

Action, in this sequel intertwined with throbbing hearts, unfolds in the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. Maggie, a young Chicago newspaper reporter, strives desperately for happiness. First, she must resolve horrifying questions about her father. Bucky, a local business man, has his life torn apart by involvement. Events spiral into living or dying, leaving no plausible options. Dilemma is unimaginable, beyond shocking. Their struggles pull at your heart into the final minutes.

The Daughter's Dilemma

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"Unimaginable, beyond shocking...."

The Daughter's Dilemma

JACK O MOORE

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One

The whipping Chicago wind rippled chills through her body. She rubbed the goose bumps on her left forearm as she scanned approaching cars. The forceful breeze had been nudging her body for only ten minutes though it seemed like twenty. She was ready to dig a sweater out of her suitcase if she had to wait much longer. Her flight arrived at Midway Airport on time and the penetrating breeze coming off the lake was not gentle and soothing as the warm Pocahontas County air she enjoyed earlier today in West Virginia. As Maggie waited by the curb her mind tumbled with endless thoughts. She wished the brisk Chicago chills would blow away her troubles that lie ahead between her and her father. What a relief it would be if those chills could conceal or make them disappear. She dreaded what she must face.

These and many other thoughts rampaged repeatedly in her mind during the flight from Charleston; some horrible, many uncertain and worrisome, but a couple brought a slight smile to her lips. Especially when she thought of Bucky her smile widened. She knew Melanie, her dear friend, would get there as soon as possible, but Chicago traffic could be unpredictable, especially on Friday late afternoons. She had not spotted Melanie's car, but suddenly Melanie pulled over by the curb and jumped out.

"Meg," Melanie exclaimed, reaching out as she rushed toward Maggie. "Welcome back. It's so good to see you,"

"Good to see you too, Mel," as they remained in a hug for several seconds before their arms relaxed.

"How was your flight? You must've arrived on time."

"A smooth flight, really, and on time."

Melanie popped open the trunk and each lifted in a suitcase.

"Let's get out of this airport traffic," Melanie quipped, as she slammed the truck closed.

Melanie glanced toward Maggie with an excited grin, as she pulled away from the curb. "I have missed you Meg. Really nice to have you

back,” as she patted Maggie’s arm. “I can’t wait to hear all about your trip. When we talked, it sounded as though romance was beginning to bloom.”

Maggie hesitated, finally responded, her voice solemn. “Mel, you’ll never believe what I’ve had to deal with – some awful things happened.” She put her hand to her cheek and hesitated. “I have so many disturbing and unanswered thoughts. Even yet, some heavy things I have to deal with.” Her tone slowed. “In one way, I wish I had never gone there.” Her eyes began to glisten.

Melanie turned toward Maggie with a shocked expression. “Meg, what happened? I thought things were going good for you. I ran into Ed and he told me about all the recognition you received as a result of that murder trial.” Melanie paused. Not sure what she could say.

Maggie merely nodded, her lips tightened.

“Oh, I’m so sorry to hear that,” Melanie’s tone was soft. “Meg, did the romantic thing with that guy turn sour?”

Maggie struggled to hold her composure. “No -- not that. That’s one of the good things.” Maggie turned her head, looked out the window.

“Then what happened? That could be so awful.”

Maggie, was slow to turn back, but looked only straight ahead. Finally, she answered. “Mel -- I can’t talk about it now.”

“You can tell me anything. You know that. We have always told each other everything, Meg.”

“True, but this is different.” Maggie looked into Melanie’s eyes. “Maybe, in time I could. But now -- I just can’t.”

Melanie could not believe her dearest and best friend could not share what was on her mind. What could be so awful? She looked at Maggie with an unbelieving expression.

“Mel, please don’t be hurt. We will always be the best of friends. But this is something you could never imagine.” Maggie gripped the purse on her lap as she looked down. “This is something I must deal with on my own. I’m really sorry, but it’s something I cannot share with you.” She turned toward Melanie with moist eyes. “Okay? Just give me some time.”

Melanie reluctantly smiled and reached for her hand. “Okay. But you can talk to me anytime. You know that.”

The Daughter's Dilemma

“Yes. I know.”

There was silence for a couple blocks.

All the things Maggie needed to do, now that she was home, flashed repeatedly through her mind; talk with her father and what would she say to him? Could Ed's guru friend be wrong about her father? He had to be wrong. Her father is not like that. What should or could she tell her mother? Does her mother know anything about her father's business? Could there really be a connection from Marlinton, West Virginia, to Chicago for the murders of Ex-Mayor, Sam Olsen and his acquaintance, Luke Johnson? If so, who was responsible? Who was responsible for attempting to force her car off the road that could have killed her? Then there was Nick who she walked out on only hours before they were to marry. He wanted her back and will want to talk. Back in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, what will Bucky do now? What will happen between them? But first she must talk with her editor as she will need a few days without any assignment. The airport scene, as she departed Charleston, was inscribed in her mind. Emotions flowed heavy between her and Bucky. All her thoughts were jumbled together, nothing seemed to make sense or ease her mind. She would give anything if her agonizing problems would suddenly vanish. At times, she felt totally hopeless.

Melanie, for the first time, was perplexed with Maggie and about her reluctance to share, whatever troubled her. What happened in Pocahontas County that could be so horrible? What had changed Maggie? She was not her usual jubilant self. Obviously, something serious had happened. But she would not press Maggie, in view of her frame of mind. She knew Maggie was hurting and would do anything to help her dearest friend.

Finally, Melanie blurted. “So, tell me about the good part, the guy you met soon after arriving. Is he a real country hunk?”

Maggie wiped her eyes with the palm of her hand and smiled slightly toward Melanie. “Well – you could say that.”

“Is he handsome? I believe you told me he is.”

“Yes, he really is.”

“Is he real country?”

Maggie still had a slight smile. "He is country alright, but in a polished kind of way." Her mind flashed back, she spoke slowly. "He is caring – polite -- persistent -- thoughtful." She hesitated. "There is a certain ruggedness about him that I like. Not boisterous or a bragger. A kind of self confidence that is nice and comfortable."

"Sounds as though he is a rough and ready type guy."

"Not really. But he can take care of himself quite well." She remembered his fight with Jason, a much bigger ape of a man, how he brutalized Jason and rescued her from Jason's clutches. She took a deep breath. "Some would probably consider him a man's man, type of guy."

Melanie glanced at Maggie with raised eyebrows. "Hummmnn! I believe he has made quite an impression on you. Am I right?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, I'm happy for you."

Melanie glanced at her watch and it was about time for an early dinner. "Would you like to stop and have some dinner before we get to your apartment? I'll treat."

They were passing a restaurant row and would be in sight of the apartment within minutes.

Maggie thought for a moment. "Thanks for the offer. Another time would be better. I just want to unpack and get settled in."

"I understand. We'll make it another time," Melanie's voice had a tinge of disappointment.

Melanie found a parking space directly in front of the entrance. Neither spoke as they opened their doors and stepped out. Melanie lifted both suitcases from the trunk.

Melanie offered, "I'll help you carry in your bags,"

"Thanks, but I can handle them from here."

"You're sure?" Melanie had expected to go inside for awhile and chat about her trip, but she could see Maggie was not in a mood to talk.

"Yes, I can handle them." Maggie reached and folded her arms around Melanie. The hug lingered, with more emotion than usual. "Mel thanks so much for picking me up." She looked at Melanie. "You are my dearest friend. And you will always be."

The Daughter's Dilemma

"Meg, again, I want you to know I am here for you. Anytime! I want you to understand that. All you have to do is say so. I really mean it."

"Mel, I have no doubt. Thank you so much."

"And we should have dinner together -- soon. Okay?"

"Yes. We will," Maggie responded.

Maggie turned and rolled fitfully through the night, checking the clock almost every hour. Even with her eyes closed she would doze only briefly. The night seemed endless. When the first ray of light pierced the blinds, she rolled over and sat on the edge of the bed. Stretched her arms and rubbed her legs. Her mind vaulted ahead into an uncertain day. First she wanted to see Ed, her Editor. She needed two or three days before taking on an assignment and hoped he would understand. Also she had questions she must ask him; regarding Ed's guru friend and what he said about her father. The longer it dwelled in her mind, the more she questioned its validity. She was certain she knew her father well and those kinds of terrible acts could not come from him.

After her warm shower Maggie felt refreshed. Last night she did not eat, only drank some fruit juice. After getting rest she was ready for something solid. She had a leisurely breakfast of muffin with coffee and milk on dry cereal. She knew Ed would be in the office early, even on Saturday. But she wouldn't call too early.

Edgar (Ed) Green, Editor of the *Town Herald*, a small newspaper in suburban Oak Park, near Chicago, Illinois, arrived early in the office every day, except Sunday. When he answered the phone a few minutes before eight o' clock, he was pleased to hear Maggie's familiar voice. Glad she was back and that she would be there within the hour. Maggie had demonstrated and proved to him, with all she did and endured down in Pocahontas County, that she was a strong and determined woman. She had become his most vital investigative reporter. But he was concerned about how she was dealing with her

father's situation. He knew Maggie had a heavy burden to cope with and he had regretted often that she made him reveal the information. The fact that it was done on the phone, only made it worse. He could only imagine how it affected Maggie. When he told her, he knew she was stunned by the tone of her voice. She was terribly shocked and distraught. He absolutely would not tell her if he had it to do over. After all, it's a situation she can do nothing about. Why reveal such information to a daughter about her father? It could not lead to anything good.

Ed's office door was open. Maggie tapped the door and entered. She looked at him with a slight smile.

"Hello Maggie," he greeted, came forward and put one arm around her shoulder. "I am glad you're back."

"Well, I did make it back. Finally."

He held her by one shoulder in front of him and looked her over. "Say you look good, but you're probably tired. Sit down."

"I'm not bouncing with energy. I didn't sleep too well last night."

He sat across from her and not behind his desk. After a moment, he folded his hands with a concerned expression.

"Maggie," he paused. "I want you to know how much I appreciate all you did and what you went through to cover that murder trial. Your timing was perfect to be there. And you know, timing can make or break getting a good story. Nobody could've done a better job. And look at all the recognition you received, deservedly so, along with the *Town Herald*. And I know it was difficult for you, at times."

"Yes, it was difficult. Very much so, sometimes." Maggie breathed deeply and continued. "Ed, I haven't told you everything. My articles didn't tell it all. You know when I confronted Jason Hollands, at one point, he dragged me by the hair and whacked me across the face."

Her face quivered as she recalled what happened. "If Bucky had not found me when he did, I'm not sure what would've happened."

Ed was astonished to hear what she endured. "Maggie, that's awful! I'm sorry that happened. But I bet you were pressing for information. Correct?"

Maggie merely nodded.

The Daughter's Dilemma

"It shows your metal and determination." After a moment he added, "This Bucky fella must be quite a person."

Maggie reflected briefly. "He sure knew how the local country and rural people would act. His intuition about things was incredible. If not for that, he never would have found me with Jason. He is uncanny in relating how incidents can tie together. Maybe you call it country wisdom." Her mind flashed back. "He helped me a great deal."

"Good. I'm glad you had someone local working with you. That always helps. I have used that method, when possible." Ed leaned forward. "Was there an attraction between you and Bucky? I sense there may be."

Maggie smiled. "Yes, there is."

"Enough said on that. I'm sure you would easily attract suitors. But I don't want to delve into your personal affairs."

Ed reached and picked up a paper from his desk.

Maggie surmised it was an assignment and spoke first. "Ed, I want to talk to you about a couple things." She focused on his face. "I need some time -- three or four days before taking a new assignment. Perhaps all next week. I am struggling with this situation regarding father, as you can realize." She glanced away for a few seconds, then back. "Will that be alright?"

Ed stood, walked slowly to the side of his desk. Looked at the paper in his hand. "Well -- I wanted to get you on this high profile, child abuse trial that is ready to begin in Chicago." He thought for a moment. "Often though, those types of trials never start as scheduled." He looked at Maggie. "I can only imagine what is going through your mind. But do you think you will need that much time?"

Ed's response did not surprise her. Maggie reflected a moment. "Maybe I won't. At the moment, I just don't know. Right now, it's difficult for me to concentrate on anything else." Her expression was somber. "I need to talk with father and try to sort things out. And that's the other thing I want to talk to you about."

Ed did not respond immediately. "Maggie. Alright -- but don't take more days than you must have. I must have good coverage of that trial for the paper."

Jack O. Moore

"I understand. But I have to get things cleared in my mind in order to do my best. I promise. I won't be off more than needed."

"Okay Maggie. Do what you have to. But don't leave me stranded on this."

Maggie thought about what she would say. "Ed, regarding this guru friend of yours. Do you really believe the information he came up with on father? Is there any chance he could be wrong?"

Ed paced slowly across his office. "I can imagine how you must feel. This man is a professor. Teaching at the university for many years. The business world, fraudulent corporate structures, and various types of corporate entities are his specialties. He is a recognized authority in that field." Ed looked at Maggie. "Law enforcement consults with him. I would love to tell you there is probably nothing to it." Ed glanced out the window then looked her in the eyes. "Maggie, I do not doubt what he says, as hard as it is for me to say that to you."

Maggie had hoped for a sliver of doubt and was slow to respond. "I believe I know my father. And love him dearly. I just cannot believe he deals with those kinds of people. And murder! I just can't." Maggie stood, looked out the window. "He has worked hard in building his businesses. Very dedicated, to the point of being away from mother too much. Why would he need that or even want to? It doesn't make any sense that he would do that."

Ed put his hand on Maggie's shoulder, so she would look at him. "I don't know Maggie. And I agree, he has worked hard and is well connected in the business community. It doesn't make any sense." He stepped back. "But I believe something is there. Definitely. The professor does not say things lightly."

Tears oozed down Maggie's cheeks. "I find it so hard to believe that about my father."

"Are you sure you want to talk with your father about this?"

"Yes." She dabbed her eyes with a tissue. "I must."

"What will you say to him?"

"I don't know – it will be very hard. I just don't know."

"Do you think you should be alone when you talk with him?"

"Probably – but who could be with me?"

The Daughter's Dilemma

"Maybe your friend in Pocahontas County, since he obviously knows much of what happened. Have you thought about that?"

"Yes. It has crossed my mind." She recalled that Bucky wanted to be with her when she talked to her father.

"Maggie, I don't know what to tell you. If there is some way I could help, I would be happy to. Who would ever think of having to deal with this type of thing?"

Maggie shook her head. "Never in a million years could I have imagined this -- and now what do I do?"

Ed stepped close, again put one hand on her shoulder. "Now as difficult as this seems, somehow, it will work out. I don't know how, but it will. Maggie, you must believe in yourself. You are a fine woman, strong, intelligent with great ambitions. Whatever you do or however this is resolved to your satisfaction, do not let it beat you down. If it is true, somehow you must learn to live with it." Ed thought how difficult that would be. "Maggie you must believe you will deal with this and your life will go on. You must do that for yourself."

Both were silent. Maggie responded. "That all sounds good. Like -- sure it will work out and everybody will be happy, but making it happen, if it does, will be a nightmare -- and I hate nightmares. They're always bad."

Both contemplated for moments.

Maggie got up from her chair. "Do you think I should tell mother anything? We're meeting for lunch today."

Ed shook his head. "I've talked briefly with your mother a couple times. I don't really know her." He remembered her as a pleasant woman. "That's a tough one -- if it were me I wouldn't tell her anything until I had to."

"That's my thinking also. I wouldn't want to alarm her or bring worry upon her, if avoidable. She's a strong woman, but I have no idea how she would deal with it --- it struck me like a bolt of lightning. And still it's on my mind every second."

"It sure was a shocker to me also."

Maggie glanced at her watch. "Well -- I better go. Have to meet mother before long."

Jack O. Moore

“Maggie, I don’t know what it would be, but if I can help you in this situation, in any way, just let me know. Okay?”

“I don’t know either, but thanks for the thought. And thanks for giving me some time to deal with this.”

As she walked out the door, Ed called to her. “Now Maggie, don’t leave me stranded on this trial.”

“I’ll try not to.” She glanced back. “I’ll be in touch.”

Ed watched, as she left the building. Maggie’s stride was a bit uncertain, not her usual bounce exuding with confidence. As she pulled away from the curb, he felt a pang of sorrow for her and tried to imagine the dreadful thoughts going through her mind.

Three

Cars rushed by in a blur and Maggie's eyes were on the road, but her mind sizzled with thoughts. Dinner with her father was not what she expected. She was anxious to get to her apartment. He answered some questions and he appeared to respond truthfully. He admitted wanting to do business with Snowshoe Mountain Resort. If that connection was undercover, why would he even admit it? And he knew of Sam Olsen. Why would he admit knowing Sam if something sinister was going on? He admitted doing business with the Greenbrier Bank and knew of the professor. She didn't even have to ask about the professor. And he was clearly irritated that somebody would think he was involved in a murder, in any way.

Although she still had unanswered questions about Luke Johnson, Jason Hollands, Adam Holt and Jared Pike, she felt more at ease about her father. He had always been a kind loving father, though in recent years he became involved in a whirlwind of business activity. She could not see in him the kind of person who would be involved in such terrible things, including murder. That professor who started all the insinuations must be wrong. As Maggie drove along seeing only the cars in front of her, oblivious to restaurants and buildings, the nervous twitches lessened in her stomach. Her mind was no longer gushing with horrible thoughts. A more peaceful feeling eased over her. Talking with her father right away was good. She looked forward to sleeping better tonight.

After parking behind her apartment building in her designated space, she walked hurriedly toward the front and turned the corner toward the entrance steps. The night lights along the walkway were dim and in the corner of her eye she saw a man on the sidewalk as she started up the steps. But that was not unusual.

A familiar voice rang out, "Hey you! Why are you in such a hurry?"

Jack O. Moore

Maggie turned, shocked, her purse fell from her hand. Stepped down the steps, stood amazed and could not believe who she saw.

"Where ---." She was speechless for a moment. "Bucky where --- where did you come from?"

"Maggie, I had to come." He rushed up, held her tight. "I had to see you even though it's been only two days."

"Oh, Bucky --- it's so good. So good to see you."

Maggie's thoughts bounced back to the Charleston airport. She wondered what he would say now. Does he remember what he did? Surely he must. How could he forget? Would he tell her now? She wanted him to remember. Having him close instantly gave her a warm and secure feeling. She had always felt good when they were together.

Bucky stepped back and held Maggie's arms so he could look into her eyes. "Maggie, I had to come." He took a deep breath. "I just had to see you. And hold you." His face flushed with excitement. "Look at me. Look into my eyes." He spoke softly and slow. "Maggie, I love you. I really love you."

Maggie quickly put her arms around him and both held on tight.

"Oh, Bucky. I love you too -- I'm so glad you came."

They kissed tenderly and slow.

Maggie finally pushed herself away.

Bucky held her hands, his eyes smiled with desire.

Maggie uttered, "Oh my! You shouldn't do this to me -- up to your same old tricks. Showing up when least expected."

Bucky nodded and grinned.

Maggie blurted. "How did you find me? I never told you my address."

"There are ways."

"Now you sound like you're still in Pocahontas County. Not in the big city."

"Big city or country, I could track you down anywhere."

"Well -- you certainly proved that."

Bucky stepped forward and picked up her purse. "You may need this," and handed it to her.

"Yes. Definitely."

The Daughter's Dilemma

Maggie held on to his hand. "Come on, let's go inside," and led him up the steps and into her apartment.

She put her purse on the coffee table, took off her sweater, walked over to Bucky, put her arms around him. "I can't believe you just popped in here."

"I tried to reach you on the phone then decided to surprise you."

"Mr. Acce -- you certainly did. And what a nice surprise." Her voice was soft and inviting.

They gazed into each other's eyes, kissed briefly a couple times. Maggie stepped away into the kitchen and brought two cold sodas.

She handed one to Bucky. "You know Bucky, I waited for you Friday at the Country Roads Cafe as long as I could. I was counting every minute and when you didn't come, a lot of crazy thoughts were going through my mind. Also I was even worried about you."

Bucky chuckled. "I really wanted to get there, but you'll never believe what happened."

"Wait! Are you going to tell me another one of those country tales and tell me it actually happened? I thought you had told me all those down in Stony Bottom."

"Now Maggie, did I ever just make up any of those stories?"

She thought a moment. "No. They did turn out to be true. I think so anyway."

Bucky shook his head and chuckled. "The reason I did not meet you was all due to some daggone chickens."

"What?" Maggie exclaimed. "Chickens! Now I know I'll never believe this one. Let's sit down before you say more."

They sat next to each other on the sofa. Maggie sipped her soda, waited for Bucky to continue.

Finally, she said, "Go Ahead. Tell me this chicken story you've concocted. This I can't wait to hear," as she smiled.

"Maggie, don't make me laugh." His expression sobered. "I didn't concoct anything. What I will tell you is a fact. Nothing but the truth."

Maggie with a devious smile responded, "I'm waiting."

"Okay. Now you know I went up the hollow to bring Ma Taft out. Willie even took his horse for her to ride down."

Maggie nodded, she remembered.

“Well, Ma had to wait until an apple pie was ready to take out of the oven. She wanted to take it to mom. And when I thought we were ready to put her on the horse, she spotted some of her Plymouth Rock chickens up on the hill side. They had found a way out of the pen. She insisted on getting those chickens back in the pen before leaving and ran out to get them. Willie went with her. She didn’t want the foxes to get them while she was gone.”

Maggie started shaking her head in disbelief.

“Now if chickens don’t want to go back in the pen, getting them in can be a real challenge. Believe me!”

Maggie interrupted. “Bucky wait.” She was trying to keep a straight face. “Are you telling me this is the honest truth? Really?”

“Maggie.” Bucky put his hand on her knee. “This is the honest truth as crazy as it sounds. I wouldn’t lie to you.”

“Incredible,” Maggie uttered.

“I called it much worse at the time.” He turned, facing her more. “And by the time the chickens were corralled, I should have been back out of the hollow and leaving mom’s place to meet you. I couldn’t call as her phone line was still down and my cell doesn’t work up in those hills, as you know. I was out of touch and could not do a damn thing about it. And I couldn’t leave without her.”

He reached and held her chin. “My dear Maggie --- that is why I did not meet you. All because of her daggone chickens. Now you met Ma and you can probably visualize her being that kind of mountain woman. Her chickens are valuable to her.”

Maggie grinned. “Yes. She is one of a kind. No doubt there, a remarkable woman.”

“When I finally got Ma to mom’s house, I called Country Roads immediately. I was told you had been gone only minutes. Within seconds I headed for Charleston – and you know the rest.”

“Yes and what a surprise you were at the airport.”

“Speeding to Charleston, lots was going through my mind. That’s when I knew for sure I truly loved you.”

“How sweet,” she responded and kissed him lightly on his cheek. “I thought maybe you had changed your mind.”

The Daughter's Dilemma

"I broke every speed law in the book. And in Charleston I was pulled over and given a speeding citation." He grinned. "You won't believe this. But I ask the cop to give me a speed escort to the airport. Told him I had a personal emergency."

"You actually did that?"

"Sure did. He just laughed and wanted to know where I was from." Bucky chuckled. "He didn't share my view that I had an emergency and took his time writing the ticket."

"I'm sorry you got a ticket."

"Sometimes you just do what you have to do."

"I believe I've heard that from you before."

"And yes. Ma asked about you. Said she enjoyed talking with you."

"I was astounded by her. I had heard of mountain people, but the way she lives on that mountainside is unbelievable. And her mountain drawl fascinated me. I'd never heard anybody talk like that."

"You know her way of living has almost vanished."

"Probably so." She glanced at her watch. "Are you tired? You've had a long day."

"It has been a long day, but I'm fine. I had to come and talk with you before you see your father."

She was slow to respond. "You're too late?"

"You've talked with him? When?"

"I just returned from having dinner with him."

"Daggone! I wish I had got here earlier."

Maggie was amused when he spoke that country slang word again.

"Bucky, in your phone messages your voice had an urgent tone. Why?"

He glanced away a moment. "I wanted to tell you some things. But first how was your time with your father?"

She wondered what to say. "As you can imagine, nothing else has been on my mind. I could barely sleep. My stomach, at times, was in knots. All kinds of crazy thoughts going through my mind."

"How did it go? Do you feel better now?"

"Yes -- and no."

"Now you sound like me, at times. Those double answers."

"See, I've picked up some of your habits. I'll have to watch that."

The entire conversation with her father flashed through her mind. How she came away feeling better about him. And the total surprise that he wanted her to work with him. How can she explain this to Bucky? Everything they learned and heard in Pocahontas County following the trial seemed to point to her father.

She continued. "It was good to see him again. It had been awhile." She reached for his hand. "The conversation made me feel better and also was very surprising."

"It made you feel better?" Bucky was surprised.

"Yes. It did. I know this is not what you expected." She put her other hand on his. "He answered questions about Snowshoe, Sam Olsen and the Greenbrier Bank. And talked about the professor. I didn't even have to ask about the professor."

She turned her body slightly more toward him. "He was very annoyed that anybody may think he would be involved, in any way, in a murder. And admitted he was trying to arrange some construction business with Snowshoe and does business with the Greenbrier Bank, along with several others."

"Do you believe him? How did he sound?"

"Bucky, he talked sincerely and I believed he was leveling with me." She rubbed his hand lightly. "I cannot see him doing the terrible things that happened. I believe I know my father. I just can't."

She looked into Bucky's eyes. "I do believe him."

Bucky shook his head. "So how did it end?"

"He had to leave and said we would talk later."

Bucky pushed up from the sofa, took a few steps and turned toward her. "Maggie, something is missing here. Something is not right. Think of all that has happened."

"I know, but that is not all. There was another big surprise. I couldn't believe at first."

He froze, looked at her. "What was it?"

"He wants me to work with him to run his various businesses."

"He what?" Bucky snapped back.

"Seriously. He wants me to work with him. Said he needs an assistant to handle the coordination between the companies and someone he can totally trust."

The Daughter's Dilemma

"What did you say?" Bucky had a doubtful look.

"I didn't give him an answer. But I could tell he really wants me. He said it would be great for me financially. I have to think it over."

She leaned back. "And Ed is expecting me to cover a high profile child abuse trial that is due to start in Chicago any day."

Bucky sat back down beside her. "Maggie, I never expected to hear from you everything you're telling me. I am real concerned."

"I don't know what I expected. I dreaded asking him if he was involved. But I didn't expect to hear him say those things either. And why are you still concerned?"

Bucky reached for her hand. "More terrible things happened as you left. Something really big is still going down."

"Like what?" Her face flushed with surprise.

"I wanted to talk with you before you met with your father. Whatever it was that triggered all the events surrounding the murder and trial, it's not over."

"Bucky, what happened?"

"Two more people are dead,"

"Dead!" She blurted.

"Yes. Dead."

"Who?" She stared at him.

"Adam Holt ---."

Maggie interrupted. "Adam is dead! How?"

"His car went off the road down a steep mountainside. He was found by some farmer."

They stared at each other.

"Another car accident? And who is the other person?" Maggie reflected her total surprise.

"Jason Hollands."

"Jason is also dead? He was in jail. How could that be?"

"You tell me. He was found dead in his cell. Both he and Adam died within hours of each other."

Bucky continued to look at Maggie.

Maggie turned her head, stunned and tried to understand two more deaths.

She responded. "That is terrible! Have you heard anything else?"

“Nothing. Friday afternoon it was announced on the local radio station every thirty minutes or so. Jason’s death is being investigated and every announcement included that he was involved in Sam Olsen’s murder. They are speculating that Adam’s death was an accident, but the State Police will investigate. You know he was considered the most prominent banker in the area.” Bucky rubbed the back of his neck. “I first heard about both within thirty minutes on the radio on the way to Charleston. I was shocked. I think I even drove faster after hearing of their deaths.”

Both were silent, heavy in thought.

“You see,” Bucky reflected on how much to say. “That is why I am concerned. We know Jason was with Luke Johnson when Sam was killed, according to Jason’s statement to the police. You and I concluded based on all the information we uncovered that Adam, in all probably, was involved in some way -- now both are dead. Were we wrong on how we related the events and what we found out? Or could we be right or close to being right? Remember how we tied things together and thought we figured it all out, when we spent the night on the brink of the mountain?”

Maggie smiled. “How could I ever forget? You and that night did wonders for me. And as soon as we were back on the main road in our cars that deputy was right behind us. They had been looking for me all night.”

“You had become the local celebrity and Sheriff Austin didn’t want another tragedy to deal with. He was ready to chew me out, but remember after I explained he settled down.”

Both were again quiet, caught up in their thoughts.

“Bucky, do you think something else may happen?”

“I hope this is the end. But I’m still concerned. Maggie you and I figured out things that nobody else had. Or we think we did. Now if somebody becomes aware of what I know and if what you and I know is correct, I may have to keep an eye over my shoulder. It sounds crazy, but I could be a target on somebody’s list.”

“You really think so?”

“I hope not, but who knows? And since Lisa worked close with Adam, I am concerned about her.”

The Daughter's Dilemma

Maggie tapped Bucky's leg. "We've never talked about Lisa. I gather that you two were close. Am I right?"

He nodded. "Yes, we were steady for a couple years. She considered the relationship more serious than I did." He recalled how she often remarked and hinted about marriage. Even his own mother wanted him to marry her. He added. "She is a good woman."

Maggie nudged closer. "You said were! Obviously our relationship has changed that. Right?"

Bucky looked into her eyes. "Maggie, honey, you coming to Pocahontas County changed everything. Not just that."

He pulled her close and gave her a soft kiss. "And I am so glad you did. I can't imagine now not knowing you."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Yes. Absolutely! But I still have a slight problem."

Maggie looked surprised. "What could that be?"

"I haven't told her."

"What are you waiting on?"

"Maggie, think about it! I haven't had a chance. I've been chasing after you."

Maggie smiled. "Well – there is some truth to that. Are you reluctant to talk to her?"

"Yes, in a way. She called a couple times and left messages, but I have to tell her in person. I'm afraid she will take it hard." He reflected a moment. "But I have to do it." He smiled at Maggie. "I can't handle two women at the same time. That could be a problem."

"Bucky Acce," she quipped. "You better not!"

He reached for her chin. "Maggie you are my love. I truly love you. It's amazing how our feelings and personalities meshed in the short time since we first met. Within hours you had my mind and emotions spinning. It took me awhile to realize it was for real." He removed his hand. "I will deal with her. But it won't be easy."

Bucky visualized how Lisa would react. She has a temper which she usually controlled but she does not give up easily on something she wants. She can be strong willed. Now that Adam is out of the picture this may change Lisa. When he returned he would have to talk with her and get it over with. He did not see how she could have been

involved in any of the deaths, but since she was close to Adam he wondered about her safety.

Maggie was surprised at Bucky's concern for himself. She learned, while in Pocahontas County, he is one of the most well known and liked persons in the area. Who would possibly want to harm him? Now that she had talked with her father she did not believe Bucky should be concerned.

"Bucky I don't want you to worry that something else could happen. I believe my father. Those who think he is masterminding all these deaths are wrong. I just cannot believe it."

"You're probably right. You should know your father. I'm probably reading too much into all that's happened. Maybe Sam's murder, the trial and these deaths are getting to me."

Bucky did not want to tell Maggie he still believed somehow her father was involved. Since she now felt better about her father and believed what he told her, he didn't want to destroy her good feelings. All he had was his opinion. And he could be wrong. If he tried to convince Maggie she should not believe her father, she would continue to worry. She had been traumatized enough. He wanted her to feel good. If he put himself between Maggie and her father it may destroy his new and wonderful relationship with her. He did not want to take that chance. Until he could find something solid to support his belief he would not try to change her thinking about her father. He was surprised she had changed her thinking after talking with her father only once after all they had learned. But he realized even adults want to believe what their parents say. And what could he find out to support his belief? He had no idea at the moment.

"Bucky all those things affected both of us. Try to think about something else. I think it's time to put Sam's murder and all that trauma behind us." She smiled. "Think about us."

"You're right. I need to lighten up. When I think about us, it gives me happy feelings." He knew his response would help Maggie feel better, but he could not believe that her father was not involved in some way.

They were content to sit close for a minute.

Maggie then asked, "When do you have to go back?"

The Daughter's Dilemma

Bucky was slow to reply. "Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow! You can't stay longer?" Her voice heavy with surprise.

"I'd like to, but I have to meet with some clients this week. If I don't they may not like it. I can't take that chance. You know my business is based primarily on my personal relationships with people."

Maggie nodded. "You have to go back so soon?" Her tone was sad. "I was hoping you would be here a few days."

Bucky looked at her, "I'd love to, but not this time. I had to come and see you though, even for one day. I had to talk with you."

"I'm so glad you came. Did you fly or drive up?"

"I flew. I'll arrive back in Charleston about one o' clock."

"Have you arranged for a place to stay tonight?"

"Yes, at a Best Western, only a couple miles from here."

Maggie was surprised he already had a room.

"Bucky you are welcome to stay here."

Bucky replied with a sheepish grin and could see there was only one bedroom. "Really? Well – that would be nice."

Maggie sensed what Bucky had on his mind. "However, you will have to sleep on the sofa. Is that okay?"

He was slow to reply. "I suppose so. Sure."

Maggie saw some disappointment and reached for his hand. "Now that we have serious feelings for each other --- I just think that is best for the time being. Not to share a bed."

Again he was somewhat surprised. He recalled a couple times when her passions were irresistible and he was the one who kept dignity between them.

Finally, he responded. "You're right -- that would be best."

"I knew you'd agree!"

"Maggie, you know your appeal to me is so strong. You set my heart afire whenever we are together. But I must admit restraint for me is not easy at this moment, but I admire your sense of values."

"Thank you. That was very open of you to share your feelings." She kissed him softly and felt her own physical desires rising, but in time they could allow their passions to flow. "You're my country

Jack O. Moore

gentleman.” She kissed him softly again. “The time will come, my love. Okay?” she whispered softly.

Action, in this sequel intertwined with throbbing hearts, unfolds in the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. Maggie, a young Chicago newspaper reporter, strives desperately for happiness. First, she must resolve horrifying questions about her father. Bucky, a local business man, has his life torn apart by involvement. Events spiral into living or dying, leaving no plausible options. Dilemma is unimaginable, beyond shocking. Their struggles pull at your heart into the final minutes.

The Daughter's Dilemma

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