

If it Could Happen to Her



Terri Parsell Hilmey

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For Peter, Elsie, Charlotte and Henrietta

Chapter One

Ingrid Musgrave sat quietly watching “American Idol.” Priding herself on her culture – she was, after all, the largest donor by far to the Metropolitan Museum of Art – sometimes she lowered her standards a bit and watched something that was pure fun. Besides, Bart liked it.

She looked over at Bartolomeo Molina and smiled. He was dozing peacefully in his overstuffed floral chintz chair, feet up on a matching ottoman, his head tilted a bit to the side. Devastatingly handsome, with thick, nearly black hair, and a firm body kept fit by rounds of polo, Bart was Argentinean in origin, and 22 years younger than her – and he made her very happy. She knew he probably wouldn’t be sitting there if she weren’t as wealthy as she was, but they did have fun together. She could never marry him – the checks from Geoffrey would stop coming if she did – but she thought what they had was quite good enough for now.

She turned back to the television briefly, and then sat up straight. Was that a knock on the door? Was she hearing things? She picked up the remote control and turned the volume down. She sat listening for another few seconds and then, again, distinctly heard a rapping on the front door. “That bloody woman,” she thought, as she rose from her chair.

Ingrid Musgrave’s security system had motion detectors that should have warned her when someone so much as stepped foot on her property. There was an elaborate web of cameras all around the periphery that should have shown her who her visitor was. And there were lights that should have lit up all along the driveway, and up to the house, as they approached.

Of course, none of it worked if her stupid housekeeper, Greta, didn’t turn the damn thing back on before she left for the day. “I’m spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a security system that can be rendered completely useless by Greta,” she grumbled to herself as she went to the front door.

Ingrid Musgrave wasn’t really concerned. After all, many of her equally privileged neighbors in their little haven of Cambridge, Connecticut had a habit of stopping by before bedtime to share a cocktail and a bit of gossip. She was only mildly annoyed. That is, until she opened the door.

The first man she saw – she was pretty sure she saw three, dressed all in dark green work clothes that reminded her of her grounds crew – pointed a gun at her and shot her through the forehead.

She fell, crumpled to the floor – dead before she even hit it – but he leaned over her and shot her two more times in the head.

The three men moved quickly into the house, fanning out. The second man into the house was the one to find Bart sitting in the chair in front of the television. Bart woke from his dose, and started to get up, a question in his eyes. That question was answered quickly by a bullet through his head. He fell back into the chair, quite dead, but was also shot once more to ensure he wouldn’t rise again.

The three men searched the rest of the house, silently at first, and finally shouting to each other, “Clear!” They methodically searched the enormous house, from the top floor, where they removed all of the valuables lying about in any of the bedrooms. They also took tools and removed the entire safe from Mrs. Musgrave’s dressing room, using a heavy-duty dolly to haul it to the window and toss it out, where it embedded itself four inches deep in her lovely lawn. Then they proceeded throughout the house, not bothering to take stereos or televisions, but rather skillfully choosing pieces of art from the walls, pieces of sculpture from the tables and shelves, and first-edition books from Mrs. Musgrave’s library.

They were in and out of the house in about thirty minutes, politely closing the door behind them when they left. With everything secured and stored in the back of their SUVs, they drove one by one down Mrs. Musgrave’s driveway, took a left at the end, and headed toward the highway.

Georgina Emerson Adams woke slowly that morning. She felt the cool comfort of her Frette pillowcase against her cheek before she turned over onto her back and opened her eyes, and, once she did, felt her long eyelashes fluttering against the black silk of her sleeping mask. She pushed the mask up onto her forehead, and lay looking at her ceiling, 12 feet above her head, with its intricate scrollwork and antique chandelier. She blinked her lovely, unusually vivid blue-green eyes and thought for a moment to herself, wondering why she had a headache, and why her stomach wasn't feeling very well.

Then she quickly turned to her right, and saw a familiar shape under the covers next to her. Georgina's perfectly-arched eyebrows drew together as she frowned, and she said, "Will I never learn from my mistakes?"

"Wally," she said, kicking him under the covers. Walter Grentham Grant, Georgina's ex-husband, groaned slightly, and rolled over to look at her. He smiled easily, and said, "Good morning, Georgie."

"Get out of my bed," Georgina said, throwing off her covers. "And don't call me Georgie."

He watched appreciatively as she stood and stretched her arms up over her head, wearing only a tank top and pajama bottoms. Her light brown, expensively-highlighted shoulder-length hair fell down her neck as she pulled the sleeping mask off her face. "How are you feeling this morning?" he asked, pushing the covers aside and putting his feet on the floor. "We actually did tequila shots, you know," he said, rubbing his temples. Walter's neat, usually tidy brown hair stood up in random spikes all over his head, and he ran his fingers through it, giving his scalp a good rub at the same time. He stood and stretched all of his 6'2" frame.

"I don't want to remember," she said, her stomach rumbling and reminding her. "And, on top of it, because you're here, Armeda won't bring me my breakfast tray." She threw her sleeping mask onto the bed, and grabbed the pale gray cashmere robe that lay at the foot of the bed. "The Frickin' Frick," she said, smiling for a moment and showing lovely white teeth.

Wally grinned, too, enjoying the smile he saw far too rarely. "You know you just go to the Young Fellows Ball to make fun of everyone."

"It's an excuse to wear a pretty dress and get drunk," Georgina said, pulling on the robe.

"And see me," Wally said, reminding her.

Georgina rolled her eyes. "My parents were devoted to the Frick," she said, "I couldn't *not* go."

She walked toward the double mahogany doors of her bedroom suite, as Wally got out of bed. "I'm in for a shower," he said, heading toward her marble and granite spa-quality bathroom.

"And then be on your way," Georgina said.

"Nonsense. Armeda can make me some breakfast," he said, going into the bathroom.

"She doesn't even like you," Georgina said as she walked out.

"She loves me – it's you she can't stand," Wally said, closing the door behind him.

Georgina pushed open the double doors, feeling their substantial weight, even though they operated as smooth as silk. Everything in Georgina's bedroom was substantial, from the king-sized thickly-carved mahogany bed, to the large French doors which led out onto her limestone terrace. She exited her room and strode to the kitchen, her robe swinging to and fro behind her as she made her way barefoot down the long marble hallway, past highlighted works of fine art, in her 10-room pre-war Park Avenue apartment. It had belonged to her parents before they died, and though she owned a house on Long Island, and another in Wellington, Florida, it was where she spent most of her time. She walked past the entry foyer on her right, decorated with matching consoles, mirrors and elaborate floral arrangements, and the

enormous formal living room on her left, as she made her way toward the kitchen.

When she pushed through the kitchen door, she found her short, plump housekeeper Armeda sitting at the counter reading the New York Post.

Georgina had changed few things about the apartment, but the kitchen was one of them. The building had risen back in the early 1900s when people really knew how to build things, and Georgina did little more than occasionally restore what was already there, and occasionally reupholster furniture that was showing wear. But the kitchen had been built for a time when the owners rarely saw, and frequently neglected, the room, while Georgina liked to eat in there quite often. She had the cupboards redesigned, creamy white, with lavish scrolls and moldings, but with a slightly weathered look, making them look as old as the apartment, and brushed silver handles and drawer pulls that were also of the period, but all of which opened and closed with the barest touch of a finger. Greenish-black granite topped all of the counters, and the center island was a very dark brown wood, similar in design and style to the other cabinets, but adding a bit of contrast. It was one of her favorite rooms.

“Shouldn’t you be working or something?” Georgina asked, as she pulled open the refrigerator door, paneled with the same creamy white cabinetry, and reached in for a Diet Pepsi.

“I’m not walking into your den of iniquity to bring you food,” Armeda said, folding up the paper, dramatically making the sign of the cross, and turning toward the stove. “And I didn’t know what time you’d be getting up. What do you want?”

“I want a Bloody Mary,” Georgina said, climbing onto one of the tall chairs at the large center island.

“Well, I’m not making you one,” Armeda said. “I’ll make you an omelet with cheese and tomatoes and mushrooms,” firing up the royal blue La Cornue range, turning and pointing at Georgina with her spatula, “and two pieces of wheat toast to soak up some of that alcohol.”

Georgina sneered at her and turned the New York Post around, so she could see it herself. She thumbed through it while Armeda filled the kitchen with wonderful scents, and then put a plate in front of her. Wally strolled in a few minutes later, and Armeda put an identical plate in front of him, too, complete with a look of disgust. He smiled generously back at her, and said, “Armeda will you marry me?”

“You need to marry this one again,” Armeda said, pointing at Georgina, “not just this sinning whenever you feel like it.”

“Pray for me, Armeda,” Wally said, digging into his breakfast, and pulling the New York Times closer.

“Oh, I do,” she said. “Every day.”

Wally finished his breakfast first, and went out through the back doors of the kitchen into Georgina’s study. She turned to see him go, then put down the paper and followed him in there, crossing her arms, leaning against the doorframe and watching him. He was looking at some of the papers on her massive desk, and then up at her bookshelves, made of the same dark solid wood as the desk. “I’m glad you got out for some fresh air,” he said, finally. “What were you working on this time?”

“The limitations of qualitative research,” Georgina said

“Where’s it being published?” he asked.

“The American Journal of Evaluation,” she said, watching as he went around and browsed her bookshelves. He pulled out a study from the Australian Institute of Criminology entitled “Contract Killings in Australia.”

“Why do you do this to yourself, Georgina?” He asked, putting the study back in the same spot where

he found it, among many other similar studies, and reference books on psychology and crime.

“People are scum, Wally,” she said. “It’s interesting.”

“Most people aren’t,” he said, turning to her. “You’d know that if you let a few more in.”

“I have people in my life,” she said.

“That you don’t pay?” he asked.

“Paying them makes them very easy to get along with, and very dependable,” Georgina said.

Wally sighed and turned to give her a kiss on the cheek as he left. They’d had this discussion many times before. “Will you marry me again, Georgina?” he said, holding her by her two shoulders.

“Maybe someday,” she said, as she always did.

He smiled, patted her bottom to make her angry, and went out to give Armeda a big hug before he left. “Get away from me, you heathen!” Georgina heard her scream. Georgina smiled, and went over to her desk. She looked at the papers, books and files neatly organized on its surface. She was finished with her latest research project, and it was time to file all of the materials away. She had boxes ready to be assembled, so that she could begin the process of storage, but she had been avoiding it. It was something she found sad and exciting at the same time.

She walked out into the hallway, and into her formal living room. It was easily 1,000 square feet on its own, and it, too, had large floor-to-ceiling bookshelves on nearly every wall, these with sliding glass covers to protect the contents, filled with expensive collections of books, current fiction and non-fiction, first editions and reference books, all neatly and exactly organized into the Library of Congress system. Georgina had a librarian come and overhaul it for her about once every six months, because she read so much, and added so many books to the collection. The room was currently decorated in shades of blue, from pale to navy, with many floral prints and stark white cut-out fabrics, which she found soothing and stimulating at the same time. She walked past the very good furniture, stuffed with fancifully-trimmed down cushions, and the even better art, and pulled open the French doors that led out onto the large terrace that ran the length of this side of her apartment. She braced herself against the chilly mid-March weather, as a quick frigid breeze lifted her hair off her shoulders and made her eyes water, and she pulled her robe tighter around her.

She took a deep breath, and looked around her view of the Upper East Side. It *was* nice to be out again, she thought to herself.

A few hours later, Georgina lay on the buttery black leather couch of her therapist, Dr. Max Gregson, her ankles crossed neatly on one of the arms, and her arms behind her head. She was dressed in faded jeans and ballet flats, and an oversized black turtleneck sweater. Gregson’s office was soothing, in a typical therapeutic sort-of way, but clearly reflected taste, with very expensive, rather stark architectural furniture.

Dr. Gregson almost didn’t seem to fit into his surroundings, with a rumpled look which didn’t quite match the tidy order of his office. He was short and balding, with wire-rimmed glasses perched on the end of his nose. He wore a pleasant, unruffled expression, and a worn-looking grey herringbone jacket with patches on the sleeves, a blue patterned bow tie and black, faded trousers. “You seem a little more relaxed today,” he said to Georgina.

“I am,” Georgina said. “I just finished a project. That always feels good.”

“Yes, it’s good research,” Dr. Gregson agreed. “I’m glad you gave me the opportunity to review it for you.” He changed the subject quickly. “But you also mentioned you got out of the apartment again.”

Georgina stiffened a bit, moved her arms from behind her head, and laced her hands together over her belly. “Well, yes. I went to a party last night. It was a social obligation.”

“And other than coming to see me, it’s the first time you’ve been outside of your apartment in nearly four months,” he stated the simple fact.

“Yes, and if you’d come to my apartment for our appointments, it would make my life much easier,” Georgina said sharply. “I’m not merely ‘isolating,’ as you like to call it – I’m actually working, and it’s easier to do from home. I have everything I need there.”

“Well, I think that’s debatable, Georgina,” he said. “Your life might seem easier, but a lack of honest human interaction can tend to limit your growth as a person. When you insist you have everything you need there, it’s because you’re not properly including everything you need.”

“I’m 30 years old now,” Georgina said. “I think I know what I need.”

“I see,” he said, writing on his notepad. “And you told me you saw Walter last night,” he said. “How was that?”

A little smile flickered at the corner of Georgina’s lips for a moment, and quickly disappeared. Not so quickly that Dr. Gregson missed it, however. “It was fine. He was the typical Walter.”

“Tell me about the typical Walter,” he said.

Georgina inhaled deeply, knowing she was being drawn out, but being tolerant of the process. “Walter. Walter is Walter. I’ve known him since forever. We grew up together, and got married when I was 23. We got divorced when I was 25.”

“And what is Walter like?” Dr. Gregson said. “You married him, and you still maintain a relationship. People tend to bore you easily. What is it about Walter that keeps you interested?”

“He’s just Walter,” she said. “He doesn’t pay attention to me when I’m being nasty. Nothing bothers him. He’s smart, and he’s hard-working. With all of his money, he doesn’t have to be, but he is. He’s unusual in that way. He’s intelligent, a decent person... It’s hard to find fault with Walter.” She nodded to herself, thinking that was a very good way of putting it.

“Did he ask you to marry him again?” he asked.

Georgina sighed, but looked slightly pleased, “He always does.”

“And how does that make you feel?” he asked.

“I guess I like it,” she said. “It feels nice to know he’s there.”

“Do you ever think of saying yes?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” she said, firmly. “I like things the way I like them. In my apartment, everything is where I put it, or where I directed it should be. If you’re married to someone, you’re living with them, and they’re leaving their things all over – they’re moving your things, so you can’t find them. It’s awful.”

“Well, that’s true. In order to have a relationship with another person, you have to let them into your life. You have to allow your lives to intertwine.”

“Right. I don’t like that,” Georgina said. “That’s why we divorced.”

“It’s been five years,” he said, “do you ever worry Walter will meet someone, and stop being available to you?”

She shifted uncomfortably on the couch. “I guess I do. I like having him available.” She took a deep breath, and sat up rather abruptly. She crossed her legs and sat back, crossing her arms in front of her as well. “I don’t want to talk about Walter anymore.”

“That’s fine,” Dr. Gregson said, making some notes on his pad, “we can talk about other things. How about what you’re going to do next? You’ve just finished a project, you’ve been out socially – have you been riding?”

Georgina finally gave a full smile, “I haven’t yet, but I’m going to. I’m going out this afternoon for a good, long ride on Three Winds.” Three Winds was her favorite horse.

“That’s wonderful,” he said. “It might be nice for you to take some time off, and perhaps take a vacation – spend some time on the shore, or down South?”

“No, actually, I’m thinking about working again,” she said, raising her chin a little, as though preparing herself to hear his objections.

“You mean for Konig?” he asked.

“Yes, for Konig. I’m going to call Daniel Levine either this afternoon, or first thing tomorrow morning,” she said. “He’s been leaving messages, and I’m going to call him back.”

“Do you think that’s a good decision?” Dr. Gregson asked. “You always want to work after you’ve isolated, but then it tends to set you back.”

“I don’t think that’s true,” Georgina said.

“The work you do for Konig reinforces your belief that people can’t be trusted, don’t you think?”

“Maybe,” she agreed. “But it’s not as though these things don’t happen. They do. There’s a certain value in the fact that I usually find out who did it.”

“Yes, absolutely. And you’re extremely talented. But, I think what concerns me most is the fact that you usually isolate again after you’ve worked. It does have a negative effect on you.”

“No, I don’t think so,” she said. She paused for a moment, and considered, “Maybe you’re right. But I usually have a really good sense afterward that there’s a rightness to it. That I’ve put things back together the best way they can possibly go back together.”

“Would you say you feel compelled to do it, at all?” he asked.

“No, I would not,” she said strongly. “It’s just that – well, it makes me feel good – murder is a mess... and I’m a tidy person.”

“Then why do you usually feel you need the services of a round-the-clock nurse afterward?” Dr. Gregson asked gently.

Georgina flushed slightly, and said “I take to my bed for a little while, and I suppose I enjoy having someone look after me every now and again. She keeps track of my medication, and brings me what I need so I don’t have to do anything I don’t want to. It usually doesn’t last long.”

“No, I know that.” Dr. Gregson moved off of the familiarly touchy subject. “So, you’ve determined you’re going to look for a job?”

“Yes,” she said, sitting up a bit straighter.

“Do you already have something in mind?” he asked.

She glanced over at him, sometimes surprised by his insights, “Yes, there’s something I’m interested in. I’m fairly certain Konig is going to get called in, if they haven’t already. I thought I might ask for it.”

“Is this someone you know?” he asked.

“It’s someone who I have met, yes. I wouldn’t even say it’s an acquaintance. I would say we travel in similar circles.”

“I see,” he said.

“I really don’t want to go into it any further than that just yet,” she said.

“I understand,” he said, looking at the clock. “I guess if I can’t talk you into taking a little break, I think in our weekly sessions we should keep very close tabs on how the case is proceeding, and how you’re feeling about it,” he said.

“That’s fine.”

“Well, our time is nearly up. Is there anything else you’d like to talk about today? It seems you’ve got things fairly well worked out.”

“I think so.”

“How is your medication?” he asked.

“I’m taking the Xanax situationally,” she said. “I haven’t actually taken any since last week.”

“And you’re still off the Paxil CR?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said, strongly.

“I do think we should revisit the idea of trying that again. I think you might find yourself feeling much more comfortable with an SSRI. Perhaps we could try Pristiq. It’s fairly new, but it’s having good results.”

“I don’t think so. I don’t feel as sharp, or as acute, when I’m taking those types of medications. And when I’m working outside, I don’t take anything at all. I need to be working on all gears. I can’t be fuzzy at all.”

“Alright,” he said, “Well, we’ll keep thinking about that.” He took a deep breath. Georgina Adams was one of his most difficult patients, but by far his most interesting. Dealing with her was like walking a very thin tightrope. “I will see you again next week,” he said, smiling and rising.

“Yes,” she said, also standing, shaking his hand, and pulling her sheared brown mink coat off the back of one of his chairs.

Georgina turned, threw on her coat and walked out of the doctor’s back door, tying her multi-colored Hermès scarf around her neck. She sometimes wondered why she bothered talking to Dr. Gregson. She had a Ph.D. in Psychology of her own, and had done some very extensive and ground-breaking research in methodology and analysis. She felt she knew already what was wrong with her – that her parents had been killed when she was less than three years old, and that she had been raised by a great-aunt who barely knew she existed. “I have attachment issues. I have trust issues. I have control issues, and a slight case of OCD,” she thought to herself. “Duh.”

She also felt that the systems she had put in place in her own life had made her very comfortable, and shouldn’t be messed with. By anyone’s standards, she was very productive. She had five university degrees, had been published in countless psychological journals, and had personally solved (officially or unofficially) over 50 murders.

All of this ran through her mind as she took the elevator down to the lobby of her doctor’s Art Deco office building. His office was on the Upper East Side, only six blocks away from her own apartment, and sometimes she walked there, but the March chill had her taking her car. She walked towards a black Lincoln Town Car, with a 6’4,” 270-pound young black man in a black suit and tie leaning against it, arms crossed, glaring at and frightening passers-by. He noticed her, and moved to open the back door. “Jason,” she said. Jason’s head was shaved, and Georgina never knew whether he had done it because he had started to become bald, which she doubted because he was still so young, or just because it made him look meaner. She suspected the latter.

“Ms. Adams,” he said, helping her into the car, and closing the door behind her. He moved around the car and got behind the wheel. “Home?” he asked, looking in the rear view mirror.

“Yes, please, Jason,” she said.

Jason wasn’t chatty, and Georgina appreciated it. When she did take her car out, she liked to either look out of the window, or quietly read. Sometimes she drove herself, if it was a great distance, but within the city limits itself, she liked riding with Jason. Certainly nobody was going to bother her with him at the wheel.

On impulse, she pulled out her Blackberry and called Daniel Levine. She almost wanted to do it before she changed her mind. Three Winds would have to exercise with the groom again today.

“Daniel?” she said, once she finally got through to him. “Do you have some time this morning?”

“For you? Always,” he said.

“Thanks. I’ll be there in about ten minutes,” she said, punching the button on her phone. “Jason?” she said.

“Yes, Ms. Adams.”

“I changed my mind. We’re going to Konig’s offices.”

Without a word, Jason took a left at the next corner, and headed back in the other direction.

Chapter Two

Georgina sat cross-legged on the floor of Daniel Levine's office at Konig Investigations. It was a particularly male sort-of place with an enormous mahogany desk, brass-studded brown leather furniture, and several photographs of him with his Green Beret buddies and a variety of politicians and businessmen. He sat in one of his own guest chairs, turned to face the center of room and Georgina, his legs comfortably crossed at the knee, his hands folded together neatly on his thigh. He was dressed impeccably in a dark navy suit which fit his tall, athletic frame, dark hair and eyes perfectly, a crisp white shirt, and a lighter blue patterned tie with a perfect Windsor knot at his throat. He watched appreciatively as Georgina went through his files. It reminded him of the first night he had met her, more than four years ago.

They had attended a dinner party in Manhattan at the home of mutual friends, and had gotten onto the subject of crime. He told her what he did for a living, and she grilled him on his procedures. If she hadn't been so drop-dead gorgeous, he might not have been as content to listen, but as he listened, their contentious conversation became more interesting, and he had to admit she had made many good points. The friendly argument had ended in a challenge. Georgina asked to look at some of his open files – the ones he hadn't been able to close to his satisfaction. She insisted she could solve them all, just by looking at the paperwork. Intoxicated with her good looks, and three glasses of Scotch, he took her up on the challenge. They went back to his offices, he had her sign a confidentiality agreement, and then she took up the same spot on the floor where she sat now – of course, that night, she was in an evening gown, and they had continued to drink Scotch as she methodically examined paper after paper for hours, until the sun came up.

She wasn't able to come through, completely, with what she had boasted. She did, however, close – right there on the floor of his office – around 20 percent of his open cases, with evidence to back them up, and solid corridors for his investigators to follow through with. And she had given him what he believed to be the right answers, based on solid reasoning, in at least another 25 percent of them – but with no evidence, he would be unable to close them completely. He had sat, mostly mute, as he watched her process. She quickly, but thoroughly, examined each piece of paper in the file, reorganizing each into various piles, and then re-reorganizing them as she worked, mostly in silence. He answered whatever questions she had, but otherwise sipped on his Scotch and observed.

At the end of her analysis of each file, she had sat back and told him what she thought. Sometimes she had some new avenues his investigators might try, sometimes she had the answer dead-to-rights. By far, she was the most frustrated when she had to admit the information they had was inadequate, that all alleys were dead-ends, and there was nothing to be done.

He had offered her a job then and there. She laughed at him, and told him what her net worth was. He had to admit he was impressed by the number, but she stopped laughing when he asked her what she did with her time, since she didn't have to work. She grudgingly admitted she spent most of her time studying psychology, reading, and obtaining university degrees, mostly online. They left that night in a polite stand-off, with Georgina considering his offer.

First thing the following morning, she called and offered to do some work for him, on a consulting basis, but only if she was allowed to take those dead files and work on them first. He agreed, and didn't hear from her for about four months, aside from an e-mail every week or two when she closed a file. She ended up closing another 15 files, which, to him, was remarkable. To her, however, it must have been terribly frustrating, because he didn't hear from her again for another two months, despite his telephone calls and e-mails.

Out of the blue, she called him again, and asked if he had anything interesting to work on. She came

over and looked at a few things, and he let her have her choice. Since then, he had known Georgina Adams was an odd duck, but she was brilliant. She probably had the finest mind of any investigator he currently had on his payroll, and he was probably also half in love with her. And since some of the files she had closed had been extremely lucrative insurance contracts, payable on a contingency fee basis, her cut of the fees had already run into millions. Money she didn't need, and hardly even noticed when he gave it to her.

He thought of that now, as he watched her sit cross-legged, in her jeans this time, going through the files from the Musgrave murders.

"So," she said, looking at the gruesome photographs of the bodies of Ingrid Musgrave and Bartolomeo Molina, "it's the beneficiaries' position that the killings were just incident to a robbery?"

"Yes, and it's the position of the police, too – which turns a \$10 million payout each, into a \$20 million payout each, and Lloyd's doesn't like that."

"No, I imagine they wouldn't," Georgina said. "And it's just the kids, not the ex-husband?"

"No, in fact, the ex-husband's splitting our fee with Lloyd's," Daniel said.

"Really?" Georgina said, looking up at him.

"Mm-hmm," Daniel murmured, nodding his head and raising his eyebrows.

"Hmm," Georgina said, looking back down at the photos.

"What do you think?" Daniel said.

"Well, it's overkill, but it's not malicious," Georgina said. "Three shots to the head, each? Is that what you said?" she asked.

"That's what the Coroner said," Daniel murmured.

She looked at the photographs again. Ingrid Musgrave lay on her side on the rug in her front hallway, dressed in cream-colored silk pajamas, a plush white robe and slip-on fleece-lined slippers. In the closer photographs, what was left of her face registered surprise. Bartolomeo Molina was slumped backward over the arm of an upholstered chair with a floral pattern. There was a lot of blood, but their skulls were still mostly intact despite three rounds each. "Not that much damage, considering," Georgina said. ".22 or nine millimeter?"

"Nine millimeter," he said.

"That's a very precise weapon to use. No wiggle room for mistakes." She paused. "And they didn't bother with the televisions or the stereos. It certainly wasn't a bunch of gang-bangers bursting in and holding their guns sideways," she said, looking at the other crime scene photos.

"Nope," Daniel said.

"Well, then, I doubt they ever felt any pain," she said, "maybe even no apprehension." She paused for a moment, considering. "It certainly looks as though it was incidental to a robbery, but that doesn't mean anything. It could have been incidental to a robbery, or someone might have gone to some considerable trouble to make it look that way." She looked up at him. "Can I have the list of the stolen items again?" she asked.

He turned around to his desk, picked it up and handed it to her.

"Very nice things," she said. "Total value, \$70 million? Wow."

"Well, most of that was the art. There was some in the way of jewelry and cash, in the safe they removed," he said.

“I can see that for myself,” Georgina said sharply. “Of course, we’ll never know everything that was in that safe.” She paused. “And the security system was off?”

“Off,” he said.

“Completely off? There’s no back-up? It wasn’t damaged, or tampered with?”

“Nope, just off,” he said.

“Well, that seems inside,” Georgina said. “It might have been a simple mistake if someone hadn’t come along at just that particular time and killed everybody and stolen everything.”

“Exactly,” Daniel said.

“And the housekeeper was the last one to leave. Have the police talked to her?” she asked.

“Swears she left it on. Took a polygraph,” he said. “Passed.”

“Well, I wonder if I would have asked the same questions as our fine men in blue,” she muttered. “I’m going to talk to her.” She turned over another piece of paper. “Hmm... Why’s the ex-husband hand-in-hand with Lloyd’s on this one?”

“He’s the executor of the estate.”

“Still?”

“Still.”

“What does the will say?” she asked.

“It leaves everything to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for the introduction of an Ingrid Musgrave wing,” he said, smiling crookedly, “including the art that’s now gone.”

“Nothing to the kids?” Georgina said, sitting back on her heels.

“Nope,” he said.

“Wow.”

“Yep.”

“So, all the kids would be getting would be the \$20 million each from Lloyd’s, basically?”

“Basically.”

Georgina ran all of this through her head. “So, the father is the executor, but he doesn’t necessarily have to look into this if he doesn’t want to.”

“He does, actually. There’s a recent codicil to the wife’s will, specifically demanding an investigation if she were to die under suspicious circumstances.”

“You’re kidding,” she said.

“Nope.”

“Well,” she said, pausing. “That’s unusual.”

“Yep. Plus,” he added. “I get the feeling the ex-husband hates his kids.”

“Oh, he does,” Georgina said. “At least the ones from his first marriage.”

“How do you know that?”

“I know,” she said, not bothering to elaborate. “So, they might not be inheriting anything from him when he goes.”

“I’d tend to doubt it,” Daniel said.

“So, conceivably, this \$20 million might be the last free money they’re going to get for the rest of their lives?”

“Looks that way,” he said.

“That’s interesting,” she said.

“I think so.”

“People can get pretty desperate about that kind of money. Disagreements can come up about splitting it up, more people could get hurt. It rarely goes smoothly,” she said.

“Nope,” he agreed.

“So, why you? The police are content with calling it murder in the course of a robbery?”

“They are, unless we prove otherwise.”

“Well, it only happened last week. They can’t have that carved in stone yet. Do you have a copy of the will?” Georgina asked.

“I do,” he said, turning around in his chair, picking that file off his desk and handing it to her.

She glanced it over quickly, flipping through the pages. “I thought so. I was pretty sure if you’re disinheriting your children, you have to be fairly specific about it. It says, ‘It is my intention to leave no money to my children, having adequately provided for them during their lifetimes, and wishing to fund, instead, the charity of my choice.’”

“Cold,” he said.

“I’ve seen worse,” she said, flipping through more pages. “And here’s the codicil.” She read, “‘Should my death be of anything other than natural causes, it is my wish that a thorough investigation be undertaken by a private firm of my Executor’s choosing.’ Well,” Georgina said, “it seems she wasn’t worried about her ex killing her. Otherwise, he could have hired any rinky-dink P.I. service that would have given him whatever result he asked for. I wonder what else she was afraid of? The Metropolitan Museum of Art is usually content to let its donors die of natural causes.”

“It’s nearly \$400 million,” Daniel said. “Can we completely discount that?”

“Maybe not completely,” she said, “but they’ve got that much hanging on just one wall in there. And they’re not hurting. They’re doing very well.”

“So, the kids?” Daniel asked.

Georgina shrugged her shoulders. “I guess. Lloyd’s would certainly like that. \$70 million in trinkets is pretty powerful incentive, too. It could just be a robbery.” She picked up the paperwork from Lloyd’s. “Key man policies,” she said, “all through the ex-husband’s holding company. Apparently, she still sat on the Board of Directors.”

Georgina sat thinking for a moment.

“Geoffrey Musgrave wants it handled as quietly as possible,” Daniel said, intruding on her thoughts.

“Well, with the newspapers and magazines he owns, that should make the PR angle easier,” she said, sniffing out a little laugh. “Can we get him on the phone?” she asked.

Daniel raised his eyebrows. “Sure,” he said. “Why?”

“I just want to talk to him,” she said, “to get a feel for him again. It’s been awhile. Call him in Bedford.”

Daniel knew better than to ignore Georgina's instincts. He got the telephone number out of the file and dialed, moving the telephone from his desk to the floor in between them, and turning on the speaker.

A maid picked up the telephone, but before Daniel had a chance to introduce himself, Georgina said, "Geoffrey Musgrave, please. Georgina Adams calling."

After a few minutes, they heard a loud, gruff voice say, "Georgina Adams? I hope you're not looking for more money for that Frick. It hasn't been a year yet. Do you think I don't keep track?"

"It's not the Frick this time, Mr. Musgrave," she said, "although I do appreciate your last donation. It was especially generous. Honestly, I don't know what we'd do without you."

"Well, I like to do what I can," he said.

"I'm sorry we didn't see you at the party last night," she said.

"Yes. Sorry about that. Couldn't make it, dear," he said, getting close to flirting with her, "You'll have to save me a dance for the next time."

"Oh, my pleasure," she said, smiling into the phone.

"What can I do for you today?"

"I'm calling because I'm working for Konig on Ingrid's murder."

There was dead silence for close to a half a minute. Daniel and Georgina waited. "What the hell for?" he finally asked.

"I suppose you could call it a career," she said.

"What the hell is this?" Geoffrey Musgrave yelled, "Some kind of damn joke?"

"Oh, it's no joke, Mr. Musgrave," she said. "I've been working for Konig on a consulting basis for awhile."

"For money?" he asked.

"I get money, but I find the work interesting. I'm very good."

"Well, I guess you're smart. Weren't you Valedictorian or something when you graduated with Luanne?"

"Yes," she said.

"Well, at least you've got a decent job, unlike the wastes of space I've got," he growled.

"You're referring to your children from your first marriage?" she asked.

"You can quit fucking around, now, Adams," Mr. Musgrave growled.

Georgina smiled as Daniel leaned forward and spoke, "Mr. Musgrave, this is Daniel Levine. Georgina is the lead investigator on your wife's case. We wouldn't give it to her if we didn't feel she was the best one for it."

"Oh," Mr. Musgrave said, "Levine. Well," he paused for a moment, "What do you want, Adams? It's not easy to catch me off-guard."

"I just wanted to double-check a few things with you really quick. I'll probably also be coming out there for a visit to talk with you in the next few days," Georgina said.

"That's fine. Do what you need to do. I just want everything handled. I want it handled well. Somebody killed my wife, and I want to know who did it. People don't get away with just doing things like that to me."

“Certainly,” Georgina said. “I understand. But, I have to ask you, what if it’s one of your children who’s done this thing?”

“Throw them under the bus,” he said, without hesitation.

“Okay,” Georgina said simply.

“Well,” Mr. Musgrave said gruffly, “When are you coming out? I do have work to do, you know.”

“Well, I want to drive down and look at Ingrid’s house tomorrow, probably with the detective investigating it for the Cambridge department. You don’t have a problem with that, I hope?” she asked.

“No, I don’t have a problem with that. Levine should have the keys and the security system codes – a hell of a lot of good they are now,” he said.

“How about we meet the day after tomorrow? After lunch?” Georgina asked.

“That’s fine. I’ll be working from out here. You know the way?” he asked.

“I do,” she said.

“See you then,” he said, hanging up the phone.

“Well, I guess you were right about the way he feels about his kids,” Daniel said.

“Oh, yes,” Georgina said. “I’ve found a man tends to love his children as much as he loves their mother. Once they move on to the next marriage, they usually move on to the next set of children, too. And his children *are* fairly worthless – probably through his lack of attention, though. They lost their oldest son, Geoffrey, Jr., in an accidental drowning when he was about 10 years old. Something like that can really change the family dynamic. Plus,” she said, “I thought he needed to wrap his head around the fact that I was working on this.”

“You clearly enjoyed throwing him for a loop. Do you know him socially?” Daniel asked.

“I went to Brown with Luanne, his daughter,” she said. “And we’ve seen each other around. He’s an asshole.”

“He’s also a billionaire, and he’s the client,” Daniel reminded her.

“I know,” she said simply. She picked up the insurance policies again, and started making notes on a legal pad Daniel gave her. “The kids... Luanne, the oldest since Geoff Jr. died – she’s a flake, and an undiagnosed dyslexic. Ingrid, Jr. comes next and then Matthew – they are *unusually* attached to one another,” Georgina said, raising her eyebrows and looking at Daniel. “Frederick, a culture wannabe in San Francisco, and then little Magrit – a stoner. What about the old mistress, Marianne Daumier, and her bastard daughter, Olivia?”

Daniel sat up straighter. “Who are they?”

Georgina rolled her eyes. “For years,” she said, “Mr. Musgrave was keeping Marianne on the side during his marriage to Ingrid. Everybody knew about it, including Ingrid. They even had a daughter together, Olivia. She’s a little younger than me. Then, when Mr. Musgrave divorced the first Mrs. Musgrave, Marianne thought he was going to marry her. It came as something of an unhappy surprise when he married his personal trainer, who was about 20 years younger.”

“Well, you certainly should talk to them,” he said. “They didn’t benefit from the insurance policies, but I’m sure they’d have a few things to tell you.”

“I think it’s strange, don’t you, that he referred to Ingrid as his wife, not his ex-wife?” she asked.

“I also thought it was interesting that he considered something had been done to him, not her.”

“Yes, he seemed almost *offended* by it,” she said, trying to use exactly the right word. “He seems to have ownership issues about the people in his life,” Georgina said, leaning back on the heels of her palms, and pushing the papers around with the toe of her ballet flat. “She was still on the Board of his company. They both seem to have little regard for their children. Maybe they were closer than they let on, even though poor Bartolomeo was in the picture,” she said, while nudging an actual picture of poor, dead Bartolomeo with her toe. “And why the codicil? I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like that, and I’ve known some very paranoid rich people.”

“I know. It’s weird. You might talk to one of her friends, too,” Daniel suggested. “maybe she had a best friend?”

“No,” Georgina said, “not really. At least I don’t think so. I can ask around, but I’m starting to think the ex-husband might still have been the best friend she had.” She exhaled deeply. “I need some time to think.” She looked up at Daniel. “Can I take these things with me?” she asked.

“They’re yours,” he said. “I’m giving you the originals, and I’m keeping the copies, so take good care of them, as usual.” He reached down and started helping her to gather up the papers, and put them into the storage box. “I’ll carry these down to Jason,” he said.

Georgina got back to her apartment, and had Jason deposit the box of Musgrave materials and paperwork into the office, right next to her desk. She had cleared away her last research project, and her desk stood empty and ready to face the next task.

She pulled down a large scroll of magnetized plastic that rolled out of her ceiling to cover one-half of the wall of her study, and hooked the bottom of it to the baseboard. She pulled the box of papers over to the board, and got a box of small red-enameled magnets from her desk. She methodically pulled the pieces of paper from the file, including the photographs and other paper pieces of evidence, and affixed them to the board. She stepped back every few minutes, examining what she had done, reorganized, and began to add more. By the time she was done, nearly every relevant piece of paper, or a miniaturized photocopy of it, was affixed to the wall. She always called this her “murder board,” and she liked to think it represented the contents of her head, in the file in her brain where she was slowly writing the story of Ingrid’s Musgrave’s untimely death. It was in constant flux, and she kept it constantly updated. Armeda knew never to go near it, or even so much as dust it, or she would deal with Georgina’s fiery temper. It would remain there until she was finished.

Georgina stepped back, and felt the board represented her current understanding and the information she had. She took a deep breath, and decided to now clear it all from her mind, and not look at it again until she could see it from a fresh perspective.

She called one of her personal trainers on the telephone, and had him come over. If she wasn’t going to be able to ride Three Winds today, she needed a workout. She changed into a black tank top and black leggings. She stretched and warmed up while she waited. Once James got there, he found Georgina ready for a fight. She already had her own kickboxing equipment, so it wasn’t long before they were into it. Georgina had transformed one of the extra bedrooms in her apartment into a spacious gym. It had little in the way of equipment, just an elliptical machine, and a Pilates reformer machine. It also had a large mat in the center of the room where Georgina liked to practice various forms of martial arts with private instructors. She found it centered her mind and relaxed her nerves almost as well as about 2 mg. of Xanax, with the added benefit of not making her tired, and keeping her fit and skinny.

Georgina worked up a sweat, and thought about the Musgrave family in one part of her brain, while the other part of her brain was strictly focused on not letting James kick her in the head. He was very, very good, and she had told him long ago not to hold back with her. She had also bloodied his nose more than once in a friendly reminder that she wasn’t going to hold back, either. He knocked her on her ass for

the second time, and she finally pushed the Musgrave murder completely away, and focused on the fight at hand. She matched him blow for blow, blocking and being blocked, and found herself, at the end of an hour, exhausted on her knees, breathing heavily.

“Thanks, James,” she said, pulling herself up from the floor wearily.

“No problem, Ms. Adams. Same time next week?” he asked, breathing and sweating heavily himself.

“I’ll call you,” she said, heading off for the comfort of her shower.

She let the shower heads pummel her body, using the strongest setting for water pressure, leaning into it. She wrapped her robe about her, and strode back into her office. She hefted what remained in the box from Konig onto the desk, and flipped off the top. She took out the folder of crime scene photographs again, and flipped through them, allowing her brain to absorb all of the details. She placed them one-by-one onto the board, too. She pulled out the various legal papers, the insurance policies, and the police reports, neatly sorting each pile, and moving papers from one file to another as she read and re-read the material. Then she sat quietly looking at the various tidy piles, and up at the board, until the sound of the front doorbell, and Armeda’s quick footsteps, alerted her that her hairdresser was there to blow out her hair.

Chapter Three

Georgina called around and located all of the grieving children. Frederick was in town from San Francisco with his lovely blond wife. They were staying at his father's Fifth Avenue apartment, along with his younger sister Magrit, in from London with her three year-old son. "That explains why the old man's in Bedford," Georgina thought to herself. She could imagine the scene there, smiled, and shook her head. Frederick fancied himself an art historian, and a collector, and his wife had social pretensions which knew no bounds. Also, they were sharing the apartment at the moment with Magrit, whose little boy was the product of a brief fling with a British rock star who had since died of an overdose of heroin. Magrit, a hippie and stoner of long standing, could barely take care of herself, let alone properly raise a child. Georgina could imagine how they were getting along with the two San Franciscans who, after seven years of marriage, had still not seen fit to produce offspring. Not well, was her guess.

She needed to speak to all of them, and time was of the essence. They might scatter to the ends of the Earth at any moment, but she hoped their greed would keep them in New York City, while they waited to find out how their mother's death would affect, or benefit, them financially. The other three lived in NYC, so she had fewer worries about them.

First, however, she needed to see the crime scene itself, and talk to the housekeeper, Ms. Greta Larson. The police might be satisfied with a polygraph. They usually were. But she thought it was just too much of a coincidence the alarm system was turned off when the murderers arrived. It was too tidy.

Georgina made a call over to her garage to make sure her Range Rover was gassed up and ready to go. She hadn't used it in ages, and whenever it wasn't used regularly, she had it professionally garaged and maintained. She had a drive to Connecticut ahead of her. She put together a map of everywhere she wanted to go, with detailed driving instructions, and went over it several times. She hated to admit it, but staying in her apartment for so long had made her nervous about being far away from it for any length of time. Dr. Gregson would love for her to admit that at their next session. She memorized her driving plan, and printed it out. She also had a state-of-the art navigation system in her Rover, so she felt as comfortable as she possibly could. She thought of taking a sedative to steady her nerves before going, but decided against it. She knew that once she was interacting with people, her interest in them would take her sufficiently out of herself to calm down, and she needed to be sharp to read them properly. Until then, she would have to tolerate a few butterflies in her stomach as she drove.

Jason dropped her at the garage, and she generously tipped the attendant as he handed her the keys. She slipped into the cream-colored leather interior, and glanced around, checking each of the systems in turn. She rubbed the smooth leather and burl wood of the steering wheel, and adjusted her Cartier Balon Bleu watch, and then the amethyst and peridot Verdura three-stone ring that she wore on her right hand. The car appeared to be functioning perfectly, and she took a deep breath as she slowly moved it out of Park, and into Drive. She tried to keep her face without affect, in case the attendant was still looking at her. Men invariably stared at her, because she was so breathtakingly beautiful, but she didn't really want a witness to how nervous she was at the moment. She eased her foot off the brake, and drifted out of the parking garage onto a busy New York City street.

She gripped the wheel tightly as she eased into traffic, and paid attention to everything on every side. It didn't take long for her to relax behind the wheel, though, and, indeed, before she was even leaving the complicated and taxi-glutted streets of Manhattan, she was already piloting in and out of lanes with a confident expertise. She felt herself exhale deeply. Once she got onto the I-95, she really relaxed, and enjoyed the feel of the luxurious interior, and the control of the car underneath her. It was a powerful black Range Rover, a suggestion of Walter's. He had arranged for its purchase, although she wouldn't allow him to pay for it. It was reinforced with many options like specialized hearty bumpers in front and back, and a sophisticated and brutish suspension system that could go off-road quite deeply with perfect

ease. He felt she would appreciate not only the superb performance, but also the confidence of knowing she was driving something designed for far more rough stuff than she was ever likely to need it for.

She had already programmed her first destination, the Cambridge, Connecticut Police Station headquarters, into her car's navigation system, and was able to enjoy listening to her audio lecture series on game theory from The Great Courses while she drove. After about an hour, she pulled into the parking lot of the police station, and straight into a clearly-marked Handicapped spot right next to the front door. She put her large tortoiseshell sunglasses on, checked her lipstick, and fluffed up her hair in the car's rear view mirror before exiting. She jumped out, and deliberately dropped her keys onto the parking lot cement. She bent over to pick them up, giving a perfect view of her derriere to anyone who might be looking from inside the police station. From her extensive study of, and experience with, police, she knew for certain they were. She retrieved the keys, and tucked them away into her purse as she strode purposefully into the police station. She opened the door with a flourish, and looked around, deliberately not connecting eyes with anyone, knowing they would all be on her. She took her sunglasses off, and swept them up off her face, pulling her hair back with them, and revealing her unusual blue-green eyes.

The desk sergeant came around his desk, looking stern, and she turned to face him. "Hi," she said, giving him her most dazzling smile.

He attempted to look unaffected, but the bob up and down of his Adam's apple as he swallowed betrayed him. "Ma'am, you've parked in a Handicapped spot. Can you please move your car?"

She laughed, and reached out to touch his forearm. "I'm completely helpless," she said, "does that count as handicapped?"

A smile flickered at the corners of his lips. "Not in this county, it doesn't."

"Well," she said, "why don't you just tell me where to find..." she fished for a few long moments in her large tote bag, "Detective Trigilio," she finally said, seemingly reading from a cocktail napkin, "and I'll get out of your hair." She looked him full in the eye, then, and he had trouble looking away.

"Alright, but then you're going to have to move that Rover, or it's going to get towed," he said.

"Okay," she said. "That's a deal." She sat down on one of the benches against the front window, and turned to her left to bestow her haughtiest smile at a portly middle-aged woman who had been watching the entire exchange, but who now looked away. Georgina examined her manicure until she saw a pair of brown size 12 worn Hush Puppies appear near her feet.

Georgina looked up and saw a man who matched those shoes more perfectly than she could ever have imagined. She smiled, this time quite honestly, as she saw a 50-ish man, about 6'3" tall, weighing close to 300 pounds, dark brown hair cut poorly and starting to show some grey around the temples, wearing a boring brown tie and a brown tweed jacket that didn't match either the tie or the season, and a world-weary, bored air that didn't for a moment seem to notice her good looks. Immediately, Georgina knew she had met someone she could talk to.

She got up, and extended her hand. "Detective Trigilio?" she asked.

"That's me," he said. "You're from Konig?"

"Yes, Daniel Levine sent me."

"Alright, well, that's fine," he said, pulling out a notebook from his back pocket. "I talked to him earlier today." He looked up at her, "I guess you've got the keys and the security codes? We've got them, but you're really supposed to have them yourself."

"Yep, I've got them," she said, patting her purse.

"Have you got any identification in there?" he asked, pointing at her Louis Vuitton Neverfull totebag.

Georgina pulled out her wallet, and showed Trigilio her New York State driver's license, and her photo identification from Konig. He made notes of the identification numbers on his pad, and made sure he had the spelling of her name correct. "Adams," he said. "I just read a book about John Adams."

"He's my great-great-great-great-great grandfather," Georgina said.

"Do you know the book I mean? Won the Pulitzer?" he said, ignoring the reference to her famous forebear that made most people drool.

"I do," she said.

"Good book. I like a guy who isn't flashy. A guy you don't see coming."

"Me, too."

"Must be nice to say you're related to a president."

"It is," she said.

"Maybe in about two hundred years, my great-great-great-great-great grandkids will like to brag that I was a cop." He swept his left hand out toward the door, indicating to her he was ready to leave. She followed him out.

"We can both go in my car," he said.

"Okay, then I'd better move mine, or it won't be here when I get back."

He saw she was parked in the Handicapped space, and said, "What are you, some kind of a jerk? All of these spaces all over here, and you've got to park where the folks with wheelchairs need to go?"

"Sorry, Detective," she said, honestly meaning it. "I did it to get attention. If I hadn't, I'd still be sitting there on that bench with everybody else, waiting for somebody to notice me."

"Well," he said, "maybe that's true, but get it out of there now. Handicapped people don't call ahead for reservations, you know."

"Yes, Sir," she said, and moved the Rover quickly into a proper spot.

She followed Trigilio to his blue Chevy Impala, and got into the passenger seat. Clearly, he was not the type to hold a car door for a lady. As she snapped her seatbelt on, she asked, "could this car look any more like an unmarked police car?"

"I'm not out to fool anybody," he said, looking over his shoulder as he backed out of his spot.

They drove for about ten minutes, straight outside the village, with the countryside getting more and more rural. But, unlike most rural countrysides, this land had been groomed and planted with a symmetry God had never intended. The extremely wealthy people who had made this their country home had pulled up ancient trees, and planted new ancient trees, as it suited them. There were a few dairy farms, but with none of the sulfuric smell that usually heralded such places. Georgina sensed that they were more decorative than functional, and that only enough milk flowed, so locals could find it 'adorable' to be getting their milk from the local dairy.

They pulled into the driveway of Ingrid Musgrave's 210-acre estate, and drove about the length of two football fields on the cobblestone surface before arriving at the curve which turned right in front of the massive Colonial house. Georgina had noted the location of several cameras nestled in amongst the trees which lined the drive. She got out of the car, and buttoned up her barn jacket around her neck, tucking her hands into her pockets. The late March chill which hadn't been quite so noticeable in the city, was definitely felt here. A slight breeze carried dampness, and the gray sky hid any sunshine that might have warmed things up, or changed the somber mood of the scene. The house had a stone exterior, slate roof, and copper trim, with black enamel shutters on each of the fourteen windows, eight on the top floor,

and three on either side of the front door, each with a flower box filled with pink and white flowers. Georgina walked slowly back and forth in front of the house, looking at the electrical hookups, the wires and cables for telephone and television, observing the security cameras, some of them trained back down the driveway, and some trained at the entrance to the house. She walked over to the right side of the house, and looked back at the lawn. "Is it alright if I walk on the lawn?" she asked Trigilio, who had been watching her every move.

"Sure," he said, following her. Georgina walked slowly along the right side of building. She saw the deep triangular indentation in the lawn. "I guess this is where the safe landed. If you've got the right equipment, it's smart to just take it with you."

His eyebrows raised. "We expect that's right."

She looked up at the windows. "It's hard to tell with these colonials," she said. "They're so lovely and symmetrical. If this were a typical McMansion, there would be no doubt where the master bedroom was. But I'll bet it's up there," she said, pointing.

"You'd win your bet," Trigilio said, "but I would have said Federalist."

Georgina smiled at him. "You could be right." She was really starting to enjoy his company.

They continued on a walk about the perimeter of the house, and then walked up and down the driveway again, taking note of the position of the security cameras. "That's unusual, isn't it?" Georgina said. "Why wouldn't Ingrid just have these running all of the time on a looping recording?"

"I've seen all kinds," Trigilio said, "motion control – turn it on, turn it off. It's hard to say. We're looking into it with her security company, a local place. If it was installed more than three years ago, it might still be running on videotape. If it's recent, then it should have been digital, with practically unlimited storage, and could, and should, run all the time. If she was extremely security-minded, I would also say they should always be running. She's got quite a few of them, but I'm looking around, and there are plenty of blind spots. Who's to say? Maybe she wanted to have the best security possible, but got a little bit cheap when she got the quote from the contractor."

Georgina nodded, "That's exactly what she would do. But she didn't spend all of her time here, either. I think she was in Florida most of the time, or in the city. And out here –" she said, gesturing at the rolling hills, "one might feel safe." She stood and thought for a moment, looking about her at the property, feeling another chill up her spine that was only partly caused by the gust of chill wind that swept her hair to the side. "Hmm. Well, shall we go in?"

They approached the front of the home, meant to be welcoming, with a flagstone walk flanked by black, iron, solar-powered spot lights and careful plantings of pink and white perennials, leading up to a large black enamel-painted double door, with two enormous brass door knockers, and a lively white and pink wildflower wreath hanging from each. The only thing marring the otherwise idyllic scene was the yellow crime scene tape which stretched across the door, secured on either side. "May I?" Georgina asked, gesturing to the tape, "or would you rather?"

"I'll take the tape down," Trigilio said, "but you're supposed to let yourself in. Do you have everything you need?"

"I should have," she said, reaching into her coat pocket for a small zippered leather wallet which contained a notepad, and the key to the front door. She put the key into the lock and turned it, pushing the door open at the same time. Instantly, a steady beeping told her she had 60 seconds to punch in the ten-digit security code. Trigilio looked on with appreciation as he watched her turn to her right, flip open the security panel and punch it in without referring to any notes, having clearly memorized it. The beeping stopped, and she said, "I wish it had been on that night."

“Yeah,” he agreed. “She had a motion sensor that would have told her the minute somebody pulled into her driveway.”

They both stood very still, very quietly for a moment, looking around them respectfully, knowing this was where Ingrid Musgrave had met her end. Georgina finally allowed her gaze to drop to the rectangular carpet which covered the center of the foyer, with long console tables and mirrors on either side. The stain from the pool of blood still covered almost the entire area of the 10’ x 14’ Samarkand Persian rug. Georgina never failed to be surprised when faced with the amount of blood the human body holds. Ingrid was fashionably thin, and her body would have held slightly more than 4 quarts of blood. “So,” she said, “a nine millimeter shot as she opened the front door, from a distance of about three feet, and then two more shots to the head once she was down, both from about 6 inches.”

“Seems professional,” Trigilio said, “and confident. They didn’t just take a .38 and blow her head off with one shot.”

“And none of them were through-and-through?” Georgina asked.

“Nope,” he said, looking down at the rug. “Mrs. Musgrave here had one that glanced off her skull, but stayed lodged in her scalp – but she was probably already dead when she got that one. The first shot most likely finished her off. Right between the eyes.”

“And poor Bartolomeo,” Georgina said, walking forward, past the formal living room and into a smaller television room. She looked at the flowered chintz-covered easy chair, the top half of which was now covered in Bartolomeo Molina’s blood and brain matter.

“He was sitting over there,” Trigilio said. “He got up, but not very far. They shot him, and put him straight away. He ended up sitting back down, and they got closer and put two more into his forehead. Those all stayed in.” He paused for a moment. “And I wonder why she got the door? It’s late at night. Why didn’t the man get the door?”

“Hard to say,” Georgina said. “And they weren’t a bunch of goofballs, either. They took some quality stuff, and didn’t bother with anything relatively inexpensive. Was there any trace?”

“None,” Trigilio said, growling. “The rugs had been vacuumed before the housekeeper left, but they left nothing, not a hair, not a speck of mud, nothing. I almost see them wearing plastic booties and hair nets.”

“Definitely not goofballs,” Georgina agreed. She went back to the front door and started examining each room on the first floor, trying to look beyond the fingerprint powder scattered over everything, observing the places where pieces of art had been removed from its housings on the wall, and taking in whatever she could gather from this observation of what Ingrid Musgrave liked to have around her. At least in the public rooms of the house. The photographs which were displayed in the formal living room downstairs were exactly what she would have expected from Ingrid. Pics of Ingrid with two ex-Presidents, and the current President. Pics of Ingrid with the Governor. Pics of Ingrid with several celebrities. Pics of Ingrid with Bartolomeo on vacation were in the television room where he was murdered.

“So far no pictures of the kids... or the grandkid, either,” Georgina said to herself, somewhat surprised by that. Although knowing what she knew of Magrit, the perma-stoner probably never was able to produce a photograph of the child sufficiently cleaned up to pass mustard with Ingrid. “Maybe upstairs in the bedroom.”

Trigilio followed her around the house, keeping quiet unless she asked a question, but observing her observing. She started up the stairs to the second floor, and went, room-by-room, seeing Ingrid’s bedroom, but leaving that for last. She looked at all of the guest bedrooms, one clearly fitted up for children, with two twin beds with rails and a crib. “Hmm,” she thought, but moved breezily amongst

these rooms, as they were clearly the product of the decorator's imagination.

When she finally went back to Ingrid's room, she stopped at the door, and slowly took it all in. It was nearly as large as the formal living room downstairs, which it was directly above. Bookshelves near the window told Georgina these books were favorites, too frequently consulted to be downstairs in the formal library. The writing desk, situated next to the bookshelves and square in front of the window showcasing her perfectly symmetrical backyard, was not merely for decorative purposes. There were shelves holding papers neatly stacked, and two sides of full-size drawers, which Georgina found held files, favorite writing implements, stationery, etc. Through a set of double doors opposite her, Georgina saw a glimpse of a marble and mahogany bathroom that rivaled her own in spa-like beauty. Ingrid clearly spent nearly as much time up here as she did downstairs. This was her lair.

Georgina drifted about, and slowly took in the measure of the room. It was lovely, without question. The color palette was an off-white toward the pink end of the spectrum, with highlights of salmon and other darker floral colors. The bed itself sat against the far wall, facing the fireplace, and a mediocre landscape in an elaborate gold frame that Georgina didn't recognize. She went over to the right side of the bed, furthest from the door, slid out the drawer of the bedside table and found the remote control. She pointed it at the painting and the canvas slowly rolled up to reveal a flat screen TV.

"Goddamn!" Trigilio said. "That's incredible."

"I have one just like it at home," Georgina said, smiling. She punched a few different buttons, and found the link into the security system. Once she was in there, she goofed around with it, and made a few mistakes, but finally was able to see how Ingrid could monitor her various security cameras (both inside and outside her home) from her bed. "I don't have this, though," she said. "Did you see any cameras downstairs, inside?" She looked over at Trigilio with amazement. "I was looking, and I didn't see any."

"I didn't either," he said. "And none are listed. We didn't have any idea this setup was here."

"It's meant to look just like a regular television remote control, so I can understand, but why didn't your guys wonder why there was a remote control without a television to control remotely?" Georgina asked, waving the remote control in her hand, her eyes showing anger briefly.

"I don't know," he said. "I was here, and I checked the inventory, but I didn't put two and two together."

Georgina sat down on the end of Ingrid's bed, and shrugged her arms out of her jacket. She said, sharply "TV plus remote equals 0. Remote minus TV equals negative 1."

"Understood," he said. Trigilio swallowed and watched Georgina work. She quickly scrolled through the various options of cameras in each of the rooms of the house and outdoors, and scanned through the recording options as well. The good news was she was able to pinpoint the location of the cameras in each of the rooms, including the guest bedrooms, Georgina didn't hesitate to notice with a frown. So Ingrid liked to watch.

The bad news was that the inside cameras didn't appear to have recorded anything, either.

"This is bullshit," she said, turning to Trigilio. "There is no fucking way this woman, who liked to watch the cameras in her house from her bed, as a form of entertainment," she bit the words out, "was going to have it just turned off by accident. No fucking way. Where's the housekeeper?" She stood up and tugged on her coat.

"She passed the polygraph," Trigilio said.

"She didn't pass any polygraph I administered," Georgina said, getting ready to charge past him.

He put out his arm and stopped her. At her look, he moved his arm back out of the way and raised both of his hands up, but said, "Just wait a minute. Now I'll admit we missed this monitor. But stop and

think for a minute. Those things don't need to be taped to be enjoyed. They're clearly running, even now, with the system turned off. Maybe she just liked to watch what her guests were up to. Maybe she didn't tape it."

Georgina stood fuming for a moment. "Ask me about the polygraph," Trigilio said. "I wasn't happy with it, either."

"In a minute," she said, taking advantage of his guilt. She took a deep breath, and appeared to be thinking hard. "Do me a favor and go downstairs into the television room, and move that book that's blocking part of that camera." She reached over and picked up the remote again and sat down. When Trigilio went out of the room, she jumped up and hustled over to Ingrid's desk. She pulled out drawers, and reached her hands up and behind them, not finding anything until she reached the bottom of the right hand stack of drawers. She felt a crinkling of paper and smiled. She pulled very carefully and dislodged a soft package, wrapped in brown paper. She chuckled to herself, and quickly shut the drawer and shoved the package into her handbag.

She was proud of herself, but still pissed the police missed so much. "Idiots," she said. She picked up the remote again, and saw Trigilio had, indeed, moved the book, and was probably on his way back upstairs. Georgina took a deep breath, and tried to shake off the feeling she needed 10 milligrams of Librium. Goddamn it, but incompetence pissed her off. When he walked in, she flipped off the remote, put it back into the drawer, turned and sat down in one of Ingrid's chairs in front of the fireplace. "What did the housekeeper say?"

Trigilio joined her in the chair opposite. "They asked her about turning the system on and off. It was her job, her responsibility. She'd forgotten to do it once or twice several years ago, and got her ass handed to her, verbally. She said she'd never forgotten since, because she knew she'd be fired. She'd been told as much. She swears she left it on, and her pulse reflects that. That's what we've got."

"And that's it?" Georgina asked. "Maybe that was all for the polygraph, but I hope you interviewed her better than that."

"I did," he said. "The questions on the poly were all about the system. But the questions I asked were more about her associations, her family, her friends."

"What'd you find?"

"She's got next to nothing. She's got this job. Or she used to. She didn't get paid very much – figured it was an honor to work for 'such fine people,' she said. She's got no kids; she's got no husband. She was here six days out of every seven."

"But Ingrid wasn't," Georgina said. "Maybe that's why Greta liked it. Ingrid couldn't have spent more than four or five months here, total, here during the course of the year. She spent some time in New York City, but she had to spend half of her time in Florida, for income taxes."

"That's how the rich stay rich," Trigilio grumbled.

A smile pulled at the corners of Georgina's lips when she thought how much money she would save every year if she spent more of her time at her house in Wellington. "And all you've got is her say-so that she's got no kids, no husband."

"We're checking it out. It's the first avenue I'm going down."

"But if somebody she knows was involved, she wouldn't necessarily know about it herself," Georgina said.

"I know," Trigilio said, sounding annoyed.

"Okay," Georgina said. "I would like to talk to her, though. Where is she?"

If it Could Happen to Her

Trigilio sat up straighter. “She lives in town, apartment above the drycleaner. You’re welcome to go and question her, obviously, but I need to be there.”

“You don’t need to be there,” Georgina said evenly. “It’s not mandatory.”

“Unless you’re walking there, it is,” he said, taking his car keys out of his pocket and getting up from the chair.

Chapter Four

Georgina quickly determined that she could abide Trigilio's company, since her own car was over 20 miles away, and she was not disposed to walk to get it. Plus, she also knew her disappointment with the police investigation couldn't be entirely held against him. For a moment, as they drove together in silence, she wondered if perhaps she was so uncomfortable because, if somebody like Ingrid could get murdered, and somebody could get away with it, then somebody might be able to get that close to somebody like Georgina, too. If it could happen to her... she didn't like the thought.

They arrived in the charming village of Cambridge, with its rustic-looking painted signs, all seeming small-town, but hanging over entrances for shops like Lilly Pulitzer, Prada, Gucci. "There's a lot of money in this town," Trigilio said as he pulled into a space in front of the local drycleaner, a cheerful place called Village Clean.

"That's for sure," Georgina said, getting out of the car, and pulling her jacket up around her neck. She followed Trigilio around the side of the building, and up a flight of bright, white enamel-painted stairs. He pushed a button which warbled politely. They only had to wait a few seconds before a tall woman in her late 50s, with clear pale blue eyes, a trim figure and dignified bearing, blonde hair slightly graying and tucked neatly into a bun at the back of her neck, opened the door. Seeing Detective Trigilio, a shadow flashed over her face for a moment. Typical reaction, Georgina thought. Ms. Larson thought she was done with the police.

"Hello, Detective," she said, holding the door tightly with her right hand for a moment, before stepping to the side, and gesturing with her hand for them to come in.

"Thank you," Trigilio said. "Ms. Larson, this is Georgina Adams. She's looking into Mrs. Musgrave's murder."

"Well," Ms. Larson said, "what can I do to help you?" she asked, shutting the door behind them.

Georgina smiled at her, and walked around her small but bright and neatly-furnished living room. The walls were a sunny shade of yellow, and the furniture was all stark-white and slipcovered. The bookshelves held a very eclectic set of reference materials and religious books, and the knick-knacks were all first class. She even had a couple of Staffordshire figurines on her shelves. The room gave off to a small dining room, attached to a smaller kitchen, all equally neat as a pin, and, while seemingly simple, were furnished with very fine housewares and nice, quality furniture. There were a few pictures on the surfaces, all of different Pekingese dogs, with one exception. "This is lovely," Georgina said, picking up a framed photograph of Ingrid's house from a table beside a chair.

"Yes," Ms. Larson said, "I had it in my photo album, but I put it there now to remind me. I miss that house."

The current Pekingese came running out from a hallway that ran down to the back of the apartment. A fluffy little reddish poof of a dog, it came into the room and yapped twice at the visitors. "They're guests, Carina," Ms. Larson said, smiling at the dog.

Georgina smiled at the dog, too. "It's a gorgeous house," Georgina agreed, looking back at the picture. "And you kept it in great shape, too. It was still neat and tidy when we were there earlier, and probably would have hardly a speck of dust, if there weren't fingerprint powder everywhere." Ms. Larson visibly stiffened. "How did you manage to do it all by yourself?"

"I didn't," she said. "I had a couple of girls from the village high school who helped me every now and again, with the heavier cleaning, and polishing the silver, especially when Mrs. Musgrave was in residence." Mrs. Larson sat down, tucking her yellow gingham house coat around her knees.

“Different girls every year?” Georgina asked.

“Yes,” Ms. Larson said, “I put an ad on the high school bulletin board, with the guidance counselor’s permission.” She seemed uncomfortable that Georgina continued to walk around and inspect her things. “Can I offer you something to drink?” she asked.

“No, thank you,” Georgina said.

“Me, either, but thank you,” Trigilio added.

“Why don’t you sit down?” Mrs. Larson asked, gesturing to the couch.

“Because we hadn’t yet been asked,” Georgina said, smiling, moving over and taking a sit on the couch.

“Oh, forgive me. My manners,” she said. “Please.” The rims of her ears turned slightly pink.

Detective Trigilio sat down next to Georgina. “How did that work? Were the girls ever left alone in the house?”

“No, never,” Ms. Larson said. “I would give them a specific job, and I would supervise them while they did it. While they vacuumed, I dusted the finer pieces on the shelves. While they cleaned the bathroom, I tidied the cosmetics, and wiped them off. I always stayed in the room with them. Mrs. Musgrave insisted. She said if one thing ever went missing, she would hold me to blame for it.” She looked at the two of them, thinking how that sounded, and her ears got redder. “But she was absolutely right. Her things were beautiful, and needed to be treated with special care. She trusted me, and knew if I was in the room, nothing would get broken, or stolen. And then, four times a year, we’d have a cleaning crew come in, and scrub it from top to bottom.”

“What did Ingrid do with her stuff, then?” Georgina asked, leaning forward, her elbow on her knee, and her chin in her hand, giving Ms. Larson her utmost attention.

“The most expensive things were stored when that happened,” Ms. Larson said, looking back and forth between Georgina and Trigilio, evidently trying to figure out why this cultured young woman was here in the same capacity as Trigilio.

Georgina turned to Trigilio, “I assume the part-time help has been checked out, too?”

“It’s in the works,” he said.

She put her chin back into the curve of her hand and smiled at Ms. Larson. “What did she call you? Ms. Larson? Or Greta?”

“She called me Greta,” she said.

“What did the kids call you?”

“The kids?” Ms. Larson asked.

“Ingrid’s kids. What’d they call you?” Georgina asked, still smiling warmly.

“I guess they called me Greta, I really don’t know. They weren’t there very often.”

“No?” Georgina asked. “I understood they were a close family.”

“Well,” Ms. Larson said, uncrossing her legs, and then crossing them the other way, “I don’t think they were. I think her children were a great disappointment to her.”

“Oh,” Georgina said, looking stricken, “that’s too bad. What makes you say that?”

“They didn’t call very much, and they hardly ever came to stay. When they did, Mrs. Musgrave seemed tense. She was a very great lady, but all they wanted from her was her money. I felt sorry for

her. I don't like to gossip," she said, taking a deep breath. Georgina loved hearing those words, because it meant a big, long gossip was just about to begin. "But when one of the kids invited themselves down – she never had the opportunity to ask them – they always asked themselves – she always said 'here they come with their hands out.' And it was true. I didn't eavesdrop, but you couldn't help it when they started begging. That son of hers from San Francisco, with his prissy wife, always ordering me around, asking her for this and that – telling her he was an art collector. All he did was collect money. They had quite a blowout the last time he was down – about two months ago."

"Really?" Georgina asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Oh, yes," Ms. Larson said, "he wanted her to buy them the townhouse they'd been renting. Their lease was up, and I guess all of their friends already thought they owned it. He said it would be an embarrassment for the family. She laughed right in his face. She said, 'it wouldn't be an embarrassment for me,' and she told him no." Ms. Larson took a deep breath, but sat back and continued, clearly warming to her subject, "And the same with the rest of them. Worthless, the whole lot. It's a heartbreak to a woman when she spends that much time bringing children into the world and providing for them, and then they can't fend for themselves. It's a terrible shame." This she said with fierce determination.

"What about little Ingrid, and Matthew?" Georgina asked.

"Oh, those two," Greta said, rolling her eyes. "The less said about those two, the better."

"Yes, I know them," Georgina said, smiling at Ms. Larson with understanding. "And Magrit's hardly ever here, is she?"

"No, and it would have been nice to have the child around – a decent, clean child, but that one's not even potty trained. They were there once and it was a great strain on Mrs. Musgrave's nerves."

"And Luanne?" Georgina asked, "how often did she come down?"

"Now, Luanne," Ms. Larson said, "she's a little different. She'd come down for the day, or for lunch, and she'd remember to bring something with her – candy, a bottle of wine, something. I know she asked for money like the rest of them, but it was usually for some charity or other, and she didn't impose herself the way the others did. She was polite to me, respectful of her mother, and always behaved. She wasn't so bad."

"No, I went to school with Luanne. I liked her," Georgina said. "Well, it's nice, though," she continued, "it's nice Ingrid had somebody like you she could trust, and who showed her respect." She paused for a moment as Greta nodded her head, and segued into the matter at hand, "Detective Trigilio already told me you passed the polygraph, and you definitely turned the security system on before you left."

"Yes, I did," she said firmly. "I certainly did. I never forgot that. I did the same thing every night." Ms. Larson put one hand out, and karate-chopped into it with the other, emphasizing her words as she spoke. "I walked one last time around the house, and tidied everything. I went into the kitchen, and picked up my purse and my coat. I went to the television room to tell her I was leaving. I said goodnight," she said, starting to tear up a bit, "for the last time, little did I know it. And then I went out the front door, and armed the security system when I left. I had to lock the front door behind me, jog to my car, get in, and get to the end of the driveway before 60 seconds went by, otherwise I'd set off the motion detector at the stone wall at the beginning of the driveway. So there's no way I forget that, ever." She sniffed, and wiped at her nose briefly. The dog jumped into her lap, and turned around once before settling itself in a little circle. She patted the dog as she breathed deeply and got herself under control.

"Would you like a tissue?" Georgina asked.

"No, I'm alright," Ms. Larson said, taking a handkerchief from the inside of her left sleeve, and

wiping her nose.

“Well, I’m sorry if we’ve upset you,” Georgina said, reaching forward to pat Ms. Larson on the knee. She turned and looked at Detective Trigilio. “I think we’re all set here, don’t you think?”

“I am if you are,” Trigilio said, rising. He reached out his big paw, and shook hands with Ms. Larson. “It’s good to see you again.”

“That’s fine,” Ms. Larson said, setting the dog on the floor and seeing them to the door. “I don’t like being questioned, but I’ll do anything for Mrs. Musgrave,” she said.

Georgina shook her hand as well, and waited until they got in the car before speaking to Trigilio. “She only got an annuity in the will. It’s less than she was making working at the house. I don’t think she’d kill for that.”

“Nope. Me, either,” Trigilio said, as he backed out and piloted them toward the main road.

“But she might be stupid and give somebody a tour of the house, or let somebody in innocently, who was smart enough to figure out how things worked around there,” she said.

“Maybe,” he said. “But why would they have to risk murder? They could have knocked the place over when nobody was there.”

“True,” she said. “What did Greta do before she worked for Mrs. Musgrave?” Georgina asked.

“She worked for her for about 10 years,” Trigilio said. “Before that, she worked for another family down here for about 15 years. It was actually the family that owns that dry cleaner below where she lives, but the kids sold the big house, kept the business, and the father, in his will, gave her a right to live in that apartment until she dies.”

“That’s a long time to be in the domestic trade,” Georgina thought out loud. “She’s not dumb. Those books in her apartment took some brains to read. And some of those things in her apartment were really nice. Gifts, maybe? I wonder. She clearly isn’t acquisitive, or she’d want more than that little apartment, although it’s nice. But she doesn’t pay any rent. You’d think she would find something less demanding to do to pay for her groceries and whatever else she needs. She didn’t have to keep flogging away, cleaning somebody else’s house.”

“She got a decent salary. But she knew she didn’t have any kind of pension. Just Social Security. Maybe she wanted to keep working because it’s all she knew. She clearly liked Mrs. Musgrave,” he said.

“Bordering on worship, I would say,” Georgina said. “Ingrid would have liked that.”

They drove in silence for a few more minutes, and as they neared police headquarters, he said, “Now, I’m willing to continue to let you know what’s going on with us. Are you willing to keep me informed of what you’re finding out?”

“Oh, absolutely,” Georgina said, popping a piece of Trident gum into her mouth.

“That’s fine, but the minute I find out I’m not getting something, your info here dries, up, too, understood?” he said, pulling into the parking lot.

“Understood,” Georgina said, shaking his hand. She got out of his car, and strolled over to her own car. As she jumped in and backed out, Trigilio watched her, shaking his head.

Georgina drove back into the city, with visions of the bloody scene in her mind. Ingrid had been comfortably secluded in her vast kingdom, and her wealth, and someone had been able to come into that world and end it for her, very, very quickly. A shiver went down her spine as she thought about how easily it seems they had done it, and then disappeared into the night.

She parked her car in the underground lot at her own building, to keep it handy for her trip to Bedford the following day. She called Jason, and had him pick her up in front of her building, all the easier for a quick trip to Fifth Avenue. She called Mr. Musgrave's apartment, to be sure Frederick and Magrit were both there, before she headed over. She didn't mention, and she didn't feel it was her responsibility to mention, that she was investigating the murder. She rather enjoyed the speed with which Frederick had come to the telephone, and thanked her profusely for her condolences. Frederick had always estimated people based on their net worth, so Georgina's acquaintance he valued very highly.

She walked into Geoffrey Musgrave's fabulous apartment, and though she'd never been there, she knew it by sight. She had seen it laid out on the pages of one of Mr. Musgrave's various shelter magazines. It stretched across the entire top of a building that Mr. Musgrave owned, and took up part of the unit below as well. It was stark and decorated almost completely in white, with large-scale colorful modernist paintings strategically located. "Typical," Georgina thought to herself, and bet that she could name the designer who had done it. A maid in uniform met her at the door, and relieved Georgina of her jacket. Frederick and his wife came around the corner together, arm-in-arm, "Georgina!" he said, holding her by the upper arms and kissing her on both cheeks. He was aging fairly well, she thought – hair thinning, but at least he wasn't running to fat. Georgina stood and received the same kiss-kiss treatment from his platinum blond skinnier-than-skinny wife, Rika. She noticed the wife's eyes momentarily narrow as she assessed Georgina's good looks, in order to determine if she were skinnier and more attractive than herself.

"Come in," Frederick said, gesturing toward the living room with its glorious views overlooking Central Park, as though he were in his own home. He didn't know yet that she knew he was, in fact, effectively homeless. "This is all terrible. We've all been in shock. We can't even imagine how to cope."

"Is Magrit here?" Georgina asked innocently, enjoying the shadow which flew across Frederick's face and quickly disappeared.

"She is," Frederick said, offering Georgina a seat, while his wife composed herself in a lovely manner in a bergere chair opposite her, from her Christian Louboutin high heels to her Chanel earrings, the picture of glorious, wealthy comportment, legs crossed at the ankles, wrists resting on her knees. "She's got her son here, too. I think he's taking a nap. Cute little guy," he said without any feeling whatsoever.

"Well, how are you?" Georgina said, reaching over and patting Frederick's knee. He had chosen to take the seat next to her on the sofa. She saw out of the corner of her eye the frown she had expected to see from the blond wife. "This is just unbelievable. How could something like this happen?"

"Honestly, I think it's a lesson to all of us," Frederick said. "We can never be too careful. One has to protect ones' self from the criminal element. Just being fortunate makes one a target."

"Mm, yes," his wife murmured, "that's so true."

"When was the last time you saw your mother?" Georgina asked.

"Oh, let's see," Frederick said, looking up at the ceiling, "it must have been only a month or two ago. We visited her so often down in Cambridge. It's all just so shocking. She was doing so well. She was as happy as I had ever seen her. She was happy in her friendship with my father, hard-won after the divorce, and so happy and proud of her children and their accomplishments. I think she was very, very fulfilled and satisfied. She even had that new boyfriend, who was also killed," he frowned, not quite knowing how to disapprove of Bartolomeo without speaking ill of the dead, "who must have brought some comfort and companionship to her. She deserved it. She deserved all of that happiness. And to see it all brought to a violent end, well," he said, reaching up to wipe away tears at the corners of his eyes that weren't there, "it's just almost too much."

At that moment, Magrit wandered in from a hallway to their right, and headed into the kitchen without noticing them. “Magrit?” Georgina called.

Magrit came back in and looked at Georgina. She was actually in pretty good shape, Georgina noticed. She had her blond hair parted in the center, with two braids at the front pinned back at either side behind her ears. The hair was clean, and the face looked clean, too. Georgina had definitely seen her look worse. “Magrit, how are you?” she said. “Do you remember me? Georgina?”

“Oh, right. Luanne’s friend,” Magrit said, coming over and sitting in between her brother and Georgina, pushing him to the side with her behind. She held both of Georgina’s hands, and said, “are you here about Mother?”

“Yes,” Georgina said, looking at Magrit’s blue eyes, and trying to determine her level of sobriety – thinking she was doing very well, considering. Maybe a sedative or something, but, other than that, she wasn’t exhibiting any symptoms of withdrawal, or being under the influence of anything stronger. Her brain might look like Swiss cheese inside, but Georgina hoped, for the sake of her son, she wouldn’t make it any worse.

“Somebody killed Mother,” Magrit said, holding tightly to Georgina’s hands, and looking into her eyes. “They shot her, and they shot Bart, too.” She started to cry. “I liked Bart. He was nice to Mother. He was really cute, and she liked him.” Georgina put her arm around Magrit and patted her gently on the shoulder, noticing Frederick’s look of annoyance at this public display of grief.

Magrit sat up and wiped her eyes. “Can I get you something to drink, Georgina?” she asked.

“Oh, yes, sorry about that, Georgina, where are my manners? Can we offer you something?” Frederick said, getting up and heading for the kitchen.

“Just a Coke or something would be fine,” she said.

“Bring me a Heineken, please, Fred,” Magrit said.

“Nothing for me,” Rika said.

“How is your boy?” Georgina asked.

“Tommy,” Magrit smiled. “He’s in having his nap with his nanny. He still likes the afternoon nap. The morning nap is long gone.” She turned and accepted the beer glass from Frederick.

Georgina was impressed. Magrit had apparently cleaned up her act quite a bit. The last time she had set eyes on her, she was falling down drunk, and had visible track marks, which she had made no attempt to hide. She was wearing a sleeveless babydoll top right now, and Georgina could see barely noticeable faded scars when she snuck a look, but nothing fresh. “Good for you,” she thought. She chatted for a few moments with Magrit until she excused herself to check on her son.

“Magrit’s looking well,” Georgina said.

“She ought to be, after what Father and Mother spent on cleaning her up,” Frederick sneered. “Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad she’s doing better, but that scumbag boyfriend of hers nearly dragged her into the grave with him, and now the little kid,” he said, gesturing toward the back hallway where Magrit had just gone, “is a bit of a monster. She’s trying to rein him in now, but it’s not easy. He’s got some behavioral problems...”

“To say the least,” huffed Rika.

Frederick frowned at his wife. “Sorry, Georgina, Rika’s a bit upset...”

“He pissed in my Birkin bag,” she said to Georgina.

Georgina suppressed the immediate tendency to laugh, but instead said, “Oh, my goodness, that’s

horrible. It's like a travesty."

"Tell me about it," Rika said, flipping her hair over her shoulder. "I don't care, Frederick, nephew or not, that's \$16,000 she owes me." Rika got up to leave the room, but Georgina stopped her.

"Oh, just one quick thing before you go," she said, hooking Rika firmly with her eyes, "what was the fight with your mom about last month, Frederick?"

Rika's mouth flew open, astonished, and she looked over at Frederick, exhaling loudly. Georgina took in Rika's response fully before she turned to Frederick with a smile. He, too was looking at her with his mouth open. "Um, I'm not sure what you mean," he said. "I don't fight with Mother. I, I didn't fight with Mother." He put his own glass down on the table and looked away from Georgina's gaze. Blink.

"I heard you wanted her to buy your townhouse for you, because the lease is nearly up, and everybody thinks you already own it," Georgina said, turning toward him, taking her right hand, and sweeping her hair off her face, placing the back of her arm on the back of the couch, leaning her head against her hand.

"What? Who told you that, Magrit? Luanne?" Rika shouted.

"Blink, again," Georgina thought.

"Well, that certainly is none of their business," Frederick said. "And, I have to say, Georgina, it's in fairly poor taste to be bringing it up now."

Georgina didn't move or flinch. "Then you're definitely not going to like the fact that I'm going to ask you about the 10, or 20, million dollars that you hope to receive from the insurance company."

"What the fuck?" Frederick said, now clearly losing his cool, and getting up from the couch. "Georgina, really, this is too much. I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"Even though I'm investigating this for Lloyd's, and my report will likely determine what, if anything, you receive?" she said, keeping her voice at the same level of modulation.

There was dead silence for a solid 30 seconds, before Rika broke the ice. "You're investigating," she spat the word out, "for Lloyd's? Aren't you Georgina Adams? Frederick, isn't this Georgina Adams?"

Georgina never moved her eyes away from Frederick's. "Just relax, Frederick," she said. "Sit down."

Frederick sat down, half angry and half intrigued. Rika still stood, her hands on her hips, now, wondering what was going on.

"I work for Konig sometimes, investigating things that have some bearing on the kind of work I do," she said.

"I think I heard you were a psychologist or something," Frederick said, trying to get all of the pieces to fall into place.

"I'm more of an academic, really," she said, "and sometimes I do work that interests me. When I heard this thing happened to your mother, I was interested. I knew Ingrid, and I knew you guys, and I wanted to find out what happened. That's all."

"Well... I don't..." Frederick sputtered.

Rika, still standing, asked, "but you're going to report to Lloyd's? You get to decide whether we get our money?"

"Shut up, Rika," Frederick said quietly. Rika sat down again.

"Don't pee your pants, Fred," Georgina said. "Wouldn't you rather have a family friend looking into

this, than a stranger? I know I would if I were in the same position.”

“Well, yes, of course,” he said, sitting back, and trying to regain his composure.

“So why don’t you tell me about the fight?” she asked again.

Rika crossed her arms in front of her and looked disgusted that her personal business was about to be divulged.

“Well, it’s true,” Frederick said, “we’ve got a wonderful townhouse, and we’ve been leasing it. My allowance is adequate for that, but it’s inadequate to purchase it,” his face grew slightly more pink as he went on. “Now that the lease is up, we’ve been given the option to buy it. And it’s not a bad price. I wanted to buy it. But Mother wouldn’t give me the money. It’s as simple as that.” He got up and went to the bar to fix himself a serious drink. He poured some good Scotch into a tumbler, and took a sip before he came back to the couch.

“And now that she’s dead, you could afford to buy it with the money – that’s what a small-minded, suspicious person might think,” Georgina said, comfortingly.

“I’m going to kill my mother over a townhouse?” he laughed and showed his perfect white teeth. “I wanted it, but I certainly can get another place to live. I do still get an allowance, and I have company stock. I’m not independently wealthy, but I’m fine. It’s wasn’t that big of a deal.”

Georgina found herself believing him. “Well, I did have to ask, Fred. I’m sure you understand.”

“Certainly,” he said, not looking at her, and sipping his cocktail.

She asked them a few more questions about what they’d been up to, and slowly, the conversation turned into a typical catching-up session. The mood lightened slightly, and Georgina could sense them relaxing again.

Georgina figured she had done just about enough damage for one day, and wanted to leave on a high note. “Well,” she said, “I’m going to get going.” She stood and picked up her bag, slinging it over her shoulder.

Rika stood up, quickly realizing that having Georgina as a friend was in her best interest. “Well, feel free to come over anytime, Georgina,” she said. “You’ll have to excuse us for being shocked, but, you’re right, it’s better to have a friend of the family looking into this, than some stranger.”

“Yes,” Frederick said, standing and readily agreeing. “We’re grateful for anything you could find out,” he said, “whatever you can do for Mother.”

Exiting with a quick kiss-kiss for each of them, Georgina stepped into the elevator and called Jason. By the time she got to the lobby, he was waiting right outside the front door for her. She swept inside and went back to her apartment to revise her murder board, and get a good night’s sleep before starting out again the following morning, this time for Bedford.

Chapter Five

Georgina got up the following morning, and got ready with her usual care and attention to her appearance. She was again dressed casually, in jeans and flats, but she made sure she wore one of her lower-cut tank tops underneath a deep V-necked cashmere sweater. She knew Geoffrey Musgrave, Sr., and she knew he could hear a woman better if he could see some cleavage.

She took the elevator down to the basement level, and walked to the left, seeing her shiny black Rover just where she left it, in the spot she rarely used. She pressed the button which, with a boop-boop, turned off the alarm system, and reached for the driver's side door handle.

She caught a movement out of the corner of her right eye, and was able to dodge to the left just barely fast enough to avoid the pipe aimed at her head, hearing it shatter the glass of her driver's side window instead. She fell off balance, down to the left, and rolled away toward the wall quickly, but not quickly enough. She saw the dark hulking figure swing the pipe again, missing her head, but connecting with her upper arm hard enough for her to hear as well as feel the breaking bones. She screamed at the pain, but managed to lean her back against the wall hard enough to give extra force to a hard kick directed at the man's groin. He howled, too, and fell to his knees, momentarily incapacitated.

She forced herself up, her left arm completely useless to her and already excruciating. She got her first look at her attacker. He was easily 6'4" tall, and close to 300 pounds. More blubber than muscle, she thought quickly, or she would easily have her head bashed in by now. He wore a black ski mask, obviously to conceal himself from the security cameras that ran 24-7 in the posh garage. She didn't bother to get a much closer look, as he growled like a bear and launched himself toward her again. She aimed a kick at his midsection, but wasn't quite fast enough, as he tackled her rearwards against the wall. She felt the back of her head smack hard against the cement, and saw stars, momentarily disoriented.

Her attacker had clearly dropped his pipe when she crushed his testicles, but he improvised with his bare hands, grabbing her around the throat from behind. Before he could get a good hold, though, she used his own weight against him to duck from under him, and shift him to the right, against her car. Using her good right arm, she drove her elbow up and under his ribs, feeling at least one of them crack. Her attacker again howled, and in that moment, she was able to sweep his legs out from underneath him, and deposit him on his side, with his back against her Rover's tire, and Georgina on top of him, her back to him. One of his arms was pinned underneath him, and before he could extricate it, Georgina planted both of her legs on the column beside her Rover, and used all of her leg strength to hold him in place and drive her elbow into his windpipe. He thrashed and clawed with the left arm he had free, punching her several times in the back and side of the head, but with his one arm pinned, he couldn't move out of his vulnerable position. His blows connected, though, and Georgina began to see far more stars than garage as she continued to lean on him. She tried hard to maintain her consciousness, but eventually the stars obliterated everything and it all turned to black.

Georgina woke up slowly, trying to make sense of a white suspended ceiling above her, and a pale blue curtain beside her. It took a few moments for her to realize she was in the hospital. It took a few more moments for her to remember why she was there. Once she did, she tried to sit up. She found herself hooked up to an intravenous drip through a stint in her right hand. Her left arm was tied to her side with a sling that seemingly went all the way around, because she was unable to move it at all. When she did try, though, a thumping dull ache told her she had broken her humerus. She wished she could have a look, to see if it was a compound fracture. She shivered for a moment, when she thought of the impact of the pipe. Then her eyes flipped wide open, and she thought of the man who had wielded the pipe. She looked around her, but saw no one in the room she was in, which was very comfortable as

hospital rooms go. She had to know if someone from her building had found her, and if they had found the man who did this, too.

The button to summon the nurse lay on the table on her bedstand, about two feet away, and up to the right. She groaned, but determined to reach up and find it. She got it with two fingers, and dragged it toward her, and punched the button hard. She waited a few seconds, and looked at the drip bag, seeing that she was being dosed with Fentanyl. “Oh, Jesus,” she thought. She was post-surgical. They must have already set her arm, if they were treating with something as strong as that. Having not received a response yet, she punched the button again twice, and finally heard, “can I help you?”

“Yes,” Georgina said, her voice sounding thick and unusual to her own ear, because her throat was so dry, “I’m conscious. Can I see my attending right now?”

“I’ll be right in,” was the response.

“That would be great, dear, but bring the doctor with you,” Georgina said.

“O-kay,” was the steely-sounding response. The nurse did come in without the doctor, to check Georgina’s vitals, and her drip, and told Georgina, with a fake smile, that Dr. Han would be in to see her in a moment.

“That’s great,” Georgina said. “Bring me the telephone, and put it over here by my right hand.”

The nurse did as Georgina asked, giving her a dirty look which Georgina ignored. She began punching numbers even before the nurse exited the room. Her first call was to her private general practitioner, Dr. Westfall. She received his answering service and told them it was an emergency, and she expected to hear from Dr. Westfall sometime in the next five minutes.

Two minutes later, the phone rang. “Andrew?” Georgina asked.

“Georgina, you don’t even need to tell me. Dr. Han is taking care of you there at the Hospital for Special Surgery.”

“How did I get here, and how soon can I get out of this foul place?”

“Georgina, I believe your room has leather furniture and a view of the East River,” Dr. Westfall said.

“I didn’t ask you who the decorator was,” she said, raising her voice, and feeling her head start to throb. “Ouch,” she said.

“Yes, Georgina. You’re in pain. You’ve not only got a fractured humerus...”

“Compound?”

“No,” he said. “You’ve sustained several blows to the head which have caused your loss of consciousness, and have caused simple concussion. You should recover completely from that in just a few days.”

“About that,” she said, “what happened to the guy who beat me up? Did they get him?”

“He’s not quite as lucky as you,” Dr. Westfall said. “He’s at New York Downtown, and he’s in a coma. A Mrs. Jacobs from your building apparently found you both unconscious.”

Georgina breathed deeply. She wasn’t quite sure how to feel. Should she be happy she hadn’t killed someone, or should she be disappointed, because he had clearly been trying to kill her?

“Alright, well...” she paused, briefly, collecting her thoughts, “Andrew, I want to get out of here. Do whatever you need to do, hire whomever you need to hire, but get me moved back to my apartment immediately, and get me whatever medical care I’ll be needing over there. I want to be home before two hours go by, or I’ll be ripping this stint out of my hand and taking a cab.” She hung up the phone before

he had a chance to argue with her, and dialed another number she'd used recently and had memorized.

"Geoffrey Musgrave," she said, "Georgina Adams calling."

She waited only about thirty seconds before she heard his voice. "Adams," he said, "I've been waiting for you, damn it..."

He started to say something else, but she interrupted him. "Geoffrey, I'm in the hospital. I just got the shit kicked out of me in the parking garage under my apartment. The man who did it is in a coma. I do not want to hear about it in any one of your newspapers, and I'd like you to lean on your friends for favors, and keep it out of the other two, too."

"What the..." he began.

"Geoffrey, I've got a broken arm, a concussion, and I put a guy in a coma," she shouted, "and it's probably all your fucking fault because I'm investigating what happened to your wife. Keep it the hell out of the papers, do you understand?"

She heard nothing but deep breathing for a moment, and then heard, "I'll take care of it." He hung up.

Georgina laid back, letting the Fentanyl do its work, because the time she'd spent on the phone had both given her a headache, and strained her injured arm. And she felt like she could finally relax and concentrating on healing, quickly.

Once Georgina was settled in comfortably at home, she had to get through the obligatory paperwork and details of having been physically assaulted. She sat through an annoying interview with a uniformed female police officer from the NYPD, in which the woman filled in the blanks on a form, and asked very few questions other than those that were printed there. She was shown a photograph of the man, eyes closed, tubes in his mouth. "No," she said, "I've never seen him before." The photo depicted a pudgy white man, so white he must have rarely seen the sun, with a shaved head showing a fringe of reddish hair and a brownish-red untidy goatee on his chin. His head seemed to sit on his shoulders without connection, except for the three chins Georgina could count.

"Can you think of any reason he might attack you?"

"I don't know – robbery?" Georgina said, just waiting for the interview to be over with. She already knew from Daniel Levine, who was having Konig look into the attack, that the man had snuck in along the side of the building when another occupant of the building had driven their car in the night before. She had personally arranged to have a 24-hour guarded security presence in the garage, and the building Board of Trustees had been more than happy to pick up the tab, after being assured Georgina would not sue them.

Detective Trigilio came by shortly after the uniformed officer left. Georgina had called to let him know what had happened, but she hadn't expected him to drive into the City to see her. Armeda gave him a nasty look as he came in the front door, and tapped him a little harder than necessary on the shoulder, "You don't tire her out," she said, wagging her finger in his face.

Georgina smiled as she saw Detective Trigilio turn into an obedient little boy, "Oh, no, ma'am," he said, as he looked around, taking in the vast apartment with an indulgent grin on his face.

Georgina was perched on one of the sofas in her large living room. The room was so big that it easily accommodated two separate seating areas on opposite sides of the room, one with slightly more formal furniture, such as a newly upholstered and refurbished Chippendale suite of seating furniture which had been in Georgina's family for years, and which was centered around a fireplace with a large marble mantle. The other seating area was much more comfortable, consisting of a sofa with puffy down-filled

cushions, chintz, silk and chenille fabrics, chosen more for their comfort than their provenance, and a chaise lounge that was nearly as large as a twin bed, where Georgina was now ensconced. This seating area faced the same kind of television setup that Georgina had found in Ingrid's bedroom. A middling sort-of painting that Georgina liked, but didn't mind wearing a bit, rolled up in its intricately-carved gold frame to reveal a 36-inch flat screen television.

She was dressed in a sleeveless t-shirt, pajama bottoms, and had a gray cashmere throw wrapped around her shoulders. In addition to her left arm in a sling, she had her left leg up to soothe a muscle she had also strained during the struggle. Her hair was tugged up into a ponytail, and a bunch of papers, magazines, books, and her laptop lay by her side. She also had a packet of letters Mr. Musgrave had written to Mrs. Musgrave, after their divorce – the contents of the brown paper-wrapped package she had found when Trigilio wasn't looking. She had been reading those when he stopped by, and she put a pillow over them now, hoping he wouldn't notice.

"Well, you don't look so bad," Trigilio said, "considering." He sat down in one of the chairs opposite her without her invitation.

"You should see the other guy," Georgina said evenly.

"I have," he said. "I've asked NYPD if I can be of any assistance in identifying this bozo. They're running his fingerprints rights now. After a stunt like that, I would be very surprised if he didn't have some of record." He unbuttoned his jacket to make more room for his big belly. "But I don't think we'll be talking to him anytime soon. He's still in a coma, and he may have been without oxygen for some time," Trigilio said. "I'm hoping his jacket might turn up some known associates, and we can go from there. It's not a bad lead. How did you manage to get the jump on him?" he asked. "Big guy."

"I didn't," she said. "I just happened to see his reflection in the window before he hit me," Georgina said, "and he was a little too pudgy for his own good. It slowed him down."

"Oh, no doubt about that," Trigilio said, patting his belly. "I'm glad I don't have to chase anybody around anymore."

"Hmm," Georgina hummed, noncommittally.

"So, what's next for you?" he asked.

"I told you I'd let you know if I found anything out," Georgina said. "I didn't say you could have my itinerary."

"Just curious," he said, shrugging. "I thought you might like to know what I found out from the security company about the system, but if you're not interested..." He gestured with his hands open.

Georgina frowned, "I'm going out to Bedford to talk to Mrs. Musgrave's ex-husband, if he can manage to make some time for me. What did the security company say?"

"It was like I said, the system was put in about three years ago. They had recommended updates to get it recording onto digital, etc., but she never got around to it. The outside camera ran onto a videotape, but they were only on when the system was armed. The system on the inside of the house ran separately, and was pretty much always on, barring a complete loss of power."

"Well," Georgina said. "It pays to upgrade. And what about the high school girls who used to work there?"

"Went back for the last three years, since the system went in. Almost all of them are out of town at college. I've interviewed two that are still in town, and commute into the city. We'll eventually talk to all of them, but from the outside, they all seem like nice girls, and from what Ms. Larson's told us, they probably didn't get a look at the system if she was always breathing down their necks."

“If she was,” Georgina muttered.

“Yeah, we’re checking out the gardeners, too, although Mrs. Larson tells me it was the policy to never, never let them inside the house.” he paused. “I keep thinking about her, too,” Trigilio said. “Every time I go and see her, I just somehow get more interested.”

“I agree,” Georgina said, “I still think it’s a long time for somebody to be in the domestic service if they don’t necessarily have to be. And that apartment thing – the more I think about it – how normal would it be to give your housekeeper a place to live for the rest of her life? I’m sure the kids would like to have that space for themselves, to either rent out or use for office space. It seems too friendly – almost like family.”

Georgina thought about how young Ms. Larson would have been at the time she worked for the drycleaner’s family, and how it almost felt like the way one would take care of a mistress, not a housekeeper, but she kept her thoughts to herself. “Can you find out more about her?”

“I intend to,” he said. “So, how long is this going to keep you on the couch?” he asked, gesturing at the little nest she had created for herself.

“Only one more day,” she said. “I’ve got some lumps on the back and side of my head that need a little time to go down before I try to drive again, my doctor tells me.” “If I ever decide to drive myself again,” she thought, but didn’t say to Trigilio.

“Concussion?” Trigilio asked.

“Slight,” Georgina said.

“Yeah, you seemed smarter the other day.”

“Very funny,” she said.

“Alright, well, if I find out anything, I’ll let you know,” he said, getting up. “Do you need any magazines or takeout, or anything? It must be hell to have to recuperate in a dump like this.”

“Thanks for stopping by, Detective,” she said, picking up her computer and pretending to ignore him. “Don’t feel as though you need to rush back.”

“Unless I’ve got something else you want to know, right?” he said, smiling and walking toward the front door.

“Exactly,” she said, looking up and smiling at his back as he strode toward the door and let himself out, with Armeda rushing behind him to shut the door and sweep the entryway.

Georgina was able to get some work done, some journal reading and some research on her computer, but her mind kept drifting back to Mrs. Musgrave, and the image of her dead body lying sprawled on her carpet. She started on her laptop, going back through archived copies of party pictures taken by Patrick McMullen, and others who do the same thing, trying to remind herself who, exactly, it was Ingrid palled-around with. There were countless pictures to be gone through – Ingrid posing with literally hundreds of New York City’s erstwhile socialites, from the truly accomplished to the truly desperate. A few caught her eye, and struck her memory. She started copying certain photos and making notes next to them on her computer, creating a photo album of sorts, with captions like, “Didn’t she travel on their yacht during the winter last year? Didn’t I see them having dinner together at Cipriani?” Georgina started a short list of ladies she thought might know Ingrid well – well enough to talk to about disinheriting her children, anyway.

This was delicate work, though. It wasn’t like taking the legs out from under the Musgrave kids – these were serious people with money as old as hers, and people she really, really didn’t want to piss off. The first lady she tried to reach was not in the country, so she left a message. The second lady she tried to

reach was simply not at home. She left a message there as well. Georgina hit pay dirt, however, with her third call. She called Ingrid's co-chair on the Committee which organized the Costume Gala at the Met last year. She knew the ladies primarily attended lunches and chose themes and menus, went over guest lists, etc., and left the really tough work to people who were paid. But she also knew even that much was an enormous undertaking for an event like the Costume Gala. Georgina was a decent contributor to the Metropolitan Museum herself, and had originally thought the party was quite cool, but it had, over the past couple of years, gradually devolved into the Vanity Fair Oscars party of the East Coast. The 'temporarily famous' had never been invited in the party's heyday, but now the place reeked with tabloid flavor.

Georgina thought she would probably leave those observations out when she spoke to Charlotte Rumsey, though. "Charlotte!" Georgina gushed, when Mrs. Rumsey came to the phone.

"Georgina!" Charlotte gushed right back, "how are you? I haven't seen you in ages. What have you been up to? How's the riding?"

"Well, I haven't fallen off lately, so that's an improvement for me," Georgina laughed.

"Oh, now, I know you're one of the best," Charlotte said, "don't play coy with me."

"You're so sweet," Georgina said. "How have you been?" she asked gently. "I've been thinking about you a little bit ever since I heard about what happened to Ingrid Musgrave. I know you were her friend, and I just..." she paused, leaving the sentence unfinished, "well, it's just horrible."

"Oh, Georgina," Charlotte said, her voice getting a little lower and a bit thicker. "It's horrible. Did you know Ingrid very well? I didn't realize..."

"I graduated from Brown with Luanne," Georgina said, feeling badly that she had to parlay that tenuous link into a relationship that might get Mrs. Rumsey to open up, "and I spent a bit of time with Ingrid, just talking and... I found her to be just one of the most generous people... so cultured and witty... it's just such a loss."

"Oh, Georgina," she said, "there will never be another like her. Truly one of the grande dames of New York City, and the world, for that matter, certainly. And Bartolomeo... I'm just sick over it."

"I think she told me she spent some time with you and your husband last year. I think that meant a lot to her," Georgina said, gritting her teeth, and hoping she hadn't just pushed too far, with an outright lie.

When Charlotte Rumsey started crying softly, Georgina felt bad, but knew she had got it right. "Oh, Georgina. We had a wonderful time. It was so relaxing. We just sat on the deck of our boat and talked and talked and talked. My husband actually liked Bart, so the two of them would spend the whole day shooting skeet, or watching sports on the satellite television, but, honestly, Ingrid and I had some of the best conversations of our life."

"You had just finished the Costume Gala, hadn't you? A triumph," Georgina said.

"Oh, that's so nice of you to say, Georgina. And thank you, again, for sponsoring a table. It is so much work, though. Most people have no idea. We start about nine months ahead of time with our planning and work, work, work, and then it's over in a flash."

"But a lot of money gets raised for a great cause," Georgina said. "I know Ingrid wasn't afraid of hard work when it came to the Metropolitan."

"Oh, it meant the world to her," Charlotte said, "really, just the world. We were exhausted, and we were talking about everything that was important. You're still so young, Georgina, but once you reach our sort of age, you really only bother yourself about a few things you find very, very important. And the rest of it, you just let it go."

“I haven’t stayed in close touch with Luanne,” Georgina said, again treading on thin ice, and hoping she was guessing correctly. “I think I knew Ingrid better than Luanne. And, honestly, I think I – well, I hate to say it, but I really liked Ingrid better than Luanne, or even Frederick, who I knew a little bit. She was just so much more substantial... I don’t know. It probably wasn’t their fault – Geoffrey their father was just so busy...” she left that hanging out in the air, hoping Charlotte would pick it up. She held her breath.

“Well it certainly wasn’t Ingrid’s fault the way they all turned out,” Charlotte said, very pointedly, and the only thing that kept Georgina from bouncing up and down in her chair was her bad leg. She knew a woman on the verge of a colossal, glorious bitch on a subject when she heard one. “Ingrid spent so much time with those children, and gave them the very best of everything, the best schools, the best companions.... Ingrid worked and worked, and those ungrateful children – not completely embarrassing – at least not publicly, but they were just greedy, greedy, greedy, and had no idea how to take care of themselves. Ingrid had paid her dues – she worked her fingers to the bone when she was first married to Geoffrey, and he owes that media empire of his to her. There’s not a doubt about it. She scrimped and saved and worked, and entertained, and did everything that was required. When they divorced, Geoffrey was good to her, very good to her, and she deserved it. But those kids, well, what did they know how to do except shop? How does one make a career out of that? The one who lives in San Francisco calling himself an important collector, always asking for more, more, more. Luanne always begging in that round-and-round way of hers about whatever her latest bleeding heart cause was. Magrit stoned and bringing bastard grandchildren into the world. And little Ingrid and Matthew – oh my Heavens! Can you even imagine a brother and sister running a bookshop together, and living together, and carrying on in public the way they have? Ingrid practically wanted to have them both committed! She wouldn’t even talk to those two toward the end. She deserved better... far, far better than she got from those worthless cretins of hers.” Charlotte started to cry again. “She deserved to enjoy her time. She deserved to enjoy Bart, and she should have had decent children, with decent occupations she could be proud of, and grandchildren she could be proud of, but all of them, worthless, worthless, worthless. She was even a little bit afraid of them, if you want to know the truth,” Charlotte said, and Georgina’s eyebrows went up.

“How so?” she asked, breathlessly.

“She actually thought they might just murder her to get her money. If they didn’t want to wait until she died of natural causes. She said ‘I’m a little too healthy for their preference.’ She was joking, sort of, but I don’t think she would have put it past them. Now they’re getting all that money, and she’s gone.” Charlotte clearly didn’t know about the will, the fact that the children had been disinherited, and the codicil, but it all made clear sense now to her. Ingrid did hate her children, and was honestly afraid of them. Maybe that’s why she had the indoor cameras, not so much to be a voyeur, but because they made her nervous when they were in the house, and it’s almost certainly why she added the codicil to the will about a mandatory investigation. “What a family,” she thought.

Charlotte went on for several more minutes, being subtly egged on by Georgina, but she had already gotten everything she wanted. They agreed to see each other at the memorial service, and made plans to have lunch together, “real, real soon.”