

Chapter 1

THEY came in with guns drawn. There were two of them. Both wore Halloween masks. Bishop was Donald Trump complete with hair. Thornton wore a Chucky mask also with a shock of hair. Both wore latex gloves and even booties on their sneakers.

It was a little past noon on a sunny spring Sunday in the New York City suburbs when they surprised her in the spacious kitchen preparing lunch.

She was dressed in a short sleeveless pink dress, with buttons down the front, which showed off shapely and toned legs with curves in all the right places. At 52, Hildy Swanson was still a looker.

She dropped the salad tongs on the floor and looked at the intruders with shocked surprised.

“If she moves, kill her,” Bishop barked to Thornton. Then he shouted at Hildy, “Where’s your phone? What’s your password?”

After she pointed to her cell and gave them the password, they hastily gagged her and sat her down at the kitchen table. They took her photo with her phone, scribbled her password on a piece of paper next to it and then left it along with a manila envelope addressed to “Mr. Cassidy” near the unfinished salad.

Bishop took out another blank piece of paper and a black sharpie. He put the paper on the table and gave Hildy the sharpie. Her hands were shaking.

“Write what I tell you,” he ordered.

When she was done Bishop took the paper. They tied up her hands, walked her out of the well-appointed five-bedroom, four-bathroom colonial with the requisite pool and patio in the back, out to the circular driveway, past the Mercedes and Mini to a small

black Honda. They bundled her in the trunk, got in, took off their masks, gloves and booties and drove off.

The entire encounter took less than fifteen minutes.

In the car, Bishop reflected on Hildy's short dress and her curves. Not bad, not bad at all for an old broad, he thought. Nobody had told him he couldn't mix business with a little fun he thought.

As they drove out neither man noticed the security camera perched on a tree at the bottom of the driveway.

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About 90 minutes later RG Cassidy returned home from Sunday tennis practice with his club's Westchester Country Tennis League (WCTL) Open division team. They were preparing for the next weekend's championship match against Chestnut Ridge and it was a hard and spirited workout. He had a grey Oklahoma State tee-shirt on and white Adidas tennis hat. At 37, he was in pretty good shape—five feet ten, about 165 pounds—with light brown hair and brilliant blue eyes. He had an engaging smile and plenty of women thought he was good-looking.

After playing tournament golf as a youth through college and even taking a swing at making the PGA Tour, Cassidy had picked up tennis about six years before, finding that his native athletic prowess made him exceptionally well suited to the game. A smattering of lessons had helped enhance his performance and now he was one of the better players at the club with a coveted singles spot on the club's very competitive WCTL league team sprinkled with a several former college players.

He headed into the kitchen for a cold drink. That's when he saw the uneaten salad and the envelope. He opened the envelope. The ransom note was typical in that it was printed on plain white paper. Its message was not.

We got your wife. Check out the phone

Bring \$300,000

Trencher's Farm Golf Course

Tomorrow at 1:00

Tee time in your name

18 holes match play

Win and you get your wife back

Lose and we keep her for more money

No tricks No cops Be there

He saw the phone. Opened it. Saw the photo of Hildy trussed up and sitting right where he stood now at the kitchen table. Then he searched everywhere—inside and outside the house—calling out her name all the while.