

Due to an amazingly complex case of mistaken identity, a nun is murdered in an idyllic setting in the Hudson River Valley, resulting in a frantic search by the assassins for their "correct" victim, with Death firmly behind the wheel.

Out of Order

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Out



of

Order

Kevin P. Murphy

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ISBN 978-1-60145-857-5

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2009

## TWO

**EARLY** Spring mornings in the Hudson River Valley challenge drivers, especially those unfamiliar with the roads, with their icy patches from mountainside runoff and frost creating slick spots capable of hurling a careless driver over sheer cliffs and down harsh rocky slopes.

Despite her reputation (she was known to her family as "The Flying Nun"), Sister Michael (*nee* Marie Lorenc), Order of Marian Devotion (O.M.D.), drove slowly northward on US 9W, after crossing from New Jersey into New York's aptly named Rockland County. Driving along the Hudson River Valley, she curbed her near-legendary tendency to drive "pedal-to-the-metal," as the road twisted and turned along the slopes of the mountains over which she drove cautiously northward toward the Bear Mountain area.

Making the driving more strenuous was the fact that Sister Michael was driving a friend's car for the first time, and not her own familiar Honda Civic, the use of which might have emboldened her this morning.

*"Maybe it's just as well that I'm driving Sister Gabriel's car--these curves would be too tempting in mine,"* she thought, consoling herself about her irritatingly slow rate of progress. On the other hand, driving at--or slightly less than--the posted speed limit offered fringe benefits, she realized, as she was able to take greater note of the visual beauty that accompanied her up the valley.

What awareness she had of the parallel US 9 that ran along the east bank of the still night-cloaked river was limited by the early morning darkness as the rising sun made a halo in the tree line along the east bank's mountain tops. Lights of occasional shipping on the river, and of locomotives traveling along both riverbanks, contrasted starkly with the rapidly descending band of sunlight that crept down the mountainside above the road on which Sister Michael guided the little Suzuki.

Bits of green were beginning to emerge on the foliage, just awakening from its winter slumber in an annual resurrection that spoke powerfully--and privately--to Sister Michael, whose devotion

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to God was not something she waved about like a football banner at a college game.

"*Thank you,*" she murmured, as she rounded a breath-taking curve that revealed miles of river ahead, the sweep of the mountains on both sides of the river gorge, and the coming of daylight on the shoulders of the west bank mountaintops while the east bank still remained deeply shrouded in the darkness and mists of dawn.

Then her car followed the road back down the slope into the darker valley below, and once again up toward the next peak in an undulating trek toward Bear Mountain.

\* \* \*

"Drive Time"--for many as welcome as Athlete's Foot, for a few the moment of challenge that tests their resourcefulness--"drive time" comes to Station WNYK-TV each spring and early winter. It is an especially bizarre time, when stories run more than usually toward the idiotic and titillating end of the spectrum. It is about ratings, the prize that drives competition among news organizations whose normal rule of thumb regarding stories is, "If it bleeds, it leads." During "drive time" the guidelines get ratcheted up to "If no one is bleeding, go out and stir up a fight!" Serious reporters dream of vacationing during "drive time" or, perhaps, of getting cosmetic surgery, whichever is more easily arranged.

Spring Drive Time had come again to WNYK-TV.

\* \* \*

"Jess, have you got a minute?" Bob Kushner stood in his outer office doorway as he caught Jessica Schoenhofen's attention. She gave a final instruction to Al Themander, her senior cameraman, who nodded and departed toward the parking lot exit, where his assistant, Johnny Pierce, was inventorying their gear before they set out on Jessica's project.

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"You're in mighty early this morning, Bob. What's up?" Jessica entered as Kushner held the door for her, then led the way into his private office.

"Drive Time—ruins my sleep—and my digestion—every season. I hate it."

Jessica waited for a moment after the door closed quietly behind them and Kushner took a seat in an easy chair in front of his desk, gesturing toward another on the opposite side of the low coffee table that separated them.

"*Informal intimacy*," she thought, "*Better watch out!*" Her polite smile gave no indication of her thoughts as she waited for the WNYK-TV News Director to get to the point.

He smiled at her as he asked, "How's the special project coming along, Jess? Are you about ready to run it?"

She shook her head. "Not yet, Bob—I have reason to believe that there's something going on up the valley this weekend, and I have to be there to see who comes out of the woodwork. I believe that there are some heavy hitters in this thing who haven't surfaced yet, but my sources indicate that they will appear this week."

"So, it could be another week or longer before you have it all together and ready to air?"

"Easily. A week minimum, I estimate—you know what these things are like, Bob. A source says three days, it's five—or never. But I don't think we're looking at 'never' here. What I have so far is excellent. We could run it as we have it, but we'd only spotlight the minnows. This is shark week up the Hudson, Bob. I believe my sources on this."

"You have a fantastic track record, Jess, so I don't doubt it." He paused for a moment, thinking, and then remembered his manners. "Coffee, Jess?"

"No, thanks. I need to get on the road and put my crew in place for what's coming."

"Before you go, let me ask you this—you've done some preliminary background taping to lead the report—how would you feel about our running that tonight as a teaser to strengthen our rush?"

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Jessica shook her head as she responded, "No, Bob—the way I've set it up, I'm afraid that we'd give everything away before we're ready."

"The other networks are killing us, Jess. We need a breakthrough story badly, and you're in the middle of what promises to be the story of the year—if not the decade!"

"God, I hate these ratings battles! I'd like to say go ahead, Bob, but it's too dangerous right now."

"Dangerous—how dangerous?"

"Damn dangerous! I've had to go under cover just to get close to this story. I change my appearance once we're away from here. I separate from my crew right after that—it's all pre-programmed from that point on. I cruise around in a little beater that I picked up just for this job, stay in touch with them by mobile phone and two-way radio, and guide their van to a good shooting position without getting them—or me—killed. This is no picnic, Bob. Run that stuff early, and we could wind up among the missing."

"Jesus! Killed—you're serious?"

"You know the kind of people we're talking about here—international drug lords, local Syndicate and, I am convinced, an influential government official—at least 'one highly placed person,' I've been told. Tell me that's not dangerous."

"No, you're right. But, damn, the head office is all over me about ratings—you know the crap. I need something to push us out in front or I'm headed for a Montana ghost town for my next assignment. And I'm not joking, either."

"That's all bluff and bluster, Bob, you know that—'Heads will roll!' 'Your children will be sacrificed!' Bluff and bluster. They do it every ratings drive."

"I know—that's how it was—but since this new management crew took over, that's how it has *been*. What do you think happened to our buddy, T. J. Willikens, in Boston? That 'seeking a different challenge' baloney was just smokescreen to save everybody's face. They axed Tommy—and his key staff, right down through the anchors and field people. 'Bringing in new blood,' is the party line. There was blood all right."

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"I never heard a word on that—are you sure?"

"The survivors are scared stiff—they're saying 'nuttin' to nobody.' I got it from Tommy last week, after a couple of hours of serious drinking. 'Seeking a new challenge,' my Aunt Clara—Tommy's so scared, he thinks he may never work again—unless he sticks to the party line. I don't think he knew what he had told me by the time it came out—he was pretty well into the bag. These guys are sharks! The fact that they don't know diddley about staffing a news operation doesn't matter. I need *something*, Jess, and you've been our ace in the hole! And now you're telling me we can't use it. I have great choices here: I can kill you and your team, or let us all die in the ratings war. No wonder I'm going broke on Maalox!"

"This is all coming at me too fast right now, Bob, and I have to get going. Let me think about this while I get on up the valley. Maybe there's something we can use, but I need time to review what I have, and how it's packaged. I'll call you in a couple of hours, okay?"

"We're counting on you, Jess—anything that can pump some excitement into our headlines—just a hint that something big is coming—will be a godsend right now."

\* \* \*

On a daily basis, Shea and his wife, Ann, who was a faculty member of Lackenby's Bowen High School, refuted the "soft life, easy hours" stereotype often held toward teachers in this society. Stereotypes notwithstanding, the work day began each morning for them at 5:00 A.M., with them sharing a quick breakfast, followed by rapid preparation for their respective jobs and getting their three daughters off to their respective schools after a decent breakfast. Since Shea's classes started a bit later in the morning than Ann's, he was usually the breakfast chef—and the chauffeur for their children.

As they shared morning coffee for the last quiet moment before the workday took over their lives, Shea smiled at his wife—marveling, as always, at her loveliness, no matter what the hour—



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and asked, "What's on your agenda today, love? Any exciting projects shaping up?"

"Nothing unusual. Today will be a recruiting day, as I try to round up a group for Saturday's work at Powderhorn Lake. It will probably feel more like track and field than recruiting, as I chase after the ones who really need the hours and keep ducking me."

"Those will be the same kids screaming at you when they don't get promoted to the next level at the end of the year because they will lack the required amount of hours, right?"

"Uh, huh—the same. What about your day, Hon'? Anything interesting ahead?"

"We're going into the perception stuff now, and that's always fun. That's the "Socio-Emotional Origins of Crime" course. And I'm getting into the on-campus interview activity in the sociology course, so it's fun time, at least for me."

"For them, too, if they're at all worth having in class. Those are fun sections as you've designed them. Lots of hands-on stuff."

"The old 'Nielsen Maxim' still holds true: 'the mind cannot absorb more than the seat can endure.' Gotta get 'em involved in the learning, just as you do with all the field projects for those kids. Speaking of kids, it's about time to get the little darlings up. God, how I hate that! It's the one time of day that they really live up to the idea of kids as monsters. Is it your turn to get 'em up, or mine?"

\* \* \*

Jessica rode out of the lot with her camera team in an old nondescript van that the station used for low-profile coverage of people and events. As they drove north on the Palisades Interstate Parkway, Jessica concentrated on her disguise, changing her appearance radically with skin-darkening makeup and a short, dark wig. Old jeans, a faded Michigan State University sweatshirt and hiking shoes completed her transformation.

The Palisades Interstate Parkway ended at US 6, where the van headed east to connect with US 9W, which they took north from the Bear Mountain traffic circle where the two highways met.

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Heading north on US 9W toward West Point, they dropped her a half-mile south of the little "Mom and Pop" motel where she had taken a room a week earlier under the name "Cindy Marshall."

Looking like a vacationer out for an early morning's stroll, she walked the rest of the way to the motel, going into her room long enough to grab a hooded rain jacket and visor. By the time she came out again, wearing sunglasses beneath the visor, she was unrecognizable as the well-known investigative reporter, Jessica Schoenhofen, and much more like the vacationing college teacher, "Cindy Marshall."

She had paid for a used, but serviceable, Ford Escort with traveler's checks made out to "Cindy Marshall." That was also how she paid for her room at the motel, which she had chosen as her base of operations in the Hudson River Valley. Like a good spy, she was careful to leave nothing in the room connecting her to Jessica Schoenhofen.

After starting the Escort, Jessica decided to call Kushner on her cellular phone before heading for her destination.

"Bob?--Jessica. Listen, I think there's something we can do to pump up our drive without giving anything important away. When I started the project, I put together a brief opening tape--also from Boscobel. It provided a great view down the valley toward Bear Mountain. I just open it with a few general comments about the drug problem, and hint that what little I've mentioned is the tip of a huge iceberg. That should be okay. I don't do anything but give background statistics about the drug problem and what it looks like in New York City--no names, no pointed hints about specific people. Tell Dave to close it with a statement to the effect that 'Our investigative team is currently looking into the problem and expects to have significant revelations very soon.' That should do it. What do you think?----Yes, Janie would know where it is. When she gets in this morning, tell her it's the original opening tape----Right, the *original* opening tape, the backgrounder. It's short, but sets the scene----Well, I hope so, too. Wish me luck up here. I think we'll have a lot more footage real soon. 'Bye."

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The large limousine coasted slowly toward the man sitting on a solid-looking concrete post beside the road, one of many such posts marking the steeper drops on the outside of the tightly twisting mountain road. The vehicle stopped in front of the man, who was dressed in an expensive-looking jogging outfit. The rear passenger window nearest the jogger slid downward and a dark-haired man's face appeared in the opening. He spoke to the jogger, who rose and approached the car.

"So, Senator, how'd you enjoy your workout?" he asked, as he opened the door for the jogger.

The man called "Senator" grunted as he got in beside the dark-haired man, who slid across the seat to make room for his guest.

"Felt like God-damned James Bond, running around the countryside like that, but we can't be too careful. It's prettier than the Capitol area where I usually run, but it makes you pay a higher price for the view--too damn hilly for my blood. I like a flatter run where I can keep a steady pace. I take it your trip up was uneventful?"

"Smooth as a baby's butt, Senator, smooth as a baby's butt."

"Good. Now, let's talk about the people we'll be meeting with today. Fill me in on them--and we can compare what any of us know about our competition."

\* \* \*

Jessica drove into the Bear Mountain Inn parking area, thanking her lucky stars for a parking position that gave her an unobstructed view of the entrance and the Seven Lakes Parkway that passed behind it and up into the park to the southwest. She took time to observe the lot and the area surrounding the inn before getting out of her car. Then, like any athletic young tourist, she began jogging away from the inn, paralleling the access road for about fifty yards before stopping. Again, she casually glanced around and then walked

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back across the nearby parking lot, crossing it diagonally toward the inn and the lake beyond, known as "Hessian Lake."

Reflecting on the legend surrounding the lake--that, following the Revolutionary War battle of Ft. Clinton, numerous corpses of Hessian soldiers had been weighted and thrown into the cold waters of the lake--once known as "Bloody Pond"--Jessica felt a chill along her spine, then chided herself about an overactive imagination, cut short her walk in that direction and entered the Bear Mountain Inn.

The restaurant area of the inn building, located on the second floor, offered an excellent view of the immediate valley, the playing fields, parking lot, Hessian Lake and the surrounding wooded slopes of Bear Mountain. Jessica selected a table overlooking the entrance drive and the parking lot, with her Escort in plain view. She knew that it was a gamble that she would recognize the "important government official" when he (or she?) showed up, but her instincts told her that the odds were in her favor--"*highly placed in the federal government*" had been the key, she thought. "*If that's true, I'll recognize him.*" It really was hard to conceive of a **woman** being the criminal in this case, but Jessica knew that she would have to stay open to that possibility. "*See what is,*" she admonished herself, "*not what is supposed to be.*"

She saw Al Themander leave the van that had been parked a few spaces away from the spot she had chosen for her car. He had waited until he saw her enter the lodge, and then followed, to join her in the restaurant for coffee and conferring.

The few patrons that morning were well dispersed, apparently wanting to take advantage of the view and the opportunity for solitude while enjoying their Continental Breakfast, which was all the inn offered in the morning. She and Al spoke softly, none-the-less.

"Can you see the driveway and the inn clearly from where you're parked, Al?"

"Yes. I should be able to check their dentures if they smile anywhere in those areas. I can also get the playing field and the drive that runs past the administration building or whatever it is over there

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at the south end of the parking lot. For anything else, we'll have to move."

"Let's hope we're ready for whatever develops."

"You must really trust those sources, Jess. This looks like a long shot to me."

"My sources on this project have not failed me yet, Al."

"Okay. What will happen, as you see it now?"

"Recognition is first. If I can't spot the person, it won't matter. That's the long shot, really, that my contact's idea of top official will match my Washington experience. If it's some secondary slug, he--or she--could waltz right by us. So, it has to be someone really significant, or we may go home empty. But my sources were positive about the person being a high visibility person, and ..."

"You trust your sources," Themander interrupted. "Okay, Jess, say that you do spot the guy. Then what?"

"I follow him--or her. If he drives, I'll tail him, with you a bit behind me ready to move up when he gets where he's going. That'll be touchy, but we'll have to wing it as well as we can without being noticed. It will be much better if he's meeting someone here. Then, we get what shots we can while they're visible. See, at least, who's meeting with whom. If they meet out in the open, you shoot everything you can. Pick up what sound you can with that snoopier mike of yours. If they go to one of the cabins-- which seems likely--I'll be 'Cindy the Jogger,' and see what I can do about locating the place so we can get you into a position to watch who comes and goes. The parking lot at the Overlook Lodge would be a good spot for shooting the cabins, which are secluded from both lodges. I'll keep you posted by two-way. You and Johnny stay out of sight while you're parked there, or the park police may get suspicious of you two. If they look inside the van, we'll be compromised up here."

"Yeah. The kid's snoozing in the van now. That reminds me--I promised him coffee and doughnuts for minding the store."

"Well ...that's funny."

"What?"

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"That limousine coming down 'Seven Lakes Drive'--over there--it's coming past the administration building now--that's not the sort of road you'd take a limo like that on."

"People get lost in these mountains all the time. Probably turned off the parkway too soon."

"Yeah, I suppose. Funny, though. That's a rough road--I've taken it a couple of times, and it's no fun in even a small car. A car that size would find some of those turns really tight."

As they pondered the event, a second large sedan, almost as imposing as the limousine, appeared on the road, following not too far behind it.

Jessica's instincts shifted into high gear at the sight. "Tell me you think that's coincidence, and I have a great big, granite and limestone suspension bridge over the East River that I think you'd just love to buy from me!"

Themander pulled out a small two-way radio, and pressed the transmit button, "Wake up, Johnny, we got business. Limo coming at you from the south, get on it--get the plates if possible--keep out of sight, though. Same treatment for the sedan behind it, kid. You read me, Johnny?"

A soft "10-4, Big Guy. I see 'em," came over the two-way, which Themander returned to its pouch, smiling at Jessica, "How's that, Jess?"

They watched as the two-car parade drove on past the lodge and out toward the highway. The limousine's tinted windows revealed nothing of any occupants, and the sedan's revealed nothing more than two people in the front seat.

She smiled back, "That's why you two are my team, Al. I always go first class."

"You don't want to chase those two, Jess? They look suspicious to my tired old eyes."

"Yeah, I agree--but my source said that it was here that I'd find my superstar, so we'll wait--but I hope Johnny got enough good footage that we might be able to fit those other two vehicles into the puzzle, as well."

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He finished his coffee, and prepared to rejoin his partner. "I'd better get back, just in case things start poppin' around here. Keep in contact, Jess."

"Yeah, I might as well get situated, too. I talked with the hostess for a while--played the 'Golly-gee!' tourist bit--do they get celebrities up here very often, that sort of thing. If there's any big shot here now, either she doesn't know, or they've been taught to keep quiet, 'cuz she convinced me there isn't anyone here right now worth knowing about."

Themander grimaced, briefly, "Maybe politicians don't rate in her celebrity book," as he sauntered away to get coffee and a roll for his partner.

"Now, *there's* a thought," Jessica muttered softly to herself. She pushed her chair back from the table, stood and walked slowly around the restaurant area, gazing thoughtfully out the windows, searching for a familiar figure--someone she would recognize from her Washington days--or even someone who looked like someone she should remember--but there were only people, no demigods, and only a few people at that. It was still early.

"Okay," she sighed, "*I guess it will be the hard way. Hell of a way to spend a beautiful morning,*" as she departed the inn and headed back to her car, there to wait as patiently as she could to see what developed. If anything would develop.

\* \* \*

After a donut and coffee at a roadside diner she had found between the Bear Mountain Bridge and West Point, Sister Michael drove north for several miles past the United States Military Academy until she saw the sign designating the entrance to the "West Hudson Retreat Center" that was her destination. She turned off US 9W and began to climb--even more cautiously now--the narrow, precipitous drive that led into the retreat center. Even with her own car she would have tended toward caution here, as the road hung on the edge of the mountain, with a sudden sheer drop and a quick end the penalty for inattentiveness.

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As she approached a knoll, the ground spread out on either side of the road, and trees replaced the cliffs. There the drive branched in several directions, one leading to the main retreat center, others to lodges used by visiting groups who wished to sequester themselves away from the more hotel-like main building.

Sister Michael's group was scheduled to use the Harriman Lodge, which a sign indicated was farther up the mountainside. She took that lane, and found herself surrounded by trees, with an occasional ravine sliding unsettlingly into view on one side of the lane or the other as she continued to exercise more than her usual degree of caution.

As she neared the Harriman Lodge turnoff, she saw a car sitting squarely across the lane, effectively blocking the route.

She noted that it was a large new automobile, but her attention was more focused on the two men who leaned against the car. Engaged in what appeared to be casual conversation, when they heard her vehicle approaching, both became alert, poised like hunting dogs ready to flush and pursue game. Yet neither one had actually moved perceptibly.

Something in their demeanor sounded an alarm at a deep, primitive level in her psyche. A veteran teacher in inner city schools, her senses had become attuned to gang violence. A similar sense of danger caused her to drive past the large automobile and its sentries with no more than a casual nod to the men as she continued on up the road to the next cabin parking area. There she sat, wondering why she hadn't just asked them politely to move aside so that she might get to Harriman Lodge. Admittedly, she was three hours earlier than her group's scheduled arrival time, but it seemed hardly likely that someone else could be using the lodge now. If there were other people still occupying it this morning, how would the Retreat Center employees be able to freshen up the space in so short a time?

For one of the few times in her life, Sister Michael felt menaced, unable to appreciate the natural beauty that surrounded her. Feeling isolated, farther up the mountain in the Roosevelt Lodge parking area, with a few unoccupied vehicles offering her no sense of



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security in the early morning quiet, she decided to go back down to the highway and wait until the appointed hour before returning.

She backed the Suzuki out of the parking space in which it had been idling, and headed back down the drive. The sun was now high enough to make the light contrasts difficult. Sister Michael put on her sunglasses thinking, offhandedly, that they would also help to disguise her features should the two idlers still be blocking the Harriman Lodge entry.

They were, and her tension became palpable as she drove by. This time she was keenly aware of their scrutiny.

She continued down the road, which widened downhill from the Harriman lane. From that point down to US 9W, it was possible for two cars to pass without one or the other having to resort to the shoulder. While passing would still be a tight process--more than exciting where the steepest cliffs dropped away from the road's edge--it was possible.

As she rounded a curve, she saw a large limousine approaching, looking rather like a man-of-war steaming down a narrow channel. It pulled as far as possible to one side and she held her breath, realizing that they would pass on the verge of a harrowing drop-off. As the two vehicles got close to one another, she saw that it was a limousine with darkly tinted windows, and that a rear window was open, some passenger perhaps appreciating the scenery. Curious, she glanced at the open window space as they passed and noted two men sitting in the back seat, the white-haired one farther from her suddenly covering much of his face with a magazine or something of that sort. That surprised her. She also felt a vague sense of recognition regarding the man sitting near the open window and that, too, surprised her.

As her attention returned fully to the road in front of her while the receding limousine disappeared around a curve, she thought, "They look like the kind of people who would be at home with those two at the Harriman entrance."

Then she thought about how she would fill the next two hours, finally deciding to return to the diner for a real breakfast.

*Kevin P. Murphy*

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As the Suzuki passed them, the taller of the two watchers spoke to his associate.

"She didn't stay long, did she?"

"Didn't look much like trouble, either, you think?"

"No, I guess not. Pennsylvania plates--I got the number."

"You and your photographic memory, Carl. How the hell do you do it?"

"I don't know--no, really. Just being able to remember stuff don't mean I know what to do with it, you know?"

"It's still weird, man. I seen those plates, too, but all I remember is the state and L-something."

"Pennsylvania, LOJ 4783. Like I said, weird--but useful."

"Heads up. They're back."

"Right on time."

\* \* \*

Ending a lecturette on "The Scientific Method in the Behavioral Sciences," Shea paused to determine what questions students had about the material. It was their last class session before a long weekend and everyone was already a bit "somewhere else," Shea included, so it seemed prudent to take stock at that point.

"I think that I see questions out there--what problems are you having with this? Andi?"

Andrea Dutton--"Andi"--hesitated but a moment before responding, "I—I guess it's the idea of predictability. It's like you're saying that people aren't really in control of their decisions, that they're like little atoms in a physics experiment—you know, controlled by forces they can't see, and can't change. At least, that's what's bothering me about it."

Several others students nodded in agreement.

"Okay," Shea nodded, "Anything else? — Anyone?" No one else seemed to want to add anything, and he continued, "It's an

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understandable concern, Andi. I had a similar reaction when I first studied the concept. The notion of predictability in human behavior sounds like a contradiction of individual differences, free will, and so on. But, in fact, it isn't exactly that. The kind of predictability we're talking about here is one of trends and patterns, not inflexible, magnet-to-iron-filings inevitability.

"Now, before we go on, gang, I want to assure you that Andrea and I didn't set this next part up. It's just that the kind of predictability that I'm talking about prepared me for this moment. Because I've taught this subject many times before, I was able to anticipate the kind of question you've raised here today. Therefore, I have an activity prepared that will, I hope, answer your questions and relieve your concerns.

"One of the best ways to internalize the idea of social research, I believe, is to do it. Therefore, you are about to conduct a small research exercise, right here on campus, today. Not to worry," he added, seeing the looks of anxiety that appeared on some of their faces, "You will be able to do it with the material that I am going to provide. You may even have fun doing it. Here's what will happen: you are each going to act as *survey researchers*, seeking out two separate persons on campus to interview on a contemporary social issue. I have prepared the survey material for you and will provide guidelines by which you are to conduct your research."

Shea walked around behind his desk and opened his attaché case, which was lying on top of the desk. He withdrew a small pack of paper, removed a clip that held the pieces together, walked back around the desk, approached a student in the front row of seats and handed over the pack of paper, indicating that they should be passed around the room.

"This is your survey sheet. On it are the questions you will be researching, with space for you to record the information that you pick up."

Shea waited until all had copies of the survey, had time to read it over, and then he continued, "As you can see, the instrument asks the respondent to indicate what he or she believes to be the biggest social problem facing America today. Once they have told you that,

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you will ask the indicated follow-up questions about the respondent's opinion as to the cause(s) of the problem, the steps needed to eliminate or reduce the problem, the person(s) who must take those steps, what the future will look like if the problem is reduced or eliminated—and also their estimate of the likelihood that it can be resolved, and why. Any problems with the questionnaire?"

Shea waited for them to look the form over again. Then, he continued, "Okay, that's the surface task. However, there is another, *experimental research* phase to this activity, and that is this: once you have established an interview relationship with a respondent, and while you are conducting the interview, I want you to get as close, physically, to the respondent as possible, ***without telling the respondent that that is what you are doing!*** Just move in on the person, gradually, without overtly acknowledging that you are doing it, and note the respondent's reaction. And that is what the exercise is really about. By all means, get their responses to the questions. That will be useful, too. But your main goal, today, is to examine people's reactions to another person's invasion of their personal bubble, and to learn about the limits of people's personal space when we compare notes after the experiment. What are your questions at this point?"

"We're not to tell them that we're trying to learn about their personal space, right?"

"Right. They are to know only that you have the indicated survey questions for them to answer."

"And who are we, as far as they are concerned?"

"Just who you are—students in the behavioral sciences, learning to conduct surveys for a class that you're taking here on campus."

"Should we write down their responses to the questions, anyway?"

"Absolutely. That, as they say in the spy stories, is your cover. And it will be interesting to see what kinds of responses you all get to that part of the experiment. Any other questions?"

"We're going to do this now?"

"Yes."

"How long have we got?"

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"Take 20 minutes—that's your break, plus a few minutes. ***At the very latest***, be back in this room 25 minutes from now. That will give us time to process your experience a bit before the period ends. Any other questions?" Hearing none, he concluded, "Okay, one final note: ***do not discuss your experiences with anyone*** until after you come back to class and we have had time to process the data—now, take off, spread out on campus, pay attention—and have fun."

\* \* \*

When the little Suzuki passed the limousine, the white-haired man instinctively covered his face with the road atlas that he had been perusing. He saw the driver clearly, however, as he peered over the atlas to see if he might spot a familiar face. The driver was female, young--perhaps in her early thirties--pleasant featured, with a short hairstyle that was becoming to her without diminishing her femininity. Then, she was past. He thought that there had been something vaguely familiar about her, but couldn't place her with any certainty. "*Gene pool*," he thought. "*She looks like someone else I really do know, but can't recall.*"

"Damn, John," he muttered, turning to his companion as he continued, "I thought your boys were supposed to have the trail secured against snoopers."

"It's a public area, Senator. We picked it for just that reason, remember, but we scheduled the meet early so that we'd see very little activity up here. And that one gal didn't exactly look like a federal agent. I know, I know," he continued, waving a hand impatiently at the senator, "they don't all wear neon signs that say 'Fed.' I'll have her checked out. I know you'll feel better if we do."

"Absolutely! We can't afford to have it known about this meeting, you must realize that. There was something familiar about her, but I can't quite . . ."

"Relax, Senator! I'll see to it that your image isn't messed up. Ah, there they are! I'll check with them, and then we'll go up to the meeting, okay?"

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The limousine glided to a stop in front of the Harriman Lodge lane entrance, and the dark-haired passenger got out and approached the two watchers, who regarded him respectfully.

They spoke quietly for a moment, then the man got back into the limousine, while the two watchers got into their car, pulling it away from the lane entrance, like a four-wheeled gate. The limousine passed through and the other vehicle reversed itself, again blocking the lane.

The man turned to his companion.

"Everything's going fine, Senator. The area is all secured. They say she just looked like a lost tourist--went up the mountain, came back down the mountain. But we'll check her out."

"Let's get on with it, then."

\* \* \*

Fifteen minutes passed before Shea's students began trickling in. Eleanor Stenson, the first, appeared a bit agitated and asked if she would have time for a cigarette out in the stairwell, where the cigarette urns were clustered. Indicating that there were still a few minutes before he expected to continue the class session, Shea asked, "How did it go?"

She paused in the doorway, as she felt inside her bag for cigarettes, and said, "I only interviewed one person, a guy. I think that he thought I was really flirting with him and the survey was just an excuse. He started following me all over campus, and I had a hard time losing him--I hope. I was so busy trying to shake him that I didn't talk to anyone else."

Shea smiled, briefly, commenting, "I guess that's what they mean by 'unintended consequences of research,' Eleanor," as she turned and exited the room, leaving Shea to wonder what the rest of the class would report.

\* \* \*

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After the class members had worked in groups to combine the data from their respective experiences, Shea passed out a handout that he had prepared in advance. He allowed them several minutes to read the single sheet, which contained the predictions that he had made about their just-completed activity.

The handout containing Shea's predictions read:

**When we talk about predictability of human behavior in this classroom context, we are referring to what the Theodorsons<sup>1</sup> described as 'social fact,' a term that refers to a category of facts with very distinctive characteristics, such as forms of behaving, thinking and feeling, that are external to the individual. Thus, 'social facts' are predictable, and do not depend on the unique identity of individuals in interaction. Social facts only depend on the existence of the interaction itself. To illustrate the nature of "social facts," I offer the following:  
My Predictions: Before meeting the members of this class, I made these "predictions" regarding the members' experiences with the "Campus Survey Activity:"**

**Those who say they got to "physical contact" distance ("touching," etc.) from the respondent will actually mean by that--in the majority of cases--that they stood side-by-side and touched shoulders or arms,**

---

<sup>1</sup> Theodorson and Theodorson, *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969.

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**rather than standing face-to-face and looking at each other squarely. The closest actual face-to-face distance will be no closer than two feet.**

**More members will pick respondents of the opposite sex than respondents of the same sex.**

**Members will report the following feelings, among others:**

**Initial embarrassment--most members.**

**Relaxation after beginning the interview--about half.**

**Feelings of power as interviewer--a minimum of 3 to 4 members.**

**Guilt because of the hidden agenda in the activity--at least 3 or 4 members.**

**At least one class member will report an unusual, bizarre, or unsettling encounter.**

"I didn't need to know you before I made these predictions," Shea said, adding, "How close did I come with these 'social facts' to the results you shared in your group reporting?"

Impressed, Eleanor commented, "My God, that's spooky! You hit 'em all!"

A general murmur of appreciation, accompanied by applause, followed that comment.

Shea waved a hand in deprecation, as he said, "Here's another question for you to ponder: Given these results, how many of you were compelled to act as you did with no room for individual choice? Which gets back to your concern, Andi--and the concern of all of us who wondered about the issue of free will and social predictability--how do you feel about that question now?"



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"Well, it is spooky, just like Eleanor said, but it's not the kind of spooky that I thought it was. What it says to me is that there are things about people that are sort of predictable if we know the kinds of things--you know, like forces at work, social expectations, and the way a situation is structured--that make it possible to know what to expect before the things actually happen, or even before we meet the actual people who will be involved. Does that make sense, what I just said?"

Sam Martino commented, "I'm thinking about something a buddy of mine and I did one day, coming up out of the subway in downtown Chicago--right in front of the Chicago Theatre, in fact. We both started staring straight up at the sky like something unusual was happening. A whole bunch of people started doing the same thing, some even asking each other what was going on. It's sort of like that, isn't it?"

Andi nodded, "Yeah, like that. You know that things like that will get a reaction of some kind, but you don't know for sure what it will be, or exactly who will be doing it."

"Here's a chance to find out," Shea answered as the classroom door burst open and Lloyd Rains surged in, taking the first open chair in the front of the room, "Let's hear what happened to him. Lloyd, how did it go?"

Shaking his head, Lloyd spoke directly to Shea, "God, that's a dangerous activity! I almost got dropped by the State Line Security Department's SWAT team!"

"What happened?"

"Well, I went over to the Student Union, where I used to work when I first started here. Familiar territory, right? So, I'm interviewing this girl behind the cash register when she suddenly throws her arms around me and kisses me! I'm so surprised, I jump backwards--there's a hidden alarm near the cash register, and I triggered it. Next thing I know, there are three of the Security team, packing guns, bracing me against the wall! Well, the girl explained what happened, but, *sheesh!* Scared the hell out of me! I could have been shot! Anyway, turned out that she was a kid from my neighborhood who recognized me from when we were growing up. I

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was one of the older kids, right? I didn't recognize her, though, and that's why I jumped back! Sheesh, Doc, I was scared!" He smiled, finally, shaking his head.

"Well, Lloyd, I'm glad you weren't shot. And the girl?"

Lloyd smiled more broadly, and shrugged, "We're meeting after this class." And the rest of the class reacted, with various "Uh, huh," "Awwwww," laughing responses. Looking intently at the desktop, Lloyd merely raised one arm and waved.

Smiling, Shea concluded, "And who says the behavioral sciences can't be exciting? Well done, Lloyd! There were other interesting outcomes from the activity, but I don't think we'll top your experience for a while--at least, I hope not.

"Given your unexpected windfall, Lloyd," Shea's comment was greeted by more laughter, "I won't suggest that you remain behind after class to get an overview of the group's experiences but, sometime this week, stop by my office for a few minutes and I'll fill you in on what happened while you were out on the firing line. The handout that I gave out after most of the group returned today outlines a lot--actually all--of the group's experiences in the activity, even--in a general way--anticipating your experience. There are extra copies here in the room, Lloyd. I have to tell you, too, that my handout doesn't always hit 'em all, but it has always been right about most of them happening every time we do this activity. Predictability.

"And, here's another thought to make you wonder about scientific predictability in the behavioral sciences: 20 years from now, when one of you is teaching an equivalent class here or at some other university--or 40 years from now, when one of your students is teaching the class--you won't be able to rely on the predictions that I've made with the activity during this era. Society will change, and you'll have to collect data all over again to see what patterns emerge. But that's the point! Patterns *will* emerge. They just may not be exactly the same patterns that we see today. It's stuff like that that makes the behavioral sciences fascinating--and frustrating.

"I guess that about wraps it until next week. Before it fades completely from memory amidst the joyful distractions of your

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weekend, review the text material on 'social facts' and the concept of experimental replication, using today's experiences as your frame of reference. Write down anything that bothers you--or excites you--about the material, and we'll work with your ideas next session, when we'll move further into the scientific method as it applies to the behavioral sciences."

\* \* \*

Sister Michael swung the Suzuki into a parking space near the entrance to the Harriman Lodge and shut off the engine. Unlocking the trunk lid, she exited the car and walked around to the trunk, where she removed her traveling bag and a folder containing conference materials that she had received earlier. She closed the trunk, locked the car and headed toward the lodge building.

As she crossed the parking lot toward the entrance, a young man came out and approached her, smiling a worried sort of smile that told Sister Michael he must be working for the retreat center.

"Sister Gabriel, how good to see you again! You took me by surprise when I saw you getting out of your car. I thought you were coming up with a van full of your associates."

Sister Michael smiled as she responded. "I'm not Sister Gabriel, Mr.... "

"Tomkins--George Tomkins--not Sister Gabriel? But, we met last month when . . ."

Sister Michael interrupted him, as she removed her wallet from her purse and showed him her driver's license. "It happens all the time, Mr. Tomkins. Sister Gabriel and I look a lot alike."

"I'll be darned--Sister Michael Lorenk--I'll be darned. You really do look a lot alike!"

"It's our genes, Mr. Tomkins. We both are of Polish ancestry. And it's Lorenc-- pronounced like Lawrence of Arabia. You were right about Sister Gabriel coming up with a van-load of people. This is her car, so that may have added to the confusion. I had some errands to run, so we switched off. Otherwise, I'd have been driving

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the van. They should be along soon. Is there anything I can help you with now, to get things set up?"

"Well, yes, Sister, you can, if you know what Sister Gabriel wants in this opening session--equipment-wise, I mean. Can I show you the space?"

"Yes, that would be good. I know what she has scheduled, and I know the opening speaker, so I believe I can help you define what's needed. Show me the room, please."

"That's great! Not only do you look alike, you work alike. This way, Sister."

\* \* \*

After finishing his classes at the Liberal Arts Building, Shea crossed the campus to the Learning Resources Building, which also housed the faculty offices.

There was coffee in the communal faculty reception area, and Shea was pleased to see that it appeared to be fairly fresh. He paused long enough in the reception area to claim a cup of coffee, which he poured into a Styrofoam cup to which he had already added some powdered creamer, and covered it with a plastic lid. Then, he continued to the office that he shared with Frank Stanley, PhD., a teacher in the Chemistry section of the Physical Sciences Department. Because of staff size and office availability, theirs was the only cross-disciplinary pairing in the Behavioral Sciences Department's office area, a factor that subjected each of them to friendly jibes from visiting members of the opposite discipline.

The office was locked and the lights were off. Shea unlocked the door and entered, turning on the lights. He set his attaché case on his desk long enough to remove the folder of student papers that he intended to evaluate, and slid the case out of the way, under his desk.

Then, he took his own ceramic mug from its resting place on the lowest of the shelves that ran along the wall above the right side of his desk, removed the plastic lid from the Styrofoam cup, and poured the brew into the mug, lettered with Shea's personal motto, "This time, this place--that's all there ever is."

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Setting the cup to his right, near the front of the desk--which butted squarely against the front end of Stanley's desk--Shea pulled the first student paper from the folder and began to read.

\* \* \*

About a quarter of an hour later, Shea disgustedly shoved the paper aside, leaned back in his chair, tossed his pen on the desk with a clatter, and expressed his disgust with himself more loudly than he realized, "Damn!"

He was surprised by the unexpected but familiar sound of student assistant Donald Dixon's voice from the outer office, "Are you all right, Matt?"

Dixon often appeared unexpectedly, and Shea associated his quietness of movement with his expertise as a magician--a skill that had sparked Shea's critical insight into the solution of a major murder case the previous year.

"I'm okay, Don--just disappointed at my own thick-headedness this morning. How are you doing?"

At the faint sound of Dixon's approach to his office doorway, Shea turned in his swivel chair and faced the doorway as Dixon appeared therein.

"I'm great, Matt--thanks to you and Chief Weiss. You know, I never did thank you for all that you both did to get me free of that dumb doctor's drug routine."

"We were both glad to help, Don, and delighted that our--very smart--medical staff proved you to have been correct all along. So, how have you been? I've missed not having you in class this semester."

\* \* \*

Donald Dixon had originally been a recurring source of frustration to Shea. While there had been something basically likable about the young man, Shea had also been irritated often by Dixon,

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who had demanded inordinate amounts of attention whenever he could collar Shea, asking for help and guidance that he never seemed to use.

Not liking to be used badly, Shea had resented Dixon's encroachment on time that might better have been devoted to helping others who would use the help. Knowing that about himself, he usually referred more difficult cases to those of his peers who specialized in therapy.

Unfortunately, some students would not be referred to the practicing therapists among Shea's peers. Thus, he was forced to struggle along with them as best he could, unhappy though he might be at the prospect. Donald Dixon had been one such subject.

Shea had believed that many aspects of Dixon's behavior ranged a bit outside the rather loose limits that define normal behavior. However, he also realized that Dixon was uncommonly bright and imaginative, possibly falling into a category once loosely labeled as "genius."

When they first met, Dixon had been a drama major, with a minor in sociology. Following a series of academic and real-life adventures in the realm of the behavioral sciences, Dixon had switched his major to sociology, with drama as his minor subject.

It was a decision that Shea had privately applauded, having seen how brilliantly Dixon had analyzed the available data concerning a series of Lackenby murders that had almost been pinned on him by a most ingenious--and murderous--classmate. That experience--and the role that Shea had played in saving Dixon from a monstrous frame-up--had convinced Dixon that Social Psychology was a more fascinating field for him to pursue than theatre. Dixon made that decision despite the fact that he had proven to be an accomplished performing illusionist, perhaps his one safe refuge during his earlier, more trying years.

After he had been diagnosed with a heart weakness in his early teen years, an inappropriate drug regimen had been imposed on him by well-meaning parents and a less-than-cutting-edge family doctor, who had prescribed the wrong medicine to begin with, and

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subsequently prescribed additional drugs to counteract the negative psychological effects of the initial drug regimen.

The interaction of the drugs had led Dixon to near suicide and temporary institutionalization, despite his vigorous assertions that the drugs were causing his bizarre behavior. Unfortunately, he had been unsuccessful at convincing anyone in authority of that fact.

Nothing had changed in Dixon's favor until Shea had intervened, after observing the bright young student extensively under classroom and external circumstances that suggested that Dixon might be right. With the persuasive support of the Lackenby Chief of Police behind him, Shea had been able to request a court-approved study of Donald's physical and mental condition under the influence of his prescribed drug regime. Performed by the medical staff of State Line University Hospital, Dixon's claims had been supported. The struggling youth had been freed, finally, of the incorrectly prescribed drugs that had been handicapping him for far too long.

After examining Dixon's analysis of the series of seemingly unrelated murders that were nearly laid at his doorstep (something of which Dixon had then been unaware), and after he had indicated his desire to change his major focus to sociology, Shea had recommended to his department chairperson that he be offered a position as student assistant in their department. It was a recommendation that Shea had not regretted, seeing the way in which the bright youth had changed since being freed from the prescription routine that had so seriously handicapped him until then.

\* \* \*

Shea waved his hand toward the visitor's chair next to his desk, and Dixon eased himself into it.

"I've been busy enough, Matt, between homework assignments and helping out here in the department. But it is a good kind of 'busy,' and I like it."

"How are things at home?"

"A little lumpy still. Mom and Dad are still carrying a lot of guilt because they think they failed me when they supported the doctor's

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prescriptions for me. But that's what parents tend to do, isn't it--follow the doctor's recommendations? If I hadn't had my experience, I'll bet that I'd do the same, without questioning a thing."

"Have you told them that?"

"Sure. It's like you told us in class, 'People can't read your mind, but they can misread your behavior. So communicate. Let 'em know what you think and what you feel.' So, I've told the folks what I feel, but they're still struggling with it. But we're getting on better, and that's a good place to be, don't you think?"

"Absolutely!"

"So, what can I do to lighten your paperwork--or whatever?"

\* \* \*

By the time afternoon arrived, Jessica felt like a well-worn gym shoe, sweaty, pungently fragrant, stiff and unclean. She had, she was sure, become familiar with every tree on the mountainside facing the parking lot, and still there was no sign of any government figure she might recognize. Except for the early morning sighting of the unlikely limousine and its companion sedan coming down the Seven Lakes Drive, there had been nothing of the slightest interest to ease the boredom.

She had taken one break imposed by Nature, grabbed some junk food from one of the machines in the inn, and that was it. She knew that Al Themander and Johnny Pierce had been similarly burdened--and relieved--but at least two of the team had been on watch all the time.

She was beginning to doubt the reliability of her source when Themander interrupted her reverie with a call. "Heads up, Jess! Here comes that limo again. From the north."

She turned in time to see the first of two vehicles come up the drive and past the entrance to the inn. She grabbed her Canon, and swung it into play, focusing the 400-mm lens as she panned to follow the vehicle up the drive. When it passed her position, she had a clear shot at the rear end, including the license plate, before the trailing sedan masked it. She shot photos of the second vehicle, also at high



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magnification, noting the two apparently male occupants. She got its license plate as well, and hoped that her team got video copy of the vehicles as sharp as those her camera would undoubtedly yield.

She picked up the small two-way and called Themander.

"Did you get it, Al?"

"Got it--sharp stuff, I think. What's next?"

"We wait. I still expect to see someone I'll recognize. Dollars to doughnuts, he's in that limo. But if we try to follow them, we'll be spotted for sure. So, we just wait."

\* \* \*

Hardly 15 minutes had passed from the time they photographed the limousine until Jessica saw him. Dressed in a jogging outfit, he came down from behind the Administration Building and across the open field toward the parking lot. Picking up her camera with one hand, she also grabbed her two-way unit, pressing the transmit button.

"The white-haired runner, Al, coming in from the south end of the parking lot. Get on him. Got it? Over."

Themander's voice came back faintly from the two-way, which she had placed with the speaker facing down on the passenger cushion. "We see him, Jess. Rolling tape. Over.""

"Okay, fella, come this way--attaboy--oh, **wow -- Senator Ralston!** You sanctimonious hypocrite! And I voted for you! So much for my judgment!"

Senator Ralston stopped next to a nondescript automobile about a hundred yards south of Jessica's position. Starting her car's engine, she picked up the two-way again, "Get that car, too, Al. This is big stuff. You copy? Over."

"Gotcha, Jess. Johnny is on him. You gonna fill us in on this guy, over?"

"Oh, yeah, but first, let's see where he goes. Stay with me, guys, when he leaves the lot--over."

She heard the sound of the van's engine starting as Themander responded, "We're right behind you, Jess. Out."

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The senator backed his car away from the concrete bumper, and turned toward the north end of the lot. Jessica picked up a map and held it in front of her as he drove by, not more than 20 feet from her Escort. He paid no attention to her as he maneuvered around the unoccupied gatekeeper's shack and onto the inn's driveway. He signaled a left turn and crossed out onto Seven Lakes Drive, stopping at the traffic light where the drive joined US 9W. Jessica drove slowly out of the lot, watching his vehicle, then followed, just making the light before it changed again. Themander stopped momentarily at the light. Then, with no other traffic on the road, he ran the light to keep Jessica's vehicle in sight.

The procession moved north into the Bear Mountain Bridge traffic circle. The senator's car went completely around and back southward on US 9W for a short distance before taking a hard right turn up the driveway toward the Overlook Lodge. Jessica drove around the traffic circle one more time to give the senator time to reach his destination. Dodging incoming traffic from US 6 east-, and westbound, and US 9W north-, and southbound insured that they would not be close on the senator's heels by the time they, too, turned up the Overlook Lodge driveway. Themander waited another minute or two to allow Jessica time to get out of sight. Then, he too, drove up the mountain toward the Overlook Lodge. As they passed the group of stone lodges on the south side of the road, they noted that the senator's car was parked in the uppermost cabin's parking area.

"Summit Lodge, Al. Is that symbolic? The drug summit-- Jessica's story."

"Yeah, I get it, Johnny. Poetic. There she is."

They had reached the uppermost parking area, in front of the Overlook Lodge, out of sight of the lower mini-lodges. Themander pulled the van alongside Jessica's car. She got out and joined them in the van.

"Do you want to see the raw footage, Jessica?"

"Yes, Johnny, I definitely do, but first, let's figure out what's next. The jogger down there, in case you didn't recognize him, is the illustrious Senator Edward Theodore Ralston, of our glorious Empire State."

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"Teddy? Naw--you're kidding!"

"Senator Blue-Blood? I don't believe it--that guy?"

"I know, guys, I had to look closely, too, but it's Ralston. I've seen him running before--for our cameras in D.C.--for charity, right? But take off the sunglasses, the headband and the running suit, substitute an expensive business suit, and it's our guy. Trust me. It's Ralston."

"Jesus! I thought he was 'Mr. Clean.' All right, Jess! Your source was dead on target. What's next?"

"We need to get you guys into position to keep an eye on that cabin he's in. Tape any visitors. You know the routine. What do you think about the layout here?"

"What do you think, kid?"

"I need to go back down the road and see what's possible. I think that there's plenty of cover below that maintenance cabin we passed just before we got into this lot. I'd be looking right down on his place, see any incoming visitors, and be able to stay out of sight of any cars coming up here. After dark, their headlights will be sweeping the north side of the drive when they come around that section. A little masking tape over the cue light and my mini-cam is as stealthy as you can get."

"It will be cold tonight, Johnny. I don't like the idea of your being exposed out there all night."

"Your call, kid. We could put the van behind that maintenance shack."

"No, Al, it'd stand out too much. The guy's gotta be a little paranoid, you know? You cough, open a can of soda--step out to take a--trip to the john--he hears a sound and gets spooked. I'm Special Forces-trained, right? I can sit in his front room, and he won't know I'm there--so to speak."

"Okay, kid. Sounds good to me. Jess?"

"Yeah, I think so. You guys know you're both on premium overtime, don't you?"

"Wouldn't have it any other way, Jess."

"I've got my outdoor gear in the back. I won't be cold, Jessica."

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"Good. When I go down, I'll get you something to eat--nothing fancy, I guess, but burgers, for sure. You've got all the soda and stuff that you need?"

Both men nodded.

"Cheeseburger and fries for me, Jess. Johnny?"

"Cheeseburger--two of 'em, please. No fries."

"Okay. Let's see the footage before I go."

\* \* \*

Immensely pleased with the videotaped results of their day's work, Jessica drove into the town of Monroe to get her team's dinner, added a carryout for herself, and headed back to the Overlook Lodge parking lot. There, she dropped off her team's food and departed for her motel, to eat alone while she planned the next day's activities and roughed out her program's copy to include the day's discovery.

\* \* \*

Evening News Anchor, David Warren, activated the intercom to his Program Director in the WNYK-TV control booth.

"Mike, are you sure about this Jessica piece for tonight? It feels to me like we're tipping her hand too much."

"I know, Dave. But I cleared it with Bob, who told me that Jessica said we could run this tape tonight--it's her preliminary tape, he said, a backgrounder."

"**Preliminary** ... Wow!--Then her main story must be a real mauler! Okay, if you all are sure of it. I hope Jessica knows what she's doing."

"I know. I thought the same thing, but Bob okayed it. Think, 'Drive Time Madness,' Dave. Just lead into it in your usual 'Uncle David' way and the folks will eat it up."

"Yeah, yeah--that's what you say to all your talking heads."

"Not true, Dave, not true. I've never called any of the gals 'Uncle.' "

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"Ho, Ho! I still think it's a bad move. Ah, well, what do I know-- I just read the stuff, right? I guess, if nobody changes their mind before we go on, that'll be that--'***and what hick station will you find work at after this, Daddy?***'"

\* \* \*

The motel room's television screen was filled with the "talking head" of David Warren.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We start this evening's report with a special segment from our top investigative reporter, Jessica Schoenhofen. Jessica is deeply involved in an investigation of drug activity in the New York metropolitan area. Her preliminary report outlines the extent of the problem and points at key players in the multi-billion dollar drug trade. But let's hear it from Jessica, herself."

Jessica was startled by the intro. "***What? Key players?*** No, they ***couldn't*** have . . .!"

The scene changed to a view that included a large river in the background, framed by mountains on either side, with the voice of Jessica Schoenhofen.

"Hello. This is Jessica Schoenhofen, speaking to you from Boscobel, a beautiful, tranquil historic site on the Hudson River just across the river from another, even more historic site, the United States Military Academy at West Point.

"Just downriver from where I am standing, we have a view of the valley that includes several resorts that have been familiar to New Yorkers for generations. At the point where the river fades out of sight in that narrow gap, you can just make out the Bear Mountain Bridge, which serves the Bear Mountain Inn and Park complex, among others. Immediately beyond that is the Harriman State Park, and upriver a short distance north of the U.S. Military Academy is the West Hudson Retreat Center. Most of these sites have played host to generations of New Yorkers--and other visitors from around the world-- offering them a place--and time--to de-pressurize from the many stresses of modern city life.

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"Unfortunately, these same isolated retreats have sometimes hosted less savory visitors, people who take advantage of the seclusion to hide their criminal activities, as they hatch plots to exploit the rest of us in the name of cruel profit--in this case, the vast profits associated with the growing drug trade in our region.

"Police authorities in New York City today find themselves with a new nightmare to dispel, namely that of a Mafia link with the Columbian drug trade, according to official sources who wish to remain anonymous. Investigators have ascertained that this man (a photograph is inserted over the Hudson River background) ..."

"Oh, my **God!**" Jessica shrank into the chair, instinctively trying to become invisible, as her taped persona continued, "...John 'Knuckles' Cangemi, is the organized crime figure most actively involved in negotiations with higher-ups in the Columbian cartel believed to be the prime mover of cocaine into the United States. The significance of this alliance, authorities fear, is the probable attempt by the New York-based syndicate to move the drug traffic through the Port of New York, providing a much more direct route to the eastern seaboard than the current, and more highly patrolled, southern border routes."

"Even as I speak, representatives of local criminal organizations are scouting these resorts to find the most suitable place for conducting a major meeting that will, for the first time in our history, unite traditional organized crime families with the new, upstart, 'families' of a South American drug cartel. Until now, these two distinct criminal groups have, at best, observed an uneasy truce. Thus, while the drug trade has grown, it has grown only marginally compared to its potential. This will change if they are allowed to fulfill their plan for a new, coordinated assault on the American--and, most specifically, the New York--'market.'"

"The next photographs are of Gonsalvo and Umberto Mata, brothers reputed to be the ambassadors of the Columbian drug cartel. It is known that the brothers Mata have left Columbia, and believed that they are en route to New York for a top level meeting with Cangemi and key Syndicate figures from other interested regions, and here's the kicker--it is also alleged by another reliable source--

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that these *gentlemen* have been brought together by a highly placed member of the United States government. That government official allegedly has ties to several clandestine paramilitary operatives in the so-called "black"--or most secret--levels of United States intelligence and counter-intelligence operations, people with vast budgets and little accountability.

"And what, do you suppose, is the purpose of a meeting that may involve such diverse groups as members of our federal government, local Mafiosi and South American drug lords? And where, exactly, will that meeting take place? That is what we will be telling you in subsequent reports but, for now, this is Jessica Schoenhofen, WNYK-TV News, in the Hudson River Valley--on assignment."

The screen shifted back to David Warren, "We'll have more on Jessica Schoenhofen's upcoming exclusive investigative reports following these messages."

\* \* \*

Watching the news broadcast alone in her motel room, Jessica felt more frightened than ever before in her life. As her taped segment gave way to commercials, she pressed the remote, turning off the television, and remained huddled in the upholstered chair as darkness cloaked the room.

"My God! You've killed me, David."

\* \* \*

Cangemi set the video remote down on his desk and pressed a button on the communications console. A moment later, Carl Maggio entered the study.

"Yes, boss?"

"That news broad on WNYK-TV--the investigative reporter--you know the one I mean--Schoenhofen--the blonde."

Carl nods. "Sure, the snooper. I ...*Madre!*"

"What?"

*Kevin P. Murphy*

"It was **her**! I wondered why the broad looked familiar--I mean, up there--in the woods. Only her hair looked darker than on TV--but it was her!"

"You saw her up there? Today? **Tell me!**"

"Yeah--when Vinnie and I were standin' guard at the drive up to the lodge. There was this gal went by in a small car, a Suzuki--Pennsylvania, LOJ 4783. She drove up--went on up the mountain--and came on back just before you and the big guy came up. We talked about it when you got there, remember?"

"Jesus! I do remember! We had the window open--Senator Ralston wants to 'smell the country,' right? I saw her, too! You're right, Carl. It was her, but with darker hair. " Cangemi shook his head, smiling briefly. "The broad changes her hair color and practically sits in on our meeting. Christ, she's got **stones!**"

Cangemi paused for a moment, thinking. Then, he continued. "Okay. She's probably still in the area, snoopin' around. So, you and Vinnie are gonna do some snoopin', too. Get on up there and find that damn broad, and when you do find her, make sure that she goes into early retirement, get it? But--and this is a must, Carl--make it look like an accident, one that no one will ever question, get me? An accident her mother wouldn't doubt."

Cangemi smiled thinly as he continued, "When you said 'I got her number,' this morning, I didn't get it ...You got her **license** number! You're a champ, Carl, and that's a fact! Give that number to Ralphie, and get the name it's listed under."

"I'm gone, boss."

\* \* \*

After a few minutes in the soothing darkness, Jessica stood, moving to the bed stand, where she turned on the light, picked up the telephone and dialed Bob Kushner's home number.

"Hello, Marilyn, it's Jessica Schoenhofen----Yes, thank you. I guess it **might** boost the ratings. Is Bob there? I'm still out on assignment and I have some business that can't wait----Thanks, Marilyn----Bob, what in God's name have you all done to me



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tonight? That wasn't my preliminary tape that David ran!----No, my preliminary tape was clearly marked 'Preliminary Tape!' It was shot in the same Boscobel setting, but it stopped with the part about 'here's this beautiful valley, and sometimes not so beautiful things happen here, too.' That was it--with a 'more to come' teaser line.

"What Dave had tonight was the draft of my actual program opening. But the program is not yet completed, as you know. There's no way I'll get the full story now---- Yes, I'll do that much, but that's it! I'll try to stick to my government guy tomorrow, but after that, we'll have to get out of here. They'll be all over the place looking for us, and it won't take a genius to spot our vehicles. Whatever we get tomorrow will have to be it. There's not much chance that they'll stick to their original plans, anyway--they'll probably switch their meeting to some really remote site--maybe Hudson's Bay, or Tierra del Fuego, for Christ's sake, but not here! As for our part, we'll be lucky to get out of the valley alive after this screw-up! **Damn!**"

\* \* \*

Due to an amazingly complex case of mistaken identity, a nun is murdered in an idyllic setting in the Hudson River Valley, resulting in a frantic search by the assassins for their "correct" victim, with Death firmly behind the wheel.

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