

# Murder in Genosha - Room 301

**The following is a true story of events that took place inside Camp-X during WW2. The names of individuals have been changed to protect their legacy and that of their relatives.**

*Bait the hook well: this fish will bite* William Shakespeare

## Back at Camp-X

Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Graham sat in his office at the rear of the Lecture Hall, staring dejectedly at the newly fallen snow outside his window. 'Will it never stop? This is March, for Heaven's sake.' His intercom buzzed, startling him.

"Yes, Betty?"

"Sir, Mr. Drew Brooks on your secured line."

"Betty, please be a dear and warm up my tea while I take this call. Thank you."

"Drew, old man, good to hear from you. How are you?"

"Fine, thank you, Gordon. Lovely weather, eh? It was a freak storm. It shouldn't last out the day." He paused, and then continued, "Colonel, Stalwart is getting somewhat anxious about the status of Jael and company."

"I agree. I've received nothing at all, however, not a whisper, Drew. Please assure Stalwart that as soon as I do hear anything, I'll forward immediately. Is there something that I can actually do for you this morning?"

"Yes, there is. I've been asked to find three Italian-speaking clients for some special operation, the details of which will be coming to you by wireless. I wasn't allowed much time, but I did manage to come up with six local candidates who may fit the bill."

"Send them here. I'll assign them directly to William Sampson. Don't worry about a thing, Drew, we'll take care of it from here. When should I expect them?"

"They'll be ready a week Monday. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, that's fine. Let me make a notation in my desk diary." After a pause, he continued, "The usual arrangements?"

"Yes. Have your driver pick them up, unmarked car, at Base Borden. They'll be ready at 10:00h. Thank you, as always, for your co-operation, Gordon."

"No trouble, Drew. Good speaking with you. Please drop by soon. Goodbye for now."

As he hung up the receiver he called, "Betty, have you forgotten my tea?"

"No, Sir, I didn't want to bother you. I assumed that call must have been important."

“No bother at all. You may interrupt me any time when it comes to tea,” he stated, smiling. “We must keep our priorities in order.”

She blushed. Betty Robertson thought him the most handsome male ever, with the possible exception of Errol Flynn, to whom he bore more than a passing resemblance.

“Betty, it’s March, is it not? Now, I ask you, how much longer will we be seeing this type of weather?” He put on his warm boots and winter greatcoat, recently requisitioned from Charles Constantine’s Quartermaster at Military District 2. The standard issue was just not up to Canada’s winter. On the other hand, perhaps he was not yet up to Canada’s climate.

“This is not that unusual for this time of year, Sir. I’ve seen more than a few white Easters.”

“Easters? Oh, well. Then I suppose I had best get used to it. When does spring arrive in these climes?”

“On the twenty-first or the twenty-second of this month, Sir. I always confuse the official starting date.”

“I’ll believe it when I hear the first cuckoo.”

“That’ll be quite a long wait, Colonel. We don’t have Cuckoos in this part of Ontario, as far as I’m aware. Plenty of Robins, though.”

“I’m off to find Major Sampson, Miss Robertson. He’s likely in the barn with some of the lads. That’s where I’m headed if you need me.”

“Very good, Sir. Do fasten your coat.”

Lieutenant Colonel Graham smiled, snug in the warm greatcoat, his collar turned up against the chill wind. He walked along the old Sinclair farm road until he came to the Hydra building where he spotted Bill Hardcastle in the doorway. “Good morning, Yorkie! How’s that transmitter working? Humming along, I hope?”

“Morning, Sir. Yes, she’s tip top.”

“Does this weather affect it in any way, Yorkie?”

“It doesn’t at all, Colonel. It’s quite stable and I must add, it can generate quite a bit of heat on its own. The steam plant puts out enough heat to keep the building at a constant seventy degrees. Floor gets a little cold though, with no basement, just the cement pad. Pop in anytime, Colonel. Off to breakfast?”

“No, I had mine earlier, thanks. Yes, I will drop in. Carry on, Yorkie.”

“Good seeing you, Sir.”

As the Colonel continued westward toward Corbett Creek, the chilled wind off the lake blew straight into his face. He increased his pace until he reached the barn door and then opened it slightly. Looking in he could see Major William Sampson demonstrating a hold on one of the young Hungarian recruits. He thought, ‘I can’t believe that this man, in his late fifties, is still tossing around young men almost forty years his junior. Bloody well remarkable!’

“Major, may I have a moment?”

“Aye, Sir!” The Hungarian, ‘Joe,’ seemed relieved when Sampson announced, “Men, take a five minute recess; I suggest you keep the blood circulating by moving around the gym or by running on the spot. I’ll be back shortly.

“Greetings, Colonel! Care to go a round? I’ll spot you one fall.”

“Do you think I’m insane? With you blindfolded and both arms tied behind your back, I might be persuaded! Major, I have three new clients coming in a week Monday. I’d like you to stay with them as the brass has some concerns. Are you free to do so?”

“Yes indeed, Gordon. This lot finishes up Friday. They’ll be shipped out the following week.”

“Thanks for the reminder. Are we having a send-off?”

“Friday night, at 20:00h, Sir. Officers’ Mess, as usual. We’re expecting you, Colonel. There are the usual trophies to be awarded.”

“I can never say no to your festivities, Major. Right, then. They’re yours, a week Monday. Thank you. And do take care not to incapacitate any of these lads before graduation. HQ has rather grand plans for them.”

“I’ll try my best. Thank you, Sir.” The Major saluted then turned back to his class. “All right lads, form up, into a circle, please. I’m not finished with you yet. Now, who wants to demonstrate that last manoeuvre...on me?”



The unmarked truck pulled into the old lane, lumbered past the guardhouse, turned down the road, and came to a full stop in front of the Lecture Hall.

“Right, men, off the truck and into the building; please be seated and wait until someone arrives.”

Six men jumped down, picked up their gear, and proceeded silently, in single file, up the wooden steps and into the lecture room. There, they seated themselves, spaced well apart in the first two rows, and waited. Five minutes later, Adjutant Jones entered. To a man, they stood up at attention.

“Good day, gentlemen, please be seated. Thank you. Welcome to STS 103. If you’re unfamiliar with that name, Camp-X will suffice. I am Adjutant-Quartermaster Major Brian Jones. It’s my job to make sure that your stay here goes smoothly. I will be your eyes and ears. Any concerns that you might have should be brought directly to me, and I will do my best to help you. You have been assigned to Major William Sampson who will be your personal instructor for the duration of the twelve-week course.

“Shortly, I will take you to your living quarters where the Major will join us. For your welfare, as well for greater concerns, you will associate only among yourselves, and with no one else other than the Major, the Commandant, or me, for the duration of your stay. Failure to comply will result in either your immediate dismissal or worse, in further sanctions. You will also take all of your meals with Major Sampson or with me. Do I make myself clear, gentlemen?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Clear, Sir!”

“Questions...No? Good then. Gentlemen, stand and follow me.”



One week later, over lunch, Hamish Findley asked Colonel Graham, “Sir, would you happen to know the new client, Marco?”

“I’ve read his dossier. We’ve already got him lined up for some important business. How is he coming along? When can I tell Drew Brooks that he’ll be ready?”

“Colonel, that’s the problem. He seems more interested in asking questions than in learning the Syllabus. For example, yesterday, he was questioning the others in his class whether they knew anything about my background. Did anyone know what was going on in Hydra, and so forth. Seems a bit too curious, for my liking. If I may ask, Sir, what’s his story?”

“Let me try to recollect. Marco Palermo. Age: twenty-three. Toronto-born, speaks two languages, fluently; has spent time in Italy. He’s bright, Senior Matriculation from Riverdale Collegiate, with Honours in Maths, Physics, and Chemistry. Parents are both old country, Abruzzi. They own a small speciality bakery, in the west end of town. He fits Brooks’ profile to a ‘t’. Why? Are you concerned about him, Hamish?”

As were all of the officers, Hamish was in awe of Gordon Graham’s prodigious memory. “Yes. I am Sir. There’s something that just doesn’t add up, that I can’t put my finger on....”

“I’ll speak with Brooks in the morning and advise him of your reservations. In the meantime, keep a close watch and report to me promptly anything that’s not to the letter. Anything at all, Hamish! Perhaps he’s simply a brighter light than most.”

“Yes, Sir, I expect that you’re right. Thank you.”



A few weeks later, William Sampson and Michael Heaviside were having a drink in the Officers' Mess, enjoying a break from routine. They were quietly arguing the merits of the most recent revisions to 'The Bible', the name by which SOE staff officers unofficially referred to the Service's training handbook, the Syllabus.

"Speaking of clandestine entry, Michael, I have a promising client, the lad Marco, whom I would like to test. I want to send him on a 'scheme'. I've decided to see if he's up to snap, if I should bring him forward for further assessment for leadership training.

"I'd like you to send him into Oshawa to the Genosha Hotel. His assignment: to find out in which room one Terence Browning is staying. Browning's not involved in any way - simply a name I picked up from a source in Oshawa.

Once Marco has made his way past the desk clerk, he is to slip into the room, while Browning is out, obviously, and remove some personal papers that Browning has supposedly hidden away. They will actually have been planted by my source. Our client, Marco, must not be armed but may carry a burglary pry and a flashlight. Once he has the papers, he is to return here directly and check in with you. No one else is to be informed of this. Do you agree?"

"Rob, if you don't mind my curiosity, why are you asking me to do this? It seems the sort of thing you like to manage... your forte, no?"

"True enough, Michael. Normally I would organize this sort of escapade, but in this case I don't want him to know or even suspect that I'm involved. I'd like to turn him over to you. Then, if you would, after an interval of a day or two, send him on this assignment. Kindly let me know the evening before so that I can make the necessary arrangements."

"'Ours is not to reason why....' William, it will be my pleasure, so long as the Colonel has no objection."

"Thanks, old chap. Leave that to me, Michael." He nodded, indicating the empty glass on the table. "Time to recharge the mug?"

"Plying a colleague with drink now, are you William? Yes, I'll do it and yes, you can fetch me two fingers, neat, one ice. Ta."



Colonel Gordon Graham was not amused. It was one thing to send young men and women out on training schemes, as he had routinely done previously as Chief Instructor at Beaulieu, and now, as Commandant of STS 103, but it was quite a different kettle of fish this time. He had received no information as to their whereabouts, nor was he apprised whether they were even alive or dead. These two brave youngsters, as he perceived them, had volunteered for a mission so daunting and with implications so enormous, that he couldn't get them out of his mind.

It mattered not to him whether the mission was a success or a complete washout; he liked and admired them both. Despite his recent run-in with Hugh, and contrary to his better judgement, he found himself personally caught up in their undertaking. He felt responsible for them in spite of everything he had been taught and had insisted upon from his own officers. The rules of intelligence were often callous by necessity and they dictated otherwise, but he couldn't shake his concern.

'Did I do everything to prepare them sufficiently? Can our people in Britain be completely trusted to help see them through? What if the British circuits have been compromised and I, Gordon MacKay Graham, am handing over Tent Peg's operatives to the Gestapo on a silver platter?'

He picked up the Camp telephone and dialled Hydra's operations room. "Bernie, Colonel Graham. Listen, I need you or Yorkie to send this to Claymore:

'FRAGILE GOODS SHIPPED STOP

REPORT CONDITION AND ANY BREAKAGE IMMEDIATELY STOP'

Sign it with my code name, 'Red Ticket', 103. Got that? Read it back, please.... Very good. That is all, thank you. And do let me know immediately if and when you get something back."

He set down the receiver. Somehow, it made him feel better. 'Red Ticket'; he could still chuckle at his *nom de guerre*. It had been conferred by the SOE brass in England to reflect his dubious personal achievement as the second-most penalized right striker in Sandhurst Military College's football team history. He glanced at his wall clock. 'Time for a bite.' "Betty, I'm slipping out to the Mess." 'I wonder if Sampson wants to join me?' "Hullo, William, Gordon, care to go for a nosh? Oh, I see. Well, perhaps an early dinner then? Yes, I'll ring to remind you. Cheerio."

William Sampson was unable to join the Colonel at that particular moment as he was counselling the client, Marco.



"Sir, may I please have a pass to go into town tomorrow?" Marco asked. "I feel that I need to get away for a few hours and clear the cobwebs."

"Is there anything wrong, lad...something not right on the home front, girl problems...?"

"No, Sir. None of those, I assure you," he smiled. "I just feel that I need a little bit of private time, a break to get away from the books and the other clients, that's all, Sir."

"I understand. Don't see why not, Marco. I've worked you and your mates hard; by and large, I'd say you're progressing quite nicely. Mind you, I'll be deluged with

requests when the other chaps find out, but I can cope, since you were all due for eight-hour leave mid week anyway.

“I can meet you at the guardhouse at 09:00h, waiting with a day pass. Please be on time, as I have a lecture at 10:00h. You do realize that I have to take you into town? Camp Regulations. You’ll call the number on this card when you’re ready to come back, no later than 16:00h, mind. Leave a message and I’ll pick you up at the drop-off spot. Agreed?”

“Yes, Sir! Thanks a million, Sir.”

The next morning at 08:55h, Marco picked up his day pass at the guardhouse, and then trotted over to where Sampson waited for him in the station wagon. As they drove westward into Whitby, Sampson reminded Marco of his responsibilities as a member of BSO; “Stay out of trouble, lad. I don’t want any 25-1-1 calls from the RCMP.” He concluded by asking Marco if he had enough money for the day. “Here’s an extra two dollars. Take it...have a beer and lunch on me, but watch out for talkative strangers. Where shall I drop you off?”

Marco thanked him and replied that the corner of Brock Street, and Highway #2 would be ideal.

“Four Corners, they call it locally. So, what do you have planned Marco?” inquired Sampson affably, pulling up to the curb.

“Well, first thing is breakfast at the restaurant around the corner and then a visit to the barber shop; I’m not sure after that, Sir. Maybe a little window-shopping, or a stroll down at the lakeshore before lunch. After that, I might take in a matinee of *Citizen Kane*, that new movie that’s creating all the fuss. The paper said it’s playing at The Strand. Thank you for the lift, Major. I’ll call you this afternoon.”

As William Sampson drove away, Marco watched until the station wagon was out of sight, and then slipped quickly into the restaurant. Instead of sitting at the counter, he went straight to the cash register. Using Sampson’s two dollars, Marco purchased a \$1.25 Grey Coach ticket to Highland Creek, Return, about fifteen miles west of Whitby. The cashier assured him that the bus was due at Four Corners in ten minutes, “...more or less.”

Marco thanked her and went outside to wait on the wrought iron bench in front of The Canadian Bank of Commerce. Although the sun was shining directly in his face, he didn’t mind as a cool breeze from the lake countered its heat.

Ten minutes later, right on schedule, the Grey Coach bus pulled up at the stop, its air brakes shattering the morning stillness with a high-pitched screech. Marco waited while the bus driver punched his ticket, and then took the window seat mid-coach, in an empty row. The driver threw the big diesel into gear and wheeled west, making several brief stops along Highway #2, and taking aboard a dozen or so Toronto-bound passenger.

Marco stared out at the passing farmland, avoiding any eye contact or conversation with his fellow travellers. After twenty minutes, the driver announced, “Highland Creek, Highland Creek this stop!” Marco yanked the overhead cord to signal his intention to get off at that stop.

The bus pulled over onto the gravel roadside, slowed, and stopped. Its front door opened and Marco stepped down. He waved to the driver and, when the bus pulled away, Marco could see his destination directly across the highway.

The large, old barn looked completely out of place so close to the road. Marco had often wondered who had chosen this location. A car sped past and it was then clear to cross. A husky man, apparently the shop foreman, greeted Marco as he walked into the barn, long since converted into a machine shop.

“Hello, I’m here to see Günther, please.”

“Who?”

Marco raised his voice, in an attempt to be heard above the incessant whining and roaring of the machinery. “Günther...Günther, please!”

“Günther? Ya, that’s him, over there at the lathe, but you’ll have to wait five minutes. He’ll be on break then.”

“Oh sure, I have all day. Thanks a lot.”

A few minutes later Günther walked up to Marco and greeted him, extending a huge and filthy ham of a hand. “Sorry,” he apologized, “I’m a bit greasy.” He wiped the offending hand on his coveralls. “Come over here, Marco. Perfect timing, I’m just starting my break. I get fifteen minutes, so we can talk a little.” They walked over to the work area where Günther had set up a wooden table and a chair next to his metal lathe.

“Sit down, I’ll get another chair. Would you like coffee?”

“That would be great, thank you, Günther.”

Günther opened his lunch box and pulled out his thermos and a wax paper-wrapped sandwich. “We’ll share.”

“No, you eat the sandwich and I’ll just have a sip of your coffee. Günther, I’ve always wondered, what is it you make here, tanks, or something? It’s certainly loud enough!”

“We make parts for General Motors. Right now, I’m making brake plates for a new personnel vehicle. They really don’t tell us very much. Everything is Classified, Top Secret, nowadays. I practically have to sign in blood for new metal stock every time I run low. But there’s no end to the overtime, so the money’s good. Sometimes I wish we weren’t so busy, though; I could use a rest.”

“Soon you’ll be so rich that you can build that cottage up in the woods, eh? Where did you say it was?”

“Haliburton. Another time. Land’s too expensive and there’s no building material at all for civilian use right now.

“So, Marco, how’ve you been? What are you up to lately?”

“Oh, I’m working in a Department of Defence lab right now. But I’m looking for a transfer to something a little more daring.”

“Sounds pretty important and exciting to me, no?”

“It has its days, but generally, not as much as you’d think.”

The two men chatted idly for another ten minutes. As Marco finally stood up to leave, he dropped a folded piece of paper into Günther’s lunch pail.

“Well, Günther, it sure has been nice seeing you again. I’ll be in touch.”

“Yes, good to see you again, Marco. Take care!”

Marco stepped off the bus at Four Corners in Whitby, and walked directly to the Strand Cinema. The grey haired woman in the box office stopped filing her nails long enough to remark that the matinee of *Citizen Kane* was already underway. He thanked her, and then proceeded into the foyer, noticing a pay telephone beside the washroom doors. Taking note of the time on the large electric wall clock, he slipped into the Men’s Room and entered a stall, closing the door behind him, then quickly crumpled and flushed away the incriminating bus receipt.

When he emerged, the usher took his theatre ticket, tore it in half, and absently handed him the stub, gesturing with his flashlight toward an aisle seat. Marco settled down in the darkness, smiling as he carefully placed the paper scrap in his billfold, secure in his alibi should Major Sampson decide to check his story.



Günther knew that he would have to be off the airwaves quickly in order to avoid detection by the government’s listening posts. Amateur, or ‘ham’, radio operators were expressly forbidden on air during wartime. With the message in the exercise book and a one-time-code pad, which he kept in his travel kit, he converted Helmut’s note onto the code pad in five-letter groups. With less than a minute to go, he was ready. At eight fifty-nine forty-five, he switched on the power. Exactly at nine, Günther began to tap out his Abwehr W/T ID.

At Camp-X, Bernie Sandbrook was manning Hydra, twiddling the powerful receiver’s tuning dials, listening for traffic from BSO agents in South America, when he detected an unusual transmission on a rarely used, high frequency band. The groups were coming in at a rapid rate.

“Hey, Yorkie, come here! Have a listen to this guy! He must be practising for the ruddy Morse Olympics!”

Smiling at the usually unflappable Bernie’s excitement, Yorkie put on his headphones and started to jot down what he could catch of the rapid transmission. In a matter of seconds, his smile turned to a look of pure consternation. “Bernie, something strange is going on. It’s not Allied code and it’s not any ham, at least not one in his right mind. You’d better get the Commandant, PDQ! I’ll stay with it.”

Bernie raced out of the building and ran across the road the short distance to the CO's residence. Without knocking, he opened the front door and went directly to the Commandant's closed parlour door. There, he knocked once and called through the door, "Colonel Graham, it's Bernie from the radio room. We need you over there, urgently, please, Sir!"

Graham and William Sampson were having a scotch while drafting the junior staff officers' performance reports that were due in less than a week. "Come in!"

"Commandant, Major Sampson, I really apologize for barging in, but you must come. Now! We've intercepted a signal that I think you need to hear."

The three sprinted to the Communications Building. Graham, who excelled at Morse, immediately put on a spare headset and listened intently. "Paper, Yorkie!" he barked, then commenced scribbling down the coded groups. After the transmission was finished, he took off the earphones and looked at Bernie and Yorkie. "You were certainly on your toes, boys. Jolly smart work."

"Major Sampson, I'll be damned if that wasn't an Abwehr high level code!"

"Meaning what, Colonel?"

"Meaning we have, somewhere in this fair land, a loose cannon, an active Axis agent."

"Colonel, it's not possible to pin him down now that he's off the air, but judging by the signal strength, I'd guess that the transmitter's probably not far away," Yorkie asserted.

"Thanks for the information. Put the blighter's message through the encoder, then off to Bletchley, with an OU priority, chop-chop, there's a good man. You two have certainly earned your keep tonight. Many thanks. Well-played chaps. Enjoy the evening, or what's left of it, and keep me informed as always. Good night."

The signal, bearing an OU prefix was sent directly to Bletchley Park General Code and Cipher School, where, after decoding and encoding, was assigned Most Secret, Your Eyes Only status, and routed to SIS HQ, London, Attn. 'G', and BSO HQ, Toronto, Attn. Stalwart.



"Sir, our U-99 off Halifax has just forwarded a signal from 'Helmut'."

"Let me have it, please, Corporal." He picked it from the radio operator's hand and read it, twice, then strode into the office of the Abwehr Director General of Foreign Counterintelligence Communications.

"Pardon the interruption, Sir; I have finally received something, which may be quite useful from Helmut, my Canadian agent at Camp-X. He says he strongly believes

that the British are training two agents for an assassination attempt on a high ranking German individual, but he doesn't know specifically who the target is meant to be."

"Those Brit bastards are always cooking up something. I think that SIS plants these nuggets of misinformation, just to test the integrity of our system, or to mislead us and divert our attention from something more significant. Do you think there's anything to this one?"

"Yes, Sir. Yes, I do. Helmut's not the sort of fellow who's inclined to let his imagination run amok."

"Sit down and close the door. Let's think about this. The immediate question is, should I inform the SD and the Gestapo? If your Helmut proves to be mistaken, or we find he's a double agent, they'll eat us for lunch. Perhaps the Boss should go over their heads, directly to the Führer?"

"Well, Sir, I strongly suggest that you leave that decision to the Admiral; perhaps you could have a glass of wine at an outdoor café? I don't trust our newly crowned Obergruppenführer Heydrich. He's probably listening in, right here and now. Remember how he wired the bedrooms in that bordello, 'Salon Kitty', and caught those officers giving away the game to the girls? He could have made mincemeat of the lot of them."

"Oh, he did. More than a few careers were torpedoed, just by innuendo. Luckily, I never frequented the place."

"Of course not, Sir, luckily."

"Very well then, I'll make an appointment for an after-hours drink with Rear Admiral Canaris without delay. I can't risk being held accountable for knowingly suppressing a Commando plot to assassinate our friend Heydrich, Marshall Göring, or, heaven help us, the Führer himself.



Marco opened the door of the Genosha Hotel and walked up to the front desk. The young female clerk looked up from a dog-eared crossword puzzle book. "May I help you?" she asked, smiling sourly, reluctantly turning the paperback face down.

"Yes, please. I understand that an old friend of mine is in town and I wonder if you would be good enough to tell me what room he is staying in? His name is Ralph Breen, Mr. Breen, R."

"I'm really not allowed to give out room numbers." She had already sized him up in one glance: the handsome but harmless type you could actually bring home to mother. He stood motionless, waiting, not breaking eye contact. Flustered, she reconsidered. "Well, I guess if he's an old friend of yours, then it's okay," she murmured nervously and

she began scanning the register. “Let’s see now, B...B...Breen. Hmm, you say he’s a guest here?”

“That’s what the telegram said. This is the Genosha Hotel, isn’t it, dear?”

“Uh huh, sure it is, but I don’t see that name listed. When did he check in?”

“Listen, sweetheart, I’m not supposed to say this, but he may be staying under an alias. He uses two, sometimes three. Secret war work, hush-hush, cloak and dagger, you know the drill.”

“No kiddin’! Just like the movies?” She was now definitely very interested in this intriguing turn of events.

“Uh, huh, just like the movies. If I could take a look at your register, I’d recognize him, right off the bat.”

“Gees, I dunno. I could get fired. What if he’s a spy and they...”

“No, no, nothing like that. He’s definitely on our side. Besides, who’s going to tell? Not me, you can count on that. Your name’s Dianne?” he read from her nametag. Leaning closer, he whispered, “I’m Sergio. Confidentially, Dianne, you’d be making a small but very important contribution to the war effort, I swear.”

She looked at him and decided he was not only above board but cute, too, in a dark, Latin sort of way. “Okay, Sergio, but just one quick look,” she responded anxiously, glancing furtively over her shoulder, then turning around the book so that he could read it. “Please, hurry. Okay?”

“Thanks, Dianne. You’re a real doll.” He scanned the entries, thumbing the pages until he located ‘Terence Browning, Room 301’. “Okay, so how do I get upstairs, babe?”

“You can take the elevator, but it’s kind of rickety. I’d use the stairs, there, at the other end of the lobby.”

“Thank you very much, Dianne. I really appreciate it. This could be a big help to our boys at the front. Oh, here’s something for your co-operation, with thanks from the Government of Canada. But you can’t tell anyone about this. ‘Loose lips...’ you know? Good luck with that crossword!” he added, placing a crisp, new five dollar bill on the counter in front of her.

She seemed taken aback by this act of official generosity. “Gee, thanks a lot! Any time. Hope you and your friend have a nice reunion, Sergio! Drop by again!”

“For sure. *Ciao*, kid!”

‘*Ciao!* Goddamn, how’d I let that slip out? So much for blending into the background.’ Five bucks...cheap at twice the price. As he walked across the lobby toward the stairs, he felt her eyes boring into his back. He stopped at the fireplace to warm his hands. Now to determine where Browning was and how he was going to get into and out of Browning’s room without being discovered.

When he reached the door at the far end of the hall, Marco turned quickly and looked back, but the desk clerk had apparently forgotten about him already and was

absorbed once again in her puzzle. Cautiously, he turned the knob, pushed open the door, and tested the handle on the other side. He looked around for something to shove in the latch so that he wouldn't be locked out. He found a burnt matchstick lying on the floor, and breaking it in half, he jammed it into the mechanism so that the door would close, but remain unlocked. 'Just like they teach us!'

Satisfied, he went out the nearest exit and, shielding his eyes, he looked up, squinting into the bright sun. Directly overhead was a steel ladder that could be pulled down almost to street level. The ladder led to the second floor where it met the steps of the fire escape that ran up one floor, then turned, and continued on to the next. 'Perfect, I'll wait 'til dark, and then make my move. Now, to fill in some time. Too bad that dame is working!'



He sat at the counter drinking coffee until a booth near the rear of the Rose Bowl Restaurant emptied, then he sauntered back, sat down, and leaned against the backrest. Casually reading the greasy pages of the Sports Section of a two-day-old *Toronto Star*, he drank more java and chain-smoked. At seven-fifteen, he asked the waitress for a double order of the local favourite, the Oceans O' Fish and Chips Special, which he ate slowly, all the while keeping an eye on the street.

When he finished, he checked his watch again: eight o'clock. He ducked into the Men's' Room; when he returned, he lit his tenth cigarette just as a Toronto/Hamilton-bound Grey Coach rumbled out from the Bus Terminal. Its interior lights were still switched on, illuminating the faces of the passengers: soldiers, sailors, flyboys, WREN's, and assorted civilians. His face flushed as he reflected how much he hated them all for their English-Canadian-Protestant arrogance and their air of superiority towards 'foreigners' like his own Momma and Poppa, and even him, Marco, a Canadian, born and bred.

Major Heaviside had told him that Browning was employed at the Genosha Hotel as a bartender and that he followed a precise routine. His shift began at 8:00 p.m. and lasted until closing time at 1:00 a.m. He took two fifteen-minute breaks, at 9:30 and 11:30 p.m. Heaviside said that Marco should be inside the room before 9:00 p.m.; no later.

Marco's eyes darted towards the black cat wall clock, its wide eyes panning the room, back and forth, in perfect cadence with its swishing tail: 8:27 p.m. He butted his cigarette, gulped the dregs of his sixth coffee, and dropped fifty cents on the table for the bored waitress.

From the Rose Bowl, it was a short, brisk walk back to the Genosha. As he rounded the southeast corner of the hotel, he walked directly into a middle-aged man in a bus driver's uniform kissing a young woman, pressing her hips against the building just beside the ladder.

Marco began one of several well-rehearsed scenarios. “You got a light? Hey, you two love birds, can you knock it off long enough to give me a light?”

The woman was momentarily flustered, but recovered and snapped back indignantly, “Drop dead, you bum! Let’s get out of here, honey!” Reluctantly disentangling themselves, they hurried away as she delivered her parting shot, “Why don’t you try doing somethin’ useful, like sobering up and joining the army, you little creep!”

‘Little creep. That’s a good one! Hey, the light routine works every time. Can’t say I blame her,’ he sighed, as he glanced around the corner and watched the woman indignantly walk away from him on her high heels. ‘All clear, now get the ladder.’ It pulled down easily. He climbed to the first landing, then tugged the ladder up behind him and secured the rungs. Looking in the window, he could see a deserted hallway. ‘So far, so good; two to go!’ Climbing up the fire escape to the third level, he tried the hall window. It was locked. ‘301, there it is. First on the right. Coming right in!’ The metal landing extended as far as Browning’s window; the open drapes showed that the room was empty and in darkness.

Marco tried to pry the window. ‘No luck. Bring out the heavy artillery.’ He took a short metal object from inside his jacket, an SOE Break and Enter ‘Slim Jim’, lent to him by Heaviside, and pushed it gently between the top of the window and its sash. This lock was doubly unyielding. He glanced impatiently at his wristwatch. The luminous glow of the hands indicated 8:57 p.m.. ‘Give, you bastard!’ he muttered. Suddenly, the catch gave, ever so slightly. He pressed harder, too hard, and forced the tip to slip off the heavily painted brass.

‘Damn!’ He repositioned it. ‘Easy now.’ This time, the catch gave way. 9:02 p.m. But the window still refused to budge. He inserted the thin end of the pry underneath the frame and pressed down, very hard, on his end. 9:03 p.m. ‘I might as well break the bloody window!’ He pushed down once again with all of his strength. The paint seal broke under his fourth try and the window creaked open an inch. Marco pushed and coaxed the window with considerable effort until it finally and totally jammed halfway up, then, crouching, he clambered over the wooden ledge into the room. 9:05 p.m.

‘Christ, I’m sweatin’ buckets!’

He wrinkled his nose. The room had the stale aroma of a bachelor: cigar smoke, forgotten, half-empty beer bottles, and unwashed socks. ‘What a slob!’ As he moved in the near darkness, his elbow bumped something that clattered onto the floor. He pulled out a miniature flashlight, courtesy of Heaviside, and shone the beam around. A glass ashtray was laying upside down, its contents scattered on the scuffed parquet floor.

‘Where the hell would someone hide documents in a room this size?’ He looked under the bed. ‘Nothing. I’m not looking in those bed sheets!’ He pulled open the three drawers of the unpainted dresser and dumped the contents of each onto the bed. He picked the items apart using the tip of the metal pry bar. ‘All crap. Still nothing. Last chance!’ he muttered, as he sucked air through his teeth, walking toward the closet.

He opened the door. In the flashlight beam, he saw a single wooden support rod bowed under the weight of a jumble of coloured shirts, gaudy sports jackets and an assortment of dress trousers and work pants, and a tangle of belts and ties on one wooden hanger. ‘This guy’s wardrobe definitely needs help. Jesus, it’s 9:16 p.m. I need to take a leak. What kind of shoes are those? Army boots? What the...?’

A white-hot ring of fire closed around his throat. His shallow scream of surprise, terror, and agony abruptly ended as his hands clawed frantically at the piano wire tightening its death grip. Gagging and gasping for air, his body arched and twisted grotesquely backward. Trying desperately to relieve the terrible pain and pressure, he dug his fingernails into his own flesh underneath the steel loop. He tried frantically to kick his unseen assailant with his right heel, earning him only a brutal and immediate tightening of the snare.

His feet lifted from the floor. As Marco lost consciousness, his bladder emptied in a spreading dark pool on the worn carpet. He ceased struggling. Completely limp now, his rag doll body dangled for another eternity then was lowered, almost gently, onto the floor. ‘Nine seconds.’ The man in the combat boots looked down at the corpse as he calmly coiled and pocketed the garrotte, then walked to the half-opened window, climbed over the sill and was swallowed up by the night.



Terence Browning looked at his watch. It was 12:50 a.m. It had been an unusually slow night for a Saturday. He called over to Joe, the night manager, who was sitting across the bar, counting out the evening’s take. ‘I’ve cleaned the tables and washed up the glasses. I’m heading home now, Joe; you mind locking up?’

‘Nope, I’ll do it. See you Monday, Terry. How ‘bout those Leafs!’

‘Killer dillers! We’re square... till next week. Okay, Joe, see you.’

Terence walked toward the stairs past Dianne’s desk. ‘What a cutie-pie’ ‘Hi, Di. How’s it goin’?’

She smiled and shrugged, ‘So, so. Slow night, dull as dishwater, but I’m finished soon. G’ night Terry.’ The elevator, slow as molasses at the best of times, wasn’t worth the five-minute wait. Besides, a three-floor walk up wouldn’t kill him.

He unlocked his door, entered his room, and then turned, double locking, and chaining the door by touch. He flung his bow tie in the direction of his armchair, and went into the bathroom to run some warm water to rinse his face. In the light of the single bulb, he looked into the mirror as he dried off. ‘Man, you look like you could use a brew!’ He switched off the bathroom light, and, as usual, walked back down the short hallway in the dark, toward the kitchenette.

He stumbled over something beside the closet. "What the hell?" He reached for the light switch. "Oh, dear God!" It was a pair of legs; worse, looking up at him was a grotesque caricature of a human face, frozen in a state of perpetual terror, eyes bulging like obscenely overripe grapes, and the swollen black tongue lolling absurdly from purple lips. An angry red welt ran across the throat from ear to ear. "Christ, he's, he's been strangled. I'm getting the hell out of here!"

He struggled with the locks and chain. Finally, in spite of his trembling hands, he managed to fling open the door and ran, stumbling along the hallway to the stairs shouting, "Help, help, please somebody!"

Dianne heard his cries, and as he ran down the final few steps, she had already started around the counter. "Terry, what is it? What's wrong?"

"In my room...I don't know...a body, he's dead!"

"Who's dead, Terry?"

"A man...on the floor...I don't know...how he got there!" He was shaking and sobbing now, uncontrollably.

"Terry, come, sit down; I'll get Joe." Dianne led him gently behind the counter and helped him sit in a chair. After a reassuring pat on his shoulder, she went to the entrance of the Time Out Lounge. Seconds later, she called back, "Terry, it's okay. Joe's calling the Oshawa police right now. They'll be here in a jiffy. I'm getting you coffee."

Detective Sergeant Paul Cummins was a twenty-two-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police. He was looking forward to his well-earned retirement in three more years. As he pulled up to the hotel, he swore silently and hoped that this call was not what the dispatcher had reported, but just some kind of Saturday night drunken prank. It was a classic handoff. The Oshawa boys had a full-blown arson investigation going on at a lumberyard in the south end, and begged off on the Genosha call. It landed squarely on Cummins' lap, along with a hot coffee when he hit the roof light and peeled out of the vacant lot.

After a brief and garbled attempt at conversation with "the poor sap who had allegedly found the stiff," Joe, the night manager accompanied Cummins to the third floor. Cummins motioned him to stay back and removed his gun from its holster, pointing it toward the door, which Terry, in his flight, had left ajar. He slowly pushed the door open with his free hand and entered the room. In the dim light, the lifeless eyes stared up at him.

"I don't think you want to see this, Joe."

"What is it, Sarge?"

"Well, it's not a joke, that's for sure," he sighed. "No pulse. Looks like we have an old-fashioned homicide on our hands. Give me your pass-key. Sorry, you can't go in, even if you are an Auxiliary. I'm sealing this room. Is there a phone in there? Good.

“Listen, Joe, go down stairs, and keep a close eye on the guy in the lobby. Don’t let him out of your sight. Take him by the hand to the toilet, if he needs to go. I’ll need to question him later. And get him to calm down.”

“Gees, Paul, he’s Terry Browning, an employee. He was working with me in the bar, all night.”

“Did he take any breaks, Joe?”

“Yeah, only two, fifteen minutes each.”

“That’s more than enough time. I’m calling for backup, the coroner, and crime scene boys. I want this place dusted, photographed, and then taken apart, if necessary. Till another copper arrives, Mr. Browning’s your baby. Lock him in your office and call this number fast if he tries to bolt. Keep your clerk here until I can get to talk with her, too. I want to look around some more.”

Dr. Donald Miller, the Coroner, arrived within twenty minutes.

“Hi, Paul, what have you got for me? Another ‘John’ with a bum ticker?”

“Nope, Doc, it’s a murder. See for yourself; strangled. And whoever did it meant business. That poor bastard’s half-decapitated.”

“Huh. We haven’t had a homicide in Oshawa in years. Let me take a closer look, Paul. By the way, the window’s partly open. Your killer might have flown the coop...” he remarked, opening his bag.

“Donald, you look after the medical mumbo-jumbo, I’ll handle the detective work. Tell me when I can search him for his ID.” He dialled the telephone, holding the receiver in a white handkerchief. “What’s the time of death?”

“Turn on the lights, please. Thanks. I’d roughly estimate, based on preliminary observations, between three and six hours ago. I’m taking the body temperature now.” Dr. Miller continued his methodical examination. Judging by the marks around the neck, it was likely that he had indeed been brutally asphyxiated, strangled by something very fine and very efficient. ‘No fibre burns,’ he thought, ‘so it was probably metal, a wire, or possibly a lamp cord.’

The examination continued down the body, from the neck to the torso. The Coroner inspected the hands and fingernails for signs of abrasions and for tissue fragments, which could be harvested for analysis at the Provincial Lab. He froze. On the cadaver’s left wrist there was a metal chain-link ID bracelet, bearing the lettering, S25-1-1. Hastily, he unfastened the clasp and slipped the bracelet into his vest pocket. Dr. Miller rose. “Paul, I’ll be right back. I have to get something. Don’t touch him, yet.”

He exited the elevator at the lobby and walked into a sea of blue uniforms. “Detective Cummins is waiting for you boys, Room 301.” Dr. Miller walked immediately to the lobby pay phone and called Commandant Graham’s private residence line.

“Hello, Gordon?”

“Yes?”

“Donald Miller here.”

“Hello, Donald, is there a problem?”

“I’m afraid so, Gordon. Can you come to the Genosha Hotel right away? I’ll fill you in when you get here.”

The Commandant’s black Buick pulled up in front of the hotel. He got out of the car and looked across the street at the flashing marquee lights of the Regent Theatre: ‘Now Playing - *Murder In The Air* - starring Ronald Reagan’.

When he stepped into the foyer, Dr. Donald Miller met him. “Over here, Gordon.” The two men walked toward the fireplace. “I..”

“Donald, what in blazes are the police doing here?” Graham interrupted, impatiently.

“That’s why I called you. There is a dead man upstairs. He was wearing a Camp bracelet.”

“Was? You’ve removed it? You’re sure that it’s one of ours?” Graham asked, incredulously.

“No question,” he stated, palming the bracelet to Graham.

“Yes, it’s one of ours, alright. Do you know who he is, Donald? Have you ever seen him before?”

“He’s not one of your staff officers, so I assume that he must be a client.”

“Oh, Lord! A client? I don’t know what to say.” Graham thought for a minute. “Your contact at the funeral home, what’s his name?”

“John?”

“Yes. Call him. Have him come over straight away to pick up the body. I’ll get hold of Ted Reynolds at the RCMP and tell him to come with some plainclothesmen. This could be messy. The OPP are going to claim privilege...first to the scene. I’ll have to use the desk phone, if you don’t mind.”

Dr. Miller went back to the pay phone. He inserted a nickel and dialed the number. After two rings, a voice answered, “McIntosh Anderson Funeral Home; this is the Director speaking. How may I help you?”

“John? It’s Donald Miller.”

“Hello Donald. It must be urgent business!”

“Very. John, I need a hearse at the Genosha Hotel, as soon as you can be here. Back entrance. The fewer people you bring, the better.”

“I understand. I’ll be there in a flash.”

After rousing a sleepy Commissioner Reynolds, Colonel Graham called his own private nightline. “Betty? Colonel Graham.”

“Yes, Colonel?”

“Sorry to bother you at this ungodly hour, but I need you to Contact Michael Heaviside. Please have him meet me ASAP at the Genosha Hotel in Oshawa. Tell him to bring the station wagon and come alone. That’s all. Thank you, Betty.”

“Yes, Sir. Of course, right away.”

“Well, Donald, success?”

“John should be here momentarily. You?”

“Ted sounded as if he was already getting dressed while as we spoke. I expect him shortly. Let’s slip into the lounge and lie low until they arrive. Above all, I do not want an incident. Do you see the man in the brown fedora? He’s the local police reporter. I pray he doesn’t recognize me.”



“Thank you, Ted. Your driver must have flown at low altitude! You remember our Physician, Donald Miller?”

“Yes, hello again, Donald. So, Gordon, what’s all the commotion?”

“It appears that one of our clients has met with foul play upstairs in Room 301. It hasn’t been confirmed yet, though. Fortunately, Donald retrieved this bracelet from the body before the detective noticed it. Beyond that, I don’t know what has happened. Donald has called the funeral home to come get him.”

“I see. What do you want me to do, Gordon?”

“Run interference, essentially. Go upstairs and smooth things over for us with the local constabulary. The policeman’s name is Detective Sergeant Cummins. I need him out of here as soon as possible. Then, I need your forensic chaps to investigate the situation, along with Donald, of course. And as soon as you’re finished, I want the body taken away.”

“I brought along my top man, Dr. Phil Douglas, and an assistant, from Toronto. Of course, neither you nor I can authorize the release of the remains. That’s up to Donald as the Coroner and attending physician of record.”

“I know. And time is of the essence. Send them out as soon as you can then, Ted. Donald, I’ll leave it to you to deal with the undertaker. Please explain that he may have a considerable wait. ”

“I will. There he is now, Gordon.” Dr. Miller approached the undertaker and his two assistants entering through the rear door as Ted Reynolds walked toward the staircase.

When the Commissioner reached Room 301, he found the door locked. He knocked. "Sergeant Cummins? Commissioner Ted Reynolds here, of the RCMP. May I have a word with you?" he asked, holding open his billfold to display his identification.

Cummins stood at the doorway and scrutinized the newcomer's credentials. "RCMP, Sir? May I ask who sent you?"

"If I may step inside, Detective, I'll gladly tell you."

"This is highly irregular...very well, come in. May I ask what brings you here, Commissioner?"

"Detective Cummins, this fellow's apparent murder has created some, shall I say, unusual circumstances. I'm not at liberty to tell you precisely what is going on, or even how I know the details, but suffice to say there's much more to this than meets your very professional eye."

"Commissioner, I mean no disrespect, Sir, but, as I said, this is all very unusual. I'm sure you will agree. I'll have to call my duty Captain, Billy Bell. I can't hand this over to you on my own."

"Absolutely, Detective. Of course you can't. I strongly recommend that you do call; I'll be more than pleased to discuss the situation with him."

From the tone of Detective Cummins' directives, and by the frequent and furtive glances cast at him, it became clear to Ted that the Captain was less than favourably inclined to show the spirit of inter-service co-operation. When Cummins hung up the receiver, he wiped his forehead with his white handkerchief. "He's coming here. Captain Bell's orders to me are that you must stay put, Commissioner."

Captain Bell arrived at 2:00 a.m. Joe, the weary night manager, met him in the lobby and showed him to a table in the darkened bar, around which sat a British Army Lieutenant Colonel, two RCMP types, the Coroner, Donald Miller, and John, the funeral home director. Terry the bartender sat forlornly apart from the others, looking pale and shaken. The Colonel stood and introduced himself, then led Captain Bell upstairs, where Ted and Detective Cummins were waiting.

"Captain Bell, I am Commissioner Ted Reynolds of the RCMP. You've met Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Graham, of course."

"Yes, pleased to meet you, Commissioner Reynolds. I'm a great admirer of your force's work. I confess that I didn't know where to start, as I had never run into this situation before. I will say though, I have just concluded a discussion with the Mayor, who, as you know of course, is also the Chief Magistrate for the City. His Worship said that, provided you are prepared to give your assurances that a full report of your findings relative to your criminal investigation will be made available to him, then we can turn the matter over to you."

Ted looked over to Colonel Graham, who nodded his assent, then answered, "That would be satisfactory, Captain Bell. The Colonel and I must get our people down to business now, if you have no objection. Whoever did this must be half way to Timbuktu by now."

“Very well then. It was a pleasure meeting you. Sergeant Cummins, follow me. By the way, does our ‘John Doe’ have a name, Detective?”

“No ID that I could find, Captain. Good luck, Commissioner, Colonel.”

As the two OPP men walked down the stairs, Captain Bell turned to Cummins and remarked, “Paul, this matter has now been turned over officially to the RCMP and is closed as far as the OPP record will show. Your logbook should indicate this. Can you handle a coffee and a sandwich? The Rose Bowl’s not far. Follow me over and I’m buying’.”

“Sure, Captain, but I’m curious about one thing. Where does that Scotty Colonel fit in the picture?”

“I wouldn’t waste your time trying to figure out any of tonight’s events, Paul.”

“Whatever you say, Sir.”



Colonel Graham turned to Commissioner Reynolds, “Thank you again, Ted for bailing me out. That was too damned close for comfort. I’ll let your men and Doctor Miller get on with the investigation. Call me when the body is ready for release. I’d like to get it secured over at the funeral home as soon as possible so we can begin to piece this thing together.

“Doc, your friend John deserves a medal for patience. I’ll go back downstairs and keep him company.”

“Phil says he’ll need about half an hour to take pictures and finish examining the scene before you take away the body, Gordon. I’ll be calling in some more staff to inspect the room, when it’s time. Of course, there’ll be an official autopsy.”

“That’s fine, Commissioner, you’re in charge. We’ll be waiting downstairs.”

A concerned Major Heaviside arrived at the front desk. “I’m looking for Colonel Graham, please.”

“One moment, Sir. I’ll call the room.... Oh, here he is now, Sir.”

“Michael! Glad you made it. Where in blazes were you?” Gordon whispered.

“Colonel, I came as quickly as I could. What is it, Sir?”

“Come upstairs, please...it’s been quite a night. Major, I want you to go into this room and tell me if you recognize the body lying on the floor.”

“You did say, ‘body’, Colonel?”

“I did. Go ahead.”

When Major Heaviside walked into the room, he could see Dr. Miller, Commissioner Reynolds and two other men talking in the tiny kitchen area with Colonel Graham. A moment later, Graham joined him.

“Where is it? He? Oh, there.” He saw the man’s body, naked from the waist up, lying face down on the floor. He knelt down on one knee beside the corpse, and then looked up at Colonel Graham. “Is it okay if I move his head for a better look, Colonel?”

“Yes, the medical examiners say they’re finished with the body, for the time being. Do you need some assistance?”

“No, it’s okay.” When Michael Heaviside turned the head gently towards him, he was stunned. “

“God, it’s Marco!”

“You knew him then, Major?”

“Yes, Sir, he is, was, a client name of Marco Palermo, one of the boys in the special Italian ethnic group. This is a shock!”

“Would you have any idea why Marco is dead, Major?”

“Sir, he was sent into town on a routine field training assignment. How he ended up like this, I have no idea.”

“Thank you, Major. I expect you have a ready explanation for your delay in arriving here? You may go now and await my call when I return to the Camp. Of course, do not breathe a word of this to anyone. I will expect a full report, ASAP, on this man including all of his structured activities at the base. And see what you can find out regarding his off time pursuits, who his chums were, problems with other clients... I’ll address this situation with the other instructors in the morning briefing.”

“Yes, Sir. Understood, Sir.”

“Michael, I want you to wake up Brian Jones and tell him I need a guard sent over to the McIntosh Anderson Funeral Home, now. Use the back entrance, no uniform or sidearm. I’ll be there to meet him, in an hour.”

“Very good, Sir. I’ll see to it immediately I get there.”

“Did I hear that he was one of your clients, Colonel?” asked Commissioner Reynolds.

“Yes, Ted, an Italian-Canadian lad. Now we have to find out who killed him and for what reason. You’re through with the body, Doctor?”

“As much as can be done here, Gordon. We’ve packed up all the tissue and fluid samples, ready to go directly to the Pathology Lab downtown. Phil will take them; he’s going that way. I’ll get the Funeral Director.”

“Thanks, Donald.”

“John, you and your assistants are to take the body to the mortuary. I’ll follow you there and will remind them they’ve been sworn to secrecy under the Official Secrets Act and are not at liberty to discuss any particulars with anyone. I will be assigning an

armed sentry, plain clothes, full-time, to guard the body twenty-four hours a day, for as long as I deem necessary. They'll be out of sight in your basement: however, should they cause any problem with your customers or interfere with your staff in any fashion, ring Doc Miller straight away."

"I understand, Colonel Graham."

The hearse travelled along King Street for approximately a quarter mile, turning into the narrow lane of the elegant redbrick McIntosh Anderson Funeral Home, and proceeding slowly to the rear parking lot. Colonel Graham followed the Cadillac limousine in his Buick, and parked while the hearse backed up to the service entrance. The body was removed and carried directly down a short concrete stairway to the basement. Just inside, the staff placed the stretcher on a gurney then awaited further directions from Colonel Gordon and John.

"Take him straight into the prep room, boys, and then you may leave," John said. "Thanks very much for coming over on such short notice. I'll finish up."

"And thanks to each of you for your patience," Colonel Graham added. "Sometimes these events take on a life of their own, well, that's not exactly.... I think we're all a bit tired. Just remember your oath of secrecy. I trust that you will bear that uppermost in mind."

"Colonel Graham?"

Gordon turned toward the voice. Sergeant Jack Wright, reporting for guard duty, in civvies as ordered, stood at the basement entrance. "Come on down, Sergeant and I'll introduce you to your hosts."

When he had finished explaining the guard's duties, Colonel Graham shook John's hand and went up the stairway. When he had gone, John turned to the guard, "How long will you be here, Sergeant?"

"Until 08:00h when my replacement will show up. I get the shortest graveyard shift, this time only, I suppose."

"Then let me show you where things are. That's the Preparation Room. The door will be locked and you are not expected to enter it, as the Colonel just said. Doctor Miller will be here at eight in the morning to perform an autopsy. The telephone is there, if you need it; the private washroom is just around the corner. Across from it you'll see a comfortable chair and a table with a hot plate, and the makings for coffee and tea. And homemade cookies! Our receptionist bakes them fresh! Please help yourself and we'll see you around 7:30 in the morning. I'll be locking up on my way out. Oh, I almost forgot. There's a small radio in my office. You might be able to find some music to listen to. Let me get it for you."

"I'd better not, Sir, but thanks for mentioning it."

"No? Very well, then. Good night Sergeant."

"Good night, Sir."