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MEMORY
MAN



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- Group 4: The Classified

*To Tom and Patti Maciag:
Go forth and have fun.
You've earned it!*

She idly played with the button of her jacket, shooting glances at him. Preparing for what she had really come here to do. To say.

“We made an arrest, Amos. In *your* case.”

Amos Decker opened his eyes. And kept them open.

“Take you through it?” parroted Leopold.

“From the moment you got there to the moment you left. Let’s start with how you got there.”

“Walked.”

“House address?”

Leopold hesitated. “It was a two-story, yellow siding, carport on the side.”

“How’d you get in?”

“Side screen door into the kitchen.”

“Remember any details of the room?”

“It was a damn kitchen, man. Stove, dishwasher, table, and chairs.”

“Remember the color of the walls?”

“No.”

Decker glanced at his watch again. He had to speed this up, and his anxiety at being here was growing by the second.

“Who’d you kill first?”

“The dude. Thought it was the guy that dissed me. But I guess it wasn’t.”

“How do you know that?”

“Pictures in the paper. After.”

“Go on.”

“He was at the kitchen table. Been drinking.”

“How do you know that?”

Leopold looked up, obviously irritated. “Why you keep me asking me that?”

“Because the cops will. The court will. The jury will want to know these things.”

“Hell, I confessed.”

“They can still try you.”

Leopold looked shocked by this. “Why?”

“To make themselves look good. How do you know he’d been drinking?”

“Beer bottles on the table.”

“How’d you kill him? He was a lot bigger than you.”

“He was drunk. I took my knife and cut him, right here.” He pointed at his neck.

“He was found in the adjoining room.”

“Yeah, yeah, that’s right. But, see, he crawled in there, after I cut him. Bleeding like a bitch. Then he, hell, he just didn’t move again.”

“Did he make any sounds?”

Leopold said, “Yeah, but not no loud ones.” He pointed to his neck again.

knelt down next to Debbie Watson. As he did so his head started to spin. He cleared his throat and focused on her body.

She had taken what looked to be a round of buckshot full in the face. The result was she no longer had a face. He glanced at the wall behind her. It was splattered with bits of her. Books lay beside her; a notebook was soaked in blood. He looked down at a piece of paper that apparently had fallen out of a book. If these were the girl's doodles she had been a good artist, thought Decker.

"You have the order of shootings yet?" he asked.

"From everything so far, it seems she might have been the first one killed."

"Shooter's entry?"

"This way."

Lancaster led him a short distance away to what he recognized as the rear of the school. She pointed at the rack of doors. "They're kept locked during the school day." She pointed at a camera attached to the upper corner of a wall. "That camera gave us a nice view of the ingress."

"Description?"

"I've got the image loaded on my laptop in the command center we set up in the library. But it was a big guy in full camouflage gear. Face completely obstructed by a mask and a face shield."

"Belts and suspenders," commented Decker. "Methodical."

Lancaster continued, "We believe he walked in this way, turned the corner, encountered Debbie Watson, and shot her."

"Wouldn't there have been other people in the halls?"

"At that time of morning everyone was in their classes."

"So why wasn't Debbie?"

"She was going to the nurse's office. She had an upset stomach. That's according to the teacher who gave her permission to leave class."

Decker looked around again. "Everyone was in class. So either the shooter was lucky or he knew the routine of the school."

"That thought struck me too."

"And after Debbie went down?"

"He went to the gym, killed Joe Kramer, the teacher there, reversed course, passed Debbie's body, and headed toward the front of the school. By then the shots had alerted everyone, but people were more or less trapped in their classrooms. He shot one more student dead in a classroom. He went into a second classroom and opened fire. One more dead and one wounded, a teacher."

"Andy Jackson? English? I heard it on the news."

“He was hiding in the freezer with the temp turned way up. It looks like he hid his weapons and maybe his cammie gear in the ceiling. So he was already here, which is why no one saw him come in.”

“But have you found any other trace?”

“Oil mark on a ceiling tile support. Could be from a gun. The thread you found. Looks to be cammie fiber. The FBI is verifying. So that’s something.”

He drew his hands from his pockets and placed his index finger a half inch from his thumb. “This is how much I found. Nothing to cheer about.”

“Well, it’s more than we had.”

“I saw the control panel. When does the security system get turned on here?”

“Normally ten p.m. But there was an event that night. A school play that ran late. Lots of people. So the system wasn’t turned on until midnight so everyone could get out of the building.”

“And no activity on the alarm log?”

She shook her head. “None. First thing we did was check with the monitoring company. The log is clear.”

“So the shooter has to get in before midnight. Did this play involve refreshments in the cafeteria?”

“No. A friend of mine went because her kid was in it. She told me everyone left right after the play was over.”

“So he comes in during the gap before the alarm system was set and takes up his hidey-hole.”

“Why put his guns in the ceiling, then, Amos? Why not just have them in the freezer with him?”

“You’re assuming he came in with them and then took up his hiding spot. What if he brought the weapons in at another time and hid them? Then the freezer wouldn’t work. Someone would spot them. The ceiling would work just fine. If he *did* hide them up there.”

She shook her head stubbornly. “Why not do it all at once? It was pretty risky to get the guns in and hidden. And then sneak in again and hide in the freezer? Another risk that someone might have seen him.”

“Agreed. But if that’s the way it happened, then there must be an explanation for it. This guy strikes me as being methodical and thoughtful.”

“I can see that,” said Lancaster.

Decker continued to ruminate, seemingly talking to himself. “Guns and gear first. Then the shooter. He might have come in for the school play along with everyone else. Or appeared to do so. The auditorium is across the main hall from

him. He might be due some money. Got a line on him that brought me here. How about your friend over there?"

He looked at the man who was leaning on his mop and studying him quizzically.

The woman said, "Billy, you want to look at this picture?"

Billy parked his mop and bucket against a rack of candy bars, wiped his hands on his faded jeans, and ambled over. He looked pleased to have an excuse to stop cleaning the linoleum.

He looked at the photo and then shook his head. "Nope. Don't look familiar to me. Weird-looking dude. Spacey."

Decker lowered the phone. "How long have you two been here?"

The woman said, "Nearly six months for me. Billy came just a few weeks ago."

Decker nodded. *Too recent, then.* "And the people here before you?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. There was a woman, a couple of men. Turnover is high here. The pay is not very good. And the hours are long. I wouldn't be here if I could find something better. But the job market sucks," she added bluntly.

Decker looked at Billy. "You?"

Billy grinned. "I don't know nuthin' 'bout this place. Just drawing a paycheck, man. Beer money on the weekends. Looking to have a good time with the ladies. Need cash for all that."

He went back to his mopping.

"I'm sorry we can't help you," said the woman.

"Part of the job," said Decker. "Thanks."

He turned and left.

His phone buzzed. He looked at it.

Lancaster.

He put it away without answering.

It rang again.

He looked at it again.

Lancaster.

He sighed, hit the answer button.

"Yeah?"

"Amos?"

Decker immediately went rigid. Lancaster sounded nearly hysterical. And she wasn't the type ever to do so.

“Doing what?”

“Well, he worked at the military base here when it was open.”

“The one next to Mansfield High School? McDonald Army Base?”

“That’s right.”

“What did he do there?”

“He had a series of jobs. His training was in engineering and construction. So he worked on the facilities and plant side.”

“Do you know the dates?”

“Come on, what does this have to do with anything?”

“I’m just looking for leads, Mr. Watson. The dates?”

“I can’t tell you for certain.” He paused and thought about it. “He left the regular Army in the sixties. Then he went to McDonald probably around 1968 or ’69. It must have been ’69. I remember associating it with the astronauts walking on the moon. Then he worked there until he retired. About twenty years later.”

“And the base closed eight years ago.”

“That sounds about right.”

“That wasn’t a question, Mr. Watson, it *did* close eight years ago, on a Monday. There was sleet that day.”

Watson looked at him strangely and then coughed. “If you say so. I can’t remember what I was doing last week. Anyway, it was part of a Pentagon base realignment and Burlington lost out. I heard tell most of the operations moved east, maybe to Virginia. Closer to Uncle Sam and his dollars in D.C.”

“So, presumably Simon talked about his work at the base with you, with Debbie?”

“Oh, yes, I mean the parts he could talk about. Some of it was classified, I guess you’d call it.”

“Classified?”

George’s features eased to a grin. “Well, I don’t think they did nukes or anything there. But the military always has its share of secrets.”

“So what *did* Simon talk to you about? I mean with the base?”

“Some of the history of it. People he met. Some of the work he did. They kept adding on to the base for years. Building, building, building. All the people who worked there sent their kids to Mansfield for high school. His son—my father—went there. So did I. So did my wife for that matter.”

“Did Debbie ever mention to you some of the things she and her great-grandfather talked about?”

“Nothing that I really recall. As Debbie got older she didn’t spend as much

Bogart sat back. "That's right. I of course didn't know it at the time. How did you know? Did you look up my personnel file?"

"I wouldn't have had access. And until five minutes ago I didn't even know you existed. If you want more proof I can do the same thing for your colleague."

"And your point?"

"I would've remembered dissing someone at the 7-Eleven whether it was seventeen months or seventeen years ago."

"You think Leopold was lying, then?"

"I think Sebastian Leopold is not what he wants us to think he is."

"And what exactly is that?"

"Homeless and more than slightly out of his mind."

"So you're saying he's neither homeless nor out of his mind?"

"I'm saying that I think he's dangerous."

"But you said he couldn't have been the school shooter. Do you think he killed your family?"

"He couldn't personally have done it. He has an alibi for that too. But I'm rethinking whether he was still involved somehow."

"Why?"

"Because he walked on a murder charge he confessed to. And now he's disappeared. You don't luck yourself into either one of those results."

"So you *do* think he's involved somehow. And now he's disappeared?"

"I have no proof. And even if we find him we can't charge him with what we have, which is basically nothing."

"So why do you think he's involved?"

This came from Agent Lafferty.

Bogart turned to her, seemingly surprised that she had uttered actual words.

Decker stared dead at her. "Because he's inexplicable. And I don't like people who are inexplicable."

A slight seam where the wall met the stairs. He dug his fingers into this gap and pulled. And the wall opened on hinges, smoothly and without noise, just like the fake wall back in the cafeteria. It had been recently used.

Decker was peering down a long, dark hall.

The air in here was stale and musty as well. But not overly so, which meant fresh air was getting in somehow, somewhere. He moved down the passage, his light hitting the dirty concrete floor. There were the shoeprints, again size nine or so. He took pictures of them with his cell phone camera.

He stopped when he saw the door. Leaning next to this door and against the wall were sections of plywood with bent nails protruding from them. Like back in the cafeteria. They had been used to seal off this end of the passage, but someone had unsealed it.

The shooter.

He pulled his gun, touched the wood of the door, and eased it open. He shone his light ahead. He could hear water dripping, the scurry of what he assumed were rats, and the beating of his own heart.

Decker was a brave man, because you did not go into his line of work without being braver than average. But he was also scared, because you did not go into his line of work, or at least survive very long in it, without a commonsensical understanding of your own mortality.

He moved ahead. The floor sloped upward after a hundred feet. Then he reached a set of steps. He took them up, trying to keep as quiet as possible. There was another door at the top. It was locked. He tried his lock pick. It didn't work.

He tried his shoulder with over three hundred and fifty pounds of bulk behind it.

That *did* work.

He came out into semidarkness and looked around. The room he was in was large, with windows set up high. There was the smell of grease and oil, and as he looked around he saw the skeletons of vehicles scattered here and there.

They were old abandoned Army vehicles. Because he was now standing in one of the buildings of the long-closed McDonald Army Base.

A passage connecting a school with an Army base?

But the more he thought about it, the more it made sense. Lots of kids who went to Mansfield back then had parents who worked at the base. In the event of an emergency, what better place for the kids than either in the "bombproof" shelter underneath the school or at the base with their parents? Or maybe the

Chapter

32

ALEXANDRA SCOOPED UP her recorder, pad, and pen and put them back into her bag and rose. She wouldn't look at Decker.

"Okay, if it makes you feel better, you have officially scared the shit out of me," she said.

"Did you see Leopold leave the bar?"

"What?"

He tapped the newspaper. "The bar where this picture was taken?"

Now she looked at him, her features wary. "I'm not going to answer that."

"You just did. Okay, I have one more question for you."

"What?"

He held up the newspaper. "Where did you get this photo of me and Leopold at the bar? There's no attribution for the photographer. I know the profession is a stickler for that, so I'm wondering why there's no name there."

"I took it."

"No you didn't."

"How do you know that?"

"I'm pretty observant. And I happen to *know* you weren't in the bar. Whoever did take the picture was watching Leopold and me. Which means he followed us both there though I was following Leopold too." He paused. "I wouldn't be asking if it weren't important. How did you get the photo?"

"I got it from an anonymous source," she finally admitted.

"And did this anonymous source also supply you with elements of the story you wrote?"

"I really can't get into that."

"If you don't know the name of the source, you don't have to worry about protecting his identity." Decker let the paper fall to the table. "Did it come by email, text? Surely not snail mail. You wouldn't have had time to write the story."

Chapter

37

WHEN DECKER GOT back to the Residence Inn after the search at the storage unit turned up nothing, he found that others had visited him and left very telltale signs behind.

A hatchet was stuck in the wood of the door. Slurs had been spray-painted across the window and brick front. Headless baby dolls lay on the concrete. Copies of the news story that Alex Jamison had written were strewn across the catwalk or else taped to the wall, with venomous words scribbled across them. The photo of Decker had been doctored in several of them to make him look like the devil.

Under it was written, “Child Killer.”

Decker pulled the hatchet free, kicked the other items aside, opened his door, and went in, locking the door behind him.

He dropped the hatchet on the bureau, went over to the bed, and lay down. He closed his eyes and tried to think of what he was missing. Because it was there. He knew it was. For the hundredth time he started to go through all the known facts of the case in chronological order.

The knock on his door interrupted these thoughts. He struggled up, crossed the room, and said, “Who is it?”

“Somebody who owes you an apology.”

He recognized the voice and opened the door.

Alex Jamison was standing there holding one of the headless dolls.

“I’m really sorry,” she said, and she actually looked it.

“What do you have to be sorry for?”

“Shit, Decker, you’re making me feel worse than I already do.”

She was dressed all in black, tights, long sweater that covered her butt, low boots with chunky heels, and a short jean jacket. A large bag was slung over one shoulder.

“You have time for a cup of coffee?” she asked.

She said, "But there is old Dr. Rabinowitz."

Decker turned back. "Harold Rabinowitz?"

"Yes, how'd you know his first name?"

"I did some research before I came," he said quickly.

"Oh, well, yes. He's still around, and if you can believe it, he still orders flowers from us. You know, the Coggers—that's what we used to call them—were some of our best customers. My mother used to tell me, fresh flowers every week they ordered. And they sent a lot of flowers to folks, too. It was really nice. Nice for them, nice for our bottom line."

"So you have his address?"

Her expression changed. "I'm really not supposed to give that sort of information out," she said doubtfully.

"Can you give me his phone number?"

"I'm really uncomfortable with that too. You seem nice enough, but it's against our policy."

Decker said, "How about you call Dr. Rabinowitz and tell him that Amos Decker would like to see him. If he says it's okay you can give me his address. If not, no harm done."

"Well, I guess that makes sense. So you know him? I saw on your card that you're Amos Decker."

"Yes, I know him."

"Well, why didn't you say so? Hold on."

She went to a phone, looked up the number on her computer, and punched it in. She turned her back to them as she spoke. A minute later she put down the phone and came back to them. She wrote something down on a slip of paper and handed it to Decker.

"Bingo. He said he would be delighted to see you."

Decker looked down at the paper and then back up at her. "Are your parents still alive?"

Daisy looked mildly surprised by the query. "My mom is at an assisted living center and loving it. Big surprise, she does all their flower arrangements."

"Well, tell her that Amos Decker remembers her flowers. And... that they helped a lot."

"I sure will. She'll be glad to hear that. The way Mother sees it, the more flowers we have the better world we'd have."

Outside, Jamison looked at Decker. "Nicely done."

He didn't respond.

Chapter

46

A SNOWFLAKE DRIFTED down as Decker stood across the street from the bar, Lancaster at his side. The flake hit the sidewalk and then melted almost immediately.

Lancaster pulled out a handkerchief and blew her nose.

“If you don’t want to go in, can we wait in the car at least?” she asked. “It’s freezing and I feel the flu coming on.”

Decker had taken in the city block grid by grid, and then his gaze started over and went through it again. He began to walk and Lancaster hurried after him. They covered both sides of the street for a block in either direction.

“No cameras,” he noted.

“Burlington has surveillance cameras, just not everywhere. I hear that London and New York have them on every street. But we don’t have their tax base, do we?”

“There are private surveillance cameras,” said Decker. “Banks, pawn shops, liquor stores. But none that I can see. Can you check on that? See if there are any on this block?”

“I’ll put in a call.” She did so while Decker continued to look around. A few more flakes were falling, and overhead the clouds had thickened with moisture. If the temperature continued to fall they might get some real accumulation.

Lancaster put her phone away. “They’ll get back to me. Now what?”

Decker headed across the street to the bar and she followed.

It was full, with most tables occupied by couples, although there seemed to be a bachelor party going on in the back of the room. Lancaster eyed with disdain the stripper, who was in the process of shedding her skintight Catwoman costume.

“Amazes me what gets young men excited.”

“It’s the same thing that’s always gotten them excited,” said Decker absently. “Pretty women in the process of taking off their clothes.” He worked his way to

palpable.

“I have a lead.”

“Can I come too?” asked Jamison quickly.

Bogart looked at her and then at Decker. The latter shrugged.

Bogart said, “Okay, but keep in mind that the FBI is not running a freaking airline service. And not one word of anything gets printed.”

“I quit my job at the paper.”

“What?” said Decker. “Why?”

“I’m working this case full-time now. And I couldn’t do my other reporting duties. And, quite frankly, it was time to move on.”

She got up and snagged her bag. “So, let’s go. Chop-chop.”

She walked out of the room.

Bogart looked at Decker. “A real piece of work. What’d you do to deserve her?”

“I can’t process that right now,” said Decker.

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The jet flew them to a private airstrip south of the Windy City and they took an SUV to the new headquarters of the Cognitive Institute. It was in a three-story building in a campus-style office park about an hour outside of Chicago.

Bogart flashed his FBI credentials at the receptionist, which started a chain reaction that ended with their being escorted to a conference room in the back of the building outfitted in soothing earth colors.

A man in a dark three-piece suit with a pink shirt and yellow bow tie with green dots came in.

He looked at Bogart, who flashed his badge and introduced himself. Then Darren Marshall saw Decker.

“Amos Decker?”

Decker rose and shook his hand. “Dr. Marshall.”

“It’s been, what, twenty years?”

“Plus two months, nine days, and fourteen hours,” said Decker automatically. The calculation came out of his head so fast he didn’t even realize he was doing it. It didn’t seem weird to him anymore. It just... was who he was now.

“Of course, I will take your word for it,” said Marshall. He glanced at Bogart. “Amos was quite an exceptional case.”

“I’m sure. But I know nothing about it.”

Marshall next looked at Jamison. “And are you also with the FBI?”

Chapter

55

HE SPENT TEN minutes watching the store from across the street. He saw people go in and people go out. Cars came and went. And still he kept watching. He was watching to see if anyone was watching him. When Decker was satisfied that there was no one doing so, he hurried across the street and approached the door. He glanced through the glass and saw the same woman at the counter, once more counting packs of cigarettes and ticking them off on her sheets. He could see no other customers in the store.

He opened the door and the bell tinkled. The woman looked up. It took her a moment but she recognized Decker.

Because of his size and appearance he was hard to forget and harder to miss.

"You're back?" she said.

"I'm back," said Decker, his gaze darting around the corners of the store. His hand had slipped to his pocket where his gun sat.

She said, "I owe you change from when you were here last. The coffee, pastry, and paper didn't add up to five dollars."

"Keep the change. You work long hours. Morning, night."

"I do work long hours, but I'm also on different shifts. Today I work the night shift."

"How's business?"

"Slow now. We sell a lot in the morning when people are going to work. Coffee, cigarettes, and sausage biscuits. And Red Bull by the gallon."

"The other person here when I came by the first time. Billy, right? Is he here?"

She shook her head. "No, he's not here."

"He doesn't work here anymore, does he?" Decker said.

She looked startled. "How did you know that?"

"When was he here last?"

"The day you came in the first time. I was pissed when he didn't show up for

“I’m thinking that a lot of people are dead because of a bunch of ignorant folks.”

“Wyatt and Leopold made choices, bad ones,” said Bogart. “Horrible ones. They’re responsible for this and no one else.”

“And human beings have limits,” said Decker. “And you can say all you want about the world being unfair and people rising above the atrocities done to them, but everyone is different. Some are hard as steel, but some are fragile, and you never know which one you’re going to get.”

“They killed your *family*, Decker,” barked Bogart.

Lancaster and Jamison exchanged nervous glances.

Decker didn’t look at the FBI agent. “Which is why we’re going to catch them and their lives will end either in prison or in a death chamber. But don’t expect me to fully blame Wyatt for this. Because I can’t, and I won’t.”

“I wonder where Giles Evers is,” said Jamison.

“In hell, I hope,” replied Decker.

*

Decker asked to be dropped off at the Residence Inn. He walked up the steps to the second floor and gazed back as the SUV rolled out of the parking lot. Jamison was staring out the window at him. She gave him a tiny wave.

He didn’t return it.

He went into his room and sat on the bed, the springs sagging under his girth.

He closed his eyes and let his mind whirl back to two images of the same person but in different situations and garb.

Billy the waitress at the bar.

Billy the mop boy at the 7-Eleven.

He had gotten a good look at Billy the mop boy’s face, not so with Billy the waitress. He scrunched his eyes tighter as though refocusing a camera. The chin was the same on both. The line of the jaw. And the hands. People always forgot about the hands, but they could be as distinctive as a fingerprint if you knew what to look for.

Long, delicate fingers, short right pinky, no nail polish on the waitress, split nail on the left index, small wart on the right thumb. Same person absolutely.

He opened his eyes wide in surprise.

He had just seen Billy. In color. For the first time.

Gray.

For him, as for many folks, it was a confusing color. It lent itself to no

Leopold stood and gazed at Wyatt. "I think it's time to end this."

Decker quickly said, "Clyde Evers paid your parents six million dollars to keep quiet about what his son did to you. The house in Colorado cost one-point-eight million. They didn't make any improvements to it. We checked their financial records. Their expense burn rate was only about twenty percent of the amounts thrown off by their investment portfolio. The rest just accumulated over time. Stocks did well. By the time you killed them they had over ten million in liquid assets. But someone got his hands on the authorization codes to start taking money out. About a million a month and counting over the last nine months. It's almost all gone now. Did you take it, Belinda?"

"That was bribe money to keep my parents quiet. And they told me if I said anything they would make sure the whole world knew I was a freak. They'd... they'd taken pictures of me down there. They said they would send it to the newspapers. So no, I didn't take the money. I didn't want that... that blood money. My blood!"

"So I wonder where that cash went? Maybe your buddy here knows."

Wyatt's gaze darted to Leopold and then back at Decker.

"I don't understand anything you're talking about," Wyatt said mechanically.

"Leopold has apparently helped lots of folks with 'Justice Denied.' And the folks he helps have two things happen to them. First, whatever money is around disappears. Second, the *friend* he's helping ends up dead."

Decker had no idea if this was true, but he suspected that it was. That outflow of cash from the Wyatts' account had to have gone somewhere. And he doubted that Leopold would want the "heir" around to find out. When he looked at Leopold the expression on the man's face told him that he was right.

Decker said, "And did he tell you that his family was murdered? Wife and daughter?"

"They *were* murdered," said Wyatt.

"Yes, they were."

"By cops."

"No, not by cops. *He* killed them."

Decker heard the hammer of the gun being pulled back.

"You're full of shit. You're lying!" screamed Wyatt.

Anger, lack of control, that's good. To a point.

Decker slowly shook his head. "I read the file. I looked at the pictures of the corpses. They were both strangled to death. By hanging. At the napes of their necks where the ligature compressed the life out of them they found a very

CHAPTER 2

Darkness.

It awaited us all, individually, in our final moments.

Amos Decker was thinking that as he sat in the chair and studied the body.

Anne Berkshire lay on a metal table in the FBI's morgue. All her clothes had been taken off and placed in evidence bags. Her naked body was under a sheet, her destroyed face covered as well, though the fabric was stained with her blood and tissue.

A postmortem was legally required, though there was no doubt whatsoever as to what had caused the woman's death.

Walter Dabney, by an extraordinary twist, was not dead. Not yet, anyway. The doctors at the hospital where he had been rushed were holding out no hope that he would recover, or even regain consciousness. The bullet had driven right through his brain and it was a miracle he had not died instantly.

Alex Jamison and Special Agent Ross Bogart, two of Decker's colleagues on a joint task force composed of civilian and FBI agents, were with Dabney right now. If he regained consciousness, they would want to capture anything he might utter that would explain why he had murdered Anne Berkshire on a public street and then attempted to take his own life. Dabney recovering to the point of being questioned was simply not going to happen, the doctors had told them.

So for now, Decker simply sat in the darkness and stared at the covered body.

Although the room was not dark for him.

For Decker it was an ethereally bright blue. A near-fatal hit he'd received on the football field had commingled his sensory pathways, a condition known as synesthesia. For him, death was represented by the color blue. He had seen it on the street when Dabney had killed Berkshire.

And he was seeing it now.

He had given statements to the DC police and the FBI, as had the security guard who joined him at the scene. There hadn't been much to say. Dabney had pulled a gun from his briefcase and shot Berkshire and then himself. That was crystal clear. What wasn't clear was why he had done it.

The overhead lights came on and a woman in a white lab coat walked in. The medical examiner introduced herself as Lynne Wainwright. She was in her