

HAL HICKTON

Tusks, Tamil Tigers, Trouble



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by

Hal Hickton

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Chapter 1

Gray skies were growling. Thunder rumbled close by. The wind was picking up now, light rain beginning to fall. Unusually warm weather for Northern Ontario in late October.

The old Ford pick-up slid to a halt in front of the paddock gate, worn tires pushing gravel as the brakes locked up. The small, old barn ahead was in contrast to the newer buildings behind it. Seth James got out unsteadily.

"Shut up you fleabag!" he yelled at the barking German Shepherd, chained close to the bungalow 200 yards away. He knew the owner would be away until tomorrow. He reached back into the cab and picked up his micky of whiskey from the front seat. He walked towards the barn, breathing heavily.

"Have to lose some weight" he muttered to himself. He paused and took a swig from the bottle, gasping as the whiskey went down. He shook his head and put the bottle in his coverall pocket. At 72 years and close to 250 lbs he was feeling his age. He rubbed his grizzled chin and opened the paddock gate and walked the few yards towards the barn. Unlocked as always. Pushing the door open he went inside and flicked on the lights. He let the barn door swing in the wind. The exhaust fans hummed loudly.

'Stinking place' he muttered. Thunder was much closer now, rain getting heavier. Seth adjusted his eyes. The fly crap and cobwebs dimmed the light from the 100 watt bulbs somewhat.

He peered down the small barn and grunted in satisfaction. The bales of straw at the other end of the barn looked undisturbed. He walked towards them glancing at the wild boars in the pens. Mostly sows. They were at the back of the pens, ears erect, sensing danger. The last pen held the black Russian boar. Large at 400lbs and standing 4 feet high at his leather like thick shoulders.

"Black bastard" Seth said aloud..

The boar recognized the voice and moved to the rear of the pen, 12 inch tusks gleaming, chomping in fear, foam forming around his mouth.

Seth turned to the straw bales and moved them aside. Right at the back he found what he was looking for. The large Zip Loc bag was filled with marijuana buds. He put the bag in his coveralls.

Turning to go he paused then picked up a long handled pitchfork.

He leaned over the pen wall and jabbed at the boar with it.. The tines did not penetrate the tough shoulder skin very far. The boar moved away, chomping again. Seth paused and put a cigaret in his mouth. He was in the act of lighting it when a flash of lightning hit one

of the tall firs beside the barn.

Startled he dropped the old Zippo lighter inside the boar pen. The straw bedding caught fire right away. Cursing he hurried down the passage way towards the open door. Seconds later the lightning struck fir came crashing down on the barn roof collapsing it. The ceiling gave way sending the straw bales from the loft down in to the pens. The animals were screaming in panic as the flames quickly spread.

Seth was trying to run, impeded by straw bales. The wild boar jumped the pen wall as did most of the other animals. Fight or flight mode. Seth was at the door now and glanced behind. The wild boar was bearing down on him, tusks gleaming his head swinging side to side.

Seth screamed in fear then in pain as one of the boars tusks sliced in to his thigh as it rushed past.

Blood spurted. He got through the door then the paddock gate. His leg gave way and he went down onto the gravel.

The boars went to the right, through the paddock, through the opening in the electric fence and in to the forest.

Seth got up groggily and opening the door of his truck and pulled himself in. Sweating profusely, grimacing in pain he fired it up. He jammed it in drive and swung the wheel around, accelerating out of the driveway. He hit the main gravel road and almost lost control. The rain was almost blinding it was so heavy. Turning West he glanced at his leg seeing the blood oozing out.

‘Tourniquet’ he thought. ‘No doctor for 20 miles’. He fought to keep the truck on the wet gravel.

He put his hand down and felt inside the rip in his coveralls. The gash was deep and bleeding profusely. “Shit!” he said. He grabbed an old newspaper and began to wad it up with his right hand, his left trying to keep the truck on the road. He slowed down and managed to get the wadded paper over the wound. He took the bottle out of his pocket and took a swig.

“Much better! Lets see how fast this old bugger will go!” 5 miles further on he could feel the wadded newspaper was getting saturated and he was feeling dizzy. Panicking he pushed the accelerator harder fighting the steering wheel to keep the truck in the middle of the road. The rain was very heavy, the wiper blades unable to keep up.

“Oh shit!” Seth yelled as squinted through the windshield spotting the tree laying across the road.

He hit the brakes as hard as he could. He was carrying too much speed. The truck hit

the tree at 40 mph and catapulted up in the air. It came down on it's roof onto the gravel road and the cab crumpled on impact. Seth died almost instantly.

Chapter 2

The 2 two seater Cessna 152 was cleared for take off and was soon up in the air heading East..

"Two hours?" the passenger asked. "Clear weather anyway." he added.

Bill Bressete was a big man, early 40's. Well muscled, shaved head.

"About that." replied Dave Willis as he adjusted his course a little. "Yup, good weather anyway." "What were you doing in Sudbury?" asked Dave. "Or can I guess?" "Go ahead. Guess" replied Bill.

"K. Seen you in MacDonalds last night. Recognized you from the Reserve. Assumed you had just brought in a bunch of pot. Now assume that something went wrong and you did not have a ride home." "Yeah, something like that." He was quiet a moment then said "Two hours to get back, no music in here, my cell phone is dead. What better way to pass the time than talk? Goes both ways though." Dave Willis shrugged. "Fine by me. Usually these trips are boring." then "Give me your cell.

Can recharge it here." Bill passed it to him. Dave plugged in the adapter. "K. Your turn." "Partially right. Not too good a crop this year. Wet Spring and all. Hell, you should know we grow it on your land."

Dave nodded. "Yes, looked pretty ratty until July."

Anyway" Bill continued "partner and I were not up to the pre-sold quota. Padded the buds with leaves. Filler. Probably only 5% but it was noticed. We already had some cash advances. We have supplied these guys for years anyway. Met as usual outside of town. Just getting dark. They had a new guy with them. Funny accent. He was in charge. Not a Brit accent but close. Anyway, he looked at the product and claimed 20% was junk. He was starting to pull a gun as we were arguing so I hit him. He dropped. I grabbed the bag of cash and ran. Heard a few shots as I was running. So partner is either dead or wounded or escaped. I hitch hiked in to town after hiding for a while. Hard to get a ride. Who wants to stop for an Indian at night on the highway?" "What about your vehicle? Traceable?"

"Nah. Borrowed.. Partner makes it to the hospital with a gunshot wound, no big deal around here.

If he is dead.." he just shrugged. "Name of the game." Dave was silent for a while. "Interesting. But they know where you live. They may come looking." "No big deal. We can take care of it." then "The almost Brit or whatever. He is one mean guy by the looks of him. Not a big guy but just mean. OK your turn. Why do you keep those wild boars there?" then added "Getting old for that stuff ain't you?" "Old but not dead. 50 next January. The spirit is there though. Teeth all gone, plastic now, but all other parts intact. Eyes giving up so probably last year flying. Shrunk from 6 feet to 5 foot eleven. 185 lbs from 200. Age thingy is all. One lives with it. Adapts or gives up." He reached over and fished out a cigaret from the pack and lit it.

"Smoke too much, drink too much. Anyway the wild boars. Bought the 400 acres years ago.

Ontario Land Tax sales. Retreat kind of thing. Came with the mineral rights. Put up a few sheds alongside the old barn, razed the log house and built the bungalow. Liked the lake on the west of the property. Your res is just on the other side of it. As you well know. Anyway, I read about hunting wild boars in Texas. Game farm. Tried it. Few other places also. Too easy, hunters said. They had no natural instinct, or not much anyway. So tried to import some. Too much expense and paper work involved.

Finally managed to import some semen from a farm in Russia that bred them. Lot of hassle. My vet helped me. She is Russian or something. Speaks the language. Expensive to import. First batch failed.

Second batch got I lucky. 3 sows caught. 4 in each litter when they farrowed. 12 piglets. Male and female died early. Left me ten little pigs. 3 boars seven gilts. Bred them together about two years ago.

Had enough then to fence off 200 acres and let them go." Bill asked "Money in it?"

"There is now. New, superior genetics is what most game farms want. Week from now have 1 boar and 5 sows going to Texas. Many orders for them. Demand is high. Shit!" He pulled the plane up sharply then leveled off over the flock of geese. "Should have been watching" he said."Oh well" Bill said. "Age thingy."

They were silent for a while watching the forests below. Sun was up and looked like a beautiful day. "So" Bill said, "were did you get your money? Land and new bungalow and imported semen and all?"

"What?"

"What did you do before you moved up here?"

Dave looked at him a moment hesitating then he shrugged. "I was in the British Merchant Navy.

Got drunk. Missed my ship in Nigeria. Hired on as a security guard for an oil rig there. On land. Lots of trouble with the locals. Got back to the UK after a few months. The company contacted me after a week or so. Another security job in South America. So I went. Mine security. They moved me around country to country. Wherever there was a problem. Spent almost twenty years around there. Colombia was the last place. Bunch of guys were dealing dope. Usual stuff. Big money. Anyway. I did not deal.

Objected to it. Not too much I could do though.” He was thoughtful for a minute. “Was in a bar one night when I was asked by this little old guy if I was interested in getting out of the country. With a good pay off. Told him I did not do drugs. Guy was from the DEA or working for them. After a month decided to talk with him and his boss. US Citizenship. Many dollars, if I told them what I knew. Which was a lot by then. I did. I was jailed with the rest. Three weeks later I had a supposed heart attack and died. The DEA flew me in to the US in a casket. New ID all the rest of it. Got my money. Headed to Canada and applied for citizenship. So here I am. Ex-security guard.” “Bullshit!” Bill said “you are making it up!”

Dave shrugged. “My other version is I am an alien.” Bill laughed out loud. “Prefer the first version!” then “They cannot track you? The ones you turned in? Security guard? Contractors they call them now” Dave he said “Cell phone is half charged.” he handed it to Bill. He looked at his watch. Couple hours or less..

Bill dialed and then shut it off. “No answer will call back.” Few more minutes of silence the Bill asked “Why were you in Sudbury?”

“Mining deal. A company drilled on my place years ago. Found rare earth but not enough at that time to mine it. Chinese had just found very large deposits. Sold it cheaper. Some of the elements went down to \$200 from \$1000 an ounce. California mines price back then.” “So what changed? What is it used for?”

“Rare earth is not rare. Some elements in it are used in cell phones, TV’s and just about everything else in small quantities. Just getting it out of the ground and processing it has been cost prohibitive. But China keeps upping the price as they are the worlds largest suppliers. No one wants to be hostage. So mines are being re-opened worldwide. Now it is almost profitable.” He paused. “Anyway that is how it was explained to me.” “Lots of money coming your way?”

“Hope so. Settled on 20 cents a ton taken out.”

“That is not much! How many tons a day?”

“Whatever they can take out. All goes to a processing plant. Every ton gives them an ounce maybe, of what they need. Then that has got to be refined again. Tons a day? Not sure. Trucks with a 40 ton capacity. 15 minute fill up. Running 24 hours. Few hundred a

day for me? Half that, good money. OK. Your turn. Heard about the residential schools etc,. Were you there?" "Nope. Bunch of perverts ran those schools. Now they are having hearings for Christ sake! Healing the wounds. What a bunch of bullshit!" He lit a smoke. "We were down, taken advantage of back then. Will not happen again. Indians are supposed to be lazy. Smoke pot and are alcoholics.

Living on government handouts. In our own bloody country yet! We own the land and the resources! But we are a minority. " He took another drag on the cigaret and calmed down a little."Time we took some of it back."

"How would you do that?" Dave asked.

"We have an agenda. No bombings shit like that no confrontation. Did 9 years in the Canadian forces. Elite group. Probably you have never heard of it. No matter. Not the way we are going.

Violence is not an option. Counter productive. We are going another way." "JTF2?" Dave asked. "P90 weapon. Created early 90's. But you are not going to tell me, right? How to reclaim your land"

"Right. Yes JTF2. You are a decent honky but some things are best left unsaid." Bill's cell phone rang. "Yes?" he listened for a few minutes then said "OK." and shut it off.

"Problems?" Dave asked.

"Thanks for telling me. About the mine. News from my woman at the res is that your small barn got burned down. Truck crashed on the gravel road about 5 miles from your place. Hit a fallen tree.

Big mess, driver dead. Sorry about that. My partner called her. He is OK. On his way back." Dave clenched his teeth and slowed his breathing. He concentrated on flying the plane. Deep breaths. Composed now he said to Bill "Shit happens. My export animals were in the small barn.

Worst case scenario they all perished. Best case scenario some escaped. The fence is on so should be OK."

Few seconds later "Oh well, plan for the best and expect the worst." then "What truck was it?" "Let me check" Bill said. He dialed and talked a few moments then shut it off.

"Old blue Ford half ton. Body they pulled out was a big old guy. All she knows right now." "Thanks. Has to be Seth James."

"You know him?"

"Fired him two weeks back for abusing the animals. Was part time. Always drunk. But could be somebody else. Raised pot not far from the barn. Harmless shit so ignored it.

Anyway will be there in hour and a half.”

Dave thought about what the Indian had told him about the deal. Did not seem right.

“I will call my woman to pick me up.” then said “James? Know the name. Son Jesse? Bad bastard! In jail for manslaughter I believe.”

“Yes. Think so” They were silent, both lost in thought for the remainder of the flight. Bill soon fell asleep lulled by the steady drone of the engines. Hour and a half later Dave shook the sleeping Indian. “Getting close. Do not see smoke though.”

He throttled back and flew over the reserve and followed the gravel road East. “I see the tree that was down, in the ditch, no truck though” Bill said.

Dave nodded. “Big tree. Probably have the truck in the wrecking yard by now.” He applied power and went higher. As he passed over his barns he felt sick. Just a pile of rubble were the small barn had stood. Two police cars in his lane. The 3 officers looking up at the Cessna. He banked and lined up the plane towards the grass landing strip behind the larger sheds. He reduced power and made a relatively smooth landing, yawing a little in the wet grass. He taxied closer to the shed that acted has a hanger and cut the engine. “Oh well. Home again.” “How much I owe you “? asked Bill after they had climbed out of the plane. Dave shrugged.

“Just give me a truck fill-up at the res.”

“OK with me. You talk to the cops, I am going back to the road. Woman should be here soon.” “K”, Dave said. He grabbed his overnight bag and headed towards the police cars.

Chapter 3

“Dave Willis?” The OPP officer asked. He was probably getting near retirement age Dave thought. Heavy set, close to 6 feet. Blue eyes, hair getting gray. Looked capable enough.

Dave nodded “Yes officer. What happened? Lightning strike? Any animals escape?” “Sergeant Johnson.” The cop shrugged. “Probably lightning. Animals? Not sure. Anyway need to ask you for a statement.” The other two officers were much younger. They both watched him with interest. “Sure. Few minutes to check the barn. OK?” “Go ahead.” He turned to talk to the other two as Dave headed towards the barn. He touched the electric fence that encircled the paddock. “Shit!”he said as the fence gave him a good jolt. He opened the gate and went to the remains of the barn. Few wisps of smoke came up

through twisted metal of the roof otherwise fire looked out. He checked the entrance and walked down into the paddock towards the forest. His spirits lifted as he made out the fresh hoof tracks in the soft earth.

"Yes!" at least some had made it out alive he surmised. He walked around to the other end of the rubble heap. Charred beams lay across the concrete pen walls plus the partially burned tree. He could not see in to the pens but his nose told him there was no smell of roasting pork. The sound of a car starting up caught his attention. One police car was leaving. He walked back to the remaining car. The older cop looked at him inquisitively.

"All looks well far as the animals go. Barn can be rebuilt if needed. 200 acres fenced in. So no loss there. Other two leave? Statement? Better come in the house then" The cop looked at the dog as they got close to the house. Dave noticed the look. "He is OK." He stroked the German Shepherd and let him off his chain. The dog ran around tail going ten to the dozen then ran to the police car and peed on the tires. Dave walked ahead and unlocked the door. He took off his leather jacket and motioned the officer to a chair. The cop sat down.

"Coffee?" Dave asked. The officer shook his head 'no'. "OK. What do you want to know.?" "Just your whereabouts for the last day or so. Plus a few other questions about another matter." He put a small recorder on the table and switched it on. Noticing Dave looking at it he smiled.

"Saves time. Modern technology. Just go ahead."

"I left early yesterday morning for Sudbury. Had a meeting with some people. Meeting ran pretty late. Stayed at the Evergreen Hotel. Overnight. Back here today. Easily verified. New North Mining people I met with"

The officer said "Right then. Do you know a Seth James?" "Yes. He worked for me on and off for a year or so. Fired him a few weeks back for mistreating the animals. Last month or so he kept turning up drunk. Think he had something to do with the barn fire?"

"Just something we may be looking in to. He ran in to a fallen tree last night 5 or 6 miles from here. Unfortunately he died in the crash." He turned the recorder off.

Dave shrugged. "Crap happens."

"Off the record. 1Lb of pot in the truck, open bottle of liquor. Must have been speeding." he thought for a minute then said "Not common knowledge yet but his right leg was sliced open. Did not look like it happened in the truck. Wadded newspaper on the cut. From what the fire Dept meds told me he would have bled to death real soon. Volunteer Dept so they may be wrong. Good bunch of guys. Time they had moved the tree off the road and got to here the fire had burnt itself out. Over an inch of rain helped. Well, that's about it

for now.”

He got to his feet and held out his hand and Dave shook it. On his way out he asked “Hear you keep wild boars here? They have sharp tusks do they not?” Dave nodded. “Yes and would be about leg height.”

“Take care then will be in touch.” He turned to go then hesitated. “Seth James. Widower. Son Jesse. Got ten years for manslaughter. About due out. Extremely violent.” They stared at each other.

“I should be worried?” asked Dave.

“Just a heads up, is all.”

“You arrest him?” Shot in the dark.

“Yes. With two other officers.”

He went out to the car. Dave whistled his dog as the police car left. “Shrewd old bugger” he said.

Dave went back in to the house and picked up the telephone and dialed. He was about to hang up on the 6th ring when he heard “Markona vet clinic. How may we be of assistance?” “Hi Olga. Dave here. Change of plan.” He explained quickly what had happened.

“You capture them we can do another blood test and you should be able to ship them on time. Do you need help catching them? I do have a tranquilizer rifle and darts.” “It may help. Hard to round them up in 200 acres. Going to leave them ‘til morning and let them settle down. I believe all escaped. Hope so.”

“OK. Friday now so my weekend off. Sounds like fun! Be there in two hours.” “But....” he hesitated then said “OK. Will make up the spare bed.” She hung up.

Dave stood there thinking then went outside. Animals to feed in the main building and chores to do.

Chores complete he checked the ATV and gassed it up. Sky was starting to cloud over again. He put the Cessna in the hanger and locked the doors. He glanced at his watch. ‘Quick trip to the Res’ he thought. 20 minute drive. He whistled his dog and let him in the cab of the Dodge Ram then put it in 4 wheel drive and headed West on the gravel road.

The gas station and store were doing a thriving business. Gas was 10 cents a liter below regular pump prices off the Reserve and cigarettes \$12 a carton.

“Fill it up” he told the young girl pumping gas. “Will pay inside.” She smiled and nodded. She stuck the nozzle in and switched it on then hurried to the vehicle behind. All 4 pumps were busy. He picked up 4 cartons of smokes and put them on the counter.

"That all sweetie?" the tall thin lady behind the counter asked.

"Sweetie? You always make my day! Nah, gas at pump 4." She smiled and checked the inside monitor. "Will show in a minute. There we are. \$60 for gas, \$48 for smokes." He paid her and she put the cartons in a bag adding two lighters. "Have a nice day now!"

Chapter 4

The vets Ford F150 was sitting in the driveway when he got back. Gunmetal colored skies were putting a light drizzle in the air. He pulled up alongside the Ford and got out. The dog followed him.

Truck was empty. The dog took off towards the newer sheds. She came back with him few minutes later.

"What a bloody mess!" she said, when she was 20 feet away. He shrugged. "Shit happens." "Shit happens because of bowel movements only! This was no bowel movement!" "Act of God or mankind. Whatever. Done is done. Coffee?" She patted the dogs adoring head and smiled.

"If you insist. Here, carry some stuff in for me! She opened the truck door and passed him a rifle case and another bag. "OK that is it"

. "Your command is my wish your highness!"

"That is how it should be," she replied. They looked at each other and laughed out loud. She was 5 foot 6 or 7. Slim build with green eyes. The left eye just slightly different from the other. Dirty blond hair. Probably early 40's he thought. Weather beaten face. As opposed to cosmetic. Few lines under the eyes. Just a slight accent. Very competent. Some times very bossy and abrasive. They had never had too many conversations about each others personal life even after 4 years of Dave retaining her as his vet.

"K then, coffee." Rain started to come down heavier as they hurried to the house. "So what is this?" he asked opening the rifle case.

"X Caliber. Made by Pneu-Dart in Pennsylvania. Good to about 45 yards. Co2 or compressed air or nitrogen propellants for cold weather. Works well." "Use it often?" he asked.

"Yes. Large animal in the pasture one cannot get near. Sedation mix in the needle. About 10 seconds to go down. 20 minutes or so they are sedated. Larger the animal,

quicker it wears off." She showed him how to load the needle and push the bolt forward.

"Interesting" he said. "You bring enough darts?" She just looked at him with raised eyebrows.. "OK then. Sorry. Coffee."

"So whats the plan?" she asked.

"Track the animals. Dart the boar first. Use the ATV and trailer to load him up. Bring him back to the barn, the new one, then repeat the process. Time consuming." She nodded then said "Cannot you herd them back? They are familiar with the place." He shrugged. "Need the boar first. Maybe try the sows later. Just do not want to spook them.

They go through the fence they are gone. Quite a few square miles out there for them." She took a sip of coffee pulled a face. "How old is this stuff? Tastes like crap!" He shrugged again "Just two days or so. I make a pot and re-heat it. Easier that way. Getting dark" he said, glancing out of the window.. "Need a drink of something else? Rum, Gin, Vodka, beer?"

"Rum may be nice. What make?"

"Kraken. Black spiced. 47% alcohol. Made in the US. Good stuff." She shrugged. "Why not?" He got up from the table and went to the cupboard and found the bottle. "No pop" he said. "

"Ice will do fine." He put the bottle on the table and put a bowl of ice beside it and a glass. She looked at the glass quizzically.

He caught her look. "Guess I better wash it!"

"It's fine. Alcohol will kill the germs!" then "You need a woman around here" "Move in anytime!" then "Sorry. How come you did not go for the Vodka? Being of Russian background or whatever.?"

She smiled at him. "Latvian actually. Hate the stuff. Reminds me of...never mind." He poured himself a shot and filled the glass with tap water. He seen her raised eyebrows and said "Only way I can drink it. Too strong just on ice." then "You married?" "Was. You?"

"No. Never had the time or the right one. Heck! Food you hungry?" "What do you have?"

"Freezer full of stuff. Fridge full also. Have a look." She opened the fridge and looked in. She started to read the labels on some of the packages.

"Most of this needs dumping. Best before date was a month or so ago!" "Yes. One of these days..."

She opened the freezer and looked in. "What's the stuff in the freezer bags? Unmarked?" "MM's. Mystery meat. Cook something then freeze the left overs. Frozen dinners in there also." "K. Couple of those should do. Chicken?"

"Fine with me." She got two out and went to the microwave. "Goodness!" she exclaimed on opening it.

"Forgot to clean it. Had something in that sort of exploded." She looked at him for a few moments then sighing she went to the sink and got a cloth and washing up liquid and began to clean it out. She muttered something in Latvian.

"What?" he asked. "Slob!" she replied.

He felt embarrassed. "So what happened to your husband? If I am not prying." She shrugged and said "We were married 2 months. He left me for another." "He must have been a fool! Handsome lady like you!" She turned and smiled at him. "Well thank you kind sir! When he left it really upset me for a while. Think he married me to get citizenship. 2 months married and we never had sex!" "You are being frank." he said.

She continued to wash out the microwave then said "All done." She put one frozen dinner in the microwave and started it going. "Frank?" she came back to the table and sat down and made another drink. They looked at each other for a few moments. "I will be frank. After he left I just did not go out with any one. Just worked. So, here I am. Waiting to go in the bush and hunt pigs. 43 year old virgin.

Am I being too honest?"

"Not at all. Appreciate you telling me. What was the other woman like, the one he left you for?" "Woman? It was a guy!"

Dave looked at her for a few moments then started to laugh. He could not hold it back. "Sorry" he said then laughed even louder. "Holy shit! Never heard of that one!" She frowned at him at first then began to smile then she also started to laugh also. "Holy shit is right. His boy friend is a priest!"

They laughed for quite a while then the microwave dinged and she got up to get the dinners, still chuckling.

"I feel comfortable with you" she said. "First time I have laughed in a long time." "Same here" he replied. "Comfortable."

After supper and a few drinks later they sat at opposite ends of the living room sofa watching a movie. "You like this movie?" she asked.

He shrugged. "Watch it occasionally. Cinderella Man is probably as true as they get. You?" "Do not watch too many. Animal Planet stuff like that." she shivered a little.

"Cold? I will turn the heat up." He got up and adjusted the thermostat. "Will just take a minute." He sat down again then said "You could sit with me." She looked at him for a few long seconds. "OK." She moved over and sat close to him. "Am I safe?" she asked.

“Safe as you will ever be” he replied. She sighed and put her head on his shoulder. Her hair smelled of watermelon. Shampoo he assumed. Cautiously he put his arm around her shoulders. She snuggled in closer and sighed.

“Feels nice” she whispered. “So quit twitching ever time one of them throws a punch!” “OK. About finished anyway.” The screen credits were rolling now. “Watch another or...?” “Bed for me. Too much to drink. Feeling woozy. Where is the bedroom?” “Follow me.” Reluctantly he got up. “I will get your bag first” he said. She followed him to the bedroom at the end of the passageway.

“There you go. Bed all made and everything.” he hesitated and then said “I am next door. Anything you need just ask.”

She gave him a quick kiss and said “I will remember that. Goodnight.” “Goodnight”.

He left feeling a little confused. ‘Oh well. Had my hopes up too high’. A noise woke him at about 2 am. He lay there listening. He heard the toilet flush then the bathroom door open and close. Few seconds later his bedroom door opened.

“You awake?” she whispered. “Yes. Of course.” He could just make her out in the dim light.

“Can I help you?”

“If you want to.”

“How can I help?” She dropped the nightgown to the floor and lifted the sheets and got in beside him. “Tired of being a 43 year old virgin” she whispered.

“I can help” he said and reached for her.

Chapter 5

Dave awoke early. Dawn a half hour away. Quietly he got dressed and went in to the kitchen.

‘Strange night’ he thought. He put the memories aside and started the coffee pot going hearing her going in to the bathroom, then the sound of the shower going. Ten minutes later she came in to join him. Blue jeans, heavy wool shirt. She looked ready for work.

“How you feeling? You look edible” he said.

“Bloody sore!” then she put her hand over her mouth and her face went scarlet in

embarrassment.

Dave laughed. "Coffee is ready. Clean pot and all."

"About last night.." she started to say when he held up his hand. "Stress relief. We all do things we sometimes regret later."

"No regrets." then "OK what is the plan again?" She sat down. He shrugged. "Boar first then the others. Any new ideas?"

She thought for a moment. "The Indians on the reserve. You get on well with them?" "As well as a white guy can. Some helped me build the barns." "Yes, I know. How about you hire some to drive the sows back? ATV's." "May work. Yes, just may work. Need the boar first though." then "You want breakfast?" "No.

Coffee is fine. Aspirin would be good also. Slight hangover" He obliged her. "I also."

Rain had stopped and the sun was just starting to rise as they went out to the drive shed. Cool, fresh morning

."OK."Dave checked the back of the trailer. "Looks like everything. Ropes, snare, bag for his head. Bungee cords for his legs. You have the gun. All set?" She nodded. The dog jumped up on the trailer all excited. "You taking the dog?" she asked "Wont it scare them?"

"If the dart does not work right away the boar might get in to heavy cover. Bruno will find him." "Good thinking. Ready then?" she climbed in to the front seat. Dave got in also and started it up. He drove it past the burnt out barn, through the paddock gate, closing it behind them and in to the bush.

"Can you find them" she asked.

"Think so. They will try and hole up for the day. Have about six sites to check." He followed one of the many trails heading North through the bush.30 minutes later he slowed down to a crawl, the engine just puttering away quietly, his eyes searching the track just ahead of him.

He put the machine in neutral and got off motioning the dog to stay. He studied the hoof prints in the damp earth. Seconds later he was back aboard.

"All seem to be together" he said to her. "Now the tricky part. Were would they turn off?" She looked at him and shrugged. He put the machine in to low and crawled ahead, eyes still scanning the ground. The trail ended soon after as they came upon a series of small hills. Heavy brush, small ravines. Wind was picking up from the North now they were out of the shelter of the trees.

"Now for the hard part. Over the next small hill is a brush filled ravine. If I am lucky

they will be there. Usually their favorite hangout. Small caves there. If not.." he shrugged "may be a long day. You stay put. I am down wind so will see if I can spot them." He retrieved his binoculars from the front seat and motioned the dog down. He held up his finger for the dog to signify 'quiet'. Walking as quietly as he could he headed for the hill ahead of him, dog at his side. They covered the two hundred yards to the base of the hill and edged up through the brush. A yard from the top he lay down and belly crawled the rest of the way. Dog beside him. Cautiously peering over the top he looked down in to the ravine. Scrub and tall Goldenrod moved slowly in the breeze. He could not see any animals. He used the binoculars and scanned it again slowly. 'The boars coloring would blend in nicely with that background' he thought. After a few minutes he decided to follow the ravine. He was just about to move when Bruno whined. The dog, slightly below him had his nose up in to the wind from the right. He focused the glasses again in the direction the was pointing. Bruno whined again. The light wind dropped for a moment. He detected a slight movement in the weeds. He kept the glasses focused on the spot. Minutes passed. He was about to give up when he saw movement again. He made out a sows rear end. 'Of course' he thought 'they do not crap in their sleeping area. Must be in the caves or just under the overhang.' he slid back down the hill patting the dog's head.

"Good boy" he whispered.

Back at the ATV he told her what had happened. "What now?" she asked.

"Well. The ATV cannot go down the side of the ravine. So will have to park it at the West end. If I can flush them out from the East end can you shoot the boar? He may be running. If you get him I can tie his legs and bag his head snare his snout then I can bring the ATV along the bottom and load him." "Sounds like a bloody rodeo! What distance? From the hill down?" "25 yards maybe 30."

"Can do. These Pnue-Dart darts have a one and a half inch needle. Still, skin is so tough on these animals may not penetrate the shoulder area. Um-mm..will increase the pressure and try for a shot just behind the shoulder. K. Were will you be?"

"Will park the ATV at the West end then walk back and come in from the East. They should run West. Do you remember were I was on the ridge?"

She pulled a face. "OK then, sorry but..I worry."

She smiled at him and said "I will not miss. I know what it means to you" She climbed out and walked towards the hill with her X Caliber in hand. Dave started up the ATV fretting at the noise even knowing the animals could not hear it. He was feeling tense. He tried to relax. Few minutes later he had it parked at the West entrance to the ravine and walked back towards the East end. 10 minutes it took him. Bruno by his side anticipating action. He scanned the South ridge but could not see Olga. He walked in to the ravine

cussing as the pebbles on the bottom rattled loudly under his feet. Bruno moved up to his side. 'Now or never' he thought 'hope she is ready.'

"Bruno! Easy boy! Go see." The dog darted ahead. "Easy boy!" the dog slowed and moved ahead, nose down hairs on his back rigid. Old stuff for him. His nose went up and he headed for the patch of scrub Dave had seen the sow in. Bruno stopped and barked. Nothing moved in the scrub. He barked again, fully alert. He looked back at Dave ten feet back.

"Git em out boy!" The dog ran in to the scrub. Squeals and snorts and lots of movement then the animals came running out. Four then five sows. They saw Dave standing there in there path swinging the snare and headed West.

"Frig! No boar here". then "Maybe backed up. Shit, he wants to fight!" The dog was still barking in the scrub. He moved forward through the trampled scrub and stood just behind Bruno. The boars head was visible at the front of the small cave he was backed in to.

Foaming at the mouth, tusks gleaming.

Dave hesitated then commanded "Bruno! Easy!.Back off! Out boy!" Bruno whined and backed off. Dave backed up a few yards with the dog beside him. The boar held his position. Dave backed up more. The boar cautiously came ahead his nose up and mouth open to help with his sense of smell. He moved out at a slow pace. Finally satisfied and perhaps recognizing Dave's voice he trotted West tail up and occasional backward glances.

He squealed as the dart him just behind the shoulder then he took off at a run. Dave watched him run and took off after him. He was falling behind quickly.

"Git him Bruno!"

The dog went in to full speed and soon caught up with the boar. He grabbed the boars ear and pulled him down. The boar struggled then the sedative kicked in. Panting heavily Dave reached the boar and put a snare over his snout.

"Back off boy!Good boy. Watch him"

He then left the boar and ran towards the West end of the ravine. Olga was already bringing the ATV towards him. He stopped and waited for her then jumped on the trailer. She turned the ATV around when she got to the boar and backed the trailer up. He put a feedbag over the boars head then tied his feet with Bungee cords. He pulled the release and the trailer tipped up. He put the rope around the boars chest and winched him up with the hand winch. The trailer went back to level. He locked it and looked at Olga.

"Good work! You are fast! Dart then ATV! Excellent work!" "Fast but not loose. Good

mornings work. Think we should apply for the rodeo?" "Too hectic for me. You OK?"

"Sure. Want to climb up and get my gun?" "Heck, my back is killing me!" She smiled at him then said "I am not surprised. Don't do the Tarzan thing tonight." She blushed.

"What? Oh. OK. Understand! I do need stress relief!". He kissed her on the cheek then climbed the hillside.

Back at the barn with the ATV backed up and the pen door open they tripped the trailer. He untied the boar's legs and undid the hold down rope. The snare came off next. The boar was starting to chomp right away. Sedative had worn off a while back. Dave took off the feedbag next. The boar got to his feet and looked around. He trotted down the passageway and in to an open pen. Dave followed him with a pig board in case he turned around. He closed the pen door and bolted it. The boar lifted his head smelling the other wild boars in the building then looked for the feed trough. Grunting he started to eat. "So all went well" Dave said to Olga. "No damage to him. Ear a little chewed but all looks good."

"Question? How did you get the dog to pull him down?" she asked.

"I watch YouTube sometimes. Argentina Dogo have done it for years. Big white dogs. Just copied the methods. Anyway, lunch time. Almost two. OK?" "Yes. Pretty hungry right now."

Chapter 6

After the canned soup and cheese sandwiches with corned beef she said "Have to check my mail."

"Thought you were off for the weekend?"

She shrugged. "Sometimes there is an emergency. My job." She turned her cell phone on and pushed buttons. She listened to the messages and turned it off. "All clear! Surprise!" then "What do you want to do now?"

"Better go to the res and get some help for tomorrow. Then back here and look after the animals.

You staying tonight?"

"Sure! Want to see the rodeo tomorrow! Actually the animals should be re-quarantined, but will skip that part. Too much paperwork"

“Appreciate it. Just have to check with the buyer. Tomorrow may be better. Make sure I have all the animals. Paperwork is fine?”

“Yes of course! “ she said eyes flashing “I know my job!” “Whoa! Sorry! Just asking! Don’t get upset!”

She muttered something in Latvian “What?” he asked.

“Nothing.”

“Please?”

“It translates in to ‘Do not piss me off!’ OK?”

“Hey, fine with me! You want to wear the combat boots that is good also! You going to whip me now?” She looked at him and her mood changed. She smiled sweetly at him. “Not right now. Maybe later?”

“Looking forward to it! Please be gentle! I am just an old fart” She laughed. “You were pretty good last night. But I have no comparison to go by.” She got up and walked around the table. She put her hands on his shoulders and massaged them for a few minutes..

“Feels nice” he said. “Relaxes me.”

“Get up” she said.

He did so saying “What?”

“We have to be moving. You set up the rodeo for tomorrow. I have to make a trip home.” “OK. As always your command is my wish!”

“Bill Bressete around?”

The woman behind the counter said “Sure. Will call him.” She picked up the phone and punched in the numbers. “Someone here to see you” she said in to the phone.”The boarman.” She put the phone back.

“Be a couple of minutes. Coffee?” she motioned to the dispenser.

“Sure.” He went over and stuck a plastic cup under the spigot then went and sat down at one of the small tables..

“Anything to eat? Pizza? Sandwich?” He shook his head ‘no’. Bill arrived a few minutes later.

Made himself a coffee and sat opposite him.

“How are your animals?” he asked, taking out a smoke and lighting it. Dave recounted briefly what had happened. Then explained what he needed. “\$10 an hour OK?” he finished with.

Bill thought for a moment. "No charge." then "Can get three beside myself. I will have an ATV.

Others dirt bikes. So. We start at the North fence line. I will come down the lakeside. You come down the West fence. Three others spread out between us. The bikes are better in the ravines anyway. We go slow should be OK. We know the area. About ten tomorrow then?" "That would be fine. Just have to set up a chute to funnel them in to the barn. Hope to ship them next week. Well," he stood up "if there is anything I can do for you just let me know." Bill stood also. "There is something"

. "What?"

"Maybe another time."

"OK. Ten am then." Dave left, Bill watched him go and muttered 'Good guy.!' Dave pulled in to his drive way and got out. He let Bruno off his chain and the dog followed him to the barn. He spent an half hour doing chores then started on the chute. Took him two hours to get the fence up. Electric fence. Finally satisfied he went back to the house. He opened a beer and checked for messages. Only the one. Pressed the button and listened to it.

"Hi buddy. Change of plan. Joe here in Texas. Need to bring the shipping date forward few days.

Also need the animals with a chip in their ear. OK? Simple stuff. My man will drive up with his trailer and drive them back. He should be there Monday afternoon. He has left already. OK? Call me. This number." He gave him the number. Dave wrote the number down and turned the machine off. He was puzzled. Communications were usually by email. The voice was vaguely familiar. He knew the hunting preserve had changed owners or they had a new manager. Since the original contact. He thought about it then shrugged it off. He finished his beer and picked up the phone and put the numbers in. "please hold" a voice said. He heard lots of bells and whistles as the call was apparently re-routed. The ringing sound came on. It was picked up almost immediately.

"David! Glad you called back. You alone now?"

"Yes, alone. Is there a problem?"

"Could be. Listen buddy we are on a secure line. Nothing can be recorded at your end.?" "No. So what is the problem? Why the secrecy?"

"Colombia. I got you out of there. With the help of others." The hairs on the back of his neck bristled. "So what do you want now? That shit is all over for me. That was the deal!"

"Times change, all new stuff. Not interested? "

"Why should I be?"

"Your life. Maybe."

"So what the hell is going on?"

"Give me a few minutes and will explain it. Short version." "OK."

"Murphy and Brown. Your ex-bosses. Did about 6 months and bribed their way out of jail. K now. Went up in to Mexico. Connections of course. K. Apparently there is a new designer drug on the market. Contains some other chemicals as the catalyst to make the other stuff work. Why would they bother? Because it can be transported easily. Dogs cannot sniff it out because of the chemical make up.

Very potent, reasonably addictive. Big demand for it right now. Cheaper than coke also. Coke has had it's day. Few years it will be over with same as Heroin. Anyway. If you know the Mexican border situation it is tighter than ever. No matter, the guys get across, bury packets of this stuff and go back to Mexico. Heat sensors whatever, Border Patrol sees them come and then go. No action taken. Figure cold feet. Not boring you am I?"

"Keep going."

"K. They have expanded in to the US but particularly Canada. Logistics, easier border to cross.

Production of it is growing in Canada. Biggest producer there is. We have no informants or the usual channels. Not in your area anyway. Just a few tips is all" "So what do you want of me?"

"Cooperation. Locate one site producing it and we will do the rest." Dave laughed. "Come on get serious! How the hell do I do that?" "We believe that if you make a right out of your driveway, head down to the reserve there is a site producing it. Probably way back in the bush. Tip from the Mounties." "Come on! You are not serious! How the hell do you know all this stuff?" "Anyway,, Brown is dead, Murphy is alive and well and looking for you. Termination in mind.

We can protect you. Tit for tat."

"How would he find me?"

"We did, he can. Electronic age"

"Shit" Dave said. Thought a while then said "What is in this stuff? Any other options?" "Sorry bud. What is in it is BZP. Worm medication for cattle. Unregulated in Canada. US banned it."

"Then why the hell do you want to get in to the wild boars? " Joe replied "My hobby. Going to retire soon as this job is done. Can't chase druggies for ever! Talked with your vet

once or twice. They are superior animals, supposedly. Ideal! Have 1500 acres for them to play in."

Dave thought it over. "No other options?"

"Nope!"

"If I do not cooperate?"

"Your choice. No protection. For you and your vet. Murphy might just find out were you are.

Your mining deal will collapse also."

"You bastard!"

Joe laughed. "Yes I am but job has to be done. The RCMP and the DEA work pretty close together at times. Usually kept quiet though. For obvious reasons." "Where is the protection now?"

"Part timer in your area. Full time soon."

"Any more info I need to know?"

"Sure. One of the guys driving the trailer will fill you in. Thanks for co-operating buddy!" "Wait!" Dave said.

"Yes?"

"Question. The guys cross the border and bury the stuff. That right?" "Yes."

"So dogs cannot sniff it out?"

"No, they cannot.. Why the question?"

"But wild boars can? Same as they find truffles in France?" "Too sharp for your own good."

The phone went dead before Dave could reply. Dave poured himself another beer and thought the situation over. Rock and a hard place came to mind. He got up, burped and took another swig of beer.

He put on his windbreaker and went out to the barns and checked on the chute and made some adjustments. An hour later he stood back and surveyed his handiwork. Satisfied he headed for the house Bruno with him. 'Should work' he thought. 'Hope for the best prepare for the worst'. He went in to the house finished his now warm beer and headed for the shower. The last hour he had thought about the sequence of events over the last few days and had more questions than answers. Bill Bressettes claim of a pot deal gone wrong did not ring true. Pot is peanuts money. It should be legalized anyway. So if

he was lying then what? For what purpose? If Joe was right and the production of some of this 'ghost coke' was being made around here on the res then maybe he was selling that? Then why hitch a ride back on the plane? Planting a 'bug' or something? Why? Who was the part time protector? He finished showering.

'Watch too many Bourne movies' he thought. He dressed again and went out Bruno following him to the hanger. He walked around the 24 foot long Cessna looking for anything out of the ordinary.

Nothing unusual. He checked inside. After a few minutes he was about to give up then did a last check under the seat. There he found it. About the size of a very large cigaret packet sticking to the metal frame of the seat. Green light came on as he moved it. GPS or ? He put it back. The light went out. 'So it only activates with movement' he thought. He closed the hangar door and went back to the house. It was starting to get cold. His brain was going in to overtime. He picked up the note book and pen from the telephone table. He wrote down 1 to 10. Facts. 1. Plane bugged. Could assume why after the previous conversation. Need to keep track of me. Second. Who is the part time protector? Third. Who else works with DEA or the other side? Fourth. Who is close enough to do any damage? Conclusions? None. Bruno barked at the truck pulling in. Hastily he covered the note book with papers, then got up and got another beer.

"Hi Olga. Glad you are back! All set for tomorrow am." then "Oh yes. Guy from Texas called.

Needs ear implants in the animals."

She smiled brightly at him as she took her coat off. "Have them here. What I went back for." 'How did she know?' he thought.

She looked at him puzzled. "What is it? You look surprised? Oh. The implants! Easier to get them across the border. Only way to ID the animals!" She blushed slightly. "Actually forgot about them!"

"Thank goodness you did remember. Beer or something?" He still had doubts.

"Nah. Brought some food. Getting late. Kentucky fried chicken. OK?" "Fine with me." 'shit' he thought 'suspicious of everyone now. They ate and went in to the living room. He put the Bourne Identity on the TV.

"Like watching this stuff. Do you?" she asked.

"Not really. Too many twists and turns and all sorts of gadgets. What would you like to watch?" She shrugged. "Nothing too violent. Animal movie?" "Black Stallion?"

Her eyes lit up. "Super movie!"

He found the DVD and put it on. Dave gave it about a half hour then started to probe a little.

“You do not like violence then?”

“What? Oh, violent movies. Not really.” she turned and smiled at him. “Seen too much of that when I was younger.”

“Sorry. Latvia?”

“Yes, before I got out.” she looked at him and said “Worst days of my life! Parents killed.

Brother over there somewhere. Oh well usual stuff. Many did not make it to Finland.”
“How did you get from there to here?”

She looked at him intently for a few moments then asked “Why all the questions?” He shrugged. “Just interested in you. Sorry, your business is none of mine.” They watched the movie for a few more minutes then she asked “How interested?” He looked at her then motioned her towards him She moved up the sofa and sat close.

“You first came here 3 or 4 years back. I really liked you. Had a crush on you. Every time I tried to get close you backed off. So gave up on it. Trying to make headway was not working.” then “After last night thought I would ask you a few more questions. Sorry about that.” “You do not know me very well. Years past had problems I am still dealing with. Before my sham marriage.” She looked at him intently. “Would you marry me?”
“Without a doubt!”

“Well? Ask me!”

“Not at the moment. Have to make sure you were as good as last night. Then I will.”
“You bloody asshole!” Dave turned off the movie and they went to bed.

Chapter 7

Sunday morning was cool. Just above freezing. Sun and some cloud. Dave and Olga had instant oatmeal and coffee for breakfast then went out and checked the chute and the other fences. They fed the animals and waited for the Indians. They arrived a half hour early. Dave talked to Bill and they just went through the plan again.

“OK then. Some sows are pregnant so easy does it. OK?” “Sure chief! Easy does it. We have radios so can communicate. You don’t so will have to trust us.

You hear Indian calls that means we fucked up. Nah just joking! Means we have them in sight” They went through the gate and in to the paddock then in to the bush. Bill and the

other three headed left to the lake. Dave and Olga headed East then followed the fence line North.

Ten thirty they all started to move South. Slowly they came down and after a few moments a whoop was heard. Minutes later another one.

“Looking good” Dave said to Olga in the seat beside him. She reached over squeezed his hand.

She said something in Latvian.

“Translate please?”

“Full translation?”

“Yes please.”

“Hope to fuck this works!”

He laughed out loud. “You do have a way with words!” Her hand squeezed his again. “Cold hands” he said. “you should have worn gloves.”

She laughed then. “Can warm my hand anytime.”

“How ?” he asked.

She laughed again “Like this” and put her hand between his legs. He hit the brake suddenly.

“What the hell?”

“Lighten up! Just checking the equipment of the animals I work with.” She saw the look on his face and laughed out loud. “Priceless! Your expression!” Whoops again. They were getting close to the enclosure now. Finally the wild boar sows broke from the forest and were funneled into the chute. On foot Dave and Olga walked them in to the barn.

Few minutes they were penned in. They appeared quite happy, snuffing the straw on the floor and the feed in the troughs. Dave walked out satisfied.

“Easier than I thought “ he told Bill. “Thank the guys for me.” “No problem always here to help.”

“By the way, found something in the Cessna. Under the seat. Still there. Yours?” Bill stared at him for a few moments.

“Leave it there. Your protection. I am one of the good guys. If there is such a group. Anyway have to go. Watch your back.” They left.

“So what is next on the agenda for today?” she asked. “Tag the animals?” “Later perhaps, let them settle in. Need to talk.”

She looked at him in surprise.

"You sound serious!" she shrugged "OK. Need a coffee anyway." Dave let Bruno off and Olga followed him in to the house. He made the coffee and lit a cigaret.

"Not sure were to start."

"Beginning?" she said.

"Yes. OK." He started to fill her in from Colombia to the present time. He spoke for almost 15 minutes ending with the locator in the Cessna. "So," he finished "much to think about." She got up and poured another coffee. She sipped her coffee then "Need a shot!" She got up and poured out a rum over ice. She sipped it and pulled a face. He was silent, waiting for her to speak.

"So. You worked for the DEA. You got out. Now they want you back in. You do not want to do it.

You have no option far as I can see. Quite a mess. Only way out is you die. Or they think you are dead? This Murphy guy and the DEA." She looked at him. "Yes, quite a mess." She took another sip of her drink. "You think I am involved?" She stared hard at him face taut.

"No I don't."

"Then good!" she relaxed a little. "So what are you going to do.?" "Not sure. For now play along. Heck, maybe I should not have told you." he sighed "getting too old for this crap. Upside is they get what they want. Downside is..well may happen again. DEA thing.

Lots to think about."

"Then figure out a bloody plan! Always a way! Anyway let's tag those animals while I am still capable!. Coming?" She stood up.

"Of course."

They put on their coats and went out to the barns. They ran the animals on to the scales one by one and Olga put an implant in their left ears. Finally they were finished.

"Good work" he said to her.

She just smiled at him."As usual." she laughed then "OK,getting way past lunch time! Then I have to go. Be back Tuesday am with the papers and other stuff."

Chapter 8

After she left he went back in to the house. He cleared the plates off the table and poured himself a shot of Kraken rum and added water.

"Something is wrong with the whole scenario" he muttered. He tried to analyze it. Why make this drug up here? Why not Mexico or the US? Must be the worm med. He took a sip of his drink. Why involve me surely they have DEA agents in Canada? So why do they need me? Murphy and Brown could be alive or dead. Logic is they are dead. Colombian Police or pissed off drug cartel. What do I have that they do not? Apart from the wild boars? No particular skills except how to use guns and security skills. Plus a reputation for staying alive. Thousands of people have the same credentials. Ex- Army, whatever. Millions perhaps. He took another sip of his drink. Why my boars? They are superior but has to be thousands of tuskers in the US. What is the connection here? So link wild boars from Canada going to Texas. Perhaps I am not the only one shipping them there from Canada? I better find out.

Dave turned on his computer and waited for it to load. He googled wild boars Canada. 35,000 results came up. Only one other Game farm in Ontario. He ignored the bred for meat farms. German boars for hunting. North of Toronto. Looked a promising contact. He emailed the site. Basically asking if he had shipped stock to the US.

He shut the computer down and called Olga home phone. "Hi" he said when she picked it up.

"Problems?" she asked. "Just got in" she added.

"No problems. Need a favor."

"What?"

"Can you find out for me the number of permits issued this year for transportation of wild boars to the US? Destination also if possible?"

"May take a while. What are you thinking?"

"Just fishing in the dark. Curious. The scenario we talked about earlier just does not make sense.

Can talk Tuesday morning better."

Silence for a minute then "You think my phone is tapped? You are paranoid!" "Sorry, no to the phone. Perhaps I am paranoid. No matter, just miss you and love to see your expressions before you piss me off!"

She laughed out loud. "You are a softie! K see what I can do. Miss you already" "Ditto!"

She hung up. Dave sipped his drink. Finally he said "Screw it! Brain is numb!" He put his coat on and took Bruno for a walk around the property.

Monday morning was bright and clear. Again just above the freezing mark. Dave did his chores did a quick inventory. 35 sows and 4 younger boars left after the others were shipped, plus the 25 smaller ones.

His original idea was to get enough, let them roam and open a hunting lodge.

With the sale of the first 6 looking so profitable he was having other ideas now. If the sales continued that is. There was every indication they would until this new situation arose. He did have preliminary orders from two other game farms in the US. Still negotiating the terms. The sale to Texas would boost his credibility. He finished up and went back to the house. One phone message waiting.

Olga.

"No other permits issued last five years. May be there tonight." then a click.

"Better get off my butt" he muttered. He grabbed his heavy flying jacket and went out to the Cessna. He topped it up with fuel and did a quick check. He pushed it out of the hanger got in and fired it up. The Lycoming engine coughed once then settled down, running smoothly. He taxied to the south end of the runway feeling the ground firm through the plane. He turned it around and let it sit for 5 minutes to get up to operating temperature. Finally he gave it power and released the brakes. The plane went up smoothly. He leveled off at 2000 feet and headed East. Few minutes later he turned North at the edge of his property. Nothing below but trees and occasional rocky clearings. He followed the dirt track North until he was over the old mine site. Couple of small derelict buildings beside the small hillside were all that was there. He continued North. He went past the edge of his property and looked ahead from the cockpit. Just trees stretching to the horizon. He continued for a few more minutes enjoying the view. He was about to turn to port and go West when something caught his eye. Smoke? Just a small plume rising from the trees. Hunters? Not likely this far back in the bush. He turned West immediately. "Bloody paranoid!" he said. He lit a smoke and continued West. 15 minutes later the lake was coming up and the reserve on the other side of it. He turned North and climbed. "No point in pissing them off" he muttered. Few minutes later he turned West again. He figured he should pass half mile north the spot he had seen smoke. From higher up he got a better view of the terrain below. Seemed to be a road or track going West also. Just visible through the open ravines shielded from above by the trees. He was getting a mile from the spot where he had noticed the smoke. "Piss on it" he said and turned South. "Maybe another day." The Cessna safely in the hanger he went to the house and had a sandwich. He checked his watch.

2.30. Noticing the red light flashing on the phone he picked it up. One message.

“Sergeant Johnson here. Accidental death. Funeral Wednesday at noon.” hesitation then “his son will be there. He got out today due to the circumstances. Cremation. Markona. Just a heads up.” Dave replaced the phone. ‘Another problem?’ he wondered, then shrugged. ‘take it as it comes.’

Bruno was barking. Dave went out side. The driver of the older model Chrysler van got out and looked around and pulled his jacket tighter. Medium size and build. Mexican? He walked over to him.

“Can I help you?”

“David Willis?” he held out his hand. “Name is Joe Santos. Texas.” Dave shook his hand surprised at the power in it from the size of the person. “Ontario plates on the van.?” Dave observed.

“Picked the van up this side of the border. Texas plates too conspicuous.”

“K. Were is the trailer?”

“He is at the reservation gassing up. Cheap gas. Said he was going to get a bite to eat there. Be here in an hour or so.”

“K. Come on in. Coffee?”

“Sure.”

Joe Santos took his coat off and sat down. “Alone I assume?” he asked looking around.

“Yes, for now anyway.” he put the coffee pot on. “So what is the plan or whatever?” “Usual stuff. Find out were they are making this stuff and go from there.”

“Shut it down?”

“Hell no! We can do that pretty easily. More importantly we need to find out the ways they get it in to the US and in to other countries. Canada is the biggest exporter of MDMA.” he saw the puzzled look on Dave’s face. “Designer drugs. They are taking over from the traditional. Supply meets demand now. Or will soon. MDMA can be produced in a basement. Caves anywhere. Cheap ingredients, high mark -up. Very few side effects. Everyone loves them.” “Then why the big push on them? Lethal?”

“Not at all. Not too addictive actually. Canadian mass production is flooding the market. Some people are getting pissed off.”

“So druggies kill druggies. That bad?” he poured out the coffee.

“Many other people also get killed in the process. I am not DEA. UNODC. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Just working with the DEA. To our mutual benefit.” Dave sipped his coffee and looked at Joe. “So they sent you to blend in with the Indians?” “We all look alike in the dark!”

Dave laughed out loud. “Good one!” then “OK. What am I missing here? Drug busters. Whatever the drugs. As you say old stuff is expiring. This new stuff is pretty benign. Big push on it to get it taken off the market.” he paused then said “just speculating here. Bear with me.” He took another sip of coffee. “Hypothetically if some one or organization, government or whatever controlled the source or the most of it, then again, hypothetically of course, they could add other compounds. How about.. lets say for instance chemicals that make people suicidal? Or want to fight or make them more patriotic or make them more likely to vote for some one. After all they are ‘designer drugs’. How about religion? You control the minds of the masses you control the world.” He took another sip of coffee and looked at the agent. He noticed his face was as tight as a drum, eyes hard his body tense.

“Lighten up Joe. Fantasy world! I need a drink”

“Yes fantasy world.” Joe said. “pour me one? Whatever it is.” Dave said “Sure” and poured him a Kraken rum.

Dave lifted his glass. “Cheers.” and took a sip.

Joe did like wise.”I checked you background. You seem capable enough. Bit of age on you but not too much. No intelligence background, CIA or stuff like that. So where did you come up with the ‘fantasy’ scenario?”

“Seems a logical scenario is all. No matter, fantasy is all. I watch the TV.” “Fair enough. K now. Your Cessna good for a short flight tomorrow?” “Sure had it out this morning. Did not remove the GPS or whatever it is taped under the seat.” Joe stared at him. “Who put it there?”

“Probably my Indian friend. Gave him a ride back day or so ago. Told me for my safety. Problem?”

“Then we have complications already. That was not authorized. Not to my knowledge anyway.” He looked upset.

“Come on! My limited experience with the DEA is they do not know what the hell the next guy is doing. Maybe you were on a ‘need to know’ basis and they did not think you needed to know. Shit.

let’s get this location pinpointed and then the cavalry can come riding or whatever. Then I am out of it.

Want to see the GPS or whatever.?"

"Yes of course!" he got up and put his jacket on. "After you."

Chapter 9

Dave opened the planes door and showed it to him. Joe took it out and examined it carefully.

"Just a tracking bug right?" Dave asked.

Joe examined it again frowning. He lifted it up to his nose and smelled it. Then he put it back.

"Well what?" Dave asked.

"Oh shit. Not a major problem can fix it. Smart people but predictable" then "Were did you fly today?"

"Just over the property. East then North. Over the end of the property a few miles. Saw some smoke coming up. Campfire I think but avoided it went West. Got close to the reserve and turned over the lake and back West. Indians get pissed off if you overfly the res, Got higher and saw what may be a trail to were the smoke was coming from but avoided the area and came back here. Discretion." "You are lucky then." Joe said. "How high were you when you first seen the smoke? Under 2,000 feet?"

"Yes. !000. Coming back was about 2000 feet or better. So what is happening then?" "K. Lets go back to the house." he explained it on the way back.

"If you had overflown the site/smoke under 1500 feet I believe your plane would have crashed.

You did not overfly so you avoided it. Over 2000 feet on the way back you were probably out of range anyway. I may be wrong but signal could be sent from a cell phone. You were smart or lucky.

Probably lucky." They neared the house and the vets truck was pulling in.

"Out of range of what?" Dave asked.

"Ground trigger, cell could reach you any time.. If they had sent the signal when you were in range you would be dead. Fucks up your senses when that things goes off. If that was a site that manufactures the drugs. If not would be no problem." "C4 or something

like that?" Dave asked.

"No. Old standby always used. Sarin gas. I would suspect Anyway. Lets talk to the vet "

"This shit only happens in the movies!" Dave said.

"Get real.! All the same thing!" Joe said and they went forward to greet the vet. 'Young asshole' Dave thought as Joe Santos held out his hand to Olga.

"Really pleased to meet you Olga." He took her hand and kissed it. 'what the..?' Dave thought.

"I am Joe Santos just visiting the country from the Southern US. It is so different here. So many trees and mud and gravel roads and so cool! Perhaps I should head back home." She looked at Dave and laughed out loud. "What a charming man! So polite! Stay around!" "Thank you for your invitation! Be here a few days is all just checking out flora and fauna." "That is the biggest load of bullshit I have heard in quite a while!" Olga said.

Joe shrugged, "Come on folks, best I can do but working on my introductions. If one did not laugh one would cry."

Dave watched them with mixed emotions. He had the feeling they were not complete strangers.

He watched the facial expressions and body language. 'I am paranoid' he thought. He shrugged it off. "Thank you for kissing my hand. Such a gentleman. Last place the hand was it was inserted in to a cows rectum. Checking for pregnancy. Did wash it afterward though." she laughed out loud again.

The Dodge Ram with the trailer in tow came up the driveway, country music could be heard over the sound of the engine.

"Full house" Dave said. Then to Joe "guess this is it?" Joe nodded. "Yes. 18 footer lots of room. Just need to bed it." then "What took you so long?" to the driver.

"Man, had to eat and gas up." said the driver as he got out and shut it down. "Hi folks. Need to get an early start tomorrow. Name is Jimmy. Jimmy Reed." He walked over and shook hands with Olga and Dave as they introduced themselves. He was tall.

Six five at least. Skinny. About 30. Bright red hair and blue eyes.

"K now. Anyone got a beer? Am staying here the night right? Truck sucks to sleep in." "We have your accommodations here" Dave said "and yes a beer." Joe said "I have to take off. Have a place in town to stay. Motel. See you early am." "OK. Want to load about 6 am. Easier in the dark."

"Will be here. Take care now." He was halfway to his van then stopped and turned. He glanced around. Olga and Jimmy were already going in to the house. "Cannot vouch for

this guy. Never met him until three days ago. Keep alert!" he waved and got in to his van and left.

Olga broke out two bottles of beer and put them on the table. "Glasses?" "No ma'am. Fine as is. You should come down to Texas and visit for a while. God's country! Warm, sunshine! Biggest State! Biggest everything down there!" "Biggest bullshitters also" Olga said.

Jimmy laughed out loud. "Have to agree with that! No rain this year. Must admit not a good year for livestock on the Double D. Most of Texas for that matter. Rain last few weeks so animals are fine."

"Thought you were near a river anyway?" Dave said.

"Yup! Creek most of this year. Water not a problem. Forage. No rain no growth. Hay is twice the price from last year. Anyway, show me the loading chute and the animals?" Dave got up and motioned Jimmy to follow. He glanced at Olga questioningly. She shook her head 'no' "I will make food" she said and smiled "OK?" "Sure. Sounds good"

Dave showed him the animals to be shipped. Jimmy looked at them with great interest. At the boar pen he whistled low.

"Biggest frigging razorback I have ever seen! Biggest tusks! Not crossbred? Have enough feral pigs in the state. What a magnificent animal!"

"Pure Russian. Some of his daughters will be crossed with the German black boars. Hybrid vigor.

No domestics in the mix."

"No wonder Joe wanted them! Told me he was going to breed off them for a year or so then release in to the hunting part of the property. Offspring anyway. He can charge a helluva lot for animals like this boar."

"Been there long?" Dave asked. "seems a shame to kill these animals offspring." "What? Oh no! 5 years there. Hired me when I broke a leg and could not ride again. Bull riding in the rodeo. No killing animals for a few years until the population expands. Mean time paint gun .Pnue-dart rifle only. Marker dart is all. Makes the animals more wary stuff like that when they get older. Then he can charge the big bucks for the real thing. Smart guy is Joe" "Surprised! Good way of thinking. What does he do to make his money?" Jimmy turned away from looking at the boar and stared Dave in the eyes. "Fella I do not know you. I do not know nor care. I work for him. Why not ask him?" He was hard voiced, country cowboy act had gone.

"Hey! Don't get all uptight! Long as he pays me I do not give a shit if owns the best little whorehouse in Texas."

Jimmy stared at him then his face relaxed. "Guy saved my life." Dave pushed it a little more.

"Glad to hear that. How?"

Jimmy looked at him a while then leaned against the pen wall and lit a smoke.

"I was a young guy riding bulls. Making the big bucks on the circuit. I was good! So good a lot of guys bet on me. Big money. From what I know now there were many Mexicans betting on me and against me, regular folk also. Drug money perhaps? Was explained to me later. No matter if they make millions with drugs or whatever some just have to bet. Even if it is peanuts for them." He lit another cigarette off the stub of the other one. Dave watched him putting his thoughts together. "Well. Bull I rode was doped up. Crazy bastard. Could feel the tension in his body. Had to go for it. I was off him in 4 seconds. He went to 30 seconds and dropped dead. On my leg. Broke it.

Anyway, some of the gamblers figured I had thrown it. So to cut it short seemed I was targeted. Day later Motel room 1 masked guy with gun came in. Scared the shit out of me! Leg in a cast could not move much. Figured dead. Another guy came in seconds later.. Shot the first guy back of head.

Silencer. Short pudgy guy. Joe. Got me out and his team burnt down that section of the motel. Left my stuff in there. So. Last 5 years worked for Joe. He wants anything done I do it." "On ranch or off?" Dave asked.

"Whatever is needed buddy!"

"OK. We understand each other. Lets get a beer and get some rest." On the way back to the house Jimmy said "Same scenario?"

"What?"

"Saved your ass also way back when?"

"No comment."

Jimmy laughed "Fine with me! "

5am the three were up and moving. Jimmy had slept on the sofa, Dave and Olga in separate bedrooms. Not too much said over coffee. Little small talk then Dave checked his watch. "About ready folks?"

They nodded and got up. "I will put the outside light on. Just back straight up. They should load easy." "Oops! Paperwork!" Olga went to her room and brought it back, "OK, everything is in order.

All in this folder." She passed it to Jimmy.

"In return your paperwork." he looked in his wallet and took out a check. "Certified" he added.

"Right amount?" he passed the check to Dave who looked at it and said "Very generous. Thanks." Jimmy backed the trailer up to the barn and opened the back doors and put the ramp down.

"OK?" he asked. "Water is on board for them."

Dave checked it out. "OK. I will load them. Shavings down first though. Aluminum floor. Do not want injuries. Nice and quiet. If you have an inside trailer light you could put it on?" "Sure will do." He switched on the interior light. Dave opened a bale of shavings and spread them over the floor.

Headlights in the driveway and a few moments later Joe came in to the barn.

"How can I help?" he asked. He looked around and sized everything up. "Seems all is well." "Just stay back" Dave said "I will load them."

He picked up his plastic herding board and let the Boar out first. Firmly he moved him up the passage way keeping the 4x3 foot board ahead of him close to the boar so he could not turn around.

The boar loaded without a problem. Divider gate across once he was in and he returned for the sows.

They went up in to the trailer without too much of a problem as well. He put the back gate across. Joe looked in the trailer before the back doors were closed.

"Look comfortable" he remarked. Then "Good idea! Insulation on the walls. Styrofoam? Not much need for it in Texas. Oh well. The aluminum ribs will stop the animals destroying it. Whatever works." He fumbled a little and closed the door.

Jimmy locked it and said "So. Back home soon. Hate the bloody cold. Everyone set? Everyone happy? May be back in a month." He looked around and they all said "Take care now" "Safe drive" etc etc. Jimmy raised his hand "Thanks folks I am out of here." He started the truck up and turned the radio up loud. He beeped his horn once and took off.

"Almost seven. Starting to get light. Breakfast anyone?" Olga made ham and eggs and beans.

Dave watched Joe eat and said "Joe? Question?"

"Sure." Dave noted how his expression immediately got guarded. "What?" "Back of the trailer you fumbled around for a few seconds. You do not fumble. See something unusual? What was it?"

"Love the ham! Beans are not Mexican but pretty good." he finished the beans and

looked at Dave then Olga. "Just one thing. There was no Styrofoam in the trailer when we left Texas. Another slice of ham please? Thanks" he said when Olga passed him the plate. "So he had it put in behind the trailer bars inside the box last night at the reservation. Why?" "Maybe for the comfort of the animals?" Olga asked.

"How did he know they had it there? They must have been expecting him. Prior arrangement.

Something is not right. Last slice of ham or does some one else want it?" Olga moved it over for him. "Thanks. Eat when I get nervous." "What makes you nervous?" Olga asked.

"The whole situation. Not as cut and dried as it seems. Styrofoam. Out of character. Few other incidents also. Have a bad feeling about this. Think I am being set up." He looked at Dave and Olga in turn and saw their expressions. "Whoa! Not you two!" Dave said "Unusual for anything like Styrofoam to be in an animal trailer. Even behind the bars in this trailer. So? Is it Styrofoam? You fumbled and assume you got a sample?" "Smart!" Joe said "very smart!" he reached in his pocket and put a 2 x 3 inch piece on the table.

"Corner I broke off one panel. Not Styrofoam. Too hard. Has a coating on it. Not sure what but seems just like a regular shellac type substance."

Dave got up and poured himself another coffee deep in thought. Olga and Joe watched him. After a few minutes he said "Break the piece. Small portion I need. Have to test it. OK?" Joe hesitated then said "OK." He cut off a tiny piece and gave it to Dave. Dave ran the hot water tap until the water ran hot. He put the tiny piece in a glass of water then let it disperse.

"Folks the heat should break up the binder. I hope. If it is what I think it is..need a guinea pig." He laughed at the expressions on their faces."Have one in mind. May not work the same but no matter. No problems."

He went to the back door and whistled Bruno in. Bruno bounded through the door licking everyone tail wagging like crazy. In the house was a big treat for him.

"Your pet?" Joe asked.

"Pet? You point a gun at him you are down or he is dead. He does not back down. Anyway folks.

Show time." Dave moved over to the fridge and took out a carton of milk. He poured some in to a bowl and added the glass of water with the the dispersed piece in it.

"Here Bruno.!" he placed the bowl on the floor. Bruno came over and readily drank the milk. He finished it and sat looking at Dave with his tongue hanging out. Dave stroked his head. "Good boy!" "What is the point?" Joe said. "Dog eats insulation material? What are you thinking here?" "Wait and see. He should be getting hyper soon if my theory is right.

Just hope I don't kill the poor bugger."

Bruno got more excited and start acting like a puppy. Dave opened the back door and let him out.

"Get the bears boy!" he yelled as Bruno headed for the forest at full speed.

Dave looked at Joe and asked "What do you think?" Joe stared back at him "About what?"

"You are not that stupid!" Olga told him abruptly standing up. "It is quite likely the insulation is the drug powder made in to sheets! Easy to transport and think of how many dollars in one sheet! Can make pills why not sheets? The other Joe who bought the boars is going in to business himself? Easy to transport when in sheets in trailers. Any trailers but livestock preferably. Logical?" Joe nodded. "Interesting situation." He was deep in thought for a few moments. "Well, could call the RCMP. Have the trailer stopped at the border. But that would not do much good. Need the source or sources."

"If that Styrofoam was the powder reworked what would it be worth?" Dave asked.

"Maybe a million. Peanuts really." He noticed their expressions and added "drop in the bucket really. In this multi billion dollar industry. We need the big players." "K. So what now?" Dave asked.

"Plane ride?" Joe said.

"K. Lets do it then." Dave said and got up.

"What about your dog?" Olga asked.

"30 minutes stuff should wear off." Joe said rising. "He should be fine." Dave and Joe went out and walked to the hangar. In the Cessna Joe took out the tracker device.

He examined it again then asked "Screwdriver?"

"Sure but if that has gas in it?" He handed him a small tool pouch.

Joe took out a small screwdriver and worked carefully on the device. "K. Should be disarmed for now. To arm it just turn this screw all the way in" He put it back under the seat. "Tracker should still work though."

Dave fired up the engine and asked Joe "Were to?"

"Just an overview first. 4 miles East then North then West then South. Then do it again at 3 then 2 miles. Square grid pattern. OK?"

"OK." He lifted off smoothly and asked "What height?" "2000 should be good."

"So what authority do you have in these situations?" Dave asked as they headed East.

Joe shrugged. "Nothing direct. Local forces do it. Just have to call in to my Canadian counterpart and he does the rest. I just supply the information."

Dave figured he was at the 4 mile mark and turned North. "Not much to see" he commented.

"Too close to the gravel road" Joe replied. "Can I use your glasses?" "Sure" Dave handed them to him. "Nothing but trees." Joe put the binoculars to his eyes and start scanning the terrain without replying. "There!" he said after a few minutes " whats that place?"

"Jesus hangout. Summer camp. Retreat."

He circled and came back over the collection of cabins. "No life there this time of year" Dave remarked. "Want me to drop down?"

"Yes.500."

Dave did so. Joe kept the binoculars trained on the retreat as the Cessna dropped lower.

They circled it twice and Joe said "Nothing there, old car but no tracks. Better go North at 2000 again." Dave pulled the Cessna up. "Going to port" he said and turned the plane. They flew West and then South. Then did the grid again from 3 miles.

"Smoke?" Joe asked pointing South. They were going West again.

Dave looked. "Yes. Same place as yesterday. What do you want me to do?" "K. Keep going a few minutes more then drop down to 300 feet . Circle around and overfly the location"

"You sure?"

"Yes. If there are people there they will not get a chance to recognize the plane. Too fast for a visual. Besides, if it does not crash with the transmitter then they will assume it is not yours." "Hope to hell you are right!"

Joe took out a small GPS unit and turned it on. "This should locate the site for future reference." "Full throttle over the site?" Dave asked as he dropped down and banked left.

"Yes. Only does 110 right?"

Dave nodded and lined up to were the smoke was spotted. Joe took out a small camera and turned it on. "Video. Will record everything. Hook it up to a computer and slow it down. Then can see better than a 100 mph eye scan."

"K. Hope it works!"

He throttled up and minutes later was over the site. Dirt track coming in to a ravine then a small cabin then was over it and climbing again.

"All done now?" he asked.

“No. One more grid. Closer in. Will look like a mine survey plane to anyone on the ground.” Nothing unusual on the second fly around so Dave headed back home.

Chapter 10

They examined the video on the PC. They run it a dozen times at various speeds. Then hit the pause button every second or so.

“What do you think?” asked Dave.

“Looks like 3 cabins in the ravine. Obviously well camouflaged. Metal piping showing, other bits and pieces. Would guess it is a manufacturing facility.” “What about the smoke?”

“Probably a generator. Smallest structure. Biggest structure supplies, other the lab” Joe said.

“So what now?” Dave asked.

Joe shrugged. “It needs checking out. On foot. Who owns the land it is on?” “Could be part of the reserve but think it is Crown land. Canadian government. They will have it guarded of course. Such a small facility though. Thinking here of the Styrofoam sheet scenario.” “That size operation can produce a lot of powder. Has to be another place around that processes it.

Reserve maybe?”

“Good luck with that one! Honkys not allowed. Or cops. Inside man?” Joe was silent for a while then said “Maybe.”

Dave stared at him. “You have one in there already?” Joe looked at him. “Not to my knowledge but possible. Seems I am sometimes left out of the loop”

Dave stood up. “OK buddy. I am out of this crap! Get some one else. I am not the last Boy Scout on the planet!” he left Joe sitting there in front of the screen and got himself a beer.

He sat at the kitchen table with his beer and lit a smoke. ‘Not everything is has it seems’ he mused. Joe came in a few minutes later and opened the fridge door. “Mind if I have one?” “Go ahead.”

Joe sat across for him and picked up a smoke and lit it. He coughed violently. “Holy shit!

What is in these things?"

"You get used to them. Coyotes piss on the plants."

They sat there in silence for a while. Joe looked about to speak then stopped. "OK what?" Dave asked.

Joe shrugged. "You have limited options. We need a plan. For you. A way out after this is over.

Best way is for you to die."

"Thanks. Already heard that one." "Or let them think you are dead." "Then what? Go on the run? Never mind, will figure something out" They sat in silence for a few minutes then Dave asked him "OK. What is the next step?" Joe looked at him relieved. "Get close to the sheds, take some pics, samples. Proof for the authorities."

"When?" Dave asked. "Going to have mine people around tomorrow. Maybe a good time then?"

'Yes. Good cover actually. OK. Tomorrow then?"

"Fine with me."

Joe got up. "Thanks for the beer and the plane ride. Have to get back to town. Stuff to do. By the way saved the video on your computer. Will download to mine also once I get back"

Chapter 11

Another clear, cool morning. Dave was finishing his chores as the bright red "New North" Ram diesel turned in to the driveway. Young fellow got out and extended his hand.

"Mr Willis? John Chambers."

Dave shook his hand. "Alone?" he asked, smelling the aftershave.

"No. Surveyor and others went on ahead of me. We are just going to look the site over. Have to put a road in, buildings, stuff like that. Just thought I would let you know we are here." Dave nodded. "I will be up later to see. Curious."

"Anytime! Welcome anytime!" then "Well better get on the ball! Crack the whip! Later then." 'Asshole' Dave thought. He nodded as the young blond guy climbed in to his truck and left.

He checked his watch. 9 am. He had expected Joe before now. Shrugging he went back to the house and made a coffee. He picked up the phone on the second ring. "Yes?" "Joe here. Mine people there?"

"Yes. Just got here. Problems?"

"Not sure. I have a feeling that my room was searched yesterday some time. That video I down loaded. Copy to a disc and wipe it off the computer. Hide the disc." "What are you thinking?"

"Just a bad feeling. Maybe nothing. Better safe than sorry." he hesitated then said "Just watch your back."

"What about your video? Did you download it?"

"Yes. To my laptop. Will copy it in a few minutes. Have to get some discs first though. Anything goes wrong, call CSIS."

"Now you are getting me worried! Have heard of CSIS. Want me to come over?" "No. Just copy the disc. Hide it. Will be over later." he hung up.

"Shit!" Dave said aloud. "Frigging spooks!"

It took him 20 minutes to figure out how to transfer the video to the disc. He then deleted the original. He looked around, looking for a place to hide the disc. Finally he went out to Bruno's kennel and duct taped it inside under the roof. Bruno watched him quizzically.

"Watch it boy." Bruno wagged his tail. He knew the word. He let him off his chain and headed for his truck. Bruno sat beside his kennel. "Come boy!" Bruno jumped in beside him. 20 minutes later they were at the mine site. Three pick up trucks and a van. He got out and watched the proceedings.

Bruno close beside him. The surveyors were already set up and laser sighting the path the road would take. He walked over to the the ramshackle buildings where a group of workers were in discussion.

Older, grizzled worker came over to him. "You the owner?" "Yes."

"Karl. Site manager. Blond guy is the overall hotshot." He held out his hand and Dave shook the calloused hand.. "Hotshot? Looks queer to me."

Karl laughed. "Bosses son. We have to live with it. Must admit though he is good." "K. Plan is this. The old bunkhouse needs tearing down. The storage shed needs enlarging, obviously. Couple of 40 gallon drums of diesel in there. So bulldozer will be here in a few days from now. Few of them actually. Roadway first. Then the buildings then the equipment for the mine. Hope to get it done before the snow falls. "

“What mine equipment you bringing in?” Dave asked. “Derricks, rigs what?” “No” Karl said. “Big conveyer to load the trucks. Strip mining. Open pit whatever you want to call it.”

“What about bedrock? How deep can you go?”

“Lucky that way. Seems by the previous survey we have a relatively deep one here. 200 hundred feet. Perhaps less. Like a soup bowl. Quite wide though.” then “Oh shit! Hotshot is on his way here.” The blond guy approached them smiling.

“Hi David! Glad you got here. Nice dog! Anyway, I imagine Karl as already told you I am the bosses son? Just to set the record straight. I am good at getting projects rolling within budget. My old man would fire me if I did not perform. So all is well now? That shit is out of the way? So Karl, input please.”

Karl looked a little embarrassed. Then said “OK. Modular trailers for the on-site work force.

Usual stuff. Nothing put up permanent. 24/7 operation. Food trailer. 5 modular trailers should do it.” “What you think?” John asked turning to Dave.

Dave shrugged. “Over thirty miles to town assume 12 hour shifts? Rec trailer would keep everyone happy. They have to relax without driving too far. Stock it with cheap smokes from the res and beer.”

“You been in this business before?” John asked.

Dave shrugged. “Just an observation is all.”

“K. Karl? We go that route.”

“Well back to cracking the whip!” he turned to go then paused, looking back. His attitude changed. “By the way. People are not what they seem. From outward appearances. Stereotyped. Karl I know well. Tougher than a pig snout but heart of gold. You Mr Willis are a dangerous person. No matter. Business is business. Oh well. I have a job to do. Later folks! “ He strode away. Karl looked at Dave and shrugged. “Never heard him talk like that before.” He hesitated then said “Rumor only. They need this mine to produce. Cash flow problems.

Talking out of turn here. No matter, have to get back to figuring out logistics. Nice talking with you.” Dave nodded and called Bruno and got in the truck. ‘No matter what happened’ he thought, ‘nothing lost anyway.’

He briefly thought about going to the site in the bush then discarded the idea.

Chapter 12

'So' he mused 'Who is what, wants what. Hide the tape. Why? Nothing on it. Or did I miss something? Different scenarios for different people. Frig it, will just get out of the situation. If possible.'

Sky was clouding over and soon a light rain was falling. He took his time getting back to the house. 'Now what?' he thought as he pulled in to his driveway. Bruno, his paws on the dashboard, growled at the sight of the person standing beside the side of the old Taurus wagon. Male about 35 Dave guessed at first glance. Dirty blond hair very short, about Dave's build. Jean jacket and trousers.

'Military' Dave guessed. He parked and got out. Bruno beside him.

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Just looking. My old man worked here right?"

"Seth James?"

"Yes. I am his son. Jesse. Funeral this afternoon. You going?" Dave felt a shiver run down his spine as Jessie's pale blue eyes stared in to his. 'Fucking lunatic.

Mad.' he thought. He had seen many before, the body language, the crazy look.

"No. Have other things to do."

"What? No respect for the dead?"

Dave thought 'hell with it, face off right now'. "You have any respect for the dead?" Dave stared at him, feeling his muscles tighten up. Ready for whatever this guy wanted to do.

Jessie stared back. Slowly he seemed to relax. He shrugged and said "Nope! Dead is dead. But it is my old man so have to go watch the old fart get cremated. By the way. Have a friend in the fire department who pulled him out of the truck. Gash to his leg. Bled to death. His opinion. One of your wild pigs maybe?"

Dave looked at him, noticing the twitch in his jaw. 'Yup. Loony tune' he thought. "I have no idea.

I was not here."

Jessie stared at him a few moments then said "I do not like you! Limey bastard! You look like you can handle yourself but watch your back! I screwed tougher guys in jail!" He took a step forward arms raised and Bruno growled and moved in front of Dave.

Jessie hesitated looking at the dog. "So, attack dog. Never met one yet I could not terminate! Later maybe." He turned to go.

“Want a beer?” Dave asked.

Jessie stopped and turned back. “Beer?” he seemed confused then shrugged “Sure! Why not?” He followed Dave in to the house. He sat at the table and Dave got him a beer. Jessie drank half in one swallow.

“So what is this shit? Get to know the enemy stuff?” then “Got a smoke?” “Sure” Dave replied passing him a pack of cigarettes.

“No, a real smoke not that Indian shit!” he pushed the pack back.

“Sorry no pot here. Try the reserve.”

Jessie laughed out loud. “I go on the reserve those bastards will kill me!” then “Old history.” He swallowed the rest of his beer stood up and burped.

“Well, I am out of here. Stuff to do. No credits for the beer. Eye for an eye. Fair enough?” Dave stood up also. “Whatever you decide.”

Jessie waved and left. Bruno watching him in alert mode. Spinning the tires he took off out of the driveway. Dave watched him go. He sighed and stroked Bruno. “I do not need this shit!” he said to the dog. “Now a guy wants to kill me! Looks capable also. So what do I do boy? Eliminate the threat?” Bruno just looked at him with adoring brown eyes and whined.

“K buddy. All is well.”

He went to the fridge and gave Bruno a hot dog.

Chapter 13

The rain cleared up and the sun came out as Dave started up the ATV and headed in to the bush with Bruno sitting in the front seat. His rifle with him as usual. He headed North then two hours later turned East. He was out of his own property by now. He was just driving, clearing his mind.

“Shit, must be near the drug site” he hesitated and slowed down. ‘Go or no go?’ he asked himself.

Then ‘Hell with it, take a peek.’ 5 minutes later he was close. Half mile, he figured. He shut the engine off and proceeded on foot Bruno beside him.. He was panting when he finally topped the ridge of the ravine. His rifle felt heavier than normal.

'Too old for this shit' he told himself. The buildings were to the right some hundred yards or more. He backed down the ridge and went that way. Bruno heeling behind him. Finally, peeking over the ridge he had a good view of the buildings there. He could not see any activity but by the low hum of the generator he figured work was in progress.

He moved back down the ridge a little. He stroked the dogs head. "What now buddy? How do we get out of this mess?"

"Frig it" he lit a smoke and thought some more. Light bulb went off in his head. "Eliminate the problem!" he said out loud. "Shit! Simple!"

Bruno looked at him puzzled. "No worry boy, talk to myself all the time." He squirmed back to the top of the ridge and checked the site out again looking for the weak spot.

Shed with the supplies would be volatile. Lab also. Generator room best bet. Must have fuel there. He thought a few minutes then motioned Bruno to follow him. Carefully he navigated his way along the ridge of the ravine until he was a few hundred yards past the buildings. He slithered down the ravine and crept back towards the buildings. Generator room had a gas generator in it. Large one. 100 gallon fuel tank at one end supplying the generator. He looked around and found a white plastic pail.

Carefully he opened the bottom drain tap and let about 2 gallons flow in. He motioned to Bruno to go outside. He then poured the gas, a trickle at a time towards the door. Outside he poured a bigger trail until he was a few hundred feet away and out of gas.. He looked around. No one in sight, probably some folks in the lab he thought.

"Fuck it!" He lit a piece of cardboard from his cigarette pack and dropped it on the path. It flamed right away heading to the generator room.

"Run boy!" He ran up the slope and headed back in the general area of his ATV half mile away.

Took about 4 minutes before the explosion and fireball occurred. He was still running and did not glance back. Finally, sucking in air he got back to the ATV. He started it up and Bruno jumped in with him. "Out of shape boy! Need to exercise!" then "Hope all this shit is over now!" sweating heavily he headed back home.

Chapter 14

Dave had just finished chores for the evening when Joe's minivan pulled in to the driveway.

"Well buddy" he said getting out of the car, "all done here. Heading back Stateside tonight." "How come?" Dave asked.

"Heard in town there was a brush fire in the North west. Luckily it burnt itself out. Lot of black smoke was seen. Figured it was the site. One of the miners from your site was also mentioning he thought he heard an explosion" He looked at Dave questioningly.

"Did not see anything from here. Sure it was the site?" "Thought you might tell me?" then "No matter. Hope it is the end for you now. Be happy!" He held out his hand and Dave shook it. "By the way, destroy the disc. Useless now." "Will do. Be safe."

Joe nodded and got back in the van. One final wave and he drove off.

Dave stood and watched him go. It was getting dark so he called Bruno and went in to the house.

He poured himself a shot of rum and sat down. He lit a smoke. 'Has to be more than one site' he thought. 'Then again maybe there was just the one and I am off the hook? Yeah, right!' Bruno perked up his ears and growled. Dave went to the door and opened it. Olga was getting out of. The pick-up. Bruno ran to meet her happy as usual. She bent down and patted his head then reached in the cab and brought out a bag,

"Supper" she called. "Kentucky fried."

"Staying the night?" he asked when she got close.

"Sorry. Early start tomorrow. Blood testing a herd of sows. Later some large beef cattle need vaccinating. So came back for my Pnue-Dart."

He nodded and followed her in. She put the bag on the table and said "Eat before it gets cold!" "Yes your highness!"

"So" she asked "what did you do today?"

He shrugged and picked up a piece of chicken. "Mine guys were here first thing. Going to be lots of activity over that way. Joe was here earlier. Leaving tonight for the US." She looked at him questioningly. "Why?"

"Seems the site we found sort of blew up. Industrial accident maybe. So nothing more for him here he said"

She stopped eating and looked at him intently. "Accident? Bullshit!" He looked at her surprised at her tone of voice. "But..." he stopped. Then said "Thought you would be

happy? Gets people off my back anyway." She started eating the chicken leg again then threw it down. "Greasy crap" she said and went to the sink to wash her hands.

"So what's the matter with you? You wanted the site left alone?" he asked.

She wiped her hands dry. "You have put yourself in danger. Don't ask. Just think it was a bad move."

"Danger? Had Jesse James here this morning. 'Eye for an eye', he said. Thinks I am responsible or my boar is for his fathers death. He is looking for revenge"

"He knew about that site. Him and a few jail buddies. They were going to raid it and steal the product. You destroying it will really piss them off." "How do you know all this? What is your involvement?" She made herself a drink and sat down. "The people who got me and others out of Europe did so with the understanding we would help them if and when needed. Tit for tat. Of course we all agreed." "CSIS?" he asked.

"No. They were not around at that time. Americans and British or Canadians. As far as I could tell. No names nothing like that. Still have no idea who they are. They want something they call. Obviously cannot refuse. First call was about five years ago. Had almost forgotten about them. Instructions to make contact with you. Easy as I was the only vet in the area who could help you with the Russians." She paused, then "Next Joe called from Texas regarding the boars. About a year back or so. Was told to expect the call and cooperate. I did. Reasons they wanted JJ and group to raid the site and and get the drugs is so they could kill them. Legally"

"Why?" he asked.

She shrugged. "Something to do with his Army Service. Guess he shot some fellow soldiers.

Used an AK47 to make it look like insurgents had killed them. Iraq or some where. Pile of drugs found but the Army could not convict him. Discharged him. Cops here picked him up on a bodily harm or manslaughter charge. 6 or 7 years ago. Saved his life I think." "Why not just bump him off then?"

She shrugged "Do not know. Lot I do not know. Maybe times have changed?" "Doubt it." he got up and made a drink. "No matter. He will be coming after me. Guy is nuts." He sat down "Maybe you also?"

"Why me?" she asked, surprised.

"Guy is crazy. Seen lots of them. First they kill the ones close to the target, or injure them. Then go after the target." he shrugged "I will be ready. You better be careful also. Tell this to your handlers next time you talk with them. I assume you will get another call soon." "You frighten me!"

He looked at her. She did look scared. "I may be wrong about this but doubt it. You have a handgun?"

"No, of course not!"

"Know how to use one?"

"Yes."

"Good! Will get you one."

He went in to the computer room and searched under his desk. He found what he was looking for and also picked up the Pnue-Dart rifle and went back in to the kitchen.

"Here you go. S&W38. It is loaded." he handed it to her and laid the rifle on the counter. She picked the gun up and examined it.

"Yes. Familiar with this one." then "maybe I should stay the night? Maybe safer?" "Those your orders?" he said then immediately regretted the comment. "Sorry! I apologize!!" She stood up and pointed the gun at him, eyes blazing, face tight. "You piece of.." she tailed off and lowered the gun. She relaxed a little. She poured herself another drink. "Asshole!" she said.

"Stay the night. Safer."

"Safer, yes. But I also need sex. Alright?"

He was taken aback momentarily then said "I am sure that can be arranged. Oral or regular?" She smiled at him "Lets try them all?"

"Sure. My pleasure!"

Chapter 15

She left early promising to be back that evening. She was glowing after the night of love making.

Dave poured himself a coffee and sat down, wincing as the small of his back creaked in protest. 'Too old for this shit' he muttered then 'maybe not'.

An hour later with the chores taken care of he was back in the house. "Now what?" he mused.

'Check the mine site? Talk with Bill at the Reserve?' He decided on the latter. Another

coffee and he fired up the truck and headed out, telling Bruno to stay. Bruno was loose but would stay around the house.

"Hi sweetie!" the tall thin lady behind the counter greeted him. He smiled back at her. "How come you are always so pleasant? Especially at this time of the morning?"

She beckoned him to come closer and whispered in his ear "I get screwed regularly, how about you?" He backed off and laughed out loud.

"You do have a way with words? No comment on the other one." She smiled at him again. "So what do you need today?" "Coffee and talk with Bill if he is around."

"Sure honey, will call him. Coffee over there but you know that." She picked up the phone and dialed. "About 5 minutes" she told Dave. He nodded and sat down with his coffee and lit a smoke.

Cars and trucks were pulling in an increasing rate. Oil prices were low and gas prices high.

Normal. 10 cents a liter cheaper here than in town. Worth the drive out. He watched the traffic come and go then got another coffee. 15 minutes had passed. He got up and went to the counter.

"Pay for the coffee" he said. "Will talk with him later." "He is here now. Told the bugger to get up when I left." She smiled at Dave. Dave smiled back and turned around. Bill came in dressed in jean jacket and jeans. The cowboy boots made him look taller. 'Imposing figure' Dave thought.

He was wearing a T shirt with the picture of a wagon train and Indians on horse back firing arrows at it. "First drive by shooting" the caption read.

"Hi buddy" he said to Dave and extended his hand. Dave shook it. "Little early for social calls.

What do you need?"

"Some info."

Bill looked at him. "Serious stuff? Was figuring you would be around" "Yes."

"Have your truck here obviously. Lets go for a ride." "Make a right at the end of the road" Bill said. "Show you the site of the new Casino we are putting up."

Dave made the right hand turn on to the gravel road. Bill was fishing around for something. "No bugs." Dave said.

"Sorry buddy. Have to look anyway." Dave shrugged, "Fine with me." After 5 minutes he appeared satisfied. "K. What info you need?" "K this may take a few minutes. Will tell you

what has happened so far then perhaps you can fill me in on the blanks?"

Bill nodded and said "Leave nothing out. K?"

"Alright. Here we go."

He talked for a good ten minutes recounting events then hesitated when it came to Olga. Bill turned to him "No holding back. OK?"

Dave continued on. Finally he quit talking. "Said about everything that has happened." Bill lit a smoke and rolled down the window. He pointed right.

"New Casino will be built over there. Indian land." He was silent for a moment then said "For your ears only. No matter no one would believe you anyway if you told them. First order of business.

JJ will kill you and yours unless you kill him first. Do not hesitate! So you blew up the production site yesterday. Good. Dummy site. Have others. Heat is off for a while. Olga and the shadow group. Not sure about those folks. Cannot help you there. Have heard of a group of ex Army vets dating back 40 years or more but just rumor. Has it they take care of the renegades. Whatever. Has to be more to it than that."

"Why do you make the pills?"

Bill looked at him then pulled out a smoke and lit it. "Make another right on the dirt track and stop the truck."

Dave did so. He shut off the engine and also lit a smoke.

"OK" Bill said. "Will give you the simple, quick version. Do not interrupt. I am only going to say this once. You are only the second non-native person to hear this. To my knowledge anyway." He paused for a moment then continued on. "Little history. We owned all of North America. Then the whites came. Then came more and more. To cut it short we have a little bit of land left. No rights worth speaking of. All on reserves, living basically on handouts. Remember the agenda I mentioned in the plane? OK. About ten years ago there was a meeting of all the major First Nations People. How to overcome the inequality. Many ideas put forward. Mostly usual shit. Protests whatever. One guy had a radical idea. As the 'invaders' are many times more numerous than us, either breed more Indians or slow down the birth of the whites. Sounded stupid at the time, people who were there told me.

Anyway.

We have many smart Indians. University degrees and all. So, we got a bunch of those guys together. Native peoples increase, non-natives decrease. Took them a few years but they figured out a solution. We can never out number the whites or other immigrants. So

plan was and is to curtail the birth of whites or others. Anyway. Lots of youngsters and young adults smoke pot and pop pills.

Designer drugs. So all the smart people we have designed a pill that when taken a number of times, not that many times, it makes the non-native people sterile. Permanently. Guess us Indians have a slightly different genetic or DNA background. Does not affect us the same. See we have many smart Indians! OK. Long term. Less whites born, shortage of labor in the next 15 to twenty years. Critical shortage. Anyway stop gap solution. Working on other ideas also." He paused and lit another smoke.

"Comments?" he asked.

"Pretty far fetched scenario. Sterility from designer drugs? China and India may be interested." Bill laughed out loud. "You got it buddy! We are in contact. Native people are shipping them now from BC on container ships. Worth billions in the next few years. Oh shit! Eventually they will figure out the exact formula but for now no one can crack it. Same as the recipe for Coca Cola." Dave tossed his smoke out of the window and lit another one.

"Well back from the future. So you can basically add any thing to this pill?" then said "This conversation will not be passed on to anyone. I may need help if JJ decides to get nasty. By the way, are you in contact with the guy in Texas? He is DEA!" "JJ is your problem. Nuke him!" then "Buddy, I am in contact with anyone who needs bulk pills! OK lets go, enough said. Really do not give a shit who he is. Has to be in business for himself.

Besides we are covered here."

Dave started the engine and backed the truck up and headed back.

Chapter 16

After dropping Bill off he headed home. 'Getting out of hand' he thought. 'Thought I was out of this crap years ago. Oh well, back to basics.'

Bruno greeted him as he got out of the truck. He patted his head as he went in to the house. Inside he headed for the office. He opened the bottom drawer in his desk and took out a handgun. Glock Model 26 9mm. Magazine was full. 10 rounds. He put it in the nylon holster then in to his jacket pocket.

He looked around, thinking. All windows and other points of entry were secure as always. He shrugged. Any person determined enough could break in regardless of

security measures. He went out and headed for the Cessna, telling Bruno to stay. The plane was tied down. He undid the tethers and climbed in. He fired it up and let it idle for a few minutes. He reached under the seat and removed the GPS device. He sat it on the seat beside him, revved the engine and lined it up for take off. Full power and he took off smoothly in to the light North wind. He turned the plane East and 15 minutes later was over the mine site. Just a pick-up with a camper there now. Figure stood beside the truck and waved.

Looked like Karl. He wagged the wings and kept going East.

Another ten minutes he was over the locked and shuttered buildings of the Church retreat, flying at 500 feet. Just the one old car there. He opened the window and threw out the GPS device. He was starting to climb then leveled off and circled over the small deep lake. Something in the tree cover was out of place. Next pass he saw it. Hood of a car backed in to the trees. He climbed and headed North West.

‘Well’ he thought, ‘not much to steal there. Cabins have been locked for weeks now.’ He thought back to a few years ago. He had taken his canoe to the lake to fish. Early spring.

Cool. He had fished for an hour and had 4 good sized trout and then decided to head home. The small wooden jetty stuck out in to the lake where he had launched from. Large person was standing there watching him.

He pulled the canoe on to the jetty. “Sorry” he said to the guy “Thought this place was abandoned.”

He held out his hand saying “Dave Willis. Have a place few miles west from here.” “No problem.”

He shook his hand. Guy was old but had a firm grip. “John Comley.” “This is our Summer retreat. I am here to check things out. Church retreat. Helps some relax and enjoy life more.” His green eyes were sharp and shrewd. “You a church goer Mr Willis?” Dave hesitated then replied “Not for many years now Reverend.” The big guy laughed, “Not a reverend! Not a pastor! Elder in the Kingdom Hall.” “Jehovah Witness people?”

“Yes. Feel free to come over any time.” then he laughed again “See by your expression you do not want to get involved with the commonly called ‘door knockers’. No matter. But would appreciate a visit from you?” he held up his hand before Dave could reply. “Just think about. Anyway, please read some literature I have if you have time.”

Dave loaded the canoe and the elder went to his car and came back with a handful of leaflets.

“You may find them interesting. Have a nice day now!” Dave nodded and left. He pulled himself out of the memories and focused ahead. Plant site was just a large, scorched patch

as he flew over it. Not much left at all. He turned South and headed home.

The vets truck was parked in the driveway he noticed as he circled to land. 'Must be done in good time' he thought. 'Good!'

He landed the Cessna and secured it. Bruno bounded up to him and he stroked him. "K buddy, getting about supertime."

"You are early" he said to Olga as he entered the house. "Have a good day?" She turned from the sink, putting the few cups on the counter. Her green eyes were flashing.

"Good day? No! Shit day!! So friggin scared it is not funny! Carrying a gun yet, for goodness sake! I am a vet! This is Canada! This crap is just getting to me!" He walked over to her and put his arms around her. She put her arms around him and he stroked her hair. "Nothing I can say will make it better." then "where is the gun?" "Seems like yours is in your coat pocket. Under the seat of the truck. Drivers side. Why?" "Truck locked?"

"Oh shit, no." She pulled away and got her keys off the table. She went outside and pressed the lock button on the key. Truck burped in assent.

"OK?" She asked.

"Good. Why so scared now and not so much this morning? Anything unusual happen?" "Nothing I can be sure of. Think I may have been followed but just imagination I assume." "What type of vehicle?"

She shrugged "How would I know? First seemed like a black sedan then later a small pick-up.

Imagination probably."

He hung his jacket up. "Probably imagination. Staying the night?" "Yes. That alright?" she stared at him

"You know it is! So what now?" She looked puzzled "What...?" "Food or sex or jog in the woods?"

She laughed loudly, nervously. "Food is good. What you want to eat?" "Besides you? Something simple."

She checked the fridge then the freezer. "Not a hell of a lot here." "No" he said "you dumped a pile of stuff already. Cupboards?" She checked them out. Lot of muttering then she said "Quick easy and nutritious!" she proceeded to get out two cans of sardines, and Tabasco and Worcestershire sauce.

"Get the bread and toast some" she ordered him. He did so. She emptied the cans of sardines in a bowl then added a dash of both the sauces. Then a squirt of ketchup. Then mixed them all together in to a paste. "Bloody Mary on toast! Good for you!"

Dave felt a twinge of apprehension but when the toast was done and the mix put on it he complimented her. "Really good. Thanks!"

"Needs Vodka but never mind. Glad you like it." She smiled at him between bites.

"K." he said after they had finished "Check the barn. Be right back. Excellent meal". He lit a smoke and put his coat on. Then went outside.

Chapter 17

'Cold tonight' he thought as he walked around the barns. All looked secure. He shrugged off the feeling of something bad about to happen and went back in to the house.

Olga was on her cell phone, listening intently.. She looked at him and shook her head. He sat down watching her.

"Yes. He just came in." she handed him the phone and shrugged at him.

"Willis. Who are you?"

"Mr Willis. Finally we talk. It does not matter who I am. Just call me Simon. Let us just say we, I have you and Olga's best interests at heart. " Voice sounded British.

"What do you want?"

"There is a lot of bad people in the world."

"That is why we have cops" Dave replied.

"True, true. However, justice is not always served."

"So you and others are a vigilante group? That is what I am thinking now." "Something like that. However, world wide lots of resources. People etc,." "So what do you want of me? Obviously you want something." "Yes of course we do! Read your file. Do not ask how we got it, just be assured we have it. Let me ask you this. What do you want out of life?"

"A world without spooks!"

"Unfortunately that is not possible. Let me run this past you. You and Olga. Living in British Columbia or Florida. Happily etc,. Small ranch perhaps? No records, no files on you." "You found me as did others."

"I have a program that will delete all past records etc,. A virus for the law enforcement agencies computers."

"I do not trust you. Nothing is ever erased."

He heard the sigh on the phone. "Mr Willis. I will be blunt. JJ wants to kill you. Yes? I do not think you have a chance against him. He is dangerous. Perhaps a small chance. We want him dead.

With the industrial accident at the site that screwed up our plans. Legal cop shoot out was intended.

However, due to circumstances, scenario has changed. I do hope you can kill him in self defense." "You must have people who can do that stuff?"

"Yes. We do. Prefer not to though. We like to keep at arms length. Use the..well..expendables.

He will go for Olga first. Probably a ransom or something. He has about three people with him but they are not of his caliber."

"How about the guy in Texas? DEA guy?"

"Good question. Will supply some evidence to the DEA and he will be looked after." "So. All this goes down, kill JJ, end up in B.C. Then what? Another project?" Silence for a while then "Not on the agenda." "You mean not yet? Look buddy, I do not mean to be rude but piss off!" "Certainly. Have a pleasant evening." The caller hung up.

"I need a beer." He arose and handed the phone back to Olga. She looked at him quizzically. He opened the beer and took a swig., then briefly told her the meat of the conversation.

"I am frightened!" she reached out and held his hand.

"What did you do in Latvia?" he asked.

She shrugged "Nothing too much. Was a lab technician." "What sort of lab?"

"Viruses. New ones. New to us anyway. Some old ones" "Why did you have to leave?" he took another swig of beer.

"Government was always interfering. Mafia state really. Rumor was it we were all getting moved to Russia to help with a program there. One of the workers said he knew someone who could get us out of the country. A few of us decided to leave."

"Any special virus you were working on?"

She shrugged "No. Anthrax, usual animal problems. Rodent carried viruses. Hantavirus few variations of it. HPS. Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome" She stared at him "Why you asking?" "You do any work on viruses over here?"

"No. Just read the literature. Do mock ups. There have been some deaths recently to

HPS. Large spike. Carried by the Deer Mouse. But same as Europe. Warmer winters, rodents thrive. The Bank Vole in Europe and other rodents. Here and in the US. Air born virus. Excreted in the droppings.

Inhaled as dust. Not thought to be transmissible between humans. But apparently it is now. Must have mutated."

"Mortality?"

"About 30 to 50 percent. No vaccine against it to my knowledge." She looked at him questioningly.

"Just wondering why some one would get you out of Europe. Just the four or 5 of you. You get any results with the vaccine?"

"We tried. Looked promising but program was canceled. Moved on to other things. Then got out." "O.K. This whole scenario does not make sense. Do you keep in touch with your fellow workers

from Latvia.? Can understand JJ. Cannot understand why a high ranking DEA agent would go in to business for himself though. He must know he will be caught." "Maybe he is not in business for himself?" she said. "Besides, Joe knew it was in the trailer." then "Yes keep in touch with some of them. Why?"

"So what do they do now? Where are they?" he asked.

She shrugged. "No idea. Think Montreal. Still working on the vaccine I understand. They are pretty private about names etc,. Email me sometimes."

"What do they say? When was the first time they contacted you?" She looked at him for a moment. "Actually just after the call from the group, I think. They asked about how I was doing, small talk then about the work we did in Latvia. They asked for some input and feedback. On the HPS vaccine. Asked if I remembered the sequence we had back then. Before we quit it. Said no, Stefan would. Older leader of the team. Told me he died 6 years back now." "So they are picking your brains now? Why?"

"Had some old notes in a diary I kept. Looked it up and gave them some models of what looked promising way back then. Reverse engineering and splicing it to a DNA molecule." "K. How significant would it be to produce a vaccine like that? Money wise?" She shrugged again "It cost millions in research to get a vaccine that works. In this particular HPS scenario, not enough market to make a profit. Not enough people get the virus. No profit no research. Heck why do you think all the drug companies warn you of side effects? So they can sell other drugs to cure the side effects knowing people will take the risk. Sounds far fetched but the millions spent on a cure for cancer has to have produced a cure by now. DCA works, shrinks tumors in rats, but too cheap and not under patent. But that

would not be profitable as the other treatments.

Just my thoughts.”

“Heck with it. Maybe you should leave the area for a week or so. Vacation. Until this is over.” “No! Not going to run! Not without you!”

He sighed. “Alright. Better to see it through and get it over with.” He got up. “Bruno will be in the house tonight. Doubt if he would attempt it but one never knows with these crazy buggers.” ‘Bed then?’ she asked.

“Yes. After you.”

“Have to shower first.” she smiled at him and went to the bathroom. He checked the doors again after letting Bruno in, then headed for the bedroom taking the Glock with him.

Chapter 18

She left early, over his pleas to stay. He did the chores and went back inside. ‘Now what?’ he asked himself. He made a coffee and lit a smoke. ‘No great need for a vaccine yet they make one anyway. On the cheap. If there is no market or a small one then why?’ He started to rise then sat down quickly. ‘Chicken wings! Years ago thrown into stews or soups.

Garbage meat. Now expensive. Some one had created a demand. OK. No demand for the vaccine unless some one creates a demand. Why ..? Unless many people suddenly get infected. Transmissible virus? But how would one anticipate a spike in infection? Shit! Cause and effect. Give people the virus!! Same as designer drugs that cause sterility!’

He got up and walked around the kitchen. ‘ Nah, too far fetched!’ He thought about it some more. ‘Profit in the pills, profit in the vaccine. Cannot lose! China and India, must be billions of dollars potentially!’ He sat down again. ‘Hell with it! Go for a drive! Clear the brain!’ He arose and went out to the truck calling Bruno.

The mine site still had the one truck and camper there. Karl came out of one of the old sheds as he pulled up.

“Nothing going on here” he said as he shook Dave’s hand. “Heavy stuff in the next day or so.” “Just driving around” Dave said. “Why would rare earth be here and just in this spot?” he asked.

“Sediment. Used to be a shallow lake. Stream run if from the north. Must have been pretty fast at one time to cut through the ridge.” He pointed to the cut in the ridge. “Over the years it filled with silt.

Usual scenario.” then “know anything about geology?” “No. Worked at some mines. Security guard is all.”

Karl scratched the back of his head then rubbed his grizzled chin. Dave looked at him and said “Something bothering you?”

“Well, found something earlier. Take a look.” He walked over to the trailer and Dave followed him. “Years ago I spent most of my time prospecting. For gold. So could not resist checking out the old stream bed. Just scrabbled around for an hour and came up with this.” he went in to the trailer and came out with a clear pill bottle. “Take a look.” He handed the plastic bottle to Dave. Dave took it and looked at the contents. Looked like dirt but with small gold flakes in it.

“Gold?”

“Probably. Yes.”

“So what are you thinking?” Dave asked.

“K. Could be much more in the sediment below. Or nothing or nuggets.” “Why you telling me this? “

“You seem like a good person. Probably signed the standard agreement. So much a ton taken out. Right?”

“Not signed yet. Waiting for the paperwork. Just signed a letter of intent.” “Well..you should negotiate again. Maybe nothing in the silt but one never knows. Has to be some.”

“Thanks for the heads up but why?”

He shrugged. “Got screwed one time. Lost a fortune. Alaska. No matter. Would not like that to happen to anyone. Besides the boss is an asshole!”

Dave thought for a minute then said “How come this was not found earlier? When they took samples?”

Karl shrugged. “Probably just went deep in the silt but not deep enough. Core samples can be deceiving.”

“So I have a potential gold mine here?”

“Maybe not enough to make a fortune but one never knows.” Dave looked at Karl a few minutes, thinking, then said “What would you do?” “Me? Get a new contract!”

“K. Will think about it.” He looked North. “So you think it comes from the North of here?”

Maybe you should explore it?"

Karl shrugged "Distinct possibility."

"Well, have to go. Nice talking with you." Dave raised his hand and returned to the truck.

"Take care now. Looks like heavy weather coming in" Karl said. He pointed to the South where large black clouds were gathering. He headed back to the buildings.

Dave made a left at the end of the rutted lane and headed East. 20 minutes later he was at the retreat. He got out followed by Bruno. He paused for a moment looking around. All seemed as it should be. He walked around the cabins checking the locks and the ground for tracks. Finally he went to where he thought he had seen a vehicle's hood. Trees were much taller here. Damp ground showed tire tracks. 'Car not a truck' he figured. 'Who and why?' he wondered as Bruno barked from his right.

He walked in that direction his right hand on the Glock in his jacket pocket. Brush was thicker here.

Light dimmer. If it was a threat Bruno would have warned him. Still, he took the gun out and pushed off the safety. The scrub was trampled in about a 10 foot area. He searched around carefully. Nothing he could see out of the ordinary. He backed out and went around the other side of the thicket. Still nothing. Back in the thicket he had a hunch. He looked up into the pine trees. Slight breeze making the branches move. There! Black object lodged in a branch. His GPS from the plane. He put the safety on and put the baby Glock back in his pocket. 'Now what?' he thought. Minutes thought then he climbed the tree clumsily with his heavy work boots. Carefully he loosened the transmitter from the branch holding it and came down, sweating a little. 'So, tracking me are they?' he muttered. He looked around and walked over to the cabins. He selected one nearest the lake and picked the lock easily.

Inside he glanced around. Closet, small bedroom, bed with a plastic cover on the mattress. Kitchen.

Chemical toilet in the tiny bathroom. Closet held sheets and a blanket. Rodent bait on each floor of the cabin inside traps, large plastic traps. No droppings anywhere. People were thorough in their housekeeping.

He carefully put the GPS unit in one of the traps. After arming it. Green light flickered intermittently. He thought about the gas in it then shrugged at the thought. He straightened up, looked around then went outside.

He managed to re-lock the door. Calling Bruno he headed back to the truck and set off for home.

Chapter 19

An hour later the storm arrived. Towering black clouds dropped heavy rains whipped around by high winds. Remnants of a hurricane in the US a few days ago he assumed. He had already fed the animals so he waited for a lull in the rain and ran to the house. He was soaked the time he got there.

Bruno went in to his kennel. Dave made a coffee and changed in to dry clothing. He checked his watch. 6pm. He got up and turned on the radio. Local station. News was on. He turned it up hairs on his neck standing up as he listened. "Apparently the driver lost control of the black mini-van last evening and hit a tree. The van burst in to flames. The Trans Canada was closed for an hour or so until the wreckage was removed from the East lane. The van was a rental. The driver has not been identified as yet but the the person who rented the van was a US man. Now on to other news. Severe storm watch is in effect for the immediate area. Ice pellets a possibility. People are advised to be cautious and seek shelter if in an exposed area."

Dave turned it off.

'Last night? He was supposed to leave day before that. Wait! Heading East? Must have been on his way back maybe?' he shrugged and looked out of the window. Rain was heavier now. Lightning flashing lighting up the black sky periodically. 'hope Olga is OK' he thought.'this situation is pissing me off!' He checked the piece of paper besides the phone. Olga's cell number. He called it. It rang numerous times without being answered. He hung up and lit a smoke. He waited five minutes then tried it again. It was answered on the third ring. "Yes?" "Hi. Where are you?"

"Home. Was near here anyway. Weather is too bad to drive much further. If it does not clear up soon will stay the night here."

"Want me to come over?"

"No. Hours drive anyway. I will be fine. Thanks for caring!" She did not sound her usual self. Her voice was tense. "OK. Listen. If you are under stress tell me you castrated some pigs today.

She hesitated. "No. No beef today. Just castrated pigs." "OK then. Sit tight."

"Goodnight see you tomorrow" she said and turned off her cell phone.

Quickly he put on his soft rubber soled boots and a zip up jacket. He transferred the Glock and went out to the truck telling Bruno to stay. He drove out spinning gravel then steadied down. Heavy rain changing to ice pellets then back to rain again. Wind still strong but weakening he thought. Off the gravel and on to the highway. Not too much traffic. He drove as fast was safe in the rapidly dwindling light. He reached down and

rummaged in the tray between the seats. He found the GPS and turned it on. With one eye on the road he punched in favorites then Olga. 'Continue on 73 another 15 kilometers.' the voice said. 'thank goodness she put her addy in' he thought. She had insisted on it. He lit a smoke. Soon he was on the edge of town. 'Turn right on Beechwood Drive in 100 meters.' he slowed and did so. 'Continue for 600 meters then turn right to 3111 Beechwood drive.' He turned the unit off slowing to 50 km. The houses were old and well spaced. He drove past the house. Looking at the place he saw it was set back off the roadway. No lights on. Her truck was in the driveway alone. He went farther down a 100 meters then pulled alongside the curb under a street light.

Next few houses had their lights on. He turned the truck off and pocketed the keys after locking the doors. He walked back quickly in the rain. He passed the house then the next one, also dark then turned left in to the driveway. He made his way around to the rear. Wind had picked up strength drowning out any sounds. No dogs barked. Quickly he got to the back of Olga's house. He looked the situation over. No sign of any one. No open windows he could see. He moved to the back door.

Screen door was closed but the inside one open. The screen door rattled in the wind. He waited on one side of the door oblivious to the rain his Glock ready. His eyes were now accustomed to the dim light.

He noticed a movement just inside the door. He waited. The wind downed a large branch from a maple tree one house down, the noise easily heard above the wind. The shadow took shape as the man peered out through the screen door. He wore a black balaclava and black clothes. Medium height.

Dave shot him between the eyes and stepped back. The sound of the 9mm lost in the wind. No other movement he could discern inside. He waited another minute or so. Then quickly pulled the screen door towards him and entered dropping to the floor and rolling. He lay there listening, searching for movement. He got up and moved to the inside of the kitchen door avoiding the tables and chairs. He was about to open it when there was a knock from the other side. He waited a few seconds then tapped back. The person on the other side turned the knob and start to come in, saying "This is fucking bullshit! No one is going to show up!"

"Wrong" said Dave and put the gun to the side of the man's head. The guy raised his hands and dropped his gun.

"Please! Only following orders!" he started to whine.

"OK. How many more in the house?"

"You wont shoot if I tell you?"

“No I wont.”

“Just us two down here one upstairs. Other one left. Already!” Dave pressed the gun harder to his head

“But you promised!”

“I lied!” He pulled the trigger smelling that the man had already crapped his pants. He let him fall then stepped over him. He moved along the passageway slowly. He checked the front door and the two rooms downstairs. Cautiously he moved up the stairs. Three bedrooms it looked like. Dim light under one of the doors. He checked the other two first. Nothing there. He stopped outside the door with the light under it. He thought a moment or two. May be the guy was telling the truth? Maybe not? He shrugged and looked at the light at the bottom of the door. Not a bright light, so he would not get blinded when he went inside. Caution made him wait a few moments longer. It paid off. A shadow crossed the floor from left to right inside the door. Door was modern style. Two veneers over a hollow core. Easy to shoot through. Man’s voice said “Hope you liked it! Going to have another go soon! The three of us. Prison gets us horny!” He laughed. The voice was close.

‘So just the three ‘ Dave thought. Good! The shadow started to cross again and Dave fired two rounds waist high. A scream and then a thud. Dave pushed opened the door moving the mans kicking body away. He fired one more in to his head. The man stopped moving. Quick look around. No danger. Olga was tied to the bed a gag in her mouth. Naked. He noticed the bruises on her arms and thighs. He kept his anger under control and undid the ropes. He took the gag out of her mouth.

“Give me the gun!” she said. He did so. She went over to the guy on the floor and yelling in Latvian shot him between the legs. He grabbed her and took the gun back. “Getting low on bullets” he said. “Get dressed now.”

She did so. Jeans and shirt and bra that were strewn on the floor. Then her heavy shoes. She was blazing mad he could see and also close to tears. He held up his hand when she was about to speak.

“Later. First things first” then “can you drive?” She nodded.

“Then OK. Follow me in your truck. OK?”she nodded yes. “Go out the back door. Anything you need from here? You may be gone a while.”

“Briefcase with papers. Wallet, purse” she said and opened a closet. “Ready” she said after fishing out the briefcase.

“Minute then. Wait until I pass you with my truck then follow me.” She nodded. He did a quick search of the body and retrieved a cell phone.

“OK, lets go. Car keys?”

“Oh shit. Kitchen” they went downstairs quickly. “Just two more? Hoping it would be three.” she said.

“Saving him for last. Keys?” She nodded.

“OK let us move.”

He felt exhilarated. ‘Still pretty good for an old guy he thought.’ She got in the truck and fired it up. He walked quickly down the street and got in to his. Still raining and windy. He fired it up and turned it around. She tucked in behind him. Just out of town he turned on the cell phone. He dialed 911. Dispatcher asked what the emergency was about.

“Neighbor of mine. Looks like someone is breaking in to the house”. He gave her Olga’s address and rolled down the window and threw out the phone.

Chapter 20

Storm was passing and he made good time. He thought about the events. Then mentally shrugged. ‘Done is done’ he thought. ‘She will be probably mad as hell and crying all at the same time.

Good job she is in her truck.’

Bruno came out to meet them as they turned in to the driveway. He parked and got out, Olga close behind him. Her gun in one hand, briefcase in the other. She turned and pressed the lock button on her ignition key then followed him inside. Bruno joined them, shaking the rain off himself.

“Drink?” he asked her.

“Yes. Make it a good one.” She took her jacket off and hung it up with the gun in the pocket. The briefcase she put on the table. He nodded to a chair and she sat down. He passed her a drink. She took a sip and coughed. She looked at him, her eyes still mad. Looked like she had cried a little in the truck he thought.

“You are a killer!” she said. Her voice hard.

He shrugged. “Only shoot the live ones. Never found it necessary to shoot dead people.

Ammunition being so expensive.” He looked at her and she stared back. Then a slight twitch of the mouth, then a smile and a loud laugh.

“You are one of a kind!” she took another drink then asked “So what now?” “Have to

wait and see. Think he terminated Joe. Accident” he added seeing her inquiring look.

“Trans Canada highway last night. Lost control, van hit a tree, burned up. According to the news anyway. Seems to me if he was in the East lane he was heading back in this direction” “No. Not that! Us!”

He went over to her and stroked her hair. “Nothing has changed, far as I am concerned. Past is past. Life goes on.”

She stood up and faced him “I have just been raped by four freakin animals and all you can say is life goes on? I feel humiliated! I feel unclean! I feel unwanted...” her voice tapered off.

He pulled her to him. He could feel her heart pounding. ‘Careful’ he thought ‘say the right things’.

“Nothing has changed for me. My feelings for you. Same as yesterday. You are a strong woman. It is up to you how you deal with it.” he took a chance, saying “it will always be in your mind what happened. Try and bury it. As for feeling unclean, get a shower then we can make love.” He felt her stiffen then relax a little.

“It does not bother you that..?” he held up his hand.

“It bothers the shit out of me! What happened to you! But for now it is one day at a time. We have some thing good going between us. Let us keep that.” She moved away and sat down and took another drink. She looked at him again. “Not tonight. I do not think I could go through that this soon.”

“Fine with me! Next week, next month, next year. Does not matter. Whenever you are ready. No pressure. For now no messy bodily fluids, no exhaustion, nice platonic relationship.” She got up and walked around to him and kissed him.”Thank you.” she said.

“OK then. Seriously. Next few days. Cops will be here probably. You were here since early afternoon. Hope no one saw your car in your driveway.?” She shook her head. “Do not know. The neighbors are pretty much retired etc,. But do not know.” “OK, stick with that story. Here from early afternoon. Now I called the cops from the cell phone I got off the body. Threw the phone out of the window. Reported an attempted burglary. They will find three bodies. Two with bullets in the head, one guy with two in the gut, one in the head, one in the nuts. Also they will find semen stains on the bed sheets. Not yours. Lots of speculation, forensic tests done etc,. They will find your DNA but you do live there. They just may try to swab DNA off the guys penises. But not likely. So. Tomorrow call in sick. I need you with me at all times until this matter is settled. OK?”

“OK. Have to soak in the bath for a while.” She stood up.

“What is in the briefcase?” he asked.

"Notes from Latvia, from the lab, some scribblings, stuff like that. Personal papers. Read it if you want to. Thought it might be important. Cannot see how but read the stuff anyway." "OK. Going to get a bite to eat first."

She headed for the bedroom for her clothing then the bathroom.

Dave opened a can of luncheon meat and made a sandwich. He put HP sauce on before eating it.

He finished the sandwich then made another. "Good stuff" he said out loud. "OK now the interesting stuff." He opened the briefcase and pulled out a sheaf of papers. He looked at them then laughed out loud. He put them back in the briefcase and closed it. He went to the bathroom and knocked on the door. "May I come in?"

"Sure" she answered.

She was covered in bubbles up to her neck. She smiled at him. "I feel better already!" "You look lovely." She smiled again.

"About those papers." he said. "Yes?"

"Cannot read them, they are in Latvian or some thing." Her green eyes sparkled and she laughed out loud. "Oh yes! Forgot about that! Will translate some time for you!"

He smiled at her and closed the door. He poured himself a drink. 'Last one' he told himself.

'situation could get hectic next few days.'

He went back to the kitchen and was about to sit down when the phone rang. "Yes?" "Mr. Willis? Sgt Johnson here. We met a few weeks ago?" "Yes sergeant. Problems?"

"Just checking on a person. Have you seen your vet in the last few days?" "Yes sergeant. She stays here with me most nights. She is taking a bath right now. Want me to get her?"

"No. Was she with you all day?"

"No. Since around three this afternoon. What is the problem?" There was silence for a few moments. "Still there sergeant?"

"Yes still here. Will you be around tomorrow morning?" "Both will be. She is feeling under the weather right now. Taking a day or so off." "Thank you

for your time Mr Willis. Until tomorrow then." he hung up.

"What is it darling?"

He noted the word 'darling'. First time she has called him that. He turned and looked at her. Her night gown was semi-transparent.

"You look lovely" he said then "Local cop. Wants to talk with us tomorrow morning." He related what he had said to the cop. She looked worried.

"No problem" he assured her. "Stick with the story. Anyway bed for me. How about you?" She nodded. "Yes. Your bed?"

"Would love that" he said.

Chapter 21

The storm had blown itself out overnight. All it left behind was lingering light rain and fog.

Wind shield wipers on the police car were on medium as he pulled in to the drive way. Bruno ran up to the car and peed on the tires.

Sergeant Johnson got out. Dave walked over to him. "Good morning sergeant. Please come in out of the rain."

"Morning Mr Willis. Will do that."

Olga poured coffee for them both as they sat down. She wore jeans and a T shirt.

"Just a statement from your vet has to her whereabouts yesterday. That alright miss Ludinsky?" "Sure officer. Left here early yesterday morning. Went first to a farmer who had a problem with his cow calving. Then went to a farm to vaccinate sows and do a write-up regarding sanitation protocols.

Finished about 1.30. heard of the storm coming in so came back here." She blushed "We are what you may call ahem, cohabiting. Hope you are not offended?" "Hard to offend me miss. Reason I am here is this. We got a call last evening about your house potentially being burglarized. 911 call. Officers were on scene shortly after. Back door was open." "Oh goodness! Did they steal anything?" she asked, sounding quite shocked.

The sergeant looked at Dave. Dave just looked interested. After a moment he turned back to face Olga. "Actually, we do not know. Some one did leave three bodies though. All shot. 9Mm according to the shell casings. No matter, sorry to intrude on your privacy. As the scene will be under investigation for a few days we would appreciate it if you did not return there until it is complete." "Goodness me! How terrible! Of course I will stay away! Do you know who got shot?" "Yes. Three ex-cons. Your wrists look quite bruised. Hurt yourself?" "Sergeant, you ever pull a calf out with a rope?"

"Yes, many years ago. OK folks that is it for now. Thanks for the coffee." Dave followed him outside.

"Sorry we could not have been more help" he said.

The sergeant opened the car door and turned around. "I think you have told me all I need to know for now." He got in to the cruiser and rolled down the window. "Watch your back! The last one is dangerous! We have a warrant out for him. Person of interest. Known associate of the other three," he started the car waved then left.

"He knows" he said to Olga when he was back inside.

"So what now?"

"Have the feeling he is with us. But if I screw up he will not hesitate to jail me." "Good! Then do not screw up!"

"Papers?" he asked.

"Sure."

"They let you take them?"

"Copies. We all had copies. I have added some things. Look up new stuff on the internet." She took the sheaf of papers out and spread some out.

"OK. We tried reverse engineering, DNA splicing stuff like that. Always missing something.

South Koreans have come the closest to developing a vaccine. Always some thing missing." She frowned. "The answer is in here, somewhere, I am sure but I cannot find it." then "Why the urgent interest?"

"I think they have the vaccine ready to go. I also think the pills contain the virus." She looked at him in disbelief. He told her what he thought. He concluded with "Indians are not aware of this. They are losing out on millions potentially." She sighed and she got up and made herself a coffee. "Want one?" "No thanks."

"So what are you going to do?"

"Do not know yet. Getting too complicated for me." He looked at his watch almost 11. He arose and turned on the radio. "May be something on about last night." The music stopped and the news started. "News headlines. Responding to a 911 call last evening regarding a possible break and enter, the police found three bodies in the house. All had been shot. All the police will say at this time is that the three men were known to police. They are seeking a fourth man, a known associate, as a person of interest only. The police would not speculate on the circumstances but sources tell this station that it looked like a falling out of thieves. In other news.." Dave turned the radio off.

“How easy is it to reproduce the virus?” “Pretty simple. Why?” “Just thinking.” He sat down again. “Heck with it. Brain is going numb!” He got up and took the Glock out of his coat pocket. “Going to put a bigger magazine in it.” He went to his office and put in a larger magazine. ‘Thank goodness they are interchangeable’ he told himself. The 17 round magazine protruded from the grip but did not cause a problem as he put it in his jacket pocket.

“Thought they were illegal in Canada?” she said watching him.

“Only if you get caught.” then “anyway, going to the reserve. You will be OK here. Might be a good idea to park your truck in the drive shed?”

She nodded ‘yes’ then “Be careful!”

He smiled at her and left her with Bruno.

Chapter 22

He stopped at the end of the lane to let a tractor trailer go by. Large bulldozer on the trailer. He turned right and drove on.

Bill Bressette was sitting with two others at a table drinking coffee. Their eyes met as he came in.

Dave nodded to him and went to the counter. The men at the table stopped talking for a minute, watching him as he went past. The conversation started up again. He could feel their eyes on him.

“Carton of D.K’s please”

The young girl got him the smokes and took the money. He thanked her and turned around to leave. He made brief eye contact with Bill on the way out. Bill made his excuses and followed him outside. “Problems?” he asked as Dave got in the truck.

“Not me. You perhaps. Want to go for a ride?”

Bill got in the other side and lit a smoke. He was wearing hunting outfit, camouflage jacket and pants. “Same place as before” he said. Dave did so.

Dave parked the truck at the site of the new casino. Work was progressing fast. “Have a busy night last night?” Bill asked. “just rumors floating around.”he added.

“Early night. Storm frightened me.”

Bill laughed out loud. "I bet! Good work," he said. Then "Why would I have a problem?" "Just my theory. Those pills you are shipping out. Full of mouse shit. Hanta virus. Transmissible." Bill looked at him intently. "Unclean facilities probably. Too many rodents. Know what the virus is. So why should I be worried?" "Your people stand to lose millions. I will explain it and you let me know what you think." "Go ahead."

He explained at length. It took quite a few minutes. When he had finished he looked at Bill and asked "Plausible?"

Bill said nothing, lost in thought then "Can you prove it?" "No."

"So there must be one or more of the smart guys involved. They made up the formula. Just speculating here. They own stock in whatever company is making it they will be quite rich.

Bastards!" then "why tell me? What have you to gain? You could have bought shares also?" Dave shrugged. "Soft heart I guess?"

"Yeah right! Want to drive me back now? Have people to talk to and thanks for the info." On the way back he asked "The GPS, we followed the signal. Could not find it." "Should have looked up. Stuck in a branch."

'Sheesh! I am some tracker eh?"

Dave told him where it was, then asked "How do you detonate it?" "Cell phone call. No big explosion, compressed gas so comes out fast.." "Just gas" Dave said. "You have the number?"

Bill looked at him and laughed "You are quite smart for a honky! Number? 1234567" Dave pulled up outside of the reserve and Bill got out. "Thanks again" he said and walked back to the reserve. He drove back passed the house and turned left a mile or so later towards the mine.

According to the tracks the tractor trailer had backed in and unloaded the bulldozer then left. The machine had made one pass up the track. Dave drove up to the end to where it was parked.

"Going to take much?" he asked as Karl came over.

"Not too much. Solid rock about a foot down. This machine will have it done in less than two days, all going well. As long as everyone keeps their blinders on." "Blinders?"

Karl held out hand and showed Dave an arrowhead. Dave looked at him puzzled.

"We find stuff like this all work stops. Get University people out here searching around. Site may be of historical significance, stuff like that. Then the Indians claim it as an old burial ground then we leave."

“Really?”

“Yes, really.”

“So no mine?”

“Nope.”

Dave shrugged then “We have to hope all are blind here. Anyway have to leave again” He climbed back in his truck and drove off .

Back at the house all looked quiet. Bruno came running up to him as he got out of the truck.

“Good boy!” he stroked his head and went in to the house. All was quiet. He tensed up and quietly checked the bedrooms. He heard muffled noises from the spare bedroom. He took his gun out and knocked on the door. Standing to one side. Before he could speak a bullet came through at head height. “It is me!”he yelled, then kicked the door open gun at the ready and went in. Olga was sitting on the edge of the bed the .38 pointed at him. She looked haggard, terrible. Eyes all puffy from crying.

“OK. It is me. I am going to put the gun down now. You know me right? Dave.” He slowly bent down and put the gun on the floor. Again very slowly he straightened up.

She sat there staring at him, gun still pointing at him but trembling in her hands. “Olga. Snap out of it!. You are safe! “

‘Oh shit’ he thought ‘just about over the edge’.

Her eyes went from blank to focused and she shook her head a little. “Dave?” “Yes lover, I am here for you!”

She lowered the gun. Carefully he walked over and took it out of her hands. “You OK?” he asked and put his hand on her shoulder.

“You filthy bastard do not touch me!” she yelled starting to rise up from the bed hands up.

Surprised he grabbed her wrists and held them. “Easy, easy. No one will hurt you. No one. Just relax now. OK?”

She looked at him her eyes not quite focused. ‘Shit’ he thought ‘she is losing it.’ She burst in to tears and rolled back on the bed in the fetal position her back to him sobbing. “It is alright Olga, just sleep for a while. You are safe.”

He sat there for 15 minutes or so until she fell asleep. He left quietly taking her gun with him. In the kitchen he called Sergeant Johnson. It was picked up on the second ring.

“Yes?”

“Willis here. My lady the vet is having problems. Losing it.” “Call the ambulance” then. “What problems?”

“Not sure.”

“Post traumatic stress?”

“Could be but do not know from where.”

“Yes you do. You should have expected it. Leave it with me. Let me think a minute. OK private hospital about 40 miles from you. Mental facility, now do not object! Safe and secure. Car there within the hour. OK?”

“What type of car?”

“Limo. Hearse actually. You owe me a few.”

“Yes sergeant I do.”

The sergeant hung up. Dave got up and was about to pour a shot then got a beer instead. He checked on Olga. She was sleeping soundly.

The car was there within the hour. He awoke Olga up and held her close, putting a jacket on her before he took her outside.

“We going for a ride?” she asked sounding like a child.

“Yes sweetie. Nice car ride then nice place to stay for a while.” The two men stood outside of the hearse. One said “We have to restrain her. Cuffs. Just in case.” “No way!”

“OK. Charlie will be with her in the back. Not a problem. Sir, we have done this before.” “Appreciate it.”

Charlie helped Olga in to the back and got in beside her. The driver got behind the wheel and waved. Dave watched the car take off out of the driveway. Back inside he considered his options. JJ first. Has to be watching me. Olga is safe for now. The drug stuff best left to others. Keep out of it.

Nothing seems to have a good ending. “Hell with it” he told Bruno and poured large shot of Kraken rum. He sat and thought for a while. What had Joe Santos said. CSIS? For help? He called Sergeant Johnson. “You again? What now?”

“Lady has been picked up. Thanks for that. Another favor. Could you have some one from CSIS contact me?”

“Whoa here! Heavy stuff! They do not do local stuff.” “How about Global and billions? Originating in Canada?” Long pause then “You serious?”

“Yes.” He explained quickly.

“OK. Will see what I can do. My advice is to leave it as is. Some people make a little on the vaccine some on the pills. I imagine they will go back to the usual stuff. Still want me to contact the CSIS?”

“Maybe not. Forget it. K. Thanks” he hung up.

Chapter 23

Nice morning. Sun and no cloud. Cool. He called the hospital and inquired about Olga. “Moment please” the receptionist said.

“Dr Sythe here. The young lady is sedated. Usually takes about two weeks to get over it if not earlier. It would not be wise to see her until she asks for you.” “K doc. Thanks.”

Chores done he called Bruno and got in to the truck. He had Olga’s cell phone with him. He drove to the reserve and passed it. He went in to town and bought a case of beer. He headed back towards his place. Constantly checking the rear view mirror.

“Gotcha!” he said out loud. Bruno in the other seat just looked at him. The small truck was behind him quite a ways. Had followed him some time then disappearing then behind him again.

Dave went back towards home and the truck was not in his mirror. ‘Knows were I am going now’ he surmised. He drove past the turn off to his lane way and continued on. Past the mine turnoff and down to the retreat. Nothing showed in his mirror. Finally he reached the retreat. He parked in front of the cabin he had entered before. He told Bruno to stay in the truck and got out. He picked the lock again and went in leaving the door slightly open. He checked the potential exits. Front door was it.

Small window in the one room. He opened the window. Just enough for a person to get through.

He climbed out through it. Outside he moved back behind the other cabins and circled around. He was in the bush now where he had found the GPS. He waited, ignoring the mosquitoes. Bruno lifted his head and whined. Dave watched his point of direction. JJ was walking up to the cabins, dressed in hunting attire. Looked like an AK47 he was carrying. Bruno growled. Dave put his hand on his muzzle. JJ looked at the cabins and went to the partially open door spraying bullets at it. He stopped and looked around. He kicked open the door and rolled in firing. Dave dialed 1234567 on the cell phone. Moments later JJ came out choking for air. He died just outside the front door of the cabin.

Sarin works fast.

Bruno was barking. Truck was coming in. Bill. "Need a hand?" he asked.

"Disposal?"

"You amaze me! Security guard knows all this shit?" "Got lucky."

"K" Bill said. "his truck is parked back quite a ways" "Let us get it here and put him in and push it into the lake." "Will do. Hang on a while."

Few minutes later Bill drove the Ford Ranger down to the body. "OK we load it up and your truck pushes it in the lake"

They got JJ in to the drivers side. JJ's head twitched a little. They looked at each other. "Dead?" "Is now" said Dave and snapped his neck. "Let us get this done." As an after thought he threw the Glock in the cab also. They pushed the car in to the lake with Dave's truck. It floated out slowly then nose dived as the cab filled with water.

"Just a clean up now then I am out of here. Want the gun?" Bill nodded and put the AK47 in his truck. "How is your lady?" he asked.

He shrugged. "She should be OK. They are keeping her sedated for a while. Two weeks doc said, she should be out of there."

"Then what?"

"Sell the place. Move on."

"Sorry to see you go. Were you headed?"

"B.C. I imagine. Probably ship the animals out there. Have a place in mind. Internet search." "Have to talk with the elders. The band may be interested in buying the place. Casino going up.

Place for people to stay. Clear some land towards the lake build some cabins or a guest house. Lots of possibilities. Mineral rights also?"

"Probably."

"Well, heading out." He got in his truck, waved and left.

Chapter 24

It was a week later when the hospital called and left a message saying Olga was asking for him.

He was met by Dr Smythe. They shook hands

“So what is the situation?” Dave asked him.

“Quite good actually. Coming along quite well. Another week she should be out of here. Just do not upset her?”

“Of course not.”

“This way then” he led the way down a corridor then turned left. He indicated the door.

He knocked and went inside. She was sitting in a chair beside the window reading. She looked up. “Dave!” she hurried to her feet came over and hugged him. “Missed you” she said putting her arms around him. He held her close.

“Should be out of here soon. Another week.”

“Then what?” She moved back and looked at him.

He shrugged. “I would like you to come with me. B.C. Small ranch there. Boars are moving out this week. New start.”

“Of course I will come! Warmer winters out there!”

He kissed her and for a second she stiffened up then relaxed and kissed him back. They talked for the next half hour making plans then he said “Have to leave now.” “So soon?”

“Yes, love. Will be back tomorrow.”

She sighed then said “OK. Will have to sell the house. Lots to do!” They kissed again and he left.

It was a busy week for him. Deal was done and the 100 acres in BC bought. Boars were shipped.

Other matters taken care of. Bill had called and an agreement was reached on the price of the property. Clothes that he needed plus some other items were also shipped out. Olga had put the house on the market. They had discussed her belongings and she had told him nothing in the house was going with her. Too many bad memories, she said. Truck was sold back to the clinic. Plane filled with gas. He picked her up on the Wednesday evening and drove her back to the ranch.

Bruno went wild at the sight of her. “Missed you also boy” she said stroking his head.

They had supper and sat looking at each other. “Well” she said “what happened to..” he

held up his hand before she could finish.

"All taken care of. OK, bed time? The bed in the spare bedroom is all made up for you."
"I will sleep with you. OK?"

"That I would like very much!"

Early morning he called the sergeant. "Yes?"

"Willis. Owe you one. Know the retreat East of my place?" "Yes."

"Check the lake. OK?"

"Will do. Thanks."

Olga came in after her shower. "Problems?"

"No just tying up a loose end. We leave in an hour. Alright with you?" "Yes" then "last night was nice." She blushed.

He went around to her and held her saying "Many more to come." It took a few minutes for Bruno to settle down as the plane took off. Dave kept low and flew over the reserve, waggled the planes wings then he climbed and headed West.

Part Two

Chapter 25

The Cessna turned in from the sea a couple of miles south of Port Renfrew on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Weather was clear in the early afternoon. Bright sun, but cool. Dave motioned to the port side. "Juan de Fuca Straits. Graveyard of the Pacific. Olympic Peninsula further over." Olga looked over saying "Looks pretty calm right now."
"Thousand ships foundered up and down the West Coast. So history says. There is a trail running from the North end of the Island down to Port Renfrew and further South. They built it for the shipwreck survivors. Some trees are hundreds of years old, get up to 200 feet. Bigfoot lives here apparently."

"Nice place! Looks pretty wild."

"Can be. Usual winter storms roll in. Weather can change rapidly." A large container ship was heading South down the strait, probably from China Dave thought. In

contrast to the huge vessel a small trawler was heading North, rolling gently in the low swells. Dave spotted the valley and dropped down lower.

"This it?" Olga asked. She checked the map on her knee.

"Looks like it. South end of the valley. Hope so, need a piss." he followed the valley then climbed over the forested hills behind the cleared land and circled around. He took in the house and buildings. Old looking house, large log cabin also, new looking large steel drive shed. Collection of other building, barns he guessed. He noted the creek running through the property and the grass field in front of the house. He came in from the North noting a small house and buildings a half mile from the property. The pasture looked OK to land on. A large Canadian flag atop a 20 foot pole, was barely moving in the slight breeze. A man came out of the house and stood in front of the flag and waved.

Dave did one more pass then dropped down and throttled back. Manipulating the flaps, he carefully came in to land.

"Hang on, grass looks wet. May have a rough one." he glanced at her briefly. Her face was tense.

She hated landings. "Come on, I don't crash too often!" She gave a little smile then tightened her seat belt, saying "Well, just get us down." "Hang on then." He felt the wheels touch down and it yawed left then right as he quickly corrected it. He kept minimum speed on it and taxied up towards the house. The man pointed to the drive shed and Dave turned the plane in that direction. Carefully he taxied it inside the shed, stopping just in front of an old Ford tractor. Engine noise reverberating off the steel sides was loud He shut the engine off.

Bruno whined from behind the seat.

"OK boy. All is well. OK?" he looked at Olga. She nodded and undid her seat belt, opened the door and got out, the German Shepherd right behind her. Dave did the same, picking up the two bags they had with them. He stretched away the tension and turned to face the man coming in. Stocky, about 60 some Dave guessed. Weather beaten face, piercing blue eyes. He was wearing a baseball cap and coveralls, heavy work boots.

"Mr Willis? Mike Heard." He held out his hand and Dave shook it. "This is Olga" Dave said as she came around the tail of the plane with Bruno.

"Pleased to meet you ma'am. If you would like to go in to the house go ahead. No one in there. I want to show Mr Willis his animals."

She nodded and picked up the bags. "Thank you. Will do that. Bathroom?" "Make a right through the door."

She nodded in assent.

“Call me Dave” he said to Mike. “OK, lead on.”

Dave and Bruno followed Mike to the next buildings in line. Opening the door he led the way in.

“Used to have sows in here. Everything has been power washed and sanitized. Animals fed, lots of water. Never seen the likes of these before.” he said nodding towards the wild boars in the pens, “interesting!”

Dave looked them over carefully. They all looked healthy and contented. “Shavings, straw is too expensive around here” Mike said.

“They look good, thanks. Coffee?”

“Right this way.”

“Whats with the cabin?” Dave asked, gesturing towards it.

Mike said “Rent it out in the summer. Tree huggers and whale watchers” Dave looked at him questioningly. “You make a living at it?”

“Nah. Worked at logging to make ends meet.” then “take a look inside.” Inside it looked clean and tidy. Two bunk beds on each side. Small wood stove. Table, few folding chairs.

“Bathroom?” Dave asked.

“Around back. Chemical. Makes the folks think they are living rough.” Dave and Bruno followed him out. As they went in to the house Dave told Bruno to “Stay!” Bruno lay down outside the door his eyes on Dave.

Chapter 26

Captain Larsen motioned to Jimmy Wells the deckhand to take the wheel. “Keep her NNW” he said. He was a big burly man, weather beaten face after years at sea. Black beard now streaked with gray. He picked up the binoculars and focused in on the the Cessna. He watched it pass and turn then circle and go down to land lost out of sight behind the trees. He thought for a moment then shrugged.

“Keep her on this heading. I am going down to the galley for a coffee.” Jimmy just nodded. The Captain went out and down the steps. He checked the 70 foot trawlers deck with a practiced eye. All looked well and ship shape.

In the house it looked old but well kept. The large table was wood. Looked home made.

New looking microwave, older electric stove. Quite a few boxes off to one side. Overall, place was clean and tidy. He noticed the short wave radio on the shelf and looked at Mike questioningly.

"Listen to the ships, marine forecast. Entertaining at times." Olga came in and Mike said "Please everyone sit. Will make some coffee. Your boxes from Fed Ex are over there. Have a good trip?" he asked.

Dave laughed, "Not too bad considering the mountains and all. Snow storm through Alberta.

Stopping for gas, only get 600 miles out of a tank. 2000 mile trip but it is over now thank goodness." then "Pretty close to the ocean here I see."

"About a mile. Usually rains a lot this time of year. Nice in the summer though. Bought this place, wife and I over 20 years ago. She died few years back. Nothing here for me now so moving to the town. By the way, will be going there tonight. Have a place. So if you could take me in you can borrow my truck for a while. I need to be at the bank tomorrow, papers to sign." "I also" said Dave, "so pick you up? Nearest bank is in Lake Cowichan? Hours drive?" "Yes. OK. Just a recap. Have a back up generator. Drilled well. Pasture were you landed usually I grow hay and sell it. Have a Ford tractor with a loader, ATV. All in the deal we made. Right side of the property is bush, some big trees. No logging allowed. To the left is a road that runs North to South. Two hours to Victoria, but guess you seen this from the air?" Dave nodded. "Who has the property at the North end?" "Indian family. East Indian, I think. Raises a lot of chickens. Once a week he takes a bunch to Victoria. Chickens and eggs. Seems to do quite well with them. Probably he will be over to meet you in a day or so. Nice fellow. No problems with him. Anyway, electric heat here but usually I use the wood stove. Satellite dish. No telly though."

"Wildlife?" Dave asked.

"Usual stuff. Bears, Cougars, deer etc,. Not usually a problem. Bears can be at times. They don't hibernate for long. Like to go to the beach for food. Reserve on the other side of town. Cheap gas and smokes."

"Bigfoot? Veterinarians?" Olga asked.

"Yes, some around. Of both. Never had call to use the vet though. Too expensive!" "I am a veterinarian" Olga said.

"Oh dear! No offense?"

"None at all! Will be looking for work is all "then"you ever see a Bigfoot?" "A few times, I am sure. But I never mention it to anyone. People would think I am looney, if I did."

"Were did you see it?" Olga asked.

Mike looked embarrassed. "Once logging, once right out at the end of the field there. Coming out of the bush going down to the beach."

"9 footer?" Olga asked.

"No, seven maybe. Anyway, you tell anyone I will deny it!" Olga laughed "Secret is safe with me!"

Mike glanced around then said "Sometimes you can hear them howl. You never forget the sound." Mike stood up. "I will make the coffee. Anything else you want to know just ask me." "Nothing right now" Dave said. "Oh yes. Feed for the animals?" "Store in town. Anything you need." He motioned to the shelf at the back of the room. "Short wave radio. Usually leave it on, as I mentioned."

Dave drove the old Ford F150 along the gravel road then on to the Highway. He drove past the "Fresh Eggs For Sale" sign and 20 minutes later they were in town. Mike had him drive around pointing out the mini-market and the feed store then directed him to a small house on a quiet street.

"Well, this is my new place" he said. "Will call you tomorrow. Some food in the cupboards.

Blankets, stuff like that. 30.30 in the closet. Just in case of bears. Semi-hibernating right now so should not be any trouble"

Dave said "Thanks" and Mike got out and went to the house. Dave headed back to the farm deep in thought. Sun was setting as he got back. He patted Bruno's head and went inside. Olga had a lot unpacked already. She had been busy.

"Did you check the other rooms?" he asked.

She nodded. "Computer room is that one. Small one. Think it was used for an office. Bedroom over there other one the other way beside the bathroom. Food in the cupboards. Will have to stock up tomorrow freezer is about empty"

The trawler was off Port Renfrew and changed course to WNW. The radio crackled and the captain picked up the mike. He checked his watch. "Right on time" he muttered. "Red to Blue. Out." the captain pressed the send button "Blue on time. Out." That would be the end of radio transmissions until 4pm tomorrow. 'Stupid codes' he muttered. 'Oh well, confuses any one who listens in'. The "Mary Rose" pitched a little as she headed out in to the Pacific at just over 9 knots.

Chapter 27

"OK. I will light the stove." he went outside and brought in some split wood. Adding some packing from the boxes and soon had a fire going. The temperature was about 48F outside he guessed.

It felt damp. "Home sweet home." he said, looking at her.

She smiled at him "It will be, I hope so anyway."

He went around to her and put his arms around her. "Try and forget the past." then to change the subject he asked "You need to make a list out for tomorrow?" She nodded 'yes' then said "Will have to change the Hydro and telephone. Usual stuff." He nodded and went around the inside of the house. As Mike had said, the 30.30 was on a rack in the closet. Full box of ammo above it on a shelf. He checked the rifle out. Seemed in good working order.

He replaced it and checked the office/computer room. Quite a large desk, drawers empty. He went back to the kitchen asking "Guns?"

She was cleaning out the microwave, her back to him. He saw her stiffen then relax. "Large box" she said turning around looking at him questioningly.

"Just got to hide them" he said "probably never get used." "I hope not!"

"Radio work?" he asked her pointing to the small one sitting on the counter top.

She turned it on. "Yes, seems like it." Country music filled the room before she turned it down.

He took the guns and put them in the drawers of the office desk.

Back in the room he said "Going to hook up the computer" She just nodded then said "Plug my laptop in would you?" "Certainly."

Wind was picking up now he noticed. Clouds were rolling in. Soon rain was hitting the windows.

He let Bruno in and fed him. Darkness was falling fast. He put more wood on the fire and turned on the small fan besides the stove. Supper was corned beef and beans. Bread was stale but edible, not green. He looked at her, noticing her frowning.

"Something bothering you?" he asked.

"Do you think the past will catch up with us?" she asked.

"If you mean can we be found, then yes. But why would they bother? No benefit to anyone. As for selling the boars, no problem. Have other customers. Closer than Texas

also. Anyway, take life as it comes. No use worrying.” then “Heck! No TV?”

She smiled at him. “So, early night? I am beat!”

“Sure. Just have to check the computer. OK?”

“OK. Bedroom beside the bathroom. Bed is made. Convenient, that bedroom.” “Fine. Be there soon.” he got up and went in to the computer room.

No emails of any consequence. Usual flag burning and protests in the Arab countries. He Googled Port Renfrew and read up on the history and other stuff. He put his cigarette out and turned the computer off. Lights out he let Bruno out for a few minutes. He stood in the doorway smelling the sea air. Rain had eased off a little but the wind had picked up. He whistled and Bruno came bounding in. He locked the door and checked the back door. It was bolted. Bruno lay in front of the front door as he passed him. He gave a small wag of his tail and sighed. He was at home. Small table lamp was on as he went in to the bedroom. Dim light. Olga lay in bed under the blankets. Her blonde hair shining. She smiled at him a little. ‘Hope she does not have nightmares again’ he thought. ‘She needs to sleep’. He smiled back and got undressed. He got in to bed and turned off the light. She had her back towards him. The rain had picked up again and was pounding on the window. He moved close to her feeling her tremble. His right arm went over her and cupped a breast. He felt the nipple go erect. She giggled.

“What is so funny?” he asked softly.

“ You” she said. “Less than two minutes!”

“What? Oh that! What can I say? You get sexier every day!” “And I swear you get bigger! You taking pills?” she giggled again.

“No pills. It just grows in fertile places.”

“Then fertilize it!” she said pushing back towards him. He did so until they were both spent and exhausted.

Chapter 28

He was up before daylight. The fire was going, Bruno was outside and coffee made when she came in to the kitchen. She was wearing an almost sheer nightgown.

“You look beautiful.” he said. “Love you.”

She smiled at him saying "Shower time for me. After a coffee." she sat down opposite him. "So what are your plans for today?"

He lit a smoke. "Mike is going to call. I need to ask him about getting a vehicle. One for you also.

Then go to the bank. Get that sorted out. Smokes from the reserve and gas. Back here to check where I can put the electric fence. Probably pick up feed also. You?" "Groceries. Maybe a TV. Cell phone. Odds and ends. Oh yes, new sheets. Those are worn. Don't be a smart ass" she said as she saw him begin to smile and say something. She got up and headed for the shower.

"Nice ass!" he called after her. She wiggled it and continued on. Phone rang and he picked it up.

"Yes?"

"Mike here. Everything alright?"

"All is well. Would like to get up there early. Need to find a used car dealer." "Come anytime. Remember where the house is?"

"Yes, of course."

"Know just the place. Cheap and reliable vehicles. See you later." "OK". He hung up and went out to feed the animals, Bruno with him. Sky was clearing, rain had stopped. He found a long chain in the drive shed and secured it to the front porch. He found a swivel snap and attached it to Bruno's collar. Olga came out dressed in jeans, woolen shirt with a windbreaker over it. 'Nice' he thought, then "All ready? Need some money?" "Ready. Have plastic. I am fine." They got in to the old truck and headed to town. Mike was waiting for them. "Vehicles first?"

"Yes."

"K. Make a left here. Top of the hill make a right and go on about two miles. It is on the right." "Joe's Auto" the sign said. "Used quality vehicles".

Dave turned in to the fenced in lot. Lots of cars and vans. Some almost new, some junk. The office was a small trailer. They parked beside it and got out. Dave pressed the horn.

"Right behind you" a voice said. They turned to see a middle aged Indian standing there. 'Way overweight' Dave thought.

Mike said "Hi Joe. Friends here looking for a vehicle." "You are at the right place then. What kind of vehicle folks?" "Pick up. About 2005 and up. F150 or similar."

"K. Come this way then. Lot's of people looking for them." they followed him down between rows of mini-vans. Some in good shape, some tough looking ones. Next row were

the pick ups. He gestured down the row.

"About 15 here. Some Rangers, some Dakotas some Rams. Check em out . All certified" Dave and Olga checked them out carefully.

" This black one. 2003. 200,000 km. How much?" Dave asked. Joe took a notebook out of his pocket and looked through it.

"Taxes and everything \$3600. No rust.."

Dave got in behind the wheel. "Keys?"

"Glove compartment. V8." Dave fished them out and started it up. Seemed to run fine. He got out and lifted the hood. No leaks that he could see. "Warranty?" he asked.

"One month, just for major problems. Otherwise I get nickled and dined to death." "Plates? Ownership?"

"Can be arranged. Tires are good." he added.

"OK." he did not feel like haggling. "How about you Olga?" She was looking at a vehicle a little farther down the line. "This Dodge Ram. 2007. Over 200k on it. How much?"

"Same as the other. \$3600."

"Come on Joe! These are gas guzzlers! Heck, you are selling two in one morning! Over \$8000?" He hesitated, "Well, OK. I am going to go broke like this! Keys in the glove compartment also." Olga got in and fired it up. Started without a problem. Turning it off she got out. "OK. Paperwork?" "In the office. Money?"

"Two hours or so" Dave said "have to get to the bank." Joe nodded and they followed him in to the trailer.

The bank transactions went quickly. The manager looked more like a cowboy than a banker.

Very large person. "Hope you enjoy our community folks. We are all friendly people here. Anything you need just ask." he shook hands all around and they left.

"Joe is an OK guy" said Mike. "His lucky day. Two trucks at once. Business not too good this time of year. Where I bought this truck."

Hour later Joe took the certified checks and gave them the ownership. "Just temporary, you will need insurance to get them changed over."

Mike said "I know a guy. Cheap as anyone."

"After you Mike. Let us get it done." Mike pulled out and the others followed. The office was small and the insurance policy was arranged quickly.

"It will be in the mail in a few days" he said. "These temps are good for 14 days." Dave took Olga's arm when they were outside. "I am going to the reserve for smokes and gas then the feed store. How about you?"

"Shopping. Meet you back at the farm?"

"Yes. Don't be too long."

She smiled "Fast as possible!"

Mike told Dave where the reservation was and he drove off. Dave drove away also, following Mike's directions.

"Fill it up please" he said to the teenager who was pumping gas.

"Sure chief!" Dave checked out the various brands of cigarettes. Nothing was familiar. He picked up a carton of Putters.

"They are good" the middle aged lady behind the counter said. "You passing through?" "No, just moved here. Mike Heard's place. South of here. Bought the farm." "Know the place. You putting animals on there?"

"Yes. How much I owe you?"

The young fellow came in saying "\$40 for gas."

"\$55 altogether then. What animals?" she asked as he passed her the money.

"Wild boars."

She shrugged. "Never seen one" she said then "have a nice day" as he left.

He picked up feed at the feed store diverting as many questions as he could. Outside he got in to the Ford and drove home after covering the feed bags up. Slow wet drizzle was starting. The truck ran good. 'Oh well' he thought 'all the little things done.' The 'Mary Rose' was well out in to the ocean now. Probably 200 miles off the coast, her bow cutting in to the ever increasing swell.

"Don't like it, Captain" Jimmy said, "gonna be a tough pick-up." "We will manage. Just keep your eyes open." the second crew member came in to the wheelhouse. "Whats the forecast skipper?" He turned to Butch Reid, the youngest crew member barely 22 years old. "Moderating later. About 12 hours then we may get a good one come through.

May have to ride it out."

Chapter 29

Dave spent the next few hours walking the property boundaries. He was pessimistic about wiring in an area. Too close to the road on the West side and the East side was too dangerous. Too much wildlife he figured. Bears and wolves would make short work of the animals. He headed back to the house.

Bruno ran ahead seeing Olga's pickup drive in. She waved at him and began carrying her purchases in to the house. Few minutes later he joined her.

"Get all you needed?" he asked.

She smiled at him "Most of it. Halibut for supper tonight. Fresh caught!" he helped her with the parcels. "Case of beer for you also. Cans" she added.

"Thanks. Need one." After numerous trips the truck was unloaded. Sun was setting as they sat down at the kitchen table with a beer each.

"Good news! May have a job interview tomorrow!"

"How did that happen?"

"I stopped for lunch in a little restaurant in town. Silverado pulled in. Sooke Veterinary clinic on the side. Older gentleman. Asked him about the vet situation. Told me it was hard to get young vets around there. So we got to talking. Said he was interested in hiring another person. Think he is looking to retire. Anyway, job interview tomorrow. South of here." "Good for you" he said. She pulled a face.

"What?" he asked.

"Place is one hour 45 minute drive. Long trip to go to work" "Well, your choice. If you want it go for it."

She thought for a while then said "Most of his practice is down that way. Lots of farms etc.,. Said if all went well and my credentials checked out would be better to get an apartment down there as many calls are late afternoon."

He took a sip of beer and looked at her. "I would do it if I were you." he felt a sinking feeling in his gut.

"You sure?" she asked.

"Yes I am sure. No point sitting around here doing nothing." then "Will miss you though.

Anyway, may need a vet. Looks like the idea of letting the boars out is no good." he explained his reasons why. "So, will have to sell some. Probably 2 boars and 8 sows. Will get on the computer tonight and see what I can come up with. Have some sows ready to farrow anyway. So will not miss them, numbers wise."

"Hope you can sell them then."

"Sure I can. We will see. Anyway have to feed them now." he got up, finished his beer and went outside. He felt a little let down. If she was not going to be here...then said 'Hell with it. She has her life. Maybe I am feeling jealous?' he shrugged it off and entered the barn. Later after supper they went outside and sat on the porch. Coats on against the damp air.

"The Halibut was excellent." he said.

"Well thank you!" she replied "nothing tastier than fresh sea fish." then "you are not upset? If I have to move in to town few days a week?"

"Sure, I am selfish. Will miss you! But it is better if you do. It will keep you busy." She arose and kissed him on the cheek. "Yes, will keep my mind off things. Oh heck! Almost forgot!" She hurried back in to the house. Few minutes later she was back. "Here, cell phone.

Activated and prepaid."

He took it off her. "Thanks."

"I put in the house phone number and my cell number. Should work OK." "Thanks again. Never thought about that." He arose and stubbed out his cigaret. "time for the computer. See what I can do."

"Dishes for me then bed" she said also getting up, " busy day tomorrow." His computer turned on he checked his mail. Message from Bill Bressette. "how you doing buddy? Hear through the grapevine cops found a body in a truck in the lake. Wanted guy. Texan was picked up and released. Guess he talked his way out of the deal. Casino is coming along good. All is rosy this end. I have friends on the reserve down there. Any problems just ask for Geronimo. Happy honeymoon!" Other emails were of no importance. He looked in his folder for the emails pertaining to his boar correspondence. He ran through them quickly then stopped at one. 'interesting' he thought.

Game farm owner in Northern California had asked about buying animals. He had replied 'none yet available.' he thought about it a few minutes then emailed the guy. '2 boars 6 sows. No room this new location. Interested let me know.' he sent it off and skimmed through the world news for a few moments then shut it off. Time for bed.

He opened his eyes suddenly and listened. Wind was moaning a little, Olga breathing steadily, nothing unusual. He checked his watch, lit up dial showed 4 am. He lay still, listening. Some noise had awoken him. Then he heard it. A low growl. Quietly he got up and put his jeans on and a tee shirt.

In the light from the intermittent moon he made his way out of the bedroom. Bruno

stood looking at the door, ears up tense. Bruno turned his head briefly then looked back at the door.

“Easy boy.” he whispered walking past him to the office. Inside he got the rifle and loaded it in the semi-dark. Quietly he walked back to the kitchen and stood at one side of the window and looked out. Mist swirled around lazily then cleared only to return again. He could make out the drive shed and the buildings between the slivers of moonlight as the clouds passed by. He stood motionless ready to cock the rifle. Something moved besides the drive shed so he readied the rifle. Bruno whined at him.

“No boy. Quiet” he whispered. He strained his eyes looking for the shape he had glimpsed.

Seconds ago. The mist cleared again momentarily. Dark shape was large. Half upright. ‘Must be a bear’ he thought. The shape moved to the far end of the drive shed, 50 yards away, then was lost from sight.

He moved to the kitchen table and laid the rifle on it. Quickly he sat down and put his boots on.

Straightening up moved to the front door with the rifle. He pulled Bruno back from the door telling him to “Stay.” Bruno sat and waited. Carefully he turned the doorknob. He eased the door open a few inches and looked through the gap. Nothing he could see. He flicked on the out side light and raised the rifle. A black bear ran down and in to the bush on all fours. He lowered the rifle, tenseness evaporating. He closed the door and locked it. He reminded himself to check for anything that could have attracted the bear come daylight. He put the rifle back and stroked the dogs head. “Good boy” he said and went to the bathroom. Minutes later he was back in bed.

“Some thing wrong?” Olga asked half asleep.

“Nothing. Just had to go to the washroom.”

“Night then” she went back to sleep. ‘Probably have nightmares about ‘Bigfoot’ he thought and snuggled up and tried to sleep.

Chapter 30

250 miles away the ‘Mary Rose’ plodded on. Seas had eased quite a bit. She was making nine and a half knots. The captain checked the radar scope. He had the range set for 20 miles. About its limit.

There was an intermittent blip right at the edge of the scope slightly to port as the trawler crested a wave. The radio squawked. "Red to Blue. Over." He thumbed the send button on the mike. "Blue to red. One and a half hours. In sight. Over."

"Starboard side. Gangway down. How you going to do it? Over." "Inflatable. How many? Over".

"Six large two small. Over."

"Sounds good, over and out." He thought about waking the crew but decided against it. 'Let them sleep another half hour' he thought. He opened his thermos and had a coffee. 30 minutes later he put the speakers on.

"Rise and shine boys! Work to do, money to make. Lets get moving!.Jimmy. Up here when you you are awake." 15 minutes later Jimmy and Butch were in the wheelhouse. Both looked bleary eyed.

"Yes captain?"

"Giving you a choice Jimmy. You handle this and I go in the inflatable for the pick up or do you want to do it?"

Jimmy did not hesitate. "You do it! This girl I can handle, not sure about the inflatable." "OK then. You and Butch get it ready. I will get the 'Rose' in position then you look after it.

Remember, this is a money deal just don't screw up!" "Come on skipper! You know I can handle it!"

"Yes. OK. Apologize for that."

Jimmy looked at him curiously "You apologize? Has to be a first!." "Think it is a first. K then. Go and make sure the inflatable is all set to go. We rehearsed it many times already."

"Sure skipper." then added "sometimes I think you are almost human!" He scuttled out rapidly laughing. Larsen shook his head and smiled. He rubbed the hair on his beard and ran through what he had planned trying to pick weak spots in his plan. The overall picture was simple. He was just average at catching fish, or unlucky, whatever. Not enough to pay for the boat most years. He had done a season on the crab boats after leaving the US SEALS. He figured he could do it trawling for fish. Pay the expenses but did not happen. Sometimes he had a good catch, other times pretty poor. He had taken chances for years in the service. He was not used to losing. 8 years now and breaking even. Not good enough for him. Many people in the industry noticed this. There were many like him. Probably 70% of the trawler skippers were in a similar position. Hoping for a few good seasons. So when he was approached on his boat for a charter of the boat he was interested.

The proposition was this. "Just need a ship to meet another ship out at sea and bring some individuals back to Canada." The short, fat Asian looked at him intently. "We have checked your record. Far back as we could. You seem ideal for the job. Incidentally, we have another few doing the same work."

"OK. Have a boat. Have some background. Why not just use the boats and the people you have?"

The Asian sighed. "Not that simple. The days of bringing in refugees by the 100 is over.

Australia does not want them. Canada as of now holds them for refugee status. Some get through others do not. But the laws are changing fast. Soon will be automatic deportation. However we, or my people anyway, would like a few individuals to get in to Canada unnoticed. We will handle it from there." He thought about it a few seconds. "So use the boats and people you have?" "Unfortunately it is not that simple. The Canadian Coast guard and the US have planes that track ship movements. Mother ship is out in the Pacific. We get people off in to smaller boats like yours.

We do realize that eventually the authorities will wonder why these small fishing boats are in a place that is not a fishing ground."

Larsen lit a smoke. "Just like the Somalia pirates. How much?" he asked.

"We will pay for your fuel for 500 miles, plus crew at \$1,000 each plus \$2,000 for the risk factor, plus a bonus of \$5000 if successful, ends up quite a bit. Better than fishing! What do you say?" Larsen looked at him a few moments then stood up. "Piss off" he said walking to the door and opening it. The Asian half rose then sat down again.

"So what do you want? I am empowered to negotiate." Larsen noticed he was sweating a little.

He closed the door sat down again.

"I assume these people are Tamils. I also assume many pay up to \$50,000 or more to get here.

The big shots anyway. You came to me. OK. I will guarantee to get them on the coast of Vancouver Island. That is all. On dry land. Alive. Now, you give me an overall figure. Extraction and delivery. I am not going to haggle over this. If you need to consult with some one then forget it. I need 50% on deposit. So give me a figure." he got up and opened a beer.

Out of the corner of his eye he watched the Asian guy squirm a little and wipe his brow. He sat down again opposite him. He took a swig from the bottle and said "Take your time." The Asian looked at him and said "I do not really know.." "Come on! The guys you want picking up probably have millions stashed somewhere! Give me a number!" He took

another swig of beer.

"Maybe..no. Best I can do.\$20,000?" He looked at Larsen almost pleading with his eyes. Larsen lit a cigarette. He held out his hand to the Asian.

"Deal." then "Need some cash up front. How many people? Were do I drop them off?" "Little south of Port Renfrew. Details are here." he handed Larsen an envelope."Ship to ship channel, codes etc, meeting point other stuff"

"Up front money?"

"In your account tomorrow."

It was there when he checked his balance. Larsen slowed the engines down as he approached the other ship. She was a coastal ship, about 2000 tons he guessed. Black with red rust streaks. It was still dark, this time of morning. She was stopped almost just enough power to hold her on course. The 'Mary Rose' went past her on her port side and came around her stern. 'Skorpio' was her name, port of registry Anchorage. US ship. Surprised him. The Skorpio' put on her deck lights. Larsen came up on her starboard side

"K Jimmy take the wheel. Be friggin careful!"

"Come on skipper, ain't stupid!"

"OK, just watch it."he went down to the deck. " Butch, everything ready?" "Yes skipper."

"K then lets get it over the side." They got the Zodiac over the side and Larsen jumped in it. He fired up the Mercury outboard and shouted "Let her go." Butch let go the forward rope and threw it in the boat. The Skorpio was less than a 100 yards away, swells not too bad as he was leeward of her. He nudged the boat over to the gangway and carefully kept the throttle barely open holding position. Crew member was at the bottom of the gangway. First down was an adult male,bag in hand then two teenagers, they looked like, then a 3 more adults. The transition went smoother than expected. Stumble or two transferring to the Zodiac but no casualties. He backed the Zodiac off and turned it towards the Mary Rose. Few minutes later he was alongside. Butch was ready and took the bow rope and secured it. The people climbed on board. The Scorpio tooted its horn, the deck winch whining as it raised the gangway and the derrick swung it on board. The Scorpio blacked out its deck lights and headed North East. Towards the coast engines at full throttle. All were safe on board the Mary Rose now. They got the Zodiac aboard and Butch lashed it down.

Larsen motioned to the group and pointed to the crews quarters. "That way. Some one will be with you soon. English anyone?"

"I speak English sir." A middle age man stepped forward, scar on his cheek. "We all do." As the others he was dressed in heavy clothing. The four adults were all average size. The

two younger ones appeared to be about 15 or 16.

“OK. In the mess hall there. Be with you soon.” turning to Butch he said “Make them a coffee or something. OK?”

“Aye skipper.”

Back in the wheelhouse he said “OK Jimmy, kill the deck lights. Full throttle ahead.” He looked at his watch. “Another hour or so it will be dawn. Just follow the Skorpio for now. She will leave us behind soon. Looks about 12 knots she is doing. Weather should get heavy before too long.” “Aye skipper.”

First streaks of light were showing on the horizon as he went below to talk with his guests.

Turned out to be two males and two adult females and two young females.

“Make yourselves comfortable. Be ashore in 24 hours weather permitting.” They nodded at him. The two males looked to be hard bitten fellows Larsen thought. But if Tamil Tigers, they would have to be.

Chapter 31

“You be careful now” he told Olga thru the truck window. “Call me?” “Soon as I can. Take care now going to miss you!” She put it in drive and headed out and on to the road. Dave shrugged and pulled his windbreaker a little tighter. Light rain and the usual mist swirled around. He could feel the wind coming in off the sea starting to pick up. Forecast were for high winds later in the day and overnight. ‘Never any bloody sun around here’ he mumbled to Bruno.

Then ‘k boy. Breakfast.’ he checked his watch. 8 am. He went back in to the house. After breakfast and the animals were fed he checked the Cessna over. Oil was good, gas almost full. Bruno barked and he came out of the drive shed. A new Silverado was parked in front of the house. Small East Indian got out warily eying the dog.

“He is OK” said Dave, “can I help you?”

“I am your neighbor. Ali. Next door.” he pointed to the North. “I have chickens and eggs for sale. Would you like to buy some?” Ali looked at him hopefully. Dave did not want to but nodded anyway. “How much?”

“\$3 a flat. Fresh eggs. Brown ones.”

"3 flats then" Dave said, "Sell your chickens ready for the oven?" Dave asked.

"Yes sir! All ready to go. Big ones. \$8 each."

"Will take two then."

Ali went to the rear of the Silverado and raised the tailgate of the truck cap. He took out 3 flats.

"Chickens I will drop off in an hour. They are in the freezer. OK?" Dave nodded and took the eggs from him. Ali nodded towards the guest house. "Could I rent that for a few days? Have relatives coming but only a small house. Only for a day or so until they move on. Will pay you good?" "Outside bathroom" he said trying to dissuade him.

"That is fine! \$50 a night? In advance? Eggs and chickens free? Two nights at the most?" Dave hesitated. Mentally he shrugged. 'Oh well better start making friends around here' he thought then said "OK. When will they be here?"

"Thank you! Tomorrow or the next day."

"Fine will throw some extra blankets in and some wood for the stove." "Thank you sir! Greatly appreciate it!" Dave watched him drive off then took the eggs in to the house. 'Harmless little fellow' he thought. He finished cleaning up a small pile of spilled pig feed that had attracted the bear last night then puttered around in the barn. The wind was picking up quite a bit now. He climbed in to the Cessna and fired it up. He let it run for ten minutes then shut it off.

Climbing down he went back in to the house. He turned the short wave radio on and fiddled around until he got the Marine weather. Did not sound good. Gale force winds from the West and rain forecast. He left it on low volume and went in to the office and checked his computer. Email from California. "Will take them. 2 boars and six sows. Give me a price, vaccinated and delivered here." 'Good' he thought. He emailed back with a price for the animals and also said "You will have to arrange transport." he included his phone number. The phone rang and he picked it up. "Yes?" "Hi lover! All is going well" Olga sounded quite happy. "Get the job?" he asked.

She laughed saying "Yes, started already! This afternoon have to go help vaccinate dairy cattle.

May be late getting home."

"If it is too late stay there for the night. Sounds like a bad storm coming in." "Well, will see. Miss you! Will call later OK?"

"OK with me. Love you."

"Wow! You must miss me already! Later love. Got to run." She hung up.

Ali was back within the hour. "You like rabbit? Breed rabbits also." He handed him the frozen chickens in a bag. "Have a good business in Victoria and area. Many Sri Lanka people there." "With chickens and rabbits?" Dave asked.

"Deer meat, herbs lots of other stuff also." Then "Can I see your pigs?" Dave said "Wait a minute" and took the chickens in to the house. "OK" he said coming back out, "this way." Dave made a mental note to fix a noisy fan and showed the animals to Ali.

"Very nice, very good. Much bigger than back home. You sell for meat any of them? We love boar meat!"

"No breeding stock. Export to the US." He thought a minute then said "over here." Ali followed him to a pen with one animal in it. "This sow. Open. Not in pig. Have to cull it. You want to buy it?"

Ali looked it over. "Looks about 300lbs. Dress out at 200lbs. How much?" Dave shrugged.

"Make me an offer."

"\$350?"

Dave figured Ali would sell it for much more. "OK." "I will pick it up Friday. Have a friend with a trailer." Dave nodded. Three days from now. "Why do your friends not stay in Port Renfrew? Hotels there. Not wanted by the cops are they?" "No sir! Not wanted by the cops! They prefer quieter place." Dave shrugged again "OK then." Ali left and Dave cleaned out a few pens refreshing them with shavings. Feeling bored he went in to the house and got the rifle. He whistled Bruno and walked along the East side of the hayfield down to the stream. He followed it up through the trees. Faint trail led up the forested hill. Mike had mentioned a cabin up here. He walked for thirty minutes and was sweating when he reached the cabin. 'Not much good' he thought. Looked about 20 by 10 feet, built in the side of the hill. Door was hanging open. He looked in. Homemade table, chair, couple of plastic pails up turned. Extra chairs he assumed. Dirt floor. He left it and started off back down the hill. What had Mike said? Oh yes, bird watchers. It felt just above freezing as he left the trees and got to the open hayfield. Light was failing, wind still strong. His cell phone went off as he reached the house.

"Yes?"

"Hi me again. Tried the house first. Were are you?" "Just got back was walking. And you?"

"Just finishing up. Another hour here. May not make it back tonight. That OK?" "Fine. See you whenever." he turned the phone off abruptly, then regretted it. 'Hope that does not piss her off' he thought and went in to the house.

Chapter 32

“OK Butch, I will take over for a few hours. Get yourself some food and try and get some sleep.

Hoping for a 5 am landing. Have Willy come up for the 8 to 12 watch. Try and dig out some rice or curry or something for the passengers. Gonna have to lay you both off for a week. You both have a cash bonus coming anyway. As agreed on”

“Aye skipper.”

Larsen checked the compass and radar. Few ships coming his way but off to port. One coming up behind. About 5 miles out. Should pass him to starboard. “Skorpio’ was out of sight now way head of him. 20 mile radar scan did not show it. Weather had not got as bad as he figured. Waves about 15 feet from astern. No danger of getting pooped, a wave over the stern, as yet. ‘Get these people off, ‘Mary Rose’ up to Port Alberni for an engine overhaul. Can afford it now.’ He whistled a little. Things were looking up at last. The container ship from astern passed him an hour later. All looked clear astern. West bound ships also had passed him. He listened to the radio not paying too much attention.

Marine weather was for winds to drop. ‘Good’ he thought. He kept her on course with minimal effort, almost instinctively. He checked the charts for the straits although he knew them off by heart. The hours passed. 8 on the dot Willy arrived.

“K skipper. Passengers are doing well. Had to loan one my cell phone. His had dead batteries.

Jumpy buggers!”

“How come?”

“I went to move a suitcase out of the way and the one with the scar was pretty quick to grab it.

Think he had gold in there or something! He gives me the creeps! Both do. The ladies are nice though.”

“Keep it in your pants Willy. You will be ashore in a day or so. No gold in the suitcases. Do not look heavy enough. Try not to piss them off. They probably know Cheena di or Angampora. First takes 15 years to learn. Chinese fist. Second is basically weapons and pressure points” “How you know this shit?” Willy looked impressed.

“When I got the charter I looked it up on the Internet. Sri Lanka. It pays to know what one is dealing with. Anyway, keep her East North East. Will take over at midnight. You should be off Cape Flattery by then. Any problems at all call me on the pipe.” “OK skipper. They do use their cell phones a lot. Radar on 20 miles?” “Yes 20. Be back later.”

Willy took the wheel and he left.

He tossed and turned in his bunk but managed some sleep. His brain kept going through the disembarkation procedure. Midnight soon came. He put his heavy reefer jacket and boots on and went up to the wheelhouse. Cape Flattery was to starboard and the Rose Marie was just passing the headland.

"All OK Willy?"

"Aye skipper. Pretty quiet on the radar."

"K then. Plan is this. Going to go to starboard and down the inbound lane. Get 20 miles down going to cross the separation zone and start back North in the outbound lane. Will get close to the shore but have to watch the depth. May be a half mile run. Everyone off will get back aboard then on to Port Alberni. Should be at the drop off point in 4 hours or so. Clear?" "Clear skipper."

"K then I have the helm now." Willy left and Larsen turned to starboard feeling the ship roll heavily with the seas abeam. Soon he was in calmer water as the land mass of Cape Flattery blocked the waves somewhat. Two more hours he turned to port and crossed the separation zone and two miles offshore he went to port again. Traffic was light. Full moon out and intermittent cloud. He ran the trawler at half throttle, keeping 2 miles off Vancouver Island. He put on the speakers.

"Rise and shine! Drop off in less than an hour. Willy to the wheelhouse. Butch get the Zodiac ready. Passengers on deck in thirty minutes." He switched it off. He felt the adrenalin creeping in.

'love this shit!' he said to himself 'action'. He glanced at the radar again. He had turned it down to a 5 mile scan earlier. "Shit!" he said aloud as Willy came in a few minutes later.

"Problems skipper?"

Larsen turned on the intercom again. "Ignore the last! Stay where you all are. Keep off the deck! Repeat! Stay down.!" Larsen pointed to the radar and Willy peered at the screen.

"About a mile back, closing fast. What is it?"

"Our worst nightmare I think. Canadian Coastguard." "Shit skipper if we get.."

"Relax! Calm down! They should be on the speaker soon if they are going to talk with us." He edged up the throttle a little.

"Small vessel ahead. This is the Canadian Coastguard. You are moving slowly. Can we be of assistance? Over."

Larsen thumbed the mike. "Canadian Coastguard. 'Mary Rose' here. Diesel engine is not at full power. We are only doing 7 knots. We are heading to Port Alberni for a check up on

it. Otherwise we are fine. Appreciate the offer of help. Probably cheap fuel! Over.” “Mary Rose. Copy that. Problems anchor off Port Renfrew. Seas are not too bad to Port Alberni. Over.”

“Thanks for your concern coast guard. Will be careful were I fill up next time!Over.” “Have a good one. Over and out.” The coastguard vessel overtook them on port and a searchlight came on and swept the decks then was shut off.

“Shit that must be doing 20 knots! It is flying” Willy said. The coast guard vessel pulled away rapidly. Larsen got on the intercom again. “All is well. On deck in 10 minutes.” ‘shit cutting this close’ he thought.

“OK Willy take the helm. Watch the depth! Turn to starboard and get me a half mile out. Watch the radar.”

“Skipper you piss me off at times. I know how to handle this boat!” He was very tense.

Larsen said “Mutiny! Bread and beer and a bunk with a blond for the next week!” It did what it was intended to do.

Willy laughed and relaxed. “K. Anytime!”

Larsen used his night vision glasses and scanned the shore line. “OK. The cliff is off to the side.

Need to be half mile past it. Throttle back to 5 knots then when I tell you just keep steerage way. I am going on deck”

“K skipper.”

Larsen left for the deck. Seas were only a few feet high and the Rose Marie just rolled slightly. As the passengers came on deck.

“Butch? All ready?”

Butch lifted his arm. “K lets get it over.” He waved to the wheelhouse and felt the engines drop to minimum revs. Larsen and Butch got the Zodiac over and Larsen motioned to the passengers to get in.

The deck lights came on and Larsen waved at the wheelhouse and they were turned off. Larsen got in to the inflatable and started the engine. Butch cast off from the bow. Larsen powered the boat up and swung it starboard towards the shore. 10 minutes later he slowed it down.

“Ready folks!” He could feel they were tense. Moon came out briefly and he grounded the boat.

Flash light waved on shore then was shut off. ‘Right bloody place’ he thought. The

passengers climbed out the males hanging on to their suitcases.

“Quickly folks” he said. They waded through the water gasping at the cold and on to the beach.

“Good luck!” he yelled then put the outboard in reverse and backed off the shore. He throttled up the motor and headed back to the ‘Mary Rose’. His part was over.

Chapter 33

Ali led the way up the beach. The group behind him stumbled occasionally as their legs got used to dry land again. “Careful” he said as they got in to some brush. Few minutes later they were at his truck. He lifted the tailgate and motioned them in.

“4 adults in there and you two” he motioned to the teens “in the front.” They did as they were told. It was starting to get light. Rain had stopped. Quickly he started the truck up and drove off the shoulder and on to the road.

His house was small. He parked in front of it and opened the tailgate. “Everyone inside now.” He led the way. Finally they were all inside and enjoying the warmth.

“Sit please” he said and turned the thermostat up. Take your shoes off and I will get you some dry socks. They sat around the table and looked at him questioningly.

“So what is next?” asked the older of the two men.

“Have to split you up. Four can stay. Two will be moved at daylight to another place just ten minutes away.”

They looked at one another then the younger male spoke. “When do we get to the city?” “Two days at the most. Have to get confirmation all is ready for you. Will make some coffee” he said and went over to the stove. The group began talking to each other in low voices. The older one said to Ali “After this many weeks we can wait a few days more.” “Good. I am happy you are all here safe and sound. Now which two will be going? It is not a house but comfortable enough.”

“After weeks of cabins we we will be fine. My sister and I will go. My friend here and his wife and daughters will stay here.” He looked at the others “Agreed?” They all nodded in assent. “Fine then. Will take two of you there in an hour. Your coats you can hang up there.” he pointed to the coat rack behind the door. They got up and hung up their coats as the door opened and a small Indian lady entered.

“My wife” said Ali. She greeted them and made sure they were comfortable.

“We have one bedroom spare upstairs. Two will have to sleep in the living room. I will make you breakfast. How are things back home?”

They started to talk in Sinhalese and quickly relaxed. Soon there was some laughter. Ali felt satisfied. So far so good. He did not know who these people were nor did he care. He was getting paid well for his efforts.

Bruno barked and Dave looked out of the window. Ali got out of the truck with a man and a woman. The man went to the rear of the Silverado and took out a suitcase. The two with Ali looked a little exhausted. He went out to greet them, Bruno beside him.

“Mr Willis here are the two guests. May I show them to their lodgings?” “Go ahead.” He held out his hand. “Dave Willis, you need anything let me know.” The man shook it. “Pleased to meet you sir.” He shook his hand. Very strong grip Dave noticed.

“I am Ameen and this is my sister Rishani.” She shook his hand briefly dropping her eyes. ‘Pretty woman’ he thought.

“K Ali, show them the way.” The two guests were wearing jeans and sweaters under there heavy coats. They followed Ali in to the guest cabin. Dave went in also and started a fire in the stove.

“Food in the fridge. Bathroom is outside unfortunately. Sure you will be alright?” “We will be fine sir. Thank you for your hospitality.” Ali had filled them in on the way over.

“If you need a shower just come over to the house, alright?” Rishani nodded and smiled a little before dropping her eyes again.

“K then, I am going.”

“Sir” she said “I would like to shower.” her brother looked at her quickly and she looked back at him defiantly.

“OK. Follow me. Just bring some clothes.” she hesitated and he said “My girl friend is about your size. Lots of clothes over there. You can borrow them. She is not here right now.” he went out and heard her say a few words to her brother then followed him.

“Bathroom to the right, through that door.” She looked in the direction he nodded and said “Thank you sir.” another quick smile. Her eyes held his briefly then she lowered them and went in to the bathroom closing the door. He made a coffee, lit a smoke and sat down at the table.

‘Curious’ he thought. ‘Traveling with only a few clothes. Looking a little haggard also. Oh well, keep my nose out of it’ he thought. ‘But she was a pretty woman.’ He looked out

of the window again.

Rain turning to freezing rain was the forecast. He went in to the office and checked his computer.

Mailbox was empty. He called Olga on a whim.

"Yes?"

"Hi Olga. Be careful today. Freezing rain forecast. Where are you?" "Motel. Just heading off to work."

"Back tonight?"

"I sincerely hope so! Got to run. See you tonight!" She hung up.

He looked at the phone thoughtfully. 'Not like her to be abrupt. Probably because I was yesterday' he thought. Dave went out to do the chores. 20 minutes and he was finished. Ameen was standing at the open door of the cabin looking East.

"The home of Bigfoot?" he asked nodding towards the forested hills. Tone of voice was pleasant.

"So I am told. Bears are more dangerous. They do not hibernate here for very long. Couple of days, week maybe then then come out. Weather gets bad they go back to their dens." Ameen nodded. "My sister thanks you for the shower." "Anytime. Whatever you need just ask."

"An ax? I need to chop wood. Keeps me busy."

Dave was surprised at the request. "Sure. Right there." He pointed to the ax. "Well, I have some things to do. Later then."

Ameen nodded and picked up the ax and went to the wood pile. He stopped and turned. "Mr Willis? My sister would appreciate the use of your washing machine." "Fine tell her to just go in and use it." he went back to the house. He stopped before he reached the door as the Silverado pulled in. Ali rolled down the window.

"Good morning again. I have to leave for a few days. Just stopped by to tell Ameen." Dave nodded "Be careful, freezing rain." he went in to the house as Ali talked with Ameen.

'Fishy' he thought. 'guests here and he is leaving them.' He sat in his office and checked his mail again.

"Will take care of the transport. Email you with details." Well that was settled. There was a knock on the door so he got up and answered it.

"Come in" he said to Rishani. She smiled and came in with a small bundle of clothes and looked at him inquiringly. He nodded to the laundry room door.

She smiled "Thank you" and took the clothes in. Few minutes later he heard the washing machine start. She came out and stood there hesitantly. "Yes? If you want to wait in here that is fine. Will make some coffee."

"Do you have tea?" she asked.

"Think so" then "yes. Ceylon tea. OK?"

"But of course!" He put the water on to boil then asked casually "Come a long way?" "Yes. Very long way."

He took a gamble. "Ceylon?" then "sorry, do not want to pry." He noticed her look around heard the wood being chopped and said "No. Now it is Sri Lanka." So his suspicions were correct he thought. "Tamil?" he asked.

She hesitated a few moments then "Yes. You did not know?" "No I did not. Don't worry about it.

I mind my own business."

She looked in to his eyes. "Thank you sir."

"Brown gold." then "sorry. Was remarking on your eyes." She blushed deeply. "Thank you for the compliment." She lowered her eyes again.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

She shrugged before replying. Then said "Big ship then small ship then fishing boat. Please do not tell my brother I told you? He may get angry."

"Of course not. So you are here as a refugee? How many came?" "Many but just six here. Ali is taking four to Courtenay or a name like that." He nodded "Other side of island up North. Where are you and your brother going?" He made the tea. She shrugged. "I do not know yet. Ali may know. I am to be married." "Is your boyfriend here?"

She shrugged again "I assume so. Arranged marriage. Have not met him but he is a powerful man here. Has citizenship."

"I see. Do you want to marry him?"

"No! But I have to. I was promised. I want to be free. Can you help me?" then "Please! Do not tell my brother!"

"I wont. Do not think I can help."

She got up and looked at him. "I can pay you!" she paused then said "I have seen your eyes on me. I know you want me. Help me escape and you can have me." She blushed deeply. "You will be the first."

"Sorry" he said. She looked at him a few minutes then turned and went to check the

wash.

‘What a waste’ he thought ‘but have to keep my nose out of this one.’ He put his coat on and went outside. Rain was changing to ice pellets. Ameen was sweating, his coat beside him.

“Feels good, exercise” he said as Dave walked past him.

“We all need it.” Dave said as he walked to the drive shed. Ameen picked up his coat and followed him. “AH! A Cessna! Yours?”

“Yes mine. You fly?”

“Not for a year or more.” he shrugged “maybe I will get the chance again.” “Hope so” Dave said

as his cell phone went off. “Yes?”

“Hi. Cannot make it tonight. Sorry about that. Pretty slick this part of the island.” “Fine with me. Call when you can. By.” He turned it off. “Girl friend” he said to Ameen. Bruno barked at Rishani leaving the house with the laundry. He looked in that direction and felt the other mans eye’s on him so he turned away. “Your girl friend, pretty?” “Yes. Blond. Veterinarian. Animal doctor” he said noting the puzzled expression.

“Oh. I see.” he turned and left. ‘Jealous bastard, edgy’ he thought. ‘have to be careful around her.’ He went back to the house through the ever thickening ice pellets. He turned on the computer and did a search on Google for Sri Lanka and Tamils. He read for an hour then looked for Tamils in Canada.

He read about the refugees and other aspects of them. ‘Interesting’ he thought. ‘Clears a lot up’.

Chapter 34

He spent the next few hours cleaning out the boar pens. The freezing rain had stopped and the sun peeked through. ‘Finally! Some sun’ he muttered to Bruno. He checked out the ATV in the implement shed. Old one but it started up after a few tries. On a whim he drove it out of the shed and noticed the two guests had come out.

“Want a ride?” he asked them.

“But of course’ said Ameen, “just a moment sir.”

He disappeared for a moment then came out with two coats. They put them on and climbed aboard, Ameen in the front seat and his sister in the back. He drove it down the North side of the pasture and turned on the trail he had followed yesterday. Bruno ran along beside him. He idled it along and up to the old cabin.

“What is in there?” Ameen asked.

“Nothing. Empty. I am going to go over the hill and look around. OK? ” “Yes sir. Does one good to get out of the cabin.” Dave drove farther up the track and over the hill. He stopped. As far as the eye could see was forested hills.

“Good hunting.” said Ameen. As a deer bounded across the track and disappeared in to the bush.

“Yes. Deer, bears some cougars I believe. Few wolves also.” “Grizzly bears?” Ameen asked.

“No, black bears.” he throttled up and went down the side of the hill, following the overgrown trail. He went on another mile or so then turned around.

“Nothing but forest that way” he pointed East. “Few miles that way is a road.” He pointed north.

“Heading back. Getting dark soon.”

“Bigfoot also here?” Rashini asked.

“Supposed to be but maybe just a legend. How did you know about Bigfoot?” “Computer” she said.

He drove back to the house. He parked the ATV and they all got out of it.

“Thank you for the ride sir. Cold. Must put wood on the fire.” He and Rashini left. He turned the local radio station on and made himself a couple of hamburgers. Not too much news wise. Weather forecast was South winds and plus 55F tomorrow. ‘Good’ he thought ‘about time.’ He cleaned up the kitchen and rinsed a few dishes, throwing Bruno half a hamburger. He opened a beer and lit a cigaret.

He played around on the computer a while then yawned. ‘Bed for me buddy’ he told Bruno and put out the lights on the way through. He slept fitfully. Days events going through his mind. Finally he fell in to a deeper sleep. He awoke at six and splashed cold water on to his face. Thought about shaving then dismissed the thought. He found some pancake mix and read the instructions and made himself some.

It was starting to get light outside. He let Bruno out to do his business. Warmer than yesterday, the breeze. Quite pleasant. Ten minutes later Bruno was back scratching at the door. Dave let him in and stroked his head. “You are getting house bound buddy!” he told

him. Bruno just licked his hand in appreciation.

“Rishani!” he heard then again ‘Rishani!’ Then something in Ameen’s native language.

Dave got up and went outside.

“Problems?” he asked. Ameen looked terrible. Blood shot eyes and very distraught. ‘Hangover?’ Dave asked himself.

“My sister! Have you seen my sister? I awoke this morning and she is gone!” Dave shook his head ‘No’. “When did you last see her?”

“Last night. We played cards and I had a few drinks and fell asleep! Where would she go?” he was really agitated now.

“Calm down. Give me a minute to get my coat on and will drive up the highway and back down.” Ameen ran to the cabin and came out dressed warmer he climbed in to the truck as Dave got in the other side and started it up.

“Did she say anything last night?” he asked.

“No, nothing. All was good!” They drove up past Ali’s place towards the town. At the outskirts they turned around and on the way back stopped at Ali’s house. Ameen got out and went to the door.

A small woman answered it. They spoke a few moments then he came back.

“Not there!” Dave turned around and headed south. He went 5 miles past his place then stopped.

“What time did you go to sleep?”

“Late. Maybe 2 am or so. Why?”

“She would have been still on the road. We would have seen her by now. Unless she got a ride, but unlikely. Very little traffic at night on this road.” “Then where?” Ameen asked squeezing his hands together.

Dave shrugged. “Bush? Forest maybe?”

“Maybe. She can survive in the forest!”

“OK. Let us start there then.” then “why would she leave?” “Because..I do not know.” He had cut off what he was about to say.

“OK. We should find her.” ‘Obviously she had made a run for it’. Dave surmised. ‘Now I am in the middle of some shit again.’ Shortly he turned the truck in to the yard.

“You check the cabin again. I will check the house and buildings.” worth a try but knew it would be hopeless. It was.

“What now?” Ameen asked.

“Come with me” he said. He followed Dave in to the house. He pointed to Olga’s hiking boots.

“put them on we are going in to the bush.”

Ameen nodded and changed his shoes for the boots. ‘Right size’ Dave noticed.

“Back in a minute.” He went in to the office and came out with the 30.30. Ameen looked at the gun then Dave.

“Bears” Dave said and they went outside. “Give me a piece of her clothing. For the dog,” he explained “he should find her for us.” Ameen did so, holding a pair of socks looking at Dave enquiringly.

“Good enough. Bruno. Find.” The dog smelt the socks and whimpered. He was ready. “Go see” Dave told him then “Easy boy!” as Bruno put down his nose and circled the yard a few time then he barked. “OK. He is on the trail.” Bruno kept his nose down and ran along the edge of the bush nearest the road then across the pasture. “Slow boy!” Dave yelled as they had a hard time keeping up with him.

“Probably she went up the trail we were on yesterday” Dave said to the panting Ameen. They followed Bruno. On reaching the cabin Dave called Bruno back. “We rest a few minutes” he said.

Bruno had looked in the cabin and had come out again. He sat beside the two men panting. “She probably stopped there to rest” Dave said. Ameen just nodded. Dave gave him a few more minutes then said “OK. Time to move. Bruno! Go see! Easy boy, easy.” as the dog started off.

They followed him down the hillside in the morning sun, stumbling occasionally, panting heavily. The trail seemed to disappear. The slope in front of them was littered with fallen trees. Large ones, uprooted years ago by the looks of them Bruno stopped and whined, looking back at Dave.

“Stay!” he told him. It was hard to see in the heavy brush under the trees. Bruno stopped and was pointing in to the bush. Dave took the safety off the rifle. Ameen looked at him questioningly. Dave moved ahead slowly telling Bruno to stay again.

“Could be your sister or an animal” he said. “Just stay back.” He moved ahead and past Bruno.

He heard a whimper but did not relax.

Ameen heard it also and ran forward calling “Rishani!” He was 20 feet ahead when he stopped dead and screamed as the black bear arose from out of the bush and swiped him

in the head with it's paw then then bit in to his neck. Bruno did not need telling. He ran at the bear and leaped at it's throat only to be knocked aside with a blow from the powerful paw. Ameen was down and the bear stood upright again. The first shot got it in the head, blood and brains splattering the surroundings. The next one was through the heart. He took a deep breath and walked ahead to where Ameen lay. The bears claws had ripped his face open. The bite to the neck had severed the veins there. He was dead, face frozen in horror, wide open eyes looking sightlessly at the sky. Bruno whined and hobbled over to him.

Dave checked him out quickly. Looked like maybe a fractured rib. "Good boy!" he said, then again "Good boy!." Bruno walked away and looked back at Dave.

"What boy?" Bruno whined again and Dave followed him. He stopped and looked at Dave. Here there were four large uprooted trees. At the base there were marks as if the bear had been digging.

Bruno whined again. Dave got on his hands and knees putting the rifle down and looked in under the tangle. Bruno barked. Whimpering noises came from inside and he heard movement.

"Safe now?" he heard soft voice ask.

"Rishani! Come on out. You are safe. Thank God you are alright!" he felt a surge of relief come over him as he helped her out. She stood up shakily, grime and dirt on her face.

"The bear! I heard him following me so I got under here. He was digging me out.!" He put his arms around her and held her until she stopped shaking.

"Thank you" she whispered "thank you!" He held her for a few more minutes then said "Your brother is dead." She stiffened up.

He held her tightly. Finally, reluctantly, he let her go. "How?" "Bear. Let us get out of here." she looked over to where the bear was lying and her eyes focused on her brothers body. She made a move to go in that direction and he stopped her.

"Not pretty!"

"I have seen worse!" she said and walked over to the body. "He wanted to die for the Cause! Be a martyr for the Tigers! Not killed by an animal! In a strange country!" No tears, no wailing he noticed.

"Can you make it back?" he asked. She looked at him and shook her head 'yes'.

"OK. Lets go then."

She hesitated "What about.."

"I will come back for him with the ATV. OK?" She nodded and started back following

him and the limping, slow moving Bruno.

Chapter 35.

It was well over an hour later when they got back. She had told him the bear had had a smaller one with it. It had chased her so she had dived under the fallen logs. He had asked her where she was going. She told him she was hoping to find a trail and follow it to a road. He had asked her what she would do for money?

“\$300 plus part of my dowry” she had said. “Then added “Permanent residence card also.” He had asked “How did you get that?”

“We buy them in Sri Lanka. Very expensive.”

He just nodded. “Always a way” he acknowledged. Then “what part of your dowry?” She stopped and put her hand in her jeans pocket and pulled out a blue large stone.

“Sapphire,” she said. “6 Carats. Cut and polished worth \$10,000 or so Canadian. Very good color, clarity.”

He took it off her and examined it. He gave it back to her asking “You have more?” She nodded ‘yes’. “At the cabin. Many more. Good dowry.” “K. Lets keep going.” They had not spoken since.

“In the house” he said and she followed him in. “Get a shower and changed and I will get your brother. Seeing as he is not supposed to be here, you want me to bury him? Or what?” “No bury! Not religion of ours!” She looked at him pleadingly. “We cremate.” He looked at her intently, noticing the tremble around her lips. Finally he shrugged. “OK.” He went out to the drive shed with his rifle and fired up the ATV. He picked up a 5 gallon container of gas, two thirds full and put it on the floorboards. He drove the ATV out and yelled at Bruno to ‘stay’ then drove back the way they had just come. He stopped at the old cabin and put the can of gas on the floor. He started off again. ‘Messy’ he thought as he pulled Ameens body to the ATV and loaded it. Soon he was back at the cabin. He dragged the body to the back of the cabin and positioned the table over him. Searching the pockets produced nothing. Around his neck on a leather thong was what looked like a thumb drive for a computer. He looked at it. USB port on the one end.

He put it in his inside pocket. Then he pulled the boots off him and put them in the ATV. Olga would miss them. He poured gasoline over the body and on to the log walls. He made a trail to the cabin door and outside. ‘Well, nice day for it.’ he thought and fired up the ATV

after putting the empty can in the rear. He flicked his lighter and the tongue of flame moved quickly towards the cabin. He jumped on to the ATV and gunned it. He was 100 yards away when it went up with a loud whooshing sound. He turned to look. 'Few minutes and the rafters should burn through and fall down,' he thought, then left the scene. He had to talk with Rishani as to her next plan of action. He drove slowly, enjoying the weak sunshine. The pasture seemed to be well drained. The ATV did not leave any marks. 'suitable for a take off' he thought 'if need be.' He parked the ATV and got off it feeling his leg muscles ache. He patted Bruno on the head and went in to the house. She had apparently left. Putting the rifle in his office he went in to the shower. There was a wet towel on the rack, the smell of perfume. He stripped off and got under the shower, the hot water easing his muscles. Finally he got out and dried off. He put on a clean pair of underwear and looked for clean jeans and tee shirt. 'Laundry room' he thought and went out towards it. Rishani was sitting at the table drinking a tea. He stopped and looked at her.

She smiled at him. "Hope you do not mind? I seen the smoke on the hill." "Not at all." She wore jeans and a cardigan over her white tee shirt.

"Make me one?"

"Yes sir. Of course." She arose and stood up and the unbuttoned cardigan opened. The tee shirt was tight. Her breasts pushed forward and her nipples were very prominent. She stood there looking at him. "Do you approve?" she asked him.

"Yes, of course I do. You are a beautiful young lady." her liquid brown eyes gazed in to his green ones. "Do you want me?" she asked quietly still holding eye contact.

"Of course I do but I already have a woman."

"But she is not here." She looked down at his shorts and giggled. "Looks like you do want me." A lot of emotions ran through his mind and he said "Hell with it!" he walked over to her and took her hand and led her towards the bedroom. He lay her on the bed and fondled her breasts hearing her moan softly. She yelped as he pinched them. He pulled her tee shirt off and looked at her breasts.

Small and firm"

Nice" he said then sucked a little on one then the other. The nipples were erect and hard. He moved his head down and kissed her stomach. She moaned again and he undid her jeans then pulled them down and off. She wore very brief white panties. He took them off also. He rolled her over and kissed the bottom of her spine and used his tongue. He could feel her quivering. He rolled her on to her back again and used his tongue on her belly button then further down. "Oh my goodness" she gasped, "oh my goodness!"

They made love for 30 minutes or so. Panting and sweating he stayed there a moment and rolled off laying beside her.

"You alright?" he asked, seeing the tears in her eyes.

"Oh yes! So happy! So happy!.." then she said "We have not even kissed yet." He kissed her on the lips and then used his tongue on her ear.

"You are one hot woman" he said and got up. "My tea is getting cold!" She laughed and he went to the laundry room and got dressed. Later she came out of the bedroom with a glow on her face and smiled at him.

"I have been missing a lot" she said and sat down.

"What are your plans?" he asked.

"I would like to stay here with you. Forever!" He just shrugged. "I know" she said "not possible." He watched her as she mulled over her options. He lit a cigaret, remaining quiet.

"I have some friends in Toronto" she finally said. "There are many Tamils there. 300,00 I believe. I used to talk with them often before I went on the ships. My father does not know about them."

"How did you talk to them?"

"Computer. I was training government workers computer skills back home." then "how far is Toronto?"

He shrugged "About 4500 km" he said. "By air about 6 hours or less due to time zone change." then asked "what are you thinking?"

"You have a computer?" she asked.

He nodded "This way."

He turned it on and put in his password. "All yours. Animals to feed." he said and left. Sun was starting to get low over the Pacific. He fed the boars and checked out Bruno again. He was walking much better now. 'Probably just bruises' he thought. Back in the house he opened a beer. He could hear her fingers clacking on the keyboard. He envied her, he only used two fingers. 'So' he thought 'her brother gets mauled by a bear, I burn him up and she wants sex. Tough woman. Sapphires. She said she had many. Guess they are as good as cash. Some one will come looking in a day or so for them, no doubt. All he could say is they disappeared. He finished the beer and opened another.

"One for me?" he turned and looked at her.

"OK." he handed her his and got another one out. "Glass?" he asked. She shook her head 'No'.

"So how did you make out in there?"

"Very well" She said smiling. "Old friend I went to school with. He has been over here very many years. My first boyfriend." She blushed, "I mean friend." "OK."

"He now sells houses outside of Toronto. Not married." She dropped her eyes then raised them again. "He has a place for me but first has to clear it with his boss. His boss will not be back for another 3 hours. May I stay here until then?"

"Sure" he said, then "if this goes through how you going to get there?" She smiled at him, saying "Comox airport to Vancouver. Vancouver to Toronto. About \$400." "You have the money?"

"Yes. My brother has \$800 in the suitcase plus I have \$300. Plus the gemstones." He nodded.

"When? Leaving I mean."

"Leave Comox early morning. Is that far from here?" "Long drive. Will fly you there."

"Thank you. I will make some food " she said and got up. "You like curry?" she asked.

"Sure" he said so she got busy.

After supper she checked the computer again. "Nothing yet." His cell phone went off. "Yes?" "Hi how you doing?" Olga asked. "Hi Olga, fine." "Looks like I will stay down here again tonight."

"No problem, tired out anyway."

"How come?"

"Oh, long walks, hour with a virgin stuff like that." Rishani looked at him startled, eyes wide. "I know, I dream a lot." he said as Olga laughed out loud. "take care now" he said and switched it off.

"She did not believe me anyway. But I did not lie." he said to her.

"You scared me!"

"When is your friend going to email you back?" he asked.

"About an hour or less. Can I stay here tonight? I do not feel safe by myself." "OK."

"Will get my things" she said and left. Soon she was back with the suitcase. She made a space on the table and opened it. "Can you burn some things for me" she asked.

"Sure." he said. She removed her brothers clothes, very few there, he noticed then his papers.

"Permanent residence card, drivers license." she said. He looked at the license. Looked

genuine enough. He threw the papers in to the stove.

“Clothes I will burn outside tomorrow” he said.

She nodded then took out a canvas bag tied at the neck. She opened it and tipped it over. About 20 stones came out of it.

“Dowry” she said.

He picked some of them up and looked at them “Half are red ones in here.” “Yes, very rare, these are all quality stones. Only the best. 5 to 8 carats each, uncut.” She took the one red and one blue and put the rest back. She tied the top and handed the bag to him.

He looked at her questioningly.

“Keep them for me please? If I need them you can mail them to me? Do not know if I can get them through airport security. Keep four for yourself. Deal?” she held out her hand.

He took it. “Deal. You are very trusting. What are these worth? \$200,000?” She just smiled at him then she checked the computer again and he heard the keys clacking.

She came back smiling “All is well! All arranged. I am free!” “Good for you. My bedtime” he said. “Early to rise tomorrow.” She smiled at him saying “Can I sleep with you?”

“Not sure my back can take it! Of course you can. Just take it easy, I am delicate.” she laughed and he put out the lights as she went in to the bedroom.

“I will be gentle” she said.

Chapter 36

Dave was awake at 5 am. Carefully he got out of bed. Rishani slept soundly, her long hair framing her breasts. He covered her up and getting his clothes went in to the shower. He shaved after showering and got dressed and went in to the kitchen.

“You are awake!” he said surprised. She gave him a quick smile and made them both tea. She wore a tee shirt and panties only.

“Sheesh lady get some clothes on!”

She gave him an impish grin and went in to the bathroom laughing. He lit a smoke and drank his tea listening to her singing in the shower. ‘Hell with it, work to do.’ he arose, put his boots on and went out, Bruno beside him. The dog looked much better this morning

he noticed. Sky was starting to light up. Looked like another nice day coming. First he checked the animals noticing one sow had farrowed 6 babies. He fed them and went to the Cessna. He climbed aboard and checked his maps. 'No problem' he thought' less than an hours flying time.' He got out of the plane and went to the front. He pushed it backwards and out of the drive shed. Calling Bruno he went back to the house.

"Leave in 30 minutes. OK?" She nodded and finished closing the suitcase. "I am ready." she wore jeans again and a heavy coat and a wool hat.

"OK. Stay!" he said to Bruno as they got outside. Bruno lay down across the front door and whined. She got in the plane without any help at all, putting her suitcase behind her seat. He was a little slower getting in. He fired it up. It caught then spluttered then caught again and settled down on idle. He put his head phones on. He motioned to her to do the same. He waited until the gauges were all showing correctly then gave it a little more throttle. He taxied to the beginning of the field and increased power and then put it on full throttle. The ground was firm underneath. He gathered speed and then lifted off and climbed. He flew over Ali's house and he headed North then ENE, climbing to his altitude. She looked down at the forest below and saw the wisps of smoke from the fire. She raised her hand in a small wave then settled back in her seat watching the scenery slowly roll by. He flew over Lake Cowichan and kept the heading he was on. Less than an hour spotted he spotted the airport.

He called the tower and identified himself. They gave him instructions and told him he was clear to land. No air traffic. He circled the airport and dropped down. He had been directed to the outskirts of the airport. He saw the hangers and planes and the runway he was told to land on. He put her down gently, taxiing up to one of the hangers.

He took off his headphones and turned to her. "Well, this is it. You know were the terminal is?" "Yes I can see it."

"I wish you luck. I sincerely do."

She leaned over and kissed him hard on the lips. "I will never forget you!" she whispered.

"And I you. OK. Show time." he got out and walked around the plane.

She was already out with the suitcase. She gave him a quick hug then walked towards the terminal. She turned once and waved then strode on purposefully. He watched her until she disappeared behind some buildings then sighed and got back in to the plane. He called the tower and they told him to wait.

The small North Mountain commuter plane landed on the main runway and he was cleared for take off. The flight back was uneventful. Coming in to land at his place he

noticed the Silverado in the driveway of Ali's house. He shrugged mentally, take it as it comes. He landed without a problem and taxied to the drive shed and carefully eased it in then shut it off. He got out and went in to the house.

Gathering up the garbage bag full of Ameen's clothes he went out and put them in the burn barrel a 40 gallon drum with holes in the side. He threw in some old papers and wrapping material and set it going. It burnt rapidly. Back in the house he made a liverwurst sandwich and made a coffee. As expected Ali arrived shortly thereafter and parked behind his truck. Dave went out to greet him.

"Mr Willis! How are you today?"

"I am fine. You?"

"Just fine. I came to talk with the guests."

"Guests? They left yesterday some time while I was in town." Ali laughed then said "Good, you joke yes?"

Dave looked at him in surprise. "No, no joke! I saw them yesterday morning. Ameen was outside on his cell phone so I just waved and he waved back." Ali's face was ashen, he looked terrified.

"Anyway, I went in to town to get some things. Came back a few hours later and did not see them around. I knocked on the door last night and no answer. I looked in. seems they took there things and left. That a problem? Surely they will call you and let you know were they are?" he shrugged, "Guess they did not like the place."

"May I look?"

"Go ahead."

Ali hastily walked to the cabin and went inside. He came out a few minutes later looking agitated.

"Find anything?" Dave asked.

"What? No, nothing they did not say were they were going?" "Told you, did not talk with them."

"Oh yes, forgot." then he strode towards the Silverado and got in. "Were you flying this morning Mr Willis?"

"Yes. Lake Cowichan airport for gas. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. See you later!" he reversed the truck then spun it around and took off.

'So if Ali was the broker, the one who had to deliver the people he could be in big trouble' he thought 'then I better watch my back until all this settles down.' At noon his

phone rang and he picked it up "Yes?"

"Hi love. Will be home tonight. OK?"

"OK. Miss you!"

"Ditto!". The phone went dead. He checked the cabin carefully. Nothing, not even a dirty dish.

She had done a good job. 'Better check the house' he thought and went back over there. He went through the rooms carefully. The smell of curry hung in the air so he opened a window. Bedroom was as it should be. He pulled off the sheets and put them in the wash and put clean ones on. Washroom was clean. Office was clean. He opened the drawer under his desk to deposit the gems and there was a pair of her panties with a happy face drawn on in marker. He smiled and took them out. 'sense of humor..great.' Outside he threw the panties in the burn barrel. He went back in and debated were to put the gems. Then decided to leave them were they were then,changed his mind and took the bag out.

Opening the paper shredder he dropped the bag in there. He sat down and turned the computer on.

No new emails. He looked in the 'deleted' folder. It was clean. So she was smart enough to get rid of any trace of emails between her and Toronto. He went to the Google toolbar to check history. It was also clean. 'Good' he thought 'all is clear on here.'

Chapter 37

Olga arrived as he was was just finishing chores. Bruno ran to greet her his tail going in circles.

"Good boy!" she said then "You hurt boy? Let me check." She ran her fingers over him expertly.

"Pulled muscle. How did he get that?" she asked standing up.

"Well hello to you also."

"Sorry!" she laughed.

"I saved a virgin from a bear and Bruno helped me." She looked at him then laughed again. "Just about over a week here and you are already getting cabin fever!" Her blue eyes were sparkling and her blond hair shone in the late afternoon sun.

‘Lovely looking woman’ he thought then said “Must be because you were not here. Anyway, a beer each and you can tell me all about your week in civilization. OK?” “Let’s do it then.” She sat at the table and he opened two beers. She drank hers out of the can then burped. Her hand went to her mouth “Oops! Sorry! But I needed that!” her nose went in the air “Curry?” she asked.

“Yes. Tried it. It was bloody hot!”

“How much powder did you put in?”

“Too much! Anyway, what did you do all week?”

“Oops! Kentucky chicken in the truck!” she was up and out. She carried a large box of chicken and a bottle of Kraken back in with her.

“Your favorite!” she said. Again she sat down and proceeded to tell him the weeks events. Two beers and 20 minutes later she was done.

“So what did you do?” she asked and got up. She put the chicken on a plate and in to the microwave, turning it on.

“Not too much. This vet you are working with, the Chechen refugee, is he any good?” “He is not too bad. Doubt if he will get his license just yet. May be another year. Little rough around the edges but a very nice man.” She got two glasses out of the cupboard and poured two shots of the Kraken rum. Dave topped his up with water. The microwave beeped and she got the chicken out. They ate in silence for a while.

“So you got to see a lot of the island?” he asked.

She nodded. “Have a good idea where places are now. Cows, pigs, horses. Worked on them all this week.” She poured herself another shot of rum. “Nice country” she said.

He noted her words slurring ever so little. “The motel. Comfortable?” he asked her.

“Not very. Thinking of renting an apartment next week. What do you think? The one Ivan has is nice. There is another for rent in the same building.” He noticed her pause as if she had said too much.

“Really? If you think that is best then go ahead and do it.” He topped his glass up with water and sat down again.

“How big are the apartments?” She poured another shot. ‘Going to be drunk soon’ he thought.

“One bedroom is all. Come with fridge and stove. Heat also but they keep it at 18 C so gets cool at night.”

He lit a smoke. “Ivan have a sofa in his apartment?” “Well yes. He..” she trailed off and

just looked at him, realizing she may have said too much. "I slept on it one night." she sounded defiant.

"Oh well, saves you the price of a motel room." He kept his voice light, not wanting to show his true feelings. He felt pangs of jealousy.

"Anyway, you want an apartment rent one. Better than a motel room." he got up and poured himself a drink and topped it up with water again.

"Dave what are you thinking?" 'her best form of defense is to attack' he thought. "You don't think I was sleeping with him do you?" She was gathering steam now, getting angry.

"Olga!" he held up his hand "It is not worth arguing over. What you do in is your business. You did or you did not, it does not matter! You are here now, that matters." then "All that matters." 'What a hypocritical bastard I am' he thought then shrugged. He walked behind her and put his arms around her and down on her breasts. The tenseness began to leave her.

"As long as you don't think I am fooling around" she said.

"Forget it! Anyway, sow farrowed yesterday, six. Guy in northern California wants the six sows and two boars. What vet papers do I need?" subject was changed and she became animated again, explaining what was needed. Awkward moment had passed. He knew exactly what was needed but needed her mind off the other subject. No point in getting in to an argument. He figured he had or was about to lose her anyway. No matter whether or not she had slept with any one. She talked on for a while then reaching for her drink spilled it. "Oops!" she said.

"Come on love. Bedtime for you." He helped her up and walked her to the bedroom. "You have had a tiring week. You need to rest."

"I do feel woozy. Are you going to be long?"

"No. Few minutes is all." She struggled with her jeans and he helped her get them off. She lay back on the bed and closed her eyes. She was sleeping before he turned off the light and closed the door. He tidied up the kitchen and went in to the office. He turned the computer on and went back for his drink. He made a face at it and poured it down the sink then got a beer instead.

1 message in his in box. "all is well. Tired out! What a big city! Bed for me. Alone!! Bet you miss me already you sexy man! Will have my own e mail address soon. So do not reply to this address. Thinking of you! But that makes me 'you know what' LOL!!! Love. Sapphire." he smiled at the email. 'she has come out of her shell' he thought, 'good for her!'. He spent an hour researching sapphires and again the Tamils and Sri Lanka. He deleted the message and shut it off. He sat there a few moments thinking about Olga. 'pot

calling the kettle black' he thought, then 'At least I get some rest tonight. Selfish bastard that I am.' he shrugged it off and went to bed. Carefully he got in beside her. She mumbled in Latvian then he fell asleep.

Chapter 38

He was up before daylight and made a coffee. Olga was still sleeping. He popped two aspirins with his coffee. Slight headache. He lit a smoke and put his boots on and went outside with Bruno.

Another cool morning but very few clouds. He stood there breathing in the morning air, a mixture of wet forest and sea. 'now what?' he thought, his mind mulling over the last few days events. He realized there would be visitors, two people just do not disappear. The Cessna had been seen, probably they would think he had flown them somewhere, whoever they were. Hopefully he could avoid it all.

Then thought 'Nah, never happens. Always seem to end up in shit somewhere along the line. Hell with it!.' He went to the barn to feed his animals. It was daylight when he returned to the house. Olga sat at the table in her nightgown, coffee in front of her.

"Good morning. You look like crap!" he said.

She raised her eyes "I feel like shit. I have just popped an Advil. Two in fact. Oh yes, good morning." He laughed out loud, saying "Well you need a hearty breakfast! Runny eggs and slimy half done bacon sliding down your throat. Just think of it, cold grease." She looked at him a few seconds then her face began to change and she ran to the bathroom and started to vomit.

"You bastard!" she managed to yell between retching. "You miserable bugger!" He laughed again. "Sorry love!" Still smiling he made himself another coffee. Later she came out and went past him in to the bedroom without a word. When she came out she had her jeans on and a tee shirt with a denim shirt over the top.

"You look better now" he ventured.

"Asshole! Why didn't you stop me last night? You know I cannot drink like that!" He shrugged, saying "Would you have listened to me?" "Probably not but you could have tried!"

"OK, my apologies then."

She sipped her coffee frowning at him. "What did I say last night? I cannot remember." "You told me all what you had been doing all week. Stuff like that." "That all?" Her green eyes stared in to his.

He shrugged "Just about. Said you were going to or thinking of renting an apartment in your Chechen friends building."

"Anything else?"

"Not really. Anyway the sow and litter are doing fine. Have another one ready to pop." She stared at him intently then shrugged. "The animals, that is good. Sure I did not mention anything else?"

"About sleeping in a guys apartment? You mentioned that but did not think it was worth bringing up." She was about to speak when he raised his hand saying "Forget it. Want to see the animals?" she hesitated then nodded "yes" and they went outside.

"Let's go for a ride on the ATV" she said as they came out of the barn "You said there was a trail going in to the forest. I need some fresh air."

"OK" he said reluctantly and started the machine up, telling Bruno to 'stay.' he left it running in front of the house and grabbed his rifle.

"Bears" he said noticing her inquiring look. She just nodded. He drove past the burnt out cabin and she asked what had happened. He went further then stopped.

"It was ready to collapse. Dangerous. So burnt it down." she just nodded.

"OK? Home now?"

She was staring ahead along the faint trail. "No! Look! Wolves!" He looked and cursed under his breath. "Let us go see what they have!".

"OK."

He drove forward slowly and the wolves far ahead scattered.

"Bear it looks like" she said and got off the machine as he stopped it. The wolves had eaten quite a large portion of the bear. She looked at it and walked around it. Bending down she looked closer. "It must have been shot! Look at the skull. All fragmented." she straightened up and looked at him.

"You?" he nodded 'yes'.

"Why?"

"It is a long story."

"Want to tell me about it?" She stared at him.

“Another time. Let’s go.” He got back on the ATV and she just stood looking at him. “OK then” she said and climbed aboard. She remained silent all the way back.

“I will make some coffee” she said as she got off the machine. He nodded and for something to do he went in to the barn to check on the pregnant sow. He fiddled around for a while then was about to go in to the house when the Silverado pulled up. Two men in it. Dave looked at Ali feigning surprise.

“Hi. Find your missing folks?”

Ali got out shaking his head. “No sir. Very strange. Are you sure they did not say anything? At any time?”

“Not that I can remember. Why is it so important? Surely they will contact you?” The passenger got out and came around to join them. He held out his hand “Mr Willis. Pleased to meet you. I am Rashan.” Dave shook his hand. ‘Firm and could be powerful’ he thought ‘trouble’. He was a little shorter than Dave and broad across the chest.

“The missing people are important to us Mr Willis. It is a family matter. Unfortunately they may have stolen from us. But we are not sure. So you see we need to get the matter cleared up.” His English was flawless.

Dave shrugged.”Wish I could help but told Ali all I can remember. Sorry.” Rashan put his hand in his jacket pocket and took something out. He opened his hand. “Do you know what this is Mr. Willis?”

Dave looked at the large, uncut sapphire and shrugged. “No, but assume it is valuable?” “Why do

you assume it is valuable Mr Willis?”

He said “Because I believe you are going to tell me what it is and what it is worth. Try and jog my memory perhaps? But as I said, I have no idea where the people went.” “Mr Willis. Very clever. It is a sapphire of 4 carats. Worth about \$5,000 or more US when cut. If you can remember anything else that helps us it could be yours.” “WOW! Helluva a lot of money! But no, sorry.”

“Then we must leave. Good day Mr Willis. Offer is open. Ali knows how to get hold of me.” Dave watched them leave and went in to the house.

“Who were those unsavory characters?” she asked.

“Short one is the next door neighbor. He brought me some eggs over few days back. Other is his friend I guess.”

She stared at him asking “You going to tell me what is going on? I suddenly have a very bad feeling about this!” he did not reply and instead made himself a coffee. “Look at me!”

she said. "I cannot go thru this crap again! I was a 43 year old virgin when I met you. What, maybe 4 months ago? Then I was raped by those bastards and ended up in a loony bin for a few weeks. Then you killed those four bastards. Then we moved away from all that to here. Now it looks like the same shit is about to happen over again! I cannot go thru it again! I just cannot!" She was blazing mad.

"I did not invite this situation. Nothing should happen." he said.

"Trouble always follows you it seems!" She glared at him.

"Then leave."

"What?" she sounded shocked.

"You would have left me anyway. This just quickens the process for you." His face was calm hiding the emotions he felt. She sat down and began to weep. "I would hate to lose you but you deserve better. Anyway, I am going in to town."

She looked up at him with tears in her eyes and was about to speak when he said "No. Let us leave it as is. You do what you have to." He left her sitting there and called Bruno in to the truck. She was at the door when he left. She did not wave as he drove off.

He put the bags of feed in the barn, fed the animals, and went to the house. The note on the table said "Dave. I have to think. Going to the conservation area for a while. There was never anyone else but you. I admit I was tempted." He read it frowning. Maybe he was wrong about her? Conservation area? Provincial Park he figured. Go after her? Call her on her cell phone? 'No' he thought. Her choice. He opened a beer and looked in the fridge. He then checked the freezer. 'Yes' he said and got out two frozen chicken dinners. One was never enough for him. Bruno barked and he looked out of the window. Olga got out of the truck and came in to the house. She wore a white polo necked sweater under her windbreaker. She looked nice. Healthy glow on her face. She looked at the frozen dinners.

"Were you expecting me?"

"I did not know what to expect, and that is the truth." She looked at him a minute, then "I thought it through." "And?"

"I stay!"

"Good" he said. "I am glad!" he stood there looking at her then said "So what now?" She took her jacket off and hung it up.

"In there" she said pointing to the bedroom and walking over to it. "Come on! It has been a week!." then "God you are slow at times" she said walking over and grabbing his hand. "Come on!" he was too surprised to resist.

"Any other commands your highness?"

“Yes! I am on top! No quickies! Or I cut it off! You know I am good with a scalpel!” “Your command is my wish” he said.

Chapter 39

It was dark out now. He finished his warm, flat beer and opened another. She shook her head as he looked inquiringly at her. He went to the office and opened the paper shredder. Taking out the bag he returned to the kitchen. He let Bruno out, just in case of visitors. He poured the gems on to the table carefully. She raised her eyebrows at him.

“Dull looking pebbles.” she said.

“Sapphires. 5 to 8 carats. Cut and polished perhaps \$200,000 US.” Her eyes opened wide. “Good God!”

He put them back in the bag and returned the bag to the paper shredder. He lit a smoke and she sat there watching him, waiting for him to begin.

“Started with Ali” he said then told her what had transpired in the preceding days. He left out his fling with Rashani of course but by the look in her eyes, the way they narrowed he knew she was trying to put two and two together. She at least suspected. “Anyway, that is it up to today.” She said nothing for quite a few minutes, he could see she was thinking it over. She got up “I will have a beer after all.” then “OK. So far you are clean enough. What if they check your gassing the plane story?”

“Admit I screwed up on that one.”

“So,” she said “this big shot wants his girl and the dowry. I do not think he wants the girl that much. He can probably get dozens of them. Virgins also. No, think he just wants the stones.” She reached for her beer and froze. “When I talked with you the other day...’long walks..hour with a virgin’ you said.” She picked up her beer and looked at him.

“Yes, hour that day hours other days. She did make curry here so another hour with her. Hour in the plane.”

“That is not what I meant!”

“I know what you meant.”

“Oh well guess you did not, did not see any Karma Sutra or whatever they are, moves today.” she took a sip of beer and he relaxed inwardly. “Must be the stones. Unless they had something more important with them?”

"They left the cabin clean. Ali even checked it. No were to hide anything. Nothing on his body. Has to be the stones."

She said "Give them back?"

He said "Had crossed my mind. Problem with that then I am implicated. I become expendable." "Cannot understand her leaving the stones with you. Why would she? Helluva a lot of money to trust to a stranger. Does not make sense."

"Maybe she had no option?"

"That is hard to believe," she said "has to be another reason. You sure the stones are genuine sapphires?"

"I would not know the difference" he replied.

"OK then. No point in speculating. What now?" He shrugged "Sit tight I guess. What else can I do?" She just shook her head. "Anyway, will do those frozen dinners." He nodded, got up and went in to the office, turning on the computer. There was an email from Rashani. "Hello again! Over 200.00 Tamils here and already some of them know about my brother and I disappearing. I have to be careful! I did not think it would be that big an event. It has happened before many times with others. Miss you! Oh yes, my friend is 'Gay!'. Just my luck!. LOL!" He hit the reply and wrote "Guy called Rashan was here. He is suspicious, but so far so good.

Sorry your friend turned out that way. Take care now." He pressed the send button. Reply came few seconds later.

"Download Skype. Can talk better there. Add sap1 as contact" "K. Few minutes." he sent the message and downloaded Skype. He verified his email address and logged in as sap2. He added the contact and messaged her. Green mark came up beside her name her picture came up live. She looked to be wearing a sari.

"Plug in your video cam" she typed. He found it after a few minutes and plugged it in. "Much nicer to talk face to face" she typed.

"Yes. So what are your plans now?" She frowned and wrote "Not sure." Yell from the kitchen "Supper!"

"Just a minute" he shouted back.

Rashani said "May have to go to the US. Have some distant cousins in Washington. Not too far from were you are." She lifted her head a little and typed in "your girl friend is pretty!" "How do you know?" he asked.

She laughed, "look behind you!" He turned. Olga was standing in the doorway.

"That the one?"

"Yes."

"Pretty young thing. Supper is ready." She left.

"Have to go"

Rashani said. "OK. This time tomorrow night?"

"Yes." Her picture disappeared. He turned the computer off and went in to the kitchen.

"She is pretty" she looked at him, he was deep in thought and barely heard her.

Something was nagging at the back of his mind. He tried to hone in on it then said loudly "Oh shit!" "What?" she asked surprised.

"Computers! She worked on them!"

"So what?"

He did not answer right away. He walked to the door where his coat was hanging and felt in the inside pocket. He breathed a sigh of relief. "This!" he said showing her the thumb drive "it was around his neck!"

"So?"

He shrugged. "Maybe this is what they were after and not the stones?" She looked at him apprehensively .

"Maybe you should destroy it?" he shook his head 'no'. "Have to see what is on it." He went back in to the office and started the computer up again. She was right behind him. He plugged it in. The prompt asked him where to upload to. He hesitated then put in a CD R/W. He made a folder and clicked on that option. He held his breath as the data transferred. Took a few minutes then was done. He then downloaded it to the CD. He unplugged it and opened the folder.

"Arabic?" he asked as the text came up on an official looking manuscript. There were quite a few pages.

"Sinhalese, probably" Olga said.

"Can Google translate them?" he asked her.

"Do not know, try." He clicked on 'translate'. A little garbled but Sri Lanka government and 'Secret' stood out. Looked like a series of memos and other documents. Tamils were mentioned numerous times. They looked at each other. He saved the originals in Sinhalese to the folder and shut the computer off.

"Now what?"

"Hide the bloody disc and thumb drive! This is dangerous shit!" He typed in to the Google search bar "CSIS Tamils". They both read for a while and looked at each other.

“Bloody dangerous! They assassinated the Prime Minister of India and Sri Lanka” he said.

They read more then finally he looked for CSIS BC. “Office in Burnaby” he said. “Call them?” he asked her.

“Yes! Sooner we get out of this crap the better!”

“OK.” He dialed the number. Voice on the other end told him he had reached the CSIS and asked the nature of his call.

“Have some information regarding Tamil Tigers that may be of use to you folks.” He listened a minute then said “Not over the phone.” he gave his name and address and added “Bring some one who can read the language.” He hung up.

“What they say?”

“They will be in touch, is all.”

She shrugged “Typical. So now what?”

“Supper then bed.”

“OK with me. What about the thumb drive and disc?” “Will hide them right now.” he put the disc and drive in his pocket, put on his coat and went outside.

Chapter 40

“I am going in to town.” Olga said putting her coat on. “Need to get a few things.” “OK.” he said and she went out and started up her truck. He checked his watch. 10 am. He made another coffee as she drove off. He lit a smoke and sat down. Animals were fed and other minor chores done. 10.30 the gray Ford Escape pulled up in front of the house to be met by Bruno. He went outside calling the dog over to him. The driver got out first, middle aged, well dressed, horn rimmed glasses. Pudgy. The passenger was female, about 40, sweater and slacks, long loose red hair. The man extended his hand asking “Mr Willis?” Dave shook it “Yes.”

“Canadian Security Intelligence Services. I am Tony Smith and my colleague is Jesse Brown.” He nodded to her and she gave him a slight smile.

“Smith and Brown?” he said.

“Yes, Mr Willis real names.”

"You don't look like spies." "We are in disguise."

"OK come on in. I was expecting James Bond types." he walked towards the door and opened it.

"After you folks. Can I get you a coffee?" They both shook their heads. "Please sit." they did so.

"About your call Mr Willis, what information do you have that may be of help to us?" "Not sure how important it is." he lit a cigaret. Brown looked at him disapprovingly. "I take it you do not smoke Ms Brown?" "Personally I think it is a disgusting habit."

"I am a disgusting person at times. You can always stand outside." She brindled and Smith hastily said "K folks. Business?" Brown glared at him and backed off.

"I have come in to possession of some documents. Did a Google translate on the first one. They appear to be government of Sri Lanka documents. Tamil and Tigers appear in them. Top secret or similar." he stood up and said "If you come this way I will show them to you." he went to the office the other two close behind.

"Moment please."

He turned on the computer and logged in then went to the folder he had them in and opened it.

Smith looked at Brown as she scanned the first page. Her face went taut. "Good grief!" "Please sit here" said Dave. "All yours."

Brown sat down as Smith looked at her questioningly. She ignored him and rapidly skipped from page to page, then clicked back on the first one. She sat a moment then asked "Where did you acquire these?"

"Downloaded them or uploaded them or whatever off a thumb drive. Long story." "You have the

thumb drive Mr Willis?"

"Yes."

"Anyone else seen these?"

"My girl friend is all."

"I see," then "how is Olga?"

"Why am I not surprised you know her name" said Dave. "Look, leave you two alone. I will be in the other room feeding my disgusting habit." he chuckled and left them alone. Smith almost smiled.

Almost 30 minutes before they came out. They sat at the table and Brown had a CD in

her hand. "I downloaded the contents to the CD and erased the originals." She looked at him expecting an argument.

"Fine with me" he said. He put the fan on and his cigaret out. 'No point in pissing her off' he thought. "So, Mr Willis, how did you get your hands on the thumb drive? After all, you have only been here 14 days or so."

"Obviously you checked up on me."

"Yes Mr Willis, you have a colorful history. By the way, congratulations." Dave was surprised "For what?" he asked.

"A job well done. At your last location. No messy ends. Neat and tidy. The long story you mentioned, want to tell us?"

"Sure, the highlights anyway." He went through it again pausing only to answer a question or two. "So, we are now at this point." he concluded. He had told them the basics, omitting only a few personal things, the gemstones etc.. "So now what?" Smith said "I have to consult with some people as to the next step." "Next step?"he asked.

"Yes Mr Willis. Next step."

Dave thought for a while then said "You have not asked me for the thumb drive or whether or not I also made a CD."

Smith got up and Brown a split second behind him. "We would prefer you to have it in your possession for now Mr Willis, yes we assume you have a CD. Just do not tell anyone at this time" "Oh shit!" said Dave getting up "why do I feel like a worm on a hook?" "Few days only then we will get back to you."

He held out his hand and Dave shook it saying "Hope this works out." "Mr Willis. You are a capable character. I am sure you will be fine! Just one other question, do you know the name of the boat that dropped the illegals off?" "No." Dave said.

"Type in your Google toolbar "Sri Lanka's killing fields" very interesting indeed. British documentary. Well then we have to leave. I cannot thank you enough, it is people like you that keep our world safe!"

"Bullshit" said Dave.

Smith laughed, "Supposed to say that. Take care now we will be in touch." They left and Olga pulled in a few minutes later.

"Grey Escape" she asked getting out. "Yes."

"Just passed them. They do not look like spies."

"Guy said they were in disguise. Anyway, "he said picking up a shopping bag, "will tell

you inside.” They looked at the TV documentary and the follow up one. Two hours later they went in to the kitchen, grim and silent.

Olga spoke first. “That was horrible!” Dave nodded ‘yes’.

“The world knew and did nothing!”

“Nothing we can do except get the hell away from this situation. May end up way over my head.” “Agreed”, Olga said.

“OK, just have to wait for the CSIS as to the next step. Hopefully it is the last one.” Few hours later the phone rang. “Yes?”

“Smith. Did not wake you up did I? Anyway, the powers that be informed me to inform you to pass on the thumbnail. In the best interests of all.”

“Watched the documentary. Bad stuff.”

“Yes”.

“Have thought about it. From what I translated seems these papers prove what was obvious back then. So to release them or the tigers do, big propaganda before the elections. Heads may roll, government may fall. Lots of oil off the coast, perhaps some parties want this to happen?” “Perhaps, but you are just speculating Mr Willis.”

“Yes I am. We all are. True?”

“Perhaps. Goodnight Mr Willis.” he hung up.

“Ali will be here to get the boar I sold him. I will make sure he finds the thumbnail.” he said to Olga. “Smith said to pass it on, best interests of all concerned.” She just nodded then said “Bed time?” he nodded. “Probably have a hard time sleeping” she said.

“I also.”

Ali was there early and Dave was waiting for him. “Good morning Mr Willis.” “Good morning

Ali. Back the trailer up to the ramp”

. “Yes, did this for Mike’s pigs before.” he backed it up and opened the tail gate. “Have you heard from your friends yet?” Dave asked.

“Unfortunately not. You?”

Dave shook his head ‘no’. “Strange.” he said “they cleaned everything out. I searched the cabin from top to bottom. Nothing.” he laughed saying “Maybe left a forwarding address in the toilet on a roll of toilet paper.” he laughed again and said “Well, I will get the sow out.” Corner of his eye he saw Ali frown then he said “Moment Mr Willis. Too much tea. Call of nature.” He headed across to the outhouse. Dave went in to the barn and watched

him through the window. "Shit" he said "he must have found it by now!" Ali came out looking smug. "Good' Dave said and opened the door to the ramp then lifted the trailer door as Ali came in to the barn. Dave got the sow out and herded it in to the trailer. Ali put down the back door and locked it.

"Pay me now or later?" Dave asked.

"Now of course, I was not thinking." He paid Dave the money and got in to the Silverado, firing it up. Dave watched him pull away. The truck made the bend around the house and Dave got a glimpse of Ali driving with a cell phone stuck to his ear then he was out of sight.

Back in the house Olga asked him how it went. "He found it. Hope I was not too obvious." He called the number Smith had given him. Recording machine came on. "Smith. Willis. All done." he hung it up.

"So that is it?" Olga asked. "Yes. It is over."

Chapter 41

He checked his email. Message from Rashani "Please email me when you get this." He did so.

He had forgotten about talking with her last night. She must have been waiting for him, reply was almost immediate.

"I need help!" she wrote.

"How? Why?" he asked. "Dangerous for me here."

"Is here for you also" he replied. "Understand that but safer there than here. Why are you in danger?"

Few minutes before the reply came through. "They want something. They think I have it." "They have the thumb drive" he replied.

"I thought you may have given it to the Tigers by now. It was around my brothers neck, I knew you had found it. I felt it in your coat pocket. That is good that they have it. Soon all will know. But that is not what these people want. Secret Intelligence Service people. Government people." He waited a moment then wrote "What do they want?" "Me. They want to find out the source of the papers on the thumbnail. Who it is that leaked them." 'Shit' he thought 'this is not good!'. "Do you know?" he asked. He waited a while then

wrote "Still there?"

"Yes. Still here."

"How about the Tigers? Can they help you?"

"Cannot trust any one. Tigers are infiltrated. Can you help me?" He sat there thinking a minute.

"Not sure. Will email you back in an hour. What is your address?" she gave it to him and he wrote it down.

"OK, have it?"

"OK" was the reply. His first instinct was to wash his hands of the whole situation. End any involvement. Second choice was to inform the CSIS and let them deal with it. He went in to the kitchen and Olga looked at him. "More problems?"

He told her. "For Christ sakes! Tell the bloody CSIS and get out of it! Not our business!" He called the CSIS and got hold of Smith. Quickly he explained the situation. "Did she tell you the name of the source?"

"No."

Silence for a few moments then Smith said "So if it is the SIS they will want her alive. Address?" Dave gave it to him. "We will look in to it" Smith said.

When?" Dave asked.

"Do not know that. Just tell her to sit tight."

"OK then." he hung up.

He made a coffee and emailed her a short message. "Sit tight help should be on it's way." "OK" was the reply.

Two hours he waited until a message arrived in his in box. He opened it. "May have told you the wrong name. Which one did I tell you?"

Dave was puzzled. 'Not her!' he thought. "You did not tell me any name." he replied. He waited a while and no other messages came through. 'Must be some one else on the computer' he thought apprehensively.

The phone rang and he picked it up. "Yes?"

"Smith. Your lady friend was there. Unfortunately she was dead. Throat cut. Sorry I have to tell you this." Dave hung the phone up. He felt sick then mad then resigned.

"Everything alright?" Olga asked. "Yes. All is over now. I hope!!"

Rashin got out of the Mercedes. "Mr Willis! How are you?" "I am fine." He put the ax back on the wood pile and walked forward. They shook hands briefly.

"Nice car. Did you find your friends?" he asked.

Rashin smiled. "The car is nice. I have some jewelery stores so have to keep up appearances. As for friends, one has been located. Unfortunately deceased. But I assume you knew that?" Dave said nothing, just looked at him.

"Yes, I believe you know. However, the other one, Ameen is still missing. We are very anxious to find him."

Dave pointed up the hill. "Up there. Bear killed him. He was looking for his sister. She did not want him buried so put him in an old cabin and burnt it." Rashin raise his eyes in disbelief.

"Over there is a tractor and front end loader. I can take it up there and dig out the remains if you wish. Want to do it now?"

Rashin looked at him a few moments. "No Mr Willis. This time I believe you. So all ends well.

No loose ends." He turned to go then stopped. "By the way, I owe you a favor. If you would like your stones cut I can do them for you."

Dave looked at him in surprise.

"I assume you have them?"

Dave nodded. "Will cut them for a price. 4 stones for me, my pick." He shrugged and said "Man has to make a living." He turned and walked back to his car. Dave followed him. He started the Mercedes up and rolled down the window. "My regards to Mr Smith." He waved then drove off.

Chapter 42

"Oh shit!" she said hitting the brakes, feeling the pick up slide around on the rain soaked road.

The deers eyes shone in the dark, accusingly it seemed. She desperately tried to turn the wheel, feeling the ABS system chatter, but it was too late. The impact knocked her back in her seat as the air bag deployed. She screamed as the truck slid across the road

and over the cliff plunging to the rocks 40 feet below. It landed on its roof. She gained consciousness a few minutes later, hanging up side down, badly bruised. In panic she tried to unlatch the seat belt, the smell of gas permeating the cab.

She got the belt unbuckled and dropped on her head. Clawing at the buckled door she began to scream. "Not like this! Please God not like this!" The truck exploded in a ball of fire, her screams suddenly cut short.

Dave looked out of the window as he sipped his coffee. Nice early April day. Light wind off the Pacific barely stirred the branches of the trees. The accident had happened over 3 months ago but he still felt depressed about it. He was no stranger to death but never a person that close to him. 'Snap out of it!' he told himself, 'done is done!' he went in to the barn with Bruno beside him. He patted the dogs head and told him 'good boy.' Bruno wagged his tail in appreciation. He had sold a lot of the Wild Boars the last few months. Less than the normal price but good money anyway. He seemed to have lost ambition after Olga's death. He had spent years and a lot of money getting the animals to were they were today. Black Russian semen had really helped the genetics. They were in high demand on many US game farms. Bigger, stronger, more aggressive than the normal ones hunted. The herd was down to 5 boars of varying ages and 15 sows plus 30 little ones. He had debated getting rid of them all but after many years work breeding and culling them, he hated to do it. 'Pull yourself together!' he told himself, 'get a frigging life!' He fed and watered them and went back outside, taking deep breaths of the salt laden air. Bruno barked as Ali, his next door neighbor pulled up in his Silverado.

"Mr Willis! Good morning!"

"Hi Ali. You brought me eggs yesterday. Or is it something else?" Ali smiled at him saying "Rashin would like to speak with you." "Oh? I have a telephone." "Not on the phone. Private. May he visit this afternoon?" "Not smuggling refugees again is he?" Dave asked.

"No, no! But I do not know what he does. Perhaps the sapphires are ready?" Dave frowned. He had given six to Rashin to cut and polish. They were meant to be a present to Olga. Four of them anyway, other two for the work done. He had forgotten about them.

"OK. Tell him to come over."

Ali smiled and got back in the Silverado and drove off.

The Tamil Tigers were making good use of the info on the thumbnail by all accounts.

Assassinations, impeachments and a whole lot of other stuff going on over there now. 'Oh well, not my problem' he thought. Bruno peed on the daffodils and Dave marveled at the early spring here on Vancouver island. Rest of Canada was still in a semi-deep freeze.

"Come on boy. Truck." He opened the door and Bruno jumped in. Little slower than usual he noticed. 'Must be 10 years old' he thought. He fondled his head and Bruno licked his face. He started it up and headed to the reserve.

"You have any work at your place?" the woman behind the counter asked him as he paid for the cigarettes.

"Not too much" he replied. "May be some part time yard stuff." "My son, 18 and no job. Part time would be good for him." "He have a car?"

"No, dirt bike. He can get to your place in good time." Dave thought about it then nodded. "OK.

Send him over tomorrow and I will find some work for him." She smiled her thanks and Dave was about to leave when she said "Dogs getting old." looking at Bruno sitting outside in the truck.

Surprised he said "Yes he is. Had him 10 years almost. Trained him for all sorts of stuff. Attack, search, protection other stuff. Why you ask?"

"Come with me" she said and came around the counter. He followed her through the door to the outside then turned to the back of the shop.

"Ten months old" she said pointing to a jet black German Shepherd chained to his kennel. Dave looked at him.

"Big for his age" he said, "good looking animal" The dog barked at him, tail wagging. "Where did you get him?"

"He was out of a litter a friend of mines dog had. Only black one. My son, the one who left for the city, traded some pot for him. Never paid attention to him. I have to feed him. What a waste." Dave walked up to him and put out his hand towards his head. The dogs demeanor changed in a flash and he showed his teeth.

"Easy boy!" he said as he walked past him. The dog followed him, curious. Dave walked around the dog a few times as the dog sniffed him. He stood for a minute his hands down besides him. The dog cautiously sniffed his hand then a few moments later licked it. Dave stroked his head. The dog backed off then hesitated then came back for more.

"Seems you have a way with them" the woman said. "You want him? Free." Dave thought a while then said "OK. Help pass the time."

"Sorry about your woman" she said.

He nodded "Yes. Bad situation. Oh well. Can I take his chain? Will bring it back" "Sure go ahead."

"He ever been off it?" he asked.

“No.”

He undid the chain from the kennel and brought the dog closer then walked him to the truck. The dog was hesitant at first then followed Dave. Dave dropped the tail gate and persuaded the dog to jump up. He fastened the chain short and got down again. Bruno watched all this from the cab with interest.

“He got a name?” he asked the woman.

“Blackie” she said.

“Yes of course. Thanks anyway.” as he drove away he could hear the dog whining as he tried to get loose.

“Get used to it boy” Dave said. Time he arrived home the dog was quiet, resigned. Dave got him down and chained him besides the house. Bruno did his dog macho act and then followed Dave in to the house. Dave made sure Blackie had some water then fed him some liver that had been left over from the previous evenings meal. Blackie ate it ravenously.

“K boy. Your new home” Dave said and went back inside.

“Car is dirty” said Dave to Rashin as he got out of the tinted glassed Mercedes.

“Yes. Canadian weather.” He held out his hand and Dave shook it.

“Your stones Mr Willis.” He brought his hand out and opened it with the four sapphires sparkling in the sunshine.

Dave took them and looked at them briefly. He sighed and put them in his pocket.

“You have my sympathies Mr Willis. Have been through it many a time” then “OK now. I have a proposition for you and a surprise.”

Dave looked at him enquiringly.

“I assume you have heard of all the troubles in Sri Lanka lately?” Dave nodded ‘yes’.

“Some heads are rolling” he said.

Rashins brown eyes were fixed on Dave’s face as he said “Some we do not want to roll.” Dave stared back at him saying “Let me guess. You got some out and they are on there way here and you need my help?”

“Yes. I will not lie to you. Could be dangerous. Very rewarding but dangerous.” “Why me?”

“To be frank Mr Willis, thought you may be ready for some excitement. Not much going on here, if I may say so” then added “no offense intended.”

“None taken.” then “Will have to think about it.”

“Of course Mr Willis. I appreciate it.”

He turned back and strode towards the car then turned, saying “Just let Ali know if you are interested.”

“Will do. So what is the surprise?”

Rashin beamed and opened the rear door of the car. “Surprise!” Dave’s heart skipped a beat as Rashani stepped out of the Mercedes. She came walking slowly at first then running as she put her arms around him and hugged him tightly “What the ..?”

“They got the wrong one Mr Willis. Does she stay?” Rashani looked up at him with her gold brown eyes pleading. “Please?” she whispered.

“Of course!” he said.

Rashin reached in the rear and took out a small suitcase and placed it on the gravel, smiling hugely. “The day is looking much brighter” he said and got into the car and drove away.

End.

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