

Identical twins masquerade their identity. Confusion, anger, frustration by others.

Devious Twins

by Jack O. Moore

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DEVIOUS TWINs

*Girls Who Use Their Identical Appearance
Creating Anger, Frustration, Pleasure and Deception*



JACK O. MOORE

Devious Twins

Jack O. Moore

California Trend Publishers

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www.ctpcalifornia.com



and

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First Edition

TWO

Jackie was plopped sideways, legs dangled over one side in a plush soft chair with a book open as Cindy came through the door.

"I'm back," Cindy greeted, holding a small Macy's shopping bag.

Jackie looked up, "So soon? I didn't expect you for another hour or so." She turned, sat straight in the chair, noticed Cindy carried a bag. "You were shopping!" In a frivolous tone added, "Did you buy me something?"

Cindy flipped her head sideways with a smile, "I did. Something for both of us."

Jackie straightened up, her eyes widened, "Show me! What did you get?"

Cindy came around, stood in front of Jackie, pulled a pair of walking shorts from the bag with both hands. "What do you think?"

Jackie, after a moment, puckered her lips, "Style is good – was that the only color?"

Cindy anticipated her reaction and responded. "Not a bad color, beige with a pink side stripe. Kind of cute I think."

Jackie responded, somber tone, "Well – okay, but something a little brighter would've been nice."

Cindy curtly replied, "Alright!" Turned her back to Jackie, pulled out another pair, dropped the bag to the floor, looked back quickly, "Alaaa!" She blurted, held up the shorts again with both hands, "How about this?"

"Awesome!" Jackie snapped, excitement in her voice, jumped up. Cindy handed her the shorts and Jackie held the pair against her. "This color is great, maroon with a pink side stripe." She moved into a slight pose. "Sis, you're so smart."

Cindy, with a satisfied smile, sat in another chair. "Remember, we are two, only in a physical sense. Otherwise, we are one – we actually share the same mind and thinking." She tilted her head. "I also liked the maroon best, but it was the last of that color."

"That was thoughtful of you," Jackie responded with a pleasing look. "Or should I say it was thoughtful of us?"

"Well – either way is correct I suppose." Cindy squinted, her expression pensive. "You know our situation is really odd – unusual or whatever you call it. We are two separate persons. I see myself in you and you see yourself in me." She fixed her eyes on Jackie to read her reaction. "Lately, for some reason, I think a lot on that. Do you?"

Jackie, with raised eyebrows, reflected mild surprise, "I do, but I don't dwell on it." She folded the shorts on her lap, looked at Cindy. "We are

definitely unique.” She recalled the two sets of twins they had met during their life, but neither were identical twins. Her devoted and loving emotions swelled within, as it does every time she sees herself in Cindy. “Cindy it’s a real blessing that we have each other. No two people could ever be or feel closer than we. Again in reality we are two, but in mind and spirit only one. That is fantastic for us and I feel so fortunate for that.”

This was a topic they had rarely talked about, but just thinking about their likeness and uniqueness brought surges of warmth in Jackie’s body. “Yes, we are odd or unusual, but I think of us as a miracle. We really are – and I love having and being the same as you.”

Cindy raised her eyebrows followed by a gratifying smile, “You know this may sound also a bit odd.” She inhaled to control her emotions. “Sometimes I’m not sure whether I’m you or me.” She chuckled, half believed what she said. “You think it may be possible that we could become uncertain between us on whose Cindy and Jackie?”

“So what, if that happens.” Jackie grinned, knew from a pure physical viewpoint it was possible. She closed the book with the bookmark in place. “Seriously, we must remind ourselves mentally who we are. What I’m saying is – the mental must control the physical.”

“Okay,” Cindy said, as thoughts of how confusing this was, her tone half serious. “But if there is doubt, how do we know for sure?”

“Remember Cindy, the mental must control the physical.” Jackie also had thoughts on how baffling the situation could become. If it became critical, their DNA was identical, that would not help. “Are you telling me Cindy you are uncertain at this time?”

Cindy with a cynical smile replied, “Well – I’m not sure. Whether it’s a passing belief or becoming real. I see you as myself – so I could be you or me.”

Jackie dropped her head, her laughing barely audible.

“Jackie!” Cindy blurted, “What’s so funny?”

Jackie raised her head, looked at Cindy with a sly grin. “If somebody heard us talking like this, they’d think we’re nuts.”

Cindy chuckled, “That’s for sure – and maybe we are.”

“Okay, enough said on this.” Jackie waved her hand indicated no more. “Now I am Jackie and you are Cindy – you got that?”

“Well, I’m not ---“

“Cindy,” Jackie interrupted. “Don’t say it. Now you’re trying to get me confused. Right now I know I am Jackie. Okay?”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes -- Cindy I am certain. Now stop it!”

"Then I suppose that settles it for now. If you are Jackie then I have to be Cindy."

"Good. Now believe it!" Suddenly, Jackie's eyes widened. "Cindy," she blurted. "We forgot -- there is a difference."

"What are you saying?"

Jackie with a wide smile answered, "Remember -- the teeny scar on my butt, the left cheek?"

After a second Cindy's face brightened, "Oh yeah -- I remember. You sat on a small piece of glass."

"So that is the mark that differentiates us. My dear sister if you ever become confused or uncertain on which one of us you are -- check my butt. That will settle it."

Cindy, with a slight chuckle, remarked, "You make it sound funny."

"Maybe so, but it's a fact."

Cindy with a sheepish look asked, "What if I get a teeny scar on the same place?"

"Forget it Cindy. It'll never happen. Enough talk about your butt and mine." A slight grin spread across her face. "Sometimes I wonder about our minds -- when we slide into weird thinking."

"Also I ----"

Jackie cut her off. "Cindy no! Don't go there, enough of this."

Cindy shrugged her shoulders, as if to say okay. There were times she had the same thoughts.

After moments their eyes locked on each other briefly, with a slight grin. Both admired the other and what they were seeing. Their thoughts flashed back on how their identical appearance had affected them.

Jackie remarked, "Now on sensible thoughts -- our identical looks have enabled us to get some laughs. And remember how this has helped us many times in past years. With two of us we were able to get more done, do some things faster, better, and I must say our double identity allowed us to manipulate others, at times, to our advantage or wishes."

Cindy's face lit up, eyes flashed, "I know -- that has worked so well." Immediately, she thought how their antics had left one person, who came to mind, puzzled, irritated and he finally walked away shaking his head. His expression reflected rising anger. "But there are times it rides on my conscience. We have done some unethical tricks even though I like the result."

Jackie asked, in a serious tone. "Have we ever truly hurt anybody?"

Cindy, running her hand lightly over the book, answered. "Only some temporary emotions -- but remember, at times, it cost the person a few dollars and also wasted their time."

"Agreed, but we've never hurt anybody in any significant way. I consider such acts of deceiving or

confusing nothing more than a practical joke. We are not unethical – it's merely practical jokes when we can add a little spice to our life. Also to another if the person has a sense of humor. And most people do. Or take care of an urgent need without real hurt or damage. We have a laugh, do our high five and it's over."

Cindy nodded. "We do have an advantage, others do not have, which can be used -- we just don't want to go too far." She waved one hand as if to indicate, one more thing. "I believe we look for opportunities to create, rather than allow situations to arrive on their own. You know we have a compulsion, even a need, to do this. This desire could take us too far."

"Cindy, are you saying we have become addictive to this?" Before Cindy could respond, "No, that's not so. Though we don't want an opportunity to pass. As always, I believe we are in total agreement." Jackie leaned back. "Now enough on our oneness, practical jokes or whatever. Do you feel better after getting out for awhile? It's a beautiful day."

"Yes it was good to go out – fresh air and sunshine always boosts the spirit." Cindy pointed her finger at Jackie. "You should've told me about your odd friend you met." She attempted to remain somber.

"What friend?" Jackie snapped.

“Remember? The couple you met at the birthday party?”

Jackie turned her head, hand to her chin, suddenly said, “Marty and Ray?”

Cindy shook her head to agree. “They really blindsided me.”

“No – they didn’t!”

“Yes, absolutely they did! And don’t mess with my man! That was Marty’s message.” She slapped one knee, followed by a mild laugh. “I was shocked the way she acted.”

Jackie with hands to her cheeks, “I never dreamed that would happen. Never expected to see them again. Tell me what happened!”

Cindy pictured both in her mind. “I was taken back at first, but after realizing what you apparently did last night, it became amusing.” She slipped off her shoes to stretch her toes. “I was admiring jewelry in a display window when suddenly this man blurted, ‘*Hi Cindy, good party last night.*’ I turned, told him I had never seen him, started walking away and he followed, trying to convince me we had talked and -----“

Jackie shook her head, interrupted, “They are a peculiar couple.”

“That’s for sure. Anyway, Ray was trying to make conversation, but when Marty popped up he became quiet as a mouse. I decided not to explain our situation and left them with their mouths

gaped, totally aghast that I didn't remember them." Cindy broke into a sly grin. "They're probably still talking about you and your memory. She is probably telling Ray you have mental problems and another reason to stay away from you."

Jackie chuckled. "You're probably right. Sorry Sis – but again you handled the surprise encounter commendably."

"Fortunately or unfortunately, I suppose, that's just something we deal with on occasion. It becomes more interesting when the person does not know there is an identical twin. They are totally flabbergasted."

Jackie quipped, "Are we bad girls or not? But no harm done." The buoyant expression on their faces was, 'we did it again.'

Both were occupied with their thoughts for a couple minutes and Jackie remarked, "By the way, Mark will be coming by soon."

"You two are spending more time together – is it becoming serious?"

Jackie thought of a recent conversation with Mark which triggered reflection. She sensed, for the first time, he was moving into a serious relationship. "For me – no. Only casual times together. He's respectful, easy and fun to be around, but he could be. I'm not ready to get serious or date only one guy."

“Neither of us date much, but you act as though you are serious when you’re around him. You surprise me.” Cindy dropped her head, her chuckle drifted into muffled laughing.

Jackie saw no reason and snapped. “What are you laughing about?”

Cindy attempted to control her actions. “Something flashed in my mind – you could never guess what.”

“Is it good or bad? What?”

Cindy replied with a loud, “Wow! It could be either – and I’m sure it would be a first.”

Jackie, showing her impatience, blurted, “Cindy, what is it? Tell me!”

Cindy in a sober tone, “Now think of this situation. Say you and Mark, or that other guy, decide to marry.” She stopped, as the scenario possibilities ripped through her head.

“Cindy stop alluding – what is so funny with you?”

“Okay – say you are getting married and we, on occasion switch off.” She covered her eyes, shook her head, again laughing. “Wouldn’t that blow some minds?”

Jackie bellowed, “No way!” And in lower tone added, “Cindy don’t even have such a thought. That is totally preposterous. I would never stoop to that.”

Cindy looked at her with wide eyes, knew her thought was hilarious. "But it could happen, if you think about it."

Jackie stared at her. "You are forgetting a most memorable time. Couples spend their wedding night together! Together Cindy! When all personal hesitation, inhibitions and awkward moments begin to fade away," and closed her eyes in disbelief at such a thought.

Cindy again remarked with a wide grin. "The groom would never know the difference! That would be the ultimate antic."

"I would not call that an antic. That would be a cruel and unforgiving trick. Plus, the bride would know. I would not turn my husband over to you for the night. We may pretend and share everything except a husband. That crosses the line -- and imagine how I would feel? I shudder to even think about it. Forget it! Out of the question -- It'll never happen."

"Maybe not, but it sure is a wild thought. That would be the master stroke -- the pinnacle of all deceit!" Cindy turned serious. "Anything is possible you know."

Jackie still astounded, waved her hand furiously indicated no way, "That my dear sister, is one thing that is not possible."

At that moment there was a knock on the door.

They glanced at each other, knowing what the other was thinking. Both scurried to the door and greeted simultaneously, "Hi Mark, come on in."

Mark jerked his head back showing surprise, "Aaah -- Hi ladies."

After a moment, he came in and closed the door. He looked at one, then the other and realized they were playing their identity game. He stepped toward one. "So I'll gave you a hug," and to the other. "And a hug for you."

Both winked at each other, smiled, surprised at his actions.

He remarked in a cheerful tone. "Both of you are wearing the same fragrance, by the way, which I like. So who is Jackie?"

They stood, arms crossed, looked at each other with a sheepish grin.

He waited.

Neither commented.

"Okay you leave me no choice."

Immediately their expression changed, their grins disappeared.

He walked behind, put his arm around the shoulder of both. "I suppose I'll have to talk to both of you charming ladies. How could I ever be so lucky? Now may we sit on the sofa?"

He guided both and placed himself between them.

Even yet, they were not ready to divulge their names.

He decided to play along, continue with the dual role, to see how long they would continue. He reached and held the hand of each. "Jackie I've been thinking of you a lot today." He looked at one, then the other. "Had a busy day and really looked forward to seeing you."

Both responded, "I thought of you also." Both glanced at each other with a smug smile.

Again he waited.

No response.

"So Jackie what have you done this afternoon? Anything exciting" He looked at each and squeezed each hand.

Both replied, "Just before you came we were having a good laugh."

His response was quick. "I like a good laugh. Tell me about it."

Both shook their head, looked at each other. "Afraid not, it's too crazy."

In a pleading tone, he replied, "Come on! I haven't had a good laugh for awhile."

Both tightened their lips and shook their head.

He knew this charade was giving them much satisfaction. Even though sitting between two lovely ladies and close, gave him a rush of emotion, he decided to take more direct action.

"You know if you ladies persist, I'll have to kiss you both good night when I leave." With an elated grin, he added, "No doubt, I would like that."

One responded, "Well – maybe so and maybe not." Quickly, the other also said, "Well – maybe so and maybe not."

He dropped his head momentarily with a quiet grin. "I guess I'll have to let some of my emotions show." Again he looked at one then the other. "Jackie, you may have sensed." He stopped, uncertain how much he should say.

Jackie and Cindy looked at each other, wondered what he was thinking. Should they let him spill his emotions to both? But both remained quiet.

He continued, "During the past month or so you have been on my mind constantly. I have to say, my emotions and feelings are moving into serious thinking." Again glanced at both and saw no reaction. "I'm becoming very serious about you. What do you think about that?"

Jackie responded, "I'm surprised, I must say." Quickly, Cindy also said, "Yes, I'm surprised."

He grinned, glanced up. "Jackie, I can't hold back my desire for you. You're the most special woman I've known."

Both smiled as though waiting to hear more.

Going against his conscience, he continued, "I believe we have much in common, our thinking is

often the same on things that matter – you have a lovely personality.” He paused, took a deep breath, attempted to control his emotions. “I feel we have strong compatibility. And you are a beautiful woman – I honestly believe I’m falling in love with you.”

Immediately, Jackie felt a quiver in her throat and coughed. Cindy also imitated the cough.

All were quiet briefly.

Mark got off the sofa, sat on the coffee table, faced both. He looked into their eyes. All the vibes from each of their eyes triggered romantic desires. He felt and saw no difference. How can they have totally the same expression, looks and demeanor? Which was Jackie, the special one for him?

“Ladies,” his tone soft, “I’ve spilled my heart here, which I had not intended.” He rubbed the back of his neck to settle a tingling. “I can’t allow my desires to escalate, not knowing which one of you stirs my emotions. Jackie I have never been able to know for certain which is you when you two are together.”

He gazed deeply at each and still detected no clue.

“So I’ll do this – Jackie since we have kissed, I’ll kiss each of you and see if that results in the sensation and feeling I remember.”

Immediately, both leaned back. Their expression, hold on not so fast.

He quipped, "You ladies are forcing me to this," and reached for Jackie.

Jackie snapped, "Oh, okay, you ---"

Cindy, wanting to continue the drama, quickly outreached Jackie and with a smile, "Mark it's me." She patted him on the knee. "You're such a good sport and ---"

Jackie stunned, interrupted, "No Mark, I'm Jackie, believe me." She pushed Cindy's arm back.

Mark threw up his hands. "Hey ladies!" For a second he thought he knew which one was Jackie, but now who should he believe? Both could not be Jackie. He looked at both, his expression tolerant. "I know you enjoy doing this sort of game, but now I can't believe either of you. I have no way of knowing who is truthful, which leaves me in the dark."

Jackie quickly responded, "I'm sorry Mark, we didn't intend to push it this far. But I'm Jackie."

Cindy added, "That's true and I'm Cindy. And I must say your patience is a good character trait." She saw he still wondered who to believe. "Now it's all clear." She put her hand on Jackie's shoulder. "She is Jackie and I'm Cindy. Okay?"

"Nooo! – not so fast. I don't think so." Should he accept what they say now? They could still be carrying their charade further. He had no way to know for certain. Their latest comments appeared to be honest, but they always sound honest. "Girls, I'll tell you what." He spotted chips and dip on a

nearby table. "Why don't we have some chips and dip, then I will leave. Okay?"

Jackie replied, "I don't want you to leave so soon, but yes let's hit the chips and dip."

"Good idea," Cindy remarked. "But Mark, don't feel we want you to leave right away."

"That's alright," Mark replied, as they gathered around the table. "You've made my visit quite interesting."

"Do you think we are mean?" Jackie asked.

Mark, with a hesitant grin, "How could I think two attractive ladies, as you, are mean? No, not mean, but you could be pushing the dividing line."

Cindy responded, "We don't want to be mean – just taking advantage of our uniqueness. How's that?"

"That's one view, since you're not on the receiving end." He popped a chip in his mouth. "This is very tasty," he remarked and patted Cindy on her back.

Their conversation was light hearted as they chatted about a couple new shops downtown for several minutes before Mark decided to leave.

"Ladies I must go." He forced a grin. "Again it's been somewhat of a short and fascinating visit."

"Mark we'd prefer you not leave so soon," Jackie remarked. "Sorry for how we treated you."

"No harm done, my confusion hopefully will clear up on my next visit." He looked at both, his smile friendly. "Can I count on that?"

"Yes, absolutely," Jackie replied.

"We wouldn't do that again to you," Cindy added.

"Good," he replied, looked at Jackie then Cindy. "Since I'm still uncertain on who is who, I'll just give each of you a soft kiss on the cheek. Okay?"

Both nodded their approval.

He kissed both softly and started to leave.

Jackie said, "Bye Mark, you're a good sport."

He stopped in the doorway, glanced back. "You think so? My mind is still spinning. But it's always a pleasure to see one or both of you," and waved.

"Bye Mark," Cindy called out as the door closed.

Jackie remarked, "Mark played along well, I don't think it bothered him too much."

"He has a good sense of humor." As they sat down, one in a chair the other on the sofa, Cindy added, "In fact I think he enjoyed the guessing game."

Jackie did not respond and there was brief silence. Both were having thoughts on how they treated Mark.

Jackie looked at Cindy. "When I started to let him know I was Jackie, why did you continue to confuse the situation?"

"I didn't think we were ready to clarify who was who. I reacted without thinking." Cindy widened her lips, reflecting a regretful expression. "I'm sorry, Jackie. But I didn't expect him to leave so soon."

"That's okay, I don't believe he would've stayed much longer anyway. He said when we talked he would not stay long."

Cindy broke into an anticipated smile. "Tell me – what do you think about what he said? He's obviously moving toward a serious relationship with you."

Jackie shrugged, raised her eyebrows. "It surprised me, especially when he didn't know which was me. I'll talk with him. As I said, I'm not ready for a committed relationship. He will have to keep it as friendship only, for us to spend occasional time together."

"Good luck," Cindy quipped. "You know how some guys are, once there emotions begin spiraling they can't just turn it off. My guess, he will not want to back off. Most would take that as a definite no – probably move on."

"I know – you could be right. If it happens, so be it. I will not be rushed or pushed on matters of love which could affect my entire life. We'll see." Jackie got up, started toward the bedroom, stopped and looked back. "Don't you have your driver's license renewal coming up?"

"I do in a few days. Don't get me thinking about it – makes me nervous."

"Oh you'll be fine. It's no big deal, relax. Are you reviewing for the written test?"

"Yes, but it makes me nervous to think about it."

"I've heard that some individuals are now selected, on a random basis, to take the road test."

"I heard the same thing, but that it rarely happens." Cindy wanted to convince herself she would only do the written. "I wonder how they determine who takes the road test."

"I have no idea," Jackie responded and considered how a person is selected. "I suppose a couple possibilities could be – if you barely pass the written or seem to be really nervous. Who knows?"

"I sure don't want to take the road test," Cindy quipped, in a disappointed tone.

"Now Cindy, don't worry about it. That will only make you nervous." Jackie pointed her finger momentarily to Cindy. "Just relax and review the practice tests. You're a good driver and you're probably concerned about something that will never happen. You know most things we worry about will never happen."

"You may be right," Cindy replied in a skeptical tone.

“Anyway, you know I can’t help you.” Jackie remarked as she disappeared in the bedroom. “Sorry, you’re on your own.”

Suddenly nervous twitches pulsed through both Cindy’s arms. She clasped her hands tight to calm down. She knew she was on her own and was never nervous when driving with Jackie or friends. Also some of the questions were a bit tricky and this bothered her. She would rather prepare for a final exam. Immediately, she grabbed a *Peoples* magazine and began paging through to push the license renewal from her mind.

FOUR

The day for Cindy's driver's license test finally arrived. Her appointment was nine-thirty in the morning and she spent most of the evening reading the booklet and reviewing the sample tests. Jackie reminded her a couple times to relax and think of something else. Cindy commented she would, but it was obvious she could not push the renewal test from her mind.

Next morning Cindy was up twenty minutes earlier than Jackie which was a bit unusual. The most common breakfast for both was some combination of dry cereal or quick oatmeal with strawberries or blueberries if any were left, bagel or perhaps muffin with raspberry preserves or something sweet and perhaps a banana.

Jackie came into the kitchen, "Why are you up this early? I expected you to sleep in a few minutes."

Cindy took the last bite of a strawberry, sat at the table and rested her chin in her hand. "I was awake and decided to get up."

"Did you not sleep well?"

Cindy rubbed her cheek momentarily, "I was awake more than asleep."

"All because of the test today?" Before Cindy could answer, "I've never seen you so nervous. Can't

you relax? I'm telling you the test was not all that hard when I took it a couple months ago."

Cindy raised her eyebrows, looked at Jackie. "You're probably right. But for some reason I really dread going there."

"Have more breakfast and that will help settle your jitters."

"I had a couple strawberries," Cindy responded.

"That's all? Most every day you have a bowl of cereal, at least. You should put more in your stomach. That could help."

Cindy shook her head, "I can't eat anything else. Afraid I'll throw up."

Jackie walked over, placed her hand on Cindy's shoulder. "Sis what can I do to make you feel better?"

Cindy quipped, "You could take the test for me!"

"I shouldn't and I can't – you know that."

Cindy tightened her lips. "I know – but will you go with me. You could wait somewhere."

"I couldn't do anything. You really want me to?"

"Yes I would feel better if you were there. I definitely would. Okay?"

Jackie with a reluctant smile responded, "Alright – I'll tag along. But I don't want to spend all morning in a busy DMV office."

"I promise I'll try to get through everything as fast as I can."

“No, I don’t want you to rush the test or anything. I just hope you can move through the lines without waiting so long.”

Jackie changed the conversation to a new skirt she had seen in a window display as she wanted to put other thoughts in Cindy’s mind. This seemed to help briefly. Though during the time they dressed, in casual attire, there was little talk. Jackie’s mind was absorbed with a project for her Journalism class. It had turned out to be more difficult than she expected and it was due in four days. Cindy’s thoughts had returned to her challenge for the day. She kept repeating in her mind she could do it. Settle down. It’s only a driver’s license test and people do it every day. If others can do it, so could she. But in spite of her mental effort to calm her jitters, the nervous rushes continued to flare up.

Jackie insisted that Cindy drive and only a couple remarks were made for several blocks. Cindy stopped for a red light, when it turned green Cindy did not seem to notice.

“It’s green,” Jackie commented. She sensed the driver behind was ready to blow the horn. Cindy turned her head toward Jackie, but looked partially ahead with an ‘I know’ expression.

It was obvious Cindy had nothing on her mind except the exam. “Are you close to finishing the paper for the Theoretical Criminology class?” Jackie asked to get Cindy’s mind off the testing.

“Almost,” Cindy answered in a totally disinterested tone.

“What is it you have to do?”

“Something minor,” Cindy replied as she looked straight ahead. Reflected no interest to talk about her class.

“Cindy I know your mind is totally wrapped up with the testing. Let’s stop and get a milkshake. That would sure taste good to me.” Jackie was not in a milkshake mood, but knew Cindy rarely turned down an opportunity to enjoy the cool delicious taste of a Blueberry-Pomegranate shake.

Cindy glanced at her watch, “No – I don’t want to chance being late.”

Jackie knew they had plenty of time before she made the comment, but did not push it further. If Cindy thought she may be late that would increase her nervous jitters.

“Okay – on the way back we’ll treat ourselves. How about that?”

Cindy with a slight smile merely nodded her agreement.

Nothing was said as they continued down Jefferson Street then turned onto Madison Avenue. The DMV Office came into view and as a car pulled away, Cindy took the space within view of the entrance. For a moment, they sat quietly.

Jackie put her hand on Cindy's shoulder. "You'll do fine. I'll sit here awhile and may go inside later. I'll watch for you."

"Well here goes," Cindy snapped.

"Sis you'll be fine. I know you will."

Cindy, for the first time, broke into a joyful smile, looked at Jackie. "Thanks. I hope your right."

Jackie commented, "If I'm not here, I'll be close by or waiting inside."

Cindy nodded with a smile as she closed the car door.

The office was busy, as always. Cindy navigated through the first line to be seated and waited for her number to appear on the high monitor screen showing the window number for her to continue. Several waited in the same section and Cindy sat in one of three available chairs. She noticed the man who sat next to her constantly moved an arm, leg or rubbed the back of his neck. Her stomach continued to twitch with nervous jitters, but she was determined to act calm on the outside. As she glanced around a group of people waited in each section and none appeared fidgety. How could everybody sit so calm? Surely many must be straining to control their anxiety. If they could, she must do the same. But the man beside her continued to fidget, move and shift around.

He glanced at Cindy. "Waiting is the worst part. This place is always crowded."

"This is my first time here," Cindy responded.

"You look so calm. I try, but I can't. I always get nervous."

Cindy with a smile said, "I may look calm, but my stomach is doing flip-flops."

"How can you sit so quiet?"

Cindy could see the tension on his face. "For me, it's a mental thing." Her thoughts shifted from her anxiety to his. She wanted to say something to calm him. "Sometimes when my nerves and emotions are stirred, I concentrate my thoughts on calming my mind. If my mind becomes quiet then my body soon settles down." She immediately realized it was working in reverse for her. Her exterior physical body was quiet, but her stomach continued tense.

He tilted his head. "That really works for you?" Before she could reply, "Are you a student at the university?"

"Yes."

He grinned. "You know many of you young people believe the mind can control most anything. Now I'm not being rude, but when the body aches or whatever, I don't believe the mind can push it away. Not for me anyway."

Cindy with a soft chuckle replied, "I'm not saying just think something and it disappears or changes immediately." For a moment she realized her jitters had almost vanished. "But if you really

concentrate, think hard to clear your mind and put your thoughts on how you want to feel – you can control your emotions. You'll be surprised."

He merely stared at her, his expression doubtful.

"I'm telling you, most often it works. But don't expect it to happen in seconds, or even in one or two minutes."

"You really believe that don't you?" At that moment his number appeared on the monitor. "That's my number." He got up, looked down at her. "You may be next."

"I hope so. Now you relax." Cindy replied.

"I may try that sometime." He smiled and started to walk away. "What the heck – nothing to lose."

"That's what I want to hear," Cindy snapped, as he headed toward his window.

After a moment she reminded herself to take her own advice. All morning she had been nervous and her mind had dwelt on nothing except taking the exam. Strangely, at this minute, she felt calm, the stomach jitters gone. Suddenly, words of wisdom from her mother came to mind. If you're feeling down or fretful about yourself, think about somebody else. Thinking about one's self too much is not good. Move your thoughts to a friend or something you could do for another person. Cindy leaned back, smiled. She was convinced that was

precisely what happened to her. By wanting to ease this man's anxiety, her jitters disappeared. But she doubted his anxiety would vanish until he finished with the DMV.

Within fifteen minutes Cindy's number appeared and she quickly went to the window. The preliminary paperwork was checked, paid her fee and began looking at the chart of letters for her eye exam. She repeated the letters correctly for each line, as requested. Remembered she and Jackie's vision was better than 20-20 she remained calm while reading the letters. This boosted her confidence as she was sent to another area with the form indicating she was ready for the written exam. She was given the test, sat by the wall counter and began. The first two questions she felt certain and quickly marked. The next one she was uncertain of the correct answer, skipped to look at it later. After perusing all twenty she had skipped several.

She never anticipated being uncertain on this many questions and the jitters again rippled in her stomach. She went back to the first question skipped. Stared at the question, closed her eyes and concentrated. Why was she having difficulty remembering? She tried to calm her mind, take the advice she had given to the man. Distance to stop from a school bus with flashing red lights -- 20 or 35 feet? She remembered answering this question on the practice test, but how did she answer? After

moments she marked 35 thinking this would be safer.

She continued to each unmarked question, and still no certain answer popped into her mind. She concentrated to no avail and began to guess. Where should the left hand be placed on the steering wheel when driving – 10:00 o'clock or 8:00 o'clock? She tried to remember how she placed her hands and felt the most comfortable. She finally marked 10:00 o'clock. What is the safest method to use when following a vehicle? Allow 2 to 3 seconds or 3 to 4 seconds? After vacillating between these two options, she marked the later. When parallel parking on a two-way street, how close must the tires be to the curb – within 12 inches or 18? This question shot nervous spikes through her mind. Parallel parking was her greatest fear. She would rather walk a distance than parallel park. She figured closer would be better and marked 12 inches.

She continued to mark answers, but with an uncertain feeling. The mark which indicates a lane is closed ahead, she marked as yellow X. Diming lights at night when an on-coming vehicle is approaching, marked 300 feet. Speed limit on interstate highways, if not stated. She first thought 65, but marked 70. When backing up, the options given appeared ambiguous. She knew it was necessary to look around, but the best options

stated, in her mind, were to continue looking in front or looking behind for people, etc. She marked to look behind.

She finished marking the questions and gave the test to be checked. The person placed the template over the test and began scanning. Cindy watched anxiously, barely breathing, almost holding her breath. Quickly the checker, marked one wrong, then another. Cindy looked away, no longer able to watch. Her confidence plunged. She knew she had failed. She dropped her head into her hands. This was ridiculous she could not pass a mere written test. Why did it make her so nervous she could not think straight? As an A and B+ student why was the test such a hurdle for her? She didn't know why, but it pushed her mental and physical emotions over the edge. She was jolted by a voice.

“Miss, please step up to the window.”

Cindy moved slowly, her mood downcast. And waited.

After a moment the checker said, “I’ll comment on a couple questions. The distance to stop from a school bus is 20 feet, not 35. When driving your left hand should be at 8:00 o’ clock on the steering wheel, not at 10:00.”

Cindy put her hand to her forehead, stared at the floor. She didn’t want to hear more. Why didn’t the woman come right out and say she failed?

The woman continued. "When parallel parking the tires must be within 18 inches of the curb, not 12." She looked at Cindy holding her head in her hand. "I see you are disappointed, but don't feel too bad." Cindy looked up. "You passed, by one question."

Cindy inhaled, showed a slight grin. "Oh, thank goodness. I was sure I failed when you started marking."

The woman furrowed her brow, looked Cindy in the eyes. "Are you a college student?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then you should never miss more than one question. What happened?"

Cindy glanced away, clasped her hands. "I make very good grades and I really knew those answers. But for some reason this test scrambles my brain. Makes me so nervous I can't think straight. I did fine on the practice tests." She shook her head. "I can take a tough course exam and not sweat it. I know it's crazy, but I can't relax in the DMV."

"Well – you can relax now. Go ahead and have a seat."

Cindy replied, "Thanks so much," nodded and went back to a chair. A calm feeling oozed throughout her stomach, arms and legs. Her mind felt a heavy load pushed away. She leaned back, closed her eyes for moments. Reminded herself, it

was over. She passed. Now she would have her picture taken. She glanced around at three other people concentrating on their test. She felt empathy for them, but all appeared to be calm.

Suddenly, a man entered the room and spoke in hushed tones with the woman behind the window. He turned, glanced at everybody, looked at Cindy with a friendly smile. "Young lady you have been selected for a random driving test."

Cindy's jaw dropped, her eyes widened. "Me?" She snapped.

"Yes, you are the lucky one." Her surprise and rising emotions were quickly noticeable. "Now don't fret. It's not hard. You've been driving a few years, so you'll be fine."

"Why me?" She blurted. "I didn't know I would take a road test."

He motioned, "Come on with me. Now relax." They started walking toward the door. "I just want you to show me some of the basics. Okay?"

Cindy glanced at him, did not respond.

As they went out the door, he asked. "Where's your car?"

Cindy pointed, "That maroon Chevrolet on the corner."

As they walked toward the car, he commented. "I bet you are a student at Marshall."

"Yes, I am."

"I knew it. When will you graduate?" He wanted her to relax.

"This spring." Her tone somber.

"I'm sure you are excited about that."

"Yes, very much so," Cindy replied, showing a slight grin. She could not see Jackie in the car and started glancing around.

"Are you looking for somebody?" The instructor asked.

"Someone came with me, but I don't see her."

"Do you want to find her and tell her you'll be gone for a short while?"

Cindy knew Jackie was close by somewhere. "That's okay. She'll wait if she sees the car gone."

Unknown to Cindy, Jackie was inside and saw her leaving with the man, whom she surmised was an instructor. Cindy's face reflected clearly what was happening. Her lips were tight, both hands on her purse with no hint of a smile. Cindy would have to take a road test. She had heard some people are selected, on a random basis, but she never believed for a second it would be Cindy. Jackie decided to wait inside.

Cindy sat quietly, both hands on the steering wheel. She remembered what the woman said and moved her left hand to the 8:00 o'clock position and her right hand at about 3:00 o'clock. The instructor noticed and nodded his approval.

He looked at Cindy. "You seem to be up tight. Now relax. We will drive around a couple blocks and it will be over with. Okay?"

Cindy mumbled, "Okay." Immediately, she made it obvious she was checking the mirrors for correct visibility. And pretended to adjust the inside rear-view mirror slightly, even though it was fine. She wanted him to notice.

"When you are ready, leave the lot and turn right."

Cindy started the engine, looked around and slowly backed out, as she continued to turn her head and look. She stopped at the edge of the parking area, turned on the right-turn signal and waited. After three cars cleared, she turned her head in an obvious manner to check, turned and headed down the block.

He noticed she was overdoing the head motion a bit, but said nothing. As they went through a traffic signal, he said. "At the next traffic signal turn left."

Cindy nodded, "Okay." Checked her left mirror, turned on the left-turn signal, turned her head slightly to look and moved slowly into the inside lane. To her surprise her slight stomach jitters began to calm. She could see the upcoming traffic signal. She did not see a left-turn lane as she approached which she hoped and came to a stop slightly into the intersection. She waited, as a

steady stream of cars moved through in the opposite direction. She glanced ahead and to the side. Desperately wanted to get through before the yellow caution light appeared. The instructor sat calm, looked straight ahead. She felt her stomach tighten as she waited. She saw a break in traffic coming and moved more into the intersection.

Traffic was clear except for a slow moving car approaching far away. The car slowed, as though going to stop due to the signal change. Otherwise, opposite direction traffic had cleared. Cindy had barely moved forward to turn, when the car speeded and zoomed through the intersection. She slammed the brakes and blurted, "You idiot! You almost hit me!"

The instructor calmly said, "Go ahead now."

Cindy fought to settle her emotions, moved through the intersection and pulled over by the curb.

"Why are you stopping?" His expression reflected concern.

Cindy took a deep breath. "Want to calm my mind. That driver could have caused a serious accident."

The instructor sat calm, after a moment, "Are you okay?"

"Yes, I just needed a minute before going on."

"You're right. That driver was careless and to suddenly speed up to get through is what causes

accidents.” He liked her decision to pull over, calm her emotions before going on. “You being alert to what was happening avoided a potential collision.” He smiled at her. “Pulling over to calm your emotions is smart.” She appeared relaxed and he added, “Go ahead now.”

Cindy responded with a slight grin, flicked on her turn signal, traffic was clear and pulled away. She felt the instructor was a reasonable person and would not be picky on his judgments. His remark made her feel good. Within minutes she was on a residential street with no traffic and sparsely parked cars.

“Now go ahead and make a three-point turn here.” His tone was soft as he looked at her. “Do you know what that is?”

“Yes,” Cindy answered. She had made such turns on a two-lane highway near her home.

Promptly she looked for traffic ahead and behind, slowly pulled to the right and turned left, stopped near the opposite curb at a forty-five degree angle. Again checked for traffic, backed toward the opposite curb, turning the steering wheel right and stopped near the curb behind. Then slowly pulled away and headed back in the direction she came. In her mind she was now telling herself to stay calm as it was almost over. Overall, it was not as stressful as she had imagined.

In a calm voice, the instructor said, "Now go back to the office and you can parallel park in front of the building."

Instantly a knot pushed up into her throat. She coughed to hide her emotions. She felt certain she could never pass parallel parking. What could she do? She had passed up to this point, but parallel parking could cause her to fail. Her shoulders began to shiver. Every few seconds she placed one hand quickly on her stomach. Her face twisted into a slight grimace.

The instructor noticed her change in body language. "Are you feeling okay?"

Cindy tightened her lips and her jaw muscles became obvious. "Well – yes and no," she replied. Quickly pressed her stomach again.

"What does that mean?" He asked in a somewhat baffled tone.

"I have to go," she snapped.

He squinted at her. "Go where?"

"To the ladies' room."

"You'll be through in three or four minutes," he responded calmly.

"That's too late." She glanced quickly toward him. "I can't wait that long."

"What! You can't wait?" He snapped in a stern tone.

"I can't! I'm telling you I can't."

"Come on, you're almost through."

Cindy gave the full effort as she twisted, contorted her face. "You have to believe me. I can't wait." She wanted him to say they would forego the parallel parking because she had done well on her driving. But those words never came.

He stared at her. "Just hold it. Okay?"

Cindy blurted, "I can't!" Pressed her stomach. "I have a bladder problem. It can happen instantly. You want me to pee my pants and wet this seat?"

"Are you serious?" He snapped, stared at her.

"If I don't go quick, this seat will be soaked – I promise." She squirmed as though trying to hold back.

"Okay, pull up in front." The DMV office was ahead. "Go inside and I'll wait." After a second he added. "There's always a first for everything I suppose. Now make it fast."

"Sorry," Cindy quipped, jumped out and rushed inside.

He watched, merely shook his head. Twenty years giving road tests and nothing remotely like this had happened.

Cindy stopped. With a desperate wide-eyed look, glanced all around. Where was Jackie? She had to find Jackie. She spotted her sitting near the ladies' room. Cindy walked hurriedly, tapped her on the shoulder.

In a surprise tone, Jackie remarked, "You all through?"

Cindy shook her head, no, "Follow me. Hurry."

As Jackie entered, she saw Cindy starting to undress. "Cindy, why are you undressing? What's going on?"

"Jackie you have to help." She finished removing her blouse. "Quick put my clothes on."

"Cindy, no!"

"Jackie -- please." Her tone soft.

Jackie stared at her.

"I have to parallel park. He's waiting out front in the car." Cindy removed her pants. "I can't do that and you can. Hurry! Please."

"I can't believe this." Jackie began removing her blouse. "What did you tell him?"

"Said I had to pee right now or I'd soak myself and the car seat. Said I had a bladder problem." She stooped to remove both shoes. "Didn't know what else to do. I had to do something." Cindy noticed Jackie was not moving fast enough. "Jackie hurry and get out there or he'll begin to wonder what's happening."

Jackie hastened her dressing and started out the door. "I'm on my way."

"Wait," Cindy said. Reached and straightened her blouse collar. "Now you're good. Sis I owe you big."

Cindy dressed leisurely. She put on Jackie's pants, blouse and shoes. She was in no hurry to be seen.

Jackie rushed out the building and quickly got behind the wheel. She exhaled. "Thanks so much. I'm okay now."

His face solemn, he looked at her, said nothing for moments. "You certainly appear calm now. Quite a fast transformation."

Jackie did not respond. She knew he was staring at her and a surge of emotion spiked through her stomach. Obviously he was scrutinizing her appearance. Had he figured out she was not the same person? If so, it would be the first time.

Soon he added, "A remarkable change -- even fluffed up your hair."

Jackie tried to appear relaxed. Why does he continue to look?

"Does this happen with you often? You acted pretty frantic."

"Not often, but it's fast when it does." She recalled what Cindy had said. "This bladder problem. I hate it, but what can I do?"

"I thought you may be kidding at first."

Jackie shook her head no. "I don't kid about this. You know what it's like to suddenly have a wet butt and seat. Not good." Jackie wanted him to tell her to go. She wanted to get it over with.

With slight skepticism he shook his head in disbelief. "Now Cindy, if you're up to it -- circle around the block and parallel park over there." His frustration was obvious as he pointed across the

street. "Then we can finally finish." He glanced at his test sheet and mumbled. "I've been doing this for twenty years and this is a first," followed by a chuckle.

"I'm really sorry," She replied. Relieved by his jovial tone, but was glad to start moving before somehow he might figure out her identity.

Neither spoke as she drove around the block. As she backed into the space between two cars, she was glad the space was not tight, and steered the front end toward the curb. Turned off the engine, looked at him. His expression was somber. He got out and looked at the space between the tires and curb. He muttered, "Alright." Barely discernable to her.

He used the top of the car to finish completing his test sheet, as Jackie stood nearby, and handed it to her. "Take this to the corner section on the left. They'll take your thumb print and your picture."

Thumb print! The words bolted through her head. Never thought of a thumb print.

He scanned the test a minute. "You did fine. Remember always play it safe like you did in the intersection."

"Yes I will and thanks." Jackie's mind was digesting the next immediate move. She would have to do another quick change. She wondered what happened at the intersection but that was not the immediate problem. Cindy could clue her in later. .

The instructor walked away in the opposite direction.

Thumb print? The words still rang in Jackie's mind. She hurried inside. They never figured on taking a thumb print. She glanced around and saw Cindy sitting in about the same place where she sat before.

She tapped Cindy on the shoulder as she rushed by. "Follow me, hurry."

Cindy looked confused.

"Cindy come on!" She motioned to hurry.

When Cindy entered Jackie was removing her blouse. Cindy quickly asked, "What are you doing?"

"We have to change back and fast. You -----"

"What for?" Cindy interrupted.

"They take your thumb print before taking your picture."

Cindy clinched her fist. "That's right! I forgot all about that."

"Get back into your clothes and take this form to the section in the left corner. You better hurry."

Cindy as she rushed to remove clothes and dress again began to chuckle.

"What's so funny?" Jackie snapped.

"We are devious – you know that." She pulled on her pants. "Nobody and I mean nobody -- could pull off what we're doing."

Jackie responded. "You better hope nobody ever finds out. Others may not think it's so funny."

"Nobody can figure out which is you and which is me, so how will they ever know? They can't and we're certainly not going to tell when we're pulling one of these antics." Cindy started checking the sole of one shoe. It felt sticky to the floor.

"Cindy stop fooling with that shoe." Jackie thought she should be moving faster. "Hurry and go. I don't want to stay in here long after you leave."

"Okay, I'm going."

"Good. I certainly had not planned to spend part of my day in this ladies' room and you know we can't walk out together."

"I know – I know. I'm leaving." As Cindy opened the door, she glanced back. "Love you Sis."

"Go!" Jackie exclaimed, as she flashed a wide smile and waved her hand. She wondered, at times, why they felt great gratification in pretending to be the other. Such actions started at an early age when they realized their mother could not tell them apart. They were definitely unique or an oddity, depending on your perspective. Clearly they were sisters dedicated to each other, at least in their opinion. However, others would most certainly consider their antics anything but dedication. Probably trickery in its worst form. But why stop now? Other scenarios, or options, she felt certain, would present themselves any day.

SIX

A three car collision had traffic backed up for half mile. When Cindy finally walked in the office, she tossed her manila folder on the desk and dropped into the chair. She had found and talked with all four individuals, but came up with no additional information beyond what she already had. She wanted to review the file again before talking with her supervisor, when suddenly his voice echoed.

“Cindy, let me know what you have.”

As she glanced hurriedly through the file, “Give me a minute and I’ll be there.”

“Make it quick, I don’t have much time.”

“I hear you – it’ll just be a minute.”

Harry Wade, her supervisor, always acted as though he was in a hurry. She caught onto his ploy long ago. He wanted you to believe he was running out of time so he could get you in and out. She was certain he was not so rushed and continued to review the file. After a couple minutes she was on her way within a few feet of his office when his voice echoed again.

“Cindy! I’m waiting.”

Instantly, she replied as she stepped into his office door, “Hey, I’m here.”

“Good. I expected you back earlier. What happened?”

“Now remember when I called there was one person I hadn’t talked with and traffic was horrible due to a three-car collision.”

He didn’t look up as he was going through a stack of folders. “I’m being pressured to determine if we have come up with additional information. I have to give some answers and fast. That’s why I’m pushing this.” He pushed some papers to the side of his desk, opened another folder, leaned back and made eye contact. “Did you get anything new?”

Cindy shrugged her shoulders. “All said they knew him and talked briefly with him no more than couple times a month. None considered him a close friend.”

“Did anybody mention seeing him with any woman? Someone they didn’t recognize and hadn’t seen before?”

“Nobody mentioned a woman. One person saw him with a man he’d never seen before, but they appeared as though talking about some project on the house. Is his wife still convinced he’s cheating on her? Has she provided any new information to support her belief?”

He checked his file notes. “No -- nothing new, but she expects us to catch him and have a picture for proof. She is adamant and certain he’s seeing another woman.”

Cindy glanced at the report she held. "Well – if she's so certain she needs to give us more clues -- possible places or hotels. As you know, I've shadowed him four nights, two on weekends, and saw nothing. Maybe she's paranoid about him, but has no real reason. You know some people are like that." She cracked a devious grin. "And I must say some of us females fall into that category."

Harry chuckled, a rare expression for him. "You said it – I didn't." He closed his file, folded his hands, looked at her. "Do we have to tell her we've found nothing?" He tapped his finger on the desk, pondered the situation. "Do you have any other option to check?"

Cindy was already going through her file again. "We've discreetly talked with everybody we thought may know or have seen something and came up blank." She closed her file. "At this time we have to tell her we have nothing to corroborate her belief. Otherwise, we continue to shadow him, at times, if she wants to pay for it."

Harry shrugged his shoulders. "Okay – I'll talk with her. Also let her know if she thinks, at any time day or night, he may be with someone, call us."

Cindy got up to leave. "Now I hope you don't call me again late evening or night to try and find him."

He snapped back. "Cindy – somebody has to. We have to take care of clients 24/7. Right?"

“I understand, but you know I don’t like these suspicious marital cheating cases. You never know what to expect and I don’t want to be threatened with physical abuse like the other investigator. And all too often there’s nothing there. Some couples don’t communicate well with each other and become paranoid or suspicious when one is gone too much.”

Harry quipped. “That’s often true.” He waved his arm. “Go on – I’ll let you know.”

Cindy gathered up her file, moseyed back to her office telling herself she didn’t want another midnight assignment.

During the past six years, after graduating from Marshall, Cindy’s first job was in Clarksburg, West Virginia, with a small private investigating firm. For three months she worked in the office and was not given an opportunity be in the field with another investigator. She had often requested field assignments. Her supervisor complemented her on occasion and finally she was given the opportunity to work certain days with another investigator after five months. Between office work and field time she became involved in various types of investigations; marital disputes and affairs, child custody, verifying financial transactions, accidents, insurance fraud and events requested by law firms, gathering various records and information from

private companies for personal and business cases. After six months she began working alone or was the lead investigator.

Cindy valued the exposure and experience she gained with the small firm, but wanted to be part of a large firm. After one and half years she moved to Wheeling, West Virginia, and accepted a position with Matador Investigators. During the past two years she worked primarily on accident, murder and assault cases handled by law firms, and insurance fraud. She had become adept in knowing what Harry, her supervisor, viewed important and dealing, at moments, with his idiosyncratic ways. Finally she does not have to handle marital and infidelity cases which she disliked. Delving into lifestyles and events between a husband and wife or unmarried couples can lead to unpredictable and scary encounters. This she didn't miss.

The strong desire for her and Jackie to work in the same town never happened. When the day arrived for them to go their separate ways it was traumatic. Never had they lived apart. Each viewed the other as being part of herself. Emotions overflowed with promises to see each other often. But they soon learned that real life and responsibility of working in a career position brought demands.

Spur-of-the-moment trips did not happen though telephone calls were made weekly for the

first year. Each had the compulsive yearning to share thoughts and hear the other's voice. After all physically and emotionally they were identical and often had the feeling of walking in the other's shoes. Such thoughts would be considered bizarre by others, but was totally engrained and normal for them.

Their first year of being separated was difficult. Mentally they imagined it had an effect similar to physically separating conjoined twins by surgery. Though conjoined twins would never be separated mentally as adults. As more time elapsed and jobs brought more demands their minds began to deal with their situation with less stress. Though daily with no prompting by any event, their minds often vaulted toward the other. Cindy often wondered if sisters, close to the same age, would have such strong desires to be together. Even if so, the experiences and antics she and Jackie had shared could not be duplicated by fraternal sisters. Their uniqueness, beyond any doubt, placed them in a rare lifestyle. Cindy believed this their good fortune.

Jackie faced a 6:00 PM deadline for her article. She had finally arranged a second meeting with the city's transportation manager for the latest information on US Highway 50, on/off ramps to the Staunton Turnpike. In eight days these ramps

would be closed for the weekend, Friday midnight to Sunday midnight. This was her second article for this closure near downtown which would impact many local residents. She arrived back to the newspaper office, near the corner of 7th Street and Williams Street, one hour before the deadline.

Within minutes she met with the Editor, Margaret Dill, who went by the name, Marge. She quickly reviewed the article, inserted two changes which Jackie agreed to change immediately. They talked for several minutes on the impact the closure would have before Jackie got up to leave her office.

"Wait Jackie, I want to talk with you about another assignment."

"Okay," Jackie replied with a surprised tone, returned to the chair by her desk.

Marge began to review a file on her desk.

Jackie could not see the file label and was anxious to know. Recently she had handled various assignments on city issues, such as a water levy, zoning changes and a new high-rise office building planned in downtown within six months. She was hoping for an assignment which would require more of her journalism skills.

Within seconds Marge said, "I'm sure you know about the woman found in the river -- apparently a murder."

Jackie, with a spark in her voice, quickly replied, "Yes, I remember hearing and reading about it."

Marge continued to flip through the papers. "That was a very tragic situation and it appears the police do not have any real leads, at this time." She shook her head slightly, reflected her concern, put her fingers to her chin, as she concentrated on a single paper. "Nothing has been reported for a month and we should find out where the police are on this and what they're doing. You have assisted on investigating a couple murders -- would you like to work on this?"

Jackie pondered a moment. Definitely, she wanted the assignment, but played down her true excitement. Casually, with a smile, "Yes, I would like to take the assignment."

"Fine, I knew you would." Marge shuffled the papers back into the file folder. "I'll have a copy of our entire file ready for you tomorrow. I've been hearing around town that people are beginning to wonder where the police are in solving the case, so we need to get on it right away."

"I will. I'll review the file and get on it immediately," Jackie responded as she got up to leave.

"Jackie I want you to know I appreciate your willingness to do whatever we need." She reached, shook her hand. Jackie merely nodded. "Keep me

informed and don't hesitate to come to me with any questions or anything you need."

"I'll keep that in mind," Jackie answered with a smile, "I'll make the changes on the ramp-closures and put it on your desk right away." Marge nodded and Jackie went to her office.

Emotions soared through Jackie's body as she slapped her desk with eagerness and plopped in her chair. This was the type of assignment she relished. You never knew who you may want to locate or talk to next. Putting together an article involving the police in an unsolved crime could take days and often weeks. She leaned back, glanced up at the ceiling with a found-an-old-friend smile, and savored the moment. But instantly knew that much hard work was ahead. She calmed down and pulled up the ramp-closure article on her laptop.

After graduation Jackie was determined to find a job related to journalism. She and Cindy gave themselves three months to find a job in their Degree Field before accepting just anything. Jackie found her position in two months and Cindy found hers in only five weeks. Jackie moved to Parkersburg, West Virginia, immediately when accepted by the Parkersburg Herald newspaper. She worked in the office for eighteen months with the understanding she would be given the

opportunity to become an investigative reporter. After this time period she began to spend time frequently with other reporters. Her time was alternated between two experienced journalists.

As she spent more time with other reporters she became convinced this was the career she wanted. This relieved her mind greatly that the journalism profession would give her the job rewards she desired. The possibility of getting her Degree and not liking the profession gave her a sober thought. Though she realized now it would require more long hours and dedication than she thought while in school. After only six years her position as an up-and-coming Journalist gave her a confident feeling for her future. Jackie had gained true respect for her Editor due to her high demands and successful fair actions for the newspaper. This was a good day. And no time to think about what she may be doing if she didn't go to college. In her parents mind, college was also a must.

When she and Cindy knew they would be separated due to their career field choices and job locations, she would never forget their disappointment and trauma. Those same emotions and feelings, while they were two people physically, but often felt as though one, hung strong also with Jackie. She had many restless nights during the first year, in spite of frequent phone calls and text messages. As more time elapsed she knew both

gradually accepted their separation with less frustration. Their job demands had a way of pushing other thoughts and desires from their minds.

During their final year at Marshall they hoped desperately to work and live in the same town. Their entire life, to that point, they had lived and breathed in each other's shadow, shared clothes, personal items, intimate thoughts, feelings, and dreaded the possibility of being separated. Having an identical sister in whom you saw yourself in every physical detail, emotion and mannerism created a bond of love which only the two of them could comprehend. Each felt the other's joy, hurt where the other hurts, thought what the other thought, dressed the way the other dressed, which gave the miracle of seeing and watching yourself every day. Each came to understand, in time, this wonderful feeling and elation.

Though working a few years while living in different towns, they were forced to cope with their separation and gradually accepted their new so-called normal, real-life circumstances. They didn't prefer it, but this was reality. Jackie paused, had a flashing thought of what it would be like for them to work together on an assignment. Quickly she dashed the thought. Living in different cities it wasn't in the cards.

Two days after Jackie was told of her new assignment she was checking and reading through every line and item of the newspaper file. In so doing, she was reminded of everything she had previously heard and read. As she continued, page after page, the description of the woman's murder began to affect her emotions. It became personal. Strange as it seemed, she felt some of the emotions she surmised the woman probably struggled through. Jackie wanted to know everything about the woman. More about her daily routine: her co-workers if she worked, her friends both male and female; any men she was dating or had dated, what hobbies, if any, did she have and how did she spend her leisure time; was she a joyful happy person, or was she serious and more cautious than most people? What kind of lifestyle did she have?

The newspaper file included no personal information and Jackie wanted more detail. To the extent possible she wanted to get inside the woman's mind. What bothered her? What was her main worry? Did anybody have a grudge against her? Jackie felt people who knew her could shed light on her life. But who? She would have to find out. And would they be willing to talk? She assumed the police would have some of this detail.

After she spent several hours digesting the file she reminded herself she was not the detective trying to solve the murder. She was merely a

newspaper reporter who would delve for all available information to write an accurate and informative article for the citizens of the Parkersburg area. And to provide information, hopefully on the progress, by the police in solving the murder. She would have to walk a thin line to gain confidence of the police without giving the appearance of interfering with the Department's investigation.

The horrific circumstances of the murder became inscribed in her mind. Her empathy for the woman became vividly strong, by the time she reviewed all the details. She felt as though she must find the murderer. Her mind surged beyond being a reporter to an investigator. But again, Jackie reminded herself to calm down. Her job was to write a story, only the story.

The file showed the woman, blond Caucasian, late twenties, was found partially submerged at the river's edge, mostly nude with abrasion marks on her neck and arms. Her body probably had been in the water for two or three days. Jackie noticed her body was found about two months prior. But the file did not have any of the Coroner's Autopsy Report. Neither did it have the woman's name. Jackie recalled for days after the body was found, the woman's name, if determined, was never revealed. Jackie figured her first contact would be the Police Department and next the Coroner's Office. She

wanted all the information the Coroner's Office would release. But with an on-going investigation by police she wondered what that would be.

The next day Jackie spent much time arranging an appointment with the Police Department. She wanted to talk with Chief Jeff Dole, but was told he was not available due to commitments. She finally got an appointment the next morning with one of his staff. Jackie arrived at the Department in Government Square ten minutes early. After waiting a short time she was directed to Captain Neal Daniel's office.

As she entered, the Captain stood and greeted, "Hi, I'm Captain Daniels. Please have a seat."

"Jackie Harper, reporter with the Parkersburg Herald." She gave him her card.

His face remained solemn, "Why are you here today, Miss Harper?"

"I have been assigned to do a story on an apparent murder which happened a couple months ago."

He leaned back, lips tight, "Did Marge send you here?"

Jackie smiled, "In a sense, yes. She gave me the assignment and I thought this is where I should start. You know our Editor?"

“Oh, yes. We’ve talked a number of times.” He looked intently at her. “You’ve been with the paper a few years haven’t you?”

“About six and Marge has kept me busy,” as she chuckled.

“That sounds like her,” he responded with a slight grin. “Have you dealt with murder cases before?”

“I have,” Jackie answered her tone serious. She was glad he didn’t ask for specifics.

He nodded, reflected satisfaction. “Miss Harper which case are you interested in? But understand we must be careful on what information we can reveal.”

“I understand – by the way, please call me Jackie.” She already realized she would be fortunate to be given anything significant. Also she wanted to make a connection and hopefully have good rapport with a key officer in the Department. She anticipated more meetings and pulled the file from her briefcase. “I don’t have the name. It’s the woman who was found in the river couple months ago.”

“I had a hunch that was the case.” He looked through a stack of thick folders on the corner of his desk, pulled one out, looked through it.

Jackie merely watched.

After a minute, "We still have no name. Sad – don't know who she is. We've given her the name Rose Doe #1."

This struck Jackie as terrible, but didn't say it. She didn't want to infer the police were not working the case. "So obviously you've found no family member. Have any idea where she was from? Was she a local person?"

He continued to look in the file. "We don't know where she came from. No ID was found and nothing was on the body."

"What about jewelry?"

Captain furrowed his forehead. "Why would you ask that?"

Jackie smiled, "Now you must know we women like to wear bracelets, rings and nice jewelry." She held up her wrist with a colorful bracelet and two rings on one hand.

He shook his head as he checked his file. "Nothing except an ear stud."

"You mean she just appeared from nowhere? You have nothing?" Jackie thought there must be a clue from something on where she came from.

He rubbed his hand over his cheek. "Miss Harper, or Jackie – basically we have nothing. Except, from the police sketch we published she was recognized by a motel on the edge of town." He glanced at Jackie. "We don't publish an actual picture of a deceased. Of course the sketch was very

accurate. It would be helpful if we had some personal information.”

“The Motel must have personal information, at least an address.” Jackie responded in a questioning tone.

“It should have, but didn’t. She came to the desk alone, paid cash for two nights and nobody recalled seeing her again. She came late. The night person was relatively new and didn’t get a name or address.”

Jackie snapped, “She didn’t sign in showing a vehicle or anything?”

“Correct, she just seemed to drop out of the blue.”

“Can you give me the motel name?”

“I suppose so,” as he looked in the folder. “Kanawha Motel, on Pike Street, not far from the river.”

“Can you give me the name of the person who checked her in?”

Shook his head, “Sorry, can’t.”

“When the body was found -- our paper reported it was in Little Kanawha River, near Pine Tree Lane, which leads off Little Kanawha Road. This is also near Interstate 77. Is that correct?”

He appeared uncertain for a moment, “Yes.”

“Who found the body?”

He checked the file. “Woman was walking her dog.”

“Do you have the name?”

“Yes, but I can’t release the name.”

“The paper article stated she was partially nude. What items of clothing were on her?”

Shook his head no, “Sorry.”

“Did you find any missing clothing?”

“Sorry.”

“Okay – Captain you’re not giving me much on which to build an article and -----“

He interrupted, “Again sorry, but we must keep certain information confidential during the investigation.”

Jackie with a wily grin asked, “Can you give me the detective’s name handling the case?”

He smiled. “You know I can’t do that. Any information released must come from me or the Chief.”

“Did the Coroner’s Office determine if she was assaulted sexually or otherwise?”

“I can’t divulge that,” showing some impatience with her questions.

“Captain,” Jackie began softly. “At least tell me if she was sexually assaulted. I promise not to print it.”

He looked at her for several seconds, “Yes there was sexual contact, but can’t say there was assault. And you better not print it.” His tone was serious.

Jackie shrugged. “Captain I stand by my word. You’ll realize that when you get to know me. As you

know, part of my job is to ask questions to inform the people.” She realized he was becoming edgy with her questions. She glanced in her file. “Are you working on any leads? If so, what?”

He closed his file. Shook his head. “Miss Harper there is no more information I can release.” Smiled at her. “All I can say is – this is an active, high priority case and we are always looking for leads, including anonymous leads. So far, this is a tough one.”

“Can you give me anything from the Coroner’s Report?”

“Only that it’s a Homicide.”

“Cause of death?”

“Sorry.”

“I assume the body remains in the Morgue.”

“Yes.”

Jackie thought a moment. “Would I be allowed to see the body?”

Captain jerked his head back. “Why? Why would you do that?”

Jackie was slow to reply with a concerned expression. “When I read where she was found, mostly nude with marks on her neck and arm – well I feel real empathy for her. She had a life, some kind of life somewhere. Women have feelings, emotions. Many very much so. You know what I mean?” Before he answered, “It would be difficult, but having a visual might help me at some point.”

He squinted, looked at her. "You're serious?"

She nodded, her tone low. "Yes, I am."

He thought a moment. "Chief would have to approve." Tapped his fingers on the desk. "If okayed, you would only be allowed to see the face, nothing more."

"I understand," Jackie responded softly. After a moment, "Is there anything else you can tell me? I assume no fingerprint. Since there was sexual contact you must have forensic and DNA data. What can you tell me about that? I assume you have no match for the DNA."

"Correct and no fingerprints. We have other forensic which I cannot divulge in addition to DNA. By the time the body was found all the items at the motel had been laundered, the furniture wiped down and other items replaced. Now there's nothing more I can give you. And I won't talk about the forensic information. With an active investigation we don't give any details on what we know or what we're doing."

Jackie got up, felt disappointed. "You have my card. If I stumble onto anything, I'll let you know." She didn't want him to know this woman, Rose Doe #1, had triggered an intense desire to find her murderer.

Sternly he responded, "Miss Harper, I must remind you – do not do anything to interfere with our investigation. I know you want a story, but do

not interfere with the police investigation. Is that clear?"

Jackie again knew he was serious when he didn't use her first name. "I understand." She smiled. "You have a job to do and so do I." She reached, shook his hand. "Thanks for your time and talking with me. But one more question. If you come up with anything that can be released, would you let me know?"

In a jovial tone he responded, "Let's leave it – you can touch base with me. And I'll let you know about the Morgue visit."

"That's fine." Jackie smiled. "Captain you'll see me again," waved slightly as she walked away.

He merely watched, said nothing, no hint of a smile.

On the way to her car Jackie evaluated her meeting. Captain Daniels was pleasant, but left no doubt he would zealously guard the Department's actions and information. She understood and was not surprised, but had hoped for more. Even though he knew Marge, her Editor, she knew the Captain would not call her with information. She would have to keep the communication line open and hopefully be close by if something broke on the case. The Captain's comments led her to believe the police had come to a dead end, no pun intended, with no credible lead or probably none. Jackie did not anticipate he would be that direct in saying so,

and believed if there had been a trail initially, now it had vaporized, cold, nothing. She had an assignment and desperately wanted to come up with probabilities, leads, hunches, even facts on which to build a story.

All she had to start with were the name of a Motel, when and where the body was found mostly nude, name unknown and not even a clue as to her name or where she came from. After two months the police hadn't identified her, had no details on her life and apparently had no good lead. If so, the Captain was not about to say so. Jackie wanted to be optimistic, which was her nature. But if the police couldn't find anything, within two months, what are the odds of her coming up with a lead or helpful information? She didn't like the odds, certainly not in her favor.

Jackie didn't understand why Rose Doe #1 tugged at her emotions so vividly and strong. For some unexplained reason, she continued to feel driven to find out and know about her life. It was as though there was something in her life begging to be known which somebody had to find, reveal or uncover. Jackie tried to downgrade the connection to just another victim, but Rose overrode every thought in her mind. Was she the one picked by destiny to find justice for Rose? So she could be properly laid to rest? And the world would finally know about this unknown woman. Had she been

courageous? Had she left a positive legacy on those who knew her? Jackie knew this was fanciful thinking in her mind, but was how she felt. She was concerned it was becoming a burden, she may have to carry every minute of every day. All the unanswered questions about Rose affected her thinking hourly. Jackie never imagined a body, which seemed to appear from nowhere, would engulf her physically and mentally.

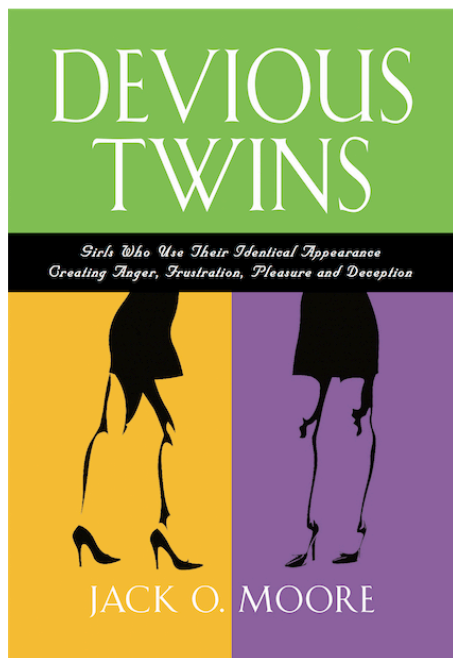
The next moment she had second thoughts about going to the Morgue. She had never been in a Morgue where bodies are temporarily kept in closed compartments. When the body would be pulled out, the cover removed to see the face, Jackie knew her stomach and mind would be jolted. How severe, she was uncertain. She would attempt to discipline her mind to prepare and keep control. It was the last thing she preferred to do, but believed it may help, in some way, as she probed for information. She had not thought of doing so until it flashed in her mind when talking with the Captain.

She made the request instantly without giving it real thought. Now she was not so anxious, as the impression she left with the Captain, and he was certainly surprised. Or she may be fretful on something that may never happen. The Chief may not grant her request. If that happened it wouldn't be a big disappointment the way she felt at the moment. Maybe she should have waited, after she

had worked on the case a week or so, to make the request. This could be a reason the Chief would not grant the request at this time. Anyway, the request was made and she'll wait for the answer. If granted, she'll stiffen her emotions and do it. But saying it is one thing, doing is another. She was certain, if she lost control, she wouldn't be the first.

Jackie knew first hand when you see a face, think about it, thoughts and impressions immediately vault into mind. Everyday faces you see, if you reflect, triggers one to speculate on that person's life. Is the person happy, sad, friendly, does the face reveal struggles, a hard life, an easy life, is it beautiful, is it handsome, is the person calm or nervous, is the person someone you would like to know or stay away from? Endless thoughts can flash in mind when triggered by a person's face and actions. One sees many faces every day, but rarely does one capture our mind at that moment. When it happens, one's mind spins into action, draws a mental picture of that person's life. Of course, you never know if your passing thoughts and reflections are accurate, or even close, unless it is someone you befriend. Some faces which are a mirror of one's life, if written about, could fill several pages in a book. Others which appear dull, no reflection of experiences or active living triggers little thought. It passes quickly.

Looking at the face of a person murdered, Jackie was uncertain what would flash through her mind. A lifeless face must also reveal something about her life. But what would it be? Jackie felt uneasy, if it happened, and could only speculate.



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