have, for all honorable purposes, been closure for Mark and those around him, and not this three ring circus that it had quickly evolved into. He kind of liked Scott and was thankful that he didn't have to sacrifice him, but it would have been nice not to have had to lie to him either. It was difficult to gain somebody's trust deceptively. Maybe difficult wasn't the right word. That part was actually easy. Living with the fact that somebody trusted you who shouldn't, was the difficult part Shane wrestled with now. He helped Scott with three rolls of carpet and

a few rolls of pad and once they were in the elevator, he realized he suddenly wasn't doing a very good job of looking Scott in the eye.

"What's up with you today," Scott finally asked.

"Nothing," he answered weakly. They lugged the carpet down the hall and dropped it outside Shane's door. Shane asked him inside and offered him coffee before they got started. Scott sat at the table in front of Shane's largest window on the Bay. "I have to be honest with you," Shane blurted out awkwardly.

"You're not moving into the Duke Ellington," he guessed.

"Not right away, no. But that's not it."

"Well, tell me. I'm a big boy." He sipped at his coffee and stared out the window defensively, almost as though he were bracing for a let-down.

"How do I say this?" Shane deliberated out loud.

"Just say it, Shane. It won't be the first time I've heard it. I promise you."

Shane chuckled nervously. "I promise it will be the first time you've heard this, Scott." He took a sip of his coffee. "I know that you've been under investigation as a suspect in Mark Morgan's death."

"Oh really?"

"I knew Mark. I should stop saying that. I had met Mark," he corrected himself, "just before he died. I know the Morgan family. Until yesterday, I worked

for them. As of last night, I began working for the RCMP."

"Jesus," he stammered. He raised a fist to his mouth and bit nervously at a finger as his eyes watered. "Every time I cross this line, I get burned. I wish someone would just—" he stopped.

"Just what, Scott? You wish someone would tell you there are just too many hardships and heartaches involved with being gay so you might as well stay straight? Let me tell you, with years and years of experience, nobody and I mean nobody can promise you won't get hurt. Look at Mark. Few people walking the planet are more miserable than he was and he had all the toys. He didn't want for anything except the one relationship he could make work, even if he had to buy it. I know you didn't kill him. Even the RCMP wants to believe that now. But I need your help to prove it."

"If I could have proved I didn't kill Mark, don't you think I would have done it by now?" He wiped a tear that escaped one of his better facades.

I waited another minute before I continued. "Who got to you, Scott?"

"What do you mean?"

"I think somebody got to you. I think somebody leveled with you, Scott, and said if you break it off with Mark and make it really sting, it would trigger Mark to do what he'd long threatened to do." Scott stared at him with both fists clenched before his mouth, his elbows on the table forming a teepee over his coffee. "I don't

believe this suddenly dawned on you to hurt Mark bad. I believe you were coached. Who got to you, Scott?" Shane asked again.

"You have no idea how bad it had become. Mark had me followed, he got the security code for my answering machine and was checking messages left for me, he threatened to tell everyone that I was gay. He kept telling me that if I left him he would trash me in the community, tell everyone about my credit problems. He nearly promised that I wouldn't date again in this town. You're right, he did have the most toys I'd ever seen. He held all the cards. That scared me. I was really scared." Scott's eyes shut and tears jumped onto his hands. His shoulders began to quake.

"Who got to you, Scott?" Shane persisted.

"Paul Tamorin," he sobbed. "Paul Tamorin," he said it again, sitting up straight and regaining his composure. Paul phoned me a few weeks before Mark and I had it out and asked if he could meet with me privately. He said he could help me get out from under the Morgan empire."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At Delilah's in the West End."

"The same place where you arranged for Tina to meet Mark?" Shane recalled the phony set-up.

"That was Paul's idea too. I didn't understand what that was supposed to

accomplish but I was very intimidated by them. The Morgan's that is."

"And what did you and Paul talk about at Delilah's?"

"He told me that Mark was a hanger-on. That he wouldn't ever let go of me and that in the end, he'd hurt me if he didn't think he could have me. I'd seen these sides of Mark already, so what he said made some sense. He told me that I had to break it off hard. That I had to *leave Mark reeling* -were his words. He said the rougher I could make it the better it would be for Mark. I remember saying at the time that I didn't know if Mark could survive a final break-up. I told him about his attempts at suicide before."

"And did he respond to that?"

"He said that people like Mark, might be better off. And then he repeated that if I didn't do this, I'd never be able to shake him. He said that he knew Mark and that he'd talked with Mark and that he had vowed to break me like some wild horse, even if it meant he'd destroy me in the process. Something like that."

Shane stood from the table and walked to the window to get the wire taped to his chest a bit closer to Scott. He was talking on his own now. Shane had a feeling there would be no stopping him if he just kept silent.

"So we agreed that I'd break it off on Tuesday night the 14th. Paul told me that if I did my part, he'd make sure he did his. I didn't ask him what that meant. I

guess I didn't want to know. So Mark and I made plans to have dinner at his place, -to talk things out like adults, except I knew he wasn't ready to face the break-up. I kept remembering what Paul had said, —that I had to be tough, you know. I got to Mark's place earlier than he did and I just paced around the house. I'd walk to the balcony and think about what I was doing and then I'd remember what Paul had said, —how Mark wouldn't let go unless I forced him to. I got pretty worked up by the time Mark got there after his workout. We didn't really start out with words but he did ask me the moment he walked in the door if I was finally ready to give up Jenny and girls for good. I told him no. As I expected, he didn't take that well. He told me to start making dinner and open some wine and we'd talk through this. He went upstairs, I assumed to change but when he came back down he seemed pretty doped up, like he'd done coke or something. I figured if he'd started drugs, he was either going to become more aggressive or he'd pass out, depending on what he took. I'd seen these patterns with him before. It wasn't long before I could tell it had been coke and not sleepers, you know. He got right in my face and we started arguing. I kept drinking the wine because I was so damn nervous around him. I think now he must have put something in my glass because I got loopy pretty fast and I can usually drink wine like Kool-aid. About the time we sat down to eat, and it must have been ten or so, like I told the Mounties, he offered me a valium or something, to calm

down you know. I don't know why but I took it. I can see now that he was trying to drug and liquor me up. He'd done that plenty of times before and in the end, I usually cooperated with him, but that night, I stood my ground, —even though it started to spin beneath me once the pill had kicked in. I don't think I even touched my plate. I don't know what I had been thinking when I matched Fettuccine with baked potatoes but looking at the food suddenly made me really nauseous. I went into the living room to sit down and Mark followed me. He started making the moves on me and I should have seen that coming. He threw this porn tape in the VCR, to get me more in the mood but when I realized it was this girl getting fucked by a guy, I sort of just got fed up with Mark's games. I jumped off the couch and you know, let him have it. I didn't touch him, or anything," he insisted rather suddenly. "I mean, I know the Mounties think I beat him up or something. But that wasn't me. That had to have been Paul after I'd left, you know, his part of the deal. I realized as soon as I heard about Mark bleeding and his black eyes, that Paul had tried to frame me. I don't know why I didn't just come clean with the cops when they first talked to me. I guess I was so shocked to hear that Mark was actually dead, that I wasn't thinking straight at first. Of course, throughout the day as I began to realize that Tamorin had double-crossed me, I was completely overtaken with anxiety. In fact, it made me sick. But before I talked to the cops again, Tamorin phoned me. At first he started

out all reassuring and stuff. I mean he promised that the cops didn't have anything they could use against me but I must not have sounded too reassured because then he started threatening me. He became Mark you know. He starts telling me that if I ever mentioned that he and I had talked, he'd feed me to the lions, he'd destroy me. Then he said, —no, he promised," Scott stressed, "that if I talked, I wouldn't talk again. I'd been up against the Morgans for the last year, their judgements, their criticisms of me. I knew what they were capable of. Besides, he reminded me, I didn't kill Mark. I hadn't touched him. That was the only truth I had to stand behind so I kept my mouth shut. Then I went and flunked the lie detector test after he phones and puts all these thoughts into my head the night before I tested and my world seemed to fall apart. Lo and behold, Tamorin calls me again after it's over and says he'll bail me out of it. That he has something in the works to draw attention away from me. He arranged to get me five thousand dollars in cash, by messenger service and promised another five as a severance package, he called it. I knew it was hush money. I'm not stupid."

"Did you ever wonder why Paul wanted Mark dead?" Shane asked Scott, burying his hands in Scott's tense shoulder muscles.

"Sure, I wondered. I heard that he got promoted after Mark died. I figured that may have had something to do with it."

Shane walked around him and pulled his chair up close to face him. "Scott, I believe you. I can prove this and the RCMP is anxious for me to prove this, but I need your help. I need your help tonight," he told him.

"I just want to be out from under this. I'd do anything at this point." He realized how desperate that may have sounded and amended his statement. "Well, almost anything."

Shane smiled at him. "I know what you meant."

Shane left him to install his carpet, the one perk he could claim for putting his life and integrity on the line. He had a lot to do to ready for this evening. He raced across town to gather supplies which he assembled at the West Van Police Sub-station closest to Mark's house. He couldn't risk Tamorin or Tinsel dropping by the house during the day to find him working inside so Uwajimaya had arranged the cooperation of the local cops who had first uncovered this bizarre case. Only after Shane had the RCMP confirm that Drew Patterson was still at work, did he hop over to Mark's to set the place up. The rest of this was a waiting game and just like Mark, Shane had never been particularly good at waiting.

At five before eight o'clock, after the RCMP officer assigned to Tamorin's house, confirmed he was inside his home at Point Grey, and with everyone in place,

Shane phoned Donald to remind him to phone and Sandee answered.

"He knows," she told Shane. "He's getting ready to make the call now. Oh, Shane? —I know that wherever Mark is, he appreciates you tonight. Be careful."

Shane reviewed Scott's delicate role while Uwajimaya and to Shane's pleasant surprise, Elias Hern, taped Scott with a wire under his shirt. Together, they reassured Scott that the house would be well monitored and that the rest of them would be just outside if he got into any trouble. Shane gave him a beer from the refrigerator to calm him down. He nursed it slowly.

Next, Shane went to Stephen in the bathroom upstairs and helped him spirit gum his fake moustache into place. He grabbed a robe from Mark's bedroom closet and told Stephen to strip down to his underwear and his left sock. Stephen smiled uneasily.

"You know I have lousy circulation. I'm going to freeze to death on that garage floor!"

"I love you," Shane responded with a finger to his lips, one hairier than normal.

"Okay everybody. We have word that Tamorin's left his house. He's en route." Uwajimaya hollered up the stairs. Stephen and Shane made their way to the garage as the Mounties prepared to leave Scott alone in the house.

"We can do this," Shane told Scott. "And then it's over."

"I better thank you now in case I get killed in this scheme of yours. I appreciate what you've done," Scott told him.

"Ah, it was nothing. I've had fun," Shane confessed. He opened his arms to hug him and Scott didn't hesitate to hug him back, though the compression drove the tiny microphone into his chest and he jumped away. "Sorry about that," Shane offered smoothing out the tape underneath his shirt. "Break a leg," he told him insensitively, intending to wish him well with his performance, completely disregarding the basketball incident with his roommate.

Elias met him at the front door. "Good work on this, Shane. I mean that. Your ex is beside himself that you've cooked all this up."

"I didn't do this to get back at him, you know." Shane wanted him to know that. "I did this because we all had a hand in Mark's death. Each of us," he stressed. "I know you slept with him, too. None of our hands are completely clean here."

"You're quite the detective, I must say. I wouldn't be surprised if our Captain took a stab at recruiting you for the force."

"Thanks, but I'm a *Fall*," Shane referred to his colour wheel. "I look shitty in red."

Uwajimaya led Elias out the front door and over to Tatterson's where they

had arranged to set up surveillance. "I think it's time you divulged your numbers scheme when it comes to crime solving to see if it held for this case," Roger suggested to his partner.

"Ah, you don't want to go into that now," Hern stalled but Roger leveled with him.

"Look Mister. In an envelope in the back seat of the Mustang, I recovered enough photos of you, plastered all over the inside of Mark Morgan's boat like wall paper by the way, to plunge your image through the sewer pipes from here to Ottawa. I don't even want to know how they got there. I just want to know how the numbers work and I'll give the envelope to you."

"That's extortion and black mail!" Elias accused him in the middle of Marine Drive.

"Let's just say I did the math on this one, and if you want things adding up in your favour, you'll spill it here and now." Roger squared off to face him.

"In college, in some deviant behavior class, we were presented the Kinsey heterosexual-homosexual continuum. —This theory that every man is either exclusively heterosexual, exclusively homosexual or at some point in between. Since I'd been struggling with my own spot on this scale most of my life, it became a hobby of mine to rank every man I met on this continuum with the hope that someday I

would actually become comfortable with the fact that I wasn't perfect, that I wasn't exclusively anything. For instance, I would rank you as *zero* or exclusively heterosexual, like Mark Morgan's brother Donald, in this case. Mark, on the other end of the continuum was exclusively homosexual so he becomes a *six.* Since college I've tried to guard my position as a *two* or predominately heterosexual but more than incidentally homosexual. I have always been afraid that if I slipped to *three* which is *bisexual* on the continuum it would mean I hadn't a clue what I was or what I wanted and the oblivion would consume me. In this case, Scott Barry was the obvious *three.* You see, I used this continuum to gather the six most prominently figured people in each case and then through the course of investigation, I worked them into a ranking on Kinsey's continuum keeping number *two* reserved for me. I was the constant. Everyone needed to compare to what I knew about myself. Are you following this?" Hern felt he might have been losing Roger in his explanation.

"Keep going," Roger encouraged him.

"Because Man is ruled by sex and sexual expression, sexual exertion, sexual manipulation, —because sex for Man represents all power, the point of the continuum then is to examine the six degrees of orientation, if you will, in the context of a criminal case, and this is the critical part, —to determine who of the six players has the absolute most to lose in defense of their ranking whether they happen to be

comfortable and adjusted with their position in the continuum or whether their position is a fiercely guarded secret and source of inner turmoil. I have always found that the player of the six most motivated to change or escape their ranking either through psychological therapy, denial often marked by substance abuse, or the deception of self and others, is the player responsible for the criminal act. Take Dalmer, John Wayne Gacy, Wayne Williams, Patrick Kearny —some of the most famous of the continuum murderers in the past decades. Take the Morgan case. The six major players, as we know them, are Mark and his brother, already at opposite ends of the continuum, Scott Barry, the convenient suspect, smack dab in the middle, Gilles Eiswine, because of his two kids ranks logically as number *four* being predominantly homosexual but more than incidentally heterosexual, —still following?"

"Yeah, yeah." Roger walked him into Tatterson's house where another half dozen officers sat in the front room around surveillance equipment, in the dark.

"Paul Tamorin, I made number *one* or predominantly heterosexual only incidentally homosexual even though I didn't really have anything to base that on besides a hunch that he was hiding something major. That left position number *five*." Hern lowered his voice to a whisper as the two took their place in front of the window. "I needed someone predominantly homosexual but incidentally

heterosexual. I was inclined to plug Shane into that position for equation sake though he didn't really fit the profile. That's when things started to shake up for me. I saw Mark Morgan's picture. I had to face up to the incident with Shane the night he broke up with Floyd. I had to come to terms with the fling I had with the friendly photographer who took the shots for my portfolio and the Mountie calendar and suddenly I realized that *I* was number *five*. I couldn't hide behind number *two* any longer if I was going to be honest with myself. I guess it was really a matter of accepting that I was a grain of rice, and that was okay. But in the numbers game, you have to look at who is the least stable in their ranking. You could have said it was me but I came clean. Mark was certainly unhappy, Tamorin seemed a nervous wreck and then there was Scott Barry who was being yanked by both sides. Donald and Gilles were most stable in their rankings so it was logical to dismiss them as not having anything to gain by Mark's death..."

"Hold on a minute," Roger stopped him. "We have headlights."

Shane positioned Stephen's body to fit inside the crudely drawn chalk lines next to the Saab then loaded the dry ice chips into the hotel pans filled with water. Soon the garage filled with an eery fog. Shane adjusted his ear piece in time to hear Roger announce

"Tamorin is here. I repeat, Tamorin has arrived."

Shane double-checked the duct work attached to the exhaust pipe of the Saab then took his place behind the wheel with his fingers on the ignition. He heard the front door open and then close. Then he heard the *Heathen's* voice both in his earpiece and in his other ear.

"What in the fuck do you think you're doing here?" Paul practically screamed up the staircase at Scott who stood on the first landing, with the beer still in his hand.

"Waiting for you," Scott answered coyly.

"This is pretty stupid of you, you know that?" Paul started up the stairs to confront him.

"Mark asked me to come. He wanted you to see something he left behind for you."

"I don't know what the fuck you're talking about." He joined Scott on the landing and waved a stubby finger in his face. Shane took his cue and started the Saab, revving the sports engine before jumping into the shadows of the garage. "Goddamnit Barry! What is going on here?" Paul turned back down the stairs and went to open the door between the house and the garage but found the deadbolt locked. Just then the smoke alarm above his head sounded giving his shaky nerves another start. He jumped at the alarm, ripped it from the low ceiling and smashed it against the opposite wall, pieces of the specially rigged prop rolled all over the entry

way floor. He flipped the thumb lock on the door and stormed into the garage to find himself enveloped in what his mind told him was car exhaust. He threw the light switch and walked behind past the Saab to glimpse a moustached Stephen, laying face up and motionless. Paul felt he might be losing his mind and fumbled for his medication on his way back into the house. He started up the stairs but found that Scott had retreated further into the house. Paul emerged into the living room on the second floor and searched for Barry without moving more than five steps in as many directions.

"It's up here, Paul," Scott yelled over the top floor balcony and Paul spun around to continue up the next flight of stairs. There before him, hanging in the stairwell atrium was a white vinyl banner painted in blood red paint. Paul read the message: *I slept with Paul Tamorin and he has a tiny dick.* "You fucker!" he shouted. "You fucker!" he tore up the remaining stairs to find Scott standing in front of the open washing machine in the hall. "Mark told you that?" he demanded to know.

"He didn't have to," Scott replied in a remarkably cool voice. "I read all about it in here," he said holding up Mark's blue address book. "Before you ripped half the page out I should say," he corrected himself. "I figured you had a pretty good reason for wanting him dead, otherwise you wouldn't have coached me into

taking the fall for you."

"You son of a bitch," Paul articulated with very deliberate spacing between words.

"Police told me Mark was beaten-up pretty good." Scott provoked him further. "I have to hand it to you. You made it look real."

"I only had to improve on what you left me. A black eye? Come on! That didn't look like murder. Shit! That faggot-in-law of mine could have walked into the door and given that to himself," Paul rambled ignorantly shaking a couple pills into his hand which he popped into his mouth. "But you did the real damage. You got him to kill himself."

"Mark had planned to do that anyway. I was just the unwilling witness he decided to frame for it. You and his family had tried killing him off for years. His own father certainly kept him in enough sleeping pills to do the job whenever things got bad enough and then the rest of you made sure that things stayed bad enough."

"You have it all figured out don't you?" Paul threw his head back to swallow the pills.

"Mark had already arranged for this thug to show up after I'd gone, to rough him up. I didn't touch Mark that night. Your brother-in-law had the keys in the ignition long before he ever met me. It was all of you he was trying to escape. It was

your ignorance and your arrogance that killed Mark Morgan," Scott improvised, actually speaking what was on his mind. "You and the Morgans made it very clear to him that he could never fit in, no matter how much he mutated. But you went and slept with him anyway, didn't you. Four inches by four inches," Scott taunted his shortcomings. "Tsk, tsk."

"I didn't sleep with him you fucking asshole. I'm not like you," Paul spit on the floor and his eyes narrowed. Mark and I got drunk the night I proposed to his sister. I passed out and he blew me, trying to get back at his family by destroying me. You see, the Morgan Family was accepting me, practically no questions asked, but they could never accept Mark. He couldn't deal with that. In the end, he wouldn't let me forget it either. Brought it up every time he felt the least bit of pressure from his faggot little world. He was a vindictive little shit and you should know that better than anyone. I couldn't let him live with that secret and risk everything this family had given me. That's just not a secret you live with." He took steps toward Scott in front of the washing machine. "God, this is so familiar." Paul suddenly calmed down as though his medication had kicked in. "What, what do you faggots call it? — *Deja-vu*, or something like that. I had to carry Mark's body up three flights of stairs after I found him scarcely touched in the garage that night. Fucking smoke detector was blasting when I walked in. I'm surprised the whole neighborhood wasn't over here.

But Mark went down the stairs a helluva lot easier than he came up 'em, I'll tell ya." Paul laughed a bit sinisterly. "I could show you," he offered Scott.

"No, I get the picture. I wonder how many times you had toss him to break his ribs and scratch up his body like that?"

"I had to strip him down first. Make it look like you tried to rape him or something but he was wearing these dirty socks, see. And I thought it would be too obvious that Mark had walked into the garage all by himself, in his stocking feet, so I changed them."

"You mean these?" Scott reached into the washing machine behind him and extracted a pair of soiled socks.

Paul felt confused for a second. "Yeah, those." He motioned, moving just a step closer. "Except, I remembered I'd thrown them in there so when I was back in the house, with the police sniffing all over the place downstairs, I came back up here and took them out. Cleaned out Mark's wallet too, which I was surprised to see you hadn't done first, considering the whore you turned out to be. But those socks, yeah, that could have been a costly slip-up had I not remembered. Like hooking up with you," he said. "I should have known better but like I said, ya can't live with a secret like that, can you?" Paul withdrew a rag from one jacket pocket and a bottle from the other. "Ever sniff ether?" he asked him. Scott shook his head. "Shame." he said,

pouring the liquid into the rag. "It gives you quite a rush and then you pass out and the amazing part is you don't feel anything that's happening to you." Scott backed into a corner as Paul rushed him, forcing the rag into his face. Scott fought back ramming Paul backward into the utility closet door, where he hit his head and crumpled to the floor. Scott took advantage of the commotion and the apparent failure of his back-up protectors and raced down the stairs. Shane, the closest line of his defense, passed him on the first landing coming up to the living room.

"Bravo," he congratulated him.

"Shit," Scott exclaimed, pushing past him in a shaken state.

Shane walked up the stairs in time to see Tamorin coming to. He rubbed his eyes to find his assistant standing where he'd last seen Scott Barry.

"What the fuck is going on here?" He rose to one knee.

"Why did you lie to me, Paul?" Shane asked quietly. He heard the door open and the detectives assembling in the entry below.

"You?" He stood. "You were insignificant."

"Or so you thought," Shane smiled. "Your mistake."