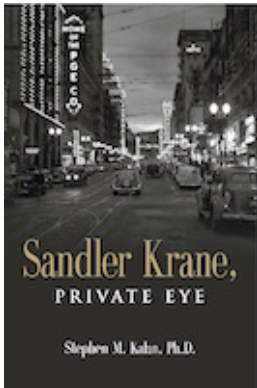




Sandler Krane,

PRIVATE EYE

Stephen M. Kahn, Ph.D.



Meet Sandler Krane, a former police detective beginning a new career as a private investigator in Portland, Oregon during the 1940's. He quickly realizes that most clients engage him to deal with mundane, low paying cases involving cheating husbands, missing children and similar situations. One day, new opportunities provide interesting problems that force him into a world of murderers, gangsters and greed. Stubbornly, he tenaciously stands his ground and resolves a most intriguing case...

Sandler Krane, Private Eye

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Sandler Krane

Private Eye

Stephen M. Kahn, Ph.D.

Portland, Oregon

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CHAPTER ONE

I remembered sitting in my tiny apartment in San Diego thinking how just a few months earlier in October, 1942 I had been fighting alongside my platoon in Guadalcanal facing the enemy in their counter-offensive. With bombs going off all around us, we prevailed and marched through the jungle on our way to victory. When I looked into the eyes of these men they showed the fear and rage that I felt as we surged forward but without hesitation, gave it our all. As with most veterans I had my share of injuries to take back home and knew my body would heal but what would heal my mind was the question that kept nagging me. I feared that the strife seen in combat would be indelibly imprinted in my thoughts forever.

Once back home I was able to tolerate the scars on my body but when back at work with the San Diego Police Department, trouble restraining my minds' anger and rage was evident. Much of the time it felt like I was going to snap especially when an injustice showed itself. I had changed and at the same time so had my beloved city which had been transformed into a busy Navy town filled with military personnel, air craft repairmen and defense plants rapidly building weapons of war. I had a difficult time getting use to this influx of people from across our country and it seemed to me that everyone had a uniform or defense company badge as they crossed the streets to board the trolleys. We were all packed into public transportation to save on gas and rubber while the war effort was waged in Europe and the Pacific. Along with those in uniform, factory workers and other citizens, another group consisting of hoodlums and gangsters had also descended on the area.

Most of my unit was still fighting overseas but my injuries made that impossible for me to continue on the front lines. What I needed to do now was relax and concentrate on more pleasant activity such as socializing. When I looked for women from my past, I

discovered that many were married, and several were already widowed. Fortunately, I was able to connect with a few of them and resume a normal social life. My old chief at the San Diego Police Department still thought well enough of me to provide the same job I previously held. However, once I started working, my confidence wavered in the midst of assuming life or death responsibilities. I was able to hold myself together on the surface but as time passed, serious crime from the gangsters on the docks had to be dealt with. I found myself in some situations that caused me to erupt inside. My fits of temper, outrage and physical mistreatment of criminal elements were the ultimate problems that led to my dismissal as a detective. The days that followed took me deeper into despair and greater feelings of hopelessness.

Friends of mine in Portland became aware of my situation and began encouraging me to settle in the smaller city and work as a private investigator. I thought about it for many weeks before deciding to give their suggestions a try as a private eye and see if the slower paced city life might help me heal my wounds. I had a few friends who were working in the shipyards and also had contact with a former police partner who now worked as a detective in the Portland Police Department. There should be plenty of work for me with the rise in Portland's crime but I was just looking to take on a few cases without getting involved in really serious matters.

As I traveled north by train, I had plenty of time to mull over the good and bad choices I had made within the last few years. The hardest decision of all was leaving my wife and young daughter. I could still see them standing in the door way as my wife asked me for a divorce. It became plainly evident that I wasn't the man she knew before entering the military and would never be that person again. I knew that my daughter, Cheryl was already being showered with gifts from my soon to be ex-wife's new friends. She also showed the family trait of impulsive stubbornness by living with a drug addicted worthless man.

As I stared out the window of the train I could see old

weather beaten barns and shacks that must have been hastily built in the 30's during the great influx from the dust bowl. Small farms dotted the land as we approached Eugene, Oregon where the beautiful greens and golds of the fields and oak trees made me temporarily forget all of the recent unfortunate events of my life.

We pulled into the train station in Eugene for a lay-over and I immediately noticed that it was far different than my home town. Looking around the area, I could observe many young people in what appeared to be a very serene setting. There was little evidence of the fast paced military life found in San Diego and probably far less crime than I faced on the job just a few weeks ago. This place seemed almost too quiet for me. A part of me wished I could live in a place like this but a sleepy little town was too benign for me. As the train continued on toward Portland I could see the landscape becoming dense with all shades of green. Even though it was still September I could feel the warm moisture in the air and see flowers and heavy fruit on the trees. When we pulled into the Union Station in downtown Portland, I tried not to let my mind wonder back to my combat days but a heavy feeling came over me as men and woman in uniforms headed for the train and moved up and down the city streets of this busy port town. I was sure these folks were also trying to forget their trauma and make some sense of their experiences.

I soon realized that finding a place to stay in this lively growing town was going to be a challenge. Every house and apartment building in the greater Portland and Vancouver area was filled with workers from the shipyards and construction trades. Food was also going to be a challenge to find even with my ration booklets. I saw a one room unit in a boarding house in northwest Portland and grabbed it quickly. I had already heard that the government was building thousands of housing units to support the war effort but this little place would have to do for now. My landlady was pleasant, so for a few dollars a week and stamps from my ration booklet, I obtained a quiet place to sleep and eat.

I was able to locate a few friends from the past who moved

here to work in the shipyards and that evening went out for recreation and drinks. Since I wanted to set up a private detective business in Portland I started talking to them about all the crime that was following the more than 60,000 people who were streaming into the area. I received a few good suggestions on how to start the business but most of the talk was centered on the wild night life, gambling, drugs and of course woman.

I learned about the crime inherent in this area and the names of Al Winter and a fellow named Elkins who was trying to muscle into the crime business but they meant nothing to me at this point in time. As the night wore on, some of my group wanted me to check out the action in Chinatown but I was weary and said goodnight.

As I settled in, thoughts turned to how to get around this sprawling town. A vehicle and gas were going to cost a fortune but I knew it was a necessity for my business. I invested in an old beat up 1936 coupe but saved most of my gas rations stamps by walking or taking the Portland trolley whenever possible. I applied to get an X sticker for additional gas rations as part of the civil defense force. By the fall of 1943, the weather had turned bone chilling cold which seeped through my entire body. I had been in a warm climate for years and this seemed like an omen that the coming winter season would rival a harshness not felt in many years. I ached for the warmer climate of California but my reputation prevented me from returning to that land of sunshine. Sometimes I thought back on the events that led me to Portland and wished my actions had been different after returning to work at the San Diego Police Department. I hadn't heard from my ex-wife in months and of course she probably made no effort to persuade my daughter to write a letter to me. I just tried to put it all out of my mind since there was no solution to be had.

It took me two weeks of paperwork and interviews to finally obtain a private investigators license but now I could finally start to work. I rented a tiny two room office in a building near my boarding house and put an advertisement in the *Oregonian* which brought a few small cases my way. It seemed that I was quickly becoming a

specialist in petty thefts, disputes over property and a few adultery cases. When I scanned the yellow pages of the phone book, it was apparent that a stiff group of competitors were in the investigative business. At least my telephone was paid up and the office sign faced the busy traffic on Irving Street and 23rd. This area had a huge amount of foot traffic so I was set up as well as could be. My “want ad” brought in a part time secretary named Andrea who seemed to know how to run an office and gave me breathing space to work my cases. Now, if only someone would enter and present me with a juicy, lucrative proposition, I could easily make ends meet but that scenario seemed to only happen in the movies. I was near idleness as new cases dropped off and could temporarily enjoy a life of leisure if money was flowing my way but cash was at a premium and running out fast. If nothing happened soon, I would be forced to look for work in a rival’s office and receive a very meager hourly salary, working the cases that involved long hours. I know how these guys would treat me and desperation would have to set in before taking their insults. I was beginning to feel as bleak as the cold rainy weather that was setting in when a shot of bourbon helped raise my spirits from really sinking into a sense of despair that turned toward a very dark place. I never thought that anything including my time in the service, my divorce and the loss of contact with Cheryl would ever jolt me like this but something was creeping over me like a large open wound. I strongly considered finishing off the bottle when a noise like a car backfiring turned out to be a knock on the door. I still jumped at sounds like that but dismissed them as figments of my imagination. As it happened again I knew it was real when Andrea opened the door and mouthed, “Clients.” Quickly, straightening my desk and giving my clothes the once over to make sure they were presentable, I walked slowly to the door and opened it to welcome the person who would provide me with a new challenge. I tried not to look surprised at the well-dressed couple who stood before me and motioned them to enter and have seats. I could tell from the looks on their faces that the office was not up to their expectations but what I could do except

make them feel comfortable? I normally didn't have finely dressed clients so my demeanor had to show a certain level of propriety. After all, this might turn out to be a highly lucrative case that would temporarily solve my cash flow problems, I thought. I looked respectfully at the couple and said, "I'm Sandler Krane, please have a seat," while motioning toward the only two chairs in the office. With a somewhat disdainful look on their faces, the couple sat down and the man started to talk. "Hello Mr. Krane, I am Charles Borgmen and this is my wife Barbara. First of all, we wish to be assured that all matters discussed here are held in the strictest confidence. After receiving my promise of confidentiality, the man continued, "We're here about a problem with our children. We were married shortly after my first wife, Lucia, died. She was the mother of my sons Alex and Marshall who were lost without her until Barbara filled the void in their lives. They have become fine young men and both have been in the service and returned home without injury. My youngest son has not followed in their footsteps, and that is what brings us here." He paused for a minute as if to consider his next sentence and then continued with, "We are not accustomed to employing a private investigator but great discretion is of the utmost importance to us. Going to the police would not insure our privacy and that is why we seek your assistance." At this time, Barbara turned to her husband and poked him while blurting out, "Charles, get on with it." A slightly startled look appeared on his face as her words seemed to annoy him temporarily but he continued with, "We are a rather well off family living in the southwest Portland area and have encountered a situation that seems to be beyond our ability to satisfactorily resolve. After making a few inquiries about hiring a suitable investigator, your name was mentioned by a Portland Police Lieutenant as a trustworthy and competent person to hire. This situation involves my youngest son, Edmund, the most unruly of my children, and his addiction to several vices. He is a twenty two year old who was deferred from the draft because of a heart condition. He has been a major problem for us these last few years due to his drug use, gambling and womanizing.

While I appreciate that a young man wants to enjoy his youth even during war time, Ed has overdone all of these vices and now finds himself in serious trouble. He has numerous debts and a host of unsavory characters from some of Portland's gambling establishments are looking for him to make good on his markers. These hoodlums would not stop at harming him physically to get what they see as theirs. The biggest problem is his gambling debts which are up to twenty thousand dollars and owed to a Mr. Franko Locarelli, who has a long criminal history. Another concern is a young woman who says she is pregnant and wants to marry him or perhaps demand a huge payoff to go away. This mess is further compounded by Edmund's heroin addiction that has gone on for at least two years. It is my belief that all three of these horrible situations are interconnected but I don't know which came first in this twisted mess. My two older sons also have tried to help us manage Edmund's behavior but haven't been able to make any headway so we had to turn elsewhere. I'm the president of a large insurance company and want to avoid any undue publicity since any type of scandal could undermine my position." As Mr. Borgmen paused to take in a deep breath, his wife gave the impression of an urgent plea for help but said nothing.

I could smell that the Borgmen's had money and were capable of paying a large sum to me to help sort out this mess. I sized up the husband as a nice looking distinguished man who was used to having his way with most anyone. He looked to be in his late fifties while Barbara was at least fifteen years younger and she was quite an attractive woman. Their manner of dress was high end and they must have looked at me as a roughhewn character who couldn't afford decent clothes. No matter, I didn't take offense and hoped that my appearance would improve shortly after they paid a retainer to me. I reassured the couple this problem could be resolved without a public airing and told them that my usual fee was \$75 in advance, \$15 a day for expenses and \$400 when the case was successfully concluded. To my delight, they quickly agreed, gave relevant contact information to me and paid in cash for one week of work.

That seemed to conclude our business arrangement and after telling me to keep them informed, they quickly got up and exited my office. They really zoomed out as if being here would contaminate them. Now, I had enough money to live on for a while with the promise of making much more. Finances were finally off my mind and it was time to start working on this case. The referral that pushed the Borgmens my way was probably from Sammy Carleson, my former partner in police work. We worked homicides together and now he was a detective for the Portland Police Department. We had had been very close and we parted in a friendly manner when he moved to Oregon. I would have to remember his kindness and give him a call. Besides, I thought he could occasionally help me with matters that only the police could investigate. I realized that it never hurt to have an inside man with the local authorities.

My first step would be to talk with the older Borgmen brothers and see if they could add anything new to my knowledge of the case. I phoned the number given by the couple but was told by a maid that no one was home and to call back in a few hours. I had no information about the brother's employment or if they worked at all. In the meantime, I decided to pay a few bills and visit a recent lady acquaintance. I was just leaving when Andrea returned from lunch. She was a tall, spindly average looking woman with two kids and no man currently in her life. When she answered my "want ad", I probably hired her because she agreed to work for less. The average wage in the city was thirty three cents an hour and she had agreed to work for twenty eight cents per hour because she really needed the work. Some of her friends were making good money working in the shipyards but she was not physically able to do the laborious work and really didn't want to either. Not only did I owe her a week of back pay but often ignored most of what she said and hardly responded even when asked a direct question. Andrea was a good worker and very loyal to me even though I didn't treat her very well. I sometimes teased and flirted with her but it was nothing serious and expected that she saw it the same way.

After giving her a few facts about the new case, I left the office and decided to pay a visit to Mr. Franko Locarelli's business. He had a place located near the 8212 Club on the east side and another joint near the water front on the west side. I wanted to see if anything could be worked out to avoid deeper problems. I surmised that he had connections to the gambling and racketeering world and didn't know me from a hole in the wall but maybe his curiosity would work in my favor. I couldn't help but think about how the influx of workers in Portland benefited a guy like this. The folks who worked so hard to produce a battle ready Liberty Ship in ten days also were the people that fueled these vices. These hard working people packed into tiny houses left their backbreaking jobs on the assembly lines and wanted some fun at night. It was the perfect environment for all kinds of crime to thrive and gambling was the largest part of the crime wave. I had learned that Locarelli was deeply involved in all aspects of the gambling world and was close to the mob bosses on both coasts as well as some prominent men in the city government. Although he was a "big fish", I would try to drop in to his place and play it by ear. I found that sometimes the simplest approach payed off big and hoped it would do so in this case. Like most gambling joints I knew, this place was no different and was just a large storefront room located in a seedy part of Portland's China Town. From what I had learned about the operation, Franko had been in business for over ten years and managed to stay one small leap in front of the law although a few times, he had been run in for bookmaking. Several corrupt political administrations on the west coast from Mexico to Canada kept him from experiencing more serious legal problems. It appeared that some of the politicians live very handsomely on bribes just for looking the other way.

It was a certainty that Franko didn't know me so walking in cold might not be the best strategy, but I did it anyway. When I arrived at the building, it was exactly as pictured in my mind. The room was dark and filled with the smell of old grease, damp wood and cigarette smoke that permeated from wall to wall. It was evident

that Franko made some halfhearted attempt to spruce it up for the privileged set but some nice chairs with red velvet seats couldn't alter my first impression. The small bar had some tough looking characters nursing drinks but nothing suggested that bets were being placed at this location. One of the men at the bar, a short heavy set older guy with a vivid scar across his cheek, approached and asked about my business. "I'm looking for Franko to discuss a private matter", was my reply. He looked at me and said, "Mr. Locarelli only sees visitors by appointment and unless you have one, take off." I showed him my investigator's license and mentioned that this was a matter of some importance to his boss. I cautioned that the boss might not like hearing that he dismissed me without his knowledge. My words got a little reaction from Mr. Scar and he told me to wait while he checked with someone. After a few minutes he returned from the back room and said, "Mr. Locarelli will be here in four hours, come back then." Reflecting on my interaction, I was pleased with my first attempt at contacting this big boss and I started to formulate my next move.

I returned to my office and was told by Andrea that a call came in from the Borgmen's house that needed an immediate response. I couldn't imagine which of the family members had called with such urgency but my curiosity was satisfied when Mrs. Borgmen answered. It seemed that I dialed her personal number and the deep voice at the other end had a pleasant tone to it. Without any formalities, she quickly said, "I need to see you right away to clear up a few facts that my husband omitted during our visit. Could you come to the house?" I could do nothing but say, "Yes". After she hung up I checked with Andrea and headed out the door. I hated to waste all that gas to drive up to the West Hills area but it could be a good lead in the case. It took me about twenty minutes through the rain to arrive at the Borgmen's stately colonial house. I had about a five minute wait after ringing the bell before Mrs. Borgmen opened the door and asked me to come in. After making a quick perusal of the house I could tell that these people were in the chips and certainly knew how to embellish their environment with the finest of furnishings. I asked Mrs.

Borgmen what was on her mind and her first utterance was, “Mr. Krane, please call me Barbara.” She motioned for me to sit on one of the plush leather chairs that probably cost more than all the furniture I had ever owned and then she began by speaking in a soft seductive voice. “Mr. Krane, it was not easy for us to ask you for help with our son. We have always been a family that prides itself in handling matters privately, but this is a different situation. A scandal could emerge due to Edmunds actions that would bring disgrace to us and while it may not mean much to you, it would shatter our lives. Edmund has always been the wild one in our family but his present trouble is far above anything he has been involved in before. He is not only addicted to drugs and desperate for money, but his life is in a state of ruin with constant danger from a terrible criminal element. These men have threatened to harm him unless payment is made on his debts immediately. The amount owed increases each week and it’s impossible for him to catch up. His mind is so twisted that even in these dire circumstances, he continues to make bets that lose. We have been bailing him out but my husband is adamant about not giving in to his weakness at this point. I’m worried that something bad will happen to Edmund. My two older sons, Marshall and Alex understand most of this situation but they are in no position to help financially. I’m ready to do almost anything to get my little Edmund out of this dilemma and we are asking you to do something that will make it all disappear.” Whew! That was quite a mouthful I thought. Here is a lady who has been used to having her way in life and now has run up against a brick wall. “Mrs. Borgmen, I have made a few preliminary probes and in fact, will meet shortly with Mr. Locarelli to discuss the matter after which you will be apprised of any new facts. In the meantime, there is not much your family can do until we know more. What I would like to know right now is where Edmund can be located?” Barbara picked up an address book from a nearby table and rattled off a few places where he might be found. I wrote the locations on my pad, thanked her and left the exquisitely furnished house. I couldn’t help but think about all the average folks who were living in

their tiny places, crammed together and surviving off OPA stamps while this family was able to live the good life on the salary of an insurance executive.

I drove back to the office and found Andrea with her legs on the desk, taking what looked like a nap. I gently brushed her calf and she reacted quickly. “Hi boss, nothing has happened since you left.” Too bad, I thought as if hoping some huge break in the case would miraculously occur. I had to stay focused on my strategy which involved finding my persons of interests and asking lots of questions. I had three leads to follow; meet with Franko, find Edmund and see what information the older sons could provide. There was always the matter of Edmund’s girlfriend too. She seemed to play some part in this mess but at this point I had no way to contact her. Before I returned to Franko’s place, it seemed like a good idea to grab a bite to eat and up my energy reserves. Normally, I don’t like to eat out, preferring the Spartan meals of my own making, but this situation called for an immediate response that couldn’t wait for home cooking. I stopped at a nearby diner and ordered a ham and cheese sandwich, gulped it down with coffee and was off at once. I hated burning all this gas but as a Class X driver I got a few extra gallons a week for work so what else could be done? It had been almost four hours since my last visit to see Franko, and hopefully, I would catch the boss man in. I parked in front of his door and walked in to what was essentially the same smelly joint as before. This time, Mr. Scar approached me abruptly and said, “We’ve been waiting for you to show your face again, follow me, Mr. Franko will see you now.” I followed him through two greasy swinging doors into a back room that looked ominous. I was told to take a seat in front of the older man who ignored me for a few minutes. Finally, Locarelli looked up from the plate of food he was inhaling and spoke in a gruff voice. “I don’t know you kid, or what you want with me but make it fast.” If he was trying to intimidate me then he was probably achieving some success. I replied in a firm voice, “Mr. Borgmen, Edmund’s father hired me to straighten out his finances with you. The Bergman’s’ want to be done

with this matter once and for all.” Thinking I would get an informative response, my body relaxed as I leaned back in the chair. Instantly, Franko had a snarl on his face and screamed out, “I don’t answer questions of shamuses like you and if you know what’s good for you, tell that little bastard kid and his father to pay up or big trouble will follow them. Now, beat it while you still can.” With those friendly words, two of his gorillas grabbed my arms and started dragging me out of the room. Not taking kindly to these apes abusing my body, I used my arms to throw each goon onto the floor while taking a stance that I hoped would deter any further aggression aimed my way. I could feel myself almost lose control in a way that was reminiscent of my final days with the San Diego Police Department but calmness returned when the other men in the room, surprised by my action made no further moves toward me. Franko spoke up in a controlled curt voice stating, “Let the crumb go but don’t let him in here again.” Hearing those words, I said, “Bye, it’s been nice”, and quickly made my way to the street. That didn’t go too well, I thought. This case is turning out to be more challenging than expected and I began to wonder if the money was worth the aggravation.

I returned to the office to relax and think over what had just occurred but there would be no rest for me today. Andrea motioned that someone was waiting for me and I found a fairly attractive young woman sitting in my office. She turned out to be Susan Johnson, the pregnant girlfriend of Edmund Borgmen. I don’t know how she found me but her presence certainly saved a lot of time looking for her. Susan was a pleasant looking woman in her early twenties who could easily turn a man’s eye. She had a way of oozing sex appeal without it seeming to be intentionally done. I could see why Edmund had taken to her. She must have been in the early stages of pregnancy since nothing was visible and my mind wondered if her story had been concocted to trap the young man. Her first words were, “I obtained your name and location from Edmund and decided to pay you a visit to clear up any concerns.” Her speech and use of language gave me the impression that she was intelligent, educated and leery of my

demeanor. I tried not to stare at her shapely figure in an obvious way but she knew where my eyes were focused because a faint smile appeared on her lips. I had to admit that the more you looked at her, the stronger the urge was to continue enjoying the view. Susan's words seemed to drip from her mouth as she continued, "My relationship with Edmund Borgmen is serious and as you may have been told, I'm pregnant and expecting his child in about six months. I know that his family thinks he was trapped by me for the money that will eventually come to him, but it's not true. We really love each other and believe in our destiny to do well on our own. I have an associate's degree in business and can find a decent paying job. I know that Ed can contribute to our finances after straightening out his money troubles. I am also aware of his drug and gambling problems but the two of us can work it out and overcome any adversity. Please believe what I am saying, it's the absolute truth."

I was somewhat impressed by her little speech but knew it was only empty words. She really had no awareness of the difficulty Edmund would have breaking free of his many addictions or how it would involve one heartbreak after another before an inevitable break up. My years as a detective in the drug division made me well aware of what lie ahead for these two. Not wanting to appear negative, I changed the subject and asked, "How do you get along with the Borgmens?" Susan seemed to stiffen up at that inquiry and almost snarled when she stated that things were not good between them. She started off by saying that, "I come from good people who are not educated but worked hard at blue collar jobs. The Borgmen's seemed to think that we are beneath them socially and shouldn't intermingle. Ed and I met about six months ago at a nightclub and hit it off immediately. There was just something about him I found irresistible and Edmund felt the same. As I learned later on, he never told his parents about us until the pregnancy was known and that is when they expressed their disapproval. You would think I was total trash from the way his mother spoke about me but even so, I tried to befriend them. Ed's brothers had no problem with me but his pompous parents

couldn't even pretend to hide their dislike for me. After a while, I stopped trying to be enthusiastic and gave Edmund an ultimatum that he choose which side to support. He said it was me but I know the parents were not giving up because they hold the financial strings over him. He admitted that their remarks about me have become nastier each day until the conflict caused him to further retreat into drugs, alcohol and his stupid gambling. I know it's not an excuse for his behavior but they have really hurt him. I haven't seen much of him this last week and I'm really worried that bad things will happen; Mr. Krane, please help us." I've always been a sucker for a pretty damsel's plea so my words to her were, "Not to worry." Within a few minutes, Susan gained control of her emotions, told me to keep in touch, thanked me and left my office. Now I was really in the middle of a mess and it wasn't getting any simpler. Of course, the money was good so why complain, was my next thought.

I turned to Andrea and asked if anyone else stopped by? She thought for a moment and said, "Two young men poked their heads in and asked if you were available, I said no and they left abruptly without leaving their names." My immediate thought was that it was Edmund's two older brothers but a phone call would be needed to verify it was truly them. A call to the estate produced nothing and a face to face meeting was necessary. I hated to have to return to the Borgmen house so soon but if they were there, important information could be obtained and added to the few facts in my mind. I told Andrea where my destination would be and drove back to the family estate.

This time, the door was opened by Mr. Borgmen who didn't seem too pleased to see me but made a pretense of welcoming me in. He motioned toward the living room and that is where I had my first look at the older brothers, Alex and Marshall. They looked nothing alike but were presentable young men wearing very nicely tailored clothes. After being introduced to the two men, I turned and said, "Hello, Mr. Borgmen", I came here to specifically talk with your sons about Edmunds situation in the belief they might be of some help to

me.” The brothers had me follow them to a small room where we could speak privately. The oldest son Alex was a tall, thin man with a domineering style. He did most of the talking while occasionally allowing his younger brother, Marshall to get a few words in edgewise. They indicated that Edmunds whereabouts was unknown at the moment but as I kept pressing for details of his life they eventually provided a few facts about him. Most of what they revealed was information already known. The way they spoke about him gave me the impression that they didn’t care for their sibling and despised his girlfriend. Alex stated, “I always saw Susan as a vulture looking for a victim to chew up and spit out. She must be gloating at the coup pulled off by her alleged pregnancy. Chances are good the kid is not even a Borgmen.” His words were tipped with venom and I could feel the father’s influence all throughout the man’s body as the words left his mouth. I couldn’t believe much of what he said but it was good to know where his allegiance was situated. Marshall didn’t add much to the mix and I figured the only way to get him talking was to hold a private meeting with him and very soon. We walked out to the living area Mr. Borgmen looked like he was getting edgy with my presence so it seemed like a good time to exit. I told him about my progress and said goodbye to the family. What a bunch! If I was Susan, no amount of money would be enough to make me become part of this crew.

The most obvious missing piece in this patchwork quilt had to do with Edmund and his location. Since no one seemed to know where he was, I needed to pursue my other leads and track down some alternative methods for settling his debts before the wrath of Franko comes down on his young head. Locarelli had given me a deadline and I had no idea if it could be met. If the young Borgmen didn’t come across with the payoff, he might end up in cement shoes. It seemed useless to visit Mr. L. again since my welcome had probably been worn out. Unsure of what to do next, I decided to rely on my old routine of returning to the office and reviewing all case notes. Walking through the front door, I noticed that Andrea looked

very businesslike while emphatically motioning that someone was waiting in my inner office. Without asking who it was, I briskly entered and was surprised by seeing Marshall Borgmen facing me. “Marshall, what brings you here so soon after our recent exchange?” Marshall started talking just as a man would who was free from the dominance of an older sibling. “Mr. Krane, I couldn’t really speak freely at the house but there are some facts you need to know in order to help Ed. To begin with, I don’t know where he is but have been assured that it is a safe place, far from the clutches of the gamblers. In case you have not guessed, my father is stubbornly refusing to pay the crime boss unless Ed gives up the girlfriend and baby which I know he won’t do. I think he is fighting for his way of life and doesn’t know where to turn. Sorry I can’t be of much help, but the family keeps me on a short leash and you have already seen how my brother dominates me. You have to convince my father to pay up without manipulating Edmund into submitting to his demands before the situation worsens. I love my brother and don’t want to see him hurt in any way and will do whatever it takes to help you resolve this mess.” How could I refuse after an impassioned plea like that? I replied with, “I’m guarded about this outcome but will do my best to help your brother safely out of his predicament. It will come down to whether or not we can prevent these goons from getting to him first so you have to act fast. If you hear from your brother, call me immediately.” I motioned that our meeting was over and watched Marshall leave with a sad look on his face. At that instant, the thought occurred to me that this family’s dark secret may be too tough to unravel in a short time.

I needed a little background information on this gorilla, Franko Locarelli so a visit to my old buddy, Lt. Carleson at the Portland Police station might help me fill in a few blanks. As I drove to the Police Department, memories of the days when Sammy and I were patrolman in San Diego flashed through my mind. Unlike me, he was an ambitious and motivated guy who played the political game and moved up the ranks quickly. When Sammy achieved detective, he put in for a transfer to his wife’s home town of Portland. He came to

Portland at the right time just as the police force rapidly expanded in 1941. He was a good cop who had not been tempted by the corruption within this city and he had achieved a reputation that helped his career. His honesty continually put him at-risk for scrutiny in every direction as many of his colleagues caved into the pressure of taking bribes and overlooking certain crimes. Now, I hoped that Sammy would share a little information without breaking the law, for old time sake, and that might be the start of a new day. I wasn't asking too much of him as this case seemed to straddle the line between a private investigator and law enforcement. Upon entering the Portland Precinct down town, I checked in with the Desk Sergeant to see if Sammy was available. By now the sergeant knew my face from a few previous visits to the building and located the Lieutenant quickly. I was always glad to see my old friend. He was one of the few people who stayed loyal to me even after my dismissal from the San Diego Police. He seemed to recognize what a loss it was for me and realized that I longed for the days of working with a great squad. Sammy motioned me into his private office and after exchanging a few jokes, he asked about the purpose of this visit. "I'm involved in a case that pays well but seem to be running into a twisted criminal predicament. One component is Franko Locarelli, who holds several markers on a young fellow named Edmund Borgmen. I'm trying to help his folks sort out some financial and personal problems for their son and Franko is threatening to do some serious harm to this boy if the money isn't paid up. Ed's father is Charles Borgmen, a successful insurance businessman, who lives in the West Hills. The old guy is getting tough and hedging on squaring the son's debt. Edmund had always escaped work because of his heart condition and seems to spend all his time hanging out with the guys drinking, playing pinball, and slots down in China Town. It seems that when his drug of choice changed to heroin, the gambling problems grew by leaps and bounds and now he has disappeared. My only leads seem to be from his older brother, Marshall and an allegedly pregnant girlfriend who might have some idea of his whereabouts but both have been feigning

ignorance. When I went to see Franko, he practically had me thrown out of the gambling joint by his goons. I'm at an impasse so any help you can give would be greatly appreciated." Sammy seemed to digest every word I had said and after a moment of thought screwed up his face and responded to my plea. "I'm familiar with this Locarelli character and his establishment and I must warn you that he can be a very dangerous gangster. Many beatings and some deaths have been attributed to him but he has managed to evade our clutches for years with the aid of several expensive shysters who find loopholes and bribe public officials. As far as the others, I can't offer any further info at this moment but asking around might provide new facts. I don't envy Edmund and hope he turns up before ending on a slab in the morgue. Write down the names of all the people involved and I'll see what can be done." What more could I really ask for? After thanking Sammy and a quick mention of the old days, we agreed to stay in touch and I left the station.

I headed back to my office to consult my notes and check for messages hoping that one of these characters tried to reach me but opening the door found Andrea working on a crossword puzzle and eating a meatloaf sandwich. "Nothing new boss," was all she had to say. That was disappointing so what could I do but review my notes and start searching the *Oregonian* newspaper archives for more information on Franko and the gambling mobsters. Before I had a chance to head for the public library to look through the old stacks, the phone rang and a hysterical Barbara Borgmen began screaming into the phone that her oldest son, Alex, had been found dead on a small path in the Balch Creek area not far from their home. She wanted me to head over to the house, but before leaving I called Sammy to tell him of this latest event. He already knew about the boy's death and was now ready to take a greater interest in this little matter. I reviewed the call from Mrs. Borgmen with him and his last words before ending our conversation were, "Let me know if any new leads are revealed during your visit." I started thinking about how fortunate it was to have a contact like Sammy in the Portland Police

Department. I had always prided myself on being a good detective and part of me still wanted to work with him. While driving to the estate, I recalled a few past experiences and realized that some crimes, especially against children had totally disgusted me and caused overreactions but never resulted in injury to an innocent person. Then my thoughts turned to imagining how the Borgmens must feel with their son brutalized on a secluded forest trail not far from their swanky home. Being a private investigator was not the same as a detective, but it was as close to my former life as possible and it gave me some time to straighten out my mind after Guadalcanal. I had to keep my priorities in order and not run far afield by investigating a murder.

Before visiting Mrs. Borgmen, I stopped at the crime scene on the trail in the Balch Creek area where Alex's body could be seen under a tarp. I had a serious physical reaction to seeing his body lying there on the path. I still had this visceral response when witnessing dead people and wondered if this combat reaction to death would ever change. I took a brief walk up the path and finally got a hold of myself. The area was swarming with cops and a frenzy of reporters lined up behind the police barricades. Sammy was not around so there was little chance of being privy to any new or inside information. No use in wasting time, I thought so I headed back down the hill to meet with the Borgmens. I wanted to learn what they knew about their oldest son's death and where Edmund might be found. When I got to the big white colonial on the hill the Portland Police were already everywhere and fortunately, Sammy was present as well. I was permitted to enter and listen to the family's frantic expression of shock and despair over the loss of their son, Alex. I waited until the formal questioning was finished and approached Barbara who looked like she was in a state of despondency. I heard her tell Sammy that she had last seen Alex the night before and it seemed that no one had noticed anything unusual until two uniformed policemen showed up at her door late in the afternoon. They had learned of their oldest son's fate without knowledge of the cause of death except that he was

covered with bruises. As usual, the Portland Police seemed guarded about the crime until an autopsy was completed. Mr. Borgmen had taken it especially hard since Alex had always been his favorite son and the heir to his insurance business.

As one day turned into the next, I would have expected that all those reporters who frantically took pictures of the murdered man would have filed a story on this prominent family. When I scanned the front page of the *Oregonian* for news stories about the slaying there was nothing to be found. It seemed the Borgmen's were able to use their influence to relegate the event to small print on the back page with headlines of the war taking precedence. Within a few days, the story had ceased to be a matter of interest to the public while the family waited for autopsy results. I hoped that Sammy could fill me in on some details but sensed that he was giving me the brush off. I started to wonder if internal politics might be having an effect on my friend's ability to share important information with me.

There was nothing to be gained by visiting the crime scene area again so I decided to return to my apartment where a meal and solitude could be had. I checked out the mail before going in the door and found nothing enticing or lucrative. I had been hoping for a note from my daughter but no such luck. The only food in the fridge was some sliced ham and cheese and I made a sandwich which satisfied me for the time being. I hadn't spoken to my current sweetheart for several days and wanted to check in with her. I planned to phone her but first came a few moments of playing my guitar. I was not very accomplished at the instrument but the sound seemed to sooth me. Music had always been a part of my life although I never thought my jazz playing was good enough for a public showing. Still, I occasionally sat in at parties, especially with some of the guys I met from the east coast who were fun to improvise with. We often played a little Glen Miller just because the guys like to jam on those pop tunes. I met my lady friend, Millie at one of those parties and we had been attracted to each other right away. We had become close but after my last divorce I always felt guarded. The two divorces had

made me very leery of any serious commitment and Millie was very tolerant of my attitude. She had been divorced once but I think that her heart was set on a permanent romance and possible marriage. It just seemed that with so many guys coming and going overseas and all these people moving in the area, everyone just lived for the moment. I dialed the number and listened for Millie's voice as she answered, and her voice resonated like the sweet tones of a fine violin. "Hi hon, how is life treating you?" I asked teasingly, knowing full well that she controlled her own destiny very tightly. Millie was a legal secretary who acted all prim and proper at work but was a different person with me. She enticed me by saying, "I was hoping you would call, it's been a while and your presence is sorely missed. Why not come around and see me tonight about seven and I'll throw a meal together." How could I refuse an offer like that? I confirmed the time and went back to playing. This was the best I had felt in days and all my worries just seemed to melt away for a short period. About six, I stopped playing, took a shower, put on clean clothes and headed for that lovely woman's place. When the door opened it was hard to understand why I hadn't been around more often. Millie was about 5'5", very shapely, attractive and what's more, she seemed to like me. I couldn't help grabbing her and kissing her until we ended up on the bed where we spent a delightful hour. Afterwards, she smiled and said, "I have a nice meal ready that needs to be eaten." Fine with me, I thought all this pleasure and good food too. It seemed to completely erase that edgy feeling from the crime scene earlier in the week.

CHAPTER TWO

By the next day I was back in the office and eager to continue working the case. It seemed that I had amassed all the elements of the situation but had no idea why Alex was murdered. The most obvious suspects were Franko and his gambling cronies although I was certain he had an iron clad alibi and many witnesses to verify it. It just seemed too easy and Franko knew he would be suspect number one. As I entertained the thought that the crime boss would want to dirty his hands over a twenty thousand dollar debt, it just didn't make sense. A guy like that with deep pockets probably made a hundred thousand a year and while he wouldn't like to lose a nice sum, would this debt really be worth a possible conviction for murder? There had to be something missing that I didn't know about and believed it had to do with Alex's private life. Mr. and Mrs. Borgmen probably didn't know what it was either at least not from the evidence I had. Marshall and Susan had not been helpful in my book. If they were clueless, then I was in a blind alley with nowhere to go. Before I could talk to either one of them, Andrea came back from lunch and knocked on the door to tell me about a phone message from a Mr. Fritz. I didn't know the man but wondered if he might be one of Locarelli's goons. I took the number and called Mr. Fritz and sure enough, he said that Mr. Locarelli wanted me to drop in to his China Town business location for a sit down. I quickly reviewed my notes before heading for the hot seat with Franko. If he had something important to add, I was open to listening. I put a small shiv in my pocket for some extra assurance and drove to the establishment which took about fifteen minutes. I walked up to the wrought iron door that seemed somewhat ominous since having been unceremoniously shoved out of it a few days earlier. Once inside, I was immediately approached by my old buddy, Mr. Scar. This time he used a friendlier voice and stated, "My boss would like to speak with you in his private office, follow me." His office was

on the second floor and looked as sparsely furnished and run down as the rest of the building. The same smell from the previous visit washed over me as I saw Franko's bald head and hanging jowls as the man looked up from a plate of food. He smiled and motioned for me to sit and this time he offered me a drink as if we were old friends but I declined with a superficial glance while saying, "Let's get right down to business." The boss man began by offering as close to what I would consider an apology as the guy could make. I had to wonder what his angle was going to be and then he said, "I regret the way that you were treated last time you dropped by. You seem like a good fellow who is on the up and up and trying to do your job. Let's find out if maybe I can be of help to you. That young Borgmen, Edmund, is a typical bad boy wasting his family's money on gambling and ripping himself apart with heroin. I offer these kids credit for as long as they make good on their losses but this is a business. He was warned to pay up and I tried to be patient but stalling on making markers good is taboo and no more Mr. nice guy. My guys located his girlfriend's place and found him hiding out there. He promised to pay up by the next day, but I've heard nothing from him since. I learned that his brother was found dead near Balch Creek but the killing had nothing to do with me even though I had markers from him for gambling debts that were higher than what his younger brother owed. You should check out all the broads who use to hang with him in the clubs. A few of them might know something about his demise." With those words, he rose from his chair, waved me off and I took the hint and promptly left. While walking to my car, I tried to make sense of why the man had suddenly tried to be so helpful. Franko was a ruthless and cunning man who was rumored to be in tight with some underworld bosses and was not the kind of person who voluntarily offered information unless he thought it would benefit him. I wasn't going to forget Sammy's caution and crib notes on the beatings Franko's men meted out on several locals and the fact that he was also suspected of executing a few rivals from across town. For now, I filed this event in the back of my mind and concentrated on the straight

forward leads. I had more questions for the Borgmens but answers would have to wait until after the autopsy and funeral.

As usual, when not knowing what to do next, I headed back to the office to relax and think over the developments. Next in order was a trip to the library to find more information on this troubled family and any connections with Locarelli. However, when I arrived Andrea was on the phone and handed me a note about the caller. It turned out to be Mrs. Borgmen and when I answered she spoke in a very calm voice requesting a meeting with me at her home around eight p.m. Apparently, at that hour her husband would be at the club drowning his sorrows in bourbon. It sounded like a set up from the start but I needed any information she would give me. When I hung up the phone, Andrea asked, "What did the woman want so soon after a son's death? Is she interested in you?" I didn't bother to respond and feed into any wild ideas she might have. Andrea had always been overly interested in me personally but willing to work cheap, tolerate my tardy payments and was also a competent secretary. I busied myself with routine tasks for a while and allowed Andrea to calm down and resume a normal demeanor. I knew why she was suspicious of this manipulating looker but Mrs. Borgmen might provide some useful assistance. One thing I had never figured out was the way females think, it's beyond my abilities after endless attempts. Andrea went back to fidgeting with the papers on her desk and I headed for the archives. It would be nice if I had all of the resources of the Portland Police but that was not going to happen. When I arrived at the library and the archived stacks of newspapers, I began the slow process of sifting through them starting with the January, 1940 issue. I scanned through any article on organized crime then moved onto reviewing the society pages for anything on the Borgmens. I hoped to discover some background information on how these two groups might be linked. I was finished with all of the 1940's and most of the dailies from 1941 when I heard the voice of a woman asking me a question. She was a short blonde who looked about 30 years old and had a very soft yet controlled voice tone. The stone floor of the library

made everything echo back at me as I looked into her piercing blue eyes. When I focused on her words she was asking if any help was needed. I was hardly prepared for this chance meeting but another knowledgeable person would be exceedingly useful. She gave her name as Callie and volunteered that she worked here as a Librarian. I briefly mentioned the topics of interest being searched for in a very guarded way and left it at that. Working together paid off and soon we located several articles on Franko and his unsavory connections in the early 1943 issues. After March, 1943 it seemed that all mention of him abruptly disappeared from print. I wondered who helped halt this flow of information and if his legal problems were also cut loose. I remarked how ironic this was and my new acquaintance agreed. Callie was a sharp cookie who recalled hearing some incidents about him in early June, 1943 but when we searched through all the issues from that period there was no mention of Locarelli anywhere. Instead we saw tidbits about some gambling kingpins who were emerging as powerhouses in the vice world of Seattle and Los Angeles. Callie seemed keen to show me articles on a powerful woman in town named Dorothy McCollough Lee, who appeared to be evolving as a counterbalance to all the criminal chaos that was spreading up the west coast. My new contact located several articles showing Mrs. McCollough Lee was trying to impact crime from her position as an Oregon State Senator. It appeared as though she might have a chance at cleaning up this tangled web of crime that Portland had become enmeshed in. I turned my attention to the face that was before me and realized this was a very smart and determined person. It was then that my curiosity took over and I asked Callie, about her previous experience since she seemed very adept at this type of work. Her terse reply was, "I worked for two years in the military as a cipher code breaker." Nothing more was said about that aspect of her life except that she was just a small town girl who really loved the Pacific Northwest and just couldn't imagine herself anywhere else. I could see the twinkle shine in her eyes as she talked about her hometown and her job. Here was a previously unknown woman helping me by

shuffling through the pages of the *Oregonian*. As the time drew nearer to eight, I got my notes in order and asked for her phone number which she promptly provided.

As I traveled up the winding tree lined streets to the West Hills home of Mrs. Borgmen, it was apparent that she had been in my thoughts these last few days. I knew she had a formidable role in this case but wasn't sure what form it was going to take. She was a woman in her early forties and a striking beauty that Borgmen must have acquired as a show piece after the death of his first wife. Being married to a much older man must have left her with a sparse romantic life I thought since Charles seemed like a proper sort of guy with a no nonsense frame of mind. Of course, I was only guessing at the situation but my assumptions were usually accurate. I arrived at the house on time and noticed that no other cars were parked in the area. Ringing the bell once brought an almost immediate response from Mrs. Borgmen, who opened the door as if she was eagerly waiting for me. I gave her another round of condolence on the loss of her son and entered as she motioned for me to follow her into the parlor. For just a second I could see a flash of her manipulation as she graciously showed me to a seat on a sumptuous brown leather sofa before sitting a foot away. She began speaking in a low and seductive voice that had my complete attention. "Thank you for coming so quickly, I really needed to see you to discuss how we can help each other in this terrible matter. I spent the last few hours going over Alex's life with the hope of finding something that would explain his dreadful death. Alex was seeing a few women but he was only serious about Marla Carrasco who works in one of those Gentleman's clubs on 82nd Street. He seemed to have a vulnerable spot for these women ever since his mother died. I also wrote names of a few male friends on this list if you wish to speak with them. The Portland Police didn't really question me about Alex because I was grieving but they are sure to be back in a few days. My husband and I haven't spoken about Alex yet; Charles seems to have entered a serious depressive state and is totally lost in his bottle of Jack Daniels. With those words, the

woman stopped talking and I spent a few minutes assessing her little discourse as she left to get a tray of refreshments. The first thing that struck me was her apparent lack of remorse over this son's death. I saw no sign of heavy crying or sadness that normally would be shown by a parent who had just lost a child. Her husband's depressed drunken state seemed more normal as a reaction to the death of a son. No mention was made of Marshall or Edmund's connection to this tragedy or what motives anyone might have to kill this young man. Mrs. Borgmen's demeanor did not fit at all with these events and I needed to know why. She couldn't be that immune to what had happened but come to think of it, I didn't see many signs of mourning on Marshall's face when he was talking to me either. What kind of family is this, I thought. It was amazing how quickly thoughts of Mrs. Borgmen as an attractive socialite vanished from my mind as her character seemed to devolve into a calculating broad. I began to look at her and the rest of the brood in a much different way. They knew a lot more about this dilemma than I did but it would be like pulling teeth to get it out of them.

There was nothing more to be gained by lingering on so to her surprise, I thanked the woman for the assistance, said my farewells, and told her that we would speak again soon. Without waiting for a response, I quickly hopped into my coupe and left before anything else came up. I was puzzled and disgusted at the same time by this woman's lack of feelings for her stepson. I had to focus on my standard case planning and keep moving on until figuring out the motives that these people had and then make sense of the situation. On the way back to my office I stopped by the Portland Precinct to see if Sammy had learned something new. Surprisingly, when I asked the Desk Sergeant about him, he motioned for me to go right in to the Lieutenant's office. "Hi Sammy, thanks for seeing me", I said but he did not look pleased. He almost snarled while uttering, "Why have you had contact with Marshall and Mrs. Borgmen without clearing it with me?" After a minute to compose myself, I described the details of my contacts with the two family members which seemed to

assuage him for the moment. Then, taking a little initiative, I asked, “Did you learn anything that you can share with me?” He looked at me in a puzzled way and said, “Sandler, some things can’t be revealed. You have been very active in this matter and helpful but remember you are not part of the Portland Department so leave the felonies to us. However, it’s important that you keep me informed so I can cover your back.” The silence that followed was a cue for me to leave and I acted on it immediately. I did sense a pressure in Sammy’s voice that had not been heard before. No use getting mixed up in his complicated politics just to get a few clues. Once again, I headed back to the office to check the facts and think about the motives of individuals, their means and opportunities and how that all fit together with my original case. I hoped that Andrea had a stack of pink message slips waiting for me but if not, I would look up Alex’s girlfriend, Marla Carrasco. She seemed like a link that the stepmother wanted me to follow and I might as well see what she could add to the mix. I wasn’t sure if she might be a help to me or just a decoy from a stepmother. There were only a few strip joints on 82nd Street so the woman shouldn’t be hard to find unless she skipped town before I got there. When I opened the outside door to my office two visitors were waiting for me. Lo and behold, there sat Susan Johnson and the elusive young man, Edmund. At first glance he looked like a healthy young man which was surprising due to his alleged addiction to heroin. “I’m Sandler Krane and I’ve been trying to reach you for days. Are you aware that your parents hired me to help you sort out some of your pressing issues related to a gambling problem? I’ve been looking for you to fill in a few blanks and then see if we can work out a safe solution to this problem. I spoke to your parents, Susan, and both of your brothers before Alex was murdered. I also dropped by Franko Locarelli’s place and got thrown out on my ear once. Later he called me back and requested a visit to talk about a settlement but I got the impression that your father is not on the same page with that proposed plan. Now I can finally hear your side, so what’s happening?” Ed looked at me strangely and said, “You have

really been diligent in your search to get at the bottom of my problem. I've been avoiding people for a few days in spite of what has happened to my brother. I needed time to think this thing through and sort out my options. Right now, the main problem is my gambling debt. Locarelli would not hesitate to take me for a one way ride if his money is not received soon. I know that my gambling was out of control when bets were placed on all kinds of sporting events putting me deeper in debt by the day. I have been avoiding my parents, their tight ass morality, the constant lecturing at me on the evils of a little heroin use and of course my bleak future. Susan has been after me to take responsibility for this baby she's carrying and I want to assume that obligation. The murder of my brother really stunned me although we were not very close. It scared the crap out of me and brought a realization that my death could follow. All in all, I haven't been doing too well and when your name kept turning up as someone who could help me; I came right down to the office. I have no idea who killed my brother or the kind of trouble he must have been in. I do feel scattered and afraid that the victim was supposed to be the man you're talking to now. I am not a drug addict in spite of what you have heard although I do use heroin occasionally to calm me down. These matters need to be straightened out or I'll be living in the fear of my own shadow. What do you need to know? Ask what you want." Edmund took a deep breath and shut up while I tried to digest all the facts he had thrown at me in the last few minutes. First impressions were important to me and although I didn't like this little screw up too much, he seemed coherent. There were a few new leads here and to make sense of them meant another trip to the *Oregonian* stacks to see if I could link any of these events to the murder. I knew that there wouldn't be much time before something else shady happened or another body turned up. "Edmund", I said in the most serious voice possible, "Tell me about what's going on with your family and what they are involved in no matter how trivial it seems to you. Something is not right with them and I need to get down to the facts about who might have the motive to kill your brother and come after you, other

than Franko?”

Edmund had a look on his face that indicated deep thinking before saying a word but finally he looked at me and began to spill out his thoughts. “My brothers and I were born into money and pretty much had everything we wanted even during the depression. That includes cars, women, clothes and drugs. We went to Lincoln High School and Alex had ambition for success so he studied business at the University of Portland which pleased our father. I was born in 1921 after my mom married into the family and as the baby of the family; I was probably the wildest of all the children. My parents seemed to have no control over my actions. Mom was very lenient and made excuses for any outrageous things I did. Even when I was arrested for mischievous pranks, my parents got me off without any public record. The three of us kids kind of separated about a year ago and I have only a vague idea of what kind of lame brain schemes Alex and Marshall were up to. Alex was the most secretive about his business dealings while Marshall was more of an open book. I occasionally heard rumors about him being involved with a bad crowd. When we were kids he liked committing petty crimes just for the thrills. Marshall has always been the most devious of us and he may have been involved in stealing cars, breaking into businesses and threatening people for money. I spoke often to Alex about these acts but he always blew me off and assured me they weren’t true. When I got too nosy, the conversation would turn to my conduct and the discussion was dropped. Alex was very protective and controlling of Marshall. Other than some of the crowd Marshall ran with, there is no one else who comes to mind with motives to harm him. Alex had one best friend, a guy named Joe, who ran around with him and I can’t even name a girlfriend except that dame from the club on 82nd Street. I tried to locate her but she left town two weeks ago and hasn’t been heard from since. I don’t know what more can be added. Susan knows almost nothing about Alex so she is of no help. If you want the names of Marshall’s crowd, I can probably come up with a few of them but I’m mostly concerned for myself and Susan right now.”

Edmund stopped talking and slumped into the chair as if he had been deflated. I was sure that Alex's death was pressing on his mind and causing fear to dominate any other thoughts. I offered him a drink, but he declined and just stared into his lap. After a few more minutes, he got up, took Susan's hand and left but not before he placed a paper on my desk with his phone number and address. This case was getting more interesting and complicated by the minute. I wished that a copy of those sealed records from these lads' misspent youth was available but that was not going to happen. For just a moment I thought of all the guys out there on the front lines and in the trenches and how these Borgmen boys have wasted their lives away. Needing time to think before making my next move I headed back to the Public Library to see if there was any information on the auto theft rings and any minor burglaries that could be linked to Marshall. The Borgmen family was a web of deceit that kept secrets from each other and the public. I supposed that maintaining your reputation is more important when you own a large firm but when it cost a son's life, something has got to give.

I stayed in my office a little longer and worked on some trivial matters that were long overdue. Andrea tried to look busy but I knew she was doing her best to flirt with me particularly by resting her legs on the desk so that lots of skin was showing. I finally had enough and left without saying a word and headed for the library. As I walked into the library there at the stacks stood Callie in one of those sleek silhouette dresses in a dark burgundy color. Her outfit and demeanor presented a professional look but the smile on her face seemed so welcoming. After a greeting, I asked to see the 1942-43 copies of the *Oregonian* and mentioned in particular, that I was looking for some stories on a few creeps. I wanted to start with anything on the auto theft rings and needed to find out about the history of one of Marshall's friends. I also needed to locate the main honcho in the string of break-ins mentioned by Edmund. I figured it was useless to search for the Borgmen's in crime reports and we had already searched the society pages. Callie put her skills right to work

alongside me and before long we had several stories that seemed to link these crimes. With what I had learned about the brothers, these new facts had given me a better picture of crime in this town as it related to the Borgmens. I was furiously taking notes when Callie got a pen and started to help. I could see the wheels working in her mind and without saying too much she was beginning to get the picture too. She didn't need to have any confidential information to figure out the direction I was going. We moved quickly to articles on the break in's and I could see that Marshall had been questioned about his role in the seemingly petty thefts. I wracked my brain for how this theft ring might be linked with the stolen cars and the murder of young Alex. An hour later, I thanked Callie for her quick archive skills and keen thinking. I mentioned that we could hook up later and she agreed to meet out in front for dinner. I would pick her up at 5:30 and she suggested a little place down in Vanport.

It had been short interval since talking seriously to Sammy but I decided to drop by his Portland Precinct anyway to see if I could get a line on what he knew. When I walked in the door, he was standing by the booking desk and surprisingly waved me on with a smile. I took that as a good sign and approached him. Sammy asked, "How are you doing with your case? I know that you have been talking to the Borgmen family quite a lot, so what can you tell me since our last meeting?" I gave Sammy some of the facts from my crib notes but omitted a few obscure items and hunches that were not quite connected. Looking intently at me, he said, "We have pretty well rejected the idea of Franko being involved in Alex's murder and have begun looking at some new leads. It appears that Alex was mixed up in some high level criminal matters that were dangerous in many ways. Right now we can't get any information from the Feds about the interstate auto theft cases you are interested in but it sounds like they have some undercover operations that are taking place in Central and South America. The Bureau is swamped right now with the interception of Japanese radio traffic but as soon as things cool off in the Asian Theater they will get right on it. Of course they always

cite national security as their foremost concern and I can't disagree with them. My wildest guess is that Alex had been involved in some type of espionage that eventually got him killed. What it entailed was beyond my scope at this time but our department is digging deeper into this matter. I hope to have something soon but until then maybe you could snoop around a little since there are no eyes on your activities. Just between us, Sandler, there are some real twisted political things going on around here and it's hard to understand people's motives. I hope that we can help each other out." I thanked Sammy for the vote of confidence by allowing me to stay close to the investigation. He started to joke around as we left his office and walked toward the front door.

Right now my mind was drifting back to Callie standing on the steps of the library in that burgundy dress waiting for me. I drove down to the library, picked her up and headed north. Ten minutes later, she motioned for me to take a turn which took us into the highly organized and packed housing project called Vanport. I could see why this place was sometimes called Kaiserville. It was perfectly located along the rivers between Swan Island, St. Johns and the Port of Vancouver. The Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation hired enough workers to toil around the clock to produce a never ending line of ships called the Liberty and the Victory. This little town was filled with homes, schools and stores that just seemed to pop up overnight. I had the same feeling back in San Diego when I returned from Guadalcanal to see the shifts of workers that toiled nonstop toward our victory in this war.

We stopped at a little diner that Callie liked to visit with her friends and sat at a table near a window facing the Columbia River. We were ready for our dinner while those around us were from various shifts and eating their breakfast or lunch. We shared a little about our time in the service and as she trusted me a little more, revealed a few thoughts about the war and her reentry back into this crazy town. We made it a short night but planned to meet on the weekend.

By the next day I was back on the case and looking into new solid leads acquired from the newspaper, the Borgmens and Sammy. My thoughts kept returning to the confusing split in the Borgmen family's reaction to the death of Alex. Mr. Borgmen appeared to be in a shattered state over the death of his oldest son but Mrs. Borgmen and Marshall seemed impervious to such grief. To think of it, I hadn't seen Charles since our first few meetings in this case. Since we had never discussed his view of what happened to Alex, I phoned the house and asked to speak with him. I was told that Mr. Borgmen was indisposed however, at my repeated insistence, the voice on the phone said he would inquire about his availability. After a few moments, Charles answered the phone in a testy sort of way and growled something about me leaving him alone to mourn in privacy. He mentioned that talking with the Police had produced nothing relevant. I replied in a soft voice, "Mr. Borgmen, time is of the essence, so please let's set up a meeting so I can do my job. I need to work with you on this matter quickly if you want to resolve Edmunds' situation and maybe find Alex's killer. The original reason for hiring me was to resolve issues with Edmund but the case has been altered by Alex's death. If you wish me to broaden my investigation, then we have to come to a new understanding. Otherwise, I will deal only with Edmunds' situation." My little speech seemed to help him focus and he said, "Come by the house about seven and we'll talk." I responded by saying, "There is nothing as important to me as finding the criminals who are threatening the wellbeing of your family so let's put this tragedy to rest." That said, he hung up and I felt somewhat pleased with the outcome of our conversation. I had several hours before meeting with this man and spent a few minutes putting together my case notes. I had my original questions that were focused on Edmund's bad behavior involving gambling, possible drug use and pressure from a woman. Now there were the life threatening issues related to unknown motives. Whatever Alex was doing had got him killed and I had the feeling that Marshall knew more than he revealed. Then there was Mrs. Borgmen who seemed more interested in

seduction than in delving into facts about the death of her stepson. Charles Borgmen himself seemed to add to this strange mixture as well. I kept going over what was known and unknown in the facts, but just couldn't seem to connect all of the dots. I hoped that Charles might fill in a few of the blanks for me. I puttered around the office, looking over older unsolved issues and bantered playfully with Andrea while having a bite to eat. Now it was time to get moving and meet with the head of the family.

I had made the drive up to the West Hills so often that my car seemed to find the Borgmen's house all by itself. It was now time to take a direct approach with this man by stressing that he must provide truthful answers to me. If I thought he was not cooperating, a tougher stance could be in order. In the back of my mind I realized the best approach might be to terminate this contract and move on. As I neared the driveway, only one car was visible so it appeared that this meeting could turn out to be a very private one. Ringing the doorbell brought a quick response from Mr. Borgmen who waved me to follow him toward the parlor. I had a seat and began by asking how he was feeling and offered my condolences for his loss. While my words had no relevance to the intent of my visit I hoped they would start off a dialogue. For an instant a thought crossed my mind that there were tears on this man's cheek but he seemed to catch his emotions and recover quickly. He returned to his usual arrogant demeanor and provided a global description of his perceptions by saying, "This has been the worst time of my life and I want more than anything to find out who did this to my boy, Alex. I always thought he would follow in my footsteps and take over all my business interests after college graduation. However, I misjudged his intentions and must take part of the blame for what happened. I fooled myself by only seeing a distorted view of what Alex was up to and you can see how that ended up. As for Edmund, he was always a particularly wild sort as you have discovered, while Marshall is more enigmatic and a real unknown commodity. My wife and I have tried to give our children everything and it is true that we may have spoiled them. Following

the depression and now in war times, my sons have seemed to be in a lost state of mind.”

Charles looked increasingly distressed as he focused on his present situation and said, “Alex’s room has not been entered since his death and I have decided that you should have a look around to see if anything related to his death turns up. I know that the Police are looking for the killer but they never asked to enter that room. I’m sure that they have dozens of other cases to work on and have just overlooked a search of his belongings. You came to me highly recommended and I believe that one individual focused on this issue will be more successful than a whole police department running around. You must promise that if you learn anything, I’ll be notified immediately before releasing it to the authorities.” I had to wonder about his motives after that last comment but just then he reached over and offered a handshake to seal the agreement. He then led me up a stairway to what I presumed was Alex’s room.

The room was actually more of a suite with a separate bedroom, bath and sitting area. The furnishings had the aura of expensive taste and I immediately noticed a large desk in the sitting area. I walked over to it and started my investigation as soon as Mr. Borgmen left. Most of the drawers were unlocked but the top center drawer was securely sealed. I didn’t want to mar the wood by prying open the drawer so a search for the key occupied my time for the next twenty minutes. I finally lost patience and used my trusty army knife to open the lock. The compartments contained scraps of paper and several folders holding small notes with red and black ink scrawled on both sides. Taking my time, I perused each scrap until they started making sense in a loose sort of way. Many of the pieces were dated and it was easy to follow the progression of these writings. The scraps contained phone numbers and what I assumed were shortcuts that were known only to Alex. I would deal with the numbers later but right now, my focus was on the more legible papers. My eyes widened as I realized what these papers contained. I believed they referred to gambling wagers made by almost every bookie joint in the

state with coded names and payouts. A separate list consisted of names and a matrix of symbols that I thought were people involved in the operation or who took bribes to look the other way. These sheets contained a treasure chest of facts about organized gambling and could result in a complete destruction of the illegal betting industry in the area. I could see that some of these documents were in Alex's handwriting and tried to figure out how he had acquired these papers. It seemed as though they could be the cause of his death. If the criminal element involved knew about this information why hadn't they burglarized the house? My first instinct told me that these papers had been kept secret and no one was aware that Alex was harboring them in his father's home. What was this man's involvement and did his brothers know anything? It was extremely important that no one else know about this cache or the family might be in danger from whoever stood to lose the most by the authorities obtaining the data. I decided to scoop up everything in the drawer, put them in one large envelope and hide them under my coat. Before leaving with the find, I briefly scanned the other drawers and night stands but found nothing of interest. On a lark, I decided to look under the bottom of the desk drawer and found a few more coded lists in Alex's own handwriting. Now that I uncovered some very incriminating evidence, the next step was somewhat murky. If these papers had led to Alex's death, then whoever did it wouldn't stop searching for them and most likely, eliminate anyone who happens to be in the way. I knew the danger to the family and if it was ever known that they were in my possession, my life wouldn't be worth a song. Even though I had promised Mr. Borgmen that he would be the first to know about any new revelation, this information was too important for his eyes. I went back to my boarding house and started thinking about moving into an apartment where documents could be kept more secure. Housing had been very tight up to now but with the Vanport homes completed, the apartment inventory had opened up. I made a couple of calls about furnished places, checked them out in person and was ready to move my few belongings into a nice little furnished place before bedtime. I took the

keys to the tiny apartment on NW Hoyt and 21st and set my bags down. I found a couple of bright lamps at a used furniture store and started photographing all the documents found in Alex's desk. One by one, I made a close ups with my Baby Brownie camera and then hid it in a closet. After seeing all the articles on corruption during my last visit to the library, I was not sure who to trust and these snapshots could be the case breaker.

The next day I decided to trust Sammy and see what he thought was the best path to pursue. Not wanting to call because I was now starting to feel paranoid about phone taps, my inclination was to show up at the Precinct and unload the evidence on him. I made some last minute notes and thought that if the criminal element decided to attack in order to retrieve these documents then at least the police would have the fire power to shoot back. I drove downtown and entered the Police Station which just happened to be in a state of turmoil due to some random shootings in a warehouse on the east side docks. I was almost denied access until a familiar voice said, "He's alright, let him through". I was able to walk right up to Sammy and uttered the words, "Let's find some place that is private to talk." We walked up the back stairs to the top floor and out onto a rooftop deck. Sammy started by saying, "I'm assuming that you are here because you have some new leads." I reviewed the recent events leading up to my discovery and he was surprised that his own team had failed to check that room. We took a few minutes to quickly shuffle through the documents in my brief case and then we went back to Sammy's private office where the papers could be stored for safe keeping. It didn't take him long to realize the importance of these documents. He took a deep breath before saying, "This could really put the kibosh on some money making deals. If it's what I think it is, we could send quite a few people up the river, so to speak. I have to share this with the big brass since it could put a huge dent in the bookie operations of the entire state and possibly impact the west coast crime syndicate." I looked Sammy square in the eyes and asked him if he thought his higher ups were honest enough to do the right thing with this treasure-

trove of information. He quickly responded with, “This could be a big break for you and if I can get my way, you would be hired by this police force without fail.” Being a modest person, I thanked Sammy for his encouragement and said, “My greatest interest is not in the gambling operation except to clear up what I was hired for. That’s the case I’m working on and this extra stuff is just one of those fortuitous finds that occasionally turn up by accident. I would like you to leave my name out of this matter and let me attend to my investigative business until it’s all been sorted out. All I ask is to be apprised of any new facts that turn up concerning the murder of Alex.” With that said, I bade Sammy goodbye and left with a good feeling of having done something that would benefit a lot of people.

I walked out of the station with a measure of satisfaction and naively imagined that my involvement with these newly found documents was over. Heading over to my apartment for a much needed shave and change of clothes was my next priority but upon entering the door, I discovered an unwelcome surprise. My entire new place had been ransacked and left in a ghastly mess. Every drawer had been pulled out and the contents had been strewn about while my closets had been thoroughly demolished. In fact, everything I possessed had been deliberately cast about like straws in the wind and in some instances, torn apart or cut open with a blade. The phone jacks had been ripped out and dishes smashed to provide what I considered a severe warning from some nasty people. My first guess was the gambling papers I located in the Borgmen’s house had somehow been connected to me. But how did these dirty dogs know about my link to them and where the new apartment was? Sammy’s team was the only conduit this knowledge could have traveled through. Before even attempting to clean up the mess, I thought about my office and whether it would be the next target. I phoned Andrea but no answer so she must have left for the day. That was a relief, but whom other than Mr. Borgmen and Sammy’s team even knew that I entered Alex’s room. Borgmen didn’t know anything about the papers? I left everything in the apartment as it was and headed for the

office to see if a break in had occurred. Upon arriving, I found the door locked and I decided that calling Sammy might shed some light on this problem. I hoped that no one could listen in on the phone but dialed it anyway and when he answered, let him know that my apartment had been destroyed during my absence. Sammy assumed the surprising air of someone caught unaware and quickly replied, "If the break in has to do with the documents, I don't know who is responsible. I delivered the papers to the brass right after you left. I don't even know who the players are in this case anymore and we may not find out for a while. If you need police protection, I can provide it and if not, my best advice is to stay away from your office and apartment for a while. If what you brought me is as big as I think, these people will be relentless in recovering the evidence and eliminating those who obtained it." I declined the protection, hung up the phone and called Andrea at her apartment. I was relieved when she answered and told her to stay away from the office for a few days for safety reasons. Without any further explanation, I ended the call with the certainty that she had been with me long enough to comply without asking questions.

What started out as a simple investigation case had turned into a major crime enigma with me in the middle? I thought that dealing with one gambling boss was bad enough but now it seemed that an entire syndicate might have me in their sights. Other than Andrea, no one else close to me lived in the area so further warnings were not needed. I dialed her number again and hoped there would be no response. The phone rang many times but was not answered so I was convinced that my message had been taken seriously. I figured that she had left the apartment immediately and now was starting on a little vacation.

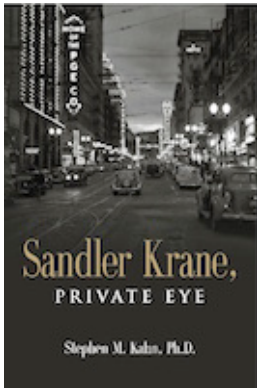
Normally, I wouldn't carry a pistol but I thought it was time to strap on my Police Special and let it bring me some peace of mind during these tumultuous times. Having a gun on my hip for the first time in a while brought out strong negative reactions but after a few seconds I seemed to push the memories it triggered aside. It may not

have been the smartest move, but I decided to return to the Borgmen house because I wanted to understand more about what Charles thought his son was up to and make another quick search of the room. Thinking that the house might be watched I parked far off from the driveway and made my way to the back entrance. I jogged across the manicured grounds and quickly reached the rear door. Looking in, I could see a few domestic servants attending to their tasks and it only took a slight tapping on the glass to get one of the maids' attention. She approached the window and luckily, recognized me from previous visits. I motioned for her to let me in and without hesitation, she opened the door. I thanked her and asked if Mr. Borgmen was available? The maid, Carolyn, must have grasped the urgency of my words and motioned for me to follow her into another room. I stood there for a few minutes until Charles entered with a surprised and annoyed look on his face. "Why are you here again and what's with all this secrecy?" I gave him a quick rundown of what had happened since my departure and he seemed quite unnerved by the news. His first response was, "I have no idea what Alex was doing with those documents and can't imagine him being involved in a criminal enterprise. Is it possible that you are mistaken in these assumptions?" The man appeared to refuse to accept this reality and I realized that any further dialogue would be futile at this point. I asked to visit the bedroom again and reluctantly, Charles agreed. This time my search was going to be more exhaustive since it might be the last time before an intruder or the Portland Police turn this place upside down.

Nothing in the room seemed to have been disturbed since my last visit so I took a systematic approach moving from one end of the sitting area to the bath and then the bedroom. After spending several hours in what seemed to be a futile search I was ready to call it a day when a loose floorboard near the head of the bed made a slight noise. I grabbed a letter opener from the desk and gently pried the wood until the board popped up. Within minutes I was opening a concealed space containing a packet that was about twelve inches long wrapped in old newsprint. My anxiety level was rising as I took off the

protective paper. These documents were similar to the first ones I found but the most dramatic difference was the recognizable names aligned with numbers typed in red or black ink. I didn't waste time trying to decipher the meaning of the info but instead made some quick notes about the colors aligned with the names. After taking a photo of each form with my little camera I folded the papers back into their original shape and put the packet back into the floor space. I replaced the board and made my way downstairs without seeing anyone. I planned to call Sammy later and ask him if he searched Alex's room yet. That should whet his appetite for making a thorough examination of the premises and lead a competent team to find the mysterious papers. Exiting through the rear door, I headed for my car and left the premises. As soon as I entered onto Burnside and drove toward town, a car popped out from behind a thicket of trees and tailed me very closely. As the vehicle moved nearer, I could make out the shapes of two men in the front seat and figured that they probably meant business. They were gaining on me and I was going as fast as my car could take the curves. Upon entering the city limits, I sure wished I had one of those walkie-talkie radio receivers used by my unit in the Army Signal Corps. However, at this moment I could only hope that a patrol car would notice this chase and try to pull me over. I heard that some of the patrol cars had been all decked out with new communication systems and maybe I could talk to Sammy via their radio. Sure enough, about a mile later a black and white was parked on the roadside and took after me. I could instantly see that my tail had dropped back as soon as the squad car appeared. I quickly came to a stop and explained the situation to the officers, who were skeptical until they heard the Lieutenant's name. They tried to patch me through to Sammy but it was tough to hear and I was concerned about who might be listening to the transmission. Before ending the communication, my last words to the cops were that I would head over to the Precinct to meet with Sammy. I wanted to plant the idea in his head that Alex's room might yield some significant information and was sure he would understand my meaning.

My mind was filled with all kinds of theories concerning these new papers but nothing really seemed to fit. I continued to be puzzled by Alex's role in this apparent criminal web. Something about him must have endangered the syndicate business but on the surface it was hard to figure out. Luckily, the drive downtown went fast and my tortured mind didn't have to cope with these ruminations for too long. I entered the station and was motioned to a chair in the Lieutenant's office where I found Sammy and two higher ups waiting for me. The first thing Sammy said was, "This is Captain Warrens and Commander Vinci who have been eagerly looking forward to meeting you." The Captain looked at me with a coldness that was startling and said, "You have been very helpful to the department by bringing to light these interesting documents but I must caution you this murder is a police matter. We don't want our citizen's to put themselves in harm's way and that is where you are headed. We need to have you leave this matter to the Portland Police." I suddenly had more than a feeling that the brass was easing me out of the picture. I wanted to take the supervisor at face value but a part of me couldn't help but think this strange political mess was getting just a little more twisted. Deciding to leave it alone and omit the encounter with the menacing car, I gathered my hat and coat and thanked them for setting me straight. I didn't need any more aggravation and reminded myself that I had my hands full with Edmund's situation. As Sammy walked me to the front door, he wasn't joking around as usual. I mentioned once again that Alex's room needed to have the once over with a fine tooth comb. Somehow, I didn't feel too confident about this and for just a second wondered if he was in the middle of some planned incompetence. They had all the power and I had to stay on their good side to receive any cooperation. The Commander had thanked me for my help and I was wise enough to realize it was time to go and leave it at that.



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