

FRACTURED



By

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Chapter 1

December

Wanted: Physician's Assistant to work in maximum-security prison. Must be bondable. Flexible hours. Benefits. Contact the State of California at . . .

Dennis Potter called the number not so much thinking he would ever get the job, but that the change would be nice. He was tired of the monotony of orthopedics. He didn't have a clue what the prison industry had to offer, but thought it might be interesting to check it out.

He sat at a large circular desk under what he would later refer to as *interrogation lights* in a spacious room. Sitting solo at 90 degrees on one side of the desk, five others sat at one-hundred-eighty on the other. Those five consisted of the Deputy Warden, the Chief of Staff of the Medical Department, the Chief Correctional Health Care

Administrator (CCHCA – referred to as the ‘Cha-cha’), his assistant, and the Director of Personnel. They asked several questions ranging from, “Are you opposed to working with individuals who are outwardly homosexual?” to, “Are you opposed to working with people who are HIV positive?” He answered the questions to their liking, the interview lasted twenty-five minutes, and at the end of it he had a new job.

He reported to personnel two weeks later, having given notice to his previous employer. After filling out appropriate forms, the personnel director sent him to the medical building with a temporary ID, a letter of introduction and several additional items for others to complete.

He entered through heavy, as well as heavily secured, electromagnetic doors into an atrium resembling the baggage check area in an airport. After emptying the contents of his pockets into a plastic tray, a security officer frisked him. He then walked through a metal detector, retrieved his personal effects from the tray and walked through another door electro-magnetically controlled. This allowed him passage into a waiting room of sorts in which visitors awaited inmates.

He passed his letter of introduction through a small, semicircular tray of the type found in banks and under bulletproof glass to a CO in a circular control room isolated from the waiting room. It reminded him of buying a pack of cigarettes from a 7-11 in Chicago’s East Side. The CO scarcely looked at the letter before shoving it back through the opening. Having received a phone call from personnel some three minutes earlier advising him that a new Physician’s Assistant would be coming over shortly, the CO expected him.

“Wait over by the elevator door,” the officer said flatly, looking down at something on the countertop, and pointing to the doors.

Dennis walked to the doors and waited for another CO who, taking a ring laden with many keys from his belt, keyed a control panel on the wall by the elevator door. After keying the Up/Down controls, the CO pushed a button, the door opened, and Dennis stepped in. The CO pushed the button for the second floor and said, “Get off on the second floor when the door opens and stand there. Someone will take care of you.” Dennis regarded the comment as more a command than a request, something consistent with the remarks COs made.

The door closed and the archaic Otis chugged up one floor. *Slow elevator*, Dennis thought. When the door opened, Dennis, being compliant with the command of the CO, stepped out and almost immediately a nurse approached him. “Slow elevator, huh?” she confirmed. “Got your paperwork with you, Dennis?” she asked.

“You have me at a disadvantage. You know my name, but I don’t know yours,” Dennis said as an introduction and extending his hand, making eye contact and smiling. He immediately recognized Michelle was a dyke. Her mannerisms, as well as her spiked blonde butch haircut, told him this little woman swung in a direction that made him a potential drinking buddy; and she was little, barely topping five feet - perhaps four-eleven.

“Michelle. Come with me,” she said, ignoring his outstretched hand, turning on a heel, and heading down a hall.

Michelle led him to an exam room. There, an elderly physician, one who Dennis sensed had done so many exams that he had become robotic, performed a head to toe

physical examination including the digital rectal exam. He sensed it was coming and prayed it would be omitted. It wasn't and was as robotic as the rest of the exam. After Dennis dressed, Michelle drew blood for a drug screen, HIV test, and several ancillary tests. She then placed a miniature needle just under the skin of his right forearm and injected a tiny amount of liquid that caused a small bubble to appear under his skin.

"T.B. test," she said. "We'll do the other arm for a two-step in seven days; *if* this one is negative," she said smiling and patting his arm.

Michelle then escorted him down a hall to x-ray. The X-ray tech asked him to remove his shirt, eyeing him closely as he did. *Eye rape*, Dennis thought as he slowly unbuttoned his shirt. Positioning Dennis in front of a screen, she placed his back against the cold cassette.

"When did you take the cassette out of the refrigerator, just now?" Dennis asked jokingly.

She ignored the question, and Dennis, and disappeared behind a screen. "Take a deep breath," she commanded from behind the screen; he did. "Hold it" she ordered; he did.

There was the unmistakable sound of several thousand volts passing through cables somewhere, the cassette seemed to shake, and then he heard her say, "Breathe"; he did.

She came out from behind the screen, pulled the cassette out of the tray and loaded another. She placed his left side against the cassette and asked him to put his arms in the air in front of him.

“Pretend like your holding onto a broom stick slightly above your head,” she said flatly.

Mind if I use your broom? He thought with a smile. Again she disappeared behind the screen, commanded him to take a breath, hold it and breathe.

“All done,” she said opening the door.

Michelle was just outside. “Put your shirt on and come with me,” she said, not so much as glancing at his bare chest. *Jealous?* Dennis thought.

Last he had an EKG to ‘make sure he had a heart’ Michelle jokingly explained. “It won’t do you any good in here, but at least you’ll be another warm body in medical. And, by the way, welcome,” she added somewhat more warmly than she had previously.

Michelle completed her part of Dennis’s paperwork and then invited him to the employee lounge for a cup of coffee. Several of the medical personnel sat at a large, rectangular wood table, some smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and talking about things in general.

“Everyone, I’d like you to meet Dennis Potter. He’s the new PA,” Michelle told the group. There were a variety of comments made at that point.

“Welcome to hell,” one nurse said and blowing a lungful of smoke from her mouth. The others half-heartedly laughed.

“It’s not *that* bad, it’s *worse*,” a dental hygienist offered snickering, talking a puff on her cigarette, and letting the smoke drain from her mouth and travel up her face.

“You’re not gay are you?” another nurse inquired.

“Hardly,” Dennis said smiling and quickly glancing at Michelle.

“Hum. Maybe I’ll find that out on my own,” the nurse said giving him the head to toe and winking at him.

“He does have a nice chest,” the X-ray tech confessed in the same flat tone of voice she used to command breathing.

“Leave him alone,” Michelle said somewhat annoyed. “My god, he just got here and already he has to find out what a bunch of shits you are.”

“Calm the fuck down Massetti. We’re just trying to break the ice and make him feel welcome. Why don’t you take an Ativan or something?” A nurse said defensively.

At that, Michelle flushed. She threw a porcelain coffee cup into a metal sink from a good three feet away. The cup careened around the sink several times before coming to a loud rest at the bottom of the bowl. Most thought it would break, including Dennis. Miraculously, it didn’t. Michelle stormed out of the room, showing the entire group the magic middle finger as she exited.

“You’ll have to excuse her, Dennis. She gets real uptight. Has panic attacks. She used to be married but her wife shot herself in the head outside medical one night and Michelle found her with her brains all over the car. She just started walking down the main road out in front of the prison and they found her a few hours later still walking down some road somewhere. She was in a catatonic state and she almost lost her job here. Would have, except she has so damn much seniority. I heard it took her three months to get all the blood and brains washed out of the car,” a nurse concluded.

Holy shit! I pegged her for a dyke, but that’s a little more information than I wanted, Dennis thought.

“She can’t handle *us* most of the time. Gets too fucking uptight. But she’s a good nurse, the inmates like her, and she does love us even if it doesn’t look like it right now,” another nurse offered. It was Jade Mallory. “Anyway, stupid little bitch of a wife of hers deserved to off herself. She was a stupid little cunt,” Jade concluded, taking another drag from her cigarette and waving a hand to dismiss the subject.

Additional introductions were made around the table. Dennis was brought up to date on the past, present, and future lives of each individual present, and several absent, in a few short hours. At long last Dennis met with the Chief of Staff who spent several more hours discussing protocol, standing orders, inmate manipulation tactics, drug seeking behaviors, and the like. By the time he left the prison his mind was reeling. He had been called every name in the book, had been propositioned three times by women and twice by men, had heard every foul word in the English language and several in three or four other languages, and still had not met a single inmate. He found that amusing. In order to exit the prison he had to follow the opposite procedure of that when he entered.

Another nurse, Ann, escorted him to, and keyed, the elevator door. When he got off on the first floor he walked to the rotunda and handed the CO his paperwork and temporary ID through the same pie slot under the bulletproof glass. The CO, after briefly examining the papers, opened a door by disengaging the electromagnetic door and Dennis entered the atrium. He was not asked to step through the metal detector but exited the prison through another door after it was electronically disengaged. Once outside the prison he walked back to personnel, signed several more papers, and was at last finished for the day.

Once home, Dennis opened the refrigerator door, one strewn with alphabet magnets, mostly red, and most holding yellow post-it notes with instructions of one sort or another scribbled on them. He scrutinized the interior of the refrigerator briefly, thought it might be time to buy some groceries, grabbed himself a beer which was the only thing in the refrigerator, sat on the couch, and turned on his Sony big screen TV. Not being married, and having a substantial income, Dennis was able to afford the toys of men, and he had the very nicest of the ones he decided to purchase. *You get what you pay for in this life*, he thought. And if he was going to invest in something, it was going to be the very best offered at the time of purchase. He flipped through the channels and settled on the evening movie. He thought it was somewhat ironic that this night's movie presentation was *The Green Mile*.

* * * * *

Dennis spent the next week orienting to the medical department in general and the inmates specifically. He found the former enlightening and the latter repulsive. There was one saving grace for Dennis. Say what you might about the prison environment, the pathology encountered almost made up for the abuse. Dennis realized he would see more diseases and their processes in prison than he would ever see in the private sector. After all, where else could a physician, or a physician's assistant, see TB, HIV, Hepatitis A, B, C, and a myriad of opportunistic infections all in one man and all at one time? The challenge of such a case was enough to excite, if not invite, the most blasé of those in the profession, given their ability to handle the abuse that was a part of prison life.

After being introduced and acclimated to the medical department, the Chief of Staff put Dennis in the capable hands of Tony Pierson, LPN.

Pierson started as a CO but couldn't stomach range life and ended transferring to the medical department after two years in the prison industry. He had many stories to tell of those early years in medical and he was not shy telling them.

Tony sported a gray mustache, steel gray wavy hair, and a belly that revealed his passion for more than an occasional beer. He was short, squat and solid. Under the hair and behind the belly lived a man waiting for a massive coronary. His skin revealed pallor that if one shade lighter would be corpse-like. He often complained of chest pain and the small brown bottle of nitroglycerine he kept in his right front pant pocket, and often toyed with to ensure its presence, was never far from reach.

"I'll give you the tour from North to South. It's easier to learn the building that way," Pierson told him. "This is the employee lounge," he said as he and Dennis slowly walked down the hall. "Anything you want to know about anyone, you come in here, and sooner or later you will hear about it. I would advise you to keep your private affairs just that, private. Otherwise every scum sucking, shit bird in this place will hear about it. That is the storeroom. We keep extra everything in there," he said indicating the next door. "That is X-ray on the right, and dental on the left. Then," he said coming to the next set of doors, "we have the autoclave room on the right, and the lab on the left. Next we have the eye exam room on the right, and the whirlpool slash treatment room on the left. Then we have the pharmacy on the right and the doctor's room on the left."

Tony proceeded to show and explain the purpose of every room down the hall until they came to a door at the end of the hallway. Extracting a large Yale 13 key from a ring

on his belt, he keyed the door and they entered. A CO lazily eyed them as they came through the door from a circular observation room.

“Lazy fucking asshole is supposed to see us coming, push the electromagnetic door lock, pop the door and let us in, but he’s sleeping half the time anyway. That’s Pete Koonts. We call him Pete Cunt. He’s nothing but trouble. He’s the laziest, lyin’ist, gossip in the jail. Worse than any inmate you will ever know in here. He’ll praise you to your face and stick a knife in your heart from the back of you. Don’t ever tell that sorry son-of-a-bitch anything you don’t want everyone in the jail to know,” Tony warned eyeing Pete, disdain dripping from his words.

“Thanks for the warning,” was all Dennis could think to say. He was beginning to wonder if everyone in the prison was an inmate, had been an inmate, or acted like an inmate. Thus far, he found no evidence to the contrary.

“Trust me, Dennis. I’ll give you all the information you will need to survive in this shit hole. When I was a CO”

For the next ten minutes or so Tony arrogantly expounded on his experiences in prison, all the time sticking his finger in Dennis’s chest. This was a habit that on more than one occasion almost got Tony killed. But he was unable to shake the habit and just as it annoyed *everyone* he lectured, it annoyed Dennis.

Tony turned and walked down a curved corridor outside the circular room from which Pete watched. Dennis followed. There were several rooms to the right of them in a circular pattern.

“This is TBO. It stands for Treatment Building - Observation. On the other side over there,” Tony said pointing through both Pete and the glassed rotunda, “is TBI. That stands for Treatment Building - Infirmary. We’ll be going in there in a minute.

“TBO is where we put inmates who threaten to harm themselves, or who go on hunger strikes, or who are just acting fucking nuts for a few days. The psychologist, Jack, or our psychiatrist, Calvin, one or the other, comes in daily and tries to talk them down. The inmates usually do some stupid assed thing on the range to get themselves over here. For example, they may tell a CO they’re feeling like they’re going to hurt themselves. Hell, when one of them used to tell *me* that, I’d ask the asshole how long he needed to off himself. Then I’d just leave him the fuck alone for that period of time. Only one of ‘um ever had enough testosterone in his balls to actually do it. Anyway, after the inmate tells on himself, a Captain and two CO’s have to bring his sorry, lyin’ ass over here. You’ll have to take one of them through the procedure soon enough. So I won’t go into it right now. Suffice it to say they start out on the concrete floor in there naked and progress from there. It doesn’t take long for them to come to their senses and want to go back to their cell. Most of them think they can get out of jail by acting like a fruitcake. It doesn’t work. They just end up cold.”

“I read the procedure the other day for admitting someone to TBO, Tony, so I’m a little familiar with what to do. Thanks for the heads up though,” Dennis said.

“You actually *read* that pamphlet they gave you?” Tony asked incredulously.

“My God you do have a lot to learn. Let me give you one more piece of advice. It will take you a minimum of one year to figure out who the fuck you are in jail Dennis, if you were going to stay here for a career. Don’t try to figure it out any sooner than that. It just

takes that long for a person to assimilate all the shit they have to assimilate and it doesn't get straightened out in the mind before a year. You might think you have it figured out sooner than that. Then whammo, you get fucking blindsided by one of America's Finest here," Tony said pointing at an inmate in TBO, "and you're back to wondering what the fuck is going on," he finished, stabbing his finger into Dennis's chest.

Looking at Tony's finger, Dennis said, "I have a pretty good handle on who I am, Tony. Trust me when I say I have dealt with very difficult people before. It can't be too tough. These guys are, after all, just doing time. They're the ones that got caught. I'm sure there are many more on the streets than are here that *didn't* get caught!"

Noting the look and extracting his finger, Tony said, "Well, the reason these *did* get caught is because they are fucking stupid. If they were smart, they would still be getting away with it outside of prison. And being surrounded by five thousand stupid inmates is going to cause you to question your sanity at some point in time. If you don't believe what I'm telling you, come to me at the end of your stint here and tell me I was full of shit. Anyway, that's TBI." At that, Tony changed direction and headed for another door, Dennis in tow.

Later the same morning Dennis visited several of the prison's cellblocks. Officers working the blocks oriented him to range protocol.

"This is A block south, and through the door at the end of the hallway down there," the CO said pointing down the range, "is A block north. It's the same building, just divided in half so that we can keep an eye on these gems. If we walk down this range," he continued still indicating the long hallway, "we count eighty cells. Each of these cells houses two inmates, unless the inmate is Z status. That means he has some

problem like HIV, or he's a combination HIV and child molester, or he's a queen – that means he's a cock-sucking, fudge packer - or has some other perversion. If he's classified as Z status then he's in a cell solo. But most of the cells have bunks and house two inmates. There are five levels in this range. That makes for a lot of cells and a lot of inmates. All the blocks are basically the same except the mods. The mods are large modular units, like mobile homes, set up out in the southeast corner of the prison. You'll get a tour out there soon enough I'm sure. They keep all the sex offenders out there. Child molesters, rapists, anyone who is a known sex offender is in the mods. Now you might be wondering why they put all the pervs together. About the only answer I have is that the administration must have the attitude, 'Let 'um fuck each other'. I really don't know."

"And you run everything from this control area?" Dennis asked pointing to control panels each adorned with hundreds of amber, red and green lights as well as switches.

"Basically. If an inmate wants something he comes to the widow right over there to let us know," the sergeant told him pointing in the general direction of a window-like opening in the mesh screen separating the control room from the block. "It's usually some bullshit thing he wants. Most of the time they just come to the window and ask some off the wall question. We're not working with Mensa material in here. Actually, I think we're working with the opposite two percent. Anyway, you learn to ignore ninety-eight percent of the bullshit. If someone wants to get on sick call they come to the window and ask for a request. We give them one and they put their name, number, and reason for wanting to be seen on it, that is if they can write. Then they put the request in

that box on the wall over there,” the sergeant said pointing to a wooden box next to the door exiting the range. “Then someone on night shift comes over at around midnight, opens the box and takes the requests out. It’s in medicals hands from there. If someone has an emergency on the range we call the DW. They call medical and get one of you over here ASAP. DW, the Deputy Warden building, is the main control center for the entire prison. It is the equivalent of the Command Center on any Military Base. In the event of an incident - riot, uprising, whatever - DW shuts the prison down and all commands come from that control center.”

“I see. So, do you get a lot of requests for requests?” Dennis asked.

“It’s the same inmates every day and generally with the same bullshit every time. Mostly their just gamin’ you people. Somethin’ to do. They have it in their head they can fuck you around long enough to get you to make a mistake. Then they can take you to court and get a few hundred thousand for their retirement. When we see one of them coming we just open the drawer, peel one of these requests off the pad,” he said doing so, “and wait for the guy to get to the window. You hand it to him before he ever says a word. Like I said, they just hound the shit out of you guys until they get what they want. If it’s not with a lawsuit in mind it’s usually they want something with Codeine or some shit in it. Pretty fucking pathetic. My grandmother can’t get in to see a doctor when she’s sick. And these assholes can see a doctor every day of their miserable lives. Makes me fuckin’ sick.”

The sergeant spent the next half hour explaining the operation and responsibilities of custody on the blocks and Dennis listened attentively. When the sergeant was finished, Dennis returned to the medical building where he spent the remainder of the day listening

first to Tony, then to the Medical Director review protocol drugs, and then to the Chacha. His last orientation was the pharmacy. He could not have chosen a worse day, or nurse, to orient him.

The pharmacy was being audited, as it was monthly. Beth *and* Jade were on duty and it was 1430; change of shift. Adding it all up meant a bad day at BlackRock.

“Now isn’t this just like the fuckin’ medical director to arrange this at change of shift . . .,” Mallory went on in rapid fire, staccato style. There was never a pause between her words or phrases. She reminded Dennis of Sean Shannon, the actor who purportedly recited Hamlet’s *To Be Or Not To Be* soliloquy in 23.8 seconds. The exception with Jade was she threw in much more colorful words.

“Well you’ll just have to wait for the next shift to come on,” Jade told Dennis. “I just got ten boxes of meds and we’re sorting ‘em. If you want to take your thumb outta your ass and help, grab some of them bubble packs out of that box and sort ‘em by number. And try not to fuck it up. Otherwise I’ll have to throw your sorry ass out of here,” Jade scolded.

Dennis took a handful of individual packages of medication out of a box and began to sort them according to the inmate number. AS1010, BG8765, AC7621, CD9890 . . .the numbers were all over the place and Dennis had to make a separate pile for each first noting the letters, then each noting the progressive numbers.

The ‘white major’ had explained the inmate numbering system to Dennis earlier and Dennis found it fascinating.

“The DOC started with the letters AA and went from 0000 to 9999,” the Major had explained writing the letters and numbers on a napkin while he and Dennis had their

lunch. It was the first and only time Dennis had met with the Major. “Then they went to AB and did the same thing. So, AA0000 to AA9999 is about ten thousand inmates. We do AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, etc. Then once the A’s are done, we do the B’s; BA, BB, BC and so forth. You following this? So BA0000 to BA9999 is another ten thousand inmates. We’re at EK8981. Can you figure out how many inmates that equates to, Dennis?” he paused briefly then, before Dennis could answer said, “I’ll tell you; several thousand too many!”

“Whoever came up with that system was pretty innovative. What happens when they get to ZZ9999?” Dennis had asked innocently.

“The very next inmate after ZZ9999 is immediately executed, as are all others after that,” the Major had said with a straight face. “That is if the A.C.L.U. keeps their fucking noses out of here. Otherwise, we start with AA10000, AA10002, and etcetera. And let me tell you, we will see that day. The prison industry is the fastest growing industry in the U. S. of A today. If you have any spare cash, Doc, put it in prisons. You can’t but make money. These pansy asses will always be around. Especially the black inmates. Fucking bunch of morons. And we have to cow-tow to them because they *are* black. Burns me up. But I’m not going to get on that soapbox or you might accuse me of being a racist, prejudiced, homophobe. Which, by the way I am,” the Major had admitted.

Dennis spent the next hour assisting the nurses in sorting and putting medications away. In so doing he learned much about the operation of and management of medications in the pharmacy. He thanked Jade for allowing him to help. She left for the day with one final comment to a coworker. “Stupid fuck of a new PA likes putting away meds. We’re gonna have a great time with that asshole.”

Dennis found that medical personnel poured all medications into small white medication cups and inmates either came to the pharmacy window by block or the medication was taken to the range and administered if the inmate was unable to come to the pharmacy. It was an efficient system and allowed for personnel to monitor medication and have some control as they watched the inmate take his medication. In theory that worked. In practice, it was a joke. Many inmates cheeked their medication and feigned swallowing them until they got out of the pharmacy call area. Then they would spit the medication onto the ground, spit it into their hand and save it or, depending on the medication, save it and later sell it to another inmate.

Dennis learned that *all* injectables - insulin, testosterone, antibiotics, TB meds, psych meds, you name it - were kept in the refrigerator or in drawers. Some vials were tagged with the inmates' names. This was something Dennis didn't give too much consideration to at the time. Later, the fact that he had access to these medications would prove invaluable.

As the new shift came on one of the LPN's said, "I understand you're going to the hole with me?" It was Seth Carrol.

Seth Carrol was lucky to be alive in prison. He was around 5'7", weighed a *round* 195 pounds and every pound of him resembled baby fat. In a word, he was soft. Inmates detested people like Seth Carrol. He epitomized laziness, self-indulgence and lack of self-esteem. Besides being soft, Seth smoked like a nervous woman. He held his cigarette gingerly between the tip of his first and second fingers as close to the end of the rilter as he could and still hold on to the cigarette. He puffed, blew, puffed, blew, puffed . . . watching him smoke was exhausting. All the while his hands shook while he tried acting

calm, cool and collected. It was pitiful. He was pitiful. Seth Carrol was a queen in jail, weather he knew it or not. Many inmates fantasized about having Seth Carrol in their cells, having Seth Carrol as their 'cellie'.

"I am?" Dennis asked, surprised. "I wasn't aware of that, Seth."

"Well, I just heard from the Cha-cha," Seth said perturbed, throwing a hand on his hip.

The Cha-cha, Lonnie Lane, although as gay as Seth Carrol, made no bones about his preferences. The inmates referred to him as Lois Lane's sister. His position protected him from inmates as he had the power to hurt them. As a result, Lonnie had a much easier time of it than Seth Carrol, although not at all times.

"Lonnie wants me to go to the hole with you? Why?"

"Said he wants me to orientate you out there," Seth said.

"Well, OK. I suppose if he wants me oriented, I'll get oriented," Dennis said trying not to show his anxiety.

"You'll be all right. Don't worry, Dennis," another nurse standing nearby and recognizing Dennis's symptoms offered. "We all go out there and we've been doing it for years. The worst that can happen is you might get some shit or piss thrown in your face. Just do what Seth tells you to do and the chances of that happening will be somewhat minimized."

"Thanks for the warning," Dennis offered the nurse sincerely.

Leaving the medical building, they headed for MSRHU - the Maximum Security Restricted Housing Unit. Inmates and Correctional Officers called it *The Hole*. This was a prison within the prison, where they housed *America's Finest*. These comprised serial

killers who were not executed, serial rapists who were lifers, serial criminals who beat some rap with the assistance of high priced attorneys; serial criminals of all categories.

Five hundred yards after they left the medical building they approached RHU's outer fence. As was the case with the parallel twin fences surrounding the main compound, this fence was strung atop with razor wire. Seth opened the metal door of a phone box perched on a metal pole just to the left of the gate, picked up the handset and immediately set it back on the receiver. Dennis wondered how many times he had done the same when someone he knew, and sometimes when someone he did not know, called and he did not want to speak with them. Seth closed the telephone box door and waited. Seconds later Seth and Dennis heard the sound of the electromagnetic lock disengaging the heavy metal gate and Seth opened it. Cameras mounted on poles in the compound as well as the building itself observed their movements. Seth was thinking that he wouldn't have to use the phone if the officers inside paid any attention to the monitors. They walked the fifty yards across empty compound to the entry door of RHU and waited until they heard the same hollow sound echo through the emptiness allowing access into the building. Momentarily they entered. They repeated this procedure through three more doors until they were standing in the circular control room. Seth signed his name and placed the time he entered the building in the daily log book that was perched on a flimsy wooden podium just inside the door. He instructed Dennis do the same.

“Good afternoon,” Seth offered a lieutenant who was sitting at a monitor console.
“Larry this is Dennis, the new PA.”

Larry Craig stood to his feet. Topping six feet eight and 250 solid pounds, the man was massive. He extended his immense hand to Dennis and said, “Welcome to The Hole.”

“I wish I could say the pleasure is mine,” Dennis said honestly as he watched his hand disappear into that of the lieutenant. Seth, sensing Dennis’s amazement, smiled but said nothing. Seth simply thought, *I wonder if the rumor is true and Larry’s cock is as large as his middle finger*. He briefly fantasized about finding the answer in the quiet of an empty room; just him and Larry.

Seth led Dennis through several more doors and gates until, at last, they arrived to the medical room. Seth proceeded to show Dennis how medications were prepared for inmates on the ranges, how the ranges were ordered and how the inmates were housed. He proved to be very knowledgeable concerning the operation of RHU and Dennis was grateful for the information.

Seth prepared the medication cart and when he was finished he let the officers know they were ready. Dennis listened to several last minute instructions from Seth.

“Always stay to the wall furthest from the cell doors,” Seth warned him. “Inmates out here have a tendency to throw shit, piss, or even cum out of the cell windows at you. Be ready at all times for this to happen.”

The officers met Seth and Dennis at a gate and one CO said, “You men ready to go?”

“Yep,” Seth said.

Perhaps I should have qualified that when I said ‘men’, the CO thought.

The sound of the electromagnetic lock being disengaged was followed by Dennis's testicles crawling into his abdomen. The door opened and two CO's passed through the gate followed by the Medication Cart, Seth, Dennis, and last, one more CO. As they approached the first cell an inmate standing at the door and looking through the mesh window said, "Hiya Doc." Dennis tried ignoring the inmate.

Seth said, "You're not on sick line, Bensen."

"I don't need to be on sick line, fag. I just wanted to greet the new doc."

"Your social manners really impress me today, Bensen," a CO said.

"Don't listen to them doc. They're just jealous of you."

"Why would they be jealous of me?" Dennis asked, turning and looking at the inmate through the metal grate barrier.

"Well, aside from having a pretty little girlfriend . . . June, is it? . . . they probably wish they were here for the same reason as you. You *are* here to see all the, what do they call it, path . . . path?"

"Pathology," Seth finished.

"Yeah, faggot, pathology," Bensen said and winking at Dennis.

Seth Carrol and all three CO's turned and looked quizzically at Dennis.

Dennis felt like he was going to vomit.

Chapter 2

January

Sick Call

“CD8989,” Dennis called through the door into a waiting room packed with inmates from B block south. An inmate got off a bench, did some flashing with several others seated on the bench, and slowly sauntered toward the door. Dennis patiently held the door for the inmate as he came through into the hallway of the medical department. Dennis escorted him into a room and said, “Have a seat.”

The inmate sprawled himself out on the wooden chair, half laying and feet stuck out so that Dennis had to step over them to get to the desk. An officer who had been walking by the room and saw Dennis step over the inmate entered the room.

“Excuse the interruption, Doc,” he politely said to Dennis. Then to the inmate he said, “When you come into this room, Ford, sit up in the chair and keep your fucking feet out of the way.”

Ford sat up and with a sneer responded, “I’m hurtin’ man. And you be breechin’ my confidence by bein’ in here.”

“I’ll breach more than your fucking confidence, asshole, if I see you gaming the Doc anymore. Act like a fucking man for once in your miserable life.” With that the officer left the room.

“What can I do for you today, Ford?” Dennis asked.

“Man, I be hurtin’. I need some medicine or somefin’.”

“Where are you hurting?”

“My back. Man jus’ gimme something and I’ll get outta here. I need some Motrins or Codeine or somefin’.”

Dennis had the inmate stand, stoop and squat to conduct several orthopedic tests, all of which were normal. “I don’t find anything wrong with your back,” he told Ford.

“What the fuck you talkin’ ‘bout? How the fuck can you tell if I be hurtin’? That’s s’jestive. I’m tellin’ you my back hurts. Jus’ gimme some fucking aspirin or somefin’.”

“Yes, Ford, that is *subjective*,” Dennis agreed with emphasis on the correct pronunciation. “But from an *objective* standpoint,” he continued using the same emphasis, “I don’t find anything wrong with your back. But, I’ll give you a couple of aspirin.”

“And I want you to lay me in for the day. I’m hurtin’ too bad to go to work,” Ford added.

“What kind of work do you do?”

“What the fuck you wanna know what I do, man? Can’t you see I’m hurtin’ here? Jus’ gimme the fuckin’ aspirin and lay me in so I can get the fuck outta here,” Ford said jumping out of the chair and taking a somewhat threatening and defensive posture. These intimidation tactics were known to work in the past and he figured he’d try them out today.

“I’ll give you some aspirin, but I really don’t see any reason to lay you in . . .”

Ford headed for the door. “Hey, fuck it, man. You’re a fuckin’ quack. I thought you was gonna’ be better than these other peoples. But you jus’ the same fuckin’ way. Forget it, man.” With that James Ford, CD8989 left the room.

Dennis sat looking at the door the inmate had just exited in disbelief. He then spent the next seven hours listening to variations on the same theme inmate after miserable inmate until the last miserable inmate left the medical department. He then spent the next week listening to the same variation on the same theme inmate after miserable inmate until he was ready to scream.

Just after he had finished sick call one afternoon, Tony Pierson came into the room. “So, Dennis, how’s it going?” Tony asked.

“Tony, let me ask you a question. How long have you been putting up with this bologna?”

Tony laughed. “Dennis, sooner or later you’re going to have to let loose with a line of profanity. Scream, yell, do something or you’re going to lose it man. ‘Bologna?’ It isn’t bologna! It’s fucking absurd bullshit.”

“OK. Let me rephrase the question,” Dennis said looking around and lowering his voice. “How long have you been putting up with this BS?”

“Okay. BS. BS is good,” Tony said encouragingly. “You’ve come a long way. Anyway, I get the point. And, no, it doesn’t ever change. It’s just the same thing on another day. But ‘you ain’t seen nothin’ yet’ as they say. We’ve got to go to the hole for sick call.”

“RHU?” Dennis asked startled. “Why me? I don’t want to go out there. Can’t Lewis or someone else do it?”

“Nope. It’s your turn. And we’ve got to get out there soon or the Captain will pitch a fit when we get there.”

“Well, I suppose if I must. Do you know *who* we have to . . .” Dennis started. He noted the way Tony was looking at him and realized what he was asking. “Sorry Tony. I forgot. You’re the man. How could I be so dumb? So just tell me what to do, where to go and who to see, and we’ll get this done.”

“It’s not going to be that easy today. You’ve got Dumas on the list. He’s always on the list. It’s indoctrination time,” Tony said half chuckling.

“Dumas? Who’s Dumas?”

“Not *who* so much as *what!* Dumas *is* RHU. He owns his own cell out there. He’s been there forever and he’ll die out there. Seldom does he ever leave his cell. When he does it’s because he wants to make a point about something. I have his chart out there and you can take as much time as you want to review it before you see him. It would help if you know as much as possible. One thing I will tell you is that all the inmates out in the hole know they can present *one* and *only* one complaint a day. If he gives you ten things that he wants you to take care of, tell him to take a flying leap off a short pier. That’s not what I would tell him to do. But if you won’t even say bullshit you sure as hell won’t tell him what I would tell him,” Tony finished grabbing a bag full of supplies.

They left the medical department through the waiting room. Before Dennis got out the door twelve inmates tried getting medical advice or medication. Pierson told all of them to chill out and wait until they were called into medical.

“Remember, you’re breaching each other’s confidentiality,” he said sarcastically.

“Hey, fuck you Pierson,” someone said. Others voiced their agreement of the statement.

The issue of confidentiality was a very sore subject in prison on both sides of the fence. It began when two inmates, Williams and Hunter, were in a single sixty by sixty foot room. While the inmates had been sitting in the waiting room they were discussing several issues, one of which was what each of them was doing on sick call that particular morning including every aspect of their conditions. Both of the inmates were called into the medical room at the same time. A Physician’s Assistant in one corner of the room interviewed Williams and a doctor in the opposite corner of the room interviewed Hunter.

After both inmates had left the medical department both filed individual grievances with the ACLU.

The grievances stated they were not afforded proper privacy and that the Physician's Assistant and doctor had breached patient confidentiality by asking the inmates to discuss their medical problems in front of each other. The inmates won the case. Each received fifty thousand dollars for their embarrassment and the department of corrections was forced to erect a wall dividing the examination room. Additionally, the room had to be soundproofed. This cost the taxpayers approximately eighty-five thousand dollars. It made the medical staff, administration and custody furious. The inmates couldn't have cared less about the room. They enjoyed the game. And if they could get an extra dollar or two in the process, all the better. Some games they won; others they lost.

The walk out to the hole was relatively uneventful. There were the typical shouts from the wire meshed windows on the exterior of the blocks out of which came the occasional comment directed at the medical personnel; “. . .should'a got my Advil . . .”, “. . .still have a fuckin' toothache . . .”, “. . .aaasssssholes. . .”.

When they arrived at the gate, Tony stood staring at the phone box perched on a metal pole just to the left of the gate for several seconds, opened the metal door, picked up the handset and immediately set it back on the receiver. He closed the telephone box door and waited. Seconds later they heard the sound of the electromagnetic lock disengaging the heavy metal gate and Tony opened it. Cameras mounted on poles in the compound as well as the building itself observed their movements. Tony was thinking that he wouldn't have to use the phone if the officers inside paid any attention to the

monitors. He understood the sad reality was that the COs were paying attention to the monitors. They simply enjoyed the power and control they felt. Tony and Dennis walked the fifty yards across empty compound to the entry door of RHU and waited until they heard the same hollow sound echo through the emptiness allowing access into the building. Momentarily they entered. They repeated this procedure through three more doors until they were standing in the circular control room of RHU. Tony signed his name and placed the time he entered the building in the daily log book that was perched on a flimsy wooden podium just inside the door. Knowing Dennis knew the drill, Tony handed Dennis a pen and he did the same.

“Good afternoon,” Tony said to those present. No one responded.

Dennis and Tony went through several more doors and gates until they were in the medical room. Tony took the makeshift med tray out of a cabinet and fussed over medications while Dennis reviewed Dumas’s chart. When he was finished, he said, “Let’s do it Tony.”

“Always stay to the wall furthest from the cells,” Tony warned him jokingly.

“Yeah. Thanks. I almost got it in the face a couple days ago on C range.”

The officers met Tony and Dennis at a gate. “You men ready to go?”

“Yep,” Tony answered.

Tony and several CO’s escorted Dennis down the ranges to conduct sick call. He heard the same complaints inmate after inmate. It was as if a tape was being played. It didn’t matter if the inmate came to medical, or medical went to the inmate. Pain, athlete’s foot, pain, itchy balls, pain, a runny nose and pain were the most common problems reported. Dennis blew most of them off with a casual word. Others were more insistent

and demanding and it was necessary to relent and prescribe an occasional aspirin or antifungal. This infuriated most inmates who directed Dennis to place the aspirin and/or antifungal in various orifices in his own body. They finally arrived at Dumas's cell.

"FA1856. Sick call," Tony said in a loud voice.

The inmate approached the cell door. He resembled a gorilla in most aspects with the exception that he had less hair. He was flat nosed, thick lipped, large framed, obese, ebony black, and moved with the speed of a sloth. The appearance of his cell confirmed the conviction and utter contempt that most felt for this man; *he is indeed an animal*. There were pictures of 'barely legal' teenage girls plastered on the walls, each face stained by numerous sexual onslaughts in which he had first masturbated and then ejaculated. There were stains on the walls and floor where he had missed the poster, or where in a sexual frenzy he simply hadn't cared where the wad landed. There were pictures of 'barely legal' young boys on the opposite wall with the same stains. Bits and pieces of debris - food, cigarette tobacco, paper, fingernail and toenail clippings - littered the cell. The stainless steel commode/sink combination was stained with yellow splatters of urine, brown splatters of shit, and clumps of dried toothpaste and soap. His bed was devoid of sheets. The mattress, stained with semen, feces, urine, slobber; you name it. For Dumas, this was par for the course. The sight and stench of this shit hole made Dennis sick.

"What the fuck you lookin' at fag," Dumas said in a thick, sleepy voice. The speech was typical of black prison slang; barely intelligible.

"What seems to be your problem today?" Dennis asked.

"I want my fuckin' Insulin order changed," Dumas demanded, staggering toward the cell door and falling against it.

Dennis looked at the inmate evenly. He spoke softly. "You are currently getting two units of regular and twelve units of NPH insulin. "

"I know what I be gettin'," Dumas said disgustedly. "It ain't workin'. Makin' me feel like shit."

"What do you recommend?" Dennis asked.

"Don't they pay you? What the fuck you axkin' me for medical advice for? Ain't you 'spose to be the po'fessinoal?"

"What do you recommend?" Dennis asked again.

"Man, I need at least six of regular."

"Done! Anything else?"

"Yeah," Dumas said feeling very powerful. "My lips is getting chapped in here."

"One complaint a day, Mr. Dumas. Fill out a request for sick line and your lips will be addressed tomorrow. Until then, I recommend keeping them off of any object that might tend to cause inflammation."

"Yeah. Like my dick, Kim," Pierson said.

With that, Dennis, Tony and the CO's walked away from the frothing, cursing, ranting inmate. They could hear him screaming obscenities fifteen minutes later when they left MSRHU.

"You handled that asshole pretty well," Pierson said slapping Dennis on the back as they left.

The last thing they heard as they left the building was the booming voice of Kim Dumas, FA1856, “. . .and you ain’t got no fuckin’ dick, Pierson.”

March

It was still dark when he left the medical building and headed for MSRHU. The morning air was still frigid this time of year. The moisture hung thick in the air and offered little visibility. The compound lights shone like surrealistic little suns through the fog soup. He carried a large brown grocery bag full of supplies; surgical tape, Latex gloves, Band-Aids; items used to pacify inmates when they conned up some bullshit complaint or injury. He walked with purpose this morning. He had formulated his plan. It was just a matter of implementing it. And this was going to be the day. CO's coming on duty were pouring through the main gate, heading north. He paced himself so that he avoided having to offer the canned ‘*Mornin*’ to any of them on his way east.

Five hundred yards after he had left the medical building he approached RHU's outer fence. Like the fence that surrounded the main compound, this fence was strung atop with razor wire. He opened the metal door of the phone box that hung just to the left of the gate, picked up the handset and immediately set it back on the receiver. He closed the door and waited. Seconds later the sound of the electromagnetic lock disengaging the heavy metal gate echoed through the fog soup, and he opened it. Cameras mounted on poles in the compound and mounted on the building itself observed his movements. He was thinking that he wouldn't have to use the phone if the officers inside paid any attention to the monitors. He walked the fifty yards to the entry door of RHU and waited

until he heard the same hollow sound allowing access into the building. Momentarily he entered. The same procedure occurred through three more doors until he was standing in the circular control room of RHU. He signed his name and placed the time he entered the building in the daily log book that was perched on a flimsy wooden podium just inside the door. Two sleepy looking CO's were buttoning shirts and tucking them into unzipped pants.

“Good morning,” he offered.

Neither of them spoke, but dreamily continued their dressing ritual, one that was characteristic of RHU. *Bastards sleep all night, and get paid for it*, he thought.

“Sorry I woke you up,” he offered good-naturedly. They were in no mood. One theme that permeated personalities in jail was paranoia. Rules of conduct were *trust no one, admit nothing, and show no weakness*.

“You saying we sleep on duty?” One of them asked defensively.

Dennis didn't bother answering. He walked out of a solid metal door opposite the one he had entered and headed for the medical examination room. He stood and waited for the CO in the bubble he had just exited to push the button to open the door separating the medical exam room area from the central control area. The CO placed his finger on the button and waited just a couple of seconds after Dennis had arrived at the gate before pushing it. *Bastard*, Dennis thought. He hated the games CO's played. This one involved waiting until you pushed on the gate, then just as you backed off and turned to give them *the look* they pushed the button to open the door. Seldom did a CO push the button as one approached the door unless it was a female officer or nurse he wanted to get lucky with, the Superintendent, a Deputy Superintendent, the white Major, or, on occasion, a Captain.

The Black Major, who was once an inmate and had crawled through the ranks to the position of Major after his incarceration ended, seldom made it through any gate in less than three minutes. The Black Major still walked like an inmate, talked like an inmate, acted like an inmate, and smelled like an inmate. This man was living proof of the adage, "Once an inmate always an inmate". There was another adage that applied to the Black Major; "Once a snitch, always a snitch." It was surprising he had lived as long as he had in prison.

Dennis took a ring containing several keys off of one of the two mandatory *OKAY'S KEY SAFE* key-holders he wore on his belt, selected one and unlocked the door to the med room. Once inside, he unpacked the grocery bag. Selecting another key he unlocked one of two metal cabinets and placed the items inside of it on appropriate shelves. He re-locked the cabinet, pulled a rickety chair out from under the only desk in the room and sat on it. He pulled the med cart over, turned it so that the drawers faced him, opened the bottom drawer, and fingered his way through blister packs until he came to those with FA1856, Dumas, Kim on them. He found the one medication he wanted, pulled the blister pack out of the drawer, closed it, and stood. He looked at the gelatin capsules, each nested in its plastic shard. *Perfect*, he thought as he examined the capsules. "Perfect," he repeated softly.

Dennis spent several weeks formulating his idea. He had chosen Procardia because of the ease in which he could implement the scheme. The capsule was red and barely translucent so that the solution inside could not be clearly seen. The capsule could be punctured and its contents easily aspirated. The bubble pack contained thirteen capsules and he counted back three days. He would be off that day, and the day before.

He took a small syringe with a 22 gauge needle attached and carefully inserted the needle through the thin foil that served as a backing for the capsule he had chosen. With little difficulty he managed to puncture the soft gelatin capsule. He aspirated half of the contents and disconnected the hub of the syringe from the needle. He attached a second syringe to the needle, one containing a clear solution, and injected its contents into the half-full capsule. He carefully pulled the needle out of the capsule and the foil, making sure that the hole was barely visible. He had chosen to replace the Procardia with Ricin.

Dennis knew Ann, who would be the unwilling participant in his plan, was paranoid on a good day and volatile every other day. Hopefully, she wouldn't look at the back of the pack when she punched the capsule out. He placed the bubble pack back in the med drawer. "You're dead, Dumas," he whispered.

He opened another metal cabinet and pulled a plastic tray off a shelf. The makeshift medication tray was a brainchild of Tony Pierson. If there was a way to make trash useful, Tony could figure it out. Any time he wanted to make a point he said, "Hey, we work for the state. Do you think we're going to get anything better?"

The makeshift medication tray was actually several plastic trays taped together. The trays once held individual doses of Milk of Magnesia. They worked well for holding the tiny paper medication cups. Each cup had an inmate's number and last name on the inside and bottom of the cup. On the inner, upper rim of the cup was the range and cell number. The cups were arranged in the plastic holder so that they were in order as you went down the ranges. This particular morning there were forty-seven cups, each nested in its individual space in the tray. There were twelve cups for A range, eleven for B, fifteen for C, and the remainder for D.

Dennis pulled the medication cart, with the tray full of medication and paper cups on top, out of the med room and waited at the first steel gate. A CO sitting in the bubble in a typical office chair, one with wheels, saw him standing there. He turned the back of the chair to the control panel and lazily pushed himself over to it. He spun himself around and pushed the correct button to open the door. He repeated the maneuvering until he found himself back where he was.

Dennis pushed the med cart toward the bubble and waited for the CO's to escort him down A range. "Mornin' Potter," one said as he exited the bubble.

"Good morning," Dennis replied as he handed the officer a list. The list indicated which of the inmates would receive medication by cell number.

As they approached the first gate, a CO in the bubble pushed the button to open the door. The two officers went through the gate first. Dennis pushed the cart through, and then closed the heavy gate behind him as he went through.

Each of the solid metal doors on the cells housing the inmates contained an opening that measured approximately eight inches in height and eighteen inches in length. This was referred to as the "pie slot."

The lead officer lit cigarettes for those inmates needing a light. This gave him the opportunity to scope the cells and potentially diffuse the throwing of any bodily excrement. The inmate held his smoke in his lips and stuck the tip of the cigarette through a hole in the heavy wire mesh window. Each screen had several black spots on it, evidence of hundreds of cigarettes being lit over the years. The other CO busied himself at the task of opening the pie slots indicated on the list that Dennis had given him. Each cell housed one or two inmates; most housed one.

Dennis approached the first cell in which the CO had opened the pie slot. It was A7.

"BC5678, your meds," he said flatly as he sat the cup on the sill of the slot. The inmate took the cup, threw the meds in his mouth, and threw the cup back out of the slot. Dennis slammed the small door shut and proceeded to the next cell with the slot opened. At the end of A range, the lead officer took a large key from his belt clip and keyed the lock of the gate. The three of them went through a hallway connecting the back of the ranges. They came to another gate, which the officer keyed, and stepped into the back end of B range. They continued this process through C, and then D range. Dennis paused when he got to D9.

"FA1856. Meds," Dennis said acidly.

"What the fuck you lookin' at fag," Dumas said in a thick, sleepy voice. "Take the meds Dumas," Dennis ordered.

"I want my fuckin' Insulin first," he demanded, staggering toward the cell door.

Dennis took the syringe containing two units of regular and twelve units of NPH insulin off of the cart. He opened an alcohol swab and waited. Dumas grabbed a fistful of fat on the side of his belly, pinched up a place for Dennis to inject the Insulin, and jammed his belly as far through the pie slot as he could. Dennis swabbed the site, and then inserted the needle into Dumas's fat girth, completely missing the place on which he had just administered alcohol.

"Moron," Dumas protested. "Why you even bother swabbin' me if you ain't even goin' poke it in the spot?"

Dennis ignored him. "Take the meds, convict," Dennis said evenly, looking Dumas straight in the eyes. Dumas gave him the *eat shit and die* look, took the medication and threw the paper cup out of the slot. Dennis quickly slammed the slot door and moved off to the next cell. *Your dead, shit for brains*, Dennis thought as he moved away from Dumas's cell. *Two days, and you're a dead man.*

When he had given the last med on D range, he and the officers went through another metal door. Dennis headed toward the med room, the officers toward the bubble. Dennis waited for one of the officers to open the iron gate so he could get back into the med room and soon one did. Dennis unlocked the door, pushed the cart into the room and shut the door behind him. He tuned a radio on the desk to some rock station, one of two stations the radio received, and began to pack meds for the next morning. He wouldn't be on duty, but he knew who would.

Typically medical personnel didn't give medication poured by others. But in RHU it was an acceptable practice due to time constraints. You had little time to get the meds out and ready to go down the ranges as it was. Setting up medication was quite involved. First, each inmate had a Medication Activity Record - MAR. All medication that the inmate was to take was listed on the MAR. All of these medications were in individual blister packs. The nurse would identify the medication on the MAR and check the dose. He or she would then identify that medication in the blister pack and check that the correct dose of the medication was being given. More than once had the pharmacy packaged medication that was either the wrong medication and/or the wrong dose. The individual administering the medication would then take the medication out of each

blister pack and place it in the paper cup. Some inmates received as many as fifteen medications at one time.

If each nurse had to pour all of the meds each morning, it would be noon before the inmate got his morning meds. And that would spell an unpleasant situation. The individual administering the morning meds would re-pour meds for the next morning, whether he or she was going to be giving them or not. This took the pressure off of getting morning medication out to the ranges. And that would work well to Dennis's advantage. He had checked the schedule, made absolutely certain that Ann would be on duty in RHU, and decided she should have the honor of killing Dumas. *The bitch deserves the honor.*

He set up Dumas's medication with the usual Procardia, Tenormin, Ativan, et cetera. Dennis knew that when she set up the next morning's medication, she would be giving the Procardia that he had laced with Ricin. She would not get off the range before Kim Dumas was dead.

Three days later, it was still dark when Ann left the medical building and headed for RHU. CO's were pouring through the main gate and she paced herself so that she poured through the middle of them. "Good mornin'," she giggled as she brushed through them, rubbing her breasts against whomever she could. "Mornin' Annie," many responded. "Mornin' Ann," the Black Major said after having caressed a breast. She giggled, he flushed. *My wife would shit . . .* he thought. Everyone knew that Ann and the Black Major were banging each other. Who did they think they were trying to kid, inmates? Hello!

She walked as though every eye in the jail was watching her and wanted every one of those eyes to desire her. Much of the time, she *was* being watched by most eyes, and many of those *did* desire her. She wasn't particularly attractive, but she carried herself in a manner that inmates found irresistible. She was an enigma to most everyone in the jail, staff included. No one knew what would set her off, but everyone knew when it happened what he or she could expect. She was loud, and moved as a person who was fixed on her intent. God help the man, or woman, who was in her way when she was at a task. It brings to mind a fat woman at a sales table.

Ann acted confident, yet she was unsure of herself. She acted sexy, and had low self-esteem. She acted as though she needed no man, yet it was a man she desperately desired. She was gruff when she spoke, yet gentle as she administered care. She would yell at an inmate, grabbing this and that, throwing the other thing, and very tenderly clean his wound at the same time. Her black eyes would reflect her distaste by what was going on at any given moment, and she would hide the emotion behind a facade of disinterest.

Before she had the chance to open the metal door of the phone box that hung just to the left of the gate; before she had a chance to pick up the handset and set it back on the receiver; the sound of the electromagnetic lock disengaging the heavy metal gate echoed through the fog soup, and she opened it. Cameras mounted on poles in the compound and mounted on the building itself observed her movements. She was thinking that she would have to have used the phone if the officers inside didn't have their eyes glued to her on the monitors. She walked the fifty yards to the entry door of RHU and several yards from the door she heard the same hollow sound of the door being electromagnetically disengaged allowing access into the building. She entered without pausing.

She repeated the same procedure through three more doors until she was standing in the circular control room of RHU. She signed her name and placed the time she entered the building in the daily log book that was perched on the flimsy wooden podium just inside the door. Two CO's were straightening. "Good morning," they offered.

"Mornin," Ann said, flirtingly. She turned and moved her body in any manner she could to entice the two.

"Let me know when you're ready to go down the range and I'll go with you," one of the CO's told her.

Opening a solid metal door opposite the one she had just entered, she headed for the medical examination room. Before she got to the door separating the medical exam room from the central control area, the CO in the bubble she had just exited pushed the button to open the electromagnetic gate. The CO placed his finger on the button, and made certain Ann didn't have to wait even a couple of seconds before pushing it.

Bastard, Ann thought. She hated the games CO's played. This one involved fawning flattery before she pushed on the gate. She never bothered turning to give them the 'you're so sweet' look after they pushed the button to open the door.

The Black Major was one of the few lucky who had his way with Ann. She was partial to black men, and she made no bones about it.

Ann took a ring containing several keys off of one of the two mandatory OKAY'S KEY SAFE key-holders she carried on a cloth designer belt she wore around her uniform, selected one and unlocked the door to the med room. Once inside, she unlocked one of two metal cabinets and pulled a plastic tray off a shelf. She placed the tray on the

medication cart, quickly checked the medications in the tray, and grabbed some extra Dixie cups.

Ann pulled the medication cart, with the tray full of medication and paper cups on top, out of the med room. Before she made it to the first steel gate, a CO sitting in the bubble in a typical office chair, one with wheels, saw her coming out of the med room. He turned the back of the chair to the control panel and quickly pushed himself over to it. He spun himself around and pushed the correct button to open the door. He jumped up to exit the control room and assist Ann up and down the ranges. Ann pushed the med cart toward the bubble and the CO's met her to escort her down A range.

"Mornin' Annie," one said as he exited the bubble. It was the Captain. The Captain seldom escorted *anyone* down a range, unless it was a female CO or nurse he wanted to get lucky with, the Superintendent, a Deputy Superintendent, or a white Major. He never escorted the Black Major.

"Good morning," Ann replied as she handed one of the officers a list.

Before they got to the first gate, a CO in the bubble pushed the button to open the door. The two officers went through the gate first. Ann and the Major pushed the cart through, and the Major closed the heavy gate behind them as they went through. They stayed to the left as they walked down the ranges. This was one way of preventing getting a face full of urine or shit if an inmate decided to throw it out of the small, heavy meshed screen window of the cell as they were approaching, which was infrequent if Ann was on the ranges. If any other female nurse was passing meds, she would do well to walk to the left to prevent getting ejaculate on her as she walked down the ranges. But not Ann. She

invoked a sense of sheer dread in most of the inmates in RHU. She had ways of paying an inmate back for the slightest indiscretion.

Ann approached the first cell in which the CO had opened the pie slot. It was A2.

"CC1816, your meds," she said teasingly as she sat the cup on the sill of the slot.

The inmate took the cup, threw the meds in his mouth, and ever so gently handed the med cup back out the pie slot in hopes that Ann would take it from him. If she did, there was a remote possibility that her hand would touch his. He would live off the aroma of her perfume for days from even the lightest touch of her. The Major slammed the slot shut and they proceeded to the next cell with the slot opened. At the end of A range, they heard the sound of the electromagnetic gate being released. A CO in the bubble had been watching them – Ann – and pushed the button to let them into the hallway connecting the back of the ranges. They came to another gate, heard the sound of the gate being disarmed, and stepped into the back end of B range. They continued this process through C, and then D range. Ann paused when she got to D9.

"Kim," Ann said in a singsong voice. "Meds."

Dumas waited at the cell door. He knew Ann would be passing meds when she first entered RHU. There was an unspoken language in prison; almost a telepathy.

Inmates knew well in advance almost every event that would occur in the prison.

"G'mornin Annie," Dumas said in a thick, lazy voice. She was one of the few people he spoke to in a civilized manner.

"Here's your meds, Kim," Ann said. She was unaware of the fact she had just handed the inmate a lethal poison. She hadn't even looked in the cup to see what meds

were there. She was caught up in the drama of being with the CO's, and the catcalls coming from every range in RHU.

"I like Insulin first, Annie, but I'll take them," he said, swaying at the cell door.

"No, Kim," Ann said, "If you prefer your Insulin first, I'll give it to you. You've been very polite to me out here and it's the least I can do." The Major and CO's rolled their eyes. One of the CO's mimed masturbating behind Ann's back, making certain Dumas could see him. That was his way of saying, "This act of yours is a hand job, inmate." Dumas took the med cup off the pie slot, and set it inside his cell on a metal desk. Dumas grabbed a fistful of fat on the side of his belly, pinched up a place for Ann to inject the Insulin, and jammed his belly as far through the pie slot as he could. Ann ever so gently swabbed a spot on his belly and then, placing the needle dead center of the spot she had applied the alcohol, injected the insulin.

"Oh, that was gentle," Dumas said. "You really know how to hit the spot, Annie." Ann ignored the comment. He turned and picked up an empty med cup he had sitting on his desk, and pretended that he threw his pills in his mouth. He asked for some water, feigning a mouthful of pills, and further pretended to swallow them. He handed Ann the empty med cup as a testimony he had taken the pills.

"Thank you for taking your meds, Kim," Ann said. Dumas gave her the '*I'd eat a yard of your shit just to look at your ass*' look. The Major quickly slammed the slot door and moved off to the next cell. *You're an ass, shit for brains*, the Major thought as they moved away from Dumas's cell.

After they were out of sight, Dumas picked up the medication cup and examined the meds. *Stupid cunt*, he thought as he poked through them sloppily with a large, apelike

finger. He was considering which ones he might sell for a pack later. He had already sold the Procardia to an inmate four cells down range. Getting it to him was no problem.

Getting his pack was.

Officers in MSRHU are not supposed to deliver articles from one inmate to another. Oftentimes inmates ask officers to take magazines, books, or other articles to other prisoners; sometimes in the same range, sometimes in another. Most officers just say no. Others will deliver the articles. Some would inspect them before delivering to ensure there were no drugs or medication in the articles, but most who *would* deliver the articles cared little about what might be stashed in it. “Who cares if someone is passing his meds to someone else,” one officer said. “Maybe it’ll kill the stupid son-of-a-bitch. Then we would have one less ass hole out here.” Those sentiments resounded through the CO population in RHU.

Every inmate in RHU knew who would and who wouldn’t deliver. Dumas knew every CO in RHU. Not only did he know them, he knew almost everything about them. He knew their marital status; whether married, divorced, single, dating, or separated. He knew their orientation; gay, straight, or switch hitter. He knew their address. He knew many of their phone numbers. He knew their shirt size. He knew their likes and dislikes, their hopes and dreams, even their fears.

It is said that knowledge is power. Knowledge in prison is power exponentially. Inmates listen. Dumas listened. From the blackness of his cell he listened and stored information in the blackness of his heart; like a black hole sucking light into it, devouring it. He heard everything. He wrote down much of what he heard. He, like many inmates,

wrote *everything* down. Most of what inmates write down would be considered inconsequential to the average person. But it is gold to the inmate.

On one occasion Larry Davis, an RHU Lieutenant, was having a conversation with Jim Walker, a CO.

“No shit? You’ve got to be kidding,” Dumas heard Larry say as they were entering the range.

“I shit you not! I was right there. He damn near marbleized right there on the stage. Skinny little bastard deserved it.”

“Ok, start from the beginning,” Larry said.

“We’re all at the club and Oscar gets up and heads for the stage. He’s not too drunk yet, and everyone starts shouting and cat calling because they knew he was going to do something fucking stupid like he always does. Sure as his mother was a black bitch, he gets right up on the stage.”

“Oh, shit. You’ve got to be kidding,” Larry said disgustedly.

Dumas listened intently, as did half the inmates in D range. Kim Dumas wasn’t the only inmate taking notes; gathering information.

”I’m not kidding at all” Walker continued. “So, he gets up there and grabs the mic and announces he is going to do the Macarena or some such shit. He’s got the karaoke machine going and then; oh, Larry, you’re not even going to believe this; he puts a pair of symbols on his legs at the knees.”

The two officers stopped in mid range, the wind-chime sounds of their keys ceasing a split second after they did.

“Doesn’t he realize what an ass he is? That stupid fuck doesn’t have one ounce of modesty or shame,” Larry said with contempt.

“What do you expect? He was an inmate himself,” Walker said sardonically.

Dumas was barely breathing as he listened to the conversation. His black frame hidden in an even blacker interior of his cell, he was the painting in the stage production of ‘*Art*’ in reverse.

“Anyway, so he’s up there singing his lungs out in some minor dysfuckingharmonic key, and clanging those symbols with those skinny chicken legs. In the meantime, Paula is downstairs with Gary from over in Medical giving him the big blow.”

“Isn’t she at a thousand yet?” Larry laughed.

Dumas grabbed his penis and began gently stroking it. The talk about Paula excited him and he had half a woody before they got to the range anyway. *Might as well take care of this*, he thought, stroking it with intent.

Paula Zook, an aide that worked in the medical department, had vowed that she would perform at least one thousand blowjobs to at least one thousand different men before she died. She had succeeded in this endeavor with eighty five percent of the CO population and it was guessed at least five percent of the inmate population.

“Oh, she’s *way* over a thousand, Larry. Anyway, here’s Oscar up on the stage and you see Paula coming toward him. No one knows what she’s going to do. She gets up on the stage, walks right over to Oscar, grabs the mic out of his hand and plants the hugest French fucking kiss on him you’ve ever seen. He’s like eating her face, and you can see tongues lashing around. It was sickening. But the final joke is this. What Oscar doesn’t

know at this point, but he finds out later, is that she has a mouthful of Gary's cum in her mouth when she kisses him."

At that Dumas lost his wad. He was pounding himself while listening to the conversation. He envisioned Paula with a mouthful of *his* cum, kissing *him*, swapping spit. Then he blew his wad. He staggered backward a little from the intensity of the blood leaving his head from the orgasm. When he regained himself, he stepped back up to the door so he could listen, and when he did he stepped in the pool of semen he had just deposited on the floor.

"That's sick," Larry confessed. "That's just plain sick."

"Well, Oscar finishes his song and goes back to his seat. Gary watched this entire thing and he comes over to the Major and says, 'Hey Oscar, great song'. And Oscar says, 'Go fuck yourself, Gary'. You know there's no love lost between them two anyway."

"So, I've noticed," Larry said.

"So then Gary says, 'Yeah, you'd like it if I did that, wouldn't you, Major? You'd probably like to join me wouldn't you?' And the Major says, 'You're a fucking pervert, Gary. Get away from me.' So, Gary leaves. . . . with Paula. And Gary makes sure the Major sees it."

Dumas followed the entire story. He knew all the players and he was getting a kick out of hearing about the Black Major being the butt of the joke. *Wanna be honky deserves it*, he thought.

"Then what happened?" the Lieutenant asked.

“Well, nothing that night. But the next day the Major calls Gary in to his office and gives him an ass ream. Tells him to watch his back because people who pull that kind of shit get shanked.”

“You telling me the Major *threatened* Gary? He’s even fucking dumber than I thought.”

The conversation continued up A range, down B range, up C range and finally ended as the two officers completed their rounds on D range. Dumas caught every word of the conversation through the echoing halls. He barely breathed as the two men got further away. Every range was a tomb. A pin dropping in any of them would have sounded like a cannon going off. When inmates listen, they don’t even breathe.

Yes, Dumas knew every officer who would, every officer who wouldn’t, and every officer who, if worked properly, could be trained to deliver. And Dumas, as with others, had a way of getting officers to do exactly what he wanted through the stepladder approach of manipulation.

Once, an officer who was adamant about not delivering articles ended up not *only* delivering articles, but *in* RHU as an inmate for selling drugs. And he was actually surprised that an inmate to whom he was selling drugs would rat him out. Definitely inmate mentality.

When an officer will not act as a *mule*, the first approach by the inmate is *kill him with kindness*. If that doesn’t work, it’s *kill him with hatred*. If that doesn’t work, it’s *make the officer work*. This latter tactic is generally a last resort, and it generally works. Inmates accomplish this goal by faking serious medical conditions while the officer in question is on duty. They will have a bogus heart attack, stroke, seizure, fainting spell,

you name it. Other inmates will start yelling and screaming and demanding the officer help the inmate.

In RHU no cell door can be opened unless there is a Captain present. There are no exceptions to this rule. Even if an inmate is dying in his cell, that door cannot be opened until there is a Captain at the cell door with the officers. Inmates know this. And when they fake their unconscious state they are well aware of the fact they will probably lay in their cell for quite some time. But it's all part of the game.

As soon as the officer sees the inmate on the floor, he calls the main prison control center, located in the Deputy Warden's (DW) building. An officer in the DW building dials 333. This rings an emergency phone in the medical building that sounds an alarm. When the phone is answered, the officer informs medical that someone is down in RHU. A Nurse, Physician's Assistant, and sometimes a physician, jump onto an electric cart and drive to RHU. Once there, a large gate the size of a three-car garage door is electronically rolled to one side so the cart can enter. Guards in the towers are notified that the gate in RHU is being opened and they make certain no one other than the medical personnel enter or leave through that gate until it rolls shut.

Once inside RHU the medical personnel and officers attend to the inmate, providing there is a Captain present. If not, they all stand outside the inmate's cell waiting for a Captain to arrive. While they are waiting, most inmates on the range shout obscenities.

“You gonna let him die, you fucking bastards?”

”Open the fuckin' door, asshole.”

“Hey, why don't you help him, morons?”

These are some of the more pleasant of the comments shouted out from various cells up and down the ranges.

Once the door is opened, the inmate will magically regain consciousness and mumble something about low blood sugar. He will be shackled, cuffed, placed on a gurney, carried out to and placed on an electric cart, taken to the infirmary, and found to be fine. At that time, medical will call RHU, and tell them to come and get their inmate. The officer in RHU will call the DW, and request a Captain. Once the Captain is available he and officers from RHU will come to the medical department, shackle and cuff the inmate, take him to a van, haul him back to RHU, and put him back in his cell. If a Captain is unavailable, the inmate waits in the medical building until the Captain is available. Inmates love getting out of RHU, if only for a time. Who knows? Perhaps Annie will take care of them once they get to the medical building. Something to dream about.

After the inmate returns to RHU, the paperwork begins for the officer who responded to the emergency. Inmates make certain that it is an officer who will not mule for them. These types of incidents are never limited to feigning sickness. Inmates have a barrage of circumstances, any of which will create mounds of paperwork, as well as headaches. In time CO's learn it is always much easier to deliver the articles, and not have to go through the incidents.

As the officers came down the ranges to gather up breakfast trays, and light smokes one last time for a couple of hours, Dumas stuffed a book and a magazine out of the pie slot and said, "Hey, Walker, take this to D6 for me, would you?" It sounded more like a demand than request.

“Dumas, you know I can’t take that shit to D6.”

“Hey Walker, I heard Smith over in B range talkin’ ‘bout how he ain’t been feelin’ too good this mornin’.”

“Fine, Dumas. I’ll take the book to Marv. But don’t make this a habit. And if Smith gets sick today, you’re going to be eating shit for the next month.”

“Testy today, aren’t we? What’s the matter? Didn’t that pretty little woman of yours; what’s her name, Donna? Yeah, Donna; didn’t Donna give you any this mornin’?” Dumas asked.

“Leave my wife out of this, Dumas. You’ll go too far one of these days.”

“I never meant no harm, Walker. I’m jus’ funnin’ wif ya,” Dumas said apologetically, his voice an octave higher than normal.

Walker took the book and the magazine. He rifled through each quickly, found nothing out of the ordinary, and delivered them to Marv who was waiting impatiently for them.

“Bout fuckin’ time,” Marv scolded.

“Hey, asshole, you might not get them at all next time if you’re not careful,” Walker protested slamming the pie slot door shut. “Ungrateful bastard,” he said as he did.

After the officers left the range, Dumas whispered as loudly as he felt comfortable doing, “In the binding, Marv. You owe me *two* packs.”

“You’ll get them tonight when Karson comes on. She’s a stupid bitch. She’d take a balloon to you and not even know what the fuck she was doin’.” Both inmates laughed.

Sniggers came from various cells up and down the range from inmates who were listening to the conversation. Knowing a balloon contained enough raw hash to supply

inmates in RHU for several days seemed funny enough to them. Knowing Marv was right was funnier.

Marv peeled a small piece of fabric off the top of the binding from the book. Underneath he found what he was waiting for.

“Oh, I love this shit,” he said eyeing Dumas’s Procardia.

Chapter 3

“You fucking son-of-a-bitch,” Dennis whispered through tight lips after reading the file from cover to cover. The content made him physically sick. His chest felt like all of his intestines had wormed their way through his diaphragm and it was getting hard to breathe. He recognized that he was having an anxiety attack. While he knew how to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety, he didn’t have a clue how to deal with what he had just read.

DF5716, Marvin W. Fitzgerald, a violent sex offender slash pedophile. From the time he entered the prison he was classified Z status and kept from all other inmates. Marvin lived his sexual aggression through fantasies too horrible to describe. He had been a Pediatrician with a successful practice, had a beautiful wife and a beautiful two-year-old daughter, Shelly. Shelly’s saving grace was her father preferred boys. Like most sexual sadists, Marv lived a seemingly "normal" life. His wife never suspected a mild mannered man such as Marvin could be responsible for such repulsive acts. Later, while Marv confessed these acts to the Chief of Police, his wife, who was sitting next to him, retched, then vomited, and then fainted. Marv looked at her lying on the floor and,

without missing a beat, proceeded to give police a detailed recounting of over 150 sexual acts over ten years.

While in jail Marv had many orgasms just thinking of his encounters with young boys. He enjoyed fantasizing about the black goings on in his office, the deeds done there, and he would eventually cum in his pants. He often said, “My last wish is as that of a soul-mate long since departed. I wish to hear my own blood filling the sack when I’m decapitated.” His wish never came true. Incidentally, he did hear inmates yelling.

It was during his psychiatric rotation in Medical School at Texas Tech where Marv recognized his compulsion. At first he tried resisting the powerful urges to initiate sexual contact with children. Unable to do so, he chose the field of medicine dealing with children, Pediatrics. He knew he would be trusted with children. He befriended the parents, eliminating any suspicions about his being alone with the child. He refused to call it a sickness. He referred to it as a preference. He preferred boys just entering puberty. He was fascinated by their sexual curiosity. He boasted, “Give me a boy who knows nothing about sex, and you’ve given him to Professor Marv, Master Teacher.”

Marv quickly found several interesting Internet sites in which he could share his preferences with those of like mind. He chose the handle *BoysRUs*, and even duplicated the famous ToysRUs reverse R in his logo online. He viewed hundreds of pictures online revealing every act imaginable with children. His lust for sex with prepubescent males waxed stronger with each interlude on the Internet. He joined a group of militant and highly organized child molesters who operated worldwide through an Internet pedophile organization. Their belief is that sex with children is harmless; some even claim that sexual relations are healthy for children. Marv took to writing several medical articles

with the goal of addressing, and attempting to convince others, the time for decriminalizing child molestation and lowering the age of consent was at hand. He based his premise on grounds that current laws infringe on the children's right to form free associations.

Under the handle BoysRUs, Marv joined the Rene Guyon society and NAMBLA; The North American Man-Boy Love Association. He also joined the Netherlands organization PAN, Pedophile Alert Network. He received their monthly magazine and newsletters and learned techniques of avoiding detection and prosecution. In one issue's "Lure of the Month", he learned how to approach and seduce children.

Marv took to attending underground pedophile conferences and conventions. While attending one such convention, he was spotted by a colleague, an Internist who preferred little girls, and who, as it turned out, had a little boy whom he had entrusted to Dr. Marv Fitzgerald's care on more than one occasion. After questioning his son, he notified the authorities that he suspected his son's Pediatrician of molestation. The American Medical Association, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and local law enforcement officials, spearheaded by Captain Wallace Graves, set up cameras in the good doctor's office. It wasn't twenty hours later they had him on tape molesting a child.

At his trial, Marv proved to be the genius many knew he was. He wrote much of his own defense, and fired three attorneys before he ever made it to trial. He finally found an ex-ACLU attorney, Stephanie Cooper, who he thought would benefit his cause. He referred to her as a Pit Bull with PMS. She resembled Betty Boop in that she had large hips and legs that were grossly out of proportion with the thinner upper half of her body. She tried minimizing this obvious physical flaw by wearing very short dresses.

Unfortunately this simply accentuated the flaw and made it laughable. She was as ruthless in her desire for winning as Marv was in his desire for sex with boys. Each had a preference. And hers was for climbing the ladder of success. She saw herself as the DA, and would stop at nothing until she was there.

Marv insisted on taking the stand, something he and Stephanie had several heated discussions about. Marv finally won. In his first parlay with the prosecutor, Marv put the man to shame. The attorney, Earnest Fisk, III, asked standard questions and received far from standard responses. No one in the court could refute Marv's comments. The prosecutor was left speechless.

"You do realize you have been charged with Sexual Child Abuse, is that correct Doctor?" Fisk asked.

"You suggest there is a *good* sexual use of a child, sir. I believe no one should ever be used sexually, neither children, nor adults, for that matter."

"Let me rephrase the question, Doctor," Fisk said trying not to show his anger. "Is it true you had deviant relationships with children?"

"I suggest your use of the word deviant would better be suited if referring to a structure in the nose. Since objectively there are no criteria existing in the realm of human behavior for deviant, your use of the term is simply a value judgment and as such, has no merit."

"Please, try to answer the question directly, Doctor," the Judge admonished.

"I'm sorry, your Honor," Marv lied. "I did answer the question. But this line of questioning is moronic."

“I’ll decide what is moronic and what is not in this courtroom, sir,” the Judge said showing her displeasure. “You may continue counselor,” she concluded.

“Thank you Your Honor,” Fisk said gratefully. “Isn’t it true, Doctor, that you stand accused of sexual *perversion*?”

“Objection, Your Honor,” Stephanie tried. She was quickly silenced.

“Now *that* word, perversion, was originally used to describe a false religious belief. Are we talking about religion here, sir?”

“No, we’re talking about you having sex with little children,” Fisk said sharply.

“Objection,” Stephanie shouted, springing to her feet.

“Sustained. Mr. Fisk, please refrain from badgering and rephrase.”

Fisk shot the Judge an angry glance before continuing. “Dr. Fitzgerald, we have evidence showing you have been involved in perverted sexual contact with children.”

“Do you mean as opposed to normal sexual contact?”

“Call it what you will. Do you feel the sexual contact you have had with these children is *normal*?” Fisk asked, trying for a confession.

“Objection, Your Honor,” Stephanie returned. “Your Honor, this questioning is baiting the witness.”

“Overruled. I’m anxious to hear this response myself.”

“Why, thank you Your Honor,” Marv said smiling at the Judge and feeling somewhat important. “*Normal* should only be used in the context of statistics, sir. When you apply this word to sexual matters, it is usually supposed to mean ‘good’. If this is the case, then ‘abnormal’ means ‘bad’. However, when it comes to details, the exact meaning of both terms may change from you to me; from Her Honor to my Attorney. As a result,

we could sit here and have an argument about the very concept of ‘normality’, and this argument would never be allowed in Her Honor’s courtroom. In court, the term should be avoided altogether, since it never describes facts, but only expresses value judgments.”

“Your Honor, is this line of exchange going to be allowed to continue?” Fisk asked angrily.

“He does have a point, Mr. Fisk. Perhaps you could move to another line of questioning.”

“Dr. Fitzgerald, you are a medical doctor. Is this correct?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Well, finally, a straight answer,” Fisk said turning and looking at the jury.

“Well, finally a straight question,” Marv said, also looking at the jury.

“You will confine your comments in my Courtroom to the questions presented to you Dr. Fitzgerald or I will hold you in contempt. Do you understand, sir?” the Judge said sternly.

“Yes Your Honor. I apologize.” Marv was silently laughing at this pitiful excuse for a three-ring circus, all the while thinking how he was going to walk out of it.

“Doctor, are you familiar with the term *paraphilia*?” Fisk asked, strolling toward the jury.

“Yes.”

“At the risk of inviting a thesis, could you tell us what that word means?” Fisk asked sarcastically and glancing at several jury members sitting before him.

“It means a second-class love. A love that is less than another love.”

“Excuse me?” Fisk asked, astonished. “Isn’t it true sir, that this word is used in the medical profession for sexual behavior of which they disapprove? I have a psychological report in my hand that states you have a sexual paraphilia, which, if I understand it correctly, means the same thing as a perversion. Is this not the case, Doctor?” Fisk asked, barely able to contain his rage.

“The word has been used in ancient circles for perversion, but the term is too ideological. Para means *next to*. And philia means *love*. This implies the existence of a *true* or *correct* love. That means there has to be something next to it in rank that is less than it is, just like they use the word paramedical to mean below a *real* doctor. Scientifically speaking, this is an unwarranted assumption, as it calls for a judgment. What is love to one is not love to another. I have noticed that many of the words you have asked me about involve judgment,” Marv finished smiling.

“Dr. Fitzgerald. The use of terminology in this context is used in the Good Samaritan sense. That is, used as it would be used by another medical professional in the same field and under the same circumstances.”

“If my colleagues wish to employ words that are outdated, or simply out of context, that is their choice. I prefer to describe the condition rather than label it.”

“OK. Would you describe your sexual activities as natural, or unnatural?” Fisk asked.

“Objection . . .” Stephanie started. Marv held up his hand.

“I’d like to answer that question if I may. Unnatural? Again, Mr. Fisk, you throw religion in my face. *Contra naturam*; against the will of God as revealed in nature. Birds do it, bees do it, even educated fleas do it - fall for their own sex, that is. You would refer

to this as the doctrine of Natural Law. I conclude, Mr. Fisk, that the only *unnatural* sexual act would be one that cannot be performed.”

At that, Mr. Fisk stopped, looked at Marv, and stood staring for several seconds. There was silence in the courtroom. The Judge looked as though she was trying to guess what the prosecutor would do next. Her guess was that Mr. Fisk would grab Dr. Fitzgerald by the throat and slowly kill him. That is what she would have done, or so she thought.

“Dr. Fitzgerald,” Mr. Fisk asked slowly. “Isn’t it true you sodomized these little children?”

Marv shot a glance at his attorney to pass the mental note, *I’ll answer this*. She relented. Marv looked at Mr. Fisk with utter contempt. *This guy is even a bigger moron than I had ever suspected*, he thought. “I remember my mother taking me to church when I was a little boy, Mr. Fisk. And I understood sodomy to be a term used to describe *all* unnatural sexual activities. That included oral intercourse, sex with animals and anal intercourse. Are you asking me if I had anal intercourse with someone? Or are you asking me if I had oral intercourse? Or are you asking me if I had sex with animals in front of someone? Or, Mr. Fisk, are you implying all of these?” Marv asked angrily.

“Dr. Fitzgerald, how long do you think this verbal swordplay will keep you alive? I plan on showing the court a video recording made by several law enforcement agencies in which you are having sex with a child, sodomizing him. It will be very interesting to see how you banter your way through that,” Fisk said, eyes a narrow slit, the rage he felt evident in his tone.

“That, Mr. Fisk, presupposes the video is fact, or Hollywood. Much can be done in a film lab these days. Remember, Mr. Fisk, I am innocent until you prove my guilt; that is of course unless our justice system has changed since we entered this courtroom.”

“Dr. Fitzgerald, one more comment concerning this court and I will hold you in contempt. You will restrict your comments to the questions only. Do you understand?”

The Judge snapped.

“Yes, your Honor,” Marv said as apologetically as possible. *You stupid black bitch*, he thought. *And it’s a good thing you are a stupid black bitch or you wouldn’t even be hearing this case*, he concluded.

“No further questions at this time, your Honor,” Fisk said. “Your witness, counselor,” he finished, presenting Marv to his attorney.

Stephanie got up and slowly approached her client. She planted the heel of her high heel shoes in such a way as to make each step echo through the courtroom. The effect was that of time slipping away, like the ticking of a clock.

“Dr. Fitzgerald, have you ever had sex with a child?”

“Absolutely not.”

“As a matter of fact, how many consecutive years have you been presented with awards for your work with children?”

“Fifteen, not including this. I was up for one this year, but it was rescinded due to these allegations.”

“Are you married, Doctor?”

“Objection, your Honor. That has already been established, and need not be revisited,” Fisk stated impatiently. He was already thinking he was not going to make his 3:15 tee time at the club.

“Your Honor, it is important we keep a perspective of my client. My esteemed colleague would have us all to believe that Dr. Fitzgerald has spent his life in ‘*contra naturam*’, *unnatural sex*, as my client so deftly pointed out. He would have us believe my client has spent his entire life a leech in and on society. I would like to show the opposite is true.”

“Overruled. Continue,” the Judge said. She could hardly hide her contempt.

The verbal legalese ended several weeks later in a conviction. Dr. Fitzgerald was sentenced to five years in the state prison with counseling. He would be eligible for parole at that time if deemed appropriate by those evaluating him.

Three months after landing in prison, his wife’s divorce attorney served him papers. He lost his home, several cars, a boat, a summer home, and a condo she knew nothing about in Thailand. He swore he would have his vengeance. She moved to Georgia, married the President of the local Georgia Pacific Bank, and thought little of Marv again.

“You fucking son-of-a-bitch,” Dennis repeated. He left the file room and immediately went home.

Ruth, one in a long line of girlfriends, met him at the door. Dennis walked past her and headed straight for the bathroom. He vomited, showered and stood looking at himself in the mirror for several minutes. His thoughts were fragmented. He tried processing the experiences of the prison and his disillusionment with humanity.

“Sweetheart,” he heard Ruth say through the door. He didn’t answer. “Are you all right?” she asked sweetly, concern in her tone.

“I’m fine,” he finally answered tersely. He continued staring at himself in the mirror. What was it he saw? Did he recognize himself anymore? Who was he? What was he? These thoughts coursed through him like a metastatic disease being pumped with every beat of his blackening heart. Somewhere in the recesses of his mind he had the fleeting thought, *The heart of man is evil continually; Who can know it.* He didn’t process the thought long enough to even ask where it came from.

* * * * *

In order for Marv to satisfy his sexual urges he had taken to autoeroticism shortly after entering RHU. He discovered several methods of cutting off the supply of blood to his brain just before reaching orgasm, something he found explosively sensuous. He would fantasize about some youth he had molested, masturbate with the vision fresh in his mind and wait until he was at the edge of ecstasy. He would then allow himself to slip into a position in which a makeshift noose would tighten around his neck. Several times he had almost slipped too far. But he managed to come around just before losing consciousness. Once, he had lost consciousness briefly. Fortunately he had already reached the limit the electrical cord wrapped around his neck was able to afford, and he woke up with a severe headache that lasted for three or four days.

He thought about the ways he could enhance the experience and considered Nefidipine, also called Procardia, would offer a good rush. He knew this drug, intended to lower blood pressure, was something that could cause his vessels to open up if he put

the liquid contents under his tongue. He tried this several times after having convinced some huge Niger downrange to sell his medication. Marv found it disgusting touching the gel-cap but thought if he quickly rinsed it most of the filth would be gone. The Neanderthal hands of Dumas would not have contaminated the liquid contained inside. He punctured a small hole in the end of the gel-cap using a safety pin, squeezed the Procardia under his tongue, waited for several seconds, and applied the pressure of the noose. The combination of strangulation, vasodilation and masturbation was ethereal. He couldn't get enough of it.

This particular morning he awoke after having a particularly pleasant dream concerning one youth he had seen in his office several times. He had convinced the child through manipulation, fear, and shame that he could never tell a soul what was going on inside the office. The boy, twelve years old, knew enough to know what was happening to him was wrong, was terribly wrong, but who would ever believe him? Who would believe that his doctor, a man of respect, a man of power, a man of position, a man of education would ever do anything like what he would describe? The answer for the child was simple; no one.

Marv woke with an erection and knew that soon he would be getting Dumas's Procardia. He teased himself during the morning until he was ready to lose his mind with the passion he had conjured in it. When the Procardia arrived, he quickly slipped the electrical cord around his neck, punctured the Procardia, and sat on the edge of the bed stroking himself, waiting for the proper time to squeeze the contents under his tongue. He gently lay back barely allowing the cord to tighten around his neck. At the magic moment, he let the cord tighten more and squirted the contents of the gel-cap under his

tongue. It tasted different, acidic somehow. He thought it must be his imagination and continued to slip backward allowing the cord to tighten. His orgasm was short and unsatisfying. He tore at the electrical cord around his neck. It wouldn't come off. He was still trying to loosen the cord and considering what went wrong just as the first of several violent contractions tore at his stomach. The first brought him to his knees in the cell. He cried out in anguish. The pain continued to tear at him as he moved in tonic jerks on the cell floor.

Someone in a nearby cell shouted, "Hey Marv. You OK, man?"

When there was no answer he started shouting for a CO. None came. Marv continued to convulse on the floor, gasping in pain, and for breath with each new wave. Several inmates had taken up the chant for an officer to come on range. Not because they were particularly concerned with Marv, but it would afford some the opportunity to get their smokes lit, others their complaints heard, and many, their insults registered. Within thirteen minutes the convulsions ended. As Marv lay on the cell floor, cord around his neck, life slipping from him, he sensed he was dead. But he could hear inmates yelling. Then everything went black. DF5716, Dr. Marvin W. Fitzgerald, was dead.

Chapter 4

Dennis flew to work this particular morning. He could scarcely contain himself. He figured the first CO he encountered would spill the beans. He heard a voice echo in his head; *Kim Dumas died in RHU the day before yesterday*. He came through the first locked door, through the metal detector, and into the visiting room lobby. The CO in the

control room simply offered a half-hearted wave of his hand and returned to reading his morning paper. Another CO was busy pouring himself a cup of coffee.

Dennis got off the elevator where Captain Davis greeted him.

“I’m seeing who?” Dennis asked trying not to show his surprise. This was an unexpected turn of events. *Ann*, he thought. *I should have known that stupid bitch would screw this up.*

“Kim Dumas, FA1856,” the Captain repeated.

“You’re bringing him out of RHU? Why not let me see him there on sick line today. Did he even sign up?”

“No. But I want to bring him over here and have him seen. He thinks he’s having a heart attack.”

“Could we ever be that fortunate?” Dennis asked facetiously.

“Hardly. Anyway, we lost one of America’s Finest out there day before yesterday. You were off duty yesterday, right?”

“Yes,” Dennis answered suspiciously.

“Right. Anyway, Fitzgerald hung up out there. . .”

“Fitzgerald?” Dennis asked genuinely surprised. “I would never have expected it of a coward like him.”

“Well, I don’t think he really meant to off himself. I think he was trying some more of that automatic erotic shit he did and didn’t get the noose off soon enough.

Anyway, he died with a stiffy,” the Captain finished with a chuckle. “Now the entire range is in a huff and Dumas thinks he’s going to have a heart attack. We’ve tried to

reassure him and we even got him some kind of anti-anxious shit to take last night. But he just eats that like candy and wants more.”

“Whatever,” Dennis said resigning himself to the inevitable. “Bring him over.”

The Captain picked up the phone and made the call to RHU. “Bring Dumas over to medical. Doc is ready to see him.”

Four officers following RHU protocol grabbed equipment and headed for D16. “Step away from the door,” the Lieutenant told Dumas. He did.

One of the officers keyed the slot and let it drop. Dumas stuck both hands through the slot, fists clenched. He knew the drill. Another officer placed handcuffs on his wrists. Dumas then pulled his hands back through the pie slot and stepped away from the door. The Lieutenant keyed the cell door. “Step back and turn around,” he commanded.

“Why you have to tell me what to do every time? Do you think I’m stupid? How many times we been through this?” Dumas asked.

“Yes, Kim, I think you’re stupid,” the CO answered. “So just shut the fuck up and do as you’re told like an obedient little inmate should.”

All four officers entered the cell. One placed shackles on Dumas’s ankles while another threaded a chain through the handcuffs and brought them around the inmates back, the other two officers standing on either side. After applying the hardware, they escorted Dumas to a security van for the short drive to medical.

On arriving, they brought Dumas directly into the medical building. Several inmates in the waiting room made insidious comments.

“Hey, man, I was here first.”

“S’happenin, Duma.”

“Yo, Du.”

“He be with the man this mornin’.”

They brought Dumas to a gurney, unshackled him, and told him to sit. He jumped up onto the gurney with a grunt. He resembled a gorilla in his actions. Most all those in medical who peered in made no pretense of hiding their disgust for the man.

Dennis walked in with Dumas’s chart. He felt somewhat uncomfortable confronting this inmate face to face. Not that he was afraid. He wasn’t. In fact, he would have welcomed the opportunity for five minutes alone with Dumas somewhere. Dennis had earned a black belt in Kempo before graduating from High School. Eight years later he had earned a second black belt in TaeKwonDo. Although he never had to use the self-defense skills he had so diligently practiced, he would have welcomed the challenge of it now.

“What seems to be the trouble today, Mr. Dumas?” Dennis asked flatly.

“I be havin’ a fuckin’ heart atact,” Dumas said thickly.

“What are your symptoms?”

“I’m feelin’ like my ches’ is thick and tight.”

“Your chest is thick, ass hole,” one of the officers reported. “It’s called fat, you pig.”

“Hey, fuck off. You be breechin’ my confide . . . my conform. . . you ain’t supposa be in here anyway.”

The officer laughed at the illiteracy of the inmate, turned around and sauntered toward the door.

“Gotta make a comment every time,” Dumas said to himself.

“Calm down, Mr. Dumas, or you *will* have a heart attack,” Dennis advised.

“Calm down? Now ain’t that jus’ like some white cracker ass doc to tell me to calm down. What the fuck you talkin’ that shit for?” Dumas asked angrily.

“Anger does more in that which it is stored than it does on that which it is poured, Kim,” Dennis said.

“Oh, that’s real cute doc. And you gonna sit there and tell me you ain’t angry as a mothafucka right now? I can see how much you hate me written all over your face like a big birth mark, one of them cherry talent agencies some people is born wif. You be like that Russian president with that big red shit all over his forehead look like a map of the east coast of the Unites States. Only yours be sayin’ ‘*HATE*’”.

Dennis nearly choked trying to hold back his laughter. Hearing Dumas trying to say *telangectasia* was comical. Dennis wondered where he had heard this word. He was confident Dumas hadn’t read about it. He was certain the inmate couldn’t read a comic book much less a medical book.

“Well, Kim, I think you have your fruits wrong. I think you mean a Strawberry Hemangioma. But to get back to the point the answer is yes, Kim. You do make me angry. But for reasons I don’t think you could ever understand,” Dennis said not trying to hide his repulsion or his anger.

“And you think you understand why I’m angry?” Dumas countered.

“Why don’t you tell me,” Dennis said sitting back as though he gave a shit.

“Forget it, Doc. You wouldn’t understand either,” Dumas said apathetically.

“Try me.”

“I’m angry ‘bout injustice.”

“He was set up, isn’t supposed to be here, was framed, had shit for brains of an attorney, got the wrong judge, yada, yada, yada,” the officer chimed in. “Same story all of them give you.”

“Why don’t you mind your own bidness. This don’ concern you anyways,” Dumas scolded.

“Injustice? Are you talking about the kind of injustice that would allow someone to live who has raped little children, has pictures of little children plastered all over his walls with ejaculate all over them? Is that the kind of injustice you’re talking about?” Dennis asked, leaning forward and stiffening in the chair. He had a mental picture of jumping out of the chair and beating Dumas to a pulp.

Dumas looked at Dennis evenly, his head slightly caulked to one side. “No. The kind of injustice I’m talkin’ ‘bout is different from that. The kind you be talkin’ ‘bout is effect. The kind I’m talkin’ ‘bout is cause.”

“What the fuck do you know about cause and affect except when you beat your meat you lose your wad, Dumas?” the officer chimed in again.

“How many kids in your family Doc?” Dumas asked ignoring the officer.

“None yet, Kim. No children and no brothers and sisters. So, what’s your point?”

“You CO?” Dumas asked the officer shifting his attention.

“None of your fucking . . .”

“Let’s see, it’s, what, six now isn’t it?” Dumas said more matter of fact than as a question. “Mary 13, Jeffery 12, Justin 10, Ashley 9, Amy 7, and little Jakey 2. What happened there, CO? Little Jakey a mistake?” Dumas finished.

“You son-of-a-bitch, Dumas. Some day you’re going to say something that is going to get your sorry ass killed,” the CO said taking several steps toward Dumas and reaching for his mace.

“Ever get anything free for your kids, Warren?” Dumas asked the CO.

“Never Kim. Unlike your mother who, when she wasn’t on her back, was on welfare all her life and took everything free she could get,” Warren said still holding onto his canister of mace.

“Matta o’ fac’, my mamma worked ironin’ for a livin’, and never took a cent from no one. I ‘member bein’ real hungry all the time. Heard one day ‘bout some white bitch had six kids all at once. Sex tulips or somethin’.

“Sextuplets,” Dennis corrected him.

“Yeah. Them. Anyway, next thing I hear she’s getting’ free milk, free cloths, free strollers, free cribs, free linens, free everythin jus’ caus she had all them babies at one time. Shit, she does one sixth the fuckin’ work, has kids half the normal size, and gets all that shit free ‘till her kids is seven. There was six of us too. Know what we got for free? Not a mothafuckin’ thing,” Dumas said in protest.

“So you’re saying that’s what made you molest kids, Kim?” Dennis asked trying to make Dumas see his injustice.

“Then I heard ‘bout a whale whose mamma died and it got off from its group. I think they call them a school or somethin’,” Dumas continued.

“They’re called a pod,” Dennis told him settling back in his chair once again.

“Oh, yeah. I ‘member. A pod. It’s pod gets lost. Its stuck somewhere in Washington in the specific oshin and the rest of the whales is somewhere on the other

side of the world in Canada or somewhere. I don't really 'member none of the details. Anyway, the goody goody whale society decides to get this baby whale back to its pod. They pour millions of dollars into this big fuckin' fish to get it back to its pod. Why? Because it's an orphan and it would die if they don't. They feed it, they dive in with it, they put it in a huge fuckin' cage and tow the cage with the whale in it to Canada and let it go. Spend millions for this whale. Don't any of these fuckin' assholes know there are orphan children with less of a chance than that whale?"

"Point taken, Dumas. But unlike you, the whale can't think its way out of his dilemma. It is, after all, an animal. It doesn't have the intellect to get itself out of its mess," Dennis reminded him.

"Neither does he," Warren said throwing a thumb at Dumas.

"We was talkin' 'bout cause an' effect wasn't we?"

"I don't get the point, Dumas," Dennis said. I simply do not get the justification for your acts. That is not cause and effect. That is animalism."

"And you never will get the point Doc," Dumas said.

"Now, Dumas, I believe we have engaged in enough parallel monologue for the time being. I've let you express your opinion," Dennis finished. Having decided that the conversation was nothing more than a stall tactic for Kim Dumas so that he could spend as much time out of the hole as possible, Dennis decided to get back to the issue at hand.

"Have you been taking your medication?" Dennis asked.

"Sure, doc."

"All of it?" Dennis asked rifling through Dumas's chart.

"Yeah, why? Why you axkin' me that for?"

“Because I see that you are taking Procardia. You shouldn’t be having chest pain if you are taking your Procardia, Dumas.”

“I dropped it on the floor yesterday and then I assidently stepped on it so I flushed it.”

Bull shit, Dennis thought. He considered questioning Dumas further about the Procardia but he did not want to draw further attention to it, or himself. Not yet anyway.

“Do you ever ask for the Nitro?”

“Yeah, but it takes those assholes too long to get it to me so I quit axkin.”

“Ok, I’ll examine you and see if there is any change. Is that all right?”

“What the fuck you think I’m here for? To discuss fillopasy?”

“Don’t you mean philosophy? And isn’t that what we’ve been discussing for the past thirty minutes?” Dennis asked perturbed.

“Whatever,” Kim said rolling his eyes.

Dennis spent the next twenty minutes listening to Dumas’s heart and lungs, tapping on his chest, feeling lymph glands, looking into his eyes, nose, mouth, and listening to and palpating his large abdomen.”

“Well, Kim. I have some good news and I have some bad news. Which would you like first?”

Dumas looked seriously at Dennis trying to assess if he was serious or not. “I always want bad news first, Doc.”

“Ok. The bad news is you’re going to live.”

Dumas rolled his eyes. The CO laughed. “If that’s bad news, I can’t wait to hear the good news. Give it to me.”

“You won’t live forever,” Dennis finished.

While Dumas was trying to figure out exactly what Dennis was telling him, three more CO’s arrived and they began the ritual of re-shackling him.

“So, what you be sayin’ is you think it’s bad news I am gonna live and good news I’m gonna die?”

“Have a great day Mr. Dumas,” Dennis said smiling.

“What? That’s it? No medication? You ain’t gonna amit me to the infirmary? What the fuck kind of quack are you?” Dumas protested.

“Let’s go Dumas,” one of the officers said pointing to the door.

“I need medicine. You gonna jus’ let me die, is that it?”

“Dumas, if I thought you were dying, I would give you something. Despite my personal feelings I live by an ethic. But I don’t find anything wrong with you. Now, Kim, you’ve had your little vacation out of the hole, and you got to look at a few of the nurses and do a little fantasizing. Let’s not overdo it.”

Dumas smiled at Dennis as if to say, “You’re right doc, that was what I was doing over here.”

Dennis smiled back but said nothing. *You’re a dead man, shit for brains*, he thought.

Chapter 5

April

Greg Carter, the inmate janitor in the medical department, knew everything that went on in the building either by firsthand experience or the inmate grapevine that seemed to travel at the speed of G4 broadband. He was one of the more trusted inmates in the prison; trusted meaning you could believe seventy-five percent of what he told you and only needed searching once or twice a week when leaving the building.

A lifer, Greg had made the fatal mistake of getting drunk and playing modified Russian roulette with his best friend. Each was the proud owner of a .38 special, either purchased or stolen. Each loaded a single hollow point round into one of the five chambers, closed their eyes, spun the chamber, and slammed it into position. The game was to be a *one shot* game. They computed the odds and decided that if each pulled the trigger just one time, they would probably come out of it unscathed. Anyone could beat odds like that. After all, both of them had beat odds much greater than a single bullet in a five bullet cylinder just being alive.

“You go first, Bro,” Greg had bravely invited his friend.

His friend cocked the trigger, put the barrel on Greg’s forehead, and pulled. Both heard the redeeming sound - ‘click’. Greg Carter didn’t flinch. He didn’t even blink as the hammer fell on the empty chamber. He remembered thinking at that precise moment he was *cursed* to live. Further he was certain the curse would keep him in Watts, a suburb of Los Angeles, forever. How he had prayed the hammer could have fallen on the primer of his friend’s shell and ended his own miserable existence. It hadn’t.

Greg placed the barrel of his cocked pistol on the forehead of his friend and, as his friend had done, squeezed the trigger. Just as Greg had not, James Earl did not flinch, nor did he blink as the hammer fell against the primer on the cartridge. Greg recalled

watching James's head jerk backward violently even before the report of the firearm sounded. He then watched blood and brains exit the back of James's skull as James's face turned ashen. Greg referred to this as a 'Michael Jackson'. As he told the story in court, he calmly said, "Jamie just sat there and did a Michael Jackson."

Both James and Greg were sixteen years old.

Greg Carter arrived in prison after spending time in a juvenile detention center and a local jail. On arriving at the prison he quickly and quietly got involved, as many prisoners did, with the Nation of Islam. He joined the brotherhood of hate. This brotherhood focused on recruiting new inmates into a pact with prejudice. As with many inmates, Greg Carter's affiliation with the NOI would continue until his untimely death, and he would infect many with the racist ideologies he learned to embrace.

"What's going on this morning, Carter?" Dennis asked as he entered his office and prepared for work.

"Looks like we will be havin' a quiet day today. Hope you brought a book," Greg answered.

"Quiet? Have you seen the list from sick line? There are about one-hundred-forty on it. Most from B block south. No, Greg, I don't think it's going to be that quiet,"

Dennis countered.

"Sorry, doc. But in about fifteen minutes DW is gonna call over here and tell you people to send everyone back to their blocks. Then they're gonna shut the prison down,"

Greg assured him.

"What for?" Dennis asked.

"They're sending in the turtles this mornin' to shake the place down," Greg said.

The *turtles* were a group of officers who were the equivalent of a SWAT team in the police force. In riot conditions they donned gear making them look like the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Ergo, *turtles*. They were officially the C.E.R.T. team.

“They gonna be lookin’ for drugs, shanks; the usual. It’s supposed to be a surprise,” Greg said whispering.

“Then how in the hell did you find out about it?” Dennis asked in amazement.

“Oh, we been ‘spectin this for two days. Jergens overheard the Warden talkin’ to the Deputy Commissioner couple days ago ‘bout it. Whole prison knows. I’m surprised you don’t,” Greg said acting surprised. He knew Dennis was either kept out of the loop in most cases or chose to be out of the loop in most others.

Inmate Tim Jergens worked the Warden’s offices, including that of his secretary. Rumor had it he was also working the secretary. He made it a point to be extremely inconspicuous while listening to conversations. While dusting desks, mopping floors, sweeping; whatever the task; he pulled bits and pieces of information off memos, notes, files or anything else laying on a desk from which he could glean information. This information had earned him a great deal of popularity and power.

Just then a nurse walked by. “Say, Steve, you know anything about a shake down today?” Dennis asked.

“Not hardly. I’m pulling charts for sick line now. Gotta run,” Steve answered.

“Save your energy,” Carter told him.

Steve joined Greg and Dennis and they talked for a few minutes about why the shakedown took place if everyone knew about it.

“See, we ain’t s’possa know ‘bout it. But sometimes the Warden accidentally lets his phone conversations be overheard.”

“Why would he do that?” Steve asked.

“Think about it Mr. Steve. If them turtles came in here and found a whole buncha shit, what do you think the Commissioner would say to the Warden? I’ll tell you,” Greg said holding up his hand. “He’d ream his asshole. Ain’t s’possa be a whole bunch of shit in a prison. So, he gotta give everyone some time to get rid of their shit so the place looks clean.”

“That’s absurd, Greg” Dennis scoffed.

“Is it? Would you want a couple pounds of hash, a few pounds of coke, a few pounds of m’jane leavin’ here if you was the Warden? I don’t think so.”

“But to warn everyone . . .,” Dennis said trailing off.

“Yep. That’s zactly what he be doin’.”

Just as Greg finished the phone rang. Dennis, Steve and Greg sat looking at each other in silence. A minute later the Cha-cha came out and announced the shutdown.

“Send everyone back to the block,” he said. “DW is shutting the jail down for the day and calling in the dogs.”

Carter smiled, picked up his bag, and headed for the door. “Hope you brought a good book,” he repeated as he went through the door.

Dennis resigned himself to the fact that he would probably be reviewing charts for the day. Just as he settled into a stack of files, the phone rang. Steve was standing next to it and he picked it up.

“Medical, Steve.” There was a pause. “Yeah Chris, he’s right here, hold on.”

Steve handed the phone to Dennis. "It's Chris," he said.

"Yes Chris," Dennis said taking the phone.

"Dennis, can you come back here to the Infirmary and draw some blood on BC7672, Myers? He's circling the drain and you told me you wanted to check his lytes."

"Circling the drain. Why hasn't he gone down the damn drain?" Dennis asked somewhat dramatically.

"He's on the rim. Won't be long," Chris said.

"OK. I'm on my way."

Dennis walked down the hall to the infirmary conscious of how he carried himself, his walk, his gestures. He dared not look right or left in the event of cameras being present. He made certain he kept a steady pace.

Pete Kuntz sat and watched him approach. *Weird assed PA*, he thought. He waited until Dennis was at the door and then bothered to look up. He lazily strolled to the control panel and popped the door. He strolled back to his chair, sat, replaced his feet on the same spot he had had them, and continued to revel in his imaginary import.

"I hope I didn't disturb you, *asshole*," Dennis said with disgust as he keyed the inner door into the infirmary. Kuntz ignored him; a Cheshire cat grin pasted on his face.

After entering the infirmary Dennis proceeded to room A1. Chris had two red top tubes, one purple top and one lavender top tube, a tourniquet, alcohol swabs, a tubex, and two 18 gauge hemevac needles waiting. "Thanks for setting up," Dennis said.

"You're welcome. Want me to run it to the lab when you're done?" Chris asked.

“No. Thanks. I’m not doing anything and you’ve got your hands full here. I’ll go ahead and spin them down and call transport,” Dennis said knowing his day would be boring and needing something to occupy his time.

“OK. Suit yourself,” Chris said passively.

Myers was lying in the bed, his breathing heavy. He looked like a skinny breathing sculpture from the Wax Museum. His skin was pasty, gray-white and had a sheen to it. He was thin as a rake.

Dennis donned two pair of protective gloves, and then applied the tourniquet to Myers’ upper arm. “This is like putting a tourniquet on a mop handle,” Dennis said to no one.

He swabbed the antecubital area where a large vein was standing out on both the inner and outer part of the arm. Dennis secured the needle into the plastic hemevac container and inserted a red top tube part way onto the inner needle, being careful not to puncture the rubber top and allow the vacuum to be lost. He palpated the vein as a matter of habit; there was really no need since he could have hit the vein blindfolded. He did, and as skillfully as a junkie. He felt the familiar pop as the needle entered the vessel. He pressed the tube all the way onto the needle inside the plastic tube holder and blood immediately flooded in to replace the vacuum of the tube. When it was nearly full he replaced it with the other tubes one by one until all were filled with blood. He released the tourniquet, withdrew the needle under a two-by-two gauze pad, and held pressure with one hand while holding the needle toward a wall for safety with the other. As he looked at the wall he noticed streaks of mucus from Myers frequent picking his nose and wiping the contents from his finger on the wall. Most streaks contained some blood with

the mucus giving the streaks the appearance of slimy red crayon marks. Disgustedly, Dennis asked, "Chris, will you hold this two-by-two for me for a while until he stops bleeding? I've got to get out of here. This room makes me sick."

"Sure, Dennis," Chris said chuckling. She understood that Dennis was not really sick, but the disgust that comes from seeing inmate excrement time after time on wall after wall gets on ones nerves.

Dennis placed the tubes of blood in a baggy and headed for the lab. He went through the ritual of waiting for Kuntz to get off his ass to open the door, something that took even longer than letting him in. Dennis shot him the finger, and left the infirmary. When he got to the lab, he keyed the door, entered, and locked the door behind him. He extracted the tubes of blood from the baggy, and placed them into the centrifuge. He made sure the tubes were counterbalanced with tubes of equal size and volume opposite one another and set the timer for fifteen minutes. When the bell dinged Dennis waited for the centrifuge to stop spinning. He then opened the lid and extracted the tubes. He inspected them and found each tube to have centrifuged properly. There was a one and one-half inch layer of solid red in the bottom of the tube on which sat a very thin layer of beige, a 'buffy coat', and a two to two and one-half inch layer of straw colored liquid. While inspecting the last tube, he picked up the phone to call for the blood to be transported for analysis.

Just as the lab attendant answered the phone, a thought emerged that caused him to puzzle and momentarily flinch. The thought was sudden and gripping and the sequelae were as profound as the flashing of the word 'Coke' on the giant screen during a desert scene. It was an awakening to a thirst and he was beginning to realize how to quench it.

He looked at the serum, and mentally visualized the billions of viruses floating in it. “Industrial lab,” he heard as though through a dream. And then the idea crystallized. The phone slipped from his fingers as the attendant said for the third time, “Industrial Lab. How may I help you?” In a most agitated tone. Dennis quickly grabbed the phone on its first bounce off the floor and returned it to the cradle. He stood staring at the serum and a smile came to his face. “I’ve got you now, Dumas. You’re a dead man,” he said with his own Cheshire cat grin. The smile suited him well.

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Dennis knew that getting the tubes of serum out of the prison would be tricky. He had extracted the serum and placed it in clean vacutainer tubes. If he was caught, he could say he was delivering them to the lab personally, which might work. But if he was pressed, it could be uncomfortable. He decided to chance it. When it was time for him to leave, he went through the same ritual as was the norm. White coat comes off, sports coat goes on, and tubes go into the inner left pocket just behind his reading glasses. He picked up his briefcase and headed for the elevator. He keyed the lock and pushed the button.

As the elevator door opened Dennis was startled to see the Warden. He was huffing and puffing his way down to the waiting room to talk with a visitor who had come several states’ distance and wished to complement him on the exemplary manner in which he ran the prison. The Warden seldom missed such an opportunity, and he would have the prison’s news media present for a photo op.

He was a huge man. Short and morbidly obese. This was the result of sitting behind a desk for thirty years while inmates waited on him hand and foot.

The Warden lived on State property in a mansion resembling Tara. Hailing from Charleston, South Carolina, and having appreciated *Gone With the Wind* as a youth, he was responsible for directing inmates in fashioning the grounds. After several years, the estate espoused a familiar mix of Caribbean and ante-bellum influences. He even fantasized in his younger years of being Rhett Butler. Now as he descended the stairs overlooking a lawn strewn with black inmates going about their duties of manicuring and servicing the foliage, he *was* Rhett; if but a slightly heavier version. As the years passed the pounds packed on. A sedentary lifestyle with servants coming in and going out of the prison was a blessing and a curse back to back.

“Warden,” Dennis said matter-of-fact, nodding his head in a polite gesture.

“Hi, Doc,” the Warden wheezed. “Headed out?”

“Yes. I’ve had enough for one day,” Dennis responded tiredly.

“Letting ‘em get to you, aren’t you,” the Warden stated. It was not a question.

“Perhaps. It’s hard not to,” Dennis confessed holding the Warden’s gaze.

“Hell, son, you wouldn’t be human if it *didn’t* get to you. Why do you think it *doesn’t* get to *them*? Most of ‘um are no better than animals. And this cage is the best place for ‘em.”

“Well, what you are seeing is the result of my having seen some very difficult inmates today. That’s all,” Dennis said in his defense.

“You mean *a* difficult inmate, don’t you? Dennis, Dumas would try the patience of Job himself. I can’t count the number of times I have had to deal either directly or indirectly with this inmate, or his ACLU-pain-in-the-ass-attorneys and I know he can suck the life right out of you just by being in the same room. Hell, he can suck the life out

of you by being in the same building,” the Warden said and chuckled, his massive habitus giggling as he did.

Dennis was surprised that the Warden knew he had seen Dumas on sick line. The Warden sensed it.

“You’re wondering how I knew you saw Dumas?” The Warden asked sheepishly.

Dennis started to respond but the Warden waved his hand as if to say, ‘It’s all right, I understand’, and he continued, “I know everything that goes on in this jail either sooner or later. I wouldn’t be a very effective Warden if I didn’t know every dirty little secret about every dirty little inmate, officer, nurse, or doctor in this institution now would I? Most of it I keep to myself. And, there are times I even look the other way. I’m not a patsy, nor am I a pushover. But I do have my own sense of justice and there are times when justice is best served Texas style if you know what I mean,” he finished with a wink. He added some extra emphasis on the *Texas* for drama.

“I think I do. But this whole place is so evil, so paradoxical, so . . .” Dennis trailed off. He couldn’t think of how to describe his feelings about the environment.

“You’re right, Dennis. This is Hell. It’s Satan’s domain. You don’t change the Devil, the Devil changes you,” the Warden confided.

“What a horrible thought. But I know you’re right. I sense some of that change happening to me. I can’t imagine how I would be if I had worked here as long as you have.”

“You should have listened to Pierson, Dennis. He is a real pain in the ass at times, but he knows prisons. And I know if he talked with you for more than ten minutes, and I know he did because he can’t talk for *less* than ten minutes,” the Warden said softly, “he

told you that it would take a minimum of a year for you to figure out who you were going to be here. He's right."

"Yes, he is. And, Warden, you're right. I should have listened to Pierson."

Once the elevator had descended one floor the door opened. Nurses and officers stood waiting for Dennis and the Warden to exit so they could enter. Dennis gestured for the Warden to exit first. He panted his way out through the door ever so slowly. Dennis keyed the interior lock so that the door wouldn't shut on him, which it would have done three or four times had it not been keyed. At long last the Warden was out the door and Dennis followed. He exited the prison without incident, got in his car and headed for town. He had some equipment to buy.

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On entering the store Dennis saw various displays, each with a theme. He headed for the chemistry theme and examined items he found on shelves and tables. It was a chemistry major's candy store. You name it, it was there; with the exception of chemicals. These were secured in a locked cage inside the store. Items such as Toluene, Perchloric Acid and Ethanol, targeted by would be terrorists would, by law, be under lock and key.

Dennis recalled a chemistry experiment that almost cost him his career, and his life. To impress his chemistry professor, he decided to synthesize some Picric acid crystals, also known as Tri-Nitro-Phenol, or T.N.P. He learned that this is a military explosive most often used as a booster charge to set off a less sensitive explosive, such as T.N.T. Pulling out the procedure for making it from his chemistry lab manual, Dennis

followed the procedure as exactly as he could. He had no trouble getting concentrated sulfuric and nitric acid, both of which were readily available in the chemistry lab. He didn't even need to sign them out. Dennis then gathered the rest of the materials he would need - phenol and distilled water.

Next, he gathered the equipment; a flask, heat source, beaker, filter paper, funnel and glass stirring rod. Following the instructions as outlined in the lab manual he warmed the flask under hot tap water, then placed it in the boiling water and continued to stir the mixture of phenol and acid for about thirty minutes. After the time had passed he took the flask out and allowed it to cool. He continued with the experiment until he had the yellowish-white picric acid. And then it went 'boom'.

While Dennis was thinking about the consequences of this little debacle, he heard an attendant ask, for the third time, "Can I help you find something?"

Coming to himself Dennis said, "Yes. I need to do some fractional distillation. I need a boiling flask and condenser."

"All right. Are you going to heat with an oil bath or water bath?" the attendant asked.

"Both," Dennis said, uncertain at the moment as to which method he would use.

"I see. We'll get you set for both. You're also going to need a hotplate, stirring rod, stand, tubing"

As the proprietor wandered around gathering this item and that, he asked general questions of Dennis. Dennis chose items he knew would produce the best results; the purest distillate. He wanted this to work. He *needed* this to work.

“Are you a teacher, or chemist?” the man asked casually. He wore a plastic name badge with *Clarence Booth* skillfully etched into it; blue letters on a white background.

“Both. . . ah, Clarence is it?” Dennis said, looking at the name badge.

“Right. Clarence. A chemist. Great. At the University?” Clarence asked.

“No, private industry,” Dennis lied again.”

“Working on anything exciting? Or is your work hush-hush?” Clarence asked knowing he would get an evasive answer if the answer was ‘yes’.

Dennis put his index finger to his lips in a ‘shhhhhh’ manner to indicate his work was ‘hush-hush’. Clarence got it and asked nothing more.

Within twenty minutes Clarence had gathered all the equipment Dennis would need, wrapped and packaged every item carefully, and had Dennis out the door. As he left Dennis thanked Clarence for his assistance.

“The pleasure is mine. Hope the equipment brings you great success and notoriety,” Clarence offered sincerely.

“Oh, you can bet on that,” Dennis said smiling and carrying his spoils. *In fact, Clarence, you can take that to the bank*, Dennis thought.

Chapter 6

Dennis wandered aimlessly through the house running vignettes through his mind of his relationship with June in short, choppy clips. He decided to go to a movie, any movie. He found a pair of black slacks in the closet, wandered into his office, stripped and put the slacks on. He went back to the bedroom where he looked through shirts and

settled on a plain white dress shirt. He wandered back into the office and put the shirt on. He took the shirt off, laid it on a chair, and went back to the bedroom to retrieve an undershirt. He found one in the top drawer, threw it over his head, and headed back to his office. He put his shirt on again, buttoned it and tucked it into his pants. He looked down at bare feet, went back into the bedroom, looked for socks and found a solitary black one. He went into the laundry room, searched for the mate, and found it in the dirty cloths hamper. He threw the clean one in with it and went back to the bedroom. On the way he thought about eating and went to the refrigerator. He opened the door and wondered why he was looking in there. He shut the door and tried to remember what he was doing before he opened the refrigerator. *Oh, socks*, he thought. He went back into the bedroom and found a clean pair in the second drawer. He took the socks into his office, sat in a chair, brushed the dirt off the bottom of his left foot and put a sock on it. He repeated the procedure for the right foot.

“Shoes,” he said softly. “Where would they be? Where did I take them off when I came in?”

He decided that he had taken them off in the hallway. He got up from his desk, briefly looked on the floor in the hall and didn't see them. He went back into his office and settled on checking his Email. *Maybe she wrote to me*. There was no Email.

He went back into the bedroom to look further for his shoes but by the time he got there he forgot what he was looking for. His mind was a blur of thoughts racing around such that he only saw fog. He had difficulty concentrating on the simplest of thoughts. They ran together, ran apart, ran amok. He thought several times he was going to be sick.

He wasn't. He thought several times he would cry. He did. He thought several times his life was over. The phone rang.

"Hello? No, I'm sorry, you must have the wrong number," he told the person on the other end of the line asking to talk with Freddy.

The event was surrealistic. He heard the phone through the fog. He walked to it through the fog. He answered it through the fog. He hung it up and walked back to his room, all the while taking the fog with him. He thought again he was going to be sick. He was.

"I must be losing my mind," he said still gagging on vomitus, wiping remnants off his mouth.

His thoughts shifted to his makeshift lab. Working on purifying the viral loaded serum preoccupied every sense. His attempt with the Procardia failed miserably; *Thank you very much Ann*. He knew that his time was short, that he would be leaving the prison shortly, and that this last opportunity was upon him.

He mustered what sanity he had remaining and headed for the lab he had set up in the garage. He had discarded most of the items he had purchased from the chemistry supply store. After getting the supplies home he remembered that the virus would not survive the heat of distillation. He wanted these viruses to live.

He pulled several tubes of serum out of storage and placed them carefully into the centrifuge. He made sure the tubes were counterbalanced with tubes of equal size and volume opposite one another and set the timer for fifteen minutes. When the bell dinged Dennis waited for the centrifuge to stop spinning. He then opened the lid and extracted the tubes. He inspected them and found each tube to have centrifuged properly. He had

performed this step four times and the remaining specimens were a very pure looking serum, as clear as water. He carefully pulled the rubber stoppers out of each of the tubes under a makeshift sterile hood and, using a 25cc syringe with an 18gauge needle, extracted the serum from each.

Dennis had, during the past several weeks smuggled vials of Insulin, Sodium Chloride for injection, Heparin, Testosterone, TB, Haldol, and anything else that was clear, out of the prison. He systematically extracted one half of the contents from each of the vials. The process was tedious as he had to lift the metal tab just far enough to allow passage of the small needle, puncture the rubber stopper in such a manner as to not attract attention when the metal tab was lifted off for us, and replace the metal tab so as to make the vial appear as though it had not been tampered with. Others were fitted with plastic caps which, when snapped off, could not be replaced. Knowing he would have to be particularly careful with these vials, Dennis decided to keep these in his possession until the time was right for him to pretend to open have opened it.

Now it was time to replace the precious contents of each with the more precious contents of his work. Using the viral laced serum, he replenished all with the contents of what he had extracted from each of the vials. He examined each after refilling them to ensure there were no obvious signs of tampering. There were none. He thought even the smallest increment of solution missing from any of the vials would invite suspicion; something Dennis did not want to invite. Prison paranoia ran rampant enough without his adding to the mix. He placed fifteen of the vials back into his briefcase, dismantled his lab, and went back into the house. He called for June several times as he wandered

around and there was no response. *Fuck her*, he thought. *She could never understand the import of, much less agree to, what I'm doing anyway.*

Rummaging through cupboards, Dennis found half a bottle of Vodka. He grabbed an 18 ounce glass, fumbled with an ice cube tray, threw several cubes into the glass, filled it four-fifths full of Vodka, threw in a shot of seven-up for taste, and proceeded into the living room. He repeated this process three times until hopelessly inebriated.

"I'd be more 'an happy to give you your insulin," he said to an imaginary Dumas, swaying, his speech slurred. Saliva dribbled down his chin as he spoke. "Shit, I'd better do better than that. 'I'd be more an fuckin' happy to give you your fuckin' insulin'," he tried again.

After repeating the same phrase twelve times, adding emphasis, and changing superlatives as many times, he was satisfied with that line and tried another. This continued until he passed out on the couch. His last slurred, slobbering words were, "You're a dead man . . ."

The next morning Dennis woke to find himself face down on the bathroom floor in a pool of vomit. He did not recall when he had gone into the bathroom. He inanely recalled getting sick at one point in the night but did not remember vomiting or passing out. He pulled his slimy, vomit laden clothes off. Chunks of who-knows-what dropped onto the floor and into his hair as he stripped his shirt off. Jumping into the shower, he washed the remainder of the vomit, mucus, and God knew what else off of himself.

Standing with his head under the showerhead, Dennis let the wet warmth dreamily revive him. It felt amniotic.

“Did I dream I filled those vials, or did I do that last night?” he asked himself, the water mumbling his words as it poured down his face. He decided he had. Dennis grabbed a bar of soap and began to wash himself, sliding the soap down his abdomen. Realizing he had an erection, he thought about masturbating. *After all, June hasn't been around lately to take care of Mr. un-Happy*, he thought. Then the thought of Marv hanging himself in an autoerotic frenzy killed the moment as well as the erection. “At least I know what to think about in the future when I am in a situation where I don't want to get a stiffy. It's better than thinking of dead puppies,” he chuckled.

Dennis climbed out of the shower, dried himself and threw on some Gillette underarm deodorant. The deodorant never did work to keep him dry, but psychologically it made him feel better and he did believe he smelled better nonetheless. Squirting a dab of gel into his hand he proceeded to spread it through his hair after which he carefully combed it to what he considered perfection. He ran into the bedroom and once there dropped down and did twenty five quick pushups. He rolled over onto his back and started to do some sit-ups, but the cold floor did to his body what the thought of Marv had done to his erection and he decided to simply get dressed. There would be plenty of time for exercises after completing his task.

Finding his clothes, and particularly his lab coat, Dennis proceeded to dress and to place the vials he had prepared into his pockets. He knew that if he was searched going into the prison this morning he would end in prison, possibly a cellie with Dumas in MSRHU. The thought led him to the reality that should that happen he not only could,

but would muster the courage to end his life. There was no doubt about it. Of all the reality slipping daily from his mind, this reality was affixed absolutely. He placed three vials into each of his front pockets, three into each of the lab coat inner pockets and the remaining three in his lunch box tucked under a sandwich he had made two days earlier and had forgotten to take with him.

On arriving at the prison Dennis sat in his car for several moments contemplating the consequences of his actions should he fail. He vacillated for several moments, having a serious conversation with himself. Inside the prison, COs inside the rotunda monitoring the parking lot noticed Dennis sitting in his car.

“Look, man; just let it go. You are here to do a job. You’re being paid to treat inmates. It is not your responsibility to pass judgment on them. Justice is being served,” sensible Dennis said.

“Hey Brad, come look at this,” a CO said looking into a monitor.

“What is it, Ben?” Brad asked.

“Doc. He’s sitting out there in his car and he’s talking to someone. Do you suppose someone is in the car with him?”

“Yeah. Some bimbo is giving him a blow and he’s telling her how to do it. These medical guys can teach best because they know all about anatomy,” Ben offered.

Brad looked at him and laughed. “That is the biggest line of bullshit I have heard in thirty minutes. Any man with a dick can teach a woman how to give a good blow job, which is something you would know if you ever got one,” Brad finishes.

The two officers continued to watch Dennis.

“What is ‘just’ about allowing an animal who has raped, sodomized, and killed women and children to suck the same clean air as the rest of humanity? He lives in a luxury hotel, the state takes care of his every need, and he is indulged because some spineless, pussy ACLU lawyers who can’t make a living doing anything else but being sucking leeches choose to defend the animal,” deranged Dennis responded.

“Who do you think he’s talking to? Brad asked.

“Beats the hell out of me,” Ben answered.

“Who died and made you God? The legal system has exacted the punishment it deemed appropriate for these inmates. It is not for you to invoke your own legal system,” sensible Dennis countered.

“Fuck you. I’m going to do this,” deranged Dennis finished grabbing his lunch and opening the car door.

“Right. Let’s dance,” sensible Dennis agreed, losing his sensibility.

“Did you see anyone in the car?” Brad asked.

“No,” Ben said.

Dennis made his way to the prison entrance and Ben pressed a button opening the outer door. Dennis walked into the atrium, placed his keys on a tray, and walked through the metal detector. An alarm and red light warned of something metal on Dennis. A CO picked up a detector and was getting ready to pass it over Dennis’s body. Suddenly Dennis put up a hand and pointing with a finger on the other said, “Sorry Gary, the belt.” Dennis removed the belt and passed back through the detector. There were no bells or whistles.

Passing back through the detector he took his belt and keys and was allowed to pass through the second door into the rotunda area. After carefully putting his belt back through each loop of his pants, making sure he did not jostle the vials in his pants or lab coat, he approached the window to get his keys.

“Good morning Ben,” Dennis said.

“Who in the fuck were you talking to in your car?” Ben asked. Brad sauntered over to hear the conversation. He, too, was curious.

“Myself,” Dennis answered, wondering how he could be so stupid to sit in his car under dozens of cameras.

“Yourself? What in the name of god were you saying to yourself?” Brad asked.

Dennis, knowing he had to be careful with these two, decided to take a chance. “I was asking myself what in the fuck I was doing working in this shit hole of a prison. I was telling myself that if the state ever needed an enema, the tube would most certainly be placed in the middle of this place,” Dennis said.

Ben looked at Brad. “I believe that is the first time I have ever heard Doc use foul language. Have you ever heard Doc use foul language?” Ben asked.

“Never. And the first word out of his mouth is ‘fuck’. I gotta hand it to you Doc, you chose the best of the four letter words to begin your improved sense of vocabulary with. Fuck is right up there at the top of the list,” Brad teased.

“Can I have my keys?” Dennis asked, agitated. He was not so agitated with the conversation as he was with the thought that at any moment he may be asked to allow a search.

Just as Brad was about to get Dennis's keys, the Black Major strolled through a door and into the control room. Both Brad and Ben looked at him with disgust. It was plain neither of the COs liked this major and they did little to hide their dislike. It was just as obvious that the major did not like the two COs. There was a palpable tension in the rotunda and Dennis did not want to stick around and experience the outcome. As he turned to leave, the major stopped him.

"Just a minute, Doc.," the major said.

"Yes?" Dennis said, turning back to the glass.

"Looks to me like you been drinkin'. You been drinkin, Doc?" The Major asked.

Dennis looked at him with both disgust and contempt. *Who in the hell gave this Major, this alcoholic piece of shit, the right to question me?* he thought. Dennis decided to take another chance.

"Yes, Major. I got shit faced last night. Fact is my girlfriend dumped me. It finally got to me," Dennis said.

"Chose a black man did she?" The Major chided.

"Hey, back off Javon," Brad said angrily.

"Fuck you, Brad. And you will call me Major," Javon scolded.

"It doesn't matter who she has chosen to be with. I simply wish her happiness," Dennis said half-heartedly.

"If she found a black man, she will be," Javon said, mustering a serious look and tone of voice.

"Asshole," Brad whispered. He did so just loud enough to make sure the Major heard him.

“What did you say CO?” The Major asked.

“I said, ‘Yeah, just what she needs, a soul brother,” Brad said.

“That’s what I thought you said,” the Major laughed. Then to Dennis he asked, “You didn’t happen to add any extracurricular items to your cocktail to forget your misery, did you Doc?”

“What do you mean?” Dennis asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Maybe a little blow or some African bush?”

“What the hell is African bush?” Dennis asked, not knowing.

“Well, at least he knows what ‘blow’ is,” the Major explained to Brad and Ben, both of whom were getting tired of the Major’s insults.

“Why don’t you back off, Javon,” Ben said angrily.

“I thought I told you to call me Major,” Javon said, peering through irate eyes.

“No, you told Brad to call you Major. You didn’t say anything to me,” Ben returned.

“Cut the insubordination’,” the Major cautioned.

“Can I go?” Dennis asked, trying to make a clean getaway.

“When was the last time you was drug tested, Doc? The Major asked.

“If you want me to piss in a cup, if you want me to bend over and spread my ass cheeks so you can stick your finger up my ass, if you want me to whip my dick out so you can get a good look, just say so. If not, I have a list of scum waiting on sick line,” Dennis said angrily.

Javon laughed. “Doc, even if you did whip your dick out I doubt I could see it. And what the hell you doin’ standing ‘round here shooting the shit with me for when you have fine citizens waiting for your professional care?” The Major finished.

Dennis, beginning to break out in a sweat, turned and headed for the elevator.

“And Doc, just like someone told Pierson out in the hole, ‘you ain’t got no dick’,” the Major finished with an evil grin.

Dennis thought of returning to the rotunda and telling Javon exactly what he thought of him and he would have if what he had planned would not eventually take care of the Major. *Keep your head*, Dennis thought.

Keying the elevator, he stood glaring at the Major who had turned his attention to the two COs. He was chastising them for not dotting this i or crossing that t. Give a man a little man a little power and it becomes his god; and eventually his undoing. Once inside the elevator Dennis’s knees gave way and he sank to the floor. He sat there shaking until the elevator door opened on the medical floor. When it did, Pierson was standing there.

“What are you doing sitting on the floor of the elevator,” Pierson asked and offering Dennis his hand. Pierson innately understood what had happened. It had happened to him several times as well.

-3-

“I want that son-of-a-bitch dead,” Dumas whispered through the stained, iron mesh screen of his cell.

“Where you gonna get that kind of manpower, Du?” Another inmate asked from a cell two doors to the left of Dumas’s.

“I’m gonna send a message to the brothers. Juju will take care of this for me. He owes me from long time ago.”

“Juju ain’t gonna kill nobody. He won’t go in for that Du. He be the Imam.”

“Then he can find someone who will. It don’t matter what I have to do. I want the man’s ass. You’re gonna get real sick this afternoon and they is gonna have to take you to medical. You get a message to Juju I want him to sign up for sick call tomorrow. You get the message to Carter. Carter can deliver the message to Juju.”

“You don’t want to trust Carter to deliver that message, Du. You can’t trust him to do that.”

“He’s a brother, part of The Brotherhood. You tell him to tell Juju this, ‘The man’s bitch is a Jew. He’s sucking blood out of the system and us to support a Jew’. You tell Carter to tell Juju that.”

“How you know she be a Jew?”

“Jus’ don’t you be wonderin’ ‘bout that. Jus’ you get your ass over to medical and deliver the message.”

The message got delivered as Dumas instructed. Carter, not wanting to deliver the message, yet knowing he could not deny Dumas, decided to err on the side of logic.

Logic told him that Islam would prevail in the prison, not the Doc.

Having been informed of Dumas’ demands, Luscious Johnson, AKA Islamic cleric Sheikh Fayez Hassan Mohammed, after careful consideration of the request from Dumas, and with the approval of Juju, issued a fatwa, a decision, which called for the life of ‘he who wages war against Allah’. By this he meant Dennis because of his Jewess

girlfriend. The fatwa was both substantiated and tolerated by the NOI. This was all Kim Dumas needed. He put the word out.

Word spread quickly through the ranks. The Doc was feeding a Jew, supporting her, having sex with her. He just as well may have been having sex with a pig so far as the Brotherhood was concerned. He had to be stopped. Several inmates devised a plan and after careful consideration one, Clarence Lewis, was chosen for the honor of sacrificing himself for the cause. Should the plan succeed, he would more than likely be euthanized for the murder of Dennis Potter. The belief that several virgins awaited him in the top tiers of paradise outweighed the anxiety of dying by lethal injection.

After fashioning a shank from a toothbrush handle, he decided he would sign up for sick call and complain of pain in the back of his eyeball. Another inmate, one who previously had this complaint, reported that the doctor had used a bright light and, getting very close to his face, looked into his eye. Clarence determined that when Doc did the eye exam he would be close enough to thrust the sharpened toothbrush handle into Dennis's heart. Clarence envisioned COs rushing upon him, tackling him and throwing him violently to the ground. Once having restrained him, they turn their attention to Dennis, blood spurting from his chest. However, their efforts are in vain. Dennis slumps to the ground, his face paling as he does, and sucks one last labored and sonorous breath. Then he is dead. "Fuck'n'a", Clarence whispered at the conclusion of his prophetic vision. With that, he proceeded to sign up for sick call.

"What is it this time?" A CO asked from behind a metal mesh screen and handing Clarence a slip of paper.

"My eyeball be bother'n me", Clarence whined.

“What? Your cellie miss your mouth last night?” the CO chided.

“Go fuck yourself,” Clarence said acidly.

“Tell your cellie to keep his cock out of your eye next time,” the CO finished.

Clarence filled in the request for sick call and tossed it at the CO through the small window cut into the thick wire screen.

“You throw anything at me again, Lewis, and I will have your ass. Now get the fuck away from the window,” the CO said angrily.

Clarence, knowing the CO meant it, complied, but not before showing him the magic middle finger.

I'll take care of you after I take care of Potter, Clarence thought as he walked away.

The next morning Clarence sat in the waiting room, waiting. He gingerly pushed on his right eyelid feigning something wrong with the globe beneath. He chose his right eye as he felt the Doc's position while looking into this eye would afford him a better opportunity to complete his mission. He had practiced the move with his cellie for several hours in order to make the movements as natural as possible and to draw as little attention as he could manage. Once satisfied that he could get the shank from its hiding place and place it in Dennis's chest, he had slept.

“CD3278,” Clarence heard someone call from the door of the examining room. He lazily got up, did a high five with several other inmates waiting for medical attention, and lumbered through the door. Once inside the examination room, a doctor told Clarence to take a seat. It was a doctor from a temp agency who had been asked to cover

for someone who was ill. Dennis sat comfortably in another part of the room looking at a chart.

“I’m Dr. Sand. What brings you in today?” The doctor asked.

Confused and starting to perspire, Clarence said, “I wanna see the other doc.”

Dennis quizzically stopped looking at the chart and listened to the conversation.

Now there’s a first, he thought.

“I am sure I can handle whatever it is that is bothering you,” Sand assured the inmate.

“I want to see Doc Dennis,” Clarence protested.

A CO standing just outside the door, and who had heard Clarence protesting, popped his head through the door and said, “Stop complaining, Inmate, or you’ll go back to your block”.

“You ain’t supposed to be listening to me in here. Your breechin’ my confidential,” Clarence protested.

“So sue me, you stupid shit,” the CO said.

“What brings you in today?” Sand repeated.

“I have somethin’ wrong in my eyeball,” Clarence said, rubbing his right eyelid.

“Let me take a look,” Sand said, taking an ophthalmoscope from a wall rack.

Then, looking in Clarence’s left eye, he began doing an examination.

“You be lookin’ in the wrong fuckin’ eye, you moron,” Clarence said, perturbed.

“If I hear one more remark like that I am going to shove that instrument up your scrawny little ass,” the CO said, popping his head through the door once more.

“I wanna see the Captain,” Clarence demanded.

“Fuck you, Inmate. File a complaint when you get back to your filthy hole,” the CO said.

“The reason I examined your left eye first is because I want to see what is normal for you so that I can compare it with your right eye. Then, if there is something about your right eye that is not right I will know,” Sand explained.

“Good luck, Doc. There’s nothing normal about that asshole,” the CO said shooting a thumb at Clarence.

“I’ve got this,” Sand said smiling and excusing the CO. Then he proceeded to examine Clarence’s right eye. “There’s nothing wrong with your eye that I can see,” Sand told Clarence.

“Which is ‘xactly why I wanted the other Doc to see me,” Clarence scoffed.

“You believe I missed something,” Sand said looking evenly at Clarence.

“Yeah. I believe you missed your class on eyes in school,” Clarence muttered.

Dennis, who had heard the entire conversation, chuckled to himself. *Welcome to hell. You probably won’t be coming back here after today*, he thought. Then, standing in the doorway between the two rooms, he said, “Something I can help you with in here Dr. Sand?”

“I don’t believe so, Dennis. Thanks,” Sand said with a wave of his hand.

“He don’t know how to ‘xamine eyes, Doc Dennis. I want you to see my eye,” Clarence whined.

“What makes you think I care about your eye?” Dennis asked.

“I know you don’t care about my eye. That’s why I want you to see it,” Clarence offered.

“Do you mind?” Dennis shrugged.

“Go for it,” Sand said retreating.

“Come over here. Bring your chart,” Dennis told Clarence.

The CO followed Clarence into the room and stood in the doorway. Once on the exam table, he left Dennis and Clarence alone.

Dennis repeated the procedure that Dr. Sand had. First, he looked into Clarence’s left eye.

“You wanna look in my good eye first to see what be normal, right Doc?”

Clarence asked cheerfully, trying to sound educated.

Dennis smirked. *Idiot*, he thought. “Right,” he said. Then, moving just slightly to Clarence’s right, he peered into his right eye. Seizing the opportunity, Clarence smoothly extracted the shank from its hiding place. Taking a firm grip, he swiftly plunged the shank toward Dennis’s chest.

Dennis, at the same moment, had dropped the instrument. Holding it just at his chest, he was about to explain to Clarence that there was nothing wrong with his eye. The sharp point of the shank careened off the handle of the ophthalmoscope and pieced Dennis’s chest just below his left nipple. The force of the thrust allowed the toothbrush handle to further careen off a rib and come out at the side. Dennis shouted in pain.

The CO immediately rushed into the room as Clarence jumped off the exam table. He was attempting to get the shank out of Dennis so that he could finish the job. Dennis instinctually brought his left arm around Clarence’s and lifted, snapping Clarence’s arm at the elbow. Clarence screamed in pain as his arm hung loosely at his side. The CO tackled Clarence and slammed him to the floor. The arm, already loose at the elbow,

ended in a position that one could only describe as obtuse - and unnatural. Several more CO's poured into the room as Dennis staggered back, trying to get the shank out of his chest. Sand came in behind them.

"Get this out of my chest," Dennis said, blood running down his white smock.

Sand quickly grabbed the toothbrush, a CO grabbed Dennis, and Sand extracted the shank. Dennis grimaced as the shank exited his chest wall. The CO quickly snatched the sheet from the exam table Clarence had been sitting on and pushed it against Dennis's chest to mop up some of the blood that was streaming out of the wound.

"Lay him down in here," Sand told the CO and pointing to the exam table on the other side of the room.

Dennis, staggering, allowed the CO to assist him into the room and onto the table.

Clarence lay on the floor, arm broken and askew, a CO's black boot planted squarely in the middle of his chest. He was thinking that at least part of his prophecy had come true, the part about being slammed to the ground by a CO. Then he passed out.

Chapter 7

May

"FA1856. Sick call," the Captain said in a loud voice. Dumas, after several attempts, hefted his obese frame from the filthy mattress and staggered to the door. Standing on the other side were the Captain, a Lieutenant, two COs and Dennis Potter. Ever since Clarence Lewis had spilled his guts regarding the fatwa on Dennis, Dumas had been under strict confinement. He wore a muzzle, a straitjacket and was allowed out

of his cell only once daily for twenty minutes under heavy guard. After Dumas had learned of the failed attempt on Dennis Potter's life, the Warden had placed an order to confine him. Dumas learned that Clarence had snitched him out and he went berserk. He ranted in his cell until several COs, led by the turtles, entered to quiet him. Dumas then attacked the COs, spitting, biting and clawing at them until most every one of them were a bleeding mess. In the end one of the turtles laid Dumas out with an audible crack to the skull with his baton.

“Time for your insulin, Dumas,” Dennis crooned.

Dumas looked at the syringe, at the Captain, at Dennis and at the syringe again and said, “I don't want that. I want to watch you draw it out of the vial. I don't trust you. You gonna kill me.”

Smiling, Dennis squirted the contents of the syringe into Dumas's face through the wire mesh and discarded the syringe in a red plastic container on the medication cart. Dumas stood paralyzed with rage as he watched Dennis pull vials of Lente and Regular Insulin from a drawer in the medication cart. Dennis peeled the metal tabs off both vials and cleaned the rubber stoppers with an alcohol swab. The officers watched the process with disinterest. They had better things to do than to waste their time with Dumas and his insulin. Drawing out the prescribed amounts of insulin from each vial, Dennis held the syringe up so that Dumas could see the gradations. Satisfied that he was getting the correct dose from clean vials, Dumas stuffed a piece of his belly through the pie slot. Dennis, in typical fashion, swabbed a piece of fat and plunged the needle into an area apart from that which he had swabbed.

“Don't matter none, Doc,” Dumas muttered through his muzzle.

“Excuse me?” Dennis said smirking.

“I missed you once. I won’t miss you again,” Dumas warned.

“Are you threatening me, inmate?” Dennis asked.

“You bet your sweet white cracker ass I am,” Dumas said.

“I do believe your anger management classes are of little effect, Mr. Dumas,” Dennis said, slamming the pie slot door shut against the fat sticking through it. Dumas recoiled from the slap of the door.

“I will kill you, you sonofabitch,” Dumas slurred.

“Temper, temper,” Dennis warned. “Anger does more in that which it is stored than it does on that which it is poured, Kim.”

“I swear on my mother’s grave I will kill you,” Dumas said, frothing at the mouth. He was near convulsing with rage.

“Now I know you are a liar, Dumas. You didn’t have a mother; at least not in the sense one would consider the standard. You, Dumas, were born out of the filthiest cunt to ever service a thousand or more cocks,” Dennis chided.

With that, Dennis and the COs moved away from Kim Dumas’s cell and headed back down the range.

“I believe you really pissed him off this time,” the Captain said as they exited, all the while listening to a muffled Dumas scream threats and insults.

“So what else is new?” Dennis said.

As he listened to Kim Dumas shout, he smiled. He had just administered his first dose of HIV to an inmate. Not just any inmate, he thought, but his favorite inmate.

Within no time Dumas would exhibit signs of being HIV positive, and Dennis would have infected over half the prison population. That thought was redemptive for him.

-2-

“Next,” Dennis said.

“ED2014,” the inmate said as he stepped to the pharmacy window.

“Ah, yes, your testosterone injection,” Dennis said.

“Yes, silly, my testosterone, although I don’t believe it is helping,” the inmate said effeminately, feigning a lisp when pronouncing the ‘silly’.

Known throughout the prison as one of a handful of queens, Gloria Angel, who when he entered the prison was Brian Summers, had a reputation for being one of the best - for a queen that is. Gloria was ultra-effeminate and flaunted his preference for males without apology. His services were not free, but for those who could afford him he was considered a master. Rumor had it he could suck a cock better than any woman, or take it in the ass and make it better than any pussy a man could have. Many in the prison testified to his talents making him one of the most sought after prisoners.

“Why do you keep taking this stuff, Brian?” Dennis asked.

“Gloria”, the inmate corrected immediately, looking around at those who may have heard Dennis call him by his true name.

“Why did you choose Gloria?” Dennis asked intrigued.

“Because when I’m finished with you, Dennis, you will say, ‘Glory Ah!’,” Gloria said smiling.

“Gloria it is then,” Dennis corrected. “Again, why do you keep taking this stuff?”

“Because I have a court order to take medication so that I can face the parole board with half a chance of getting released sooner,” Gloria answered.

Dennis withdrew the testosterone from the vial as he talked with Gloria. “Why don’t you just tell them you would prefer to remain gay and be honest about it?” Dennis offered.

“I have told them that, but because of my reputation in the prison, they insist on my taking the testosterone,” Gloria said smiling at some of those standing near and suggestively licking his lips.

“I see. Which arm today Gloria?” Dennis finished.

“This one,” Gloria answered and turned to the left to expose a feminine looking right arm.

Dennis swabbed Gloria’s arm and, unlike Dumas, placed the needle smack in the center of where he had swabbed. He injected the testosterone slowly so that there was minimal pain, withdrew the needle smoothly and re-swabbed the site. “Want a Band-Aid?” Dennis asked teasingly.

“Silly,” Gloria answered batting his eyes at Dennis and using the same lisp. “You were very gentle, Dennis. I can be gentle as well,” Gloria added invitingly.

“I’ll pass, Gloria. Next,” Dennis said, turning to discard the syringe.

I’ll pass Gloria, but those who don’t are going to get more than they bargained for. You have been careful not to get infected until today. I gave you a little gift. Now you can infect as many as you wish, Dennis thought, knowing the viral load in a single millimeter of his poison. He had just administered four millimeters to Brian ‘Glory Ah’ Summers.

Five days later Dennis had exhausted his supply of virus laden injectables. His final victim, HP5476, Larry Banyon, had come to medical in the same slobbering stupor as usual. Larry, plagued with a multitude of psychiatric complaints, had done well on a whopping 300 milligrams of Haldol given intramuscularly every two weeks. Dennis wondered how Larry could walk considering an average dose of 10 milligrams every month sustained most patients with schizophrenia or psychoses. That Larry, even though a large man, could function with that much Haldol coursing through his brain was a mystery in and of itself. Dennis remembered how the Soviets, and others, used Haldol to keep prisoners in line, most often at times to try breaking their wills. *Perhaps they were on to something*, Dennis thought. Nevertheless, he felt indiscriminate in who got the final dose of death, and Larry, by karma, had been chosen.

“Where do you want it this time, Larry?” Dennis asked.

“It doesn’t matter,” Larry offered blandly.

“Ok, right ass cheek then if I’m choosing,” Dennis said showing Larry the syringe full of liquid death.

Larry turned, dropped his pants, lowered his briefs just enough to expose a quarter of his ass, and bent over the gurney he stood next to. Dennis swabbed the upper-outer quadrant of his butt and jabbed the needle into tight flesh. Larry did not so much as flinch, much less wince.

“Larry, you have nerves of steel,” Dennis offered.

“With all that shit in me I don’t have nerves at all,” Larry admitted.

“Is it helping?” Dennis asked.

“Seems to be. I haven’t killed anyone since I’ve been in here even though I have been tempted to several times. I have even wanted to kill you once or twice Doc”, Larry admitted.

“Me? Why me?” Dennis asked surprised. He could not recall having done anything that would provoke such a response.

“Nothing personal Doc. It simply has to do with me being an inmate and you not. That’s reason enough isn’t it?” Larry asked blankly.

“I suppose so Larry. Since you haven’t killed anyone, we can agree the medication *is* working. Maybe you’ll even get out of this tank one day,” Dennis offered.

“The only way I am getting out of this place is toes up,” Larry said flatly, staring at Dennis and not so much as blinking.

“Toes up it will be then,” Dennis agreed and grateful Larry had not made it an obsession to kill him.

With that, HP5476, Larry Banyon, ass full of Haldol and HIV virus, galumphed his way out of the medical department.

Toes up, Dennis thought as he watched Larry leave.

June

“Notice anything different about sick call Tony?” Dennis asked and trying not to reveal his ace.

“Either we have a flu virus suddenly hit the jail or these guys are trying to shut medical down. I’ve never seen so many on sick line so many days in a row with the same complaints,” Tony offered puzzled. It was not often Tony was puzzled about anything in the prison and that he was puzzled annoyed him.

“So, you think this is a flu,” Dennis stated innocently.

“Whatever it is, I’d wear a mask if I were you,” Tony urged, a feeling of impending doom clouding his senses.

Dennis spent the day hearing the same complaint, one very common in those immunocompromised, and Dennis knew they were. Slowly, his magic was spinning its web in the population. Whether inmates were sharing needles, or sharing bodily fluids, it did not matter to Dennis. It was working. He had effectively infected a fifth of the population and the fact they were ignorant of this was working to Dennis’s advantage.

“Excuse me, Dennis?” He heard behind him. It was the Warden.

Dennis, who had been reviewing a chart and had not noticed the Warden enter, turned, stood and greeted him. “Good morning Sir. To what do I owe this honor?” Dennis asked. *What motivated you to bring your fat ass down here?* He thought.

“I’m not sure how to put this, so I’ll put it on the table. The inmate grapevine is buzzing. Word is that there is something going through the prison, some epidemic, and the further word is it is some kind of biological shit,” the Warden puffed. He was barely able to speak through a sentence without getting short of breath.

“So what does that have to do with me?” Dennis asked, innocently shrugging.

“The inmates believe you are the one who has caused this in retaliation for being shanked,” the Warden said, thoughtfully examining Dennis’s response. If there was one

thing the Warden was not, it was stupid. His gut, and there was an abundance of it, had proven right through many years of inmate, as well as CO, bullshit.

“Just exactly what is it that I am supposed to have unleashed on them, the new bubonic plague?” Dennis laughed.

“Well, I haven’t seen any buboes yet,” the Warden admitted, his expression remaining serious.

“I’ll let you know when I see the first one,” Dennis assured, his expression matching that of the Warden.

“So, what do you think this is?” The Warden asked, fishing.

“Probably a continuation of the flu we saw, or a new strain coming back through. We saw H1N1 come through and inmates were convinced that they were going to be annihilated by pigs. Many thought it was a Jewish epidemic to wipe out the Muslim Brotherhood,” Dennis lied.

“I recall that. But even then we didn’t see this many inmates on sick line. Most of them stayed in their cells and waited for death to come and get them,” the Warden reminded Dennis.

“Perhaps we should call the CDC and get them involved if you are concerned,” Dennis offered trying to sound proactive. He sensed the Warden’s suspicion and wanted to offer a carrot.

“These boys would have the CDC for breakfast,” the Warden chuckled, waiving his hand at imaginary inmates scattered throughout the infirmary, his enormous girth bouncing up and down as he did.

Dennis smiled. “Right,” he admitted, grateful the Warden did not take the bait.

“Dennis, what are you seeing as the most common complaints?” The Warden asked.

“Flu symptoms. Fever, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, some lymphadenopathy, pharyngitis; the usual,” Dennis said honestly.

“That could be the flu or a hundred other things,” the Warden puzzled.

“What ‘hundred other things’ would that be?” Dennis asked, wondering how the Warden would know anything about medicine.

“The first thing that came to my mind was TB. If someone has active TB and is going through the population coughing, sneezing and blowing snot all over the population, we could have an epidemic,” the Warden offered, knowing it was not TB.

“Sounds feasible,” Dennis agreed. “Have we had any new inmates come through who haven’t been tested?”

“Someone may have slipped through with MDR or XTR TB.”

Dennis understood that TB that was resistant to multiple drugs or that were extensively drug resistant were particularly dangerous. He also knew the symptoms of TB were close to those of HIV. This fact would be the smokescreen he needed to divert attention from his magic bullet to anything else giving these animals time to infect one another at will.

“You’re pretty knowledgeable about medicine, Warden,” Dennis admitted.

“Truth be told, I started as a physician. Seems like a gazillion years ago. Didn’t have the stomach for it,” the Warden finished.

With the stomach you do have you would have been a great physician, Dennis thought. “I had no idea,” Dennis said, acting impressed.

“Few know about that part of my sordid past,” the Warden confessed.

“So you believe this may be TB?” Dennis prompted.

“Not sure. Many things have been going through my mind – TB, salmonella – not sure,” the Warden said looking thoughtful.

“And the inmates believe I am the source of this ‘epidemic’,” Dennis stated.

The Warden studied Dennis for several seconds before responding. “Dennis, I have been listening to inmate bullshit for over thirty years. I know when something is frivolous and when something, even though it goes against all convention, is not. It doesn’t matter what I believe. What matters is there are over six thousand inmates here. They own the prison and can take it at any time. Inaction on my part, no matter how it is perceived, will result in a bad day at Blackrock. If they believe I am seriously looking into this ‘rumor’, I can prolong any action on their part. Why do you think I would expend enough energy to give myself a heart attack to come down here? In case you haven’t noticed I’m not getting any thinner,” the Warden finished, the seriousness of his words written on his face.

“What do you want me to do Warden? Should I take some time off?” Dennis asked.

“I don’t believe that will help. What *will* help is if you take extra care while examining these men for as long as it takes to figure out what is going on. If they want some extra medication, give it to them. If they ask to be laid in for a week, arrange it. If they want to go to the infirmary and spend a night or two in there getting their cocks sucked by Paula, let them,” the Warden finished smiling.

“As you wish Warden. You do realize they will be lining up for the cock sucking, right?” Dennis said, smiling.

“You try any of that yourself Dennis?” the Warden asked cocking his head to one side. Dennis sensed he was enrapt at the thought.

“She’s not my type,” Dennis offered shyly.

“Well I have; many times. That woman should have her PhD in Blowjob. She has a technique of her own and I get a woody thinking about it. There are times I call her up to my office and I have a hard on thinking about what she is going to do before she arrives. She comes in, licks her lips, smiles, and starts gobbling it up. That girl loves cum for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I doubt she has room to eat with all the cum she ingests in a day,” the Warden whispered.

“I’ll just take you at your word on that one Warden,” Dennis said, wondering why the Warden would confide in him.

With that, the Warden slapped Dennis on the back and puffed his way toward the door. As he got there he paused, turned and asked, “You *don’t* have anything to do with this epidemic do you Dennis?”

Dennis flushed at the directness of the question. Gathering his composure, he said, “Absolutely not Warden!”

The Warden studied Dennis for several seconds, smiled, shook his head and puffed his way out of the medical department.

He knows, Dennis thought.

* * * * *

FA1856, Kim Dumas meandered his way through the hallway not allowing COs to assist him. As exhausted as he was, he remained the consummate bad ass. Entering the examination area and seeing Dennis he stopped dead in his tracks and said, “That son-of-a-bitch ain’t gonna touch me”.

“Calm down Dumas,” the Captain escorting him said.

“I *am* calm,” Dumas said, agitation evident.

“If you prefer seeing someone else Mr. Dumas, I will arrange to have Tony or Seth see you today,” Dennis said and picking up a telephone receiver.

“Fuck that,” Dumas said, slobbering the words.

Dennis replaced the receiver on the base and asked, “What is it you would like me to do Kim?”

“I would like you to eat shit and die mothafucka,” Dumas answered, glaring at Dennis.

“Keep it civil Dumas, or I will muzzle you and haul your sorry ass back to RHU,” the Captain said sternly.

“And fuck you too,” Dumas said, turning.

“The Captain quickly unsheathed a canister of pepper spray and was ready to unleash a blast into Dumas’s face when Dennis held up a restraining hand and said, “Please, Captain, don’t.”

The Captain paused, looked at Dennis, then Dumas, and after a few seconds relaxed. He replaced the canister into its holster and backed off.

“What is it you would like me to do Kim?” Dennis repeated, standing near Dumas and at the ready. Perhaps Dumas would give him the opportunity he had been waiting for.

“I want to go to the hospital, the real hospital and not the shithole of a place you call the infirmary here,” Dumas demanded.

“What is it you believe they will do there that we cannot do here? Our infirmary is as well-equipped and staffed as any hospital,” Dennis stated emphatically.

“They can find out what kinda shit you put in me and fix it,” Dumas answered.

“Dumas, there is nothing they can do for you in the hospital that we cannot do for you here,” Dennis reassured, knowing nothing could save him.

“I wanna go to the fuckin’ hospital,” Dumas demanded, staggering. The Captain held out a restraining hand and righted him.

“Ok. I’ll write the order,” Dennis agreed, sitting.

Dumas looked shocked. He had not expected Dennis to relent, at least not until he had spent some time in the infirmary and had deteriorated significantly.

“I’ll get the Landcruiser,” the Captain said.

“I don’t wanna go in that fuckin’ ambulance. Smells like death in there,” Dumas protested. Not only had he been in the ambulance on several occasions, he had seen several inmates loaded into the SUV, shackled, and never heard from again. He sensed some were killed by COs, others had died from wounds either self-inflicted or the result of being shanked, and some as a result of illness. Whether those prisoners were killed or died of natural causes did not matter, Dumas did not want to go in the Jeep.

“Have it your way Dumas. I’ll bring a car,” the Captain said. Then, extracting a two-way from a holster he radioed for a car.

“You understand that I have to accompany you,” Dennis said, eyeing Dumas evenly.

“Send Paula,” Dumas ordered.

The Captain burst out laughing, as did the others in the room. Dennis neither laughed nor spoke. He continued to hold Dumas’s gaze.

“If this is some type of game for you Kim I will tear up this order and you can go back to your filthy miserable cage,” Dennis said, holding up the transfer order and feigning ripping it.

Dumas and Dennis held their dueling gaze for several seconds. Finally Dumas said, “If that is the only way I am going to get outa this fuckin’ place, then I don’t have any choice.”

“You’re right Kim, you don’t,” Dennis said with a smirk and lowering the order.

“Car’s ready,” a stacy voice announced through the Captain’s two-way.

“On our way,” the Captain, extracting the radio from its holster, answered. “Let’s go Kim,” he said, taking hold of the chain between the handcuffs loosely attached to Dumas’s wrists.

With that he led Dumas out of medical, Dennis and two COs in tow. Once at the car, the COs placed Dumas in the back seat with an officer on either side. The Captain drove and Dennis sat in the front passenger seat. A thick, heavy, metal screen separated the driver’s compartment from that of the passengers.

After leaving the main gate, Dumas protested. “I don’t like sittin’ in the middle.”

“What the fucks the matter now Dumas? You wanna drive?” one of the COs chided.

“I ‘jus don’ like bein’ in the middle,” Dumas answered and pushing the two COs with his elbows.

“Stop pushing, Dumas, or you’ll ride in the fucking trunk,” the other CO warned.

“What is wrong with the middle, Dumas?” Dennis asked, trying to divert the inmate’s attention.

“You wouldn’t understand,” Dumas said perturbed.

“Try me,” Dennis invited.

“When I was a kid one of my many stepfathers loaded me and two of my brothers into the back of a Volvo. It was one of them Volkos that had the small back seat so we was pressed in there,” Dumas began.

“How do you know it was your stepfather Kim? Any one of them could have been your daddy,” one of the COs teased.

“Let me guess, you felt like a sardine,” the CO to Dumas’s right said mockingly.

“Let him finish,” Dennis said.

“My stepfather had this bull mastiff; big mothafuckin dog. There was a shelf in the back of the car just behind where we sat and my stepfather used to have that fuckin’ dog lay up there behind us. Then we would drive for hours. He sat in the front and smoked a stinkin’ pipe. Smell made me sick. It was hot in the car,” Dumas said and he started shifting nervously in the seat.

“Ok, Kim, that’s enough,” the CO to his left said, trying to calm Dumas.

“Then the fuckin’ dog would start slobberin’, panting like this,” Dumas said, and he began panting like a dog.

“Ok, Dumas, that’s enough,” the CO reminded him and holding Dumas’s arm.

Dumas paid no attention to the CO but continued. “That fuckin’ son-of-a-bitch dog would slobber down my neck, and the more he slobbered the sicker I got. Then that fuckin’ dog would start fartin’,” Dumas said.

The COs howled with laughter. Even the Captain burst out in laughter. Dennis listened and thought about what Dumas was saying. He visualized what Kim felt and for a brief moment, felt sorry for the inmate.

“My stepfather would laugh while we wretched in the back seat. He said, ‘Anyone pukes back there and I will take your hide’. I was always the first to puke, and I had to clean it up *before* I got my beatin’,” Dumas said, agitated. He again pushed the COs away.

“Calm the fuck down Kim. It’s behind you,” the CO to his right said.

“The big mothafucker beat me silly until I swore I would never sit in the middle again,” Dumas said, and shoving the two CO’s as forcefully as he could.

“Dumas, calm down,” one of the COs yelled as the other brought out his mace.

Dumas ripped the mace out of the COs hand and started spraying them; first one, then the other. The two grabbed at his hands and the canister, but Dumas bested them, continuing to spray. The Captain, briefly looking back to see what was happening, was blasted with mace. It found its way into his eyes. Letting go of the steering wheel momentarily, he furiously wiped at his face trying to clear his vision. Dumas continued to spray as the two COs fought to retain possession of the canister. Dennis, realizing the Captain had lost control of the car, reached across for the steering wheel. Just as he did, the Captain did the same. The combination of Dennis’s pull on the wheel and the Captain’s hand pushing Dennis’s downward caused the car to first veer, and then flip end

over end spewing dust, rocks and gravel as it did. After rolling several times the car came at last to a rest on the driver's side in a ditch at the side of the road. Both the front and rear windshields had shattered, as well as the left rear passenger window. The left arm of the CO to Dumas's left lay pinned and partially avulsed under the car. Dennis, listing toward the Captain and restrained by his seatbelt, sat stunned in the passenger seat. The Captain, Dumas and the two COs lay unconscious in their respective places. The CO to Dumas's right lay halfway across Dumas's chest. The rear seat looked like someone had ordered a blood bath. Dumas bled from his nose from hitting the back of the front seat and from the wrists from the force of the handcuffs ripping into flesh. The COs bled from their arms and faces as a result of trauma. The Captain was spattered with blood from the centrifugal force experienced while the car flipped and rolled. Dennis remained unscathed. Motorists who had witnessed the accident were beginning to coalesce around the car. Someone was asking if they should right the car while others argued against touching it. A man climbed and was standing on the side of the car and, looking down into it, said to Dennis, "Hey, man, are you okay?"

"I think so," Dennis mumbled, shaken.

"An ambulance is on the way," the man reassured Dennis.

"Stay back. We are transporting a prisoner," Dennis warned.

The man jumped off the side of the car and backed off. Several others stood in shock and fear at the grizzly scene before them. Within minutes Dennis heard the sound of sirens as he shifted in his seat. He felt a sharp pain in his right hip and wondered if he had broken his leg. He decided to wait until being extricated to find out.

Looking at the Captain, he thought, *Well here's another fine kettle of fish you've gotten us into, Ollie.*” Then, looking at all of the blood, the realization struck him. Dumas had probably infected everyone in the car with HIV, perhaps even himself.

Chapter 8

Dennis woke to someone gently touching his shoulder. Coming to consciousness, he started but was calmed by the soft voice of a nurse standing by his bed. “You’re okay,” the nurse said soothingly.

“Where am I?” Dennis asked, trying to regain his senses and looking around the room.

“You’re at County,” the nurse answered.

“What happened?” Dennis asked as vignettes of the accident flashed through his mind. Then, before the nurse could respond, he said, “I was in an accident.”

“Yes, and you were very lucky to have escaped serious injury,” the nurse said.

Dennis, wondering just what injuries he did have, shifted slightly in the bed, cautious in case something was broken causing pain. Feeling no discomfort he shifted more until he was satisfied he was in one piece. “It would appear I didn’t break anything,” he said, more as a question than a statement.

“No, you did not break anything. Just some contusions and abrasions, but no fractures. Your friends were not as fortunate,” she said solemnly.

“Where are they? Can I see them?” Dennis asked, shaken.

“Those who survived are in the Critical Care Unit,” the nurse informed.

“Those who survived?” Dennis asked, shocked.

“Yes. Unfortunately there was a fatality,” the nurse said.

“Do you know who died?” Dennis asked, hoping it was Dumas.

“I don’t know the officers name,” the nurse admitted.

Dennis visibly slumped back in the bed. Hearing ‘officer’ made him sick. He wondered if it was the Captain or one of the COs. He sensed she would have said ‘inmate’ if it had been Dumas. Closing his eyes, Dennis tried to remember what he saw immediately after the accident, but he could not. Everything was a fog in his mind. Perhaps he had been given some medication that was clouding his judgment or memory. He didn’t know. The nurse stood by the bed but said nothing. She was silently waiting for Dennis to digest what she had told him. Finally she asked, "Is there anything else I can tell you just now, Mr. Potter?"

“Mr. Potter? How do you know my name?” Dennis started and then, with half a smile said, “Sorry, of course you would know my name. I wore it on my chest didn’t I?”

“Well, I didn’t see it on your chest, but I did learn that was your name in report when I admitted you to the unit,” the nurse confided.

“And what unit am I in?” Dennis asked.

“This is Med/Surg. Just a general unit for observation. I believe you will be discharged later today after Dr. Martin sees you. He’s your attending,” the nurse finished.

“Dr. Martin. Great. Anything else?” Dennis asked.

“Not unless you have something,” the nurse said and waiting patiently.

Dennis gave her a ‘I don’t have anything else’ look, eyes wide, lips closed tightly and smiling, and she left the room.

In less than a minute, the doctor entered the room. He wore a shin length white lab coat with Dr. Giles Martin neatly stitched in blue monogram silk thread over the left breast pocket. The tubing of a stethoscope teetered out of the right lower pocket. Seeing that Dennis was awake he extended his hand and introduced himself.

“Good morning. I’m Dr. . . .”

“Giles Martin,” Dennis finished, shaking the doctor’s hand and pointing at the name on the lab coat. “Either that, or you are an impersonator,” Dennis said humorously and smiling.

Dr. Martin, looking down at the name over the pocket, chuckled and said, “That is a dead giveaway every time. I’m going to have to stop wearing this thing when I introduce myself.”

“No worries, Doc. That’s why I don’t wear mine half the time,” Dennis confessed.

“Right. So, I understand you are a P.A., you work for the D.O.C., you, an L.T., and two C.O.s, were transporting an inmate from R.H.U. to L.A.C.G.H.”?

Dennis laughed. “You should have been a comedian,” Dennis said truthfully. “At least you can offer up some humor in such a tragic circumstance.”

“Don’t you use humor in your practice?” Giles asked frowning.

“Humor? In prison? You have got to be kidding. Those ass . . .” Dennis trailed off. “What I meant to say was the inmates would eat me for breakfast if I tried using humor. You ever seen inmates on sick line Dr.?” Dennis asked.

“I can’t say that I have. But it can’t be that much different from seeing patients in any stressful environment, like the Emergency Room. Patients coming into the E.R. are

not always pleasant. They are in pain, frightened, confused, and they don't always act mannerly. I have found, however, that even under the most extreme circumstances humor, when used appropriately, can calm many patients," Giles finished.

"I do use humor at times. When I see something so paradoxical that not pointing it out borders on the absurd, I use humor to do so," Dennis admitted.

Dr. Martin frowned. "Can you give me an example?" He asked.

"Sure. Let's say I'm seeing an inmate on a range and he decides to throw some shit in my face. Then he asks me to check that for ova and parasites and he is serious! So, I say, 'Sure, I'll check your shit, and if there are any parasites in it I will make sure your mother knows about it so she doesn't fuck any more Italians named Giardia Lamblia and produce any more ova like you.'

Dr. Martin, although he did not want to, had to chuckle at the analogy. He could see Dennis was both angry and frustrated with his work and knew that his sense of humor was being warped by contact with inmates. "I see what you mean," was all Martin could say.

"I knew you *would* get it and that you *wouldn't* all at the same time," Dennis said.

"I believe I get it *and* I get it," Martin said softly. "I cannot pretend to understand what it must be like to practice in an environment in which you are daily bombarded with insults, profanity and stress. You are much stronger than I am being able to endure that day after day."

"I have ways of dealing with it. At least I haven't become an alcoholic or crack head yet like so many do," Dennis said.

"How *do* you deal with it?" Martin asked, academically.

“I have a barrel of glass bottles I collect in my garage. When I feel the need, I throw bricks into the barrel and break the bottles,” Dennis lied. “It takes away the emotion because I have broken something. And, before you ask, the answer is ‘yes’. I do pretend that I have broken an inmate.”

“Well, that sounds like a healthy release. At least you do not actually harm anyone. That is commendable,” Martin praised.

“Do you really think so?” Dennis asked, baiting him.

“Absolutely,” Martin agreed, taking the bait hook, line and sinker.

“Believe me, it takes restraint. I will admit there are times I want to grab some of them by the throat and choke the life out of them. The single most preventative is the thought of being an inmate and ending up being the cellie of some serial rapist,” Dennis concluded.

Dr. Martin thought about the comment for several seconds, visuals rampant, and finally he said, “You are absolutely right, bottles make better bedfellows, even when they cut. Now, how would you like to get out of this place?”

Dennis’s eyes widened and he said, “I would love to get out of this place. But I would like to see the others before I leave if possible.”

Dr. Martin’s gaze shifted momentarily and then he said, “I believe it would be best if you came back in a few days before you see your friends.”

“They’re not really my friends. We work together, but friends are not a commodity in prison. Few of us get personally involved with anyone even though we work closely together. Imagine working there all day and then going home and talking about it for the rest of the evening. That *would* be suicide for certain,” Dennis offered.

“I can understand that. My ex-wife and I only discussed medicine, which probably added to our demise. She is also a physician, Pediatrician, and when we weren’t talking about sick adults we were talking about sick children. Then our relationship became infected and got sick as well. We decided to end it before we were both casualties,” Martin shared.

“That is one of the reasons I don’t marry. Not that my girlfriend works for the prison, but because I know myself. I don’t want to go home after a day at the office, kick the dog, kick the kids, kick the wife and drink a bottle of Scotch each evening so that I feel better. What in the name of fairness would that involve?” Dennis asked.

“Well, at least we are in agreement that we need to find ourselves before we find a relationship, or at least find a balance,” Martin suggested.

“Agreed,” Dennis said. *A balance? At least you don’t have to kill your patients to find a balance* Giles, Dennis thought. “Now, about getting out of here,” he finished.

“Sure. I’ll attend to that at the station while you dress. I’ll be back in a few minutes,” Martin said. “Is there anything you need in the way of medication?” He added.

“I might need a Fentanyl patch for a few weeks to manage this terrible pain I’m having. You could throw in some Valium or Ativan while you’re at it since this was so psychologically traumatic. Finally, could you put me on either forty milligrams of Prozac or fifty of Zoloft daily so I can deal with the depression? A three months’ supply of all of them will suffice,” Dennis said.

Dennis knew, as did Dr. Martin, that what he was requesting was out of the realm of reality. Fentanyl, a narcotic one hundred time more potent than Morphine, would never be a consideration under any conditions but hospitalization, and even then for intractable

pain such as that caused by bone cancer. Both Valium and Ativan, while appropriate for anxiety, would require careful dispensation and would not be given in large quantities. Dennis understood that patients often requested large amounts of these drugs in order to commit suicide. Finally, both he and Dr. Martin are aware of the dependence issues of both Prozac and Zoloft. These antidepressants were also requested in large doses by patients who planned their deaths. To request three month's supply of all combined led to one conclusion; the patient was suicidal and seeking the most expedient method of ending it. Both Dr. Martin and Dennis were completely aware of what it was Dennis was asking for and the suggested end.

Martin studied Dennis for several seconds and finally said, "Do you want me to set up a psych consult? I am sure we could arrange everything with the exception of the Fentanyl."

"Dr. Martin, that was humor. If I wanted any of the above I would simply take them from medical at the prison."

"Dennis, I learned many years ago there is always a little truth in every joke," Martin said.

"You're probably right. But I know myself well enough to know that if I start taking all that shit I would never quit, and I would never get enough of any of it. And to answer your unstated question, if I were suicidal, I would not be here," Dennis confessed. Martin knew he was serious.

"Then seriously, Dennis, is there anything you *do* need?" Martin asked.

"Thanks, no. I'm good doc," Dennis said.

“Ok. Get dressed and I will be back in a few minutes,” Martin said and extending his hand once more.

Dennis shook it and Martin left the room. Dennis carefully got out of the bed. He noticed while he was not broken, he was bruised. His right hip and leg were bruised and swollen and he walked with a limp. *This, too, shall pass*, he thought. Throwing his clothes on, Dennis strolled to the door of the room and looked out into the hallway. Medical personnel meandered their way up and down the corridor, each attending to this patient or that project. Soon, a nurse approached him pushing a wheelchair. Dennis thought about protesting but knew the drill and decided it would be best for him to simply comply.

“Your chariot, Sir,” the nurse said as she approached.

“Thank you,” Dennis said and sat in the chair.

“What? No protest? You must be the first medical professional I have ever attended to who has not put up a fuss when having to leave the hospital in a wheelchair,” the nurse stated.

“Has it ever done any good for anyone to protest?” Dennis asked.

“Not that I remember,” the nurse admitted.

She pushed Dennis to the nurse’s station, grabbed a handful of papers Dr. Martin had left on the desk, and headed for an elevator.

“Uh, by the way. I should call someone for a ride before we go,” Dennis said.

“There is someone waiting for you now,” the nurse said.

“Oh?” Dennis said, surprised.

“Didn’t Dr. Martin tell you? Some men from the prison are here to take you home,” the nurse said.

“Do you know who they are?” Dennis asked quizzically.

“I only know one is from the prison and the others are law enforcement. You must be very important because they want to ask you some questions about the accident,” the nurse confessed.

I bet they do, Dennis thought. He said nothing more.

July

“I believe this board of inquiry has been more than patient, Mr. Potter. It has been several weeks since the accident. As you know, Officer Paul Jergins lost his life. Officer Andy Farajian continues in a vegetative state and Captain Glen Ricsi, while improving, remains on a ventilator. Thank God a full recovery is anticipated. As for the inmate, Kim Dumas, he came through this with minor injuries as did you. He has been ranting since the accident that he wants the A.C.L.U. involved and that you were the cause of the accident. From our perspective, he is going to spend the rest of his life in prison a very rich man,” the chairwoman concluded.

“Ms. Chairwoman, Gentlemen, my client has every intention of answering all of your questions. However, given the nature of this investigation, I would suggest patience is in order,” Dennis’s attorney stated.

“Granted,” the chairwoman, Claudia Parsell, stated. “For the record, Mr. Potter, it is requisite for this board of inquiry to advise you of the purpose and objectives of these proceedings. Do you understand?” Claudia asked.

“Yes, Ms. Chairwoman,” Dennis said.

“Mr. Potter, perhaps it would be easier if you were to simply call me Mrs. Parsell. Ms. Chairwoman sounds complicated, wouldn’t you agree?” Claudia asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” Dennis agreed.

“I would interject at this point that I will answer many of the questions for Mr. Potter, Mrs. Parsell. He is still recovering and he has advised me of his answers to the inquiries of this board,” Dennis’s attorney stated.

“Very well, Mr. Schorer,” Claudia agreed.

Claudia spent the next several minutes introducing the other four members of the Board. With the exception of herself, the others were brought in from outside the State. This seemed odd to Dennis at the time, and his attorney scribbled, *‘Why from out of state?’*, on a yellow notepad as Claudia introduced them. As each member was introduced, Dennis noted that there was an air of . . . what? He could not identify it. Was it condemnation he sensed? Anger? Had they already found something incriminating and this was a circus act? Dennis could not figure it out but one thing was certain, he felt convicted before they began.

After the introductions Claudia proceeded. “You do understand, Mr. Potter, that all of the evidence you give, both oral and written in this matter, you do so under oath, sir,” Claudia began.

Dennis answered, as his attorney could not answer for him. “Yes, Mrs. Parsell, I understand.”

“Very well. Have you relinquished any and all documents to your attorney as pertaining to the full investigation under consideration in this matter?” Claudia asked.

“He has, Madam,” Mr. Schorer confirmed.

“It is the responsibility of this board of inquiry to initiate and carry out this investigation expediently. Because of the nature of the injuries suffered by those involved in this investigation, we have had to postpone this case for some time. Given the gravity as well as the complexity of this inquiry, this board is under obligation to investigate all individual complaints or testimony. The findings of this investigation will be based on evidence and the outcome and recommendations relating to punishment consistent with those stipulated as a breach of California Code. Should criminal responsibility be determined by this board, recommendations for punishment will further be made. Do you have any questions, Mr. Potter?” Claudia finished.

“No ma’am, I have no questions,” Dennis said.

“Very well, we will begin,” Claudia stated, opening a folder in front of her. The other members, as well as Mr. Schorer, did the same. “Mr. Potter, please describe for this board exactly, to the best of your recollection, what happened on June 17, the day of the accident.”

Dennis spent the next two hours recounting everything he could remember of the day. Beginning with Kim Dumas’s arrival in medical, his insistence on seeing another medical professional, his insistence on going to the hospital instead of the infirmary, his insistence on going in a car rather than the prison ambulance, and ending with Dumas

spraying everyone in the car with mace, Dennis painstakingly gave as many details as possible. During his testimony, members of the board asked questions related to Dennis's relationship with Dumas.

"Mr. Potter, how long have you known Mr. Dumas?" One asked.

"I believe I first met Mr. Dumas sometime in January," Dennis said.

"What was the occasion of your meeting?" He asked.

"I was doing sick call out in RHU and Dumas was on for something. I don't remember what his problem was that particular day," Dennis answered.

Looking at the stack of papers in the folder in front of him, the man continued.
"Wasn't Mr. Dumas concerned about his insulin?"

"Dumas was always concerned about something or other. It could have been any number of things on that particular day," Dennis admitted.

"Did Mr. Dumas have any other complaints that day?"

"I do not recall anything" Dennis started.

"He reported to custody that he asked you to address a problem he was having with his lips and you told him, and I quote, to, 'Watch where he places his lips'. Mr. Dumas infers in this report that you were insinuating something of a sexual nature."

Dennis, trying to recall what he had said, answered, "I do not recall saying anything like that to him."

"I believe the report Mr. Dumas filed with custody after Mr. Potter saw him was that he was told he could register one complaint per day and that his lips would be addressed on another day. The comment concerning keeping his lips off objects was made by another medical staff member present on the range," Mr. Schorer advised.

“The report clearly states that it was Mr. Potter who made the comment regarding keeping them off any object that might cause inflammation. There was another comment made by Mr. Pierson. That comment will be addressed in a subsequent hearing,” the man said.

“The comment made by Mr. Potter was benign and could have referred to any number of things. The statement was neither inflammatory nor prejudicial,” Mr. Schorer stated.

“What we are attempting to determine here is whether Mr. Potter had any reason to harm Mr. Dumas when the accident occurred,” Claudia stated.

“Dumas has incited most every official in the prison from the Warden down at one time or another. One could surmise that anyone would have a bone to pick with him, including the Captain driving the car,” Dennis protested.

“That may be so, Mr. Potter, and Captain Ricsi will be questioned regarding his role in the accident as soon as he is able to testify,” Claudia advised. “For now, we will shift our attention to a new board member, one who has been appointed by the Governor to follow up with some additional questions,” Claudia announced.

As she finished speaking, the Warden puffed his way onto the stage and, eyeing Dennis evenly, sat next to Claudia. Dennis realized he was in trouble.

- 2 -

“Dennis, I am going to dispense with the formalities, not because it isn’t because I don’t know how to be formal, I do. It’s just that formalities put everyone on edge, on the defensive. I don’t want anyone to be on the defensive,” the Warden started.

Claudia, covering her microphone, whispered something to the Warden. A brief, muffled conversation ensued and after several minutes Claudia removed her hand from the microphone. The Warden continued.

“Counselor, do you have any objection to a line of questioning apart from that of the accident?”

Mr. Schorer spoke briefly with Dennis in the same muffled tones that the Warden and Claudia had.

“What do you think this is all about Dennis? Any ideas?” Mr. Schorer asked.

Dennis shrugged and said, “I don’t have a clue.”

“Why do you think the Warden would come to this hearing an appointee of the Governor and want to delve into a new line of questioning? Did you do something at work that I don’t know about?” Mr. Schorer asked.

Do you mean apart from killing half of the population? Dennis thought. “Not that I know of,” he lied, shrugging again.

“Warden, can you be a little more specific about the line of questioning you have for my client?” Mr. Schorer asked.

“Yes, counselor, this has to do with an HIV epidemic that has recently been established in the prison, and everyone in the medical department is being asked about it,” the Warden shared.

“HIV epidemic?” Dennis asked, frowning.

The Warden smiled at Dennis but said nothing.

“What is it you believe my client has to do with an HIV epidemic?” Mr. Schorer asked.

“I won’t know the answer to that question until I have had the opportunity to question him,” the Warden said, his tone serious.

“Very well, then. Since Mr. Potter does not have any objections neither do I. However, I would appreciate the line of questioning to be fact finding rather than accusatory,” Mr. Schorer stated.

“We’re all in agreement with that, Mr. Schorer, aren’t we Dennis?”

Dennis sat, fingers interlaced, hands resting comfortably under his chin as though he were deep in thought. After several seconds he lowered his hands and answered, “Yes, Warden, we would all be in agreement.”

“Dennis, I believe we have found our ‘flu’. We OraQuick tested every inmate in the prison, as well as the COs and ancillary staff. Of the inmate population, greater than thirty five percent tested positive. That is an increase of over three thousand percent in three months. We didn’t stop there because we could not believe what we were finding so we did finger-stick and blood plasma testing to verify the findings and within twenty minutes, our results were conclusive. They are all HIV positive,” the Warden finished. He sat holding Dennis’s gaze but said nothing. Dennis did not flinch.

After a considerable silence, and staring contest, Claudia spoke. “Mr. Potter, can you explain, from your professional experience, how something such as this could happen?”

“Do you want the Dennis Potter answer or the rest of the staff answer?” Dennis offered.

“I don’t understand what you are getting at,” Claudia said, perplexed.

“Well, the rest of the staff’s answer would be, ‘There’s an increase in the amount of fucking going on in the population’”, Dennis offered. “My explanation would be that someone, perhaps many someones, have a plan to take out the prison population and they have implemented the plan. I suspect that while thirty five percent may show a positive result at this time, the number will likely double in the next several weeks. Am I correct in this assumption Warden?” Dennis asked, looking evenly at the Warden.

“Dennis, are you aware that Marv Fitzgerald was murdered?” The Warden asked.

Again, Dennis did not flinch. He did feign enough surprise to indicate no prior knowledge of this.

“Are we calling autoeroticism murder now?” Dennis asked.

“No, we’re calling Ricin murder,” the Warden answered. Those sitting on the board said nothing, nor did they act in any way surprised at the information the Warden spoke about.

They are obviously in the know, Dennis thought. “Ricin,” Dennis stated, acting surprised. “How was that determined?”

“Mr. Dumas confessed that he had one of the COs deliver his Procardia to Marv. Seems that Marv enjoyed masturbating and the added effects of the medication to enhance his orgasm. That combined with a cord around his neck accounted for his demise. At least that is what was thought. But when Mr. Dumas became concerned that you had it in for him, he confessed that he had passed his med to Marv,” the Warden stated.

“How does Marv’s death implicate my client?” Mr. Schorer asked, puzzled.

“So far, it doesn’t. Like I said, this is simply a fact finding,” the Warden said.

Dennis knew this was no more a fact finding mission than the Salem Witch hunts were. He was the Witch, and he sensed the Warden knew it.

“Warden, if I recall correctly, I was not in the prison the day Marv died. It was my day off,” Dennis offered.

“I know that Dennis. Ann was the one who gave Dumas the Procardia. We have already questioned her and she claims she knew nothing of the Procardia being laced with Ricin,” the Warden admitted.

“How do you know for certain it was the Procardia that contained the Ricin in the first place? He could have had Ricin brought in by anyone and planned his own death,” Mr. Schorer suggested.

“We are speculating at this point, Mr. Schorer. We had a Tox screen done on Marv and the report came back positive for Ricin,” the Warden explained. A toxicology screen test would definitively verify the findings.

“Again, Warden, I submit any dozen methods could have been used to get Ricin to Marv. It could have been one of the COs,” Mr. Schorer stated.

“I understand there were many on the range that day, and every other day for that matter, who would have liked to kill Marv. He was an animal. There was no question about it. I knew from both the inmate and CO grapevines that Marv would be killed before he got out of RHU. The prediction came true,” the Warden said.

“At this time, since there is nothing that would seem to connect Marv Fitzgerald’s death with Mr. Potter, I submit we return to the topic at hand; HIV,” Claudia said.

“Do you have any evidence that directly, indirectly or by supposition remotely connects Mr. Potter to this HIV outbreak?” Mr. Schorer asked.

“No, we don’t,” the Warden stated.

“Then I respectfully request we get back to the issue Mr. Potter is here to discuss, that being the accident that claimed the life of one CO and has two others in the hospital,” Mr. Schorer said.

“Mr. Potter, you have described for us in detail the accounts of the accident. Is there anything else you wish to add to your testimony concerning the accident?” Claudia asked.

Dennis thought for several seconds before responding. Finally he answered. “No, Mrs. Parsell.”

“I have something I would like to add to the testimony here,” Mr. Schorer said.

“Yes, Mr. Schorer,” Claudia said.

“It would appear that while the Warden has diverted the attention of this inquiry to what my client knew concerning the HIV outbreak, as well as the death of Mr. Fitzgerald, he conveniently failed to mention that Mr. Dumas issued a death sentence through the Muslim Brotherhood in the prison and that Mr. Potter nearly lost his life,” Mr. Schorer stated.

The Warden, after a minute of contemplation, answered. “Would it seem appropriate for us to inquire of Mr. Potter his knowledge of these events given that fact? After all, many have done more in the way of retaliation than this if Mr. Potter indeed did have anything to do with this accident, the HIV epidemic or Mr. Fitzgerald’s demise,” the Warden offered.

“I believe the evidence in this case is quite clear. We have police reports, eye-witness accountings, expert witness reports from chemical experts verifying the inside of

the car was maced, evidence that both COs were maced as well as Captain Ricsi, and finally, sworn written testimony from Mr. Potter. Everything my client has stated has been corroborated. Nothing stands in question. I request this inquiry end and that Mr. Potter be completely exonerated of any wrongdoing in this case,” Mr. Schorer finished, closing his file.

“So stipulated,” Claudia said and closing her own folder.

“May I ask one last question of Mr. Potter?” The Warden asked.

“Sir,” Dennis said.

“Why would you have a centrifuge in your garage?” The Warden asked, a quizzical look on his face.

Dennis said nothing. He held the Warden’s gaze and waited for the answer to come to him. It did not. *I have a centrifuge in my garage to spin down vials of HIV laden blood, and I am not finished yet,* Dennis thought.

“I object to any more questions along this line,” Mr. Schorer stated.

“Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Potter. You are dismissed,” Claudia ended.

I can’t say as I blame you for what you did, Dennis, the Warden thought as Dennis left the room.

Dennis turned just as the thought left the Warden’s head and smiled. The Warden smiled in return.

Four COs and the Black Major entered the room just as the nurse left. She had just finished giving a bath and her patient was sitting up in the bed looking clean and contented.

One of the CO's threw a pair of handcuffs on the bed and said, "You know the drill, Dumas. Put them on."

"What the fuck you mean, 'put 'em on'? I ain't going anywhere," Dumas said picking the cuffs up and throwing them at the CO.

The CO pulled a Taser from his belt, aimed it at Dumas, and was ready to fire when the Major said, "Put it away, Cowell."

The CO held his gaze and posture as though he had not heard.

"I said, 'Put it away'," the Major said loudly.

Thinking he would get a week's suspension without pay and a reprimand, the CO thought it would be worth it to shock the shit out of Kim Dumas. He was just ready to fire when one of the other COs placed a restraining hand on his shoulder and softly said, "He isn't worth it."

Cowell slowly lowered the Taser and replaced it on his belt. Dumas had not moved. He simply sneered at the COs.

"I win," he said.

Cowell took a step toward Dumas and the others restrained him. The Major walked over to Dumas's bedside and said, "I wouldn't piss him off any more than you have, Kim."

"Fuck him and the horse he rode in on. Fuck all of you. I ain't goin' anywhere 'till I have seen my lawyer," Dumas protested, pulling the white sheet over his bare chest.

The Major extracted a folded paper from the inner pocket of his jacket and, showing it to Dumas said, "This is a court order to return you to the custody of the prison."

You will be kept in the infirmary in a locked down cell until you are deemed well enough to go back to RHU.”

“You can take that court order and shove it up that tight ass of yours you fuckin’ ex-con niger,” Dumas said.

The COs present laughed. It made their day to see the Black Major treated like an inmate by an inmate. Eyeing Dumas, he slowly unsheathed the Taser on his belt. There was an audible ‘click’ as the Taser left its locked position. Pointing the blunt end of the device at Dumas’s chest, the Major said, “Give Mr. Dumas the hand cuffs.”

Cowell walked over to the bed and placed the cuffs on it next to Dumas.

“I am going to give you sixty seconds to put those on and then I am going to watch you do the fuckin’ funky chicken all over your bed,” the Major said, a look of hate on his face.

“Go fuck” was all Dumas got past his lips.

With the laser sight choosing a spot on Dumas’s chest, the Major fire the weapon. The blast doors had barely left the device when the laser wires, probes on the ends, found their way to Dumas’s chest. They immediately impaled the inmate followed by a current that immediately paralyzed Dumas. He violently shook as one having a grand mal seizure. The Major kept applying the current, watching Kim Dumas convulsing on the bed. After several seconds Dumas shook himself off the bed and convulsed on the floor. The Major continued to apply the voltage.

“Uh, Major, I don’t want to spoil your fun, but I think you should let up before you fry him,” one of the COs said. The others stood by watching the grizzly scene with

pleasure. This was something all of them had dreamed of either doing or watching. They were in no hurry to see this end.

The Major, continuing to depress the trigger, said, "I jus' wanna make sure he don't have enough strength left after this to fight with us."

The CO shrugged, stepped back, and watched Dumas convulse for another full minute. Once the Major was satisfied Dumas would not resist, he let off the trigger. Dumas slumped on the floor, unconscious.

"Get his sorry ass dressed and into the van," the Major said and turning to leave. He re-sheathed his Taser as he left the room.

"Just fucking great. 'Get him dressed'. He weighs enough when he's awake. He's triple the weight when he's half dead," Cowell said disgustedly.

The four COs were able to get Dumas's clothes on him in a matter of fifteen minutes after which they hoisted him into a wheelchair and wheeled him out through a secure entrance to a waiting van. The Major sat in the passenger seat smoking a cigarette. After Dumas was in the van they headed back to the prison.

"Jive ass niger won't fuck with me again," the Major said, taking a drag off his cigarette.

"Right," the CO driving the van agreed. Both could not have been more mistaken.

On arriving at the prison, the van rolled to a stop at one of two entrance gates. A sergeant came out of a guard room and approached the van. Guards in towers on either side of the gate readied their weapons as was protocol and waited for the sergeant to clear the van.

"Major," the sergeant said and looking into the van.

“Sergeant. We’re bringing our favorite guest back today,” the Major said.

“Fuckin’a. You got Dumas in there?” He asked laughing.

“Fuckin’a,” the Major said.

With that the sergeant pointed his right index finger at the sky and made a circular motion. This was a sign for the CO in the tower to open the gate. After gaining entrance the Major ordered Dumas taken to the infirmary. Shortly after his arrival and having been placed on a bed and restrained, Dumas awoke. He tore at the restraints and, cursing, threatened to kill all present. He made such a fuss that the medical personnel requested added security. Hearing about the uproar the Black Major once again paid Dumas a visit. Entering the room, he asked the medical staff to leave. Once they had, the Major stood over Dumas and, looking down, said, “I am going to tell you one time and one time only. You are going to shut your fucking mouth and behave in here like the good Niger you are or I am going to arrange to have someone come in here and put an end to your miserable life. You know I can do it ‘cause you’ve seen me do it before. You know I took Baxter, Perkins, Jessup – the list goes on – out and I will take you out as well.”

“You gonna have to take me out you fuckin’ piece of shit. You gonna have to. ‘Cause once I get free of these chains I’m gonna do whatever it takes to get my hands around your black neck and I will choke the devil out from you,” Dumas said, hate seething from him.

“Then we have an agreement. You’re a dead man, Kim. Dead. And it will happen when you least expect it,” the Major said smiling.

With that the Major left the room. Finding Pete Koontz, the Major said, “Pete, I want you to have Dumas unshackled in there. Then I want you to arrange to have Potter see him.”

“You know I can’t do that. The Warden has absolutely forbidden Potter to be with Dumas for any reason. I’m not gonna lose my job over this,” Pete said.

“You will find a way, Pete. If you don’t, I will make it well known how you and Paula spend your evenings in here,” the Major said.

“Fuck that. Everyone spends the same time doing what I do with Paula. Even the Warden. He’s not gonna bring her into this ‘cause he knows she’ll rat him out as soon as he does. She’s not gonna lose her job over this either,” Pete said in protest.

“Pete, it isn’t what you and Paula do that is the issue. It’s what you have her do,” the Major said.

“So she sucks my cock. Big deal. She loves it. You wouldn’t want to take that away from her would you?”

“I know that’s not the only candy you are feeding her, Pete. It’s the little baggies of coke you’re bringing in and having her sell for you,” the Major said.

Pete flushed. How did the Black Major find out about his little enterprise? He was certain no one knew of it. Then the thought hit him. *Paula. That bitch.*

“So, Pete, here’s the deal. I won’t end your little operation here and you’ll find a way to get Potter and Dumas together. Do we have an understanding?”

Pete eyed the Major evenly, his contempt evident. He hated the Major almost as much as the Major hated him. Either of them would gladly kill the other and not give it a second thought. Pete knew he was backed into a corner and knew that if he ended up in

the prison the other inmates would have him for breakfast. But not until they had used him as their bitch. He was not going to allow that to happen.

“I’ll figure out a way,” Pete finally said.

The Major smiled and said, “I knew you would.”

Chapter 9

August

One week later, Dumas was deemed well enough to return to RHU. Custody had been notified and were waiting for a call from medical that he had been discharged. Per protocol, Dumas had to be seen one last time before he could be released. Pete had waited until this time to call for someone from medical to release him. Dennis Potter was the only one in medical who had the authority to discharge Dumas. Pete called the DW and asked that RHU be notified that Dumas would soon be discharged and for them to be ready to send a Captain and four COs to escort him. An officer from the DW called the medical department and requested Dumas’s discharge.

“Potter,” a nurse coming out of the infirmary said. She had come looking for one of the doctors, but none of them were in the building nor would they be for several hours. Pete knew this, and it was the reason he made the phone call when he had.

“What is it, Becky?” Dennis asked.

“You need to come to the infirmary and discharge Dumas,” she said.

Dennis looked surprised. “I am supposed to go to the infirmary and discharge Dumas? Becky, you know I can’t see Dumas. The Warden has an order to that effect

posted in both TBO and TBI. In fact, there is a general order posted all over medical that I am to stay away from Dumas.”

“I know that. But Pete called the DW and they put RHU on standby. The Captain is available now and they want to come and get Dumas before change off shift out in the hole.”

“Pete called DW? He knows I can’t discharge Dumas,” Dennis said. He was wondering why Pete would make the decision to have Dumas released at this time.

“All I know is you’re supposed to go to the infirmary,” Becky said, and she headed down the hall.

Dennis, deciding to find out what Pete was up to, trailed Becky. Once in the circular control room, Dennis approached Pete. “What’s going on here Pete?” Dennis asked.

“Dumas. He’s ready to go back to the hole,” Pete said in a nonchalant manner.

“It will have to wait. I’m alone in medical and you know I can’t see Dumas. Warden’s orders,” Dennis said turning to leave.

“Come on Potter. It will take you three minutes to step into the room, take one look at him, document that he is breathing, and leave. The Warden said you were not to examine Dumas. You won’t be. You’re just gonna ask him if he’s ready to leave and when he tells you to go fuck yourself you can document he is breathing and talking and that will be the end of him in here. I’m sick and tired of his bullshit,” Pete whined.

Dennis thought about it and decided to have one final word with Dumas. He had been thinking about the possibility of seeing Dumas one last time. Not knowing if he was

going to be released from his job, fired, Dennis felt compelled to have one more encounter with the inmate. This afforded that opportunity.

“Okay, Pete, I’ll discharge him. But you are going to chart that you asked me to do it in front of me, in the chart, right now,” Dennis said.

“Fine. I’ll chart it,” Pete said.

Dennis waited for Pete to make the note in custody records, after which he let Pete lead him to Dumas’s room. Pete unlocked the door, one that was double locked, with two large keys. As Pete opened the door, Dennis stepped into the room. As he did Pete pulled the door shut leaving Dennis in the room alone, something custody never did. Dennis stood facing Dumas who was sitting on the edge of his bed, unshackled. Pete stood outside the door listening, waiting to hear the screams of Dennis Potter as Kim Dumas slowly killed him.

* * * * *

“Something doesn’t add up,” the Warden said.

“I know this looks fishy, but we have no evidence, nothing that would stick anyway,” Claudia said.

“Dennis Potter is as guilty as the day is long. I know it. I sense it. He sat there dueling with me as if to say, ‘I’m not going to go down’,” the Warden said.

“Whatever you sensed, Aaron, it is going to have to be proven. Potter’s attorney is going to post a PFA brief to keep us from further questioning Potter,” Claudia warned.

“Claudia, please, protection from abuse? This man has systematically taken a vigilante stance in our medical department. Thousands are going to lose their lives, including many from custody who unwittingly have wandered off the sacred path. We

have officers in here as gay as some of the inmates. I've heard through the rumor mill that some of them are enjoying having intimate relationships. These officers can take inmates into private areas and have all the fun they want without fear of being caught. I know this goes on. What with this Potter dilemma, how am I supposed to warn them they are more at risk?" The Warden asked.

"Aaron, you are not responsible for the actions of others. You are one man in a cesspool. I don't know how you have been able to deal with all the truths you know here for as long as you have. It would drive most men to drink," Claudia admitted.

"Who says I don't drink?" The Warden asked, laughing.

"You know what I mean," Claudia said.

"Yes, I know what you mean. I am going to have to figure out a way to catch Dennis on my own. I know there is a legal line drawn in the sand that I am not going to be able to cross, Claudia. And you can rest assured that I won't cross the line. But I need to end this chess match with Potter. He has to have made a mistake somewhere," the Warden said.

"What is it that makes you so certain Dennis has caused any of this?" Claudia asked, leaning back on the large couch in the Warden's office and crossing her legs.

The Warden shot an appreciative glance at the legs, something that did not go unnoticed, but Claudia said nothing. "I went to Potter's house. Something told me that there was something about him that had changed. When he arrived here he was fragile," the Warden said, leaning back in an oversized chair. He sat as if reflecting on his first encounter with Dennis. "I know it wasn't right. I admit that," he said holding up a hand. "I just wanted to take a walk through, get a sense of things there. As soon as I arrived and

looked at the house I knew he was my man. Don't ask me how I knew, I just did," the Warden said.

Claudia said nothing but silently waited for the Warden to continue.

"I had Masterson along with me. He's the best we have here at picking locks," the Warden said.

"You took an inmate with you?" Claudia asked, surprised.

"How else could I get into Dennis's house? I needed someone with a particular expertise," the Warden admitted.

"Are you sure you should be telling me this Aaron? After all, I am an officer of the State," Claudia warned.

"Claudia, how many years have we known each other? My God, it's been, what, forty years? Where has the time gone?" The Warden asked, reflecting.

"Time flies, Aaron," Claudia offered.

"In this case, at the speed of light," the Warden said. "Anyway, when I stepped into Dennis's house I got the feeling that this man was not simply fragile. I knew immediately that he was fractured."

"Fractured," Claudia parroted.

"Yes. You know; his mind. His mind is fractured," the Warden said.

"So you believe he has gone mad in a sense," Claudia stated.

"Not simply mad, broken. His mind is broken. I've seen this happen before. Not to this extent, but I have seen it. It's like this Claudia; a man or woman is raised with a certain sense of morality. I would classify it as a universal morality, one that says, 'Do no harm'. Then he or she lives in this bubble their entire life. When injustice occurs they see

what they sense as justice prevail. Most of the time when someone does something that goes against the law they see some news report showing how justice won and the person is convicted and punished. They view the punishment as something other than what we have here,” the Warden said.

Claudia shifted slightly. “Isn’t that the way it works? What is so strange about that?”

“Claudia, you know and I know and those who work in this place know the truth of the matter is these inmates live better in here than many do outside of the prison. Free food, free medical care, free clothing, free everything. When someone like Potter comes into an environment such as this with his sense of justice what he sees rocks his world. His world all of a sudden becomes a lie. He believes he has believed a lie all of his life and he begins to question what else he has believed that is a lie. Finally, he is unable to separate his truths from lies and the mind simply fractures. It breaks,” the Warden finished.

“Don’t you try to eliminate these types of problems as part of your interview process Aaron? Don’t you try determining who will fracture and who won’t?” Claudia asked, a look of sadness on her face.

“It is most difficult when interviewing those in the medical profession Claudia. First, they have their Hippocratic Oath that tells them to treat all of humanity with dignity and respect. If Osama Bin Laden dropped dead in their presence they would jump on his chest and start resuscitating him. So, in essence, they are coming in with a mindset that is contrary to these surroundings. What they learn is that the Hippocratic Oath they have taken becomes hypocrisy. They begin not to believe their oath when they see what they

perceive as injustice here. That unhinges their world. That is what has happened to Dennis,” the Warden finished settling forward in his chair, placing his large hands on the desk and interlacing his fingers.

“So, Aaron, what I hear you saying is that we broke him,” Claudia offered.

The Warden, looking evenly at Claudia, sat silent for several seconds. He wondered how much the system *had* contributed to Dennis’s damage. Perhaps he could have intervened earlier had he been more thoughtful. He realized he saw symptoms of Dennis coming unraveled soon after he was hired. He further realized he had done nothing to try to prevent it. In fact, looking back, he had not intervened with anyone coming into the prison that he could recall.

“Perhaps this *is* partially my fault, Claudia,” the Warden said.

“I don’t believe we need to fault anyone. Things are what they are. At this point I believe we should do whatever we can to try and salvage what may be left of Mr. Potter, if anything,” Claudia said. Then, reflecting, she asked, “Aaron, how is it that you were not ‘fractured’?”

The Warden laughed. “Who says I’m not? Claudia, look at me. Do you remember when I was a fit one-hundred-eighty pounds? It was at the time I decided to quit smoking. I remember thinking I might have to defend myself someday here and I knew that any one of these guys could have simply waited until I was winded and then stomp the shit out of me. Then every time I got frustrated, upset or agitated instead of reaching for a cigarette I reached for one of those,” the Warden said and pointing to a box of Bon Bon’s he kept on his desk. Claudia could not recall a time when she had not seen them on

Aaron's desk. "Food became my pacifier, my outlet. Now look at me. Of course I was fractured," the Warden finished.

"I have never considered you weak or broken," Claudia said, standing.

The Warden stood as well. "Perhaps you are right," he said.

"Aaron, it is always good to see you," Claudia finished and approaching the Warden.

"It is always good to see you as well," the Warden said and placing his hands on her shoulders.

"Do you ever wonder about us, Aaron?" Claudia asked.

The Warden, pulling Claudia into his habitus, answered. "Every day of my life."

With that, Claudia left the Warden's office. The Warden decided it was time to tell Dennis Potter he was sorry for his part in Dennis being fractured.

* * * * *

"Where's Potter?" The Warden asked. He had asked several COs to accompany him when he went down to medical to talk with Dennis.

"He's seeing Dumas," Pete said.

"He's in with Dumas? I specifically ordered that Potter was not to have any contact with Dumas," the Warden puffed, his face turning red.

Pete knew he was finished. Sweat beaded on his forehead and he tried thinking his way out of the mess he was in.

"Who's in there with him?" The Warden asked.

"No one," Pete admitted.

“Cuff Pete,” the Warden ordered one of the COs standing nearby. The officer immediately did as he was told. Pete, protesting, said, “I’ll have your job for this.”

“You will? Bring him along,” the Warden said.

Arriving at the room Dumas was in, the Warden ordered the COs to open the door. After they had done so, he ordered them to take the cuffs off Pete and stand guard outside the door. Realizing Pete had a Taser and mace, he shoved Pete into the room, entered after Pete, and closed the door. From inside the room, the Warden slid a steel bolt into place locking the door from the inside. Dumas and Dennis were standing near the bed, face to face. Dennis was telling Dumas that he did not want to harm him.

“Kim, I am a martial artist. I could hurt you badly. I don’t want it to end this way,” Dennis was saying when Pete and the Warden entered the room.

Dumas, looking at Pete and the Warden, said, “It feels like Christmas in here. I have three presents.”

“Back off Kim,” the Warden said. Pete toyed with the holster holding the mace but did nothing.

“I don’t think you are in any position to order me to do anything,” Dumas said.

“Kim, you know the kind of power I have here. I can hurt you badly,” the Warden said.

Dumas quickly stepped up to the Warden, towering over him. What the Warden had gained in width, Dumas had in height over him. Pete cowered away from Dumas as soon as he had approached the Warden. He would not intervene if Dumas attacked the Warden. Perhaps he could get out of this mess simply by doing nothing.

Dumas grabbed the Warden by his jacket with both hands and, looking into the Warden's eyes, said, "My grandmother taught me that when it was Christmas someone died. It don't matter if it is me. But I am gonna take all of you with me." He then squared off and raised a clenched fist. Dumas was just ready to strike when Dennis grabbed his arm and spun him around. Dumas quickly shoved Dennis backward with all of his strength. Dennis landed on the edge of the bed, stunned. Pete, in an effort to escape, shouted, clawed at the metal bolt, and pulled at the door. COs outside the room tried gaining entrance but to no avail. Dumas grabbed Pete from behind by the chin and with a quick jerk snapped Pete's neck like a twig. Pete immediately fell to the floor, dead. The Warden backed away from Dumas who had refocused his attention. Dennis, regaining himself, flew into action. Realizing he could not get close enough to Dumas to effectively use his hands, he used several kicks. The first landed squarely on Dumas's side. Dennis could feel the ribs give way, one of them snapping as the side of his foot found its mark. Dumas, grabbing his side, stooped in pain and turned toward Dennis. As he did, Dennis delivered a second kick square on Dumas's nose. The force of the kick shattered Dumas's face, driving nasal bone back and into Dumas's brain. The inmate hit the floor with a heavy thud, eyes open and staring at blackness.

"It looks like you finally got your man," the Warden said, recovering from the wall and stepping toward Dennis.

"Yes, Warden. It looks like I'm on a roll," Dennis admitted.

"Why, Dennis? Why so many?" The Warden asked.

"Oh, I get it. You've never wanted to off any of this scum," Dennis said, pointing at the lifeless body of Dumas.

“Many times, Son. But it was never my job to be the judge, jury or executioner. It was my job to run a prison. You would not believe the baseless humanity that has come and gone through this place over the years,” the Warden explained.

“By virtue of the fact these animals are allowed to suck the same air as those who try living honorable lives in this perverted world, isn’t it obvious that I am the only hero of humanity left?”

“And you believe killing all of them is being a hero? Who died and made you God?” The Warden asked.

“Oh. Now you want to bring God into this. Okay. Let’s do that. Doesn’t it say somewhere an eye for an eye? I don’t see very many blind men here Warden, unless I am counting you,” Dennis said.

“I’m blind? No, son, I see very well. I saw you long ago, what you were up to,” the Warden confessed.

“Let’s get back to God and the eye thing. You want to lecture me about civility and justice. What do you think the children Marv Fitzgerald fucked would have to say about what he took from them?” Dennis asked angrily. “Or Kim Dumas. What do you think the little girls he ripped apart would have to say about this monster? Do you believe they would agree that justice was served? How do you make a child understand this? How would you explain it to some child if she was sitting in here right now?” Dennis asked, taking a menacing step toward the Warden.

“I would simply have to tell them that when they were older they would understand. You can’t understand any of this because you’re fractured Dennis,” the Warden said.

Dennis, grabbing his head and squeezing it, turned in a circle. Then, looking into the Warden's eyes, his own face expressionless, Dennis struck the Warden square on the throat, crushing his trachea. The Warden tore at his neck to gain breath, but to no avail. Momentarily he slumped to the floor. He, too, was dead.

"Yes, Warden, now it looks like I have finally got my man," Dennis said, quickly grabbing both the mace and Taser from Pete's belt.

Spraying the Warden, then Dumas, then Pete with mace, he turned Dumas onto his back. He then turned the Taser on himself and deployed the probes. Letting them imbed in his chest, Dennis did not depress the trigger. Placing the Taser in Dumas's hand, he left the probes and cables attached to it in his chest and unbolted the door. As the COs rushed in Dennis slumped to the floor as if he had been Tazed. The COs quickly ripped the probes from Dennis's chest, dragged him out of the room and pressed an emergency button on the console inside the control room.

"Lay still," one of the COs told Dennis.

"What happened?" Dennis asked.

"Dumas killed everyone," the CO said.

* * * * *

"It would appear you have once again escaped being killed, Mr. Potter," Claudia said.

"I was fortunate," Dennis responded.

"Once again, for the record, Mr. Potter, can you please give us an account of the events leading to the death of Warden Aaron Wright, inmate Kim Dumas and Officer

Pete Koontz?” Claudia asked, tears welling in her eyes. She quickly contained her emotions and blinked the tears out of her eyes.

“I will do the best I can. The events are hazy so I would like the record to reflect that this testimony is the best of my recollection today and if I have a different recollection of the events later it will be because things are hazy today,” Dennis said.

“Agreed,” Claudia said. Mr. Schorer sat at Dennis’s side but said nothing.

“We have testimony from the COs who were outside the room that the Warden first ordered Mr. Koontz cuffed and then ordered him un-cuffed before entering the room. Can you offer an opinion as to why he would do that?” Claudia asked.

“Mrs. Parsell, that calls for speculation on the part of my client. There is no way he could know what the Warden was thinking or his motivation for what he did,” Mr. Schorer objected.

“Yes, Mr. Schorer, you are correct. However, there is something I am confused about. What I need is clarity about what happened. From what I understand there were four men on the room; you, Mr. Potter, the Warden, Officer Koontz and Mr. Dumas. I would like to know who killed whom, and who tazed you. Can you enlighten me Mr. Potter?” Claudia asked.

Dennis carefully considered the question. *Think, Potter, think*, he thought.

“Let’s break this down to simple steps. Mr. Potter, what happened after the Warden and Officer Koontz entered the room?” Claudia asked.

I killed them, Dennis thought. “Officer Koontz, acting against a direct order of the Warden, demanded that I see Mr. Dumas and discharge him back to RHU. I refused but he insisted, stating I would only have to document Mr. Dumas was breathing and was

able to return to his cell. I asked him to document that in custody records and he did,” Dennis started.

“We have those records, Mr. Potter. Please continue.”

“When we got to the room Mr. Dumas was in, Officer Koontz unlocked the door, shoved me through it, and locked me in. Mr. Dumas was sitting on his bed with no cuffs and no restraints. I immediately realized it was a setup,” Dennis said.

“So it would seem,” Claudia agreed. “Please continue.”

“When Dumas saw me standing in the room by myself he smiled that ‘You’re all mine’ smile. I said, ‘Good day, Kim. I am here to discharge you back to RHU,’” Dennis started. Pausing, he took a deep breath and shook his head as though reflecting on the scene.

“Take your time Mr. Potter. Think clearly,” Mr. Schorer comforted.

“To be honest, I had envisioned the scene a million times in my mind. I fantasized about being alone with Dumas and what I would do to him. Yes, I would have to admit I did want to kill him. But I don’t think I wanted to kill him any worse than Pete Koontz or even the Warden for that matter,” Dennis said.

“Mr. Potter, I do not believe Warden Wright would have the slightest thought of killing any inmate,” Claudia offered in defense of the Warden.

“I didn’t mean any disrespect to the Warden, Mrs. Parsell. I just know he disliked Dumas as much as any of us,” Dennis said apologetically.

“Please continue with your recollection of the events, Mr. Potter,” Claudia said coolly.

Dennis got the message. He had treaded on personal ground. *I do believe the Warden and you were involved in more ways than prisons*, Dennis thought.

“After I told Dumas that I was there to discharge him, he got in my face. Started threatening me and telling me what he was going to do to me. It wasn’t pretty,” Dennis shared.

“Exactly what did he tell you?” One of the Board members asked.

“I really don’t think you want to hear it,” Dennis offered honestly.

“Mr. Potter. This is a Board of Inquiry and I am inquiring. Please answer the question,” the man asked.

Ok, if you want the down and dirty I’ll give it to you, Dennis thought, a smirk coming to his face.

“He said, ‘I’m gonna beat you to a fuckin’ heap. Then, I’m gonna take my big black cock and I’m gonna shove it in your ass and fuck you ‘till you bleed. Then, once my cock is covered with your shit, I’m gonna shove it down your throat and watch you eat your shit off my cock. Then, I’m gonna drown you with my cum and watch you slowly choke to death while you gargle on it’,” Dennis said.

No one on the Board said a word. Dennis continued. “I said, ‘Kim, I am a martial artist. I could hurt you badly. I don’t want it to end this way’. Just as I finished saying that the Warden came in with Officer Koontz,” Dennis said.

“So there was no physical confrontation up to the point that the Warden and Mr. Koontz came into the room,” another man stated.

“What part of my testimony indicated there was any physical confrontation?” Dennis asked, perturbed.

“You will answer the questions and refrain from any sarcastic remarks. Do you understand?” The man scolded.

“Do the words ‘Fuck off’ in any way answer the question?” Dennis said coldly.

“Mr. Potter, you are in contempt,” Claudia said angrily.

“Contempt? Contempt?” Dennis said standing.

Mr. Schorer placed a restraining hand on Dennis’s wrist but remained sitting. Dennis did not shake Schorer’s hand loose, but remained standing.

“I’ll give you contempt. I come into the prison, do my job, volunteer to take a man who does not deserve the cell he lives in to the hospital, get into an accident and nearly lose my life, get set up and end up in a cell with a man who is bent on killing me and nearly lose my life a second time, and all you can do is tell me I am in contempt? Just because you can’t fuck the Warden anymore, eat his Bon Bons and reminisce about the good old days - yeah, I heard the story; it’s all over the prison. Janitor was listening to every word through a com while you and the Warden schmoozed each other. Every one of you can take this inquiry and shove it up your asses,” Dennis said as he turned and walked out of the room. He offered the Board a salute with the middle finger of both hands as he did.

Claudia sat stunned and said nothing.

* * * * *

“You’re getting off with a reprimand and you should be grateful that’s all you’re getting,” Mr. Schorer said, taking Dennis by the arm and walking with him toward the courtroom.

“A reprimand? For what?” Dennis asked.

“For flipping the Board off and telling them to fuck themselves,” Schorer said.

“They deserved it,” Dennis said.

“Perhaps, but I would advise you when we step into the courtroom you had better act respectful. This judge is a personal friend of Mrs. Parsell and was also a friend of the Warden. Hearing that you told her to fuck off did not sit well with him and it took a great deal of convincing on my part to keep you out of jail,” Schorer explained.

With that, Dennis and his attorney entered the courtroom. Dennis, looking around and seeing the members of the Board, Claudia, and several of the prison personnel in the room, approached the bench.

“Mr. Potter?” The judge asked.

“Yes, Judge,” Dennis said.

“Has your counselor explained the situation to you?”

“Yes,” Dennis said.

“Do you have anything to say before I make my final determination?” The Judge asked.

“Yes, Judge. I am confused about one thing that I would like to get explained before you sentence me,” Dennis said.

Schorer cringed.

“And what would that be?” The Judge asked.

“Well, my attorney, Mr. Schorer here,” Dennis said and pointing at Schorer, “has advised me that I am to be reprimanded for telling the members of the Board to fuck off. What I want to know is if that is true,” Dennis said.

“Well, Mr. Potter, since you have brought this matter to light in front of all of our guests here today, that was the reason I was going to reprimand you. However, in light of this new attitude, I am going to have to reconsider. Why do you ask, Mr. Potter?” The Judge asked, settling back in his chair and adjusting his black robe at the collar.

“Well, sir, when Mr. Schorer told me that, I got to thinking. Every day, and I mean *every* day, not just on some days, or holidays excluded, I am told to go fuck myself, to fuck off, to go fuck my mother or my sister or my father, to eat shit, to get fucked . . . I believe you get the point, Judge. And *every* day I have to simply provide the medical care, give the medication, give the injection, do the surgical procedure, suture the inmate, flush the A-port, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera,” Dennis said and paused.

The Judge simply sat listening to him as did the others in the courtroom. Schorer was thinking, *Dennis, you are really putting your foot into it.*

“At the end of the day, I go home and I sit on my couch and I wonder why I am told to fuck myself. I have never done anything to these inmates. I have done nothing to deserve this abuse. Yet, every day I am expected to simply take it, ‘Take it in the ass’, as Mr. Dumas aptly put it. And do I have any recourse? No. None. Zilch. Nada. Then, after what most would consider a fucking horrible day at Blackrock, I’m hauled in front of your friends over there,” Dennis said and indicating the Board members, “and interrogated as if I am a 911 suspect. Well, Judge, after I had had enough, I decided to just do what the inmates do. So, I simply told them to fuck off,” Dennis finished.

The Judge sat considering Dennis’s words for several minutes. There was not a sound in the courtroom. Finally the Judge opened a folder on the bench in front of him and writing said, “Mr. Potter, I want you to go home. Take a week off. Then I want you

to see the Prison Psychiatrist. The State is to pay for your rehabilitation and care until they believe you have recovered from the trauma you have experienced. I am going to ask to see you again at the end of your therapy so that I can personally see that you are well and have recovered. This court is adjourned,” the Judge said standing and walking out of the courtroom. He left so quickly that few in the courtroom had time to stand before he disappeared.

Schorer stood, mouth agape, unable to speak. Claudia and the rest of the members of the Board followed suit.

Chapter 10

October

“Welcome back, Potter,” the CO in the rotunda offered as Dennis stood waiting for his keys.

“Thanks,” was all Dennis said.

Gathering his keys from the tray, Dennis made his way to the elevator and, after keying the panel, stood waiting. Inmates sitting on chairs, sofas, and at tables scattered about the room visited with friends and family. Momentarily the elevator door opened and Dennis stepped in. Pushing the button for the second floor, Dennis waited for the elevator to chug its way up. When the door opened, a nurse stood waiting. Dennis did not recall seeing her before.

“Slow elevator, huh,” she said.

Dennis simply smiled but said nothing. As he made his way into the lounge, several staff members greeted him.

“Hey, Potter,” Michelle said and extending her hand.

Dennis took it, after which Lonnie, Tony, Seth, Jade and several others did the same.

“So, we heard you were seeing the shrink,” Jade said and taking a puff from her cigarette.

“Give it a rest Mallory,” Michelle said disgustedly.

“Yes, Jade, give it a rest,” Lonnie agreed.

“It’s no big secret,” Jade offered defensively.

“Yes, I have been seeing the shrink,” Dennis confessed, sitting.

“Feeling better?” Tony asked, smiling. He, too, had occasion to visit the psychiatrist.

“I never felt bad. Fact is, I believe I’m helping her more than she’s helping me,” Dennis said.

“Well, unless you’re fucking her, what do you talk with her about, the weather?” Jade asked with a laugh.

“No, we talk about my feelings, her feelings, feelings, feeling, and feelings,” Dennis said.

“My God, that would be enough to keep me in therapy for the rest of my life,” Seth offered, puffing nervously at his cigarette.

“I will admit I feel like I’m an active participant in ‘True Confessions’,” Dennis said and standing. Gathering a cup from a cupboard, he inspected it. Realizing there was God only knew what growing inside, he quickly rinsed it and then poured what looked

like tar from one of two coffee pots on warmers. “When was this stuff made?” Dennis asked, holding the pot up and examining the contents.

“Just about fifteen minutes ago. You know Paula likes it strong. She makes it, takes it, and makes it to the infirmary without so much as a word,” Jade explained.

“Yeah, she likes it strong,” Tony added with a smirk.

“I’m not talking about that,” Jade said, taking a napkin off the table and feigning hitting Tony with it. He simply smiled.

“Seriously, Dennis, do you feel fit enough to get back to work?” Lonnie asked. He seldom joined the others in the lounge but knowing Dennis was coming back to work this particular morning he made it a point to be present.

“I believe I am. I understand there is an epidemic in here and I believe I will be needed to help with sick call if nothing else,” Dennis said.

“We’re still investigating the HIV issue. The CDC tells us there has never been anything like this anywhere in the history of the disease. They are stumped as to how this thing has spread so quickly. They’ve taken twenty inmates to County and are testing them to see if this is a new strain of the virus. It feels that virulent,” Lonnie explained.

“So, what have they come up with?” Dennis asked innocently.

“Nothing. Absolutely nothing,” Lonnie admitted. “By the way, there will be two COs with you at all times for the next several weeks to make sure an incident such as happened several months ago doesn’t repeat itself,” Lonnie added as an afterthought.

“I don’t think I need protection,” Dennis protested.

“Probably not. There hasn’t been anything come down the grapevine about it. Word was last week you were coming back today. The inmates knew before the DW knew,” Lonnie said.

“Fucking shrink must have spilled her guts and told someone,” Seth said.

“I don’t think it was my psychiatrist,” Dennis said defensively.

“How the hell else word could have got out about it? She’s the only one can discharge you back to work,” Seth argued.

“I don’t know,” Dennis said.

“When are you going to learn you can’t trust anyone in this place?” Tony said pompously, as if to say, ‘I told you so’.

“You’re not *always* right about everything, Tony,” Seth said. He didn’t like Tony or his arrogance on a good day, and this day had started good enough. Had it been the beginning of a bad day the conversation would have ended with Seth and Tony locked in a war of insults.

“‘It is not good a sleeping hound to wake’. Chaucer,” Lonnie said, feeling poetic. Seth understood this was Lonnie’s way of saying, ‘Let sleeping dogs lie’. “The fact of the matter is, Dennis, you will have some extra protection just until we can make sure everything is going to go as smoothly as possible around here. Is there anything you need from me?” Lonnie finished.

Like a blow job? Dennis thought. That Lonnie was so gay was detestable and Dennis had a difficult time dealing with his feelings concerning those like Seth and Lonnie. That gay men would want to work in an environment in which sex was a precious commodity by virtue of the fact men in prison are cut off from normal relations

was sickening to Dennis. It was as if they had a sign hung around their necks that read, ‘Whip me, beat me, call me trash’.

“No, Lonnie. There isn’t anything I need from you,” Dennis said, not looking at Lonnie.

Several present chuckled. They got the message. Lonnie did as well.

“Well, if there ever is, don’t hesitate to let me know,” Lonnie shot back. He was as expert as anyone in verbal parlay and he would not lose in this little exchange.

“Thanks,” Dennis said resignedly. He was not in the mood to parlay further, not with Lonnie.

After Lonnie left the room, Jade said, “Mr. Cool this morning isn’t he?”

“So, Dennis, when are you going to tell us all what happened in *the room* as it has infamously now been named?” Tony asked.

“You’ve all heard my testimony, I’m sure. That should be good enough,” Dennis said.

“Yeah, we heard your testimony. There’s what you said happened, and there’s what did happen,” Tony said smugly.

“Are you doubting my testimony, Tony?” Dennis asked, turning and facing off with Tony.

“I knew Koontz, I knew Kim Dumas, and I knew the Warden. Fact of the matter is I knew them for better than fifteen years. I could tell you when they were taking a shit; that’s how well I knew them. There were a couple of things you said happened in that room that I have a hard time wrapping my mind around,” Tony said in a suspicious tone.

“Perhaps you need a bigger mind so it can wrap around something larger than a BB,” Michelle said and coming to Dennis’s defense.

“Cute Massetti,” Tony said with a huff.

“I’m not at liberty to discuss what went on in *the room*; psychiatrists orders,” Dennis said smiling and shrugging.

“Doesn’t add up,” Tony said and holding Dennis’s gaze.

“Get a calculator,” Dennis said, his eyes narrowing. He was beginning to develop an intense dislike of Tony. *Careful. You might be the next*, Dennis thought as he and Tony engaged in the stare off.

Tony must have read Dennis’s mind. He did back off, and he did so apologetically.

“Yeah, Dennis, you’re right. I wasn’t in the room and anything I believe might have happened would just be speculation. There are a million scenarios I could conjure up, none of which would be fact. Sorry,” Tony said, standing and offering Dennis his hand.

Reluctantly, Dennis took it. He considered whether shaking Tony’s hand would be a sign of weakness and resignation or a sign of agreeing to disagree. Either way, he was skeptical of offering his hand to Tony.

Each of the staff had his and her own thoughts as Dennis and Tony shook hands.

You’re a pussy, Tony, Seth thought.

Fuckin’ brown nosing kiss ass, Jade thought.

You’re fucked, Tony, Michelle thought, knowing in her heart Dennis had killed everyone in the room.

* * * * *

Dennis began feeling as though his breathing was getting more difficult. He could not get enough air. Two days of seeing fifty inmates a day and lorded over by COs was suffocating him. Calling Lonnie, he asked that all ‘protection’ be rescinded.

“Lonnie, nothing out of the ordinary is going on. I can handle myself and the COs are within earshot if anything does go down. I can’t do my job under lights,” Dennis protested.

“Okay, I’ll call of the watchdogs. But I want you to make damn sure you keep vigilant,” Lonnie agreed.

“Thanks Lonnie. I appreciate it,” Dennis said sincerely.

Once the COs left, Dennis felt as though he could breathe again. The air got thicker and filled his chest with ease. The feeling of confinement left and he felt better about doing his job. Truth be told, it was as much for the safety of the inmates Lonnie had ordered protection as for Dennis. The COs were there to ensure that Dennis did not do anything out of the ordinary. While they did not watch every move Dennis made, they did watch him.

Near the end of his shift, Dennis was called to the infirmary. One of the terminal inmates was terminating, and the nurse wanted Dennis to be present. Dennis made his way down the hallway and before he could key the door he heard the electromagnetic lock being disengaged. Surprised, he looked up and saw a new CO in the TBI/TBO control room. It was strange not seeing Pete sitting with his feet on the counter and reading a girly magazine while struggling with the door.

“Thanks,” Dennis said to the CO as he entered the control room.

“You’re welcome,” the CO said.

“You’re new here?” Dennis asked.

“Yes,” the CO said and extending her hand. “Marsha, Marsha Hunter,” she said.

Shaking her hand, Dennis said, “Dennis, Dennis . . . “

“Potter,” Marsha finished.

“I see that my reputation precedes me,” Dennis offered.

“Few in this place don’t know the name ‘Potter’,” Marsha said.

“Well, Marsha, who is it I am supposed to see?” Dennis asked.

“Gilroy in A3,” Marsha said and heading to the room. She keyed both door locks and opened the door.

Dennis, cautiously examining the room before entering, was satisfied it was safe and he greeted the nurse in the room as he entered.

“Another casualty of the HIV epidemic?” Dennis asked.

“Well, he was HIV positive for several years. I doubt this epidemic has little to do with his condition,” the nurse advised.

“You’re right. It will take several years for those who are victims of the current epidemic to be in this state,” Dennis said, pointing at the emaciated frame of Gilroy. There wasn’t a pound of flesh left on him.

Dennis stayed with the nurse and Gilroy until Gilroy sucked a loud, gurgling breath and stopped breathing. The air slowly escaped his lungs making a long, thin whistling sound until there was no more air left to escape. Dennis watched Gilroy’s eyes turn glassy and his pupils grow until they were as dilated as was possible. Shining a light

into Gilroy's blank eyes, Dennis tested to see if the pupils would react in any way. They did not.

"Another one bites the dust," the nurse said. Then singing the Queen song, she sang, "And another one gone, and another one gone, another one bites the dust."

Dennis laughed. Although a morbid song in a morbid scene, he was impressed with the nurse's voice.

"You should have been a singer. Why don't you try out for 'American Idol'? You're that good," Dennis complimented.

"Thanks. I sing in church every Sunday. Most Sundays I sing a solo and everyone tells me the same thing. I might someday," she admitted.

"Do you want me to help you pack him?" Dennis asked, indicating Gilroy.

"Would you?" The nurse asked.

"Sure. Grab a pack and I'll get started."

As soon as the nurse left the room Dennis spotted several blood tubes, needles and vacutainers. Smiling, he loaded a large red top tube into one of the vacutainer holders, placed a needle on the holder and, finding a vein on Gilroy's arm, extracted a tube full of blood. Then Dennis quickly discarded the needle and placed the vacutainer device back where he found it. Examining the large tube filled with blood, Dennis smiled and thought, *Hello little friends. I have someone I want to introduce you to. His name is Tony Pierson.*

Dennis shoved the tube into his lab coat pocket just as the nurse returned with the body pack. Opening it, she handed Dennis a toe tag. Dennis scribbled the information from Gilroy's chart onto the tag and tied it around the large toe of Gilroy's right foot.

Then, turning the body onto its side, the nurse pulled a rectal plug from the pack and shoved it into the rectum of the dead inmate.

“I hate this part,” she said, a look of utter disgust on her face.

“Me too,” Dennis agreed. “Thanks for not asking me to do it,” he added.

She smiled. They finished by placing the remains in a large plastic bag and zipped it closed. Finally, they wrapped two large ribbon-like strings around the bag holding the remains, one at the chest and one at the knees. Once packaged, the nurse stuck her head out of the door and advised Marsha the remains were ready for transport.

“If you don’t need me anymore, I’ll go back to medical and get busy with sick call,” Dennis said.

“Sure. Thanks again,” the nurse said.

Heading back to the medical department, Dennis felt for the tube of blood. Finding it in his pocket, he smiled and thought, *Centrifuge, here we come.*

Dennis finished his shift and headed out of the prison. He had no trouble entering or leaving as the COs were reluctant to search him. They did not believe he would bring anything into the prison since he was under scrutiny nor did they believe he would take anything out. This afforded him much in the way of freedom, something that was to his benefit. Once home, he repeated the procedure he had earlier purifying the viral laced serum. Working carefully, he placed the serum in a safe place.

Now, Tony, I just need the right set of circumstances and you’re mine. You want to fuck with me? You want to fuck with me? It has almost been a year, Tony, and I have figured out who the fuck I am in prison. I am the hero of humanity, Dennis thought.

The next day, Dennis was assigned to work in the treatment slash emergency room. It was his responsibility to follow up on such tasks as removal of sutures, removal of casts, applying sutures, applying casts, as well as a variety of simple surgical procedures. Early the same afternoon, a doctor seeing inmates on B Block South, sent one of the inmates to Dennis. The inmate was found to have a skin tag. Dennis knew skin tags were seldom cancerous, but to be on the safe side, they were removed as a matter of prevention in the prison. When the inmate came into the room, Dennis looked at the area and placed the patient on the examination table.

“Walters, this is going to be tricky since it is on your eyelid,” Dennis advised the inmate.

Being an older man, one in his seventies, the inmate did not protest. “Jus’ be careful as you can, Doc,” he said.

“I will be extra careful for you, Mr. Walters,” Dennis said to comfort the man.

Dennis set everything up as the inmate rested on the table. Gathering xylocaine, sponges, sterile towels, a scalpel, syringes, and other items he would need, Dennis worked swiftly. He then picked up a red phone hanging on a wall next to the door and telephoned the COs responsible for admitting inmates into the medical building. These COs checked inmate medical passes issued on the ranges against their identification to ensure all coming to the department were warranted.

“Blake,” the CO said as he answered the phone.

“Potter, Blake. I have a scalpel in the ER,” Dennis said.

Prison protocol dictated that if a scalpel was used a CO had to be present with the medical personnel for safety purposes. This policy had been established after an inmate

had quickly extracted a scalpel from a physician and slit his throat with it. The physician died before custody arrived. The inmate was tazed, the scalpel retrieved, and since that incident the policy was implemented. Dennis had on many occasions followed the policy and, unbeknownst to him, it had saved his life.

“Need help?” Someone asked from the doorway.

Dennis turned and looked.

“Sure, Tony, I would appreciate it,” Dennis said, his heart beginning to race. He could not believe the stroke of luck. “Glove up.”

Tony loved putting on gloves and pretending he was a surgeon. It gave him a sense of power and he loved playing the role. “What are we going to do?” He asked.

“Skin tag on the right eyelid,” Dennis said and pointing at Walters’s eye.

“Ugly looking thing, isn’t it?” Tony asked.

Dennis shot him an unappreciative glance as if to say, ‘Keep your comments to yourself’. Tony got the message.

“I’m going to numb him and I would appreciate it if you could hold his head very carefully so that he doesn’t jerk. I would not want to have anything go wrong,” Dennis said.

Tony held Walters’s head. Standing at the inmate’s right side, he placed his right hand on the left side of Walters’s face. He placed his left hand on the right side and held as steadily as he could. Dennis, standing at Walters’s left, carefully swabbed the eyelid with a weak iodine solution taking care not to let any of the liquid run into Walters’s eye. Once he had disinfected the area, he drew a few mls of xylocaine and prepared to numb the area. Using a 25-gauge needle, he carefully injected around the skin tag.

“Did that hurt, Walters?” Dennis asked when he had finished.

“Not as much as Tony’s hands do,” Walters protested.

Tony left off some of the pressure he had holding Walters head. “Sorry,” he said as he did so.

Dennis placed a sterile towel over Walters face. A hole in the center of the towel allowed visualization of part of Walters’s face. The towel covered Tony’s hands. Dennis positioned the opening such that he could clearly see the eyelid as well as Tony’s left thumb resting on Walters’s cheek. Using a number twelve curved blade on a number three handle, Dennis prepared to excise the skin tag. Picking the tag up with a pair of tissue forceps, Dennis carefully cut into the tag. Just as he cut he said, “Tightly, Tony.”

The jerking motion of Tony repositioning his hands caused the scalpel to reposition itself, slicing Tony’s glove and into his thumb.

“Shit,” Tony said as he watched blood accumulate in the glove.

“Will you be ok for just a moment?” Dennis asked.

“It’s a sterile blade. I’ll heal,” Tony said.

Dennis finished the procedure and then, turning his attention to Tony said, “Let me take a look at that.”

Tony allowed Dennis to remove his glove. Looking at the laceration, Dennis said, “We can either throw a quick stitch into that or steri-strip it. You choose.”

“Steri-strip,” Tony said.

“Ok, sit here,” Dennis said and indicating a stool. Tony sat.

Dennis, walking to the treatment cart, extracted a vial of clear solution from his pocket. Pouring it into a sterile cup he carried it to Tony. “Put your thumb in here for a while so that we can rinse the wound,” Dennis said.

Tony placed his thumb into the liquid. Dennis, smiling inside, and looking at Tony’s thumb in the liquid, thought he could see the viruses entering Tony’s wound.

* * * * *

“How have you been feeling?” Dr. Maria Poe asked.

“Fine,” Dennis said, smiling.

“Is there anything new going on that you would like to discuss?” Poe asked.

“No. I have been doing my job, the inmates are not complaining – at least not about me,” Dennis said.

“Dennis, I have been going over your testimony about what happened during the assault and deaths of Mr. Dumas, Mr. Koontz and Warden Wright. I have some questions I would like to ask,” Poe said.

“Dr. Poe, is this absolutely necessary? I have been over this a thousand times, a million if you count the number of times I have been over it in my head. Sometimes I wake in the middle of the night in a sweat and the horrible scene fresh in my mind,” Dennis lied, trying to avoid having to go through the explanation again.

“I simply need to have clarity on several points and then I can submit my report and discharge you from care; that is unless you wish to continue,” Poe said, smiling sweetly.

“Are you flirting with me, Doctor?” Dennis asked.

Poe flushed. She did find Dennis attractive and had hoped she could hide the physical attraction. Perhaps she had not been careful enough.

“No, Dennis, I am not flirting with you,” Poe lied.

“Jade Malory asked me a week or two ago if I was fucking you,” Dennis said, looking straight into Poe’s eyes, his face set in a serious frame.

Poe said nothing for several seconds, then asked, “And what was your answer?”

“I told her I couldn’t fuck you, but that we were making love,” Dennis said to see how Poe would respond.

“You do realize that kind of comment could jeopardize my position here. Further, I could be asked to provide a written testimony to the contrary, Dennis. Is there a reason you would want to bring harm to my reputation?” Poe asked seriously.

“I didn’t tell her that. I wanted to. But I didn’t. I’m sorry that I lied to you about that,” Dennis said looking down.

“About that? Are there other things you have lied to me about Dennis?” Poe asked softly.

Dennis, looking into her face, wondered if he could tell her everything. Would she understand? Would she turn him in? Would she think he was an animal like the inmates he was eliminating? He decided he could not take the chance. Not yet.

“What is it you are concerned about in my testimony?” Dennis asked and changing the subject.

Poe let it go. Taking some papers out of a folder and reading from them, she said, “You said that after Mr. Wright and Mr. Koontz came into the room Mr. Dumas attacked them,” Poe stated.

“First, could we just refer to them as Warden, Pete and Kim? It makes it easier talking about them if I hear their names as I did in the past,” Dennis protested.

“Certainly, Dennis,” Poe agreed.

“Okay. Here’s what happened, for the thousandth time; the Warden came into the room with Pete. Dumas was squared off with me thinking he was going to have me alone. He had been threatening me as I already testified. I don’t want to repeat what it was he said to me unless you insist,” Dennis said, squirming in his chair.

Poe noticed that Dennis was uncomfortable with the thought of telling her what Dumas had said and decided it was not important. “No, Dennis, you do not need to repeat what he said to you,” she agreed.

“Great. Dumas walked over to the Warden looking like he was going to hit him and the Warden told Kim to back off. Dumas told the Warden he didn’t have to listen to any orders from him and the Warden told Kim he could hurt him in the prison. It sounded like a threat to Kim and pissed him off,” Dennis said and paused as if recalling what had happened next.

“Then Kim made some comment about someone dying at Christmas time and grabbed the Warden. Pete tazed Kim just as he hit the Warden in the neck. The Warden grabbed his throat and I rushed over and tried to help him. In the meantime, Pete had dropped the tazer and was trying to get out of the door. Dumas, recovering just enough from being tazed, grabbed Pete’s head and snapped his neck. It was quick. Then he slumped to the floor again. I grabbed the mace from Pete’s belt and started spraying Dumas. He grabbed my hand and the mace went everywhere. I narrowly escaped getting a face full myself. Then Kim pushed me away, pulled the probes out of his chest, re-

coiled the tazer and fired it at me. Just as he was depressing the trigger I head-butted him square on the nose. I must have knocked myself out or he tazed me as I fell. The next thing I remember was opening the door and COs pouring into the room,” Dennis finished and settling back in his chair.

“Would you like me to tell you what I believe happened in that room?” Poe asked.

Dennis looked at her in surprise. Then he said, “Sure, I’d love to hear it.”

“What I believe happened is that Dumas killed the Warden as soon as he stepped into the room. Pete was trying to get out of the room and you were so incensed by his cowardice you grabbed him and pulled him away from the door. He used you as a shield while he maced Dumas, didn’t he Dennis?” Poe asked softly.

Dennis, considering her scenario better than his, said nothing.

“Then, Dumas grabbed you and threw you against the bed. Pete head-butted Kim just as Kim grabbed Pete by the neck. Because you were afraid of how all of this would look, you tazed yourself, didn’t you Dennis?” Poe asked.

“Why would you surmise that?” Dennis asked surprised.

“Dennis, this type of fear is common in a hostage situation. There is no way the probes could have landed in your chest from the position you say Dumas was in when he fired at you. Further, he could not have had time to re-load the taser. Your story is full of holes Dennis,” Poe said leaning forward and speaking gently.

Dennis, feeling a sense of panic, thought it best to go with her story and confess.

“You’re right, Maria. I did taze myself. I feel like such a coward and I didn’t want anyone to know I was afraid,” Dennis admitted.

“Now we’re getting somewhere,” Poe said.

“Am I going to get into trouble?” Dennis asked.

“I sense you are improving Dennis. In fact, I feel you have made impressive strides in your therapy. There is something called doctor client confidentiality. I am sure you understand that. I will keep this confidential,” Poe said, and taking Dennis’s hand in hers.

Dennis looked at her hand and gently petted it with his other hand. He looked into her eyes and said, “Thank you for trusting me and for helping me.”

“You’re welcome Dennis,” was all she said.

Chapter 11

December

“You’re what?” Lonnie asked, stunned.

“Sick. Sick to death. I am HIV positive,” Tony admitted.

“But how?” Lonnie asked in disbelief.

“I don’t know. I have been over my life here in the prison a million times and I can’t remember a single time I could have been exposed. I have never had a needle stick. I’ve been cut a number of times, but my cuts never came into contact with anyone else’s blood or body fluids if you get my drift,” Tony said.

“Are you sure?” Lonnie asked.

“I know my body better than anyone. You know as well as I do that I am a heart attack waiting to happen. Any little thing that comes along knocks me on my keester. I went to the doctor day before yesterday because I thought I had the flu or something. He asked me about the prison epidemic and said, ‘Tony, do you want to do a quick oral swab

test'? I said, 'Why not', thinking it would absolutely be negative. When he told me it was positive and ran several other tests to confirm I was stunned," Tony said.

"Shit. What in the fuck is going on around here?"

"You want my honest assessment, Lonnie?" Tony asked seriously.

Lonnie studied Tony for a minute and then said, "You can't be serious Tony. Potter?"

"Yes. Potter. I don't know how, but all of this started after he arrived on the scene. I believe he's gone south and he's done something to cause all of this," Tony said.

"Can you prove it? Even his psychiatrist, Dr. Poe, has given him a green light to full time, uncensored duty," Lonnie said, resting back in his chair.

"Yeah, and word is that he's banging that tight little pussy as well. You don't know how many times I thought about getting into that. He's a lucky little shit," Tony said reminiscing.

"No one knows that he's having a relationship with Dr. Poe. I have known her for several years and she has an impeccable reputation," Lonnie said.

"I know her reputation as well. She was one hot and horny number until Potter scratched the magic spot. Anyway, he's at work because she has given him permission. I stand on my belief he is the cause of this and I am one of the casualties of his personal war. I sensed one day after he got back I was on his shit list," Tony admitted.

"Tony, you can't be serious. Potter wanting to harm you? I simply can't believe it. There is nothing about him, with the exception that he is a little odd at times, that suggests he has it in for any of us and would do anything to harm us," Lonnie scoffed.

“You have my two cents worth. I have just been to Human Resources and given them my resignation. Without proof that I contracted HIV here, I will not get a single dime in compensation,” Tony said disgustedly.

“You have your pension. You’ve been here longer than anyone Tony. You have to be sitting on at least 30 years,” Lonnie said.

“Twenty-eight,” Tony advised.

“Twenty-eight. That’s three quarters of your monthly salary for life,” Lonnie said, then realizing what he had said offered an apology, “Sorry, Tony.”

“It’s okay. I probably have at least three years unless my heart gives out before then, which I suspect it will,” Tony offered.

“Is there anything I can do for you?” Lonnie asked, the concern showing both on his face and in his voice.

Tony looked at him for a few seconds and then both of them burst into laughter. After laughing for several minutes, and each understanding why they were laughing, Tony said, “No, Lonnie. But I do want to tell you that it has been nice working with you these past six years.”

Extending his hand, one that Tony had reluctantly taken in times past as he considered if Lonnie was HIV positive, Tony took Lonnie’s hand and shook it. Lonnie immediately washed his hand as soon as Tony left.

Picking up the phone, Lonnie called Dr. Poe. He could not believe either the report that Tony was HIV positive or that Dennis might have anything to do with the prison outbreak. He was shocked at what was happening.

“Poe,” he heard as the other side connected.

“Good morning, Doctor, do you have a minute?” Lonnie asked.

“Lonnie, it’s good to hear your voice. What can I do for you?” Poe asked, immediately recognizing Lonnie’s familiar effeminate lisp. Lonnie subconsciously exaggerated the lisp, as well as the sing-song manner in which he spoke, when speaking with women.

“I just spoke with Tony Pierson. He told me he has HIV,” Lonnie said and pausing.

“He has what?” Poe asked incredulously.

“HIV,” Lonnie repeated, enunciating each letter clearly.

“Did he tell you more?” Poe fished and not wanting to ask Lonnie if Tony was also homosexual, or perhaps bisexual.

“No. Yes. He told me he thinks Dennis Potter has something to do with this,” Lonnie admitted.

Keeping her emotions in check, Poe asked, “What brought him to that conclusion?”

Lonnie sensed the tension in her voice – *Is that protection I hear?* He thought – but said nothing. “I think he believes Potter had it in for him and somehow has infected him and everyone else that is HIV positive in the prison,” Lonnie answered.

“That is delusional thinking, Lonnie. Perhaps you should give him some time off,” Poe suggested.

“He is giving himself time off. He just advised me he has quit,” Lonnie shared.

“This is all very sudden, isn’t it?” Poe asked.

“There are so many things going on here that are ‘sudden’,” Lonnie admitted.

“Lonnie, please do not mention this to Dennis yet. I would like to speak with him before you do. Can you do that?” Poe asked.

“Sure Dr. Poe. And Doctor?” Lonnie said.

“Yes, Lonnie?”

“If he has caused all of this, can you put him someplace where the rest of us will be safe?” Lonnie asked.

“Of course I will,” Poe agreed and hanging up. Then she immediately picked up the phone and made another call.

“Medical,” a voice answered.

“Yes, Michelle Massetti, please,” Poe said.

After holding for several minutes Poe heard, “Massetti.”

“Michelle, can you come to my office today?” Poe asked.

“Sure Maria. What’s up?” Michelle asked.

“I have a dilemma and I need your advice,” Poe said.

“How about four thirty, will that work?” Michelle asked.

“Four thirty will be perfect. Would you like to have a glass of wine with me when you get here?” Poe asked.

“Love it,” Michelle said and hanging up the phone.

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“I’m having some trouble wrapping my mind around this one,” Michelle admitted after hearing Tony was HIV positive and thought Dennis was the cause.

“Do you believe there is any validity to it?” Maria asked.

“No way,” Michelle answered emphatically.

“Neither do I,” Maria admitted.

Michelle studied Maria for several seconds and smiling said, “You’re fucking him aren’t you?”

Maria, her expression set and not flinching, countered, “What makes you believe I am having a physical relationship with Dennis, Michelle? Is there something you’re not telling me?”

“And to think I tried for several years getting into your pants and failed,”

Michelle said smiling.

“You told me you were over that fantasy,” Maria said, leaning forward and folding her hands, her expression remaining soft.

“Oh, I am. Don’t get me wrong Maria. I’m not jealous. In fact, I’m happy for you if you’re enjoying it,” Michelle said, resting back and holding up an empty glass.

“Right. Wine,” Maria said and picking up a wine opener. She toyed with the bottle for several minutes until successfully extracting the cork. It made a familiar pop as it exited the bottle. Maria unscrewed the cork from the corkscrew, sniffed it and handed it to Michelle who did the same.

“Ah, that’s nice,” Michelle said dreamily and setting the cork on the glass coffee table.

Maria poured wine into two glasses until each was half full. Then, picking her glass up and holding it toward Michelle said, “Here’s to being better.”

The two touched glasses and a clinking sound ensued. Michelle swirled the wine around in her glass and then examined the glass.

“Nice legs,” she said as the wine slowly settled down the glass.

Maria simply sipped her wine and let the aroma fill her senses. Michelle, after taking one more sniff, did the same.

“Wow,” was all she said.

After taking several more sips in silence, Maria set her glass on the table and said, “Michelle, is there any way you can think of how Dennis might have infected either Tony or anyone else in the prison?”

Michelle, looking thoughtful, took one small sip of her wine and said, “Only if he’s HIV positive and having sex with inmates.”

“Right,” Maria said.

“I know that isn’t happening because he’s too uptight at work to have any contact with inmates. What I see is that he is the ultimate professional. I sense that he has a love hate relationship with the inmates, much as all of us do. He gets frustrated with them but he gives them the best care he is capable of,” Michelle said honestly.

“That is what I have gleaned from many others working with him,” Maria shared.

“Then why are you asking me?” Michelle asked, puzzled.

“Because I trust not only your professional opinion, but I also trust your gut Michelle. You have – dare I say it? – a sixth sense that is uncanny,” Maria said.

“Right. My sixth sense,” Michelle said and rolling her eyes.

“Michelle, you can stay in denial about it as long as you are comfortable doing so. However, we did determine you do have some of the qualities of being somewhat psychic. You know I do not believe in these types of things, but you have almost convinced me there is something to it with what you have seen and told me in the past,” Maria finished.

“Maria, I’ve told you several times I believe I am simply in tune with my senses, my emotions. Perhaps I am a little *to* in tune with them, and by the way, didn’t we agree when I concluded my three years of visits with you that I am simply conflicted?”

Michelle said.

“Yes. We agreed you are conflicted. Is that getting any better?” Maria asked.

“Let’s see. I believe I am a man trapped in a woman’s body. I seek relationships with those who I believe need saving, and I believe I am the one who can save them. I subconsciously sabotage my relationships because I can’t accept anyone’s love. To add insult to injury, I love too much in every relationship I find myself in. Then, the icing on the cake is that my last lover blew her brains out in my car because I told her it was over. So, Maria, does it sound to you like I am getting less conflicted?” Michelle asked, her expression showing no emotion.

“Perhaps not just now, but I believe in you Michelle. I believe you can overcome these emotions.” Sensing Michelle was about to object, Maria held up her hand and said, “I’m not saying you need to change your orientation.”

“I couldn’t change my orientation any more than you could. Hell, I have more testosterone than the average guy,” Michelle said and laughing.

“To answer your question, yes, I am having a physical relationship with Dennis,” Maria said, her expression serious.

Michelle held her expression so as not to reveal her disgust. *Why would a woman as beautiful as you want some cock slamming into you when I could take so much better care of you?* Michelle thought. “Is it serious?” She asked, setting her glass on the table and refilling both hers and Maria’s.

“Yes, it is Michelle. There is a side to Dennis that he rarely reveals to anyone. He has been burned in relationships as well and is in his own way as conflicted as you,” Maria explained.

“Conflicted enough to kill inmates?” Michelle asked, her expression serious.

Maria paused for several seconds, studied Michelle’s face, and then after taking another sip of her wine said, “I believe so.”

“What is it you want me to do?” Michelle asked.

“I want you to help me find the truth,” Maria said.

“How?” Michelle asked.

“I want you to convince Dennis that he needs hypnosis,” Maria said.

“You want to take him through the same therapy I went through?” Michelle asked, surprised.

“Basically. I want to see if I can find a link between what we see in Dennis and what we see happening in the prison,” Maria explained.

“I’ll see what I can do,” Michelle said.

The two women finished their wine and after offering each other a few pleasantries and hugging, Michelle left. Maria washed the glasses and returned the remaining wine to the shelf. As she did so she thought, *I am going to find the truth Dennis. God help you if you have deceived me.*

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“You want me to do what?” Dennis asked.

“I want you to go to a club with me tonight. That is unless you have other plans,” Michelle said.

“I’m not really into clubbing, Massetti,” Dennis confessed nervously.

“It’s not a date, Potter. You’re not my type,” Michelle said, punching Dennis on the arm.

“To be honest with you Michelle you might be my type if your orientation was one-hundred-eighty degrees North,” Dennis said, winking.

“Well it isn’t, and that’s disgusting. I can’t imagine you on top of me, slobbering and panting like a dog,” Michelle said disgustedly.

“What makes you think I pant?” Dennis asked with a chuckle.

“So you do slobber! You animal,” Michelle said punching him again.

“What’s the club?” Dennis asked.

“It’s just a club. Actually, I am playing in a band there and I wanted you to hear the band and tell me what you think,” Michelle said.

Dennis looked surprised. “You play in a band? How is it I’ve known you all this time and you never told me you played in a band?” He asked.

“Don’t look so shocked. I have more talents than you know,” Michelle said.

“Massetti, I’m a little taken aback here. I know I don’t share much of my personal life with anyone here, and I sense you don’t as well. I always thought that was because you are gay. But we’re kinda friends, aren’t we? I mean, playing in a band is something I believe you would have told me about,” Dennis said.

Michelle studied Dennis’s face and then said, “Potter, I choose my friends carefully. Most of these people here are so fucked up, so totally dysfunctional, that on a good day they can’t find their ass with both hands. What do you think they would say if I

told them I played in a band? They'd have one more thing to bring up every day and joke about. I'm already their whipping boy because I make no bones about being a dyke."

"I suppose you're right. By the way, I am glad you chose me for a friend here Massetti," Dennis said sincerely.

"So what about the club?" Michelle asked.

Dennis thought about it for several seconds and said, "Okay. I'll go."

"Great. We'll leave from here after work. Let's say seven-thirtyish?" Michelle asked.

"Seven-thirtyish it is," Dennis said.

After Michelle left the room Dennis smiled and thought, *How does a barely five foot tall petit little woman who thinks she's a man play the drums? This I gotta see!*

Dennis was ready to go at seven-fifteen and Michelle found him at exactly seven-thirty. "We'll take my car in case you want to have a drink. I never drink when I play," she explained.

"Sounds good," Dennis said, taking his doctor coat off and putting on his sport coat.

Michelle drove and Dennis listened to her tell him how she became interested in playing the drums, how she found a band to play for, how she beat six other men out of the competition for the position and how much she loved being a musician. She talked non-stop from the time they left the prison until they arrived at the club. Dennis was surprised that Michelle would share so much of her life with him and in such a short period of time. After parking behind the club in an alleyway, Michelle and Dennis entered the club from a rear door.

Dennis had been in bars before and this one was typical. The lingering smell of cigarette smoke filled the place as did the smell of sweat and booze. Dennis thought if he could take these scents, combine them and sell them in cologne, he could make a ton of money. He would name the cologne *Shit Faced*. He figured the only time one truly appreciated the combined scents of these items was when one was – shit faced.

Michelle led Dennis to a stage crammed with gear. Her drum set, packed in at the back of the stage, consisted of a bass, five toms, a hi hat, two crash cymbals, a ride cymbal, and an inverted China Boy. A tall swivel stool sat nested in the arc of the set. Michelle jumped on the stool, pumped the foot pedal a couple of times to test the bass and, satisfied things were in order, got off the stool.

“Come with me and I’ll get you set up,” she said taking Dennis by the arm and leading him off the stage.

“Nice set,” Dennis said, pointing at Michelle’s chest.

Michelle looked down at her chest, then looked up and said, “Are you fucking flirting with me Potter?”

“I’m pointing through your chest at the drum set Massetti. I know flirting with you will only get me a black eye,” Dennis said, rolling his eyes.

“Come on Potter,” Michelle said, ignoring his complement and dragging him to a table in front of the stage. A sign on the table read ‘Reserved’ in large, bold letters. “This is the place of honor. I had it reserved just for you,” Michelle said and pointing at the sign.

“I’m honored Michelle,” Dennis said truthfully.

“Hey Mickey,” a voice said.

Michelle turned and said, “Jimmy, come. Let me introduce you to my friend.”

Jimmy extended a hand and Dennis reluctantly took it. Resembling Mick Jagger with half the lips, Dennis was repulsed at the man. He wore a black one-piece jumpsuit that looked like it was made of shiny plastic. Dennis wondered how he got the thing zipped up. *You couldn't even fart in that thing*, Dennis thought as he looked at the man.

“Jimmy is our bass guitarist,” Michelle said proudly.

“Nice to meet you Jim,” Dennis said, trying not to reveal his disgust.

“Jimmy. Please call me Jimmy,” he said correcting Dennis and extending a limp, albino hand.

If this guy isn't a vampire I don't know what is, Dennis thought. “Jimmy,” Dennis corrected and letting go of the man's limp hand.

“Where's the rest of the band?” Jimmy asked, throwing a hand on his hip and tossing his head back with the other.

Oh shit! Dennis thought as the realization set in. *I'm in a freaking gay bar.*

Looking around, Dennis began taking notice of others in the club. Many ‘couples’ sat at tables or at the bar. He recognized immediately they were *gay* couples. Several women sat at one table drinking and laughing. Half Dennis recognized as butch and the others, as what he would later be told, were ‘fem’.

“Look. Here comes the others,” Michelle said, pointing at a door behind the bar.

Introductions made for the sake of Dennis, the band took their places. Michelle, perched on her stool behind the drum set, was barely visible from Dennis's perspective. The lead singer and guitarist, Sammy, introduced the band.

“Good evening ladies, gentlemen and all others. We hope you’re having a good time. We’re ‘The Gape Ride’. Our band was named by our drummer, Mickey. Let’s give it up for her,” Sammy said, applauding. Those in the audience did the same. “On bass we have our MIB, PVC man in black, Jimmy Falcon.” More applause greeted Jimmy as he curtsied. “On rhythm guitar we have Tommie Lombard,” Sammy said and pointing at Tommie. More applause. “Finally, my name is Sammy the Dish Dressier.” Those in the audience laughed and applauded. There was general understanding among those present that the term “dish” in their vernacular meant Sammy had a cute ass; at least he professed to have.

Sammy, turning and speaking to Michelle, said something that was inaudible. Michelle, tapping her drum sticks together four times, started the first riff. The band joined in and the music began. Dennis was impressed first with Michelle, and second, with the band in general. He had not expected that Michelle would be an excellent drummer, or that she would be in such a great band. Mickey, Sammy, Jimmy and Tommie played through a repertoire of tunes ranging from *King of Pain* to *You’ll Think of Me*. Sammy was an excellent vocalist and the rest of the group, including Michelle, were excellent harmonizers. All in all, in the middle of the performance when the group announced their break, Dennis was impressed. He had sucked down two large lagers on tap and was feeling great. Michelle joined him at the table and asked, “Enjoying yourself?”

“I have to tell you Massetti, I am stunned,” Dennis admitted.

“What do you mean? Stunned at how good we are or stunned at how much we suck?” Michelle asked, sitting.

“Stunned at how good you are. I mean ‘you’ in the sense of both *you* and the band. Michelle, you are amazingly talented on those drums. Some of the riffs you played were truly remarkable,” Dennis praised.

“Thanks Dennis. Coming from you that means a lot to me,” Michelle said with deep sincerity.

“I also have to admit that Sam has an excellent range and is quite talented. He is a dead ringer for singers from Sting to Urban. That’s about as great a range as I can imagine,” Dennis praised.

“He won a lot of singing awards and was offered parts in musicals as a student. That was before he dropped out of the university after falling in love with his best friend,” Michelle shared.

“Well, your group is going places. Speaking of going places, I believe you will understand when I tell you that I don’t feel very comfortable here. You know why. Did you see the guys who came over while you were performing?” Dennis asked.

“I noticed a couple of guys at the table. But it looks like you did a good job of blowing them off. I’m sure I know what it was they were asking,” Michelle said and smiling.

“Right, and don’t say “blowing them’ Massetti.”

Michelle laughed so loud that many wondered what the joke was.

“I’m not used to women approaching me much less men. It makes me a little queasy,” Dennis continued.

“Makes the testicles crawl into your abdomen does it?” Michelle asked playfully.

Dennis laughed. "You have a way of defining things that is truly spot on," Dennis said and sipping his beer. Then as an afterthought said, "Can I get you anything to drink?"

"Barry's going to bring me a coke in a minute," Michelle said and pointing at the bartender.

"Anyway, what I wanted to say Michelle is that if your band played in other places I would definitely come and listen to you often. In fact, I would invite some of my friends to come as well," Dennis said.

"So, Dennis, when you told me we were excellent were you lying?" Michelle asked.

Dennis, frowning, said, "I meant every word of it."

"Then why would you lie to me about coming to see me with your 'friends'. I know you don't have any Dennis," Michelle scolded.

Dennis, taking another sip of his beer, studied Michelle's face and finally said, "Touché. You're right. I don't have any friends. I did lie about that. The point is Michelle that if I could come and see you in another environment, I would make some friends so I could show you off," Dennis said honestly.

"Thanks, Dennis. Thanks for both the complement and for admitting you lied. That's a huge step for you, I'm sure," Michelle said.

"Probably," Dennis said and relaxing in his chair.

"Dennis, I asked you to come here for another reason other than to listen to me drum," Michelle said.

"Oh? What was the other reason?" Dennis asked, intrigued.

“I know how much stress you have been under at work. I know the accident you were in and the stress of looking after so many HIV positive inmates has gotten to you. I wanted to share with you that I had a bad experience and the one thing that helped me most was hypnosis,” Michelle said.

“Hypnosis. I believe hypnosis would do little more for me than to reveal that I had a childhood that was not the best, that the relationships that I had sucked, and that I’m just one notch above that of loser,” Dennis said.

“You’re not a loser Dennis. You simply need to get in touch with your true self. When I learned the reasons for my being gay, I was able to discuss them with Dr. Poe and she helped me understand who I am. I spent three years on her couch after Kerry, that was my wife, shot herself in my car. I know you have been on Dr. Poe’s couch as well because any time these types of things occur we all have to see the prison psychiatrist,” Michelle explained, hiding her knowledge that Dennis’s time on the couch was on top of Maria. Dennis, sensing Michelle sensed something, played coy.

“Dr. Poe has helped me as well. In fact, she released me back to full time work in short order. I am as fit as a fiddle,” Dennis said, overplaying his cards.

“I’m just saying I believe it would help you. I want to see you be all you can be as well,” Michelle urged.

“You sound like a recruiter, Michelle. ‘Be all that you can be. Join the Army’,” Dennis teased.

“If I can recruit you into hypnosis, then I will be a recruiter,” Michelle pushed.

“I’ll think about it,” Dennis promised.

There's no way I'm letting anyone into my brain without my full understanding of what they're doing in there, Dennis thought. No way on earth.

January

“As the newly appointed Warden, I am faced with a dilemma of great proportions. Due to recent events at this facility, I found it necessary to involve the CDC. These people with me are representatives of that organization and have been working feverishly to come to some conclusions regarding the HIV epidemic sweeping through this facility. It appears no specific group or individuals have been targeted, but we believe this was an intentional act on the part of one or several individuals. Whether this is an act of vengeance or simply a vigilante act is unclear. We will find the answer,” Rod Gabriel said, facing the audience.

“What do you know so far, Dr. Gabriel?” A reporter in the audience asked and pointing a microphone toward Rod.

“Perhaps I can defer that answer to Dr. Phillips with the CDC. Doctor?” Dr. Gabriel answered.

“Yes. Well what we know so far is that there are literally hundreds of new cases of HIV. It is not yet clear where this began, but we are working on finding the source,” the doctor said.

“How do you know these are new cases? Aren't there already hundreds here who have HIV already?” Another reporter asked.

“We have a new method of detecting recent HIV infection. Without getting technical, the test is called ‘STARHS’,” the doctor answered and saying each letter separately. “This is a test of blood serum that identifies if the infection is new or old. The majority, and by that I mean over ninety-five percent, have revealed the infections are new.”

“Isn’t this extremely rare? You must have concluded this is intentional. Why haven’t you directed every effort at getting to the source?” A man in the audience asked.

“Without getting into details, and that at the direction of local law enforcement and the FBI, I can tell you that they have identified several suspects and are working on leads,” Dr. Gabriel explained.

Those in the audience began asking questions rapid fire, and at once. General pandemonium ensued until several police officers stepped to the front of the stage and demanded order. One, a Lieutenant with the Sheriff’s department, loudly and sternly announced, “You will maintain respect and order here or I will have this auditorium cleared. This will be your one and only warning.” With that, he and the other officers present stepped back to their initial positions.

After several moments of silence, a woman in the audience asked, “Can you tell us how many individuals have been infected and whether they are staff, inmates or both?”

“Dr. Greyhill is monitoring that. Would you care to respond doctor?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“At this point we have determined there are thirteen staff members, that number would include officers, as well as all other prison staff, and six hundred forty inmates so far. These numbers are expected to climb in the next several weeks,” Greyhill announced.

Gasps of surprise echoed throughout the audience.

“This is an outrage,” someone shouted from the back of the auditorium. “How in the hell could so many people get infected and you’re just finding out?”

Officers stepped forward once again. The Lieutenant was ready to speak when Dr. Gabriel held up a hand. “Like I said, if this was either a group or vigilante act, this would have been done covertly with intelligent design. There would have been no clue until now that we were dealing with anything but flu. Inmates were being treated symptomatically and every symptom pointed at influenza,” he said.

“What are law enforcement officials doing to determine who may have done this?” Another reporter asked.

“Lieutenant,” Dr. Gabriel deferred.

“As Dr. Gabriel mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, we are not sharing any information regarding this investigation at this point. The only thing I can share with you is that we, and when I say we I mean our department in cooperation with the FBI, are examining every avenue available from interviewing staff and inmates to carefully analyzing every frame of video surveillance. No stone will go unturned,” the Lieutenant assured.

“I am sure that there are many others who have questions. If anyone has questions for the CDC members present, we will be here for the entire morning and will answer every question to the best of our knowledge. Please do not ask questions related to the

investigation. Any questions regarding procedure, treatment, whatever in our epidemic findings, are fair game. So, the floor is open,” Dr. Gabriel said.

The questioning and answering went on well into the late morning. Several more outbursts necessitated ending the meeting. After one heated exchange, the Lieutenant stepped forward and dismissed those present. There were grumblings from many disgruntled press, but they realized the Lieutenant was serious and decided to do as they were asked. One of the first to slip out of the back of the auditorium was Dennis Potter.

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“What was so strange about him?” The agent asked.

“I can’t pinpoint it necessarily. It was just the way he acted. First I thought he was spaced out. I asked him if I could help him and all he did was stare off into space. It was like, weird. After I asked him about four times, he finally snapped out of it and answered. Then when I asked questions he was just all secret and stuff,” Clarence said.

“When did you say he was here?” the agent asked and jotting something onto a notepad.

“I’m not sure anymore. Maybe May, maybe April. I don’t remember,” Clarence said.

“Okay, tell us again about this man,” the agent said.

“First, he came in and was wandering around the store, just looking,” Clarence started.

“What was he wearing?” the agent asked and writing.

“Just regular clothes. Nothing fancy,” Clarence said.

“Okay, continue.”

“He seemed to know what he was talking about. He said he wanted to do some distillation, fractional distillation,” Clarence said.

“Is that what made you believe he knew what he was talking about, that he said ‘fractional distillation?’” The agent asked.

“Yeah. That and other things. He knew what to ask for in the way of equipment to do it. What was a little weird was I remember he didn’t know if he was going to use oil or water. He should have known that,” Clarence said, looking thoughtful.

“Okay, what happened next?”

“Well, he said he was going to use both water and oil and wanted the equipment to do either. So, I got what he needed,” Clarence said.

“Then?”

“That was when I asked him what he did for a living. I said, ‘Are you a chemist?’ No, I said, ‘Are you a chemist or a teacher?’ Then he said, ‘Both,’” Clarence said.

“So, he said he was a teacher *and* a chemist,” the agent repeated.

“Yeah. I asked him what University he worked for and he said he worked for some private outfit. He was acting so weird I said, ‘Can you tell me what you are working on?’ I asked in a way that made him think I was asking a spy or something, playing along with him,” Clarence said in a soft voice.

“What did he say?” The agent asked and glancing at another agent who had just stepped into the conversation.

“I remember this like it was yesterday. He put his finger on his mouth and said, “Shhhhhhh”. I was freaked,” Clarence said and shivering.

“Clarence, don’t you get many strange people in here? I mean, there are all kinds of kooks out there who have to come in here buying equipment for a variety of reasons. Maybe he wanted to make whiskey or methamphetamine,” the agent suggested.

“Well, yes, we do get some strange guys in here. Like there is this one chemistry professor works at the big University around the corner. The guy comes in here looking like Einstein, hair going off in every direction, clothes looking like he slept in them for a week, shoes untied, you know the type. He can barely communicate with anyone his mind is so, so . . .,” Clarence trailed off.

“I believe we get your meaning, Clarence,” the agent helped.

“They just don’t act the same as this guy did. Maybe he was a nobody, or maybe he was a somebody who wanted to stay under the radar. Either way, that’s all I can tell you about him,” Clarence finished.

“Okay, Clarence. Thank you for your assistance with our investigation,” the agent said and shaking Clarence’s hand.

“So, what did the guy do? Is he a serial killer or something?” Clarence asked.

The agent smiled and said, “We’ll let you know when the investigation is over and if he is, we will mention your name as helping bring him to justice.”

“Really? Wow, thanks,” Clarence said, grabbing the agent’s hand and shaking it again.

“Oh, and one last thing Clarence. Do you think you could assist our artist with drawing a sketch of the man?” The agent asked.

“Sure, I’d be happy to,” Clarence agreed.

“Great. We’ll send her in tomorrow morning. Will you be here?” The agent asked.

“At oh-eight-hundred,” Clarence said.

“Oh-eight-hundred it is then, Clarence,” the agent said.

With that, the agents left, leaving Clarence feeling bold and important. Dennis Potter watched from the safety of his car from across the street as the agents left the store. He had a feeling they would be questioning Clarence. He was right.

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“The reason I called and asked you to come here is because I need to ask you some questions about one of your patients, one of our employees, Dennis Potter,” Dr. Gabriel said.

“Dr. Gabriel, you do understand I am not at liberty to discuss specific clients with you. You are well aware of confidentiality laws and patient physician privilege,” Maria Poe answered.

“Yes, Dr. Poe, I am aware of the law. I’m not asking you to discuss confidential issues. What I would appreciate is your professional opinion concerning Mr. Potter’s past and current mental status, and given those opinions, your assessment concerning his ability to work,” Dr. Gabriel said.

“Dr. Gabriel, I could cite Sections 1010 and 1016 of Evidence Rules, as well as H&S Sections. However, seeing that you have the documents in front of you, I would say you have already read them,” Dr. Poe said, pointing at the forms on Dr. Gabriel’s desk.

“Just re-familiarizing myself with the rules concerning psychiatrists,” Dr. Gabriel admitted.

“I released Mr. Potter to full time duties some time ago. It was, and is, my opinion that Mr. Potter has recovered from the traumatic events of June,” Dr. Poe said.

“Dr. Poe, I am going to be perfectly honest with you. I believe on good authority that Mr. Potter either may have been, or still is, in some conspiracy to infect inmates with HIV. How this is being accomplished is still under investigation,” Dr. Gabriel admitted.

Maria Poe sat looking at Dr. Gabriel for several seconds. *What does your gut tell you Maria?* She thought. At last, she answered. “Dr. Gabriel, if I believed that Mr. Potter was involved in any sort of conspiracy endangering either inmates or staff, I would not have released him to full time duty. In fact, I would not have released him to *any* duty. Further, had Mr. Potter shared with me any sort of malfeasance I would not have cleared him for duty,” Maria said defensively.

“Dr. Poe, I am not questioning your professionalism or judgment. Your record dealing with our staff speaks for itself. What I want you to understand is that I am trying to find perhaps one of the greatest mass murderers in history. Should every individual infected die, this will go into the record books,” Dr. Gabriel admitted.

“That’s a little dramatic, isn’t it?” Maria asked.

“Dramatic? With the exception of Jim Jones’ nine-hundred plus victims, our man will put the likes of Fish, Manson, Berkowitz, Koresh, Gein, all of them, to shame,” Dr. Gabriel countered.

“Dr. Gabriel, what is it you want from me?” Maria asked, point blank.

“Help. I want you to help me find whoever is responsible for this. If it is someone you are currently seeing, or someone you have counseled in the past, I want you to try to convince them to turn themselves in. You know they would be judged insane or at the very least mentally incompetent. Won’t you at least try helping me?” Dr. Gabriel pleaded.

“I will give this some thought. That is the most I can promise just now,” Maria said coolly.

“That is very generous of you, Dr. Poe. I will look forward to speaking with you about this soon,” Dr. Gabriel said, standing and offering Maria his hand.

After Maria left, Rod wiped Maria’s sweat from his hand and thought, *You know exactly who is doing this, don’t you doc.*

February

It was late when Dennis arrived at his home and he immediately sensed someone was there. He cautiously entered through the front door, which was unlocked. He knew he had locked the door before going to work this day because just after he locked the door he had dropped his keys. Leaning over to pick them up he had dropped his lunch, and as it hit the porch an apple rolled out of the bag. Cursing, Dennis had retrieved it. Mornings such as these were poignant reminders of having locked the door. Entering cautiously, he loudly announced, “Hello. I’m calling the police. I know you’re in here.”

Just as he was ready to retreat a man stepped out of the living room, placed a hand in the lapel of his coat, and peering down the hallway at Dennis announced, “FBI. Please show me your hands.”

“Show me your identification,” Dennis warned as he showed his empty hands.

The agent did as Dennis requested and presented his badge. After examining it, and noting the agent's name, Dennis asked, "Agent Burroughs, what are you doing in my house?"

"We would like to ask you a few questions," Burroughs said.

"We? Do you mean there is more than one of you?" Dennis asked, looking around.

"The others are in your garage," Burroughs said.

Dennis, walking through the kitchen toward the garage door, said, "What are you looking for in my garage?"

"This," another agent answered as Dennis entered.

"This what?" Dennis asked.

"This equipment. Doing a little distillation Mr. Potter?" The agent asked.

"As a matter of fact I am. Is that against the law?" Dennis asked defiantly.

"Depends on what you are distilling," Burroughs answered.

"I'm not distilling anything illegal. You won't find anything illegal in my home as well," Dennis said.

"So, what is this? The agent asked, holding a flask with a light red mixture in it.

"Looks like blood in this to me," he finished, smugly.

"Take it to your lab and figure it out for yourself genius," Dennis said.

"Mr. Potter, if you fail to cooperate with us we will take you to headquarters and question you there," Burroughs warned.

“I suspect if you had anything to charge me with I would already be there. Given that you haven’t found anything in your expedition here, I believe now all you want to do is harass me. I’m not harassable,” Dennis finished.

“Mr. Potter, you can make life easier for all of us if you will simply cooperate and tell us why you have all of this equipment,” Burroughs said, pointing at the distillation set.

Sighing, Dennis said, “It’s a hobby of mine. I am experimenting with new scents of cologne. What you will find in the flask is red wine. That provides the alcohol component to my cologne once distilled. I’m working with a combination of thyme, jasmine and patchouli oils for the fragrance. Just in case you aren’t familiar with herbs, patchouli is from the mint family. Very nice as an oil. I believe I have stumbled onto a fine new scent that will drive the ladies wild,” Dennis said arrogantly.

“So, you’re out here making cologne in your spare time,” Burroughs said matter of fact.

“Keeps me out of the gay bars,” Dennis said with a wink.

“Yeah, we know all about your date with Massetti,” Burroughs said.

“Then you know the cologne’s working,” Dennis said smiling.

“So, why the equipment?” The agent asked.

“Read up on cologne making and you’ll find out,” Dennis said.

“You’re about this close to getting cuffed,” the agent said, holding up a couple of fingers an inch apart and taking a step toward Dennis.

Turning, Dennis placed his hands on the back of his head and spread his legs. “Pat me down and put on the cuffs Dick from the donut squat,” Dennis said, using the slang

for detective and adding an additional insult. He was not pleased with the interruption of his evening.

“The names not Dick, *dick*. It’s Russell Gains. Remember it. You’re going to be seeing a lot of me until I nail your sorry ass to the yardarm,” Gains said angrily.

“You a sailor?” Dennis asked pressing his luck.

“No, but you’re going to wish I was,” Gains answered.

“We’re finished here, Mr. Potter. We’re confiscating all of this equipment as part of our investigation. Depending on the outcome, you may or may not get it back,” Burroughs advised.

“Well, possession is nine tenths of the law. Since you are the law, and you have possession, I imagine I will never see my equipment again,” Dennis countered. “And if I find anyone using my cologne recipe down at headquarters I’m going to get the ACLU involved,” Dennis warned.

Burroughs sniggered. “ACLU? It might be more helpful if you were to call a *real* attorney Potter. You’re going to need one.”

“Are we finished?” Dennis asked.

“We’re finished. Stay in the neighborhood, Potter,” Gains said.

Taking his iPhone from his pocket and accessing his notes app, Dennis offered it to Burroughs and said, “Would you mind putting your badge numbers in my notes so I can talk with your supervisor?”

With that, and ignoring the phone, Burroughs and Gains walked out of the garage. As they did, a team of others entered with bags and boxes and began gathering Dennis’s

equipment. He felt confident that he had sterilized and bleached all traces of anything incriminating from it.

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“Why is it that everyone believes I am responsible for the HIV epidemic?” Dennis asked, feigning innocence and acting perturbed.

“Dennis, I don’t believe you are. I simply believe that if we do some further testing it might take the magnifying glass off of you,” Maria soothed, looking into Dennis’s eyes and taking his face in her hands.

Dennis kissed her gently. “What did you have in mind? A lie detector test?” Dennis asked.

“I don’t believe we’re at the point of accusation you need to worry about that,” Maria said confidently.

“What then?” Dennis asked and returning Maria’s concerned gaze.

“Hypnosis. I could trace your involvement in the prison from day one, file a report, and clear you of any and all suspicion,” Maria said persuasively.

Dennis looked at her for several seconds and then a light went on in his head. Studying Maria’s expression and determining she was on to him, Dennis turned and walked to the shelf where Maria kept her wine. Taking a half empty bottle from the shelf, the one she and Michelle had shared, Dennis held it up and peered into it.

“Would you say this bottle is half full or half empty?” Dennis asked and showing the bottle to Maria.

“What would you say?” Maria countered.

“I would say it is full of half-truths and half empty of trust,” Dennis said, realizing she and Michelle had shared the wine.

“Dennis, I do trust you. It is the prison system I don’t trust and you are caught in a game that can have the most serious of implications if you don’t do something to try clearing your name,” Maria warned.

“I thought a man, or woman, was innocent in this country until proven guilty,” Dennis said and holding the bottle toward Maria in a ‘Do you mind if I help myself?’ manner.

“Help yourself,” Maria said.

“Care to join me?” Dennis asked as he extracted the cork.

“Just a half-inch,” Maria said and showing him with her fingers.

“I’ll have several inches,” Dennis said dejectedly, pouring wine into a glass.

“I’ll have several inches after I have half an inch,” Maria said teasingly, walking to Dennis, fondling his crotch, and kissing him.

“Sounds like a plan,” Dennis agreed, smiling and pouring wine into her glass.

They sat on the plush sofa reserved for clients and sipped their wine. Maria continued the press.

“Dennis, let me hypnotize you and . . .” Maria started, but Dennis, holding up a hand, cut her off.

“Michelle recommended the same thing. I wonder why she would do that. Wasn’t she a patient of yours after her wife shot herself?” Dennis asked.

“I talked with Michelle and asked her to try convincing you to undergo hypnosis Dennis. I sense the bloodhounds are circling as are the wagons and I don’t want to see you get hurt,” Maria confessed softly.

“Why didn’t you just ask me? Why involve Michelle?” Dennis asked quizzically.

“Dennis, I know you have few friends both in and out of the prison and I know that the closest thing you have to a friend *in* the prison is Michelle. I don’t know if either of you would admit that. Both of you are introverted and for your own reasons. I wouldn’t pretend to know why anyone makes the choices they make. Life throws surprises at all of us and we are the result of how we handle those surprises,” Maria offered.

“So you decided that Michelle might be able to talk some sense into me,” Dennis stated and taking a gulp of his wine.

“Figuratively speaking, yes. Michelle has her own demons and I know you recognize that. I figured that if you saw how hypnosis has helped her you would understand that it might help you as well,” Maria said. Then, sitting very close to Dennis and taking hold of an arm she continued. “Don’t you see that we can kill two birds with one stone here, Dennis? You can benefit from the session and we can use the information to clear your name,” Maria insisted.

Dennis thought about what he should say next and the only thought that came to him was that he was tired. Running from Maria as well as the officials from the various agencies seeking answers was wearing him down. Finally, he kissed Maria full mouthed, pressing his lips to hers as tightly as possible without causing pain. After kissing her he said, “When do we start?”

Maria, surprised by the response, said, “Why not now? I don’t have any clients until tomorrow morning and you are off for the next two days. We could do a couple of sessions and I could have a report ready in a week.”

Dennis, finishing his wine and setting the glass on the table, asked, “So, what do I do?”

“First, you lay down here,” Maria said patting the couch.

Dennis followed her instruction and lay on the couch. Maria, fixing her eyes on Dennis’s, unzipped his pants. Dennis, realizing what was to come, smiled and closed his eyes. Maria continued to unbuckle his belt. Without having to say a word, as though by telepathy, Maria pulled his pants down as Dennis simultaneously lifted his hips off the couch to allow it. As Maria pulled his shoes off, Dennis briefly sat up and pulled his shirt over his head. Maria, looking at Dennis’s nude frame, pulled her blouse off, then her bra. Finally, she slipped her skirt and panties off and stood bare in front of Dennis who had achieved an erection. Maria nestled herself between his legs and gently began to suck his stiff member.

An hour later, exhausted, both lay on the couch, spent. “That was incredible,” Maria whispered, her head laying on Dennis’s chest.

“More than incredible,” Dennis admitted.

“Dennis, are you sure you want to let me hypnotize you? There may be some things in there you wish to keep to yourself. After all, my treating you goes against all

convention as it is. We should not be physically or emotionally involved as doctor patient,” Maria said.

“There is nothing in here that I feel the need to protect from you Maria,” Dennis said, tapping the side of his head with his finger.

“All of us have skeletons we would prefer to keep in the closet of our mind. I’m not after anything that is personal to you. I am willing to tell you whatever you want to know about myself, my life, anything,” Maria said.

“I am as well. You already know about the one and only relationship I had and there is nothing more for me to try hiding from you. I simply hope that you are ready for whatever you learn from the session,” Dennis warned.

Maria studied him for several seconds and then asked, “What is it that you believe I will learn that I need to be ready for?”

“Only the Shadow knows what evil lurks in the minds of man,” Dennis said teasingly.

“I’m serious Dennis. Is there something you want to tell me before we begin?” Maria asked.

“I’m content to let whatever my subconscious feels safe revealing to happen. If there is something in there that my mind wants to protect, it will not allow you to tap into it,” Dennis said confidently.

“That is true to a point Dennis. I am going to give you something that will help you relax and it will release your inhibitions,” Maria warned.

“My inhibitions have already been released and are swimming inside of you,” Dennis said, smiling.

Maria smiled back. Then her face morphed into a serious expression. “You do understand that the combination of scopolamine and hypnosis may render you susceptible and loquacious don’t you? There is the potential you will confess anything.”

Dennis knew there was no ‘truth drug’ ever proven successful in medical history. He knew this because he had studied these drugs extensively while in his pharmacology classes. His interest in hypnotic sedatives, barbiturates and other mind-altering drugs began when his best friend, Pat Bosey, dropped a cube laced with acid and flung himself off a fifteen story building as he shouted, “I’m flying.” The flight had lasted a mere 2.6 seconds before the reality of flight set in. When it had, Pat was dead.

“I’m willing to take the chance. After all, what can be in my brain that I would need to hide?” Dennis asked innocently.

“You are making the right choice Dennis. This will demonstrate you are willing to step up to the plate and do whatever is necessary to prove your innocence. No one will be able to say you were hiding,” Maria explained.

“Then let’s get the Devil’s Breath going,” Dennis said. Maria had no idea what he was talking about. She let it slip.

Dennis, having dressed, lay comfortably on the couch. Maria started an I.V. with a small needle in order to administer the drug. Once administered, Dennis slipped into a state of relaxation that felt drunken.

“Dennis, I want you to listen to the sound of my voice,” Maria started. “I want you to ignore all other sounds you may hear in this room. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” Dennis responded dreamily.

“Take a deep breath Dennis. As you breathe out, I want you to let all the tension in your body go out of you. Think about your feet; identify any tension in your feet. Take a deep breath and let all the tension in your feet go. They are totally relaxed,” Maria said in a monotone manner.

After she had Dennis identify the tension in the rest of his body and exhale it, she turned a video camera on and adjusted a microphone on her blouse. Ensuring the video was recording, she asked, “Dennis, can you hear my voice?”

Dennis, somewhere in his mind, heard her. “Yes,” he replied.

“How do you feel Dennis?” She asked.

“Wonderful,” Dennis answered.

“Dennis, I want you to go back to December two years ago. Where are you working?”

“At ‘Hip-Spine-Knee Orthopedics’,” Dennis said.

“What do you do there?” Maria asked.

“I scrub first assist in the surgical theatre with Drs. Smith, Cohen and Brien,” Dennis said.

“Did you enjoy your job?” Maria asked.

“Yes,” Dennis said.

“Dennis, did you answer an ad for the prison in December?”

“Yes.”

“Were you offered a position in the prison?”

“Yes.”

“Doing what?”

“Many things. Seeing inmates mostly,” Dennis explained.

“What sticks in your memory about your first encounter with the medical department at the prison?”

“How many sluts there are there,” Dennis answered matter-of-fact.

“Anything else?” Maria asked.

“I was shocked that the staff used the same language, had the same mannerisms, were more like inmates than medical professionals,” Dennis confessed.

“How did that make you feel?” Maria asked.

“Confused. Frustrated.”

“Dennis, did anything of significance happen in July after you started working?” Maria asked, fast-forwarding in time.

“Marv died,” Dennis answered half audibly.

“I’m sorry, Dennis. Did you say Marv died?” Maria asked for clarification and to make sure the microphone picked it up.

“Yes,” Dennis confirmed.

“Do you know how that happened?” Maria asked.

“Dumas poisoned him,” Dennis said.

Maria, puzzled, asked, “How do you know Mr. Dumas poisoned him?”

“He told me,” Dennis said.

“Did he tell you how he poisoned Marv?”

“He told me he had Walker deliver it in a magazine,” Dennis said.

“Did he tell you what kind of poison it was?” Maria asked, taking some notes.

“He told me it was something he had Ann put in the pill. He didn’t tell me what it was,” Dennis said.

Maria sat contemplating what she was hearing. Why had Dennis kept this information to himself? Why had he not gone to the Warden, or the Major, either white or black, with this information? After a minute of silence, Maria asked, “Dennis, are you still feeling relaxed? Are you comfortable?”

“Not so much as before,” Dennis admitted.

Maria, sensing Dennis was coming out from some of the effects of the scopolamine, decided to give him another dose. Without telling Dennis, she administered another 0.3mg. After injecting the medication through a Y port, she opened the I.V. allowing the fluid to flush the med into Dennis’s vein more quickly. She then waited for several minutes for the scopolamine to take effect.

“Whoa. What a rush,” Dennis said.

“What’s happening Dennis?” Maria asked.

“I feel like I just smoked one gigantic reefer,” Dennis said, his speech somewhat slurred.

Maria, not wanting to tell Dennis that she had given him more of the drug, and not wanting the evidence of it on record, something she would carefully edit from the video later, continued. “That’s just the scopolamine wearing off a little,” she lied. “Dennis,” she continued, “why didn’t you tell someone about the poisoning as soon as Mr. Dumas told you?”

“Because I was glad Ann had helped Dumas, as much as I hated Dumas, kill that fucking pedophile. If anyone deserved to die, it was Marv,” Dennis said, his body tensing.

“I sense you are uncomfortable talking about this,” Maria stated.

“I don’t like talking about killing,” Dennis admitted.

“Dennis, sometime in May an outbreak of HIV began in the prison. Do you know anything about how that happened?” Maria asked.

“Yes,” Dennis said.

Maria, stunned by the answer, paused to consider where she wanted to go with the questioning. If Dennis did have something to do with the outbreak, did she want to know? What would she do with the information if she did find out? Further, what was she going to do with the information she had thus far? Her mind reeled. Fearing Dennis would slip into a comfortable sleep, thereby ending the session, Maria carefully chose her next question.

“Dennis, did you do anything to cause this epidemic?” Maria asked, fearing the answer.

“No,” Dennis said immediately.

Maria visibly slumped as a wave of relief engulfed her. Then, straightening, she asked, “Do you know how this started, or who started it?”

“Yes,” Dennis answered.

“Dennis, who started this epidemic?” Maria asked, bracing herself.

“Tony Pierson,” Dennis said.

“I thought it was important that I discuss this with you Dr. Gabriel.”

“Thank you for coming Dr. Poe. What is it you wish to discuss?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“I hypnotized Dennis Potter under sedation this morning and learned of some things I believe are imperative to share. This will in some ways breach confidentiality. However, since it will not have ramifications for Mr. Potter, I feel it necessary to divulge the information,” Maria explained.

“So, I take it Mr. Potter does not know anything about this,” Dr. Gabriel stated.

“No. I believe he would want to protect those who I am going to speak with you about and would probably not want me talking with you about this. However, since I believe more lives may weigh in the balance, I am going to even the weight on that balance so that it is more or less equal,” Maria said.

“Go ahead,” Dr. Gabriel prompted.

“While under hypnosis, Mr. Potter told me he was aware of who was involved in the death of Marvin Fitzgerald,” Maria said and handing Dr. Gabriel a file.

“I see. Who did he say was involved?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“He told me Ann Shaw laced some medication and passed it to Kim Dumas. After Mr. Dumas had possession of the medication, he apparently gave it to Officer Walker who either knowingly or unknowingly delivered it to Mr. Fitzgerald in a magazine. Mr. Fitzgerald, not knowing the medication was laced, swallowed it and the rest is history,” Maria explained.

“How did Mr. Potter learn of this?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“He said that Mr. Dumas confessed this to him. When, I do not know. Why, I don’t know either. I believe what he told me was true. I reviewed the report I just handed you concerning the events surrounding Mr. Fitzgerald’s death, and Mr. Potter’s claim can be justified by what is in the report,” Maria shared.

Dr. Gabriel opened the folder, briefly scanned the contents taking an extra minute to view the photographs of Marv’s lifeless corpse, closed the file and asked, “Did he say anything else about this incident?”

“Not this one,” Maria said and shifting in her chair.

“Not this one. So, I sense there was another one,” Dr. Gabriel deduced.

“Yes. Another one,” Maria answered.

Dr. Gabriel studied Maria and then asked, “Dr. Poe, specifically what sedative did you use in conjunction with the hypnosis?”

“I used scopolamine at the standard dose of 0.3 milligrams,” Maria said.

“Scopolamine. Hasn’t that been shown to be ineffective as a truth drug?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“I don’t use it as a truth drug. I use it as an adjunct to hypnosis to produce a twilight sleep. I believe this level of consciousness benefits the therapy allowing more conclusive answers and decreasing the inhibitions related to potentially stressful emotional events experienced while under hypnosis,” Maria answered.

“Do you believe what Mr. Potter told you was true? Was he in fact in a hypnotic state?” Dr. Gabriel asked, shifting forward in his chair and placing his hands on the desk.

“He was under. I have the audio and video and will release it once I have completed my report and have Mr. Potter’s permission,” Maria said, defensively.

“No need to get defensive,” Dr. Gabriel said, leaning back in his chair.

“None taken,” Maria said, trying to regain her composure. She knew the disclosure of her emotional attachment had become evident, something she could not allow another time.

Dr. Gabriel studied her expression and after several seconds continued. “Dr. Poe, what else did he talk about while under hypnosis?”

“I specifically questioned him regarding the HIV epidemic and if he had any part in causing it,” she explained.

“And?” Dr. Gabriel said and begging an answer with a gesture.

“He said he had no involvement whatsoever,” Maria said.

“Was that an emphatic denial?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“Nothing under hypnosis is emphatic. You simply get a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ and that is the simple truth of it in the mind of the individual under hypnosis,” Dr. Poe said.

“Could Mr. Potter, in your opinion, have been lying?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

It was Maria’s turn to evaluate Dr. Gabriel’s expression and after having done so, she responded. “There is always a possibility that an individual can lie under hypnosis. Even scopolamine, amytal, pentathol - none of them - can guarantee alteration of the mind to the point an individual is incapable of lying. At some point, the practitioner must make a clinical judgment. In mine, Mr. Potter was not lying,” Maria concluded.

“Based on . . .,” Dr. Gabriel prompted.

“Based on clinical experience. I have hypnotized hundreds of prison employees and inmates and my gut has never been wrong,” Maria said, again somewhat defensively.

“Dr. Poe, can we be totally honest here for a minute?” Dr. Gabriel asked, leaning forward once again.

Maria, shifting uncomfortably, said, “Of course, Dr. Gabriel.”

“You have a relationship with Michelle Massetti, is that correct? I mean, a personal relationship outside of the prison,” Dr. Gabriel asked. It was more a statement than a question.

“What does that have to do with this?” Maria asked.

“You treated Ms. Massetti for over a year after her partner committed suicide. In fact, it was your therapy that brought her to the point of returning to full time, productive work,” Dr. Gabriel stated.

“Again, Dr. Gabriel, what does that have to do with this?” Maria asked.

“Do you have any type of relationship with Mr. Potter outside of a professional one?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

Maria, looking directly into Dr. Gabriel’s eyes, said, “I came here with what I felt valuable information and you want to insult me?” Maria asked.

“I’m not trying to insult you Dr. Poe. I need to establish how much credence I can give to your report and the information you are getting from Mr. Potter. Whatever you tell me has the potential of getting to law enforcement. When it does, they will ask you the same question. The exception is that they will ask you how often you are fucking Mr. Potter. If they either believe you are, or determine you are, this evidence won’t be worth the paper it is written on,” Dr. Gabriel said.

“I understand that. I knew that before I came to you. Personalities aside, I believe what Mr. Potter told me this morning. I suggest you follow up on what I have shared and

determine for yourself if there is a shred of truth to it. If so, perhaps we can try getting more truth from Mr. Potter,” Maria said.

“You said he told you something else. Do you still want to share it with me?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“Yes. He said he knew who was responsible for the HIV epidemic,” Maria said.

Dr. Gabriel, a look of intrigue on his face, asked, “And who did he say it was?”

“He said it was Tony Pierson.”

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“It has to be done by an independent psychiatrist and under the explicit direction of the Department of Corrections and the F.B.I.,” Maria explained.

“So, they don’t trust your findings or my testimony while under hypnosis,” Dennis stated.

“It isn’t that we don’t trust Dr. Poe’s findings, or your testimony, Mr. Potter. We simply need another session done independently for verification of findings,” a doctor explained.

“And if you qualify Dr. Poe’s findings, will that be the end of it?” Dennis asked.

“As far as this department is concerned, it will be,” the doctor explained.

“And what about you, agent Burroughs, will this be the end of it as far as the F.B.I. is concerned?” Dennis asked.

Burroughs glanced at the psychiatrist, then Dr. Poe and then said, “The Department will take the evidence into consideration and evaluate the findings as part of the total picture, Mr. Potter. We will not rely on any single piece of evidence,” Burroughs stated.

“So this is simply your next move, sacrificing your Bishop in the hopes that I will Queen your Pawn,” Dennis said.

“We’re not playing Chess here, Mr. Potter,” Burroughs said tersely.

“We’re not? Then why is it I am being played? You don’t have a scrap of evidence against me. You people cleaned out my garage, my house, and found nothing. To add insult to injury, Russell there used the last of my exclusive cologne and didn’t even thank me for it,” Dennis said pointing an accusatory finger and throwing an insult of his own at the agent accompanying Burroughs.

“Smelled like the shit who made it,” Russell countered.

“Gentlemen, please,” the psychiatrist said, holding up a hand. “Could you please take this childish confrontation out of here? I don’t need anyone kicking sand or measuring penises in my office.”

“Sorry, Sir,” Burroughs said, recognizing the psychiatrist’s displeasure.

“Yes, I’m sorry as well. Let’s just get this over with,” Dennis said apologetically.

“Sounds like someone’s wising up. If you would all step out of the office,” the psychiatrist said and indicating the door.

After the two agents and Dr. Poe left the room the psychiatrist said, “Mr. Potter, I don’t know if we were ever formally introduced. My name is Bret Forest.” Bret had extended his hand and Dennis respectfully took it.

“You already know who I am. But for the sake of formality, Dennis Potter,” Dennis said and shaking Bret’s hand.

“It is nice meeting you. I suggest we simply call each other by our first names. Call me Bret. Do you mind if I call you Dennis?” Bret asked.

“Please do,” Dennis agreed.

“Dennis, before we begin, I need to ask you a couple of questions. Would that be all right with you?” Bret asked, taking a note pad from his desk and remaining standing.

“I don’t mind at all. Would it be better if we sat for a minute?” Dennis asked.

“I apologize. Please, sit,” Bret answered absently.

Both men found chairs and when comfortable, Bret asked, “Dennis, did you have anything to do with starting an HIV epidemic in the prison?”

Dennis had not expected the question so directly but was not taken aback by it. His response was immediate and convincing.

“Absolutely not,” Dennis said.

Bret studied Dennis for a few seconds and then said, “Dr. Poe, with your agreement, has shared your testimony while under hypnosis with me and you stated that Mr. Pierson had something to do with the epidemic. Is that what you believe?” Bret asked.

“Yes, that is what I believe,” Dennis said.

“Okay. Based on that, I am going to direct most of my questioning toward that belief while you are under hypnosis. Is that agreeable?” Bret asked.

“Yes. But why do you ask for my permission?” Dennis asked.

“If I am going to ask about something that is not agreeable to you, you will not be completely compliant with the questioning and, therefore, your answers may not be completely accurate. I will sense you are not completely willing to answer a question

based on your physical responses and the type of answers I get. Knowing that you are in agreement before we begin makes my choice of questions easier,” Bret shared.

“Bret, ask me anything about anything,” Dennis offered.

“That might be somewhat uncomfortable for you, Dennis. There may be some skeletons in that closet in your mind that you do not want me dragging out. We all have them, and we are all resistant to having the laundry aired in public,” Bret explained.

“Agreed,” Dennis said.

Bret started an I.V., offered a comfortable couch on which Dennis reclined, and injected a mixture of hypnotics into the tubing. Once infused, the effects were both pleasurable and un-inhibiting for Dennis. After several minutes, Bret began questioning Dennis concerning the prison and his role, if any, in the epidemic that had now become the most serious in the history of the prison industry. Hundreds of inmates, staff, wives, fiancés and girlfriends allowed conjugal visits were infected. Many had filed lawsuits through both the A.C.L.U as well as private attorneys in the matter.

“Could you tell me your name,” Bret asked a dreamy Dennis.

“Dennis Potter,” Dennis answered sleepily.

“What is your address,” Bret asked.

After noting Dennis’s address, age, date of birth, social security number and a host of other information for identity’s sake, Bret probed for specific information concerning Tony Pierson.

“Dennis, you said you believe Tony Pierson had something to do with the epidemic. Is that true?” Bret asked.

“Yes,” Dennis responded.

“Why do you believe that?” Bret asked.

“Tony told me,” Dennis said.

“When did he tell you this?” Bret asked and adjusting a camera focused on Dennis.

“In December, just after he learned that he had HIV,” Dennis said.

“Did Tony tell you how he got HIV?” Bret asked.

“Yes,” Dennis answered.

“What did he tell you?” Bret asked.

“He said that he wanted to kill an inmate, one that he had known for years and had crossed him, and since he heard HIV was going through the prison he decided he could just infect the inmate,” Dennis said.

“How did he say he did this?” Bret asked.

“An inmate, Walters from B block and who had a skin tag, came to the treatment room. While I was removing the tag, Pierson magically showed up and offered to hold Walter’s head. Just as I was removing the tag, Tony jerked Walter’s head and I cut Tony with the scalpel. Not aware that Pierson was bleeding into the cut on Walter’s head, I tried reassuring Tony that the scalpel was sterile and that none of Walter’s blood had entered his wound. I know that Walter’s was not HIV positive because we looked at his medical record just before the procedure. What I did not suspect was Tony was HIV positive and had orchestrated the event to infect Walters. I later learned that Tony went to Lonnie Lane and told him that I was responsible for the epidemic, accusing me of wrongdoing. It was me who treated Tony after I accidentally cut him so that I could assure him that he would not get infected,” Dennis finished.

“Dennis, how did Tony Pierson get HIV in the first place?” Bret asked.

“He said he got it from Kerry Fairmont, Michelle Massetti’s wife.”

* * * * *

“So, how did it go? Did I tell you what you needed to hear?” Dennis asked.

“I believe I got most of what I needed. I need to clear up some things Dennis, but for the most part I am assured that you were being honest and forthright in your answers. Further, I am confident that you were not lying while under hypnosis,” Bret said.

Dennis, smiling, said, “That is great news. Well, it’s great news unless I confessed that I had something to do with all of this, in which case it isn’t such great news.” Then, after a short pause, Dennis asked, “I didn’t confess to that did I?”

Bret smiled and said, “No, Dennis, you did not.”

“So, what is it you want to clear up?” Dennis asked.

“Dennis, how well do you know Michelle Massetti?”

“Pretty well. I have worked with her for some time, and I have been out with her once,” Dennis admitted.

“Yes, the gay bar. I have already been informed concerning that event,” Bret said.

“Is there anything those agents didn’t talk about? Where is the confidentiality in all of this?” Dennis asked perturbed.

“They had to tell me Dennis. Don’t hold it against them,” Bret said.

“It’s just that people are supposed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in this country but those guys came into my home and treated me like I was a mass murderer,” Dennis said.

“They have a difficult job, Dennis. They’re confronted daily with things you and I can only imagine. And they have to take what they see daily home with them every night and figure out ways of dealing with it. Unless they turn to drugs or alcohol, which many do, they have a tough time. We should be somewhat understanding,” Bret offered.

“I understand. But they need to be sure I’m Dexter before they accuse me,” Dennis said good-humoredly.

“Back to Massetti. Did she ever talk with you about her lover?” Bret asked.

“Very little. She did tell me that her name was Karen, or Kathy; I don’t recall just now,” Dennis lied.

“Kerry,” Bret offered.

“That’s right,” Dennis said, shooting a finger at Bret for emphasis.

“Did she ever mention what happened to Kerry?” Bret asked.

“She told me that Kerry had shot herself in the car,” Dennis said, looking distressed.

“I sense you feel badly for Michelle,” Bret offered.

“Yes, I do. She is a good person, a great drummer, and an honorable woman. She can’t help it if she is ‘dis’ oriented, so to speak,” Dennis said and referring to Michelle being homosexual.

Bret let it go. Looking at his notes, he asked, “Did Michelle ever say anything about Kerry and Tony?”

Dennis, looking thoughtful, answered, “Not that I can recall. She is protective of Kerry. I sense whatever happened will forever remain confidential. I believe Dr. Poe

knows the story because I do know that it was Dr. Poe who got Michelle back on her feet and back to work,” Dennis said.

“One final question. Did Tony ever talk about being with Kerry? Did he ever mention that he knew her outside of work?”

“Not to me. That’s something you will need to ask Tony,” Dennis said.

“That might not be possible,” Bret said and scanning his notes.

Dennis, frowning, asked, “What do you mean?”

“Tony was found in a coma in his home when the F.B.I. went to question him. He is in the Critical Care Ward and is not expected to recover,” Bret said.

* * * * *

“Michelle, calm down,” Maria said.

“How could Tony bring Kerry into this?” Michelle asked, tears streaming down her face.

“Right now, there are many unanswered questions, Michelle. We simply need to try getting to the bottom of this,” Dennis offered, offering her a handkerchief. Michelle took it and dabbed at her eyes.

“Why didn’t you tell me what Tony told you?” Michelle asked angrily.

“Michelle, I didn’t believe it when Tony told me. I decided it was a hateful comment made in an attempt at causing your harm. He probably wanted me to come to you and say something. The result would have been the same either way,” Dennis said and indicating Michelle’s distress.

“No, the result would not be the same. I would have killed the son-of-a-bitch straight away,” Michelle said.

“Careful, Michelle. Even the walls have ears and you don’t want to say anything that would incriminate you in this matter,” Maria said.

Dennis, standing, gathered a new bottle of wine from a cabinet and, holding it for all to see, asked, “Anyone else?”

“Me,” Michelle said.

“Me too,” Maria agreed.

Dennis pulled the cork, sniffed it, thought about inviting Maria and Michelle to do the same, decided against it, and poured a hefty dose into each of three water glasses.

“These are water glasses,” Maria said disgustedly as Dennis passed a glass to both Maria and Michelle.

“Wine glasses were too small. I don’t want to have to pour five times,” Dennis complained.

Maria smiled. Michelle drank two-thirds of hers in one breath.

“Better slow down. This is the good stuff,” Dennis offered humorously.

Michelle would have none of the humor. “Fuck that!” She said, emptying the glass and holding it out for a re-fill. Dennis complied, knowing that trying to get Michelle to slow down at this point would be an attempt at futility.

“Michelle, did Kerry have HIV?” Dennis asked softly.

Michelle and Maria shared a brief glance, then Michelle said, “I don’t think so. But at this point, I don’t know.”

“There is another question looming in my mind, but I fear asking,” Dennis said.

“The answer is ‘yes’, Dennis. Kerry was Tony’s girlfriend. Tony introduced us at an event and the rest is history. And that is all the history I want to share,” Michelle finished.

“Then it is impossible that Kerry would be HIV positive. You don’t have HIV,” Dennis surmised.

“Dennis, knowing how HIV is spread, and knowing how lesbians make love, how do you think I would have it?” Michelle asked.

Dennis, a look of utter confusion on his face, considered the question. Scenes of Michelle and Kerry locked in sexual intimacy snapped through his mind. One of them involved Michelle strapped in a black outfit beating Kerry who hung in handcuffs from some point above their bed. Kerry bled and Michelle enjoyed inflicting the pain. Dennis shook the vision from his mind as nonsense.

Maria, sensing what Dennis was envisioning, placed her hand over his and gently said, “Erase those thoughts from your mind.”

“Are you psychic as well?” Dennis asked.

“She is. But I agree, Dennis. It’s nothing like you were just imagining. I don’t have a clue what you were imaging and I don’t want to know,” Michelle said, the effects of the wine beginning to evidence themselves.

“Okay. I get it; you were both careful. So, the question remains. Did Tony give her the virus, or did she give it to Tony?” Dennis asked, knowing neither of them had.

“At this point it isn’t necessary to speculate. Unless Tony regains consciousness and comes through this it will automatically be assumed that he was the one who started all of this. Serves him right,” Michelle said.

“Michelle, you don’t believe that,” Maria offered gently and stroking a piece of hair from Michelle’s eyes.

“I fucking do mean it and I will guarantee something right here and right now. Tony Pierson will never leave intensive care. I will personally see to it,” Michelle announced.

Maria, a look of horror on her face, said, “Michelle, you will *not* go near the hospital or be seen anywhere near it. Do you understand?”

Michelle simply held her glass out to Dennis in a ‘fill ‘er up’ gesture. Dennis complied despite Maria’s displeasure. Then, taking a sip of her own wine, Maria asked, “Dennis, do you really believe Tony had the wherewithal to cause this? Infecting one inmate out of some sick sense of revenge does not an epidemic make.”

“No, it does not. Nor does putting a saddle on a mule a racehorse make. Therefore, we must have our facts out of order,” Dennis said.

“Are you suggesting Tony was a racehorse and not a mule?” Michelle asked.

“I’m suggesting there is more to him than meets the eye,” Dennis admitted.

Suddenly, Maria’s phone rang. “Excuse me,” she said and answering the phone.

Dennis and Michelle listened to half of the conversation.

“Speaking . . . yes . . . when? . . . okay . . . that is sad . . . I won’t . . . sure . . . and thank you for letting me know . . . yes . . . goodbye.” With that, Maria ended the call.

Dennis and Michelle studied Maria for a moment but did not ask. Finally she said, “That was Burroughs with the F.B.I. They raided Tony’s apartment and found something they want to discuss with us. We’re to go to the prison at four-thirty. Will you be up for it by them if we pour a gallon of coffee into you Michelle?” Maria asked.

“I’m up for it now,” Michelle lied.

“Did they say what they wanted?” Dennis asked, trying to act disinterested.

“Just that they found something they want to ask us about,” Maria said.

“Then let’s finish our wine and get ready for the F.B.I,” Michelle said and draining a third glass of wine.

* * * * *

They met in the Deputy Warden Building. Dr. Gabriel, both Majors, several captains, Lonnie Lane and other members of the medical staff were present including all of the physicians on duty. Neatly arranged on a table in the center of the office were several articles. There were some ten test tubes, each containing a clear solution, five vials of insulin, three vials of testosterone, three of Haldol and several others.

“We called all of you here because we wanted to share with you evidence we found in Tony Pierson’s car in a brown paper bag under the rear seat. What you are looking at are the contents of that bag,” Burroughs said.

“Pierson, a thief? What was he doing, selling all this stuff on the outside?” Michelle asked.

“Hardly. Our lab tested the contents of the fluids in these tubes and vials. Each contains enough HIV virus to infect a city,” Burroughs said.

“What? Are these items from the prison?” Dr. Gabriel asked.

“Every one of them. Some were identified as coming from the infirmary, some from the pharmacy, some from the lab. There are partial fingerprints of many of the staff on these items, including yours, Ms. Massetti, and yours, Mr. Potter,” Burroughs said.

“How . . .” Dr. Gabriel started.

“We suspect Mr. Pierson was smuggling these items out of the prison for over a year and infecting them with his own blood. Then he was bringing them back into the prison and letting the staff spread the infection.”

“Why in the name of God would he do such a thing?” Lonnie asked.

“I don’t believe it was in the name of God he was doing it. I believe he was a sick, angry, depressed individual who wanted to share his death with as many as possible,” Maria offered.

Suddenly, Burroughs phone rang.

“Burroughs. Yes. Okay, thanks for letting me know,” he said and ending the call.

“We may never know all the answers now, folks. Tony Pierson just passed,”

Burroughs said.

“The son-of-a-bitch deserves it,” Michelle said.

“I couldn’t agree more,” Dennis said and smiling.

Russell Gains, wearing a smile of his own, thought, *Nice try, Potter. But it ain’t gonna fly.*

Dennis, noting Gains’ smile thought, *You’re next, asshole.*

The End