

"Cold War" memories, lost love, a brush with terrorists and unsolved deaths face the members of the Berwick Group as they uncover leads in Europe and New England to locate a lost heir.

The Photograph

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# THE PHOTOGRAPH

by

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## Prologue

The white Dodge Ram pick up truck slowly descended from Cadillac Mountain, the highest point in Acadia National Park. The only sound was the rumble of the Cummins diesel engine. The truck finally reached the Park's Loop road and made its way around towards Frenchman Bay stopping at several overlook points so the passenger could gaze out at the ocean and the scenery below. As was his custom he took numerous photographs for an album that he would later assemble to remember his trip. The plan was to circle the Loop Road to get an overview of the grandeur of the Park and then hike the 7 mile South Ridge Trail. As they passed Sand Beach the driver suggested they stop at the next parking area and walk the trail down to Otter Point. This trail parallels the Bay and traverses along towering cliffs with the scenic views of water rushing in from the Atlantic Ocean and crashing onto the rocks below. The waves sounded like rifle shots as they surged against the rocks, throwing up huge sprays of misty water and then quickly sliding back down into the cold ocean below.

They walked along the trail stopping at intervals so the passenger could take photographs. The driver followed along behind, looking all around for other people: seeing no one he moved closer to the passenger, who had stopped to take another photo. As the man raised the camera for a picture of a fishing boat heading in towards the town of Bar Harbor, the driver took one last look, came up behind the passenger and with a sudden shove, using both hands against the passenger's upper back and buttock, pushed him over the cliff and onto the rocks

*Francis Dillon*

below. The fallen man made nary a sound as his body fell at least 100 feet and lodged into a crevice in the rocks, which prevented his body from being washed out to sea. The force of the push caused the camera to fly out from his hands as his body sailed over the cliff, and disappear into the ocean below. The driver watched for several minutes as the waves washed back and forth over the body below. He concluded that the man was dead and looking around again to make sure no one was in view, he quickly retraced his steps to the parking area.

Because of the one-way traffic on Loop Road he had to drive the long way back to the Cadillac Mountain entrance to the Park hoping that the body would not be discovered before he could escape the area. He knew it would be quite easy for the Park Rangers to seal the Park's exit points if the body were found. He hurried along but kept to the speed limit. Upon exiting the Park he drove down into Bar Harbor, found the sign for State route 3 and headed away from the area towards Bangor, Maine. He was hungry and had to find a bathroom but decided to wait at least until he reached the town of Ellsworth.

As he drove across the Mount Desert Narrows he began to feel somewhat relieved that he had been undetected and counted on the dead body being determined an accident. He reached for his cell phone and pushed the numeric code to connect with an unlisted long distance number.

"Hello," a heavily accented voice said.

"Azhnu, this is Malik. Is my uncle there?"

*The Photograph*

"Uncle on trip. He be back tomorrow. You need to talk with him today?"

"No, just tell him I completed the 1st project and have the location for the 2nd project. Do you understand that?"

"Sure, sure, I understood English good, don't be smart with me."

"No offense Azhnu, I just need my uncle to get the message. I'll call him tomorrow."

"Okay, I give him message and you be sure to call tomorrow. Bye, bye."

## *Chapter One*

We reached agreement in less than two hours. Tomorrow, we would begin the search!

I don't usually look for new business clients when on vacation, but then one never turns down an opportunity when you're part owner in a small private investigative and management consultant firm. However, vacationing in Europe was the last place I expected to be offered a new assignment.

My wife Patricia (Trish to her close friends) and I had been touring the UK for almost three weeks. It was a long planned holiday, just the two of us, with a general itinerary but no specific place to be at any one time. We flew into Heathrow, rented a car and headed north to Scotland. Our thought was to visit some spots missed in previous trips, staying in B&Bs and the occasional luxury hotel, traveling counter-clockwise from Scotland and then by car ferry to Northern Ireland. Our touring in Ireland ended with a return ferry crossing of St. George's channel to Goodwich in Fishguard Bay in order to wander through parts of Wales, and then on to London and home. We had been extraordinarily blessed with beautiful September weather, fortunate to have fly-fished with a wonderful Gillie as our guide in Ireland, bicycled around a bustling Dublin city and even found time for a little ancestor hunting in an attempt to fill in blank spots in the family history. Of course there were the customary postcards for friends and gifts for grandchildren and other relatives but fortunately we found

*Francis Dillon*

little new that we needed to add to the overstuffed shelves and closets at home.

It was Thursday, and only two remaining days of vacation as we sped east along the M4 headed towards London. Our plan was to overnight about 40 miles west of London and visit with British friends from our military days before moving on to London and Heathrow. Air Commodore Harry Osborne had been my counterpart as Director of Security and Provost Marshall in the Royal Air Force. Our organizations had been linked in joint cooperation going back to World War II and Harry and I were part of a succession of commanders who ensured that the relationship remained strong. Harry and his wife Evelyn had visited Washington DC and our Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) headquarters during my tour as commander. The visit was both professional and social and gave us ample opportunity to become friends. The Osborne's, also now retired from military service, had often invited us to visit them in England but the opportunity seemed to be always interrupted by some other event. Therefore, we made it a point to contact the Osborne's before this trip to see if we could finally visit with them.

Harry was now the Director of Security for the British conglomerate, Interlaken Ltd. and so they maintained a flat in London for weekdays and like many of the managerial class escaped to the country for weekends. Harry and Evelyn owned a rather old and authentic thatch roofed cottage on the edge of Sonning on Thames, an ancient village on the river between the towns of Henley, famous for the Royal Regatta each July, and Reading, a

### *The Photograph*

rather non-descript place that was conveniently located near the M4 highway. Patricia had been dearly wanting to see the interior of a thatched roofed cottage after the Osborne's regaled us with stories of dealing with the animals wishing to nest there and the joys of maintaining the roof.

"Evelyn, I believe the Draper's are here," called out Harry as he spotted our car entering the gates to the Osborne cottage. The directions that Harry had faxed to us before we left the States were excellent but we had no idea the size of the cottage or its grounds. The two-story cottage had been a groundskeeper's house located on a large estate. The estate had been parceled years ago and the Osborne's owned both the cottage and some five acres of land. The drive leading up to the cottage was some four hundred feet long with open fields on either side. There was a narrow strip about six feet wide of formal trimmed lawn on each side of the drive and beds of flowers along the way, with a direct view of the cottage and an adjoining barn that also doubled as a garage. The fields on each side of the drive had been recently cut and gave off that wonderful country aroma, for those who appreciate it, of the new mown hay drying in the afternoon sun. It reminded me of the fields I use to walk as a young boy.

We saw Harry standing in the drive, in front of the garage, with binoculars in his hand. He was an ardent bird-watcher and it appeared that the newly cut fields had attracted a variety of species to the land. Harry looked somewhat the same when we last saw him some five years ago. He is about my height, 6' tall, with a medium build and full face that always seems to have a genuine

*Francis Dillon*

expression of welcome and warmth for guests. We alighted the car and were engulfed with a bear hug and welcome to their “humble abode.”

“ Patrick, Patricia, it’s so wonderful you are finally here after all these years of invitations. Ah, Evelyn, look who is here! They finally made it.”

“Patricia, look at you, you haven’t changed a bit,” said Evelyn. “And you two Patrick, except for the glasses you look the same. Oh it’s grand to finally have you here.”

“Beautiful lies but we will gladly accept them,” said Trish, “especially since we can say the same about you two.” “I guess age and the Lord have been good to us all,” said Harry, “but how about we open a bottle of wine and toast to your arrival and good health?”

We processed to the cottage, everyone chatting gaily and all at once. Trish and I had wondered how such a reunion would go since we had been infrequent correspondents over these many years, and the new lives that each couple had experienced since military retirement had taken us down paths that separated us from our previous shared experiences. We were sure the Osborne’s had some of those same reservations but the chemistry from our greeting in the driveway seemed to bode well for our short visit.

The cottage appeared weathered but well maintained on the outside and from the front gave a deceptive impression of its size. However, the outside was a startling contrast from the modern interior. We entered the

### *The Photograph*

front door to a wide hallway with a large skylight above us. I never thought one could install a skylight with a thatched roof but here was living proof that it was feasible. The planking of the floor was old but highly polished and a number of rooms were accessed from double glassed doors on each side of the hallway. Off to the left and to the rear of the hallway was a stairway leading to a railed balcony on the second floor that looked over the hallway and led to doors for each bedroom. There was a loft at the end of the balcony. Evelyn took Trish by the arm and began the house tour while Harry and I found our way to the kitchen and the wine pantry. I later discovered why Harry called his wine storage area a pantry. A door leading out from the kitchen brought one into a small earthen domed room that was temperature controlled by nature. There must have been over 400 bottles of wine; all on racks sorted by vintage

As we entered the kitchen, one that quite honestly could be a model for the latest and most modern of appliances known to man, Harry stopped and picked up a small pad by the telephone. "Patrick, I hesitate to surprise you with a matter of business when we have just been reunited after all these years and have much to talk about. But before we do anything else, I need to discuss this issue."

"Sure Harry, go ahead, I'm always open for new business," I said laughingly, since Harry was known for his dry witted practical jokes. However, I could tell at once from Harry's expression that this was no joke and my lighthearted response may have unsettled him. Placing my hand on his shoulder I said, "It's OK Harry, I understand, and believe its better to settle business

*Francis Dillon*

matters before getting on with the party. Please give me the details.”

“Thanks Patrick. A friend from the service days rang me up today and has a problem that you may be able to solve for him. He is in a law firm with his father and they had a client pass away. Unfortunately, the only heir is in the United States and they need to locate him. You do that sort of work, don't you old boy?”

“Sure Harry, we have all sorts of public databases that we use to find people; however, they are not foolproof. Has the law firm tried to find him using some of the Internet services or is this is a more complicated issue?”

“I don't know all the details but my friend says they are not even sure of his real name! A sticky wicket, eh.”

“You're correct Harry, this sounds like a matter where our firm could assist them. What's the next step?”

“Well Patrick, there is more than just the issue of the missing heir. My friend's firm had a disastrous experience in a civil matter with an American investigative agency a number of years ago. Apparently the investigators made exaggerated promises, spent all the advance money and didn't produce a shilling's worth of information. The senior partner, my friend's father, is hesitant to engage another American firm without some assurances. They will want to meet with you Patrick before going forward with any business.”

*The Photograph*

"I understand Harry, that's normally how we do business. But how are we going to meet? We are flying home tomorrow evening."

"I know. You had mentioned in your letter that we were the last stop before going home. However, I thought of a plan that might work, and still get you on the plane tomorrow night. But I'll need to call my friend before he leaves the office tonight so he can arrange it."

"Alright Harry, its 4:20 PM, let me hear your plan and then you can call your friend."

"No problem. He is normally in the office until after 5. Now, the law firm is located in Bristol, about 80 miles west of here."

"Lord Harry, we drove through Bristol on our way here today. I didn't see much, but I was driving and Trish was playing narrator as we navigated through the waterfront area."

"Well Patrick, maybe there will be time for a guided tour tomorrow. Here is what I propose. We set off early tomorrow morning and meet with the firm. I'll do the introductions and then sit off to the side. Evelyn and Patricia can drive up separately and visit the shops in Bristol. Evelyn says there are some superb antique places to rummage through, and still not spend a fortune. After you conclude your business we can meet the girls for a leisurely lunch, and then you both are off to London to catch the flight home. How does that sound?"

*Francis Dillon*

“It’s a good plan Harry, except that Trish doesn’t need to buy any more stuff. Seriously, I think it will work. We didn’t have any specific plans in London tomorrow except to walk around a bit and have a good lunch before heading out to Heathrow. Why don’t you give your friend a call and I’ll tell Trish of our change in plans. Does Evelyn know about this?”

“Oh definitely, I just posed the problem and she actually came up with the solution! Knowing Evelyn, she’s probably already filled Patricia in on the itinerary for the morning.”

That evening, after a delightful French chardonnay and petite snacks in the garden behind the cottage, the Osborne’s hosted us to an elegant meal at the L’Ortolan, one of the best country restaurants in England. The food, the wine, the atmosphere and the remembrances made for a wonderful night. In a matter of hours it seemed as we had reconnected again, with both couples wondering why we had taken so long to get together.

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