

## **Chapter 1**

Murder is a heartless crime one person executes on another. With all the modern equipment our law enforcement agencies have at their disposal, you would think that this crime would be useless to commit. It seems, though, that the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is the murder capital of the United States. With so much bloodshed on the capital's streets, you would think the District of Columbia was a combat zone, not one of the nation's beautiful cities. This is the chief reason why the homicide division of the Washington, D.C. police department is one of the busiest in the country. You earn your money on this force.

The homicide department, located on the second floor at police headquarters, is composed of ten working detectives, four lieutenants, one department captain, and a dozen clerical service workers. The team of Ciminelli and Hannigan is one of the best in the whole department. Steve Ciminelli, a Yankee from Boston who joined the D.C. force after serving three years as an Air Force special cop at Andrews Air Force Base, is a veteran with nine years on the force, with the last three as a homicide detective. He earned his promotion the hard way—by hard work on the job.

Linda Hannigan is a second-generation police officer on the Washington force. Her father was a cop, her uncle was a cop, and her two brothers now serve in the Secret Service and FBI, respectively. She became a detective in four years, and many of her male co-workers resent her ability to achieve her rank so fast. Every day she must fight wise-ass sexual remarks made by her colleagues, but she handles them in an expert manner.

The squad room is always active, with people working at their desks or hurrying to other destinations in the building. The captain doesn't like to see anyone stand too long near the water fountain or have more than two cups of coffee. He believes that with all the workloads our department has to deal with, no one has the luxury to be idle unless he or she is out of his sight.

Steve Ciminelli is over thirty years old and a Yankee transplant from New England. Born and raised in the East Boston area, he attended Boston University for four years. After serving three years in the Air Force, mostly at Andrews Air Force Base outside of Washington, he decided to join the D.C. police force to stay in the area. The Secret Service or the Bureau couldn't promise him that. Why did Steve wish to live in the capital? Her name is Maureen Stevens, co-anchor on one of the local TV stations. Steve and Maureen's relationship goes back to his Air Force days at Andrews.

Maureen is from the Long Island area of New York and attended the University of Buffalo School of journalism. She worked in some minor jobs in Buffalo until she earned her co-anchor post at WKWL. She met Steve at a student beer party at the U.B. campus when he traveled to Buffalo with an Air Force buddy. His buddy was getting married. Steve was his best man, and Maureen was a college friend of the bride. Their romance has flowered for the last ten years, with off-and-on periods.

"Ciminelli and Hannigan. In my office immediately," the captain shouted from behind his office door. The sound of his voice brought the movement in the squad room to a halt, and everyone knew something big had happened. As Steve and Linda walked through the door, the captain ordered it closed. With his unlit cigar in his mouth, he picked up a message sheet and handed it to Steve.

"This is a big one, Steve. A prominent socialite by the name of Laura Smith-Hughes was just found murdered in her condo bedroom. I want a very complete and thorough investigation of this, and you report to me directly with everything. Understand?" the captain commanded with a tough voice.

"Laura Smith-Hughes? She's the top of Washington society, boss," Steve remarked after glancing at the name on the message sheet. "She's loaded with dough—one of the top five hundred in the nation," he continued.

"Get over to the murder scene and make sure that none of our people screw this one up," barked the captain of the homicide division. With that last order still ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda left his

office and moved out of headquarters quickly. The drive to the condo residence of Laura Smith-Hughes didn't take too long, but traffic in Washington during the work week is horrendous. The streets are just filled with drivers who don't know how to drive.

The Smith-Hughes condo was located in the Watergate Complex along the river. The condo itself was worthy of the status of its occupant. It overlooked the marina basin and received gentle breezes from the water side of the complex. When Ciminelli and Hannigan arrived, the area had already been roped off by police tape. As our dynamic duo entered the Smith-Hughes apartment, the appreciation for elegance was immediately observable. The furnishings were elegant and suited the status of the Smith-Hughes name.

As Steve walked through the apartment, the I.D. and forensic boys were busy trying to retrieve evidence from the furniture and items situated in the living areas of the condo. As Steve approached the master bedroom, the intensity of the investigation increased. This was the actual murder scene, for Laura Smith-Hughes lay on the bed in a bright red pool of blood. The victim was clothed in an elegant, expensive teddy, and she was sprawled on a king-size bed covered with silk and satin sheets. Ms. Smith-Hughes was a very attractive woman for her age, but today her body had been punctured over a dozen times by a sharp object—probably a knife.

"For Pete's sake, close her eyes," Steve complained as he viewed the body. The victim's eyes were still open and seemed to glare at the activity around her. One of the coroner's men complied with Steve's request.

"A shame that someone so attractive could end up like this—a shame to waste such a body," replied the coroner as he worked on it. "This wonderful lady had sex before she became a pincushion, Steve," he commented.

"Give me an analysis of the pubic hair you retrieved and any info on the sperm you sucked out of her. Maybe our records will show a match," replied Linda as she examined the body of Laura Smith-Hughes closer.

"Already accomplished, detective," the coroner proudly proclaimed. Linda gave him a smile of thanks for that remark.

"The patio doors don't show any signs of forced entry, so our sweetheart here must have invited our culprit in through the front door. Having a roll in the hay shows that she knew him and trusted him, too," Steve mentioned to his partner.

"Nothing in the room looks disturbed, and our boys believe only her prints are on most items. This looks like a love murder to me," proclaimed Linda as she turned the sheet covering the body to one side. "No great bruise marks on the body. I think our lady was surprised by her lover when he hacked her to death." She then flipped the bloody sheet back over the body. "I want the carpet cleaned for everything we can find, fellahs," Steve ordered the guys on the forensic team. "Especially at the door entrance."

"The lady was the only one who had a drink, for only her prints are on this glass. The cleaning lady who discovered the body didn't touch or move anything," declared one of the I.D. team. "It seems her boyfriend came to pump her, not enjoy a cocktail, Steve," commented one of the investigating officers. Steve walked out of the bedroom, entered the great room in this unit, and glanced out of the patio doors. He noticed that it faced the opposite side of the Watergate Complex. He slid the patio doors open and walked onto the balcony patio outside. Because the apartment was on the third floor, the view to it was enjoyed by several dozen other tenants in the complex.

"Linda, do you think someone across the marina is a peeping Tom? Maybe someone witnessed something about Ms. Smith-Hughes and her lifestyle that would help us. Send some of these blues over there to check it out," observed Steve as he leaned on the rail of the balcony.

"No forced entry, Steve. We're looking for one of her lovers. We're going to have to check her friends out." As she stated this, she opened a fancy-looking phone directory. "This book contains several hundred names. Some of these people are of high status, including the First Lady herself," Linda revealed with surprise.

"What did you expect from such a lady, my dear?" remarked Steve. "High society reaches out to high places in this town . . ."

"Can we remove the body, detective?" the coroner's assistant asked.

"If the boys are through taking their pictures, take her away. Remember, I need your report as soon as you have it ready. OK?" Steve replied back.

"Steve, we found something on the patio," Linda reported.

"It may be a lead." The item found on the patio floor behind a flowering plant pot was a cigarette butt. It was from a special, private English brand of smokes. "We'll send it down to the lab and check it out," barked Linda, as she carefully placed the cigarette butt into a plastic bag.

Steve checked with the other investigators in the apartment and realized that nothing new was uncovered to reveal or shed any light on this bloody crime. "Lock it up, boys. We may have to return later," he ordered. He was a good detective who did his job very well. Some said he was the best in the department. Everyone in homicide respected his work. Steve rarely missed anything.

"Want me to drop you off at headquarters, Linda?" Steve asked as they returned to his car. "I'm having lunch at the Old Post Office."

"A cheap lunch with Maureen again? Someday you had better treat her to a fancy meal, Steve, my boy," Linda jokingly remarked. "Maureen's got simple tastes, but she's a great judge of men," Steve commented with a sense of bravado. They both chuckled and laughed.

"Drop me off at the bureau. I want to check something out with a special friend of mine concerning the LaRue case," Linda replied. As Steve turned the corner and stopped in front of the J. Edgar Hoover Building, she declared, "Have a good lunch, buddy."

The Old Post Office, a mall with fast food places, was always crowded during lunchtime because many of the government workers found it an excellent place to eat their lunch. Steve grabbed the first open table, and not too much longer, Maureen came walking up to him.

"Hi, sweetheart. Sorry I'm a bit late," she apologized. He reached out and pulled her to him for a greeting kiss. It tasted good, so Steve planted another kiss on her dry lips. "I'm hungry, Steve, not horny. A hot roast beef with gravy will satisfy me for now."

"Two hot beefs and two Bud Lites, right?" Steve asked. Maureen nodded in agreement as Steve left the table to retrieve their order.

Maureen Stevens, a very attractive brunette with a very sexy-shaped body, landed her job at WKWL News Center by her good looks. Born and raised on Long Island, she attended the University of Buffalo School of Journalism in Buffalo, New York. She worked there briefly on several of their local news staffs until the position at WKWL became available.

Her career had always been the stumbling block in their relationship. Their romance had its ups and downs, and it was up just now. It had been tough trying to keep a romance going when Steve had to leave her apartment in the early morning just to get ready for work, so weekends were the only times to enjoy sex and a comfortable relationship.

When Steve returned with their two hot beefs, they sat down and enjoyed a hearty lunch. These small meetings in the middle of the day allowed the two to exchange idle chatter and touch each other before the evening hours. Steve tried several times to convince Maureen to move in with him, but each time her excuse was the same. She didn't want to be tied down at this time. Steve always thought this was a crappy excuse.

"Remember, Steve, we still have that cocktail party at the Kennedy Center tonight. Pick me up around eight. I can't wait to see who will be there," proclaimed Maureen, with a bit of excitement in her voice.

"I'll be there with my tux and on time, darling," Steve replied with a touch of frustration, despite his expectancy about the night's events. He finished the last bite of his sandwich and downed it with the rest of his brew. The two slowly cleaned up their table. As they were leaving the eating area, Steve gave Maureen a hard hug and kiss and left through the west door of the building.

Steve found himself back at the Watergate Complex. He walked around, checking out the outside of the complex on the marine side, especially with the view of the Smith-Hughes apartment balcony. The area around the marina revealed nothing—nothing unusual. Our boy sure knew Ms. Smith-Hughes and knew her well, Steve thought. As Steve was ready to leave, a female occupant of one of the docked yachts in the marina came on deck and flirtily started a conversation with him.

“Haven’t seen you around these parts before,” she stated with a smile. This woman was dressed in a scanty bathing suit and was in the mood for some companionship. Steve, being a handsome-looking guy, was a good target for her advances.

“Well, hello,” he greeted her with a broad smile. “Did you know the lady in 3B West? Was Ms. Smith-Hughes a friend of yours? I wonder, did you see anybody strange or suspicious hanging around her apartment?”

The answers to all the questions were a cool no, and as Steve leaned against the railing of the ship, his new female friend came forward and leaned over to face him. The view of her well-shaped breasts hanging there in front of him was a tempting sight to his eyes. Steve knew she wanted to show him her charms somewhere below the deck, but Steve decided not today. He reached up and caressed her breast and reminded her that he would take a rain-check for today. She grabbed his hand, placed it on her chest, and smiled, agreeing to wait for him. Steve wondered as he walked away from the marina how interesting this broad would be if he had accepted her invitation. Maybe she did know something but didn’t wish to say anything at this time.

When he arrived back at his desk in the squad room, Linda was busy making phone calls from the telephone directory she recovered at the murder scene. “Here, good buddy, start calling,” she stated as she handed Steve a couple of sheets of paper. Steve plopped into his chair and slowly started to dial the first number on the list.

After going through the first twelve numbers on the list, Steve hit the jackpot on number thirteen. The person on the other end of the phone was a close friend of Laura Smith-Hughes, an Elizabeth Johnson, the wife of one of America’s industrial leaders. He quickly made an appointment to talk with this Ms. Johnson because her estate was located in the Mount Vernon area of northern Virginia. It took Linda and Steve about an hour to reach the Johnson estate, which suited the wealthy status of its occupants. Steve had seen people and places of wealth, but the Fair Oaks Estate of the Johnson’s was one that had to be seen. The ride from the main gate to the mansion took several minutes, and the grounds were elegant and beautiful. Everywhere you looked, it smelled of money in large amounts.

The two detectives were guided into a high-ceilinged room called the reception room, but it was big enough to be an apartment for two working people. Steve looked around and marveled at the elegant furniture and wonderful use of Italian marble. The walls were covered with paintings of people who probably were descendants of the Johnsons. After a wait of about ten minutes, Ms. Elizabeth Johnson entered the room. She was a woman in her early fifties with blond hair, and her slim figure showed her constant fight to hold her weight down. Dressed in shorts and sneakers, she was carrying a tennis racket in one hand and a towel in the other. She had just played her afternoon tennis match and decided to see us immediately instead of changing and freshening up first. As she wiped the sweat off her face, she politely introduced herself in a ladylike manner.

“How can I help you, Detective? This terrible crime about Laura must be solved,” she remarked as she sat in one of the room’s chairs.

“How well did you know Ms. Smith-Hughes?” Steve asked. “Did she have any enemies or people who would wish her dead?”

“She was on everyone’s social list. Sure, she ruffled a few feathers since she separated from Jonathan, her husband, but her close friends include the First Lady and the President. Even William Anderson was a frequent visitor to her events,” exclaimed Ms. Johnson.

“How did she get along with her husband, Jonathan?” questioned Linda, as she busily copied the information into her notebook.

“Jonathan Farnsworth Smith-Hughes is one of the wealthiest men in the country. He controls the Winn-Dixie and Publix fortunes, plus several others. Laura had it made when she married Jonathan, but I knew it wasn’t going to last. Laura liked to control her men, and many came and went at the Smith-Hughes estate. Laura and I went to college together, and we were both determined to land the right man. I got my Henry, and she married Jonathan. But Laura wanted to live the high social life, and Jonathan was the quiet, business-first type of man. Parties and social life in this area didn’t satisfy him at all. He

tolerated Laura up to a point, I guess," she commented, as she again wiped her brow with her towel. She then ordered one of the servants to get them some cool drinks.

"Did Ms. Smith-Hughes and her husband ever fight, or did he ever threaten her or cause any harm to her in any way?" Steve questioned, as he sipped on his cool lemonade.

"Jonathan didn't like what Laura was doing behind his back, but he's not the violent type, Detective. The man put up with a lot before he temporarily moved out of their home in Maryland and moved to Washington. Laura was killed in his apartment, not hers. She lived at Fairborn Estates, the Smith-Hughes mansion in Maryland," Ms. Johnson related.

"But everything in that apartment indicated that she lived there, Ms. Johnson. No men's clothes at all were found there," replied Detective Hannigan.

"Strange," she pondered. "Maybe Laura did a swap and moved into the city to be closer to her men friends, especially Mr. Anderson."

"William Anderson, the Vice President, was one of her male friends?" Steve asked in a surprised tone.

"She knew him when he was a senator, but I can't truthfully say that he was one of her lovers," Ms. Johnson related.

"Our Ms. Smith-Hughes was a very busy woman. She kept good company. I'll bet this could drive any man nuts," responded Steve as he glanced at Linda for agreement. She nodded approval with her eyes. "Ms. Johnson, can you make a list of the men friends you can recall that were friendly with our late Laura Smith-Hughes? We would deeply appreciate your help, madam."

"Surely, Detective Ciminelli," she replied. "I would be delighted to do so. I'll have my secretary fax it to you as soon as I can," she continued. Steve and Linda rose from their chairs and both personally thanked Ms. Johnson for her help and then departed back to Washington.

The drive back was a quiet one as Linda occupied herself by studying the landscape and daydreaming. Steve hummed to the music on the radio and wondered how boring the night ahead of him was going to be. Maureen attended these social events only to make contacts with people to enhance her self-esteem and her job. She acted like entertainers usually do. For Steve, a good roll in the sack would be more satisfying and enjoyable.

When they arrived at the office, the memos on his desk informed him that the coroner's report would be ready tomorrow morning. Forensic lab reports were a day or two away.

"Linda, our friend Jonathan has been located in Chicago and is flying home tonight. Let's see him tomorrow as soon as possible," Steve stated as he closed the case folder and placed it in his desk drawer. "See you tomorrow, partner, or we could do some 'special homework' at your place tonight," he jokingly remarked.

"No thank you, Romeo. Your Juliet is waiting for you."

## **Chapter 2**

Steve picked up Maureen on time, and they proceeded to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts. Steve was very handsome dressed in his tux with matching accessories. He looked like Tom Cruise, except he was taller and stockier. Maureen looked absolutely beautiful in her black cocktail dress. It was sleeveless, held up by spaghetti straps and her full-figured bust.

When Steve arrived at her apartment, he tried unsuccessfully to convince her that maybe they should forget the Kennedy social and enjoy each other with some hot sex. Maureen's reply was later, not now. That was the typical answer Steve was getting these days.

The crowd at the Kennedy Center was large both inside and outside. Tonight's event was a charity auction to raise money to feed the homeless, but the auction actually consisted of male escorts putting their looks and bodies on the auction block for some female to bid on. Maureen, a member of the organization committee, had volunteered Steve to be a contestant. All the unmarried males—usually the cream of the area's bachelors—had volunteered to help raise money for this function.

This was Maureen's brainchild and she was determined to raise a record amount this year. Even the Vice President, William Anderson, was in attendance, supplying moral support to the male contingent in

the audience. The champagne and hors d'oeuvres were tasty. (What do you expect at two hundred bucks a head?) The main lobby was filled with people. This was typical of such an event in the nation's capital. Anybody who was somebody was there.

Steve and Maureen looked terrific as a couple, and they socialized with many people as soon as they entered the center. As they were sipping their glass of champagne before the auction, Steve wondered if someone besides Maureen would bid on him. He wondered who would be the lucky lady to have a date with him. Overall, he started to enjoy the festivities.

"Maureen, guess who wants to talk to you at this time about some big-time programming on prime time?" came the voice of her station manager as he approached them. "Peter Jennings and some of the ABC News staff want a word with you."

"Excuse me, darling, I'll be right back. Socialize and enjoy yourself," she suggested to Steve. As she walked away and disappeared into the crowd, Steve slowly glanced around to see a familiar face.

"Hello, stranger," a voice from behind could be heard. "Nice seeing you here."

As Steve turned around, his eyes glanced upon the sexy lady he had met at the marina earlier in the day. She was wearing a white strapless cocktail dress, and she filled it attractively. It gave you the impression that her body wanted out of that dress.

"Well, nice to see you again, but you have me at a disadvantage here. I'm Steve, and you're . . ." he asked in a flirting voice.

"The name is Vanessa, darling. I live in that floating apartment down by the marina. We met this afternoon..." she stated in a sultry voice. "Are you a contestant in the auction, Steve?" she asked with some excited anticipation in her voice.

"Sorry to say, yes, my fair maiden," Steve jokingly voiced, "but I won't raise much."

"Don't be surprised, my love. You're the best here tonight," Vanessa replied. She walked closer to Steve, grabbed his arm, and pleaded for him to take her over to the bar for a drink. He complied with her wish.

As they walked toward the nearest bar, Steve noticed that Maureen was approaching him. The look in her eyes showed signs of jealousy about Steve escorting someone who wasn't afraid to act sexy in public, and Vanessa filled the bill completely.

"I see you found yourself a friendly hand to hold, my love," Maureen remarked.

"Don't be jealous, darling. You did order me to socialize, and I did," Steve came back smartly, but with a smile.

"Well, I'm glad you found someone to talk to, for I'm going to have to leave for the station. It seems the head of the ABC News staff wants to view some of my work. Just think, Steve! ABC News wants to consider me for their Washington bureau. I would be working with Peter Jennings and Sam Donaldson!" she stated excitedly. "I'll get home safely. I'll see you at the Hard Rock Cafe for lunch tomorrow at one, OK?" she pleaded, as she planted a good-bye kiss on his wanting lips.

She then looked at Vanessa, turned to Steve, and kissed him hard again. She then turned and walked toward her friends at the other end of the room. Steve ordered his drinks and proceeded to make the best of the night with Vanessa.

Just as Vanessa had predicted, it seemed that when Steve walked onto the auction stage, the bidding started to climb. Women who desired a date with this attractive white-tuxedoed stud were bidding dollars in a state of frenzy, but Vanessa was determined to win this prize. She was happy to write a check for over three thousand dollars to ensure her date with Steve. The look in her eyes told Steve what she desired that night. She grabbed him off the stage and planted a moist kiss on his surprised lips.

"I want my date tonight, Stevie," she whispered in his ear. They walked to the bar for more champagne. Steve needed a drink at this time.

As Steve ventured over to the nearest bar, he noticed some unsavory characters standing near the cashier's office. As his drinks were being made, a shot rang out, and Steve immediately turned toward the office. He reached into his vest and then remembered he wasn't carrying his piece tonight. Two men came charging out of the cashier's office with guns in hand and several bags of cash. Two more shots rang out,

and the man with the cash bags fell to the floor. The other man, now in a frightened state, grabbed one of the guests and used her as a shield to move through the crowd.

Steve quickly darted out the side door of the center, and as he moved to the other end of the building, he borrowed a pistol from one of the outside security guards. As he approached the door to enter again, he was now behind the man with the hostage, and Steve recognized her to be Vanessa. She was scared and in tears, and the guy with the gun had it pressed hard against her head.

“Move back or I’ll blow her head off,” he shouted.

“Stop right there, scumbag, or I’ll splatter your brains all over this room. Drop it now, before my itchy finger makes a move. Do it now,” Steve yelled. The man was so frightened that Steve would kill him that he dropped the gun but held onto Vanessa, holding her so tight that her breasts were popping out of her dress. Steve slammed his gun on this joker’s head and dropped him to the floor. Several local cops plus center guards immediately rushed up, and Steve ordered the man ‘cuffed and taken away.

Steve immediately picked Vanessa up in his arms and helped her rearrange her dress. He wiped her tears and held her to stop her sobbing and shaking. “Take me home, Steve, please,” she cried, and draped herself around him. Steve handed one of the officers his gun, gave them several orders to clean up the mess, and then proceeded to take Vanessa home.

• • •

When Steve arrived to work the next morning, the squad room was a beehive of activity. Several local television news reporters were waiting for Steve to arrive because he was the hero of the day for his actions last night at the Kennedy Center. “Steve, what did you do?” inquired Maureen as she greeted him at his desk. “You weren’t home last night when I called. Where were you?”

Before Steve could answer her questions, the cameras were now turned on, and the group of reporters were pushing upon him and throwing questions at him.

“One question at a time, please,” Steve stated calmly as he took a seat at his desk. “First, how’s the condition of the guard that was shot, and second, how is the scumbag I slammed last night? I haven’t read any reports on it yet,” he wondered.

“The guard was operated on and is in guarded condition, but it looks like he’ll survive. The ‘scumbag’ you clobbered is resting comfortably in the D.C. holding center,” Maureen answered quickly.

“What happened to the female hostage? People at the scene stated that you left with her,” a reporter asked. Maureen’s ears perked up as she heard that statement. She wanted to know about this woman. Who was she?

“The woman was shook up, so I did what any good, decent person would do. I assisted her home safely and made sure she was okay. She didn’t want to be involved in this matter, so don’t ask for her identity, please,” Steve told the reporters present.

One reporter yelled out a question: “Detective, how does it feel being a hero and saving someone’s life?”

“I did my job. What I’m trained to do, nothing special,” Steve replied, and with that statement he excused himself because he had an appointment with the coroner. As he passed Maureen, he told her he would see her for lunch as planned. She nodded, and the camera lights were shut off.

Steve rushed out of headquarters and walked the short distance to the coroner’s office. He was joined at this time by Linda, who patted him on the shoulder and congratulated him for his brave move the night before.

“There’ll be a commendation in it for you, Stevie-boy,” she remarked. “You know how the captain loves this kind of publicity.”

“Don’t make a big thing of it, please,” replied Steve as they entered the coroner’s office. They were quickly taken by the coroner into one of the examination rooms, where Laura Smith-Hughes’s body was kept. It was a cold room and smelled of chemicals and rotten eggs.

“You have my report in your hand, Detective Ciminelli. Ms. Smith-Hughes died from stab wounds to the chest and abdomen, but the chest wounds were fatal. She was killed sometime between midnight and

three in the morning, and a sharp, thin blade was used. Our man has brown hair, and he had sex with the lady before he killed her. Sperm specimens were sent to the Norwood Lab for DNA testing. That'll take about three to four weeks," the coroner related to the detectives.

He then flipped the cover sheet off the body and lifted her right hand. "Our lady here gave our boy a good scratch, for we recovered some blood and skin from under her nails. Outside of that, I have found nothing extraordinary. Some alcohol in the stomach before death, and our Ms. Smith-Hughes was a user of cocaine, too, but not a heavy one," finished the coroner as he covered the body up.

They left the examination room and returned to the coroner's office. "You place the time of death sometime around one or two A.M. Our lady was keeping late hours with visitors," commented Steve.

"Was she doing drugs last night before she died?" asked Detective Hannigan.

"All she had in her system is a week old. Her stomach revealed only her dinner—fish, probably lobster—and some alcohol. The lady liked vodka and lemon," replied the coroner after glancing at his report.

"No major bruises to relate to a struggle except that she scratched the bastard, either during love-making or as he knifed her," replied Steve.

"I would assume that to be correct," related the coroner as he settled in his chair. "Our boy—and I'm assuming that a strong man did this, for the stab wounds are deep—enjoyed screwing her, and as she was relaxing on the bed, he did her in. He probably killed her with the first blow—that way, no sound or resistance from her. He caught her by surprise. She didn't expect it. That's why her eyes were open," commented the coroner.

"Thanks Pete, the info is very helpful," replied Steve as they left the office and headed back to the squad room at headquarters.

"Linda, when is her husband due in town?" asked Steve as they entered the police headquarters.

"He should be home now. I'll call and set up an appointment to see him as soon as possible, like this afternoon," replied Linda.

Steve sat at his desk and started to glance over his notes in his report file, wondering how many of Laura's friends attended last night's function at the Kennedy Center. She would have loved that kind of event, just like Vanessa did. Just the mention of Vanessa's name, and Steve reminded himself of last night. What a night he had with her. Not bad for a broad her age.

"Jonathan Smith-Hughes will see us at his estate around three this afternoon, Steve," announced Linda. "Forensic and I.D. reports are here, too." Steve checked them out with Linda to see if something new would shed some light on this murder. "Nothing new here," Steve told his partner. "Only one set of prints that weren't the victim's. The FBI is searching for its name right now."

"That cigarette butt was an English brand called 'Dukes and Lords,' sold in every tobacco shop in town," Linda chimed in. "Not too much to go on. Many people in this town, foreign and American, smoke that brand."

"Looks more and more like a love triangle killing, but we don't have all the parts to the triangle except one," replied Steve. "Any report from the blues checking out the apartments across from 3E?"

"No peeping Toms yet, Steve. These people sleep when Laura Smith-Hughes entertains. She wasn't the noisy type. Very quiet and genteel, like most rich bitches are," Linda sarcastically stated.

"Wow, it's nearly one. I have a lunch date to be at, partner. See you back here before 2:30, OK?" Steve commented as he grabbed his suit coat and headed out the door for the Hard Rock Cafe to meet Maureen for lunch.

When Steve entered the cafe, he found out that Maureen had arrived earlier and was seated in a booth in the rear. When he approached the booth, he leaned over and gave Maureen a very passionate kiss. She enjoyed receiving it. Steve could see it in her eyes.

"I have already ordered BLT's for us, honey, with a draft to wash it down," Maureen stated as she reached to grab Steve's hand.

"How did your interview go with ABC News last night? Have they offered you a job?" questioned Steve, hesitant to know the answer.



“They want me to start after the first of the year. Steve, I’m going big time, nation-wide on ABC,” Maureen stated with much excitement. “I’ll be doing the weekend news for now, but who knows? Maybe someday prime time with Peter Jennings.”

“I’m happy for you, sweetheart,” Steve gestured as he kissed her hand. “Of course, this’ll put you in a higher tax bracket. Maybe you’ll think of living together with someone special, maybe even marrying him. Connie Chung is married,” he continued.

“Is this a proposal, Mr. Ciminelli?” Maureen replied with a smile.

“It sure is, beautiful. Make me an honest man and a stay-at-home type of guy,” he replied. “Well, do I get an answer?”

“You’re serious?” queried Maureen. She was very surprised, and her face showed it. “Well?” Steve asked.

“It’s yes, you wonderful hunk, but I want some time to have a proper wedding, OK?” she replied.

Steve smiled and reached across the table to kiss her. “I can’t believe you said yes, Maureen. What brought this change in you?”

“Darling, I may be blind sometimes, but I’m not stupid. After seeing you with that woman last night, it made me think about what I could lose. You’re a great guy, Mr. Ciminelli, and I realized this morning how much I love you,” said Maureen with a loving smile.

Steve looked at his watch, stuffed the remains of his BLT in his mouth, and excused himself to get back to work. “I’ll see you tonight, sweetheart. Your place around eight.”

“Don’t have dinner. I’ll make something special for tonight. Just bring your toothbrush and razor,” she suggested as Steve reached over and kissed her moist lips hard. She returned the kiss the same way.

Steve rushed back to headquarters to pick up Linda and found her waiting by the door. The drive to Fairborn Lea Estate near Annapolis, Maryland, took a while because the outbound traffic from Washington was very heavy today. They arrived at the Smith-Hughes estate about thirty minutes late. Steve and Linda were rushed to the mansion library, where Jonathan Farnsworth Smith-Hughes was anxiously waiting for them. “Sorry we’re late,” Steve commented as he introduced himself and Linda to Mr. Smith-Hughes.

“Take a seat, Detectives. Now, how can I help you in solving this terrible crime? Laura didn’t deserve to die that way,” he replied with a sense of compassion. “I have been in Chicago on business until your people contacted me yesterday.”

“This may be hard for you at this time, but we need to know who your wife was having an affair with? Who were her gentlemen friends that were her lovers too?” asked Steve.

“First name on that list is William Anderson,” Jonathan Smith-Hughes quickly remarked.

“The Vice President?!” Linda stated in surprise.

“It started when he was a senator, and winning the second seat on the ticket with Patterson didn’t stop it. She’s been seeing him on a regular basis the last four years,” commented Smith-Hughes. “We separated several years ago because of that affair and her relations with other men in Washington. I hate this area and always will.”

“Besides the Vice President, who were her other men friends in this area?” asked Steve politely. “You can put Senator Klausburger near the top. He introduced Laura to the First Lady and that social group on Pennsylvania Avenue,” Mr. Smith-Hughes remarked.

“How come your wife was living in your residence in Washington instead of here?” questioned Linda.

“Laura requested the change four months ago so that she would be closer to her friends. I like the quiet of the country, so I moved back here,” answered Jonathan Smith-Hughes.

Steve checked with Linda and discovered that they had covered all the bases, so they decided to leave. As they approached the door to the library, Steve asked the following question: “Do you smoke ‘Dukes and Lords’ cigarettes, Mr. Smith-Hughes?”

“No, I don’t. I don’t smoke at all,” he replied.

### Chapter 3

The ride back to D.C. was a slow one. The traffic on the northern beltway was extremely heavy today, and the weather was becoming bad as an easterly brew was moving over the peninsula area. Linda was reviewing her notes on the interview with Smith-Hughes, and you could see the frustration in her face.

"It seems our Mr. Smith-Hughes has covered his ass well. Being in Chicago at the time his wife is being murdered is an excellent excuse. I'm going to check out this trip and find out why he was in Chicago at this time. Too convenient, if you ask me," Linda stated as she flipped her notebook closed. She then slammed it into her bag and looked at Steve as he drove.

"He may have hired someone to do the deed. He has the resources to pay for the hit," Steve chimed in. "He didn't look too distraught for a man who just lost his wife, and why didn't he fly home early yesterday? He could afford a private jet—instead, he arrives by a commercial flight."

"And then he implies that the Vice President is in his wife's cadre of lovers. Tell me, how do we handle this one? Do we just go to Anderson's home and question him like any other suspect, or do we speak through a third party?" wondered Linda, while she glanced at the rain as it started to pour onto the highway.

"We handle him carefully; and if he's our boy, he goes down, no matter who he is. Richard Nixon showed us how to handle such people," interjected Steve. "Even the 'heart-beat from the Presidency' can't be accused of wrongdoing. He's just another citizen, in my mind."

When they arrived back at the squad room at headquarters, Steve hadn't settled in his chair at his desk when the captain opened his office door and called for Ciminelli and Hannigan. As they walked into the captain's office, they noticed that the captain had a visitor. A glance at his three-piece navy blue suit indicated that he was either from the FBI or a "company man"—a member of the CIA.

"Take a seat," mumbled the captain quickly. "Mr. Anders, these are Detectives Ciminelli and Hannigan, our investigative team on the Smith-Hughes murder. People, Mr. Anders is from the Bureau and has some information to relate to us. We now have a name to those prints we found on the glass from the murder scene," related the captain, as he sat in his chair and chewed on his unlit cigar.

"We have a problem here, folks," remarked the man from the FBI. "Our man is someone we must handle in a delicate manner. All material related at this meeting is to be considered confidential and for your eyes and ears only." His voice was very stern as he stated this to Steve and Linda. "From this point on, your files on this case are to be locked up in the captain's personnel file."

"Captain, why the hush-hush on this? The news media people have already been swimming around with several possible leads, such as the relationship between Ms. Smith-Hughes and our flamboyant vice president," Steve commented with some sincere interest.

"The prints on the glass do belong to the vice president, and it places him at the murder scene on the night Ms. Smith-Hughes was killed," replied Mr. Anders. "When he arrived is a calculated guess of sometime between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m."

"Are we going to be able to question him on this case, boss?" questioned Linda as she stared at Mr. Anders.

"We are advising you to do it discreetly and secretly. No way is this to leak to the media. Understand, Mr. Ciminelli? Don't do anyone a favor on this matter," warned Anders as he looked right at Steve.

This angered Steve because he knew that his relationship with Maureen was being questioned. "I don't bring my job home or to bed, Mr. Anders. You can count on it," Steve now rose up from his chair to make this point, "and second, Maureen would always check a lead out so as not to jeopardize any of our investigations. Look elsewhere for leaks."

"Cool it, Steve; no one is casting shadows on your professional abilities," the captain quickly interjected, and with an angry look, gave Agent Anders the following message: "Set up the meeting with Anderson. It can't be avoided. His official statement must be made to these two detectives, and they're personally responsible to me. If you have any problems with that, have President Patterson call me directly. Understood?"

"I'll set up a time and place, but the vice president must be assured that it's done discreetly. His office will deny any meeting if it leaks out," said Agent Anders. He then politely shook Steve and Linda's hand, and as he was about to leave, he asked Linda a personal question: "Any relation to agent Vincent Hannigan at the bureau?"

"My brother, sir, and George Hannigan on the Secret Service staff is another one too," replied Linda with a smile. "My dad was Harvey Hannigan, a forty-two year veteran of the District Homicide Department."

"You mean Inspector Harvey Hannigan," remarked the captain with pride as he pointed to a picture of Linda's dad that was hanging from the wall in his office.

"I take everything back, Captain. Your team here is undoubtedly the best in the department. You have a great partner there, Detective Ciminelli," commented Agent Anders with a warm smile on his face. With that last gesture, he walked out the door.

"Steve, I have one last question for you," remarked the captain. "First, congratulations for the great job you did last night at the Kennedy Center. I'm recommending you for a Commissioner's Medal of Merit Award. You earned it, my boy." He smiled at Steve, patting him on his back as he walked back behind his desk. "Second, who was this mystery woman you helped to get home? We need her name for our records."

"Her name is Vanessa MacGyver," Steve related in a soft tone. "She lives at the marina, just below Ms. Smith-Hughes's condo at Watergate. I have a feeling that they might have been friends, even though Vanessa denies it."

"Check it out and see where it leads us," ordered the captain. "Remember, check with me early in the morning about our questioning of Anderson." With that remark ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda walked back to their desks.

"Look, partner," Linda suddenly stated as she pulled Steve by the arm, "don't hold info back on me. You said nothing about this MacGyver person. We work together, fellah, as a team." Linda was mad, and she was trying to relate a stern message to her partner.

"I'm sorry, Linda," said Steve calmly and sincerely. "I should have told you, but Vanessa didn't want to be involved with last night's publicity, and I tried to grant her wish. The captain's right. She probably knew Laura Smith-Hughes more than she leads on. We'll pay her a visit tomorrow."

Linda smiled at him and gently tapped his arm in a friendly gesture of understanding. Just then, the phone on Linda's desk started to ring. After answering the phone, Linda sat in her chair and started to jot some notes on her answer pad. After a few minutes of conversation, she hung up and slowly wheeled around in her chair.

"That was my brother Vinnie. The bureau identified a second set of prints from the murder scene. Guess whose they are, Stevie-boy?" she questioned as if playing cat-and-mouse with him.

"Don't tell me the president is involved with Ms. Smith-Hughes?" joked Steve. "Close, my boy," Linda remarked. "Try the first lady instead. Nancy Patterson herself was in that apartment the day of the murder. Any other time the cleaning lady would have wiped them clean."

"Our lady traveled in high circles, Linda. You were right in your assessment of her earlier. She could cause the Patterson administration a lot of grief, and you know, we'll be hearing from Agent Anders again—soon." Steve made these remarks as quietly as he could, as he and Linda kept their conversation private and discreet.

"Well, Steve, my friend, I'm calling it a day. I have a concert date tonight. We have tickets to the Elton John gig at the Civic Center," Linda commented to Steve.

"How dare you go out with someone else," joked Steve with a warm smile. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do on a date."

"You're terrible," Linda replied with a shy smile on her face, "and if I do, eat your heart out." And with that remark ringing in Steve's ears, Linda grabbed her jacket and headed for her car in the parking lot. "Don't be late for dinner tonight, Stevie-boy," she remarked as she passed his desk. He smiled in agreement.

Steve sat back in his chair and started to slowly scan through the Smith-Hughes file. Several items just didn't seem right. If the first lady and the vice president were the last to see Laura Smith-Hughes alive, did they know of each other's visit? These loose ends had to be connected, yet Steve realized that these people were easy to attack publicly but extremely difficult to talk to in person. What was Laura's connection to these people that they would pay her a visit at such late hours?

Steve scratched his head and wondered if he had missed something. Had he and other members of the department missed something when they checked out her residence? Steve jotted down a personal reminder to return to the 3C condo at Watergate soon to check something out. What connection was there between Vanessa and Laura? Were they friends? They both screwed men for power and wealth. Maybe they crossed paths, Steve wondered, realizing that another visit to Vanessa was necessary. After checking out some leads with the airlines at National Airport and making a call to the Smith-Hughes corporate headquarters, Steve completed his work on the file and proceeded to lock it up in the captain's office. His work day was finished, and now his mind started to think of Maureen and what she had in store for him tonight. He realized that his surprise proposal and her jealousy over Vanessa had her in a mood. It made Steve smile in expectation of the night ahead.

• • •

When Steve arrived at Maureen's apartment, she was busy working in the kitchen making a delicious meal of breaded veal chops and spaghetti with sauce. She knew that Steve still loved his Italian heritage, and this was his favorite dish. It smelled good as Steve walked into the kitchen, and he embraced Maureen as she was preparing the spaghetti over the hot stove.

He hugged her tight and gradually raised his hands to embrace her firm breasts as he kissed her on the back of her neck. Maureen gently protested, but as she turned around to face him, he placed her face in his hands and started to kiss her lips passionately. Her hands flashed inside his shirt as she lovingly grabbed him and started to kiss his face amorously.

"I'm not going to spoil this dinner, darling. I want you just as bad, but I worked too hard on this meal; so go take a shower, my love," Maureen stated as she bit Steve on the ear. Steve nodded in agreement as he held her closer and caressed her buttocks into his body. With a hard kiss on her lips, he slowly separated from her and walked toward the bathroom.

"Sweetheart, pour the chilled wine before you bathe. We could use some about this time." Steve uncorked a cold bottle of ruby chardonnay and poured it into two wine goblets. With some soothing music playing on the stereo, Steve started to peel off his clothes. As he started to feel the waters of the shower, Maureen entered the bathroom with the two wine goblets. They sipped the wine, and Steve kissed her wine-wetted lips.

As Steve placed his wineglass on the counter, he entered the shower and discovered that Maureen had entered it too. "I put the dinner on low, darling, because my love for you wants to burst out," she exclaimed as she hugged him, allowing their naked bodies to act as one. The warm water made the movements of their bodies more fluent and sensual. Steve held Maureen tight as he penetrated deep, and their sex was torrid. His mouth was constantly moving from her luscious lips to her hard nipples on her firm breasts. The water of the shower cascaded down their bodies and acted as a lubricant, making their movements easier and enjoyable to perform.

Steve continued to put out as he was still in a strong, sexy state. He grabbed Maureen by her buttocks and again penetrated as he sat on the shower stall seat. Maureen stretched her arms around Steve's neck and held him very tightly, digging her nails into his back as she swayed with her sexual emotions. After experiencing a great sexual session, the two just held each other tightly and kissed for a lengthy time, with the water adding a touch of pleasure to both of them.

After several minutes, they both emerged from the shower and proceeded to dry off. Maureen grabbed her towel, placed it over Steve's shoulder and back, and hugged him dry. As she dried his back, she started to plant kisses on his neck and back. Steve turned around and started to wipe her dry with his towel, and he too started to kiss her, from her forehead to her firm breasts. Suddenly, Maureen started to

tickle Steve, and the bathroom was filled with shrills and laughter. Maureen wrapped her arms around Steve's neck and planted her soft lips on his, and Steve's hands pressed her body tightly against his.

"I love you, Steve," she uttered as Steve planted kisses on her moist mouth.

"I adore you too, sweetheart." Maureen then took her towel and finished drying Steve's back and chest. After rubbing the towel over his back, she turned to Steve and apologized for scratching his back during their sexual session in the shower. Steve grabbed her and kissed her as a sign of forgiveness. Maureen reached for her bathrobe, kissed Steve gently, and headed for the kitchen to get their dinner ready.

After she left the bathroom, Steve wiped the mirror clear and glanced at his back. There, to his surprise, were three short parallel scratches and several fingernail marks. He wondered, did Vanessa do this the other night? He shrugged it off. After sipping the rest of his wine and wrapping himself in his robe, he headed toward the kitchen.

"Pour the wine, darling, and sit down. Get some salad and start eating," Maureen exclaimed as she placed the main entrees on the table from the stove. The two started to enjoy the meal, sitting across from each other dressed in their bathrobes.

"You were just terrific tonight, honey. Absolutely the best we have ever experienced," remarked Steve as he poured more wine into his glass.

"It was because of your proposal this afternoon and my jealous feeling I had this morning. I wanted to show you how much I loved you. I discovered as I entered that shower that I wanted you very badly and still do," she remarked as she rubbed his leg with her bare foot.

Steve reached over, grabbed her head in his hands, and kissed her gently on her luscious lips. "I love you, Maureen. I always have and will in the future. You stole my heart, honey, back in Buffalo long ago."

"Leave the dishes on the table, darling. I want you now," Maureen reached for his hand and guided him into the bedroom. When they reached the bed, she unwrapped his robe and her own and then slowly caressed his face and chest with her soft hands.

She started to kiss Steve on the face and then slowly pushed him on the bed and crawled on top of him, rubbing her naked, sexy body against his. She kissed his lips, then his neck and chest. She then worked her mouth down onto his stomach, and her tongue played with his belly button. Steve reached for her hair, and as he did so, Maureen started to have oral sex with him. This surprised Steve, for she never had done this before, and the great sexual sensation Steve experienced caused him to stretch out and grab the bed supports. Maureen buried herself in this sexual fantasy, and she realized that she had given Steve a sexual experience that he vastly enjoyed. After she brought Steve to a climax, she reached up and he kissed her until they slipped into sleep from sheer exhaustion.

Several hours later, Steve woke up, politely covered Maureen with a bed sheet, and proceeded to wash in preparation for a day at the office. He quietly dressed, and as he was ready to leave, he amorously kissed her. As she opened her eyes, he informed her of his day's plans. She grabbed him by the neck and kissed him hard with great feeling.

"I love you, Steve. Call me at the station this afternoon around three."

"I adore you, beautiful. Go back to sleep and I'll do just that this afternoon." With that remark, he kissed her and pulled away hesitantly.

## **Chapter 4**

As Steve was driving to headquarters, he marveled how terrific Maureen had been the night before. Had the threat of jealousy planted by Vanessa's sexy attitude made her the woman Steve always wanted her to be? As he glanced in his rear-view mirror, he looked into his eyes and realized that she was the only one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. His proposal yesterday afternoon might have been a Freudian slip, but in his heart he now realized he only loved Maureen. She was his girl, and now she illustrated the same loving feeling that he exhibited in his heart for her. From the first day he met her at the University of Buffalo, he desired to have her forever as his wife. It always had been Maureen's career that held their romance in limbo. Maybe now, with new conditions and circumstances, the Ciminellis may have a start. Steve smiled at that thought—a nice home in the 'burbs to raise a family.

Linda was busy at her desk when he entered the squad room. She was busy on the phone. As she looked up and spotted Steve, she waved for his attention.

“Our appointment with Anderson is set for today at five this afternoon. A White House staffer will clue us in on the meeting arrangements sometime today,” she whispered to Steve as she hung up the phone. Steve nodded his consent and proceeded to pour himself a fresh cup of coffee. When he settled into his chair at his desk, he noticed a fax on his desk from the corporate headquarters run by Smith-Hughes. He motioned Linda over to his side.

“This is the answer to several inquiries I made yesterday afternoon. Look, the corporate jet flew Jonathan Smith-Hughes to Chicago the day before the murder, but its log states that it returned to Washington National that night. The captain reported no passengers on the return flight. The jet stayed here for a maintenance check and didn’t make plans to return to Chicago to retrieve Smith-Hughes. Funny operation,” Steve declared with a frown on his brow.

“Did you know that Jonathan Smith-Hughes was an experienced licensed pilot, Steve? Our boy sometimes flew that Lear jet himself. The people at Washington National stated that he piloted the jet to Chicago to complete his monthly FAA flying requirement,” remarked Linda.

“He could have rented a plane in Chicago, returned home to knock off his wife, and came back. Let’s see if that happened, Linda, by checking the rental companies in Chicago and around the Washington-Maryland area.”

“You could have something there, Steve,” she agreed. As Steve looked up from his desk, he noticed that the captain was waving for him and Linda to come to his office. When they entered the office, the captain placed their case folders in front of them. He then closed the door and shut the window shades too.

“People, we have a new problem developing in this case. As you know, I.D. dug up somebody that matched those extra prints. They just happened to belong to the first lady, Ms. Nancy Patterson. We believe that they are fresh prints, which places her on the scene the night of the murder, but we don’t know why,” the captain explained in a calm manner, as he leaned back in his chair and chewed on his unlit cigar.

“Our victim sure knew some high-profile people in this town. It’s beginning to look like L.A. or Hollywood,” Linda stated in a disgusted manner. Steve sat in his chair and tried to be comfortable as he glanced through the Smith-Hughes file.

“Boss, we have three bona fide suspects in this case right now. The vice president of the United States, the wife of the president of the United States, and the victim’s husband. I’m willing to bet that several more will surface as we dig deeper into this mess. This lady played around with some high and mighty people in our government, and I don’t intend to bury her death under the carpet for anyone,” Steve commented to the captain, who was now chewing harder on his unlit cigar.

“Will Anders be back to arrange an appointment for Nancy Patterson?” questioned Linda.

“Your meeting this afternoon with the vice president will be held at the Quantico FBI Training Center. He’s there to review a new batch of bureau trainees, and after that, you will have a chance to question him for less than thirty minutes. Make your questions count and don’t waste his time. And please, no mention of the first lady to him on this matter,” said the captain as he placed his cigar in an ashtray.

Steve again was concentrating on the murder file. He picked up the sheets containing the listing of people from Laura Smith-Hughes’s phone directory. He slowly started to scrutinize the names on the list, and as he traveled down the sheet, his mind reached a conclusion. “Linda, we need addresses for some of these names, especially the ones who no longer live in this area.”

“We had trouble with a few dozen names on that list, Steve. They lived in D.C. but are now elsewhere. Our lady changed her affiliation of party with each new administration. She was determined to be the social giant of the Washington scene, or close to it,” Linda remarked as she closed her folder and placed it on the desk.

“Someone silenced our lady because she either knew too much or was a danger to someone high on the ladder of this administration. This isn’t a common mugging or sexual attack. We’ll just have to work harder, and I want this case closed as soon as possible,” ordered the captain. “Because of the high profile

on this case, all interviews with the media will be channeled through this office. You two will not, I say again, will not utter a word to them. Send them to me.”

With this warning and explanation ringing in their ears, Steve and Linda returned to their desks and tried to plan their future moves. Steve picked up his phone and dialed Vanessa’s number. It rang for several minutes, but no one answered the call. She must be sleeping the night off in someone’s apartment, Steve rationalized.

“Let’s head over to National Airport and pry some answers out of the Smith-Hughes’ pilot. I want to know why he didn’t fly back to Chicago to bring his boss home,” Steve mentioned as he locked up his notes on the case in his desk.

The ride to National was uneventful, and it took a while to find the hangar where the Smith-Hughes jet was parked. As they arrived, they noticed that a maintenance crew was still working on the plane. A few chosen questions revealed that the plane was getting readied for a flight to the West Coast later in the day. One of the maintenance crew pointed to an office in the rear of the hangar where the pilot and jet crew were at that time.

Upon entering the office, Steve and Linda discovered several members of the plane crew relaxing, watching TV, and drinking what looked like to be beers. The captain was located at a desk checking out weather charts for this evening’s flight to San Francisco.

“Captain, I’m Detective Ciminelli, and this is Detective Hannigan of the Washington Police Department. We would like to ask you a few questions concerning the Smith-Hughes murder that occurred a few days ago,” commented Steve as he and Linda flashed their badges and IDs to the captain.

“Captain Pollard, at your service. How can I help you, Detectives?”

“Last Monday, you flew Jonathan Smith-Hughes to Chicago. May we have a look at the flight log of that trip, please?” Linda asked politely. After glancing at the flight log, they discovered that the Smith-Hughes jet departed National Airport at 2:35 p.m. Monday afternoon and landed at Midway Airport around 4:20 p.m. It also indicated that four passengers were on board.

“Did Jonathan Smith-Hughes pilot the jet on this flight?” asked Steve. “And who were the other three passengers on the trip?”

The captain lit a cigarette and took a deep drag before answering the questions. “Mr. Smith-Hughes clocked his required air time by flying the jet himself. He’s well qualified as a pilot. The three passengers, two men and one woman, were members of his corporate office. I don’t ask questions about who they are before I take off, especially of the boss of this operation. He pays well, sir,” said the captain as he flicked his ashes into an empty coffee cup.

“Any names to go with these passengers, captain?” questioned Linda, as she glanced to find them on the flight log.

“Mike, over there, has them listed on his flight report,” the captain commented. Mike, one of the flight attendants, handed Linda the flight report, and she jotted the names down in her notebook.

“Captain, why didn’t you stay in Chicago and be at Mr. Smith-Hughes’ call if he needed you?” Steve asked.

“The company was scheduled to have its federal regulated maintenance here in this hangar on Tuesday. Mr. Smith-Hughes had scheduled a return flight on Thursday. I notified him Tuesday that the jet couldn’t be used until the maintenance repairs were finished, probably sometime Wednesday afternoon. He informed me that he was taking a commercial flight back,” answered the captain.

“You and the crew were the only people on the plane for the flight back to Washington Monday, right?” inquired Detective Hannigan.

“As far as I know,” replied the captain. “Mike, did we carry anyone back with us from Chicago?” as he turned toward Mike for an answer.

“Yeah,” answered Mike. “One of Mr. Smith-Hughes’ Chicago office staff, a Mr. Peterson, flew back with us.”

“Can you describe him to us, Mike?”

“About five-foot-ten, and he wore a jogging suit with a baseball cap and dark sunglasses. He told me that he was scared of flying, so I let him sit in the rear, and no one bothered him. When we landed at National, he quickly disappeared,” answered Mike.

“You couldn’t recognize him or identify him? Did he ever fly with you before?” questioned Linda.

“With that outfit on, he was a stranger to us, Detective. He had official clearance from the Chicago office to be aboard for the flight. They called and told us that we should expect a Mr. Peterson to be a passenger for our trip back to D.C.,” remarked Mike.

Steve looked at Linda. Both wondered who this Peterson guy was and where he went after the plane landed. “Thanks, gentlemen. You have been very helpful. If we need more, we’ll contact you,” Steve remarked as he and Linda left the hangar office. As Steve closed the car door, he turned to Linda and made this observation: “This Mr. Peterson becomes suspect number four.”

“This case is getting muddied, Steve. More suspects than leads.”

“We need to check out that condo again,” replied Steve, as he proceeded to head for the Watergate Complex. “There must be something that we missed when we were there earlier. Our boy can’t be this clean and perfect. He left something behind; I’ll bet on it.” The drive back in to the capital was silent as both detectives tried hard to rehash all the evidence they knew in their minds.

“I’m hungry, Stevie-boy. How about some buffalo wings and a salad at Pizza Hut?” stated Linda, with a hungry tone in her voice.

“Sounds OK to me, partner.”

• • •

After getting the complex superintendent to open up the Smith-Hughes condo, Steve and Linda stared at the walls and pieces of furniture in the residence. “I’ll take the bedroom and bath, and you take the living room and kitchen,” stated Steve. As he entered the bedroom, the bed was now bare of its bloody sheets, but a large stain still appeared on the mattress. Steve opened the closet doors and walked in to check it out. All of Laura’s dresses and clothes were hung in an orderly fashion, and nothing looked out of place. Steve checked out the dressing table in the bathroom, which was connected to the closet by a sliding door.

Everything on the table seemed to show the style and type of woman Laura Smith-Hughes was. Everything was in large bottles and very expensive; even the combs and brushes were sturdy and large. Steve picked up a comb that women use as a hair pick to style their hair. He noticed that the long, sharp end of the comb had deep scratches on it. He looked at it, and suddenly a thought entered his mind. Could this be the murder weapon? It was long enough and sharp enough to do the damage to the murdered victim’s body.

He showed it to Linda, and she gently wrapped it in tissue to take back to forensic for analysis. “It may be something, Steve. It may be the murder weapon. But if it is, I’ll bet it’s clean. Again, a lead that points to no one,” Linda said in a frustrated tone.

They both walked back into the great room of the condo. Steve sat down in one of the comfortable chairs and started to stare around the room. Linda picked up the phone and made a call. As she made her call, she toyed with the items on the desk. After having a short conversation with someone she personally knew on the other end, she turned to Steve and made the following observation: “Our lady was busy in the activity of high society in this town, but there’s not a single letter—either on the desk or inside it. I’ll bet she received plenty of mail each day.”

“You’re right, Linda; that’s strange. We found no mail on her desk or in it,” recalled Steve. “Let’s check this out with the post office. Her mailman could tell us about the volume of mail our lady received.” Steve glanced at his watch and suddenly rose as if he was late for an important meeting. “We’d better leave now, Linda, or we’ll never make it to Quantico by five.”

“Relax, Steve. I just got off the phone with my brother George at the White House. I got him to arrange two seats on the presidential helicopter that’s carrying Anderson to the meeting at Quantico. We leave at 4:15 from the South Lawn.”



“Let’s head back to headquarters and recheck that forensic report. I think we missed something in it that could help us break this case.”

“We need motive, and the only one we have now is the ‘lover-triangle’ one. That leaves us with only Jonathan Smith-Hughes as a suspect,” Linda answered.

The two detectives were ready to leave when Steve walked out on the balcony and looked down into the marina. He spotted Vanessa’s yacht and noticed that no activity was on board. Steve figured that they could check to see if she was in at this time. A few minutes later, the two detectives were quietly approaching the MacGyver boat. They noticed that it was closed up and looked locked up, too. It was. No one answered Steve’s knock on the cabin door.

“We’ll be back tomorrow,” Steve mentioned as he walked off the yacht and the two proceeded back to their car.

• • •

When they returned to their desks at headquarters, Steve and Linda retrieved the case file and closed themselves in one of the interrogation rooms. They started to examine the evidence and reports comprising the file.

“The body was discovered at around eight in the morning by the cleaning lady. This places her demise sometime around one and two in the morning. No forced entry was discovered, so our killer was invited in by our victim,” started Steve as he flipped through the file.

“We’ll have more definitive knowledge when we find out the time both Anderson and Nancy Patterson paid Ms. Smith-Hughes a visit,” remarked Linda as she slowly examined the file reports.

“If forensic could establish that comb as the murder weapon, we’ll have a part of the puzzle, but it may be a useless lead. What kind of evidence could we retrieve off of it? Maybe nothing,” Steve fumed in a frustrated tone. Steve rose from his chair and left the room to purchase two cool cans of Diet Pepsi from a dispensing machine in the hallway. As he re-entered the room, he flipped one can to Linda, who caught it in one hand like a first baseman.

“Thank you, Steven. You read my mind.” After drinking their refreshing drinks, they placed the case files in the captain’s cabinet and locked it up.

At that time, the captain informed them that Agent Anders wanted them to be on the press helicopter traveling to Quantico to cover the proceedings of the vice president this afternoon. They both acknowledged the message and headed for the White House South Lawn.

When they arrived at the White House, George Hannigan escorted Steve and Linda to the presidential helicopter and found them two seats in the rear of the chopper. George introduced himself to Steve, and Linda greeted him with a sisterly kiss on the cheek. He sat with them on the trip to Quantico Marine Corps Base in northeast Virginia. It was a short twenty-minute ride, but the procedure of landing lasted longer. Upon landing, the vice president and White House staff were whisked into limos and sped away to the area of the base where the FBI training center was located. Everyone else, including the press, climbed aboard two buses and followed the limos.

The ceremony lasted only thirty minutes, and it was over before you knew it. George Hannigan escorted Steve and Linda into a private conference room somewhere in the training center. They waited there for twenty or more minutes, and finally Vice President William Anderson entered the room with Agent Anders by his side. The vice president politely introduced himself to the detectives and calmly seated himself at the head of the table. Steve and Linda sat on one side, with Agent Anders and a White House staffer on the other. They were the only ones in the room.

The vice president placed a cigarette in his mouth and lighted up. Steve noticed that the brand was “Dukes and Lords,” the same brand discovered on the murder scene. The silence lasted for several minutes, and the two sides stared at each other.

“Mr. Vice President,” Steve opened, “what was your relationship with the late Laura Smith-Hughes, and when was the last time you saw her alive?”

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

