

The background of the cover is a photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a dark-colored car is partially submerged in a body of water, tilted at an angle. The water is dark and reflects the sky. In the middle ground, there is a snow-covered shoreline with several tall, dark evergreen trees. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, with a hint of orange and yellow light near the horizon, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

**THE  
SHORELINE  
MURDER(S)**

**William H. Smith**

**He would make life so difficult for Gordy, the cop would have no time to investigate...**

The man walked to his pickup, lowered the tailgate, and signaled for the dogs to jump in. They did and continued panting nervously in anticipation. Teddy closed the gate and climbed into the cab behind the wheel.

“Okay, fellas,” he said through the cab rear window. “Let’s go and have some fun.”

He drove slowly over to Gordy Powell’s place, and by the time he pulled into the woods by the pond it was nearly midnight. He turned the headlights off and inched the truck into the brush as far as he could without leaving an obvious trail. He got out and used his flashlight to check the ground for tire tracks.

Everything was dry enough not to leave any marks.

From inside the house, the two dogs, Romulus and Remus, began to bark. The man heard them pounding against the front door, frantically trying to get out. He’d tend to them later.

He quietly lowered the tailgate and walked to the fence that opened into the barn compound. He carried a large pair of bolt cutters. There, he cut off the padlock on the gate and put it in his pocket. He swung the gate open, curled his tongue, and let out a brief whistle. A moment later the Rottweilers trotted nervously by his side. He walked them to the barn and pulled back the sliding bolt on the door. He opened it, and gestured them to go inside. “Enjoy,” he whispered, as they disappeared into the barn.

The man closed the door, sat down on an overturned feed trough and waited. The sounds coming from the barn were chilling, as the two dogs ripped and tore their way through all the flesh they could sink their teeth into.

**It all happened so long ago. Does a murderer still stalk the small Connecticut village? Is he watching? Is he still killing?**

Local policeman, Gordy Powell, who lives on a small farm with an attached pond, is rarely put in harm's way: traffic stops, car thefts, burglaries, an occasional runaway, domestic squabbles, etc. All that changes one horrible winter night in 1997, when a state senator's daughter and grandchildren drown after their car spins out of control on the icy road and plunges into Gordy's pond. When the pond is drained in an effort to straighten the road, a 1938 Chrysler is found on the muddy bottom, a bullet hole through the head of the skeleton in the front seat, and a sixty-year-old murder mystery unfolds.

Is the killer still alive and living in town? Has he killed again and never been caught? Gordy must use his best investigative skills to solve the crime and capture the killer—except that the killer is also after him, wreaking havoc in Gordy's life...

## KUDOS for *The Shoreline Murder(s)*

In *The Shoreline Murder(s)* by William H. Smith, Gordy Powell is dismayed to find that a car has gone out of control and slid into his pond, killing a mother and two little girls. But he is even more shocked when the pond is drained to straighten the road, and there is a car on the bottom with a murder victim from sixty years ago. As a local cop, Gordy knows how hard it is to solve a cold case, but this seems to be one that no one cares about. So Gordy decides to investigate it himself with the help of the victim's granddaughter. But as they dig for the truth, they both become targets in the killer's sights. With a complex mystery, fast-paced action, and plenty of surprises, this is one that mystery fans should love. ~ Taylor Jones, *The Review Team of Taylor Jones & Regan Murphy*

*The Shoreline Murder(s)* by William H. Smith is the story of a local cop who seeks justice for a sixty-year-old murder when the powers that be don't seem to care. When Gordy Powell discovers that a car has gone into his frozen pond, killing a woman and her two daughters, he has no idea that this is just the first of the horrors in store for him. When the pond is drained the following summer so the road can be straightened, a car is discovered on the bottom. The car has a body in it, one with a bullet hole in his head. Even though the murdered man was thought to have disappeared some sixty years ago, now that it is clear that he was murdered, the local authorities don't seem to be interested in solving the case. So Gordy and the victim's granddaughter, Emily, decide to investigate on their own time. Little do they know that some people will do a lot more than commit murder to keep their dark secrets buried. Intense and compelling, switching between the present and the past, *The Shoreline Murder(s)* will keep you on the edge of your seat from beginning to end. ~ Regan Murphy, *The Review Team of Taylor Jones & Regan Murphy*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# THE SHORELINE MURDER(S)

William H. Smith

*A Black Opal Books Publication*



GENRE: MYSTERY-DETECTIVE/SUSPENSE/THRILLER

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DEDICATION

*Walter Eastman*



# PART I

*Nod Road*

# CHAPTER 1

*Winter, 1997:*

Crystalline sheaths of ice formed on tree branches as darkness, wind, and sleet rapidly overwhelmed the evening. The road ahead was furrowed with tracks left by passing vehicles, and icy ridges crisscrossed the treacherous surface. Now and then, cone-shaped beams from headlights revealed shadows of a million bits of falling sleet and snow.

Annie Martin pulled herself close to the steering wheel, hoping this would somehow make it easier to see into the night. The windshield wipers were clogged with slush. Each pass left soupy smears across her view. In the back seat of the Ford Explorer, Annie's two little girls were sound asleep.

*Damn, she thought, this would be so much easier with four-wheel drive.*

She headed west on Nod Road, having just exited Interstate 95. There were another five or six miles to home, where she and the girls would be safe and warm in their own beds. The notion encouraged a little pressure from her foot on the accelerator, resulting in the rear tires spinning on the slippery surface. She quickly eased off the pedal and gripped the wheel even tighter.

"Whew, be careful," she whispered.

Nod Road ran straight for about a mile then bent sharply right and crossed a small bridge. Annie knew the road well and anticipated the familiar course as it meandered through the Connecticut countryside.

She approached the tiny bridge and noticed the glow of on-coming headlights rounding the curve ahead. Light zig-zagged left, then right. Now she made out the shape of a car, a light colored car, sliding across the centerline of the road. The headlights lit up a path to her right, and then cut a swath of light over the frozen pond that lay on the north side of the bridge.

*No room on the left, she thought.*

*No room on the right.*

*God, no room!*

Instinctively, Annie pulsed the brakes and aimed for a path between the on-coming car and the guardrail on her right. The Explorer slid right and plowed over the shoulder, missing the security of the guardrail by a few inches. As the Explorer skated away, the approaching car swerved, regained its traction and disappeared into the swirling blackness beyond. Annie felt the pressure of her body against the seat restraint as the SUV tumbled down the embankment onto the surface of the pond. The big Ford struck the ice, spun in a perfect circle, and came to rest about forty feet from a culvert that went under the bridge. A few seconds went by, and Annie's mind raced over what had just happened.

"Goddamn, we're on the pond!" she wailed. "Emma, Kristen, wake up. Wake up!"

The two girls, Emma who was eight, and Kristen, six, were already awake and wide-eyed from jolts received coming off the road.

"What's wrong, Mommy?" Emma shouted. As she spoke, there was a loud crack, like a rifle shot.

Annie knew immediately what was happening, but it was already too late. She felt the Explorer sinking. For a moment, she wasn't sure what to do. If she opened the door, the big car would sink faster; but she thought, maybe the water was

only a foot or two deep and they might be able to walk out. Whatever she was going to do, she'd better do it quickly.

"Emma, Kristen, get out of your seat belts and climb up here with me," she shouted. The girls scurried forward and Annie wrapped her arms around them. Trying to be calm, she said, "We'll be okay. We just need to get out of the car."

She looked and saw the water was nearly level with the doorsill. Remarkably, there were only a few inches of water on the floor. The Explorer's headlights were still on, shining into the murky water and ice. Then it occurred to Annie to lower the side window, maybe she could float out and pull the girls through. If she survived the water temperature for a few minutes, she'd get everyone out. She pressed the power window switch.

Nothing!

She clicked the switch back and forth.

Still nothing.

"Shit, shit, shit," she hissed through clenched teeth.

Annie knew her only option was to open the door and let the big car sink. She noticed the water inside was nearly level with the seat. She had been straddling the front console, and she realized she was about to get wet. Next, she pulled at the door handle and discovered the door was locked. She tried the electric door lock button.

No response.

Cold terror gripped Annie's mind at the enormity of what was happening. She then tried to pull on the manual lock plunger. Her hands were cold and wet and she had difficulty getting a grip on the slippery shaft. After several tries, she got a firm hold, and the plunger lifted. She felt a sense of relief for a moment, but as she looked through the window, she realized the water had risen to four inches above the sill.

Annie grabbed them both and hugged them close to her. Trying to be calm, she said, "We'll be okay. We just need to get out of the car."

Annie pulled at the door handle and felt reassured at hearing the mechanism click. She pushed against the door.

Nothing.

“No, no, goddamn it,” she wailed.

Water pressure and frozen slush around the door made it impossible for her to push it open. She braced herself against the passenger seat and slammed against the door with all her strength. Water trickled around the bottom of the door seal. Annie pushed harder, but by now, water neared the top of the door and forces holding it were still too great. In desperation, Annie leaned across the center console and lifted the door lock on the other side of the car. Her grip was stronger now, and after a satisfying click, she pushed on the door and again was met with too much resistance.

She was wetter now in nearly freezing water.

The girls were wet too.

And screaming.

## CHAPTER 2

Chief of Police Chris Forhey stood on the narrow little bridge at Nod Road. He stared at the hole in the ice just beginning to freeze. It was seven a.m. when Gordon Powell called in the accident at the curve by his pond. Gordon had owned the property for the past eight years and had seen his share of traffic carnage on this stretch of road. Since he'd lived here, he remembered at least five major accidents, claiming four lives. Gordon stood on his front deck with his dogs, looking over the pond, and at a gathering cluster of rescue vehicles.

Chief Forhey turned his gaze from the pond and waved to Gordon. Gordon gestured back and began the trek down two flights of stairs connecting the deck to the ground. His lean body was bundled in a dark blue parka with a fake fur collar. He narrowed his blue eyes into thin slits as protection from the icy wind sweeping across the pond. His blond hair was uncovered and looked uncombed. At thirty-nine, his chiseled features showed some signs of wear and tear. Thin lines radiated from the edges of his eyes and the creases in his forehead spoke of worrisome times.

Gordon was a cop, but he worked for the nearby town of Guilford. He'd lived and worked on the Connecticut shoreline a long time, and most everyone he knew called him Gordy. He picked his way across the ice-covered lawn and driveway to where the chief stood.

“Good morning, Chris,” Gordy said, when he was close enough to be heard. “What do you think?” he asked in the same breath.

“Looks like you called it right, Gordy.” the chief replied. “Dispatch took a phone message last night from a Mr. Jerry Martin over in Westbrook. He asked about any accidents last night. Seems his wife and two daughters didn’t make it home on time. We haven’t called him yet with the possibilities here. I figure we’ll wait ’til we’re sure of what we got. From the way the shoulder ice is chewed up and the pattern of tire tracks leading out on the pond, it looks like we’re gonna find something unpleasant. We got two firemen getting into suits right now.”

“Yeah, I agree. It wasn’t what I expected this morning,” Gordy said. “Strange enough, I don’t remember hearing anything but wind and sleet all night. I was pretty tired when I got off duty last night so I sacked out early. When I went to the barn this morning, I noticed the hole in the ice. Then I saw ruts in the shoulder and decided to call you guys.”

While they stood talking, two men wearing awkward dry suits carried scuba gear down the embankment to the iced-over pond. Three other men wearing yellow parkas, earmuffs, and gloves pulled a small flat-bottom john boat across the ice.

“That will be our ice breaker,” Chief Forhey said. “We’ll need to keep the ice around the big hole from reforming while our men are in the water.”

Several firemen pushed a little boat toward thin ice at the hole while the men in dry suits followed. They launched the john boat and began breaking the ice with axes and garden rakes.

Eric Older and his companion Terry Miller looked like misshapen aliens in their recently acquired dry suits—overstuffed profiles somewhere between the gruesome twins in a Chevy Chase movie and the puffed-up appearance of the Pillsbury Doughboy.

Eric, who was senior to Terry, nodded and displayed a thumbs up, signifying he was ready for the descent. Terry responded in kind, indicating he too was ready. Eric tossed a Danforth anchor into the hole and played out a length of rope until it stopped as the weight struck bottom. The rope contained ribbon-like marker flags emblazoned with numbers indicating the number of feet immersed. The rope went to twenty-two feet and stopped.

Eric shuffled back to thicker ice. "Secure the line as a fail safe route to the hole," he instructed one of the nearby firemen. Eric waddled to the edge, turned his back to the icy water, clasped his octopus in one hand, and rolled backward with a splash. Terry quickly followed. The two men regarded one another momentarily before bleeding air from their buoyancy control vests and descending into the murky water, each clinging to the anchored lifeline. The water was a deep amber color. As they descended, the amount of light penetrating the surface was choked away.

Both men carried underwater lanterns tethered to their utility belts and, at fifteen feet, they pressed switches, energizing the bulbs. In the yellow brown glow of artificial light, they began to sweep three hundred and sixty-degree arcs around them.

Visibility was less than three feet. The water temperature was thirty-four degrees. Eric removed a coiled safety line from his belt and attached the end with a large snap shackle to the anchor line. He launched himself toward the bottom, all the while fixing the other end to a ring clipped to his suit. Terry stayed behind and fastened a similar rope to the anchor line. The rules for such dives were very specific, and both men knew the danger of getting lost under the ice.

Once the men were on the bottom, Eric adjusted his buoyancy compensation and made a series of expanding circles around the anchor line until he caught a flash of chrome reflected from his light. He jerked the safety line twice and raised his light to signal Terry who hovered at the main line.



Terry signaled a response and dove to meet Eric at the wreck.

The Explorer rested on its left side. All of the windows were closed, sealing the fate of the occupants. The two men pressed their lights against the window glass and peered inside. A young female child clutched the rear view mirror. Her blank, wide-eyed gaze stared back at them, her expression seemed to say, "Here I am, what took you so long?"

Beneath her, clutching yet another child, lay an adult female. Both seemed complacent, with wide dead eyes looking up toward the passenger window, their hair splayed about their heads as if they were caught in a summer breeze.

Eric moved quickly, aware of several cases of cold water drowning that ended with resuscitation and survival. He climbed on the right rear door, braced himself, and pulled open the passenger door. Terry dove inside, grabbed hold of each little girl and pulled them from the wreck.

Eric let go of the door and showed his light toward Terry's tether and followed, lighting the way back to the main safety line. Once there, Eric clasped Terry's BC valve and inflated his vest. Both men began their ascent carrying the two children.

They surfaced in a tumult of hissing, gurgling air, and men in the john boat paddled quickly toward them. As they drew near, they reached over and gently lifted the lifeless forms from the water. Both men dove again leaving a splash of bubbles from their regulators.

"God, this is awful," Gordy said in a low tone.

"Well, it looks like I'm gonna hafta call Mr. Martin back after all," the chief said. He walked to the pond's edge, curled his hands around his mouth, and shouted to the men in the boat. "Ask Eric to get me something on the vehicle."

Once again, a diver surfaced, this time it was Terry Miller. He carried the body of a woman. The men in the boat lifted her like a religious artifact, being careful to protect her from additional injury. One man spoke to the diver, stood up, and shouted to the chief.

“Looks like a Ford Explorer,” he called.

“Damn. Damn,” the chief muttered as he turned and trudged back to the bridge.

## CHAPTER 3

Senator Matt Blanton stood at his window, overlooking the city of Hartford, Connecticut. Even though it was February, his face was unseasonably tanned from his recent visit to Mexico. The contrast of his pure white hair framing his brown skin suggested his work brought him nearer to Hollywood than Washington, DC.

The sky overhead was just clearing, as the ice storm of the night before moved up the coast. Emerging sunlight swept across the Hartford skyline, and Blanton squinted his hazel eyes, shuttering them from the brilliant glare reflecting off the copper building looming before him. He knew he had a busy day ahead and thought he was ready for it.

He wasn't surprised when the interoffice phone chirped. "Yes, what is it?"

"Sir, it's your son-in law," said the woman on the other end. Blanton hesitated a moment, then said, "Okay, put him on. Hello, Jerry."

A strange pause on the other end, then a quaking voice. "Matt, something's happened."

"What's wrong, son?"

"It's Annie—and the girls—" Another long pause.

"Good God, what's wrong with Annie and the girls?"

"There's been an accident," Jerry finally said, with a tremor in his voice.

"Where are they now?" Blanton demanded.

“They’re gone, Matt, they’re gone.”

Silence.

Blood drained from Blanton’s face as his body redistributed precious fluid from his extremities to his chest and brain. “Where are you now?”

“I’m here with them, at Yale-New Haven,” Jerry answered.

“Can you tell me what happened?”

“Matt, I don’t know everything, but they were found this morning at the bottom of a pond off Nod Road in Clinton. The Explorer must have slid off the road and broke through the ice. They—They weren’t able to get out. I got a call to come down to the hospital. I knew something was wrong when they didn’t get home last night. Jesus! Matt, I called all over the place last night. I tried the local police, and state police. I thought, because of the storm, maybe they stopped at a motel; maybe they were caught with a downed phone service and laid over somewhere safe. At some point, I gave up, figuring I’d hear something in the morning. This can’t be real, Matt.”

The senator listened, trying to control the sick feeling growing in his stomach. Somehow, he found the strength to interrupt, “Jerry, please, calm down. Give me an hour to get there, I’ll see you then.”

No answer.



Jerry Martin stood in the hospital corridor, holding the pay phone. His hands were sweaty. His eyes felt tired and gritty while he barely noticed the spasm running amuck on the right side of his face. He spoke through dry, bloodless lips as he fought to control the sobs bubbling under his voice.

The conversation with his father-in-law was over. So much had happened, why was there nothing else to say? Per-

haps, it was because his mind was numb. Although he couldn't converse, he didn't want to be alone. The idea of hanging up only amplified his feeling of emptiness. He clung to the headset feeling obligated to say more, do more.

Jerry finally shook his head. "Bye, Matt." Then he placed the receiver on the hook and stared straight ahead.



Senator Blanton listened for the click of the receiver and hung up his phone. He pressed the intercom button, and a voice responded with, "Yes, sir."

"Thelma, have my car brought out front. I'm driving to New Haven. Cancel all my appointments for today and tomorrow. Something's happened to my daughter. I'll be at Yale- New Haven Hospital. I'll take emergency calls on my cell. Otherwise, please don't disturb me until I know more about what's happened."



The morning was clear and cold as Senator Blanton and Jerry Martin stood with thirty-five other people on the grounds of Our Lady of Peace Cemetery. They were at the site where Annie Martin was to be buried. Her two little girls, Emma and Kristen, had already been laid to rest.

The tragedy placed a great strain on the public, as well as the close group of family and friends. Certainly, those in attendance, along with almost everyone in the State of Connecticut, hoped for some kind of closure when Annie was finally buried.

Jerry Martin and the senator stood by the gravesite, dazed by the reality of what had happened. Both were overwhelmed with loss, and both realized there was risk they may never fully recover. As Annie's rosewood casket was lowered into the ground, the sense of relief Blanton hoped

for didn't come. Instead, he experienced a spontaneous wave of nausea, nearly causing him to vomit in front of everyone. He held it back, not wanting to attract attention to himself. This was about Annie, not him.

When the funeral ended, the senator didn't feel like returning to his son-in-law's home and the inevitable reception of friends and other relatives. His despair was so great that he just wanted to be alone.

He drove to Nod Road and parked by the curve overlooking the pond. He sat on the ground and stared at the ice-covered water. Then his mind raced through a series of "what ifs," alternate possibilities, any of which could have changed the outcome of the tragedy. As these scenarios played in his head, he permitted himself to imagine the last terrifying moments confronting Annie and the girls. In his mind, Blanton recreated the scene, visualizing the struggle of his three precious darlings.

He stood there alone, no longer a powerful figure. He was only a man, perhaps less than a man. Maybe more like an empty, tired shell of a man. In the back of his mind, the melody of "Amazing Grace" echoed through his mind and tears flooded his eyes as the lyrics whispered "save a wretch like me." He shivered with the notion and inhaled a long hollow breath of winter air.

Senator Blanton's cloak of despair was so heavy that he barely noticed the figure of another man standing in the bony trees across the pond. The man seemed very old and wore a plaid hunting jacket with the collar raised and pulled close to his face. He glared at the frozen surface for a few minutes then turned his gaze toward the senator. Matt Blanton noted the old man's stare and wondered why he was there.

The two men regarded each other for a moment. Then the old man thrust his hands into his pockets, turned, and shuffled into the woods. Two large dogs emerged from nearby trees, stopped at the frozen water's edge, then they turned and followed the old man's trail.

The senator thought the man odd. Something about the stranger seemed out of place, perhaps even sinister. Then a shiver swept through Blanton, and he wondered if it was because of the cold air or the figures disappearing into the brush. He nearly called out, thinking there was something missing in this tragedy and perhaps the old man held some secret, but he kept silent, thinking the idea was just a foolish notion.

When the man and dogs were finally out of sight, Senator Blanton got into his car and headed toward his home in Simsbury. He drove slowly, hoping the visit to the pond would represent a kind of catharsis, somehow reducing his awful feeling of despair. He only felt worse.

When he arrived home, he stayed in and alone for the next three days, scavenging from the refrigerator and cupboards for nourishment. He let the answering machine take whatever calls came through on his private line. On the morning of the fourth day, he called his numbers into his desk phone and waited patiently as the connection went through.

“Harlan Flanders, please,” the senator requested into the set.

“May I say who’s calling?”

“Tell him it’s Senator Matt Blanton”

A moment later Harlan Flanders picked up. “Good morning, Senator. what can I do for you?”

“Harlan, I’m sure you know about my interest in Nod Road?”

“Yes, sir, I do. My condolences, Matt. It was an awful tragedy.”

“Well, I want to fix the goddamn thing.”

“How do you mean, ‘fix’?”

“I want to change the shape of the road and get rid of the curve at the pond. Maybe even get rid of the goddamn pond.”

“Well, sir, it’s a great idea, but it will take a lot of money. There’s a considerable number of people who own land

along the road, and it'll take some doing to convince them that changing the road is good for them."

"That's why I'm talking to you, Harlan, I want you to set the stage in your town for what needs to be done."

"I'll see what I can do, sir."

"Good, I've got some influence with the governor, and I'm meeting him this week to discuss the matter. Don't worry about the money. The most difficult thing will be convincing the people affected. Do an assessment of what'll be necessary to bring those people on board. Get it done by the end of the month. Then we'll talk again and lay out some kind of plan. Don't take forever. Do you understand?"



The senator had been persuasive, and he didn't leave much room for Harlan to wiggle, so at this point, he simply said yes and hoped the whole deal didn't turn into some kind of political nightmare. *Besides*, Harlan thought, *if there is money available, maybe the town will benefit.*

Harlan Flanders was the perfect man in a perfect place, one of those New England hybrids. Most every town had one or two like him, clever people, somehow learning their way around local politics and the idiosyncratic twists and turns of town government.

Harlan's father was a local retired chief of police. His late mother was a caring shadow of a woman in his distant past. She died in an auto accident when he was only five and the impact of her life lay in scattered fragments of his memory. Over the years, he reconstructed his relationship with her, combining old photographs with the creative glue of his imagination. He resented her death, feeling he was somehow cheated of some entitlement. Strangely enough, she seemed at fault for not being there when he needed her.

The experience of his childhood left him with the creation of an odd and complex relationship with his mother, rein-



forcing his need to be both independent and tolerant to ordinary disappointments with women. Maybe this component of his background explained why he avoided long-lasting associations with women in general. Whatever the reason, he was content to live alone. Besides, being a bachelor provided him infinite, albeit short lived, variety with many women.

As a young man, he watched the way his father manipulated the world around him. His father tried tirelessly to encourage him into law enforcement.

"I'm not interested, Dad," he always responded to Teddy's suggestions. "I've seen too much of the violence you accept as routine in your life."

Somehow, Harlan resisted the pressure to go into police work and ultimately stumbled into early success with real estate.

Harlan's business prospered until 1987, when increasing construction costs struck a major blow to the development of real estate. In self-defense, Harlan ran for the position of selectman and won. Although, he had opposition, the other candidate suddenly resigned shortly before the vote. He cited personal reasons and quietly fell into obscurity. After Harlan took office, his real estate business bumped along, breaking even while he prospered in town government.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Harlan owed some of his achievement to his father. Despite conflicts arising from his disinterest in police work, his father seemed to always be there, helping in the background, perhaps, a little too much.

Harlan Flanders pulled his Toyota SUV off Nod Road and into Gordy Powell's driveway. It was seven p.m., and since he had called Gordy to ask for the visit, he didn't want to be late. He parked, got out, and climbed the stairs to the front door. Gordy's dogs heard him pull in and were barking somewhere in the house.

The dogs had Gordy checking at the window, and he was already by the door when Harlan got there. Before the bell rang, he opened the door. Harlan stood there, a big man with a thick mop of white hair long enough so the observer sensed

he didn't have a job interview in his immediate future. Beneath his bristling eyebrows lay a pair of dark eyes that seemed to absorb everything around. He smiled, his large boyish face beaming with a confidence that revealed a lifestyle good for him.

"How you doin, Harlan?" Gordy asked as he led him to a living room chair. "Please, sit down."

"Thanks Gordy."

"Can I get you some coffee?"

"Sure, that would be good."

Gordy went to the kitchen, and a few minutes later, brought out two mugs, some milk and sugar, and placed them on the coffee table.

"So tell me what's going on with Nod Road?" Gordy asked as he sat across from Harlan.

"Well it's like this, Gordy, the county, state, and I believe a small piece of the federal government wants to straighten the curve right here at your place. It looks like Senator Blanton has gone all out to do something about the loss of his daughter and grandkids. He's on a mission and we need your help. We'd like you to get on the bandwagon and help us sort out the new property configurations."

"Look, Harlan, it's my home, and I'm not sure I agree with the idea of straightening the road and cutting up everybody's property—"

Harlan was quick to interrupt. "Damn it, Gordy, it's not going to change things that much. Keep in mind the town can acquire the land by Eminent Domain and you won't have much to say about it. Taking that route requires more time and aggravation. On the other hand, if we can work together, the end result will be better for everyone. What I'm proposing is to compensate you for any land taken and invite your participation in the planning process."



Gordy Powell wasn't naive. In the back of his mind, he thought what seemed like a noble project could also serve as a contractor's dream, and either reality was most likely just a nuisance. Not only were they proposing to straighten the curve, but they also wanted to widen the road. This almost certainly meant lopping off sizable chunks of frontage for everyone along the way.

In addition, there was some talk of permanently filling the pond and rerouting the entire marsh currently draining into Long Island Sound. It was too much for Gordy. He sensed the final compromise would end with straightening the curve. If he were to participate, he might be in a better position to salvage the pond. He also knew when there was state and federal money available, some folks in town saw it as a significant opportunity. It always happened that way.

## CHAPTER 4

*August, 1998:*

**O**n a hot morning in August, the sun rose above the trees to find a construction crew working on Nod Road. Surveyors had started in April to lay out most of the proposed changes. Although widening the road was an important part of the project, the curve at the pond was the driving force for all work scheduled. On this day, the crew was about to finish temporary draining of the infamous pond.

At the north end of the property, a coffer dam was constructed and a series of connecting ditches were carved with the use of a backhoe. The ditches went in a southeasterly direction around the pond and into a temporary culvert. The culvert emptied into the marsh, which eventually found its way into Long Island Sound.

The original idea was to complete this portion of the project during August and September when the water table was at its lowest. The pond drained naturally for the past several days, and yesterday the crew began using high volume pumps to finish the job. As the water level decreased farther, a work crew stood by with portable pumps to remove water from the deep contours that were lower than the customary drainage pitch. Once they straightened the road, a new culvert and bridge were to be constructed. Fill was scheduled to arrive, and a new roadbed would be completed.

Gordy Powell stood on his deck and watched the activity below. His dogs, Romulus and Remus, had been restless for days, barking almost constantly at the crews and the noise. *At least, he thought, I'll get some idea of what the bottom of the pond really looks like.* He knew he had a lot of work to do once they allowed the pond to refill. Over the years, he had carefully stocked it with an ecological blend of fish and plants. He'd have to start from scratch to restore it. Because he was a cop on the Guilford force, and because a lot of the project was done with state money, the state assured him access to its fisheries, and they would restock the pond with an ample supply of assorted game fish.

As the water drained, the expanding muddy beach left a murky oversized puddle at the deepest end of the pond. Based on soundings Gordy had taken when it was full, he knew the depth covered a substantial range. The northern end averaged seven to eight feet, while the southern portion near the bridge was twenty to twenty-five feet. Water in the pond had never been crystal clear; usually it was amber with some turbidity. Today, with all the pumping going on, the remaining water looked muddy and opaque.

At the north end, Gordy saw a number of brown catfish flapping around in the drained areas. A few appeared quite large and Gordy thought about picking them up for the frying pan. Along the muddy shore, ducks and geese ambled back and forth, restlessly trying to figure out what was happening. Down at the south end, there were still six to eight feet of water left.

Sometime later, Gordy made his way toward the deep end and watched as it drained rapidly with the help of several large pumps. Oddly enough, emerging at the water's surface was the roof of what appeared to be an old car. Gordy watched with interest as more and more of the old wreck materialized.

"I'll be damned," he said aloud.

Gordy's gaze went from the car to several of the workers who also noticed the old car coming into view. He watched

as they stopped working just to watch. Then one of them shouted to the others and everyone stopped what they were doing. Soon he saw them converging at the bridge to look down at the car.

“So what kinda car is it?” one man asked.

“I can’t be sure,” another man answered. “But, I think it’s an old Chrysler.”

“Maybe middle to late thirties,” said another.

Gordy hadn’t planned on walking in the bottom of the pond and now he realized he’d need some boots to get a closer view of the mysterious car. He trudged back to the barn, found his knee-high boots, and got ready for a serious encounter with this new surprise. Then he returned to the deep end. At first, he tested the muck gingerly with one foot, trying to find out how far he’d sink into the bottom mud. As he applied more weight, he went down about four or five inches and found a firm bed of clay supporting him.

Slowly, to avoid sliding, Gordy walked to the old car. As he drew nearer, he noticed all the window glass was still intact and blanketed with a thick layer of pond slime. The roof had sagged but it was still in one piece. A mixture of mud and slime sealed the doors. Gordy suspected the inside was still full of water, because the car’s bottom still lay buried nearly to the top of the rotten tires. There didn’t appear to be any place for the water to go.

The men on the bridge still watched, making wise cracks.

One guy shouted down, “Hey, I’ll give you three hundred bucks for it, if you drive it over to my place.”

Gordy looked up and countered, “You better give me thirty thousand bucks if I drive this thing to your place.”

The rest of the crew chuckled as they broke up and returned to work. Gordy figured on draining the wreck before having it hauled away. He trudged back to the barn to find a sledgehammer.

A few minutes later, he was back at the car. He walked a full circle around it, trying to assess just what kind of condition it was in when it entered the pond. When did it end up in

the pond and how? He'd lived here for eight years and had no idea it was there. He supposed someone could have dumped it while he owned the place, but the idea seemed very unlikely. As Gordy contemplated the story of the old car, he decided he was ready to drain it. He walked around to the driver's side window, raised the sledge over his shoulder, and smashed it sideways into the glass.

The breaking window made a noise like a heavily laden jar striking the floor. A thud followed by a liquid sound of syrupy brown water. Gordy quickly sidestepped to avoid the foul smelling liquid that nearly splashed over him. Water flowed over the doorsill but refused to drain any farther.

"Ah shit," he muttered. He peered inside but couldn't see very much. "Oh, well."

He sighed as he slogged to the other side of the wreck. Once again he raised the hammer and then struck the passenger side window.

This time the noise sounded a little more like breaking glass.

As Gordy stood there, he noticed the water inside finally beginning to drain. He watched the murky liquid recede, inch by inch. Inside, the windshield was green with some form of algae, while everything else had a thick layer of brown slime over it. As more water drained, remnants of the front seat became obvious, coil springs, bits of cloth, and some framework.

Gordy peered through to the driver's side. Behind the slime covered steering wheel there was a dark clump of debris covered by what resembled a piece of leather-like clothing. Visible under the pile was a pale yellow object that looked like a length of bone. Gordy bent down, and stuck his head inside the car.

*It sure looks like bone*, he thought. He took the sledgehammer by the head and poked the handle at the debris in the driver's seat. As he probed, he uncovered more bone.

"What the hell do we have here?" he muttered. Then he decided he'd better get back to the driver's side and figure

this out. Once there, he poked again and found the pile was indeed leather, appearing to be some kind of coat or jacket.

Underneath the leather garment were the remains of a human being. The skull, still attached to the backbone, lay nestled in a slimy, black puddle between the ribs and was cocked to the right.

A neat round black hole dotted the temple.



## CHAPTER 5

The county coroner arrived about an hour later. His name was Doctor Merle Steiner and he pulled his green state-owned van into Gordy's driveway. He was a chubby man in his late fifties, with pure white hair hanging in a curly mass over his collar. He knew he needed a haircut, but he really didn't care how he looked anymore. Sitting beside him in the van were two younger men, both dressed in EMT uniforms. One fellow, a big man, was Hartley Schiff. The other, a skinny man, was Arnie Ferris. Both had special skills, and Doc Steiner usually brought them along whenever he was called to a traffic fatality.

Hartley was good with emergency tools, like jaws-of-life and metal-cutting chainsaws. Arnie's specialty was cameras. He was very good at taking pictures and did the job with extraordinary enthusiasm. Hartley got out first and went around to the driver's side. He opened the door for Doc Steiner.

Gordy had been sitting on the stairs of his front deck when the van turned into the driveway. He stood up and walked over.

"How are you doing, Doc?" Gordy asked as he reached out his hand in greeting.

"I was doin' okay, until I got this lousy phone call a while ago," the doctor replied. "What in God's name is going on out here?"

"I really don't know any more about it than you do at this point," Gordy said. "I'll be real interested to hear what you've got to say after you take a look. By the way, Doc, did you remember to bring your boots? You're gonna need them."

"Yeah, yeah, they're in the van."

A few minutes later, Chief Forhey joined the group and all five men slogged their way down to the old wreck. By now, the car was drying, and most of the remaining water had drained out.

Hartley carried a metal-cutting chainsaw and Arnie Ferris carried a big Nikon camera.

Doc Steiner signaled Arnie to go ahead, and he began taking pictures with the digital camera, inside and outside the car. These pictures were in addition to several rolls of traditional film already taken by Chief Forhey's detectives.

The Clinton Police Department was budgeted for three detectives, and two of the three were at the scene. They stood some distance away, out of the mud. A half-hour went by while Arnie snapped off his shots.

"Okay, Hartley, it's your turn," Doc said. "Let's get those doors off, so's I can get a looksee at what's in there."

Hartley responded with, "Sure thing, Doc." He attacked the driver's side door.

Soon, the door lay in mud near the left front fender. Doc Steiner signaled Hartley to use his saw on the right side door, and it too dropped. Steiner pulled on a pair of latex gloves, reached in and poked at the bones in the front seat.

"Hartley, get out your pad and take some notes," he said without looking back.

Hartley placed the chain saw on the hood and pulled out a pad and pen from his back pocket.

"Okay, Doc."

Steiner continued, "By the shape of the crown of the forehead and taper of the chin, the subject is likely male. There is a probable medium caliber entrance wound at the left temple, and a large exit wound on the right side. Can't tell much

more until we get the remains out and reconstructed. Wait a minute, there is something on the floor of the passenger side. It looks like a leather bag. Like an old purse or a hand bag.”

Steiner and the detectives spent the rest of the afternoon removing the victim’s remains, along with whatever else they could find as potential evidence. They pried open the glove box and placed the slimy contents in small transparent bags.

Under the hood, they found a manufacturer’s plaque and identified the car as a 1938 Chrysler. They removed the leather bag, placed it on a sheet of plastic, and opened it. Indeed, it was a doctor’s bag filled with tools of the trade, as they were sixty years ago. Most of the stainless steel implements were in remarkable condition. Also inside were remnants of what appeared to be an appointment book, a gold ring, and a leather wallet containing paper money. Every item was carefully bagged and cataloged. At day’s end, the Chrysler was finally dug out and hauled away.

## CHAPTER 6

Gordy took the entire day off and followed the events with keen interest. After all, how often do you stumble across a situation like this in your own backyard? He'd noticed a rusted license plate still fixed to the trunk, and he tried to make out what the numbers were. The doctor's bag in the front seat was also a strong clue as to whom the victim might have been.

The next day, he called the Department of Motor Vehicles and asked for a check of 1938 Chryslers registered to doctors that same year. He asked for only those registered to a shoreline address. The DMV told him their records, if any, were quite incomplete for that time frame, but promised to do their best.

Because the county morgue facility was not equipped for this kind of case, Doc Steiner sent the remains to the forensics lab at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

At one o'clock the following afternoon, Gordy found himself there asking to see Dr. Steiner. He displayed his Guilford badge, and they passed him to the old laboratory in the basement.

Fortunately, no one noticed the distinction between his badge and a Clinton PD one.

Doc Steiner was bent over a gurney as Gordy knocked on the windowed door outside the autopsy room. The doc looked up motioned him in with a latex-gloved hand.

“What brings you down here, Gordy?”

“Curiosity, I guess. I can’t seem to get this thing out of my mind. Have you figured out who it is yet?”

“No, but it shouldn’t take too long. I confirmed the observations I made yesterday. It is a Caucasian male, about forty-plus years, shot once in the head at close range, probably a thirty eight-caliber weapon. The fellow’s got good dental work, fine bone structure in his hands, no poorly healed injuries. These conditions suggest he was well off. He could have been a doctor. There was no other indication of trauma. He was probably quite dead when put in the water.”

As Gordy got closer, he could see the reconstruction the doc had created on a six-foot, linen-covered tray. In front of him was the skeleton of the man they had removed from the old Chrysler yesterday. The bones were yellow and soft with strands of matter still clinging here and there. The doc had collected a quantity of hair at the scene, and it lay nested on the linen near the skull.

“Gordy, you sure there were no holes in the side windows of the car before you swung that sledge hammer?”

“Of course I’m sure. The car was full of water when the pond was empty. If there were any holes, the water would have drained, don’t you think?” Gordy said. “After all, how could I know there was a body inside the damn car?”

“Calm down, Gordy, I was just askin’. I’ve been trying to figure out where he was when he was shot. It looks like he was shot somewhere else and placed in the car, or someone shot him in the car with the door open or the window down. Either way, it wasn’t a good day for our mysterious doctor.

“I got Hartley working with the Clinton cops as they go through the car today. So far, they examined the doors and much of the remaining glass and everything appears to be intact. No entry or exit points. If we can’t find the bullet, maybe he was shot somewhere else and placed in the car.”

## CHAPTER 7

Emily Pierce woke as usual at seven a.m. She pulled on a soft, saffron colored robe and made her way to the bathroom. The first glimpse of her reflection startled her for just a second.

“Jesus,” she said softly. At thirty-six, she was still in pretty good shape, but there were some telltale signs of age. Her hair was dark brown and cropped square across the back just below the bottoms of her ears. Her well-shaped eyes were hazel and, when not sleepy as they were now, had a penetrating quality that almost made you feel defensive. She had shed about twenty pounds since she walked out of her marriage with Charlie Pierce.

When she finished dressing, she went out the front door and retrieved her copy of the *New Haven Reporter*. She threw it on the kitchen table and made coffee while toasting an English muffin. She’d been alone for nearly a year and was becoming quite used to it. Charlie had left the shoreline after the divorce and moved to Atlanta. He’d always said that he wanted to live in the south, so now he had his chance. *Just as well*, she thought, after hearing of his plans, at least she didn’t have to worry about bumping into him in the grocery store.

While coffee dripped through the filter paper, she opened a can of Tender Meals for Isabel, her cat, her only live-in housemate. Isabel circled the floor, meowing, anticipating

her breakfast. Emily finally sat down with her coffee, muffin, and morning paper. When she opened the shoreline section, on the first page was a picture of an old car. The caption read “Drowned Car Gives up Dead Body.”

The article said the remains of a human body were discovered in a 1938 Chrysler found at the bottom of a pond in Clinton. Cause of death and the identity of the remains were as yet undetermined. The article went on to say it was thought the car might have been in the pond since 1938.

A chill rippled from the back of Emily’s neck all the way to her temples. She knew immediately. The story told by her mother and her grandmother was crystal clear as it raced through her mind. *No one else is going to know*, she thought. With the exception of her Uncle Bert, there might be no one left alive who knew. She paused, not sure what to do, then she picked up the phone book, thumbed through, and finally dialed Yale-New Haven Hospital.

“Hello,” she said. “I need to reach Dr. Merle Steiner right away.”

Several minutes went by, and the receptionist finally came back. “I’m sorry, but there doesn’t seem to be anybody on staff by that name.”

Emily felt a sense of urgency. “I believe he’s with the county coroner’s office.”

“Well,” the receptionist replied with a hint of sarcasm. “Maybe you’d be better off calling the coroner’s office instead of the hospital.”

“It’s about the body found in Clinton yesterday. The remains were discovered in an old car. The story was in this morning’s paper,” Emily explained.

“Look, miss, I don’t read the paper and I can’t tell you anything about a body or a Doc Steiner. Why doncha just call the coroner’s office direct?”

Now Emily was really upset. She hung up the phone with so much force that she nearly broke the receiver. She wasn’t sure what to do next. She picked up the phone book, scanned through it, and called the Clinton Police Department.

“Hello, my name is Emily Pierce, and I want to speak to someone about the body found at Nod Road.”

“What did you say your name was?” responded the voice on the other end.

“Emily Pierce,” she said calmly.

“Please hold, ma’am.”

A minute or two later, a man with a deep voice said, “This is Chief of Police Forhey.”

“Yes,” she said. “My name is Emily Pierce, and I may have some information about the car found in the pond.”

“What kind of information?”

“I may know who was in the car.”

“Just who do you think it might be, Miss Pierce?”

“I think you may have found my grandfather.”

“Emily, can you come down to the station?”

“Yes, I guess I’d better come down. Give me about forty-five minutes,” she said.

“That will be just fine, but go easy. There is no terrible rush.”

“Yes, I know,” she said and hung up the phone. As librarian for the town of Madison, Emily was supposed to open the building at nine a.m., but now she had to get someone else to do it. She picked up the phone once again and dialed Gladys Bower. “Hello, Gladys, I’ve got a real emergency, and I need you to open up this morning.”

“Okay, I can do that,” she replied.

“I’ll try to call you before lunch and let you know what’s going on. Got to go now, talk to you later, bye.”

Emily was anxious as she got into her two-year-old Camry and headed toward Route 95 East. The highway drive took only ten minutes. She took the Clinton exit and made her way toward the police station. Strangely enough, the route brought her past the entrance to Nod Road. She noticed the street sign as she drove by, and somehow resisted the urge to detour.

A young uniformed police officer sat behind a large desk. He looked up and seemed to know who she was before she



introduced herself. She went ahead regardless, announced her name, and asked for Chief Forhey. No sooner had she finished, than the burly chief entered the lobby and walked over to her. He extended his hand and introduced himself. Emily replied in kind.

“Come on into my office, Ms. Pierce,” he said, as he led the way to his door. Once inside, he gestured for her to sit before he propped himself in a big chair behind his desk. “Tell me what you think you know about the Nod Road situation,” he asked in a soothing voice.

Emily had dressed hastily in a cotton dress, and she’d only pushed her hair back with a brush. Suddenly, she felt very self-conscious. She hesitated a moment, thinking this was ridiculous. She didn’t feel good, she didn’t look good, and maybe her stroke of insight at the news article was silly and inappropriate.

“Well, I’m not sure how to begin,” she said. “I’ve lived on the shoreline all my life. My family’s always lived here. So, it’s not like I need publicity or anything. When I read the article this morning, I knew you’d found my grandfather. He disappeared over sixty years ago in a Chrysler car. My grandmother told me the story before she died back in 1983. My mother told the story over and over until her death a year ago. My grandfather was Doctor Sam Stemford. For a while he was the only GP between Clinton and Branford. He disappeared without a trace in 1938.”

Chief Forhey leaned back and looked at Emily with some intensity for a full minute.

“We did find something in the car that suggests the situation may involve a doctor. We found an old doctor’s bag full of medical instruments. Now, that in itself doesn’t mean the remains are your grandfather’s. But, it does suggest the car may have belonged to your grandfather.”

“Where are the remains now?” Emily asked hoarsely. Her mouth was dry despite the August humidity.

“They’re at Yale-New Haven.”

“Can I see them?” she asked.

“I don’t see why not, but it won’t be a pretty sight,” the chief answered.

“When?” She pressed.

“In a couple of days. The coroner is still trying to reconstruct the body,” he replied.

“I want to know what can be done to identify the remains as soon as possible. If it’s my grandfather, I’d like to put closure on this thing after all these years. How awful to die in an accident at the peak of his life and never be found,” Emily said.

“Well, Ms. Pierce, it may not be all that easy,” the chief said. “You see, we don’t think it was an accident.”

“What do you mean?”

“We think the person in the car was murdered.”

## CHAPTER 8

Gordy entered the front office at the Clinton police impound. He knew the three detectives on the force, so he didn't expect much trouble learning what might have turned up during the search of the rusted Chrysler. Even in decrepit shape, there were traces of innovative elegance in the old Airflow design. The 1930s were ripe for the display of symbols depicting all things moving. The period marked an era aching to combine the styling of airplanes, motorcars, and architecture into objects for everyday living.

The Chrysler Airflow made its debut at the end of 1937 and represented the epitome of art deco transportation for the still-recovering post-depression-era masses. The original car sparkled with chrome highlights ranging from its massive grill to winged blazes decorating each of the rear fender skirts. The interior was a handsome blend of burlled wood veneer on the dashboard garnished by rich fabrics upholstering the seats and door panels.

Perhaps the car was too far ahead of its time or the competition from the plethora of rivals was too great. At any rate, the car saw only two years of production and then it fell into quiet obscurity.

Now one of the few remaining examples of a deeply troubling period in American history lay in the Clinton police impound. The car and its parts filled up two bays in the gar-

age. The chassis rested on cinder blocks, while the two severed doors lay flat on the floor. All the pieces of the side windows that Gordy had smashed with the sledgehammer, were placed on the floor in an attempt at reconstruction. Obviously, they were looking for a bullet hole in the glass or some other part of the car.

Detective Barry Lands was the only one working on the wreck. He was crouched over one of the doors as Gordy approached. Lands, in his mid-forties, was overweight, with thinning sandy-colored hair. He wore a green polo shirt and blue jeans. Hearing Gordy, he glanced up and shook his head.

“How you doin, Barry?” Gordy asked.

“Just peachy, Gordy,” Barry replied. “What brings you to the bad side of town?”

Gordy paused for a minute then said, “I was curious about what you guys may have learned about the wreck.”

“Forget it, Gordy, this ain’t for you. It’s our case and we don’t need no help.”

“Come on, Barry, don’t pull that righteous jurisdiction crap with me. I’m not after your job. Since the damn thing was found in my pond, I’ve got a natural interest, that’s all.”

“Interest or no interest, there really isn’t much I can tell you, Gordy.”

“How ’bout I ask a few questions and you simply say yes or no? I’ll try to sort out whether or not you’ve found anything, okay?”

“Look, what can I say? This is a formal police investigation of a homicide. At this point, I can’t tell you anything.” Barry was almost pleading.

Gordy ignored him. “Barry, just tell me, was the car in gear or neutral? Was the ignition on or off? Do you think the dead guy was driving or just propped up to look like he was driving? Did you find an entry or exit hole in the vehicle? Did you find the bullet?”

“Can’t say. Can’t say. Can’t say. No. And no. Enough already,” Barry said. “We are working on the answers, but at

this point, I can't tell you anything more than you can read in the newspaper."

"Barry, cut the bullshit, by now you know the answer to every freakin' one of those questions. You may even know answers to questions I haven't even asked, like who was the poor guy sitting in the car when it took a dive into my pond."

Gordy was so busy grilling Barry that he didn't even notice the woman standing behind him. She had no doubt been there for a while, listening to some of the banter between the two men. Gordy finally sensed her presence. He turned around, looked at the woman for a moment, and then broke into a large smile.

"Hello, miss," he mustered the presence of mind to say.

"Hello," she replied. "Is that the Chrysler found in the pond on Nod Road?"

"Yes, ma'am, it sure is," Gordy said before Barry had a chance to answer.

"Are you Emily Pierce?" Barry asked as he walked toward the two of them.

"Yes, I am," she said. "And you must be Detective Lands."

"That's right," he said.

Gordy was beginning to feel left out, so he extended his hand and introduced himself. "Gordon Powell, Special Investigations Unit, Guilford PD," he said, shamelessly inventing the title.

"Actually, the car was found in Gordy's pond," Barry said.

"It sure was, Ms. Pierce—" Gordy replied.

Barry interrupted again. "Chief Forhey called and said you might stop by."

"I'm glad he did. I've already been to look at my grandfather's remains, and now I'd like to see the car."

"But, Miss Pierce, you can't be certain the remains are your grandfather," Barry went on.

"Oh, I think I can be," Emily said. "They found a ring with the body, a wedding ring with the inscription 'To forev-

er love, Mary.’ That’s my grandmother, Mary Stemford. They’re running DNA tests now to confirm, but I know what the results will be, Detective Lands. Have you found anything new about the car?”

“Well, Ms. Pierce we should talk privately,” Barry answered, shifting his eyes toward Gordy.

“Okay, I’ll wait till you and Mr. Powell finish your business, and then we can talk,” she said.

“I believe Mr. Powell and I have finished our business, haven’t we, Gordy?”

“I guess we have, Barry. I’ll see ya soon,” Gordy said. He turned to Emily and extended his hand once more. “It’s been a pleasure to meet you, Emily. I’ve developed a special interest in this case and I would be glad to work with you, if you need some help.”

“Maybe,” she replied, “after the dust settles.”

## CHAPTER 9

Gordy had been in the Guilford Police Department for six years. During that time, he was union president and had received several commendations for action in the line of duty, but he was still only a patrol officer. For one reason or another, he avoided the additional responsibilities of promotion and special assignments.

Maybe times were changing. Since the discovery of the old Chrysler, Gordy was unable to get a good night's sleep. He became absorbed with the need to find out what really happened at Nod Road.

When Gordy finished at the Clinton impound, he went directly to the house. Even if he couldn't sleep well, he knew he had to get some rest, because he was scheduled to work the night shift for the up-coming week. A series of unplanned absences in the department had reached his level of seniority, and he was needed to cover nights for one week in the next four.

Gordy didn't like the shift very much, because nights were usually feast or famine—nothing to do but try to keep from dozing off, or too much to do, dodging bullets or chasing perps on the highway at a hundred miles an hour. Duty called and he was resigned to his one-week assignment.

He reported in at eleven forty-five p.m., went through the duty log with the dispatcher, and found that it had been a pretty boring second shift, with not much local activity. After

the review, he picked up his car from Officer Tommy Maybret. Tommy greeted him with a nasal “Hi,” and complained about a head cold that had plagued him all afternoon. The complaint caused Gordy to grimace at the prospect of taking over a car that had become a Petri dish for Maybret’s infection. Despite his annoyance, he exchanged a few courtesies and climbed into the car. He drove toward his territory, the southwest part of town. This section included Route 1, down to Branford, and north to the Durham line. Not much happened on the East End of the territory, but the stretch of road going toward Branford was always unpredictable.

At twelve-fifteen a.m., he pulled into the Southside Computer Center and began his usual checks of locks and windows. Everything was fine. He exited the driveway and headed south on US 1. He stopped at three other businesses, did his rounds, and posted the results in his log. He checked his watch. The luminous hands pointed to one forty as he pulled into the front lot of Shoreline BMW.

As Gordy spun the steering wheel to the right, he sprayed a bright arc of light across the property with the cruiser’s hi-beams. The light passed parked cars in front and panned across the main building. The new cars were in a fenced area in the back lot. He pulled the cruiser near the main showroom door and parked with his hi-beams lighting most of the front of the building. He got out of the cruiser, tried the door, and determined it was locked securely.

Gordy returned to his vehicle and noticed the left door on a 325i convertible in the front row was slightly ajar. He thought, *Damn, what do I do with this? Some bozo probably left the lot after a test drive and forgot to lock the door.*

He had limited choices—one was to close the door, verify it was locked, and write a subsequent report. He could pretend he didn’t see it. Or, get real cautious and suppose someone had broken into the car after closing. If someone had done that, they might still be on the property.

Gordy released the strap on his service pistol. He walked slowly to the parked car. The door was unlatched. He decid-



ed to close and lock it and write the damn report. When he finished, he started to walk back to the cruiser. He noticed the large gate to the “new car” paddock was not wrapped with the usual length of chain.

He decided he needed a closer look. As he approached the gate, he saw the familiar chain was off and lying in the dim light on the ground about twenty feet away. Gordy drew his Smith & Wesson, nine millimeter-semi automatic, turned around, and started back to the cruiser.

*Damn*, he thought, *I need back up*. He straddled the front seat and reached for the car radio microphone. As he did, he heard an engine start. A brand new BMW 528 squealed from position behind the fence. It barreled toward the unlatched gate.

Gordy crouched behind the cruiser’s opened door and tried to juggle his gun in one hand and the mike in the other. He yelled “Police,” as the BMW sped through the gate. It headed straight for Gordy’s opened door. He didn’t have time to call or even think. His reflexes took control. He leaped across the large front seat. He banged his head on the passenger door, as the BMW struck the cruiser’s left door and smashed it into the frame. The speeding car grazed the cruiser’s rear fender and sped toward Route 1.

“Shit.”

Gordy managed to get behind the wheel. The cruiser’s door was hopelessly buckled. There was no way to keep it closed. He clicked his seat belt in place, jammed the shift lever into drive, and spun the big Ford Crown Victoria around in hot pursuit.

Once he was on Route 1, Gordy fished the mike off the floor and yelled into it, “This is car four, Gordy Powell. Officer needs help, in pursuit of black BMW Five-Twenty-Eight. Perps dangerous! Heading south on Route One, at pole marker two-oh-five.”

While he talked, a hole appeared in the windshield and he heard the whine of a bullet rush though the interior and strike the back seat with a thump.

“Ah, shit!”

Gordy continued the chase toward the Branford town line. He figured dispatch would call Branford PD and advise them they were heading in that direction. He looked at the speedometer and noted he was doing eighty-five. He wasn't gaining on the BMW. The fleeing car was still pulling away.

The Guilford Police Department was quite small. There were only four patrol cars on night shift. They had a lot of territory to cover. It was unlikely anyone would be joining Gordy before the BMW crossed the Branford line.

Gordy drove with his head low. Once again, he squeezed the button on the mike. “Dispatch, advise Branford PD, the perps are headed in their direction. Also, shots are fired, I'm still in pursuit.”

Dispatch relayed the message. Two Branford cruisers converged on Route 1 and headed north. Gordy wondered if the BMW driver would continue to stay on local roads or try to swing onto Route 95. If he did, he entered jurisdiction of the state police. Gordy would have to break off the chase. In the meantime, dispatch came back and gave him permission to maintain pursuit over the Branford town line.

“Thanks a bunch,” Gordy muttered.

As the BMW approached the town line, the driver saw two Branford cruisers parked in a V-shape with all lights flashing. The speeding car spun into a right-hand turn, hurdled the curb, and made it to Rire Hill Road without crossing into Branford.

“Ah shit,” Gordy said again. “Officer requests assistance,” he called into the mike. “Ask the Branford guys to give me a hand.”

“Will advise,” came the reply.

A minute later, the dispatcher came back, “Gordy, you're on your own, Branford claims no crime committed on its side of the line.

“Great, really great, how far away is some assistance?”

“Officer Peterson is on Route One, about two miles north of Rire Hill Road, estimate closing on your twenty in three to five minutes.”

“You know this guy is shooting?” Gordy yelled once again.

“We have that,” dispatch replied.

Gordy heard a metallic clink come from the engine compartment. A spray of steam bellowed over the hood. This reduced Gordy’s visibility considerably, but he didn’t slow down. “Dispatch? How about the state troopers?” Gordy asked in desperation.

“Have them on the line. They’re on the way,” dispatch confirmed.

Gordy knew he had to keep up the pressure. He hoped whoever was driving the BMW made a mistake before he did. Both cars were doing over ninety miles an hour. Gordy saw on-coming headlights and familiar flashing lights emerging over a rise in the road ahead. He could occasionally see through the veil of steam wafting over the hood. *Great, it looks like we may be able to hold them off at the pass.* The local resident state trooper headed right at them from the opposite direction.

Dispatch came back, “Trooper Ray Marrow has you in sight and is preparing to block the way with his vehicle.”

“Do it quick, this guy is nuts,” Gordy yelled into the mike.

*There is pasture to the left, woods to the right. If the BMW were going to break from the road, it will surely go left,* Gordy thought. That was exactly what happened. The luxury car spun into a left-hand skid, went over the shoulder, through a barbed wire fence, and hurdled into the pasture. Gordy slowed and took the same route through the fence and followed suit. The state trooper pulled in next. Officer Bill Peterson soon fell in behind as they raced across the moonlit, hilly pasture.

This Connecticut field was typical, with borders of rocks and shrubs laid out in straight lines separating sections of

pasture. The BMW sped along until it came to the first such border in its path. The driver picked a spot with little brush, floored the accelerator, and attempted to careen through. The car bumped and lurched over the ground, making terrible grinding sounds as the car's bottom struck rock and stump, but kept going.

The BMW emerged on the other side of the border and like a launched rocket hurtled into the air. Suddenly there was no pasture in front, only a seven-foot drop to the farm's cow pond. The car's brake lights flashed bright red as the car flew for several seconds completing a graceful, predictable arch and landing with a large moonlit splash. The big six-cylinder motor, roaring with high speed revs, gulped a fatal dose of pond water and seized up immediately.

Gordy drove through on the same path, and slowed to a stop as the trunk of the BMW disappeared below his line of sight. Then he eased his car over the rise and surveyed the scene below. Trooper Marrow and Officer Peterson pulled in behind, got out, and trotted to the edge of the cow pond, leaving their cruisers' headlights fixed on the scene. The BMW stood immersed to the door handles, its headlights still shining into the water. Reflected light all around showed all three occupants still inside, shaking their heads in either bewilderment or physical shock.

The rest was easy. The three cops aimed their weapons at the car. Gordy ordered the occupants to show their hands and leave the vehicle. Slowly the car doors opened. Three men staggered into waist deep water. Gordy told them to keep their hands raised and walk toward him. They did and were cuffed. Gordy patted them down and ordered them into the back of Bill Peterson's cruiser. He rode in the passenger side as they headed to the station with Trooper Marrow following closely behind.

## CHAPTER 10

Emily arrived at the library at seven-fifty a.m. as usual. *Just another Tuesday morning*, she thought. She unlocked the front door, and went inside. The building officially opened at nine o'clock, but she always went in an hour or so early. Behind the offices was a small kitchen where she made coffee and kept fresh milk.

Yesterday she had received confirmation she was a close enough match to DNA taken from the molars of the Nod Road remains to be a genetic granddaughter. Not that she had any doubt, but at least no one could dispute her notion of direct lineage. What surprised her was the feeling of despair that swept over her when the test result was confirmed. She had stayed awake most of the night, thinking about her grandfather, trying to imagine what he was like, and what happened in 1938.

During the course of last night, she made up her mind to visit her Great Uncle Bert and listen to what he remembered about her grandfather and the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. He recently turned eighty, and he lived in a managed care facility in Branford. The last time she visited him was the week before Christmas last year. Although his mind was clear, he was confined to his wheelchair. It was nearly ten months later now and she wasn't sure what to expect, but she decided to drive to the home when she left the

library at day's end. She also decided to make a list of everything she already knew about her grandfather.



The Branford Golden Maturity Center sat on a small knoll overlooking Long Island Sound. The facility was located just north of the Thimble Islands and the property afforded an excellent view of them. The main building was an older construction, with Victorian dormers and weathered cedar shakes for siding. The rooms on the inside opened to the inner courtyard. Uncle Bert was in the south wing and could access the courtyard through a set of aluminum and glass sliders. He had been a resident at the center for the past two years, and he was always glad to see an unscheduled visitor.

Emily stood outside the open door and knocked on the wall. Uncle Bert sat in his wheelchair watching Jeopardy on television. With the TV noise and Uncle Bert's poor hearing, he didn't respond. She entered the room and called, "Uncle Bert."

Bert looked up in surprise, and then his face broke into a huge smile. He was a thin man with white skin and countless freckles. His head was nearly bald and wisps of stringy red hair hung over his ears. His blue eyes welled up with fluid as he recognized his visitor. "Oh, my goodness, Emily, what a surprise."

"Hello, Uncle Bert." She bent over and wrapped him in a big hug. "How have you been?"

"Please sit down, dear." He motioned to a chair by the bed.

"Thank you," she said, as she sat down.

"You know how it is when you get old. If somebody asks how you are, it might take an hour or so to run through just how you really are. So, I try to avoid talking about it as much as possible. For the most part, I'm doing okay. The really important thing is how you are, and what brings you here?"

“I had been just fine up until a few weeks ago. Have you been reading the newspaper?”

“No, not very often?”

“Okay, have you heard about the old car pulled out of a pond in Clinton?”

Uncle Bert’s cheerful expression suddenly turned pale, and he turned his face toward the courtyard sliders. “No, I haven’t dear,” he said with a voice that sounded far away.

She noticed his change, but decided to wait before asking anything. “They found the remains of Sam Stemford in an old car that’s been under water since 1938. That’s my grandfather and your brother-in-law. They’ve finally found his body after all these years.”

Uncle Bert seemed to rally, and he turned to her, “Well, Emily, that is quite a surprise. How can you be sure it’s your grandfather?”

“I’m quite sure. They found his wedding ring with an inscription from grandmother, and they have done preliminary DNA tests to confirm a paternal match to me. But there’s more you need to know, Uncle Bert,” she went on. “The police told me Sam was shot in the head before ending up in the pond.” She paused for a moment to let the remark sink in. “I want to get as much info on Doctor Sam as possible, and I need your help.”

Emily reached into her purse and took out a small pocket sized tape recorder. She placed it on the bedside table and pressed the record button.

“Well, dear, I don’t know that I can help you very much, it was all such a very long time ago,” the old man said with a touch of sadness in his voice. “Doctor Sam Stemford was quite a scurrilous fellow.”

“How do you mean scurrilous?”

“I don’t know, I guess I just didn’t like him very much.”

Emily thought for a minute and decided to take a different tack. “Let’s start with some specifics that you might remember. For example, do you know when he graduated from

medical school? I remember mother telling me that he went to Yale, but she had no idea when.”

Uncle Bert scratched his temple. “I’m not sure I can tell you...let me figure this out for a minute. I believe he was forty-nine years old when he disappeared. He must have graduated around the time of the Great War, probably 1917 or 1918. I know he wanted to join the army but the war ended too soon. After graduation, he did an internship at Yale-New Haven and then went to work for a small practice in East Haven. A few years later, he met my father, your great-grandfather, Doctor Lawrence Moorefield.

“Father was a good man and, at that time, his was the only practice between Madison and Branford. I believe it was the year after the stock market crash. Father persuaded Sam to move out here and join his practice. I know father was having trouble with his emphysema and needed help. Sam possessed a kind of charm that gave him an advantage whenever anyone was dealing with him. I remember he was a great proponent of vaccination as a method of disease control, and not everyone was in favor at the time. Even Father had serious reservations on the subject. They often argued about the idea of vaccination.

“Back then, I suspect there was more risk with inoculations than there is today, so Father did have some useful facts to argue against the wide-spread use. Perhaps he was old fashioned, but he found it inconsistent to infect someone with a disease in order to protect them from the disease. I believe Sam wrote some sort of paper on the subject when he was at Yale. At any rate, he came to work for Father in 1930. Four years later, he married my sister Mary.” As he spoke, his voice seemed to slow; either the strain of conversation or the content was weighing heavily on him.

Emily asked, “Tell me about their relationship. What were they like as a couple?”

Uncle Bert let out a great sigh and stretched his arms. Through the glass sliders, Emily noticed shadows spreading across the shrubs and flowers. She realized the old gentle-



man was tired and she probably wouldn't learn much more today.

Uncle Bert went on, his voice slow, giving the impression of choosing his words carefully. "Mary was very quiet and shy. Since Father's practice was in the house, Sam saw Mary almost every day. At first there didn't seem to be much interest between them with Sam being so much older, but a year later they began to spend time together. Another year passed and they announced they were going to marry. Dear, I'm feeling very tired and running out of things to remember. Perhaps we can talk some more about this some other time."

Emily agreed it was enough for now. Then she thought of one more urgent question. "Just one more thing, Uncle Bert, can you tell me the date Sam disappeared?"

"Why yes, dear, I remember it clearly, it was September 14, 1938. It was a week or two before the terrible hurricane. Teddy Flanders was in charge of the case, despite his tender age. I didn't like him much, either."

"Thank you, Uncle Bert," she said and then quickly asked "Would you mind terribly if I dropped by next week and perhaps we can talk some more?"

"No, dear, not at all. That will give me some time to find my thinking cap and try to have more information for you."

"Thanks Uncle Bert. We'll try again next week. Get some rest now and I'll talk to you later," she said as she picked up the little tape recorder and tucked it into her purse.

As Emily drove home from the center, she made up her mind to call Gordy Powell and see if he was still interested in the case. There was so much she didn't know, and she was obsessed with finding it. Uncle Bert seemed to tire so easily. She pulled into her driveway, locked up the Camry, and walked toward the house.

Twilight had stolen the colors from the day, leaving dark gray shadows in the path ahead. She walked briskly, toward the front porch. Suddenly, she heard something rustle and huff in the thick bushes that wrapped around the house. The noise startled her and she slowed her pace.

Her mind raced through the possibilities. Then she turned around and returned to the Camry. She retrieved a flashlight from the glove box and once again headed for the door. This time she projected a circle of white light at the overgrown ornamental bushes and stepped briskly to the door. She fumbled with the key and finally unlocked it. Once inside, she locked the door behind her. She was shaking.

Emily hadn't experienced real fear in a long time. She convinced herself the noise was probably a dog or some other animal, but still, she was surprised with her reaction. Was it the noise or simply the surprise? Was it because of the murder of her grandfather?

A chilling revelation swept through her mind as she realized why she was so frightened.

Suppose her grandfather's killer was still alive.

And lived nearby.

And was watching.



Two blocks away, a man whistled. Two large Rottweilers emerged from the darkness. He extended his hand and dispensed crunchy treats to both the animals.

"Good dogs," he whispered as he patted the side of his truck. Both animals leaped into the pickup bed. The man climbed into the cab and drove away.

## CHAPTER 11

**G**ordy was glad to be back on day shift. The excitement of last week was enough to last him the rest of his career. Although his sergeant recommended him for a commendation, he knew he was lucky to be alive and uninjured.

“We’re still trying to determine who actually fired the shots that damaged your car,” the investigators said. “So far, we’ve confirmed who was driving the BMW, but the other two men wouldn’t admit to the shooting. Both men tested negative for gunshot residue, and it’s possible the shooter wiped himself clean while he was in the cow pond, but the ballistics report is worrisome. It took two days to recover a gun from the pond. By that time, prints were undetectable. But it wasn’t even the same caliber gun that shot up your car.”

All three men were from New York City and specialized in hitting upscale car dealerships in Connecticut and New Jersey.

The police learned there were actually four men in the theft ring, and they ran stolen cars regularly into the city for either chopping or resale.

“The fourth man was parked nearby when you made your rounds,” the head investigator said, “and simply drove away when the altercation started. We’re pretty sure he wasn’t the

shooter, either. We have his name and have issued a warrant to the tri-state area.”

Gordy didn't think much of the mystery. Instead, he enjoyed the relative peace and quiet of his regular day shift. He arrived home on Tuesday and finished his regular chores. He considered himself a gentleman farmer and maintained a small collection of livestock. His two dogs, Romulus and Remus, were rescues from the local shelter. They had the run of a fenced in acre behind his house. His three cats, Dolly, Rocky, and Izzy lived in the house. Counted among the barn animals were a horse, a donkey, two goats, two pigs, and a number of ducks, geese, and chickens. The first task he faced when he arrived home every day was the care and feeding of the menagerie.

After Gordy finished his chores, he walked to the front of his property to inspect the progress of the roadwork. To his delight, the entire fill was put in place and the new culvert installed.

Nod Road had to be severed for four days while the curve was straightened, and preparations for the new bridge were being made. This meant Gordy was forced to enter his driveway from the west. All his neighbors on the east side of the pond had to enter their property from the east end of the road. Things were finishing up and hopefully they could open the coffer dam next week and refill the pond.

The dry pond bed was crazed with mud cracks like the patina on an old piece of china. Residents in the area had experienced nearly a week of terrible odors as the pond bottom slowly evaporated and the residual organic material decomposed.

While Gordy rummaged through the construction area, he noticed fresh diggings around the depression that once held the old Chrysler. A large number of new shovel holes were scattered here and there. Gordy figured the Clinton PD had come back to the site and searched for something, maybe a piece of the car, a bullet, or even a gun.

It was getting dark now and he decided to go back to the house. As he climbed the front door stairs, he heard the phone ring inside. He hurried through the door and picked up just before the answering machine intercepted.

“Hello, Mr. Gordy Powell please,” said a woman’s voice on the other end.

“Speaking,” Gordy answered, hoping it wasn’t a telemarketer trying to peddle something.

“Mr. Powell, my name’s Emily Pierce. We met at the Clinton impound a week or so ago. How have you been?”

Gordy tried responding in a cool, professional voice, but his heart was pumping hard. “Yes, Ms. Pierce,” he answered. “I’m fine. What can I do for you?”

“I’ve been wondering if we can meet and discuss the death of my grandfather. Sort of compare notes, if you don’t mind?”

Gordy didn’t hesitate. “Yeah, I think that’s a great idea. I’ve been poking around and I’ve discovered a few pieces of info that might be worthwhile. When do you want to meet?”

“How about seven o’clock tomorrow, here at my place,” she said.

“Okay, where’s your place?”

She rattled off instructions and, when she finished, she hung up with a polite “Goodbye.”

## CHAPTER 12

Gordy arrived at the home of Emily Pierce a little earlier than expected. He felt guilty and hoped he didn't interrupt her dinner. He'd rushed through his regular routine at Nod Road so quickly, he was surprised with his lack of timing. He pressed the doorbell and waited on the porch.

Emily opened the door and welcomed him in. "Hello, Mr. Powell, or should I call you Officer Powell?"

"Just call me Gordy," he replied as he followed her into the living room.

The house was an older Dutch colonial with a gambrel roof and wrap-around porch. The place was sorely in need of repair. Outside paint was weathered and peeling. Overgrown shrubs around the front porch poked their branches through the railings. Alongside the house was a detached garage with hinged wooden doors that sagged toward the center. Inside, light poured into the entry hall through port light windows on either side of the door. A rather old glass chandelier hung in the center of the foyer and Queen Anne furniture graced the entrance and the living room. By any standard, the place had character, but somehow it didn't fit the lifestyle of a 90s woman.

"Nice place you've got here, Ms. Pierce."

“Thank you, it was my mother’s. She died a year ago in September. I’ve been living here for nearly two years. By the way, please call me Emily. Would you like some coffee?”

“Sure, that would be nice.”

She brought out a tray with two mugs wafting steam, alongside a creamer and sugar bowl.

“Well, let’s get down to business,” she said as she sat down in a wingback chair across from Gordy. “You said you were interested in finding out what happened to the man in the car. If you meant what you said, I’d like your help. Frankly, I don’t think the Clinton Police are going to make much progress working with a sixty-year-old murder case. And I don’t accept that. I want to know everything’s being done to find out what happened.”

“I feel the same way,” Gordy said. “I’ve not been able to forget the image of the remains in the car. Usually things like that don’t bother me, but this one does.”

As Gordy talked, he found himself studying her large hazel eyes and at the same time, thinking he wanted to know more about her.

Emily went on, “What I’ve been doing is making a list of all the information that’s available. If you’re interested, I’d like to form a team to access whatever resources we might need to put some kind of closure on my grandfather’s death. There’s so much to be done. There may be records that can help. There may be people we can interview who might have some threads of information. I’m not exactly sure how to proceed, but I’d feel a lot better if I were working as hard, maybe harder, than the local PD. For example, I met with my Great Uncle Bert yesterday, at his nursing home in Branford, and we talked for a while. He wasn’t even aware Sam Stemford’s body had been found. He seemed so sad when I told him, but at the same time, he told me he didn’t like Sam very much when he was alive. That kind of surprised me.”

“It does seem a little strange,” Gordy said. “At any rate, you’re right about gathering information, Emily. There must have been some kind of paperwork filed when your grand-

mother reported your grandfather's disappearance. We'll need to try and find those records, see if anyone's alive who may have been involved with working on them, and we'll need to confirm the date of his disappearance. It could provide an approximate date of death."

Emily said, "Good. Uncle Bert said Sam disappeared on September 14, 1938. He also said several other revealing things. They may provide clues to Sam's personality. Uncle Bert called him a scurrilous fellow but wouldn't elaborate. He also said Sam had some kind of charm that made him clever in negotiating, and Sam was a fan of inoculating against disease, not necessarily a popular position at the time. I'm sure there is a great deal more he can tell us about Sam's life. Although it may be difficult to draw it out of him. After all, if there's anyone else out there who knew Sam or the Moorefields, we've got to find them."

"How about the newspaper?" Gordy offered. "There may have been some articles written after the disappearance."

"That's a good idea," Emily said. "I know I must go to New Haven, stop at Yale, and check on when he graduated. Uncle Bert thinks Sam wrote a paper on the use of vaccination for disease control. Maybe I can find the paper. In the meantime, let's make a list of things we can do separately so we don't end up stepping all over each other."



## CHAPTER 13

The first item on Gordy's list brought him to the Madison Police Department. Chief Terry Deering had lived his entire life on the shoreline. He wasn't a recent import like so many other officials. He was an uncomplicated man, direct in his methods and fair in his regard. He was forty-one and enjoyed his work very much. He was sitting behind a big oak desk when Gordy entered his office. Deering was in full summer uniform, and his large brown eyes opened wide in greeting.

"How're you doin', Gordy?" he said, reaching out his hand without getting up. "What brings you to my neck of the woods?"

"Well, chief, I'm sure you know about the Sam Stemford affair, the old Chrysler found in my pond," Gordy said.

"Yes, I do, but isn't that a Clinton problem?"

"Yes and no, Terry. The fact is his granddaughter is Emily Pierce. She's a very stubborn lady, and she wants to know what happened. She's doing some backup research on the crime, and I'm helping her. We'd like to get into the records of 1938 and see what we can find out about his disappearance. According to Emily, the situation was reported here in Madison, and there should have been reports filed. I'd like to look through the old records and see what I can find."

The chief leaned back in his chair, "I don't mind, but you're a couple of days late. Fact is, Barry Lands from the

Clinton PD rummaged through the archives in the town hall cellar a few days ago. I don't know what he found, but I told him to let me know if he took anything. To the best of my knowledge he didn't find much to take. You're welcome to look through the old junk and see what you can find, but you might save yourself some time and just ask Barry if he found anything."

As the chief spoke, Gordy recalled his last conversation with Barry Lands, and he dismissed any hope of the policeman sharing information with him. Gordy explained he'd just as soon check it out himself and advise the chief of any information he found.

A little while later, he was at the Madison Town Hall. The building was original, a three-story colonial painted white with black trim. The front of the structure boasted a large open porch with four Doric columns supporting a slate covered roof.

Gordy entered the front double doors and smiled at the matronly receptionist. He showed his police badge. "I have the chief's permission to look through the old records kept in the cellar."

"I know. He called. Sign the logbook," she said and handed him two keys. She directed him to a door that led downstairs.

The archives, organized in rows of shelves, stood behind a chain link fence that reached from floor to ceiling. In between each row was a series of sixty-watt incandescent bulbs hanging from old, cloth-covered wires. The resulting light was poor, and Gordy smiled to himself as he thought the last time any work was done down here was probably back in the 1930s. Little did he know, at the time, his casual notion was right on the mark. The last time the cellar had any work was in the aftermath of the infamous 1938 hurricane.

The terrible storm ravaged Southern New England, sweeping across Long Island, slamming the Connecticut shoreline and into Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay. Millions of gallons of water pushed up the bay, flooding the entire

city of Providence. When the storm was over, six hundred people were dead and over three billion dollars of damage was done.

The cellar of the old town hall was formed of stone and mortar and, on the wall—nearly obscured by an old wooden bookshelf—was a faded yellow line with tiny letters that read, “High Water 1938.” The line was a full six feet off the floor. It was a good thing police records of the time were still secured at the old police department building, because almost everything prior to 1938, languishing in the town hall cellar, was lost when the building flooded. The original police building was on higher ground and sustained less damage.

Gordy had used one key to open the door leading downstairs. He took the second key and unlocked the chain link gate that allowed access into the archives. He wished he’d brought a flashlight but decided he could do without. He convinced himself he had better search now, instead of trying to return later. As he entered the enclosure, he saw seven-foot racks with shelves containing hundreds of boxes of papers.

The only thing that would simplify the search was the placement of the beginning racks. They were dated 1938, and there wasn’t much dated before then. Gordy had no idea why there weren’t many annual records prior to the 1938 hurricane, but he was astonished with the fact that there seemed to be ample information available from March 1938, forward.

Within two hours, he had found a box with PD records dated September 1938. To his delight, he found a missing person report dated September 15, 1938. Mary Stemford filed the report, and it described her husband Doctor Samuel Stemford in careful detail. A yellow photograph was attached with a rusty staple to the back of the report. The paper was frail but the type was still quite legible. At the bottom of the page was a place for the reviewing cop’s signature and there, in pale black ink, was the name Theodore Flanders.

*Holy shit*, Gordy thought. I'll bet that's Harlan's father. Flanders was a rookie cop back then, just out of the academy. He knew Teddy Flanders had been a chief of police somewhere on the shoreline before he retired. At least he was still alive and maybe could remember something about the original investigation.

Also tucked into the same file were several pages of old newspaper clippings and various forms with hand-written notes attached. Gordy pulled a clear plastic bag from his pocket. It was large enough to hold all the paperwork. He carefully inserted everything into the bag, all the while thinking something troubled him. Why didn't Barry Lands find the same stuff? Surely if he did, he would have taken it. Gordy would have never known it existed. Maybe Lands just missed it.

## CHAPTER 14

Emily disliked the drive into New Haven. There was usually a traffic snarl starting in East Haven that spread all the way to Bridgeport. It was one of the reasons she valued the shoreline so much. Each of the townships from Branford to Old Lyme was relatively uncongested. Each retained a unique identity, and even though Interstate 95 passed through the area, somehow the shoreline maintained a certain aura of anonymity.

Until recently there wasn't much in the way of shopping malls, little in the way of price-busting warehouses, and still not even a resident television station. The area catered to a few quiet businesses, sleepy older neighborhoods, and several choice marinas that maintained Connecticut's largest sailing fleet. The complexion of the area changed now. With the advent of the Pequot Indian Casino, there were new problems; new challenges; and, on the weekends, new congestion.

Emily's family had been there for three generations and, although all things must change, she could not imagine living anywhere else in the world. She finally arrived at the exit ramp that took her to Yale University.

The venerable institution sat in the middle of downtown New Haven like an old, veiled queen mother shrouded in black shadows, hiding her age in the cold recesses of brick and stone. She lay permanently fixed by the foundations of

her buildings. A fortress for wisdom and knowledge assaulted from all sides by the ignorance of the inner city, a curious paradox of our times.

Mozart by day.

A chorus of gunshots at night.

Emily had been there many times and had no trouble finding a parking spot at the main administration building. She knew of several resources that could assist in the search for information about her grandfather. But, because the dates were vague, she decided to visit directly with the dean of Information Services and ask for special help.

Emily had worked with Evelyn Van Denaker on several local projects, and she believed she'd be a willing aid. Emily's experience with large bureaucracies was less than positive, and she was prepared to cope with some frustration as she appealed for special consideration. Certainly, the degree of frustration she encountered depended on whom she dealt with.

She went to the front desk, introduced herself, and asked to see Dean Van Denaker. When asked, she conceded she did not have an appointment but explained she was there on a matter of the utmost importance and she knew the dean personally. She explained who she was and that she and the dean had worked together in the past. She was confident the dean would see her. A few minutes passed and she was invited to proceed to the dean's office.

Evelyn Van Denaker was a plump woman in her early forties. She sat behind a large Chippendale desk and didn't get up as Emily entered.

Van Denaker wore a plain beige dress with a straight neckline. Her hair was cut short and frosted. She looked at Emily through rimless glasses that magnified her steely gray eyes. Her overall appearance gave the impression she was both efficient and perhaps a little lofty.

"What can we do for you, Emily?"

Emily resented people using the royal "we" when referring to themselves. But she needed this woman's help so she

was determined to remain extra courteous. “Well, Evelyn, you know the discovery of my grandfather’s remains has been in the newspaper.”

“Yes, I’ve been following the story with interest.”

“Did you know he graduated from Yale?” Emily asked.

“No, I didn’t,” the dean answered.

“Well, he did, and I would like to find as much information about him as I can. I need your help. May I look through his school records? I’ve been told he had some special interest in the field of inoculations and he may have written a paper on the subject while he was here. I’d also like to see the paper. I don’t know the exact dates, but I believe he attended Yale during the years of 1916, through 1918. He may have graduated in 1917 or 1918. Because it was so long ago, you could be a tremendous help.”

“I’m afraid I’ll have to discuss your request with other members of the staff. Give me a few days, and we’ll see what we can do,” Evelyn said.

Emily felt her tension building and the idea that she may be facing some sort of bureaucratic gauntlet crept into her mind. Suppose Yale feared any references connected to a local murder could be some kind of board or committee decision. Suppose this staid institution refused to help in any way. Emily considered the possibility and decided to take a risk.

In a carefully controlled voice, she said, “Evelyn, this whole situation is terribly sad and even more frustrating. Not only am I dealing with a tragedy, but I have precious little information to know what my grandfather was like, as a man or as a doctor. Given enough time, I can probably find the information I need all by myself. But with your resources, it would be so much easier. Please don’t force me to wade through a bureaucratic nightmare. I’ll be in your debt if you just turn around to that terminal behind you and pull up any information available regarding Dr. Sam Stemford. I understand your concern and obligation to the university. But, I

assure you, I am looking for my own personal reasons. None of what I'm doing is going to the press."

"Emily, I understand your situation, and I will try to help. Please take a seat out in the lobby, give me a few minutes, and I'll try to find out what information's available and just how long it will take to get it out."



## CHAPTER 15

Emily always enjoyed driving out and away from New Haven. On the front seat beside her was the thick portfolio of information Dean Van Denaker had given her only moments before. She had been there for four hours.

Emily arrived back at the library and went directly to her office, carrying the package of papers. She sat down at her desk and dialed Gordy Powell's number. As she expected, she was greeted by his answering machine.

"Gordy? It's Emily. I've got the information from Yale. Can we get together tonight and review where we're at? Let me know. I'll be at the library till five and at home from five-thirty on. Bye." She hung up and began looking through the paperwork.



Later in the afternoon, Gordy Powell checked his message machine before he got off duty. He smiled to himself as Emily's message rattled through the receiver. When the recording was over, he called the library and confirmed with Emily that tonight would be fine at his place at five-thirty. He'd fix dinner and she could bring a six pack of diet Coke.

As soon as Gordy got home, he scurried through the house, picking up files and old newspapers. The place was very clean, but untidy. He didn't want Emily to think he was

domestically challenged. He'd been more or less alone since his divorce in 1983 and didn't spend a lot of time organizing the household. He'd married a Japanese woman while stationed there during his hitch in the marines.

Gordy brought Son Lea home in 1981, full of high expectations and youthful idealism. After two years of conflict, they divorced and she returned to Japan. As far as he knew, Son Lea never returned to the states. Although that period of his life was painful, he didn't regret his failed attempt at marriage. The situation gave him a healthy respect for relationships and probably contributed to his remaining single for such a long time. Throughout his association with local women, he kept a comfortable distance and avoided the usual traps relationships could spring.

Gordy had a feeling Emily Pierce was different. She seemed self-sufficient and very motivated. These attributes suggested she was fine all by herself. Those characteristics attracted him.

He thought about the way her hazel eyes flashed when she talked about her grandfather. The kind of half smile she displayed, when she heard something she liked, and the shape of her supple body underneath the light cotton dresses she seemed to favor on these hot August days.

Gordy took two steaks from the refrigerator and husked four ears of corn. He had picked two large, plump red tomatoes from his garden the day before and he set them aside for slicing later.

When the doorbell finally rang, his heart started pounding. As she opened the door, he noticed that she was wearing another of the light cotton dresses that he found so pleasing. He swallowed hard and said, "Hi."

"Hello, Gordy."

"Come on in," he urged and reached for the six-pack to relieve her burden. "I've got some steaks and corn, but if you don't mind, I'm running a little late, and I should take care of the animals before we sit down." He put the Cokes in the fridge.

On the sills of three separate windows sat the three ugliest cats Emily had ever seen. They blinked at her amicably from their perches.

“I’d asked for the three cats that had been at the shelter the longest,” said Gordy, “And came home with Dolly, Rocky, and Izzy.”

“How many animals do you have?” she asked with some hesitation in her voice.

“Oh, just a few, right now,” he answered. “It varies, from time to time. Come along. I can introduce you as we go.”

Emily followed Gordy down the porch stairs. In the backyard were two of the ugliest dogs she had ever seen. They came up to her and nuzzled her hands. “Same story with Romulus and Remus,” Gordy answered her silent question.

He led her to the barn. In a fenced area nearby was a speckled horse standing with one of its legs raised. In the background, a large gray donkey grazed on clumps of pasture grass. As Gordy and Emily drew near, the donkey and horse advanced to the fence. From way behind them came a pair of pitch-black goats, running at full tilt.

Gordy entered the barn and emerged with two large pails of feed. He approached the gated fence and motioned for Emily to follow. He opened the gate, carried the feed pails to three separate troughs, and emptied the two pails evenly into all three. The big appaloosa walked over to Gordy and muzzled his hand. Gordy cupped his free hand over the horse’s nose and introduced Emily.

“Ivan this is Emily, and Emily this is Ivan. Forgive me for dispensing with last names, but he has a terrible memory for them,” Gordy said, smiling. The donkey was already up to his snout, deep in a trough when Gordy gestured to Emily to come nearer. “This fine fellow is Sammy.” He patted the animal’s shoulder. The donkey looked up momentarily, as if to say hello, then returned to the feed. Gordy walked over to the goats, and said, “These two guys are Heckle and Jeckle.” As he spoke, he patted each of their foreheads.

Emily's face broke into a large grin as she nodded her head. "Please to meetcha, all of ya."

Gordy took a garden hose and filled a big galvanized tub with fresh water. While he was doing this, a rather large number of chickens, ducks, and geese emerged from everywhere and converged on them. Gordy once more went to the barn and this time returned with two coffee cans filled with feed for the newcomers. He threw the feed in a spray, and the feathered critters pecked and pushed their way into a near frenzied state. The cacophony was almost deafening.

"Too many to name," he shouted. "Come on to the barn." He motioned to her to follow.

He closed the gate, secured it, and walked back to the wood frame building. Inside, was a boarded pen that spanned the length of one wall. On the other side of the boards were two little, pink piglets. "Last, but not least, I'd like you to meet Pirate and Penzance," Gordy said, as he reached down and picked up Pirate. The little guy weighed about twenty-five pounds, and he squealed as he was lifted.

"Care to hold him?"

"Will he bite?"

"I don't think so."

Emily reached out and took the little pig and held it close. Gordy looked at her and smiled. She stood in the doorway with the afternoon sunlight behind her. The glow framed her and some light illuminated her cotton dress revealing the shadow of her body inside. She was lovely and he was struck by the image.

He wanted to touch her, but instead he reached to take Pirate from her embrace. Emily moved closer and, as he removed the little pig, his hand grazed the top of her breast. She flinched, and then her eyes softened as she gave up the animal. Gordy smelled the fragrance of her shampoo, and he felt overwhelmed.

There was a moment when they regarded each other in a different way. But the moment passed quickly as Emily tossed her head back. "I'm starved, how about you?"

Gordy nodded in agreement and gently lowered Pirate into the pen. From a wooden basket nearby, Gordy tossed bread, buns, and bagels into the pen and the two little pigs grunted with delight. They tore into the provisions with slovenly greed. Gordy felt the need to explain, so he did.

“I have an agreement with the local Food Mart. Instead of throwing out all of their outdated bread, I haul it away a couple times a week. These little guys love it, and it rounds out their diet. They watched for another minute or two, and Gordy said, “That’s it, we’re done. Let’s go make dinner.”

As the man and woman left the barn, long, dark shadows stretched across the landscape while the late August sun fell below the trees. They returned to the house and worked together on fixing dinner. After they’d eaten and cleared the table, Gordy took out his plastic bag of paperwork taken from Madison Town Hall, and Emily laid out her cache of papers obtained from Yale. Neither had time to do much with the papers prior to their meeting. Emily went first, spreading her papers into discrete piles as she read the contents. The first document was a copy of Sam Stemford’s Medical Doctor Degree dated June 2, 1919.

“Well, Uncle Bert was pretty close,” Emily said. The second document was about fifteen pages, entitled “Inoculations for a Healthier World (The Great Spanish Influenza of 1918).” The rest were one and two-page grant request queries, all justifying research money to develop vaccines of one sort or another.

There was a two-page request to fund the development of a vaccine for the Spanish Flu disease. There were printouts of various billing receipts for laboratory supplies and an enrollment application. The application fixed his date of birth at June 10, 1891. Emily scratched some numbers on a napkin and concluded Doc Sam was twenty-eight when he graduated from medical school and only forty-three when he disappeared.

Gordy went next. He laid out the original missing person report filed by Mary Stemford. That was indeed a treasure.

He pointed out the attached photograph. Emily picked it up tenderly.

“My god,” she said. Apart from her grandmother’s old wedding picture, she had not seen any other pictures of the doctor. This one was sepia, and was a close up of a thin man with chiseled features. He wore a fedora and a leather jacket. His smile showed a neat row of perfectly spaced teeth and a pronounced dimple on the right side of his face. Emily knew she had the same dimple in the same place.

She noticed his eyes. She couldn’t be sure because of the sepia, but the transparent flecks in his eyes looked like the hazel characteristics of her own. No one else in the family carried the color of her eyes, and as a little girl, she thought she was a genetic accident. A great sadness swept over her as she studied the picture.

Gordy saw her tears building up and quickly said, “Look what else I’ve got here. It’s a series of newspaper pages. Here’s an article dated September 16, 1938, it’s titled ‘Shoreline Doctor’s Disappearance,’ and another one about a fiery truck crash that killed a woman on Horse Hill Road. Here’s an old speeding ticket issued to the doctor by, guess who, Teddy Flanders. He’s the same cop who filled out the missing person report after the doc disappeared. Looks like he was a pretty busy guy back in those days. Here’s an article about an outbreak of a Spanish flu-like disease in March of 1938. It started in New York City and by the end of May it had spread all the way to Rhode Island. They compare the 1938 version to the Spanish flu of 1918. Major difference being very few people died in 1938. It says here, the 1918 epidemic killed nearly five hundred thousand people in the United States.

“So, why is all this stuff stuck in the same file? It seems odd, because I don’t see much connection between them. At any rate, someone did a reasonable job of saving information about the period. We’ll need to make double copies of everything and return these originals to the archives. I’ll need to tell Chief Deering what we’ve got so he won’t have any sur-

prises later. By the way, you know what's really strange? Terry Deering said Barry Lands were there a few days before me. Evidently, he didn't find this material or else he would have taken it. It wasn't that hard to find, although the light was pretty bad."

"So what's next?" Emily asked.

Gordy thought for a minute. "Here's what I think we should do. I'll track down Teddy Flanders, see what he remembers about the original investigation, make copies of the files from the Madison Town Hall, and return all the paperwork. Plan to sit with Uncle Bert one more time and try to get more information from him. You can also stop by the Clinton impound again and see if they have uncovered anything new. They'll probably talk to you easier than they will to me. Besides, I'd rather not be put in a position of withholding information from Barry Lands.

"Ask about whether they found any kind of paperwork in the car. The doc must have kept an appointment book of some sort with him. The Titanic research has spawned some great new techniques for restoring submerged papers. Maybe you can find something there. In the missing person report, Mary listed a couple of stops that were on the doc's house calls the day before. I'll see what I can find out about them. In the meantime, read through the stuff that you've accumulated. We can set up a crime board on an old easel I've got, and we can list information as we find it. It will be important to recreate as much of the seventy-two hours before his disappearance as possible. We'll need to list all the folks involved with his life at that time. And it will give us the first look at our suspects."

"Everybody?"

"Everybody."

"Like my grandmother?" she said with some hesitation.

"Yes, and even Uncle Bert," he said. "Then, as we find more facts, we can begin to apply the notions of motive and opportunity. But the list has to be large enough to stand a chance of including the killer."

“Well. I think it’s silly to include my grandmother and Uncle Bert, but if you say so, they can go on the list,” she agreed.



## CHAPTER 16

Gordy reported early in the morning to make copies of everything he had taken from the Madison Town Hall. He kept the old photograph and hoped to make an enlargement if possible. He sensed that Emily wanted it.

The next morning, while sitting in his cruiser, Gordy called Chief Deering from his cell phone. He explained what he found in the archives, and that he was returning the papers during lunch today. He drove to the old town hall and walked to the front desk.

The same matronly woman was sitting there. She looked up and greeted him with a smile. "Hello, Officer Powell, how are you today," she said cheerfully.

"Good afternoon," he said. "I have made some copies of old documents that were on file, and I want to return the originals."

"That will be fine," she said.

Gordy thought for a moment and then asked, "By the way, do you get many requests to go through the stuff downstairs?"

"Oh, it comes in cycles," she answered. "Sometimes months go by and nobody has any interest, and then there times like this month when everybody and their brother needs to go down there."

"Do you keep a list of people who actually do go downstairs?"

“Yes of course, it’s the same book that you signed when you went downstairs a couple of days ago.”

“May I look through it?” he asked.

“Sure, you’ll have to sign it again anyway.”

When Gordy had signed it the first time, he was so intent on getting to the archives, it didn’t occur to him to discover who else had been there. *Bad cop*, he thought. His name started the beginning of a page, so he had to turn back to find the others. The book was divided into sections across the top of the page. The section titles were, *NAME, DATE, OCCUPATION, ADDRESS*.

He turned the page and noted five names recorded since the beginning of August. Those names were: Peter Simpson a local contractor, Allen Drew retired merchant, Theodore Flanders, chief of police (retired), Avery Johnson, reporter for the New Haven newspaper, and Barry Lands, detective for the Clinton PD. The name Peter Simpson was familiar right away. It was his company, Simpson Construction, doing the work at Nod Road. Most of the other names were familiar, too, except Allen Drew.

*I wonder who he is*, Gordy thought. Then he jotted names in his notebook.

“Perhaps you can help me,” Gordy asked. “What kind of permission do people need to go downstairs?”

“Well, it depends,” she said.

“Depends on what?”

“It depends on who they are,” she said.

“How about if it’s a fellow like Peter Simpson, what happens?”

“Mr. Simpson is a local contractor; he’s had access to the archives for years. He is always doing research on land parcels and the like, and he is completely trustworthy. Mr. Drew has been around for a long time. He used to run a hardware business over in Clinton many years ago. He said he was doing research on his family tree. Mr. Flanders used to be the chief of police in Madison a long time ago. He is well known in town and highly regarded.” This woman was a veritable

fountain of information and it just kept coming. “Oh, and Mr. Johnson works for the *New Haven Reporter*; he was trying to find information on that body they found in the old car in Clinton.”

“Did Avery Johnson have permission from Terry Deering?” Gordy asked.

“Not at first. The day he came in, I told him he must have authorization if he were planning to look into police records. He left and came back the next day with a typed letter giving him permission, so I let him go.”

*Jesus*, Gordy thought. *Terrific security system they’ve got here. That’s a boatload of people in the past three weeks, and who knows whether everyone really did sign in.* Gordy sighed, thanked the woman, and returned the papers to the cellar.

When he finished, he climbed into his cruiser and headed toward Guilford. While he was driving, he had an idea, picked up his cell phone, and dialed the *New Haven Reporter*.

“May I speak to Avery Johnson, please,” he asked. “Tell him it’s Gordy Powell from the Guilford Police Department. Tell him it’s urgent.”

A minute later Avery Johnson was on the line. “What’s going on?”

“Avery, Gordy Powell here. I’m working with Emily Pierce on the death of her grandfather.”

Avery said that he had heard as much. He sounded unimpressed.

“I need to ask you something,” Gordy went on. “A couple of weeks ago you were in the archives at the old Madison Town Hall.”

“Yes.”

“What were you looking for?” Gordy asked.

“I was trying to find information on Doc Stemford,” he replied.

“May I ask what you found?” Gordy went on.

“Sure, you can ask,” he replied. “I didn’t find anything. I spent three lousy hours in that hole and found nothing at all,”

Mystified, Gordy said, “Thanks. That was what I needed to know.”

He pushed the off button as Avery Johnson yelled, “Wait a minute” into the phone.

Now Gordy knew he would have to talk to each person in the logbook and learn when those papers were seen last. It was unlikely both Barry Lands and Avery Johnson missed the files if they were there. Gordy had written down the dates that each of the men had signed in alongside their names on his personal note pad.

## CHAPTER 17

That evening after Gordy finished his chores, he called Emily.

“Hello” she said.

“It’s Gordy. I’ve had one hell of a day.”

“What’s wrong?”

“You know the files I borrowed from Madison? Maybe they weren’t there when Barry Lands was looking for them,” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I said. Seems Avery Johnson looked for them the day before and he didn’t find anything, either. I doubt that two reasonably motivated people were in there within a few days of one another, looking in the same places that I did, and not find anything. It doesn’t make sense, if the files were there. Did you have chance to talk with Barry Lands today?”

“Yes, I did. He said they did find an appointment book, but it was unreadable. They sent it out to a specialized lab to see what they can do with it. He doesn’t expect to hear from them for a couple of weeks. We’ll just have to wait.”

“Did you find out anything else?” he asked.

“No, he was rather closed, seemed a little uptight.”

“He probably got a call from Terry Deering telling him I was returning the 1938 police files,” Gordy said. “Emily,

I've got some ideas that need discussion. How about spending a couple of days on a sailboat?"

"Maybe, but not a couple of days. That isn't such a good idea. How about one day?" she said.

"How about this Saturday?"

Silence.

Gordy went on, "A buddy has a Catalina Twenty-Seven at the town dock in Clinton. I've got a lot of time on the boat and he's out of town for the next couple of weeks. If we leave early in the morning we can have lunch in Mattituck, and be back before dark."

"Okay, if you are going to supply the boat, I'll supply lunch," she offered.

"Okay, see you Saturday. By the way, bring all your notes," Gordy said, as he hung up. He went through his Rolodex, looked up the home phone number of Harlan Flanners, and dialed the number.

"Hello Harlan, its Gordy Powell. How are you doing?"

"Okay, Gordy, what can I do for you?"

"Sorry to bother you at home, but I need a favor. This may seem a little strange, but I need to speak to your dad. I was hoping you could help." As he spoke, Gordy thought payback was great. After all the pressure that Harlan had put on him to settle the Nod Road affair, he enjoyed requiring something, however small, from Harlan.

"What do you want with my father?" Harlan asked with some concern in his voice.

"Nothing much," Gordy said. "I just want to hear what he may remember about the Stemfords. Evidently he was the cop on the desk when Mary reported Sam missing."

"How do you know that?"

"Found it in some old records over in the Madison archives. All we're doing is trying to reconstruct as much of what went on at the time as possible. I'm sure it won't take much of your dad's time."

"God. Gordy, Teddy's an old man. He's recently turned eighty and has become pretty cantankerous."

“That’s okay, I’m up for it. Just arrange some kind of introduction for me so I can fill in the background on this case,” Gordy said.

“I’ll see what I can do, but keep in mind this is still Clinton police business,” Harlan said. There was a touch of reluctance in his tone.

“Please don’t wait too long, Harlan. Emily Pierce is pulling out all stops to get information on her grandfather’s murder. I appreciate whatever you can do. I’ll talk to you later, goodbye.”

Next, Gordy dialed information and asked for the number of Allen Drew. He called and there was no answer. He listed the number on his cell phone and set out to make himself dinner.

## CHAPTER 18

**A**t six a.m. Saturday morning Gordy opened the front door for Emily. She was wearing cotton pants with a plaid cotton blouse tied in a knot just above her navel. On her head, she wore a white baseball cap that read Toyota in blue embroidery. She smiled. “So tell me, where did you learn to sail?”

“It’s a long story,” he answered. “Want some coffee before we go?”

“Sure,” she replied.

He emptied the pot into two cups that were already on the table. They sat down and slurped gingerly at the hot brew, staring at each other.

“Do you know much about sailing?” Gordy asked through the veil of steam spiraling from his cup.

“A little,” she said. “I’m sort of self-taught on a Sunfish.”

“Well, you’ll have a good time then; have you ever been to Mattituck Inlet?”

“No, Gordy, I haven’t. Where is it?”

“Just across the sound, almost due south of here it’s not too difficult to find. With a morning breeze, we should be in by eleven, and if we leave by two, we’ll be back by six or so. The tide will be in our favor most of the day. I’ve checked the weather. It looks like it’s going to be a fine day for us, mostly sunny, maybe a chance of some thunderstorms late in the day. Pretty standard for this time of year,” he said.



It was six-thirty when they left the house. There was a glow in the morning sky to the east as the sun was about to rise above the horizon. They transferred several bags of groceries from Emily's Camry to Gordy's truck and headed for the town dock. As the couple walked down the ramp connecting the dock to the bulkhead, the *Catalina 27* shined among the rest of the small boats tied along the way. The boat was clean and white with blue non-skid decks. She sported blue covers on the sails and companionway. Carefully scripted letters on the transom spelled the name *Raggedy Ann* just above a brightly painted smiling doll face.

They loaded their gear and supplies aboard, and Gordy took a few minutes to explain the various features of the boat. He showed Emily the head and how it worked. He showed her where the life jackets and fire extinguishers were located and gave her basic information on the running and standing rigging. They donned the life jackets. When he was convinced Emily knew her way around, Gordy switched on the bilge blower and started the little Atomic Four engine.

By now, the sun was an orange dome in the eastern horizon and the sky above was pale blue and cloudless. Emily helped untie the dock lines, and Gordy coached her into the boat as he undid the last line and climbed in behind her. He took the wheel, pushed the shift lever forward, and throttled up the engine. The *Raggedy Ann* slid gracefully away from her berth and into Clinton Harbor.

The channel leaving the harbor was formed by the Hammonasset River and ran due east for several hundred yards before taking a buttonhook turn to the right, and then another turn left as it flowed into Long Island Sound.

Once clear of the harbor, Gordy picked up a compass heading for Mattituck Inlet and set the boat on course. He asked Emily to steer the boat while he tended the sails. He raised the mainsail, set the trim, and cleated the main sheet. The big genoa was on roller furling, so all he had to do was unwind the control line and the big headsail blew out full size with only the force of the prevailing breeze. He trimmed

it with the port side sheet and cleated it. The wind blew from the southwest at about twelve knots making for an ideal passage. It was one of those rare days on the sound when everything seemed perfect.

Emily lay back in the cockpit. "So what did you want to talk to me about?"

"I think there is more going on than we can easily see. I believe someone else besides the police, you, and me is somehow involved. I think somebody took the old files from the Madison archives and for some reason returned them. That's why Barry Lands and Avery Johnson didn't find anything when they were there."

Emily stared at him for a minute. "That's crazy, but let's assume you're right, the next questions is, who and why? Got any ideas?"

"That's why I wanted to talk to you. I made a list of people who showed up in the logbook at the Town Hall. The procedure for access is far from secure. There's an old doll who is the gatekeeper, and she more or less decides who can go to the basement based on the reason they give her or whether they had reason to go there before. Although she keeps a logbook, who's to say it's always been used? I've made a list of people who have signed in so far in August, but nobody has signed in twice. If someone did take the stuff out, they didn't sign in to return it. So there's at least one flaw in my theory. How did they take it out without signing in to return it?"

Emily looked out at the open Sound. "Okay, let's say they somehow returned the files and didn't sign in, what did they do with them while they had them? We can both testify they appeared original and more than complete."

They paused for a moment in the conversation. The sound of water rushing by the hull and the motion of the boat drew them from the subject. It was as though a subtle form of hypnosis redirected their attention to the quiet joy of the passage. The wind was modest and the waves were casual, measuring two to three feet in height. In the sky, several

small thunderheads reached for the altitude needed to build towering anvil shapes. Time passed while Gordy and Emily mused within the scene around them

Finally Emily broke the spell. “Maybe that’s it. Suppose nothing is missing, and information was deliberately added. Just suppose some of what we found was not part of the original file but added to provide more information. Doesn’t it suggest someone may be trying to help us?”

“Yes. I suppose so, but this is about as indirect an influence as I can imagine. Whoever it is may be trying to help the local police, and we just ended up as the beneficiaries. They couldn’t have known we’d be the first ones to find the files.”

“Well, let’s assume there is someone out there who has a serious interest in the case. We need to find out who it is,” Emily said.

“I’ve taken copies of everything with us. Let’s go over it again, in detail, during lunch,” Gordy said.

He secured the wheel, studied the sails for a moment, and then made several adjustments to the sheets. A little while later, he sat next to Emily. “I called Harlan Flanders and asked him to help get me in to see his dad Teddy. He said he’d try to set up something. So, next week, I’ll interview him. At least he’s a contemporary to the crime. Maybe he can tell us something new.”

“I hope so,” Emily said. “By the way, I spoke to Merle Steiner this week. He is now convinced Sam was shot fairly close up, and the bullet path suggests the gun was held nearly level, like someone walked up to the car window and shot him while he was sitting. That goes against his original theory of Sam being shot somewhere else and placed in the car afterward, but I think he’s right. They’ll eventually find the bullet somewhere in the car. Tomorrow, I’m planning to see Uncle Bert again.”

The entrance to Mattituck Inlet could be hard to find by an inexperienced sailor. But Gordy had been there several times and had little trouble picking up the outer marker. His

compass course brought them within viewing distance of the buoy. The rest of the passage was a straight line toward the stone jetties that spread open to the sound like the maw of a great beast.

Gordy furled the sails while Emily took the wheel and steered the *Raggedy Ann* into the inlet. A short distance inside, the route bent to the left then to right and proceeded a mile or so, until it ended in a tidal basin that was the perfect anchorage. When they arrived in the basin, Gordy checked his watch. It was eleven-twenty. Not too bad, he thought. He gave Emily brief instructions on anchoring procedure and went forward to complete the task. In a few minutes the hook was set and the boat was secure.

Emily went below and started fixing lunch. Gordy tidied the deck and cockpit, and then went below to see if he could help. She was doing well, so Gordy opened the brief that contained copies of the archive files. He took the material and spread it across the dinette table. He separated the newspaper articles from the more official looking documents.

He picked up the article about the outbreak of flu, which hit the New Haven area in 1938.

“Well, this doesn’t look like it belongs in a police file,” he said. “I wonder why our friend picked it, to get our attention?”

Emily stopped washing lettuce momentarily. “Probably had something to do with the work Sam was doing. Is there any mention of someone developing some sort of vaccine?”

“Not much, but there is a reference to the fact that several doctors felt this was a less virulent form of the Spanish Flu infecting the country in 1918. A few docs thought it might be a candidate bug for use in developing a flu vaccine. Although, a lot of people showed symptoms, there were only a few severe cases and fewer deaths in 1938. There was a major fear the event might become the epidemic of 1918, but it never happened.”

“Let’s look at the car wreck again,” Emily said. “What was the woman’s name?”

Gordy shuffled through the articles, found what he was looking for, and started reading aloud, "'Local woman killed in fiery crash'...here's something. Guess what her name was—Never mind the guess, her name was Molly Drew. How much will you bet she was related to Allen Drew?"

"Gordy, there's a connection. What do you think?"

"I don't know, but it sure goes on my list of questions for Allen, once I get hold of him. Let's take a look at the missing person report again. See who Mary listed as Sam's appointments for that day." Gordy pulled out the copy of the report and read the names aloud, "'Claudia Bishop, Robert Blein, and Samantha Harris.' Those were the only names that he had listed for the day. Not a very aggressive schedule, I'd say."

"Well, those were people he was scheduled to see. That doesn't mean those were people he actually saw," Emily said.

"Let's hope the lab working on the appointment book can come up with some better results," Gordy said.

Emily finished preparing lunch and carried a tray through the companionway into the cockpit. The tray was overflowing with colorful things to eat. Sliced peaches and papaya surrounded a large bowl of lobster salad. Crackers formed an outer ring and two columns of sliced cheddar cheese were stacked on either side. She asked Gordy to bring two large glasses of ice tea that were still on the galley counter top.

"You have a choice, Officer Powell: you can create your own lobster roll or have the salad straight up. What's your pleasure?"

"My goodness, Emily, I'll have a roll if you please," he said, thinking he wanted to add "in the hay," but resisted the temptation.

They ate with an appetite that could only come from a wonderful morning's sail. When they finished, Emily went forward and removed her cotton blouse. Underneath she wore a tiny bikini top that highlighted her modest breasts. She laid down on the foredeck in an effort to take advantage

of the late August sun. Gordy watched her graceful moves from the corner of his eye, and decided he had better use the time productively. He sighed quietly and directed his energy to plotting the compass headings for the return trip.

At two o'clock, Gordy announced it was time to head back. He went about the task of getting the boat ready for the passage home. He checked the sky and noticed an accumulation of clouds had built up during the early afternoon. Nothing too menacing, but he knew it was a good time to leave. The wind had freshened and from the movement displayed in the nearby tree branches, he estimated it was blowing eighteen to twenty-five knots.

He decided to leave the inlet with a reef in the mainsail, and he set about to rig it before they left. He could always shake out the reef if the wind eased on the way back. He explained to Emily what he was doing. She listened with an absolute attention Gordy enjoyed. It gave him a sense of control that was both flattering and a little seductive. When he finished, he started the engine and soon they left the breakwaters of the inlet behind.

Two hours into the return passage, the *Raggedy Ann* was in a broad reach, surging ahead at full speed. The knot log registered six point seven with occasional swings as high as seven point zero. The wind blustered with gusts over twenty-five knots.

Gordy was thankful he had put the reef in the mainsail before they left. The boat worked hard and he ran the genoa loose enough to allow a fisherman's reef at the leech of the sail. Emily's face showed the strain of the constant, sometimes harsh motion, and Gordy tried to think of ways to keep her from getting sick.

"How are you doing?" he shouted over the sound of water breaking along the side of the hull.

"Okay, I think I'll be all right," she replied with some hesitation.

"Come on back and take the wheel while I make some sail adjustments," he said. He knew he had to keep her busy.

Reluctantly, she inched back behind the wheel, and Gordy let go. "Steer this course," he instructed, pointing to the binnacle on the wheel post. "Concentrate on this heading."

"I'll try."

The *Raggedy Ann* plunged ahead with occasional spume flying across the foredeck. The boat was grand, and the sea spectacular. In a few minutes, Emily's concentration became so focused, so intense, her effort to control the boat overwhelmed the snake of nausea roiling in her stomach, and she no longer felt sick. She was no longer a passive victim of the sea and wind. Without realizing it, she was transformed. She became a participant in the drama of the passage, a force within the forces and she felt exhilaration.

Emily smiled, gripped the wheel tight with both hands, and shouted, "God, this is great."

Gordy looked at her and saw something new. He saw a woman in passion. The sight was so revealing that for a moment he felt like an intruder.

And then she reached out and grabbed his arm and shouted, "It's fantastic, Gordy."

He moved closer to her and she hugged him with one arm and steered with the other.

Gordy laughed. "You are terrific."

She held him for a while and the *Raggedy Ann* surged ahead.

Soon, Gordy saw the outline of Faulkner's Island to the left and he knew the passage was nearing an end. He picked up the mark from the end of the Clinton breakwater and began his approach to the harbor.

Forty-five minutes later, the *Raggedy Ann* was tied up at the finger dock and Gordy hosed the boat down to remove the salt spray. Emily unloaded the leftovers and stowed them in the truck. When the boat was clean and empty they climbed into the truck and headed home.

"Well, how did you like sailing?" he asked as he drove the pickup.

“It was wonderful,” she said with a toss of her wet hair. “Where did you learn to do that?”

“It’s a long story,” he said, as he shifted gears. “My parents,” Gordy continued. “They’re the sailors. That’s where it began anyway. Seems like we were always on the water when I was a kid. During most summers, we were usually skipping around from anchorage to anchorage, putting in at Green Port or Shelter Island or Newport or Block Island. While most kids were sent to camp, my sister and I spent a lot of time on the boat or in the marinas. Some of the time we spent cooped up below, like when the weather was bad, or we rowed around a strange harbor in a dingy. Anyway, as I think back on it, it was a lot of fun. I guess I picked up just enough to get by. I’m not nearly as good as my dad. I don’t sail as passionately as my parents, but I don’t have to cope with the expenses they considered normal.”

Emily listened intently. “You have a sister?”

“Yes, her name’s Lillianne. She lives in Florida near my parents. She’s married to an engineer and has three kids. She was a nurse until my niece came along. Then she took a break and it seems like she’s taking it easy now.”

Emily was quiet for a moment. She seemed reflective, like she was carefully weighing what she was thinking.

“What made you decide to become a cop?” she blurted.

Gordy smiled, as if he knew the question was inevitable.

“Well, when I was in the marines, I was stationed in Japan. I was trained to run a cryogenic plant. That’s a machine that makes cold gases like liquid nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. All in all, pretty boring. At any rate, the cold gas business was slow, and at some point I was asked if I would help with some prisoner transports. I helped move a few guys from the brig to various lock-ups around the islands and got to like the duty. Did a lot of traveling, met a lot of people, and picked up some training. Actually got pretty good at it.

“When I was about to be mustered out, I married a Japanese princess, literally, and brought her home. The local police departments were pretty inbred back then, with a lot of



the guys related—fathers, sons, cousins, or uncles. That kind of thing. At any rate, I applied to the Guilford PD, they liked my background and they hired me. Eight years later, here we are.”

Emily’s face took on a serious expression, “What about the danger, the risks associated with what you do? Doesn’t it bother you? Didn’t it bother your wife? Which brings me to the next question. What happened to your wife?”

“She lasted about two years. Then it was over. She’s back in Japan happily married to a Japanese man who works very hard installing computer chips for Samsung. And for the most part, I like my job. I sleep well at night and have few regrets. As for the danger, there’s little of it. We’re way below the national average in violent crime, about average for white collar crime, and a little ahead in miscellaneous, such as domestic violence and runaways. We have more than a few cold cases involving missing persons, but they aren’t a priority, at least not with my department. What about you?” Gordy decided it was his turn, “Why did you decide to become a librarian?”

“My family’s lived on the shoreline for a very long time. After high school, I went to University of Connecticut, got a Masters in Library Science and married badly. I didn’t really expect to work at all after I got married. Charlie Pierce was a hoot. The whole marriage might have been a hoot if it weren’t so damn tragic. He was in sales for Rogers Distributors. He had a territory from the Palisades to Kennebunk Port and went as far west as Watertown, New York. Basically, he sold the hardware stuff you find in the supermarkets. He had a great time, and I didn’t. I wanted to have a family back then. I was never sure of what he wanted. After the second year, we found out his sperm count was nonexistent, so that explained a few things. We looked into the possibility of sperm donors, along with some new procedures using in vitro methods. We even talked about adoption. While this was going on, I found out he’d been leaving his soldier-less seminal fluids all over five states. At first, I couldn’t believe

it. Then I spoke to some of his bimbos and realized I had no idea who he was. We separated, and a year later divorced.

“The position at the library happened along in the middle of the divorce. Just as well. It gave me something I needed at a very difficult time.”

## CHAPTER 19

When they arrived at Gordy's, they unloaded the truck and brought the remaining food to the kitchen. They went to the barn, fed the animals, and, when they finished, returned to the house.

Once inside, Gordy announced he had a surprise for Emily. He spoke as he began making a pot of decaffeinated coffee. "Remember the idea of starting a crime board? Well, I've begun putting down everything we've got so far, and I wanted to add what we discussed today. We can keep adding as we go along."

After Gordy got the coffee going, he left the room and returned a short time later carrying a large aluminum easel with a flip pad mounted on it. He brought it into the living room, placed it in the middle of the floor, and flipped over the cover page. At the top of the next page was:

*The Murder of Doctor Samuel Stenford*

*DOD: September 15, 1938*

*COD: Bullet wound to the left temple.*

*Discovery of body: Bottom of Powell Pond, Nod road, Clinton, CT*

*Body found in front seat of 1938 Chrysler. Fully decomposed with only bones remaining.*

*List of items at the crime scene: Doctor's bag with implements.*

*Gold wedding band*  
*Clothing remnants/leather jacket*  
*Unreadable papers in glove box*  
*Appointment book, unreadable*  
*Wallet with forty dollars cash*

The second page had a list of names contemporary to the crime. The list contained:

*Dr. Sam Stemford*  
*Mary Stemford*  
*Albert Moorefield*

“That’s what we had. Now I’ve got to add Allen and Molly Drew and names of the folks Mary had given as appointments for the day he disappeared,” Gordy said.

Emily looked at the list with some intensity. “What about the cop, Teddy Flanders?”

“Jesus, Emily, he’s a cop, probably the first cop to work on the case when it happened. I don’t think we can put him on the suspect list.”

Emily shook her head and rolled her eyes, “You mean it’s okay to put my grandmother and uncle on the list, but it’s not okay to put a cop’s name on the list? Just what do you use for your open-minded, open-investigation criteria? Whatever doesn’t violate your unbiased, police-trained sensibilities? Excuse me, but you said we must to try to keep the field large enough to stand a chance of including the murderer. Am I mistaken, or did you really say that?”

Gordy reflected for a minute and thought, *Oops, bad cop*. He tried a little reversal. “You’re right, you’re absolutely right. We’ll include Teddy Flanders on the list.” As he made the statement, he took his Magic Marker and spelled out Teddy Flanders just below Albert Moorefield. Right below, he wrote in Allen Drew and Molly Drew. “I guess they belong here, too.”

“That’s better,” Emily said with a sense of victory. “Now I’m ready for coffee.”

Gordy was beginning to realize Emily possessed a forceful personality. There was a price for her self-sufficiency and he must accept the price to get close to her. He knew he wanted very much to get close to her.

They spent the remaining hour or so talking about the day’s sailing. Then she said it was time to feed her cat, and, with that, she prepared to go home. They agreed to talk again on Wednesday of the coming week, unless some major break-through occurred before then. Finally, Emily said goodnight and left.

When she was gone, Gordy realized the entire encounter was still more professional than he would have liked. Why had she not shown any real interest? Even when she talked about herself, she maintained a considerable distance, and it seemed she wasn’t going to be the one to make a first move.

Maybe there were no moves in this situation. Maybe she was no longer interested in men. It was probably just as well. His life was fine and he’d be better off keeping it uncomplicated. Although he rationalized well, he still felt a tinge of disappointment.

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## About the Author



William (Bill) H. Smith spent his teenage years sailing the waters of Narragansett Bay. He received a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Western New England College.

While pursuing his career in manufacturing, he developed his experience in boating, becoming an avid sailor, scuba diver, and captain. In the 1990s, he and his wife moved from New England to Florida and took up residence on the St. Johns River.

Smith currently resides in North Florida. And apart from his novel, *The Shoreline Murder(s)*, he has published poetry and has several other written works in progress. Besides his scholastic credits, he has held a United States Coast Guard captain's license and spent years as a certified diver.