Like a Fleeting Shadow (Original writing, Novel).

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Like a Fleeting Shadow

by

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Book One

He springs up like a flower and withers away,
like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.

Job 14:2
Chapter 1

An apartment living room, darkly shaded with mahogany brown wainscoting and textured wallpaper. A polished oak table with four matching chairs rest near red velvet curtains that fall to the golden glaze of a hardwood floor. There is glass coffee table between a long couch and matching chair.

The room is illuminated and shadowed at erratic and dramatic angles by the soft glow of yellow-white halogen lighting recessed into the ceiling. The atmosphere, the aura, normally warm, is ponderous and foreboding.

A black dial phone sits on a side table at one end of the long, tan couch. The phone rings. Leif enters from another room and picks up the handset.

"Hello?"
"Leif?"

He knows that voice immediately, and freezes momentarily. "Yes?" he finally answers, feigning an ignorance of her identity. Slowly, silently, he sits on the couch, and braces himself.

"Hello?" she says, determined, with a transparent flourish of anger and impatience evident in her voice.
He covers the handset speaker with the palm of his hand, and takes a deep breath. He must reply, he must show strength. Determined now, he removes his hand from the phone.

“Yes? What can I do for you?” He tries to intone a cool neutrality into his voice, but his voice breaks on the first word—Yes—of his reply. He briefly curses that demonstration of vulnerability, then lets it pass—if he doesn’t dwell on it, it might not be perceived—and he strives to stay focussed. His curiosity is strong, more powerful than his fear of exposure. But his fear of not knowing, of having to resort to speculation, when the facts—facts?—are about to be presented, is painfully resolute.

He attempts to ease his dread by imagining the woman on the other end of the phone. She is scowling, he senses, with that biting disapproval of him she usually had, in days gone by, kept badly hidden behind a sickly sweet patronising mask. She had never been a good performer, and he had never been comfortable having to participate in the folly. But, what now?

She says, “You really went out of your way, didn’t you?” End of sentence. It is ridiculous. It is a game. It is...what?

She waits for a reply. Bitch! But...she was always kind to him. Gracious. And yet...too personal sometimes. Like they were friends. They weren’t. Not really.

“What are you talking about?” he asks.

“You sent my daughter those flowers. Roses. Bags of them. All over the place, all dead.”

“I don’t...”

“You really went out of your way, didn’t you?”

Leif is baffled, but the line goes dead before he can work up a denial.

The dream continues. There is a knock at the door. He is positioned there, by the door, expecting the knock. His heart quickens and, apprehensively, he opens the door.

A rush of cold air blows into his face. It is man wearing surgical greens.
Leif struggles to maintain his composure. Silent, they stand in the doorway facing each other, each vying for position, for an edge. Leif squints against the brightness of the hallway lights.

Leif wakes. The lights are out and, in the darkness, he stares at nothing, sees nothing, thinks everything.

He has forgotten, for the moment, that he is being monitored.

Chapter 2

Bill Butler slumps in an old wooden office chair in front of a computer monitor. His mind drifts from the subject at hand to fleeting thoughts influenced and agitated by the immediate environment. He absently plays with a loose button on his black sports jacket. The button comes off in his hand, startling him, and he looks down and sees loose black threads emanating from the button’s former home. Bill tucks the button into a pocket and continues his reverie.

Bill is in his mid-forties. His experiences of the last fifteen years are embodied in his ruddy, weathered complexion due, in parts, to genetics, an affinity for the outdoors, and stress—from both his civilian life and the requirements of the job.

As in almost any organization utilizing roughly three thousand workers, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service employs a wide variety of specialists. Bill’s speciality is death or, at least, the possibility of death. He has worked almost exclusively on homicide investigations—anything with the possibility of international implications—for the last eight of his eighteen years with CSIS.
Though prevention of death is also tacitly part of Bill’s job, he is not a bodyguard. That job, if required, is for the RCMP, perhaps, or for a private contractor, depending on the circumstance. Bill’s involvement in such a scenario might be to provide a tip-off, such as providing evidence that a person or group may be in need of protection, or that violence is possible or imminent in a particular case. Otherwise, his job begins when a life ends.

Eight years at the same job denotes experience. Bill’s experience is that evidence of a former existence—a body—is often found in desperate locations, under grave circumstances. It seems to him—especially when the weather is bad, or if he is sick, or tired, or feeling moody—as if dead bodies are as likely to be discovered outside as in someplace protected from the elements.

The combination of nature’s ability to destroy biological evidence and the passage of time results in advanced states of decomposition, and clues regarding identity and circumstance, therefore, may be compromised, tainted or elusive. But trained, experienced forensic scientists, and the imagination of affiliated police professionals, can often find useful information where none seems to exist. Bill stands at the receiving end of much of that investigation, in morgues looking over bodies, or offices looking through files. Still, his physical presence at the scene where a body has been found does not hurt his overall comprehension of a case. And, it seems to Bill, as often as not, those scenes are outside, amidst the stirred up mud and dirt of a rainy day, against the biting wind of a winter’s morning, or under the blackness of night in a light-starved alley or farmer’s field.

Outside, collections of evidence are time-consuming. Factors such as dew, rain, mud, snow, insects, wildlife, and a host of other outdoor environmental factors that corrupt evidence and hamper progress, must be dealt with. It is easier for Bill if other agencies do the picking and probing before transferring the results to him where, most often, further delegation takes place. However, the sight of a dead body at the scene can personalize the case, make it seem more immediate and important, thus contributing to a more zealous effort. Though the scene might be gruesome, Bill appreciates the importance of being there.
However, there is a drawback to first-person field investigations. An affinity for the outdoors is not necessarily paralleled by being in a constant state of preparation. Bill is usually wearing a suit—a CSIS dress code requirement, except under special circumstances—when the call comes in, and his rush to the crime scene under-dressed for the cold of winter is not an unusual occurrence. Conversely, he might be overdressed in the heat of the summer, dressed for the formalities of first impressions required to suggest legitimacy and professionalism. CSIS demands that its employees, whenever possible, represent the government agency in a style which suggests order and authenticity. Despite—or, perhaps, *because* of—the autonomy given to CSIS by the government, complaints about the corporation, after all, usually end up in the laps of politicians who value white-collar affectations. If nothing else, the implications of the dress code are clear; look and act the part. Down filled coats don’t cut it if they don’t look sharp, nor do loosened ties.

However, what one wears—if not what one does—on his or her own time is one’s own business. More or less. As long as it’s at least tacitly sanctioned and does not have the potential to embarrass the employer. But there is an irony here too, because CSIS is a public institution in name and financial support only. Most people know little about the organization. Regional headquarters routinely refer the media to Ottawa for official statements by CSIS *spokespeople*. Names seldom make the news. So, when Bill goes fishing in a frumpy cotton jacket stained with ink at the pockets and ripped at one elbow, he doesn’t lose much sleep over it. *Body of CSIS Officer Wearing Frumpy Jacket Found at Bottom of Lake Scugog* is an unlikely headline.

Bill *is* an outdoorsman. Though he is as sensitive to environmental factors as anyone, he genuinely likes the outdoors. Off-hours, when he knows for sure he’s going to be outside, he checks the weather forecast, and dresses for the occasion. He especially likes to fish, and likes the control he can hold over the activity (the *dress code* for fishing is, at least, surreptitiously optional).

Fishing can be planned, whereas homicide investigations tend to unfold less
predictably. But the quantity of both the planned and unplanned outdoors experiences show on his face. His face has begun to line, and always seems to be slightly sun and wind reddened. But he also has a healthy glow. His face, therefore, communicates a paradoxical contrast, suggesting a man who is tired and stressed, yet healthy and strong.

His mental stamina comes not from his work, but from his minor obsession. If Bill has a few days to himself, or a holiday, he goes fishing, off to a rented cabin and boat. For the past seventeen years—since he picked up the hobby—he has tested the waters of almost every promising lake within a two hundred kilometre radius, although confining his sport to his native country. He has found crossing the border to the U.S.A., alone, too much of a hassle. “CSIS, huh,” the customs officer will say in an awkward way after running Bill’s passport. “What’s your business here, or should I ask?” All that’s missing, at times, is the conspiratorial wink. Inevitably, however, there is a look of disbelief, as if Bill is some sort of toy soldier, or amateur sleuth, angling for authenticity. “Fishing, huh?” the officer might add, with a look that suggests, “What are you fishing for?” The double entendre makes the customs officers either co-conspirators, or inquisitors—take your pick. Mostly, Bill suspects, customs officers don’t like to feel as if they are out-ranked or out-classed by people in related professions passing through their border. Canadian or American, the nationality of the border guards didn’t seem to matter. The treatment was the same both ways. So, why bother? Besides, Ontario has more than enough lakes and rivers for Bill to sample.

Bill’s other hobby is cooking. He is somewhat of a gourmet, with a taste for fine wines and spicy foods. He believes that it’s just as easy—and more rewarding—to prepare tasty, interesting fare than to half-heartedly throw a steak in a frying pan and microwave a baked potato. He particularly enjoys seafood—fresh cod with a basil cream sauce, or perhaps baked halibut with mushrooms or Sole Florentine—inexpensively purchased, cleaned and filleted, from a grocery store or fish market.

He does not take home the pickerel, bass and trout he pulls from Ontario
waters. Rather, he will unhook the fish, admire the catch briefly, compare it by weight and size to his memory of past catches, have a passing regret that he has no one to share the experience with, and then, gently, release the fish back into the water, holding the fish gently by the tail until, with a quick wriggle, it releases itself to the depths of the water in a metaphorical letting go. Trips to food stores are necessities, but the act of fishing serves a different purpose in Bill’s life. Fishing is therapeutic for Bill, a dip into a private world where he can think of nothing, so that when he comes back to work his mind feels cleansed and unfettered, if only temporarily. He can then can immerse himself fully in the next shift, the next mysterious murder and, privately, personal investigations, such as the bitterly contested divorce which had almost drowned him.

He’s been divorced for a year, but separated for three. He had hoped to fix the marriage through counselling and personal therapy (he even gave up fishing for a while, which to him was a hugely unappreciated sacrifice). He took a methodical approach to solving the problems of the marriage as he saw them, the same as he would to solving the riddles of a homicide investigation, or even to fishing, by changing the bait to suit the conditions, by going through a repertoire of familiar alternatives, and finally through experimentation and guessing. Nothing worked.

Still, he fishes, and if this does not help him to understand the failure of the marriage, it at least helps him to cope. Dead bodies, a dead marriage, and fish. He has power over the fish. If he can catch them, he can return them to water. To life. It is his decision.

His tendency to avoid direct eye contact tends to disarm whomever he is talking to. He only looks up after making his point. Then, he looks directly at his subject with his curiously compelling blue eyes, and waits for a response. He never seems to blink when he is looking at someone directly, and failure to respond to his questioning is difficult. His deep raspy voice, soft and unintentionally seductive when he is not angry, is also strangely intimidating. He is a good detective. But he does have a short temper, an impatience not exhibited when fishing that only those close to him at CSIS North see, and they see it rarely.
Strangely, his childlike temper, unprofessional perhaps, not only inadvertently produces positive results, but gives the man an illusion of latent, potent energy. Strange, because his outbursts are privately embarrassments for Bill, an unhappy display of weakness that leave him drained and confused.

He is a big man—over six feet—and despite his preference for oversized comfortable suits which unintentionally exaggerate his bulk, he is in relatively good shape, a matter more connected to genetics, and perhaps to fresh air, than to physical activity. His communication skills are good on a professional level, though he has no talent or use for the slick kind of verbiage that seems to him a prerequisite for advancement, and it is the rare superior who can overlook Bill’s intimidating disposition—and bulk—in favour of his record. Still, although Bill can be aggressive and authoritative when it comes to his work, and is well respected, he has no wish to join the echelon of upper-management and does not actively seek promotions. He likes his job—at least, he can think of no better alternative—and has no wish to rise, as some do, to a level of incompetence. The job suits his character.

Bill’s disposition camouflages his insecurity and retreat into solitude. His co-workers stay out of his personal life because he seems to want it that way. He has always been judged a private man, and hence, has never had many close relationships. The door to his personal life seems closed, if not locked. He comes from a large family, but his father had deserted them early, and his mother had retreated into an abuse of prescription drugs that eventually killed her. The children had fled from their home, and each other, as soon as they possibly could. His siblings had all more or less been assimilated into uneventful, middle class lives, and his contacts with them, since he had left for university at eighteen, had been sporadic. They exchanged cards at Christmas, when they thought of it. He had been born into the antithesis of the loving, caring family, and consequently he had seldom regretted his wife’s unwillingness to become pregnant.

He had thought that meeting his wife was a stroke of luck. It was the summer before his first year of graduate studies in Criminology. They met at a car
show. She worked at a booth selling car wax, her auburn hair piled high, and she wore bright red shorts and a tight yellow tee-shirt bearing the car wax logo. Inexplicably, she had been smitten by him, and there was something about her flirtatious approach which encouraged him to flirt back. They dated, and his confidence grew, and the relationship became a marriage. He cooked for her, and if he did not win her over with talk, then he may have with his inventive variations on good recipes. She became a flight attendant, and he discovered fishing during the separations. He was comfortable with her, and loved her, until the day three years back when he came home from a weeklong CSIS seminar in Ottawa. He had expected her to be home but she was gone, gone for good, as written in a Dear John letter, with no forwarding address. He learned then how vulnerable he was.

The man beside Bill Butler is unknowingly even more vulnerable, despite his cocky disposition. Ronald “Roadkill” Bosworth is a slight, wisp of a man who has seldom experienced a more lasting relationship than a one-night stand, or a more gastronomic delight than fast food. His failure with the ladies is kept hidden, but the poor nutrition, if not the constant rejection, is reflected in his face; pale, gaunt, acne-laden, and almost babyish—if it were not so busy and sharply drawn—with a sprinkling of freckles, and whiskers cockily reminiscent of a goatee. His hairline has receded and threatens the already dangerously barren circle at the back of his head.

Bill stares at the balding back of Roadkill’s head, fascinated at the wisps of growth desperately hanging on. A new movement this, he thinks, a youthful rebelliousness against the easy availability of aesthetic technology, though Roadkill’s demeanour, the cockiness and angst, is not new, not anything Bill has not seen before from a man of Roadkill’s age. He has an adolescent sense of immortality and self-importance, or naivete, perhaps, like a forest animal that doesn’t realize the significance of approaching headlights. It is a bearing which, Bill knows, will wear off with time once exposed to the experiences of life that no-one can ward off indefinitely. In time, with a precarious self-assurance that his point had been made, the youth will have a full head of hair, and the acne, even the
premature crow's feet around his eyes, will be gone. He'll learn caution, and some semblance of presentation. He'll become promotionable.

Both men, one experienced and cynical, the other young and cocky and naive, stare at the face on the monitor—a face unlike one either has ever seen—stranger still than Bill's sun-ripened face or Roadkill's premature facial degeneration, and listen to the words which resonate through the speakers and echo off the peeling painted walls of the Avocado Room. Bill, professionally curious about the face on the screen, but still logy with a red-wine hangover from the previous night's dinner, allows his mind to wander while the technician deftly clicks away at the computer, running various software applications in an effort to provide useful data about the face on the monitor.

Bill looks around. He doesn't much like being in this room, though the affectation—Avocado—reminds him affectionately of an old movie. It was an afternoon movie on television that he saw when he was a kid and had pneumonia. He was just old enough to be left alone, despite his illness, and he spent each afternoon watching TV. His mother was a hairdresser, cutting and curling the local locks to feed a family that was quickly disintegrating. His oldest brother had left for Europe two years earlier on a freighter, and the postcards he sent, though intriguing, arrived intermittently and unpredictably. A older sister had become pregnant at age seventeen and had married the father, a man fifteen years her senior who worked at a local mine and whose claim to fame was a red MG and a shelf full of bowling trophies. The next in line, another sister, had quit school for a factory job as soon as she turned sixteen. Seventeen at the time of Bill's pneumonia—he had missed a month of summer—she had taken up with a local university student home for the summer break. She returned to school not long after, eventually going on to university and a job as a teacher. She did not marry the student, but was forever and, Bill thought, sadly grateful for his influence on her. Bill thought the lad an insufferable prick, a snotty pseudo-academician with an unbearable superiority complex. The next two in line, both girls, were busy enjoying the brief Newfoundland summer and paid little attention to either Bill or
their older sister, finding his illness and her romance to be of little interest. Likewise, two younger brothers were equally uninterested, though they were relieved that Bill was out of commission for a month as a typically less than benevolent big brother.

Bill didn’t notice them much that summer either. He had his sickness, and his afternoon movies. And there was one, he remembers—or did he dream it?—of a darkly lit night-club, where men in suits were drinking iced liqueurs and smoking expensive cigars, and eyeing copper coloured women with painted faces who danced seductively to exotic music on a softly lit stage. The scene offered an agreeable contrast to his dire surroundings—despite the daytime absence of his siblings, and the six-day-a-week absence of his mother. The untidy busyness of the house testified to their presence, were shadows that reminded Bill that privacy was special, if temporary, and that his TV time was to be consumed hungrily. Bill would pull the sheets and blankets off his bed, carry them down to the couch in front of the television, cover the coffee table with soda and juice, and settle in to watch the afternoon matinee. And there was that movie, on an afternoon when the shades were pulled so that the sun could only peek in through the edges, that movie, that nightclub, and the beautiful lead girl who, Bill believed, surely smelled of vanilla, or almonds, or cinnamon. When she entered, all the men looked at her. Bill looked at her too, and the scene was embedded in his memory forever. Her midriff was bare, and tanned, and slim and muscular. She was tall, with long black hair that flowed down the back of her head and then up, somehow, up and then down again, sweetly bouncing over the roundness of her shoulders. Her eyes were oval, Bambi-like, and her lips curvy and sensuous, thick with moisture and sweet to the taste.

I always thought I’d marry a girl like that, Bill thinks, staring at nothing. The plot is fuzzy after all these years, but the nightclub scene is a lasting image. It, and she, had a dark sensuousness, a smoky, musky, electricity. It was a promise. Bill looks around and sighs. The Avocado Room: the unofficial title of a room that does not deliver what the name inspires. The atmosphere is decidedly
Oppressive. Not musky, but musty, and painted in a yellow which has long since dulled. Its title is a sarcastic affectation, for the yellow paint has suffered a long losing battle with basement humidity, resulting in the emergence of avocado green patches which grow larger with each passing day and year.

Bill and Roadkill sit in that moisture laden confine—labelled Computer Lab on the door's wire-reinforced white smoked window—a room small and dismal enough to induce a twinge of claustrophobia in everyone but the technician—and stare into the monitor. This is not a room for movie buffs seeking the fulfilment of a fantasy, or even a detached escape from reality. There is no dancing or smoking. There are no pretty girls. If only the room could live up to the silver screen promise that its name inspired, Bill thinks, of that darkly lit bar where he, the hero, would sit in confident expectation because that next woman to enter would be his. The men would follow her progress as she walked to him. They would watch with envy while he played with her, teasing her with an indifference that would make her want him more. As they left, a couple, her hand would be tucked behind his elbow in a possessive clutch.

"Close the door, will you?" Roadkill asks, interrupting Bill's thoughts.

Bill looks distastefully at Roadkill, then back at the door which, with a soft click, has opened. Bill had forgotten to give the door an extra pull. He sighs, gets up from his chair and pulls the door to its frame until he hears the click of metal against metal. That, Bill thinks, is in essence Roadkill's security system. A door that won't stay shut, he reasons, defeats the purpose of the lab's more sophisticated security systems. But even those systems, though somewhat effective, are laughable, like the access code for the lab which exists only as a paper record locked in the Director General's safe on the top floor, and in Roadkill's memory as the head technician. Independent use of the computer lab is almost impossible. Officers get on-line in the Avocado Room only if Roadkill lets them—"What you need you'll find on your own terminals. If you need more, you see me, if you don't like that, talk to the boss," Roadkill will elucidate, justifying his explanation with his position. But sometimes other CSIS intelligence officers
do need that extra kick, those extreme abilities of Roadkill's high-powered mainframe to sicken and surge, to aggravate and kill. That power, says the executives, must be limited and guarded, and the exclusiveness of the keys and codes contributes to the general feeling of discomfort that the Avocado Room generates. Even the lab assistants have to locate Roadkill in off-hours to gain access to the mainframe computer. So, the computer lab, for all its advantages, becomes a pain in the butt to access, and gives Roadkill a power that not even the use of his nickname—he *likes* it!—can dissuade. But then, sometimes the door to the room opens simply because someone forgot to make sure it was closed. Maybe, Bill wonders, "Cath" is equally obliging.

Cath is Roadkill's name for the mainframe computer, a towering black box with room inside for extraordinary amounts of hardware, and with a multiple array of interface ports installed for external applications. Its connections to Ottawa, and limited connections to national police sites and security agency's around the world, add to its mystique, as do its adornments. Its surface, sheened with Armor All—Bill has seen Roadkill buff it—has stickers that get buffed too, stickers that say *Bon Echo*, and *Bose*, and *CAA*, all places that Roadkill has been in his limited exploration of the world. His approach to the machine is so loving and maternal that regulars to the Lab have also come to think of the machine as Cath, if not by name, then by some more abstract expression of warmth, somewhere around the affection one might reserve for someone else's pet. At least, nobody dislikes the machine; it's a powerful tool, and power denotes sensuality and awe, while its innocence as a stupid machine that does what it's told furthers its universal attractiveness. One would be tempted to pat it on the head except for the fear that Roadkill might bite.

The innocence and vulnerability attributed to Cath is somehow recognised by the resident CSIS staffers, if not totally understood, and this provides more thought and awareness for the well-being of Cath than anybody, short of Roadkill, can directly express. Unfortunately, there seems to be some kind of universal assumption that no one would dare to attempt to misuse Cath. Hence, Bill
reasons, the shoddy security.

Bill has often wondered if Roadkill’s tightly held access code represents, by itself, an appropriate security measure. The Computer Lab door—when it hasn’t opened by itself—is electronically wired to an ancient, arthritic security system, prone to failures and false alarms. Roadkill, though offended by the criticism, seems oblivious to it all, and is quick to dismiss Bill’s occasional complaints and concerns about the lab. Cath is quite safe, he says, just make sure the door is pulled shut. And, according to Roadkill, the computer is programmed not only to recognize the access code, but his style of access. As for the immediate environment—the hovel that is the computer lab—well, computers don’t need to be babied much, Roadkill has often said, while gloating about Cath’s unique, formidable strength. Unfortunately, he has insisted so adamantly that Cath’s security system is sufficient that the lab’s security budget has sunk to the bottom of the precinct’s expenditure allotments. It is a badly kept secret.

“Why don’t you complain about it?” Bill once muttered to Roadkill during a bored moment in the Avocado Room. “You see it and then you don’t see it. You let your ego get in the way. Sometimes it pays to squeak a bit, squeak more than the next guy, or you won’t get nothing. Think of it this way: the public deserves it. They have a lot invested here.”

“The public want laws upheld, and their tax dollars reduced or rebated,” Roadkill responded testily, hurt at the reference to his ego. “You know. The two R’s. Money’s tight, Officer. But Cath’s a big girl, aren’t you, sweetheart?” Roadkill patted the edge of the console. “She can take care of herself, believe me. Can’t you, honey? If you guys could just remember to pull the door shut…”

Bill looks on unemotionally at the image on the monitor. Cath. Short for what? He wonders. Cathy? Catherine? Cathode? His Bambi-eyed nightclub girl had an exotic name, he is sure. Farnaz. Nabeela. He sighs, and risks a strain on his lower back by slumping further down in the old wooden office chair. It is the passenger chair, for guests. Roadkill sits in a leather office chair—the driver’s seat—truly the only good piece of furniture in the room.
Bill looks up from the monitor to the avocado'd wallboard ceiling, stained in a myriad of oft contemplated images—that stain a rocket ship taking off, the smoke from its engines pluming behind; and this one a dachshund, or maybe a spigot, like the ones behind the bar of Teddy's Bar and Grill, and this one directly overhead a Texas longhorn, the pride of the Lone Star State when John Wayne was the Duke, and where many words and clichés originated. *Pushing up daisies. Circle the wagons. Draw. Lots of gambling references, too. Loaded deck. Card up his sleeve. Aces.* Bill likes the old westerns.

He feels like the sheriff waiting impatiently for the blacksmith to finish shoeing his horse. Gotta get that posse started! His fingers comb through his greying hair, surveying his cranium for something not yet discovered, perhaps a bald spot or a new bump that he can explore, and finally come to rest on his temples for a good massage. He looks up to the ceiling again. The spigot is a promise. He looks back to the monitor, though his fingers have not ended their temporal worship. The NET is full of morons, and Bill knows them far too intimately: white and blue collar, what the hell, first impressions could be so misleading. Who knew? Eighteen years on the job, and there are fewer surprises.

Cases had their common denominators, like the song *Windows and Holes* that Bill’s partner, Alana, sings at her desk when confronted by an enigma of any kind: "*Everywhere, everywhere, waiting for you, windows like sky, look like sky blue, black holes in space, suck you in too...*". Good lyrics, Bill thinks. A CSIS intelligence officer’s job is to look through the glass, to lean over that edge, but without getting too close, without getting sucked in. There are vacuums and gravitation forces at work to be wary of, but you have to go in because that's where the truth often is, if anywhere, beyond the glass, over the edge. You have to get close enough to extrapolate the truth, that elusive god that will, supposedly, reach up and squeeze your nuts with a big hello once all untruths are systematically eliminated. Meanwhile, untruths mate, multiply and mirror, like glass, and the truth becomes like a mouse among elephants, scurrying for life, or a flower among weeds, weeds dining on elements too toxic for anything else, like elephant shit, for
example. *Let me show you the world in my eyes*, the song continues.

That blotch on the ceiling could be elephant shit, Bill muses. He looks back to the monitor. They have the face, he thinks, growing impatient. "Why don’t you print him?" he asks, his voice breaking the still, dewy air and reverberating throughout the room in a modulating echo. No need to raise one’s voice here, he thinks, not even to overcome the dull drone and hum of the computer’s internal cooling systems, or the monotonous ramblings of the man on the screen.

"I have to get his hands." Roadkill replies.

They wait and watch for a few minutes. The man on the monitor does not show his hands.

"He knows what he’s doing," Roadkill observes.

Does he? Bill wonders. "What about an eye scan?" he asks.

"Contacts," Roadkill replies.

Bill tries to think up another angle. "What about a head scan simulation, something on his teeth maybe?"

Roadkill moves the cursor across the screen, points it and clicks. "There we go," he says, as the images begin to appear. "Fairly good straight teeth, with some definite ridges on the front. Wait...let me amplify that. Bit of discoloration here consistent with the last sampling, so it’s not food. Stains, maybe plaque, or nicotine—he could be a smoker. Nothing unusual about his facial structure. Always close shaven. A match on his hair...brown...to his nose hair...good lighting here, good angles too. So, the hair’s natural, anyway."

Roadkill continues to move the cursor and click orders into the machine, while his commentary continues uninterrupted.

"Hair colour’s not inconsistent with his skin pigment...though he could be using a good foundation. Got a little scar or pockmark on his chin. That could be helpful. A few identifying marks, here...here...and here. My guess is he’s wearing a base makeup. Now, look at the lips. It’s really difficult to hide the lines on the lips, but this guy has skinny lips to begin with and...a coat of shellac or something.
Look for a guy with tight, skinny lips... and his hand down his pants, probably. Otherwise, no match with our available records.”

Well, the simulations might provide some leads, Bill thinks. Computer simulations based on dental work, facial movements, voice aberrations, and even a few nose hairs could be helpful if a suspect could be found to compare the evidence to. Even then, it usually amounted to an insignificant part of what the prosecution needed to make a case. Still, even though simulations were not much good in court, they could, on occasion, narrow the subject search.

The two men continue to study the screen and listen to the words. The subject is masked just enough to make ascertaining his identity difficult. His voice is filtered through a continuous random selection synthesiser. The voice wavers, but the overall effect is an annoying liturgy, monotonous is its delivery. The combined visual and audio disguises make identification difficult. A discernible personality does emerge, but it is agonizingly difficult to define. Even so, both men know that clues are inevitably revealed to the methodical investigator. A distinguishing mark. A tilt of the head. A turn of phrase.

“We could do a reverse scan,” Roadkill comments. “All we’d need would be a few milliseconds.”

“And if we didn’t get it?”

“If he’s got a good firewall, and he might, he’d at least know right away that the attempt to scan him had been made. It might even tell him who’s looking in. If it’s not a good firewall, then we’d probably have him, and he might not even know it. The first scenario could scare him off the Net for a while, if that’s all you want. The second scenario, if we got lucky, would ID him, and the game would be afoot. But, you know, I’ve got some software here some refer to as stealth, but it’s shit if it’s detectable, and nothing’s completely undetectable, at least, not forever. I try to keep up, but I’m fighting the whole Net. So, it’s your call.”

“If it’s that uncertain, we’ll wait a bit.”

“We could flash him, or surge him possibly. Give him a good scare.”

“Then he loses his box temporarily and we lose him permanently.”
“Maybe not. Listen, he knows that people are watching—God knows why—but he doesn’t know who they are unless they’ve got a real shitty server. Now, we could tell him we’re watching, under a pseudonym, of course, and while he’s biting into that—like, we invent something sexy and perverse for him to download—and then send a virus along with it, sort of like Internet scabies. But, that won’t necessarily work, and it might just warn him.” Roadkill pauses for a moment, thinking, and scratching his head.

“Keep going,” Bill says, interested.

Roadkill sighs, then continues with his speculative dialogue. “He might know who we are by the strength and type of the virus, and a light virus would be useless, probably. But he likes being on the box, that’s the standard psychological profile, anyway, and he’d be back. Same with a surge, he’d be back, but the damage would be greater if it got through, and really put him to some expense. Maybe a big expense.”

“So, we have a virus or a surge, right?”

“Well, yeah…or a reverse scan. Take your pick.”

“None of the above.”

“Then,” continues the computer technician, “you don’t want to risk losing him. You want this guy for something in particular, am I right? Something offline, perhaps?”

Roadkill might make a good fisherman someday, Bill thinks, amused.

“Yes.”

“Have a rainbow day?” the technician offers, referring to a memo he had sent upstairs just twenty-four hours earlier. “I mean, that’s why you’re down here, right? It’s pretty obvious. Writes it on the wall in his victim’s blood, right? And this guy says it when he signs off. Now, if you were to supply me with transcripts and stuff…”

“It’s a long shot,” Bill says, leaning back in the wooden office chair. “This guy might have seen it in the news. Just thought I’d have a look, is all.”

“It is a long shot,” the technician concedes, “But we could do some
correlation. Anyway, it's your call. But I'd still appreciate a pat on the back if it turns out to be a good lead. Maybe some donuts, too."

"Rainbow trout, " Bill replies vacantly, staring at the space ship blasting off on the ceiling.

"What's that?" Roadkill asks, looking up. "Trout? Rainbow day, you mean. What are you looking at up there?"

"Uh, nothing." Bill says, rising to leave. "Donuts. I'll remember that."

"I don't like fish."

"Fine. No fish. And I'll try to get you those transcripts."

Bill returns to his second floor office and sits down behind his desk. Alana Chen, his partner of two years, shares the office with him, and she walks in carrying a brown paper package. As usual, he watches her, discreetly, he thinks.

"Anything in the computer lab?" she asks.

"Nothing fun."

"No naked women?"

"Not a one."

"Not a one, eh?"

"The computer tech wanted to surge our suspect, among other things. Wants donuts, too."

Alana sits down on the corner of the desk, and begins to sort out their lunch. "Who was on duty?" she asks.

"Fella named Bosworth. Seems he ran a program on his own time and happened upon a possible lead."

"Bosworth? That his name?"

"Yep. Know him?"

"Kind of a slob? Coffee stains on his tie, unkempt looking?"

"That's got to be him."

"Roadkill, you mean?"
“Appropriate, eh?”
“I didn’t know his real name. Didn’t think he had one.”
“Yeah. Bosworth.”
“He seems to know his stuff.”
“Not bad,” Bill concedes.
“He wanted to surge, you say?”
“He suggested it. I said no.”
“And…?”
“And, we didn’t.”

Alana looks out the window to the street below. She watches the noonday traffic pass by through the predominantly industrial neighbourhood, and looks over to the back of the Chevrolet dealership and beyond to the busy highway which carries commuters south to the city in the morning, and north again in a tired, cranky, evening impatience. It is an overcast day, with a steady fine veil of rain that coats the window and distorts her view. Everything looks fuzzy. She turns back to Bill. “We’re off the Rainbow case,” she says with a sigh, knowing what Bill’s reaction to the news will be when he hears it—*all* of it.

“What?” Bill replies, his tone barely disguising the fact that he doesn’t really care.

“The chief says it’s Dean’s case until further notice.” If anything about losing this case is going to bother Bill, she knows it will be this. Highly educated and motivated, it has seemed to both Bill and Alana in their limited experience with E. Trevor Dean that he had aggressively—and somewhat ingratiatingly—positioned himself for advancement within the department. Still, they both realize that Dean not only knows how to work his colleagues, his superiors, and the media, but he knows computers. He is a logical choice for the case.

“Mr. Canada, eh? Let’s go home.”

“Not so fast,” Alana replies. “There’s more to be done.”

“Promises to keep, eh?”

“And don’t tell me this doesn’t bother you.”
“It doesn’t.”

“There’s more.”

“More?” Bill mocks.

“New stuff. On your desk. Under your lunch, or that road kill you call lunch, ha ha.”

“Ha ha yourself, I think I’ve lost my appetite. Sure enough,” he says, as he locates the file.

“You’ll like this,” Alana says. Bill knows by her tone that he won’t.

“Why do you suppose somebody would allow themselves to be called Roadkill?” he asks, opening the file.


“Yeah, sure.”

“Or wants us to think something like that.”

“Do I have to read this?”

Alana turns, and looks out the window. “And miles to go before I sleep,” she says softly.

“Is the word surveillance somewhere in this file?” Bill asks, distaste in his tone.

Alana sighs in response.

“This might bother me,” Bill mutters. He opens the file.
Chapter 3

—I kept thinking... roses. Dead roses. And...

—Just words, Leif.

—I didn’t do... something...

—Just random words, Leif. They don’t mean anything.

—They don’t make sense... but, there is this woman in the dream, and...

—It’s natural to try to make sense of nonsense when we dream. Your brain is just trying to keep up.

—It is... my apartment. And I did something wrong. But... it has something to do with roses.

—Images, concepts. It’s just nonsense, trust me. Words just float around in there at random. Your brain’s trying to make sense, associations, out of random thoughts and words and ideas, that’s all. Nothing else. No hidden meanings. Nothing bad.

—I don’t know. It feels... it doesn’t feel right.

—We tend to be hyperemotional in our dreams. Nature’s therapy, that’s all. It’s not a show for you to watch.

—Not a show?

—Nope.
Chapter 4

It is Alana’s turn at the window, and she sits, alone in the darkened eighteenth floor apartment, with her eyes on the building across from her. Only a couple of weeks have passed since the surveillance began, but already she is bored. Bill, antagonistic about the assignment, had warned her of this, but she had embraced the job regardless of her partner’s misgivings. A vigilant lookout could be tiring and boring, she knew, but she welcomed the change. The hours were predictable, and she could plan her life around her work and, perhaps, get caught up on some personal projects.

She stands, and practices some karate forms, thinking of the day she would try for her black belt, a day she had put off for almost two years, since the time she had transferred to CSIS North and become Bill’s partner. An imaginary enemy tries to punch her in the head, but she wards off the blow with a downward block, gives him a back fist to the temple, grabs his head and pulls it into her knee, then elbows him in the nose, knocking him out. A bit excessive, she thinks, studying the imaginary attacker sprawled out on the floor. “But you asked for it,” she says aloud.

Then, back to the forms, concentrating on fluidity and purpose. She goes through the choreographed blocks, kicks and punches of all her forms while sneaking the odd peek at the balcony window of the apartment under surveillance, and listening for sounds from the sensitive monitoring equipment. She knows that the subject is not at home; he seldom is on a weekday afternoon.

If only she could practice her forms regularly, she thinks. The test for the black belt would take at least eight hours, and she had to be confident about having ten hours of stamina before scheduling the test. She starts in on the forms again; white through black belt, the latter forms the most difficult to practice given the small area of the living room. She must constantly readjust her steps,
improvising the forms in the available space.

Back at her apartment lie four one-litre cans of latex paint in various colours, and a roll of masking tape. She is determined to detail the top of her living room walls, something she had always meant to do. It would be a Navajo design—klagetoh, the pattern is called—based on a blanket she had been given as a gift when she had graduated from university with a degree in criminology. That was more than ten years ago, and the blanket had since worn and faded, but the design was still evident, and she had guessed the original shades. She would replace the blanket, some day, with a matching blanket for her bed, and for her couch, and maybe even a small matching rug for the entrance to her apartment, depending on the selection and prices. She knows just where to go—there is an Indian art gallery on Queen Street, Wheatley's, or Wheaton's, something like that, she can never remember the name. They had some neat jewellery too, rings and bracelets and necklaces made of silver and turquoise which, she felt, would complement the tanned tone of her skin, if only she could ever find the time and energy to make the trip.

She finishes the last form of the series. If the surveillance lasts long, she thinks, she will be ready for the black belt test, the walls will be painted, and the blankets purchased. She sits down by the window and looks across. This is boring, she thinks.

Her parents are immigrants from Hong Kong, and live on Prince Edward Island. It was there that she grew up, a small, gregarious child who admired the pluck of Anne—"with an e"—of Green Gables, and she thought of Anne often to encourage her own endeavours. Alana was valedictorian in public school, and was offered a number of prestigious scholarships upon graduating from high school. She chose McGill, took science courses, became fascinated by a televised high-profile murder case, and announced to her parents that she would major in criminology. They were not impressed.

She went on to get a master's degree in criminology, and was recruited by CSIS. She discovered sports, something that she had previously shown little
interest in, and within a few years of working for CSIS had become very athletic, with a strength and dexterity that belied her small frame. On overnight cycling and hiking trips, she wore a backpack with a tent, food, and other necessities, including the *klageto* blanket, rolled up and securely fastened. She could carry the heavy bundle with ease.

Now, in her mid-thirties, she sits and wonders about her lifestyle decisions. They were the right decisions, she is sure, but still, there were options. She could have married. She could have gone into medicine; certainly, the money would have been better. However, she decides, the view from where she sits has been satisfying, overall. *This* view, not that one, she thinks, looking to the apartment under surveillance. Better to be on the outside, looking in.

Still, there were moments that made her wonder about those *big* decisions. It was neat to be a CSIS intelligence officer. It sounded sexy. But who knew, *whom* could she tell? Secrecy and anonymity is a solid part of the CSIS agenda, keeping the public, in most instances, happily unaware or at least neutrally apathetic. She has experienced plenty of bureaucracy. Cynicism too, at times, but better than the nightmares, those instances of sleep broken by consciously realized visions of horribly disfigured or decayed bodies. And sometimes, even more haunting, beautiful bodies too, sad, like roses cut off at the roots.

But there have been the highs, too. The thrill of the chase, of finding leads, and making connections, and speculating and imagining. Of closing a file with no loose ends. Spontaneous travel. New faces. Excitement. Intrigue. Knowledge.

The flowers and the thorns. Her father calls her his lotus petal.
Chapter 5

Leif wakes in the night. There is a gentle radiance cast by a small night light by the door to his right, low on the wall, and he can just make out a rectangular item on the small bedside table. He turns on the overhead light, and picks up the object. It is a magazine. To Leif, there is something odd about the simplicity of this find, a paper magazine in a world in which information seems to him to exist almost ...not physically, but in electronic fluidity. He looks at the cover. The magazine is titled CrimeGazette. It seems an ancient curio, information with a curiously discernible texture to the touch.

He puts the magazine down, and rubs the sleep from his eyes. He had dreamt again, but the dream is already fading. He had been in the passenger seat of a car heading up a hill towards a wide, low building. The tip of the sun setting behind the building made him squint, and the details of the building were difficult to make out, though it seemed as though there was more, something rising, like a dome, as the car neared and the perspective changed. He pulled down the sun visor, but his side of the building was in dark shade, and his eyes could not adjust fast enough. "What is this place?" he had asked, but no one answered. There were three others in the car, but he could not remember who they were, although he was sure that he knew them. He turned to look behind him, and one, directly behind him and barely seen in his periphery, seemed ghostly, like black fog in a human shape. As the car reached the top of the hill, there, just to the right of the building, against the orange-blue sunset, was the silhouette of a robed man. The man held up his hand, signalling for the car to stop, Leif thought, but the car kept advancing. They were trespassing, Leif thought. Then, he woke.

Leif looks at the magazine and picks it up again. He turns the pages with a vague feeling of familiarity. Yet, he is also careful to handle the magazine with care. Maybe it is a valuable antique, mislaid at his bedside. He has that feeling of trespass again. However, as he continues to turn the pages, his mind begins to
focus on the mechanics of the motion rather than on the magazine’s existence. They are familiar activities—feeling for the paper’s edge, turning the pages, and scanning the headlines and pictures—but the content seems foreign. Sabotage in a national airline strike. An astrology con. A murder-suicide in an Ottawa home. The advertisements catch his interest too. Home security products. Weight loss programs. Laser treatments. The format of the magazine is loud and aggressive, making Leif feel increasingly uncomfortable, as if under attack, as if there is something bad to come, as if he has overlooked a signal to stop.

His intuition is correct. He comes to an abrupt halt on a page with a brilliant photograph under a heading that reads, in bold black print, Illegal Infidelities. He unconsciously holds his breath; the emotional impact of the picture is immediately unnerving. But that is the whole of the parts, and the parts, studied individually, cause Leif to feel increasingly alarmed. But Leif is used to discomfort, and is intrigued by the photograph. He continues to look, while breathing softly, taking control of his emotions by exploiting undeniable, real perceptions.

A woman. She is sitting in an armchair, looking off to no fixed point with an expression of...desperation, of devastation. Behind her, a man of medium build, with his hair close cropped and his face unshaven. He looks strong and dangerous. Menacing. He glares at the back of the woman's head. He is preparing to open a door—his hand is on the doorknob—and he will leave to...do what? He wears a white shirt under a crumpled tan jacket. One hand is grasping the doorknob; the other holds a cigarette to his lips. Maybe he once loved the woman, but at this moment he...hates her.

Leif's head resonates as emotions and words and ideas...come forth to be processed, to be made sense of. There is something...something about that man...that woman...the scene...

There are ways of thinking these things through. "Momentum," he whispers, recalling the slogan, "positive momentum to recovery is control minus distraction. Control. It's only a picture!"
Leif closes his eyes and concentrates on the picture. The haggard, frightened wife—that's what he has seen, speculative interpretations are okay—we learn through creative speculation, someone had told him—and her husband, the man, lost in spite and...and bitterness. Haunting, and yet darkly compelling. That's okay too, look deep into what you fear, what can it really do, where's the threat? Analyze the emotional reaction, ask why.

Why? What commands his attention? What is so intriguing? The tension in his head increases, suppressing his powers of reason, but he has to see it through...it is part of...of...a test? Of course, a test! He opens his eyes and looks back at the picture, focussing on the details. Rings on her left hand, a diamond, and a wedding band. A pearl necklace. Writing paper on the table in front of her. A drink, its line low in the glass. A cigarette smouldering in a glass ashtray half cut out of the picture. Is that it? Had he been a smoker? Is that...something?

It is too much. No...yes, it would have to wait. It has to. Whatever it is will have to wait, Leif thinks to himself again, in determined repetition. I have to escape from this...from this...like...like the man has to escape?

He sets the magazine down on the small table to the right of his bed. Then, his neck cramping from exertion, he lays his head back on the pillows and closes his eyes. He rubs his temples and tries to think of nothing and, achieving that goal, opens his eyes before the thoughts can return, as if trapping them in darkness. He brings his hands down from his head, and notices that his fingers are smudged with a slight black...the ink from the magazine has rubbed off on them, he realizes. Like the effects of tar and nicotine on fingers and lungs, the ink marks a trail, says something about where he has been. He thinks he must have ink on his temples, too. He closes his eyes, still thinking of the ink. Ink is real. A real substance. Not...like black fog, no, but rather like invisible electronic impulses that are manifested...in...paper...

He wakes with an explosive impulse to sit up, to see where he is, and he does sit up, and does seem to be where he belongs. The morning sun filters through the blinds, softly illuminating the room with vertical stripes of brightness
and shadow. He looks down the bed to the footboard, then to the bedside table. The magazine is gone. He closes his eyes and peers into that darkness for details of the memory, and he finds them, and he opens his eyes again, but the memories do not mesh with the real. So many dreams...was the magazine ever...no, it was there, he thinks. But not now.

A woman enters the room. She turns up the lights, bathing the room in fluorescent brilliance. She notes the confusion on his face, but does not react to it. It is a common facial expression for someone who has just woken up.

"Jane?" he asks, as if the name alone will confirm the real.

"How are you?" Jane asks, approaching the bed. She puts her hand on his forehead.

"You were here before?"
"Before what?"
"Just before. This morning."
"It's nine in the morning, since when am I an early-bird?"
"Oh."
"Why do you ask?"
"Well, I had a magazine here...here on the table, and now it's gone."
"I'll talk to security," she says, smiling. Leif is unresponsive to her teasing.
"CrimeGazette," he says. "That's what it was."
"What?"
"Called."

"Oh," she says, bending down and looking under his bed. "Never heard of it. Where did you get it from?"

"It was on the desk, here, last night. Someone left it right here," he says, pointing to the table again.

"No goblins under here." She stands up, then sits on the edge of the bed, unconsciously adjusting the silver and turquoise bracelet around her left wrist.
"Was it a good read?"

"Well, no, not really, I don't know...it's just...gone."
“Is it some reading you want? Oh, wait, you don’t have access to the Net, do you?”

“I didn’t read it. I should have.”

“You have access to some internal communications, but you’re not going to be around that much longer, you know.”

“I know. You’ve…”

“It’s just not worth the Institute’s time or your money. Security too, you know, that’s always a problem with the Net. Once you’re out of here, someone from the Institute will advise you on the applications and recommend some services. Meantime, I’ll put something online in the internal...some magazines and books maybe. Tomorrow soon enough?”

“Sure.” Leif says, without enthusiasm.

“Fine then. Well, you look okay, I think. A little tired, maybe?”

“I didn’t sleep well. Bad dreams.”

Jane makes a mental note to check the overnight recordings to see if Leif’s dreams had negatively interfered with his sleep. “Breakfast should be here soon,” she says. “If you want to, go back to sleep after you’ve eaten. Tests at noon. Sleep until ten, I’ll wake you up.”

“I think that’s a good idea. Thanks.”

“Okay then,” she says, leaving the room.

Leif watches as she turns the lights down and moves through the door and out into the hall. Her lithe figure moves cat-like, smoothly, as if on wheels. He closes his eyes and pictures her in the familiar white lab coat, her black hair swept back from her brown face, the dimple in her cheeks deepening sweetly as she smiles, the dark burgundy lipstick, moist and sensual. As he drifts off to sleep, comforted by his thoughts of Jane, he forgets about something else that he had seen as she left the room. He had thought of it for only a second, as she had dimmed the lights. Roses. Red roses in a crystal vase on a small table just inside the door.
Chapter 6

Brother Adrian is dreaming. In his dream it is late in the afternoon, and he is tending the flower garden off to the north side of the monastery. It is near dusk, and time for prayers, but he cannot stop. There is no end to the weeds. If he does not get them all, he believes, the weeds will kill the roses by the next morning.

He stands to stretch his aching back. He looks at his scratched, dirt-caked hands, then wipes the sweat from his brow with his forearm. To his right, he sees the bright blue-orange orb of the sun as it sets on the skyline. He contemplates the sunset for a moment, appreciating the respite, until he suddenly becomes aware of a faint, familiar sound breaking the evening silence. He looks to his left and sees two small orange orbs of light coming up the hillside driveway towards the monastery. A visitor. Someone to buy some bread or preserves, maybe, though it is past business hours. Adrian bends back down, and weeds faster than before.

Then, he is in his room, looking into a small mirror hanging on the wall. The mirror’s frame had been fashioned by his mother. She had decorated the top third of the mirror with an embroidery of two small brown birds sitting so closely together on a twig that their bodies almost appear as one. The twig is a light brown, and seems in good health as it gives birth to green leaves and pink-white blossoms that, in his dream, move gently as in a breeze. It is springtime in this embroidery.

Adrian looks at his reflection in the bottom portion of the frame. His image, like the picture above, denotes spring. His hair is white, but full too, and his face, though well past middle age, has few lines or wrinkles, as if the man is stuck in April like a skipping needle stuck in a groove. And yet, Adrian feels a song come on, a secular chorus from the monastery’s car radio, Let me show you the world in my eyes, the youthful voice sings amidst strings and percussion and a backdrop of crooning female voices, angels, he thinks now with curiosity. He mouths the words from the song and sees in the mirror the boy that is always with him, two lives as one.
Chapter 7

"You know, until you took sick, you had a wonderful life," Jane says, sitting in a chair by the side of Leif’s bed as, together, they look at his files. "Or so it would seem, anyway." Psychiatrists, psychologists and a variety of rehabilitation specialists and technicians—some on staff, some on a contract consultation basis—supervise Leif’s rehabilitation. Jane’s presence in his life is the most constant.

It is early afternoon, and Leif will soon walk on his own to the rehabilitation room. He has made good progress, Jane tells him, surpassing all expectations. On the monitor at the foot of his bed, his life history unfolds. It is not the first time that he has seen the documentation, but his comprehension of it has been slow.

A research team put together an extensive file on the lives of Leif’s relatives. Included among the files is a collection of his father’s writings, mostly from medical journals, along with some family records, photographs and correspondence. But Leif’s memory of his previous life is abstract at best. He has been told that he may never remember much of it at all.

Name: Leif Arthur Ward
Cause of Death: Intermediary Suspension, Lic. #769895
Next of Kin: Dr. Francis Duncan Ward (Father of Deceased)
   Dr. Mary Alexandria Burns (Mother of Deceased)
Hiatus: Toronto Institute of Cryonics Inc.

According to the documentation, Leif is thirty-four, or forty-two, depending on the interpretation. He had never been married, nor was there any mention of a woman, or children, legally and/or biologically belonging to him. Leif’s father and
mother had both died within the past five years. Leif’s only surviving relative is an Aunt, his mother’s sister. She lives on Prince Edward Island, where she had been a bookkeeper until her retirement. Her husband, also retired, had been an actor, and had portrayed Matthew in the musical *Anne of Green Gables* at the Charlottetown Festival Theatre for some twenty-eight years. They lived within a short drive of PEI’s capital city on two acres of land that had once been regularly planted with potatoes. It was his aunt, Abigail Curtain, who had, according to the files, bought the land (at a very good price, it would seem) and had since brought the two acres back to life, not with potatoes, but with a plethora of spirited gardening projects. It was also she who signed the papers allowing the Institute to attempt to reanimate her nephew. She had been kept informed, the case notes revealed, and encouraged to visit. She had refused, however, citing distaste for travel as her excuse.

The folder includes the circumstance of Leif’s death (legal deanimation while awaiting a kidney transplant), along with the original application form and supporting documents sent to the Toronto Institute of Cryonics Inc., filled out and signed by his father. The signature gave the Institute the sole right to Leif’s body while it was in a state of deanimation, procedural ethics notwithstanding. Aunt Abigail’s signature on the papers authorizing Leif’s reanimation, according to Jane, was sought as a *courtesy*.

Jane Lapin is the psychologist/counsellor assigned to look after Leif. Her main focus is on Leif’s mental and physical health, and his eventual assimilation into society. She seeks to achieve this by helping Leif to understand both the past and the present. The present is limited to the past five months, but his conversational skills and, therefore, his ability to comprehend and rationalize, have developed rapidly. Although he can remember little of an event three months ago, he can remember with clarity an event of two weeks ago. Unfortunately, as is usually the case with reanimated patients, after five months of therapy it appears to the Institute staff that Leif’s lost memory, the memory of his previous life, is gone for good. As with most memory loss, the flowers get tossed out with the weeds.
“Says here that you were in broadcasting. A radio announcer,” Jane says, as they look at the screen. “In Orangeville. That’s up north, a bit.”

“Oh?”

“They’re closed, out of business, I’m afraid. I looked it up. Want to hear about it?”

“Sure.”

“Your employer bought space on a satellite, then couldn’t afford the talent to support it. Ran out of capital. The global marketplace was already saturated with international programming, and your employer didn’t have the capital or the talent to compete. Their local ratings dropped because the information they offered only appealed to global listeners. Local advertisers weren’t interested in low local demographics, and revenues fell. The global ratings never took off either, because global advertisers weren’t interested in low global ratings—there’s a lot of competition out there, you know. Anyway, a big investment resulted in a major financial loss, and finally, bankruptcy, all in just a few years. The blacksmith couldn’t keep up with Ford. That’s my analogy.”

“How long did it take you to gather all that?”

“About five minutes. Impressed?”

“I’m not sure I followed all that.”

“Sorry. Maybe I didn’t tell it very well.”

“I don’t remember the job.”

“You’re okay with that, aren’t you? You’re quite sound financially.” She keys a button on a remote control unit in her hand to bring up another page of his files on the monitor.

Leif has no family to support him, not even Aunt Abigail, apparently. No past that he can identify with. No references. He does have some financial resources, but he has no tools, no expertise. And, he cannot live indefinitely without an additional source of income. It is a worry put on the shelf, for later, and yet, eventually it must be addressed. For now, however, Jane’s focus is on helping Leif to develop confidence, and to realize a sense of independence.
Although memories of his past life are lost, the life-functioning portions of his memory are completely intact. He has a definitive personality. But he also has many of the characteristics common to reanimates, such as confusion, and bitterness.

They look over his financial situation.

“Silver spoon comes to mind, for some reason,” Leif says. “Do you know the expression?”

“Silver... well...” She notes his memory of jargon. Interesting. “You’ve got some money, and that won’t hurt,” she says, changing the subject. “But it’s not as much as it might look like to you. Is that what it looks like, a lot?”

“Lots of numbers,” he replies.

“Anyway, you have no immediate financial worries. Besides, we’ll find something for you to do.”

“Going to make me fit in?”

“You’ll fit in. You’re alive, just like I am.”

“Yeah?”

“You’ll be okay, I think. Why not? You know, there have been some changes... but then, some things will never change. Sometimes I think that some people think... are afraid that technological change is way ahead of people change. But we still have to eat, breath, sleep... work and worry, just like always. Nothing really different, when you think of it. One shoe goes on after the other.” She looks at Leif. “Like one foot ahead of the other,” she elucidates. “Each journey to success begins with a single step. Miles to go before we sleep, and all that. See? We want to count you among our successes.” She didn’t mean to say that.

“What?”

“I mean... I’m not doing a very good job of this.” She puts the remote down on the bedside table behind her.

“Oh,” Leif murmurs.

“Just caught me... on a bad day, I guess. I haven’t had coffee yet. So, if you’ll excuse me,” she says, standing and exiting the room rather abruptly, “I’ll be
back. The remote’s right there on the table. Do some exploring while I’m gone. There’ll be a test later, ha ha.”

After breakfast, Leif lies in bed, tired, yet unable to go back to sleep, over-stimulated by the cacophony of information. He is happiest when Jane is around. He enjoys the talk and attention. Alone, he has only his own thoughts, fractured memories and references, to make sense of. But what stands out most in his mind are words—words that, like his memories, have some sort of meaning, though the meaning is illusive. It was something that Jane said, a series of words that puzzle and demand clarification. *We want to count you among our successes,* she had said.

Chapter 8

Brother Litzka is in the chapel reciting lauds—the second liturgy of the seven daily “hours” of the *opus Dei*—but his mind is on the garden. It is late April, and the time is right for planting. The rose bushes, meanwhile, which he had pruned in the autumn, were on the verge of budding anew. He is eager to see if the green leaves have sprouted since yesterday. He must wait until daybreak.
Chapter 9

As the days pass, the exercise of Leif’s mind propagates new thoughts and ideas, and stimulates the formulation of questions and inquiries. At one point, he asks Jane about memory itself, and how the mind is able to preserve memory after being frozen solid.

“Memory is physical,” Jane explains, sitting in the chair by his bed, “though it begins as a transmission from your senses, from your eyes and ears and the tips of your fingers,” she says, touching his little finger and wiggling it. “To your brain,” she continues, “where it is processed, made sense of, and filed. The transmission is electrical and chemical, and for the most part automatic, depending on the strength of the emotion that goes with the memory. Emotion can be the substance that binds, and that ultimately determines much of what gets filed where. But that can be misleading, too. Repetition of a thought, an idea, an experience, is important too. Anyway, you were emotionally tied to people and events of the past, but don’t remember them, we think, because these were soft, or undramatic emotions. I mean, you may have loved them dearly, but there was a lack of...uh...drama, something earth shattering. The ability to love remains—that’s imprinted genetically, I would think—though exactly who you loved is forgotten. But the storage of memory, or at least most memory, if it’s got emotional glue...or multiple repetitions to strengthen it, like tamping down the earth to make it stronger, is a physical imprint, like your shoe print in the earth. Therefore, it can be suspended, or frozen, just as your body was. Your ability to feel—because you were feeling all the time—becomes imprinted, rather than those specific events that triggered the emotional response. Repetition, meanwhile, plays second fiddle to emotional impact.”

“So, that’s memory, but we don’t know why you keep some, the functional stuff, and not other parts. It seems arbitrary, but it’s kind of like...like your brain’s energies are devoted to preserving what is most immediately vital to your
survival. You remember concepts like hot and cold, and emotional concepts, experienced through physical sensation, certainly, but also through language, verbal sensation, as it were, and that's why you're able to recall language. Language for communication is not only important, but its imprint is extremely strong, stamped into...into the earth so many times...that it's like prints set in concrete. Repetition, of course, augments the imprint of memory. But emotion plays the primary role here, and emotional events are often stimulated by words. How you interpret the world, and how you are in turn interpreted, is determined in large part by the importance people place on verbal communication. The specific emotional event that was expressed through words, however, gets lost, perhaps because it's not crucial to your survival, and the brain has to make a quick decision when you are dying, or being frozen—deanimated—about where it will focus its defense. Follow?"

"I think so."

"In other words, the brain has a system of prioritizing. It has only so much energy to protect information—we help that along, of course, with drugs—but even then only so much memory can be preserved. There is a central command, sort of, in your head that prioritizes the memories, and chooses those that are most important to survival. Physical memories are also retained, like the programs that maintain vital lines of communications from your brain to your body, like the programs that tell you to breath and blink involuntarily."

She asks herself if the explanation has been absorbed. He seems to have followed her narrative, but she is not sure.

"Don't forget, the literature is all right here," she says, nodding at a number of reading materials that she has obtained and arranged for his benefit on a corner shelf. Most information is easily accessible on the computer monitor built into the wall at the foot of his bed. But many of the patients have been more comfortable with, and responsive to, the older formats.

"If you'd rather," Jane continues, "I could arrange a meeting with one of our technicians. The technical aspects of memory are complicated, just like the
technical aspects of cryonics."

"Does it work for everyone?" Leif asks. "I mean, the reanimation part? Does that work for everyone?"

"No," Jane replies, angry with herself that the focus of the conversation has been sidetracked. It is too much at once, she feels.

"Not for everyone," she begins slowly, with apprehension. "But for most. There were early cases, a number of years ago, where the technology of the day was inadequate, and reanimation in those early attempts was disappointing, to say the least. Some would say premature. Some would say negligent."

"Is that what you would say?"

"Negligent? Perhaps. But that danger is pretty much past." She warms to the subject. "Negligence still exists, and ignorance too, certainly, but much of it is confined to the past, to improper freezing and maintenance. Then, suddenly, people were caught off guard with the program's success around the world. Everyone knew about cryonics and cryopreservation and what answers could be found in nature—there's a wood frog that freezes solid in winter, right here in Ontario, for example, and reanimates each and every spring. We knew what nature could teach and science showed how we could benefit, but nobody really believed it. It was too dramatic a concept, I guess. And most of those that did understand were still surprised that it would work so soon. It's been a shock. It's shaken some people, stirred up...contradicted some philosophies. The theory, even the science, and the law, finally, were with us. But an opposition emerged, an anti-cryonics movement, harmless, mostly, but not totally, and another form of negligence, in my opinion, emerged. Some agitators have received a lot of attention, negative attention mostly, but attention that has, in turn, focussed attention on the science. We've been thoroughly dissected by the media, philosophers, academia, politicians, you name it." She is encouraged by Leif's rapt attention and she continues, though with trepidation, a voice inside her cautioning her enthusiasm.

"They've had a few big scares in Scottsdale—they have a very prominent
facility there, very distinguished. But a few years ago, in California—Rancho Cucamonga, it’s called—extremists bombed a cryonics facility. The explosion destroyed one of the main buildings, and killed a number of Rancho workers. Patients were killed too, though most of the patients were still on the waiting list for reanimation, and never knew what hit them. Maybe they’re still frozen, I don’t know. In fact, no one knows for certain how many of them will ever be reanimated. You have to be alive when you’re deanimated, and most of their patents seem to have been improperly deanimated. They could be cloned someday, perhaps, but that’s another issue, and that doesn’t lessen the tragedy.”

“What do these people want? Why would they do that?”

“There are people out there who criticise the program as elitist, even as an abomination, though religious zealotry is only part of it. Some cite concerns about overpopulation. Some, the cost. Although this institute is privately funded, with income from, for example, bequests from relatives, others in the world may be funded in part, if not wholly, by the taxpayer.”

“So... what do you make of it?”

Jane is impressed that Leif is following the narrative, and continues.

“While I understand the controversy and sympathize with some opposing points of view, I’m for life. I believe that the instinct for survival is inbred—a powerful imprint—and that our desire for life is natural. That’s why we have that central command up here,” she says, pointing to her head, “setting priorities. Maybe we are robbing heaven of souls. Too bad. We’ll all get there eventually. Or elsewhere—some reanimated patients have gone on to become less than model citizens. That shouldn’t be a surprise. But there’s no statistical significance to it, as far as we know.”

“You really like working here, don’t you?” Leif asks.

Jane smiles in response to the question. “Many in the field of medicine watch people die. I get to watch people come back to life. It’s like watching a baby discovering life, with every observation between blinks a new learning experience. Except our patients are rediscovering...awakened with abilities
carried from the past into a new, curious, fascinating setting, though not usually with the same passage of time that you’ve experienced. Still, the world always seems new. And, it’s something to see, believe me.” She looks at her watch. “I have to go, but I did want to mention that the Institute lawyer will come by tomorrow to see you. At about ten a.m.”

“Why?”

“Well, first of all, the Institute has to fulfil its legal responsibilities. We would hate to send you off, only to have you return one day with some sort of legal action against us.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Well, I hope you never do, Leif. There’s no reason why you should. Anyway, he’ll also want to discuss your inheritance, check the facts and figures, and have you pay some bills. Up until your reanimation, your bills were covered by a trust fund set up by your father, but, until then, you were virtually maintenance free. The serious costs began the day you awoke. You’ll get an itemized list, and be asked to pay for services rendered. If you can’t pay for it, the money will come from a general disbursal fund. But that’s not a problem, not in your case anyway. Financially, you were well provided for. The Institute prides itself on its honesty and integrity on matters of funding, but the full history of your account is, of course, available to you, should you want to check the figures for yourself. Actually, that’s something else our lawyer will be talking to you about. The account has to be audited independently. He’ll tell you more about that, too.”

Again, she looks at her watch. “I have to go,” she says with an apologetic tone. She was enjoying the conversation, happy that he appeared to have followed her long-winded monologue.

She briskly departs from the room, leaving Leif to ponder his economic situation. It seems to Leif that his financial status is not an immediate concern (later, he will relate this to Jane, who will wonder about his understanding about money, and what that might insinuate about societal imprints). But, for the first time since being reanimated, Leif begins to seriously consider what he is going to
do with his life. How does one know where he is going, if he barely knows where he has been? Leif looks around the room, seeing it in a different light. He realizes, for the first time, that the Institute is only a temporary home, and that he must one day survive independently in the outside world, in an environment alien to him.

As he is reasoning this out, the presence of the roses by the door attract his attention. He can see the stems through the crystal vase, green filaments entwined in a cloudy, watery embrace at the bottom of the base, cut off from their roots at a uniform angle. He looks up to the top of the floral display, to the red velvet petals which flute out from the top of the stems, each flower grasping, yearning for its own space, for its own view of the world. They are pretty, Leif thinks, but he is uncomfortable with them too, though he is not sure why, and then he remembers the dream. He blinks, and looks at the ceiling, focussing his thoughts against the plain white plaster. He looks back to the flowers, briefly wonders where they came from, and then decides that it is not important.

Chapter 10

Bill Butler sits in the dark at the apartment window and looks out onto the street eighteen floors below. It is late evening, and the pedestrians are difficult to make out in the darkness. With the night vision telescope, properly adjusted, the world appears to be at about mid-day. Down on a corner, to his left, a prostitute is trying to solicit business from passing motorists. From Bill’s high angle, she appears plump, but the angle is deceptive, and Bill has guessed fairly accurately what her true body frame looks like, confirmed once when he happened to see her from street level. He watches now, as she casts out the bait, a nicely formed leg
exposed from within a long black leather coat. When she leans into cars the top of the coat opens slightly above the belt into a v-shape that exposes her cleavage, exaggerated by a black-lace bra. Often as not, she is rejected, and as she walks back to the sidewalk tugging the coat collars back together there is something sad about the change of her posture, a sort of slumping of the shoulders while she tries to keep her head up high, denying an emotion. It is as if, for a moment, a real person emerges from a caricature. She becomes a person Bill finds engaging.

Bill has gotten to know the neighbourhood fairly well, who lives there, and who does not. It all has a kind of rhythm to it, and Bill senses when that rhythm is upset, though it is often difficult to determine the reason for the occasional disturbance, perhaps because Bill is not an active participant, but a covert observer. He is not part of the rhythm. Looking through the window to the scene below is like looking into a film screen, where the characters seem almost fictional (and remotely inconsequential, at best). The plot, as it unfolds, may be somewhat compelling but it, as in a movie, will follow its own script, oblivious to its audience. Bill’s role in the action is not that of a participant, but as an observer, looking in from the outside, like God overlooking the garden, suspecting now and then that Eden is there, somewhere, hidden by an overgrowth of weeds and overcome by apathy. Bill, however, unlike a higher power, is limited to passive witnessing, with a power borne from comfortable detachment rather than an inherent sense or charge of responsibility.

There is an innate aloofness to the assignment, a sense of looking but not touching, of not being touched. It is also extremely dull, and it is difficult not to look down into the streets at least once in a while to see how, in predictable monotony, the plot unfolds. Perhaps there will be an intriguing surprise, something different to awaken and tingle the senses. So what, he thinks, if everything he looks at through the telescope is being recorded? What goes on down there is important too, he will argue. The cars, the pedestrians, the atmosphere, all contribute to who the subject is, are all part of the subject’s world, if only of minor influence and consequence to the subject’s life.
At the moment, but just for the moment, the subject is the hooker leaning into the passenger window of a dark car. She is negotiating, slightly swaying her shoulders, it appears to Bill, over the passenger seat in an inviting dance, the v in her coat and cleavage generous and inviting. Then, suddenly, she has the air of a done deal. She straightens up, opens the passenger door, gets in, and the car is off. The licence plate of the car is recorded in case anything happens to her. Or, to her customer. It’s just Bill, doing his job, he will argue, if anyone asks.

Bill looks around, but there are few other pedestrians of interest. He stands back from the telescope and stretches. Beside him stand a battery of surveillance equipment, including an array of telescopes and binoculars with night vision, heat sensing, and audio telescoping capabilities, all independently wired to monitors and recording devices. The apartment across the street has been mapped and programmed into the equipment's central computer.

Though impressive to look at, however, most of the equipment surrounding Bill has its limitations. It cannot, for example, penetrate brick, concrete, or metal. Internal devices had to be installed in the subject’s apartment, an act that often required a great deal of expertise, time, and trouble. But CSIS had found a way around that.

The key to the magnitude of the investigation is a clever ploy thought up by an anonymous CSIS technician in Ottawa. It involves a device—a C-roach, the technician has dubbed it, though it had been developed and marketed by a Silicon Valley laboratory under a different name. Flat on one side, each C-roach accommodates a suction cup with a flat ring antenna built into the cup that allows electronic signals to be broadcast. The strength of the broadcast can be manipulated, but can be set at no more than three hundred yards. The other side of the C-Roach is parabolic in shape, with a darkly tinted cover hiding a series of sophisticated sensors inside the device. Each C-Roach has a diameter of approximately four centimetres: too large to go unnoticed.

The trick was in determining how to get these devices into places under surveillance. The technician came up with the idea of packaging the device as an
invention to control crawling and flying insects. The directions on each package of
three devices instruct the recipient to attach each device to any unobstructed place
in a window. Once installed, the device, powered by a coupler reacting to the
warmth of the sun, would begin producing super-high frequency sounds that
would effectively repel any insects in the vicinity. A cover letter, complete with a
company name, logo, and contact information (of a CSIS operator, of course),
advise the recipient that the package is completely free of charge, that no
obligation to the manufacturer is involved, and that the company is merely “test-
marketing” the gadget. The package includes a questionnaire to be filled out by the
recipient after three months of trial use. The recipient is also advised that his or
her name had been chosen completely by random. In return for a filled in
questionnaire, the company promises “valuable coupons” to the recipient. The
object of this particular CSIS surveillance operation, his name neither listed nor
otherwise widely circulated, had been addressed simply as “Occupant.” He had
accepted the package and followed the directions, much to the pleasure of the
CSIS officers watching him from the eighteenth floor apartment across the street.

The subject has done nothing wrong. The warrant, approved through the
offices of the Solicitor General and the Federal Court, had only been granted
because of a promise that the otherwise unconstitutional surveillance would be
strictly for the subject’s personal safety. Further, the argument for surveillance
was tied to an assertion that national security figured into the equation. This later
argument carried the most weight with the judge who heard CSIS’s petition,
tipping the judgement against constitutional contentions that the subject should be
notified of the surveillance. To notify the subject was to risk alerting the very
organization under investigation, CSIS successfully argued.

The subject is Dag Oskorian, a registered patient of the Toronto Institute
of Cryonics, now going by the name of Douglas Bleath under the Cryonics
Reanimation Protection Edict 125409C. The warrant allows Bill’s team a limited
surveillance of Bleath’s world.

Bleath, a first year electronics student at Metro’s University of Southern
Ontario, has become highly predictable over the two months since the surveillance began. As expected of one thrust into a new world, Bleath is a private man. He seems to have few friends, if any, and his communications are kept short and to the point. Compared to most surveillance assignments, Bleath is relatively easy to watch. He keeps regular hours of departure and arrival at the apartment.

The sensitive surveillance C-roaches on Bleath's bathroom and bedroom widows, and on the living room sliding glass door that leads out to a small balcony, broadcast data to a receiver across the road. There, for example, Bleath's audio interaction with his home computers are recorded, so that the team knows when their subject is using the vast capabilities of the Net for shopping, entertainment, or educational purposes. Certainly, the Net offers a vast network of interesting diversions for someone who was deanimated in a time when the Internet system was still in its infancy. Of course, many of the diversions available are controversial, straddling the fence between constitutional rights and community tolerance. Bleath's interest in all diversions, including these, has been noted, not only as part of an attempt to create a subject profile, but because ultra-liberal Web sites tend to parallel a response of doubt and suspicion by law enforcement officials to ultra-conservative Web sites. If Bleath was to get into trouble on the Net, these sites, rightly or wrongly, are perceived to be the Pandora's Box of electronic interaction.

One of the main and most common diversions offered by the Net is for sexual gratification. Some call it Net-Sweat. It doesn't much interest Bleath, it seems. Only once in the two months of surveillance had Bleath been tempted to place an order. The conversation was brief, but it caused a mild sensation to the team monitoring him, as the word got around, if only because of the monotony of the surveillance.

"Welcome," a female voice cooed, broadcast across the road by the C-Roach on the living room sliding glass door. "Thank you for calling. You'll find our service reliable and discrete, with complete confidentiality guaranteed and enforced by law. Please make your selection from the following menu."
Bleath had logged out soon after the initial introduction. There was no further computer communication that night. Bleath did not leave the house, nor did anyone show up. The combined data of the heat-sensing camera lenses in all three C-Roaches told the surveillance team that Bleath remained at the computer terminal for only five minutes after the initial introduction. His body heat did not rise appreciably while at the computer, so no virtual contact had taken place. Apparently, although he might have been curious, he was simply not in the mood. Some members of the team thought that strange and speculated for days, agreeing among themselves that after so many years of celibacy Bleath would find Net-Sweat at least an interesting diversion. The Institute might be interested in such news, they reasoned, though it appeared doubtful that would be a prime area of discussion should the Institute ever find out about the surveillance. The team were also mildly relieved that they did not have to witness and record any sexual activity, although, given the boredom factor of the surveillance, such activity may have caused Bleath—Brother Bleath, they begin to call him—to seem more intriguing.

Under the terms of the warrant, the surveillance team is not allowed to physically cut into Bleath's Net activity, and has to rely strictly on audio outputs from his computer. The team would have appreciated more. It is paramount to Bleath's protection to know who might be trying to locate or contact him. A sweep of the Net by an expert with highly sophisticated technology might single out Bleath as an outsider, due to his unfamiliarity with the network, and his probable use of archaic words and phrases. Still, there are millions on the network with a limited command of the English language, so it will probably take more than Bleath's limitations to give him away. He would have to declare himself. Certainly, he would have been advised by Institute employees to keep quiet about his history, and to keep a low profile at least until his assimilation into society was complete. Inevitably, however, once involved in an on-line conversation of any length, questions would be asked. And the team knows that key phrase searches may have been programmed in search of particular responses on the Net.
Likewise, the team could utilize the same technology, and did indeed record Bleath’s limited involvement on the Net as best they could, scrutinising every audio signal for its content. However, constitutional laws prohibited excessive surveillance, and the team had to meet the terms of the warrant, and deal with its imposed limitations. An investigation into a particular Web site or hacker would constitute, within reason, only cautious inquiries without further extensions to the existing warrant. Still, there appeared to be no threat to Bleath, as far as could be determined. To those monitoring the warrant’s execution, that remains the most relevant data to be ascertained.

Bleath’s assimilation into the modern world has shown few surprises. He is fairly predictable, and is therefore a predictably tedious study for the surveillance team. After two months of surveillance the team is showing signs of stress. Bill and Alana, as the team leaders, have it the worst. It is their job to assess the volumes of daily surveillance data, coordinate schedules, and to sit and watch. They switch day and evening shifts on a weekly basis, and take whoever is available from the intelligence officer apprenticeship pool—their term for recent recruits from Canadian universities—for overnight and weekend shifts. Bill and Alana have also been constantly on call. But no calls have ever come for them pertaining to the Bleath surveillance. It is that boring.

Until the tenth week of the surveillance. Bill is at home, sleeping. Because of a shortage of manpower in the apprenticeship pool, Bill and Alana have had to work twelve-hour shifts over the past two weeks, and will continue to do so, until at least the coming Sunday night when, they have been assured, an apprentice will be found. In the meantime, they work and sleep, and log their overtime. The overnight twelve-hour shift pays a bonus differential plus overtime, and Alana’s desire for the extra money exceeds Bill’s. But Bill does not fish, Alana does not redecorate, and each work the assignment with a growing irritation softened only slightly by the thought of extra pay.

It is Alana’s shift, a Friday evening. Bleath arrives back from the university at 7:14 p.m. He is a little later than usual, but a couple of grocery bags seem to
account for the discrepancy. At 10:15 p.m., Bleath, fresh from a quick shower, goes to bed. Alana, watching the monitors, writes a note for Bill on a post-it and sticks it to the window looking across to Bleath’s apartment:

Bill: Is his hair sticking up? Just wondering. Reliably and discreetly yours (ha ha), A.

At 10:28 p.m., a sensor on the team’s main computer triggers a repetitive bleep. Alana, sneaking a cigarette in the bathroom of the rented apartment and blowing the smoke up into the ventilator, hurriedly sniffs it out under the tap of the sink, tosses the butt into a wastebasket, and runs back into the darkened living room where the monitoring equipment is set up. She looks at the monitor. Bleath is still in bed. With the computer still bleeping, she clicks the computer’s cursor on the DATA symbol. Bleath’s vital statistics appear on the screen:

Calibrated Multispectral Analysis
Equipment status: Audio✓
   Visible✓
   Infrared✓
   Thermal infrared✓
Respiration: Searching...
Body Temperature: 36.2° Celsius  
Conclusion: Death of Subject.

“Hell,” Alana murmurs, as she keys the computer for Bill’s line. She waits impatiently for a half-minute until Bill responds.

“Yes? Alana?” she finally hears.


“Where is he?” Bill replies, his voice sleepy and unanimated.

“In bed. He’s perfectly still and his body’s getting cold. What’s the
procedure here, what do we do?"

Bill’s face appears on the screen. He appears pale, the redness of his complexion muted, and his hair is mussed. “Are you sure he’s dead?” he asks, wiping the sleep from his eyes. He takes the news with a professional sobriety—he’s had these calls before—although Alana’s excitement is contagious.

“Send me the vitals, Alana,” he says, after Alana assures him that Bleath is deceased, at least, according to the sensors.

She forwards the appropriate electronic documentation, and as Bill becomes more clear-headed he becomes amused by her excitement.

“Cold as ice!” he exclaims with a touch of exaggerated dramatics, hoping that a bit of levity, if she grasps his intentions and responds accordingly, will calm her down. It does not.

“What?” she exclaims.

“Um, okay, I see it, Alana,” he says disappointed in himself, his tone serious again. “He’s dead, all right.” Bill knows that, as senior officer, he has to take control. Alana expects this, he thinks. But it nags at him, this lack of cohesiveness, of *partnership*. Still, he knows from experience, from professional *instinct*, what actions need to be taken. To *not* take control could result in more trouble for both of them.

“Go over to the apartment...no, wait, first, have you called this in?”

“No.”

“Call it in. I want...forensics should be there first and foremost. Okay?” He tries his best not to sound too bossy. He’s been through a number of partners over the years, and lost a few good ones. He especially likes Alana, and wants to hang onto her.

“Will do,” she replies, her voice graduating to a professional confidence—her usual self. Bill notes the change of tone with mixed feelings. He is attracted to her strong sense of independence, but enjoys too his opportunities to play the savvy big brother.

“Then,” he continues, “you need to wake up the apartment supervisor
...wait...here comes his name.” They both see it. “Dial him up on the Net, identify yourself, let him see you. I’ll be there in about...twenty minutes. We know Bleath’s dead, so don’t go in without forensics. Don’t worry about his status as a donor,” he adds. “It’ll be too late.”

Alana crinkles her forehead, puzzled. A donor?

“Just guard Bleath’s door,” Bill continues, “and tell the super to wait at the front door for forensics. That’s all he needs to know. Tell him to keep quiet about this, too. We don’t want people corrupting evidence, if there is any evidence to corrupt. Okay?”

“Gotcha, Bill. See you in a bit.”

“Right. Oh. Alana?”

“Yeah?

“If the super’s not in, call anyone on the first floor and get them to let you in, okay?”

“Right.”

The pulse tone on Floyd Simms’ computer bleeps its annoying tone. Simms mistakenly hits the wrong mute button on the remote by his bed and the tone continues. Simms angrily sits up and hits the answer button. Alana’s face appears on a corner of his large screen monitor at the end of his bed. The video image, though small, is annoying in its brightness and clarity. Simms is about to deliver something from his arsenal of obscenities, words not unfamiliar to his more troublesome tenants, when he thinks he recognizes that the image is that of an official of the law. He reaches for his glasses on the bedside table, puts them on, then presses a button on the remote to magnify the on-screen image. He reads the title below her face: Chen ARW 795-SO CSIS Intelligence Officer. His attitude changes.

“Yes, Officer, can I help you?” he asks, curious now, but still annoyed, imagining tenant trouble.

His identity is easily verified. His photo from the CSIS mainframe—
Cath—pops up in the top right corner of Alana’s monitor. She knows it is him, but asks anyway.

“Floyd Raymond Simms, Superintendent of Rock Towers?”

“That’s right.”

“Sir, I have some urgent business at your building,” she says, using a measured tone of voice most often reserved for the public. She begins to calm as she explains her business. “Mr. Simms, I need you to meet me at the front door of your building in five minutes, please.”

“What is this about, Officer?” Simms responds, adjusting his glasses.

“Does this concern one of my tenants?”

“Yes, Mr. Simms. I’ll tell you more when I see you. Please do not call anyone until I have spoken with you in person. Do you understand?”

“Five minutes, then,” Simms agrees wearily. He watches as the screen goes blank.

Simms, in an old white shirt hanging lazily over blue work pants, watches through the lobby monitor as Alana approaches the building. She rings the buzzer.

“Pass your ID card over the eye,” Simms says. Her identity as a CSIS officer is verified, though it is not necessary—he had seen her only minutes before on his bedroom monitor—and he pushes open the massive steel door.

“Just a formality,” he says.

“I understand,” Alana replies. Indeed, they had traded courtesies while stressing territorial rights. To double-check her identity gives him a legitimacy, suggesting strongly that he is a professional too, of sorts, though disadvantaged by both her authority and the privileged information that she so obviously knows.

Alana enters and stops by the next entry door—glass, this time—immediately in front of her. To her right is a wall of stainless steel mailboxes and a video call system; to her left a checked wall made up of tiny red and white tiles. The floor consists of faded brown cracked tiles that do not match the rest of the lobby’s décor. Dirt and dust congregate at the edges of the tiny space. The
cleaning is obviously superficial. The lobby is functional, but old and neglected. It matches the exterior of the building, somehow, the exterior that has been under surveillance for over two months. Alana knows it well, and notes the interior’s details with interest.

“I need access to eighteen-eighteen, Mr. Simms,” she says after he has unlocked the second door. She notices his feet. He is wearing black flip-flops, a strap wedged between his toes. She looks up again. He is no taller than she, and is much older and worse for wear. This is the man, she thinks, that’s been looking after our building? She is disappointed.

“Eighteen-eighteen? That would be... uh... Mr. Bleath.” He has a two-day growth of beard, and his breath smells of whiskey and cigarettes in an aged and rank combination.

“Yes,” she confirms, taking a step back from Simms. “I would ask you to keep quiet about this, for now. There’s no danger here, and there’s no reason to have people up and around the hallways keeping us from doing our job.”

“Us?” Simms asks, scratching his whiskers.

“There are more CSIS officials on the way. I would be grateful to you if you would stand by the door and let them in as they arrive.”

“Certainly,” he says, his scratching complete. “Anything I can do to help. Here’s the pass card,” he adds, extracting a white plastic card from the upper pocket of his shirt. “You’ll need it to get in to Bleath’s apartment. Don’t forget to return it, will you?”

Alana takes the card and walks through to the elevators. The air clears and she inhales deeply. A black elevator door opens, and she enters and turns around to press the button for the eighteenth floor. Just as the doors close, she notices Simms. Standing at the glass door, he looks at her, his head tilted in curiosity, his hands unconsciously patting himself down, a familiar act of one looking for cigarettes.

She exits the elevator on the eighteenth floor, finds apartment 1818 and waits. Ten minutes later, Bill arrives with company: the Regional Director General
from CSIS South on Front Street, and three men from forensics.

Officer Stephano Dahl is the leader of the forensics team. Both Alana and Bill have worked with him a number of times before. The other two forensics officers, Prior and Smith, are known to Bill and Alana little more than by their names. Alana nods to Bleath’s door and they go immediately to work, crouching down in front of it and unloading two of the four metal cases they have brought with them.

Everybody knows RDG Martin Yancey. A CSIS veteran, he is a short, rounded man of middle age, an expert in police ethics, and respected throughout the district command as a diplomatic tour de force. His preference for bow ties—he has chosen a yellow one, at the moment—helps distinguish him from the crowd of CSIS executives, and somehow makes him more approachable. For now, he keeps quiet, ready to offer the benefits of his experience upon request. He stands off to one side, his hands in the pockets of his light brown corduroy jacket.

“Bit of a mystery here?” Stephano asks Bill. He is a man comparable to Bill in both height and bulk.

“A cryonics grad,” Bill explains.

“Really? That’s interesting. It didn’t say that on his readout. But I guess it wouldn’t. Did you touch the door, Alana?” he asks, as his associates began to scope the door for evidence.”

“Nope,” Alana replies.

“Nice jacket,” he says to her.

“Genuine leather.”

“Nice. I’ve got shoes like that.” He winks at her.

“The cause of death is the first mystery,” Bill says, ignoring Stephano’s platitudes.

“Got three sets of prints here,” Officer Prior says to Stephano. Prior studies the readout from his portable computer. “Got an ID on the occupant, those are the freshest prints, and the other two...a few weeks old...the other two are...one is Floyd Raymond Simms, superintendent...of this building. This is Rock
Towers, right?"

"Right," Alana says.

"And Jonathan Gilbert Billings, a student," Prior continues, "University of Southern Ontario, electronics major... twenty years old. Other prints are no good. Can’t ID them. Want more?"

"That’s enough for now," Bill says.

"You want a full op on this?" Stephano asks Bill. "All the bells and whistles?"

"Yep," Bill nods. His hair remains as dishevelled as when Alana last saw him on the monitor across the street.

"Let’s drill it, then. Thom?"

Thom Smith, a compact, solid man with black hair cut to a stubble, gets a drill out of his case, and connects a blue plastic tube from a portable computer in his case to an aperture on the drill’s handle. Then, he drills a small hole into the door with a self-sealing hollowed drill bit. He holds the drill to the door and, as a sample of Bleath’s environment flows through the drill, down the blue tube, and into the portable computer in the steel case, Prior checks the analysis on the monitor.

"No nicotine," Prior says. "Common pollutants. It’s a green light."

"We can go in now," Stephano says. Then, noticing that Alana has a pass card in hand, he says, "Alana? That open the door?"

"Yeah." She is about to run the pass card over the electronic eye, when an elevator door opens at the end of the hallway and Floyd Simms emerges, the noise from his flip-flops broadcasting his presence. He stops and stands stiffly on the worn out carpet, his head still tilted in curiosity, just as Alana last saw him, with his hands still absentely patting himself down.

"What is it, Mr. Simms?" Alana asks.

"Well," says Simms, awkwardly. "If you have no need of me..."

"We may need you again Mr. Simms. Please wait by the front door. We’ll inconvenience you as little as possible, I promise you."
“Fine, fine, I’ll be at the front door if you need me.” The officers watch as he turns and flip-flops back into the elevator, his hands patting his ass pockets as he disappears out of view.

That’s odd, Simms thinks, as the elevator descends to the first floor. He runs his hand through his sparse black hair. He has never seen an apartment door receive so much study. Now that he thinks about it, the tenant in 1818 did seem kind of odd. He said that he was from Ottawa, but he sounded and acted a bit strange, like he was a foreigner of some kind. Kind of stupid-like, though he said he was a university student. He wasn’t a bad tenant, but... what were they doing to that door? Simms decides to call his nephew, Pete Simms, a big-shot columnist with the Metro Sun.

Having determined that the air in 1818 is safe to breath, the two intelligence officers, the RDG, and the three forensic scientists enter the room, led by Prior, who scopes the rooms between the front door and Bleath’s bedroom for data before possible evidence can be corrupted. Then, following a path set by Prior, the team proceeds to Bleath’s bedroom. Prior turns on the overhead light with a switch by the bedroom door. On the bed, under blankets, Bleath lies on his side with his mouth slightly agape. Prior scopes the bedroom and then pulls the blankets off Bleath’s corpse. Prior and Stephano confer over the body.

Stephano analyzes the body with a portable scanner. Then, with the help of Thom Smith, he turns the body over and scans again. He reads into a palm-sized recorder. “The time is 11:01 p.m. Time of death: approximately 10:25 p.m. Cause of death: unknown. Suspect heart failure.” He turns to the group, looking for a reaction among the blank faces. “I see no reason to do a remote autopsy,” he says. “Any arguments?”

Bill addresses Yancey. “Martin?”

Prior, standing by the bedroom window, points upwards. “You’ve got a cockroach up here on the glass,” he says.
“We won’t be needing that anymore.” Bill replies. “There’s two more, one
in the bathroom, and one in the living room.”

They all watch in limited fascination as Prior reaches up, and twists the C-
roach until the suction cup releases. He stands, holding the device in his palm as if
it were an exotic pet.

Martin, his hands still in his jacket pockets, is the first to look back to the
body. “I think that it would be a good idea if the chief coroner handled this
personally. No offence, Mr. Dahl,” he says, looking up at Stephano.

“None taken,” Stephano replies. “But there’s no need for a remote.”

“No, I don’t see any,” Martin agrees. “Bill?”

“Okay by me.”

“We’ll call for the coroner’s wagon and get on with packaging then,”
Stephano says. “I’ll contact the chief coroner right away to meet us at the lab.”

“Tell him it’s at my request,” Martin says, “and that I’ll be in touch with
him at the lab. I’d like you to witness the autopsy, though.”

Stephano pauses, thinking. “Anything you want to tell me?” he asks
Martin. “Or want me to know? Or that I want to know?”

“No, I think that’s all for now,” Martin says cryptically, the nuance not lost
on Stephano, who is getting increasingly curious. He has never seen a cryonics
grad in the flesh before, and this grad was dead, surrounded by CSIS personnel.

“How about you, Bill?” Stephano asks, fishing for any information he can
get. “Anything?”

“How’s your handicap these days?”

Stephano catches Bill’s drift, and laughs. They all understand the unstated
message.

“Yeah, we’re due, aren’t we,” Stephano says, allowing the subject of the
conversation to be changed.

“I may be able to swing the Abbey some time, if you’re interested,” Bill
says.

“The Abbey? You? The great angler? When do you have time to golf?”
“Haven’t played in a while, but I’ve got a few passes. Don’t ask,” he adds, pointing to Martin’s upper coat pocket.

Stephano looks to Martin’s chest and mouths a silent oh, while Martin lifts an eyebrow and shakes a finger at him with mock chastisement.

As the three forensic scientists package the body and begin to detail the apartment, Bill, Alana, and Martin confer in the hallway. When Bill picked up Martin en route to Rock Towers, they agreed that everything would be done by the book. That meant that all would be recorded, and Martin had been recording on a small machine in his upper coat pocket. In the hallway, Martin pulls the recording device out of his pocket, and presses the pause button. The tiny green light on the machine turns to yellow.

“You can’t pick this up across the road, can you?” Martin asks Bill.

“No,” says Bill. “It’s set up just for the apartment. Anyway, the roaches are down, now.”

“Okay. Thirty seconds. That’s all. Anything you have to say that can’t wait until later? Anything to add that you didn’t say in the car?”

“No,” Bill replies, shaking his head. “Alana?”

“No.”

“Then,” Martin says, “is it agreed that our conversation will continue to omit references to certain aspects of this case?” As he speaks, he nods his head, thus both advising and hurrying the response.

“Agreed,” says Bill.

“Agreed,” says Alana.

“And no more about golf at the Abbey, either,” Martin says to Bill, while winking at Alana. “It isn’t professional.”

“His game isn’t, either,” Alana comments.

Bill is about to protest, when Martin switches the machine back on to its record mode. He shows the detectives that the yellow light has turned back to green, and places it back in his upper coat pocket.

“I do not see any evidence of foul play. Let’s see what forensics comes up
with. I’d like that door sealed and the super advised to keep his hands off it.
That’s all for now. It’s late. What do you say we meet at ten a.m. in my office?"

“That would be fine, Martin,” Bill answers.

“I’ll grab a cab. See you in the morning, then. Nice to see you again, Officer Chen.” He smiles and turns, and begins walking down the hallway.

“Good-night, Mr. Yancey.” Alana says, as the two officers watch the celebrated CSIS official approach the elevator doors with a vigour that defies both his age and the time of night.

Alana advises Floyd Simms to go to bed. He is not advised further to keep quiet about Bleath. Enough suspicion has been raised as it is.

Later, when the forensics team has completed its work, the door to apartment 1818 is sealed with an electronic glue and the lock code is changed to keep out nosy supers.

Bill’s car glides quietly over the dark streets through Metro in the direction of Alana’s apartment, a ten-minute ride from Rock Towers. The traffic is light.

“Why don’t you stop for a coffee when we get to my apartment?” Alana asks. “It will give us a chance to go over any loose threads.”

“I’m too tired,” Bill replies. He can barely believe what he is saying. He’s never been past Alana’s front hallway. To get her alone at this time of night…but hell, they were both too tired, he thinks, even if she is interested, which she probably isn’t. “How about we meet in the office at nine?” he suggests. “That’ll give us an hour with the forensics report before we meet with Martin.”

“Should the local police be in on this now?”

“They should be advised,” Bill replies, as he mulls it over. The media, he thinks, should also be advised, with limitations. But Martin was the expert on that matter. “Martin can handle the diplomatic angles. That’s his territory.”

They continue to drive down the quiet streets of Metro. Alana yawns. “I could use some sleep. Two months of boring surveillance can make one out of
shape for an actual event. How about you?”

Lord tempt me, Bill thinks. “Yeah, I’m tired too,” he says.

However, neither Bill nor Alana will get much sleep on this night. Just as Bill pulls up to Alana’s apartment, a monitor on the car’s dashboard signals that Martin is calling.

“Wonder what he wants,” Bill says to Alana. “I’m surprised he’s still up.” He presses a button on the dash. “Hi, Martin.”

“Hi, folks. Glad I caught you two. I know it’s late, but I think that it would be a good idea if we got together. I’m at the downtown office right now. How soon can you get here?”

“Ten minutes, Martin. We’re on our way.”

“Fine. See you then.”

The screen goes blank, and Bill turns the car back out on the road. Alana is silent for about twenty seconds. Then, her curiosity piquing, she asks, “What do you think this is all about?”

“Don’t know,” Bill replies. “But Martin wouldn’t have asked if it wasn’t important. Something’s up. Something couldn’t wait ‘till morning.”
Chapter 11

The two officers pass through the front doors of the Canadian National building on Front Street, a building set back slightly from the street, dwarfed on one side by the Metro Convention Centre and on the other side by the walkway to the huge SkyDome. Two bulky security guards dressed in dark blue sweaters and grey pants allow their passage—their identities were confirmed via a video identity check the instant they walked through the doors. One of the guards greets them with a nod and a professionally serious “Good Morning.”

“Mornin’,” Bill nods back. It is almost four a.m., and the detectives squint as their eyes adjust to the bright fluorescent lighting. To their right, darkened and locked up for the night, is a small sports store that cashes in on a major local attraction by specializing in Blue Jays paraphernalia. During the days and evenings the area is a constant beehive of activity. The lobby swarms with rushes of souvenir hunters and building employees on their breaks. In business hours, lawyers, importers, investors, salespeople and other assorted office personnel, including CSIS employees, mill around the entranceway, coming or going, or merely out for a breath of fresh air or to stretch their legs. Outside, the sidewalks might be full of pedestrians, some stopping to buy from ice cream or hot dog vendors or to wave down a passing taxi or rickshaw. Some people wander aimlessly, shopping or sightseeing, while others move at a faster pace, late for an appointment. Pedestrians can also be seen attempting to avoid as best they can the panhandlers holding hats out with the familiar cardboard signs that beg Spare change for the homeless.

In the dark and quiet of the early morning, the contrast is stark. The city has cooled, the day’s promise of spring curbed by the night’s lagging reminder of winter. The traffic is light and parking is a possibility. The sidewalks are devoid of any manner of pedestrians. Inside, the lobby is still, and strangely serene. Bill
and Alana walk from the lobby to an alcove on their left, which leads to the elevators. At the elevators they run identification cards through the elevator’s entry security system, the elevator doors open, and they enter. On the tenth floor, they pass through another security check and walk through to the back of a busy communications office. There, the brown and grey drabness of the glassed-in lobby is replaced by more congenial surroundings, as if the lobby were created to appease those impressed by funereal officialdom, while the actual work place is decorated to induce tranquillity and productivity. While the lobby suggests a sense of formidability, the halls and office space suggest congeniality, a human face for an otherwise powerful national entity.

Bill and Alana receive curious glances from the people who staff the floor, people who, at this time of the morning, welcome the unexpected. Martin’s corner office has a glass wall covered with vertical blinds, open at the moment, through which he can see the two officers approach. He stands up from his desk, and greets them at the door.

“Come in, come in. Coffee’s on,” he says, pointing to the coffee maker.

“It’s a how-many-cup-night, Martin?” Bill asks.

“Oh, half a dozen, I think,” Martin replies, winking at Alana.

*Half a dozen?* Alana knows the significance of the response—they were going to be there for a while—but smiles politely anyway.

“Have a seat, Officer Chen. I’m sorry, I don’t know you very well, but seeing as how we’re going to be working together for a while, I wonder if I might call you by your first name, and you call me Martin.”

_A while?_ The significance of that phrase is not lost on Alana either. Yancey’s in it for the duration, she thinks. So, she guesses, are she and Bill.

“That’s fine,” she replies. Yancey seems to be the sweetheart that she heard he is, and she is grateful for that, not in the mood for the stuffy type of etiquette often required when dealing with upper brass. He is even shorter than he first appeared, and with his curly grey locks, light brown corduroy jacket, and trademark bow tie, he reminds her affectionately of a Norman Rockwell character.
“Well,” Martin begins, pulling on the wings of his yellow bow tie with a comic jest, “I suppose you’re both wondering why I called you here at this time of the morning. Well, I ran into a familiar name when I left Rock Towers. Pete Simms. Know him?”

“Oh shit,” Alana exclaims. “Any relation to the super?”

“What’s his name?” Martin asks.

“Floyd Simms.”

“Yes, Simms, I remember you called him that when he came up. Well, that explains that.”

“Sorry,”

“Wait,” Bill says. “I’m not following this.”

“Pete Simms is with the Sun,” Alana explains. “A columnist.”

“The super must be related to him,” says Martin. “Pete Simms is a very influential writer. He’s based at the Sun, but he’s syndicated across the country. His speciality is conspiracy. Everything’s a conspiracy, didn’t you know?”

“Lovely. But what did he want with you?” Bill asks. “What did he say? I mean, if he’s related to the super, then it’s reasonable to assume why he was there tonight, at Rock Towers. But...well, I guess this could make for some interesting reading. But he couldn’t have known that. I mean...”

“I agree,” says Martin. “Maybe it’s a slow week for him. The super couldn’t have told him much. Still, it is odd that a journalist of that calibre would pay us a personal visit at that time of night without something in mind. Instinct, maybe. Professional intuition. Alana, what did you tell him?”

“The super? Nothing. Just to stay by the door.”

“Well,” says Martin, “six plainclothes CSIS officials, including three forensics officers with a load of curious looking cases, congregating anywhere that late at night certainly signals that something is going on. Anyway, there he was upon my exit from Rock Towers, and I had some explaining to do. But here’s the problem. Or, problem number one, anyway. Bill, I really don’t know much about what’s going on here. You filled me in as best you could on the way there, but
when I got back here I found that I couldn’t access the case. I need a password. Can I have it, or are there things that I shouldn’t or can’t know about this case?”

“Not at all,” Bill replies. “It’s on voice I. D. I’ll have to get you in. Computer, voice identification.” The computer voice link on Martin’s desk responds to Bill’s command with its familiar baritone voice.

“Name please?”
“William Butler.”
“Verified.”
“Look Up File...W. B. C. S. I. S. B. L. T. H. That’s 9227472584.”

The file title comes up on the desk monitor. The three crowd in behind the desk to view the screen.

“I’ll program a voice key for you on this file before we’re done here, Martin,” Bill says, grateful that initiating that particular program is both outside of Roadkill’s domain and within Bill’s own area of computer expertise.

“Fine.” Martin responds. “But how about this first? The two of you give me the story, and I’ll fill in the blanks later from the file.”

An hour later, the detectives, with supplementary information from the WBCSISBLTH computer file, have related to Martin the most pertinent information of the case.

“I think,” Martin says, “that it would be advisable to inform the Institute immediately. We also have to deal with Simms at the Sun. I was able to delay his questions only by suggesting I’d have more information by daybreak. First, of course, I told him to call Ottawa. But he knew what that meant, and he was persistent. I also verified that we had a dead man who had been under surveillance, so I really had to promise him something.”

“Verified?” Alana asks.

“Yes. The super must have told him enough to lead him to that conclusion. Anyway, he asked if we had a corpse, and I said yes. But I did not tell him the who or why. I think that we better deal with the Institute first. Again, everything we have done has been completely above board, as far as I can see, and there’s no
reason not to keep it that way. Anything to add?”

“’Nope,’ Bill responds, thinking about it. ‘Nothing offhand, anyway.’

‘Let’s contact the Institute now, then,’” Martin decides, “and get that over
with. Maybe we can learn something more about Mr. Bleath.”

Within an hour, a conference call is set up with Institute personnel,
including the director, A.J. Cummings, a lawyer, and the heads of public relations
and security. All are arrayed on a split screen for Bill, Alana and Martin to see.
An hour later, most of the facts have been clarified. What is left is a determination
of what should happen next.

“It would have been a simple thing for you to have advised us,” says
Cummings, a good looking middle-aged man straight from the pages of
Gentleman’s Quarterly, big in the shoulders in an expensive looking suit jacket—
he had taken the time to dress up, apparently. He has steel blue eyes and black
hair slicked straight back over his head. His voice conveys a professional sense of
authority and control, though his face appears flushed. “I understand,” he
continues, “what it is you have tried to do. But, as you know, we have our own
security staff here whose duties include the well being of our patients, like Mr.
Bleath, for instance. If they had tripped over your people, or vice-versa, we could
have had a real mess on our hands. Do you not think it would be better in the
future if you were to advise us of such activities? I’m not being accusatory here.”

“I understand,” Martin responds, matching Cummings’ diplomatic tone,
“and your concerns are valid. Again, it is not our intention to interfere with the
responsibilities of the Institute. Our concerns go beyond that. I regret, once
again, that I cannot go into detail at this time about our purpose. I must
emphasize, however, that, although our mission statement can not be revealed in
its entirety, in no way was the surveillance meant to interfere with the affairs of
either the Institute or Mr. Bleath. Our purpose was to protect both.”

“As you will show?”

“Eventually, I hope, yes.”

“I see. And may we have access to the autopsy?”
“Yes. Send who you want over to the coroner’s office right away. Make
sure they all bring ID. I’ll make the necessary arrangements. They’ll be
expected.”

“Right then. It’s been a late night.”

“Yes. And we still have Simms from the *Sun* to deal with.”

“A bit of bad luck, I’m afraid. However, I agree that everything has been
basically above board. That said, we’re both familiar with the dangers that people
like Bleath face. The media blows it out of proportion, perhaps, but there it is.
Most of the public are firmly behind the program. Still, I would prefer to nip this
in the bud as quickly as possible. That would entail openness about what has gone
on. Still, to be sure…um…about our position, I’d like to get those autopsy results
as soon as possible and get back to you. Preliminary stuff anyway. I would
suggest a preliminary report verified by our man by, say, nine a.m., and then we’ll
talk again. Agreed?”

“Agreed,” Martin responds.

“Once the dust has settled,” the Institute director continues, “we will
discuss any future endeavours?”

“There will be a discussion. That’s all I can promise you.”

“All right. Off until nine.”

Martin echoes the command “Off” and the communication is terminated.

“Okay, you two,” he says, turning his attention to Bill and Alana. “Off to
bed. Be back here for ten.”

“Won’t you need us for nine?” Bill asks.

“I’ll handle nine, and Simms, too. Then, we’ll talk. You two can handle
the next twelve hours. Well, some of it anyway. I’ll brief you at ten, and we’ll go
from there.”

“Are you all right?” Alana asks Martin.

Martin, who had looked fresh at Rock Towers, now appears tired and
worn. He grabs the ends of his bow tie and gives them a tug.

“I’m fine. It goes with the territory. As you know, these kind of events do
not always happen conveniently during business hours. You two call it a night. Get some sleep. Tomorrow won’t be so bad. Bleath can only die once.”

Alana and Bill look at Martin knowingly. Martin looks back, realizing by their stares that he has missed something. He thinks about it, and then it hits him. He smiles.

“Okay, okay,” he says. “Twice. But not technically, the way I understand it.”

“Not technically,” Bill agrees.

“Spiritually?” Alana offers.

“That,” Martin observes, “is a good question.”

Bill drives Alana back to her apartment. It is 6:30 a.m.

“How long do you think this case will go on for us?” Alana asks.

“Not long. It was a natural death, as far as I can see, though Bleath was rather young.”

“It’s interesting though, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Bill concedes, without enthusiasm.

“I mean, Bleath had two lives. One before, and one after, with a good sized gap in-between.”

They drive along without speaking for a few minutes, both lost in thought.

“It doesn’t seem like much of a life,” Alana says softly, her voice melding gently against the previous silence. “This one, I mean, for him. I wonder what his first life was like. Bill, why wasn’t that in our files?”

“His first life? Security. The Institute has those files, and the Institute couldn’t know about us.”

“I know that. But isn’t it relevant? Shouldn’t we know as much as we can about who it is we’re watching? I mean, we certainly had the time to think about it. Two months!”

“Not much we could do about it.”

“I know,” she admits.
“I don’t know much about the whole thing, really. Cryonics and cryobiology, and all that. Do you?”

“Just the human...the angles the media takes on it. The new lives. The terrorist angle. But I don’t know how they do it...how they, medically speaking, bring them back.”

Bill makes a right hand turn onto Alana’s street. They are about two kilometres away from her house. The road is well lit by the streetlights and the fluorescent and neon storefront signs.

“Too bad we couldn’t bring Bleath back again,” Bill notes. Alana looks into the window of an all night coffee shop as they pass it. A few patrons linger in their seats.

She looks at Bill. “I think that you have to put them in the deep freeze before they’re really dead. Saves brain cells or something.”

“Yeah?”

“Keeps cells from crystallizing.”

“Prevents freezer burn?”

Alana laughs. “I don’t know. I’m tired.” She rests her head against the passenger window.

They drive the next few minutes in silence again. Finally, Bill pulls the car up to the front of Alana’s apartment building.

“Well, here we are,” Alana says. “See you at...in a few hours. Ten?”

“Noon will do it, I think. I’ll catch up with Martin. It’ll be about your bedtime, at ten.”

“I’ll sleep, but what about you?”

“I’ll be okay, but your body’s used to the nightshift. You might have trouble getting to sleep. But you’ll need it, so try your best. Besides, I think I owe you for some other case.”

“You don’t have to sell me on this. I’m going right to bed. Are you sure noon’s okay?”

“Yep.”
“Okay. If you say so.”

Bill looks across her to the glass doors of the apartment lobby. “It had to be this week,” he says, “when we’re already pulling twelve-hour shifts. You did a good job tonight, by the way.”

“Mostly I just watched and listened. I’m not sure if I like the diplomatic part of the job.”

“You just don’t know how good you are at it. You handled the super nicely, I thought, too.”

“To see ourselves as others see us, huh, Bill?”

“Something like that.”

“You know,” she says, leaning against the passenger door, not seeming to be in a hurry to move. Her voice is soft and sleepy. “Cummings and his people didn’t look very pleased when all was said and done.”

“Would you be?” Bill asks. “It’s got to be pretty unusual for them to be up at this time of the night. It’s Saturday now, and their weekend is shot too, like ours.”

“No, not that, I mean something else. The security guy.”

“Fox?”

“Yeah. And Cummings, too. The others just looked tired. But Fox and Cummings looked... worried? A little red-faced?”

“Didn’t notice. Maybe you’re right. I might have a look at the tapes. I’ll ask Martin about that.”

“Maybe I’m seeing something that isn’t there.”

“Maybe. Maybe not. Think about it tomorrow. Get some sleep.”

“See you at noon, Bill. I’ll bring the donuts.”

“How cliché.”

“I’ll need the energy. So will you.” She straightens, yawns, and opens the passenger door. “See ya!” she says, getting out of the car.

Bill watches until she is safely in the lobby of her apartment, and then drives back out onto the street. The night has not yet ended, but it will be notably
brighter by the time he reaches his own apartment. The birth of a new day, he thinks. And then he wonders why Bleath couldn’t be brought back to life. A third time. Like a third day. The sun goes down each night, but returns each morning. It never dies. It just...goes away for a bit. Where is death in that? Why is there no break in that continuum?

Alana climbs into bed, and turns off the light on her bedside table. Something is bothering her about Fox and Cummings. There was something not quite right about their reactions to the discussion. But Bill was right. Sleep first. Think about it tomorrow.

Chapter 12

Back at the Toronto Institute of Cryonics, A.J. Cummings, and his head of security, Frederick T. Fox, slip into Cummings’ office, and close the door. The director’s office has a funereal officialdom similar to that of the CSIS lobby on Front Street.

Cummings sits behind his desk. Fox, thin and wiry, takes a seat opposite the director. Cummings combs back his hair with the palm of his hands. “You’re still sure all this is going to work?” he asks. There is an implicit warning in his tone.

“I had twenty years with the CIA, you know that,” Fox sighs. He has been through this with Cummings many times before.

“No mistakes?”

“None.”

“I’ve had some misgivings.”
“That’s natural.”

“I mean, I’ve been... I’ve tested him.”

Fox straightens in his chair. “You’ve what? What do you mean? What did you do?”

“Well, nothing really.”

“I think you better tell me, Mr. Cummings.”

“Really, it was nothing. I put some flowers in his room.” And a newspaper by his bed, he doesn’t add.

“That’s it? What was that supposed to do?”

“He had some dreams about roses. I saw that in his file, though it just says Roses?—with a question mark after it. I didn’t ask Jane Lapin about it. But, I had some roses on my desk. I put them in his room. Anyone who thinks I did that will think I’m a nice guy, I suppose.”

“You’re saying someone saw you?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Okay. Then, that’s it?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m relieved. That’s nothing.” Fox slumps back in his chair.

“Just a little insecurity about the whole thing.”

“You needn’t feel that way,” Fox says. “Not at all. A lot of work went into this.”

“I’m still worried about his history.”

“His history is what he’s told. Same as everybody else in the program. That’s the beauty of it. We’ve done him a favour, you know it and I know it. We all come out ahead.”

“Yeah.”

“Don’t doubt it. Don’t waste your life doubting it. You made a decision. A thoughtful decision. And he’s better off for it. Remember what I told you,” Fox says, leaning forward in his chair. “Don’t ever think that people in the medical profession don’t judge. They judge all the time. And that’s what you’ve done.
You’ve made the right decision here. No one gets hurt. Everybody wins.”

“Fine, okay, thanks Fred,” Cummings says, tiring of the talk. He leans back in his chair, away from the desk. “It’s been a long night. I’ll feel better about this when this Bleath case is finished.” He thinks his tone should suggest to Fox that the interview is over. However, Fox continues.

“I don’t know how he died,” Fox says, oblivious to the message behind Cummings’ tone. “But I’m betting it was natural. People die.”

“Yes,” Cummings concedes. “But he was a good one for the Institute. The genuine article.”

“There will be lots more. I know, it’s too bad we don’t have more quality candidates, but we’ll be able to point to this latest patient if need be. They’ll be lining up at the doors to sign up.”

“Brace your enthusiasm,” Cummings responds. “I can’t imagine that.” He leans forward, puts his elbows on his desk, and combs his hair again with his palms.

“It doesn’t matter. This place doesn’t need that many subscribers to keep it viable.”

“It could use a few more than it’s got.”

“And a few more it’s going to get, because you were proactive. See?”

“Yeah. Listen, Fred…you have anything else?”

“Not a thing.”

“Well, I’m getting a tremendous headache here, so if you wouldn’t mind…”

“I’m here for the day now. Why don’t you go home? Get some sleep. I’ll have the results of the autopsy later today.”

“Don’t you need to sleep?”

“I’ll sleep on the couch in my office. I’ll leave a note for someone to wake me up. I’ve done it before.”

“Fine,” Cummings says. He puts his palms down flat on the desk, pushing, as if testing the desk’s strength. He notes that his fingernails could use a manicure.
“Well, then, I’ll see you later,” he says. He does not look up to watch Fox exit. As the door shuts behind Fox, he opens his desk drawer and takes out a plastic vial, opens the lid, and washes two pills down with a glass of water.

Chapter 13

Pete Simms leans over his humidor, a year old cabinet model handcrafted from solid mahogany with a cedar lining, and very expensive. It is an hour before deadline, an hour before the final draft of his column must be forwarded to his newspaper subscribers via the Net. Simms looks over the selection in the humidor drawers, and settles on a thick, half-hour Cabana, a thinker’s cigar, he calls it. He sits deeply into a maroon soft leather armchair and frees the cigar from its cellophane wrap, thinking of the controversy the cellophane causes back at the Gentleman’s Cigar Society of Metro. To cellophane or not to, that is the question. To chance mould, cigar beetles, or flavour transfer to an expensive Cuban Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, Cohibas, or Bolivaruns is sacrilege say some; not to expose a young cigar to the flavourful benefits of gentle aging in a good humidor was a waste, say others. Simms preferred the cellophane on. He’d rather that the cigar smelled like the country it came from.

He looks at the Cabana with admiration, enjoying the oily, dark brown leaves that encase the nutty character of the smoke about to be released. He holds the cigar under his nose. He sighs, taking pleasure in the rich aroma. He reaches for the corner of his cluttered desk, searches briefly for the clipper and his Zippo, finds both, snips the cigar at one end and lights it up at the other. Even the Zippo smells good, with an electric musk.

He puffs quickly to get the cigar burning to his satisfaction. Then, he picks
up the computer remote from the arm of the chair and hits the play button. He tilts his head back on the chair and listens as a rather sexy female voice, nicely synthesized, reads from his column.

Last week, the governor of California unveiled a memorial plaque at the site of the Rancho Cucamongo bombing. It has been two years since the explosion that killed sixteen, and as of yet no one has been held accountable. Though no person or group has stepped forward to claim responsibility, the evidence from the scene has left little doubt about the goal of the bombing: to kill cryonics patients and those associated with them, and to send a political message.

There exist in our world those who are vocal in their support of this type of terrorist activity. These zealots, who condone violent disregard for life and property, not only work to hamper any meaningful search for universally accepted legislation, but do much to create a powerful backlash in support of all things cryonic. Indeed, in the wake of terrorist activities against it, the cryonics movement has managed to heighten its favour with the public. In addition, lawmakers, whose survival is dependent on appeasing the will of the public majority, have been quick to legislate and thus legitimate the cryonicists’ cause. They have done so, I would suggest, with a measure of apprehension.

Simms hits the pause button on the remote. He looks around his study. Books line the shelves around the room, and magazines and papers sit in assorted
piles. This, he thinks, taking in the wonderful smell of smoked cigars and aging paper, is an old world, a lost world. A simple and traditional man’s atmosphere kept alive by men like him, men with a taste for the rough textures of tobacco, paper, and whiskey.

A marvellous idea, he thinks, getting up from his chair and approaching the Crown Royal on his mini-bar. Scotch or cognac, what best complements a good cigar?—that’s another Gentlemen’s Cigar Society debate. Simms prefers smooth rye whisky with his cigar, the best with the best, he reasons. He fills a crystal glass half-way and returns to his chair, appreciating the weight, the substance, of the crystal. Substance, he thinks, that’s what this column is missing. He takes a sip of whiskey and allows the gold liquid to find its own way down his throat. At last, with a final swallow of a quick sip, he picks up the remote, hits the play button, and listens again.

Although there are few people foolish enough to risk the consequences of openly siding with both the arguments and actions of cryoterrorists, there are a number of high profile personalities—members of the clergy and conservative politicians, for example—who have been notoriously quiet on the issue, not daring to take a stand on either side of this explosive (no pun intended) and divisive fence. Sam Wannamaker, for example, who as governor of Texas has sponsored programs considered draconian by many prominent fellow conservatives—the U.S. president included—has since the Cucamango bombings withheld promised legislation that would have greatly inhibited the activities of anything cryonic.

Likewise, Herb Black, leader of the Heritage Party here in Canada, has not of late been as forthcoming as usual
regarding his party’s platform on cryonics. His stance against the cryonics community in the last election was so vocal and insistent that it threatened to become a major issue in that campaign, despite his party’s perpetual low profile. The issue was inevitably thrown back in Black’s face after a round of cryoterrorist activity that preceded the federal election. The Heritage Party, thumbs on the panic button, quickly backtracked, hoping to gain favour on other issues—indeed, there were other issues—but could not escape its untimely bad luck, and returned to its inevitable place in the abyss of Canadian political obscurity.

The recent federal election, as Canadians will recall, was self-consciously dominated by the United Nations annual *Human Development Index*, which determined that Canada had dropped four placings during the government’s prior five years in office. What particularly irked some opposition candidates was that the United States, having ranked lower than Canada since the ratings began, had jumped ahead of Canada by two places. Somehow, the cryonics debate got lost in the arguments over this statistical shuffle, as have debates about abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia and other traditionally emotionally divisive (read: grey) issues of dispute. As lame as the United Nations rankings may or may not be, they provided impetus for the filing for another day of the cryonics issue. Legislation intended to more closely monitor the activities of cryonicists, it would seem, had gone home to lick its wounds—better to come out when the political environment is more receptive.

But why not now? Is it not fair and just that we inquire about our frozen brethren? Just who are these
people, the inert and icy brought back to life with the time-weary cliché—*if it saves just one life...!!!*—that propels many of our legislative acts? Do they have names?

Simms pauses the playback and thinks about his meeting with Martin Yancey. He had been excited about the meeting. Yancey was no lightweight, and to Simms CSIS was sexier than its higher-profile counterpart south of the border—ostensibly more inclined to reason and less emotional—and more fascinating because of it. CSIS seemed to have little interest in manipulating foreign governments. Rather, the agency seemed more inclined to influence through mediation and sensitivity. Yet, CSIS was quiet, almost undetectable, like stealth, like a fleeting shadow, unassuming and innocuous, and thus difficult for even an established national columnist to discern an identity beyond stereotype and conjecture. Sexy? We’ll see, Simms had thought.

They met at the entrance of the Metropolitan Zoo, of all places, a location that heightened Simms’ curiosity. “Why there?” Simms had asked on the phone.

“It’s where I go to think,” Yancey had responded.

“You’re going to make me work for this, when we’re only blocks apart?” Simms exclaimed. “If you want to be clandestine, I know a few darkly lit bars.”

Yancey had laughed. “Clandestine? No. Nothing like that. I have another meeting out that way, and I thought of the zoo. That’s all. Besides,” he continued, “you can smoke your cigar there while we talk.”

Simms wasn’t sure whether to be flattered or agitated. Either his fame had preceded him, or a Simms’ resume was readily available to the cream of Canada’s intelligence community, on file saying God knows what about him.

“You’ve done your homework, Mr. Yancey.”

“A bit. Were you never in the scouts, Mr. Simms?”

“No.”

“Just the same, I’m sure you’ll come prepared, too.”
"I don’t have the same connections you do, I’m sure. Just what is it I’m supposed to know?"

"How to ask questions."

"That you can be assured of, Mr. Yancey. But I do have deadlines."

"Now, come on. When was the last time you were at the zoo?"

Yancey was persuasive, not only in his tone, but also in who he was. The notion of a personal interview with a high ranking CSIS officer in an informal environment was too compelling to be passed up. And then, there was Rock Towers. Simms instinctually knew that something intriguing—and useful to a columnist of his ilk—would come out of this meeting.

They met at the entranceway of the Metropolitan Toronto Zoo. As was to be expected, Yancey looked different in the daylight—less imposing than earlier that morning when Yancey had questioned him outside of Rock Towers. His response to Simms’ presence at Rock Towers had been briefly unguarded, though quickly followed by authoritative responses to Simms’ inquiries. After the meeting, Simms had gone back to his car across the street. He drove around for a few minutes until he figured Yancey was gone, and then returned to the building, parking about half a block away on the opposite side of the street from the Rock Towers front entranceway. He used a cellular phone to call his uncle, who had been waiting for him to show up on the “tip,” and kept a line open with him for the duration of the nocturnal surveillance.

He waited in the parked car for over two hours in the night’s chill before seeing any sign of life at the building’s front entrance. Then, he caught the first two CSIS officers leaving—a big man and a comparatively petite female who fit the descriptions given to him by his uncle—and took their picture from a small camera he kept in his glove box. Then, he picked up the phone and told his uncle to call when the others came down to the lobby. He waited for another hour when, desperate to urinate, he got out of his car and ducked down an alleyway. When he emerged, two men were exiting. Simms stayed hidden in the shadows, then realized he had left his camera in the car. He did not have the
instinct of the paparazzi. He watched helplessly as a car pulled up to the front entranceway, and drove off with the two men. A missed opportunity, he thought. Damn. But where was the body? He got back into his car and picked up the phone. The open line had been disconnected and his uncle had been slow to respond to his request for a new line of communication.

“Hello?” his uncle finally responded, his voice groggy.

“What are you? In bed?”

“Of course I’m in bed. Look at the time!”

“Where the hell’s your dead tenant? They couldn’t have left him in there.”

“I...don’t know...I guess I fell asleep,” came the muddled reply. “Maybe they went out the back.”

“Then others might have come in, too. I’ve been out here all night!”

“Sorry.”

“Well...I’m coming over. Let me in, will you.”

Simms got out of his car and crossed the street to the front door of Rock Towers. His uncle, sulking, looking ragged and unappreciated, let him in. Together, they rode the elevator up to the eighteenth floor. They walked to Bleath’s door.

“They sealed it,” his uncle said, pointing to the edges of the door. “Look, you can just see the glue. I’ve seen this before. They don’t do this while they’re in there. They must have snuck out the back way with the body.”

The intrigue continued, and the columnist’s speculative nature had been baited.

“My treat,” Yancey had insisted, paying the entry fee for the both of them. “I have a membership.”

“You come here often, then?” Simms had asked.

“I love the zoo.”

“You must live around here.”

Yancey looked at him and smiled. “You looking for work?” he asked.
“Sure,” Simms replied. “Except, like most people, I have little idea what you do.” He looked at his watch. “When can we begin? I’ve got deadlines.”

“Ask away.”

“Thanks for not sending me to Ottawa.”

They were standing just outside the entranceway. “We can’t stand here,” Yancey said. “Let’s go get our hands stamped.”

An attendant stamped their hands at a kiosk. Simms looked at the blue stamp. It was a caricature of a lizard. They entered the zoo. It was about noon, and the sun was shining brightly, radiating a warm breeze from the west that signalled that summer was on the way. Around them were throngs of people milling about the courtyard, checking their maps of the massive park, waiting around the washrooms, and peeking in the windows of the souvenir houses.


“I’ve got deadlines, Mr. Yancey.”

“Well, how about the camels? And the polar bears, that’s not too far, and I’ll lead the way while we talk.”

They began to walk an asphalt trail marked with faint yellow camel footprints. Simms wasted little time.

“So, who was the dead guy, and why no press conference?”

“His name is Bleath. And this is the press conference.”

“Why were you watching him? Who was he?”

“He was a grad.”

“A grad!” Yancey exclaimed. “As in cryonics? From where?”

“The Institute.”

“Metro? Downtown?”

“Right.”

“I could speculate, but why don’t you just tell me? Why were you watching him?”

“That’s speculation, right there,” Yancey said, winking at Simms.
"I know enough about the circumstances to have reasoned that out."

"Your uncle?"

"That's right. He's not blind. So, why don't you give me that? You were watching him. Why?"

"We had a tip. A hacker on the Net tipped us. He, or she, happened upon a list floating around on the Net, and forwarded it to us. Anonymously."

"What was it a list of?"

"Grads. Real names, and some aliases too, and some other tidbits. Age, sex, that kind of thing. No locations. But it's a dangerous list. Grads are supposed to be protected, even the famous ones."

"Like the first few."

"That's right, but you'd have a hard time trying to track even them down at present. Most have taken new identities. At least, the new identities were supposed to protect them. Then, somebody, or some group, went to work and came up with this list."

"So, how did you know who they were, that is, what the list meant?"

"The list was titled."

"But, how did you know it was for real? Do you have a list?"

"I can't confirm that, Mr. Simms."

"But of course you do."

"We could have asked the Institute."

"Did you?"

"No."

"You have no idea, then, where the list originated?"

"No."

"So, is it possible that the list could have originated from the Institute?"

"That's possible, but not likely. Still, it is possible. Our primary concern was the protection of a Canadian citizen."

"You determined the list was for real?"

"Yes."
“Okay. I won’t ask again how you determined that. For now.”

“Thanks, but that will be self-evident.”

“It will, huh? Tell me, is this list floating around on the Net today?”

“If it is, we haven’t been able to find it.”

“Well, somebody found it.”

“Apparently so.”

They walked on in silence, stopping for a moment at the Siberian Tiger exhibit. They watched as the animal, with nervous energy, paced up and down one side of its cage, deftly stepping around its own feces.

“Let’s go back to the list,” Simms said, as they resumed their walk. “The dead guy’s name was on the list, right?”

“That’s how we determined the list was for real. Plus we had some help from international sources, of course.”

“Like the CIA.”

“Something like that.”

“Any other names on that list that interested you in particular?”

“None of concern to us, really. We forwarded the list to other security agencies.”

“So, no more dead bodies going to turn up?”

“Not from that list, at least, not around here. Let’s go this way,” he said, leading Simms to a trail with blue bear paws painted onto the asphalt.

“How long were you watching Mr. Bleath?” Simms asked.

“Ten weeks.”

“And then he died.”

“That’s right.”

“So, your protection didn’t work.”

“Protection isn’t really the right word. Call it surveillance, though there was certainly a protective element to it. He died of a cerebral haemorrhage. Mr. Bleath was a heart transplant recipient. They must have frozen him until they could find a replacement. I don’t know the whole story behind that, just that they
woke him up and threw a new heart in. That probably contributed to his death. The new heart, I mean.”

“I see. But if he had died some other way, you know what I mean, you would have looked bad, you know.”

“We did the best that we could, given the circumstances. We weren’t sure where the threat was coming from, or even if there was a threat.”

“It could have come from the Institute itself,” Simms suggested. He looked at Yancey, but got no response. “A little light’s just gone on in my head, Mr. Yancey. The idea is ludicrous, of course.”

“Yes. It does sound ludicrous, doesn’t it? But we had to deal with the evidence at hand.”

“What about the Institute? What possible motive could they have?”

“None, I don’t think. And they’ve been very responsive to our inquiries.” They walked on in silence for a few more minutes, both knowing that the story was not quite finished. Finally, Simms spoke.

“I suppose I can see how you’ve got your butt covered.”

“I’m being as open about this as I should be, I’m afraid.”

“But you have limitations on what you can say, don’t you?”

“Of course I do. I have to choose my words carefully, just like you do.”

“So, if everything’s so earnest, above-board and all that, why no press conference?”

“Think we should?”

“It’s news, you know. Not many like him in the world. Good human interest stuff.”

“Send a reporter around.”

“I don’t think you want that.”

“To be honest, no, I don’t.”

“That’s why you’re speaking to me.”

“That’s right.”

“I don’t care to speculate more at the moment.”
“Come see the polar bears,” Yancey offered. They had already walked down the winding path past a number of pavilions and outdoor exhibits. Ahead of them was an elevated concrete structure, with a tunnel beneath. They walked up a concrete path to the top of the structure and stood looking down over a plexiglas partition to a concrete pit below. A large polar bear was sleeping at the back of the pit, its head tucked beneath its enormous front paws. Immediately below the two men was a deep pool of water. One polar bear sat at the edge of the pool watching another submerged in the pool as it playfully wrestled a large, red plastic ball, grabbing it from beneath with all four paws until it managed to pull the ball beneath the water’s surface. Spectators looking on laughed and pointed as the ball came hurtling to the surface, and then watched with glee while the bear resurfaced to tackle the ball again.

“Interesting, isn’t it,” Yancey had said, “how they adapt?”

“Very amusing,” Simms responded sarcastically.

“You know, if you go down below, you can see the bear from under the water.”

“Another time.”

“It’s quite interesting, actually, although the view is distorted.

“I’m sure it is.”

Yancey looked at him. “You’re not enjoying this. Where’s your cigar?”

“Someone might arrest me. You might arrest me.”

“I have no powers to arrest anyone. Come on. Let’s walk back.”

They walked down the concrete ramp and began to retrace their steps along the asphalt path.

“We’ve talked with the Institute,” Yancey said. “They’re not shy about a human interest story, or even some hard journalism. They’re just a little tired of it. Plus, they’re in some danger too. The employees, that is.”

“Goes with the territory, I would think.”

“True enough.”
“Can’t imagine there’s any more of a risk to their job than there is to yours or mine.”

“You may be right.”

“But there’s something you’re not telling me.”

“No. I just feel for them, that’s all.”

“The employees?”

“Yes.”

“And you think I should?”

“I can’t tell you what to do.”

“I see. You’re hoping, of course, that this story won’t interest me, once you’ve explained it.”

“Not me. I’m not asking you to ignore this.”

“I think that you are. If I call in a reporter to follow up on this, I’m sort of responsible for anything that happens. I think that’s what you’re saying, and I’d call that emotional blackmail.”

“I wouldn’t call it that. You tell me, what’s the best way to handle this?”

That had stumped Simms, and still had him stumped.

Chapter 14

“How would you feel about a couple of days away from here?” Jane asks Leif. It is lunchtime, and they are in the Institute cafeteria, a high ceilinged room on the fourth floor—the top floor of the Institute. Sunshine filters through the slightly tinted room-high windows. Outside, four floors beneath them in the landscaped courtyard, employees gather for lunch and other breaks amidst the new growth of flowers and greening shrubs. Springtime has arrived, with periods of
grey, cloudy dampness alternating with days of blue skies and inviting warmth. After another long Ontario winter, springtime signals an end to hibernation, to that claustrophobic cabin fever that most Ontarians can tolerate with civility because—and perhaps only because—they know that it is temporary. Each spring—that pleasant moderation between extremes of climate—Ontarians emerge from their winter lairs to lap up sunshine, eager as dehydrated camels might emerge from the desert to lap up water at a spring oasis.

Jane sits with her back to the window. She finishes a cup of tea and a muffin while the two chat about this and that, and then, with mild concentration, she begins turning a napkin into a paper apparition. Finished, she looks up to Leif, who has been watching in fascination. “It’s origami,” she tells him. “It’s a moose. Here are its antlers. See?”

Dissatisfied with her work, she begins again. “Let me try a turtle. My Dad taught me how. He was a sculptor, you know. Made a living at it, too. Cultural stuff from Africa. People like that stuff. Not many moose in Africa, though.”

Leif watches as she bends and folds a fresh paper napkin. He looks up to her face. She looks beautiful, he thinks. He admires her face, her hair, her slim wrists and contoured arms made visible by the short sleeves of her white blouse. He wonders what she meant when she said away from here.

“Where?” he asks.

“What?” she retorts, looking up briefly from her paper sculpture. “Oh, the trip. I was thinking that maybe you’d like to go on a little trip. We have some property northeast of here. I have a thirst to explore,” she says with mock seriousness.

“We?”

“The Institute.”

“Oh,” Leif says, disappointed.

“So, what do you think?”

Leif imagines the retreat to be little different from the Institute. “What’ll we do there?” he asks.
“Oh. Just experience it. Life. It’s on a lake, quite beautiful, really.”

Leif fiddles with the white plastic spoon he had used to stir his tea. “Just you and me?” he asks, hopeful.

“Well, there may be others, but probably just us. I was thinking about Wednesday to Friday. Actually, we could leave tomorrow night. I have a light week, and it may be a few weeks before we get another chance. There,” she says, holding up the sculptured napkin. “It’s a turtle, see? He’s speaking to us. Hi, Leif,” she says, caricaturing a turtle with a low, slow croak. “Hi, Jane.”

Leif studies the fold of the paper, fascinated, but unconvinced. He wants to see it, but can’t.

“That’s nice,” he says, studying it seriously.

It is obvious to Jane that Leif is trying to see it. “It’s a poor artist who blames her materials,” she sighs, “but green paper would’ve helped. You don’t see it?”

“Yes,” Leif lies. “I see it. That’s the shell,” he says, pointing. “Yeah.”

Jane appreciates his courtesy, and offers him the paper turtle as a present. He accepts it with pleasure, cupping it in his hands.

Late the following afternoon, Leif, who has packed lightly, steps into Jane’s light brown car. It’s an older model and shows signs of wear. “Not much to look at,” Jane says. “But it’s good on fuel.”

“That’s okay,” Leif says, as he runs his hand across the dashboard, intrigued by the electronic display. Jane notices this.

“About time you got out of this place for a bit,” she says. “Familiarity breeds contempt. Ever heard that?” Then, changing the subject, she says, “You had a driver’s licence, you know. You even owned a couple of cars.”

“Yeah, I saw that. Two cars.”

“Yeah. Wonder how much insurance was back then. For two cars, I mean. You know,” she says, “you could drive this. When we get to the cabin you can drive it around a bit, until you get used to it, if you’d like. It’ll be a good test of
your memory, or maybe \textit{instinctive} memory. There are a few new toys, but you
don’t need to know them to drive the car, really. Here’s the gas, here’s the
brake.” She points to the corresponding pedals by her feet. “Not much different
from when Henry Ford was building them. More comfortable, maybe. Probably
less reliable, though.”

Leif feels at ease in the car, not intimidated at all. The idea of driving
thrills him. He smiles like an excited kid at a carnival contemplating the experience
of an exhilarating ride.

Jane starts the car and puts it in gear. “Do you remember any of this?” she
asks.

Questions of memory tend to dilute the pleasure of the moment. Leif’s
smile dissipates a touch, as he tries to remember. “Sort of,” he says. “At least, I
think I do, I’m not sure.”

“You know,” Jane says, as the car pulls out from the parking area behind
the Institute, “you should get your license. That’d be a good step towards
independence. It’s almost a requirement to have a driver’s license in this country;
everything’s so far apart. It’s like a legacy of some kind. Like a rite of passage,
part of our heritage or something.”

“I will,” Leif declares, admiring Jane and her skill behind the wheel.

They head south to the Gardiner Expressway to avoid as much of the
congested Metro traffic as possible, follow the Gardiner east to the Don Valley
Parkway, and then drive north to the Trans-Canada. Heading east, with the sun at
their back, they gradually leave the industrial heartland of southern Ontario behind.
After about an hour on the Trans-Canada, they turn north on the 115, and
buildings begin to give way to rows of newly planted cornfields. Eventually, the
land seems too rocky to plant as evidence of the Canadian Shield begins to
dominate the landscape. Finally, after two hours of driving, they cross the bridge
over Gannon’s Narrows that separates Buckhorn Lake from other lakes further up
the Trent Canal waterway. It is now about eight p.m., and the sun is low in the
sky, radiating pink and purple hues through clouds on the western horizon.

"There's the lake, straight ahead," Jane says, as she directs the car down an incline. As the car descends, the lake disappears from sight behind an influx of forest. "Well, there goes the lake, but there's the gate to the drive."

The wide wooden gate is book-ended by two large brick gateposts, with the one on the left extending to the road so that arrivals can announce their presence. Jane pulls the car up to extended gatepost, rolls her window down, and is about press the intercom buzzer when a voice from a speaker welcomes her and tells her to continue up the drive. The gate parts in the middle and swings open. Jane drives the car through the gates, follows the winding drive, and comes to a parking lot where the car gently glides to a stop on the crushed stone surface.

The building is a long, rectangular, two story log house, its details diminished in the shadow of the setting sun so that only its profile can be perceived.

"It's smaller than I imagined." Leif says.

"It's deceptively small, like the Institute. Shall we have a look?"

The front steps are wide, and lead up to an even wider veranda. At the front door, Jane and Leif are greeted by a tall, smiling, grey-haired man. He holds out his hand.

"Ms. Lapin, so good to see you," he says, shaking hands enthusiastically with Jane. "This must be Mr. Ward."

"Yes," Jane says.

"Good to meet you, Mr. Ward," he says, reaching out to shake hands with Leif. "I'm Henry Abbot." Leif almost winces under Abbot's strong grip.

"Doctor Abbot," Jane clarifies.

He invites them into the front hallway. "Just drop the bags there," he instructs them, "and I'll show you around."

Abbot conducts his tour with enthusiasm. "This," he says, "is the common room. We have billiards, chess, some comfy chairs, and a big fireplace, as you can see. Takes the chill off in the evening. And through here we have the kitchen."
Leif and Alana follow him into the well-equipped facility.

"We're still a bit off-season, so there's not many people around. It's pretty informal around here, so just help yourself at any time. Thelma, that's my wife, Mr. Ward, isn't here at the moment, but she's in charge of the kitchen. Now..."

The tour continues through the first floor of the building to the stairway leading to the upper bedrooms.

"You have the run of the place." Abbot says, standing at the bottom of the stairway. "We'll have more on the weekend and, of course, even more once the nice weather kicks in for good. Now, let me show you to your rooms. Do any of you care for fishing?"

"Oh, maybe," Jane says, as they climb the stairs.

"No?" says Abbot, leading the way. "Well, let me know if you're ever interested. I was just waiting for your arrival, you see."

"Don't let us stop you," Jane says, perceptively. "You go right ahead, Dr. Abbot, we'll be fine."

"Really?" Abbot asks, his face brightening noticeably. "Right then, I'll just show you to your rooms and then I'll be off. If there's a problem, just press the red button by the door, and you'll get security."

"Security?" Leif asks, as the three reach the second floor.

"Larry Hynes. Big red-haired chap. Ex-cop."

"Where is he?"

"Larry? I don't know, actually. He wasn't in the office. Must be outside, somewhere. You remember Larry, don't you?" he asks Jane.

"Certainly. I'll take Mr. Ward around for a hello once we're settled."

"Fine. Here we are then. Mr. Ward, room four. Ms. Lapin, five, as you requested."

"We're okay from here," Jane says. "Go catch a big one before they're all gone."

"Pickerel for breakfast if all goes well," the doctor smiles as he ambles off with a wave of his hand down the hall to the stairway.
"He’s a nice guy, the doctor," Jane says.

"Does he run the place?" Leif asks as he opens the door to his room and peeks inside. Jane follows him in and turns on the light. Leif sits on the bed.

"Like it?" Jane asks, retreating to the doorway.

"Sure."

"I’m just going to grab my stuff by the front door and freshen up a bit. Then, I could use a bite to eat. You hungry?"

"Yeah."

"The doctor is semi-retired from the Institute, and looks after this place. It’s a good set-up, both for him and the Institute."

"He’s on the payroll?"

"Of course. He has responsibilities here. He has to look after the place."

"And be here if a patient needs him?"

"I suppose that’s part of it."

"Could that happen?"

"Sure," she says, leaning against the door jam. "It’s a new environment, after all. Dramatically different from the Institute. It should be relaxing, and it usually is. But... well, it’s insurance for both the grads and their hosts. It helps me to know that I have help here if I need it. Mostly, though, the doctor is here so that in cases of sickness, or accidents, a trip to a public health facility can be avoided. Like, if someone falls down and breaks a leg, or opens the skin, we have a doctor here who can help us avoid any kind of public inquiry, in most cases, anyway."

"When you say public inquiry, you mean...?"

"The neighbours don’t really know who owns this place. It’s none of their business. Actually," she says, rethinking her assertion, "I’m sure that some of them do. This place isn’t under quarantine. It’s just... a private place. The locals are here on the lake to relax, and so are we. This place is recognized mostly as a private retreat owned by some corporation. It doesn’t matter who. The facilities are not grand enough to warrant much curiosity. Public inquiry sounds rather
grand, doesn’t it? It’s not really what I meant.”

“How many grads have been here, do you think?”

“Oh, it’s a good place to bring grads. A good starting place. Nice and quiet. Secure. Let’s talk about it later. I’m hungry.”

“Okay.”

“Be right back,” she says, departing. Leif stands up from the bed and goes to the window. Outside, it is gently darkening. A network of tree branches with maturing leaves obscure the view of the lake, but in a clearing to Leif’s right he sees that the sun has dipped below the horizon, leaving a fading arc of brilliant purple drawing a silhouette of the Gannon’s Narrows bridge.

In the morning, Thelma, an attractive middle-aged woman wearing a blue sweat suit and hiking boots, serves a big breakfast of bacon and eggs, toast, juice, and coffee. Dr. Abbot, Larry Hynes, Jane, and Leif sit at the dining room table, enjoying the breakfast, and engaging in chat. Hynes, it turns out, dabbles in origami, and he and Alana compare techniques. Hynes, like Abbot, is a big man with a firm handshake. He is also an affable person, with an easygoing personality tempered further by a relaxed lifestyle.

After breakfast, Hynes returns to his office, while Dr. Abbot helps out with the clean up in the kitchen. Jane leads Leif out through the front door to the veranda.

“Where to?” Leif asks, following her down the veranda steps.

“There’s a path over here,” Jane says, leading Leif to the edge of the parking lot, where she stops. A path, leading through the trees, is evident. “It’s just a short walk. Shall we?”

“Sure.”

“First,” she says, attaching a small pin to his jacket, “you need to put this on.”

“What is it?” Leif asks, looking down.

“It keeps away the mosquitoes with some sort of high pitched sound that
annoys them. The mosquitoes can be thick at this time of year.”

It is a hazy, humid morning, warming up quickly. They walk a while in silence, Jane leading the way on the winding trail. Leif enjoys walking on the tamped down earth, brushing branches and the new spring growth away from his face and feet as he proceeds. Jane, ahead, does the same, and Leif feels a sense of adventure and common purpose.

“Jane?” he asks, watching her back, grateful for the privacy. He suddenly feels a nervous tension, a suggestion that this is a course he should not pursue.

“Yes?” she responds.

He tries to sound as casual as possible. “How many times have you been here?” he asks.

“Oh, about five times, I guess.”

“Five different grads?”

“Grads? No. Just two. You, and the one before you.” She thinks briefly about Bleath. He seemed to be doing so well, and he was so young. With the mention of his name, she feels tears well up in her eyes. His funeral had been a small, private affair, and she had been saddened by the small turnout, but gladdened by the genuine show of sadness by her fellow workers at the Institute. Even Cummings, the Institute director, who often seemed so emotionally cold and controlled, was visibly shaken.

They walk a bit further before Jane speaks again.

“Why do you ask?” she asks, her voice cracking slightly.

“Just wondering.” What is this feeling, he wonders. “Jane, who was your grad before me. You’ve never talked about him.”

“Can’t say.”

“Is it a guy?” That came out too fast, Leif thinks.

“Can’t talk about it, Leif.”

“Did you like him.”

“He, or she, is...yeah, I liked him.”

“So it was a guy?” Leif asks, trying to sound teasing.
“I didn’t say that.”

“You said he.”

“So what? I’m not going to talk about it. I’ll talk about you, to you, or about anything else that I can talk about it.”

“So, he wasn’t a boyfriend, or…” It came out much too bluntly. Jane stops, and turns to face him. He almost bumps into her.

She isn’t mad, but perplexed. “Why do you ask that?”

To Leif’s astonishment, she has tears in her eyes. He watches as she brushes them away. “I asked you that before,” he stammers defensively. “We’ve talked about this before, and you answered.”

“Then why are you asking again?”

“I’m...curious, that’s all. I mean, you’re pretty, and intelligent. You’re nice...”

“Come on,” Jane says, turning, and continuing down the path. “It’s not much farther.”

The lake is calm. There are two islands in view, both dwarfed by a larger island behind them, with a shoreline that seems to span the east end of the lake. Off to the west on their right is the Gannon’s Narrows bridge. One half of the bridge is a paved causeway, while the other half arcs high over a channel that separates this lake from the next.

Jane and Leif sit together on a rock, facing the islands. “That’s worth the trip right there,” she says, referring to the view. “If the water were warmer we could take our shoes off and dangle our feet in the water. We could swim if it were even warmer. But we’re still a few weeks away for that.”

“It’s nice,” Leif responds, slowly, and it is obvious to Jane that he is distracted.

“Okay, out with it,” she says.

“What?”

“You want to say something, let’s hear it.”
“No...well, I was just thinking. Well, wondering...how old are you Jane?”
“I’m forty.”
“Really? You look younger. Twenty-five maybe.”
“Flatterer.”
“You’ve had surgery?”
“Leif, I take that back. Surgery? No. I mean, I’ve had some body treatments done, but...the diet is different, the atmosphere, the ozone. The drugs available are different.”
“Are there drugs to keep one looking younger?”
“That and other things. DNA manipulation. Age digression therapies. Holistic medicines, but you’ve got to watch out for them. There are a number of things one can do to look younger and live longer. You’re thirty-four. I’d say that you have about another, oh, fifty, sixty years of quality living before you start slipping into old age. Assuming all the best, that is.”
“Like avoiding accidents, disease, that sort of thing?”
“Yeah,” Jane says, turning to face him. “You know, you remember a lot more than you think you do.”
“I remember things I don’t want to remember.”
“Like what?”
“Like loneliness.”
“You remember being lonely?”
“I...don’t remember being lonely. But I feel lonely.”
“Oh, I see. But that’s good!”
“Is it?”
“Of course. It’s completely natural. I mean, most of your personal contact has been with me. You feel a need to meet new people, to make new friends.”
Now, she feels awkward. They are relatively close in age, and they are both single. It is one of the hazards of the job.
“Do you think about relationships much, Leif?” she asks.
“Just you.”
Jane gets a sense of where the conversation is going, and attempts to take more control of it. "Ah," she says, "but I'm practically the only woman you've had contact with. Just wait. There's millions of them out there."

"I realize that," he says, looking her in the eye. The message is clear.

"You mean me, don't you? I'd be flattered if I weren't the only girl you knew. But I am, and you don't know me yet, not really. You know the professional me, that's all."

"I think I know you," Leif responds defensively.

"You have no one to compare me to."

"You like me, don't you?"

"Of course I do. Listen, do you think I'm going to get involved with someone whom...could hurt me?"

"I could never hurt you."

"You could go out into the world and...there are lots of women out there, lots more attractive than I am. I think you better see what's out there before you set your heart on me."

"What if I'm sure about it? Sure about it right now?"

"So, you're sure about it now, and why not? You know, Leif, I can see it in your face. Admit it. You're more relaxed now than you have been...since you woke up months ago. And look at where we are. Look at the view. It's romantic. Don't confuse the moment for something deeper."

"But I've felt like this, about you, for a long time. It's not something new."

"I'll tell you what. You're going to go out into the world very soon. You'll have your own place and all the support you need."

"From you?"

"From me. And from others. And if in, say in a year..."

"A year?"

"If in a year you still feel the same way about me, we can talk about it then. But I just can't take your overtures seriously right now."
"I really do mean it, you know."

"Besides, I have to behave professionally. If you still mean it this time next year...but you have to be your own man. Do you see what I mean?"

Leif thinks about it a moment. One year to be his own man. Yeah, he could do that. He feels inspired. "You mean, like, get a job, my own place, that kind of thing?"

"Something like that."

"I think I can do that."

"I think you can, too. Oh, incidentally, I have something for you," she says, grateful to have a distracting prop handy. "Something your father wrote. The computer turned it up out of some old Net files. Something your father posted when he was in university. It's quite good, actually. Hold on."

She reaches into her bag and extracts a small booklet. "I read this. I hope you don't mind. It was so pretty, I had it bound for you. By the way, see that big island way back there? Not the first two, but that stretch of forest behind?"

"Yeah?"

"That's Fox Island. A neat coincidence, because that's the island your father writes about in his story. You'll read about Emerald Isle, too, on the other side of the Lake. It begins just about where Fox Island ends. That's where your father spent a few years of his youth. We'll paddle over there sometime, if you'd like."

The booklet is bound in a wine-red cover, and embossed along the side with his father's name in gold lettering.
Chapter 15

Nature
By Frank, for Mary-Alex.

There is an island, Fox Island, near where my mother and I live on Buckhorn Lake. I have never desired to set foot on Fox island, partly because of something that I heard when I was sixteen, shortly after my mother had purchased a waterfront home on a place called Emerald Isle, joined to the mainland by a short man-made causeway. The kids on Emerald Isle had told me of rumours about Fox Island, rumours of huge fields of marijuana, and of armed Indians who patrolled the crop, and of mantraps scattered here and there throughout the island to keep away the unwelcome. I don’t think that I ever truly believed the rumours, but somehow that information resulted in the island taking on a sort of mystique for me. Now, eight years have passed since we moved here, the rumours have faded, and I have no misgivings about exploring the island. That is, I feel that I could, if I so desired. But I don’t. The mystique remains. And so does my sense of territory. We all have our own sense of space, I think. I know I do. I never felt right about cutting across someone’s property because that route was shorter, more convenient. Nor do I have a wish to investigate Fox Island, despite its mystique, and despite its beauty. Fox Island was, is, Indian land. It is not government land. It is not public. It belongs to the Indians, the Indians of the Curve Lake Reserve, and the small cottages that dot the island shoreline belong to the Indians. I don’t know if it is sacred land. Perhaps it is. I’ve never been sure. Maybe I just like the idea, the romance of it. Regardless, sacred or not, it is not mine. So, even as an adult, even as someone who was fascinated by the island and
wondered about its unseen interior, I was compelled, despite my curiosity, to stay off it. It was a matter of honour.

But I do appreciate it, and I have visited it often, albeit from boat or canoe; there is much to see, to appreciate about the island from the vantage point of the water. And rumours aside, it holds many fascinations for me.

It starts with the peculiar howls that one can sometimes hear on warm summer nights, when the population of fox, for which the island is named, announce their presence. First, we—my mother and I—thought that perhaps someone on the lake owned a kennel. Next, we theorized that the sound—that multi-voiced howl that weaves in and out of itself with sharp crescendoing wails that ease off to a pianissimo lilt—came from a pack of wolves. It is a wolf pack, we thought, somewhere near the shore of the big lake, with songs echoed off the mainland dwellings and island forests.

I was never sure where these particular night sounds came from exactly, but one day I happened to mention the sounds to someone who lived right across from Fox Island, on the northwest side of Emerald Island (my home is on the opposite shore). "Why do you think they call it Fox Island?" he had returned, rhetorically. And then, one night, standing on the shore directly across from Fox Island, I had no doubt as to where the sounds were coming from.

Fox Island is, in truth, two islands separated by a narrow winding river, or channel. The mouth of this river is difficult to see and only a close investigation of the island bays will reveal it. The depth of this channel is shallow, and undoubtedly this keeps many fishermen from investigating too closely, for fear of damaging the propellers on the sterns of their deep-hulled boats. But a canoe can easily traverse the channel.

Although I have always been shy about setting foot on the island, I have never been hesitant about investigating its shoreline, for it has a number of hidden inlets stocked with an intriguing array of wildlife. The water in these inlets is usually so shallow that you can see fish, trophy-sized pickerel and chubby carp, swimming around and under the canoe if you keep still. On the rounded shores of
these inlets, one can see the remnants of old beaver dams, and recognize the sound structure of the new ones. Closer, near the shore, more evidence of beavers: tree stubs with cone shaped tops scarred in the shape of toothy ribbons, always uniform and neat, with surprisingly large curled chips accumulated in a pile beneath the cuts. And, there are other attractions.

If you are quiet upon entering an inlet, and coast on the thrust of a few last paddles, you might catch a few small turtles sunning on a floating log, or see large bullfrogs in shallow swamps, their heads poking through the water in what seems like a patient and relaxed surveillance of the neighbourhood. Sometimes, usually from a distance, you can see a Great Blue Heron walk stilt-legged down the shore, hunting for frogs, its long beak looking not unlike needle-nosed pliers. Usually, however, the heron will see you first, and freeze. It takes a patient, trained eye to spot it, absolutely still, tall and lithe against the twigs and bush and tree branches along the shoreline. If you get too close, it will fly away, elegant, its tapered wings seeming to flap only a few times before it begins to soar on the breeze, its long legs trailing behind in aerodynamic perfection. Only the loon in flight is equally fascinating, perhaps because to see it in flight is rare. In nesting season, the loon seems to fly only in the late evening. Its flight is swift and direct. If one thinks of the fast flutter of the wings of small birds—the way they dart and veer through the air in pursuit of flying insects—then one can truly appreciate the steady sure flight of the loon. In the water, it is dignified: cautious, yet confident. In the air, determination, a goal, and the shortest distance between two points seems to be the flight path, and pattern, of the loon. Our lake has many of them, a pair to each bay it seems, and there are many bays around Fox Island.

Fox Island offers many other enchanting features. An island highlight involves a huge osprey nest. Ospreys like to nest high above ground, and are able to balance their nests on the most doubtful of platforms. I've even seen them on the top of telephone poles. Just down the channel that divides the two islands there is a small inlet, roughly the size of a baseball field. There is a tiny island out about where the centre fielder might stand, and this island is not much larger than a
pitcher's mound. In the centre of this mound is a tall thick pine, dead for as long as I've known it, and it is the home to a large osprey's nest settled ingeniously atop the tree. Not part way up the tree, but on top: no branch of the tree rises above it. It is a marvel of engineering; on closer inspection, one can see that it is, in fact, balanced between a triangle of three thick dead branches. The tops of these branches are cut off, not neatly, and not by anything I can explain, but they are cut off exactly even with the top of the nest. The nest itself is as fascinating as the osprey. Upon entering this inlet during nesting season, the male osprey will shriek and soar with nervous energy, its large grey mass flying from tree to tree, and the thick branches it rests on often bend under the weight of its perch.

I feel the same way towards the osprey's home as I do toward Fox Island. It is not mine, and I feel a sense of trespass, of intrusion, whenever I visit the nest. And yet, I do want to get closer. I want to see the mother osprey and the heads of its young—as big as mallards, it seems—peeking over the top of the nest. And I want to get close to the nest, to admire and be fascinated by its construction. Yearly it survives the elements—the winter snow, and seasonal winds—and yet there it stands, seemingly unchanged. A neighbour of mine has told me that it is the same osprey pair, year after year, monogamous and territorial. I believe it and, because I do, I always hold out some hope that a time will come when I will be more welcome in the inlet, that I will become familiar, that I will not be seen as a threat to the nest, but as one that understands that on Fox Island things are according to nature's logic and reasoning...but then, I realize also, nature's reaction to my presence is logical.

I mentioned before that there are small cottages along the shoreline of Fox Island. But they are few, and the island is, it seems to me, for the most part untouched by humans. Maybe there are marijuana fields on the island. But I don't really believe it. Still, there is something, something that obliges me to entertain what I am sure are frivolous thoughts. Maybe they just make for a good story. Whatever, it does add to the island's mystique, and it has to do with the channel, a tepee, and an old Indian man.
The first time I saw the tepee was just last summer, on an early August afternoon. I had been dating a biology student for a few weeks and was eager to share my find with someone who, I thought, might know and appreciate something of nature. We paddled over to the island and, as we neared its shore, it was evident that she was unimpressed with my choice of destination. I encouraged her to talk, but she was not forthcoming with the enlightened monologue that I had hoped for. We paddled up the channel to the small inlet with the osprey nest—the occupants came out, squawked and fussed as we neared, just as I expected—and again, she was unimpressed. Finally, as the journey through the channel continued, I became fully exasperated with her lack of enthusiasm. She had stopped paddling back at the inlet with the osprey, so when I stopped paddling at the stern to light a cigarette, the canoe started drifting into another small inlet, and I just let it drift. After a couple of minutes of uncomfortable silence, she asked, “What are you doing, Frank?”

“Just taking a breather, Mary.”

“Well, this is nice, but I’ve got to get home.”

This relationship was over, I felt (“dead in the water” was an expression that came to mind), and I began to paddle the rest of the way through the channel. That’s when I saw the tepee, just on the edge of yet another small inlet. It appeared as just bits of white through the trees, but it was undoubtedly a man-made object.

“Where you going?” Mary asked impatiently as I paddled toward the shoreline, unresponsive to her question. As I got closer to the object, I satisfied myself that it was indeed a tepee. Finally, I thought I might as well tell her about my find, though I had little doubt that she’d find it as uninteresting as she had everything else. I was wrong.

“Where?” she asked, showing some enthusiasm.

“Right over here,” I said. “Wait a sec.”
I paddled even closer to the shoreline, and pointed at the tepee with my paddle. Her angle had been different from mine farther from the shore, but now she could see the object clearly.

"I want to see it!" she said, clearly excited.

"What do you mean?"

"I want to go see it! Pull the canoe up to the trees!"

"No way. You want to go on the island?"

"Yeah!" she said. Then, "What are you doing?"

I had been paddling backwards, pulling the bow of the canoe away from the shoreline.

"You can't go up there, Mary. It's private property."

"So? Who owns it?"

"The Indians. It's Indian land."

"They won't mind. Jesus, Frank, pull the boat up."

"No, Mary." I really meant it. There was no way.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Shut your mouth, Mary, you're not going up there, not with me. You want to go up there, you get your own boat."

"What, you think someone's going to scalp you?"

"We're not going. And that's that."

I paddled away from the shore and through the remainder of the channel. We headed home in an uneasy silence. As we approached my mother's house on the far side of Emerald Isle I mused that I has just paddled Mary out of my life.

That night, I dreamt of a walk around my island. Emerald Isle is connected to the mainland—Ennismore township—by a paved rock, gravel and earth causeway, and is inhabited mostly by people in search of a quiet, but not isolated, life by the lake, but within a thirty minute commute to shopping, schools, work, and friends. In my dream, I was walking around the island, this urbanized domain only a canoe ride away from that other world on Fox Island. At the part of Emerald Isle nearest to Fox Island, I heard a howl, a lone voice, coming
unmistakably from Fox Island. The howling ceased as I began to climb a slight ascent on the road that ringed Emerald Isle. I was walking away from Fox Island, and the howling had stopped completely. But then, from over my head, I saw a shadow against the dark blue night sky. It was an owl, a large owl with a wide wingspan, and it could not have cleared my head by more than a few feet. I watched it as it followed the road up and over the ridge, and out of sight. I had watched it with wonder. I was sure that it meant something. But the dream ended there. I had awakened. It was three a.m. I thought of recording my dream on paper, but instead I just lay there in the darkness, thinking of the images, and trying to extrapolate some sort of meaning. Eventually, I fell back to sleep, but when I woke up in the morning, I remembered what I had dreamt. It did not haunt me. I thought it was a nice dream.

That day, a Monday, began as warm and still, but overcast too with the threat of a storm. I knew that it was probably not a good idea to go out in the canoe, but something compelled me to go. It was nine a.m., and my mother had gone to work—I was on summer holidays from university, slumming it at home, as it were—and, as I paddled, I thought about Mary. Despite a growing perception that Mary and I were not compatible, I felt sad about the imminent end of our short relationship. It nagged at me that I had failed somehow, and yet, as I continued to paddle through the calm waters, I thought that she had spoiled the canoe ride for me on the previous day. I had to go back. I had to make the memory of the island right.

It takes about a half-hour to get to Fox Island channel by canoe. The morning weather had been calm. However, as I entered the channel a light breeze began to blow, and I felt a few sprinkles of rain on my face, hands and forearms. Then, raindrops showed on my jeans in small spots that quickly spread to the size of dimes. By the time I reached the osprey inlet—where the male squawked and flapped its wings as usual, encouraging me to go away as best it could—it was raining steadily. As I approached the edge of the inlet with the tepee, the rain was falling in torrents. I paddled quickly towards the bank of the channel nearest the
tepee, and sought shelter under the brush and tree branches that hung over the shoreline. But that was not enough, and I was quickly getting uncomfortably wet.

I mentioned before that I could go ashore if the circumstances were right. Now they were right. The tepee represented shelter from the storm. I pulled the canoe far enough up the shore bank that I was sure it would not fall back into the water. Then, I ran for the tepee. It was a white canvas tepee, and the rivulets of water which streamed down the pleats and folds of the canvas surface told me that it was waterproof, that it would be dry inside.

"Hello," I said loudly so that whoever, if anybody, was inside the tepee could hear me. "Hello," I repeated, just to be sure. Hurriedly, I sought the entrance fold, found it, and entered.

At first, I thought that I was alone. On the floor of the tepee were mounds of colourful blankets, and animal furs seamlessly sewn together. But then I noticed the grey hair of someone's head peeking out from under the mahogany-toned long-haired pelts. I studied the shape and form of the blankets and pelts, and quickly determined that, yes, someone was beneath it. I hunched down at the doorway of the tepee, and said hello once again. The figure underneath the fur blanket began to stir.

"Hello," I repeated, softly, trying to sound unmenacing, and a hand peeked over the edge of the fur pelt and pulled the blanket down, down past the grey hair and a tanned wrinkled forehead, down to the large nose of what was, I concluded, an elderly Indian.

He looked at me with his sleepy brown eyes, studied me, and I wanted to say "Hi," or something, but I said nothing. He had heard me, I was sure. He was just trying to comprehend this intrusion, I thought. He would be the one to speak next, and I waited until he finally spoke.

He said, "What do you want?" He didn't say it in fear, nor did he say it aggressively. The sentence sounded neutral, like I was family, I suppose, like I had come to tell him that there was a phone call for him.

I said, "Hi, I just wanted to get out of the rain."
He looked at me, expecting more.

"It's raining outside," I continued, trying to make him understand my presence, my intrusion into his world. "It's really coming down," I continued, and as I spoke I gradually began to speak slower, and more loudly than I normally would have, and I started to over-pronounce my words, too. Maybe he couldn't hear me over the wail of rain beating against the tepee. Certainly, he did not respond.

"I got caught coming through here in a canoe," I said. "I was hoping you wouldn't mind."

He continued to look at me. He seemed to be seeking more information, as if he needed to hear more before making a decision. I continued: "I could leave, if you want. I know I'm trespassing. I live on Emerald Isle."

"You're Irish-Catholic then?" the man suddenly spoke, and I knew he had understood me. I felt relieved to hear his voice. It was friendly sounding, soft and gentle.

"I'm neither. Catholic or Irish."

"You live in the green land," he said, his voice taking on an explanatory tone.

"Do I?" I said, returning to my usual conversational volume and tone. I began to suspect that there wasn't anything wrong with either his hearing or his comprehension. There wasn't.

"Emerald Isle. It means 'the green land'," he explained.

"I didn't know that. My family moved out here when I was sixteen."

"Then you're not Irish?" he asked, still peeking out from beneath the fur blanket. Irish immigrants originally settled Ennismore Township in the nineteenth century. Place names—villages, roads and streets—and names on township mailboxes are testaments to this history.

"I'm not Irish," I repeated. "Or Catholic."
“Then what are you?” he asked. It was a difficult question to answer. Outside, the rain still fell in torrents through the trees and danced loudly on the outside surface of the canvas tepee.

“I’m Frank. Francis.”

“Oh,” was his response. That seemed to satisfy him, to tell him something. He closed his eyes, and pulled the fur back over his face. I assumed that I was accepted for the moment, and I sat down by the door—Indian style, I thought, with my legs crossed in front of me—and waited for the rainfall to ease.

About fifteen minutes later, the sound of the rain on the canvas began to quiet. I held my hand out the entrance flap to test the fall of the rain. As I did this, the old man spoke, but I did not understand what he said.

“I’m sorry?” I said.

“The rain,” he said, pulling the fur back down to his chin. “The rain has not yet ended.”

“It seems lighter. I was thinking of chancing it.”

“Stay,” he said. “Stay for a while.”

“You think it would be a bad idea if I left now?”

“Wait. A bit longer. It will end soon, and the sun will come out, and you can go home then.”

“You think?”

“You can go now, if you want.”

“No,” I said, already hearing the sounds of the rain pick up in volume again. “I’ll wait it out.”

“Good.” he said.

We looked at each other for a moment. Then, I looked down to my shirt pocket, and took out a pack of cigarettes.

“Do you mind?” I asked.

“It’s not a good idea.”

“Oh,” I said, disappointed, and I put the pack back in my pocket.

“See, I’m dying,” the old man said, again in an explanatory tone.
I studied his face, wondering if he was kidding with me.

"Are you?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered seriously, but...there was something else, a mischievous glint in his eye or something.

"Pardon me for saying so," I said, "but if you’re dying, what are you doing here? In fact, what are you doing here period? Are you alone?"

"You ask a lot of questions," he responded, smiling. "Have you got a woman?"

"What?"

"A woman. A man needs a good woman, you know."

There was short period of silence.

"No," I finally said.

"I had a good woman. Her name was Janet. She died a long time ago. I met her when I was a baseball player. Do you like baseball, Francis?"

"Sure," I responded. His eyes seemed to blur a bit, as if he were remembering.

"You played baseball?" I asked. "Where?"

"Played for the Curve Lake Chiefs. Indians play baseball, you know. Hockey too. Ever hear of George Armstrong? He was the captain of the Leafs. He was an Indian."

Again, a brief silence. Then: "So, how come you don’t have a woman? You should get one, you know. I had a good woman."

"Janet."

"Janet, yes." His eyes went hazy with memory again. Soon, however, his eyes focussed in on mine, and he spoke in a serious, wary tone.

"You won’t tell anyone that you have seen me, will you?"

I thought about this. "Will people be looking for you?"

"No." he answered. "No." He sighed and his eyes seemed to go hazy again.

"Then you’re all alone?"
“All alone. But not for long.”

“No?”

“No.” His answer seemed cryptic to me. I sat there for a moment trying to figure it all out. Then, he asked me if I liked Fox Island.

“Sure.”

“Me too.”

“Where is your boat?” I asked.

“At the bottom of the lake.”

I looked at him closely. “You’re serious, aren’t you?”

He did not answer, but closed his eyes.

“Why do you think you are dying?” I asked.

“Why do you think you are living?” he answered, his eyes still closed.

“Did a doctor tell you, you were dying?”

He opened his eyes at me, and raised his eyebrows, saying, without voicing, *Did a doctor tell you, you were living?*

I smiled.

“Okay,” I said, “I get it. But do you really think you’re going to die? Right here?”

“Why did you come here? Were you sure it was raining?”

I thought about that. Point taken.

“I haven’t asked you your name,” I said. “That’s rude. I apologize.”

“My name is Jim Jonathan. J.J., they call me. The rain’s stopped, you know.”

Sure enough, the sounds of the rain were gone, and I hadn’t even noticed. I poked my head out of the canvas flap, and I could see rays of sunshine filtering through the trees. Back inside, I said to the old man, to J.J., “I guess I should be going.”

“What’s the hurry? You have someplace important to be?” He had opened his eyes again. He pulled the fur blanket down past his neck, and I could
see that he was wearing a silver necklace with blue stones. He touched it with his fingertips.

"See this," he said. "My father gave this to us on our wedding day. Janet and me. It is the most precious thing I own. But we had no children to give it to."

I thought for a moment that he was going to give it to me, but he pulled the blanket back up to his chin, hiding the necklace.

"You want to die, don't you?" I said, finally beginning to comprehend the situation.

"It is my time, that's all. You'll understand, perhaps, one day."

"And you plan on dying here?"

"I can't think of a better place. Can you?"

He had me stumped there.

"What's to stop me from calling up the reservation when I get home, and telling them where you are?"

"You could do that."

"You don't think I will?"

"Do you know what you will do?"

"Actually, I'm not sure what to do. I suppose it's none of my business."

I looked around the tepee.

"Do you have food?" I asked.

"I'll be provided for."

"By whom?"

He did not answer.

"Suppose," I said, "suppose I come back tomorrow and bring you some food. Maybe you'll be hungry."

"Maybe."

I was stumped again.

"Well, J.J., that seems to be that. I should go," I said, but I knew somehow that he knew I had no pressing business.
“So,” I said, “what am I supposed to do if I come back tomorrow and you’re dead?”

“You don’t have to come back.”

“I know. But I said I would.”

“Then do what you have to. I’m tired now.” He closed his eyes, and pulled the blanket up over his face. I stood up, bent over a bit—the side of the tepee was low—and exited the tepee. Then, I poked my head back in and asked J.J. if he was warm enough. He did not reply. I looked at his outline under the blanket for a moment longer, left the tepee, and walked through the forest back to the canoe. I tilted it on its side to get the rain out, pushed it back in the water, and then, with only a quick glance back through the forest to the white tepee, I paddled back from the direction I had come, through the channel, past the baseball diamond with the osprey nest about where the centre fielder would stand—the inhabitants squawked and fussed at me as I passed—and out through the channel into Buckhorn lake, and home.

That night, I sat in bed and wondered about the events of the day. Who is this old man, I wondered, who talks of death, of life, of baseball, and who reproves alone in a tepee in an island forest? Unable to sleep, I got dressed and went outside into the darkness. I began to walk the road that circles the periphery of Emerald Isle. I passed the short streets that span the thin width of the island—Shamrock Avenue, Kilarney Road—and as I walked towards the northern end of the island, I saw something that I rarely had seen before, and never with such brilliance. It was the northern lights, orange on this night, with a charged fluorescence sweeping in from the north in cascades and ribbons, moving rapidly and ghostlike against the still night air. At the northernmost end of the island I paused and looked out and overhead, following the path of the lights. Then, standing there, I heard the sound of a fox, howling its lonely, haunting song, and carrying with it the colour and the movement of the northern lights. It was a sad, lone voice, coming from Fox Island. Then, as suddenly as the sound began, it ceased, and I waited for a moment longer, but the sound did not return. So, I
continued my walk, rounding the northern end of the island, and then heading southward. As I walked, it seemed to me as if the northern lights were fading. I turned around, and they had faded, and as I watched they faded away completely, so that only the blue-black of the night sky remained. I continued my walk towards the south and, as I began the slight climb up the ascending part of the road, I noticed, just above my head, a large wide wingspan, a silhouette against the night sky that had approached me from behind, and I followed its progress, never more than my height again above me, as it glided up the ascending road and over the crest of the slight hill ahead. It was an owl, I knew, a great horned owl, common to the area—certainly its silhouette against the night sky matched pictures I had seen of the great bird in flight. The entire experience was, of course, almost exactly as I had dreamt it.

None of these events rattled me. Rather, I felt placated, reassured somehow that my actions on that day had been proper, that I had not done anything wrong. I resolved right then that I would return to J.J. the following day, just to be sure he was okay. He might be hungry or bored by then, and I would bring him some food and a little company, and show him that someone cared.

The next day, Tuesday, I returned. I pulled the canoe up onto the shore, and walked though the woods to the tepee.

"Hello, J.J., it's Frank," I said, as I approached the tent. There was no response. "Hello," I repeated, standing by the flap door of white canvas. I looked around. Perhaps he had left, or had gone for a walk, but he had not answered me the day before, either. To be sure, I peeked inside the tent, and I could make out the outline of his body under the fur blanket, in the very position he was in the day before.

"J.J.?" I said. "It's Frank. J.J.?" There was no response, and I gently pulled the blanket down from his face. His face appeared lifeless. "J.J.?" I said. "Sh..." I murmured, to myself, cutting off the word in deference to J.J., to...decorum, I suppose, for there was no one else to hear me, except...except J.J.'s god, or gods, or ancestors... I knew he was dead.
I went to the entranceway of the tepee, turned, and sat there, looking at J.J.'s face. I thought about his face. It was empty, merely a mask of the man I had met the day before. He was gone, to wherever it was he wanted to go, I thought. Heaven? The big hunting ground? Back to his wife? His ancestors? I had images of Indian movies and documentaries, and of Indian celebrities. These were the only Indians I had ever known. Little Big Man. Chief Dan George. Dances with Wolves. Graham Greene. Black Robe. Tantoo Cardinal. George Armstrong...

I left him there, J.J., in his tepee. I returned home not knowing what to do, thinking I had done what I could. But I had to do something else. It wasn’t finished.

The next morning, I returned with a shovel. I dug a grave, deep in the island woods, and then I carried J.J.’s body, wrapped in his fur and cloth blankets, to the grave. It would not be right, I thought, to throw dirt on his blanket, so I went back to the tepee, tore off its white skin, and returned to the grave with the huge sheet in tow, dragging it behind me, but careful to ensure that one side remained clean. I wrapped the canvas—clean side in—around the fur clad corpse and placed it, with as much dignity to the body as I could muster, at the bottom of the shallow grave. I filled the grave in with the loose dirt, packing it down as I went along, until the entire grave was completely filled in. I then swept over the grave with brush, and covered it with leaves and sticks, trying to make the site look as natural and undisturbed as possible. I returned to what was left of the tepee. Only its bare structure stood now, long thin poles of pine tied together in a bundle at the top with catgut, and I decided to leave it, as a memorial perhaps, to J.J.'s last place of earthly residence and, I think, as a testament to who he was.

I returned home, and did not return to Fox Island until the following year. During that interval I worried that his body would be discovered and that some telltale sign would point to my complicity in the matter. I thought about it a lot. Eventually, however, I decided that I had done right, that I understood, the citizens of Curve Lake would understand, and that, finally, J.J. would look out for
me, because I looked out for him. These were the thoughts that I carried with me, over the next year.

In the meantime, Mary and I had got back together. We had both changed, for some reason, and we got along well. August approached, and she asked me for a canoe ride. It occurs to me now that by that time Fox Island had become one last issue between us that had yet to be resolved.

We paddled across to the island and, although it was an early August Sunday afternoon, the lake was unusually absent of vacationers. Just the odd fishing boat, here and there, dotted the still waters. We entered the channel and, at times, as I turned around to say something to Mary at the stern of the canoe, I noted an expression of contentment on her face. This made me hopeful.

We passed the osprey nest, and the ospreys peeked out from atop, but did not fuss. We continued our journey through the channel. Finally, we entered J.J.’s inlet. And there, where I had pulled the canoe ashore on two occasions, I could see something bright, familiar, hanging from a branch. I paddled over to it, and Mary said only “It’s beautiful” as I took it down from the branch. I had forgotten about those beads, and I remembered then that I had not seen them when I buried J.J.

“It’s for us, I think,” I said, and I carefully made my way to the back of the canoe, placed the necklace around her neck, and kissed her. She said nothing, but she smiled and held the gift and admired it. Then, looking at me, she said, “Where to now, skipper?”

We sat there for a moment, in silence, smiling to ourselves, to each other, to everything. Mary never asked any questions about this. She just seemed to understand.

“To where the winds take us,” I finally responded.

As we paddled home, I analyzed, and a thought came to me that put a chill down my spine, and I could feel my face flush. J.J. must have hung out the necklace the night before he died. That had been my immediate thought when I first saw it there, hanging from the branch. But now, I had a new thought, an
image of....why hadn’t I seen the necklace on my second visit? Or the third? Was it an oversight? And then...why had the osprey been so silent? Another chill went down my spine, and I shyly looked back to Mary, to see if she had noticed, to see...if she was with me. But when I looked back I saw my final surprise of the day, and it was—as were the others events, in retrospect—a welcome surprise. Around Mary’s body, there was an aura, an aura of soft orange, and on her face an expression of...it was like she was soaring. And, as she looked at me, gently and lovingly, it was if we were soaring together, up and over that final pinnacle.

We both wear the necklace, on occasion, and it is precious to us. I’ve thought about researching it. But I know that I will not. Because, I think, there are some things that cannot be communicated in words. Like Fox Island, some things have their own logic and countenance, and have no need to justify or explain anything. This may be called “nature.”

Chapter 16

“Detective Sergeant Matthews, please come in,” Bill says, addressing the big, middle aged man entering the office. “I’m Bill Butler, this is Officer Chen. Please have a seat.”

“Thanks, pleasure to meet you,” Matthews replies to Bill and Alana. He shakes their hands with a mild disdain. “Swell office you have here,” he comments, looking around.

“Never been here before?” Bill asks.

“Oh, a few times. Can’t get over how swanky it is, though. Not a cockroach in sight.” He swaggerers over to the window, and looks out. “Nice view,” he says. He sets down the briefcase he has been carrying and begins
reading a newspaper cartoon taped to the lower half of the window.

“What can we do for you, Sergeant?” Alana asks, already irked by Matthews’ attitude. He finishes reading the cartoon before he turns to reply. He puts his hands in his overcoat pockets, and begins to rock back and forth on his heels.

“Well, I understand that you two have some experience with the cryonics institute here in Metro.”

“Some,” Bill replies.

“Friendly terms?”

“Why?” Bill asks impatiently. The two CSIS officers have had their fill of the Institute, and are none too receptive to Matthews’ swaggering demeanour. His attitude towards CSIS officers is not common among RCMP detectives, but not rare either. Although they work for a common goal—the common good—some in the RCMP are contemptuous of CSIS employees, cynical of any officer of the law who has never made an arrest, never even taken a weapon out of its holster on the job. There is also a perception in the RCMP of inflated financial compensation for CSIS employees, higher than their own, and unwarranted, some feel, in occupations that are extremely comparable.

Matthews’ discomfort with the present environment is evident. Certainly, Bill and Alana’s office is big and swanky, professionally renovated according to the designs of an award winning interior decorator, a far cry from the Avocado Room, which seems to be forever condemned to the pit of any expenditure list. But Matthews hasn’t seen the Avocado room, and is obviously irritated by the notion that every room in the building looks like this one.

Bill sits behind his desk, while Alana pulls up a chair beside him. They face the RCMP detective with their arms crossed. The paper work on the Bleath case had gone on for weeks, and Matthews’ style does little to pique their curiosity.

“Well,” the detective begins, noting with glum satisfaction that the CSIS agents seem to be as cold and arrogant as he figured they would be, “here’s why we need your help. We’ve got a case that may well be a CSIS matter. Couple of
months ago a lady called into the local precinct and the call was transferred to me. Her name is Elizabeth Fields."

Matthews picks up his briefcase and takes a seat opposite Bill and Alana, placing the briefcase on Bill’s desk. He opens it, extracts a small folder, and places it in front of the two detectives. "Too hot for the wire, maybe," he says, "so I couldn’t send it through the Net. But it's on the disc in the folder."

"Sounds like you’re sure you’re finished with this," Alana comments, opening the file to verify the existence of the disc. She closes the file, sets it back on the desk, and crosses her arms again.

"I think it’s a CSIS matter," Matthews says. "My partner and my boss agree."

"Please continue."

"I sure could use a cup of coffee," says Matthews, rising and moving towards the coffee maker.

"Help yourself."

"Nice machine," he says, his back turned to them. "First rate. Christ, I’m surprised you don’t have cappuccino here."

Alana and Bill give each other a look. Experience tells them both to let the guy ramble.

"Anyway," Matthews continues, his back to them as he pours coffee into a styrofoam cup, "about two months ago I get this call, and this lady says she’s seen her husband. He’d been missing for about a year. Turns out that he’s wanted for a few assaults, battery, fraud, embezzlement, and a number of other crimes. It’s a busy list." He turns to face them, and pauses to taste the coffee. "Very nice. Premium quality. This come out of your paycheque, or do the boys upstairs supply it?"

*You big idiot*, Bill wants to say.

“One of the perks” Alana quips, sensing Bill’s growing hostility.

“You said *wanted*,” Bill says, his voice matching Matthews’ sarcastic tone.

“So, you can’t find him?”
"There's a warrant out for him, and the evidence against him is solid. But no, we can't find him. He disappeared before we could pick him up. Anyway, a year after the warrant was signed, he's still missing, and his wife calls to tell us she's seen him. And here's where it gets weird. She's in a donut shop on the 115, on the way to Peterborough, you know? About eighty clicks from here. So, there she is, waiting for her take-out, when a couple walks in. She pays no note of them until she hears the man speak. She looks, but doesn't recognize him, but still, she's sure of the voice, and some of the mannerisms, too. The couple leave, she runs out and writes down the license plate number. A day later she's talking to me—I guess she had to think about it a bit. I traced the number to the Institute. Ms. Fields claims that it was her husband." Matthews takes a sip from his cup, waiting patiently for the obvious question.

"So, is it him or not?" Bill asks finally, irritated at the game playing.

"That's the kicker," Matthews says, obviously beginning to enjoy himself. "We put some surveillance on the guy. Old dog, same old tricks—the voice matches. Ditto for the height. But the face is different. No problem to change the face these days. Even the voice. But he didn't change his voice. Or it hasn't been changed for him, I'm not sure which."

"What are you saying?" Bill asks. This is getting interesting. Ugly, too.

"Well, like I say, the license number traces to the Institute. An Institute employee, actually. She's clean, but we put some surveillance on her, to see what company she's keeping. It takes a couple of weeks, but one night she leaves work with a man in her car fitting the description given to us by Ms. Fields. We take a few pictures. She, Mrs. Fields, we show her the pictures and she says it's him, the guy in the donut shop on the 115. We also did some voice scooping, and compared it to the earlier surveillance of her husband. It's a match."

"You're telling this story out of sequence," Bill notes. "But keep going."

"Am I?"

"Sounds like you've got grounds for a bust," Alana says. "But where's the kicker you spoke of?"
"The kicker is," says Matthews, "the contents of the conversation we scoped between the Institute employee, Jane Lapin, and the suspect. Listen to it for yourself. It’s on the disc."

"Why don’t you save us the trouble?" Bill suggests.

"You’re going to want to hear the tape. The suspect, voice identified as Eddie Fields, is also a graduate of the Institute. He’s been reawakened, I guess. Reanimated."

Alana and Bill, stunned, look at Matthews, clearly astonished.

"Listen to the tape," Matthews says, excited, any negative thoughts about CSIS lost momentarily in the telling of the story.

"We will," says Bill.

"It’s a strange one. And it’s all yours for the time being. You can call my boss and argue with him about it if you want. But it’s your case. Cryonics has far too many international implications. Besides, we’re a little short on manpower around here. And it’s not really up the OPP’s alley, though you can call them, too, if you want."

"Fraud?" Bill thinks out loud. Already, he is drawing his own conclusions.

"Are you saying..."

"I don’t know what I’m saying. It’s too hard to believe, I know. But I’m having a hard time coming up with a logical, innocent explanation for all this. Listen to the tape. The way they talk, this guy was legally dead for quite a while. He’s been back for six, eight months maybe, I don’t know. So, he has an alibi. A pretty good alibi—the guy was dead when the crimes occurred."

"Deanimated, you said," Bill clarifies.

"Yeah, deanimated."

"This is too much," Alana says.

Matthews pours the rest of his coffee down his throat and leans back in his chair. He looks over his shoulder and tosses the empty styrofoam cup into a wastebasket by the coffeemaker. "Hook shot," he announces, but his aim is poor and the cup bounces off the hardwood floor before settling by the door. He turns
back to the desk and closes his briefcase. “I’ve taken it as far as I can,” he says.
“Read the file. Listen to the tape. If you think it’s still my case, give me a call.
Either way, give me a call. But, believe me, this is a CSIS matter. For now,
anyway. We’ll be there if you need to make a bust.”

“Fine,” says Bill, rising from his chair. “We’ll give it a look over and get
back to you.”

“Sorry,” Matthews says, taking his cue and heading for the door, his petty
complaints about CSIS almost totally forgotten. “It’s got all the earmarks of a
grinder. Hate to dump it on your lap, but...”

“Goes with the territory,” Alana says. “We’ll be in touch.”

“Goodbye then,” says Matthews, kicking the styrofoam cup into the
hallway as he exits the office.

Bill gives Alana a resigned look. “That case sure slid easily from one lap to
the other, didn’t it?”

“I don’t want to pick up after him particularly.”

“He’s a prick. But, it’s our case, for a little while anyway, until we get all
this read. But I still don’t see why the RCMP can’t handle this. What do you
want to do, dive right in, or...?”

“I’m hungry. I need food.”

“Maybe we can talk about something else while we’re eating. I don’t feel
like weird.”

“It’s not weird, Bill, it’s a kicker. A grinder, too. Weren’t you listening?”

“It’s a kick in the pants. Let’s go eat.”

Bill feels exhausted. There is nothing like the prospect of a case filled with
mountains of red tape to make him feel tired. He picks up the styrofoam cup in the
hallway and successfully hooks it through the door and into the wastebasket.

“Score one for me,” he says.

“Must be the caffeine, Bill, all that premium quality,” Alana jokes.
Chapter 17

With little fanfare, Leif leaves the Institute and relocates one hundred and thirty kilometres northeast of Metro, in Peterborough, where he is to begin a life of autonomy. His home is close to the Institute retreat and therefore in an area that Leif is familiar with, if it could be said that he is familiar with any area at all. Still, the relatively small city is easier to navigate and comprehend than Metro. It is also far enough from Metro to give Leif a sense of independence, and yet close enough to both Metro and the Institute retreat to promote in Leif a reasonable feeling of security.

Due to the Institute's concern for Leif's safety, he has been given a new identity. The name chosen—Arthur Knight—comes from the auspices of Institute security, and had been legally approved by an accommodating Ontario court judge. Someone had a penchant for medieval folklore, Jane had thought, when the name was introduced, but she did not dispute the moniker. She thought the name trite at first, and perhaps a little too loud. But she soon appreciated an appropriate irony in the name, imagining Leif, like King Arthur, pulling Excalibur from the anvil, thus revealing his true identity.

Jane did her undergraduate degree at Trent University, in Peterborough. She knew the area and liked it. Leif's new name reminded her of the university crest. Circular, in dark green contrasting against a white background, the crest features the hilt of a sword, with the blade beneath imbedded in three squiggly waves. A boyfriend, an English major, had developed his own scenario concerning the development of the crest, and the meaning behind it. One evening, the two had stopped by a university pub and debated the crest over a game of chess. They had that in common, Jane remembered: the ability to carry on a conversation while playing chess. Unfortunately, he also had the ability to carry on simultaneous romantic relationships. That ability was eventually stifled by Jane's discovery of
his infidelity, but she still remembered with affection many of their lively conversations while they had been a couple, and the subject of the crest was one of their more intriguing discussions, magnified, perhaps, by a few ales.

The boyfriend had insisted that the crest represented an Arthurian legend—the Lady of the Lake extending the hilt of the sword (knowledge) to those (students) that might wade out into the waters to pick it up. Jane knew that it meant something else—she had read it in the Trent calendar—something about Samuel de Champlain’s discovery of the local lakes and rivers. That’s what the founders of the university had in mind, she had insisted, but her boyfriend’s arguments were compelling, and she came to think of the crest as he had envisioned it, regardless of her eventual loss of affection for him. That made Leif’s new name—Arthur Knight—somehow more becoming. Perhaps, she hoped, Leif would wade out to take up his Excalibur—his destiny—by the hilt.

Leif accepted the name, appreciating not only the flow of the name, but the symbolism of the story behind the crest as Jane had explained it to him. She augmented the story with a passage that she had found on the Net. It was a relevant passage, she thought, with words of hope and encouragement. She had those words printed with the Trent Crest on fine white parchment and then mounted in a crystal frame. She presented the gift to Leif, and though he found the words rather cryptic, he read it often and valued it higher than any other possession (he tucked the origami turtle behind it in the well of the frame).

“I’m not sure what it means,” Jane said, after he had unwrapped the gift and attempted to translate the words into Modern English. “It just struck me as appropriate, somehow. Appropriate for *Arthur Knight*. Prophetic maybe, I don’t know. You’ll have to let me know.”

Then, she read the words aloud, translating as best she could:

That is the Lady of the Lake...There ys a grete roche, and therein ys as fayre a paleyce as ony on erthe, and rychely besayne. And
thys damesel woll com to you anone, and than speke ye fayre to hir, that she may gyff you that swerde.

"It's quite poetic, don't you think?"
Leif wished that the damsel might be her, but he treasured the gift just the same. Maybe it was her, he thought, hopefully.

His first major transaction in Peterborough had been the purchase of a house in which to hang Jane's gift. Although the money left to him by his father had compounded substantially over the years, he had been encouraged by the Institute not to draw attention to himself by making his wealth obvious. Nothing fancy—no turrets or draw bridges, Jane joked. It should not be a castle or a hermitage, she said, but a refuge in the least, and perhaps a foundation from which to build. That, too, Leif thought, seemed to be the message of Jane's gift.

Leif selects a modest two-story brick home, located in a quiet Peterborough neighbourhood. His attorney, originally hired to independently audit his estate, looks after the negotiations and the paperwork. The house is in an older section of the city where century homes have been renovated and lovingly maintained, and where full-grown maples tower over the neighbourhood like green awnings rustling in the wind. It is summer, and on sunny days sprinkles of sunshine filter through and around the leafy canopies, bounce off the earth's surface—the green lawns and colourful gardens, the grey paved streets and concrete walkways, the bricked houses of weathered reds and browns—then reflect into shady areas, lighting verandas, rooms behind windows, and the bicycles, automobiles, and bric-a-brac which line the driveways and alleyways behind the houses. On humid days, tiny tree frogs—cicadas—hum in a cooling flurry according to their annoyance with the heat and humidity. They strike a similar note, but in individual starts and stops in crescendos of happy whirls and flutters that seem to resonate though the trees with the abandon of a breeze. When
it rains it is still warm, though the rains can be violent, slamming down on the streets and sidewalks in dancing silver shards, while cracks of thunder traverse the dark sky, shaking the neighbourhood with a lingering vibrato, echoing the strike of silver-white bolts of lightning which never seem to strike in your neighbourhood.

Mostly, however, it is a quiet, content neighbourhood, with a generous outpouring of summer sun and afternoon showers. It is inhabited by a mix of older couples who have witnessed changes—some subtle and others dramatically sudden—and new families, in contrast, who institute much of the change, renovating as they please, but bringing about many modifications which seem quietly evolutionary—as opposed to revolutionary—to the neighbourhood. The sounds of children newly delivered into summer holidays with a burst of liberation and energy mix with the breezy whirl of the cicadas and the low murmur of the sewers buried beneath the streets. Traffic sounds are carried through the air, bouncing and echoing off side streets, from a busier street a block away which runs parallel to Leif’s King Street (Jane thought the name a delightful irony). At night, the occasional echo of city traffic calmly reassures the residents of the continuity of life, while in the daytime those same noises are dimmed by more immediate sounds, and the world seems smaller, somehow, and less contemplative.

Leif moves in on July 1st—Canada Day—and becomes familiar with the area relatively quickly. He has little else to command his attention. Next door, immediately to his west, lives a young couple. In the early evening, Leif can often see them from his screened kitchen window, out in their backyard with their two pre-school aged children. They cook hot dogs on a natural gas barbecue, and take turns pushing their kids on wooden swing seats elevated over the shoe-scuffed earth by white polyester ropes tied to an overhead wooden beam. Even when Leif can’t see them, the tension between the wood and the rope on the swings—indicated by a repetitive rasp—indicates to him that they are there. The children’s occasional squeals of delight, and requests to be pushed higher, also remind him of their presence next door. The couple seldom entertains anyone other than their kids, whom they dote on with enthusiasm, Leif notes, glancing through the
window from time to time, unsure of the scope of social etiquette and expectations in the neighbourhood.

The older couple residing immediately to the east of Leif’s house are veranda sitters, content to watch the world come and go from shaded comfort. They sit on a pair of matching cushioned wicker rocking chairs, and peek out through the breaks in the leafy green trumpet vine that seems to cascade from the veranda roof but, in fact, climbs upwards from a garden just in front of the veranda. The couple have a mild curiosity about whatever passes by. They sip lemonade, eat butter cookies, receive their mail, read letters from family, and discard the junk mail after a half-hearted tsk tsk. They chat with the lady from Canada Post when she arrives with the mail and offer her lemonade and ask her if she has a fella and then tease her when she says no. They don’t pass judgement. They don’t really want to know anybody. They are the perfect neighbours, friendly and private, reassuring and unassuming. They are gracious—nothing more or less—and wave and smile and comment on the weather through the trumpet vine whenever they catch Leif’s eye.

Leif quickly develops a liking for walks through the neighbourhood, taking a route that becomes more familiar as the days and weeks pass. Each day he walks, often in short sleeves and shorts, passing the corner variety stores, local pubs and playgrounds. He yearns to become familiar with his environment. He knows that his father had lived in this city before moving to Emerald Isle—amazingly close to the Institute’s retreat, as it turned out—and had likely walked the streets of Peterborough, perhaps the very streets that Leif explores.

Leif’s excursions gradually cover more ground. He visits some of the churches and other buildings of historical significance in the city. The city has a past, set in concrete and brick and stone, evoking memories that his older neighbours can perhaps best identify with. Eventually, he realizes that it is futile to try to capture the essence of his father here, or anywhere, in fact—from the summer retreat, Jane had driven him to Emerald Isle. There were about one hundred and fifty houses on the island. Fox Island was close by, but still revealed
little. A closer inspection of Fox Island might have helped, but inclement weather had delayed a canoe trip for another time.

On their way back to the retreat, they stopped at a marina on the edge of the small causeway bridging the gap between Emerald Isle and the mainland. A map of the island and an aerial photograph were stapled to the wall just inside the marina door. An old man, wearing a red and blue checked shirt, and smoking a pipe, sat by the door in an old wooden chair, watching them as they perused the postings.

"Can I help you folks?" he asked.

"My father used to live here," Leif explained.

"What was his name?"

"Ward."

"Ward, huh? No, don't remember that name. This place was once called Harrington's Island, you know," he said, drawing on his pipe. "It was farmland in the old days. Then, the government flooded the canal, and the land became an island. Then, you know, some priests bought it, and called it Villa St. Clement. Built a chapel and dormitory, and spend their summers here. People are still digging up old nails and stuff. A priest once said to me, 'You know, I'm going to make a Catholic out of you someday.' I told him it was bad enough being an Indian."

Jane laughed politely at the joke, and led Leif back to the car.

The island's parts were hidden in its whole, its stories only really known by those who had experienced them. It had been a disappointing side trip. Like the churches and other buildings he passed in the city, Emerald and Fox Islands revealed little history of significance to Leif.

By moving out on his own, Leif has been forcibly made to adapt, to assimilate. It is an unending education, a constant game of catch-up. How did one explain a lack of knowledge about contemporary society, not to mention historical references? How did one participate without being involved, for involvement is to risk exposure? Remember that T.V. show...that shady politician...that accident on
Amidst his fear of divulging his identity, not to mention his ignorance, is the loneliness that results from his forced anonymity. Jane talks to him weekly on the Net, encouraging him. "Don't be too afraid of not being in touch with some things," she has advised. "You'll be surprised. Some people sleep walk through life, don't know anything more than you do. Don't judge people by what you see on the Net, or what you read in the papers. Not all people are that brilliant, or bad, or influential."

Coupled with an encouragement to socialize are warnings to be careful. The mixed messages force a delicate juggling act. A survival instinct surfaces, and a fear of the unknown takes precedence over his desire to learn, thus inhibiting his assimilation. Still, he has a motivating factor which encourages him to overcome his lack of aggression, something that Jane has both predicted and worried about: he has become bored and frustrated with his daily routine. Up before ten, then breakfast and entertainment on the Net, then exercise in a sports simulator he had installed in a spare room, at Jane's suggestion, or a jog around the block. Lunch is followed by exploration of the city. Then, supper out, or delivered, followed by the occasional early evening report at Doctor Kaye's office.

Leonard Kaye is a local practitioner recommended to Leif by the Institute. Not knowing anyone in the city, Leif has become a fairly regular visitor to the Doctor's office. He seems to Leif a kindly man—but oddly impersonal too. He seems rather old to be practicing—about the same age as Leif's elderly neighbours. He is of medium height, with a full head of white hair, and a notable gap between two yellowed front teeth. He is slow afoot, gently moving in and out of his office at a deliberate, leisurely pace: schedules are a suggestion to him, not a rule. He takes as much time with his patients as necessary, and the next patient doesn't exist until the last one is dealt with to his satisfaction, if not the patient's.

Leif hangs around the office—knowing that Dr. Kaye will see him eventually, even without an appointment—and, as he waits, reads magazines and shyly eyes the doctor's pretty receptionist even though she is married and clearly
uninterested. Despite the doctor's detached manner, he becomes, for a short time, Leif's confidant. With a monotone delivery that suggests an actor too familiar with his lines for them to sound absolutely genuine, he encourages Leif to seek out other social supports, with the familiar proviso that he note and report any undue interest.

Dr. Kaye's affiliation with the Institute is vague. Whenever Leif mentions the Institute or any of its employees, the doctor responds as if the information is new to him, even though it is obvious to Leif that it isn't.

"Jane thinks that I'm doing okay." Leif commented on one of his earlier visits.

"Jane...?" the doctor replied, sitting on the edge of his desk, his arms folded. He looked down on Leif with a benevolent air.

"Jane Lapin. From the Institute." You must know her, Leif thought.

"Uh huh. And do you talk to her a lot? Is she a good friend?"

"Yes. She's been very good."

"Uh huh," the doctor said, furrowing his brow, looking serious, but still with hints of disinterest in his posture.

"She says just to take each day as it comes, you know?" Leif hesitated, but the doctor just stood there, waiting with no reply, no words of encouragement. "But I feel like I need more," Leif continued awkwardly.

"Go on."

Leif fought for the right words. "When I...uh...first got here, when I was released from the Institute, I felt...kind of...lonely, you know, and I still do, but I'm sort of, you know, restless, like I got to do something...uh...but I don't know what."

"Uh huh."

Doctor Kaye seldom offers advice. His uh huhs, and go ons are supposed to encourage Leif to talk, to come up with his own solutions, but these little interview techniques irritate and intimidate Leif. And, the doctor seldom directly mentions the Institute; Leif's only other social contact.
Leif begins to find the visits frustrating and futile, the doctor uncaring, and his treks to the office become less frequent. Kaye’s office remains an alternative, if not for answers, then at least as a link to the Institute, to Jane. But his discomfort in the office heightens with each visit, as both Kaye, and his receptionist, begin to show their displeasure to his presence. The receptionist’s treatment of him becomes a particular aggravation. She calls him Arthur. Arrrthurr. Like a little boy. “Arrrthurr, the doctor will see you now.” Her tone does nothing for his self-esteem. She wears her full name on a plastic tag, and Leif wants to say her name aloud, replying in kind—“Thanks, Sheeilaaah”—but he can’t, and he eventually succumbs to the easiest solution to his discomfort by avoiding going to the doctor’s office. Sheila’s no Lady of the Lake, he reflected one night, looking up to his bedroom wall at the white parchment given to him by Jane. He thought of the little origami turtle hidden in the well of the crystal frame, and was comforted.

So, Leif has no one in the city. No friends, or acquaintances, or even, he feels, any allies. He even notices that the old couple to his east, peering through the trumpet vines that shadow their veranda, wave a practiced, indifferent hello. That seems the extent of their involvement in the community, the role they have perfected and are comfortable with. They don’t want more. Neither do the young couple on the other side of Leif’s house. They have their children to play with. Yet, while the old couple continue to peek through the vines as Leif passes by, he continues to peek through the kitchen window into the young couple’s backyard, envious of their youth and happiness and satisfaction with each other. Everyone looks so content with his or her role. Leif’s part is yet to be cast.

Leif’s day usually ends with a bit of tentative exploration of the city nightlife, a taxi back to his house, some television, then bed. The comfort of the Net is limited. Despite their promises, the Institute security team has not, as yet, come up with a system that can guarantee the user’s anonymity. No such software exists, and one’s identity while travelling on the Net can be as easy for a skilled hacker to pin down as the owner of a thumbprint would be for a forensic scientist.
"May as well put a sign with your name on it on your forehead," an Institute security woman had told Leif, "as to get overly involved with the Net." One-way entertainment was fine, as was communication with Jane and the Institute on a secure line, but inter-activity on the Net was hazardous, and would stay that way until more reliable firewall software could be developed and proven. Unfortunately, said the security woman, hackers were never more than a half step behind technology.

One evening, Leif makes his way to the older downtown section of the city. It is late July, a humid and restless evening, too warm and sticky to sleep. A bright full moon hovers lazily high in the night sky, radiating a whitish translucent halo that outshines nearby stars, while the sky, through the evening haze, appears as a pearly navy blue. The downtown buildings, old and new, appear formidable, unyielding to the beams of car lights and swaths of streetlights which illuminate but do not transcend solid matter. Along the streets young men loiter in groups, expectant of some vague adventure. Couples stroll from the bars and restaurants in short sleeves, hand in hand, their faces tanned with a summer sheen. Cars move slowly and aimlessly up and down the streets, glimmering waxed reflections of neon lights.

There is a bar with no line-up. Leif looks through the window to get a sense of the place, the mood. He can hear the music from where he stands, feel the bass as it trembles through the window. The patrons are young, of university age. The vibes are good, and Leif enters, receiving little curiosity from the doorman. Leif stands for a moment just inside the door, hesitating, feeling. The bar is faddish in its nostalgia—though Leif does not comprehend it—with antique neon beer signs, movie posters, and farm implements: a strange mix of spirits. The lighting is dark against the hardwood floor, and the patron’s feet are dimmed into sameness. In contrast, the neon on the walls seem dazzling against the muted background, while the halogen spotlights glaring down from the ceiling seem brilliantly intense.
The music is loud and clean, with smoothness in the highs, and a reverberating thunder in the bass that he'd had a hint of standing outside at the window. The sound waves combine to pleasantly reverberate through Leif's body. The dance floor to his left is long and narrow, paralleling the shape of the bar opposite it, with both seeming to work the limit of the building's depth. A dozen couples, with plenty of elbowroom, enthusiastically respond to the driving beat of the music. Leif walks straight ahead from the entrance way, walking almost the entire length of the bar, until he finds a vacant space along it that he can claim as his own. He orders a beer. Then, he turns and watches, entranced by the college-aged kids as they dance in the muted light, some dancing for the pleasure of expression, others for the thrill of sexual innuendo. The thought of personal contact frightens him but, increasingly enjoying his role as a spectator, he witnesses the social interaction with fascination. He notes which pairings on the dance floor seem to work and which don't. He is simultaneously intrigued and lonely, wanting to participate, but intimidated by the inconsistent rules of social etiquette that appear to be varied according to chance and circumstance.

As he sips from his beer and watches the couples dancing, he becomes aware of a change in atmosphere. Something changes, and only he, he thinks, recognises the import of that change. There is a woman by his side. She is close to him, in his periphery and in his territory. It is a both a terrifying intrusion and a welcome overture. He nervously mulls over the situation, uncertain of what to do, simultaneously intimidated by her presence and yet afraid that she will move away. He turns to order another beer and watches her back in the mirror over the bar. She sways slightly to the music. He can smell her perfume. It is exquisite.

He turns again, in her direction, to the dance floor, so that he can have a moment with her, can see her in the flesh, can verify that she is real in the artificial light. Facing the dance floor once again, he stretches his neck, and shuffles his drink from hand to hand. He looks off behind the woman a number of times, as if curious about something happening behind the bar, about the people down the bar, or about the baseball game playing without sound on the Net monitor above the
bar. But each action is a contrivance. He only wants to look at the woman. He steals measured glances of her, noting, even in the muted light, the healthy glow of her skin, and the individual strands of hair combining intimately in dark, rich curls. To Leif, she is fascinating and alluring, and exquisitely attractive. He wants to say something, but feels cautioned by the Institute’s warning to be wary of strangers. *Damn the Institute*, he thinks, but his momentary rebelliousness is tempered by his uncertainty. His quandary about how to handle the situation results in no action whatsoever. He stands there, leans against the bar, and fidgets with the label on the beer bottle, lifting up the corner of the label with his fingernail, then flattening it again. Sometimes, when he dares to glance her way, she seems to know he is looking, and she looks down to the floor, yet slightly his way. However, self-absorbed with insecurity, he is unable to judge her reaction.

The woman, meanwhile, is aware of his interest, and tries to encourage it, but he is frozen with uncertainty. The two, side by side with their backs to the bar, are doing their own little dance, a prelude, a test of intentions. Soon, he worries, she will move to another spot, or see someone she knows, or leave the bar, and he knows that he will feel relief, and then regret.

As he watches the dance floor, he gives in to his inability to act, and slumps in resignation. A few minutes pass by. Then, forlorn but relaxed again, he feels a tap on his shoulder. He looks over, and it is she, gesturing with her eyes, and her body language, that she would like to dance, but not actually saying it. Leif, almost frozen by this new perspective of her—she is even more alluring than he first thought—nods an unsure acceptance. He is caught by surprise, captured without fear, stunned by his momentary apathy. He is ready to be led. She takes his hand, and guides him to the dance floor. Tentative and self-conscious at first, Leif begins to respond to the encouragement her eyes and smile convey, and her seeming willingness to unconditionally excuse his awkwardness. He begins to loosen up again, eventually giving in to the euphoria of *feeling* the music, responding accordingly without inhibition, as he had seen so many others do. He never before truly understood the exhilaration, the joy of giving oneself over to
free expression, as he does now. The experience is liberating, and intoxicating.

After a half-hour of continuous dancing, she takes his hand, leads him out of the bar and they walk, hand in hand, saying nothing, but feeling, in the dark, still night. After a few blocks of walking, she leading the way, they arrive at a wide, grey-bricked building. He is completely in her control. He trusts without reason. It is all so easy, so natural and right. It is faith, blinded by seduction, by sensation.

They pass building security, ride the lift, and she leads him to an apartment door. She says little in words, yet Leif feels as though they are sharing their own private secret. They are both anonymous in name, but he feels as though he has known her forever.

Inside the apartment, in muted darkness, she gives him a glass of chilled white wine, and he drinks thirstily. Then, she leads him to a bedroom made pretty with pinks and baby blues, flowers and trinkets. The light is faint and sensual, and the room smells vibrantly feminine. They strip off their clothing, she slowly and seductively, he in awe of her—of the moment—and they slide into the bed, under the sheets, and make love.

He knows that she is gone, before he even realizes that he is awake. It is morning, and through the window he can see that the sky is overcast, threatening a day of steady rain.

She is gone. Not on an errand. Not to work. Just gone. He looks through the apartment. It is sterile. It has furniture, and appliances, but no personal objects, nothing to signify that the apartment is anything but vacant. He hadn’t noticed that in the darkness of the night before. Only the bedroom seems the same, and yet, as he looks closer, he sees that there is nothing of a personal nature there, either, nothing to indicate who she was... is. The prettiness is gone, vanished. He goes through the closets and drawers, the kitchen cupboards and the refrigerator—all empty.

He waits. Throughout the day he waits. He walks down the apartment hallway and knocks on doors. To his bewilderment, and growing horror, each
tenant assures him that the apartment is vacant. But he goes back, and waits, into the night.

He dreams. In his dream, he has driven her to an airport, a metropolitan airport, big and powerful and trivializing. He stands in a long empty corridor, and she walks away from him, waving and smiling, and his legs feel heavy, and useless. As he watches helplessly, she disappears through a door at the end of the corridor, leaving his life with hardly a goodbye, eager for a new adventure.

He walks aimlessly through the airport corridors, devastated, feeling abandoned and alone, and at times he cannot help but cry aloud. Finally, with heaving sobs, he stops walking, and he stands alone, in his misery, hiding his face in his hands. A middle-aged woman—a cleaning woman—sympathetic, comes up to him, touches his wrist to comfort him, and asks him what is wrong. He tells her his story, and as he does her sympathy begins to dissipate. Through the fingers that veil his face, he sees her change of heart. He is discouraged, but he keeps talking anyway, hopelessly determined to recapture her waning sympathy. When her face becomes a scowl, he stops, lost. She shakes her head and walks away, repulsed by him. No one can help him, he thinks, no one can understand.

It is a dream that haunts Leif like a dark cloak that he cannot shake off. For days he searches for the woman from the bar. Sometimes he tries to deny that the night with her ever happened. Sometimes he is angry. For weeks he is burdened by fits of crying, especially at night when, lying in bed, devoid of distractions, he can’t stop the useless recreations and speculations. He wonders who she was, and where she might be, and he imagines countless hypothetical conversations and situations in which she is involved. Finally, one morning, after another sleepless night, he goes to Doctor Kaye’s office, and waits in the lobby amidst the other patients. After a long wait, the receptionist calls him—“Arrrthurr, the doctor will see you now”—and he looks up, hating the name, and hating her. He stands and walks through to the doctor’s open door, all the while staring at her with contempt. Intimidated, she looks down to her desk.

Leif is abrupt with the doctor, disdaining, almost daring him to patronize.
He tells his story briefly. The doctor says little. He fills out a prescription for Leif, and sends him on his way. Then, the doctor calls Jane, and his call is forwarded to a hotel in Phoenix, where Jane is attending a conference. She is not in her room, but a message is taken, and she returns the call. After talking to Dr. Kaye, she calls Leif, but he says little about his experience. He doesn’t want to let her down, she determines, and she doesn’t push him to elaborate on his experience. Still, she is worried. She tells him how she can be reached at the Phoenix hotel if he needs her, and promises to phone again the next day.

By the time Jane returns, and drives to Peterborough to see Leif, his depression has gone. Still, he feels empty. Eventually, Leif stops looking for the woman. But then, one day, under the most terrifying circumstance, he does see her again.

Chapter 18

The surveillance team gathers in the CSIS North conference room and wait for the technical presentation to be introduced by Ronald “Roadkill” Bosworth, added to the team because of the highly technical nature of the case. Arnold Dean has also been added. Dean had not been happy with the assignment until he recognized the potentially high profile that the case might ultimately take. Something interesting was definitely brewing here, he conceded, as details of the case began to emerge.

Bill and Alana have worked exclusively on the case since the initial stakeout of Dag Oskorian, a.k.a., Douglas Bleath. Despite their initial misgivings when Detective Sergeant Matthews’ information had resulted in an authorized continuance of their investigation into the affair, they protect their senior positions
over the case with vigour, both understanding the need for additional help, yet neither willing to surrender the authority each feels they have earned. They yield only to the authority of law, ethical standards, and Martin Yancey, the Regional Director General, who has worked tirelessly to make the entire investigation evolve as smoothly as possible. Like the rest, Yancey has become intrigued by the developments as they unfolded. He drove north from the downtown office for this meeting, and looks classy in his blue bow tie.

Roadkill has been asked to make a summation of the evidence as it has been realized so far. That he had responded favourably to the Roadkill moniker a week earlier in a verbal slip by Alana is evidence of the camaraderie that has developed within the group. That it is said with affection helps. It is an appropriate handle for a man whose line of work includes not only navigating the Net, but also creating Net “accidents.” Hence: Roadkill. Or Ron. The latter is the norm, the moniker is reserved for special occasions. For a kill, for example. And, although the team is nowhere near a kill, the prey has been identified, and the hunt is on.

The five sit in the conference room around a large mahogany table on matching blue office chairs. As in many businesses, the conference room had been contrived to be the handsomest room in the building, a first class suite for visiting dignitaries and senior executives from Ottawa, complete with a nicely equipped washroom off the back of the room. In fact, the room was the CSIS North showpiece when first renovated just two years earlier. In the interval, however, the employees who used it for real work, and who hated the room for its formal pretensions, took it upon themselves to claim it for their own, gradually customizing the room to suit, to the chagrin of the building manager. Graffiti had been written or scratched into the sides of the table with pencils, felt-tipped pens, penknives, and car keys, the scribble now beginning to overflow onto the top edges of the table. Posters and cartoons cut out from daily newspapers began to appear, taped to the walls and the two entry doors, and on the mirror inside the washroom. Plants had surfaced along the window ledge under the vertical blinds.
Venus flytraps had become the favourite plant, labelled on the small plastic and clay pots with pet names and the owner’s initials, as employees vied to cultivate the most awesome devourer of houseflies and hamburger. Covert competitors sabotaged the competitions with feedings of lint, tobacco leaves, gum, and whatever else might be found in the corner of pockets or at the edge of the floor underneath the window. Dean, who had accompanied Yancey on the drive from the downtown office, stands by the window, looking at the pots. He shakes his head, turns, and takes a seat beside Roadkill. They make an interesting contrast. Dean is a suit, will always be a suit, Bill thinks. Bill glances to his left and right, then across the table to Dean and Roadkill, and decides that he is glad to be sitting on this side of the table between Yancey and Alana. Today, Alana looks particularly attractive in a white blouse and grey skirt—typically CSIS—providing the only reason why Bill might rather be sitting opposite her. He wonders what she thinks of Dean. He’s not a bad looking chap, he concedes. Young, too.

The room’s big picture window, behind Dean and Roadkill, looks out to the access road, then across the back of the huge Chevrolet dealership to the highway. Above, jet carriers navigate low overhead with a familiar roar and whine, descending in turn in a final approach for landing at the nearby Pearson International Airport. To see outside, up or down, is to look around the paper graffiti and newspaper columns and cartoons taped to the window which, the horticulturists argue, protect the plants beneath from an excess of sunshine. As Bill looks over the heads of Dean and Roadkill, he has a brief thought about fishing. It has been a while since he has reeled one in.

Roadkill, used to the dark dampness of the computer lab, sits beside Dean with his back to the window. He wears rose-shaded sunglasses and a Detroit Tigers baseball cap tilted low on his forehead—the overall effect does little to hide his pallid complexion. He wears a white tee shirt with a black silhouette of a leggy woman with a rose between her teeth. As Roadkill speaks, he moves, nervous to be speaking in front of four people at one time. Bill, sitting directly across from Roadkill, forgets his fishing fantasies and watches in fascination as the
silhouette dances—not a Latin dance, but something Hawaiian?—by some sort of stain near Roadkill’s heart. Basement dwellers, Bill wonders, must be excused from the CSIS dress codes.

“We began with the voice match,” Roadkill explains, wriggling in his seat. They had been waiting quietly for Roadkill to stop shuffling his papers and begin. His nervous energy continues throughout his brief presentation. As he speaks, he alternately pushes his glasses up tighter between his eyes and then balances them on the edge of his nose. Then, he takes off his baseball cap, wipes his sweaty thin hair back tight over the bald spot on the back of his head, and replaces the hat again. He dances along with the silhouette on his shirt in a strained choreography. Her mouth begins to seem clenched, as if afraid she might lose her rose during Roadkill’s nervous undulations. “We confirmed what the locals had on the subject,” he continues. “A solid match. Still don’t understand why his voice matches and his face doesn’t. An inconsistency we have to consider. We can assume that he’s had cosmetic surgery, but that can’t be confirmed without a closer look. Prints don’t match either, and I’m told that kind of surgery is very difficult. It can be done, but there aren’t many surgical technicians that can achieve an undetectable result, though it is possible. Now, if we compare the body structure to that of Fields, we get a match. Same height and build. The probability is high that the grad is Fields. But, we need more, right?”

The question has been directed towards Martin Yancey. Roadkill waits expectantly for a response, printouts at hand to back up his points, but Yancey’s response is slow to come, and Roadkill fiddles with his hat and glasses while he waits. The dancing lady stops too, freezing in alarm, mid-dance, as if the stilled and stained cotton dance floor has made her cognizant of the encroaching perspiration emanating from Roadkill’s armpits above her head. Bill watches with irritation as the dancing girl is slowly engulfed, the beauty and aroma of the rose forever lost.

“I’m not prepared,” Yancey says calmly, beginning in his usually engaging way, softly and smoothly, “to bring the Solicitor General into this yet, at least not
all the way. I think we need more before we open up this can of worms. Bill?"

"We have more," Bill says. "But I'm not sure that you want to hear about it."

"Is it legal?" Yancey asks.

"Legal, yes. But unethical, perhaps." He hated to use that word.

"Legal is good. What is it?"

"We have DNA."

"How did you get that?"

"We have a fluid sample."

"I'm guessing that it's..." The team seems to be looking everywhere but at Yancey. They fidget nervously, like guilty school kids. Roadkill's twitching has become contiguous.

"Well, why don't you tell me," Yancey says. It is obvious to him that something's up, something, perhaps, that he would rather not hear.

"Semen," Bill says. "And hair."

Roadkill begins to giggle. Then, Alana lets out a snort, and Bill smiles. Even Dean, fully aware of the unprofessional behaviour, cannot help himself, and breaks out with his own chuckle. The rare revelation of Dean's sense of humour sobered Alana and Bill. However, Roadkill laughs louder, desperately trying to muffle the sound by putting his head down on his forearms. This strategy succeeds only in dislodging his rose-shaded sunglasses and pushing his baseball cap high on his head. Tufts of thin, sweaty hair poke out from beneath the hat's rim.

"Semen." Martin appears unperturbed, although his deadpan of the word semen causes a few more assorted snorts. "And how, might I ask, did you go about collecting that?"

"We had a volunteer," Bill states. The room grows quieter. Yancey gives Alana a quick look. That sobered them all up, and while Bill looks down to his paperwork on the table, everyone else looks at Alana. She is appalled by their inquiry.

"Don't look at me," she snaps. "It was Elizabeth Fields."
Bill looks to Yancey, who, too shocked to apologize to Alana, shoots Bill a dumbfounded look. Bill looks back down to his papers.

“She wanted to do it,” Bill explains steadfastly. “And we needed to know.”

The room remains still in an uncomfortable silence for a few moments. Finally, Yancey shakes his head in disapproval, and speaks.

“I don’t really care for the...investigative technique...the...we’ll get to that later. What did you find out?”

“Ron?” Bill says to Roadkill.

Roadkill clears his throat. “It’s a match,” he says, his composure returning. “Ran the DNA with Fields’, which was on record. It’s an unquestionable match.”

“On record with who?” Yancey asks, briefly confused.

“The locals,” says Bill. “And the Super-Penn data base. It’s Fields. And you’ve seen his record. I’ve seen worse, but it’s not pleasant, either.”

“He skipped out before they could prosecute on the last set of charges,” Alana adds.

“And we don’t know what he’s doing...um...as this other person,” Bill notes.

“Then,” says Yancey, attempting to summarize, “we have a...well, what do we have? A conspiracy? A fraud? Uh...some kind of show...by a respected, entrenched...uh...recognized—for Christ’s sake—member of the community?”

“One of the above, Martin,” Bill offers, shaking his head and shrugging. “Honestly, we don’t know.”

“What’s your next step? What do you want to do?”

Bill looks around at the team. There has been some disagreement on what to do next, especially from Dean, quiet at the moment, but who had strongly argued for a quick bust. His arguments had been tempting. However, Bill knew from experience that there was a virtue to patience. He didn’t think that Fields was a threat, nor did he think that Fields was suddenly going to disappear.

Likewise, the institution that undoubtedly had something to do with this was
unlikely to suddenly dematerialize.

“We talked about busting him,” Bill says, “but we’re not sure if the timing’s right. We want to bust him, but we’ve got nothing on the Institute. Not yet. They’ve got some part in this, they must have, but we’ll need a warrant, and it seems as though we’ll have to pick up Fields to get it.”

“And then... after you pick up Fields?”

“We certainly have enough to pick him up, and then we go from there.”

“It’ll be interesting,” Dean finally speaks, “to see if the Institute files a missing person report.” This point had been part of his earlier argument.

“Meanwhile?” says Yancey.

“Meanwhile, we run some tests on him,” says Bill. “We’ve got to know if he’s putting on an act, or what. For that, we’ll need some experts who can stay quiet. People who can probe his mind, find out if he’s been tampered with.”

Yancey thinks about what he has heard. Bill’s strategy seems the most intelligent alternative. The path of least resistance, Yancey thinks. “I might be able to help you,” he offers.

“We thought you might,” Bill says. “None of us have the connections. None of us, to be honest, know if such people actually exist. You hear rumours...”

“Yes, there are rumours,” says Yancey. “Where there’s smoke there’s fire, but how much fire? Imaginations do tend to run wild, don’t they?” he says, looking around the room, looking, in turn, each member of the team in the eye. I should have been consulted, is the message he sends to each, and they each look elsewhere in response. Point taken, he continues:

“Leave it to me. I’ll get you some people. Give me the paperwork, and I’ll check it over. I’ll get you the warrants, too. If you are unsure about whether or not you’ve got enough for a warrant on Fields, that may be because the way you gathered your DNA is spooking you, as it should. However, he is wanted, so a warrant on him shouldn’t be a problem, as long as your evidence about his identity is sound, which it appears to be. You can enforce the warrant without the RCMP, I think, if you mind your p’s and q’s. I can’t see how Fields might be
inclined or able to try to wiggle out of that. Anyway, I’ll speak to the Solicitor General’s people about this.” He sighs and shakes his head. “Some advice,” he adds, looking up, looking the team over again, eye to eye, his voice rising and admonishing. “Don’t rush this. Don’t be hasty. The Institute isn’t going anywhere. And I agree…I don’t think Fields is either. Keep your eye on him to be sure. But show some prudence.”

The team looks hurt, and Yancey notices. His diplomatic tone returns. “You’ve done a great job, I think. I’m just throwing in a few cautions, cautions I have to verbalize, for my own ease of mind, if not for yours. I think that you all know the potential consequences one way or the other. It’s a big one, all right, a big case, but it’s not just me that you’ll have to answer to if something goes terribly wrong. All on the level here, I think, so far, though the involvement of Ms. Fields is…” He fights for the right word.

“Unethical?” Alana offers.

“Maybe.”

“But not illegal,” Bill notes. “She did consent. It was her idea, in fact.”

“Her idea? Are you sure?”

“We made sure. We didn’t pressure her. We told her that we still weren’t sure. That we needed DNA. She said she could get it, find out through experience if it is her husband. She’s sure. She didn’t need the DNA, she says.”

“After the…uh…?”

“Yes.”

“You baited that hook rather well. I’d rather the original idea came from her. The media will make hay of it if they ever find out. So…”

“We still need her,” Bill says, anticipating Yancey.

“Why?”

“I just think we still need her. She knows him best. Fields’ parents are dead. He has no siblings. I think we have to use her.”

“Will she agree to this?”

“She already has.”
“Is she bitter?”

“You’ve read her bio,” Bill says, pointing to the files on the desk in front of Yancey. “Yeah, she’s bitter. But we all agree that she can still help the investigation. She’s bitter, but I think that she’s as intrigued as the rest of us. She may not be entirely over him. Despite what she says.”

“Think she still loves him?”

“Maybe. I don’t know.”

“That could be trouble too, you know.”

“We know.” Bill says.

Yancey looks around, and they all nod their understanding and agreement. “I’ll get you some experts,” he says. He begins to gather up his paperwork. “I think that you had better talk to them before you act. And wait for the appropriate warrants too, though they should be readily forthcoming. Agreed?”

Bill looks to the team. Alana shrugs acquiescence. Dean and Roadkill appear uncertain. “Agreed,” Bill decides, on behalf of the team.

“Then that’s that,” Yancey says, closing his briefcase. “I’m off to get some warrants. Bill, you’d better come with me. Help me with the paperwork. I might need you for a few social calls too,” he adds, referring to the local offices of the Solicitor General.

Yancey and Bill rise from their seats and head for the conference room door. Yancey pauses at the door, turns, and says, “Keep up the good work,” with an inherent warning in his tone.

When the door closes behind Yancey and Bill, Roadkill takes off his sunglasses and rubs his eyes. “This sucks,” he says.

“It’s a good case,” Alana responds, gathering her paperwork. “You’ll be glad to have been on board.”

Dean rubs his chin and listens to the sound of a plane as its jet engines roar and whine loudly overhead on a final approach to Pearson International. He remembers that he hasn’t taken a vacation in two years.
Chapter 19

Two months have passed since the night with the woman. Leif has worked hard to get his composure back. He has even obtained a job. First, with encouragement from Jane, he had obtained a driver’s licence. Jane had been right; driving had come easily to him. The three-week accelerated driving course seemed like a refresher course. He studied the provincial guides and passed the written tests with ease. The final driver’s test also proved easy. His instructor had done a good job, but there was also an intuition involved, something comfortable about driving the streets of Peterborough.

He took a job delivering prescriptions for a drug store. The Institute arranged the position, and the drugstore manager, in the dark for the most part about the truth of Leif’s past, had asked few questions, although she did insist on having Leif prove his driving skills. At night Leif studied a map of the city, and it wasn’t long before he was finding places without referring to the navigational device built into the dashboard of the delivery car.

The job proves to be a positive experience for Leif. It provides Leif with some social interaction, while not being overly demanding. He simply has to drive safely, and be punctual and polite. The face to face interaction between Leif and the customers is usually short. The real interaction comes within the drugstore itself. On slow days, he works in a variety of odd jobs in the pharmacy—mopping the floors on rainy days when the deposit from wet shoes pose a hazard to the customers; stacking and organizing boxes of products; stocking the shelves; and a litany of other assignments. While engaged in these activities, he often finds himself in conversation with the pharmacists and cashiers employed at the store. The cashiers, though most often the busiest of the employees, tend to be more friendly than the pharmacists who, as key-holders to the drug cabinets, seem to fancy themselves as superior to the rest of the staff, even to the customers. They
seem to Leif, and especially to the other employees who love nothing better than to ignore them, to be posed as benevolent granters of favours, as brokers pedestalled high above the old and the meek who come in search of medicine. Sometimes, Leif can sense when the other workers’ egalitarian approach grates on the pharmacists’ inflated egos.

Tracy, a young USO medical student working extra hours over the summer to help cover the considerable costs of tuition, is his favourite co-worker. She is slightly taller than Leif, and she is slim, her breasts barely making an impression under her white lab coat. She has long black hair, and a long oval face with big round brown eyes, a long nose, and a small mouth exaggerated by widely applied burgundy-coloured lipstick. She speaks and laughs quickly, as if nervous, and yet she is strong willed, not fearful of expressing her emotions. Leif finds her exotic and attractive. She once commented that she saw more of Leif than her boyfriend, but it didn’t seem to Leif that she was complaining. He admires her, and appreciates her attention. So, she is taken, it seems to Leif, but her boyfriend is not the centre of her social world. He barely comes up at all in conversation, and when he does she seems to put him at a distance.

Tracy works as an assistant in the pharmacy. One of the pharmacists she assists is Lloyd Kyle, a middle-aged man who has yet to grow up. Lloyd thinks himself a lady-killer—“You can call me Tiger,” he tells Tracy, “that’s what they called me in Rochester when I played for the Americans.” He flirts constantly with Tracy who, in turn, has no problem rebuking his advances, injecting the odd profanity into her rejections of him. Unfortunately, he is a difficult type to rebuff, seemingly oblivious to such brush-offs, eager to believe in his self-created machismo myth. Tracy gave Leif an example. “You know, he says, I was the enforcer, that’s why they called me Tiger. You need anyone to stick up for you; I’m your man. You should see the things I can do with a stick.”

“The guy was like, leering, and I said to him, fuck off, will ya?”

“Aww, you don’t mean it, he says, the dumb fuck.”

“Yeah, Tiger, I do, I says. So, he mopes for a while, but then he’s right
back at it. That’s what you learn really fast about him, nothing gets through to him. He just comes back for the next shift with the same attitude, like he’s still the enforcer. And the guy’s got a degree, do you believe it? I mean, he’s such a dumb shit, you think maybe he has to be poisoning half the customers. It’s hard to figure.”

Although irritating, Lloyd Tiger Kyle becomes the focus of a few snickers behind his back by Leif and Tracy. It helps to bond the two in shared complicity and friendship, and Leif misses her when she is not there. Lloyd treats Leif with disdain when Tracy isn’t around to witness it.

“You’ve never played hockey?” Lloyd once asked Leif. “Not even once? Not even street hockey?”

“No,” Leif responded, wishing Lloyd, who had been hovering over Leif as he stocked the shelves with condoms, would just go away.

“Can’t figure it, Arthur, how anyone growing up in this country, girls even, could miss out on playing hockey. Were your parents poor or something?”

“No,” Leif replied. “Guess they didn’t think it was important.”

“So, what did you play?”

Leif excused himself to get more supplies, and tried as best he could to avoid Lloyd the rest of the day. When he did chance a look over to the pharmacy counter, Lloyd scowled at him with disapproval. Leif got the idea that Tiger was jealous of Tracy’s obvious friendship to him. When Tracy wasn’t around, Lloyd seemed bitter and angry.

Another of the five full-time pharmacists is a middle-aged lady with platinum-bleached blonde hair, and a heavy layer of make-up. Leif finds her intimidating. She has a kind of stubborn toughness that makes her the real tiger of the pharmacy counter. Tracy quips that Belle ought to be running a saloon, or pitching real estate, or running touchdowns for the Argonauts.

Her name is Belle, short for Belinda—Belinda Anne Burnette, it says on the diploma posted among the other pharmacy diplomas on the walls at both ends of the pharmacy counter. Belle calls everyone dear—Leif, Tracy, the customers,
everyone gets a patronizing dear except for the married pharmacist with the hots for Tracy. She calls Lloyd Tiger with an aggressively flirtatious pestering which makes him cower nervously and reminds him that he loves his wife.

One day, when Belle is taking a break to try out a new shade of nail polish in a back room, Tracy is busy at the counter serving an elderly lady. The lady calls Tracy dear, but says it with genuine affection. Behind the lady is her husband, a man who waits patiently, contentedly, for his wife to receive her prescription. Once she has it, she loops her arm in his, and they saunter off down the centre isle, past Leif, who is busy restocking the massive allergy medication shelf. Leif looks up as they pass, and sees Tracy watching them too. Tracy signals Leif to come over.

“That’s nice,” Tracy comments, leaning over the counter, unconscious of how seductively beautiful she looks to Leif at this moment. “That’s what it’s all about,” she says, her voice seeming to purr. “You were watching them, too. I think we’re drawn to the same kind of magic, you and I.”

Leif looks at her with wide-eyed affection.

“How could anyone not want that?” Tracy continues. “I mean, it’s so sweet, isn’t it?”

“Do you think you’ll marry soon?” Leif asks her.

Tracy looks at him and tilts her head in mock exasperation. “Do you see a ring on this finger?” she asks, holding out her left hand with an expression which seems to suggest that she intends to protect the vacant space on her ring finger with her life. At least, that’s what Leif reasons when he returns to the allergy shelf, thinking about her as he absently stocks the Dristan shelf with a competitor’s product.

In an unassuming and affable way she talks about herself, politics, education, her family, and whatever else pops into her mind. She seems to know instinctively that Leif is a private person, so she leads the conversation. If he begins to speak, she listens intently, encouraging him to say more, to share his thoughts. However, if there is an uncomfortable void in the conversation, she is
sensitive to it and takes control, for which Leif is extremely grateful. With her burgundy lipsticked smile, quick wit, and imaginative narratives, she is as entertaining to Leif as she is informative. As he listens to her tales of family, acquaintances, and experiences, Leif begins to get a sense of what it takes to feel as comfortable with oneself as Tracy is, despite the nervous energy she exhibits which suggests otherwise. Further, through his interactions with Tracy, the rest of the staff, and the customers, he begins to feel that he does not really have it so bad. Everybody, it seems, has a story to tell, though many stories are incomplete, prevailing as subjective interpretations based on scant information, such as the death of a client named Mrs. Philmore.

Once a week, since he had begun driving for the pharmacy, he had delivered prescriptions to Mrs. Philmore, a pleasant, gracious old lady who lived alone in her own home. She was short and round, and always nicely dressed, with touches of silver, gold, and gemstone-laden jewellery around her fingers, wrists and neck that punctuated her attention to detail. The prescriptions suggested a fragility that Leif could not see. Their exchanges were always cordial, but they were also short and businesslike. Yet, Leif began to feel a keen respect for the old lady. Then, one day, the deliveries stopped.

“Oh, yes,” said Lloyd as he prepared the items for Leif’s morning deliveries. “Mrs. Philmore is...uh...gone, you know. Mrs. Philmore is...no more,” he added, thinking himself clever. Then, aware of his indiscretion, he continued, though annoyed with Leif for not appreciating his quip.

“Sorry, Arthur,” he said, trying to rebuild his self-imagined status with an authoritative tone. “She died. Her name came up on the monitor this morning. Has to have been her heart. She was on strong medication.”

“She was a nice lady,” Leif responded simply.

“Never met her. I guess you meet a lot of our clients. You’ll see ‘em come and go.”

She seemed such a...there was a nobility about her, Leif thought, in retrospect. To have been so close to death, but to have remained so personable,
so stoic. I too, have been close to death. Yet, have I been...honourable? It was impossible to know.

Other thoughts, too, began to trouble Leif. *What is expected of me? What do I expect of myself? When is one heroic? When they achieve? When they cope?*

*When is one a coward?*

He sees a movie on the Net one night about the Knights of the Round Table. Lancelot, Gawain, Arthur—their descriptions are contained in the words they speak, and they enhance those words with an austere and grave delivery, words like...*heroic, noble, trustworthy, faithful, gracious...*

Should I, he wonders, lying in bed with the light out, aspire to sit at that table? Is there significance to the simplicity of that table in this world? Mrs. Philmore was knightly. Tracy is. And Jane is my...Gwenevere? To win her, must I be like King Arthur? Slay monsters, beware of the Morgan le Fayes and the Merlins, and accept challenges from...from...when is one a coward?

**Chapter 20**

Leif is about to sign off for the day, when a late delivery order comes in. He signs out, promising to deliver the order on his way home: the address on the package is near his own home. Public transit is slow, but the delivery should make it to the address written on the package reasonably promptly.

The bus moves slowly out of the downtown core, but picks up speed in the suburbs. Leif gets off at the end of his street and begins walking west towards his house. He figures, by the even numbered address on the package, that the customer lives on the north side of the street, near to facing his own house. Leif
walks on, facing the late August sun. He finds it interesting to walk down the north side of the street. He usually walks on the south side, and the perspective is different from what he is used to. It is a warm afternoon, about 5:30 p.m., and the neighbourhood seems quiet, as if worn out from the summer’s heat. Summer has long passed being a novelty and, though few will admit it, many look forward to the cooler days of September. Even the few kids still to be seen playing outside, for whom memories are particularly short, are beginning to grudgingly look forward to a new school year, if only for a change of atmosphere. They notice Leif only for as long as it takes to realize that his presence in their neighbourhood is inconsequential, if they notice him at all.

Leif continues on down the sidewalk, periodically checking the house numbers, and noting with interest the appearance of his own residence on the other side of the road. He has never seen his house from this angle. It is a fine house. Solidly build and well cared for by the previous owners, its clay brick exterior blends in well with the neighbourhood. It is distinct, yet unassuming. It is anonymous, yet attractive. It is home.

To his left, the elderly couple sit in their wicker chairs on their veranda shaded by trumpet vine and a huge maple tree. Not talking, just watching, enjoying a fine summer afternoon, their memories longer and more reflective than those of the restless neighbourhood children. Leif nods a hello as he passes, and they both wave to him through the green trumpet vine, grown thicker and leafier now, darkly shading the elderly inhabitants.

His attention turns to his own home again, and he admires it as he walks by. When he gets to his customer’s front door, he sees that he has a good view of his own house across the road, just a few houses back from the direction he has walked.

“Well, it’s about time I met the neighbours,” he says quietly to himself, with a soft smile that indicates that maybe, just maybe, things are falling into place as they should.

He rings the buzzer. A voice comes back through an intercom in the
doorframe. It is a female voice. A young lady, perhaps. Friendly sounding, too. Leif identifies himself and the door opens. He is invited into the front foyer. He enters, and turns to pull the screen door closed.

Two men immediately grab him. Quickly, and roughly, they pin his arms behind his back, handcuff his wrists, and gag his mouth with a leaf of grey duct tape. That done, they push and prod him into the kitchen and sit him in a chair. The struggle does not last long. The entire event happens so fast that Leif has little time to react.

"We want to talk to you, Arthur," a man barks, with a sarcastic emphasis on Leif’s alias. The Institute had insisted that a new identity was necessary for Leif’s protection. Evidently, it hadn’t worked.

"Now, we’re going to have a little talk. The gag’s going to come off, and you’re not going to scream, are you."

It is not a question. It is a threat. Leif gets the message. He is not going to yell, unless pushed. He nods in acquiescence and the man speaking to him approaches.

"This is duct tape, pal," he says. "I’m going to peel it back slowly, so it doesn’t hurt too much. Suck in your lips together, make ‘em tight, and it’ll hurt less."

Leif winces under the pain of having the duct tape removed.

"There," the man says, the job done. "That wasn’t so bad, eh? Good thing you shaved this morning." He balls up the tape and tosses it on the floor.

The other man, menacingly ragged and worn looking, and the woman, slim and attractive, retreat a touch, far enough away to allow the big man with the sun-redened face some space, but close enough to Leif to maintain an intimidating presence. Leif says nothing, but stares at them wide-eyed. The big guy wipes his brow with the forearm of a brown jacket and looks at Leif, scowling.

"Your name is Leif, isn’t it?"

"Yes."

The man looks at Leif, nodding agreement with mock sincerity.
“Only it’s not Leif, is it? It’s Edward. Eddie. Eddie Fields.”

Eddie Fields?

“You’re name is Eddie Fields, though I’m sure you’d rather be Arthur, or Leif, because Eddie’s got a rap sheet a mile long. Eddie’s a real son of a bitch. That ring a bell?”

“Who are you?” Leif asks cautiously, looking around, fishing for a sympathetic response from one of the three.

“Who do you think we are, Eddie?”

He doesn’t know.

“Are we the police, Eddie? No? Terrorists? Out to knock off another grad?”

“Get on with it, Bill,” says the skinny, ragged man leaning against the counter, absently chewing at his fingernails.

“Shut up, Roadkill!” Bill says. It is the first time that Roadkill has heard the moniker used negatively, and he wilts a bit, hurt.

“The tape is running, Bill,” Alana says in a pacifying tone.

That seems to have an effect on Bill. His voice becomes more soothing. He speaks to Leif as a benevolent teacher might speak to a child, sort of the way he often speaks to Roadkill.

“Okay Eddie. Here’s the way it is. We’re government officers.”

He pulls out his wallet and shows his CSIS identification.

“See?”

Leif studies the badge and the picture of his tormentor—not so red-faced in the photo—and tries to read the wording, tries to verify something that he has never seen before.

“Do you see it, Eddie?”

“Yes.”

“That’s who we are. Do you need to see everyone’s ID?”

“No.”

“Fine. Now you know who we are. We already know who you are.
We've been looking for you for a long time, Eddie. Almost two years, in fact.”

Bill turns and winks at Alana. The span of time that they had known about the existence of Eddie Fields could be measured in weeks.

Bill looks back to Leif and continues: “And I don’t give a shit what they’ve done to your head, you’re still liable for what you’ve done. It’s quite legal to shoot guys like you in some U.S. states, you know. Lucky for you you’re in Ontario. Dead or alive, though, it’s all the same to me as long as we find out what’s going on here.”

“Bill!” says Dean, from behind Leif’s back. Leif jumps in the chair at the sound of Dean’s voice.

Dean has come down from the second floor after keeping a watch on the neighbourhood. “Watch the rhetoric, will ya?” he says to Bill in an admonishing voice. Bill glances up at him, and cautions him with a look. Then, he turns around and winks playfully once again at Alana. Dean joins the three officers to face Leif.

“What did...what did Eddie do?” Leif asks, interrupting what appears to him as a silent saw-off between Bill and Dean. He addresses that question to the new man, Dean, thinking that he, as the best dressed of the lot, perhaps might be more sympathetic. But Dean merely leans against the kitchen counter with apparent apathy, his point having been made.

Bill responds to Leif’s question in a soft tone dripping with sarcasm.

“What did you do? Well. We’ll get to that later. What we want to know is...what are you going to do for us?”

Bill looks back at his three associates, all of whom are listening intently, but otherwise keeping out of it.


Bill looks around, smiling, scratching his head. Finally, he speaks.

“We want you to co-operate with us, that’s all. You’re no grad, you’re Eddie Fields. You’re going to help us expose a scam, Eddie, how do you like that? And the first thing for you to realize is that you’re no grad.”

“What do you mean?” Leif asks. He notices the depth of Bill’s brilliant
blue eyes, watery, and dangerous looking. He looks over to the other three, all leaning against a long kitchen counter, framed by a large picture window behind them. Curtains, decorated with flowers, are drawn over the windows, shadowing the room against the afternoon sun.

“We’ve got proof, Eddie,” Bill says. “We’ve got your medical records. How about that, eh? But that wasn’t the tip-off. Any idea how we got the goods on you, to begin with? We didn’t get it from the Institute, that’s for sure. Any idea where that information might have come from, Eddie?”

Bill goes to a briefcase on the kitchen counter, opens it, and extracts a large colour photograph. He shows it to Leif.

“Ever seen this before?”

Leif had seen it before, and his eyes go wide, wild with excitement, and he feels an impending sense of doom. He remembered it vividly. It is the photo that had so engrossed Leif one day back at the Institute. It seemed so long ago.

“I have seen it,” he admits. “Wh... what does it have to do with me?”

“Take a close look, Eddie. This is a surveillance photo of a known criminal, released to the papers after you disappeared. Kind of a scary picture, huh? Tsk tsk. Someone must have thought it would influence the public to support tougher crime legislation. I’m sure it sold a few papers.”

“That’s not me,” Leif protests. “That should be obvious.”

“Oh it’s you all right. Different nose, different hair, I’ll grant that. But that stuff can be manipulated quite easily. Besides, we’ve got an ID to go with a DNA match. We’ve got a personal ID on you.”

“I don’t understand you,” Leif protests.

“I’ll show you,” Bill proposes. He looks Leif in the eye a moment longer, waiting for a reaction. Leif doesn’t give him one. So, Bill leaves the kitchen and, within moments, returns with a woman, a woman Leif has seen before. Yes! A shock goes through him. His pulse begins to race. It is the woman in the bar, with that fine complexion, that wonderful curly hair. She took him to the apartment. They made love. Then, she was gone. It is her. The woman in the picture. Why?
“Ma’am,” says Bill. “Is this him?”

Yes, Leif thinks, looking at her, pleading. It’s me. Rescue me.

“Yes,” she says, coolly, looking at Leif. So unemotional. Is it spite? Loathing? My God, he thinks, please no! It isn’t her, not really, not the woman he made love to. Rather, it is that other woman, the same, but different. It is the woman he drove to the airport, in his nightmare.

“No,” he pleads.

“Yes,” she repeats, relishing his misery. “It’s my husband.”
Book Two

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face...

1 Corinthians 13:11-12
Chapter 21

It is mid-morning, beautifully sunny and inviting outside, and Brother Adrian Litzka yearns for a walk in the woods. He had awaken early as usual at three a.m. for vigils, reading, individual prayer, and then breakfast. He was back in the chapel again at 5:45 a.m. for lauds, and at 7:30 for terse. Then, with the third of the seven “hours” of the opus Dei almost complete, he became distracted from his prayer by the rays of the morning sun radiating above around the dome of glass windows in the chapel ceiling. He felt energetic, with a need to be released from the quiet, that tranquillity inside the monastery that he usually found soothing and peaceful. He needed some contrast to the communal hush, needed to hear the sounds in the forest, the breeze rustling through the leaves on the trees, the sweet chirp of birds, and the inviting—like the welcoming applause of a gracious audience—trickle of a forest stream. Such a stream existed in the monastery woods, and Adrian had built a small bridge over it, using a couple of small tree trunks that had fallen yet were still solid, and greyed boarding from an abandoned hutch in the forest’s clearing.
Adrian disrobes and carefully hangs his hooded black habit on a peg by the door of his room. His morning monasterial chores were done, and he had watered his garden—with his treks through the woods, his one other major indulgence. He puts on a pair of jeans, a white cotton shirt, and a pair of running shoes—much more comfortable and practical for a forest hike than his habit and black leather oxfords—and heads out the door. He walks down the hallway, passing the closed doors of the other monks in the east wing, towards the building’s side exit. He walks around to the west side of the monastery, where the garden lies. He quickly inspects the garden, noting with pleasure the darkened soil that he had earlier watered. The roses were doing well this year, much better than in years past. He smiles in deep satisfaction and signs a thank-you to the Lord for the blessing.

He walks to the tool shed and grabs a can of insect repellent. He had once been locked in a tool shed like this, he remembers, locked in by his father, abandoned and unjustly punished, he felt, over something he could no longer remember. But he does remember the experience, though he was not yet three years of age, locked in a grey, weathered shed, with only thin clefts of sunshine running the length along the doorjambs to slightly illuminate the confining interior. His father swore at him through the door and walked away, and Adrian wailed in terror in the darkness, fearful of the sickly, mouldy mix of rotting clapboards, oil and gasoline, paint and turpentine. Finally, his mother had rescued him, and Adrian had emerged, pale and trembling. His father was nowhere in sight. His mother, more angry than she was sympathetic, promised that if he were a good boy he could help her dig up potatoes.

Adrian sprays his hands and applies the repellent to his forearms, neck, and face. He sprays down his shirt, open at the neck, and lifts up the shirt tails and sprays up his back, knowing that the shirt is too light to repel the mosquitoes and deerflies that haunt the forest’s shade. This late in the summer, the number of biting insects are but the few that have escaped seasonal feedings from forest birds. Still there is the odd rogue, and the itch of a mosquito’s bite is distracting during prayers and meditations.
He replaces the can on a shelf among other cans—paint, plant sprays, motor oils, and the like, with just a hint of that terrifying nauseating smell from his parent’s tool shed—and begins his hike, walking past the garden and down the hill towards the trees. He finds the beginning of the path easily—it begins in a natural indentation at the forest’s edge. This is God’s path, he muses with delight, and I am its caretaker. The path is his personal responsibility, he feels, and he cares for it with enthusiasm and affection, coming out each spring to renew the trail’s integrity. The work begins with a handsaw to remove fallen limbs and branches that are too heavy to move without cutting into smaller, lighter sections. Broken and dead branches overhead must also be considered. He lines the trail with the larger limbs, but his own frequent footsteps do much of the work in defining the trail.

He walks through the indentation and into the forest’s shade. Immediately, a lone mosquito, after thus far cheating death from its natural predators, darts around Adrian’s head and body looking for a vulnerable target, and is itself cheated.

Adrian works his way down the winding path as the contour of the land declines toward the stream. There is a small ridge that he must first climb over before he can see the stream, but already he hears the friendly sounds of the stream’s water as it flows through the forest. Over the ridge, he can see the bridge he has built from the old grey clapboards. Closer, he can see the stream’s water trickling through the channel it has carved through the bottom of the wooded valley. Adrian kneels on the bridge and looks to the streambed, searching for signs of life. Crayfish, minnows, salamanders, pollywogs and water bugs have constituted most of his past observations.

He sees a crayfish, and follows the progress of the creature, its pincers at the forefront, as it scampers across the sand bed from one rock to another. It reminds him of a small brownish-grey lobster. He watches as it moves effortlessly on its spindly legs, exploring the streambed and the rocks, navigating its passage with its antennae and small compound eyes.
Adrian stands up, stretches, and continues his walk, looking forward to his next stop up and over the next ridge. There, at the back of the monastery’s wooded forest, is a kennel, the Bluenote Kennel it is called, where, at the forest side of the kennel, a chain link fence keeps the tenants from wandering. There, Adrian expects to see a new litter from Amazing Gracie, Bluenote’s prize Golden Retriever. She has been due, and Adrian has not visited for five days. He walks the path to the top of the ridge, then descends on a portion of trail abundantly carpeted with brown pine needles as the trail continues to wind. Finally, the chain link fence comes into view. He approaches the back of the kennel and, to his delight, sees Amazing Gracie nursing a new litter of yellow pups. Gracie looks up briefly at Adrian, then resumes her sleepy countenance, her body lying sideways in the roomy pen. Adrian counts six pups, all brawling for their mother’s milk. They are handsome animals.

There is a fallen tree trunk nearby, its girth wide in diameter. Adrian sits on it and watches the pups as they fight to suckle. One pup is a runt, and seems to have difficulty competing with its siblings. Adrian watches as it pushes and prods the other pups, finally giving up for a moment dejectedly. It sits up and looks around. It spots Adrian, and looks at him for a long moment, trying to figure out what he is. Then, it looks back at its mother and the pack of little siblings, stands, and waddles into the crowd. Adrian is charmed by the sight, and watches the scene in silent meditation for the next half-hour. Finally, he is stirred from his reverie by the opening of the door that connects the back of the kennel to the pen. Adrian holds his breath for a moment, but it is a woman, the owner of the kennel, who enters the scene. Adrian is relieved that it isn’t her husband, a burly truck driver who always treats Adrian with disdain and suspicion.

“Good evening, Brother Adrian,” she says, smiling. She is of middle age, greying slightly, and mildly plump. Adrian finds her a pleasant woman.

“Hello, Mrs. Magoffin,” he greets her, speaking up a touch to cover the distance between them. “Just admiring your pups.”

“Yes, aren’t they wonderful,” she says, pleased. “Just two weeks old. I’ve
had them inside since they were born, but I thought it such a nice day they could come outside.” She fills up a trough of water from a hose hanging on the wall by the door. “I’ll bet you’d like a pup, now, wouldn’t you?” she teases.

Adrian smiles. “I used to have a pup. A dog. When I was young, we had a cocker spaniel. It was a stupid dog. Not clever, like these pups. And not half as pretty.”

The runt of the litter has given up on its adventure among the crowd, and is sitting again, watching Adrian. “This one seems to like you,” Mrs. Magoffin says. Then, she addresses the pup. “You need a bit of help, don’t you? Okay, here we go. Let’s have some room here.” She clears a plump pup away from a teat and puts the runt there. The runt begins to suck eagerly. “Hope there’s something left for you. You’ve got to fatten up a bit, or nobody’s going to want you. Isn’t that so, Brother Adrian?”

“There’s a place for all God’s children,” he says. Then, feeling his response silly, he adds, hopefully, “There’s a home for all of your pups, I would think. Someone will have that one.”

“Think so?” she asks.

“I’ve fallen in love with it already. Just sitting here. Who could resist that face?”

She laughs. “She’ll be the last to go, that’s for sure. Have reservations on most of the rest. They’re all marked. She’ll have a home, but I can’t sell her for the same as the rest.” She looks at Adrian. “I suppose there’s a message there, a sermon in that.”

Adrian obliges. “She doesn’t know she’s a runt, and never will know. Animals have blessings like that, quite often, I think. She won’t know she’s been judged. She may indeed have a happier life than the rest.” He briefly imagines a life for the dog at the monastery. It wasn’t impossible, but it wasn’t a good idea either. “I like her, someone else will too,” he says.

“I’m sure you’re right,” she says, without conviction. She is looking at the runt, looking, Adrian thinks, with disappointment. Adrian decides to announce his
departure. "I must be off," he says cheerily, standing and wiping the debris from the surface of the log off his backside. "I'll visit again. It's very pleasant back here."

"Bye," she says, looking up briefly. She's suspicious too, like her husband, he thinks.

"Bye," he says. He watches as she turns to the door at the back of the pen. Perhaps, he reasons, she can't allow herself to get too close.

He continues down the path, following the edge of the property to the end of the pens and past in a straight line for a while, past the open field on the left where the dogs are trained. Then, the path is engulfed by the forest on both sides and veers sharply to the right, over the ridge and back to a different section of the stream. Here, the stream is narrow, and dotted with rocks that Adrian steps on to get over to the other side. He stops on a big rock in the middle of the water's width and looks down the stream, listening to the gentle trickle of water as it passes through the rocks. The stream winds out of sight, through the forest, past the bridge he has made, and off the property. The stream is a paradox, Adrian observes, a permanence which constantly evolves, yet remains the same. The life within it changes in cycles, dying and regenerating. The silt from eroding walls gather elsewhere to form new walls. And yet, the water keeps flowing, oblivious to it all.

The stream is called McNaultey's Creek. It is like naming a cloud, Adrian thinks.
Chapter 22

While Leif, confused and frightened, sits handcuffed to a kitchen chair, three CSIS officers, and a woman who claims to be his wife, prepare to sift through his house across the street, looking for anything that might verify his true identity. There is no moon tonight. The night sky is darkly overcast and it rains in a steady downpour. It is unlikely that anyone will see them entering Leif’s house. They enter with a key from Leif’s jacket pocket, and shake the rain off their jackets on the foyer carpet. Bill has a warrant in his pocket, but the team, taking advantage of nature’s timely cloak—the darkness and the rain—has chosen to continue their investigation in the dark. They want the operation to remain clandestine, fearing the production of wagging tongues, or worse—media involvement—that a watchful neighbour or the local police might cause.

Despite the DNA evidence, they are still unsure about their suspect’s identity. Even the woman, Elizabeth Fields, has become unsure, confiding to them, “He has changed. I’m not even sure if he is Eddie anymore,” she continued. “He once was, I know that, but … deep inside, you know, he’s a different man. Can someone change that much, do you think? Is it an act? Has he been brainwashed?”

“We don’t know,” Alana had murmured in response.

“I knew it was him,” Elizabeth persevered, “when I slept with him, but now even that seems different. It felt like him, but an aggression was missing. He liked to be dominant. Well, he was eager, but he wasn’t dominant. I just don’t know anymore, something isn’t right. It’s funny, you know. I was looking forward to this…to confronting him. I wanted to get even. It’s frustrating, you know?”

“Sure,” Alana muttered, recalling the photograph of Elizabeth and her husband, and momentarily appreciating the advantages of single life.

Alana looks at Elizabeth now, her face artificially illuminated—each has
been fitted with night vision goggles. Elizabeth is now past her initial surprise at the effectiveness of the goggles when she first put them on across the road. Now, she is caught up in the excitement of the next experience. She follows Bill into the main floor of the house, while Alana and Roadkill begin climbing the stairway to explore the second floor.

"Anything at all, anything that looks familiar," Bill says, "and you let me know. Don’t overlook anything. Books, pictures, stuff in the kitchen. Look through all the drawers. Maybe his tastes have changed. You’ll know that."

"One thing right off," she whispers, as if sensing that their voices have been artificially illuminated too. "It doesn’t reek of cigarette smoke in here. That’s something. It’s hard to believe it’s his house."

"Keep looking," Bill says, his voice soft but clear. "And you don’t have to whisper."

They look through desk drawers and leaf through books. In the kitchen, they inspect the cupboards and drawers, and the refrigerator. Bill quickly puts his hand over the refrigerator light, muting its glow. He invites Elizabeth over to have a look.

"Anything?" he asks.

She inspects the contents of the refrigerator. "Same brands, different brands," she says, looking deeply, moving some items. "Mild cheese. Eddie liked old. Eddie liked cream, had to have cream in his coffee every day, but there’s no cream here."

"Was Eddie allergic to anything?"

"Not that I know of," she replies.

They trade places with Roadkill and Alana, and search through the second floor. In the bathroom, Bill opens up the medicine cabinet. "What’s this?" he says, holding up a vial of prescription medicine. "Looks like pills."

"Let me see," she says, taking the bottle. "Oh, I know what this is. It’s an anti-depressant."

"Eddie took them?"
“No, I did.”

“Does it surprise you to see them?”

“Sweet justice.”

Bill lets that comment go. “Anything else in here look familiar, or odd?”

“Looks like a guy’s bathroom. Neater than I would have expected.”

“Okay, let’s try the bedrooms.”

One of the bedrooms is almost empty. They sift through the other one.

“Check out the sheets and the pillows,” Bill says. “Maybe Eddie didn’t like
feathers, huh? Or maybe he preferred linen to flannel. And check out his clothes,
too. Materials and sizes.”

“Eddie never said anything about pillows or linen or towels. I always
picked that stuff out, and he never said anything about it, as long as everything was
clean and in its place.” She looks through the closet. “Eddie was a 32-30,” she
says, holding out a pair of jeans. These are 34-30.”

“He gained a few pounds. Not surprising, really.”

“I suppose not,” she says. She holds out the jeans a moment longer,
unsure of what else to look for.

“Bring them along,” Bill says. “He’ll need a change of clothes. Find a bag
or something to put some stuff in. Underwear, socks, that kind of stuff. Fill up a
garbage bag or something.”

“You’re arresting him?” she says, her tone unsure.

“No. Not arresting him. Just taking him along for questioning. You don’t
have a problem with that, do you?”

“Well. No.”

Bill is unsure of how to interpret her tone. She still loves him, he thinks.
Her Eddie. Her Leif. Whatever. There are strong innuendoes of affection there.
Maybe she thinks she can save him, put him back together like he’s some sort of
puzzle where the pieces can all be made to fit. Bill imagines a scene from The
Wizard of Oz. *That’s me all over*, the Scarecrow says.

The four leave the house, each carrying a few packages, and cross the
road. It is still raining heavily. They load their packages into the back of the van. Then, they go back into the surveillance house, and shake the rain off once again. Leif is sitting in the kitchen, being watched by Dean.

"Everything's okay," Bill says to Dean. He signals Dean to follow him. They go into the living room which, like the kitchen, is dimly lit with the curtains drawn closed.

"We've got to move," Bill says. "Did he say anything?"

"No. Thought he was going to cry, a few times. He's really screwed up, this fella. Where are we going?"

"Back to Metro."

"Anything interesting across the road?"

Bill peeks through a break in the curtains. Leif's house is barely visible in the darkness. "Not really. Mrs. Fields was intrigued, but didn't recognize anything."

"So, he's clever."

"Maybe," Bill says, closing the curtains again.

"You checked out the medicine cabinets and all that?"

"Yeah. We grabbed up anything written on paper, mostly bills and flyers and stuff, and Roadkill grabbed the hard drives and discs. He'll be exploring that later. Let's pack up."

"What about his job? At the pharmacy. Are you arresting him?"

"We'll take him in for questioning. We can do that with the warrants we've got. You know we can't officially arrest him."

"That's what I thought."

"We'll call in the pharmacy in the morning and say a relative of his has died. We can set something up with a funeral home in Metro. We've done that before. Closed, except to members of the immediate family, and all that. We'll run an ad in the Metro Sun, too. They'll see it there, if anyone cares to look. We'll tell the pharmacy he needs a week. Maybe later he'll quit. He's just a driver, nobody'll miss him."
“He may have friends.”

“Well, I haven’t seen any. Have you?”

“No.”

“Stand him up and handcuff his wrists to the front of him, will you? We’re all set to go.”

They finish loading up the van, and drive off towards Metro. Alana drives. Bill sits in the passenger seat while Dean and Roadkill bookend Leif on the bench seat behind.

“It’ll be light by the time we get there,” Alana notes.

“We’ll take him in the back way,” Bill decides. Handcuffed prisoners are an unusual sight at CSIS North. The building has a holding cell, but it is seldom used.

Alana finds some soft contemporary music to listen to on the radio, and they cruise along the 115 to the 401, and head west, all with little discussion. Not intimidated in the least by Leif, the other passengers doze in turns, lost in the sounds of the music, the steady swish-swish of the wipers, the wet drone of the tires, and the muted hum of the engine. Leif does not sleep, but sits between the two strangers, one a pasty faced boy, the other the man who watched him in the kitchen while the others were busy examining his house, all darkly dressed for their nocturnal investigation.

The man, Dean, had sat upright in a chair across the kitchen table. He looked at Leif without a hint of sympathy, and heckled him. He was the only one of the CSIS people to be dressed in a suit, a black single-breasted suit that seemed without wrinkle. Even the paisley-blue tie, in the middle of the night, was still bound snugly around his throat, flowing smoothly down to his black belt buckle. He was a good-looking man, and cocky in his position of power. He had a newspaper spread out on the table.

“So, Mr. Ward,” he said, not looking up, “what do you suppose they’re going to find over there. Marijuana?”

“No,” Leif responded, looking over Dean’s head to the flowered curtains
drawn tightly over the kitchen window.

"Got a stash from the pharmacy? I'm sure your employers wouldn't like that."

"No." Roses, Leif thinks, studying the curtains. Red. And some yellow ones, too, floating randomly against a background of loose stems.

"No? You don't have much to say, do you? Rather talk with your fists, maybe, eh, tough guy?" Dean chuckled then, shook his head, and turned the page of the newspaper. "Hey, maybe I'll see your picture in here somewhere, huh? Maybe I should look in the funnies."

It didn't seem to Leif, after a while, as if Dean really meant what he was saying. It was apparent that Dean simply didn't care.

He was relieved when they loaded up the van that he would be sitting beside Dean, rather than Bill, who sits up front in the passenger seat. Leif appreciates the respite from Bill's intimidating presence. But, as the sky begins to lighten, and the van enters the industrial outskirts of Metro, he is terrified of what is to come.

Chapter 23

Jane is in her office on the second floor of the Institute, sitting in front her monitor. It is late in the day, well past the supper hour that she has missed, and her stomach growls in admonition. She touches her palm to her tummy, and wonders what might be available to eat in the Institute cafeteria. On the shelf above the monitor, balanced on top of a collection of books, is a menagerie of origami made from a variety of materials—a butterfly and a marlin made from Institute stationary; a toucan made from some orange wrapping tissue, a boat and an airplane folded from pages ripped out of a travel magazine, and a turtle made
from a cafeteria napkin. She looks at the turtle now as it peeks out from atop the books, and is pleased with its unmistakable identity. Leif would be pleased with this one, she thinks, recalling the rather indeterminate origami turtle that she had given Leif. She wonders, as she dials his number, if he still has it.

She has a new case that has been keeping her absorbed: a young girl. Jane has studied the patient’s biography and medical history and has become absorbed in the case, letting go of Leif as his dependence on her diminishes. The girl will need all her attention, if all goes well. And the case has an added responsibility: relatives who will have to be advised and who will undoubtedly want to be involved. Until their inclusion in the process, however, there are ongoing debates over the risks and potential rewards of the impending reanimation. The patient’s relatives complicate the process. But the push to reanimate is on, emanating from the top, from the director of the Institute, A. J. Cummings.

Jane gets no answer. Leif’s absence is a disturbing distraction to her current work. For five days she has been unable to locate him. On the third day, she called Dr. Kaye, who agreed to drop by Leif’s house. He called on day four to say he got no response at Leif’s door. By then, she had called the drugstore, and was advised that Arthur had taken a compassionate leave of absence due to the death of a relative.

“Pardon me?” Jane had asked, looking into the screen at the middle-aged male pharmacist.

“An uncle, I think someone said,” he replied. “In Toronto. Don’t know when he’ll be back. Want to speak to the manager?”

“Please.”

“One moment, then. You a doctor or something?” Jane was wearing a lab coat, and the pharmacist’s assumption was not unusual.

“Just a friend,” she responded.

“I see,” the pharmacist said. He rose up a bit and Jane watched as his eyes lowered, as if he were trying to look down her shirt. As if it were possible. Lech!

“Are you going to put me through?” she asked, annoyed, wishing she had
jammed the pharmacist’s call display.

“Just thought for a moment we might be in the same profession,” he grinned, leering, waiting for a response. Jane didn’t respond and, finally, with a sigh of resignation, he put the call through. The manager, a lady with grey hair wrapped in a bun, and a fake white rose over a plastic name tag pinned above her bust, wasn’t any more helpful.

“It’s Friday, he should be back by Monday. He’s been gone five days, which is more than we usually allow for compassionate leave.”

“And you haven’t heard from him?”

“No. I expect he’ll be in on Monday, but I can’t say that for sure.”

“And he left no number where he could be reached?”

“None that I know of. I could put you back to the pharmacy.”

“Thank you.”

The pharmacist appeared on the screen. “It’s you again,” he grinned.

“Yes. Do you know if Arthur left a number? Where he can be reached?”

“Hold on. I’ll ask.”

The screen went blank for a long moment. Finally, a young woman came on screen. “Hello?” she asked tentatively.

“Hello. I’m trying to locate Arthur Knight. I’m a friend.”

“Yeah,” the young woman said, pushing her long hair away from her face and over her shoulder. “The pharmacist said someone was looking for him. Is he okay?”

“Oh, that’s not why I called.”

“You know he’s at a funeral?”

“Yes. Do you know him?”

“Arthur? Oh yeah, we’re pals,” she smiled. “I know, here at the pharmacy, yeah,” she added, looking at Jane with curiosity. Was this a girlfriend? They were both wondering.

“He didn’t leave a number,” the girl added. “Sorry. Maybe if you call him at home the call will be forwarded. Have you tried that?”
“Yes, I have.”

“Guess he forgot. Well, good luck. Tell him to call Tracy at work when he gets back. Anyway, I’ll see him on Monday, I’m sure. Is this an emergency or anything?”

“No.”

“Sorry I couldn’t be more help.”

“That’s okay. Thanks, Tracy.”

“Oh, maybe the funeral home could help you find him, I mean, if it’s really important.”

“Do you know the name of it?”

“Well, no, I haven’t seen Arthur since last week. But it must be in the paper. Maybe you can find it, though that might take a bit of detective work. Sorry.”

“That’s okay. It’s not important. I’ll call him next week. Thanks again.”

“You’re welcome.”

Jane had tried. She had looked through the obituaries, but wasn’t sure what name to look for: Ward or Knight. Leif had an aunt in PEI, but had no living relatives in Ontario. Jane looked in the obituaries anyway, found a Ward—Edwin Ward—and called the funeral home. The man who answered insisted that there was no way of knowing just who had been at the funeral. Yes, there was a book that guests had signed, but the widow had taken it home. No, he couldn’t release the widow’s phone number, but he would forward Jane’s number to the widow. Jane said no, that was okay, thanks anyway. It was a useless pursuit, she realized. There were no relatives, and no death, not unless it was a friend. That couldn’t be ruled out, but then, what friends did Leif have in Metro? He had to have been lying, she reasoned. So, what was he up to?

She sits in her office now, her face in her hands, trying to recall the most recent conversations between herself and Leif. Leif had made a friend, it appeared, though not in Metro. Tracy. That was good news. He could have made another friend too, someone in Peterborough, someone who died, or who
knew someone who died, and Leif could have gone along for support...

The next day she makes an appointment to see the head of Institute security, Frederick T. Fox. Fox is a mousy little man, odd and introverted, with a way of communicating a slight distaste for everything. He has always seemed to her a surprising choice to receive the designation professionally painted on his office door on the third floor of the Institute. He does, however, seem to handle his job professionally.

Although the Institute did demand an elaborate security protocol, Jane’s relationship with Fox focuses mainly on the welfare of her individual clients. Fox secures new identities for them, and implements Net security software that helps to protect them from inadvertently divulging any revelations about themselves. He organizes random surveillance of their activities and contacts, directs reports and prepares presentations. Jane was privy to presentations that involved her clients and participated enthusiastically in the ensuing discussions. But Fox has never been a man for extraneous conversation. His presentations are professional, but he seems uncomfortable when the conversation goes off on any kind of tangent, seeming to slightly blush in discomfort. On the odd occasion, he chews his nails, seeming to be unconscious of, or indifferent to, people watching him with curiosity as he chews his cuticles down to the bone.

At the appointed time, Jane knocks on Fox’s door and walks in. Fox sits behind a desk cluttered with paperwork. He is on the Net, holding a handset to his ear, and motions Jane to take a seat. She does, and looks around while Fox finishes his conversation, which consists mostly of monosyllabic responses: “Yes...no...uh...no...”

White vertical blinds are drawn closed over the lone office window, censoring the room against the sunshine except for the odd cracks of light, lost anyway in the radiant, almost overpowering white florescent lighting which blankets the room in artificial brilliance.

There is a bookcase at the side of the room, cluttered with papers and books on all the shelves except one. That shelf has a wood-framed picture of a
woman and child—his family, perhaps, Jane thinks, looking at the woman, thin and toothy, and the child, blonde and picturesque in a plaid suit. Beside the picture sits a soda can with a clock somehow built into the centre of it, then, a figurine of a loon, and finally, a stuffed toy which takes up fully a quarter of the shelf. It is an elf, or an imp, with a round pink face and large pointed ears, a tuft of fuzzy white hair, close set black button eyes, and a large black sewn-on grin. It is ornately dressed with a cassock made of a quality material that match exactly the slippers on its feet, black mostly, but with red, gold and green flowers embroidered into the material. Around its waist is a belt made of green and black brocade, holding the cassock high in the chest. Finally, around its neck and trailing off behind its body is a silver necklace set with brilliant blue beads, stones perhaps, which don’t seem to match the rest of the outfit, don’t seem to belong. Regardless, it is a beautiful toy, elaborately decorated. It must have something to do with the child, Jane speculates.

She suddenly finds herself addressed. The Net communication had ended.

“Ms. Lapin?” he repeats. He is looking at her, fatigue in his eyes, over the pile of paperwork on his desk. The handset has disappeared under the clutter. The monitor at the corner of the desk has been turned off.

Jane feels a draft suddenly, though no windows or doors have been opened, and she replies to the chill by buttoning up the white sweater she has been wearing loosely over a pink blouse.

“I’m worried about Leif Ward,” she says as she buttons. “I’ve been trying to get hold of him since the weekend, but he doesn’t seem to be home. I thought you might know something about it. I mean, I know you monitor his activities.”

Fox doesn’t seem surprised. Professional cool? Jane wonders, as she notes his response.

He says, “We haven’t been monitoring him for a couple of weeks.” He looks at her a moment longer, and she returns his look, expecting action. Finally, he moves, pushing papers on his desk in search of the handset. Without a word, he locates the handset, dials up a number and waits, fidgeting, looking absentely
through the mess on his desk. Suddenly, in what seems a hasty retreat, he gives up on his call. "No answer," he says. "Let me make another call," he says, redialling. "Did you call his work?"

"Yes. They say he's at a funeral for a relative. But he has no relatives."

"Hm. Could be a new acquaintance?"

"Maybe."

"Could be he's playing hooky from work, too. I'll call Sherrie in the computer lab to see if he's been using the Net during the week. The computer monitors that, but isn't set up for any kind of automatic notification, unfortunately, to advise us of anything in particular. Maybe we should have done that, but there's a fine line between security and privacy that we have to heed. Anyway," he sighs anxiously, "she'll have a log of his activities, though if there's been no activity that doesn't necessarily mean anything."

He waits in silence again for his call to be answered, looking at the ceiling, seeming to bathe in the shower of light radiating from above.

"Hello Sherrie," he says, at last, talking into the handset. The monitor remains off. He can't see Sherrie's face, nor, perhaps, can Sherrie see his. "It's Fred. Call up Leif Ward's Net activity for the last week, will you? Thanks." He turns on the monitor and looks to the screen. Jane is relieved to see the monitor go on, to see proof that something concrete is happening. She leans over the desk a touch to see the screen at a better angle. A chart comes up, black lettering with a green border contrasting against the white screen, with the Institute logo across the top of the page. He clicks a button on his mouse, and manipulates the date on the screen. "Okay, I've got it," he says into the handset. "No, it looks quiet. Thanks Sherrie."

He puts the handset down on his cluttered desk. Then, he lays the palms of his hands down flat across the top of the desk clutter, holding it down as if it might blow away. "No activity at all this week," he announces, solemnly. "I might have to call the police, do a missing person's report. You have no idea where he might be?"
“None at all.”

“Well, you did the right thing, bringing this to my attention,” he says, his voice flat and emotionless. “And I’ll get right on it.”

“That’s it?” Jane asks. She was expecting more.

“Leif’s a free man. He’s not paying us anymore. It’s not really my job to be looking for him. But I’ll do the best I can. He could be travelling, or something. He doesn’t have to tell us what he’s doing. He’s got money, too, so he could have gone anywhere. Did he ever talk about travelling?”

“Not really,” Jane says, disturbed at Fox’s apparent lack of concern. “And he may not be paying us anymore, maybe, I don’t know about that, but I still consider him a client. I still see him, and I’m paid for it. No one’s ever corrected me about that. In fact, it was part of my training.”

“My understanding is,” Fox says, his voice dismissive, “that once they move out, the billing stops. I have my criteria too, which says we set them up, but everything after that is complementary. Anyway,” he says, changing the subject, “it might have occurred to him to go off somewhere. To see a bit of the world, maybe to refresh his memory or something. You don’t doubt his capacity for something like that, do you?”

“I guess he could have…”

“I mean, he’s adapted okay to things, hasn’t he? He isn’t extraordinarily vulnerable to…uh…temptations. I mean, he’s reasonably self-sufficient, able to look after himself?”

“I like to think so. But you know he’s vulnerable. The terrorists…”

“This isn’t the U.S., Miss Lapin. That’s unlikely to be the problem.”

“But it could be!”

“Not likely. He’s as likely to be kidnapped for ransom. But then, he’s not that rich. He works at a pharmacy, doesn’t own a car, has a modest home. He’d have to tell somebody he’s got some money, just like he’d have to tell somebody about his past for terrorists to be involved. He’s a grown man, let’s not get overly concerned too quickly. Maybe it never occurred to him that somebody would be
worried. How often do you talk to him?"

"Oh, it’s down to a few times a month, I guess…"

"A couple of times a month. So, maybe he wasn’t expecting you to call, wasn’t expecting you to worry. Even so, I’ll run some checks with the police, the airlines. Maybe some information will turn up. I’ll keep you advised. And if you hear anything, be sure to let me know."

"Certainly." The interview is over, he has said in his tone. He has said the right words, for the most part, but still…that tone!

She stands. “Thank you,” she says, frowning, completely unsatisfied.

“You’re welcome, anytime,” he replies with a condescending smile. “Close the door behind you, will you?”

She leaves the office, glad to be out of the oppressive brightness of the room, and she gratefully inhales the hallway air. It feels comparatively cooler and more oxygen rich. Refreshed, she heads for the stairwell, unbuttoning her sweater as she walks.

Back at her office she sits, resolving not to worry about Leif over the weekend. It’s hard to let go, she thinks.

Meanwhile, Frederick T. Fox sits at his desk, his palms still protectively holding down the clutter on his desk. He gets up slowly, releases the pile, and crosses to the window. He opens up the verticals, needing more light, more brightness, to illuminate the room. He looks down at the cars and pedestrians on the street below, and the shadows they cast, and feels his throat tighten. He must get higher, he thinks, up to the top level. On some days, when the anxiety threatens to strangle him, he goes to the roof, and walks around on the flat tarred surface, past the air ducts and air conditioners, and looks to the sky and tries to absorb the sun.

He looks at his watch, and wonders if the Institute director will be in. He will have to have a meeting with him. But first, to the roof, just for fifteen minutes, to the roof.
Martin Yancey sits in the kitchen of his Metro home. It is morning, twenty-four hours since Leif’s arrival at CSIS North, and since Bill Butler had first called Martin at seven a.m., updating him on the situation. Throughout the surveillance in Peterborough Martin had been kept cognizant of the investigation, and he knew that Leif would probably be taken in for questioning sooner or later, at the team’s discretion. The phone call had been no surprise. What had been a surprise was the seemingly genuine bewilderment of the man taken into custody. Yancey looked forward with keen interest to what the medical consultants might have to say. It would take at least the rest of the day for some kind of preliminary diagnosis, and it looked like it might be another late night, so Martin is content to have a leisurely breakfast.

His wife enters the kitchen. She is a handsome woman, much slimmer and slightly taller than Martin. Both are stately, in their own way.

She keeps her hair cut short—it’s easier to maintain that way, she says—but Yancey remembers with pleasure the way her hair was when he first met her almost forty years ago. She worked in a flower shop, and he had dropped in for an orchid for his high school prom date. The date got the flowers and Martin got the rose, he always figured. She wore her hair in a long ponytail, and they had a number of routines built around that ponytail:

*Can you wag it?*

*No.*

*Then how will I know you’re happy?*

*You’ll know.*

The ponytail is gone, but not the charming, flirtatious grin that went with the *you’ll know*. She wears that grin now as she hands him the morning paper.

“Of course, if you’re going to take the day off…” she says.

“I’m just going in late.”
“Maybe I could go in late too,” she teases.
He stands and wraps his arms around her. “Perhaps you could,” he says.
“Hands off, honey,” she says, hugging him anyway. “You know that I really can’t. I have a business to run.”
“Let’s run away,” he says.
She gives his bow tie a tug. “I like this one. But you can’t wear it when we run away, okay? Someone might recognize you.”
“Aaw, honey,” he says with amusement. “Then you’ve got to grow your hair long again.”
“Miss Scarlett, you done had a baby... I’m not eighteen anymore, Martin. Neither are you.” Again the grin. He feels eighteen.
“You’ll always be eighteen to me,” he says.
“Sometimes I think you still are eighteen,” she says, pushing him back into the kitchen chair. “Eat your breakfast. I’ve got a floral empire to run. You make it safe for me.” She kisses him on the forehead.
“I should have been a perfume manufacturer,” he says.
“And cornered the flower market, right?”
“And kept you home for myself.” Again, a familiar routine, but it is still fun.
“Read your paper, dear.”
“Yes, dear.”
She exits the kitchen, and he listens to the sounds of her departure—footsteps on the hardwood floor; the closet door opening as she grabs her raincoat; the front door opening and closing. He sits perfectly still and concentrates to hear her footsteps on the cobblestone driveway, the car door shutting, the engine’s brief turnover before it fires, and the car’s acceleration out of the driveway and down the street—all sounds he seldom gets to hear. He is usually out the door two hours before her, having to negotiate earlier hours and a longer drive to work.

The house seems unusually quiet. He sighs and looks down at his breakfast. Cold cereal. High in fibre, but mushy now. He picks up the bowl and
takes it to the sink. He strains out the milk and spoons the mushy fibre into the wastebasket under the sink. He goes to the refrigerator and opens the freezer door. Disappointed, he looks in the cookie jar for something sweet to eat with his coffee. There are a few cookies left—digestives, bland and tasteless—but he takes a few anyway and sits back down at the table. His coffee is still moderately warm, and he washes a cookie down with it.

The newspaper is rolled up and stuffed in a blue cellophane wrapper. It sits on the kitchen table waiting to be opened. Someone thought it might rain this morning, he thinks, looking at the plastic wrapping. He gazes out through the sliding glass door of the kitchen, where rays of sunshine are raining down on his wife's superb garden. He eats his last digestive, picks up his coffee cup, fills it up again from the coffee maker, walks over to the glass door and slides it open. He wanders out onto the patio and admires the garden, including in his appreciation the bounty of flowers flourishing in a rainbow of colours. He goes to a rosebush and runs his fingers lightly over the yellow blooms. They are soft and velvety to the touch. With the change of season on the horizon, they won't last much longer, he thinks. Perhaps they should try a hardier variety next year.

His wife keeps the house filled with flowers throughout the fall and winter, but there was nothing like having the genuine article, not clipped at the stem and sitting in a vase, but rooted into the ground, taking its rightful place in nature where the bees could dine on its nectar. The bees are humming this morning, he notes, listening to the symphony of buzzes resonating around the centre of the garden, where he now stands. His wife brought home some prize winners, but nothing quite compared with that which they nurture right there in their own little garden.

Martin pours the last of his coffee down his throat and goes back to the kitchen. He pours out a third cup from the coffee maker, adds a bit of cream, and sits down at the kitchen table. He rips open the blue cellophane and extracts the newspaper. It has a new format today, he notes. The paper has been cut smaller, and the font has changed. A small article on the lower corner of the front page
confirms his observation, bragging with words like accessibility and reader-friendly and robustness. Martin has his own word for it: audacious. He supposes that the substance will be relatively unchanged.

He drinks from his cup of coffee, scans the headlines, and turns to the editorial page. His mind is conditioned to spot the CSIS acronym, and he usually distinguishes it quickly from the rest of the print. Recently, he has become equally adept at distinguishing the word cryonics. He spots that word on the page opposite the editorial and the accompanying cartoon over the letters to the editor. The headline reads: Reanimating the Cryonics Debate. It is written by Pete Simms. Martin spills a bit of coffee on the article in his eagerness to scan through the column. With a paper napkin, he hurriedly pats at the widening stain.

Chapter 25

Dean, Roadkill and Leif sit in an upscale restaurant not far from CSIS North. Roadkill, wearing his Tiger’s baseball cap and his rose-coloured glasses, is eating from a bag of barbecue potato chips, and drinking from a plastic bottle of Pepsi. He looks around and frowns, uncomfortable with Dean’s choice. It is a small restaurant, a bistro on the first level of a twenty-story hotel of luxury suites, catering to airport clientele, many of whom are business people in town for meetings and conferences. Men and woman in dark suits sit together sipping expensive wines and talk in hushed animation.

The long narrow room is decorated with dark green wainscoting below blue wallpaper splattered with yellow flowers. The small tables each have a single rose standing in a slim white vase, a squat white candle in a smoked glass globe with a hole at the top, and tall wine glasses for each seat strategically placed at
each table to encourage an order of wine. The red tablecloths underneath are almost completely hidden by the white place mats and other objects. There is little elbowroom, and Roadkill feels slightly claustrophobic among all the patrons and waiters squeezing by the table. Dean seems quite pleased with himself; Roadkill notes with displeasure, but their guest seems ill at ease. No surprise there, he thinks, dipping into his bag of potato chips. Roadkill had insisted on stopping at a nearby variety store because, as he explained it, “It’ll take all day to get our food in there and I’m hungry now!” Dean ignores his co-worker’s lack of table etiquette, happy to be having a decent meal even if the company he has to entertain is rather disparaging.

Roadkill’s intuition said that this wasn’t going to be fun. He had to fight to keep from groaning when Bill Butler had asked him and Dean to take their guest out to lunch. Roadkill doesn’t like Dean much—thinks him a pompous phoney—and he thinks even less of the guest, a shadowy bloke with a contagious breed of depression. Roadkill looks at Leif as he surveys the menu with a definitive lack of concentration. This is nuts, Roadkill thinks. He says it aloud. “This is nuts.”

“What?” Dean asks, his tone relaxed.

“Nothing,” says Roadkill, shaking his head. He begins to read from the menu, and his frown turns to a scowl. “You really eat this shit?” he says to Dean. “Curried asparagus tips au gratin?” he reads from the menu. “With shallots and snails served on a bed of wild rice.”

“That’s escargot,” Dean corrects Roadkill.

“Reads snails on this menu.”

The headwaiter, black-tied and vested, stops at their table and looks at Roadkill’s Pepsi. “Perhaps sir would like a glass?” he asks.

“Uh, monsieur prefers his beverage in a bottle,” Roadkill replies haughtily. The waiter looks to Dean for support.


“With this menu?” Roadkill protests loudly.
“Quiet,” Dean says, his voice still calm. “Try to be civilized, will ya?”

“I like my Pepsi in a bottle,” Roadkill persists.

Dean pulls out his badge and shows it to the waiter, who is not impressed.

He walks away.

“What the hell was that?” Roadkill asks.

“It carries weight.”

“Ha ha. You use it to pick up women, too?”

Dean sighs. “And you don’t?” he says. Bringing Roadkill here was a mistake. “Just relax. Find something to order. Ask for a sandwich or something. Be glad we’re back at the office.”

“This ain’t the office.”

“Well, you’re closer to home here, anyway. It may not be the office but at least you can breathe in here, as opposed to your swampy Avocado hideaway. I’m surprised there aren’t reptiles crawling around the floor.”

“You’d put butter on ‘em and eat ‘em.”

“Yeah, well, you’d mate with them and…”

“Home again, home again, jigiddy-jig.”

Dean sighs. “You can play with your computer again. You should be happy about that.”

“I’m a technician.”

“Whatever.”

Roadkill looks at Leif. “So, Eddie, or Arthur, or whatever the hell your name is…”

Leif does not look up


That’s why we brought you here.”

“I’m not hungry.”

“You must be. Don’t let the menu hinder your appetite. Like it’s hindering mine.” He looks at Dean. “We could have grabbed a burger!”

“That’s all this guy’s been given for a week. Nothing but take-out. Bill
said to take him for a real meal.”

“Snails ain’t real food.”

“He doesn’t have to eat that. Look, uh…*pal,*” Dean says to Leif. “How about a pork chop? Or a rib-eye with a baked potato?”


“Well, I’ll have the rib-eye, medium, and I’ll order the same for you. With a nice glass of wine.”

“Bill said no booze,” Roadkill remarks, not really caring.

“Can’t have rib-eye without wine. A nice glass of wine won’t kill him.”

“It could screw up the tests.”

“The tests are all screwed up. They haven’t proved anything. And put away the chips, this isn’t a barn. Try to act civil for once.”

“It’s empty,” Roadkill says. “Look.” He shows Dean the empty bag, then rolls it up, ties it in a knot, and tries to balance it on his wineglass. “No wine. Bill says. You heard him say that, didn’t you, Eddie?”

“Leif.”

“Well, you know,” says Roadkill, giving up on the balancing act and stuffing the chip bag into his wineglass, “the experts say you’re Eddie. DNA doesn’t lie, you know. The experts also say you’re only *physically* Eddie. That *psychologically,* you’re Leif. I dunno. Maybe *emotionally,* you’re Arthur. That must make you confused. It sure makes us confused.”

“Just relax, Ron,” Dean says.

“So,” Roadkill continues, ignoring Dean, “we don’t know *what* to call you. You want us to call you Leif, we’ll call you Leif.”

Dean sighs. “I’m ready to order,” he says, looking around for the waiter.

They eat in silence. Dean eats slowly, with occasional sips from a glass of red wine. Roadkill wolfs his food down. He is always hungry, Dean has noted. Leif barely touches his food.

“You know,” Dean says to Leif over coffee, “we’re trying to be nice here. It’s not that we don’t believe you. Somebody’s been playing around with your
head, we think. Your wife believes you, you know.”

Leif shudders at the reference to the woman.

“She really does,” Roadkill confirms, his mouth full of apple pie.

Cautiously, Leif looks up at Dean.

“Sure,” Dean says. “She says you’re a different guy now. But what you’ve got to realize is who you once were. Maybe we can help you to remember. You’ve been this other guy for most of your life…”

“A real prick,” Roadkill interrupts, as he washes down his last piece of pie with coffee.

Dean ignores Roadkill and continues. “Somehow, Leif, that’s all been changed. The doctors say you’ve had cosmetic surgery. Your face has been changed. We think someone’s been playing with your head, too, and we’ll be visiting the Institute about that real soon.”

“It’s ironic,” Roadkill says, wiping his mouth with the back of his sleeve.

“The specialists say that the reanimated forget plenty. So, why would anybody bother playing with this guy’s head?”

“I meant since then,” Dean says.

“Without memory, what’s the point?” Roadkill argues.

Dean sighs. “Sure you don’t want dessert?” he asks Leif.

“No, thanks.”

“Ron? You’re finished?” Dean tries to sound courteous and professional.

“You’ve been ahead of us,” he says, thinking, you’re a pig.

“Yeah. The pie sucks. Don’t eat it.” He looks at Dean. “You pay, right?”

“The company pays. I’ll take care of it.”

Deans pays the bill and takes a receipt, and the three men depart from the restaurant, always managing to keep Leif more or less between them. They had walked the one kilometre distance from CSIS North to the hotel bistro, and now they retrace their steps. It is a sunny afternoon, with a hint of autumn coolness in the air.
“Nice day,” Dean says amicably, but he gets no response.

They walk south on a sidewalk seldom used on the mainly industry-lined strip that parallels the busy highway running north and south just a block away. They can hear the steady drone of traffic from the highway as they walk. Weeds, testifying to the lack of foot traffic on the strip, grow through the cracks of the sidewalk.

They walk south, passing the full parking lots of small industries that line the road. The sidewalk is too narrow for the three to walk side by side, so Roadkill falls in behind. He tugs at his collar. “I don’t belong in a suit,” he mutters. It is another reason for his aggravation.

“Makes you look taller,” Dean offers unconvincingly, not bothering to look over his shoulder. “Looks real good with the baseball hat.” Makes him look even scrannier, too, he thinks. “So Leif, is it nice to get out?” He looks at Leif, knowing from experience that the interpretation of a response should not depend solely on what is said.

Leif appears to scowl at the question, at the continuing intrusion. He hesitates to respond. “How long do I have to stay here?” he asks, not taking his eyes off the sidewalk, avoiding, as has become usual, any eye contact with his captors.

“I can’t answer that, Leif,” Dean says, dismayed that what he sees on the man’s face is nothing different from what he has seen all week. However, he is in a mood to be clever, and he tries again. Roadkill, though out of his area of expertise, recognizes what Dean is trying to do, and says nothing. He listens, but expects nothing either.

“See, we don’t know what’s going on here,” Dean explains to Leif. “You have to see it from our point of view. There’s some kind of fraud, or something, happening, and it directly involves you. We wouldn’t be doing our job if we didn’t look into this. Besides, you may be in some kind of danger. Some people don’t like reanimated people. Course, we’re not sure if that’s what you are.” Dean looks at Leif for a response, but Leif’s reaction is muted. He wears a scowl,
almost suggesting anger, but there is a hint of confusion on his face too, of uncertainty. Throughout the week, he has become increasingly silent, as if retreating to a sanctuary inside himself. He is visibly reclusive.

They walk on, and cross over a little creek that runs under the strip. Roadkill stops at the creek, leans over the concrete railing, spits, and then picks up his pace to catch up with the other two, both of whom have walked passed the creek without comment or interest. If I had time, Roadkill thinks, if I were a kid again, if I could get away with it, I'd go down to the creek and dam it like a beaver. That'd be fun. He looks back to the creek over his shoulder, but they are already too far away, and the creek has dropped out of his line of sight. Roadkill feels frustrated. What a lousy day, he thinks, tugging at his shirt collar and loosening the tie around his neck.

Less than a block away from CSIS North a sudden crack jolts through the dry air, close enough to rattle all three as they stand in a triangle on the concrete sidewalk. They hesitate for a moment. Then, as Roadkill looks around in bewilderment, Dean grabs Leif around his shoulders and pushes him to the ground protectively.

"What was that?" Roadkill says, his voice quiet as if it might reveal them. Dean pulls a side arm from its holster at his side and holds it slightly hidden under his suit jacket.

"Where'd it come from?" Dean says, an urgent excitement in his voice. "From there?" he asks, waving the palmed gun towards a building with three large bay doors, one partially open.

"I don't know," Roadkill says, his voice shaky. "What was that, Dean? Was that a shot?"

They wait in nervous anticipation, focussing their suspicion and anxiousness on the open bay door across the street while taking quick glances at the periphery. Nothing happens. After about ten seconds of nothing, they start to move.

"Let's get back to the office," Dean says, his voice calmer now. They walk
south with their eyes on the bay doors. They freeze when one of the two closed doors begins to rise, and watch as a huge yellow propane cylinder truck backs out from the garage bay. It stops, and a man in blue overalls gets out, gives the three men across the road a curious look, looks under the truck, and then back at the three men.

"Maybe it was a backfire," Roadkill offers.

"Maybe," Dean concedes. But he isn’t willing to take the chance. "Let’s keep going," he says, and they continue the final block to the office, sensing relief as they close the gap between themselves and the glass front door of CSIS north. They cut across the building’s front lawn at an angle, squeezing their bodies between a line of bushes that border the lawn. They reach the sidewalk leading to the front entrance and scurry up towards the front door. Then, just when both Dean and Roadkill are starting to feel silly about overreacting, a shard of brick explodes next to Dean’s ear as he holds the door for Leif. He cups his ear with his gun hand, the gun still in his palm, yells "Get in!" and the three scramble to enter the building.

"Someone’s shooting at us!" Roadkill yells to two young, burly security guards in the lobby, both of whom are already approaching the door with handguns drawn.

"Everyone okay?" one asks. He has a big round face with a red glow of perspiration that seems to have anticipated the excitement. "Where’s it coming from, you know?"

"Out there!" Roadkill pants, pointing outside with frightened anger, thinking the question preposterous. He absently pushes his sparse, sweaty hair to the back of his head with the palm of his hands, then, voices a sudden realization. "And they’ve got my fucking hat!" he yells in anger. His rose-coloured glasses fall down to the end of his nose, jarred loose by his violent exclamation. He pushes the spectacles back into place with the tips of two fingers.

"Across the street, somewhere," Dean elaborates on Roadkill’s vague direction. Blood runs down the right side of Dean’s face.
“Get behind the wall,” the second security guard says, looking out the glass doors not knowing that all of them, including his perspiring partner, already are behind the partition wall. “All of you. Now!” he adds, still looking through the glass. Then, he retreats a step, looks back, and realizes that he is alone, in the open, and he joins his co-workers behind the wall.

“Take him upstairs,” Dean says to Roadkill. Roadkill grabs Leif’s arm, but Leif is frozen, trying desperately to clutch at the wall.

“Come on,” Roadkill says, but Leif won’t respond. “Come on, Leif,” Roadkill says, and Leif allows Roadkill to haul him towards the stairwell.

Behind them, the round-faced, perspiring security guard yells into a microphone under the cuff of his shirtsleeve, while Dean, cupping his ear, takes nervous turns with the second security guard glancing around the partition wall through the glass front doors of CSIS North.

Chapter 26

It is late evening. Pete Simms sits in his den, smoking a huge Havana, a celebratory cigar that is leaving an uncharacteristically bad taste in his mouth. His latest column had rocked a few boats, he’s sure of that. Congratulatory faxes had rolled in from across Metro. The column had already been copied, quoted and lampooned on the Net. Requests for interviews had flooded into his office, while a powerful U.S. newspaper syndicate was inquiring about U.S. syndication rights. Simms always wanted to crack the U.S. market, and was pleasantly surprised about the attention south of the border.

And yet, after succeeding in reawakening his audience to an old debate with an irresistibly engaging angle, he is not enjoying his celebratory cigar. He has
missed something, he feels. He has a gut feeling of having been had. Worst of all, he ponders, he may have been a victim of his own speculation.

He watches as the smoke curls and dances, spiralling upward into the undercurrent of the revolving ceiling fan and dispersing invisibly, exchanged for city air, if not cleansed, by vents in the ceiling and floor. Out with the bad, in with the good, he thinks hopefully, sucking on his Havana. He blows again, and watches the smoke rise, carried by its own heat. He hunkers down in his red-leather office chair, cigar in one hand, and the prized article, cut out from the *Metro Sun*, in the other. Printed, the article seems a fresh incarnation, albeit flattened by cheap ink and pressed pulp. The delicately fibrous feel of the original print submitted for publication is gone, replaced by the cheap gaudy feel of stock newsprint. The weight of the article is carried by the weight of the words alone. And yet, somehow, the words seem less weighty, giving in to a sort of flightiness, as if a rogue quality to the text dominates, a scamp with wings that intimidates Simms with a menacing independence. These words are attributable to me, he thinks, but no longer mine.

The cryonics industry has, since the days when the first aged hippies were entombed in liquid nitrogen, been plagued by innuendoes of quackery. To raise one from the dead (*dormant* or *deanimated* in the germane vernacular) has always been a fantastic notion, and it remains that way to many people, regardless of the credit (or blame?) medical science ultimately deserves for realizing the fantastic. Many Christians, for example, promote the notion of resurrection as a divine miracle rather than, in its latest manifestation, a miracle of modern science, regardless of man’s intervention in the process. Where does an omnipotent God, others might ask, fit into this science-dominated scenario?

Since the days of leeching and bloodletting,
practitioners of medicine have been placed, with no lack of help from their peers in the profession, on an impressively exalted pedestal, seemingly Herculean in authority. No modern malpractice suit, legislative act, or editorial diatribe, no matter how powerful, can jar loose even one old bolt holding this social engineering curiosity together. For most of us, it is all we can do to climb up the rusty old structure to bestow praise and prize upon the feet of those statues of honour and virility who have assumed the roles of cultural centrepieces as if by divine right. For these are our gods, men and women who can give us life beyond the grave. But oh, what a life.

As we might be witnessing (if we had the data), reanimation leaves much to be desired—the ghost of the king of Denmark in Shakespeare's Hamlet came back with less to be bitter about (better he had remained in the otherworld?). The ghost, at least, had the benefit (and curse, perhaps) of his full memory. For, I would suggest, those reanimated on cryonics assembly lines are being set loose on society without much public attention to consequential details.

The cryonics community stands atop the pedestal, dangling the strings of life like a puppeteer, then cuts those connections, seemingly without further accountability. The deanimated patient is then expected to function independently, with regard for his or her subsequent life passed on to higher powers, other powers, or no powers at all. The patient is free to assume control over his or her own life. But then, self-sufficiency is the ultimate test, and the preferred goal, isn't it?

Society's tendency to express its distaste for
dependency is based on a tradition founded in economic and social pedestals that have long been propped up against fears—often reactionary and paranoiac—of a maternal (read socialist in Canada, and liberal in the U.S.) national ethic. If the medical profession has adapted this swim or sink mentality, who’s to blame them?

Due to privacy acts that supersede freedom of information legislation, statistics that might otherwise provide some insight into the fate of the reawakened do not exist as fodder for either the pro or the con in the cryonics debate. We don’t know much about who has been awakened, and as a consequence we know little about what has become of them. The global cryonics community’s inability to share information, not only with the public, but also with each other, does little to generate either a sense of respectability or an acceptance of liability. We protect the cryonics industry because they have joined the ranks of our untouchable medical gods. Violence against them, therefore, is wrong. For you who relate best to mathematical equations, consider this: two plus two equals four. However, if one of the factors in our equation is precariously determined, then surely we must doubt the accuracy of the conclusion. Perhaps the time has come to check our figures.

Who can complain if a dead person is, after ten years of death, still dead, or dead again, for whatever reason? With little or no information on inquests and investigations surrounding the death of the deanimated available for public scrutiny (due to privacy acts), is not exploitation of the public made possible—perhaps encouraged—where no accountability seems to exist?
Further, the lack of affiliation or consensus among cryonicists makes statistical analysis almost impossible. What is reputable, what is not, and why? How much money is involved? Who are the overseers?

The government cannot allow itself to be perceived as interfering with advances in modern medicine, and the cryonicists, not shy about political lobbying as a whole, have capitalized on a political unwillingness to intervene in regional and "scientifically sovereign" medical matters. After all, Dr. Frankenstein, though a medical rogue, meant well, didn’t he?

There has been some ballyhooed number crunching which, if the data can be trusted at all, shows that the deanimated are not statistically any more of a threat (cultural, ethical and moral threats notwithstanding) than any other unique group. Yet, we need to know more, not only about these people, but about those atop the pedestals, those pulling the strings with impunity, then cutting those same strings without fear of open, public scrutiny. There is far too much secrecy. If we beg to know more about the cryoterrorists, then it is reasonable to know more about the people we are protecting. Murder is not acceptable in our global community, but neither is secrecy when the privacy cryonicists vow to uphold supplants the trust that people have a right to expect of the medical community. We are not children. A paternal pat on the head doesn’t cut it. Accountability does. When Hamlet said, “something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” he may have had the cryonics industry in mind.

This is not to say the cryoterrorists have a point. They
don't, at least, not one worth listening to. But we have listened anyway, and debated, too. The first factor in our equation is always the same: violence against the cryonics community cannot be condoned. Still, it is reasonable and responsible to legitimately ascertain the second factor—what it is we are fighting for—before we can determine a sensible course of action. It has to add up.

A ghost told Hamlet the truth, and in that instance the truth happened to hurt. However, is that an excuse for ignorance? Even in this enlightened age—perhaps because of it—we know that the dead do tell tales.

We don't have the luxury of enlightened ghosts, nor do we want the tragedy of deadly tales. Let us get the truth from the living, for the living, and let our actions—our conclusions—be based on accurate and, hopefully, forthcoming information about the cryonics industry.

Frankenstein's horrific creation—"The Modern Prometheus"!!—might have garnered a degree of sympathetic attention had its publicity been handled by today's cryonics industry and their Madison Avenue henchmen. Nevertheless, we can effectively contemplate—even appreciate—Dr. Frankenstein's genius. However, we can do without any suggestion of monsterly behaviour in the cryonics community.

He reads the article again, and a third time, and asks the same questions of the article that he did as he was writing it. The third time through he is pleased with the article, more so than ever. It has all the right elements. It has controversy, logic and readability. It scores as entertainment, too. He concludes
that the article is reasonable. He has another article about local politics half-finished. He must be sure to give it a wide, even international perspective.

He takes another puff from his Havana, and watches in satisfaction as the smoke curls and dances to the ceiling. He begins to plan his next day. He will resist the urge to surf the Net for responses to his article. When he wakes up he’ll take no calls until the next column is finished—should have that done by noon, he thinks. Then, he’ll check the Net for criticism, and arrive at the office at two p.m., ready for both compliments and rebukes. This was going to be interesting, he thinks.

However, he thinks some more, puffing on his Havana, and his satisfaction is tempered by his curiosity. What are they saying? And who are the they that should be the centre of his concern? He wonders. He takes another puff from his cigar and it doesn’t taste quite right. He looks to his monitor on his desk, and decides that the ghosts cannot be denied.

Chapter 27

It is four a.m. Bill, Alana, and Martin Yancey have been up all night, debating their next course of action. The vertical blinds are open, revealing the illuminated front yard of CSIS North, where, the previous afternoon, shots had been fired. The strip, devoid of traffic, is black and wet and reflective in the darkness. It has been raining steadily since midnight. Alana looks through the window at a cautious angle and studies as best she can the route taken by the two CSIS officers as they escorted Fields back from the restaurant. She sees them as they walk from the north, hesitate by the bay doors belonging to the Chevrolet
dealership, continue south to the CSIS property, and cut across the lawn to the front door. There, a bullet shatters a brick and Dean is cut just in front of his right ear. The wound had been superficial, and required only a small bandage to help it to heal.

The rain beats down on the road and the sidewalk, dancing on the asphalt and concrete with a steady wet skipping that can be heard through the window. It’s usually such a boring view, Alana thinks, looking across the road to the back of the car dealership. But here, at four a.m., with no traffic or pedestrians, and only a few office lights and the interspersed glare from street lamps to light up the road, Alana’s view of the scene is stimulated. Now, she sees it from a strategic point of view. The group, returning from the restaurant, had been out in the open for so long. How could the sniper have missed? And, where could the sniper have hidden? No one knew, for sure. The bullet came from across the street, but the angle of investigation was as wide as the Chevrolet dealership. Buildings, new cars, used cars—all had been carefully investigated. Interviews and prints had been recorded, but no leads had developed.

Bill is sitting at his desk, reading the article by Pete Simms by the light of an overhead lamp. He rubs his eyes. Alana looks back to the window, and sees her own reflection. She looks tired, too, and she smooths her black hair behind her ears, noting without caring that loose strands of hair are determined to be rogues away from the main body.

Martin is glancing through reports of the sniper attack investigation at Alana’s desk. He finishes wading through one pile of papers and tucks them into a folder. He picks up another folder and begins to flip through those pages. Bill looks up and watches him. “You’re considering a safe house, aren’t you,” he says, looking weary, like he’s been frozen in one position in his chair all night and his body is past caring about it. One palm rests on the Simms’ article, as if to remind him of some forthcoming commentary he has in mind.

“We can’t send him back now, not even if we wanted to,” Martin says, not looking up. “Until we know better, we have to assume that those bullets were
meant for him.” Alana turns away from the window, leans her back against the wall, her arms crossed in front of her, and imagines the scene of the previous afternoon on the front lawn. Who else could it have been meant for, she wonders.

“Guess we can’t act with impunity, or without liability,” Bill says.

“An assumed liability, yeah,” Martin says. “You’re quoting the article.”

“There’s something to be learned here,” Bill says, patting the article, then stretching his legs to the side of his desk. “It seems to be related to what we’re doing.”

“It could be speculation.”

“Well, not the part about impunity, or speculation, or accountability. But that’s not why you wanted us to read it.”

“No,” Martin admits, looking up from the folders. “Just food for thought, really. Simms has thought this out. Done some research, I assume, too. And, if he’s right, there isn’t much accountability out there.”

“In the cryonics industry.”

“Right. But that’s not exactly what concerns me at the moment. There are implications that Simms hasn’t mentioned, though he has, of course, alluded to them.”

“You’re thinking, if the Institute released an impostor, they’d want to protect that fraud. Right?”

“That’s our suspicion, has been for some time.”

“A cover-up. A medical Watergate.”

“Sort of.”

“So, we get a warrant and sack the joint.”

“Not yet.”

“Why?”

“Because the cryoterrorists would win.”

“Again, why?”

Alana speaks up. “Because they’re suspects too.”

“That’s obvious,” Bill replies.
“And we can’t go after them,” Alana adds, “because we don’t know where to look. The Institute’s easy.”

Martin tidies up the papers in front of him and places them back into a folder. “We’re continuing to keep an eye on them,” he says. “We just need more intelligence before we risk alienating anybody. I mean, we don’t want to fan the fire here, do we? We can risk it, but just not yet. We need more.” He looks at the two intelligence officers but gets no objection to his line of reasoning. “We sure as hell haven’t cracked Mr. Fields,” Martin continues. “Anyway, while you and Alana take him into hiding, we continue our investigation here. That’s the most responsible course of action we can take at the moment, the way I see it.”

The subject of a safe house had come up a number of times since the shots rang out in front of CSIS North. That Martin’s decision is to proceed on that issue comes as no surprise to Alana and Bill.

“For how long?” Bill asks, accepting the assignment, and believing it the proper course of action, but not relishing the idea.

“You know the answer to that.”

“For as long as it takes, right?” Alana asks.

“First things first,” Martin says. “Fields can’t stay here. And you should leave within the hour. That’s not enough time to get ready, I know, so I’ll see to it that you have all the logistical support you need. Money, prescriptions if you need them, that sort of thing. You can go shopping for supplies too, wherever you go.”

“Who goes with us?”

“Take Dean. Ron Bosworth can stay here. He was missed last week when you went to Peterborough. I’m glad he got out, he looks like he could use some fresh air…”

“You’re not kidding,” Bill says.

“…but we need him here. Dean’s reaction to yesterday’s event was first-rate. He’ll be good to have along. The three of you can take turns scouting and shopping, and sleeping, of course. If you do the job right, it’ll be boring.”

“You’ve done this before?” Alana asks.
“No, not me,” Martin says, raising a hand up like a stop sign. “I’m a career diplomat, so to speak. First with the RCMP, then here. I miss out on most of the action. I get to read about it. In files like these,” he says, patting the files in front of him. “You two get the sexy jobs.”

“What are those files?” Bill asks, ignoring Martin’s comment, not feeling sexy at all.

“This one on top is a list of safe houses. Suggestions, guides, mainly, as opposed to being a hideout bible. But there is a place north of here that you can start with, if you want. It’s in the Hockley Valley. It’s a nice place. Too bad you don’t have time to pack your golf bags, there’s some nice courses up there.”

“We could rent,” Bill deadpans, without enthusiasm.

“You could,” Martin laughs. “But not with CSIS money. Not without a good explanation.”

“I don’t suppose Fields will be up to it anyway,” Bill concedes wearily. He looks back to the article. “This Simms guy. He’s right on the cutting edge, isn’t he.”

“Freedom of the press, Bill.”

“I don’t mean that. But his observations are interesting.”

“A genuine man of letters, Simms. But he sure has raised a stink. Reporters will be buzzing around the Institute for a week or two, I would think.”

“Elaborating on the story?” Alana asks.

“Yeah. They’ll be ringing some ears in Ottawa too.”

Alana sits on the corner of her desk and looks at the lettering on the closed top file. The letters appear upside-down to her, and she’s too tired to try to decode them. She looks back at the window. “It’s stopped raining,” she says. No one comments. She thinks about her apartment. They had been watching the house in Peterborough for a week, each sleeping in four-hour shifts. She misses her own bed.

Alana’s parents wanted her to be a doctor. She imagines herself at the Institute, in a dark operating theatre, wearing a white smock and a white mask
around her mouth. There, in a block of ice, is a body. She wipes a layer of frost aside with a gloved hand, and there, beneath the ice, is Fields’ face, distorted under a thick layer of frozen water. A stethoscope hangs uselessly around her neck.

“There’s someone else you can take,” Martin says, interrupting her thoughts. Her vision begins to melt. She looks at Bill, who seems to be lost in his own thoughts, staring vacantly at her legs, crossed at her ankles, as she sits on the corner of her desk. She catches his eye, and he looks away, embarrassed.

“What’s that, Martin?” he asks, scratching his head, trying to pretend as though he hasn’t been caught.

“What?” Martin says, lost in his own thoughts. “Oh,” he says, rubbing his face with his hands, his elbows resting on the desk. “Mrs. Fields. Elizabeth. She should go too.”

Chapter 28

She lies awake in bed and listens as the roar and whine as yet another jet passes over on its descent towards Pearson International. She looks at the clock radio on her bedside table. It is five a.m. She has slept seven hours, and that is enough. Yet, still she lies in the darkness, listening for the next plane, and thinking.

The suite that CSIS had booked for her is a nice one. There would be regrets about leaving it, and the investigation, too. She genuinely liked the detectives, especially Bill Butler. As a law officer, he seemed to be gentle, not at all like the locals that used to come looking for her husband, their tone impatient and dangerous. At least, Butler had seemed a nice guy, sort of a knight in shining armour, since the initial interrogation of Eddie, when, as she listened from another
room, Butler's approach had made Eddie sound as vulnerable as a lamb. She had enjoyed that.

The locals had come, often, looking for Eddie. Why do you want him, she would ask, why? She never believed them. She always believed him. Always. Then, late one evening, in a fit of anger and unforgettable horror, he had admitted, to her, to the surveillance video, what he had done. Not all of it. But enough.

They had played that surveillance tape for her at CSIS North. They did it with regret, she could see that, and their faces became human, but that only intensified the hurt. They lowered their eyes, at times, trying as best they could to protect her from embarrassment and discomfort. They felt for her, and she hated the pitying sympathy, hated that as much as the hurt her husband had caused her.

She watched the tape and thought it horrible and surreal. Then, the scene from which CrimeGazette had been issued a photograph came up on the monitor. Her sister had shown her that photograph, back then. Harold, her sister's idiot husband, had found it while leafing through a bookstore magazine rack.

"Look what Harold found," her sister had announced, holding the magazine open so that Elizabeth could have a clear look at the offending page. "I knew they had Eddie under surveillance, but I never thought it would come to this. See what he's done to you?"

Elizabeth looked at the photograph briefly, just long enough to recognize the living room. Then, she looked away. "I agreed to the camera, "she explained. "I felt I had to. I signed consent forms. He left before they could get there."

"That's not what this is about. Look at it, Libby," her sister had insisted. "Look at it, and remember it for what it was. And whenever you feel any sympathy for him, and I know you will, remember this photo, not some idiotic fantasy. Look at it!"

She did. She took a close look, and held on to the magazine. After her sister had gone, she ripped out the page with the offending picture and burned it a wastebasket.

She watched the scene played back at CSIS North. The CSIS officers
thought it might help her, or help them, but it did neither. It did not help her to remember, because she had never forgotten, although the picture, clear and focussed, clarified the truth. She squirmed with discomfort as she saw it again.

She leans over and turns on the bedside lamp. She looks at the clock again. It is 5:15 a.m. She looks at the gap in the curtains. It has begun to rain again, she notes. She gets up and goes to the bathroom.

She looks at herself in the bathroom mirror. Was that really me in the video, she wonders. I look so much older. She pulls back the skin of her cheeks with the palms of her hands. Was that me?

She showers and dresses. Today is the last day, she thinks. That’s it.

There is a knock at the door. She walks out of the bedroom, through the anteroom with its desk and mini-bar, matching couch and chair, and looks through the peephole. It is a man wearing a bow tie. Mr. Yancey. She opens the door and lets him in. His curly grey hair is wet, and his face is puffy and tired.

“Hi,” he says, his tone soft.

“Hello,” she responds flatly.

“I’m glad you’re awake. I should have phoned. We think it would be a good idea if you didn’t stay here anymore.”

“That’s fine. I’m ready to go home.”

“I don’t think that would be a good idea, Mrs. Fields. At least, not yet.”

“What did you have in mind, Mr. Yancey. Back to the office? No, I think I’ve had enough of that place.”

“No. Not there, either.”

“Where, then?”

“To a more secure location. Not in the city.”

“Why?”

“Because you may not be safe here, to be honest.”

“Not safe? What are you talking about? Has he escaped?” she asks calmly.

“No, no, nothing like that,” Martin reassures her, not knowing that the
notion of her husband’s escape is not as frightening to her as it would have been only a week earlier. “He’ll remain with us until we more fully understand what’s going on here.”

“But you must be done with me?”

“I thank you for your help. Yes, I think you’ve helped a lot on this case.”

“Then I’ll go home,” she says, her tone solid with conviction.

“We’re not sure if that would be safe for you.”

“You’re not sure, huh? Well I am.” She walks over to the couch in the anteroom and sits down. “Have a seat, Mr. Yancey.” He sits in the armchair opposite her. Outside, the rain has ended again, and the sun is rising over the edge of the world.

“I don’t know who he is, you know. Not really. But I know who he isn’t. He isn’t my husband. At least, not anymore. Maybe he once was. But he isn’t anymore.” She speaks with a calm confidence. She is reasonable. Martin is impressed with her composure. She has changed. She is not the woman in the tape. Martin likes the change. He sees an attractiveness about her he had not noted before. She is strong.

“It’s over between us,” she continues. “I don’t know that man you have in custody. It used to be my husband. I think I can even see that. But I’m no longer interested. I don’t fear that man. That’s the difference between what is and what was. He’s nothing to me. I’m just not interested.”

“You could still lay charges, assuming it is him. You know. Spousal abuse.”

“What’s the point? The charges wouldn’t mean anything to him. He’s already been destroyed, don’t you see? Somebody did it for me. I suppose I should feel a sense of satisfaction about that, but I don’t. I just don’t feel anything about it at all. Eddie’s gone, and I don’t believe he’s ever coming back.”

Martin looks at her. “I see,” he says. “So, you want to go home?”

“Yes. Unless you force me to do otherwise.”

“No, no. I won’t do that. But I do have to advise you…”
“I’ll be safe. Nobody’s interested in me. Why would they be?”

“Somebody might try to get to you, to get to him.”

“Nobody knows I exist, at least, no one that I should fear. And those that do, know that he has no knowledge of me. That’s what your people have told me. It’s true, isn’t it?”

“It seems so. But that doesn’t mean…”

“I want to go home, Mr. Yancey. And get on with my life.” She looks him in the eye, with a stubborn faith. She’s going to be okay, he decides. He stands, reaches into his inside jacket pocket, and extracts a folder.

“I’ve been authorized to give you some money. For expenses.” She takes the folder and sets it on the coffee table between them.

“My card’s in there, too. If you ever need anything at all…”

“No offence, Mr. Yancey. I hope we never meet again.”

She follows him as he walks to the door, opens it, and turns. He holds out his hand. “Good luck,” he says.

“Goodbye,” she says with finality, shaking his hand.

He exits, and she closes the door behind him.

Chapter 29

The team head north on Highway 27, exiting from the flatness of the urban northwest of Metro. The van turns left on a highway that soon responds to the changing landscape, rolling up and down the rolling terrain. The sky begins to lighten as Dean drives and Alana navigates. Bill sits behind them, his eyes closed. Beside him, Leif sits, silent as a lamb. His silence increasingly troubles the members of the team.
Into the Hockley Valley they drive, and then they are on the last leg of their
journey, a dirt road pockmarked with potholes and lined by large, decorative
houses indicative of local prosperity.

“Nice places,” Dean notes. “I could see myself living here.”

“It’s just up here on the left,” Alana says. “I always thought this was an
arts community—don’t know where they get the money. That driveway just
there,” she points. “Stop here, let me phone up the house and turn off the security
system.” The van stops at the side of the road opposite the driveway. Alana looks
down at the numbers on a piece of paper on her lap. She calls the house on a
cellular phone and enters the numbers that will turn off the home security system.
“It’s clear,” she announces.

“Disabled?” Bill asks from the back seat.

Alana looks behind her. “Thought you were asleep.”

“I’m awake.”

Dean looks at Bill through the rear-view mirror. Bill sees Dean looking,
and he squints his eyes and bares his teeth at him in mock annoyance. “Argh,” he
growls, like a pirate.

Alana turns to Dean. “The beast awakes,” she says. “Go ahead, Dean,
we’re clear.”

Dean turns the van onto the dirt driveway and follows it up and down a
few hills before the house is in sight.

“It’s nice,” Alana says. “Three stories, by the looks of it. Well, two stories
and a basement. It’ll have a basement walkout at the back, I’ll bet.”

“It’ll do,” Bill says from behind her. “At least, it’s not far from the city.
We can get some supplies in Orangeville. That’s not far, eh, Alana?”

Alana looks at her map. “Fifteen minutes, by the looks of it.”

Bill stretches in the back seat, his palms circling the top of Dean’s head. “I
think we better go right away and get some food. Then we can sleep. I’ll go.
Who wants to come with me?”

Alana looks at Dean. He doesn’t appear eager to volunteer. “You weren’t
at that meeting this morning. You should be the one to go."

Dean looks back at her, irritated. "You don’t know what I was doing. I was up half the night filling out reports about the shooting. I didn’t get any more sleep than you did."

"Fine," Alana says, unconvincingly. "I’ll go. Let’s go inside first and see what we need. We can make a list."

"I need socks and underwear," Dean declares.

"I’m sure we all do, Dean," Alana notes with a sigh.

Bill tries to calm the tension. "We’ll do socks and underwear this morning, and then get some clothes tomorrow. We’ve got credit, kiddies."

"Oh goodie," Alana mumbles sarcastically.

"We can take turns going back to Metro to get some of our own stuff. In the meantime, we’ll go nuts at the local places. Get ourselves some nice stuff, I mean, what the hell, eh! No one’s going to say anything."

"I just want to sleep," says Dean.

They sit in the van, looking at the house, too tired to move, yet conscious of the assignment. "What do you think, Bill?" Alana asks.

"Looks quiet enough. I’ll go in first."

"You have the key," Alana notes.

"Yeah," Bill says, suddenly feeling claustrophobic. The sliding door of the van opens and he steps out onto the gravel driveway. He takes a deep breath. It is still mostly cloudy, with a cool morning breeze, but the rain has stopped. On the horizon behind the house, the sunlight slips through an opening in the clouds. Bill squints, his eyes sore from almost twenty-four hours without sleep. He pokes his head back into the van, through the gap left by the open sliding door. Leif looks at him with heavy eyes, frowning, and clenches his fists under his coat sleeves. Bill looks at Leif distastefully, then ignores him. "Forget underwear this morning," he says, looking at his co-workers in the front seats. "Later in the day, maybe. Wash’em in the sink if you have to. Alana, we’ll just get some food, okay?"

"Why don’t we see what’s in there first, before we go," Alana says over
her shoulder.

"Right," Bill says without enthusiasm.

He walks past the driveway to a little stone walkway that leads to the front door. He peeks in a window. The light from the morning sun illuminates a nicely decorated living room, with a huge picture window facing the valley. He walks around the house, inspecting the windows, which seem secure, as he comes to them. He looks off down the hill. Immediately in front of him is a set of granite steps that wind down to a matching patio floor built into the side of the hill. After that, the lot grows wild, with a hodgepodge of rocks, plants, shrubs and small trees leading to a stream winding its way through the valley, passing in parallel the back of the house, then veering off into a forest at the back of the property. Bill studies the stream with interest, figuring it to be perhaps only five metres across at its widest, and not likely to be too deep. Still, he cannot help but wonder about its fishing potential. "Wow," he says in admiration, standing on the top granite step, looking out over the magnificent property. If only it were just he and Alana, Alana and he on the granite patio, sipping piña coladas or something, and then by the stream, the stream and the fish. "Wow," he repeats, shaking his head, wondering who lives in the house when CSIS doesn’t need it, wondering why they would give up that wonderful stream on request. "What’s the deal here?" he whispers.

He looks behind. Alana was right: there is a basement exit. He knows he’s been careless not to even look at the back of the house before fantasizing about the back yard. He blinks his eyes hard, wishes himself awake, and feels sickened by the idea of yet another cup of coffee. He looks in through the sliding glass basement door and decides that everything looks okay, as far as he can see.

He continues around the house, back up the hill to the sidewalk leading to the main entrance. He walks up to the door, unlocks it with a key given to him by Martin Yancey, and enters the house. He has a fleeting thought, which abruptly passes, about removing his shoes. He makes his way across the linoleum entranceway to the plush living room carpet. He inspects the rooms individually, from top to bottom, ending by the sliding glass doors in the basement that look
down the hill to the stream. The clouds continue to disperse, and the sun has edged further above the horizon, lighting up the rivulets and ripples of water passing through the stream. Again, Bill thinks about fishing.

He opens the sliding glass doors and exits the basement. He walks around the side of the house, and follows his previous steps up the hill to the front walkway, where he signals to the van. The doors open, and Dean and Alana get out. Alana goes around to the driver’s side of the van and opens the sliding door for Leif. Leif is leaning against his sliding door, its child lock engaged because the team remains unsure of him.

“You okay?” she asks with feigned enthusiasm. Even in his fatigue Leif does not miss the tone. He has become used to it. “Yeah,” he replies, his tone slightly belligerent. He no longer fears them, and they all know it.

Chapter 30

Roadkill drinks from a cup of coffee, and looks out the window of his second-floor apartment. The house he lives in, rescued from the wrecking ball a few years back through intervention by the Metro Historical Society, is in Forest Hill, a Metro neighbourhood of established credentials with upscale housing for the opulent few. A man by the name of Frederick Fox purchased the house and invested heavily in its renovation so that it would meet both MHS demands and local building codes. Roadkill, who would not otherwise have been able to afford the rent, in a fit of fantasy came to see the apartment one day, got talking with the landlord and, incredibly, he thought at the time, negotiated a deal.
The sun has been up for only a few hours. Roadkill, sitting at his living room desk in front of a computer monitor, is wearing blue and gold paisley pyjamas under a matching blue robe. His blue slippers carry an expensive logo. His morning outfit is grand, complementing the conspicuous affluence of the community. His face, however, does not match the dashing sharpness of his attire. He looks haggard, his face gaunt and moist with an oily sheen. He sits sideways with his elbow on the back of his office chair. He sips from his coffee, puts the cup down on the desk, then bites his nails, all the while staring vacantly at the leaves of a tree just outside the window. The leaves gently sway in the morning breeze, disbursing droplets of rain that cling hopefully on each leaf.

A grey-brown cat sweeps by his leg and meows. Its meow is eerie, merely a half meow that emanates from its broken jaw. Its tongue protrudes to the left of its face, seemingly stuck in its back teeth. The edge of its tongue is a dark pink, like the edge of meat that has gone bad. The cat climbs up on the windowsill, turns, and sits. It stares at Roadkill from its left eye—the good eye, with the prominent black circle that contrasts the turquoise-coloured iris. Roadkill looks down to the windowsill for a moment and playfully winks at the cat’s one good eye. Its other eye slightly protrudes from the right side of its face, its inner lid permanently half closed, barely exposing the lifeless light blue of iris inside.

Purring loudly, the cat seems unaffected by its gruesomeness. Roadkill looks down to the windowsill again and refocuses. “What’s the matter, Curious?” he asks the cat. He reaches down and pats the cat along the length of its body, and it stands, arching its back to the attention. “You’ve been fed,” Roadkill tells it. Roadkill strokes the cat for a moment longer, then turns in his chair to face his computer. He turns the machine on, waits for a moment for it to respond, and then begins to oversee his intentions with the buttons on the keyboard.

“Good morning, Cath,” he says, his voice cracking. He coughs to clear his throat. “How’s my honey?”

Curious jumps down from the sill and stretches tall against Roadkill’s leg. Roadkill feels its claws through his pajama leg and brushes the cat off. “Not now,
"Curr," he says, not looking at the cat as it saunters off to sulk. "Can't you see I'm working?" A tear streaks down Roadkill's face, and he wipes it off with a paisley forearm.

He looks up to the clock, a Budweiser beer can outfitted with hands and a motor, and numbers represented by Budweiser bottle caps. He has yet to shower and shave, but his workday is optional. He can physically report for work or, for the second day in a row, he can opt to work from home. He looks at the monitor screen, and manipulates the keyboard and mouse.

"Anything new?" he asks the computer. His home computer, not programmed to give an audible response to a negative, says nothing. Roadkill stares at the screen, his mind vacant again. He rubs his eyes with his middle fingers, and pushes his hair back with the palm of his hands. He puts his elbows on the desk and again stares into the screen. He does this for a full minute. Then, blinking heavily, he decides to have a shower. He is about to shut down the computer when he is signalled that a call is waiting. The trill that signals the call shocks him, and he stares at the little icon in the corner of the screen that indicates the call.

"Who's this, then, Curr?" he says. He looks to his feet, and then around the living room, but the cat is gone. He breathes deeply and, for a moment, speculates about the caller. Nervously, he double clicks the little icon. A box comes up on the screen, black on the perimeter, bordering a wash of blank grey. There is a caller, but not a face. No sign appears on the screen to identify the caller.

"Hello?" he says with uncertainty.

"It's your neighbour," the caller says. It is Fox, Roadkill's landlord. "I have some work for you."

He is the last person in the world with whom Roadkill wishes to speak. He cringes at the sound of Fox's voice.

"It's my day off," he protests weakly.

"I'll make it worth your while," Fox says. His effort to tempt is untimely
and unwelcome. Roadkill hesitates before answering. Finally, giving in, he asks, “Are you at home?”

“Yeah.”

“Come over in ten minutes.”

“Right.”

Roadkill turns off the computer, goes to his bedroom, and puts on jeans and a tee shirt. He has done some work for Fox in the past—all innocent enough, he thought—which had lowered his rent immensely. He could sense a further reduction. But, at what cost? He has a keen sense of what Fox does for a living, especially given the recent circumstance of the CSIS investigation. Now, he thinks, is not the time for him to be making deals with the landlord.

There is a knock at the door. Roadkill goes to the door and opens it. “Morning,” he says as remotely as he can, wanting to immediately discourage Fox.

“How ya doing, Ron?” Fox says amiably, in a tone Roadkill reserves almost exclusively for his cat.

“Come in, have a seat, but you’ll have to make it quick. I’ve got to get ready for work,” he lies.

“No problem,” Fox says, smiling, as if they are pals. Roadkill turns from him and frowns, and his stomach echoes his misgivings with a sickly gurgle. They go to the living room and sit, Roadkill by the computer and Fox in an armchair.

“What can I do for you?” Roadkill asks, straddling the office chair backwards, his hands holding the sides of the backrest.

Fox leans forward. “Ron, I need some information.” His voice is friendly and confiding. “It’s rather delicate, but like I said, I’ll make it worth your while. Ron, it’s my job to know where my clients are, and right now, I know that CSIS has a client of ours.”

Roadkill looks at Fox carefully. This is the first time that Fox has crossed this particular line, and it scares him. He had long feared this type of accommodation.
He gives the sides on the backrest a nervous squeeze, and straightens in the chair. He speaks slowly, choosing his words carefully. "I think you know, Mister Fox, that I'd be betraying a confidence if I gave you that information. If we have who you're looking for, and anything... were to happen to this person, and I was deemed to be... responsible in some way, I'd probably go to jail for a long, long time. That is, if a leak were traced back to me. You understand that, don't you?"

"I give you my word that nothing like that is going to happen," Fox says, waving his hands as if ready to give the Boy Scout pledge, if needed.

"Then," Roadkill says, tilting his head in a show of exasperation, "what do you intend on doing with this information?"

"Nothing at all. I just need to know."

"That's not a satisfactory answer," Roadkill says, shaking his head.

"Risk it."

"Why should I?"

"Risk it, and you'll never pay rent again."

Roadkill narrows his eyes and looks straight at Fox. "If I risked it," he says, softly and slowly, "this house would be mine."

Fox too narrows his eyes, as if conceding that the bargaining has begun.

"You're asking a lot," he says.

"You're asking a lot."

Fox stares at Roadkill, then seems to make a decision. "I'm sorry, I assumed you were more than a hack." He stands, as if to leave.

Roadkill scowls in anger, but says nothing.

"I mean," Fox continues, looking down at Roadkill, "I thought you were pretty high up. Guess I was wrong about that."

The insults hit home. "Fine," Roadkill says, his voice heavy with sarcasm. He stands. "I'll tell you what, Fred. You want to know the whereabouts of your client, even though CSIS hardly ever takes anyone into custody, and the person you're looking for is with the RCMP, if he's in custody at all? Fine. That's easy. I'll tell you."
“Great!” Fox says, angry now, unable to stand Roadkill’s sarcasm any further. “But do not tell me he’s at CSIS North.”

“What?” Roadkill is shocked. “What are you saying? How would you know whether or not anyone’s at CSIS North?”

“I know. He was escorted out of there yesterday morning. I want to know where he went.”

“You know more than I do, then,” Roadkill exclaims, waving his hands.

“But you can find out where he went.”

“If you know that he’s gone, whoever he is, then maybe you know what else happened at CSIS North this week.”

“No. What happened?”

“You don’t know? I don’t believe that!”

Fox gives him a perplexed look. “What?”

“You really don’t know?”

“We just started our, um, investigation… into our client’s whereabouts recently. It wasn’t until yesterday morning, in fact, that we had someone watching CSIS North, and that’s when we saw the man we’re looking for leave in a van.”

“We?”

“Really, CSIS was supposed to keep us informed about activities concerning our clients,” Fox says, ignoring Roadkill’s inquiry.

“What made you think CSIS had him?”

“You had an eye on another client. Bleath. The one that died.”

Roadkill’s eyes wander off for a moment, remembering, adding things up.

“You remember that, don’t you?” Fox says.

Roadkill’s face flushes. He had made an admission. He looks back at Fox.

“I think you’d better leave.”

But Fox is persistent. “You can find out where he’s been taken.”

“No.”

“I want to hire you, that’s all. I want information that you can get for me. In return, I think…I think this house could be yours.”
"The house now, huh. The whole house?"

"We’d be able to keep an eye on each other, wouldn’t we?"

"I think it’d be a bad coincidence, being neighbours, don’t you?"

"You’re going to do this thing for me, Ron. Roadkill."

Roadkill burns with anger. He turns to face the window.

"Come on, Ron," Fox says, his voice friendly again. "Let’s not do this, okay? This isn’t as bad as you think it is, really."

Roadkill looks out the window, out to the street, to the big houses that line it. He loves it here, in Forest Hill. His eyes focus on the leaves of the tall tree that shade the living room on summer afternoons. He thinks he has never seen the leaves appear such a magnificent green. In a soft voice, he says, "I could probably get you a list of safe houses." He turns to face Fox. "But that doesn’t mean you’ll find your client if, in fact, we even have him."

"Just give me something to work with," Fox says. The deal, he thinks, has been struck.

"You know," Roadkill says, his voice still quiet, "I know damn well what you’re after, and I also know that you’re a rotten shot. I’ve got friends out there…"

"Fine. I’ll leave. That wasn’t me or anyone I know."

"Then you did know about it."

"No, I did not. You have my word on that. I don’t know anything about any shots. And, as far as the information goes, like I say, it’s just for our records."

"Yeah, well, that’s bullshit."

"Are you going to give me the information or not."

"Not."

"You’ll get a house out of this. And a nice one at that."

"Yeah, well, bullshit." Roadkill turns to his computer and switches it on.

"You can’t ask me to do that." The fans from the computer begin to hum.

Fox’s voice takes on a threatening tone. "Maybe you can’t deliver anyway. Maybe your lease is coming due."
"I'm not talking to you anymore," Roadkill says, looking in the blank computer screen. Fox's reflection over his shoulder dissipates as the monitor begins to illuminate. Fox turns, and leaves the premises. The door shuts behind him, and Roadkill slumps in his chair. "Curr?" he whispers.

Fox crosses to his house and enters, walking immediately to his den and his computer console. He switches on the computer, and within five minutes he has Roadkill's living room on screen, a parabolic view from a tiny pinhole camera in Roadkill's ceiling. "Insecure little fuck," he mutters, "don't look for it yet." He manipulates the image so that it is focussed on Roadkill's monitor.

Chapter 31

Roadkill watches from his window as Fox backs out of the driveway and drives off. He walks to his living room, and sits down in front of the monitor. He wonders which location they chose. He looks around and sees his cat sitting among potted plants at a side window. The cat looks at him, uninterested, its tongue hanging out.
Chapter 32

Dean sits in an armchair by the second floor picture window that looks out and over the valley below. The sun shines in on Leif’s face, as he sits on a long couch opposite Dean. Dean looks at Leif, who is squinting at him in the sunlight. Leif leans against an armrest, a blue blanket over his shoulders.

They listen to the distant sound of the van engine turning over and then the muted progress of the vehicle as it accelerates away into a hushed silence.

“I can’t sit here,” Leif declares, shielding his eyes from the glare of the sun with the palm of his hand. He gets up and sits down in an armchair out of the sun. He pulls the blanket around his body.

“You should sleep,” Dean says while absentmindedly scratching the bandage by his right ear. “Wait.” He turns and lowers the blinds, cutting off the sun. “How’s that?”

Leif says nothing, but gets up again and goes back to the couch. He lies down, his back turned to Dean, and pulls a pillow from the corner of the couch to a comfortable position under his head.

Dean looks at him, wishing he could do the same. Instead, he picks up a magazine—National Geographic—from a nearby coffee table. He looks at his watch, and sighs loudly before turning the pages of the magazine. He is grateful that there are lots of pictures.

Bill and Alana stop where the paved road to Orangeville intersects the dirt road that leads to the safe house driveway. Alana points to a sign across the road, where the dirt road continues at a steep incline.

“Cistercian Monastery. I saw that coming in. You see it?”

“No,” Bill replies. “I turn here?” he asks, looking left and right for oncoming traffic.
“Yeah, right, then straight through for about ten minutes, by the look of it.”

They drive down the road, west past a golf and ski resort and a plethora of teashops and art galleries.

“Quaint, isn’t it,” Alana notes. “Quite pretty. I agree with Dean. I could see myself living here, too.”

Bill, tired and cranky, does not notice the scenery much, and they drive in silence the rest of the way to Orangeville.

They return to the safe house an hour later with five bags of groceries, a case of beer, and a case of pop. Dean unpacks the groceries, heats up the kettle, and drops a couple of tea bags into a teapot. Alana and Bill, both exhausted, sit at the kitchen table and watch Dean with weary detachment.

“Where’s Leif?” Bill asks, looking around vaguely. He hadn’t noticed Leif’s absence. Dean hadn’t looked concerned.

“Upstairs, sleeping,” Dean says, watching the steam rise from the water in the kettle. “He was dead tired, and acting fussy about sleeping on the couch. I kept an eye on him, don’t worry. He couldn’t leave without me seeing.”

The water begins to boil. Dean takes the kettle off the stove and pours the steaming water into the teapot. “You didn’t pick up some cream, did you, by chance?”

“You unpacked,” Alana says. “Did you see any?”

“Sure would have liked some cream,” Dean says.

“It wasn’t on the list.”

Dean looks at the two officers, irritated. “Why don’t you two grab some sleep? I’ll keep an eye on things. There’s two empty beds up there, and lots of hot water if you want a shower. There’s soap and shampoo too, luckily. We didn’t check that before you left.”

Alana and Bill continue to sit, too tired to move. Finally, Alana stands and stretches. “I’m not waiting for someone to tell me again,” she says. “I got dibs on
the shower.”

“That’s fine by me,” Bill says. “Wake me up about three, will you, Dean?”

“Will do.”

Fifteen minutes later, Bill is in bed. He looks to the bedroom door, which is partially open, and listens to the sounds of Alana’s shower. He should be more intrigued, he realizes, but isn’t. He drifts off to sleep. And then, he dreams.

He sits in a boat, a small rowboat that drifts down the shallow, narrow stream in the valley. Bill holds his favourite fishing rod, and watches for twitches at the end of the rod as it hangs over the edge of the boat. He is in the middle seat, facing the stern and the sunset, with oars lying lazily at his sides along the length of the boat. The boat jams at times against the shallow bottom or against the crags of earth and rock which poke out at odd angles along the edge of the stream, but mostly, it flows freely, slowly and lazily, as if in harmonious sync with the stream’s current. It is a beautiful summer’s evening, warm and still. He faces the sun, watches it with pleasure at it sets on the horizon amidst an orange-pink arc of clouds. The rays from the sun spread widely through holes in the massive arc and reach across the expanse of the remaining dark blue sky in radiating beams of light, highlighting angel hair wisps of cloud high above.

He looks down for a moment. He wears a white shirt under a crumpled tan jacket, grey pants, and rubber boots that come up to his knee. He puts a hand in his jacket pocket, and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. He looks at them, curiously, and replaces them in the pocket. He absently wonders whom the outfit belongs to. He looks around. It is getting dark. Too dark.

The sounds of the water trickling down the stream are suddenly amplified, as if a great waterfall nears. And then...he begins to feel alone and anxious in the growing darkness. He turns, and sees that the boat is approaching the black mouth of the forest, and he gasps. The boat continues onward, and the mouth opens, and Bill looks into it, trying to find reason amidst what must be irrational fear. But
there is no time for that, the fear is too real, too immediate, and he hurriedly looks for the oars, panicking, but the oars are gone. The sounds of the water escalate, and he turns again, and sees the mouth growing large, gaping in the darkness. Frantic, he rolls over the edge of the boat and into the stream.

He feels the cold wetness first, shocking his skin like a thousand needles, and he flails at the water helplessly, searching desperately for something to hold onto. He floats, his toes scraping the bottom of the stream, then collides chin first into a rock jutting from the stream’s edge. He is dazed for a moment, his face under water, his chin torn and bloody. With his face down, he opens his eyes, and it seems calm at the bottom. For a moment, a feeling of serenity washes over him.

He sees a crayfish. He watches as it crawls slowly on its spindly legs to a crevice under the rock, unmindful of the drama above. It disappears into the crevice, and Bill watches for a moment longer, mourning his sudden feeling of solitude and wishing for the crayfish to return.

He grabs the crevice, then wraps his hands around the rock and pushes his face up. He does not find air and, flailing again, he pulls his body towards the rock and pushes upwards again, searching for the night air. He finds it and gasps the oxygen into his lungs in huge gulps. The sting of the water has eased, and he settles there, still holding the rock, and he looks for the boat, but it is gone, gone into the black mouth at the edge of the forest. He fears to move, and hangs onto the rock tightly, afraid to let go, afraid of being carried away by the current into that mouth, that mouth that hungers, that eats small boats and whatever else drifts its way.

Bill wakes, sweating, disoriented, and he looks around in the dim light for a reference point to help him find his bearing. He focuses on the ceiling, and tries to imagine a rocket ship or a Texas longhorn, just as he had envisioned in the stained ceiling of the Avocado Room, but he sees nothing, nothing in the smooth surface of the plastered ceiling that might give him a sense of direction, of familiarity. He lies still for a moment, waiting with an anxious faith that the feelings of isolation
and abandonment will pass. Slowly, he begins to feel secure, and it feels safe to close his eyes, and he does.

He sleeps again, and does not remember the dream when Alana touches his shoulder and wakes him. He opens his eyes, and a new dream begins. He is in heaven, with the girl from the movie, her lips thick with moisture and sweet to the taste, and he wants to kiss those lips. He reaches for her, trying to touch her hair, wanting to nuzzle her neck that smells of vanilla and almond.

She raises her head a touch as his hand nears. His hand stops as his awareness begins.

"It's me," she says.

"Oh," he whispers, realizing his mistake.

"You want to get up?" she asks, smiling.

"Yeah….what time is it?"

"Afternoon. Dean made food. I can hardly wait."

An image of Dean hovering over the stove emerges, and the sensual fantasy of the girl in the movie drifts further away. "You sleep?" he asks, rubbing his eyes, regretting the loss.

"Yeah. I could sleep again. But yeah, I slept. You can have the shower. Lots of hot water."

"Right. Sounds like a good idea." He lies there, still, waiting for Alana to leave. He is naked beneath the blankets.

"Come down when you're ready to eat," she says, walking to the bedroom doorway.

"I will. Oh, how's our prisoner?"

"Still sleeping."

"Oh," he says. "That lad's always sleeping," he adds, trying to sound genial.

"He has little else to do. Besides, if I were him, I'd sleep a lot too. Wouldn't you?" She leaves.

Bill thinks it over. Yes, he would sleep a lot too, if he were Leif. He leans
back on the pillow and looks at the ceiling. He closes his eyes to avoid the nothingness above. He inhales slowly in shallow breaths, trying to recapture the passionate flavour of his immediate awakening, but the sensation is gone, lost in the current.

Chapter 33

By the next morning, after a series of turns taking naps and sleeps, the group—all except Dean, who has agreed to take the night shift for the first few days—are pretty much on the same sleeping schedule. It is 8:30 a.m., and it has again rained through the night. The rain has ended, but fog rolls in and settles throughout the valley under a sheet of white-grey cloud. Alana stands at the big picture window in the living room, holding a cup of coffee, and watches the fog as it wisps down the hill and over the stream. She looks at her watch, and then up to the ceiling.

"Bill!" she yells.

"Coming," Bill yells back from the upstairs bathroom. He walks briskly down the stairs, clean-shaven and looking fresher than he has in days. Alana notices the change.

"Do we all look that good?" she asks.

Bill laughs. "Hey, you’d think I was going to a wedding or something. Not mine, of course." He grabs his jeans at his rear and pulls, and makes a face—scowling in mock discomfort—to accompany the gesture. "Could use some fresh underwear, though. How about you guys?" He looks in turn to Dean, nursing a cup of coffee and reading an old issue of Maclean’s at the kitchen table, and then to Leif, slumping in an armchair and playing with the television remote control.
Dean says “Yeah,” without enthusiasm, while Leif appears not to have heard Bill at all. Alana, rested and bubbly, answers for them both.

“Fresh underwear for all!” she announces. “Come on Bill, let’s go.”

“Dean, why don’t you take Leif out for a walk or something,” Bill says.

“What do you say, Leif, want to get some fresh air?”

“Sure,” Leif mumbles. He continues to play with the remote control, grazing through the television channels but settling on nothing. Dean looks over at Leif, then gets up and accompanies the two officers to the door, and then outside.

“What’s up?” Bill asks him.

“I don’t like the way this guy’s acting,” Dean says. “He’s making me nervous. He’s depressed, or something.”

“No kidding,” Bill responds sarcastically.

“Do you want me to stay?” Alana asks.

Bill is disappointed by Alana’s offer. “We’ll just be a couple of hours, Dean,” he says. “I need extra hands to carry all the stuff we’ll be bringing back.”

“Bill, maybe I ought to stay,” Alana says.

Bill, obviously exasperated, gives Dean a look. Dean gets the message.

“It’s okay. Yeah, it’s only a couple of hours, we’ll be okay.”

“Really?” Alana asks. “I could stay. It doesn’t make any difference to me.”

“No, go.” Dean insists. “But it’s my turn next time, okay?”

“You bet,” Bill says, turning towards the van.

Alana hesitates a moment longer. “Don’t go outside if you’re not comfortable. Then, she adds, “You don’t think Leif would run away do you? Hold on.” She turns and walks to the van. Bill is unlocking the driver’s side door.

“You don’t think he’d try to run, do you?” Alana asks him.

“He didn’t yesterday.”

“Yesterday he was too tired. Today he’s not. I’m staying, Bill.”

Bill looks over to Dean, still standing in the half-open front door. They’re both right, and he knows it. He looks at Alana, standing in front of him, looking
him in the eye, expecting a response. A latent guilt about his behaviour begins to niggle at his conscience.

"You're right," he says, giving in with a sigh. "Come on." He leads Alana over to the door. "You're right," he repeats to Dean. "I'm acting like this is a holiday. Sorry about that."

"That's okay," Dean says, feeling a bit guilty himself.

"I just wasn't thinking. I'll go alone. We'll take turns. That okay with you?" he addresses Alana.

"Makes sense to me. Let's do something fun tonight, okay guys? You go to bed now, if you're tired, Dean, and I'll hold down the fort while Bill's gone. Then, we'll all be awake in the evening. Maybe we can watch a movie or something. Or go fishing down in the creek—I saw some rods and stuff in the basement. See if we can catch some trout, have it for breakfast."

"Sounds great," Dean says.

"Well, I guess I'm buying the underwear by myself, then," Bill says. "You better give me the list."

Alana takes the list out of her pocket. "Wait a minute, she says, "let me add some things." She finds a pencil in another pocket and begins crossing out and adding things to the list. "Forget the underwear for me, Bill," she says as she writes, "and I'll get my own clothes when it's my turn. Maybe when you come back. But get me some sweat pants, stuff like that. I'm writing down some sizes. Just something to make me presentable, okay?"

"Sure." Bill takes the list. "See you in a bit."

"Yep," Alana says.

"See you," says Dean.

The two go back in the house, and Bill walks to the van.

He pulls out of the driveway and onto the long dirt road, happy that he had done the right thing, and surprisingly happy that he is alone, alone and independent, without any pressing responsibilities. The road lowers into the valley fog and bottoms out, and he passes the stream to his right as it disappears into the
forest. He remembers the dream, vaguely, but the mouth of the forest, its blackness gone in the silky luminescence of the morning fog, does not seem threatening to him now. It appears well lit, with a plethora of leaves, shrubs and branches that surround the entranceway. He looks back to the road which, except for a few potholes, appears on the surface as a mud-brown slate. The gravel or stone that had once been on it has long since been compacted into the surface of the road or pushed aside to the shoulder.

Bill steers the van around the small puddles of water that mark the potholes. He brakes the van at the stop where the dirt road intersects the main paved road that leads west to Orangeville. He sees the sign that marks the continuation of the dirt road. Cistercian Monastery, it says. On impulse, he drives across the paved road and continues, following the dirt road up its sharp incline. He reaches the peak of the hill, and looks for the monastery. It is not far. He sees it on his right, a building at the centre of a softly rounded hill, hallowed by white fog. The road descends again into the fog, but he finds the driveway, and turns. The monastery is out of sight now, lost in the fog, and Bill follows the wet black asphalt driveway, moving forward with a growing sense of anxiety and intrusion as the van climbs. He keeps going, but slows as the front of the building emerges from the fog. He slows to a stop. Just ahead, a bit to his right, is a wooden cross, a large ornate structure that seems to loom from nothing, as if it is floating. Bill looks at it, and his anxiety grows. He eases off the brake, and inches the van slowly forward. Closer now, he sees an inscription at the bottom of the cross, and he is tempted to get out and read it. Instead, he pulls the car ahead, looking for a spot to turn around. His curiosity has waned.

He sees an empty parking lot on his left, the asphalt lined with white stripes to mark parking spaces. He enters, and turns the van around, back to the driveway. A figure emerges from the fog. He sees it in his periphery and stops. There, to his left, standing in front of glass entranceway doors, looking at him, is a white-haired man in a black robe. The man looks at Bill with his head tilted in curiosity. Bill nods a tentative greeting, wondering for a moment if the greeting is
universally understood. The man nods back, his head still tilted. Bill takes his foot off the brake pedal and advances the van to the right, away from the monastery, and begins the descent down the hill. He looks in the rear-view mirror for a moment, but the man has faded in the fog. As Bill prepares himself for a sudden emergence of the dirt road out of the fog, he pictures the man in his mind. The scene had no colour. Black, grey. White hair, and wisps of white fog. Glass doors reflecting nothing.

The dirt road appears, and Bill stops the van. He slips the gears into park, and he sits, thinking. It was all rather...monochromatic, like an old movie, he thinks. Details were lost. But, there were details, tempered by the fog, and by the lack of definitive colour. The man had something in his hand, a staff, it appeared, like shepherds carried in Bible stories. How curious, he thinks. A staff? No, he remembers, picturing the scene, it wasn’t a staff. It was a gardening hoe, that’s what it was. Gardening in the fog? Why not?

He slips the gearshift back into drive and pulls the van out onto the dirt road. The image dissipates as he concentrates on navigating through the fog.

Later, out on the paved road, and heading west towards Orangeville, he pulls the shopping list out from his pocket. He glances down at the list as he drives. Then, he begins to think of Alana, and he imagines what he might buy for her. He looks up and notes that the day is beginning to clear.
Chapter 34

Two men scurry through a Hockley Valley hillside. One wears a suit, the other is dressed casually, in jeans and a light brown spring jacket, and holds a large black suitcase. The man in the suit trips on a tree root hidden under a forest underlay of growth.

"Oof," he says as his nose hits the earth. The other man stops and looks back. "Okay?" he asks. The man in the suit rises to his knees, his hands to his nose. The other man walks over to him. "Let's see," he says.

The man more appropriately dressed for the hike through the woods is named Tim Wilson. He is a solidly built man of medium height. His hair is cut short to his head, exposing an ugly jagged scar lined with stitch marks on his left ear that runs from the lobe, through the ear hole, to the top tip of his ear. There is a dent in his forehead, about the size of a quarter, just above his left eye. And, his complexion is pockmarked, adding to the overall effect.

The man in the suit is Frederick Fox. Wilson had been recommended to him, and his services were expensive. When Fox first saw Wilson's face, his first thought was that Wilson was careless, that he couldn't take care of himself. He was tempted to tell Wilson that the job had been cancelled. Wilson's performance at CSIS North confirmed Fox's evaluation.

Fox wasn't near CSIS North when the shots were fired. But Wilson was, and Wilson was, apparently, a terrible shot. Fox called up the man who had recommended Wilson, and was not reassured. The contact would comment no more about Wilson other than to insist that Wilson was a professional. "If you want another man," the contact said, "it'll be a few days, with no refund on the initial deposit." Fox was desperate enough to give Wilson a second try. Assassination is not Fox's forte.

Still, Fox himself had shown some grit by returning to CSIS North the next
morning after the shooting. Parked across the road from CSIS among the used car section of the Chevrolet dealership, he happened to snap off a photo of Fields being escorted by CSIS officers out to a waiting van. Fox attempted to follow the van, but lost it in the heavy morning traffic heading north on Highway 27.

His face scrunched in pain and surprise, Fox tentatively removes his hands from his face. His nose and left cheek is scratched and muddy. “You’ll live,” Wilson says. “Try to think up a plausible alibi for that, you might need it. Let’s go. It’s just over the top of the hill.”

Wilson begins walking again. Fox follows, holding his nose. They cross the hill’s peak and descend slightly. Then, Wilson slows, stops, and crouches to the ground. Fox crouches beside him among the thick growth of forest and shrubs. Above, the sun is working its way up the sky. Below, the fog in the valley is resisting the sun and swells about in lazy cloudy patches.

“That must be the place,” Wilson says. He extracts a small pair of binoculars from his suitcase and looks down at the house. “I just saw some movement. Upper window.”

“There’s no van,” Fox says. “I’ve got to see that first.”

“You wouldn’t recognize anyone in the house, huh?”

“Let me see the glasses.”

Fox looks through the binoculars, and waits for someone to come into view. He sees, on this side of the house, the front door and four windows, two up and two down. Only one window, upstairs, does not have curtains drawn in front of it.

“That’s probably a bedroom,” Fox says. “That upper one. It might be a while before we see movement there again, and I’m not certain that I’ll be able to identify anyone with the light and shadow on this side of the house. We’ll have to wait a while for the van.”

“Maybe someone will go for a walk,” Wilson suggests.

They wait, crouched down among the hill’s growth, both wondering how long this will take, but neither saying anything about it. Fox makes a comment
about the lack of mosquitoes, but Wilson ignores him. Wilson takes a chocolate bar out of his jacket pocket, unwraps it, and begins to eat. He eats quickly, and crumples the candy wrapper into his pocket. He picks his teeth afterwards with a twig. Both men perspire heavily.

Finally, they hear the sound of a car approaching, and a van pulls into the driveway. Fox watches through the binoculars as Bill Butler gets out of the van. Wilson watches quietly, and starts chewing on the twig he had used to pick his teeth.

“That’s our man,” Fox declares.

“You sure?” Wilson asks. “Never seen him before.” A woman comes out from the house to meet the man, and together they carry packages and groceries into the house. “Haven’t seen her, either,”

“Well, our man is inside. This is the target.”

Wilson turns to Fox. “How do you know who these people are?”

“I’ve got pictures.”

“You’ve got pictures? And you didn’t show me?”

“I just got them yesterday.”

“You did, huh?” Wilson says doubtfully.

“You’ve got a picture of the target, that’s all you needed.”

“This job’s dangerous enough, mister, without you making it tougher,” Wilson exclaims.

“I’m telling you, I just got them yesterday!” Fox protests.

Wilson turns, ignoring Fox, and begins assembling parts from out of the suitcase. “This is a rocket launcher,” he says, his voice instructive.

Professional cool, Fox notes, fascinated.

“It’ll blow out the foundation,” Wilson continues, “and burn the house to a cinder. We don’t want to be around when it explodes, so…”

“I’ve got to know that the job’s been done,” Fox insists.

“You’ll know. No one in the house, or in the driveway, for that matter, is going to survive this. And the whole county’s going to hear it.”
“It’s that nasty, huh?”

Wilson ignores the comment. “We can get them while they’re unpacking all that stuff they’re carrying in. But we don’t want to be too close when it goes off. You can come back for a look-see, if you want.”

“We could storm the place,” Fox says, chewing his nails in excitement.

Wilson stops his assembly and looks at Fox, dumbfounded. His voice loses its cool. “Are you nuts? We’re too close as it is. Another step closer and they’ll be waiting at the door with a cake for us. You may know who we’re dealing with, you’ve got the damn pictures, and probably know God knows what else about them. But I don’t know who’s in there. I like to think I’m a professional. You don’t storm a place without doing your homework. This was a rush job, like that last one, and these people are big time opponents. You want to storm, then you go ahead and I’ll hold your coat. Man, you send me to their headquarters and the only viable stakeout position is a car lot across the road. I drive to the back of the lot, happen to see the target, happen to get a couple of shots off without being seen…”

“It was an inferior rifle.” Fox had supplied the weapon.

“You got that right. I had intended to replace it. Chance intervened. Fortunately, I found my arms contact last night. Maybe you should have hired a Canadian.”

Fox does not reply. He frowns, then begins chewing his nails again. He looks at Wilson, who has returned his attention to assembling the rocket launcher. “So, how does this work?” Fox asks.

“I’m going to aim it right next to the heat pump, right at the corner of the house there. It’s an oil furnace, you can see the oil pipe right there near the pump. I’ll put it into the concrete right there by the pipe. The fire department might call it an accident, if that matters to you. The rocket is quiet, and the impact surprisingly quiet. You’ll see.” He finishes assembling the launcher. “So,” he says, putting the launcher on his shoulder and aiming the rocket, “I’ll fire, and then we pack up quietly, and go back to the car. We drive a bit, and then press the
button on a remote in my pocket. You'll hear the explosion, but we won't slow
down to enjoy it. We keep driving, nice and relaxed like, right back to Metro.
You find out on your own whether or not the job was complete. That's all you get
on this short notice. And you pay me, regardless."

"That's it, then?"

"The rocket's programmed to the remote. You give me the go-ahead, and
the rocket's away. After that, if you have a change of heart, I'll give you the
remote. I'll even destroy it for you. We're losing time talking, you know. I've
got the target nicely lined up. Just say the word."

Fox hesitates for only a second. "Fire the damn thing."

The man takes careful aim, adjusts the sights, and aims again.

"I thought you said you were ready," Fox whines, unable to bear the quiet
tension.

"Anyone at the window?" Wilson asks.

Fox looks through the binoculars. "All clear," he says, and the rocket is
away in an instant, startling him, and he falls over, watching the rocket's trail to
the house as he falls. He gets back up to his knees and looks through the
binoculars. The rocket had lodged with a barely audible thud into the concrete
foundation. He looks behind. "Will anyone see the smoke?" he asks. Already
Wilson has dismantled the rocket launcher and is packing it into the suitcase. He
too looks behind.

"Looks like fog to me," he says. "Don't worry, they didn't hear that.
Let's go." He leads the way back through the forest, methodically, like a predator.
Fox watches the path for stumps and rocks while studying the man ahead as they
hike, pleased that he had recruited a pro. The pro looks back and stops.

"What's the matter?" Fox asks.

Wilson puts his hand in his jacket. "Here," he says. He takes out a square
orange cloth. "Wipe your face. You look like shit. In fact, you're starting to look
a bit like me. Why'd you want to do all this, anyway?"

"What do you mean?" Fox asks as he wipes his face with the orange cloth.
"Kill this guy."

"Oh. Latent memory. Here." Fox hands the cloth back to Wilson.

"Keep it," Wilson says. He watches as Fox spits on the cloth and begins wiping his face again. "Latent memory, huh?"

"Something like that."

Chapter 35

Alana descends the stairs wearing her new matching sweatpants and top, and clutching her jacket. "Who's for a walk?" she asks. "I wanna go outside. Let's go fishing Bill, what do you say?"

Bill is sitting on the couch beside Leif. They are watching television, but Bill, who still has his jacket on, welcomes the diversion. He looks over to the kitchen where Dean is busy unpacking and inspecting Bill’s purchases. Bill turns to Leif. "Why don't you come with us, Leif? Fresh air and all that. Make you feel better."

Leif glances to the picture window. "Sure," he replies softly. Feeling increasingly isolated and cabin-bound, he cannot refuse the distraction. He had been glancing out the window all through the morning, intrigued by the valley below. He had even stood at the window for minutes at a time, absorbed by the scene, feeling that it somehow contained a suggestion of temporary sanctuary from the events of the past week. He rises from his chair, as if in a dream, and walks to the window.

"Well," Alana says, standing by the basement stairwell. "Let's go!"

Alana's shout startles Leif, and he turns to see her motioning him to follow. Bill turns off the television and follows Leif to the stairs. "Hold down the
fort, Dean,” he yells to the kitchen.

“Sure,” Dean responds. He looks in from the kitchen. “You’re not going far, right?”

“Just down to the stream,” Alana answers from the top of the stairs. Leif and Bill follow her down the stairs and out the sliding glass basement door. They follow her down the granite steps and over the matching patio to the wilderness beyond. They walk in single file, Leif between them, over the bumps of earth, rock, and wild growth of grass and weeds that take over the landscape beyond the patio. As they approach the stream and the forest beyond, the wonderful trickles and swirls of the water as it flows through the valley plays a friendly and inviting tune.

They walk along the water’s edge to just short of where it bends sharply towards the forest. Bill looks up at the mouth of the forest, curious about it, but only vaguely remembering the dream. He remembers looking at the mouth of the forest earlier that morning, from the road. It had been devoid of sound, then.

He walks to the edge of the stream and watches the water as it nips at the tips of his shoes. He imagines the stream as it ambles through the valley, visiting with property owners here and there, but otherwise minding its own way, unwavering in reaching its ultimate destiny. Bill studies the mouth of the forest, and a smile breaks across his face.

“You like it here, huh?” Alana yells amiably from upstream. Bill turns. She is following Leif as he crosses the stream on rocks protruding from the water. She had asked Leif the question.

“It’s nice,” Leif replies, not looking back, concentrating on his footing as he bounces from this rock to that with a childish expression of wonder and pleasure on his face. His foot slips on a last rock, and slides into the water.

“Oh, no,” Alana says in sympathy. She catches up to him and grabs onto his arm. For a moment it looks like they’re both going to tumble into the stream together, but Leif manages to get his balance and pulls his foot from the water. The two step onto dry land on the other side.
“You’ve got a soaker there,” Alana says, looking at Leif’s wet shoe and pant leg. Leif shakes his leg and sits down on a nearby rock to take his shoe off.

Alana looks up at Bill, and bestows on him one of the loveliest smiles he has ever seen. She looks him in the eye too, for a lingering moment, as if sharing a pleasurable secret. His face flushes, and he smiles back, enchanted.

Chapter 36

Brother Adrian sits on the fallen log at the back of the forest and watches the puppies through the Bluenote Kennel’s chain link fence. There are only three puppies left and they are almost as big as their mother is. The runt is gone. Adrian decides that he will not ask about it.

He wears his hooded black habit with the hood, as usual, falling at his back. The only concession to the demands of the forest is his running shoes. He sits with his legs crossed at his ankles, his arms crossed at his chest. He notes a few burrs clinging to his habit by his calves. He moves to pull them off, then hesitates. It’s not necessary to preen, he thinks. Then, he pulls them off anyway, and tosses them behind the log. He thinks of entering the chapel, with evidence of his forest walk clinging to his habit. Would that be such a bad thing? Could a burr, or a few strands of grass, not be as beautiful as a jewel? Values fluctuate according to accessibility.

His meditation wanders. Although most people are just starting their workdays, he has been awake since three a.m. He had prayed, and worked in the kitchen, and prayed again. As usual, each act was complemented by a meditation on whatever caught his fancy.

He saw the fog from the window of his room, and on impulse wanted to
experience it. He went out to the garden and, standing there in the path dividing it, thought that a bench would be useful. It would be a nice touch, a comfortable place to meditate. He imagined the materials available for just such a project in the tool shed, the leftover odds and ends from various small construction projects. There were some cedar boards behind the old lawn mower, and a brown bag of galvanized nails left over from the little bridge project in the forest. Yes, he thought, he could do that, he could build a bench. Then, he could sit amidst the flowers, and meditate, his presence and thoughts private, cloistered by the morning fog.

He looked around in wonder at the silken cloud that seemed to halo the hillside, and noted the wooden cross majestically reaching to heaven from the wisps of fog at its feet. He gazed down to the woods, hidden in fog except for its leafy canopy. He stood there, in the garden at the top of the hill, his spirituality stimulated by the outdoor retreat. Then, he looked up to heaven, and everything seemed clear for a moment, and his heart felt like it would burst from understanding.

Inspired, he stepped effortlessly into another meditation. He thought of the log. God’s bench, he mused, and he decided on a walk through the forest, through the trail that he had forged. He turned towards the forest and tripped, falling to his knees. He looked behind, and there, at his feet, was a hoe that he had left outside the day before. He stood, and brushed himself off. Then, he picked up the tool and inspected it. It needed repair. He momentarily felt shame at having left the tool outside, out of order. But it was a reminder, he decided, to repair the tool. It was old, much used and abused. The wood handle had greyed and dried and was in need of a sanding. He carried it to the front door of the monastery, continuing to inspect the handle as he walked. He had meant to take it to his room, to remind him. And then, at the monastery entranceway, just outside the glass doors, he paused, listening.

A sound was breaking through the fog, the soft sound of a motor vehicle. He looked down the driveway. Headlights broke through the fog, slowing, as the
vehicle neared. The man behind the wheel of the van looked at the cross, lingering for a moment. He advanced the van, turning it around in the parking lot. He stopped. He looked at Adrian, surprised, it seemed. Then, he nodded. Adrian nodded back. Somehow, he felt, the man wasn’t lost. The man had come to...to find something. To discover. A quick detour, initiated by curiosity, prompted by impulse—it was a pilgrimage, of sorts, Adrian thought, an experience on which to meditate. Others had preceded the man, and others would follow.

He meditated on the scene again, as he paused, as usual, at the small bridge over the stream. He looked upstream and watched the water as it approached and passed by under his feet, drawn by a barely perceived gravitational pull. He turned and watched the water flow away from under his feet, endlessly replenished.

He continued on to the kennel, not intending to stop when he reached it, intending only to pass it by, feeling uncharacteristically self-conscious about the owners of the kennel seeing him in his habit. It was an uncomfortable feeling, but he couldn’t deny it. Then, he saw the puppies, and he had to sit, if only briefly. He sat on the log, and watched the pups and their mother, all of whom made little fuss about his presence. His discomfort eased, and his mind drifted, and he thought again of the headlights emerging from the fog.

A growl emerges from the pen, waking Adrian from his meditations. He looks, and a puppy has become a dog, growling another dog into submission. That dog slinks away—Adrian hadn’t noticed what had started this—and lies in a corner. The angered dog drinks loudly from the trough of water, lapping in great gulps. The third dog looks up from his sleep to his two siblings, watches each in turn with a measure of sleepy curiosity, and then looks at Adrian. It yawns, puts its head back down on its front paws and closes its eyes. The mother lies on its side, barely stirring to acknowledge the confrontation.

All four dogs seem to be settling when the forest rocks with an angry roar, and they jump up to their feet in a simultaneous response. Adrian winces instinctively at the force of the blast and jumps to his feet, too. He stands and
looks around, sees nothing, but listens, his ears piqued for the echo of the blast as it bounces through the forest.

“What was that?” he hears, and he turns, and Mrs. Magoffin is standing in the pen, looking over and beyond him. The dogs gather at her feet, wagging their tails in nervous excitement.

“Construction?” he returns, shrugging his shoulders.

“Are you building?” she asks.

“Us? No.”

“Well, mercy!” she grunts.

“Do you think someone should be called?” he asks, tentatively. He doesn’t feel welcome. He feels responsible, somehow.

“Yeah,” she says, without enthusiasm. “Maybe.” She opens the door at the back of the pen and withdraws from the affair without further comment. Adrian wonders if she will call anyone.

The event cues his return to the monastery. He decides that, rather than continue the loop, he will double back, following the trail back to the little bridge. As he begins his return, he imagines the monastery cross, the fog that shrouded it whisked away in the blast’s reverberations.

Chapter 37

Alana looks over her shoulder, horrified, as pieces of the house, some falling quickly, others twirling and fluttering in the air, fall into the valley in which she lies.

She had been knocked flat on her face by the force of the blast. She rolls over, sits up on her elbows, and looks down her body. The sweats that Bill had
selected for her are covered by minute bits of dirt and debris. Bill! She looks over
to where she had last seen him, standing on the other side of the stream. There
had been a charmed moment between them. He had looked so contented, just
then, just before the explosion.

She doesn’t see him. She looks behind, towards the forest, and sees Leif
on his knees, his arms protectively covering his head. “Leif!” she says, and he
peeks out from under his arms. She watches him as his eyes meet hers, his
expression wide-eyed, and his mouth agape. He looks stunned, but otherwise
okay.

She looks up the hill. “Dean!” she whispers. The house is destroyed, its
frame collapsed on its foundation. What’s left of the roof is barely perceptible. It
had blown skyward, with flipped and mangled segments of plywood and loose
shingle falling in identifiable chunks onto the granite patio. The basement is filled
with much of the upper two floors. Black smoke rises from the entangled clutter,
twisting and turning upwards until it eventually dissipates into the mild breeze
above.

Alana looks back to Leif in time to see him looking into the mouth of the
forest, posturing as if in quest of sanctuary. He stands, and leans towards it.

“Don’t go,” Alana says, watching, knowing that he will go.
Leif pauses, and looks at her. “I have to,” he says, simply.

“No,” she says, quietly, desperately, but he does not react to her. He
begins to walk, eagerly, with a sense of purpose, into the mouth of the forest, and
Alana watches as he disappears, and then she remembers.

“Bill!” she yells, looking around. She stands, wobbly at first, and walks to
the edge of the stream. There, just downstream, she sees Bill, and she rushes to
save him.

He struggles to keep his face above the waterline. His nose is in the air,
and his eyes are closed, warding off the blood that gushes from a large cut on his
forehead. He clings onto a large rock that juts from the stream’s edge. His grip
appears tenuous, and his legs float limply in the water behind him. Alana steps into
the stream and walks with the current, the water’s force rushing against her leg to her thigh, pushing her forward. She reaches Bill, and gets behind him. He groans as she grabs his shoulders. She pulls to turn him over onto his back.

“Let go!” she yells, but still he clings. She slaps the side of his head. “Let go, Bill,” she yells.

Finally, he releases his grip on the jutting rock, and Alana, cradling his chest, turns her body with his. She plants her feet. The current rushes against her back, as she holds the big man, uncertain of what to do next. She waits a moment, preparing for the exertion to come. Then, her arms under his shoulders and her hands on his chest, she pulls his body around so that the two are looking upstream. She walks backward, with the current, her head beside his. Then, for a moment, the current pushes him into her body, and she feels like he will be pushed back and under, his body trapping hers on the bottom of the stream. She pulls her knees toward her body and struggles to find solid footing.

“Help me, Bill,” she says, her mouth next to his ear, but her request goes unheeded. She goes down, backwards, into the water, Bill’s weight above her. Submerged, she swallows a mouthful of water. She pushes herself up, her arms still circling Bill’s chest. Her head above water, she coughs, gasping for air, and water not swallowed spews from her mouth and nose. She pauses, breathing heavily. Then, her feet planted once again, she begins to pull him up to the bank of the stream, away from the house. She makes it to the water’s edge, and pauses for breath, leaning against the earthen bank with Bill lying across her.

“We have to… get into the forest,” she says, more to herself than to Bill, and she pulls him to a shallower place further along the embankment. There, she moves from under him and attempts to roll him ashore, first, moving his upper torso, then his legs, back and forth until he seems anchored on dry ground.

Panting heavily, she drags him across grass, rock, and bits of house, along the edge of the stream to the mouth of the forest. She pulls him into the forest, as deep as she can, until she is sure they can’t be seen. She stops pulling and falls back, Bill’s body on her legs, and she lies there gasping for breath, looking
upwards through the forest canopy to the sky. It is now blue above, she notices. Bright blue. She wonders how much time has gone by.

She watches as debris from the house floats on the stream’s surface to her right. She looks around for a sign of Leif, but he is gone. She looks ahead, over Bill’s body and past the trail of earth marked by their labourious passage from the stream, to the house. She looks for movement, and listens for sounds. Then, she pushes the zipper down on Bill’s jacket, and finds his weapon in its holster, low by his ribs. She unsnaps the leather cover, extracts the weapon, and checks to see if it appears functional. Satisfied, she places the weapon back in its holster.

Bill groans. She pushes out from under him, and comes around to look at his head. It is still bleeding profusely, sheeting his face in blood. She takes off her jacket, and then her sweatshirt. She wipes Bill’s head with the sweatshirt. The cut doesn’t appear to be as bad as she first thought, but he does need stitches.

“Bill?” she asks, pressing the sweatshirt against the cut. “Bill?” she repeats. She looks back out through the brush towards the remains of the house.

Bill opens his eyes, slowly, looking to place himself, and his eyes close again. He attempts this a number of times before his eyes begin to focus.

“Alana,” he whispers.

“It’s okay,” she says, holding the sweatshirt to his forehead. He looks to his side, and sees her. He looks down her body. She is wearing only her sweatpants—wet and dirty with grass and mud and blood—and a white brassiere. He smiles.

“If you…”

“Don’t talk,” she says. “Don’t push it, Bill.”

“Didn’t like…”

“Sh,” she says.

He chuckles at his own joke. He says, instead, “You look fabulous.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” she says.

“We should get married.”
"You’re delirious," she says, peeking through the brush again.

"I can’t feel my toes."

She looks at him. "Really?" she asks.

"No, wait," he says. He moves his body a bit. "Yeah, I can feel my toes."

Alana is relieved, and chastises him. "Don’t scare me like that!"

"So, we can get married after all," he says, and he begins to chuckle again.

"How’s my head? I’ve got a terrific headache."

"You’ll live, I guess. You should be in shock. You probably are."

"I’m all wet."

"You certainly are. Are you cold?"

Bill thinks about it for a moment. "No. I’m okay. You’re all wet, too."

"I know."

"Maybe I’m in heaven, huh?"

"Hardly."

"Where’d Leif go?"

"Off into the forest."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Did he look okay?"

"Yeah."

"Oh. Hm. Don’t blame him, really."

"I’m was sick of looking at him."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. I dunno."

"Maybe he’s nearby."

"Maybe. No, he looked pretty determined."

"What about Dean?"

"Still in the house, as far as I know."

"Anything we can do?"

"No. The house has been levelled."
“Let me see.”

He leans up and looks through the forest brush, squinting his eyes to get focussed. He lies down again, saying nothing.

“We’ll wait here until help comes,” Alana says. She looks at her watch.
“The whole county had to have heard that. We’ll move when we see some firemen or someone.”

Bill does not reply. He looks up, and sees a blue sky. He thinks about Dean. Not a bad guy at all, he thinks. He had been wearing the blue sweats Bill had bought him. They were a sky blue. Dean seemed comfortable in them, which had surprised Bill.

He looks at Alana, as she looks through the forest. Everything seems extra colourful, he thinks.

Chapter 38

Roadkill sits at his computer, not staring into the monitor, but out the window. He had connected to Cath again, and obsessively began running scanning programs, one after another, to check for file and hard drive errors. Now, as Cath continues with its internal housekeeping, Roadkill ruminates, thinking back to the time that he took the apartment.

He had not expected to be offered the apartment. He had looked at it, knowing that the rent exceeded his capabilities, but he wanted a sense of the future, of how things could be. He had never lived the good life before, and was impatient for it.

He grew up in a townhouse in the east of Metro in a place called
Scarborough. The unit he lived in was second in from a busy corner where his older brother, Brian, had been killed, when Ronald was only seven. Brian, a plump boy of seventeen with a sparse, adolescent attempt of a moustache on his upper lip, seemed to Ronald to be on the verge of becoming a man. Brian kept his youngest brother aptly protected from his other siblings, and well supplied with candy and other sundries too. Brian doted on Ronald, and Ronald thought of Brian as heroic and kind, and he loved him dearly. A police car, of all things, had hit Brian when he had suddenly emerged on the road from between two parked vans. Brian had been, witnesses had stated, absently digging into his pocket, as if looking for something. Two chocolate bars, Ronald’s favourite, had been found at the scene but, to Ronald’s disgust, the circumstance—a fat young man too busy looking for candy to notice an oncoming police car—became a neighbourhood legend. Ronald became involved in a few childhood scrapes afterwards in defence of Brian’s name, and was beaten up a few times for the effort.

The unit he lived in had been renovated on the outside but was dilapidated within, the exterior a ruse for the truth. He was the youngest of five children, four years younger than the next, and his parents had always seemed elderly compared to the parents of his too few school chums. His father, dead a year now, had lived to see seventy, and had retired from his job as a church custodian only six months before his death. His mother worked on and off at a carpet factory until she was in her mid-50’s, retiring to a life of whisky and water and paperback romance novels. She still lived in that row house, alone, and Ronald seldom called or visited.

When he was fourteen, he bought a used computer with money from a paper route. He put it on a desk in the bedroom he shared with Jake, who was eighteen at the time. Jake took an immediate interest in abusing the computer and Ronald had to fight his brother a few times to protect it, which he did with vigour and viciousness. He suffered a black eye on one occasion, and a broken nose on another, but finally, and to his delight, the brawling ended when Jake abruptly moved out six months after the computer had moved in. Ronald considered that to be a good omen.
His high school marks were barely good enough to get him into university, but there he excelled in computer studies, finishing first in his class. Job offers came flooding in, and the attention bolstered his confidence. An interview with the RCMP at a job fair intrigued him and, after further interviews and inquiries, he accepted an offer from the federal agency. Two years later, he accepted an offer from CSIS. It paid only marginally more money than the RCMP, and still far less than he could have earned in the private sector, but he delighted in being an electronic hunter, tracking and cornering prey on the information highway. The job made him feel potent. Still, he often regretted the relatively small paycheques.

He had a brief meeting with Frederick Fox on the day he had looked at the apartment. He knew he couldn’t afford the rent, but he did not want Fox to know that. So, he talked big about his job, and applied for the apartment anyway, supplying a list of intriguing references. Fox called him the following day with an intriguing offer.

“If you’re interested,” he said, “I’ll reduce the rent in exchange for your expertise.”

“What exactly are you asking for?”

“It’s all negotiable, but if you do some consulting for me, on a casual basis, mind you, I’ll halve your rent.”

“What kind of consulting?” Roadkill asked.

“Oh, nothing related to your employer, really. Nothing like that. But, if I understand this right, you’re in the business of security, just like I am.” Fox then told him about the Institute and his security concerns. “If it’s good enough for the country,” he concluded, “some of the systems you use, that is, then it’s good enough for us.”

“You know, I’m not even sure if I want the place,” Roadkill had lied.

“Of course, the apartment is yours, if you want it, at the price we discussed yesterday.”

“I’ll have to think about it.”

They negotiated a deal.
He recommended hardware and software, and kept Fox abreast of the latest developments in computer security. At times, he wondered what it would be like to work for Fox on a full time basis. He hinted around about that, but Fox's reaction to the idea, though diplomatic, was not encouraging. Still, his rent was reduced substantially, and Roadkill even received the occasional cheque from Fox. Life was good.

Then, the cheques started to get bigger, and came more frequently, as the information provided to Fox became more exclusive and sensitive. Roadkill worried about this, fretting at times about how he had let the scope of his relationship with Fox grow to such proportions. There were ethics to be considered—a reasonable level of loyalty and fidelity was, after all, expected of CSIS employees.

Nevertheless, Roadkill had been determined to trust his own judgement. He continued to supply Fox with information related to Institute security—information that, Roadkill deemed, was hardly a threat to national security—but the scope of the arrangement became increasingly nerve-racking. However, he enjoyed the extra money and the prestige of the neighbourhood he lived in. Further, Fox, who seemed to know instinctively where to draw the line, had never asked for information too sensitive, nor had Roadkill ever volunteered it.

When the Institute came under investigation, Roadkill viewed the coincidence of his relationship to his landlord with apprehension, and the worries he had tried to subdue became haunting. He began to speculate. Was the Institute involved in something bad? If so, did his contributions to their security constitute an illegal or unethical collaboration?

Even if Fox had been innocent of any wrongdoing, the investigation was unnerving. Roadkill had considered volunteering the facts of his association with Fox, but the longer he had waited, the more difficult that became. With the shots fired at CSIS North came a renewed compulsion to talk, but a night's sleep, though edgy and unsatisfactory, had tempered that thought.

Still, as he sits by the window, he wonders about his relationship with Fox.
It had taken a new turn. Fox had crossed the line. The information that he had requested was far beyond their mutual understanding.

Roadkill, curious, had probed Cath for the information. He had found the folder, and perused it at great length, and wondered what Fox would do with the information if he had it. His need for the information, given his argument about protecting his client, had been completely understandable. The information would impress Fox’s boss too, whoever that was.

The computer scan ends. Roadkill stares at the program window prompting him to end task? He clicks the okay with the cursor. The picture changes, and the monitor speakers dispatch an “uh-oh,” to him in a cute, squeaky voice. Roadkill looks down to a blinking icon in the corner of his monitor. He double-clicks it, and a window comes up on the screen. Communication error, it states. Please enter password for more information. Roadkill does, and a new window comes up on screen. “Communications error, it states again. File 987558-A. Roadkill understands. Someone in the field, Cath is telling him, has lost a connection to CSIS that was supposed to remain open. Roadkill has a sense of foreboding, and begins to chew on his fingernails. Again, the screen prompts him for a security password. He enters a number, but it is refused. He turns in his chair and looks out the window, thinking, and continues to chew, his left hand to his face, the end of his ring finger between his teeth shredded and tormented.

He does not notice the pain immediately. He notices the blue sky instead, and wonders at it briefly before being suddenly sobered by the agony caused by his own bite. He winces, and pulls the finger out of his mouth. The side of the fingernail begins to bleed. He sucks on it, and looks back to the screen. There’s something, he thinks, something important happening here.

He dials up the computer operator.

“Cath says there’s an important line down,” Roadkill says.

“Yeah, Ron,” the operator replies. “We know about that. We’re looking into it.”

“Can you tell me who’s at that location?”
“Can’t say anything on this line Ron.”

“It’s a secure line,” Roadkill argues.

“It’s protocol.”

“Yeah, okay,” Roadkill acknowledges.

“Clear it with someone over my head, Ron, and I’ll send the information to you.”

“Am I needed?”

“I’ll let you know.”

Roadkill has more questions, but questions can risk a security breach as easily as answers can. He says goodbye to the operator, sits looking into the blank screen, and speculates. It was reasonable to assume that Bill had taken Eddie Fields somewhere away from CSIS North. Meanwhile, a raid on the Institute was looming, but had to be at least a day or two away. But there had to have been developments since Roadkill had last been at the office.

He thinks about Fox, and imagines the scene, earlier that morning, when he had watched his landlord pull out of the driveway next door. Something wasn’t right. But what?

He feels Curious brush against his leg, purring loudly through its broken jaw. It sits, and looks up at Roadkill, its one eye sedate, the other slightly bulbous in a permanent half-wink. It jumps up onto Roadkill’s lap, and Roadkill, leaning back in the chair, looks at the cat on his lap.

“You love me, don’t you Curr?” he asks. Curious responds, nudging Roadkill’s hand with its nose. Roadkill strokes the cat along its back, and sighs. “He knows, Curr,” he says. “I don’t know how, but he knows.”
Chapter 39

Leif did not see Bill lying in the stream. He only saw Officer Chen, laid out by the stream amidst debris falling from the explosion. Leif looked around in awe of the scene, then felt compelled to seek sanctuary. The mouth of the forest was nearby. He stood, turned, and was about to run off when he heard Chen's voice. He paused for a moment, and spoke to her. Then, determined, he ran for the mouth. He entered the forest along the edge of the stream, and continued on through the leafy shade, dodging as best he could the twigs and branches that slowed his progress. Still, the debris continued to fall, drifting through gaps in the forest canopy. Minute pieces of the house landed in the stream beside him and floated along with the current, making steady progress, faster than his own. He tried to keep up, but couldn't. At a bridge, he rested.

Now, as he catches his breath, crouching to tie up a shoelace that he had, in a peaceful moment back in the valley, been untying in order to shake the water out of his shoe, he thinks about what has happened. He remembers that she had called his name. He can't remember seeing Bill at all and, nervously, he looks up, as if Bill might be about to descend on him. Then, he looks upstream and listens, but hears only the slight rustle of leaves in the breeze, and the constant trickle of the steam's water as it passes by. He looks over to the bank that leads to the road above, and considers climbing it. He imagines standing on the road, alone and conspicuous. They'd be looking for him, he reasons.

He begins again, but has to enter the water to wade through the slim underpass. Halfway through, he hears the sound of a car as it passes overhead, and he freezes. The noise of the car dissipates, and Leif continues. The moving water, its depth to his knees, pushes him through to the other side of the underpass. There, he tries to get out of the water, but slips and falls backwards into the stream. His entire body is submerged, and he rolls with the current before
regaining a foothold. He stands, and seeks out the water’s edge. He falls forward onto the bank and pulls his body, crawling, up to dry land. He stands, his hands wide at his sides, as if willing the water to fall from his clothes, and looks back upstream. Still, no one follows.

Soaked, he walks, stumbling at times, along the edge of the stream. He thinks as he makes his way downstream, thinks that there is someone that can help him. He considers doubling back to the road to find a house and a phone, but his motion carries him forward.

The stream twists and turns slightly as the land around it rises. Soon, the banks are too steep for balance, and Leif enters the water again. The water deepens, and his progress slows as the level of the water reaches his waist. He pushes through, aided in his progress by the current. Bits of debris from the explosion continue to wash by. It occurs to him now that there is a dead man in the house. Dean. He must be dead. Leif had looked at the house, briefly, but hadn’t considered the meaning of the explosion. He had only reacted. Now, as the stream begins to shallow again, it occurs to him that he had been the reason for the explosion. But who would want to kill him? He stops, and leans against the bank. CSIS didn’t do it, he reasons. They wouldn’t blow themselves up. And, at the CSIS building, they were in the line of fire too.

The CSIS people had said little to him about the shooting. Rather, their tone and treatment of him had remained accusatory, as if he had been to blame for everything. “Bet this never occurred to you, huh, pal?” Butler had remarked. “Why don’t you do us all a favour and tell us what’s going on?”

But Leif knew nothing and, to his relief, Butler’s interrogation of him over the matter had been brief.

Officer Chen had been there too, leaning against the wall of the little room Leif had lived in for over a week. She had been there, it seemed, as a witness. She said nothing, and her expression remained neutral throughout. The two left quietly, without a hint of sympathy, and Leif listened to the familiar click of the door being locked.
Leif looks up through the forest canopy, appreciating the cheerful blueness of the sky above. He thinks of the children in his neighbourhood. They would be playing this morning, he thinks, skipping on the sidewalk under the bright sky, yelping in gleeful innocence, content in their ignorance of latent and incipient danger. He wishes he could have played with them, and shared in that joy.

He leans down and scoops up water with his hands cupped. He drinks, then splashes the water on his face, and notices with the first few splashes how cool and refreshing it feels. He continues until satisfied. Finally, he continues downstream, slower now, and with less deliberation.

The banks lower again and he gets out of the stream and walks along the edge, his pant legs clinging to his legs and his feet uncomfortable in his waterlogged runners. He stops, takes off his jacket, squeezes water out of it, and then does the same with his tee shirt. He puts the clothing back on and continues. The stream bends sharply, and then bends again, and around the second bend he stops suddenly and hears a surprised “Oh!” He is not sure who uttered that word—himself, or the man standing in the middle of the stream. The man wears a black and grey robe. Leif straightens indecisively. He considers a retreat, but pauses. He looks closely at the white-haired man, and then sees that he is standing not in the water, but on a little wooden bridge.

The man tilts his head in curiosity. “Hello,” he says.

Leif does not reply. He only stares.

“Nice day for a hike,” the robed man says. Then, he says, concerned, “Are you okay?”

Leif walks forward. The man in the robe tenses slightly, then seems to relax. He has made a decision about Leif, who approaches cautiously.

“I need to make a phone call,” Leif says, watching the man for a reaction, but the man only smiles.

“Yes, we have a phone. Follow the path,” he says, motioning towards the trail. “I’ll show you the way, if you’d like,” he offers.

“Okay,” Leif says, motioning Brother Adrian to lead. Adrian complies, and
walks a steady pace through the forest, listening to the moist squeak of Leif’s shoes behind him.

“Where are we going, exactly?” Leif asks, looking at the back of Adrian’s head.

“To my home,” Adrian answers. He looks over his shoulder. “I live at the monastery.”

“Oh,” Leif says, following, watching the man’s feet as he deftly steps through the forest trail. The backs of Adrian’s white runners are conspicuous under his black robe.

“What were you doing there?” Leif asks. “I mean, at the little bridge.”

“I was wondering what you were doing there. But, you don’t have to tell me, if you don’t want.”

Leif says nothing.

“I heard an explosion,” Adrian continues, but still the man behind him does not reply. “I built this trail,” he explains. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It’s pleasant. That’s why you saw me where you did.”

Leif sees nothing pleasant about anything. “Are you sure you have a phone?” he asks.

“Of course,” Adrian replies, and he says nothing else, but continues to lead his guest through the forest. At last, they come to an opening, and Leif can see a building at the top of a hill. The building is strange in shape, long, with a domed roof at the top. They continue up the hill to the side of monastery, then walk through the path that divides the garden. Leif slows. Adrian looks back.

“The phone’s this way,” he says, but Leif appears lost among the rose bushes. Adrian stops, and turns. “Are you okay?” he asks earnestly.

Leif does not reply, but motions for Adrian to continue. They walk out of the garden, Adrian leading, then round the property to the front door of the monastery. Leif looks over briefly to the high wooded cross, then follows Adrian through the glassed front doors. To his left is a little store, but there is no one in
it.

"Please wait here," Adrian says, and Leif watches as he disappears into a room on the right. Leif looks around. He stands in a large rotunda, plainly decorated in tan tones with mahogany trim, the shadows richly lit by the eastern morning sun radiating light and warmth through the glass doors. There are plants too, and an ornate grandfather clock. Mostly, Leif notices the silence.

Adrian emerges from the office. "This way," he says, and he leads Leif into the office. He points out the phone to Adrian and says, "I'll be just outside."

Adrian waits patiently in the rotunda, his hands clasped behind his back. He had seen people that appeared dishevelled before, though not to the degree that Leif presented. The monastery has ten rooms reserved for guests, and they came, booked weeks or months ahead, to escape or to heal. They arrived looking tired and vulnerable. They left with a renewed spirit, Adrian believed.

He looks around the rotunda with loving admiration. This is a good place, he thinks. He walks over to the grandfather clock. It was a gift from a company that supplied ingredients for the monastery's fruitcake. The company's manager was a friendly chap, though the gift had seemed a bit extravagant at the time to some of the brothers. There had been a mild debate, but at last they had accepted the gift.

Adrian hears a voice and turns. He had been addressed as Sir.

"I'm done with the phone."

"I see," Adrian responds. Leif stands in front of him, unsure.

"Would you mind," Leif asks, "if I waited here for my friend to come get me?"

"Not at all."

"It will be an hour," Leif explains, his tone apologetic. "Maybe more."

She's coming from Metro."

"I see. Would you like to wash up at bit?"

Leif does not reply, but looks down at his dirty shoes and wet clothes.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I'll take off my shoes."
"There's a washroom through that door," Adrian points, "and down the hallway. Last door on the left. Why don't you take your shoes with you? You can clean them in the sink. You'll find a soap dispenser and some paper towels on the wall."

"Thank you," Leif says. He crouches to untie his shoes. The laces are still wet, and are difficult to undo. Finally, he pulls the shoes off at the heels, and carries them to the door. He pulls the door handle towards himself and steps through, looking back at Adrian with a look of thanks. Adrian nods.

He is fifteen minutes getting cleaned up, and emerges from the hallway slowly. He pushes the door open just far enough to glimpse through. Then, seeing no one, he enters the lobby and sits down on a bench by the door, next to the little store, and watches the front entranceway through the glass doors. Ten minutes later, he is still there, bent over with his elbows on his knees, fidgeting, when Adrian emerges from the office. He walks over to Leif, who straightens when he sees the robed man approach. "Everything okay?" Adrian asks.

"Yes. Thank you." Leif looks over at the grandfather clock. "It'll be another...forty-five minutes, I think."

"That's fine," Adrian says. "Would you prefer to wait in the office? It's more comfortable in there. And there's a window. You'll be able to see your ride."

"No, right here's just fine, uh...." He doesn't know what to call Adrian.

"How about a cup of coffee, then? I'm going to have one. I'll bring a cup out to you."

"That would be nice, thank you."

"Milk and sugar?"

"Yes, thank you."

Adrian exits the rotunda, and returns a few minutes later carrying two mugs of coffee. He gives one to Leif, and sits beside him on the bench. "It's boring, isn't it," he says. "I mean, waiting."

Leif looks at Adrian and wonders at the man's apparent sense of leisure.
“What is this place?” he asks.

“This is a monastery.”

“And you’re a...?”

“A monk. My name’s Adrian. Is your coffee okay? Would you like a muffin to go with that?”

“No, thanks. What does... what do you do here? I mean, what does a monk do?”

“We pray, and work. Meditate a lot. Man the little store there.”

“What do you sell?”

“Oh, books... jams and jellies, fudge. Religious items.”

“Is that how you pay the bills?”

“In part. We make fruitcake too. We have a big kitchen through that door where I got the coffee.”

“When do you make fruitcake?”

“We should be making it now. We have lots of orders that need filling. But we’re waiting for supplies. We ran out of raisins.”

“Oh.” Leif replies. They sit for a moment in silence, each sipping from their cup of coffee. “I guess you’re wondering where I came from,” Leif says.

“I asked you before, back in the forest. Do you want to tell me?”

“No,” Leif decides. He looks out the glass doors. “Not really, if that’s okay with you. Uh, so, what else do you do?”

“I have my garden. The one we passed through. It’s one of my little indulgences, I suppose.”

“Yeah?”

“Well, everywhere I go, I like to leave something good behind, that’s all. I call it planting, no matter what it is. Here, as it happens, I’ve been around long enough to plant a whole garden.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Seven years.”

“Do you like being a monk?”
"Of course."

"Is it like running away?"

Adrian thinks about the question for a moment before responding, unsure of how to interpret it. Finally, he chooses a diplomatic approach. "I don't know," he says. "I don't think so. I think of it as running to, not running away. But I was running away, in the beginning, I must admit."

"What were you running from?"

Adrian notices the inflection on the word you. So, this man is running away, he thinks. "Sometimes people run away so that they can go back. Have you ever heard of a honey wagon?"

"No. What's that?"

"My father drove a honey wagon. I grew up in Newfoundland. It's a big truck with a container on the back and a long black hose. It's used to clean out septic tanks."

"Uh-huh."

"That's what my father did for a living. My mother left him when we were young. I think that hurt him deeply. He was a violent man—drove us all away from our home. I grew up fearing him, fearing everything. A priest pointed me this way. To the priesthood, initially, actually. Anyway, I was running away, yes, and running to Christ, you might say."

"Are you still afraid?"

"Afraid? I don't know. I don't think so, no." Adrian feels like he's talked enough, too much, perhaps, and stands. "I have work to do in my garden. Would you like to see it?"

"No. I think I'll just wait here for my ride, if it's okay with you."

"Of course." Adrian carries his coffee cup, leaves the rotunda through the main entranceway, and rounds the monastery to the side garden. He picks up the tired old hoe lying in the grass and begins to weed. He makes a mental note to repair the hoe. He had meant to get started on that, earlier in the morning, when he had seen the van emerge from the fog. That event had caused him to forget
about why he had been carrying the hoe, and he had returned to the garden with it.

He reflects on his conversation with Leif. He didn’t often talk at length with people, and he hopes that their conversation had not been discouraging for the man. But he knows that he had tried his best. Time, he thinks, is the greatest healer of all. Then, another thought occurs to him. That man, Adrian thinks, has walked the same path as I. He considers the analogy, and thinks again of their conversation. He believes that God plants the seeds, and that it was up to him, a mortal, to nourish those seeds. Some people are like seeds along the path, he ponders. This thought inspires him, and he looks around the garden, out to the forest and, finally, up to the bright blue sky, in awe of God’s kingdom.

He begins working. He finds a weed, pulls it out by the roots and tosses it aside. It has been seven years, and over thirty years before that, since he left home. He still has not felt that inner peace that many of the other monks, many younger than he, seem to have. Yet, they also have pasts—stories have emerged over the seven years of his residency. Maybe they looked at him, and envied his sense of peace. It is all a matter of perspective. Or, is it as simple as that?

He hears a car approach, and looks to the driveway. It is a tan-coloured car, driven by a woman. He sees Leif, who waits on the asphalt for the car to stop. Leif pulls the passenger door open, and gets into the car. He pulls the door closed, and sits, hunched over. The car begins to move. Then, it stops again, and the woman driving the car puts her arm around Leif. They stay like that a few moments. Then, the woman straightens, and they drive off down the hill and out of sight. Adrian lingers in his garden, leaning on his hoe, replaying the scene in his mind. No one, he decides, truly knows everything. He looks to heaven and crosses himself as if in apology. Then, with a sigh, he resumes his gardening. He faces the forest below, and pauses in his work to look down to the indentation where the trail begins.
Chapter 40

Two men sit in a car just down the street from the Toronto Institute of Cryonics. Martin Yancey, in the passenger seat, checks his watch. The RCMP officer beside him notices, and checks his own watch. He had introduced himself as Sergeant Liam Basset, just fifteen minutes earlier, when Martin had entered the car. Five minutes later, a unmarked van with tinted windows and more RCMP officers inside had pulled up behind them, and Martin had used the next ten minutes briefing the lot, through the communications console, on the CSIS investigation. Then, they had sat there, waiting in silence for the final member of the sergeant’s team to arrive.

Basset, a tall man with black hair that sweeps against the roof of the car, looks in his rear-view mirror, just in time to see a man get into the van. “I guess that’s our computer guy,” he remarks. Martin leans forward to get an angle in the mirror outside the passenger door, but all he sees behind the car are pedestrians, and the RCMP van.

Basset presses a button on his communications console. “Is everyone ready?” he asks.

“Everyone’s here,” comes the reply. “Anytime you’re ready.”

“Let’s go,” Basset says. To Martin, he adds, in an admonishing tone of voice, “We’re doing this one by the seat of our pants.”

Martin gets the message, but also understands that the sergeant isn’t fishing for an apology.

In all, ten plainclothes officers, plus Martin Yancey, stroll leisurely to the front door of the Institute. They enter, in turn, through the front door, and linger about quietly in the front lobby until the last man is in.

The Institute receptionist, a thin young woman with a pencil tucked behind one ear, looks up at the group milling about the lobby. The lead detective approaches with a document in his hand. “RCMP,” he says, his voice quiet, yet
assertive. "We have a warrant to search the premises." He opens the document and puts it on the desk so that the print faces the receptionist. "Okay?" he asks.

The receptionist takes the pencil from behind her ear and holds it over the document. She reads slowly, using the pencil to guide her reading. Finally, she picks the warrant up and hands it back to Basset. "You want me to call somebody?" she asks, her voice cracking.

An elevator door opens, and a uniformed security guard enters the lobby, communicator in hand. "What's going on?" he asks. He looks nervous.

The detective shows him his badge. "RCMP, we have a warrant. Have you called anyone on that thing?"

"Security upstairs already knows you're here. They sent me down here to find out why."

"Call up and say who we are and that we have a warrant."

They wait while the security guard complies with the request.

"Now," Basset says to the security guard, "we'd appreciate it if you locked up the exits. You have a key?"

"Yes, sir," the guard responds, digging into a pocket and producing a ring of keys.

"Start with the front door here and then the one around back." The guard locks the front door and is escorted to the back door of the building by a plainclothes officer. By now, all the officers have clipped identification tags to the front of their jackets.

Basset turns back to the receptionist. "I'd prefer if you didn't call anybody, if you wouldn't mind."

"Okay," she answers.

"The main computer is on the second floor?"

"Yes."

He turns, and says, "Who's the computer guy?"

"That's me," one of them replies. Martin looks over. The computer technician is tall and bulky, the complete antithesis of Roadkill.

“Sure,” the technician replies, and he and another officer head for the stairwell, just to the right of the elevator.

“Don’t do anything ‘till I show them the warrant,” Basset calls after them. “Just don’t let them do anything.”

“Gotcha,” the technician replies. His escort holds the door to the stairwell open, and they both enter. Martin watches as the door closes behind them.

“Mr. Yancey?”

Martin, caught in fascination of the low-key raid, turns back to Basset.

“Come with me?” Basset asks.

“Lead the way, Sergeant.”

“May as well take the elevator,” Basset says. He orders the remaining detectives to remain in the lobby.

They exit on the third floor. A security guard is there as the doors open. Basset shows him his badge. “Take us to Mr. Cummings’ office, will ya?” he says. The guard complies, and leads them down the hallway to the floor secretary.

“RCMP to see Mr. Cummings,” the detective says to the secretary, once again showing his badge.

The secretary looks to the guard. The guard shrugs in response. “It’s okay,” he adds, when she appears indecisive. She calls Cummings, holding the handset to her ear. “RCMP here to see you, Mr. Cummings,” she says. She listens a long moment, looking up at Martin’s yellow bow tie with wonder, then hangs up the handset. The door to Cummings’ office opens. Cummings appears, his face flushed, and invites the men into the office.

“You can wait out here,” Cummings says to the security guard. Before closing the door, he smiles weakly at the secretary. “Where’s…uh…Mr. Fox?” he asks.

“I don’t believe he’s in yet, Mr. Cummings,” she replies.

“Try to find him, will you?”
Chapter 41

Fox watches as Wilson pulls the car into a mall parking lot on Highway 27. It has been a quiet ride, mostly. After the explosion, little had been said between the two men. At the sound of the explosion, Fox had reached into his coat pocket and extracted a small packet. He passed it over to Wilson.

"I trust this will cover the matter," Fox said.

"It's all here, then?" the man asked.

"Yeah," Fox responded quietly. His stomach grumbled loudly just then, and continued to protest loudly and embarrassingly for the remainder of the trip.

The man parks, and Fox gets out of the car without any verbal exchange. He walks to the front door of the mall, turns and looks back. The car is gone, and he begins to hunt for his own car. He finds it, and begins the drive home to Forest Hill, intending to clean up before going into work. Halfway to home he feels a sharp pain in his bowels. He winces, and pulls the car into a side street. He parks the car by the curb and leans over the steering wheel, willing the pain to subside. He undoes the top button of his pants, and then his zipper, and continues to wait. Finally, the pain eases, and he turns back into traffic and continues.

He pulls into his driveway, and just as he turns the engine off, he winces as the pain from his bowel returns in force, doubling him over the steering wheel. He sits there for a full five minutes. Finally, thinking he can make it into his house, he opens the car door, and begins to walk up the sidewalk. He happens to look up to the second floor of the house next to his. There, in the window, is Roadkill, looking back at him. Then, he hears his name, looks behind, and sees two large men approaching. One produces a badge and says something, but Fox is already looking back up to the second floor window. The pain shoots through his innards once again, and he doubles over on the sidewalk.
Roadkill watches from his window as Fox, his face a disgusting mix of pain and rage, is taken away. He recalls that he had produced that same look from his brother, Jake, years earlier, and that shortly thereafter Jake had had moved out of the house. That look had been a good omen. Perhaps it still was.

He watches as the two men force Fox into their car. Fox doubles over in the back seat, and his head disappears below the window. The car moves on.

Roadkill looks up at the pinhole camera and waves. That’s how Fox had known, Roadkill had discovered. Roadkill had Cath search for the information that Fox wanted. Cath found it, and then, somehow, Fox had found it too. Fox had seemed a little too satisfied with himself, as Roadkill had watched him swagger out to his car after their conversation. The loss of communication with Butler—it had to have been Butler, Roadkill figured—was too much of a coincidence. It was just a matter of figuring out how Fox had known.

Curious brushes against Roadkill’s leg. “You know, Curr,” he says, “Mr. Fox is going to sing a little song about me, and then, someone’s going to find that little surprise in the ceiling.” Curious stands tall and stretches its claws on Roadkill’s knee. “Ouch!” Roadkill cries, and he swats the maligned cat off his leg. “Stupid damn cat,” he mutters. The cat runs off to sulk.
Chapter 42

The county fire department is on the scene. The back doors of the paramedic’s van are opened wide, and Bill sits just inside, his feet hanging over the edge. He faces the valley and, while a paramedic treats the injury on his forehead, Bill stares at the mouth of the forest where the stream enters and disappears from view. It seems insignificant from this far away, Bill thinks. The water’s surface glints in the sunlight, but the minute reflections merely reveal movement and little else. The direction of the current, and the width and depth of the stream would be difficult to fathom from this position. He looks back to the mouth of the forest. It appears almost closed now, as if it had just about swallowed its fill.

Alana stands to Bill’s right with her back to him. Her sweat pants are covered with Bill’s blood, dried now, from her waist to her knees. She talks to two local provincial police officers, standing at some distance from her, as if the dried blood and dirt on Alana’s clothing might be transmissible. Both officers are dressed for cool weather, with black OPP jackets over their black uniforms. The first officer, a tall, thick woman with tuffs of auburn hair springing out at odd angles from under her cap, takes notes. Her partner, shorter and trimmer, and with a brief blonde ponytail that pokes outwards from underneath the back of her cap, supplies most of the questions. Behind them, further down the driveway, fire fighters hose down the house. Smoke rises from the rubble in a continuous thick black cloud.

“Can’t talk you into going to the hospital, eh?” the attendant asks, as he wraps layers of bandage around Bill’s head. “You’re going to need stitches for that cut, and I’m worried about concussion.”

Alana overhears the attendant, and turns to face Bill. “He’ll go,” she says, determined. The two officers look at Bill for his reply.

“Later,” Bill says. He looks at the OPP officers. “You’ve got a car looking around the neighbourhood, right?”
“Yeah,” the blonde officer replies. “And another one’s on the way. You say he headed on down that stream there?” she asks, turning slightly and pointing to the valley. Her ponytail dances cheerfully with the movement of her head.

“Into the forest,” Bill confirms. “Must be a hour ago, eh?” he asks Alana.

“At least,” she replies. “He’s got a good head start.”

“You know this area, either of you?” Bill asks the officers.

The tall one shrugs. “A bit,” she says, uncertain.

“Know where that stream goes?”

She looks down to the stream, then back to Bill, and shrugs again. “All the way to Lake Ontario,” she guesses. “Far as I know, anyway.”

“Maybe there’s someone else I could ask,” Bill mutters. He shakes his head, as the paramedic applies a last bit of white tape to the bandage. “That’s kind of tight, you know,” he barks.

“Don’t want your head to fall off,” the attendant says as he begins to pack up. “How about you?” he addresses Alana. “You sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah,” she replies, looking herself over. She rolls her thumb towards Bill, and says, “It’s his blood, not mine.” The attendant snickers, and pulls another roll of tape out of his case.

Bill looks up the driveway to the dirt road, where a throng of spectators have gathered and inched forward in a group towards the paramedic’s van. He picks out an old man nearby, and stands. Bill takes a few steps towards the old man, and the paramedic follows him. “Hold on a sec,” he says to Bill. Alana and the two officers also take a few steps, following the attendant.

Bill stops, and faces the old man. “You live around here?” he asks him. The paramedic continues to rip white tape off the roll, applying it to the dressing.

The old man squints so that he can focus on the procedure. “Just over the hill,” he responds. “That’s a nasty wound you’ve got there.”

“Know where that stream goes?”

The man turns his squint to the valley. He looks back at Bill. “Lake Ontario,” he finally declares.
“No, that’s not what I mean,” Bill says. “Listen, it goes into the woods there. Then what? What’s it pass by in the immediate vicinity?”

The man looks back to the mouth of the forest and begins explaining the stream’s route, augmenting his narration with hand motions to punctuate the twists and turns of the stream, and the rise and fall of the land. “Takes a few turns,” he begins, “but pretty much goes down to the main paved road and under it,” he says, his hand scooping air. “Past the road and into the woods again. Haven’t really walked it for a while. It cuts across private property a lot of the way. New house on that side,” he says, pointing to the west. “A kennel, I think, and the monastery on this side. Goes through a deep ravine to get there,” he concludes, one palm dipping to the monastery, you said?” Alana asks.

“I’m not sure how far back that property goes,” the old man says. “The stream cuts between the two roads though. The one with the kennel, and the one with the monastery. After that, I’m not too sure. Cuts through a lot of forest.”

“Are you almost finished?” Bill says to the ambulance attendant. The old man looks on, dismayed. He had expected some gratitude.

The attendant applies a last piece of white tape to the gauze around Bill’s forehead. “You’ve gotta get this looked at, you know. You’ve lost lots of blood. Might have a concussion, too. But yeah, I’m done.” He tucks the roll of tape into the pocket of his red jacket, turns, and walks back to the van.

Bill looks to the police officers. “How about taking us for a drive?”

“Where?” the blonde officer asks.

“Just around the neighbourhood.”

“I suppose so. But we have to wait until that other car gets here,” she says, looking down the road. “Hold on, I’ll see if it’s near.” She clicks a button on the small, square microphone on the shoulder of her jacket, and speaks into it. “Five-nineteen. Is that other car almost here?”

“Just down the road,” a voice comes back. They look down the dirt road and watch as a large white sedan turns onto it from the paved road.
“Right, we see you,” the police officer says into the microphone. “We’re just up the road.”

The two officers walk to the top of the driveway, and the small throng of spectators split slightly to make way for them. The lone male officer brings his car to a stop, and the two women walk over to him. They talk for a few minutes. Then, they return back down the driveway. “Officer Gant will take you around,” the blonde says. “Be sure to come back, okay? We’ve got reports to fill out, and there’s some senior officers on the way who’ll want to talk to you too.”

“Sure.” Bill says. “Thanks!” he yells to the paramedic, who has begun walking, case in hand, up the driveway and towards the house pluming black smoke over the hill. Bill looks on as the smoke continues to rise, dissipating high above in grey wisps against the blue sky.

Bill guides Officer Gant from the back seat of the OPP sedan. “Drive up the monastery road,” he directs. The officer complies, stopping at the crossing where the dirt and asphalt roads meet, then continuing through. The sedan ascends, then levels, and the monastery on the hill up on the right comes into view. “Turn up the driveway,” Bill says. “Maybe they’ve seen someone.”

“What’s this guy look like, exactly?” Gant asks, as the car descends down the dirt road to the monastery driveway. He looks to Alana in the passenger seat for an answer.

“Medium height and build,” Alana explains. “Jeans, blue sweat shirt. Middle… later thirties. Short brown hair, a bit of grey.”

“Dangerous?”

“No, I wouldn’t say that. Bill?” she asks, glancing over her shoulder.

“Dangerous, no.” Bill replies. “I don’t think so, anyway.”

“Never been up here before,” Gant comments. He turns the car into the monastery driveway, and begins the long ascent until the driveway levels at the high, looming wooden cross to the right. Gant parks the sedan by the front glass doors. The sun is almost directly overhead.
They enter the building and look around the rotunda. “Hello?” Gant petitions. He pokes his head into the doorway of the little store on the left, looks around, then makes an unspecific inquiry to the doors opposite. “Anybody home?” Alana and Bill stand by the entranceway, as unsure as Gant about the building they are in. They share a strong sense of intrusion and trespass. Bill, for one, is irritated by the feeling.

They stand, looking at the office doors.

They hear a voice from behind them—“Hello. May I help you?”—and they turn in surprise. A middle-aged man with a greying beard, and a long hooded black and grey habit, walks out from the little store carrying a clipboard and a pencil.

“Sorry, sir, I didn’t…uh…see you in there,” Gant says awkwardly.

Alana takes over. “We’re looking for a man who might have wandered in here,” she says. “Blue jeans, blue shirt and jacket. Thirty-ish.”

“I see,” the monk says, obviously intrigued by the visitors. He gives them all a quick look over, before asking: “Do you think he may be booked here?”

The officer looks at Bill. “Booked?” he asks.

“Booked a retreat, I mean,” the monk attempts to clarify.

“He may have walked up from the stream,” Bill explains to the monk. “It runs through your property, right?”

“Is he lost?” the monk asks.

“You might say that,” Bill says. “Seen him, or maybe someone who fits that description in the last hour?”

“Saw someone like that with Brother Adrian.”

“Where’s he?” Bill asks.

“I don’t know,” the monk replies. He brings a hand to his mouth, and considers the question. “Could be in the kitchen,” he supposes. “Or in the chapel. Wait here,” he decides, “and I’ll see if I can find him.”

“Thanks,” Alana says, and they watch as he walks out of the room.

“I’ll just go out and have a look around,” says Gant.
“Okay,” Bill says. Gant turns and leaves the rotunda.

Bill looks around while he and Alana wait for the monk to return. “Nice clock,” he comments. Alana notes the sarcasm in his voice.

He points with his thumb to the small store, mimicking Alana’s earlier gesture. “Wonder what they sell in there?” he asks rhetorically.

“Settle down a bit,” Alana whispers sharply. “And keep your voice down. He’s looking for him.”

Bill walks to a small table by the glass entranceway, and starts picking up little papers and cards arranged on the table. “Cute,” he says, after reading a few. He looks to the door through which the monk had left the room. “Maybe we should go try and find this guy ourselves, do you think?”

“Just relax. No one’s going to blame us for losing him, you know.”

Bill grunts an inaudible reply.

“Not with that great bandage on your head,” she adds.

“Right,” he says with vehemence. His face begins to flush from his growing impatience and anger.

“Oh, just stop it!” she says, her voice chastising.

“Listen,” Bill snaps at her, “Dean’s dead back there, you know, and…”

“Yeah, I know,” Alana snaps back. “I was there too, remember? I’m the one that dragged you into the trees. Tone it down a touch. Show some respect, will you?”

A door opens and the bearded monk steps back into the lobby, and Bill’s sense of shame has no time to take root. He looks at the monk expectantly.

“Try the garden out at the side,” the monk says calmly, motioning the direction with his arm. “Out through the doors, and around at the side of the building.”

“Thanks,” Alana says for the two of them, and they exit without further word, Bill leading the way, his steps heavy and his stride long. Alana follows with trepidation, completely annoyed with her partner and apprehensive about what might happen next.
They round the side of the monastery, and see Officer Gant as he ambles towards them from the back of the building, pausing now and then to look behind and down the hill to the forest.

"Could be back in the woods," Gant shrugs. Bill and Alana look down the hill, considering the possibilities.

"Hello," he adds, and the officers look over to the garden where Brother Adrian has emerged.

"Hello," Adrian says to Gant. He looks at Alana and Bill, notes their dishevelled appearance, then smiles, and offers them a cheery hello. "Hi," Alana replies. She looks at Bill, and decides quickly that his expression is not encouraging.

The three approach Adrian where he stands in the little path that divides the garden. Bill stands a little too close, Alana notes. She sets to grab his shoulders, to pull him back for the second time that day, if need be.

"We're looking for a man who may have come out of the forest," Bill says, a little too loudly. He steps closer to Adrian, who takes a step back in response. Adrian looks at the three, one at a time, and tries to evaluate the situation. His smile wanes.

Bill, his impatience fully tried, puts his face a nose's distance away from Adrian's. "Seen him?" he yells cruelly and, as Alana grabs Bill's shoulders and pulls, cursing him with equal vehemence, the shock of the attack sends Adrian reeling backwards into his garden.

"Sweet Jesus!" Gant remarks, looking at the CSIS officers, astounded. "Don't they teach you guys manners?"

Bill stands, dumbfounded. Then, as Alana releases his shoulders and begins to walk to Adrian—flat on his back in the rosebushes—Bill reaches out to help. Alana, seeing this, pushes him away. "Don't touch him," she says, giving Bill a look that chills him, and he watches, feeling angry and useless, as she wades into the garden to help the monk to his feet. She pulls him back to the path they all stand on, and begins to brush leaves and yellow rose petals from his habit.
Finished, she puts her hands on his shoulders. “I’m terribly, terribly sorry that happened, sir,” she says.

“Yeah,” Bill offers sheepishly. “I didn’t mean to yell.”

“Shut up, Bill,” Alana says, not looking at him. “You’ve done enough damage, I think.”

“Sorry, sir, I really am,” Bill offers the monk.

Alana, satisfied that the monk appears to be okay, turns on Bill. “You’re having that head looked at as soon as we’re done here, you understand?”

“Yeah,” he says, looking down to his feet. “Sorry about your plant there,” he says to Adrian. “It looks all shmushed.”

“That’s okay,” the monk says. But, it is not the monk from whom Bill seeks forgiveness.

“I’m Officer Chen,” says Alana, taking charge. “Me and him,” she says, referring to Bill once again with the sweep of her thumb, “are with CSIS. Would you like to see some ID, sir?”

“I...uh...”

Alana pulls her ID out from a pocket in the bloody sweatpants.

“Really,” the monk protests, but she holds the ID up for him anyway.

“That’s not necessary. And I have seen the man you’re looking for.”

“Where is he?” Bill asks, his question quick and intimidating.

Adrian takes another step back.

“Slow down!” Alana says, looking Bill in the eye. “Just slow down, or I’ll give you another bump in the head, you understand me?” She grabs Bill by the arm. “Excuse me,” she says to Adrian. She turns Bill around and pulls him a few steps down the path. She looks up at his face, and whispers, “You wanna wait in the fuckin’ car?”

“No,” Bill replies sheepishly.

“Then show a little courtesy. Leif’s probably long gone, and your next stop’s the hospital. Got it?”

“Yeah.”
“Let me do the talking.”

“Okay.”

She looks back at the monk. “What’s your name?” she asks.

“I’m Brother Adrian,” he replies, gazing at her admiringly.

“And you’ve seen the man we’re looking for?”

“Yes. I gave him some coffee.”

“Is he here now?”

“No. He left some time before you got here.”

“You saw us pull up?” Bill asks suddenly. Alana gives him a look.

“Never mind,” he says, and he slumps a touch. He realizes that Leif is probably long gone and, as Alana looks back at the monk, a sense of relief begins to sink in.

“Did you recognize the car?” Alana asks Adrian, her voice gentle and respectful. “The colour, the make. Anything you can tell us would help us.”

“It was brown, I think. Light brown, like the brown of new cars. Sort of metallic, know what I mean? Only, I don’t think it was so new.”

Gant takes a small pad and a chewed-up blue pencil out of an inner coat pocket and begins to take notes.


“No…”

“Big car? Small?”

“Not small, no. Regular size. I’m not much on cars. There was a woman driving, if that helps.”

“That helps, eh Bill?” she says, looking over at him for a sign of normalcy. Bill has a puzzled look on his face. “Who would he call? His wife?”

“I doubt he has her number,” Alana says, comforted somewhat by Bill’s measured response, but not yet convinced that his cool has returned. She looks back at Adrian.

“See anything of the woman? Hair colour, something like that?”

“She was a black woman…”

“Bingo!” Bill shouts, almost making the monk fall back again. Alana grabs
the monk by his arms and steadies him.

“You’ve been a great help,” she says. “I’m going to give you my card. Rather, Officer Gant here will give you his card. That okay?” she asks Gant. “I don’t have a card with me but…”

“I have a card,” Bill says, pulling his wallet out of his jacket pocket.

“You saved that, huh?” Alana says. “All I have is my CSIS ID.”

“Yeah. Well, it might be a bit damp.” He locates a card in his wallet, and holds it out for Adrian. “Here,” he says. “It’s not in too bad a shape. You can still read it, anyway. Sorry again for all the yelling. We’ve had a lot of excitement today.”

“Got a phone here?” Alana asks Adrian.

“Yes.”

“Good. Then you can be reached. Oh! Did the man phone from here? For his ride?”

“Yes he did.”

“Bingo again,” Bill says to Alana. The monk looks at her curiously for an explanation. She does not give him one. “Thank you so much for your help,” she says. “We might try to contact you in the future, but it isn’t likely. I think we have all we need, right Bill?”

“Right,” he says, dearly appreciating her attempts to rehabilitate him in front of Gant and the monk.

“Sorry about your plant,” she offers.

“Yeah, sorry about that,” Bill says. He extends his hand, unsure, but Adrian takes it.

“That’s fine. Visit again,” Adrian says, smiling now, as he did when they first approached him.

“You’ve been gracious,” Alana says to him. “Good-bye.”

“Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” Bill offers.

“Good-bye.”
“Uh, what did you say your name was?” Gant asks.

“Brother Adrian. Litzka.” He spells out his name, and recites the monastery phone number, while Gant records the information in his note-pad with his chewed-up pencil. Then, Gant nods a goodbye to the monk, and walks away, tucking the notepad and pencil back into his belt as he walks.

Adrian watches as the three climb back into the police car and motor off down the long descending drive-way and out of sight. He walks down from the garden to the driveway, and stops at the base of the cross. He looks up, smiling, feeling a deep inner peace. He looks across the monastery’s view of the Huckley Valley, and there is not a shadow to be seen, none other than his own at the base of his feet.

He thinks about the big officer. He hadn’t been yelled at like that for years, and hadn’t been startled like that since living at home with his father. *Startled*, he thinks in wonder. That was the key word. Not *frightened*, but *startled*.

He walks back to the garden, and stops at the place where he had fallen. He looks at the rosebush crushed by his weight just minutes ago. I can fix that, he thinks. He senses a sudden empowerment, and he looks up to the sky and into the sun almost directly overhead. He is immersed in light.

He feels a sudden urge to go inside to the chapel. But first, he looks down from the top of the hill, down to the indentation in the woods where he had emerged with the wet, lost stranger. An interesting delivery, he muses, smiling.
Chapter 43

After a long discussion with Jane detailing his experience with CSIS—the incarceration at CSIS North, the interrogations and tests, the shooting, and finally, the explosion of the CSIS safe house—Leif focuses on the two-lane highway. It had occurred to him as he talked that the route Jane was taking was unfamiliar to him. Now, it occurs to him that he has no idea where they are going. However, he is talked out, and he sits in silence and watches the scenery pass with indifference.

Jane perceptively volunteers the information. “I called ahead to the retreat north of Peterborough. You should be okay there while we try to figure out what’s going on.”

Leif comments on the route they are taking. “Is this a short cut?” he asks.

“It’s a different route, that’s all.”

The route takes them east through a number of small towns and back roads. They emerge west of Peterborough. Jane drives north from there, and less than a half-hour later they arrive at the retreat. After identifying herself at the retreat gatepost, the gates swing open, and Jane steers the car up the stone driveway, and parks.

It is early afternoon, with the sun casting a slight shadow. The sounds of travel are replaced by a rural quiet—birds chirping in sporadic bursts, and a leafy resonance as branches sway in the slight breeze. Leif and Jane emerge from her car to a peaceful cacophony of country sounds, and both feel a sense of relief by the sudden change of sensation.

A door opens, and Henry Abbot emerges from the retreat. He steps down from the veranda to greet them. He looks worried.

He shakes their hands in turn, and Leif is reminded of the doctor’s strong grip. “Good to see you again,” Abbot says to Leif. “I’m glad you’ve come.”

“What’s happened?” Jane asks.
“Oh,” Abbot replies. “I’m not too sure. Something’s happening at the Institute, but I can’t get through. Nothing to worry about, I’m sure, but I’ve been worried just the same. Those terrorists, you know. Anyway, you don’t have any bags?”

“No,” Jane answers. “What makes you think of terrorists?”

“An overactive imagination,” he explains. He taps his head with his knuckles. “I’ve got to stop reading the papers. How long are you staying?”

“We don’t know,” Jane replies.

“Fine. Uh, you don’t know anything about that, eh?” He looks at Leif, who is leaning against the back of Jane’s car, and chewing his nails. Abbot looks back at Jane. “About the phones, that is,” he adds.

“Lines were working this morning,” Jane says.

“And you left directly from there?”

“From the Institute, yes.”

“I see.” He takes a deep breath and sighs. “Well, it’s good to see you again, Miss Lapin, and you too,” he says, glancing at Leif, looking him up and down. “It appears you’ve had a little adventure today.” Leif’s clothes are dry but quite wrinkled and dirty, stained with grass and dried mud.

“We could use a little refreshment,” Jane says, avoiding Abbot’s obvious inquiry.

“Fine then,” Abbot says. “We can talk later.” He looks at her for a moment, expecting a response, but she does not oblige. He smiles ingenuously, comments on the weather, and asks about their plans during their stay. His inquiries disturb her guest, and Leif starts edging towards the passenger seat of Jane’s car. She sees this.

“How long ago did you call the Institute?” she asks Dr. Abbot.

“Last time was just before you pulled up.”

“Oh. Then, I don’t know what we’re going to do. You see, I’d like to talk to them too, as soon as possible.” She looks Abbot in the eye, stating a fact. He backs off.
"You do, huh?"

"I most certainly do, Dr. Abbot," she says, stepping forward. "And further, I don't believe that your tone of voice is called for. We came here as guests. You've always treated my guests and me with courtesy, and I have appreciated that. Until we show reason why you should do otherwise, I would like to request that same level of courtesy."

Abbot blushes under the weight of Jane's attack. "I...I...didn't mean to, I mean, I do apologize, of course." He looks to Leif for sympathy. Leif looks at Jane, wide-eyed with marvel.

"Right now," Jane says, "we are a little dishevelled, as you can plainly see. It's been a long drive."

"Of course, of course," Abbot says, backing off another step. "Uh, are you hungry?"

"Hungry, Leif?" Jane asks. Leif scoots to her side.

"Are you?"

"Yeah," he says to her. "I could eat something."

"I'll fix something up for the both of you, then," Abbot volunteers, trying to undo the damage he feels he has caused. "I mean...see, my wife isn't here and...uh, I know my way around the kitchen okay."

"Just anything would be fine," Jane says, the authority in her voice remaining sharp. "No major productions, just a sandwich or something."

"Well, come on in, then, and I'll show you to your rooms." They follow him up the veranda steps. "It's, uh, nice to have company," he continues. "I'm surprised they haven't sold this place yet. It's not used that much, really. I feel guilty sometimes about that."

"Everybody loves it here, Dr. Abbot. There'd be a revolt if the Institute ever sold it."

"That's nice to hear," he says, opening the door. "Well, come on in, then. Hey, how about some pan-fried pickerel? I've been worried that I've exceeded my limit. Your timing couldn't be better. You can help me destroy the evidence."
“Sounds great,” Jane says.
“And some new Ontario potatoes, too, you’ll like that.”

The lines to the Institute are still down after dinner. The doctor offers
them the canoe, and Jane accepts the overture. He has worked hard that afternoon
to win back their favour.

“Work off your dinner,” he says, standing on the beach as they push off
from the dock.

They begin to paddle, Leif at the bow and Jane at the stern. The sun at
their backs is still bright, but the day’s breeze has ebbed, and the lake is calm.
They cross a couple of boating channels, passing green and red buoys that guide
while distinguishing the boundaries of navigation for boats with deeps hulls. The
channel traffic from the mix of small boats and sporting craft is light, and the wake
is negligible.

“Where would you like to go?” Jane asks, as the canoe rocks gently from
the wake of a passing fishing boat.

“That’s Fox Island, right?” Leif asks, pointing with his paddle to a long,
lush forest. He turns and looks at Jane. “From the story, I mean,” he explains.

“Oh yes, I remember that,” Jane says, leisurely paddling from astern. “We
could follow up its length, for a while, if you like. Are you sure you’re not too
tired? It always seems four times as far as you’ve gone to go back, you know.”

Leif, trying to recall the story, misses her observation. “There’s a… a break
between the two islands.”

“Yes, I remember that too. That’s where the bird nest was.”

“Ospreys.”

“Yeah? Is that what they were?”

“Yeah.”

“Big, right?”

“Yeah.”

“We might not find that,” Jane says. “There are a lot of bays along here. It
could be hidden, if it’s there at all. We may need the motor boat for that.”

“Would you mind?”

“Okay,” Jane says. “If you’re sure you’re up to it.”

They paddle along the west shore of the island, searching each bay as they come to it for a sign of a channel. This continues for a half-hour, and Jane wonders if Leif is tiring.

“The farther we go, the farther we’ll have to paddle back” she suggests.

“I’m okay,” Leif says over his shoulder. He continues to paddle. “It must be along here somewhere.”

“It’s Indian land, isn’t it?” Jane asks. “That’s why there’s no cottages, I think. No, I remember. There’s some small cottages down at the end.”

They round a point, and an inlet, dotted on the shoreline with small cabins, comes into view.

Leif looks down the bay. It is deep, but looks promising. “Mind if we give it a try?” he asks.

She looks at her watch. “Sure,” she decides. “But let’s make this the last one. Actually, we may have exhausted all possibilities anyway. If it’s not here then… I don’t know. Maybe it’s not the same island. Or maybe your father took… uh… literary licence, or something. Know what I mean?”

“Made it up?” Leif asks.

“Maybe. I mean, the story was obviously made up, I think.” She looks for a reaction from Leif to her suggestion, wondering if he had believed the story, but he says nothing. Oh, the joys of self-discovery, she muses to herself. Indeed, she thinks, there have been a few surprises today. Perhaps there are more to come—Abbot’s obvious concern about the Institute had not been reassuring. A story is definitely unfolding, she thinks, speculating, as they paddle into the inlet, on what might lie around the next corner.

They paddle past a number of seagulls to their left, all floating lazily on the water. Behind the seagulls is a forest of green bulrush. Red-wing blackbirds flutter among the green. On the shoreline to their right are a number of small
cabins, many of which are slightly hidden among trees.

The bay narrows. Just as it appears that they have paddled as far as they can into the bay, they see that it continues in a slight, narrow bend to the left, rounding behind the stand of green bulrush. The water shallows, and spindly green weeds begin to poke through the surface, floating limply on top of the water.

- "I wonder if a motor boat can get it here," Jane comments, as she guides the canoe into the channel.

"There it is!" Leif shouts.

"What?" Jane asks.

"The tree!" he says, pointing with his paddle. He looks back, smiling.

There, as the canoe completes its turn around the bulrush, is a little inlet. In the middle of the inlet, a large grey tree, obviously dead, stands majestically, magnified by the circle of forest behind it.

"Centre field!" Leif yells, waving his paddle in celebration.

Jane paddles closer. *The story unfolds*, she thinks. There, at the top of the dead tree, is a huge nest. High and round, with sticks and twigs jutting slightly from its sides, it appears as an engineering marvel, just as the story described it. A scattering of green growth circles its small island base.

Jane looks from the base of the tree back up to the nest atop it. "Look at that," she whispers, astonished.
Book Three

Nunc cognosco ex parte (now I know in part).
I Corinthians 13:12
Chapter 44

Five plainclothes RCMP officers, all wearing identical black windbreakers, stand at the intercom at the gatepost of the Institute retreat. Henry Abbot sees them in a security monitor, their shadows drawn long in the evening sun. He had been trying to reach the Institute all day, with no success, and he has an ominous sense of foreboding about this latest development. Abbot’s medical training was financed by the Canadian Armed Forces, and he had paid back his debt by serving in the military for thirty years. He knows the determined bearing of peacekeepers when he sees them.

“Hello?” he answers

“RCMP,” one says, leaning into the gatepost speaker. “Open up please. We have a warrant to search the grounds.”

“I’ll be right down,” Abbot replies. He regrets that Larry Hynes, his part-time security man, is absent. Hynes had often talked about his service with the RCMP. But the retreat’s season had all but ended, and Hynes had packed and left for a condo in Florida just a week earlier.

Abbot walks down to the front gates and sees the five officers, their faces serious and focussed.

“Who are you?” one of the officers asks him.

“I’m Dr. Abbot. Henry Abbot. I look after the place. What’s this all about?”

“Like I told you, we have a warrant to search the grounds,” the officer says, holding up a faxed warrant. “My name’s Sergeant Dennison. We’re looking for a man named Fields. You might know him as Knight, or Ward,” he adds, as Abbot presses a button and the gates swing open. “Know him?”

“What first name do you have?”

“Leif, or Arthur, or…”

“Yes, I know him. He’s one of our clients.”

“Seen him around?”
“He’s out in a canoe with one of our employees, Jane Lapin.”

“He is, eh?” Dennison says doubtfully.

Abbot watches the officers as they pass through the gate. He looks up the road and sees two large unmarked sedans parked on the gravel shoulder. “What’s going on?” he asks.

Dennison ignores Abbot’s question. “You say he’s out in a canoe?” he asks.

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Anyone else around, inside or out?”

“No. Just me.”

“It wouldn’t be in your interest to mislead us, Dr. Abbott.”

“Really, it’s just me.”

“I see. And Mr. Fields is out on the lake.”

“In a canoe, that’s right. With Miss Lapin.”

“Fine,” Dennison says. He looks at the other officers. “You three take the house. You,” he says to the last officer, “keep an eye out here.”

Abbott watches the three officers assigned to the house walk down the driveway. Two climb up the stairs, cross the veranda, and enter the retreat. The other walks around to the left of the building.

“Dr Abbott?” Dennison says, startling Abbot.

“Yes?” he replies.

“Show me where you last saw them.”

“Yes, I’ll take you down to the beach. They shouldn’t be long.” They begin to walk down the driveway.

“You have a motor boat?” Dennison asks.

“Sure. I go fishing all the time.”

“That’s nice.”

“But it’s a big lake, that’s what I’m trying to tell you.”

“Just lead the way, Dr. Abbott.”

They round the retreat to the right, and see the officer searching the
property.

"Anything?" Dennison asks.

"Nope," the officer replies.

Abbott escorts Dennison down to the lake. They walk out to the end of the dock, and look out across the water.

"Did you see which way they were heading?" Dennison asks.

"Straight out, last I saw them. That way." He points to the channel that divides two islands. Beyond, the third island looms large in the background. The water is calm, with hardly a ripple, and reflects the island vista.

"We can wait, if we have to," Dennison decides.

"It will be dark, soon," Abbot says. He looks to his right, to the west, where the sun is lowering on the horizon, drawing long shadows. Wisps of pink cloud float above in the evening air. "A beautiful night for a canoe ride," he comments.

"Right," Dennison says, uninterested.

"Red at night, sailor's delight."

"Uh huh."

"I'm sure they'll be back soon."

Dennison looks at Abbot, then at his watch. "You don't have to keep saying that, Dr. Abbot."

"Sorry."

Dennison looks back at the retreat and notes the large picture window. "I think it would be nice if we waited inside, rather than stand around here all day."

"Certainly," Abbot replies. He leads the way to the back door of the retreat. "Perhaps I could make up a pot of coffee."

"Fine," Dennison murmurs.

"Really, the fishing is just excellent," Abbot comments, wondering if he might get a chance to try contacting the Institute again. He stops, and turns. "I once caught a muskellunge this big," he says, holding out his arms.

"That's nice," the sergeant replies, unimpressed.
Chapter 45

They had paddled through the channel to the open water on the other side of Fox Island. There, they stopped, and drifted.

It’s time we made for home,” Jane says. “Back to the retreat, I mean. It’s getting dark.”

“Sure,” Leif says.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah.”

“We’ll go back through the channel. It’s the shortest way.” Jane paddles backward to turn the canoe around, and they begin paddling together. They enter the channel, passing a duck blind on their left. Leif looks at the blind’s reflection in the still water.

“What are you thinking?” Jane asks, watching Leif paddle at the bow. A sadness seemed to have come over him. He does not answer, and she does not press him.

They approach the point of a little inlet. Leif murmurs something.

“Pardon me,” Jane asks.

Leif stops paddling, and looks over his shoulder. “A tepee,” he says.

Jane stops paddling too, and the canoe drifts. She looks on either side of the canoe, to the banks and forest beyond of Fox Island. “Where?” she asks.

Leif gestures to the forest that borders the tiny inlet. “Here,” he says.

Jane looks. “I don’t see it,” she says.

“Pull ashore,” Leif says. “This way.” His voice is calm. She steers the canoe up to the shore, following his directions.

“There’s a muddy place there where you can pull up,” Leif says. She guides the canoe until it settles softly against the mud.

“Why here?” she asks, looking into the forest.
“It said... it said in the story, just this side of the point.”

“The tepee?”

“Yeah.”

“You remembered that?”

He climbs out of the canoe, and pulls it farther ashore. She follows, balancing in the centre of the canoe until she too is on dry land. “You don’t see it though, do you?”

“No,” he answers. He takes the yellow rope tied to the bow of the canoe and looks for something to fasten it to.

“Wait,” Jane says. She grabs the canoe by the bow and pulls it farther ashore. “It won’t go anywhere now,” she tells him. She looks up at the sky, it’s blue darkening, the pink wisps of cloud fading with the setting sun. She hears the cracking of twigs and the crush of brush, and sees that Leif is disappearing into the forest. “We don’t have long!” she yells to him. He does not reply. “Don’t get lost!” she adds.

Her back is in knots from the paddling, and she stretches. Then, she takes a few steps down the shoreline, and listens as Leif’s footsteps echo through the inlet. He soon returns.

“It’s dark in there,” he says.

“Yes,” she replies.

He gives her a puzzled look. “Can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

“You once said... you said, we...we want to count you among our successes.”

“I remember.”

“Why did you say that?”

“You don’t remember?”

“No.”

“Well, we were counting on you. That’s not a very good answer, I know.”

“Tell me more.”
“Okay,” she says, and she takes a step towards the canoe. “But we should go. I’ll tell you on the way back.”

“No,” Leif says, stopping her. “Tell me now.”

“Oh, Leif, if that’s what you want.” She sighs impatiently, but continues. “There was Bleath, a patient before you.”

“Bleath?”

“Yeah. He died not long ago. Natural causes, and it couldn’t be helped.” She leans against a tree and looks out, across the water. “But that was like the tip of the iceberg. That’s why I’ve been so excited about your success. Until today, that is, and what’s happened to you.” She turns, and looks at him. “It’s something that I don’t understand.”

“Who am I?” Lief asks, his voice almost a whisper.

“Who are you? Oh, Leif.” She puts her hand against his cheek. “You are the sum total of all you know. Of all you remember.”

He takes her hand, and kisses it. “Jane... I...” She pulls back her hand. “It’s time to go,” she says abruptly.

His sadness returns. “I...I have to look again,” he says, and he turns and marches back into the woods.

“Leif!” she yells. “It’s time to go!”

“Just another minute!” he yells back, his voice cracking.

Jane turns to the water. She sighs. She looks at the water’s edge, kneels, and scoops water up in her palms. She watches as the tiny ripples in her palms settle and begin to mirror the inlet’s forest and the darkening sky above. She blows on it, and it ripples, and settles again. She listens to the crackling of Leif’s footsteps in the forest. She holds the water beneath her face and looks into it, and she sees the reflection darken. She whispers. You’ll never find it.

The voice echoes. “Jane!” She is startled, and releases her palmed reflection. She stands, and hears her name again. “Jane!”

She turns, looking into the forest. “Where are you?” she calls.

“Jane, come here, quick!”
“Where are you?” she says, entering the forest. “Keep talking!”

“I’m here!” Leif shouts.

“Keep talking!”

“Come and see!”

She follows the sound of Leif’s voice, brushing branches and leaves from her face as she wanders, trying to find him. “Here!” he yells, and his voice is closer, and she continues on. “I hear you,” he says, his voice quieter. “This way.”

She is close now, and she sees him, standing amidst a small, rectangular growth of forest flora. He watches her as she approaches. “Jane, look!” he says, and she walks right up to him, and looks closely at the plants.

“Look at what?” she asks.

“These,” he says, holding his hands wide. “Roses!”

She looks closer, and sees the little rose buds amidst the bushy leaves.

“So they are.”

“Yeah. I was standing here, just like, lost, you know, standing right on top of them practically. And then it occurred to me. This is a rose bush.”

“Uh huh,” Alana says, doubtfully.

“But don’t you see? This isn’t something likely to be growing wild, is it?”

“I don’t know. My mother used to grow them. Maybe they’re perennials. You know, they grow every year. These must be a hearty bunch.”

“But that’s not it, Jane.”

“Well, what is it?”

He looks at her. “I don’t know,” he admits quietly. His shoulders slump in disappointment. “I guess I thought you’d know. I...I thought it was something, but I don’t know now. It just...seemed like someone had been here.”

“Your father?”

“I...maybe.”

She grabs him, and hugs him, but he doesn’t hug back. “We’d better go,” she whispers, and she releases him. She begins walking back through the woods, but he does not follow. “Coming?” she asks, expectantly.
“Yeah,” he replies dejectedly, and he follows her through the woods to the shoreline, just down from where the canoe has been pulled ashore. They walk along the water’s edge until they locate the canoe. Jane climbs into the canoe, settling on the seat at the stern. Leif stands on the shore, beside the bow. He bends to climb into the canoe, then pauses.

“Jane?” he asks, his voice pleading.

“Yes, Leif?”

He can barely make out her face in the darkness. Suddenly, he hears the cry of an animal in the distance, a canine howl, long and eerie, and the sound freezes him. A chill goes down his back. Jane looks around, but says nothing. The cry subsides.

He shivers, and then all is quiet.

The feeling is gone.

He whispers.

Nothing.
EpiLOGUE

A door opens, and a man and a woman, their bodies in black silhouette against the light behind them, enter the darkness. The man switches on the overhead lights, and closes the door. They walk through a large room, slowly, amidst the hum of electrical equipment. The woman carries a clipboard. She pauses.

"My god!"

"Yes, it’s impressive, isn’t it?” the man says.

"All these people!"

"Up to four adults to a tube. They’re called deWArS, actually. Each patient is cooled in liquid nitrogen to minus one hundred and ninety degrees Celsius. Uh, what’s that number again?"

"Right here,” she says, pointing to a number on the clipboard.

"That’s back here,” he says, leading the way over the concrete floor. “We keep the children in a separate section. The smaller cylinders can be a bit shocking for visitors to see, though we don’t get many visitors. Just you.”

“People don’t visit?”

“This is the one room we don’t want to advertise. That’s why you had such a long drive from Metro.”

They walk through the forest of tall aluminium cylinders. “You been with the Institute long?” the man asks.

“I just started last week, actually. I’ve always been curious about this, you know,” she adds.

“You see them come and go, when you work in here. They don’t have
names or faces, to me. Just numbers.”

“I expected to see flowers, or pictures, or something.”

“Not in here. These things are too obvious as they are. If anyone asks, we do propane cylinder research, by the way.”

They arrive at the portion of the warehouse where metal cylinders, standing half the height of the adult dewars, sit upright in a bunch. “Here it is, I think,” the man says, pointing to numbers painted on a cylinder wall. “Just one home to a customer back here. Let’s see that number again.”

She shows him the clipboard.

“Yeah, this is it.” He looks at a tag hanging from the top of the cylinder. “It says here that this is to be delivered next week.”

“Mark it, cancelled,” the woman says.

“We don’t mark anything cancelled here.”

“Oh. Well, it’s the delivery that’s cancelled. Just make sure that’s understood.”

He takes a red-felt pen out of his pocket and writes in big lettering on the tag.

DELAYED

“That’s too bad, I guess,” he says, tucking the pen back into his pocket.

“I’ve always wondered,” she says, holding the clipboard tight to her body.

“What’s that?” he asks.

“It’s just that…well, do you think they dream?”

“No.”

“I wonder what it’s like. To be, without being. Know what I mean?”
VITA AUCTORIS

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Sir Sandford Fleming College
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Diploma (Radio Broadcasting) 1984

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