

WHERE IS CAROL?



BY

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INTRODUCTION

Steve Williamson kills his GOLD-DIGGING wife, Carol.

He buries her on a friend's farm.

Steve uses his wife's fake twelve-day road trip with Alice Samberg as his alibi his wife left town alive.

Alice goes along with the fake road trip story. She mails postcards from Carol to her mother and to her husband from different cities she visits alone.

Alice reports to the police in Saint Louis that Carol went missing. Alice claims Carol flew to Las Vegas with a rich man she met in a bar.

Alice is Steve Williamson's lover and will do anything to make him happy.

Carol's mother suspects her son-in-law harmed her daughter. She complains her fears to the police in Saint Louis and Carol's hometown of Atlanta.

Steve plans to set his lover up to take the fall for his wife's murder.

The missing person case becomes a murder investigation when Carol's body is located.

Will Steve Williamson get away with murdering his wife?

Will Alice Samberg be arrested and charged for Carol's murder when she fails her polygraph?

Will the newcomer Detective solve his first murder case?

Will the real killer be caught?"

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CHAPTER ONE

STEVE WILLIAMSON IS 30 YEARS OLD. HE IS MARRIED TO CAROL, AGE 28. STEVE IS 6' TALL, 200 LBS., WITH DARK WAVY HAIR, AND BLUE EYES. HE LIVES IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

CAROL IS 5'2" TALL, WEIGHS 110 LBS., AND HAS LONG BLONDE HAIR.

STEVE MARRIED CAROL 9 MONTHS AGO IN A QUITE CEREMONY IN HIS BACKYARD. IN ATTENDANCE WERE HIS BEST MAN, RALPH TORRES, AND STEVE'S 3 DOGS.

IN ATTENDANCE FOR HIS WIFE WAS ONLY HER BEST FRIEND, ALICE SAMBERG. ALICE HAS LONG BLONDE HAIR AND IS SOMETIMES MISTAKEN FOR CAROL. THEY BOTH LOOK LIKE SISTERS.

CAROL'S PARENTS, ASHLEY, AND TONY, BECKMAN MOVED TO PARIS, FRANCE 1 YEAR AGO, FOR TONY'S JOB AS A SALESMAN FOR A LARGE WINE DISTRIBUTION COMPANY. THEY COULD NOT MAKE THEIR DAUGHTER'S, SUDDEN WEDDING, BUT DID MAIL A WEDDING GIFT.

TO MAKE HIS BRIDE HAPPY, STEVE AND CAROL SPENT THEIR HONEYMOON IN PARIS. CAROL AND HER MOTHER WENT ON LONG WALKS DAILY.

STEVE AND CAROL LIVE IN A SINGLE-STORY BRICK HOUSE OVERLOOKING A HUGE POND, WITH A 3 CAR GARAGE IN A SUB-DIVISION CALLED DEER RUN. THEIR ADDRESS IS 2437 WILEY ROAD. THEY HAVE NO CHILDREN.

STEVE HAD HIS 30TH BIRTHDAY PARTY 2 MONTHS AGO. IT WAS HELD IN A CONFERENCE ROOM AT THE 200 ROOM HOTEL HE OWNS.

FORTY FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS SHOWED UP AT THE WILLIAMSON INN LOCATED OFF OF HIGHWAY 10 IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

CAROL IS A PART-TIME STUDENT AT AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE. SHE IS 2 SEMESTERS FROM OBTAINING HER DEGREE IN LIBERAL ARTS. CAROL'S GOAL IS TO SOMEDAY OPEN HER OWN TRAVEL AGENCY.

STEVE WANTS OUT OF HIS SHAM OF A MARRIAGE TO CAROL. THEIR LOVE LIFE IS NON-EXISTENT. SHE IS WHAT PEOPLE CALL 'A GOLD DIGGER.'

CAROL TOLD HER BEST FRIEND ALICE, "I MARRIED STEVE ONLY FOR HIS MONEY."

JUST OVER 1 YEAR AGO, STEVE MET HIS FUTURE WIFE AT A FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY PARTY. THEY DATED ON AND OFF FOR 3 MONTHS.

CAROL WAS SMART. SHE HID HER GOLD-DIGGING WAYS TILL AFTER SHE MARRIED HER MAN.

TWO MONTHS INTO THEIR MARRIAGE STEVE ADDED HIS WIFE TO HIS BUSINESS AND PERSONAL BANKING ACCOUNTS. HE DID NOT KNOW AT THE TIME IT WAS A MISTAKE TO DO SO.

CAROL BOUGHT HER DREAM CAR, A BLUE VOLVO SEDAN WITH A CHECK WRITTEN ON THE HOTEL'S BUSINESS ACCOUNT 4 MONTHS INTO HER MARRIAGE.

STEVE ASKED HIS WIFE TO NOT SPEND ANY MORE OF HIS MONEY WITHOUT CHECKING WITH HIM FIRST.

SOMETIMES SHE DID CHECK WITH HER MAN FIRST, AND SOMETIMES SHE DID NOT.

A WEEK AGO, ALICE WARNED STEVE, “CAROL AND I DROVE AROUND TOWN IN HER VOLVO, AND SHE BRAGGED HOW SHE FOOLED YOU INTO MARRYING HER. SHE LOVES SPENDING YOUR MONEY.”

THE NEXT DAY AFTER HEARING THIS NEWS FROM HIS LOVER, STEVE REMOVED HIS GOLD-DIGGING WIFE OFF OF HIS PERSONAL AND BUSINESS CHECKING ACCOUNTS.

STEVE WENT TO SEE A DIVORCE LAWYER WHO SAID, “DIVORCING CAROL WILL NOT BE CHEAP. SHE IS ENTITLED TO HALF YOUR WEALTH UNDER GEORGIA LAW. WE ARE TALKING MILLIONS, STEVE, MILLIONS.”

STEVE LEFT THE LAW FIRM THAT MORNING VERY UPSET OF HIMSELF FOR MARRYING SO QUICKLY. HE HAS A PLAN TO SAVE HIS HARD-EARNED MONEY. HE WILL MURDER HIS GOLD-DIGGING WIFE.

STEVE’S NEW LOVER IS ALICE SAMBERG, AGE 29, A BOOKKEEPER AT DRE CPA FIRM. ALICE IS HIS WIFE’S BEST FRIEND, AND STEVE’S ACCOMPLICE. HER CELL PHONE NUMBER IS (470) 376-2285. SHE LIVES WITH HER FATHER AT 3662 MILLS ROAD.

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 5TH, 2022.

STEVE STARTS HIS MURDER PLAN IN MOTION. HE STOPS AT GAIL’S GIFT SHOP. HE BUYS 3 TRAVEL POSTCARDS WITH STAMPS FOR THE USA, AND 3 POSTCARDS WITH STAMPS FOR EUROPE. THESE POSTCARDS WILL LATER BE STEVE’S ALIBI.

STEVE ALSO BUYS A WALL MAP OF THE UNITED STATES. HE TAKES HIS PURCHASE HOME TO HIS DINING ROOM TABLE.

STEVE MAKES A POT OF COFFEE AND WAITS FOR CAROL TO ARRIVE HOME.

AN HOUR LATER, CAROL UNLOCKS THE FRONT DOOR AND SAYS, “I’M HOME.”

“I’M IN THE DINING ROOM.”

*CAROL’S 29TH SURPRISED BIRTHDAY PARTY IS TOMORROW NIGHT.
STEVE’S BIG GIFT TO HIS WIFE WILL BE A ROAD TRIP FOR TWO.
ANOTHER GIFT WILL BE A CANON 35 MILLIMETER CAMERA.*

CAROL LOVES TO TAKE PICTURES.

*THE 12-DAY SURPRISED BIRTHDAY ROAD TRIP WILL BE MADE IN ALICE’S
WHITE 4-DOOR HONDA ACCORD BY ALICE ALONE.*

*CAROL WALKS INTO THE DINING ROOM AND SEES A LARGE MAP SPREAD
OUT ON THE DINING ROOM TABLE.*

“WHAT IS THIS?”

*“THIS IS YOUR EARLY BIRTHDAY PRESENT. I AM PAYING FOR YOU AND
ALICE TO GO ON A 12-DAY ROAD TRIP RIGHT AFTER ALICE GETS OFF
WORK,” LIES STEVE.*

CAROL ACTS SURPRISED, “WHAT! A 12-DAY ROAD TRIP?”

“YES. I WANT YOU AND ALICE TO HAVE FUN.”

“WHY SO FAST?”

*STEVE LOOKS INTO CAROL’S EYES AND LIES AGAIN, “BECAUSE THE
TIMING IS PERFECT. I WILL BE VERY BUSY AT MY HOTEL WITH A
WEDDING, AND 2 DIFFERENT CONVENTIONS DURING THAT TIME. I
WON’T BE ABLE TO BE HOME MUCH. I THOUGHT YOU AND ALICE COULD
GET AWAY AND HAVE FUN.”*

“I WILL CALL HER NOW AND ASK.”

“NO NEED TO CALL, IT WAS ALICE’S IDEA,” LIES STEVE AGAIN AS HE WATCHES HIS WIFE START TO DIAL, BUT THEN STOP DIALING HER BEST FRIEND’S NUMBER ON HER CELL PHONE.

“REALLY?”

“YES. ALICE WANTS TO MAKE 2 STOPS. SHE WANTS TO VISIT DALLAS, AND SAINT LOUIS.”

AFTER STUDYING THE LARGE MAP, CAROL SAYS, “I WOULD LOVE TO RIDE IN A HORSE AND BUGGY IN NATCHEZ. MISSISSIPPI.”

“THAT WOULD BE COOL. TAKE PHOTOS OF YOUR ROAD TRIP FOR YOUR TRAVEL WALL,” SAYS STEVE.

“WHAT TRAVEL WALL?”

STEVE SAYS, “I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT THE GOOD NEWS IN A MINUTE.”

CAROL ASKS, “DID YOU KNOW NATCHEZ IS A VERY HISTORICAL TOWN RIGHT ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER?”

STEVE SAYS, “I HEARD OF THE TOWN. THEY HAVE A NATIONAL BALLOON RACE EACH YEAR. IT IS HELD IN OCTOBER I BELIEVE.”

“YOU ARE CORRECT. THE FESTIVAL IS HELD IN MID-OCTOBER. I JUST REMEMBERED; I DO NOT OWN A CAMERA.”

STEVE PULLS OUT A DINING ROOM CHAIR TO EXPOSE A BIRTHDAY WRAPPED GIFT. “YOU DO NOW,” HE SAYS.

CAROL OPENS HER GIFT AND PULLS OUT A CANON CAMERA. “I SEE MY GIFT ALREADY COMES WITH 3 ROLLS OF FILM.”

“I WANT YOU TO WRITE ON THESE BLANK POSTCARDS A LITTLE NOTE TO ME SAYING WHAT CITY YOU ARE IN AND WHAT YOU DID IN THOSE CITIES.”

“WHY WRITE ALL THE POSTCARDS NOW? THAT DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE. I WILL MAIL A POSTCARD FROM EACH STOP WE MAKE,” SAYS CAROL WHILE PLAYING WITH HER CANON CAMERA.

“IF YOU MUST KNOW, IT WAS TO BE A SURPRISE ON YOUR RETURN HOME. ONCE I HAVE THE POSTCARDS FROM YOU NOW, I WILL FRAME THE CARDS WITH THE MAP OF THE WORLD IN THE BACKGROUND, FOR THE TRAVEL WALL OF YOUR FUTURE TRAVEL AGENCY I AM BUYING YOU,” LIES STEVE.

“WOW, MY OWN TRAVEL AGENCY. WAIT TILL I TELL MY MOM.”

“THAT IS THE IDEA. I WANT YOU HAPPY,” LIES STEVE.

“I RATHER TAKE THE 12-DAYS AND FLY TO PARIS TO SEE MY PARENTS.”

“WE WILL FLY TO EUROPE IN 5 MONTHS. I PLAN TO HIRE A HOTEL MANAGER TO ALLOW ME TO SLOW DOWN.”

“I MISS MY MOM. I MISS THE TALKS WE USED TO HAVE ON OUR DAILY MORNING WALKS. I WOULD CALL MY MOM RIGHT NOW, AND TELL HER MY TRIP PLANS, BUT IT IS 3 A.M. IN PARIS.”

“I KNOW YOU MISS YOUR PARENTS. WE WILL SOON RENT AN APARTMENT IN PARIS FOR 1 YEAR,” LIES STEVE.

“THIS POSTCARD MAP BOARD SOUNDS WEIRD, BUT I WILL DO IT.”

“I NEED A POSTCARD FROM 3 CITIES YOU PLAN TO VISIT ALL MADE OUT TO ME.”

“THE FIRST POSTCARD WILL BE FROM NATCHEZ, OUR 1ST STOP.”

CAROL WRITES HER 1ST POSTCARD, AND HANDS IT TO HER HUSBAND.

STEVE READS, "ALICE AND I ARE HAVING A BLAST HERE IN NATCHEZ. I JUST RODE IN A HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE. WE PLAN TO EXPLORE AN ANTEBELLUM HOME NEXT. SEE YOU IN 12-DAYS. LOVE, CAROL."

"HOW DID I DO ON MY 1ST POSTCARD?"

"JUST WHAT I WANTED, SOMETHING SHORT AND SWEET WITH WHAT CITY YOU ARE IN. NOW FILL IN THE MAILING ADDRESS FOR ME."

"I AM THIRSTY. I SMELL THE COFFEE. CAN YOU POUR ME A CUP?"

STEVE WALKS INTO THE KITCHEN. HE SHOUTS, "NOW WRITE ME A POSTCARD FROM DALLAS, PLEASE."

CAROL WRITES THE POSTCARD.

STEVE RETURNS TO THE DINING ROOM WITH HIS WIFE'S COFFEE.

"THANK YOU FOR MY COFFEE."

CAROL HANDS THE POSTCARD TO HER HUSBAND. HE READS WHAT SHE HAS WRITTEN.

"FILL IN OUR ADDRESS FOR ME. JUST 1 MORE POSTCARD TO WRITE," SAYS STEVE."

CAROL WRITES ON THE SAINT LOUIS POSTCARD, "I AM HAVING A GREAT TIME IN SAINT LOUIS WITH MY BEST FRIEND, ALICE. TOMORROW WE WILL EXPLORE THE ARCH."

STEVE PICKS UP THE 3 POSTCARDS WRITTEN FOR HIM, AND SAYS, "NOW WRITE 3 POSTCARDS FROM NATCHEZ, DALLAS, AND SAINT LOUIS TO

YOUR PARENTS. ALL THE POSTCARDS WILL GO ON YOUR TRAVEL WALL, LIES STEVE.”

WITH STEVE LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER, CAROL WRITES TO HER PARENTS ON THE 3 POSTCARDS.

FOR THE NATCHEZ POSTCARD, CAROL WRITES, ‘HELLO, MOM AND DAD. I AM ON A 12-DAY ROAD TRIP WITH MY BEST FRIEND, ALICE. I PLAN TO TAKE LOTS OF PHOTOGRAPHS WITH MY NEW 35 MILLIMETER CANON CAMERA STEVE BOUGHT ME FOR MY BIRTHDAY. LOVE, CAROL’

FOR THE DALLAS POSTCARD, CAROL WRITES, ‘I FED THE DUCKS AT A CITY PARK. WE ARE MAKING PLANS TO COME VISIT YOU AND DAD IN FRANCE. WE WILL BE TAKING LONG WALKS IN THE STREETS OF PARIS, SOON. LOVE, CAROL.’

CAROL WRITES ON THE LAST POSTCARD, ‘I CANNOT BELIEVE MY 12- DAY VACATION IS ALMOST OVER. I WILL BRING DAD A T-SHIRT FROM THE CITIES I VISIT FOR HIS T-SHIRT COLLECTION. LOVE YOU. LOVE, CAROL’

STEVE SAYS, “WRITE YOUR MOM’S ADDRESS ON THE POSTCARDS. IT LOOKS LEGIT THAT WAY.”

STEVE COLLECTS THE COMPLETED POSTCARDS.

HE LOOKS AT HIS WIFE AND LIES, “WHEN YOU RETURN FROM YOUR ROAD TRIP, I WILL GIVE YOU 25,000 FOR YOUR TRAVEL AGENCY.”

CAROL LOOKS OVER AT HER HUSBAND AND REPLIES, “I PLAN TO NAME MY AGENCY ‘CAROL’S TRAVEL SHOP’.”

“I LIKE THAT NAME,” SAYS STEVE.

“WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT FOR DINNER?” ASKS CAROL WHILE OPENING THE FRIDGE.

“LET US GO OUT TONIGHT. I FANCY A MEAL AT THE RED LOBSTER RESTAURANT OFF EXIT THREE.”

“LET ME CHANGE INTO SOMETHING COMFORTABLE. I WILL BE READY IN 10 MINUTES.”

“I HAVE 1 PHONE CALL TO MAKE.”

CAROL REPLIES, “MAKE IT SHORT. I AM HUNGRY.”

CAROL THEN WALKS INTO THE MASTER BEDROOM.

STEVE CALLS HIS BEST FRIEND.

“RALPH SPEAKING.”

“HI, BUDDY. CAN YOU MAKE MY POKER GAME TOMORROW NIGHT?”

“I WILL BE THERE. I ASKED MY BOSS FOR TIME OFF, AND HE SAID YES.”

“GOOD TO HEAR, SEE YOU TOMORROW NIGHT AT 7.”

CAROL EXITS THE MASTER BEDROOM WEARING A BLACK DRESS. SHE COMBS HER BLONDE HAIR AND SAYS, “I AM STARVED.”

STEVE WALKS OVER TO THE KITCHEN COUNTER, GRABS THE TRUCK KEYS AND LIES, “I SPOKE TO RALPH. HE ASKED HIS BOSS FOR TIME OFF TOMORROW NIGHT TO ATTEND YOUR BIRTHDAY PARTY, AND HIS BOSS SAID YES.”

CAROL NODS UP AND DOWN WITH HER HEAD AS SHE DIALS A TELEPHONE NUMBER ON HER CELL PHONE.

“HELLO?”

“DID I CATCH YOU AT A BAD TIME, ALICE?”

“HI, CAROL. I WAS ABOUT TO STEP IN THE SHOWER. WHAT’S UP?”

“STEVE JUST TOLD ME ABOUT MY BIRTHDAY GIFT ROAD TRIP. YOU SURE YOU CAN GO?”

“I WOULDN’T MISS THIS ADVENTURE FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD,” LIES ALICE.

“STEVE SAYS YOU WANT TO STOP IN DALLAS.”

“I DO. I LIVED THERE GROWING UP. I WANT TO VISIT THE OLD STOMPING GROUNDS.”

CAROL ASKS, “WHAT IS IN SAINT LOUIS FOR YOU?”

“I WANT TO STOP AT THE ARCH. I THINK IT WILL BE FUN TO GO TO THE OBSERVATION DECK AT THE TOP.”

CAROL SAYS WITH EXCITEMENT, “ME TOO. I WANT TO SEE THE ARCH AS WELL.”

CAROL AND ALICE CONTINUE TO MAKE SMALL TALK AS STEVE DRIVES TO THE RESTAURANT. THEY ARRIVE AT EIGHT PM.

INSIDE THE RED LOBSTER RESTAURANT STEVE LIES TO CAROL, “I LEAVE FOR WORK EARLY IN THE MORNING. I AM EXPECTING A LARGE CONVENTION GROUP TO ARRIVE.”

“GOOD. THIS MEANS I CAN SLEEP IN, RIGHT?”

“ALL DAY IF YOU WANT.”

“I’LL CALL ALICE NOW TO SEE AT WHAT TIME SHE WANTS TO START OUR TRIP.”

STEVE WANTS THE WAITRESS SERVING THEIR MEAL TO REMEMBER HIM. HE ORDERS THE MOST EXPENSIVE WHITE WINE ON THE MENU. STEVE SMILES AT THE WAITRESS AND SAYS, "IT IS MY WIFE'S BIRTHDAY. I WOULD LIKE YOUR MAISON LEROY BOTTLE, PLEASE."

THE WAITRESS SMILES AND REPLIES, "I WILL BE RIGHT BACK."

CAROL HANGS UP HER CELL PHONE, TURNS TO HER HUSBAND, AND SAYS, "WE LEAVE TOMORROW EVENING AROUND 5 P.M."

"WHILE YOU WERE ON THE CELL PHONE, I ORDERED THE MOST EXPENSIVE WHITE WINE ON THE MENU. MAISON LEROY. IT COST 150 A BOTTLE, SO DRINK SLOWLY," LAUGHS STEVE.

THE WAITRESS RETURNS AND PRESENTS THE WINE BOTTLE FOR INSPECTION. THE WAITRESS SMILES AND SAYS TO CAROL, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY."

STEVE ASKS THE WAITRESS, "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?"

"NOEL."

"WHEN WE ARE FINISHED WITH OUR MEALS, PLEASE HAVE YOUR MANAGER STOP BY. I WANT TO TELL HIM WHAT EXCELLENT SERVICE YOU GAVE US TONIGHT."

NOEL SMILES AND REPLIES, "I WILL DO THAT. THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME LOOK GOOD IN THE MANAGER'S EYES."

STEVE AND CAROL HAVE A QUITE DINNER. THE MANAGER, A MR. CAMPBELL WALKS OVER AND STEVE MENTIONS THE EXCELLENT SERVICE FROM NOEL.

STEVE LEAVES A 100 DOLLAR-BILL AS A TIP AND WALKS CAROL TO HIS TRUCK. THE TIME IS NINE PM.

STEVE GIVES CAROL THE HALF-FILLED WINE BOTTLE TO HOLD, AND DRIVES BACK TO THEIR RESIDENCE. HE PARKS IN THE 3 CAR GARAGE.

CAROL HAS A SEAT ON THE LIVING ROOM COUCH.

STEVE GOES IN THE KITCHEN. HE RETURNS WITH A CHOCOLATE CAKE AND 2 GLASSES OF WINE ON A TRAY.

“LET US TOAST TO YOUR UPCOMING ROAD TRIP, AND YOUR SOON TO BE TRAVEL AGENCY,” SAYS STEVE LIFTING HIS WINE GLASS.

CAROL PICKS UP HER WINE GLASS AND DRINKS THE WINE. INSIDE HER WINE GLASS ARE 3 POWERFUL SLEEPING PILLS STEVE ADDED IN THE KITCHEN.

STEVE CUTS A SLICE OF CAKE FOR EACH AND SAYS TO CAROL, “HAPPY BIRTHDAY.”

TWENTY MINUTES LATER STEVE STANDS OVER HIS SLEEPING WIFE. HE DIALS A PHONE NUMBER USING CAROL’S CELL PHONE.

“HELLO?”

STEVE SAYS, “COME ON OVER.”

STEVE TAKES A COUCH PILLOW AND SMOTHERS HIS WIFE.

HE PLACES HER MOTIONLESS BODY IN THE REAR PASSENGER SEAT OF THE VOLVO. HE COVERS HER BODY WITH A BLANKET.

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR. STEVE OPENS AND THERE STANDS ALICE. HIS NEW LOVER COMES IN AND GIVES STEVE A KISS.

“DO NOT TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT YOU DID TO HARM, CAROL. I DO NOT WANT TO KNOW.”

STEVE SAYS, "GO PARK YOUR CAR IN THE 3RD GARAGE STALL, PLEASE."

ALICE MOVES HER CAR AS INSTRUCTED.

STEVE SAYS WHILE CLOSING THE GARAGE, "PLEASE GO INTO MY BEDROOM AND PACK A SUITCASE FOR CAROL'S TRIP. HER PINK SUITCASE IS UNDER THE BED. DON'T FORGET HER TOOTHBRUSH, MAKEUP, AND PERFUME."

STEVE FOLLOWS HIS LOVER INTO HIS BEDROOM. HE STARTS TO WATCH ALICE PACK CAROL'S CLOTHES.

ALICE SAYS, "I HAVE TO USE THE RESTROOM."

WHILE ALICE USES THE REST ROOM, STEVE DASHES INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND REMOVES ALICE'S SCARF FROM HER PURSE. HE HIDES IT IN THE VOLVO AND DASHES BACK TO THE BEDROOM.

STEVE SAYS, "PLEASE REPEAT OUR PLAN."

ALICE EXITS THE REST ROOM AND SAYS, "LATER TONIGHT WHILE YOU ARE OUT OF THE HOUSE. I WILL STAY HERE. I WILL PRETEND I AM HAVING A MEETING WITH CAROL. AFTER YOU RETURN, I WILL THEN DRIVE BACK HOME."

STEVE SAYS, "I WILL KEEP CAROL'S VOLVO IN THE GARAGE. YOU WILL KEEP HER SUITCASE. I WILL KEEP HER CELL PHONE AND HER PURSE WITH ME WHILE YOU BOTH ARE ON THE ROAD TRIP."

"I WILL TELL THE POLICE IN SAINT LOUIS, THAT CAROL DID MOST OF THE DRIVING"

"TELL THE POLICE IN SAINT LOUIS, WHEN YOU TWO ARRIVED IN NATCHEZ, CAROL TOLD YOU SHE LEFT HER CELL PHONE AND PURSE AT HOME IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM BY ACCIDENT. TELL THE POLICE I GAVE

YOU 4 THOUSAND CASH FOR YOUR TRIP. TELL THE POLICE I GAVE THE MONEY TO CAROL, AND SHE GAVE YOU THE MONEY TO HOLD. ”

“TOMORROW, I WILL LEAVE WORK AT 4 AND PICK CAROL UP AT 5.”

“JUST COME TO MY HOUSE, TOOT THE HORN, AND I WILL LET YOU IN THE GARAGE. THIS WAY WE ARE OUT OF VIEW FROM PRYING EYES AND CAMERAS.”

‘EXPECT ME TO TOOT MY CAR HORN ABOUT 5 P.M.’ ”

“SO FAR SO GOOD. I WILL CALL YOUR CELL PHONE DAILY TO SPEAK WITH MY WIFE. TERMINATE THE CALLS AFTER 10 MINUTES. WHEN QUESTIONED BY THE POLICE IN SAINT LOUIS, SAY I CALLED HER EVERY DAY ON YOUR CELL.”

ALICE SAYS, “I WILL RENT ROOMS AT MOM-AND-POP HOTELS ABOUT TEN MILES AWAY FROM THE CITIES ON OUR TRIP.”

“CORRECT. WE NEED TO AVOID PROPERTY CAMERAS.”

ALICE CONTINUES, “I WILL ASK FOR ROOMS TOWARD THE BACK OF THE PROPERTY. I WILL ASK FOR 2 DOUBLE BEDS. I WILL MAIL CAROL’S POSTCARDS TO HER MOM WHEN I ARRIVE IN NATCHEZ, DALLAS, AND SAINT LOUIS.”

“CORRECT. HERE ARE THE STAMPS FOR THE SIX POSTCARDS.”

STEVE SAYS, “SO FAR SO GOOD. MAKE SURE YOU MAKE IT LOOK LIKE CAROL SLEPT IN THE HOTEL BEDS DURING YOUR TRIP.”

ALICE NODS HER HEAD UP AND DOWN AND SAYS, “IN SAINT LOUIS ABOUT 11 P.M. WEDNESDAY EVENING, I WILL CALL YOU. I WILL STAY ON THE LINE TWENTY-SECONDS, THEN HANG-UP.”

“CORRECT. I WANT THE DETECTIVES TO INSPECT YOUR CELL PHONE AND SEE THE TWENTY-SECOND CALL WAS TO ME. I WILL THEN ADVISE THEM THAT CAROL CALLED TO SAY SHE WAS FLYING TO LAS VEGAS WITH A MAN SHE JUST MET WHO OWNS HIS OWN PLANE.”

“THAT MAKES SENSE.”

“YOU AND I ARE FREE TO CALL EACH OTHER ONCE CAROL IS MISSING. THIS MAKES IT LOOK LIKE I WAS ASKING ABOUT MY WIFE, AND YOUR EFFORTS IN SEARCHING FOR HER.

ALICE SMILES AND SAYS, “WHEN THE DETECTIVE ASKS ME QUESTIONS, I WILL SAY SHE KEPT TALKING ABOUT A MAN SHE MET IN A BAR. THAT SHE WANTED TO GO TO VEGAS. WHEN I WOKE UP, SHE WAS NOT IN THE HOTEL ROOM. SHE LEFT ME NO NOTE WHERE SHE WAS GOING.”

“GOOD. THE NEXT DAY YOU CALL ME ON YOUR CELL PHONE TO TELL ME YOU FILED A MISSING-PERSON REPORT ON CAROL. THAT IS WHEN I TELL YOU SHE CALLED ME EARLIER TO SAY GOOD-BYE.”

“I WILL MENTION TO THE COPS I WASN’T FEELING WELL ON CAROL’S LAST NIGHT BEFORE SHE WENT MISSING AND I FELL ASLEEP. WHEN I WOKE-UP CAROL WAS NOT IN THE ROOM. SHE LEFT NO NOTE.”

“AND WHAT ELSE?”

“I WILL GO BAR HOPPING WEDNESDAY NIGHT POSING AS CAROL. I WILL WEAR THE WIG. I WILL LATER TELL THE COPS I WOKE UP AROUND 10 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY. CAROL RETURNED AROUND 11 P.M., DRUNK. SHE KEPT MENTIONING A RICH MAN SHE MET AT A BAR. HE OWNED A PRIVATE PLANE AND OFFERED TO FLY HER TO LAS VEGAS.”

“GOOD, MAKE SURE YOU SOUND CONVINCING.”

“I WILL TELL THE COPS; CAROL AND I SOON FELL ASLEEP. AT ABOUT 1:30 A.M. WHEN I WOKE-UP THURSDAY MORNING CAROL IS NOT IN

HER BED. I FIND NO NOTE, JUST FIVE NAMES WITH PHONE NUMBERS. THESE ARE THE FIVE MEN IN THE BAR I MET POSING AS CAROL.”

“SAY TO THE COPS YOU CHECKED THE ICE MACHINE AREA, THE POOL, AND THE LOBBY,” SAYS STEVE.

“I WILL MAKE MY LIES VERY BELIEVABLE. I TOOK ACTING CLASSES IN COLLEGE.”

“THEN WHAT?”

“I STAY IN MY HOTEL ROOM THURSDAY AND FRIDAY NIGHT. I TELL THE POLICE I WENT TO BARS SHOWING A PICTURE TO BOUNCERS AND BAR MAIDS.”

“LOOK DISAPPOINTED YOU DID NOT FIND YOUR FRIEND,” LIES STEVE

“I PLACE OUR LUGGAGE IN MY CAR, THEN I CHECK OUT OF THE HOTEL.”

“GOOD. THEN WHAT DO YOU DO?”

I CALL YOU TO SAY I AM DEPARTING FOR HOME WITHOUT CAROL.”

“GOOD. YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER TO DO ALL THIS, BECAUSE THE COPS MIGHT OBTAIN PHONE RECORDS.”

“I WILL MAKE SURE WHEN TO TURN MY CELL PHONE ON AND OFF.”

“WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME ON YOUR ARRIVAL TO MY PLACE?”

“I HAVE CAROL’S SUITCASE AND CANON CAMERA.”

STEVE SAYS, “I WILL SAY MY CAR WAS UNLOCKED IN MY DRIVEWAY, AND THE CAMERA AND SUITCASE WERE STOLEN. DON’T FORGET TO TELL THE

POLICE IN SAINT LOUIS YOU TWO STOPPED IN THEIR CITY TO VISIT THE ARCH THE NEXT MORNING. ”

“I WILL REMEMBER. ”

STEVE SAYS, “THE POSTCARDS CAROL FILLED OUT EARLIER IN HER OWN HANDWRITING WILL BE THE KEY TO US GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER. THE SAME POSTCARDS, YOU MAIL ME FROM NATCHEZ, DALLAS, AND SAINT LOUIS. THOSE POSTCARDS AND THE 3 POSTCARDS MAILED TO HER MOM WILL BE THE KEY ALIBI FOR ME GETTING AWAY WITH HER MURDER. THE POSTCARDS MAILED TO ME, MAKES IT LOOK LIKE CAROL WAS ALIVE IN SAINT LOUIS. ”

“I THINK OUR PLAN IS FOOLPROOF. ”

STEVE SAYS, “IT WILL BE AS LONG AS THE COPS DON’T DIG DEEP INTO OUR STORIES. ONCE THE HEAT IS OFF, WE CAN MOVE AWAY AND BE TOGETHER FOREVER, SAYS STEVE GIVING HIS LOVER A KISS. ”

STEVE SAYS WITH A CALM VOICE, “LET ME GET THIS OVER WITH. ”

ALICE REPLIES, “I HATED TO PRETEND I WAS CAROL’S BEST FRIEND. ”

“I NEEDED YOU TO GET CLOSE TO HER. THAT WAY I COULD BE ONE-STEP AHEAD OF CAROL’S GOLD-DIGGING SCHEMES. ”

“IT WORKED. WE WENT SHOPPING FOR AN EMPTY STORE FRONT. SHE WAS ABOUT TO WRITE A COMPANY CHECK FOR 20,000 DOLLARS. CAROL NEEDED THE MONEY FOR THE LEASE, FURNITURE, AND COMPUTERS. ”

“THANKS TO YOUR TIP I REMOVED CAROL FROM THE BUSINESS AND PERSONAL CHECKING ACCOUNTS JUST IN TIME. ”

“THAT WAS A SMART MOVE, ” RESPONDS ALICE. ”

STEVE SAYS, "I HAD TO GO AROUND TOWN MAKING EVERYONE THINK WE WERE IN LOVE. I STILL HAVE TO GO AROUND TOWN PRETENDING CAROL AND I ARE IN LOVE. I HAVE TO DO THIS CHARADE TILL YOU AND I CAN MOVE AWAY FROM ATLANTA TO A NEW STATE, TO A NEW LIFE," SAYS STEVE.

"WE WILL LEAVE YOUR CELL PHONE ON NEXT TO CAROL'S. THIS WAY IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WENT TO MY HOUSE TO DISCUSS YOUR TRIP."

STEVE LEAVES HIS CELL PHONE IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM IN THE ON POSITION. HE ALSO LEAVES IT IN THE VIBRATE MODE.

STEVE DEPARTS ALONE IN THE VOLVO. HE USES THE REMOTE TO CLOSE THE GARAGE.

STEVE TURNS DOWN A DIRT ROAD, 20 MILES OUTSIDE OF ATLANTA. HE STOPS BY A ROW OF TREES. HE TURNS HIS HEADLIGHTS OFF. THE STREET SIGN READS 'RAINBOW LANE.'

STEVE BENDS OVER AND LIFTS CAROL'S BODY OUT OF THE REAR PASSENGER SIDE OF THE VOLVO. HE CARRIES THE CORPSE OF HIS WIFE TO THE PIT HE DUG A DAY EARLIER.

STEVE RETURNS TO THE VOLVO TRUNK FOR THE POTTING SOIL, CEMENT, AND QUICKLIME.

STEVE PLACES HIS WIFE'S BODY IN THE 5-FOOT-DEEP GRAVE. HE POURS A LARGE BAG OF QUICKLIME, THEN A BAG OF POTTING SOIL OVER THE BODY. HIS LAST STEP IS POURING THE QUICK DRYING CEMENT POWDER OVER THE BODY.

HE USES HIS WATER BOTTLE HE DRINKS FROM TO POUR WATER OVER THE MIXTURE. STEVE LAUGHS WHEN HE DROPS IN THE MAKESHIFT GRAVE, ALICES' SCARF. HE QUICKLY COVERS CAROL'S BODY WITH THE REST OF THE DIRT.

STEVE TAKES THE EMPTY WATER BOTTLE, THE POTTING SOIL BAG, THE CEMENT BAG, AND QUICKLIME BAG WITH HIM TO HIS VOLVO AND GETS OUT OF THERE.”

ONCE BACK IN ATLANTA STEVE STOPS AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE. HE DUMPS THE EMPTY WATER BOTTLE, THE QUICKLIME, POTTING SOIL, AND EMPTY CEMENT BAGS IN THE DUMPSTER.

STEVE’S NEXT STOPS AT A McDONALD’S. HE ORDERS ONE LARGE CUP OF COFFEE AND LARGE FRIES. HE PICKS UP HIS ORDER AND DRIVES HOME.

STEVE RETURNS TO HIS RESIDENCE AND PICKS UP HIS CELL PHONE FROM THE LAUNDRY ROOM. HE WALKS INTO THE DINING ROOM AND SITS DOWN NEXT TO ALICE.

“WE BOTH HAVE TO ACT NORMAL.”

ALICE SAYS “YOU SOUND SO POSITIVE YOU WILL GET AWAY WITH MURDER. I AM SCARED TO DEATH THE COPS WILL GATHER EVIDENCE AND COME AFTER ME, TOO.”

“LONG AS YOU DO YOUR PART OF THE PLAN AND MAIL THE POSTCARDS FROM NATCHEZ, DALLAS, AND SAINT LOUIS; THE COPS WILL THINK CAROL WAS ALIVE AND TRAVELING WITH YOU. WHEN THE POLICE COMPARE HER WRITING SAMPLE AGAINST THE POSTCARDS MAILED TO ME AND HER MOTHER, THEY WILL SEE A MATCH.”

“WHAT ABOUT A PAPER TRAIL WITH HOTEL, GAS, AND FOOD RECEIPTS?”

“DO NOT USE YOUR CREDIT CARDS. USE THE 4 THOUSAND CASH I GAVE CAROL, THAT SHE GAVE YOU TO HOLD. DO EVERYTHING IN CASH. THEN PLAY DUMB NOW AND THEN WHERE YOU STAYED, WHERE YOU ATE. MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE POLICE TO TRACE YOUR TRIP.”

“I CAN DO THAT,” SAYS ALICE.

“BETWEEN THE POSTCARDS, CAROL’S CELL PHONE RECORDS, NOT USING A CREDIT CARD, ME SAYING WE TALKED EVERY NIGHT, PLUS ME ANSWERING HER CALLS, ME BUYING HER DRESSES AND SHOES SHE ORDERED, ADD THAT ALL UP, AND IT LOOKS ON PAPER THAT CAROL WAS ALIVE AND WITH YOU ON A ROAD TRIP.”

“WHAT IF I AM ASKED TO TAKE A POLYGRAPH TEST TO SEE IF I AM TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT CAROL?”

“JUST REFUSE TO TAKE ONE. SAY THEY ARE UNRELIABLE. I WILL REFUSE TO TAKE A POLYGRAPH TEST AS WELL”

“NOT TAKING A POLYGRAPH TEST MEANS YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE,” SAYS ALICE.”

“THAT DOESN’T MEAN ANYTHING. STICK TO YOUR STORY OF THE LAST TIME YOU SAW CAROL. YOU WOKE UP AND SHE WAS GONE. STILL IN THE ROOM WERE HER PERSONAL EFFECTS.”

“I THINK THAT IS A BELIEVABLE STORY,” SAYS ALICE.

“I WOULD BELIEVE IT IF I WAS LAW ENFORCEMENT,” MENTIONS STEVE.

“NOW IF THE POLICE DISCOVER HER BODY WHILE YOU ARE ON YOUR ROAD TRIP, I WILL LET YOU KNOW. THEN TEAR-UP THE REMAINING POSTCARDS. YOU WILL TELL ME CAROL SAID SHE WAS PLANNING TO FLY IN A PRIVATE PLANE WITH A RICH MAN SHE MET IN A BAR. SHE MENTIONED GOING TO LAS VEGAS. SHE LEFT YOU IN THE HOTEL ALL BY YOURSELF.”

STEVE HANDS ALICE A BLONDE WIG.

“WEAR CAROLS WIG NOW AND THEN, PUT THE CANON ON A TIMER. TAKE PHOTOS OF YOU POSING AS CAROL. JUST BE FAR AWAY, IN THE

SHADOWS, AND PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE IT IS CAROL. YOU AND HER LOOK LIKE SISTERS IN REAL LIFE ANYWAY.”

“TRUE. I HEAR IT NOW AND THEN WHEN WE HAVE A LUNCH MEAL TOGETHER. I WILL TELL THE POLICE CAROL FOUND A BIGGER SUCKER THAN HER HUSBAND.”

ALICE EATS 4 FRIES, TAKES A SWALLOW OF THE COFFEE, AND ASKS, “DID CAROL HAVE A LIFE INSURANCE POLICY OUT ON HER?”

“NO NEED FOR ONE. I HAVE MONEY STASHED AWAY. BESIDES, IF I DID HAVE ONE, THE COPS MIGHT DIG DEEPER INTO HER MISSING.”

ALICE SAYS, “WE DON’T WANT ANY INVESTIGATION. I THINK MY MISSING PERSON REPORT, PLUS CAROL WANTING TO FLY TO LAS VEGAS WITH THE RICH MAN FROM AN UNKNOWN BAR WILL BE ENOUGH.”

“FOR THE POLICE IT MIGHT BE ENOUGH, BUT HER PARENTS WILL HIRE A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR TO INVESTIGATE.”

ALICE SAYS, “I DIDN’T THINK OF THAT.”

STEVE SAYS, “I DID. I WILL TELL THE PARENTS I HIRED JOHNNY BLACK. I WILL ASK THEM TO HELP WITH HIS HOURLY FEE.”

“WHO IS JOHNNY BLACK, AND WHAT IS HIS HOURLY FEE?”

“JOHNNY IS A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR FRIEND OF MINE WHEN HE LIVED IN ATLANTA YEARS AGO. HIS FEE IS 100 DOLLARS AN HOUR. I WILL TELL CAROL’S PARENTS HE HAS AGREED TO A LESSER FEE OF 70 AN-HOUR, PLUS EXPENSES.”

“WHERE DOES HE LIVE?”

“NOT TOO FAR FROM ATLANTA. HE LIVES IN MACON, ONLY 80 MILES AWAY.”

“WHAT IF ASHLEY, AND TONY WANT TO HIRE A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR IN SAINT LOUIS?”

“I WILL TELL THEM JOHNNY IS NOT CHARGING FOR ANY TRAVEL. HIS TIME CLOCK STARTS WHEN HE ARRIVES IN THE CITY.”

“HOW MUCH DOES A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR FROM SAINT LOUIS CHARGE AN HOUR?”

“IT DOESN’T MATTER THEIR RATE BECAUSE I WILL TELL CAROL’S PARENTS THAT JOHNNY IS HONEST AND HE WILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.”

“WHAT IF THEY GO AHEAD AND HIRE THEIR OWN INVESTIGATOR ANYWAY?”

“LET THEM. HE WILL FIND NOTHING. I WILL HAVE JOHNNY FIND A BOUNCER FROM A NIGHT CLUB YOU VISITED AS CAROL, WHO REMEMBERS CAROL DANCING WITH A MAN ALL NIGHT.”

“WHAT ABOUT CAMERAS?”

“GRANNY IMAGES OF CAROL WITH A MAN DANCING.”

ALICE STARTS TO ASK ANOTHER QUESTION WHEN HER LOVER CUTS HER OFF.

“IT IS GETTING LATE. YOU HAVE TO WORK TOMORROW. IF QUESTIONED, WE BOTH WILL SAY YOU CAME BY ABOUT 5 P.M. AND PICKED CAROL UP.”

WHAT DO I SAY IF THE COPS ASK ME WHY DIDN’T YOU GIVE YOUR WIFE TRAVELER’S CHECKS?”

“I TOOK THE MONEY OUT OF MY SAFE IN MY HOTEL OFFICE. I WAS TOO BUSY TO GO TO THE BANK FOR TRAVELER’S CHECKS. I TOLD CAROL TO GO TO THE BANK.”

“THAT’S A GOOD ANSWER, “SAYS ALICE.

STEVE KISSES ALICE AND SAYS, “HAVE FUN. IF ANYONE ASK ABOUT WANTING TO MEET CAROL, JUST SAY CAROL IS IN THE HOTEL ROOM NOT FEELING WELL. SAY SHE GETS CAR SICK NOW AND THEN, FROM ALL THE STOPPING AND GOING.”

“I THINK WE COVERED IT ALL.”

“ONE MORE THING, COME BY MY PLACE AT 5 P.M. AND TOOT THE HORN. I WILL OPEN THE GARAGE FOR YOU TO PARK IN. THEN WHEN YOU LEAVE LATER IN THE NIGHT THERE IS A WIG ON A MANNEQUIN TO SHOW A 2ND FIGURE IN THE CAR.”

STEVE LEANS OVER AND KISSES ALICE ONE FINAL TIME.

STEVE LOOKS AT ALICE AND SAYS, “WHEN YOU RETURN TO ATLANTA, ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE WITH YOU WHEN YOU COME BY MY HOUSE. I WANT THE COPS TO BELIEVE WE ARE NOT ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED.”

“ON OUR ROAD TRIP, I WILL CALL YOU EVERY MORNING AND EVERY EVENING FROM MY CELL PHONE. IF YOU CAN’T TALK, SAY I WILL CALL YOU BACK SHORTLY. THEN CALL ME BACK. I KNOW WE HAVE TO DO THIS EVERY DAY.”

STEVE REPLIES, “GOOD IDEA. CALL AT NINE A.M. AND NINE P.M. SHARP. MAKE SURE YOUR FIRST CALL IS FROM NATCHEZ. WE WILL BOTH TELL THE POLICE CAROL NOTICED SHE LEFT HER CELL PHONE ON VIBRATE IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM. THIS IS WHY WE CALLED EACH OTHER ON YOUR CELL PHONE.”

STEVE SAYS, "YOUR DRIVE FROM ATLANTA TO NATCHEZ TAKES ABOUT 6 HOURS AND 30 MINUTES. SAY YOU BOTH DROVE. YOU DROVE THE 1ST 3 HOURS AND CAROL DROVE THE REMAINING 3 HOURS."

"GOOD IDEA," REPLIES ALICE AS SHE KISSES HER MAN ONE MORE TIME.

STEVE SAYS, "I LEFT TO GO SOMEWHERE AND YOU 2 PLANNED OUT YOUR TRIP. LET ME GIVE YOU YOUR CELL PHONE BACK. HANG TIGHT."

ALICE ENTERS HER VEHICLE.

STEVE RETURNS WITH HER CELL PHONE.

THE LOVERS KISS ONE MORE TIME. STEVE OPENS THE GARAGE AND ALICE DEPARTS THE AREA.

STEVE CLOSES HIS GARAGE AND WALKS BACK INTO THE HOUSE. HE OPENS HIS FRIDGE AND GRABS A CAN OF ROOT BEER.

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 6TH AT FOUR AM, STEVE PICKS UP HIS CELL PHONE AND DRIVES OVER TO HIS HOTEL. HE GOES STRAIGHT TO HIS OFFICE.

AT EIGHT AM, BETTY COOPER, STEVE'S ASSISTANT, KNOCKS ON HIS OFFICE DOOR.

"COME IN."

"MORNING, BOSS. I HAVE ALL YOUR MAIL AND INVOICES FOR YOU TO REVIEW."

"YOU ARE SUCH A GOOD SECRETARY. ALWAYS ON TIME AND GOOD TO MY STAFF. DON'T THINK IT HASN'T GONE UNNOTICED."

“YOU ARE A GREAT BOSS TO WORK FOR. YOU TRUST ME TO RUN YOUR OFFICE WHEN YOU ARE AWAY, AND THAT MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO ME. I HOPE I NEVER LET YOU DOWN.”

“WHEN WE ARE FINISHED GOING OVER ALL THIS MAIL, CONTACT JACK IN ACCOUNTING TO COME UP TO SEE ME, PLEASE.”

“WILL DO.”

STEVE PLACES INVOICES TO PAY INTO 3 PILES. HE THEN HANDS THE 3 PILES TO BETTY AND SAYS, “THE 1ST STACK PAY TODAY, STACK 2 PAY IN 2 WEEKS, AND THE LAST STACK PAY IN A MONTH.”

STEVE LOOKS OVER THE MAIL, AND HANDS IT BACK TO BETTY. “TAKE CARE OF THIS FOR ME. I AM NOT INTERESTED IN ANYTHING ANY OF THESE FOLKS HAVE TO OFFER. DO REPLY, SAY THANKS, BUT NO THANKS.”

BETTY REPLIES, “WILL DO.”

STEVE ASKS, “ANY CONVENTIONS, WEDDINGS, OR OTHER NEW GROUPS MAKING RESERVATIONS?”

“YES, SIR. THE DONNER PARTY IS HAVING THEIR WEDDING NEXT WEEKEND. THEY HAVE RESERVED 30 ROOMS FOR THEIR GUESS. WE HAVE GASI ORGANIZATION BOOKED FOR NEXT WEEK FOR 3 NIGHTS. OUR HOTEL IS SOLD OUT NEXT WEEK WITH THEIR VENDORS, AND MEMBERS.”

“REMIND ME WHAT GASI STANDS FOR.”

BETTY SAYS “YOU BOOKED THEM, SIR. ARE YOU LOSING YOUR MIND?”

“I MUST BE. WHAT DOES THE FOUR LETTERS STAND FOR?”

“GEORGE ASSOCIATION OF SELF-INSURED. THEY INSURE THEMSELVES TO SAVE MONEY ON PREMIUMS.”

STEVE SAYS, “I JUST HAVE LOTS ON MY MIND. MY WIFE LEAVES ME TODAY AT 5 P.M. FOR HER 12-DAY ROAD TRIP. SHE ASKED ME TO BUY HER SOMETHING, BUT IT SKIPS MY MIND WHAT SHE WANTED. DO YOU HAVE HER CELL PHONE NUMBER?”

“YES, I HAVE IT.”

“GIVE HER A CALL FOR ME, IF YOU DON’T MIND. FIND OUT WHAT IT IS SHE WANTED ME TO DO.”

“I WILL GET JACK UP HERE TO SEE YOU NOW, THEN I WILL CALL YOUR WIFE.”

“PERFECT. REMEMBER, OUR WORK SCHEDULE AGREEMENT. COME IN WHEN NEEDED.”

STEVE READS THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER TILL HIS ACCOUNTANT KNOCKS ON HIS DOOR.

“COME IN.”

JACK, AGE 50, DRESSED IN A SUIT WALKS IN. “BETTY SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE ME.”

“YES. SIT DOWN, PLEASE.”

JACK SITS DOWN.

“CARE FOR SOMETHING TO DRINK?”

“I AM FINE. I JUST FINISHED A CUP OF COFFEE.”

“HOW IS THE WILLIAMSON INN DOING FINANCIALLY?”

“SOLID. WE HAVE NO DEBT, POSITIVE CASH FLOW, AND THE CALENDAR FOR THE YEAR LOOKS BOOKED.”

“CAN WE AFFORD TO GIVE THE STAFF A RAISE OF SOME KIND?”

“LAST RAISE WAS 2 YEARS AGO. WE HAVE THE MONEY TO GIVE EACH DEPARTMENT A RAISE. SAY 1 DOLLAR AN HOUR INCREASE.”

“BREAKDOWN MY STAFF FOR ME, JACK.”

“WE HAVE 10 IN SECURITY, 4 MAIDS, 9 FRONT DESK STAFF. 2 IN JANITORIAL, 3 BELLMEN, ME, AND BETTY.”

“HOW ARE OUR RECEIVABLES?”

“VERY LOW. I MADE CALLS ALL LAST MONTH ASKING FOR PAYMENTS, AND THE VENDORS LISTENED.”

“WHAT IS OUR CHECKING ACCOUNT BALANCE?”

“WE HAVE 80,000, GIVE OR TAKE A DOLLAR. WE HAD 5,000 MORE LAST MONTH IN THE BANK TILL CAROL TREATED HERSELF TO CLOTHES, SHOES, AND MEALS. WE HAD AN ADDITIONAL 50,000 MONTHS AGO TILL YOUR WIFE BOUGHT HER VOLVO.”

STEVE ASKS, “WHAT IS THE CREDIT LINE AMOUNT WE CAN TAP INTO IF NEEDED?”

“YOUR CREDIT LINE IS 200,000 THOUSAND.”

STEVE ASKS, “IS THERE ANYTHING WE HAVE TO PURCHASE?”

“NO. WE REPLACED THE CARPET IN THE LOBBY, OUR DINING ROOM RECEIVED NEW TABLES AND CHAIRS. WE HAVE FUNDS IF YOU DECIDE A PAY RAISE IS IN ORDER.”

“WHAT IS TODAY’S DATE?”

SUNDAY, JUNE 6TH, 2022

“ATTACH A MEMO TO ALL THE STAFFS PAYCHECKS, STATING THEY WILL RECEIVE 2 DOLLARS AN HOUR MORE BEGINNING JULY 1.”

JACK REPLIES, “THE STAFF WILL BE HAPPY TO KNOW THEY ARE RECEIVING A RAISE. THE COST OF LIVING IS GOING UP AS WE SPEAK.”

“HAVE BETTY COME BACK IN, PLEASE. THANKS FOR COMING TO MY OFFICE.”

JACK EXITS STEVE’S OFFICE.

A MINUTE LATER BETTY KNOCKS TO COME IN.

STEVE MOTIONS FOR BETTY TO ENTER.

“DID YOU GET MY WIFE ON THE TELEPHONE?”

“NO. IT RANG 4 TIMES THEN WENT TO VOICEMAIL. I DID LEAVE CAROL A MESSAGE TO CALL YOU.”

STEVE LIES, “I WANTED TO SEE IF SHE WANTED TO HAVE LUNCH WITH ME BEFORE HER 12-DAY ROAD TRIP TONIGHT. O.K. THANKS, BETTY FOR TRYING.”

“WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE, STEVE?”

“No.”

2

CHAPTER TWO

Steve exits his office at noon sharp. He stops by his secretary's desk. "I am going home for the rest of the day. If I get any phone calls, tell the callers I am in a meeting, and I will return their call tomorrow."

"Thanks for the raise. Jack told me the good news."

"Dial Jack's number for me, please."

Betty dials Jack's extension and hands her boss the receiver.

"Yes, Betty," says Jack.

"Jack, this is Steve. Write Betty a 5,000-dollar bonus check. Write another 5,000-dollar check for you. Place the checks on my desk and I will sign them tomorrow."

Jack says, "Thank you."

Betty stands up and hugs her boss.

"I have a loyal, hardworking team. The pleasure is all mine."

Steve takes the stairs instead of waiting for the elevator.

Once home, Steve changes into his swimming trunks. He grabs a Root Beer soda from his fridge and walks out to his pool deck. He places his soda on the small dining table and jumps into his pool feet first.

Steve swims for 30 minutes, then exits his pool. He lays down on his lounge chair and falls asleep.

A cell phone ringing wakes Steve up. He lets it go to voicemail. He finishes his soda before checking both cell phones. The call was for Carol. It was a local number. Steve plays her message.

“Hello, Carol. I wanted to speak with you about the dresses you ordered. Give me a call when you can. Oh! This Is Donna calling you from ‘Only for Women.’”

Steve does not call Donna back. He will call her only after receiving a call from Carol from Natchez, saying she left her cell phone on vibrate in the laundry room.

Steve dries off and walks Into his kitchen. He makes himself two peanut butter and banana sandwiches, grabs himself another Root Beer, and returns to the patio.

Carol’s cell phone number (470) 448-5921 rings again at 5 p.m. Steve sees the caller Is Donna as her name pops up as a contact on Carol’s cell phone. Steve answers, “Hello?”

“Afternoon, Sir, My name Is Donna. I own ‘Only for Women’ dress shop here In Atlanta. I need to speak with Carol Williamson, please. It Is urgent.”

“Carol is traveling and will not be back home for 12-days. I am her husband, Steve. How can I help you?”

“Carol ordered four dress from me. I need to collect payment.”

“I will pay you, now. Let me walk to my bedroom from the pool for my wallet. What is the total?”

“She owes 1,349.00 dollars.”

“No problem. Do you take Visa?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Are you ready to copy?”

“Yes. Go ahead.”

Steve gives Donna over the telephone his 16-digit credit card number, the expiration date, along with the security code.

“Your payment went through. Will you please tell your wife, her four dresses will arrive here in a week?”

“To play it safe, can you mail the four dresses to our house? Leave a note what the shipping cost are, and we will mail you the shipping fee cost.”

“I can do that. What is your address?”

“2437 Wiley Road here in Atlanta with a zip code of 30310.”

“Tell your wife we thank her for her business.”

“I just left your information in her incoming box. Carol will be home in 12-days. She is on a road trip with her best friend,” lies Steve.

“Thank you again for paying her invoice.”

“You welcome, have a wonderful week. Bye.”

Steve walks into his dining room and there on the table is an open shoe box. Steve places Donna’s message in the shoe box. Steve moves the shoe box to the kitchen. Tonight, at 7 p.m. Steve is expecting six men for his first poker night in his home in 4 months.

Each poker player is bringing something with them. One is bringing the beer, another the potato chips, and yet another is bringing the playing chips and a deck of cards.

Steve calls Betty at his hotel.

“Williamson Inn, Jodie speaking.”

“Hello, Jodie, Steve here. Can you connect me to Betty, please?”

“Good afternoon, Sir. I will connect you now to her extension.”

“Call me, Steve. Sir makes me think I am an old man.”

“Alright, Steve.”

“This is Betty.”

Betty, Steve here. Look in my rolodex. I need the number for Bob Mills.”

“Sure thing.” Betty walks into Steve’s office and locates his rolodex.

“Ready to copy, Steve?”

“Ready.” Steve has his cell phone in his right hand, ready to type the numbers in.

“Area code 305-304-1363.”

“Thanks.”

Steve dials the phone number given to him.

“This is, Billy.”

“HI, Billy, Steve Williamson in Atlanta. How are things down there in Miami?”

“Hot as hell. I always pray my a/c does not ever break. What is going on?”

“My office has you on my rolodex card as Bob Mills. I did this to keep your number private. You are known around my hotel as a heart breaker. I did not want any of my female staff causing you problems with Francis. My female staff are still in shock you left town with our new house cleaner.”

“It was love at 1st sight for me, Steve.”

“You were a good assistant-manager for me. I hated for you to leave. I want to hire you to come back to Atlanta. I want you as my manager of my hotel.”

“Did you say Manager or Assistant-Manager?”

“Manager. I want you to be my Manager.”

” What will I earn?”

“I will pay you 1,000 a week, plus the use of a rental car.”

“For how long a time are we speaking about?”

“As long as you want.”

“Where are you going?”

“I want to move out West with Carol,” lies Steve.

“When do you need me up there?”

“In 2 months at the end of August.”

“That is a fun time of month. Are you still with Carol?”

“Yes. Still with Carol. How long has it been since you paid us a visit in Atlanta?”

“I could not make the wedding. I came weeks later when your honeymoon was over. It has been at least 6 months.”

Steve says, “I will pay you back for your airfare to move here.”

“I want to drive my new Jeep. I will make the journey at the end of August, but for 1,500 dollars a week.”

Steve says, “You have a deal. Do you regret moving to Miami from Atlanta?”

“No. As you recall I moved down here for my girlfriend, Francis. I like it here in Miami, except for the traffic. I hate the traffic. I get up an hour earlier each morning to drive into downtown Miami to help manage the Radisson.”

“Traffic is just as bad in Atlanta, or even worse.”

“Is that Fox of a secretary still single?”

“Betty is single as we speak. Are you still with Francis?”

“Afraid not. We broke up about 3 months ago.”

“What, another man?”

“I wish It were. She came out of the closet. She is with a woman named Carmen. How is the hotel doing?”

“The hotel’s running smooth, we have no problems.”

“Is Jack still with you?”

“Yes. Everything is the same except we painted the hotel a light green, we repaved the parking lot, bought modern furniture for the dining room, and replaced the carpet in the lobby.”

“How’s marketing?”

Steve replies, “Slow right now. I hate marketing. I know you love It.”

“Yes, I love meeting people, having a drink with potential clients. I do miss It.”

“Didn’t you also market for the Radisson?”

“No, they have a marketing department made up of women only. Do you know why that Is?”

“I have no clue.”

Billy laughs and replies, “The women are so attractive and flirty that the men clients want them coming back to say hello. The married men want to take them to lunch. They give Radisson business.”

Steve laughs at that reply, “I can see why. No wonder America’s divorce rate is high.”

“The hotel is busy now with a bingo club.”

“Did you say a bingo club?” asks Steve.

“Yes. Over two hundred people each Tuesday and Thursday night sit around and play bingo for prizes. They eat and drink as well. I want to start a bingo club In Atlanta.”

“Tell you what, I will pay you an extra 500 a week to market my hotel. That will be 2,000 dollars a week income.”

Billy adds, “Plus, a hotel room as an apartment. This way I am on site 24/7. I do not have to fight traffic to get to work either. I hate driving in traffic. I will make sure the hotel runs as smooth as you run it now.”

“I will give you Suite A as your apartment.”

“You sure? A suite instead of a hotel room.”

“I still have three other suites on that floor. You can rent suite B, C, or D.”

Billy laughs, “We sure can.”

“But when it comes to closing the deal for a suite instead of a hotel room, I just cannot do It. I clam up.”

Billy laughs, “I do not clam up. I would say, Sir, suite C is only 100 more a night. Don’t you think your wife would be happier In a larger space?”

“I can picture it now, a sign saying ‘full’ at The Williamson Inn. See you September 1.”

“I cannot wait to play golf with you. I have been practicing. Have you?”

Steve says, “I have not played in 6 months. I will go out with you once you are here running my hotel.”

“You have a deal. I must hang up. I have a meeting about to start.”

Steve calls Betty.

“This is Betty.”

“I hired a manager. I need to spend more time with Carol. He starts September 1st.”

“His name?”

“Miami. He helps run the Radisson in downtown Miami.”

“His name?”

“Billy Thomas.”

“Billy’s coming back to work for you?”

“Yes. September 1st. He will manage and market the Williamson Inn.”

“What happened to what’s her face, the one he ran to Miami with?”

“Frances left him.”

“For another man?”

“Nope. A woman named Carmen. He did ask if you were still working here, so sparks may still fly someday.”

“I have to admit I do like him. I still do.”

“We are giving him Suite A as his apartment as part of his management package. He will even have the use of my truck.”

“What will you drive then, Steve?”

“Carol and I plan to move out West. I might buy me an Acura like Ralph drives.”

“You are leaving us?”

“No, I plan to fly in every Thursday and fly out every Monday. Remember, Atlanta is a hub for all the major airlines. I plan to meet with you, Jack, and Billy every Friday morning. I trust you all. I will start a bonus plan starting January 1st. I will take 15 percent of profits and give each of you 5 percent.”

“That sounds too good to be true, Steve.”

“I am hoping with Billy’s marketing skills our rooms will be full, same for the bar and restaurant. He wants to start a bingo club night, 2 days a week like the Radisson in Miami is doing now.”

“Did you say a bingo club, Steve?”

“Yes, I did. Billy says on average the bingo night brings in two hundred people to play at the Radisson he manages now. That sounds like a win-win for the hotel.”

“It sure does. Tell Billy I said hi. Tell him I am looking forward to collaborating with him again.”

“Will do. Do me a favor and let Jack know about Billy.”

“Will do. I just booked a wedding reception. Over one hundred guest will be here next month,” says Betty with excitement in her voice.

Steve replies, “Good for you. I will be giving a small cash bonus if any of my staff can land a booking. The reward will be based on the money we bring in, minus cost to fund the gigs.”

“This starts September 1st?”

“No, Betty. It starts right now with the gig you just brought to my hotel.”

Betty screams, “Wow. I cannot believe what I am hearing.”

“Tomorrow, Jack, you, and I will sit down and have a talk, ok?”

“You bet, Steve. See you tomorrow.”

Betty dials extension 431. It just rings. Betty writes a reminder note to let Jack know Billy Thomas is coming back. Betty locks her office door and exits the hotel.

From his office phone Steve calls Alice on her cell phone.

“This Is Alice.

“Hello, Alice.”

“I thought we agreed I was going to call you from Natchez.”

“You still are. I need you to come to my house to pick-up Carol. I want you to toot the horn and pull into the garage. Then we will close the garage. Then when you leave it will be dark. In case the Police Officers find cameras in the area, they will see you pulled in the garage. Buy a mannequin head and place the wig on it. This way it looks like Carol is with you as a passenger when you start your road trip.”

“Good idea. See you when I see you.”

“One more thing. It gets dark now at 6 p.m. Come then. I have a poker game at my house at 7. So be here before my friends get here, please.”

“No problem, I will toot my car horn at 6 p.m. sharp”

Steve says goodbye to Alice.

Steve makes himself two peanut butter and banana sandwiches. Steve opens the fridge and grabs a Bud Light beer. He walks out to his pool lounge chair and has a seat.

Steve takes a short nap after having his sandwiches. Alice toots her horn right on time. Steve walks in the house and opens his garage. Alice drives her Honda inside. Steve then closes the garage.

Alice and Steve kiss, then enter the house. Steve shows Alice the shoe box for messages for Carol. Steve looks out his living room window. He sees it is now dark outside. There is no moon.

“Did you buy or borrow a mannequin head?”

“I borrowed one from a friend of mine. She has eight different wigs.”

“Would you like something to drink or eat?” asks Steve.

“A glass of water and 2 kisses.”

Steve laughs at that comment. “Here is your water. Here are your two kisses.”

Steve and Alice talk about 10 minutes.

Steve hands Alice the purse and cell phone belonging to Carol and says, “Hide them behind the laundry basket for me.”

Alice takes the purse and cell phone with her on the way to the garage.

Steve follows a minute later.

He gives Alice the four thousand dollars, one last kiss, and says, “Drive safe and call me from Natchez at 9 a.m. tomorrow.”

Steve opens the garage and watches Alice drive away. He closes his garage and walks into the kitchen.

Steve starts opening potato chip bags, adding beer to his fridge, and unwrapping sandwiches he made earlier. He pops a pizza in the oven.

Steve cannot wait to host his weekly poker night for the boys.

At 7 p.m. there is a knock at Steve’s door. He opens to find four of his friends and they all carried a bag of goods with them. 10 minutes later there is a knock at his door again. There stands two more of his poker friends. They too carry a bag with party items.

All seven men stand around in the kitchen drinking and snacking. A man named Joe asks, “Where Is Carol?”

Steve grabs a potato chip and replies to the group, “Carol Is traveling. Her and her best friend, Alice are on a 12-day vacation. They are making stops in Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis.”

“Wow,” says Bob, a cook at the Williamson Inn, “Sounds like a fun trip.”

Steve lies, “I am buying my wife her own travel agency. By driving and exploring the sites each city has to offer will help her sell destination trips to all those cities. Remember, my wife has a college degree in Leisure Travel. She knows what she is doing.”

John, a Waiter for the Williamson Inn says, “Opening a travel agency must be expensive?”

Steve replies, “Carol told me the setting up of the office is the expensive part. You know, the desks, chairs, shelving, phones, and computers.”

Pat asks” Let me know if she needs to hire someone, my wife is looking for a job.”

Steve asks Pat, a bellman for the Williamson Inn, “What is your wife’s name?”

“Anna.”

“Have Anna call me tomorrow. Betty, my secretary needs an office clerk. What kind of work does Anna do?”

“My wife was a babysitter, a dog walker, a greeter at Wal Mart, a bartender, and she worked as a secretary for a nursing home.”

“None became fulltime?” asks Steve grabbing his second beer.

“Nope. Two jobs were boring, and she quit. In the beginning she liked dog walking. She got in shape and attached to the dogs. The owners of these pets were the problem. They treated her like a slave. Besides walking the dogs, they expected her to groom, feed, and take them to the vets for their shots. A new customer’s dog bit her leg. I said that is the final straw, get another job.”

“Have Anna get hold of me tomorrow. I will put her in touch with Betty.”

“Thanks, Boss. I will tell her.”

Steve shouts, “Poker time.”

For the next 5 hours the seven men play poker, talk, and eat what goodies they all brought. Steve says good night to the last one at 1 a.m.

“Thanks again for helping Anna,” says Pat

“Drive home safe, Pat, we all had too many beers.”

For the next 30 minutes Steve cleans up and washes all the dirty dishes, silverware, and glasses. He finally goes to bed at 2 a.m.

Steve is fast asleep when his cell phone rings.

Monday, June 7th, at 9 a.m.

“Hello?”

“HI, Sleepyhead. I made it to Natchez at 1 a.m. I found a small mom and pop motel, just six units with no cameras. I am in my room now. My room fee is fifty dollars a night. I will pay cash and throw away the receipt.”

Steve replies, “Good. Mail me the postcard and have fun in Natchez. I will make a note Carol called me saying she left her cell phone in the laundry room.”

“Have a busy day at your hotel, Steve. Make sure you eat right while I am away. I do not want you skin and bones on my return.”

“Ask the hotel owners for aspirin and pretend Carol has a bad headache. Then call me again at 9 p.m.”

“I will. “Bye.”

Steve takes a shower, dresses in a nice blue suit, and goes to his hotel.

Once at his office desk he sees a missed call message taken by the front desk, from Anna. Steve shouts for Betty to come in.

Betty walks right in and asks, “How was your poker night?”

“I won two hundred. We had lots of fun, and everyone showed up this time.”

“Good to hear. You wanted to see me?”

“Yes. Here is the phone number for Anna, the wife of Pat, our bellman. She is looking for an office job.”

“I do not need a clerk. I can do It.”

“I am promoting you to Assistant-Manager. I plan to be here less and less once Carol returns. She told me to slow down and be with her more often. I told her I would. So, hire Anna.”

“What do you want to pay her a week?”

“Pay her 500 a week to start. That works out to twelve an hour. If she works out, then after her probation period of 90 days, give her a raise to fourteen an hour.”

“You are right. I will be doing less secretarial work if I am the Assistant Manager. Paperwork can get behind fast if you do not file it away daily.”

“I will meet her once you hire her,” says Steve.

“By the way, any news from Carol?”

“Only from her friend, Alice. She called me from Natchez. Carol left her cell phone and her purse in our laundry room.”

“What does Alice do for employment?”

“Carol says she is a bookkeeper for a CPA firm.”

“They must be good friends. Carol talks about her all the time. Carol mentioned once she opens her travel agency, Alice will join her.”

Steve lies, “I told Alice to tell my wife, to look for office space once she returns. That is her big birthday gift from me.”

“You are a good loving husband. The way you talk about Carol, I can tell you both are in love,” says Betty.

Steve lies, “I miss her already. We make a natural pair. We never argue.”

“I wish I had a good, loving man to come home to instead of 3 cats.”

“Billy is coming back in two months. I will have you both to lunch. I then will dart off when a call comes in from someone I told to call when we were at lunch. That way, you both can rekindle the flame.”

“I like that plan. This way it will look natural us spending time together.”

“I will tell him I am expecting two long-distance calls. This way when I receive the call it looks natural.”

“Thank you, Steve, for thinking of me.”

“You welcome, Betty. Talking about phone calls I have to start making calls.”

Betty leaves the office of her boss.

As she leaves Steve says, “Close my door, please.”

Once alone, Steve checks his stock investments with the Dow Jones. The market is in positive territory. The Dow is up one hundred points. Steve checks his portfolio. He is up 5,000 so far today.

Carol’s cell phone rings. Steve lets it go to voicemail. He plays the message. “Hello, Carol. Your order is in. Call me back with your credit card number, I can then ship the shoes right away. My name is Rebecca, at (305) 356-4765.”

Steve writes the information down. He then calls the number.

“Rebecca speaking.”

“This Is Steve Williamson. You just called for my wife, Carol.”

“Yes, I did, Steve. Your wife ordered six pairs of shoes from my client in China. Her shipment is in. She owes 742.00 dollars.”

“Are you ready for my credit card Information?”

“I am ready to copy.”

“This price includes shipping?”

“Yes. That price includes shipping.”

“What address do you show for shipping?”

“2437 Wiley Road in Atlanta.”

Steve replies, “That is correct. Here is my credit card number.”

Steve gives the woman the credit card information and confirms his package will arrive at his house within five business days.

Steve asks, “What is the name of your store?”

“Just Shoes.”

Later that day he will place the information in Carol’s shoe box in the kitchen when he arrives home.

Steve has to act like his wife is on a trip and will be coming back in 2 weeks. He knows tonight Alice will call as if Carol is calling her husband. His delay alibi is working.

Steve calls the dog boarding school.

“Henry’s Boarding, Alex speaking.”

“Yes, Alex. My name is Steve Williamson. I have three dogs in your care. I need to extend their hotel stay two more weeks.”

“Williamson did you say?”

“Yes. Steve Williamson. My three dogs are, Timber, Oreo, and Cedar.”

“I found their card. # 4365. I will mark their 2-week extension down. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“Give them all a bone, please.”

“Will do. Just to let you know your dogs are well behaved. No fights with any other dogs.”

“Thanks.”

“We will see you in two weeks. Have a wonderful day.”

“You too,” says Steve.

Carol’s cell phone rings. Caller I.D. says, ‘American Reality.’

Steve answers, “Carol Williamson’s cell phone. This is her husband, Steve.”

“Hello, sir. My name is Valerie Main. Your wife is looking for office space. Something just came on the market I wanted to show her.”

“Carol is away on a 12-day trip to Natchez, Dallas, Saint Louis, and other cities I do not remember. She left yesterday, but she forgot her cell phone and her purse. If you want, I can look at the site.”

“That would be great. It is in a super location in the lobby of the Emerald Office Building. We need to act fast on this one.”

“Give me the address and I will leave now.”

“Perfect. It Is 8436 Main Street. It has ‘Al’s Barber Shop on the door.”

“What happened to Al’s? No customers.”

“Al’ was terribly busy. There are a ton of businesspeople in this 10-story building. Al had all the business he could manage. Al died of a heart attack. He was 70 years old.”

“Sad. My GPS says 10 minutes. I will see you then.”

“I am wearing a red dress. I have long brown hair.”

“I am wearing a blue suit.”

“I will look out for you. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Steve exits his office and walks over to Betty standing between two tall filing cabinets. She is busy filing away.

Steve walks up and says, “I am going out to look at office space for Carol’s travel agency.”

“I have Anna coming here now.”

“Take her to lunch. Feel her out. Does she want to work or is her husband demanding she do. I am going to look at a lobby office at the Emerald Office Building in downtown Atlanta.”

“I know that building. I have a good friend working on the fifth floor. She is a paralegal for the Bradshaw law firm. What is there now that is vacant?”

“A barbershop called Al’s.”

“That place is for rent? He is always full when I walked by. It is a big space by the lobby elevators.”

“It just came available. Al died of a heart attack. The agent said he was 70 years old.”

“That is sad to hear. Grab that space if you can. Carol will be busy from day one. That building is full of lawyers.”

“I will be there in ten minutes. I will fill you in when I return. Have a nice lunch.”

Steve exits his hotel and walks over to a parking space with a sign reading ‘Manager only.’ He enters his Ford truck and departs the property.

Steve drives over to the Emerald Office Building. It is ten floors of glass. Steve parks his Ford F150, locks it, and enters the lobby.

He spots the real estate agent right away. Her back is to him when he walks up and says, “Hello, I am Steve Williamson.”

Valerie turns around and smiles, “I am Valerie Main.”

“My final birthday gift to Carol is for her to open her own travel agency,” lies Steve. “She called me from Natchez on her friend’s cell phone, to inform me, she left her purse behind in our laundry room, along with her cell phone. She asked me to return all her calls,” lies Steve again.

“I am glad you returned my phone call. This location is ideal for her agency. Every customer and tenant has to walk by here to exit the building or ride up in the three elevators. If Carol displays a dozen cruise ships and famous world site posters she will land customers.”

Valerie unlocks the office and the two walk in, The real estate agent says, “Once you remove the 4 hair cutting chairs, replace the carpet, paint the walls in your colors, and add your own decoration taste, you will have a high foot traffic count to draw on.”

“Steve lies and replies, I like the large windows and the elevators nearby. Can we walk over to the building directory to view the list of tenants?”

“Good Idea. Are you finished looking at this office space?”

“For now, I am. Where are the restrooms?”

“Just down the hall on the left side.”

Steve pretends to be interested in renting the space. As he looks over the tenants of the building he says, “Many law offices are in here.”

“That is because they can walk down the alley, cut over two streets and be at the courthouse in ten minutes. Plus, Management keeps this place spotless.”

Steve looks around and says, “That is true. The floors look polished. How much square feet is available, and what is the price for this space?”

“There is 1,500 square feet and the asking price is 1,500 hundred a month.”

“I will take the space for one month, and I will leave it just like it is. I will hold it till my wife can inspect this site. Will that work?”

“It should work. I get to hold onto the keys. This way the property owner knows you are not redecorating yet.”

“I have no problem with that. Explain to the property owner my wife is on a 12-day trip and she needs to view the space like I am doing now. Photos or a video will not work. I will be paying her rent anyway, so it is my only term to closing this deal.”

Valerie says, “I will be right back. The landlord’s office is on the penthouse floor.”

Steve watches the young, but cute agent walk toward the elevators. He likes the perfume she is wearing.

About 15 minutes later Valerie returns with a filled contract.

“The property owner agrees to your terms. I told them you are the owner of the Williamson Inn, and this was a birthday gift for your wife. They agreed once I told them I would hold on to Al’s Barbershop keys.”

Steve looks over the contract. He signs where it says tenant. I see the property owner wants 4,500 hundred.”

“Yes. First, last, and the security deposit. The contract would be for a year at a time if your wife likes the location.”

Steve lies, “We have the same taste. I like it. You are right, this is an ideal location. I will surprise her when she returns.”

Steve pulls out of his pocket his personal check book. He writes out the check amount. “Who do I make the check out to?”

“Make it out to my real estate company. Here is our business card. I will place the money in escrow till we close on this property.”

Steve finishes writing out his check, and he hands it to the agent.

“Tell me about you, Valerie.”

“My mom and dad own American Real Estate. I just finished college in business administration at FIU in Florida. I plan to someday take over my parents’ business.”

Steve lies again, “Let me have a stack of your business cards. I will issue them to my business connections.”

“Thanks. Have them go to our website and watch our 3-minute video. We are big on customer service.”

“Owning a hotel, I agree with you on customer service. Tell you what, call me when your parents and you are available to have dinner on me at my restaurant ‘The Fishing Camp’.”

“That is generous of you. I heard of your restaurant. I saw a commercial a while back. There are fishing nets, fishing rods, wax fish on the wall, and country music playing softly on the radio.”

“You are observant. My best friend owns a fishing camp just outside of Atlanta. I visit the spot every chance I get. Noticeably quiet, and very relaxing.”

“My Dad loves to fish. My Mother stays home and reads.”

“Have him call me. I will drive him out there, we can fish and have lunch.”

“You would do that?”

“Yes. Customer service is what I go on. If I service him, he will service me. What is your father’s name?”

“John.”

Steve hands Valerie two of his business cards and says, “Make sure John calls me, soon.”

“I sure will. He will be a happy angler when I tell him about your invite.”

“Let me walk you to your car. Where are you parked?”

“Follow me.”

Steve follows the agent to the parking lot to a red Audi 4-door.

“Here I am,” says Valerie.

“You are parked right next to my black Ford F150 truck.”

“It sure is big.”

“I know. It eats gas too. I am about to trade it in for an Acura or an electric Tesla.”

“Why not, you are only live once.”

Steve replies, “You are so right. Just do it, is what I always say.”

Steve helps the attractive woman into her car. She turns to him and says, “You are the only man I met that didn’t hit on me.”

Steve laughs and replies, “The day is young.”

Valerie laughs, “I have to admit you are good looking.” She closes her door, toots the horn, and drives away.

Steve just stands there and watches her car drive into the sunset.

Valerie watches Steve in her rear-view mirror as she drives away.

3

CHAPTER THREE

Steve enters his truck and drives straight over to the Acura dealership.

An attractive woman in her thirty’s greets him. “Morning, sir. I am Ellen Johnson. What can I help you drive away in today?”

“Your sporty Acura TLX.”

“Good choice. Do you want new or used?”

Steve hands Ellen his hotel business card and says, “New. Give me a decent price for the Acura and a fair trade in for my truck, and you have yourself a sale. Remember also, as a hotel owner, I know dozens of potential future customers for you.”

Ellen nods her head in approval and asks, “Do you want to go on a test drive today?”

“No need. I am a terribly busy man this week. I have friends that own Acura’s. A nice smooth ride for sure.”

“Any particular color?”

“Anything but black.”

“Come with me to my office. I will work hard at getting you in a new Acura today.”

Steve follows Ellen to her corner office.

“Have a seat, sir. Can I get you something to drink?”

“Do you have a vending machine? I would like chips of some kind.”

“Yes. It is just off the showroom to your right. Can I give you five ones?”

“No Thanks. I have ones. I will be right back.”

Steve locates the large vending machine just off the showroom. He inserts five ones and selects three items.

He carries them back to Ellen’s office.

Steve shows Ellen what he selected. “Please have one of my 3 Items.”

“That candy bar looks tasty. I will have the Milky Way if you do not mind.”

Steve sits in his chair and hands his sales lady the candy bar.

“Can I have your keys? I need the used car sales manager to appraise it. What year is your truck?”

Steve hands her his keys to his truck.

“My F150 Is a 2022 model, with only 7,000 miles. It has never been in an accident.”

Ellen says, “I will be right back.”

Steve watches Ellen walk over to the used car building. He sees a man driving away in his truck. He sees his sales agent returning to her desk.

“May I call you, Steve?”

“Yes, you may, Ellen”

Ellen laughs at her customer’s reply.

“Do you want stick or automatic?”

“Automatic.”

Do you want the 272-power train or the 355 top of the line performance package?”

“I will take the top of the line, fully loaded TLX.”

“The 272 TLX base model goes for 44,000 and the 355 top of the line goes for 59,000 fully loaded.”

“Explain what fully loaded means, please.”

“The top of the line 355 horsepower turbo v-6 with automatic, including the wheel and tire high-performance package on the sports sedan.”

“That is what I want. The best of the best.”

Ellen’s office phone rings. She grabs a pen and paper and writes while listening. She hangs up the phone and says to Steve, “My used car manager will offer you 30,000 dollars for the truck.”

“So, what will my out-the-door purchase price be?”

“I can let you have the Acura fully loaded model we discussed go for 56,000, minus the trade-in of 30,000 dollars, leaves you owing 26,000 and some change.”

“I know you are treating me fairly. I appreciate that, Ellen. You have yourself a deal.”

“You have yourself a new car.”

“Yes. I do. I do Indeed.”

Ellen asks, “One last question. How do you want to pay for your new car today?”

“I will pay you by my hotel check. I will pick my car up after my check clears.”

“Sounds good,” says Ellen sticking her hand out for Steve to shake.

“How long till my check clears?”

“I say 3 days at the most.”

“Here is another business card of mine. Call me when I can pick-up my new car.”

“Is the color white ok with you?”

“White is a pretty color.”

“I will have it washed and waxed for pick-up.”

Steve stands-up and says, “Thanks for a quick purchase. That was painless.”

“The pleasure was all mine.”

Steve drives home. He parks his truck in his garage. He checks Carol’s cell phone for messages. There was only one from her mother. Steve puts his truck keys on the counter and gives his mother-in-law a call from his cell phone.

“Hello?”

“Afternoon, Ashley.”

“Hi, Steve. Can I speak with my daughter?”

Steve lies and replies, “Your daughter left her cell phone with me. She went on a 12-day road trip with a friend of hers. They are making stops in Natchez, Mississippi, Dallas, Saint Louis, and other cities.”

“What is her friend’s name and cell phone number?”

“I cannot give it out. Carol said she has been under tremendous stress with school studies and wanted a break from everybody. I can take a message if you want?”

“That doesn’t sound like something my Carol would do without telling me of her plans.”

“She left her purse and cell phone with me. I gave her 4,000 thousand dollars as a birthday present. She said she would not even call me unless it was an emergency.”

“Strange. This is strange behavior for sure.”

“My wife said she would drop me and you a postcard from every city they visited.”

“When did my baby leave?”

“Her and her friend left around 6 p.m. Sunday night.”

“Why so late? Why not leave on Monday morning fully rested?”

“I do not know. The ladies said they were going to take turns driving.”

“Let me know when you hear from her. Tell my baby she can call me any hour here in Paris.”

“If she calls, I will tell her. Carol said she was going to write you postcards from different cities on her trip. So, wait 3 more days before you call me again.”

“I will wait for my postcards. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.”

Steve calls his hotel and asks for his secretary.

“This is, Betty.”

“Hello, Betty. I will be home the rest of the day. I will be in around 9 a.m. tomorrow.”

“Sure thing, Steve. Thanks for letting me know.”

“No problem, Betty. Bye.”

At 9 that night, Alice calls Steve as planned.

“This Is Steve.”

“Hi, It’s me, Alice.”

“Alice who?” jokes Steve. “How is Natchez?”

“I love it here. I visited a couple of antebellum homes, rode in a horse drawn wagon around town. Very cool.”

Alice and Steve talk for about 10 minutes, then agree to speak again in the morning at 9 a.m.

Tuesday Morning, June 8th, at 9 a.m.

Steve wakes to his wife’s cell phone ringing on his nightstand.

“This is Steve.”

“Hi, Steve. My trip has been a success so far. I spent less than two hundred dollars.”

“That is good. I was going to tell you, any money you bring back you can keep.”

“That is nice to know. I studied the USA map last night. I want to do a different route. A shorter route, as I do not like to drive. What happens if I visit Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis only?”

“Nothing happens. Still file a missing person report in Saint Louis and mail the three postcards to Carol’s mom in France, and my three postcards to me. When her mom receives the postcards in her daughter’s handwriting, she will know I was not lying to her.”

“To tell you the truth I do not like to drive. I am doing this driving trip for us. I know the postcards in Carol’s handwriting mailed to

you, and to her mom from each city we visit makes it look like Carol is traveling. I just do not like to drive and drive.”

“I understand. Do your route. It works as you are still visiting three key cities, Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis. I will fly you places from now on. You do like to fly, right?”

Alice laughs and replies, “I love to fly.”

“Good to hear. Our next trip will be by air, in first class,” says Steve. “Each time you call me, just say, Hi, Steve. We never know who is around listening in on our conversations.”

The hotel owner knows Alice is his weak link to him getting away with murder. All he has to say to the Detectives is Carol left Sunday night at 6 pm, that Alice said they were loving every minute of their road trip. Steve will pretend he is heartbroken that Carol is missing. Steve does not want to hurt Alice. He just wants to get away with murder.

Alice says, “I know Carol’s dad collects t-shirts. I bought him one from Natchez.”

Steve says, “You are correct. Glad you remembered, as I forgot about the t-shirt collection.”

Alice says, “My pizza order is here. I will call you in the morning. Bye.”

Steve looks out his living room window and thinks of his next lover, Valerie, or Ellen.

Steve changes into his swimming trunks and jumps into his pool feet first. He does ten laps and exits the pool.

Steve places his cell phone on mute. He then jumps in his pool feet first again.

Steve exercise in the pool for 30 more minutes. He then walks to his bedroom and changes into a gray suit. He grabs his truck keys, his cell phone, opens his garage, backs his truck out, and departs the neighborhood.

At a traffic light an Acura TLX pulls up in the next lane over. Steve toots his horn and the driver rolls down his passenger window and leans over.

Steve shouts, “How do you like your Acura?”

The man signals with a thumbs up.

The traffic light turns green and Steve watches the Acura zoom off.

Steve shakes his head at what he saw. ‘Showoff.’

At the next traffic light Steve calls Ellen.

He has her cell phone programed in as Acura.

“Hello?”

“Good morning, Ellen. This Is Steve Williamson.”

Hi, Steve. Are you calling to order a second new vehicle from me?”

“No. I saw my Acura TLX at a traffic light. I watched the man zoom off when the light turned green. I then pictured you in my passenger seat and me taking you to lunch.”

“I would love to make your picture come true. When you finally come in to complete your purchase, we can then have breakfast, lunch, or dinner. I have a question. Are you married, getting a divorce, engaged, or single?”

“I am married. My wife’s name is Carol. I have no kids. I married my wife 9 months ago. Next week I plan to file for divorce. I am in a sham of a marriage. I married what people call a Gold Digger. She married me for my money only.”

“How sad. Are you sure she is a Gold Digger?”

“Yes. Her best friend told me last week. It all makes sense now. Once I added Carol to my personal and business checking accounts, she became her true self. She bought a new Volvo that cost 50,000 dollars, plus clothes, shoes, and jewelry.”

“Are you both in the same house, the same bed?”

“We are in separate bedrooms. There is no love making going on. We pretend to everyone we are a loving couple. This charade is getting old.”

“What does Carol do for a living?”

“She goes to college either in a classroom or online. She is two semesters away from a 2-year degree in Leisure Travel. She thinks I will buy her a travel agency. I removed her from my personal and business checking accounts just in time. She was about to write a 20,000-dollar check for a lease, for computers, for furniture, and decorating expenses.”

“How did you know that was her plan?”

“Her best friend told me. She was in Carol’s Volvo driving around and my wife said she only married me for my money.”

“What is this girlfriend’s first name?”

“Alice.”

“Are you sleeping with Alice?”

Steve lies and says, “No, I am not.”

“Why would Alice risk breaking up with her best friend by telling you Carol’s plans?”

“Alice’s ex-husband lied to her all the time. He was in college getting his law degree while Alice worked two jobs so he could become a lawyer. Once he was in law practice, he divorced her.”

Steve continues with his made-up story. “When Carol opened up to Alice and said the real reason, she married me was not for love, but for money, Alice thought of her ex-husband lying to her to get his way.”

“I have a confession to make to you,” says Ellen.

“What confession is that?”

“My ex-husband was full of lies. He cheated on me with my best friend. They are married now and living in Texas. I also worked two jobs so he could get his restaurant off the ground.”

“What Is the name of the restaurant?”

“CJ’s here in Atlanta. He has two others In Texas.”

“I never ate there,” says Steve.

“I found out later what CJs stood for.”

“What does the 2 letters mean?”

“Con Job.”

“Really?”

“Yes. He laughed when he told me in the court room.”

Steve says, “I have a friend with a data company. He calls it TLO.”

“What does those 3 letters mean?”

“The Last One.” He started and sold data companies all his life. This was his last one. He died at his desk in his office. He was 45 years old.”

“Let us get together and have a beer and see where this leads us. I only ask that you be truthful.”

“I will be truthful, Ellen, lies Steve as he pulls into his hotel’s parking lot.

“Call me after 5 p.m. so we can meet for that beer,” says Ellen.

“Will do. See you later,” says Steve walking into his hotel lobby.

Steve walks to the stairs and climbs them to the second floor. Steve walks up behind Betty with her back to him. She is busy filing a large stack of papers.

“Morning, Betty.”

“Morning, Steve. You sound happy.”

Steve lies, “I am happy. I had a nice 10-minute chat with Alice. They are driving to Dallas now. They are having the time of their lives. Alice says they are taking photos with Carol’s Canon camera.”

“You didn’t speak with Carol?”

“No. Alice said Carol went for a morning walk.”

“I put messages in your in box for you to review.”

“How was your meeting with Anna?”

“Her and I hit It off. She starts training tomorrow. Will you be here for me to introduce you to our new office clerk?”

“I should be, but you never know what might come up as a hotel owner.”

“True. The same thing as an Assistant Manager,” laughs Betty.

“I have calls to make. I will be closing my office door.”

“I will leave you alone. I want to catch-up on my filing.”

Steve walks into his office. He sits behind his desk, removes his shoes, places his feet on his desk, and kicks back.

Steve makes a cell phone call to a cell number programed in his phone as travel agent.

“This is Valerie.”

“That is a pretty name.”

“Who am I speaking with?”

“What? You do not know my voice?”

“I have no clue who you are.”

“I am the man that is coming in to see you today to take that lobby office in the Emerald Office Building.”

“Is this Mr. Williamson?”

“The one and only.”

“Let me check my notes. Your wife Carol was to inspect this location in person once she returns from her 12-day road trip. Is she back early?”

“No. Carol is having fun on this adventure. I am going to surprise her with keys to her new travel agency location. I am ready to see you to sign the lease.”

“Great. I am available now if this is a suitable time for you?”

“I will make it the right time. Do I travel to your office, or do we meet somewhere else?”

“Let us meet at Al’s Barbershop.”

“Great. I will see you in 20 minutes. I will first stop at McDonald’s for a to go coffee. Can I treat you to a drink of some kind?”

“That would be nice of you. I will have a Pepsi with no ice.”

“Will Coke do if they don’t carry Pepsi?”

“Yes. I like both brands.”

“See you shortly at Al’s,” says Steve as he exits his office.

He tells Betty he will be back. Steve enters his truck and departs his property.

Steve drives over to the nearest McDonald’s drive-up window. There are no customers in front of him this time. Steve tells the speaker box his drink orders.

“That will be three dollars and fifty-five cents. Drive forward, please.”

Steve gives the young girl the exact amount.

“Please, drive forward for your drinks.”

Steve drives forward and is handed his coffee, and a Pepsi. “Is the straw with my order?”

“Yes, sir. I also put in the bag extra creams and extra packets of sugar.”

“I like coming to this McDonald’s. I always receive good service.”

“Good to hear you are satisfied. We hope to see you again soon.”

Steve drinks his coffee while driving to meet the real estate agent. He does not want her or anyone else contacting him or Carol for any reason. The less they know that Carol is missing the better.

The hotel owner arrives at the Emerald Office Building with Valerie’s Pepsi.

She spots him as he walks in the main doors. Valerie views him carrying a McDonald bag in his hand. She is all smiles.

“Here you go. Here is your Pepsi. I feel like an Uber driver.”

Valerie says, “You are fast for an Uber driver. I have the office space unlocked for you to view.”

Steve walks in and sees the four barber chairs. “Can we reach Al’s family members and ask them to remove the barber chairs, and collect anything else they want to keep or sell?”

Valerie says, “In Al’s lease contract there is a daughter in Utah. I contacted her about the four chairs. She was rude over the telephone. Her exact words were, ‘Do what you want with his barber shop contents, and she hung up on me.’”

Steve asks, “What is the plan for the 4 chairs and the barber contents?”

Valerie replies while sipping on her Pepsi, “I called local barbershops in the immediate area. I have one coming tomorrow to haul everything away.”

“The name?”

“I made a deal with BSA Barber Salon Academy. They will clean out the barber shop and not charge any fees to do so. They told me the barber chairs will be for the future students that will enroll for the next class.”

“Thanks for calling someone about the chairs. Once I sign the lease will I have to be here when BSA arrives?”

“Normally, yes. I will do it as I know you must be busy over at your hotel.”

“I am busy. Have your father call me. I can pick him up or he can meet me to go to the fish camp.”

“I will call my dad, sometime later today. He was happy that someone was thinking of him. You will like my dad.”

“I like you. You are easy to talk to, so your father will be easy to talk with as well.”

Valerie looks at Steve and says, “I like you as well.”

“Any boyfriend or boyfriends standing in my way of asking you out?”

“No. When will your divorce be final?”

“I am leaving from here to see my attorney to file papers with the court. I feel in my heart I am single now.”

“That is a satisfactory answer. I am available this week to go on a lunch or dinner meal date.”

“Fantastic. Let me sign the contract. You will keep the keys till BSA removes the barber contents. When you hand me my new set of keys to my space, we will go to lunch from there.”

Valerie hands her client the rental agreements to sign. Steve pulls out his ink pen and signs in five places. Valerie hands him a set of the contract he just signed.

Valerie looks at Steve and says, “It was nice doing business with you, Steve. Please, spread the word about my services if you will.”

Steve replies, “I will tell every female I know about your services.”

Valerie laughs at that comment. “I am happy you are protecting me from other men, Steve.”

“Valerie, the more I see you, the more I talk to you, the more time I want to spend with you.”

“That is nice of you to say those things about me.”

“It is true, every word. Let me say bye now. I want to meet with my lawyer to file my divorce papers. Valerie, would you like a copy?”

“I trust you. You are an honest man.”

Steve looks at Valerie, he smiles, then lies, “I am honest. I am a hardworking man, and I am faithful to the woman I am dating.”

“I look forward to seeing how this relationship unfolds.”

Steve replies, “Me, too. I will leave now for my divorce lawyer meeting.”

Valerie replies, “I am 100% sure Carol will love this space.”

“This travel agency she wants to open will be my going out on your own gift.”

“Nice gift,” says Valerie as she turns out the lights and locks the front door to Al’s.

Steve asks, “Can I walk you to your car again?”

“Not today. I have a meeting with the building owner regarding other offices that may come up for rent. Thanks, Steve for the offer to escort me. Speak again soon.”

The hotel owner watches his next lover walk to and enter an elevator.

Steve drives over to the law firm that does all his legal work for his hotel. Everyone at the Anderson Law Firm knows him.

“Morning, Ginger. I need to speak with Joey Anderson, please.”

“Well, Hello, Stranger. I have not seen you since your wedding”
How Is your wife?”

Carol is on a road trip with a friend.”

“Tell her I said, Hello. Let me page Joey for you. I know he is in. Have a seat in our lobby. I will locate him for you.”

Ginger dials an extension and talks to someone on the other end of the line.

“Helen says have a seat in the conference room. He is on the telephone long distance.”

Steve replies, “You do not have to show me. I know where your conference room is.”

“Want something to drink?”

“Coffee, 4 creams and 2 sugars.”

“I will bring it to you.”

Ginger steps into the firm’s kitchen next to her front desk.

Steve walks down a long hallway to a sign on the door that reads ‘Conference Room.’

Steve has a seat in a leather chair and waits.

Ginger walks in with his drink. “Helen said Joey is off the call now and will be right in.”

Ginger places the coffee down on a drink mat.

Steve gives her a thumbs up.

Joey walks in the conference room with a notepad and ink pen.

“Is this personal or business related?”

Joey shakes Steve’s hand as he asks the question.

“Personal this time. I want to divorce Carol, but she has no clue I am filing on her. I found out from her best friend that she never loved me. She was a Gold-Digger after my money.”

“Are you sure? I spoke to your wife at your wedding. She talked and acted like your wedding was too expensive. Just the opposite of what you are telling me now.”

“Carol played it cool for about 60 days of marriage Then she spent 50,000 dollars buying a top-of-the-line Volvo and paying in full on a company check.”

“How was your wife able to pull that off?”

“I was stupid. I added her to my personal and business checking accounts. Her best friend has been riding with her in the Volvo, and Carol is saying how she fooled me into marrying her. My sex life is nonexistent, too.”

“Georgia law is on her side. I asked you to do a pre-nuptial, remember?”

“I remember. I wish I listened to you.”

“You may be right, Carol insisted on a pre-nuptial when we had a discussion on the topic, when you 2 bought the house, you live in.”

“I know Georgia law is on her side, Right?”

“I am afraid so. Give me facts. How much did you buy the house for and how much do you owe the bank?”

“I hate debt. I paid cash for the residence, 300,000 dollars.”

“Carol owns her own vehicle, which she will keep. What was the hotel worth on the date you two married?”

“I think 10 Million.”

“How much do you owe on it?”

“My parents gave me the hotel about 6 years ago. I since paid It off.” I told you I hate debt.”

“What cash do you have on hand?”

“I had a meeting with my accountant today. I have 85,000 in the business account, another 35,000 in our personal checking account, and 400,000 in a joint savings account.”

“Where is Carol?”

“Traveling by car to Natchez, Mississippi, Dallas, Saint Louis and other cities I do not remember.” It is her birthday present from me.”

“Let us do this. Hold off on filing any divorce papers. I will call her to see me alone. Let me feel her out on what she is expecting in a divorce. She can claim 50 percent of all assets.

“I have a question,” says Steve. “If Carol died in a car accident while on her road trip, can her parents file and receive 50 percent of my assets?”

“No. It ends with her Death. It would happen if you signed a pre-nuptial. It would be on the contract. One last question. Does Carol and you have Life Insurance?”

Carol has one million on me. I have done on her. I am worth more dead than alive,” jokes Steve.

“You are. Look both ways when crossing the road,” laughs Joey.

“How are your 5 children doing?”

“Thanks for asking. I have two that graduated, one in his first year of college, and two still in high school.”

“What will the twins do? Will they go to the college you attended?”

“They have not said yet. I hope they do follow me like their three brothers did.”

“I will take your advice and I will wait to see what Carol tells you.”

“One last question. Do you have a lover on the side? If you do, break it off till I can get Carol to agree to the divorce package I will present her.”

“I do have a lover. Her best friend, Alice.”

“If Carol finds out you are cheating, and with her best friend, I believe she will be mad as hell and will clean your clock financially.”

“I will take your advice. I will be a good, faithful husband,” lies Steve.

Steve stands up and shakes Joey’s hand.

“Thanks for the advice. How much do I owe you for your time with me today?”

“Let us barter. My time today is free, and you treating my family to lunch is free. Do I need to make reservations at your restaurant, The Fishing Camp?”

“Deal. You have a deal,” says Steve. “Call me when you are ready for that free lunch.”

“Let me walk you out. You look fit. Are you working out?”

Steve replies, “I normally work out in the gym, but with COVID floating around, I decided to swim in my pool.”

“Good Idea, avoid indoor places if you can.”

“We opened an outdoor dining section. Try that when you come for your free meal.”

“I will do that, thanks” says Joey as he watches his client enter the elevator.

Once back in his vehicle Steve checks his voicemail on his cell phone. There were old messages from Alice, posing as Carol.

Steve calls Valerie but gets her voice message instead. He leaves his future lover a message.

“HI, Fox. I met with my attorney. He said to hold off on filing divorce papers. He wants to talk to Carol first to see if he can settle without going to court. I will let you know what he tells me after meeting with Carol.”

Steve returns to his hotel. Betty runs to him. “We have a problem.”

“What problem is that?”

“I was about to text you. A Mr. Jake Welch staying in room 51 is complaining about his lunch order, either it is too cold, too hot, too tough, a real complainer if you ask me.”

“Walk me to him, say I am the Manager, not the Owner.”

Betty walks ahead of her boss to the dining room. She walks over to Mr. Welch’s table. “Excuse me, sir. I want to introduce you to the Hotel Manager, Steve.”

Both men shake hands.

Steve says, “What is your complaint about your meal today?”

“Today is my last business day. I travel back to Chicago at 6 tonight. I wanted to treat myself to one last meal. I never tried this restaurant before. I was going to order fish when I saw the steak listed. I asked the Waiter for a medium rare, and it came to me overcooked and hard to cut, see,” says the customer as he tries to cut the meat.

“Have whatever you want on the menu including dessert, all on the house. If you are not hungry now, and want to come back at 4,

before your flight that is up to you. Do you know your Waiter's name?"

"Yes. His name tag said, Phil. He is an excellent Waiter. He blamed the condition of the meat on the new cook."

"I will go in the kitchen, and I will tell Phil your meal is free including dessert. I can give you a ride to the airport if you like."

"If you can give me a lift that would be great. The Uber drivers do not always show up on time."

"Go to the front desk. Just ask for Steve, the Manager. I will come out front and I will drive you to the airport."

"Can I maybe get something to go, to take with me so, I can eat it while I am waiting for my flight?"

"No problem. I will tell the Waiter what is going on, that there will be no charge. I hope you stay with us if, and when you return to Atlanta."

Steve walks into the kitchen and locates Phil.

"Your customer at table 9, his meal is on the house. If he wants a meal to go, that is on the house. If he leaves you no tip, I want to know about it. I will have my hotel give you a tip."

"I am sorry you have to get involved. He was unhappy with any suggestion I offered."

"All I ask from all my staff is to be friendly, polite, and if that doesn't work call me."

"I checked; he is checking out today."

“That is correct. I am taking him to the airport this afternoon. If we can make a guest feel welcomed, they will visit us again, and that is what I want.”

Steve walks to his office. Betty knocks.

“Come in.”

“Is our guest happy?”

“Yes. I am taking him to the airport. From there I am going home.”

“Will you be in tomorrow?”

“Bright and early, maybe 7 a.m.”

“I will be here at 8 a.m. 7 Is too early for me. We have material to go over. Have you heard from Carol today?”

“I have. She mailed me this postcard from Natchez. Steve gives the postcard to Betty to read.

“Carol has nice handwriting. I told her I love her print.”

“I like her handwriting style myself. I plan to save every postcard from her trip. I plan to make her a travel board she can display in her travel agency I plan to buy her, as her last birthday present.”

“Her own business, She will be excited. She told me once that was her dream, her own travel agency.”

“I plan to just write her a check for whatever the space cost, plus furniture, and decorative expenses. We will advertise to future hotel customers we own a travel agency and can book their guest for them.”

“That is an excellent idea, Boss.”

“I can’t wait for my wife to return,” lies Steve. “I looked at a space at the Emerald Office Building that I think is perfect.”

Betty looks at her watch. “I want to finish my filing today before I go home.”

“Anna is coming in tomorrow, right?”

“Yes. I told her 9 a.m., sharp.”

Steve yawns. “I have not had a good night’s sleep since Carol went on her trip. Wake me up at 4 p.m.”

Betty nods her head and replies, “Will do.”

“Close my door, please”

Betty closes her boss’s office door.

Steve pulls out a murphy bed hidden in the wall. He climbs in bed and falls right to sleep.

Betty knocks on Steve’s office door right on time.

Steve says, “Come in.”

“It is 4 p.m.”

” Bring me a cup of coffee with four creams and two sugars, please?”

“No problem. Do you want a sweet roll with it?”

“Why not. Have the kitchen heat me up a cheese Danish.”

“About 10 minutes later Betty knocks on his office door.

“Come in.”

“Here is your cup of coffee and Danish.”

“Has the front desk or our guest, Mr. Welch called yet?”

“No calls from anyone.”

Steve replies, “I will flip on the television to the stock market, eat my Danish, and have my cup of coffee till our guest calls me to take him to the airport.”

Betty asks, “My filing is all done. It is just past four. Can I go home early?”

“You can go home anytime you like. Be safe.”

“Thanks, Boss. See you tomorrow. I will introduce you to Anna. I will be in at 8 a.m.”

At 4:30 p.m. the front desk calls Steve’s office.

“Steve, here.”

“Boss, this Is Gavin at the front desk. I just checked Mr. Welch out of his hotel room. He says he is ready for his ride to the airport.”

Gavin, I will be right there. Do not let the customer know I am the owner; Just tell him I am the Manager.”

“Will do, Boss.”

Gavin turns to the customer and says, “Our Manager, Steve will be here in 5 minutes to drive you to the airport.”

Steve walks down the stairs to the lobby. He says, “Ready for your taxi ride to the airport?”

“I am ready. I travel light. I carry my clothes in this large gym bag.”

“Come with me to my F150 parked to the right of the front door.”

Steve and the customer climb into Steve’s truck. As Steve is backing out, he asks, “Where are you headed to, Home?”

“I wish. I fly to Chicago for a day, then to Miami, before heading home, which is Dallas.”

“You must be in sales I bet?”

“Yes and no. I own a restaurant franchise system. I am looking for spots to place more franchise units in.”

Steve asks, “What type restaurants are we talking about?”

“Mama Mia Sandwiches.”

“I never heard of Mama Mia in my life,” responds Steve.

“I am looking for space and applicants in Atlanta.”

“Any luck in finding your applicants?”

“I receive applicants for my franchise. I have to fly-in, meet with each applicant and decide if I want to issue them a franchise or not. This trip I struck out. Not one of the six applicants felt right. I am

not into the sale of a franchise, but more into the personality of the buyer. “I want people that make me laugh.”

“How big is a franchise store?”

“The size can vary. We try finding space inside office buildings on the ground floor, in the food court at malls, or in a portable food truck on wheels.”

Mr. Welch opens his large gym bag and pulls out a brochure and hands it to Steve.

At a traffic light waiting for the green light Steve scans over the brochure.

“What is your first name, Mr. Welch?”

“Jake.”

Jake asks, “What is your last name, Steve?”

“I own Williamson Inn named after my last name.”

Jake asks, “Would you like a small franchise in your hotel?”

“I could place a franchise food truck parked by the entrance to my hotel. You do not even know if I am funny.”

“You know customer service is the key to serving the public. You offered me a new meal, a drive to the airport, now that is service big time.”

“You are right, Jake. Customer service is number 1 in my book. What does a franchise cost?”

“For being so nice, so professional I will give it to you for free.”

“No way. What is the catch?”

Jake laughs, “There is no catch. I think my food stand would do great in Atlanta at your hotel. You will have instant foot traffic as people will come back repeatedly. That is what I am finding out in cities like Memphis, and Charleston.”

“Why me, I do not understand and for free?”

“You will bring customer service and attention to my franchise system.”

“How much do I earn for allowing your food stand on my property?”

“Besides a free franchise, you will receive 20% of profits of all items sold.”

“What can I earn a year?”

“My other locations are making on average 4 hundred a day. Times this by 365 days by your 20%. All for letting my franchise system be on your property. That is at least 30,000 dollars a year pure profit.”

Steve holds out his hand for Jake to shake. “You have a deal.”

Jake adds, “I have over one hundred stands across the nation. I want to have ten stands a state. This is five hundred units easy.”

Steve says, “Do we go to you, or do you come to us for the training?”

“We come to you. We will be there every step of the way.”

“How long is training for the average stand?”

“On average 3 days max. Come to our Dallas area. We have nine stands up and running already. Let me show you how an operation should look like in your hotel.”

“Do you have stands in hotels?”

“Yes. In Hotels, malls, stores like Wal Mart, about any place the crowds go, we go. We can set up quickly at sporting events, too. Daytona Five Hundred is a big drawl. The Kentucky Derby is another. You name it we have done it.”

“Is your family in your franchise system?”

“Yes. I have five brothers; two sisters and our kids help when not in school. Our stands play music, it is relaxing. We have right now twelve different sandwich combos we make. You will love the taste, too.”

“I cannot wait to be part of your success, “says Steve as he arrives at the Atlanta airport. “What airline are you flying out on?”

“Delta, always Delta for me. Delta is a good running airline with trained staff.”

“Call me when you are home in Dallas. I will fly out to be with you. Just give me two days’ notice.”

“Will do. Thanks for the ride. You are better than Uber, “laughs Jake as he shakes Steve’s hand.

Steve drives to his residence. There is mail in the mailbox. Steve walks into his quiet residence. He changes into his swimsuit and jumps into his large pool.

Steve swims for 30 minutes. He lays on a lounge chair and falls asleep. He sleeps till his cell phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Steve. What are you doing?”

“I was sleeping in my lounge chair by the pool. I exercised for thirty minutes. Swimming for me is relaxing. Where are you, Alice? and what time is it?”

“I am in the Cowboy Motel, ten miles outside Dallas. There are no cameras to worry about. I have an end unit room. It is 7 p.m. here. Have you received my postcard from Natchez?”

“Yes, I have It. Did you mail the postcard to Carol’s parents?”

“Yes. They will receive it soon. I expect Carol’s mother will call you as soon as she gets It. I plan to stay in and read my library books I brought with me. Tomorrow I am in Saint Louis.”

“You know Alice, I could not have pulled this crime off without you. Where would you like to live once this missing wife is over with and dies down.”

“I always wanted to live in Alaska. I have a good high school friend living in Fairbanks. We could go gold panning, sightseeing, visit the parks that dot the State, and live in a real log cabin in the woods.”

“Alaska it is,” says Steve. “Fairbanks here we come.”

“I have been eating hamburgers, fries, and drinking Vanilla shakes. I bet I will be ten pounds overweight by the time I reach Atlanta.”

“Make sure you are obeying all the traffic laws. We do not want any police documentation showing you are traveling alone.”

“Too late.”

“What,” says Steve raising his voice.

“Just joking. I am driving five miles under the speed limit. I will be careful.”

“Great to know. Call me about 9 a.m. tomorrow, please.”

“I will. Speak to you In the morning, says Alice.

“Soon we will be free in Alaska. It has a nice ring to it, Alaska. Goodnight.”

Steve microwaves a TV dinner. He is about to eat his Saulsbury steak with corn when his cell phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Steve, Ellen speaking. Is this an inconvenient time for you to talk?”

“Heck no. I am always available for my car sales lady. Is my Acura ready for me?”

“Yes, it is. I had it vacuumed, washed, and waxed. You are set to go.”

“What time tomorrow can I pick my new car up?”

“Anytime from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you want me to be the one that hands over your new car keys, I am here at the dealership tomorrow from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.”

“How about 5 p.m. for the car and 5:30 p.m. for dinner with me?”

“I like the sound of that plan. See you tomorrow at five p.m.”

The microwave beeps to let Steve know his TV dinner is ready. He carries a tray with his meal over to his lounge chair by the pool.

Steve just lays in his lounge chair, and daydreams of him driving his sporty Acura with Ellen in the passenger seat.

4

CHAPTER FOUR

At 10 p.m. Steve gets in his wife’s Volvo and drives the four miles to McDonald’s by the interstate. He has a taste for fries and a coke.

Steve drives the four miles back to his garage. He likes the way the Volvo performs.

Steve crawls into bed, and dreams of his new car, and the hot dish of a sales lady that sold him his Acura.

Wednesday morning, June 9th, at 9 a.m.

Alice calls Steve as planned.

“Morning, Steve. How did you sleep?”

“I slept like a baby. I bought a new car, an Acura TLX with the performance tire package. I pick the Acura up at 5 p.m. today.”

“No more F150 for you?”

“Afraid not. I cannot wait to drive you around town in my new Acura,” says Steve as he makes his breakfast.

“I mailed your Dallas postcard yesterday to you. I mailed Carol’s mom her two postcards already from Natchez, and Dallas. I will mail the Saint Louis card later this afternoon.”

“That works for me,” responds Steve. “Did you buy a t-shirt for Carol’s dad, for his collection?”

“Yes. I bought him a t-shirt of a cowboy on a horse. I have been wearing the blond wig and sunglasses in areas where I know there are cameras. All I have to say to the police is, Carol loved to walk, so she walked everywhere, and I stayed in and read my books.”

“Good idea, Alice. I like the Idea you are wearing the wig and pretending you are Carol.”

Steve thinks to himself, as long as Alice mails the postcards to him and Carol’s mom from Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis, his alibi plan still works.

“That works for me,” says Steve. “Just continue to call me in the morning and evening each night and wear the wig now and then as if you are Carol.”

Alice replies, “So you are not mad at me for cutting the trip short?”

Steve says, “No. I agree with you. I know how you hate driving. Cut the trip short and come home.”

“One more idea I think makes it look good for a reason for Carol to want to leave Atlanta and go on a road trip,” says Alice.

“What idea is that?”

“Carol collects travel brochures of things to do in each city. She does this because you are helping her get her travel agency started.”

“I like that idea,” replies Steve. “That is believable.”

“On our road trip she tells me what her thoughts are. She plans to offer short bus trips to the elderly citizens living in nursing homes, casino junket flights to Biloxi, Mississippi, and walking tours for people that love to walk like her mother.”

“Great ideas, Alice. You should be in marketing, not bookkeeping.”

“Thanks, for allowing me to cut this trip short. I was looking at the map, and Las Vegas and back was too long of a drive for me. Besides, I do not gamble, so why drive all the way to Las Vegas?”

“That is believable. Tell the police Carol wanted to drive to Las Vegas, but you did not. Say to the police in Saint Louis, Carol kept mentioning she wanted to go to Las Vegas, and the man she met in a bar will fly her to Las Vegas in his private plane.”

“Another idea I have; I stay 2 more nights in Saint. Louis checking the bars, speaking to bouncers, and waiting for Carol to return to our hotel room.”

Steve says with excitement in his voice, “Super idea. Do stay in Saint Louis and search for your best friend. This makes our alibi stronger. We just tell the police Carol is traveling.”

“I am collecting all the travel brochures I can find”

Steve says, “Call me back tonight around the same time. I have a meeting I must attend.”

Steve slips into a pair of swimming trunks. He opens his bedroom sliding door and goes for a long swim. An hour later he departs in his F150 truck for the last time.

Steve stops at a McDonald's and orders a coffee and an egg sandwich. He takes his truck through a car wash, he vacuums the interior, and drives to his hotel.

Steve waives to his front desk clerks as he climbs the stairs to the second floor. Betty is not in her office. He calls Jack from her office phone.

“Yes, Betty?”

“Morning, Jack, Steve here. I will be spending less and less time in my office. Tell Betty this as well. She is not at her desk.”

“Betty had a dental appointment she forgot to tell you about. She should be in by 1 p.m.”

“When you speak with her ask how her meeting went with Anna.”

“Thanks for mentioning Anna's name. Betty called her this morning and said her first day with your hotel will be Thursday morning and not today.”

“Tell Betty that it was smart of her to cancel and reschedule the first day of a new employee in her office.”

“Will do.”

“Talk to you later, Jack. Bye.”

Steve takes off his shoes, places his feet up on his desk, and grabs his phone directory off his desk. Under R for real estate, he calls Valerie.

“Hello?”

“HI, Valerie, Steve here. I thought lunch was today, but I just remembered it Is tomorrow at 1 p.m.”

“Correct. Can I bring my father along? He wants to meet his future fishing friend.”

“Great Idea. Let us do It. Say 1 p.m. tomorrow”

“See you at 1 p.m. tomorrow, Bye.”

Steve calls his best man.

“Ralph speaking.”

“HI, Buddy. Care to play a round of golf? I can do nine holes.”

“Do you have your clubs with you?”

Steve laughs and replies, “I do now. I keep them in my truck.”

“Last time we had to hunt you up a set, remember?”

“I do remember. That reminds me I need to call that golf pro. I owe him a free lunch.”

“His name is Dennis Donnelly. His phone number Is 468-2889.”

“See you in 20 minutes at the Winddance Golf course. I have to make this one quick call to Dennis.”

Steve calls the pro shop at Winddance.

“Winddance Pro Shop, Willy speaking.”

“Yes. Can I speak with Dennis Donnelly, please?”

“May I ask who’s calling?”

“Steve Williamson.”

“Did you want to borrow my golf clubs, again?”

“No. I called to tell you to bring your family and have a free dinner at my hotel at The Fish Camp Restaurant.”

“I thought you were just joking.”

“No. No Joke. Just let me know which lunch or dinner you want. I will tell my food manager your whole meal with dessert is on the house.”

“Wow. Thanks, Steve.”

“I will see you in 20 minutes. My Buddy Ralph will join me for nine holes, and I have my clubs with me this time.”

“Good. I will see you both soon.”

Steve drives straight to Winddance Golf Course. He grabs his clubs from the truck bed and walks inside the pro shop. He spots Dennis out on the driving range. He walks outside to say hello.

Steve watches Dennis give a young man swinging instructions. Dennis sees him watching. With his right hand he shows five fingers. Ralph walks up and stands by Steve. They shake hands.

Ralph asks, “Have you ever had swinging lessons from Dennis?”

“No. No lessons from anyone. I am a natural,” laughs Steve.

“I have,” replies Ralph. I have more confidence in my swing, stance, and driving accuracy.”

Steve and Ralph chat while waiting for Dennis to be free.

Dennis walks over and shakes both men’s hands. “Which 9 do you both want to play, the front or the back?”

“We will play the back,” says Steve. “This way when finished we can get in our vehicles and leave.”

Dennis points to a golf cart near him and replies, “It is ready to go. A score card is in the pouch along with tees, and balls in case you do not have any.”

“Thanks, Dennis for your help. We will see you in two hours or so,” says Ralph as he hops in the golf cart as the driver.

While out on the putting service on hole eleven, Steve says, “I plan on divorcing Carol soon. We fell out of love with each other, that, and the fact she is a Gold-Digger.”

“I like Carol. How is Carol a Gold-Digger?”

“Carol acted like any other woman getting engaged and married. She was not a big spender of nothing, not on clothes, jewelry, shoes, trips, nothing. Carol just stayed home and took care of me. Then she switched to the real her.”

“How?”

“She tapped into my business and personal checking accounts and went on a spending spree. Even this week I paid for four dresses and six pair of shoes. Her Volvo cost me 50,000 thousand dollars.”

“What Volvo? I only see you both in your truck. Carol bought a Volvo?”

“I am afraid so. She wrote a company check and paid cash for it. I have been dating her best friend, Alice and she tells me my wife told her she married me for my money.”

“That Alice, she is really good looking,” says Ralph as he drives a ball on the 12th fairway.

“Both Alice and Carol are on a 12-day road trip as we speak. I cannot wait to dump Carol and have Alice move in with me.”

“Just make sure you do not marry a second Gold-Digger,” laughs Ralph as his third shot lands on the green on the par 5 13th hole.

“Only time will tell how she turns out. I just want to be happy, to have a woman that cares for me, not use me, or lie to me.”

Steve knocks his third shot onto the green as well.

“Nice shot, Partner. You are a natural.”

After the 9-hole match, both men have a beer in the club house café.

As both men walk to their vehicles, Steve says, “I have a lady I really want to date, her name is Valerie Main. Her dad, John is big into fishing. I plan to drive him out to your fish camp to see your operation. Then I want you to invite him for a free weekend stay. You can invoice my hotel if you want.”

“Come by with John anytime. I moved out there. I live in a double wide, white in color. I sold my house to a man in the military. I need to stay at the camp as much as I can. I went there on a Thursday afternoon and found the front door kicked in.”

“Anything missing?”

“My guard dog, Smokey, his doghouse, and my beer. The footprint on my door was small. The police think it was a teenager. I plan to put up deer cameras from the main road, then around my camp. This way I will capture who is coming around. I am waiting for my UPS shipment now.”

Steve asks, “How does that work, the cameras?”

“Day or night, rain, or shine, I capture movement. I will have a camera facing my road to capture the driver’s face, a camera leading out to capture the license plate, and cameras covering the entrance to the lodge. I am on my way to find me a new pet.”

“Why not take my three dogs off my hands. They are good watch dogs. I can pet them every time I come out to fish.”

“What are their names again?”

“Leo, Timber, and Cedar. They are at a dog kennel as I speak. Try it for a month, see if that works for you. If not, give them back to me.”

“I can do that. Where are your dog’s?”

“Henry’s Boarding, card # 4365. They are at 24365 Riverside Court. Let me call them right now. Can you take them right now?”

“Sure.”

Steve calls the kennel. “Henry’s Boarding, Henry speaking.”

“Hi, Henry, Steve Williamson here, when were you released from the hospital?”

“It was 2 nights ago. I have cancer of the throat. I will slowly lose my voice in the next 4 months.”

“I hate to hear that. I want to release my three dogs to my good friend, Ralph. I am sending him over as we speak. He owns a fish camp with two acres of land. That is better for my dogs. Now they will have more leg room.”

“Sure. I will be here the rest of the day.”

“Can you mail me an invoice to my hotel. I will get you paid right away.”

“That works.”

“I will be over to see you later in the week to hang out and play poker. I know you love to play poker.”

“Do that. Speak to you again later. Bye.”

Steve turns to Ralph. “Did you copy the address?”

“I did. I will head over there now.”

“Great. Thanks. All three are good dogs. They are alert.”

Steve drives back to his hotel. He asks the front desk for a key to a vacant room. He is handed key number 102.

Steve goes to his office and opens a closet. Hanging are new suits with shirts and ties. He grabs his shaving bag and goes to room 102.

20 minutes later he walks into his own office looking sharp. He tells Betty he has to be at the Acura dealership at 5 to pick-up his new car,

Betty replies, “I will remind you; I have Anna downstairs at the front desk learning how to check our customers in. This way when it gets busy, she can go and help the front desk.”

“Smart. I like the way you think. I feel you will make a good Assistant Manager.”

“Do you have time now to meet and speak with Anna?”

“I do. Send her up to my office.”

Betty picks up her phone and dials an extension. She speaks to someone on the telephone, then hangs up. Betty shouts, “Anna is on her way.”

“I thought Anna was coming tomorrow?”

“I thought so too, but she showed up ready to work today, so I hired her today.”

“Did you discuss her 90-day trial period?”:

“Yes.”

“Did you discuss her pay raise to 14 dollars an hour?”

“No. I forgot to.”

“I will explain the raise to her,” says Steve.

A minute later Betty is knocking on Steve’s open office door.

“Come in.”

Betty walks in with an attractive Latin female, age about twenty-five.

“Steve, let me introduce you to Anna.

Anna, this is the Hotel Owner, and Manager. Call Steve Williamson by his first name.”

Anna smiles and offers her hand. “Hello, Steve.”

Steve stands up and shakes her hand. “Welcome Anna to The Williamson Inn. Have a seat, please”

As Anna sits in a leather chair Betty says, “I will leave you 2 alone.”

“How is the front desk training going?”

“There is so much to know. I am getting the hang of it. Your front desk staff are professional and have good diplomacy skills.”

“That is nice to know. Tomorrow on, you have to learn to be my assistant.”

“I am an adaptive person.”

“That is good to know. After your 90-day probation period ends, you will receive a raise to fourteen an hour.”

“My husband said you were a good man to work for.”

“I just ask every employee to show up and leave on time, to be honest with me, and to treat every customer as if they were special. Can you do that, Anna?”

“I can.”

“If there is anything you need, just get hold of me, anytime, for any reason. I have an open-door policy here at The Williamson Inn.”

“That is good to know. It was nice meeting you.”

“Same here, Anna.”

Anna leaves Steve’s office but stops to talk to Betty.”

Steve overhears Betty saying, “I will walk you to the elevator.”

Betty knocks on Steve’s office door.

Steve looks up while eating a sandwich, and motions for Betty to enter.

“What do you think of Anna?”

“I think she will make a nice addition to the Williamson Inn.”

“I was thinking of rotating her weekly to a new position. This way if the Manager, and I, are not on site, she can step In and manage till one of us can return and take over.”

“Great idea, Betty. I thank you for looking after my hotel.”

“On the way to the elevator I told Anna I was going to rotate her from the front desk to the kitchen next, and she was for It.”

Steve says to Betty, “It is 1 p.m. Take a long lunch and come back here at 4:30 p.m. as I have to be at the Acura dealership at 5 to pick-up my new vehicle.”

“Thanks, Steve. I will buy a quick food meal, then go to the mall and visit the shops.”

“Before you leave the hotel, make Anna be in charge till your return, I want to see ff she can manage on her own.”

Betty grabs her purse from under her desk, and waves goodbye to her boss.

A young couple rents room 87. They refuse help with their luggage. When they open the door to their hotel room, they find it dirty with the king size bed not made, and the trashcan full of empty beer cans.

The young man rings the front desk and says, “This is Anthony Cruz. I just checked in to my room, number 87. I find the room dirty, the bed not made, and the trashcan full of empty beer cans.”

Joe, a desk clerk replies, “Sorry about that. My board shows it ready to rent out. I have Anna coming with room key eighty-one. Anna will give you a 20-dollar voucher good towards any meal in our restaurant for the inconvenience you may have experienced.”

About 5 minutes later Anna exits the elevator and says, “I am from the front desk. We are moving you to room 81, follow me, please.”

Anna opens room 81 and checks to make sure the room and bathroom are clean. Anna turns on the television with the remote. Anna turns the tv off, checks the fridge and that the room safe is open.

Anna turns to the gentleman, and hands him the room key. She says with a smile, “I checked the room and bathroom out. All is in order. Here is our 20 Dollar Voucher. The Williamson Inn is sorry for your inconvenience.”

The guest takes the voucher and replies, “Can I order a meal with your room service?”

Anna does not know the answer, being new, but she says with a smile, “Yes, you can.”

“It is up to the wife if we eat in the room, in your restaurant, or have a meal at a restaurant nearby.”

“If you need anything, just contact the front desk, and ask for me, Anna.”

Anna takes the elevator to the second floor and knocks on Steve’s office door.

“Come in, Anna.”

“What does it mean if the front desk shows the room clean and ready to rent, but when you get to the room, it is dirty, sheets not changed, and the trash not taken out?”

“Someone at the front desk rented the room out to a guest and pocketed the money. The clean room directory the front desk uses would still show the room as vacant and clean. The front desk looks bad when a guest checking in discovers a messy room.”

Anna asks Steve, “How does the Hotel Management stop this clean-not clean problem?”

“The hotel needs to do a background check, call the applicant’s last employer to see if they had any problem with the applicant. The hotel could install a hidden camera above the front desk. Management could send in an investigator posing as a tourist.”

“What good would that do?”

“The investigator goes in as a decoy guest at 2 a.m., and says to the desk clerk, “I need a wake-up call at 7 am. to catch my Delta flight.”

The desk clerk rents him room, 112. The Management watches the hidden cameras around the front desk to find out if he/she rings the sale and places the money in the register, or in his or her pocket.”

Anna asks Steve, “Have you discovered a thief in your hotel?”

“Afraid so. I had two house cleaners steal bed linen, valet staff using the guest’s car without permission, I had maintenance steal money and jewelry when in the room doing repairs, I had a cook pull the fire alarm and while doing so, steal meat and fish out of the freezer.”

“Wow, did anyone go to jail?

“All of the thieves went to jail. I arrested and I still arrest when someone steals from my hotel. The Williamson Inn is my life, my home.”

“I guess you have seen it all. Am I Right?”

“You are right.”

Steve opens a desk drawer and hands Anna a booklet.

“I wrote this booklet.”

Anna reads the cover of the booklet aloud, “How Hotel Staff Steal.”

“Why do you call it a booklet?”

“Booklets are 40,000 thousand words or less, and a novel is 40,000 thousand words or more. I have 18,000 thousand words”.

“Can I read this booklet?”

“Yes. Just make sure no employee reads it. I have to keep the booklet out of my employees’ hands.”

“I agree with that statement. A thief could read your booklet, get ideas, then start stealing.”

Anna, let me see how good your management skills are. Sit here at my desk till 5 p.m. I have to go pick up my new car. I bought an Acura.”

Anna asks, “Where is Betty?”

“I told her to have a lunch break at 1 p.m. and to be back at 4:30 p.m.”

“Me as Acting Manager. I hope I do not let you down.”

Steve writes out a note to Betty advising her Anna is in charge till 5 p.m. He hands that note to Anna on his way out. “Give this note to Betty when she returns from lunch.”

“Will do.”

Steve walks outside to his truck and departs his hotel.

Steve drives over to Burger King’s drive-up window and orders a quick lunch.

“That will be six dollars and fifty cents, please. Come to the first window.”

Steve pulls-up to the window and asks, “Can you repeat my order?”

“Yes, sir. Two burgers, large fries, a large root-beer, and an apple pie.”

“Last time I was here, I was missing my second burger, my large fries was a regular bag, and my root-beer became a coke. Oh, and my one hamburger had no meat. I was five miles down the road before I took a bite. I did not do a U-turn and come back. Now I check my order before I leave the parking lot.”

The clerk laughs and replies, “The server must have been a new employee. Funny about taking a bite of your hamburger and discovering no meat. Tell you what I am going to do for you, sir. I am putting on two meat patties on this order. Have an enjoyable day”

“That is nice of you. What is your first name, what is the phone number here, and who is the Manager?”

Patti gives Steve the information he requested. He picks up his meal order and parks nearby. His meal is all there, even the extra meat patties. Steve calls the restaurant and speaks with the Manager.

“I just wanted to say Patti is an excellent worker.”

“I will tell my youngest daughter you told me that.”

Steve laughs and replies, “You taught Patti well. Have an enjoyable day.”

Steve drives over to the Acura dealer. It is 4 p.m. Steve is 1 hour early. He walks up to the showroom front desk and asks for his sales agent, Ellen.

“Ellen is on the road with a customer. What is your name?”

“Steve Williamson.”

“Explore the show room or have a seat in our waiting lounge I will page you once Ellen is free to meet with you.”

“I will grab something out of your vending machine first.”

“Do you need one-dollar bills?”

“I have the ones. Thanks for asking. Can I treat you to a candy bar?”

“I love the Milky Way bar.”

“That is the same candy bar I am getting for Ellen.”

“Ellen is my oldest sister.”

“The number of brothers and sisters in your family?”

“We are 4 girls.”

“What are their ages?”

“We are 28, 24, 19, and I am 18.”

“Four girls, wow.”

“Your name is?”

“My parents all named us with a letter V. I am Virginia.”

“Why a V?”

“Our grandfather fought the Germans in 1944 till the war ended. The end of the war is known as V-Day.”

Steve asks, “But your sister is Ellen, that name starts with an e.”

Virginia laughs, “My sister’s first name is Vicki. Ellen is her middle name.”

“Let me get the candy bars. I will be right back.”

Steve walks over to the vending machine and buys two candy bars and assorted bags of chips. He returns to the receptionist.

“Here you go, Virginia.” Steve hands her the candy bar.

“That is nice of you to do that for me. I see the new car Ellen took a customer in is back.”

Both look out the dealership front window to view Ellen and her customer exit the Acura sedan. Steve watches his next girlfriend return to the showroom.

“HI, Ellen. I am an hour early. I am excited to pick up my new ride.”

“Hello, Steve, let me finish with my customer and I will come to the waiting room for you.”

Steve smiles and hands her a Milky Way candy bar. “I bought this for you.”

“Thanks, I was in need of something sweet,” as she takes the candy bar.

Steve says goodbye to Ellen as she walks a customer to her office.

Steve walks over to Virginia and says, “I like your sister a lot.”

“She has no problems getting a date. At least ten hits a day from customers or fellow staff.”

“What about you? You are very pretty yourself.”

“I have customers and fellow workers hit on me all the time. Ellen told me to find the right man to date, and make sure they treat me like a lady.”

“Listen to your big sister’s good advice.”

About 10 minutes later Ellen walks into the waiting room and says to her next customer, “Ready to own your new Acura. It is out front. It just returned from the detail shop.”

Steve looks up from the magazine he is reading, and says, “I am really excited to have my car today. I just read in Car Magazine about my Acura. A helpful review.”

Steve opens the passenger door for Ellen. He then gets behind the wheel of his new ride. Steve adjusts the mirrors, pushes the seat all the way back, puts on his seat belt, and pulls out of the Acura dealership.

“Turn right, then at the light ahead turn right again,” says Ellen as she puts her seat belt on.

“I spoke with your younger sister, Virginia. She said you gave her good advice about dating men.”

“Most men take dating as a game. Who can score first? They sit around the bars and brag. They can never have a meaningful relationship because there is no respect.”

“This road we are on has many bumps and curves.”

“Exactly. I wanted to show you how smooth your ride is.”

Steve ads, “Now I want to open her up, to see how quick of an acceleration this baby has.”

“I already know how fast your car is. I sold three this week. Every buyer wanted to open her up as well. So, drive fast when I am not in the car, please.”

“I read the gas mileage is 25 in the city and 34 on the highway.”

“I know you will love It. Please, pull into the mall parking lot. This parking spot will do.”

Steve does.

“Now what?”

Ellen leans toward Steve and says, “Kiss me.”

“My pleasure.”

The couple kiss a dozen times.

Ellen asks, “Do you like your car?”

“I like you, I like the car, and I love my life right now.”

“Let us head back, sign 4 papers with our finance department, and you can be on your way.”

Steve and Ellen spend the next 30 minutes together making his new car legal.

A young man comes over to Ellen and says, “The temporary tags are on the car. Here are the keys.”

Steve stands up and shakes Ellen’s hand. “I will be sending other buyers to you soon.”

“I would like that. So, what about dinner tonight?”

“You must be a mind reader. I was going to ask you for your home address. I was thinking at 7 I pull up, and we find a cozy restaurant where we can have a delicious meal and talk.”

Ellen hands Steve his legal papers and says, “I stapled my house address on a piece of paper on page 2 of the contract.”

“I will make sure I read page 2 for sure. See you later.”

Steve looks over the instrument panel. He loves the cockpit feel as the seat wraps around you. He drives from the dealership to his residence.

Steve checks his mailbox. Carol dropped him a postcard from Dallas. He reads it, then places the postcard in her shoe box. Steve picks up her cell phone and there are three messages. Steve plays them back. He prints the name, message, and time the person called.

Steve opens his fridge, removes a cold can of root beer, and sits on the lounge chair by the pool.

Steve dials the first number that called.

A recording comes on, “This is the 18-screen movie complex called Trojan. We are located next door to the Edge Water Mall.”

A person comes on and says, “This is Mark, may I help you?”

“Yes, my name is Steve Williamson, can I speak with Gail Fairley, please?”

“Just a moment.”

“This is Gail.”

“Hello, Gail, My name is Steve Williamson, and you left a message for my wife Carol to call you.”

“Yes. Is she with you? Can I speak with her?”

“Carol is traveling and will not return for 11 more days. She left her phone with me. I am returning her calls.”

“It can wait. She wanted a price to rent out one of our eighteen screen rooms.”

“You can tell me the price. I will put your message in her shoe box.”

“Her shoe box?”

“Yes. She will be on the road for 14 days. I needed something big to hold her mail.”

“The price for the entire day is 2,000 dollars.”

“Did she say why she wanted a large space like your cinema has?”

“No. I think it has something to do with her travel agency she is opening.”

“Alright, I just put your message in her shoe box. She will return your call in 10 days.”

Steve calls the person on his second message.

“Milton College, Professor Smith, speaking.”

“Hello, Professor. My name is Steve Williamson. You left a message on my wife’s cell phone. Carol is on a 14-day road trip out West.”

“We were discussing what she will need to open her own travel agency. My wife Joan owns one.”

“I see. I will put your message in her box to contact you,”

“Please do.”

“Have a wonderful week,” says Steve as he hangs up.

The third message is from a Maxwell Cummings.

“Carnival Shoe Store, Sally speaking,”

“Hello, Sally, Can I speak with Maxwell Cummings?”

“I will connect you now.”

“This is Max.”

“Afternoon, sir. My name is Steve Williamson. You left my wife Carol a message. She is out of town for the next 10 days. Can I take a message?”

“Yes. Tell her I want to buy two tickets on the Carnival Escape sailing out of New Orleans. It sails In 5 months. I am In no rush to buy, just wanted to talk about It.”

“Carol is traveling and will be home in 10 days.”

“Please, tell her I called?”

“I just placed your message in her in box. Have a good week”

At 6 sharp Carol’s cell phone rings. “Hello?”

“HI, Steve. How are you doing today?”

“Do not call me on this line. I am married,” laughs Steve at his own joke.

“Did you receive your postcard from Dallas?”

“I did.”

“I am in Saint Louis. I found this isolated mom and pop hotel. They gave me a decent price. They must be hurting for business, No cameras here. I just came back from a long walk around the city. I wore a wig. I saw myself in a shop mirror. I did a double take. I looked just like Carol.”

“That is a clever idea, wear a wig and pass as Carol.”

“I wore sunglasses and a scarf to hide my face, but at the same time, I wanted to look like I was not hiding anything. I stopped and talked to people on the street and in the shops. I said my name Is Carol Williamson out of Atlanta. I told people I was opening a travel agency in Atlanta soon. I have five names with phone numbers we can give to the police.”

Steve lies and says, “I have important phone calls to make. Can we talk in the morning?”

“Sure. Bye.”

Steve looks over his purchase contract. The dealership stamped ‘paid in full’ on page 1. He then looks at page 2.

Steve removes the stapled message and reads It:

‘Steve, my home address is 640 Bogey Drive in a gated community called Golf Park. Pull up to the entrance. The guard will call and tell me I have a visitor. He will then let you in. Just stay on the main road. Do not turn on any roads. At the stop sign turn left. My house will be on your right. I will be ready for you at 7 p.m.’

Steve is getting ready for his big date with Ellen when his cell phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Evening, Steve, Can you talk?”

“Hello, Ashley, Did you receive any phone calls or postcards from your daughter, yet?”

“Yes. I received two postcards, one from Natchez, Mississippi, and one from Dallas.”

“It Is 5 p.m. here in Atlanta, so it must be 1 a.m. in Paris?”

“I cannot sleep. I take sleeping pills and I do short naps.”

“I also received two postcards from my wife.”

“From Natchez and Dallas?”

Steve says, “Yes, same two cities as you. I have not heard a word from Carol. I know she will be home in 10 days. I found an office to rent for her travel agency. I put down 4,500 dollars for 1 month’s rent, and a big security deposit. I cannot wait to show it to her,” lies Steve with excitement in his voice.

“Tell me about the office space?”

“It is in a new office building in downtown, Atlanta. It is in the Emerald Building on the ground floor, so she has good exposure. People have to go by her to get to the elevators.”

“How did you find that location?”

“We got lucky. The last tenant was a barber shop. He was always full. He died of a heart attack at age 70. Your daughter was looking for a location with her real-estate agent, named Valerie two weeks ago. This agent remembered Carol.”

Ashley asks for the agent’s telephone number.

“The area code for Atlanta is 470, then 662-4849. Just ask for Valerie Main. She is an agent with America Realty.”

“I know my daughter, she always calls me with any plans, and this time she did not. Something is not right. Are you sure my daughter is all right?”

Steve replies, “Yes, Carol is fine. I love your daughter. We are happy,” lies Steve. “I bought her a new Volvo, now I am renting space for her travel agency.”

“The last time I talked to my daughter she said she was unhappy, that you were gone all the time. She said you sleep in a separate room.”

“We did have a talk about me working too many hours at my hotel I told her I was going to hire a manager. I did hire a manager.”

“What Is his name?”

“His name Is Billy Thomas. Between us, he starts September 1st at 2,000 dollars a week. Call and verify. His number at the Radisson in Miami is 305-304-1313. Say you are personnel, ask him questions.”

“Carol says you have a mistress, because you two have not had any physical contact of any kind for months.”

Steve says, “I do have a lover. Carol says she has a lover, too.

“My Carol would never cheat on you.”

“Did she tell you we planned to move to Paris, to rent a residence near you. I am training Billy Thomas to replace me, he used to be my Assistant Manager last year. He starts September 1.”

“Carol did say she had a surprise to tell me about. I know she was excited about what she wanted to tell me. It must be her coming to Paris.”

The plan is I hire and train someone to be my manager. Soon after, we board a flight for Paris. I agreed to us living there for a full year.”

“I can see from the tone of voice you love my child.”

Steve lies again, “Your daughter is my whole life. You have to act surprised about us moving to Paris when she finally tells you the news.”

“I will not mention this to my Tony.”

“That is good to know. You should be receiving another postcard or phone call from your daughter, soon.”

“Can you tell me the messages my daughter has received?”

“Yes, of course. There is one from a Donna wanting payment for dresses she ordered. I paid for them over the cell phone. It was like 2,000 dollars, then I paid almost eight hundred dollars for shoes from China she ordered, then a movie complex about reserving a screening room, why I do not know, but I think it may be about her travel agency.”

“That sounds like Carol, ordering online for shoes and clothes. I am feeling tired. I think I will go to my bedroom and take a nap.”

“Speak soon,” says Steve before hanging up.

Steve now knows his alibi postcards are working.

Steve looks at his Rolex watch. The time reads 6:10 p.m. Instead of driving his new car he decides to take Carol’s Volvo out for the evening,

Steve departs his residence and notices the warning light is on, The car needs gas.

Steve stops at a gas station to fill his gas tank.

He then drives over to Ellen’s neighborhood guard gate.

The uniform armed guard asks, "Can I help you, sir?"

"I am here to visit Ellen Johnson."

"What is your name? I will need to hold your driver's license. I will give your license back upon you exit."

"I am Steve Williamson and here is my driver's license."

"Just a minute. I will call her."

The guard steps back into his guard house.

He returns quickly and says, "Drive slowly, please."

Steve follows the directions in Ellen's note. At the stop sign he turns left and looks for her number on the right side of the street. Her house is the fifth one after turning left from the stop sign.

Steve rings Ellen's doorbell.

Ellen comes to the door in a beautiful, flowered dress. She smiles and says, "I am looking forward to our date," as she gives Steve a big hug.

"Nice house. Who lives here with you?"

"My mother, Jody, and my sister, Virginia. My mother is ill. She is upstairs in bed. Jody has cancer. I might lose her at any minute. When I leave the house for any reason, she puts on her medical alert necklace. Then help is just a phone call away. I call it Peace of Mind Insurance."

"Would it be alright for me to meet her, say hello from the doorway?"

“Sure, she would like that. Come on, let us go say hello.”

Steve and his date climb the stairs to the second floor and turn right to the last bedroom on the left. Ellen motions for Steve to stay back.

Ellen goes in her mother’s bedroom alone and is with her a minute. Ellen returns to the hallway and motions for Steve to come in and say hello.

Steve stands in the doorway and says, “How are you feeling, Jody?”

Jody smiles a small smile and replies, “I could be better.”

“My name is Steve Williamson. I own the Williamson Inn in downtown Atlanta. I am going on a date with your daughter. I asked to meet you. I will not keep Ellen out to late. Make sure you wear your medical alert necklace. I have a friend that has one,” lies Steve, “It came in handy one night, too.”

Steve waves goodbye and returns downstairs to the living room. Ellen comes down shortly after Steve does. She grabs her white sweater and says, “I am ready. It was nice of you to want to meet my mother.”

“Did other men you dated asked to meet your mother?”

“Not a one.”

“Sad to hear that. Where would you like to have a quiet dinner? Is there a place you have not been to that you heard about?”

“Thanks for asking. I always wanted to eat at The Williamson Inn, laughs Ellen.”

“I am being serious. Name a place.”

“Let us keep it simple. Let us go to The Pancake House on Jefferson Avenue. It is not too far from here. I will give you directions.”

“I am game. Let us go”

. Steve walks Ellen to his Volvo and opens her passenger door.

“What? No Acura TLX ride?” laughs Ellen as she climbs in.

Steve walks around to the driver’s side and replies, “It needs tires and gas.”

Ellen laughs and says, “Good answer.”

Steve is polite and respectful. He asks Ellen, “Can I kiss you?”

Ellen smiles, looks at her date and without hesitations says, “You may.”

Steve and Ellen kiss. Steve puts the car in gear and says, “We are off to see the Wizard.”

“I love that movie. I could watch The Wizard of OZ over and over again.”

“Me as well,” says Steve as he drives with his left hand while holding Ellen’s hand with his right.

He says, “Let us just relax and have a fun night. I have looked forward to this moment all day.”

“I agree. Let us just have fun.”

Steve stops briefly at the guard house to pick up his driver's license.

Ellen says, "Virginia will be home soon. I gave a note to my mother to give to my sister."

"What does the note say?"

"I am out on a date, and I will see her later."

Steve says as they depart the complex, "We have to kiss at every red light we catch, I have to do the speed limit and drive like I normally do. If we catch four lights, we kiss four times. Do you want to play the red-light kissing game?"

"The restaurant is five miles away. There are a twelve lights along the way. I am for it."

Steve laughs and says, "Come on red lights be red when I come up to you."

The lovebirds catch six lights. They kiss and kiss till someone behind them at the light toots their horn.

5

CHAPTER 5

At the restaurant Steve asks for a quiet corner.

The host says, "Follow me, please."

Over a bottle of Maison Leroy wine, Steve and Ellen discuss their failed relationships.

Steve says, "My wife Carol is a Gold-Digger. A real Gold-Digger. She fooled me while we dated. I remember buying her an engagement ring. She would say, take it back. I am here for you, not material things. She got on me for buying anything of value."

"So, when did the real her show up in your relationship?"

"A week after I added her to my business and personal checking accounts. Her first purchase was the Volve we are in now. That set me back 50,000 dollars. I told her no more purchases without my o.k. first."

"She didn't listen, did she?"

"Sometimes she did and sometimes she did not. I just bought her 2,000 dollars' worth of dresses she ordered online, eight hundred dollars' worth of shoes from China, It just goes on and on."

"So, is that when you knew she was a Gold-Digger?"

“I have a good friend since childhood named Alice,” lies Steve. I asked her to be friends with Carol to find out ahead of time what moves Carol was going to make on my finances. It worked.”

“Like how?”

“Alice told me her and Carol would drive around Atlanta in her new Volvo talking. Carol would tell Alice she only married me for my money. She was looking for an even richer man than me. She told Alice she was going to write a business check for 20,000 dollars to buy space for a travel agency, and to purchase office furniture and computers.”

“What happened when Alice told you, Carol’s plan?”

“I went down the next morning to my bank and took her off both accounts. I lied to her and said the CPA said I had to do it. The CPA said open Carol her own checking account.”

“Did you open her an account?”

“Nope. I kept making excuses to go to the bank with her.

“Is Carol using your money for her road trip?”

“I gave her 4,000 in cash and told her to have fun.”

“Wow, some birthday gift.”

“It is worth it. I get a 12-day vacation. I can come and go as I please.”

As they eat their meal and drink their wine, Ellen says, “I would love to see your residence.”

“Let us get 2 boxes and take our meals to go then.”

Steve flags down his Waiter and lies, “I need two to go boxes, and the bill, please. I am a Doctor on call. I have to get to the Hospital.”

“Yes, Sir, right away.”

As the Waiter dashes off, Steve says, “It works every time I do that.”

“Lying comes easy to you?”

“I hate to lie. I just do not like waiting forever to pay for my meals. I want to eat and go.”

Ellen laughs and says, “I will have to try that explanation the next time my friends and I go out to eat.”

“I don’t want you to think I am a liar,” says Steve as he drinks his wine.

“You are a fun man to be with. I cannot wait to be alone with you. You make kissing and hugging fun again. My last three dates were a disaster. They all wanted wham, bam, thank you mam type of a date.

Steve laughs at that comment.

“It has been years since I heard the wham, bam, thank you mam, words.”

The Waiter comes over and hands Steve the bill.

He looks it over and hands the man his credit card.

“I will be right back with the to go boxes.”

Ellen says, “Let us go Dutch.”

“No way. I do not mind picking up the tab.”

“I will pick up the next tab then.”

“Deal. Next stop is ice cream cones at McDonald’s on the way to my place.”

The Waiter returns with the to go boxes, his credit card, and his final bill. Steve adds fifty dollars as a tip.

Once by the Volvo, Steve, and Ellen kiss.

“Please tell me about your life while on the way to my place,” says Steve.

Ellen starts telling her life story to the man she is crazy about.

“I am the oldest of four girls. My dad was a salesperson of furniture made in our hometown of Akron, Ohio. He was away often. He missed events that occurred in my life. The one time he made for sure was my graduation from High School. He wanted me to stay in Akron and help our mother in her small dress shop.”

“Did you stay and help your mother?”

“I did for four months. Then I left for college. My mom had three more daughters to count on. I went to a small, all women’s college in North Carolina. I loved it there. I loved the hills and the trees. I did my 4 years, then I moved to Atlanta. I wanted to be independent of my parents. I got a job selling used cars. I was the salesperson of the year. I had every man in town hitting on me.”

“I bet you did. You are an extremely attractive woman and a great kisser,” says Steve as he drives.

Steve pulls up to a McDonald’s. “I will run in for our ice cream cones. What flavor?”

Ellen hands Steve a twenty-dollar bill.

“Vanilla, please.”

“I will be right back.”

Steve dashes inside the restaurant.

He returns with two vanilla cones.

“Here you go, Young Lady.”

The couple eat their ice cream and make small talk as Steve drives to his residence.

He pulls into his driveway and opens his garage.

“This is where I rest my head at night.”

” Nice place.”

“It is 3 bedrooms, 2 baths with a swimming pool, which I use all the time.”

“I love to swim. Do you have a swimsuit for me?”

“I will give you one of Carol’s. You are the same height and weight. It should fit. Follow me into my bedroom. You can change in my bathroom.”

Ellen follows her new boyfriend into his bedroom. He opens drawers of Carol's dresser till he finds what he is looking for.

“Here you go, try this.”

Ellen catches Steve's throw of the bathing suit.

“I will change, let us meet at the pool.”

About 5 minutes later the couple meet by the pool.

“Let us jump together holding hands from the deep end. You can swim, right?”

Ellen laughs and says, “I was a State swimmer in High School. All my sisters were as well.”

Steve takes Ellen's hand and counts to three. “1, 2, 3, go.”

The lovebirds hit the chilly water, and both say at the same time, “That water is cold.”

Steve and Ellen swim for a while before going inside to dry off.

He watches her undress while she watches him undress.

They laugh as they jump into bed.

“What time do I have to drive you back home?”

“At 7 a.m. My sister Virginia is with our mom. Do you have an alarm clock?” I must be home by eight for my mother's breakfast.”

Steve reaches for his alarm clock on the nightstand.

He sets the alarm for 7 a.m. “The alarm clock is all set.”

Ellen laughs at Steve's alarm clock. It is a Mickey Mouse one.

"I had that alarm clock since Junior High. Old dependable he is."

Steve and Ellen make love.

They then lay in bed and watch television.

Steve's cell phone number (470) 448-4934 rings on vibrate. He does not answer. He knows who is calling him at 9 p.m.

Steve slips on underwear and dashes to the kitchen. He comes back with a bottle of wine, two glasses, along with two slices of cake.

"I hope our relationship last," says Ellen taking a sip of wine.

"It should, as long as we do not cheat and lie. I always wanted a lasting relationship," says Steve as he takes a bite of cake.

The 2-watch television.

The love birds slowly drift off to sleep.

Thursday morning, June 10th, at 7 a.m.

Mickey Mouse wakes Steve and Ellen up.

They have breakfast and both go to the garage to the Volvo.

Steve says, "Can you lay low? I am still legally married. I want to leave the neighborhood alone if you know what I mean."

Ellen laughs, "Sure." She ducts down below the passenger seat. She says, "I forgot you are still married."

“Believe me, I will not be married long. I say 30 days max.”

“I know you spoke to my younger sister, Virginia. Please do not tell her I slept with you.”

“Your secret is my secret, partner in crime,” laughs Steve.

He pulls into a McDonald’s parking lot.

“I am running in to get me breakfast, what can I bring out for you?”

“Coffee, black and an egg sandwich.”

“I will be right back.”

Steve dashes into the restaurant leaving his cell phone on the dash.

It rings while Steve is in the store.

Ellen looks at who the caller is.

Caller identification says, ‘Alice.’

Ellen now sits upright in the passenger seat of the Volvo.

Steve returns with their meals. As they sit there eating away, Ellen asks, “Tell me who Alice is again.”

“I have known her family and her two brothers since Junior High. I asked her to befriend Carol, and to find out what my gold-digging wife was up to. It took about 3 weeks, but since then the two have been like peas to a pod. Alice saved me a ton of money. Alice said Carol will dump me as soon as she can find a man richer than me.”

“Alice seems like a good friend to have. Let me ask you a question. “Have you slept with her or is she truly a friend in all matters?”

At a traffic light, Steve looks Ellen in the eyes and lies, Alice is like a sister. I have her back and she has my back. Her brothers and I are very tight.”

Ellen replies, “Good to know.”

“It is hard to have a loyal friend that helps you no matter what.”

Steve pulls up to the guard gate.

Ellen leans over and says, “It is me, Randy.”

Steve hands the guard his driver’s license.

As Steve pulls into her circle driveway Ellen says, “I left your wife’s bathing suit hanging on the towel rack.”

“I will fold it and replace it in her drawer. I had a wonderful time. When can we get back together?”

“Sometime in the next 5 days.”

“You call me. Call me any hour,” says Steve as he opens her passenger door.

Ellen says, “We cannot kiss here in the open. Let us shake hands.”

Steve shakes Ellen’s hand and says, “Catch you later.”

Steve drives away as Ellen enters her house.

Virginia was watching from a spy slit in the living room curtains.

“Mom says you left about 8 p.m. last night. Where were you?”

“Steve and I were at his place, swimming, playing cards, watching television. I had a blast.”

“No hanky pranky went on, did It?”

“He is a married man. His wife and her brother were with us,” lies Ellen as she goes upstairs to check on her mother.

Steve checks his mailbox. There is no mail. He checks Carol’s cell phone which he always leaves on. There were two messages.

Steve plays the first one. It was a gym offering the first 30 days free.

The second caller is from a Peoples Transport from a Jackie Rivers.

Steve calls the company back.

“People Transport, Charlie, Speaking.”

“Yes, my name is Steve Williamson. Can I speak with a Jackie Rivers?”

“You sure can. I will connect you now.”

“This is Jackie.”

“Hello, Jackie, My name is Steve Williamson. You left a message for my wife, Carol to return your call.”

“Yes, I did. Can I speak to her, please?”

“You sure can in 11 days. She went on a road trip out West. She left her cell phone with me. What message should I give her?”

“She wanted prices on transport vans for her travel agency. “

“I will tell her we spoke. She might call you from the road or wait till she is back home.”

“I have a question, This day and age, who leaves town without their cell phone?”

“My wife left behind her cell phone and purse by accident, She left them in the laundry room by the garage door. She forgot them and called me from Natchez, Mississippi. She is using the lady on the road trip’s phone.”

“I can see that happening. You think you have it all packed and you do not.”

“If my wife checks in with me for messages, I will make sure she calls you.”

“Thank you, sir. That is all I ask.”

Steve dials Alice’s phone number from his cell phone.

“Good morning, Young Man. I called you last night, but you did not pick up”

“I was so tired getting the wedding party, and all that goes with it up and running. I just fell asleep, “lies Steve.

“I was about to call you. I am leaving the Visitor’s Bureau here in Saint Louis with a ton of brochures. I plan to stay here 3 nights. Then head straight home.”

“That works because we have the postcard already to mail in Saint Louis. Take pictures on timers and wear the wig. I will get the photos developed for her travel wall. It will not be long till we are together again,” says Steve.

“I have a feeling we did something wrong, and our plan unravels within days of my return to Atlanta,”

“You are a worry wart. The Police Officers will think Carol flew out of town with the rich man in his plane. I am telling you it is the postcards that make our story sound true, plus me buying her shoes, dresses, renting her the office, it shows I am waiting for my wife to return.”

“You are 100% positive I do not have to take the polygraph?”

“I am 200 %. They can get a Judge to sign off on a court order drawing blood, obtaining DNA, things like that, but not on a polygraph.”

“I have no poker face. Something makes me not lie when I need to lie. My cheeks, and nose turn red, even my ear tips turn red.”

“I never noticed you turning red on me, ever,” says Steve. “We will practice telling lies till it comes out true, then your face will not turn red. An example: Did Carol go with you on your road trip?”

“I say, yes. We were having a wonderful time too.”

“Good. Now picture in your head and your heart Carol driving, sleeping with you in the hotel room, and you both eating out.”

“I do have her camera, her personal hygiene items, and her clothes with me, along with personal items as well. I hope the police look at my trip and believe she flew out to Vegas with a rich man.”

“Alice, what type of woman is Carol?”

“Gold-digging type.”

“See, then it is believable, her running off. “

Alice laughs and says, I will practice the vision trick.”

Steve lies, “Call me tonight. I have a meeting to attend.”

Steve drives over to his hotel.

He looks at the time it is on his watch. It Is 8:45 am,

He parks in his manager spot and dials a phone number.

“This is Valerie.”

“Morning, my Fox. How did you sleep last night?”

“Good, You?”

“Better. I slept like 5 hours solid, then I flipped channels on my television. I feel rested. I spoke with Alice this morning. The women will be cutting their trip short. They plan to sightsee, get a good night’s rest, and drive back to Atlanta. Carol will be home Saturday afternoon.”

“You don’t sound excited your wife will be home earlier than planned.”

“I cannot lie, I liked being single again. I want a woman that loves me for me, and not for my money. I treat everyone I meet as an equal.”

“My dad had to cancel our lunch today. He forgot he had a routine medical appointment.”

“We can still get together for lunch,” says Steve.

Valerie asks, “Do you want to have lunch at my place?”

“That will make me happy. What time works for you?”

“How about 2 pm we have lunch at my place. I am a good cook.”

“I will let you know If you are a good cook or not. Can I bring the wine?”

“I am a sweet tooth, so bring dessert as well.”

“I will do that. Where do you live?”

“I live in Manor Oaks. Come to 5498 Island Drive. See you later. I have to say goodbye. I have a meeting I must attend.”

“Don’t fall asleep in the meeting,” says Steve laughing.

“I will try not to. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Steve calls John, the father of Valerie.

“Hello, John speaking.”

“Good morning, John. This is Steve over at the hotel.”

“Oh, hello, Steve. Sorry I had to cancel our lunch today.”

“I want you tomorrow morning to follow me to the fish camp. I will introduce you to Ralph, we will fish an hour or so, then have a lite lunch. How does that sound to you?”

“Perfect. Do you need my address?”

“No, come to my hotel. Get here around 10 a.m. Then I will be free for the rest of the day. You can follow me to the fish camp.”

“Alright, see you at 10.”

“Then 10 a.m. it is, Bye, John.”

“Goodbye, Steve.”

Steve walks into his hotel, and waves to his front desk staff before climbing the stairs to the second floor where his office is.

Betty and Anna are not in Betty’s office.

Steve goes to his desk, takes off his shoes and checks his stock investment at the computer on his desk. The stocks are down three hundred points. Steve checks to see what news is causing the stock drop. Interest rates are going up. Steve signs two checks for Betty’s and Jack’s bonus.

About 30 minutes later, Betty knocks on his door.

“Come in, Betty.”

“Good morning. I just left Anna in Housekeeping for the day. I want her to have experience in all departments. Tomorrow, I plan to have her work the Valet Department.”

“I like your strategy. It is always good to have a backup person when we need it. Do you remember last year in April how we had a flood of guest, and no staff to manage the workload?”

“Yes, that day was crazy. I was late to work because I was rear ended, and you were at a trial on that desk clerk that broke into the safety deposit boxes. House cleaners called in sick, It was a mess.”

“It is smart of you to think what the hotel needs are. You will make a good Assistant Manager, plus a Manager once in a while when our manager is sick, in court, or vacation.”

“I think I am ready to be an Assistant Manager.”

“You think, but I know you will do good. You did good for me in your current position.”

“Thanks for saying that. I know I will work hard, If I can get to work without being rear ended,” laughs Betty.

“That reminds me. I have to be somewhere at 2 p.m. today, and I will not be coming back till tomorrow sometime.”

“One question, Steve. What kind of marketing are we doing to make our hotel attract future guest?”

“I have to ask Jack the question. He pays all the bills. Why do you ask?”

“I have a Cousin that graduated high school. She asked if she could apply at our hotel. I told her no, that the owner has a policy of only one person from a related family working at the hotel.”

“That policy still stands. We made an exception for Anna, Right? I could start making exceptions. What did you have in mind?”

My Cousin, Olivia Porter is an expert when it comes to a computer. We could hire her to revamp the hotel website, redo our menus, start advertising us at sites people go to where they need rooms or events. Olivia could attend trade shows, travel conventions, all sort of things to grow awareness that your hotel exist.”

“I am interested. How much do you suggest we pay her for our new hotel marketing department?”

“I think a flat fee of five hundred dollars a week, Which is about 26,000 a year. Just a couple of two decent size weddings pays for Olivia’s salary for all year. We can make it a 6-month post. If it is working out, we extend it for 6 more months.”

“Where will her office be located?”

“The hotel has a storage room that the bellman and valet use to store all sort of Items. We give that space to Olivia. Let her first week be cleaning out the site, and updating the walls, and floors to make it inviting for guest to want to walk in and make reservations for future trips to Atlanta.”

“This is your puppy, Betty. Run with it. I trust your judgement. Make sure you Introduce her to me when she gets here. Walk her around and introduce her to all the departments. Give her 500 a week, plus a meal card for the restaurant. She can use the card on her own meals, and to pay for any person with her that can bring us business. Give Olivia a 200-dollars a month gas allowance. Order her a company credit card with a 2,000-dollar limit.”

“I will guide her all the way. I think once the hotel has a new website, traffic will pick up. Did you know there is a major convention of Major League Baseball schedule for Atlanta this October?”

“No. First time I heard of it.”

“Olivia is dating a minor league pitcher. He told her. We can offer a home run rate to the players. Then we invite the media we like to stay in the hotel and let them be the first to get scoops on stories.”

“I love it. Go, Betty, Go. What does Olivia look like?”

Olivia is five’3”, 130 pounds with brown hair. She is single and cute.”

“Make sure Olivia adds her photo to her marketing page.”

“Will do. I will go call her now with the good news.”

“Here is your bonus check. Give Jack his, please. On your way out please close my door. I have calls to make.”

“Will do,” says Betty going back into her office.

Steve checks his client rolodex list and makes calls.

“Atlanta Bakery, Robert speaking.”

“Robert, it is Steve over at The Williamson Inn. How is business?”

“It could always be better. The economy is slowly coming back. The Feds have inflation under control.”

“I feel the same way. I just hired a young lady fresh out of college to revamp my website and to bring us more business. So, if we land any fresh accounts, I will be calling on you for the sweets.”

“We can manage any growth you bring us.”

“Good. I am calling you as I need a small chocolate cake and a box of fudge. I will be over at 1:30 p.m. to pay and to pick up.”

“Just see my best worker, Tammy Smith. She always asks about you.”

Steve laughs and says, “I will take 5 minutes out of my busy day today to speak with her.”

Steve exits his office and says to Betty. “I have to go home. I will not return today.”

“I have Olivia here at 9 a.m. tomorrow, can you be in at that time?”

“I will be here. See you tomorrow.”

Steve drives home and puts his Volvo in the garage.

He takes a shower and changes into jeans and a t-shirt.

He then departs his residence in his new Acura.

Just down the street a neighbor flags him down.

“Morning, Ted. How is life treating you?”

“I am good. I am now retired after 30 years as a trucker. I am into tennis and golf.” How are you and Carol doing?”

Steve says, “Carol is on a 12-day road trip with her best friend. She will be back next week sometime.”

“Helen told me over breakfast this morning she has not seen your wife lately. Carol and her like going shopping together, they love spending our money.”

Steve laughs, “You can say that again.”

“This is your new car?”

“Yes, an Acura TLX fully loaded. Great on gas and rides like a dream.”

“Find time to take me for a spin, maybe grab a bite together somewhere, like old times.”

“I will make time, Buddy. Enjoy your retirement. Have a wonderful day.”

“Will do, Bye, Steve.

“Goodbye, Ted.”

Steve takes a drive over to the Bakery.

He parks his Acura in a small parking lot with a warning sign posted on the wall. ‘For customers only.’

Steve walks into the bakery and spots Tammy looking in his direction.

He smiles and walks over. “Hello, Tammy, How are you doing?”

“I could be better. Criminals last night pried open my driver’s door and ransacked the five boxes of clothing I had taken the time to pack to donate to the Goodwill Donation Center. My door does not open or close right. I had to tape the door shut. I have to now enter on the passenger side, then slide in my seat to drive. A big hassle if you ask me.”

“I hate to hear that. I never have been a victim of any crime, yet. I say yet, because I know it is just a matter of time when crime starts knocking.”

“Robert said you would be here at 1:30 for your cake and fudge bars”

“I know I am early. I thought I would have a fudge bar now with a cup of coffee in your café.”

“Have a seat, I will bring both items to you. Coffee with four creams and two sugars, right?”

“You have a good memory. If Robert is around, mention I am here.”

“He Is not. He is out making deliveries. He made me in charge while he is out.”

“Find 5 minutes, join me at my table if you can.”

“I can spare 5 minutes. I will be right over.”

Steve walks into the small café and finds a small corner booth and slides in.

About 10 minutes later Tammy walks over with his coffee and fudge brownie.

“Here you go.” Tammy slides into the booth and laughs.

“What is so, funny?” asks Steve taking a sip of his coffee.

“I feel like we are on a date, me sliding in to join you.”

“You know I am married, right?”

“Yep.”

“I know you like me. I like you as well. We have to be friends until I ever get a divorce. Then I promise to ask you out.”

“I might be married by then. You will have to wait on me getting a divorce,” laughs Tammy as she takes a bite of a big cookie, she brought with her.

“How’s your brother?”

“Ricky had a relapse. He is back on the street again. It is sad for my mom. We drive around at night looking for him. When we find him, he tells mom no, he is happy where he is. He will not come home. Drugs, what a waste of life.”

“If you want to keep us as friends, we can go places together, bowling, cinema, sporting events. I could be the brother you do not have. I can be protection for you when you go anywhere. Would you like that? I would like that.”

“I would love that very much. As you know, I live with my mom, and not in the best part of town. Our apartment complex is slowly changing to the drug selling side.”

“I want to help you and your mother move. What rent are you paying now?”

“We pay 600 a month, plus utilities.”

“What is your mother’s name?”

“Francis.”

“Let us do this, we find a place for 1,000 a month. You pay 50% and I will pay 50%. I will be part of your lease. So, if you do not pay, then I have to pay, which protects you both. If for any reason you cannot pay even 10%, I will pick up the slack.”

“Why do you want to help us?”

“Simple, because I can. Talking of work, would you or your mom or both want to work at my hotel. We have openings at the front desk, valet, bellman, and laundry.” lies Steve.

“Let me talk to mom and get back to you on your offer.”

“The jobs will be there if you want them. You are great with customer relations. I would place you as a front desk receptionist. I just hired my old Assistant Manager back as the Manager, starting September 1. I plan to just pop in now and then. I want to play golf, tennis, and swim.”

“I have to get back to work. When ready, come up front for your cake and fudge.”

“I have to check for message on my cell. I will be right up.”

Steve calls Valerie.

“This is your number one realtor, Valerie speaking.”

“I like the way you just answered. It sounds very professional,” says Steve. “I wanted you to know I am on my way to pick-up your sweets, and the wine.”

“Can you buy milk, too. My three cats are hungry?”

“Regular, low fat, skim, what kind?”

“Buy me low fat milk, please.”

“My GPS says I will be there in less than 20 minutes.”

The cashier is busy ringing up orders.

Steve stands in the lengthy line to pay.

Tammy walks up, smiles and says, “Here is your sweet’s order. Robert has paid It.”

Tammy winks and returns behind the bakery counter.

She says, “Next in line.”

Steve walks to his vehicle, places his purchase on the passenger seat, and departs the area.

He stops at the first gas station with a market. He buys Valerie’s milk and departs again.

At 10 minutes to two, Steve pulls up to 5498 Island Drive in a townhome subdivision called Manor Oaks. He rings the doorbell.

Valerie comes to the door wearing an apron. She is in a hurry.

“Hello, Steve, follow me. I do not want to burn the chicken.”

Steve enters the kitchen with a middle Island.

“Please place the sweets and milk in the fridge. Then give me a quick kiss and have a seat in the dining room. Lunch is almost ready.”

Steve comes close to Valerie. They lock lips briefly.

Valerie says, “Thanks for the milk.”

He places the sweets on the lower shelf and says, “Crap. I forgot the wine.”

“We can have coke this time.”

Steve has a seat in the dining room.

He watches Valerie dash from the stove to the sink, and back to the stove at least five times in a minute.

“Smells good,” he shouts over the classical music playing in the background.

“Almost ready.”

Steve’s cell phone rings on vibrate.

He knows it must be Alice letting him know she mailed the postcard.

He answers, “This is Steve. I cannot talk at the moment. I will call you back within 3 hours.”

He places his cell phone back in his front pocket of his jeans.

Valerie walks over and places down a chicken casserole dish.

“I have a salad to start our lunch with.

She dashes back to the kitchen.

Steve places a fork and a knife in each hand.

When Valerie walks in carrying her salad, Steve jokes, “I am ready.”

Valerie laughs, she places the salad bowl on the table, and sits down across from her date.

Steve says, “The casserole smells good.”

“Any news from your wife?”

“Let us call my wife, by her first name. In my head I am already divorced.”

“Let me try again, Any news from Carol?”

“Yes. I received a postcard from Natchez, and from Dallas. She is cutting her trip short. Carol wanted to go to Vegas, and her friend wanted to go back home once they visited Saint Louis.”

“I had a road trip once with three other college roommates. We returned after just one stop. We were arguing nonstop on the next city to go to,” says Valerie as she starts to add the salad to Steve’s plate.

“Sometimes I am a rabbit. I eat a salad at each meal,” says Steve as he waits for Valerie before he takes a bite.

“Do you pray before each meal?”

Steve looks at his date and replies, “I am not religious. I will pray if you pray.”

Valerie, cups her hands together, closes her eyes and says a prayer.

Steve bows his head and listens to the prayer.

When Valerie says, “Amen,” so does her date.

For the next 45 minutes Steve and Valerie talk about their upbringing.

“I loved going to school all my life. I was an ‘A’ student and made the honor roll. My parents were proud of my academics.”

“Any brothers or sisters?”

Valerie shakes her head from side to side and says, “No, I was an only child.”

“I was with different foster families growing up. Turns out my biological parents were drug addicts. They were both in and out of prison”

“Did you ever meet them?”

“No. I never did. When I was eighteen, I joined the Army. When my four-year term was up, I came home to help my adoptive parents run the Williamson Inn.”

“How long ago was it that you were handed the keys to the hotel?”

“Five years ago, next month. I expanded the hotel by eighty rooms just a year ago. I bought the vacant lot next to me. Now our guest have parking, a computer room, an arcade, a library, and a swimming pool.”

“Is there any lots still for sale near you?”

“No. I either have to build up, convert a floor from rooms to other sites like a tourist shop, a deli, a put-put Indoor 18 hold golf course, things that keep the family busy spending their money with me, than on the town.”

“Would you like 2nds?”

“Yes, please. You are a good cook.”

Valerie stands next to Steve as she serves him a second helping of her casserole.

“You smell nice,” says Steve as he kisses Valerie’s right hand.

Valerie puts down the casserole dish on the dining room table, then leans over a sitting Steve, and kisses his lips.

He pulls her towards his lap. They kiss some more.

Valerie takes a moment and asks, “Would you like dessert. now?”

“You are dessert,” replies Steve as he kisses her neck.

Valerie takes Steve by the hand to her bedroom. They jump onto the bed and start removing each other’s clothing.

Steve asks, “Where is your father?”

“He is in the apartment above the garage. He is out fishing somewhere.”

Steve spends the night.

Alice calls Steve at 9 p.m. and he does not answer.

She leaves him a message.

“Steve, pick up. I am in my hotel room in Saint Louis. I mailed off the postcard for you and Carol yesterday afternoon. I also bought a Saint Louis t-shirt for Tony.”

Friday, June 11th at 5 a.m.

Steve slips out of Valerie’s house.

Once in his car he plays back his messages. There are three. The first call is from Betty. She has a wedding party that plans to cancel next Saturday’s event and wanted him to call the Groom back to talk him out of not cancelling.

The second call is from Ralph. He has to cancel his meeting with Steve and John and to reschedule.

The third call is from Alice.

Steve drives toward his hotel when his cell phone rings. “Hello?”

“Morning, Steve. You must be busy. You have missed our evening phone call 2 nights in a row.”

Steve lies, “Morning, Alice. I have my hands full. I have staff that quit, staff that are sick, I am interviewing applicants, and I have a wedding party that wants to cancel. I have been on the phone putting fires out. Ralph even cancelled today’s lunch with me and my guest. It has just been non-stop problems.”

Alice replies, “Today, around 5 p.m. I will report Carol missing. I will say she came to the hotel room Wednesday night at 10 p.m. drunk. She changed into a blue top, blue jeans, and tennis shoes. As Carol changed clothes she said over and over, ‘I am flying to Las Vegas in a private jet. I am drinking beers with a rich man. His name is Walter.’”

Steve says, “If the Police question you further about Carol, say you were sleeping when she came in the room.”

“I went bar hoping Wednesday night as Carol. I wore a wig and pretended to be drunk. I told every man I danced with I own a travel agency in Atlanta.”

“How did that go down?”

“I have at least 5 names with their cell phone numbers.”

“That was smart. Now we have contacts to give to the Police.”

Alice replies, “I will say I was tired from the long drive. I wanted to take a nap, then go bar hoping. I fell asleep. When I woke up at 9 p.m., Carol was gone and left no note. I went back to sleep.”

“Stick you sleeping when she walked in the hotel room.”

Alice says, “Carol woke me when she returned to the hotel room at 10. She was excited she met a man that was rich. She would not let me talk.

She kept saying over and over, ‘I am with a rich man. We are flying to Las Vegas in his private jet.’ I went back to sleep after Carol left. I waited all day for Carol to either walk in the room or give me a call, but nothing.”

Steve replies, “Do not give too much detail. Say you woke up, Carol was gone, no note left. You went back to sleep. Carol came back all excited and drunk. While changing clothes she kept saying, “I found a rich man. He has a private jet. I am going to Las Vegas. Carol tosses papers in the trash. She said I do not need these numbers anymore. You retrieved the five numbers from the trash.”

“I plan to stay in the hotel room and wait for Carol. I will use Uber to deliver my meals.”

“Do not be nervous when making the missing person report. Role play it in your head over and over. It will be easier to lie. The Police person will ask for a photo of Carol. Give the photo in your wallet, of you two standing by her blue Volvo she just bought.”

“Good idea. I will look in the mirror and role play what I plan to say.”

Steve says, “Do go to the bars around the area, search for Carol, show them a photo, look and act worried, play the part of a good friend.”

“I will call you today after I make the missing person report.”

Steve says, “Good luck.”

Steve stops at McDonald’s for breakfast. He sits in the parking lot and enjoys his egg sandwich and cup of coffee. He then takes a short nap.

Steve calls Ralph.

“This is Ralph.”

“HI, Buddy. How are my three dogs doing?”

“Best pets I ever had. They bark if they need to go out, they wait to eat until I tell them to eat. They bark if any person knocks on the door. Good dogs for sure.”

“You left me a message. You have to cancel today’s lunch with me and John.”

“At the time I left the message I did, but the meeting with my banker for a business loan was cancelled by him, so I am back on with you both.”

“What amount are you looking for, money wise?”

“100,000 dollars. I need to remodel, update the furniture, and have operating capital as well.”

“What are the banks loan interest rate?”

“The lowest bank I found was six percent plus collateral of some kind.”

“I will loan you 100,000 at three percent. The collateral will be the fish camp property. What is all your land worth?”

“I have no clue. I do not plan to build on it. I like to drive down the dirt road and see trees all along the road.”

“I am ready to loan you the money when you need it,” says Steve.

Steve calls his hotel and asks for Betty.

“Betty.”

“Morning, Betty. Who is the groom that wants to cancel?”

“Frank Gordon, wedding party of 40.”

“Did Frank say, “Why?”

“No. He wants to speak to you only.”

“I have his number programed in my phone. I will call him now. I will let you know.”

“This is Frank.”

“This is Steve Williamson. What is going on? Why are you calling off your wedding to lovely Pam?”

“It is not us. It is my In-Laws. They said they are going on a European vacation that includes a 14-day cruise from Miami to Barcelona. The trip will cost them 12,000 dollars. They want us to postpone our wedding for a year. They were to pay for the wedding.”

“Let us work this out, Frank.”

“My future father-In-law thinks money buys everything.”

“Sadly, Frank money does buy everything.”

Frank says, “He was paying for the wedding. If I marry Pam next Saturday as planned, he will not foot the bill.”

“I forgot, what are we charging you for the reception party after the big day where you both say, I do.”

“There are forty-two people, dinner, with dessert and Suit B as a gathering spot, it cost 8,500 dollars.”

“Tell your father-In-Law to have a nice cruise. Whatever your bill to me is, I will collaborate with you to slowly pay me back. This way you control your own life.”

“I can pay you 300 a month for like 28 months.”

“Tell you what I want you to do. I want you to open a saving account in both names. Then put the three hundred you are giving me away. When you finally have 8,500 in the bank, call me that you are paying off your debt. I will meet you and collect my loan.”

“You are not pulling my leg, are you?”

“Frank, listen. I have no debt. The business is expanding, I am in decent shape. I have known you since you were age 7, You have always been a good kid. It might take you 6 years to pay me. So, what. I can wait for you to pay back your loan.”

“Wait till I tell, Pam the wedding is still on, thanks to you.”

“Enjoy your special day next Saturday. I trust you, Frank. This is an easy decision deal I am making.”

“Thanks, again, Steve. Bye.”

Steve parks his Acura in his assigned parking spot and walks into his hotel. He waves at his front desk staff, then climbs the stairs to the second floor.

Betty is using the copy machine when he walks by.

“Morning, Betty.”

“Morning, Steve. Have you spoken to Carol this morning?”

“No. Alice said she left the hotel room Wednesday evening. She met a rich man that owned an airplane. He was going to fly her to Las Vegas. Alice has not left the hotel room and Carol has never called. Alice said she will be filing a missing person report at 5 p.m. if her best friend does not show.”

“Crazy Carol,” says Betty.

“Is your Cousin coming in this morning?”

“No. She had to reschedule. Her mother fell ill. She is taking her to their doctor. I will have Olivia come in Monday at ten a.m.”

“Do me a favor. I am going to take a friend’s father at 10 a.m. to Ralph’s Fish Camp. I told John to come to the hotel at ten a.m. We will go in my Volvo at that time. Advise the front desk to let you know when he arrives. I will then be gone the rest of the day.”

“No problem. I placed the mail for the hotel on your desk.”

Steve says, “I will be glad when Billy takes over as the manager. I hate to look at all the mail that comes across my desk. There is so much junk lately.”

“A Jake Welch asked you to call him. He is home in Dallas. He said you have his phone number.”

Steve goes to his desk, takes off his shoes and gives Jake a call.

“This is Jake.”

“Good morning, Jake. You called my hotel looking for me?”

“Yes, I did. I want to cut down on my flying. My wife is getting mad at me for being gone so long. I have an idea I want to run by you.”

“What idea is that?”

“Any future franchise applicants for the Atlanta area you will interview for me. If the person is an honest candidate, I will fly the person to Dallas for the final interview. How does that sound? Will you help me?”

“Yes. No problem. Have the Atlanta ad say to call me on my cell. I will be happy to interview your applicants. We want applicants with people skills, right?”

“For sure. Thanks for helping me in Atlanta. I will call other franchise owners in other states to do the same thing. My wife will be happy to see me home more.”

Steve walks out to Betty’s desk.

“Can you bring me a cup of coffee and a fruit Danish from the kitchen?”

“I think I will order the same thing.”

Steve calls Jack’s office.

“This is Jack.”

“Jack, can you come to my office, please?”

“On the way.”

Betty walks in carrying a tray.

“Two cups of coffee and two heated Danish.”

Jack walks in, “That smells good.”

“Have mine, I will go get another coffee and Danish for me,” says Betty.

Steve says to Jack. “I wanted to have a quick meeting with you and Betty. I plan to come into the hotel less once Carol is back from her road trip.”

“I think between me, Betty, Anna, and soon with Billy, we can manage your hotel.”

“I see us growing rapidly once Olivia joins us in marketing.”

Jack asks, “Who is Olivia?”

“Olivia is Betty’s Cousin. She is a whiz with a computer. I hired her to revamp the hotel website, our restaurant menus, then she will start attending hotel trade shows to put the Williamson Inn on the map.”

“When does Olivia start?”

Steve says, “Monday will be her official first day.”

Betty walks in with her own small food tray.

Steve says, “I thought Jack already knew about your Cousin coming on board.”

“I was going to walk her around on Monday to all departments and introduce her at that time.”

Steve says, “I wanted to have a brief meeting between us three. I plan to slowdown and stay away from my hotel. I trust you two, plus Anna, and then when Billy returns, you four can run my hotel without me.”

Betty says, “I see the hotel getting fuller once Olivia is marketing full time. We offer an excellent rate, plus Olivia told me she wants to produce a weekend getaway special that includes all meals for one fixed price.”

“Just remember to run anything that involves money by me. Just track me down,” says Steve as he drinks his coffee.

“I checked my reservation book, and we are up 20 percent year to date,” says Betty.

Jack says, “I have an idea to bring the Williamson Inn attention. Let us give a suite away one weekend a month to a Police Officer and his family, all expenses paid. The Police Chief selects the deserving officer. There has been so much bad publicity across the nation against the police that serve to protect us. Let us reward them a fun filled weekend.”

Steve smiles and replies, “I love the idea. Run with it, Jack.”

Jack says, “I have a good friend that is a reporter for The Atlanta Times. We can get him to author the story, take photos, show us handing a set of room keys to the Police Officer.”

“I love your idea. Run with it, Jack. Let us start this weekend or is that too soon?”

Jack takes a bite of his Danish and replies, “No, Steve, this weekend is too early. Let us start next weekend. What name do we want to call it?”

Betty replies, “Good question.”

“Let us call it PAD. The three letters stand for Police Appreciation Day,” says Steve.

Betty says, “I can run it by our Chief, if you want.”

“Good idea, do that, please, Betty.”

Jack laughs and says, “See what happens when we put our heads together.”

“I need time with Carol once she returns home. I need quality time. I will leave my cell phone with Betty to answer once my wife is back. If you need anything, just call me at home.”

Betty asks, “Carol flew to Las Vegas with an unknown man she met in a bar, is that right?”

“Yes. Her friend Alice will file a missing person report at 5 today if Carol does not call her. Alice will stay 2 more nights in the hotel waiting on her. That is how bad Carol wanted to see Las Vegas.”

Betty asks, “Alice did not want to drive to Las Vegas, is that the problem?”

Steve says, “Alice does not like riding in a car too long, and she does not gamble, so Las Vegas was out for her.”

Jack says, “Carol will show up soon, I just know it.”

“I hope you are right, Jack. I hope my wife is o.k.”

Steve’s cell phone rings.

“Hello?”

“HI, Steve. This is John. I am 20 minutes away. We are still on, right?”

“Yes. We are still on. I will meet you in the lobby. Did you bring a fishing pole?”

“I did, but I have no bait.”

“Ralph has everything we will need. See you soon. Drive safe.”

Steve turns to Betty and Jack and says, “I am going to the lobby. I will turn my hotel over to you both. I know I am safe.”

Steve takes the last bite of his Danish and walks out of his office carrying his coffee cup.

Steve walks downstairs to his front desk and says hello to Pam and Scott.

“Morning, Boss,” says Scott.

“I prefer to be called, Steve.”

“Morning, Steve,” says Scott.

“How is it going at our front desk? What can we do to make your jobs easier?”

Pam speaks up, “If we had walkie-talkies for all employees that would make our job easier checking our guest in. I could just speak on the walkie and a bellman for example could be right here to help carry the luggage to the room.”

Steve replies, “Call Betty upstairs, tell her I said to work on your walkie-talkie request. Anything else I can do for you both?”

“If we could have free coffee, Danish, cookies, and candy to offer to our check-in guest, as a way of saying, ‘Welcome to the Williamson Inn,’ that would make their arrival more enjoyable,” says Pam.

“Again, run your request by Betty. She has to still get the o.k. from me, but I see no problems with your request. I am all for making your front desk job easier.”

John walks in and says, “Hello, Steve.”

“Hello, John. Let us get going. I want to spend quality time with you, today.”

Once in the Acura, Steve says, “I have to go home first to switch cars. I want to drive my Volvo.

The two men share stories as they travel to Steve’s residence.

“I really like your daughter.”

“I know my daughter likes you as well. You are married, right?”

“I am right now, but I plan to file for divorce within 30 days. My lawyer wants to talk to Carol without a drag out fight in court. We want to offer her a quick settlement.”

“What is the divorce law in our State?”

“Georgia State law is not on my side. Carol can go after 50 percent of my assets, which would be millions of dollars if we went that far. I am hoping to offer her a cool million to just walk away.”

“I would take a cool million and walk away with the sure thing.”

“That is what I am hoping happens as well. What about you, John. Are you married?”

“No. I am divorced. Valerie was five when her mother and I called It quits. We were in love for four of the 5 years we were married. Then we just drifted apart.”

“Sorry to hear that. I wanted my marriage to work,” lies Steve.

“I did as well.”

“You never remarried?”

“I did, two more times. The longest was for 11 years.”

“If I come across the right woman I would marry again. My first wife is a Gold-Digger. She just wants my money and not me.”

“I hear that word Gold-Digger often among my fishing friends. I guess those type of women exist in this world.”

“They do. My wife played it cool with me when dating. Then after we were married two months, she changed to the real her. She spent over 75,000 dollars in 3 months. She bought a Volvo, clothes, shoes, jewelry, you name it she bought it.”

“Valerie says you treated your wife to a 12-day road trip out West.”

“Yes. She is missing as we speak.”

“Missing, what do you mean, missing?”

“She went bar hopping in Saint Louis. She met a rich man with an airplane. He offered to fly her to Las Vegas. That was Wednesday night and no phone call to her traveling friend.”

“No phone call?”

“No phone call at all. Alice, her traveling companion, is staying in the hotel waiting for her call or for her return. If nothing by 5 p.m. today, then Alice will file a missing person report.”

“How do you know she wanted to fly to Las Vegas with a stranger?”

“Carol came back to the hotel room drunk. She changed clothes and bragged she found a richer man than me. Sad, but true.”

Steve arrives home and opens his garage. He parks his Acura inside and the men then depart in the Volvo.

Steve says, “Let us talk about our fishing.”

“It was nice of you to offer to take me fishing.”

“I plan to offer you a free weekend of your choice for you and any fishing friends that you want to bring. I will introduce you to Ralph, my best man at my wedding, and the owner of the Fish Camp.”

“I can’t wait to meet Ralph.”

“He moved back there this week. I gave him my three dogs as company. My dogs are Leo, Timber, and Cedar.”

“How long did you own your dogs?”

“Since they were puppies. They are between 5 and 7 years old.”

“You live near your hotel?”

“I am in my single family three bedroom, two bath, three car garage, with a pool home. Do you like to swim?”

“When Valerie was growing up, I did. Not much in the last 10 years.”

“I love it. I take a swim, then lay on the lounge chair and fall asleep.”

John says, “I should swim more. I know it is good exercise. My condominium has a pool, but I like my privacy, but the pool is always full.”

“Do you like condominium life, John?”

“Yes, I do. I like the Idea of just closing the door and walking away, that, and no yard work. I do not like the HOA monthly fees. It is 600 a month where I am.”

“That is a lot of money a month.” says Steve as he turns down the dirt road toward the fish camp.

Steve toots his horn when he pulls up to the fish camp. Ralph comes out and waves.

“HI, Buddy. Ralph, this is John. He cannot wait to go fishing.”

The three dogs come running and barking from inside the fish camp office.

“Cedar, Timber, Leo, how are my dogs doing?”

The pets are happy to see their old master. They jump all over him.

Ralph says, “You can tell they miss you.”

“Come in. I just made us lunch. I cooked hamburgers with potato salad, beans, and beer.”

Steve says to John, “Wait till you see the fishing pond, how big it is. Ralph stocked it with Catfish and Bass. I like feeding the catfish dog food and watching all the fish come to the service. That sight never gets old.”

The three men sit around the dining table talking fish stories. They all sneak pieces of meat to the dogs that hang around the dining room.

“Ralph says, “Anyone care for another hamburger?”

John rubs his stomach and replies, “Not me. I am full.”

“I will have one more,” says Steve holding out his empty plate.

The three men sit around the dining room table drinking beer.

Ralph asks Steve, “How is my Fish Camp Restaurant working out for your Williamson Inn?”

“Business is good. I hired a woman to start marketing the hotel. I will tell her to contact you to see if we can have day trips here for our hotel guest to have a meal and to go fishing.”

“That would help me. I need to start making revenue. What is the name of your marketing rep?”

“Her name is Olivia Porter. I will have her contact you on Monday.”

“I will invite her and John to both come out for a day of fishing mixed in with lunch.”

John replies, “Count me in on that Idea. I also am with a Moose Lodge. I can arrange for my members to spend the day here fishing. What fee would you charge for fishing mixed in with lunch?”

Ralph says, “I will charge 50 dollars total a person.”

John laughs and replies, “Let us tell my members 75 dollars total for the day.”

“That sounds even better,” says Ralph as he feeds the dogs pieces of his hamburger.

Steve says, “I have to make phone calls. How about you two go fish. I will join you when I can.”

“Good idea,” says Ralph. “Ready for fishing? John.”

“Boy am I ready.”

Steve looks out the dining room window and watches Ralph, John, and the dogs strolled over to the fishpond.

Steve calls Alice.

“Has Carol reached out to you, yet?”

“No. I called the police department. They are sending an officer to my hotel room to take my missing person report.”

“It is only 2 p.m.”

“I know. I wanted to get this over with. I was planning to go to the mall and do shopping with the money you gave us for the road trip.”

“Just be natural. Act and look worried. Describe what she was wearing when she left the room for the last time. Give the officer one of your photos from your purse. Give him or her my phone number as well.”

“I have to hang up. A woman just knocked and said, “This is the police.”

“Remember, act and sound worried.”

“I will. Bye.”

Alice opens her room door. There stands a female Police Officer holding a clipboard.

“Afternoon. I am Officer Robin Miller. Are you Alice Samberg?”

“I am. Thanks for coming so fast.”

“Can we sit at your breakfast table?”

“Sorry, of course. I have water and Coke. What would you like to drink, Officer?”

“I am fine for now. Let me ask the questions, and we can get this report filed, and your missing friend into the system.”

“Alright.”

“Start from the beginning.”

“Here is a recent photo of my best friend, Carol Williamson. We are from Atlanta. We were on a 12-day road trip. We went from Atlanta, to Natchez, Mississippi, to Dallas, and now Saint Louis. We were going to drive to Las Vegas, but I do not gamble, and I get car sick if we spend too much time in the car. We both wanted to come to your city to visit The Arch.”

“The Arch is our number one tourist attraction.”

“We arrived Wednesday late afternoon in Saint Louis. I swam in the pool and took a long nap. When I woke up at nine p.m., Carol was not in the room. She left me no note. At ten p.m. she returned to the room, and she was drunk. She was excited, talking a mile a minute.”

“What did she say to you?”

“She went bar hopping, drinking, and dancing with strangers. One man she met was rich. He owned his own plane. He offered to fly her to Las Vegas. She said his name was Walter.”

Officer Miller asks, “Does Walter have a last name?”

“I only have a first name of Walter. Carol is a Gold-Digger. She married her husband Steve for his money. That is what she told me, anyway. Her birthday was last Sunday. He gave her 4,000 dollars for her birthday. He said go on your road trip and have fun.”

“How much of the 4,000 do you still have, or did Carol take the money with her Wednesday evening?”

“I have the money. Carol gave me the money to manage. I have 3,300 left.”

“What is her cell phone number?”

“She forgot her purse, and her cell phone. She left it by accident in her laundry room. She did not know it was missing till we arrived in Natchez, Mississippi. That was after our six-hour drive. We have been doing all the phone calling from my cell phone.”

“What is your cell phone number?”

“It is (470) 376-2285. Carol’s cell is (470) 448-5921.”

“What is her husband’s name and his cell phone number?”

Her husband is Steve Williamson, he owns the Williamson Inn in Atlanta. His cell is (470) 448-4934. I called him to let him know Carol still has not returned. He asked me to file the missing person report.”

“When will you be returning to Atlanta?”

“I will stay here tonight and tomorrow night, then I will drive back to Atlanta on Sunday morning. I was hoping Carol would call me on my cell phone or in the hotel room.”

“Did she take her luggage with her?”

“No. She just got dressed, threw out some names with phone numbers on them, and said she didn’t need any of these men, as she found her next meal ticket in Walter.”

“Do you have those names?”

“I do. Here you go.”

“Did you call any of these names?”

“No. Why?”

“If I can find the bar she was at, see if they have cameras, I may be able to get Walter’s last name and phone number.”

Alice says “I will call one of the numbers now, and you can listen in.”

The Officer says, “Do it. Let us find out the name of the bar.”

Alice calls the first phone number with the name of Bobby G.

“This is Bobby.”

“Hello, Bobby. My name is Alice, my best friend is missing. You gave her your name and phone number Wednesday night.”

“What is your friend’s name, and what does she look like?”

“Her name is Carol Williamson, she is five’ two,” with blonde hair, and she was starting a travel agency in Atlanta.”

“I remember her. Good looking. She was wearing a blonde wig. She was drinking too much. I offered to take her back to her hotel, but she said no.”

“Where did you meet her? What bar?”

“Cowboy Boots Bar over on Gill Road. That is the only bar I go to. I am the king of darts and pool. What do you mean she is missing?”

“She came back to the hotel room at 10 p.m., changed and said she was flying to Las Vegas with a man named Walter.”

“We have men come to the bar for the pool tournament on Wednesday night. I know men named Walter. What did this Walter look like?”

“I do not know. Carol did not describe him. She just said he was rich, and he owned an airplane.”

“I know no man that owns an airplane. The men visiting the bar come for the pool playing. Hardly any women come on Wednesday nights.”

“I am making a missing person report now. The Officer wants to know If the bar has security cameras?”

“No cameras. We told the owner if he installed cameras, we all would find another bar to drink in. We do not want our wives or girlfriends reviewing any security tapes. Married men bring their girlfriends with them to the Cowboy Boots Bar.”

“Thanks for talking to me.”

“I hope you find your friend.”

The Officer motions for Alice’s cell phone.

“Sir, this is Officer Miller. I am making the missing person report. What is your last name?”

“Grant. Bobby Grant.”

“Thank you for your time.”

“I hope you find her. Bye.”

The Police Officer says, “I will go to the bar to speak with the staff and the pool players. Someone knows of a man named Walter, who owns an airplane. What is your home address?”

“I live with my father at 3662 Mills Road in Atlanta.”

“What Is your occupation?”

“I am a bookkeeper.”

“Has your friend ever done this before, just leave and not keep in touch?”

“No. She called me every day when I was home in Atlanta. I am worried for her safety to be honest.”

“Your friend must be having a fun time with this Walter fellow in Sin City is my guess.”

“What happens now?”

“I will enter her into NCIC data base as a missing person. I will attach the photograph with my report. I have a question. Does Carol have any tattoos?”

“She has a little red heart on the inside of her left wrist.”

“If Carol returns, make sure you call me. Here is my business card.”

“I will.”

“In my police department I have this case till we find your friend. I am going now to the Cowboy Boots Bar to see if anyone knows of a man named Walter, who owns an airplane. Here is your case number. The missing person report will not be complete until I speak to her husband.”

“I have one of her husband’s business cards. Let me get it out of my purse.”

Alice goes to her purse, finds Steve’s business card, and hands it to the Officer.”

“Do you know how Carol’s marriage is? Any problems that you know of?”

“Carol said their marriage was strong. They were trying for a baby. Her husband just rented office space for her travel agency she was forming.”

“So why run off to Las Vegas with a stranger?”

“Carol is what we call a Gold-Digger. She told me she married Steve for his money. She said she was always looking for a richer man.”

“There is your answer. She found a richer man.”

“I hope she is safe. I just wish she would call me. I am worried sick.”

“Try not to worry. She could return at any time with a wild story to tell you.”

“I hope you are right, Officer.”

“Make sure you call me when you hear from your friend.”

“I will.”

Alice walks Officer Miller to her hotel front door.

The Officer turns and says, “You did the right thing. You waited 36 hours before calling the police. Your friend will turn up, soon.”

“I sure do hope so.”

Alice watches the Police Officer enter her police car, wave, and depart the hotel parking lot.”

Alice calls Steve. He does not answer. She leaves him a message.

“Steve, the Police Officer, Robin Miller, came to my hotel room and made the missing person report. She will be mailing you a copy. It was surprising easy. She did not suspect anything on my part. I told her I was staying in my hotel room till Sunday morning, giving Carol time to call

me or to show back up. The Officer will be calling you to complete her missing person report. Call me.”

Alice’s cell phone rings. She does not recognize the phone number.

“Hello?”

“It is me, Officer Miller. If anyone calls you besides your friend Carol, then call me. I will add the information to the report. I just spoke to the owner of your hotel.”

“What did he have to say?”

“He described your friend as a happy person. Carol was telling him about her soon to be travel agency. I am driving over to the Cowboy Boots Bar to see if any other businesses have security cameras. We might get lucky and find a video with Carol and this mystery man, Walter.”

“Thanks for doing this for me. I hope there is video.”

Alice exits her hotel room and walks over to the front desk.

“Good evening. I just made a missing person report on my friend, Carol Williamson. She flew to Las Vegas with a stranger that claimed to own a private plane. That was Wednesday night. No phone call from her since. I am worried about her safety.”

The elderly owner says, “I just spoke to an Officer. I told her your friend was a happy person. She wanted to talk about her new travel agency she was going to open when she returned to Atlanta.”

“I will be extending my stay. I plan to check out Sunday morning. Do you need more cash deposit?”

“Yes, I do. When you check-out just leave the key in the room.”

“I can do that. How much more money do you need?”

“I need 104.00 total which includes tax.”

Alice reaches in her pocket and pulls out two hundred. “Here you go.”

“The owner gives her back the ninety-six in change.

“I hope your friend returns safely.”

“Thank you. Is there a seafood restaurant I can order me dinner from?”

“Yes. Here is a menu. Leave it in your room. I will collect it on Sunday.”

Alice replies, “I like your hotel. It is quiet and away from the interstate.”

“We have been here 32 years next month. You are right, It is quiet.”

Back in her hotel room Alice orders her seafood dinner.

“Your food should be there in 30 minutes.”

Thirty minutes later there is a knock at Alice’s door.

She looks out the window and sees a young woman in a seafood uniform.

Alice opens the door, smiles, and says, “How much do I owe you?”

“That will be 26 even.”

Alice gives the woman thirty and says, “Keep the change.”

Alice flips channels on the television as she eats her meal.

Her cell phone rings. It is Steve returning her earlier call.

“Evening, Alice. I am at Ralph’s Fish Camp, and he may walk in shortly. Any news from Carol?”

“No news. No phone call, nothing.”

“Call me at any hour if and when you hear from her. Did it go well with the missing person report?”

“Yes. It was quick. The officer left my room and was going to the Cowboy Boots Bar in search of security cameras in the area. There are none. I walked up and down that street looking for cameras. That is why I pretended to be drunk, so the customers would remember me.”

“Did you give the Officer the five names Carol had papers on?”

“Yes. I called one of the numbers in front of her. The man said, Wednesday evening was pool tournament night.”

“How did you find that bar?”

“I called the Fire Station; said I was a tourist wanting a bar that offered Darts and Pool. A firefighter said to go to the Cowboy Boots Bar on Gill. We just got lucky with no security cameras.”

Steve starts to speak when Alice says, “I have to hang up. The Police Officer is calling me back. I will call you.”

“Hello?”

“This is Officer Miller. There are no security cameras anywhere. It was worth a try. Speak to you later.”

Alice calls back Steve.

“This is Steve’s cell phone, Ralph speaking.”

“Hello, Ralph. Can I speak to Steve?”

“He just left to meet his friend, John at the fishing hole. I will tell him to call you back. Any news on Carol?”

“No. Nothing yet. Thanks for asking.”

“I will get Steve to call you back. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Steve walks over to John who is busy fishing.

“Hey, John. We have to wrap it up for today. I have an idea. Let us have dinner at my Fish Camp Restaurant tonight with your daughter.”

“Good idea. I will call Valerie when we get to your car. I left my cell phone in the door pocket.”

“I will wait for you in Ralph’s trailer.”

Steve walks back to the trailer.

When he steps inside, Ralph says, “Alice just called for you. She wants you to call her back.”

Ralph tosses his friend his cell phone.

Steve steps outside and calls Alice.

“What is going on in Saint Louis. Any news from Carol?”

“No, nothing. I am returning tomorrow instead of Sunday. I miss my dad, and I miss you.”

“I cannot wait to see you.”

“I plan to check out at 9 and be home in the late afternoon.”

“Once back, come by my place. Return Carol’s luggage, and camera.”

“Alright, I will call you once I am close.”

Steve walks back inside the trailer and tells Ralph, “That was Alice. She is coming home tomorrow. She does not want to just hang around Saint Louis and wait for Carol to return. I do not blame her.”

“I like Alice. Bring her by for lunch and fishing, will you, please?”

“I will bring her out here on Sunday morning, Buddy just for you.”

“I am a happy man.”

John returns and hands Ralph his fishing pole. I caught and released fish today. It was fun. Thanks for having me.”

“You are welcome to stay with me in my trailer any weekend you want. Just call ahead and set the dates.”

John shakes Ralph’s hand, “You have a deal.”

Steve says, “I have to get back to my hotel.”

Ralph replies, “My outdoor cameras will be here tomorrow. I will install them when they arrive. I need to see who comes to the camp when I am away.”

Steve says, “Call me. I will come out and help if you want.”

“I will do that. Thanks for offering to help.”

Steve says bye to Ralph. He motions for John to follow him.

John calls his daughter.

“HI, Dad. Are you having fun fishing?”

“Steve and I are returning to his hotel. He is inviting you to join us for dinner at his hotel.”

Valerie asks, “What time do you want to eat?”

John replies, “It is four now. How about 6:30?”

“I will meet you at 6:30. You can tell me then all about your adventure at the Fish Camp.”

John turns to Steve and says, “I had an exciting time, today. Ralph invited me to stay a weekend.”

“Ralph is a nice man. He is lonely and wants company. First the female type, then us men.”

“He has never been married?”

“Nope. Too busy with running his Fish Camp.”

John asks, “He owns the Fish Camp, right?”

“The camp was his father’s business. He is in a nursing home. He is eighty-five, I think.”

John says, “I think I will ask him if he is hiring.”

Steve replies, “Good idea.”

Steve arrives at his hotel and parks in his manager spot.

He says to John, “After dinner I need to get home and make calls. I will leave right after our meal. Stay and have dessert. My chef makes a great New York cheesecake.”

“I love cheesecake. I will make my daughter stay for my dessert.”

Steve and John walk into the hotel.

Steve says, “I have to make calls. Go to the bar, have a drink, and watch television. I will join you after I make my calls.”

Steve points where the bar is.

Steve climbs the stairs to his office. He keeps it locked ever since someone removed money from his office safe.

Steve sits behind his desk, removes his shoes and checks his stocks on his computer. He then calls Ellen.

“HI, Fox, what are you doing?”

“I am doing the laundry. Spending quality time with my mom.”

“Is Virginia or your other 2 sisters helping?”

“Virginia is on a date and my other 2 sisters live in Texas.”

“How is your mother doing?”

“The pain sometimes is too much. Her medications does not work fast enough.”

“I can’t tonight, but I can come hang with you tomorrow.”

“I would love that.”

“I will call before coming. Do you want me to bring you and your mother food or milk?”

“If you can bring us a McDonald’s meal with a drink, which would make my mom and me happy.”

“Count on it. See you tomorrow.”

Steve calls Betty. She does not answer. He does not leave a message.

Steve calls Carol’s parents. It is just after midnight Paris time.

Tony answers, “Hello?”

“Sorry to call so late, Tony. It is your son-in-law.”

“Hello, Steve. Any news on my daughter? Has she called you?”

“No. Carol met a man in a bar Wednesday night. She went back to the hotel to change. She told her girlfriend, named Alice; she was flying to Las Vegas with a rich man named Walter.”

“My daughter did what?”

“Yes, she flew to Las Vegas with a man she met in a bar called Cowboy Boots. She has not returned, and she has not called her girlfriend, either. I made a missing person report this afternoon with an Officer Robin Miller in Saint Louis.”

“That does not sound like something my daughter would do?”

“Well, she did It. Wednesday night around 10 p.m., she told Alice, I am flying to Las Vegas tonight, and she left.”

“Who is this man named Walter?”

“I do not know. The police are investigating, they are checking for security cameras as well.”

“Ashley is sleeping. I will leave her a note to call you. I will tell my wife you filed a missing person report with an Officer Robin Miller.”

“I will call you back as soon as I hear from Carol.”

“Crazy daughter.”

Steve hangs up and puts his shoes back on. He locks his office door.

Steve walks downstairs and enters the bar. He sits right next to John. Steve orders a beer.

Steve and John have a beer. They play a game of pool and darts.

Valerie walks in the bar. All heads turn as she enters. Valerie is a sexy woman, and she knows it. Valerie walks over to her dad and gives him a kiss on the cheek. She gives Steve a hug.

Steve says, “You are an hour early.”

“I know. I was getting hungry driving over here.”

Steve replies, “Let us go order dinner. Follow me.”

All three walk into the Fish Camp Restaurant. The host says, “Hi, Steve. Just the three of you?”

“Hello, Heidi. Yes, just us three. Seat us in the new outdoor patio area, please.”

Heidi walks the trio to their table and hands all three menus. “Your server will be right with you.”

“Good evening, everyone. My name is Florence. What can I get you to drink?”

Steve says, “I would like a coffee with 4 creams and 2 sugars.”

Valerie says, “I will have a glass of white wine.”

John says, “I will have a Bud Light, please.”

“I will be right back with your drinks.”

Steve says, “We added this new outdoor patio section 2 months ago.”

Valerie replies, “Your people did an excellent job. I like the outdoor fans blowing cool air down on us.”

Florence returns with their drink order. “Are you ready to order?”

Steve replies, “I am ready. What about you, Valerie?”

“Yes. I know what I want. I will take your steak and shrimp dinner.”

“How do you want your steak cooked?”

“Well-done, please. I would like to start with a house salad with French dressing.”

Florence takes all of the orders and leaves the trio alone.

Steve says to John, “I like your daughter a great deal.”

“She told me she likes you a great deal, too.”

Valerie laughs.

The three make small talk while they have their meals.

Florence walks over and asks, “Anyone save room for dessert?”

“Steve replies, “I am full.”

Valerie replies, “I am watching my weight.”

John says, “I will have a slice of your New York Cheesecake.”

Steve says to Valerie and John, “I think I will stay longer and keep you both company.”

Valerie says, I would like that very much.”

After dessert, Steve walks the father and daughter to their cars.

“I hope you both had a delicious meal.”

Valerie smiles and says, “I did. Thanks for inviting me.”

Steve laughs and replies, “My pleasure. We will do it again, soon.”

John looks at Steve and says, “Thank you for the enjoyable day at the Fish Camp followed by dinner. I had a fun time.”

“You both are great company. Drive safely home.”

Steve opens the driver’s door for Valerie. “Thanks for coming out with short notice.”

“No, thank you for inviting me. I was about to have a bowl of cold cereal when you called.”

Steve waives to them as they both drive away.

Steve drives home. He parks the Volvo in the garage.

Steve takes a shower and puts his pajamas on.

He watches television before calling it a night.

Saturday, June 12th at 7 a.m.

Steve departs his residence driving his new car. He drives straight over to his hotel. He walks in the lobby and is surprised to see his new employee carrying a broom in her hand.

Steve says, “You must be Olivia.”

“I am. Are you the Hotel Owner?”

“Yes. Why are you carrying a broom?”

“My Cousin told me about my office location. I could not sleep. I have been here 5 hours.”

“Let me see what you have done with the old Bellman storage unit.”

Olivia walks her boss over to find the place emptied out with four bare walls.

“I plan to paint it now. I found gallons of white paint in the maintenance office.”

“Let me treat you to breakfast. When Charlie arrives at 9, I will have him paint your office. That is one of his normal maintenance duties.”

“Can I help him paint?”

“If you want to.”

“I helped my dad paint our house a couple of months ago. It was fun.”

“Have breakfast with me, then join Charlie in your new office.”

Steve walks over to his front desk and says, “Morning Jennifer. Tell Charlie when you see him this morning to call me. I have a new project I want him to work on today.”

“Will do, Steve.”

Steve motions for Olivia to follow him.

They walk into the restaurant.

“Morning, Steve. Are there just you both?”

“Good morning, Karen. Yes, just us two this morning.”

“Do you want a table or a booth?”

“A table works.”

Karen seats the two and asks, “What can I get you to drink?”

“Coffee, four creams and two sugars for me. Olivia, what do you want?”

“A glass of orange juice, please.”

“I will be right back with your drink orders. Trey will be your server.”

Steve turns to Olivia and says, “Your first day to start at my hotel was to be on Monday, not today.”

“I know. I am just excited to start working for you. Betty was telling me not to let you down. I wanted to be up and running first thing Monday morning, which is why I started this morning. I knew I needed to get my office space ready.”

“I like your attitude. I believe in Betty. If she says to hire you, I hire you. Betty has my hotel interest at heart. I do need to start marketing my Inn. I want to be full every day of every month One way to help you will be our new PAD program.”

“Betty did not mention any PAD program. What is that?”

“PAD stands for Police Appreciation Day. We will award a Police Officer and his family a free weekend here at my hotel 100 percent free. The Chief of Police will tell us the Officer’s name. We will then contact the Officer and we will explain to him or her what PAD stands for.”

“When will this PAD Program start?”

“Next week. We will pick them up at home Friday afternoon and return them home on Monday morning. Free room, free food, and a free day fishing at the Fish Camp if they want.”

“That is a great Idea. The police around the nation sometimes receive a bad name,” says Olivia taking a sip of her juice.

A man walks over to their table with an order book in his hand.

“Morning, my name is Trey. I will be your server this morning. Have you decided what you want to order?”

Steve replies, “Sorry, Trey, we were talking. Give us a minute to look over the menu, please.”

“Sure thing. Just signal me when you both are ready to order.”

About 5 minutes later Steve signals to Trey they are ready to order.

“Your boss will be Betty. She will speak with me regarding any ideas or request you will have regarding revamping our website, menus, attending conventions, or marketing.”

“I hope to make you proud. I am thankful for the job opportunity.”

“All I ask is for you to be hard working and honest, and to treat customers to where they want to come back and stay at the Inn.”

Steve and his new employee make small talk as they eat breakfast.

Steve says, “Betty will issue you a company credit card for expenses. Just keep receipts. Turn the receipts in with Jack, my bookkeeper each month.”

“I can do that, Sir.”

“Call me, Steve. I hate the word, sir. It makes me feel old. I have to say goodbye. I have calls I must make.”

Steve signals for Trey. When Trey walks over Steve says, “I will sign the ticket now. I want to introduce you to Olivia. I hired her to market the Inn.”

Trey replies, “Welcome to our hotel. I hope you can grow this fine hotel.”

“I will try my best.”

Steve leaves Trey talking with Olivia.

He walks out to his car to make his calls. The first person he calls is Ashley.

“Hello, Ashley. Did your husband say I called?”

“Yes, my husband did. I called the Saint Louis Police Department. I spoke with Officer Robin Miller. I told her my Carol would always inform me of

her plans. She did not tell me of her road trip. She just did it. Why did she write me postcards instead of calling me?”

“What did Officer Miller say?”

“There are no good answers. People sometimes do the unexpected things. Sometimes they just do it.”

“I have not heard from my wife. Alice, her friend that went on the trip with her will be back tonight. I will have her give you a call.”

“Please do. I am going to hire a private investigator to knock on the bar’s door and speak with customers and employees of the Cowboy Boots Bar.”

“I have a private investigator, share the cost with me?”

“No. I will hire my own private investigator. I need to control this investigation from the beginning. Something stinks with Carol gone missing.”

“My private investigator is driving to Saint Louis tomorrow. I have him meeting with Officer Miller, then going to the Cowboy Boots Bar,” says Steve. “I will keep you advised of any information we uncover.”

“I am very worried about my daughter. This is not like her, keeping me in the dark. I have a weak heart.”

“I hope to call you back with good news,” says Steve.

“I am going to church tomorrow to pray my daughter is alright.”

“In my heart, she is having a fun time in Las Vegas. She will either call you, Alice, or me,” says Steve.

“Can you please have Alice call me?”

“Yes. I will do it now,” says Steve.

Steve calls Alice.

“Hi, Steve.”

“I need you to pull over if you are driving. I need to give you Ashley’s number. This is Carol’s mom in Paris. She wants to talk to you.”

“I am still in the hotel. I will be on the road within 30 minutes. “I am ready to copy Ashley’s number.”

Steve gives Alice the cell phone number of Ashley.

“Keep it simple and remember whatever you tell her, you will have to tell her again to make your story true. Tell her Carol came back to the room drunk, talking about this guy named Walter and about him flying her to Las Vegas.”

“I am calling her right now. Bye.”

Steve calls his friend Ralph.

“Hello?”

“HI, Ralph. Do you still want me to come over to help you mount your new cameras?”

“Yes. The shipment arrived this morning.’

“I will be there soon. See you then.”

“Thanks for calling.”

Steve calls Johnny Black.

“This is Johnny.”

“HI, Johnny. I need you to leave tomorrow and drive to Saint Louis. Call and meet with an Officer Robin Miller, she took Alice’s missing person report. Then go to the Cowboy Boots Bar and interview the staff about this guy with a plane, a man named Walter. Try to get a last name, and a phone number

“I will leave today for Saint Louis.”

“Great. The Police Officer also has five names and cell numbers of men Carol met with on Wednesday night in the bar. Speak to each of them about a man named Walter.”

“Will do. I will call you back after I speak with Officer Robin Miller.”

“Have a safe drive. Bye.”

Tammy calls Steve.

“Hi, Steve. My mom and I would love to take you up on your offer to help us move. We also would like to work at your hotel.”

“Hi Tammy. Call Betty in my office. Tell her I hired you both. She can train you for front desk, working the bar, something that makes you both happy. I will call you on Monday and we can all go look for a safer and cleaner residence to call home.”

“Thank you for helping us.”

“You welcome. I am in the middle of something right now. Just call Betty, then call me back on Monday.”

“Will do. Thanks again for thinking of my mom and me.”

“No problem. Speak to you again on Monday. Bye.”

Steve receives a cell phone call with a 507 Saint Louis area code.

“This Is Steve.”

“This Is Officer Robin Miller of the Saint Louis Police Department. Am I speaking with Steve Williamson?”

“Speaking.”

“I am the Officer that made out the missing person report on your wife with her road trip companion, Alice Samberg.”

“Alice is a loyal friend.”

“Have you heard from your wife at all?”

“Not a word. I received two postcards. One from Natchez, Mississippi, and one from Dallas.”

“Alice says Carol is a Gold-Digger. Is that how you feel as well?”

“Yes. Carol fooled me. Before Carol married me, she would get upset if I spent money on her. Then after we got married, I added her name to both my personal and business checking accounts. That later turned out to be a big mistake. Then all of a sudden, she is buying a 50,000-dollar Volvo, clothes, shoes, and jewelry.”

“Did you two fight over money?”

“No fighting. I just asked her to stop spending my money”

“She didn’t stop spending your money, did she?”

“No. Carol is a true Gold-Digger. A week ago, Alice warns me that my wife is about to spend 20,000 more starting a travel agency. Alice says Carol told her she married me for my money.”

“Alice says you gave them 4,000-dollars for this 12-day road trip.”

“Yes. I did it so I could have a financial break of my wife spending my money. She left her cell phone and purse home by accident. I have taken at least six calls from store owners wanting payment on shoes, dresses, inquiries on renting office space, a transport van company on renting their vehicles. I have a shoe box full of messages for her. It is crazy. She loves spending my money.”

“Is it true, you are planning on divorcing your wife?”

“Yes. it is true. Who told you that?”

“An Atlanta Detective I am working with, plus, your mother-in-law is saying something stinks with her daughter on a road trip, and not telling her beforehand. Your mother-in-law thinks harm has come to her daughter and she thinks you may be involved.”

“Ashley told me the same thing. She thinks I may have harmed her daughter. I told her no way. We are trying to have children,” lies Steve.

“That is what I am saying, you are telling me you both are trying to have children, yet you are telling others you are filing for divorce.”

“Before Carol went on her birthday road trip, we agreed we would give our marriage a second try. I agreed to fund her travel agency in return of her not spending my money behind my back. This will be all verified once my wife surfaces after her road trip to Las Vegas.”

“A Detective Mark Carter will be calling you soon. He is with the Atlanta Police Department. One more question, Are you having an affair with Alice Samberg”

“No. I am faithful to Carol. I have to go. I look forward to talking with Detective Carter,” lies Steve.

“Have a wonderful day, Mr. Williamson.”

Steve dials Alice’s cell phone.

“Hi, Steve. I just checked out of my hotel. I have to make one stop before I hit the road.”

“Has an Officer Miller been calling you?”

There is a long pause then Alice says, “Yes.”

“Do not talk to her again. If she calls, tell her to call me.”

“She is demanding I take a polygraph regarding if Carol went missing the way I said she went missing. I told her no polygraph. That is why I just checked out of the hotel. I have to fill up my gas tank, then my next stop will be your residence,” lies Alice.

“Good. You did your part; you filed a missing person report. It is Carol’s mother that is talking about harm coming her daughter’s way.”

“I am pulling into the Chevron now. I will get gas, then I will be on my way,” lies Alice.

Alice hangs up her cell phone. sitting next to her is Officer Miller.

“You did good.”

Steve calls the hotel Alice stayed in while in Saint Louis.

“Cowboy Hotel. I am the owner, Harry. Do you need a room?”

“No. Is my sister, Alice Samberg checked out, yet?”

“No. The policewoman is with her again.”

“I will call her cell, thank you, lies Steve.”

Steve knows now he has to watch what he tells the police and what he says in front of Alice.

Steve drives back to his residence and parks his vehicle in his garage.

Alice calls Paris and speaks with Ashley. Sitting next to Alice is Officer Miller.

“This is Ashley.”

“Hello, Ashley. I am Alice Samberg. I was on the road trip with your daughter. She flew to Las Vegas with a man she met at a bar. All I know is his first name is Walter.”

“Young Lady, stop your lying. Stop covering up for your lover and my daughter’s husband. You are not fooling anyone. The Officer says it is only you in Saint Louis. They have video of you only arriving at the hotel and checking in. the Police have you wearing a wig and telling people you are Carol ‘and you own a travel agency. How did you get my daughter to write me postcards?’”

Alice starts to say something when Officer Miller motions for Alice’s cell phone.

“Hello, Ashley. This Is Officer Miller. We arrived back at the hotel in time to observe Alice loading her car with suitcases. Ten more minutes and she would be out of Saint Louis. You are right, something else is going on with your daughter. There is no Walter, there is no fight to Las Vegas. I bet Carol never even left Atlanta.”

Ashley starts crying. “I need to know one way or another where my baby is.”

“I will be in touch.”

6

CHAPTER 6

Officer Miller hangs up with Ashley and keeps Alice's cell phone. Also in Alice's hotel room is polygraph examiner, Officer Eddie Alamo.

"The polygraph will tell us if you are being truthful or not with us," says Officer Alamo.

Officer Miller says, "If you pass, I will let you check out of the hotel and go back to Atlanta. If you fail, I am arresting you for filing a false missing person report, and other criminal charges once I have the evidence."

"I am refusing to take the polygraph."

Officer Miller pulls out her handcuffs.

"I need you to cooperate with my investigation. I viewed the hotel's video camera. It has you only arriving at this hotel. I have you wearing a wig pretending to be Carol."

"I am being truthful," lies Alice.

“Carol’s husband is your lover. He is setting you up. We are treating this case as a potential murder investigation and not as a missing person case. Wake up Young Lady. You keep lying and you will be behind bars for life. This is serious stuff with which we are dealing.”

“I am telling you the truth.”

“Prove it now with a polygraph.”

“I refuse to take a polygraph.”

Officer Miller says, “Put your hands behind your back. You are under arrest for making a false missing person report. Other charges will follow, I am sure.”

Alice starts to cry.

“I am ready to tell the truth.”

Officer Alamo says, “I will attach you to my polygraph machine. We will run three charts. The three charts I run will tell me if you are being honest, or if you are being deceptive. I go by my charts in seeking the truth.”

“Will this take long?”

“No. I will ask you a series of questions. Here are the questions I will be asking you.

Is your first name, Alice?

Is today, Saturday?

Are we in the State of Missouri?

Did you take another person with you on this road trip out West?

Did you mail postcards to someone in Paris, France?

Did you mail the postcards to make the receiver believe Carol Williamson, was with you?

Is your lover Steve Williamson?

Do you believe Carol Williamson is dead?

Did you make a false missing person report on Carol Williamson to Officer Miller?

Did you mail postcards written by Carol to Steve Williamson.

Do you plan to help Officer Miller regarding Carol Williamson?

Do you take any Illegal drugs?

Do you plan to make Steve Williamson aware you took a polygraph, today?

Do you know where Carol Williamson's body is?"

Are you taking any illegal drugs?

Everything you told me today is the whole truth.

Those are the questions I will be asking you. Are you ready for me to start?"

"Yes, I am ready."

Officer Miller says, "I will sit in my police vehicle and wait for the results."

Officer Alamo instructs Alice to answer with a yes, or a no, and not to move during his questions.

Officer Miller has Alice's cell phone in her pocket. The phone starts to vibrate. The officer does not answer, but lets it go to voicemail. Caller identification says Steve.

Steve knows Alice is with the police in her hotel room. He leaves Alice a message.

“Alice, drive safe, make sure you bring back my wife's suitcase and Canon Camera. Thanks again for filing my missing person report. In my heart Carol is having a fun time with her new, rich man in her life.”

There is a knock at Steve's front door.

He looks out his living room window to view a marked Atlanta police vehicle parked in his driveway.

Steve opens his front door. There stands a Police Officer in uniform with a man in a brown suit.

“I am Detective Mark Carter. This Is Officer Sam Green. May we come in?”

“Yes. Come in. Let us talk in my dining room. Do you have news on my wife?”

After the three men have a seat in the dining room, Detective Carter says, “No. We don't think you are being honest to Law Enforcement on your missing person report that an Alice Samberg filed.”

“I am being honest. My wife left here last Saturday with her best friend for a 12-day road trip. She left the hotel in Saint Louis on Wednesday evening with a man named Walter. He was flying her to Las Vegas.”

“When was the last time you spoke to your wife?”

“Last Saturday evening. I went to my hotel early Sunday morning with her sleeping in our bed.”

“This whole week you have not spoken to your wife on her trip?”

“I tried. Each time I called; Alice would answer instead.”

“What would Alice Samberg say to you when you asked to speak with your wife?”

“Carol is sleeping, Carol is out walking, Carol is shopping, things like that.”

“You didn’t think that was odd?”

“I did. I recorded my conversation with Alice in Dallas when I called Alice to speak with my wife.”

“Play the recording, please.”

Steve pulls out his cell phone and plays the recording between him and Alice. You can hear Steve wanting to speak to his wife, and Alice making excuses why Carol could not come to the phone.

“Alice made excuses each day I called asking to speak with my wife. I thought Carol was having a fun time. I gave Carol 4,000 dollars to have fun on. It was one of my wife’s birthday gifts.”

“When was your wife’s birthday?”

“Last Saturday. I took her to Red Lobster. Noel was the server. We had an exciting time.”

“You are telling me the truth?”

“I do not lie.”

Detective Carter replies, “Only one way to know if that is the truth. I need you to take a polygraph. Officer Green is a polygraph examiner.”

“No polygraph. I love my wife. She will call me. I know it in mt heart.”

“We know Carol never left Atlanta. Alice Samberg took a polygraph and passed when asked that question. We also have video of Alice only arriving at the hotel in Saint Louis.”

“I am not taking a polygraph. I also want to speak with a lawyer.”

Both Law Enforcement Officers stand up to leave.

“I will inform Officer Robin Miller in Saint Louis of your refusal to submit to a polygraph examination.”

Steve opens his front door and walks the Police to their police vehicle.

He watches them back out of his driveway.

Steve checks his mailbox. There is a third postcard from Carol from Saint Louis.

He hears a man’s voice calling his name. He turns to see Ted and Helen walking their dog on a leash.

“Hi, neighbor. Any word on your wife?”

“Just this postcard in my hand from her in Saint Louis. How are you two doing?”

Helen speaks next, “Ted told me about Carol’s 12-day road trip. Her and I are close. She never told me about her road trip she was planning.”

Steve says, “It was a last-minute type of decision. She wanted to get away and relax. Carol never told her mother either. I filed a missing person report on Carol.”

Helen replies, “A missing person report. Carol is missing?”

“I cannot speak about the ongoing investigation at this time.”

7

CHAPTER 7

Steve says, “I will let you know more when I can discuss the case.”

Steve walks back into his residence.

He picks up his Volvo car keys and departs his residence for his friend’s fish camp. He plans to help Ralph install the outdoor cameras.

While enroute, Steve thinks someone in a green truck is following him.

Steve turns down Rainbow Lane, the road to the Fish Camp.

The green truck continues on down the road.

Steve stops when he sees Ralph up on a ladder by the location where Carol’s body is.

Steve exits his vehicle and says, “Morning, Buddy. I am here to help you install your cameras.”

“This is the first one I am installing. It will face the main road to capture the driver’s face coming onto my property. The next camera will face toward the Fish Camp. This way I capture the license plate.”

“The cameras work on motion, right?”

“Yes, day or not.”

Ralph climbs down from his ladder and shakes his friend’s hand. “Thanks for driving over here.”

“You welcome. Where are the three dogs?”

“In the Fish Camp office guarding the place.”

Ralph is not aware he is less than one hundred yards from Carol’s body.

Ralph says, “I am putting the cameras high up in the tress. I can give the police the captured photos for evidence.”

“Where are the other hidden cameras going?”

“I do not know yet. I have an alarm company arriving here tomorrow to install an alarm on both my office-residence, and the storage room.”

“You mentioned building and installing a metal gate to the entrance of the road leading to your residence.”

“I am meeting with my installer in the morning to discuss the price, type of gate, and when his company can start.”

After the first chart Officer Alamo says, “Alice, the chart tells me you are lying to me. You know it and I know it. Let us try chart two now. Same questions. Here we go.”

The Officer asks Alice the same questions.

The Officer says, “The second chart says you are not telling the truth on questions I am asking you. We almost have the truth. Let us do the final chart now. Same questions. Here we go.”

Twenty minutes later Officer Alamo detaches the polygraph equipment from Alice’s chest and finger.

“Please do not move. I have to review your three charts with Officer Miller.”

Officer Alamo takes the three charts with him to Officer Miller’s police vehicle.

Once inside the vehicle he says, “In my professional opinion Alice Samberg is telling us the truth on most questions I asked. She did not help plan any harm to Carol. She shows deception on if Carol is alive or not, and where she is. Alice was truthful on her taking this road trip alone.”

Officer Miller asks, “What about the postcards?”

“Her husband had his wife write out the six postcards. Three to him which Alice mailed and three to her mother that Alice mailed. Her husband made his wife think he was constructing a travel board for her new travel agency.”

“Why?”

“He told his wife to write the six postcards and that he would present her with the travel board with the attached postcards on her return from her trip.”

“Why?”

Officer Alamo says, “This Steve Williamson is very smart. He is using the postcards in his wife’s name to show the world his wife is alive. He plans to blame his wife’s killing on Alice.”

Officer Miller says, “You are right. Let us go back in and give Alice her results.”

The two law enforcement officers enter Alice’s hotel room.

While Officer Alamo packs his polygraph machine up, Officer Miller says to Alice, “Your three charts tell me you are now being honest. You are free to finish packing and may head back to Atlanta. If Steve Williamson asks if you took a polygraph, tell him yes.”

“I will call you right after I speak with Steve Williamson, if and when he calls me.”

Officer Miller says, “I am collaborating with a Detective Carter in Atlanta. He is with Atlanta’s Police Department. He is opening a potential murder investigation. So, cooperate with the Detective when he calls you.”

“I will.”

“Steve Williamson is using you and the postcards in Carol’s handwriting as his alibi.”

“I know now that you are right. I let my love for him blind my thinking. I plan to end our romantic relationship.”

Officer Miller warns, “Your life may be in danger. Do not end up alone with him. Bring a friend to any meeting he arranges. Notify Detective Carter of any meeting you have with Steve Williamson.”

“I will do that. Thanks for the warning.”

“One more question, What cities were the postcards mailed from?”

“I mailed the postcards from Natchez, Mississippi, Dallas, and Saint Louis.”

Officer Miller sticks out her hand and says, “Have a safe drive back to Atlanta. Give Mr. Williamson his wife’s suitcase and Canon camera.”

“I will.”

Alice watches both officers enter their police vehicle and depart the hotel parking lot. Alice then notices a small video camera high up a pole at the entrance to the hotel parking lot.

Alice finishes loading up her Honda. She then locks the hotel room and departs Saint Louis for good.

Alice fills her gas tank, then heads back to Atlanta.

Steve calls her cell phone.

Alice does not answer. She lets the phone go to voicemail.

“Hello, Alice. Give me a call. Drive safe. Bye.”

Steve hangs-up after leaving Alice a brief message.

Ralph installs the second outdoor camera. He places the ladder back in his truck and says, “Let us finish installing the cameras around my residence.”

Steve follows his friend back to his Fish Camp.

Ralph opens his residence and lets the three dogs out. They run to Steve jumping and barking.

Steve bends down and says, “Hello, Leo, Cedar, and Timber.”

Ralph looks at his friend and says, “I just love these dogs. They are good company.”

Steve replies, “Timber is the alert one. His sense of smell is incredible. He dug up dead squirrels I buried months before.”

While hanging the last of the outdoor cameras Ralph says, “I had a Detective Carter come out here yesterday asking me questions about your relationship with your missing wife.”

“I hope you told him I love my wife; we had a good thing going.”

“The Detective said you are telling people two different stories. One, you are trying for children, and the other story is Carol is a Gold-Digger and you are filing for divorce.”

“The police want me to take a polygraph.”

“You said, what?”

“I said, no polygraph, no way, no how. My wife left on a 12-day road trip. Carol mailed me postcards from Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis. Carol left the hotel room on Wednesday night with a rich man named Walter. They were going to fly to Las Vegas in his plane. That is all I know.”

“Then why not take a polygraph? If what you just told me is true.”

“The Police and Carol’s mother, Ashley, both think something happened to my wife, and it is me that harmed her. I say she is in Las Vegas having a fun time. We just have to wait for Carol to show back up.”

Alice calls Steve.

“I have to take this call. It is from Alice.”

Steve steps outside with one of his three dogs. “Sit, Leo.”

The dog sits by Steve’s feet.

“Hello, Alice. Where are you?”

“I am on my way to Atlanta. I was almost arrested. Officer Miller made me take a polygraph. They ran three charts. They asked me if Carol was on the 12-day road trip with me, they asked if I had anything to do with Carol’s disappearance, and they warned me not to be alone with you when I return to Atlanta.”

“What did you say about the six postcards in Carol’s writing?”

“You made Carol fill them out for her travel board, and that I mailed them out when I arrived in Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis. The game is up regarding if Carol and I were together.”

“That is your story. My story is I spoke to you each day and I asked to speak to my wife, but you made excuses why Carol could not come to the telephone. You told me over and over, Carol is taking a walk, or shopping. I received three postcards from three different cities from Carol. You made me feel Carol was alive and with you on the road trip.”

“You are not taking a polygraph?”

Steve says, “No way no how. Let the police prove I harmed my wife. Carol is in Las Vegas with a man named Walter. Do this Alice. Come by with a friend and hand me the suitcase and camera. Then we stay away from each other. This protects you and this will protect me. I already had a Detective Carter come to my house. Let them investigate me all they want. I am not worried at all. Drive safely back to Atlanta. Bye.”

Steve hangs up and calls Betty.

“Hi, Steve. Something wrong? You never call me on a weekend.”

“Olivia is at the hotel cleaning out her new office. She will help Charlie paint the room. Olivia wants to start Monday morning in her new office. She is a hardworking women. Have her pay start today.”

“I told you Olivia is hard working. I will tell Jack on Monday to start her pay as of Saturday.”

“I have a question. Has a Detective Carter called you yet, about Carol?”

“No. Why?”

“He is asking questions about my relationship with Carol. If he does reach out to you, tell him the truth. He knows I plan to divorce her; he knows I call her a Gold-Digger; he is asking questions. He will reach out to you.”

“I will call you as soon as he speaks with me.”

“Make sure you tell the Detective how much I love my wife.”

“I sure will tell the Detective that if he calls.”

“One more thing. I told you I talked with my wife while on her road trip. The truth is I only talked with Alice. I lied to keep the questions brief about Carol. I told the Detective every time I called to speak with my wife, Alice would say she is taking a nap, out walking, or she went shopping.”

“I understand. Speak to you soon.”

Charlie calls from the Inn.

“Morning, Steve. The front desk asked me to call you when I got in.”

“Thanks for calling me. I need you to paint our fresh marketing rep’s office. She now has the old Bellman storage room.”

“What is her name?”

“Olivia Porter. She may be in the restaurant having breakfast.”

“I will look for her. Just paint the walls, right?”

“Yes. Make Olivia’s place look great. Have a wonderful day. Bye.”

“Bye, Steve.”

Betty calls the Atlanta Police Department. She leaves a message for the Chief to contact her about the hotel’s PAD Program.

Pam from the front desk calls Betty on her cell phone.

“This is Betty.”

“Hello, Betty. This is Pam at the front desk.”

“Is everything alright?”

“Yes. I am going on a week’s vacation tomorrow. I talked to Steve, and he told me to talk to you.”

“About what?”

“The Front Desk is requesting the hotel purchase walkie-talkies for the Front Desk, Bellman, Valet, and for Maintenance. This way we can communicate faster. This will help us service the guest faster.”

“I will talk to Steve on Monday regarding the walkie-talkies.”

“Great. Steve said to also run by you items the Front Desk wants to offer to the guest upon check-in.”

“What items?”

“Cookies, sodas, candy bars, and chips upon check-in, to welcome them to the hotel.”

“I made a note of your request. I will discuss both matters on Monday with the Boss. Upon your return from your vacation come to my office.”

“I will do that. Thank You.”

“Where are you going on your vacation?”

“California. My mother turns sixty tomorrow.”

“Tell her Happy Birthday from the Williamson Inn.”

“I will. See you when I return. Bye.”

“Bye, Pam.”

Charlie finds Olivia having a cup of coffee in the restaurant. He joins her at her table.

Olivia says, “Thanks for helping me paint my new office.”

“We have a room of furniture in the basement. Let us go select your desk, chairs, bookshelf, and computer.”

“I will follow you once the walls are painted.”

Two hours later Olivia makes her first official call from her new office.

“Fish Camp, Ralph speaking.”

“Hello Ralph. My name is Olivia Porter. I am the Marketing Director of the Williamson Inn. Steve asked me to reach out to you about both of us doing business together.”

“Yes, he told me you would be calling.”

“How about me coming out to your Fish Camp and seeing what business we can do for the hotel guest.”

“When?”

“How does this Thursday sound, say eleven am.”

“Great. See you Thursday.”

Olivia writes in her notebook the day, date, and time.

John calls Ralph.

“Fish Camp, Ralph speaking.”

“HI, Ralph. This is John. I was at your Fish Camp with Steve.”

“I remember you. Are you calling to schedule your free weekend with me?”

“No. I wanted to see if you needed any part-time help.”

“Tell you what, John. Call me in two weeks. I should be able to bring you on at that time. I am busy fixing the Fishing Camp facilities at this time.”

“I will call you in two-weeks. Thanks for taking my call. Bye.”

“Bye, John.”

Johnny Black calls Steve on his cell phone.

“Steve here.”

“Hello, Steve. I drove all night. I am at the Cowboy Boots Bar. The bar manager gave me Officer Robin Miller’s number to call. This is the Officer that Alice filed the missing person report with.”

“Johnny, don’t call the Police Officer.”

“I did already. She told me that Carol never left Atlanta, that her traveling companion passed a polygraph to that fact.”

“That is what Alice claims. I am not taking a polygraph. The Detectives here are looking into my relationship with my wife.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“It is best to drive back home. Invoice me for your time, including travel. I cannot tell you anything else at this time. When we meet in person I will explain in more detail. Drive home, be safe.”

“I am getting in my truck as we speak. Bye.”

Steve calls Betty.

“Betty here.”

“Betty. I need you to fly to Dallas when you can. Meet up with Jake Welch. I own one of his Atlanta franchises for Mama Mia Sandwiches. He will give you a tour of his Dallas setup. We will be opening a franchise In our hotel once you return.”

“I can do that next week. Text me his contact information. I will have Olivia book my flight and book my hotel.”

“I will text you the information, now. Thanks.”

“I left a message for the Chief of Police to call me on Monday regarding PAD Program.”

“Good. Let me know what the Chief says.”

“Pam called me. She wants walkie-talkies for different departments.”

“That is correct. Look into walkies with a good range.”

“Pam also mentioned the front desk wants cookie’s, sodas, snacks, and candy bars for guest checking in.”

“It is a great Idea. Just have a budget for the items, please” says Steve.

“I will get back to you with the projected cost.”

“Great, speak to you soon. Bye.”

“Bye, Steve.”

Ralph says to Steve when he walks back into his residence, “Olivia Porter and I are meeting on Thursday. John called. He wants to work for me part-time.”

“Make sure Olivia helps you bring more customers to your Fish Camp. John will be a perfect fit for your Fish Camp. He loves to fish.”

Ted calls Steve.

“Steve speaking.”

“HI, Buddy. I just picked up a package from the mail carrier for you. It says on the package, Just Shoes.”

“Thanks, Ted. I will be home in an hour or so. We can then take a test drive in the Acura.”

“I read the Acura TLX is a fast car.”

“It has great acceleration, just wait and see.”

“Toot your horn when you pull up. I will bring out the package and we can go on the test drive.”

“See you soon. Bye.”

“Bye, Steve.”

Detective Carter calls Officer Miller on her cell.

“Officer Miller.”

“Hello, Robin. This is Detective Carter.”

” What is happening with the Carol Williamson Case in Atlanta?”

“I met with Steve Williamson. He refuses a polygraph. Then he lawyered up. I had to leave with my polygrapher.

“Did he say anything about his wife?”

“Yes, he did. He said while on her trip he only spoke to Alice Samberg. When he wanted to speak to his wife, Alice would say, “She is in the shower, taking a nap, out walking, or busy shopping.”

“Did he mention receiving postcards from her in the mail?”

“He did, he showed me two of the postcards from her. He was smart to have her write postcards. It makes it look like she is traveling and more importantly, alive.”

“Can you subpoena his cell phone?”

“I am working on that. Neighbors say he loves McDonald’s. Ask Alice Samberg what time last Saturday he left her alone in his residence with Carol? I will check security cameras at every McDonald’s to see which

one he visited the night Carol went missing. Find out also what vehicle he was driving that night. That is when he disposed of her body.”

“I will call Alice now. I will call you back.”

Officer Miller calls Alice.

“This is Alice.”

“Hello, Alice. This is Officer Robin Miller. I have a question for you.”

“What question is that?”

“Last Saturday night when you were at Steve Williamson’s house and he left to dispose of Carol’s body, what time did he leave, what time did he arrive back, and what vehicle was he driving?”

“Steve left about nine pm. He returned at ten pm, and he was driving her blue in color Volvo. I never saw her dead body in the Volvo”

“Did he have McDonald’s with him when he returned home?”

“Yes, he did. I remember sharing fries with him.”

“I will call you back if I have more questions.”

Officer Miller calls back Detective Carter.

“This is Detective Carter.”

“Officer Miller, here. Alice said he left at nine, was gone an hour, and returned with a McDonald’s meal. She shared his fries.”

“What was he driving?”

“Carol’s blue in color Volvo.”

“Thanks for the information.”

Betty’s cell phone rings. She does not recognize the phone number.

“Hello?”

“This Is Detective Mark Carter with the Atlanta Police. Can I speak with Betty Cooper?”

“This is her.”

“I am calling to ask you questions regarding Steve Williamson and his wife, Carol. You do know that he filed a missing person report in Saint Louis on his wife?”

Betty pretends she knows nothing.

“Steve said he has not spoken to his wife since she went on her road trip.”

“Do you know an Alice Samberg?”

“Yes. Alice and Carol went on the road trip together.”

“All the questions I am asking you now, are you willing to take a polygraph on your answers?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Do you know if Steve is having an affair with Alice.”

“My boss loves his wife. Around me, Steve talks about her all the time. He bought her a new Volvo, clothes, trips, and jewelry. He just made a rent deposit on an office for a travel agency. My boss says they are trying to have children.”

“Where did he rent office space for his wife’s travel agency?”

“The Emerald Building downtown. He signed a lease with a Valerie Main of American Reality.”

“I interviewed other people, some say he tells them she is a Gold-Digger, and he is about to divorce her.”

“I do not know anything about her being a Gold-Digger, or my Boss planning to divorce Carol.”

“I may contact you to come in and take the polygraph.”

“Anytime, Detective.”

“Is there anyone else at the hotel that knows Steve’s personal lifestyle?”

“No. He only hangs around his wife and his best friend, Ralph.”

“What is Ralph’s last name?”

“Torres. He owns the Fish Camp Resort off Highway Ten.”

Detective Carter knows the answers to the questions he is asking Betty. She does not know that the Detective has already spoken to Ralph.

“I will be in touch.”

“Have a wonderful day, Detective.”

Betty calls Steve on his cell phone.

“HI, Betty.”

“A Detective Carter just called me. He asked questions regarding you and Carol’s marriage.”

“What did you tell him?”

I told him you and Carol’s marriage was strong, that you are in love with your wife. That you bought her a new Volvo, clothes, trips, and you just rented Carol a Travel Agency.”

“Thank you for defending me.”

“He asked me if you and Carol spoke while she was on her road trip. I told him you have only spoken to Alice. Alice would say Carol is napping, out for a walk, or went shopping.”

“Anything else?”

“The Detective asked me to take a polygraph. I said yes. He does not know it, but I will not take a polygraph. I do not trust the machine.”

“Smart woman. Let the police dig all they want. Carol is in Las Vegas with a rich man, having a fun time.”

“I will call you every time the Detective calls me.”

“Do that, please. Have a good night.”

“You do the same, bye Steve.”

“Bye, Betty.”

Steve calls the Anderson Law Firm

“Anderson Law Office, Ginger speaking.”

“Glad you are open on Saturday’s. This is Steve Williamson.”

“Hello, Steve. We are open because Joey has a trial starting Monday.”

“I need to speak with Joey.”

“Let me get hold of Helen for you.”

“HI, Steve. Ginger says you need to talk to Joey?”

“I need just one minute of his time.”

“I will connect you. Stand by.”

“HI, Steve. What Is going on?”

“I need to retain you. Carol went missing Wednesday night in Saint Louis. She met a rich man with an airplane. She told her traveling friend she was flying with this man to Las Vegas. The Police Officers polygraphed Alice and it turns out Carol was never with Alice on a road trip.”

“Wow.”

“Now the Atlanta police are questioning me, saying Carol never left Atlanta. They think I hurt my wife.”

“I have to go. I will call you as soon as my trial is over. In the meantime, do not talk to the police. Give them my name and phone number.”

“Will do. Good luck with your pending trial.”

“Thanks.”

Alice calls Steve.

“HI, Alice. How far away are you from my residence?”

“Two hours. I will stop and pick up a friend, then I will call you back when I am about there.”

“Good. See you soon.”

Steve says goodbye to Ralph.

“I will come back in a few days.”

Steve enters his Acura and departs the Fish Camp.

Steve calls Ted.

“I am on my way. I will toot when I arrive in your driveway.”

“I will be ready with your package.”

Steve stops at a car detailing shop and says, Vacuum and clean my interior only, the seats, the rugs, make my Volvo smell good.

An hour later and Steve is back on the road.

Steve stops at the nearest McDonald’s from the Fish Camp. The restaurant is on Eagle Street. He orders a coffee and a bag of large fries.

Steve arrives home and switches vehicles.

He pulls into Ted’s driveway and toots the horn.

Ted exits his residence with his friend’s package.

“Wow, I was looking forward to this test drive. I told Helen I might buy an Acura TLX.”

“What did your wife say to that comment?”

“She laughed and replied, “No dinner for you tonight for saying that.”

For the next thirty minutes the men make small talk. Steve opens the acceleration up and Ted just laughs.

After finishing the test drive while exiting his friend's car he says, "I get no dinner tonight."

Steve toots his horn and drives down the street and pulls into his driveway.

Steve changes into a pair of swimming trunks, grabs a root beer and heads to his pool.

Thirty minutes later Alice calls Steve.

"Hello, Alice."

"HI, Steve. I am on my way to drop off the suitcase and Canon camera."

Steve does not know if Alice is wearing a wire and is now an informant for the police. He says, "Have you heard from my wife, yet?"

"No."

"I miss her. Carol has not reached out to me or her mother in Paris, either. This is strange behavior. I hope my wife is safe."

"Me, too. If you want to meet me in your driveway, I will be pulling up in ten minutes."

"I will be waiting for you by the mailbox."

Steve, dressed in a swimsuit and a t-shirt, sees Alice coming down his residential street with an unknown female in the passenger seat.

Alice pulls up and opens her trunk. She removes a pink in color suitcase and a Canon Camera.

“Who is your passenger?”

“A good friend.”

“How was your drive from Saint Louis?”

“Long. I am glad I am back In Atlanta. No more road trips for me.”

Alice hands Steve the suitcase and camera.

Steve says, “I wonder who this Walter is my wife suddenly went to Las Vegas with?”

Alice says nothing. She walks back to her driver’s door.

“Be safe, Steve. Bye.”

“Bye, Alice. You be safe as well.”

Steve watches his ex-lover drive away from his neighborhood.

Steve carries the suitcase and the camera inside his residence.

Alice calls Detective Carter.

“This is Alice Samberg. I delivered the suitcase and camera to Steve Williamson just now.”

“I know. I have you on video doing so. Just stay away from your lover.”

“I will. Steve Williamson is now my ex-lover.”

Detective Carter, hiding in the backseat of a brown in color SUV tells the driver, “Take me back to my vehicle, please.”

Steve carries the items to his bedroom.

He grabs a root beer from the fridge and walks back out to the pool.

8

CHAPTER 8

Detective Carter drives over to the Red Lobster Restaurant.

He flashes his Detective's badge to the host that greets him.

"I need to speak with your manager on duty, please."

The young woman picks up her phone and dials a number. She speaks to someone, then hangs up the receiver.

"Mr. Campbell will be right with you."

A man in a suit walks up to the host. She points her finger at Detective Carter studying a menu.

"Evening Detective. I am the manager on duty. My name is Victor Campbell. Is there something wrong?"

"No, I need to speak with a server named Noel, please. She was the server that served a man I am investigating."

"Come back to my office. I will bring her to you. Will this take long?"

"No. Ten minutes at most."

“Good. We are starting to get busy.”

Mr. Campbell says, “Have a sit, Please.”

A minute later the manager walks in with a Black female.

“This is Noel.”

Noel says, “I paid my speeding ticket last week.”

Detective Carter laughs and says, “I am not here for you. There was a man and his wife that you served last Saturday evening. I want to show you their pictures and ask questions about them.”

Noel laughs and replies, “I thought I was in trouble.”

“No, you are not. Look at the husband-and-wife photos of Steve and Carol Williamson, please. Do you remember them being here?”

“I sure do. They sat at table nine. It was her birthday.”

“How do you remember them?”

“The man ordered the most expensive bottle of white wine that cost 150 dollars.”

“What? You serve a bottle of wine that cost 150 dollars.”

“Yes. Maison Leroy.”

“What else do you remember about them?”

“I never saw them kiss or hold hands. He left me a hundred-dollar tip.”

“That much tip?”

“Yes. He even asked to speak with my Manager.”

“Manager Campbell who is here tonight?”

“Yes. My manger is here every night except on Sundays.”

“Anything else you can remember about the couple you served?”

“Yes. They took the unfished wine with them when they left.”

“Did you notice what they were driving that night?”

“No, but maybe my manager did. He likes watching customers pull-up in their vehicles.”

“Why does he do that? Do you know?”

“Mr. Campbell was a car salesperson for five years. He said it is in his blood.”

“Thanks for your time. Please have the manager see me,”

“Ask for me when you come to the restaurant to eat.”

“I will, but I have to warn you I am not a big tipper like Steve Williamson is.”

“I will get my manager for you.”

Two minutes later the manager returns to his office.

“Was Noel helpful?”

“Yes, she was. Please look at their photos. They were here last Saturday night for her birthday. They are Steve and Carol Williamson.”

“I remember him, he was a big tipper, and ordered an expensive bottle of wine. They also told me Noel was a good server.”

“With hundreds of customers a week, how do you remember this couple?”

“I had to unlock the wine vault for Noel. I sell three bottles of Maison Leroy a year. The bottle cost 150 dollars a bottle.”

“Did you see them holding hands or kissing?”

“No. He did open the passenger side of his Ford F150 and help her in when they departed.”

“What color was the truck? Do you remember?”

“Black. It was black.”

“That is all I needed. Thanks for your time.”

“Can I ask you what this is all about?”

“Carol Williamson is missing. We suspect foul play.”

“Wow. I hope you find her alive.”

Both men shake hands.

Once back in his police vehicle the Detective calls Officer Miller.

“This Is Officer Miller.”

“HI, Robin, this is Mark in Atlanta.”

“Hello, Mark in Atlanta.”

Detective Carter laughs and says, “This will be a hard case to solve. I can tell you that right now.”

“Why do you say that?”

“What restaurant does Steve Williamson visit on a regular basis?”

Robin says, “He is a loyal McDonald’s man. He loves their fries.”

“Last Saturday for Carol’s birthday he took her to Red Lobster. He ordered a 150-dollar bottle of white wine and tipped the server one hundred dollars. He did this because he knew we would check his story out. He wanted to make sure the server and manager did not forget his face.”

“They did not either, Right?”

“Correct.”

“They have wine that cost 150 dollars a bottle?”

“Yes, they do. Maison Leroy, a white wine.”

“You are right. He is setting up Alice for the murder. I hope we find Carol’s body.”

“Me, too. Talk to you later.”

Detective Carter calls American Reality Office and asks for Valerie Main.

“This is Valerie, what property are you interested in?”

“I am Detective Mark Carter of the Atlanta Police Department. I am investigating a missing person by the name of Carol Williamson.”

“I collaborated with Carol to find her a suitable office space for her travel agency. A property came up downtown in the Emerald Building.”

“I was there a day ago on a deposition on the seventh floor. There are three elevators.”

“Correct. There is a barber shop called Al’s that I showed her husband, Steve Williamson. He signed a year’s lease for her and wrote a check for 4,500 dollars. His wife is on a road trip out West if I remember right.”

“Correct. Did Steve Williamson flirt with you?”

“No, he never has,” lied Valerie.

“I am investigating his background and I have discovered he is having multiple affairs.”

“I am not surprised to hear that. He is a very good-looking man. He would be a catch for any woman.”

“Did Steve Williamson mention anything to you about his wife that you can remember?”

“Yes. He said she is a Gold-Digger, and he was filing for a divorce. He said the travel agency would be his goodbye gift to her.”

“I may call you back with more questions.”

“I am in the office daily in case you want to talk in person.”

“I may do that. Thank you for talking to me.”

“You welcome. If you or others in law enforcement need a property, reach out to me.”

“I will do that.”

Detective Carter drives over to the Acura dealership.

He walks up to the pretty receptionist and says, “I need to speak with your manager.” He flashes a Detective’s shield when he speaks.

“Right away, Sir.”

“What is your first name?”

“I am Virginia. I am the receptionist. My sister works here in new car sales, her name is Ellen in case you need a new car.”

“I have a take home police vehicle.”

“I will page him now for you.”

Virginia dials a number and says over the intercom, “Mr. Gordon, you are needed at the reception desk.”

A minute later a man in a Black suit walks up to the reception desk.

Virginia whispers, “Boss, this Detective needs to speak with you.”

“Detective Carter shows his Detective’s shield and says, “I am Detective Mark Carter, Atlanta Police Department. I need to speak with you in private.”

“Let us go to my office. Follow me.”

Once in the man’s corner office, Mr. Gordon says, “Please have a seat.”

The Detective sits in front of Mr. Gordon’s desk. He has a notepad and pen in his hand.

“What can I do for you, Detective?”

I need to speak with the salesperson that sold a white Acura TLX to a Steve Williamson.”

“I will look that information up and be back with you shortly.”

The manager walks into the new car sales accounting office and asks for the information requested by the Detective.

Mr. Gordon walks over to Virginia sitting behind the reception desk and says, “Have your sister come to my office right away.”

“Ellen is not in any trouble, is she?”

“I don’t think so, the Detective wants to talk to the salesperson that sold a customer a car.”

“Which customer? If a man, you know they hang around me and flirt.

“A Steve Williamson.”

“My sister sold him a white in color Acura.”

“Correct.”

“Here she comes now from the used car department.”

“Send her to me, please.”

“Yes, sir.”

Virginia motions for her sister to come over.

“You paged me?”

“Mr. Gordon needs you in his office. There is a Detective waiting. He wants to talk to you about selling an Acura to Steve Williamson.”

“Going now.”

Ellen knocks and waits at the office door.

“Come in, Ellen. This is Detective Carter of the Atlanta Police Department. He needs to ask you questions about a sale.”

Mr. Gordon asks, “Do you want to be alone with my sales agent?”

“You can stay.”

“Detective Carter shows Ellen, Steve Williamson’s photo and asks, “Do you know this man? His name is Steve Williamson.”

“Yes, I do. I sold him a new Acura. He traded in his black Ford F150.”

“What can you tell me about him?”

“He is married, his wife’s name is Carol.”

“Did he tell you he is getting divorced, that his wife is a Gold-Digger?”

“Yes, he did on his test drive.”

“When was this test drive?”

“It was on Monday this week. I need to buy me a candy bar, or I will faint. I will be right back.”

Ellen leaves the office.

Detective Carter says, “The customer’s wife is missing, we suspect foul play. We are trying to see what this suspect is telling people he comes in contact with.”

“Between us, ask if he asked Ellen out. All other customers have.”

“Ellen walks back in eating a Milky Way candy bar. “I feel better, now.”

The Detective says, “What is your impression of this customer?”

“Nice man. He seemed under pressure because his wife was spending his money. She bought a Volvo for 50,000 dollars on his business account.”

The manager says, “I have to visit the Parts Department.”

After they are alone, Ellen says, “I do not want my manager to know, but I slept with Steve Williamson.”

“This week?”

“On Wednesday night at his house.”

“He is a married man.”

“Yes, but he is in the middle of a divorce. He visited the lawyer the day he came in to buy the Acura.”

“What day was that?”

“Monday.”

“Did he visit the lawyer?”

“He said he did. He offered me a copy of the divorce papers.”

“Can I see your copy, Please?”

“He called me later and said his lawyer wants to talk to his wife when she returned from her road trip she was on.”

“Did Steve say he spoke to his wife while she was on her road trip?”

“He said he only spoke to her friend she was on the trip with. He said this woman kept saying Carol is on a walk, shopping, or sleeping.”

“Would this friend be named, Alice?”

“Yes, Alice. He told me she was just a friend, but I knew he was lying.”

“How do you know he was lying?”

“I am a single woman, he is good looking, he flirts, so I know she was his lover.”

“When do you plan to see Steve Williamson again?”

“Soon. When, I do not know? But soon.”

“Does your sister Virginia know about your affair with this Steve?”

“No. Please do not let her know.”

“I will not. His wife is missing somewhere in Atlanta. We know she was on no road trip. We suspect foul play.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Alice took a polygraph and passed. She was alone on her road trip.”

“Really?”

“Yes, so be careful around this man. He knows we are looking into his background. He knows we will be seeing you.”

“How do you know that?”

“He took his wife to dinner last Saturday night for her birthday. He knew we would visit the restaurant and he wanted the staff to remember him?”

“Did they?”

“Yes. He made sure of it, too. He bought a 150-dollar bottle of wine, left a 100-dollar tip, and asked to speak to the manager about his server. He is tricky. Just be careful is all I can say.”

“Thank you for the warning.”

“No problem. Walk me out, please.”

Ellen walks the Detective out to his unmarked police car.

“How much does an Acura TLX cost new?”

“Fully loaded, about 60,000-dollars.”

“Must be nice to have money. Have a good evening.”

“You do the same, Detective.”

Ellen calls Steve.

Steve looks at his caller identification and says, “Hi, Fox.”

“Hello, Steve. A Detective Carter just interviewed me about you. He is investigating your wife’s disappearance. He knows that Carol never went on her road trip with this Alice. He says you and her are lovers. He told me to watch my back around you.”

“I have done nothing wrong. I tried to reach my wife daily on her trip, but her trip roommate kept saying she is out on a walk, shopping, or napping. Alice told me on Wednesday evening Carol bragged about flying with a rich man to Las Vegas. I received three postcards while she has been away. Alice harmed my wife and is trying to blame me. I have a recording of me asking Alice in Dallas to speak with my wife. She lied then as well, saying Carol was out shopping.”

“I trust you, my heart trust you. Just be careful in your travels. The Detective said he interviewed other people as well.”

“Thanks for the warning. I will be careful. How have you been?”

“Busy. This is my best month in car sales.”

“Good to know, you can treat dinner next time.”

He laughs at his own comment.

“Call me next week, let us have dinner.”

“I will do that, Ellen. Thanks for the call.”

Steve opens his fridge and grabs a root beer. He changes into swimming trunks and walks out to his swimming pool.

Sunday morning, June 12th, at nine am.

Steve is sleeping in when his cell phone rings.

Caller identification shows it is Ralph.

“Hi, Buddy.”

“Steve get out here quick. Timber dug up a woman’s body. It may be your wife’s body. It is by trees at the entrance to my road. I have to go. Detective Carter just pulled up.”

“On my way.”

Steve changes out of his pajamas, dresses in a white t-shirt and blue jeans, and departs in the Volvo.

Detective Carter walks over to Ralph and demands his cell phone.

Timber, in the bed of the truck starts barking.

“Give me your phone, do not talk to anyone, sit under a tree and watch.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Who were you on your cell with just now?”

“With Steve Williamson. He is on his way.”

“Does your friend, Steve Williamson travel down this road much?”

“All the time.”

“Were you having a sexual relationship with Carol Williamson?”

“No, I was not.”

“Will you take a polygraph?”

“Anytime. I have nothing to hide.”

One more question, are you sleeping with Alice Samberg?”

“No, but I wish I were. She is a good-looking woman.”

“Stay in your vehicle, remain here till I return. I need to take your statement.”

The Detective walks out to the street and tells a Police Officer in uniform that when a Steve Williamson arrives to send him over to identify the body.

Twenty minutes later Steve pulls up near the scene and observes four police cars and the Fire Department around the entrance to Ralph’s property. He parks on the side of the road and approaches a Police Officer working traffic control.

“Officer, the body may be my missing wife. My friend just called me. This is his property.”

“Wait by your car. I will speak to Detective Carter. This is his crime scene.”

Steve walks back to his Volvo and waits.

Ten minutes later Detective Carter walks up.

“Come with me. Do not touch a thing. I need you to identify the corpse.”

“Steve follows behind the Detective to a row of trees. There is an uncovered pit with a corpse inside.

“Is this Carol’s clothing?”

“Yes. That is Carol’s black dress, the one she wore when we went to dinner at Red Lobster last week, but that is not her scarf. I never saw that scarf before,” he lies.

“You have never seen that scarf before?”

“That is my wife’s long blonde hair, but I never saw my wife with that scarf.”

“Does your wife have any tattoos?”

“Yes. A small red heart on her left wrist.”

“Return to your Volvo. Wait for me. I will return shortly to conduct my interview.

Detective Carter calls Saint Louis to Officer Robin Miller.

“Officer Miller.”

“Steve Williamson just identified the clothing as his wife’s, the hair too, but not the scary that was in the makeshift grave.”

“Can you tell me again how her body was discovered?”

“An hour ago, a man named Ralph Torres met a gate installer to get an estimate for a gate. Ralph had a dog named Timber with him. The dog dug into the dirt to cool off. He uncovered the partial remains that are visible now.”

“Any cameras?”

“Yes, but the cameras are wilderness cameras and were installed yesterday, and the body has been here since maybe last Saturday night.”

“I guess you are waiting for the Coroner to arrive?”

“Yes. I started to interviewed Ralph Torres. He was Steve Williamson’s best man at his wedding to Carol. He says Steve often travels this road where Carol’s body was located. There is a Fish Camp just down the road that Ralph owns.”

“Wow, were you lucky finding her body.”

“Very lucky. I asked Ralph was he having a sexual relationship with Carol. He said no. I asked him to take a polygraph, and he said yes, right away. Do me a favor, contact Carol’s parents in Paris for me with the sad news.”

“I will.”

Detective Carter says, “Steve Williamson loaned his three-dogs to Ralph for security reasons. It was Steve’s dog, Timber that dug the body up.”

Officer Miller says, “Give that dog a bone for me as his reward for doing an excellent job

Detective Carter says, “I have to go, the Medical Examiner is here.”

Officer Miller makes the one call she never wanted to make on this case.

It is about 6 pm Paris time when Ashley says, “Hello?”

“Evening, Ashley, you told me to call you at any hour if I had news on your daughter.”

“I did. Have you spoken to Carol?”

“No. I just got off the telephone with Detective Carter in Atlanta. He will be calling you himself later today. I am deeply sorry to report the police in Atlanta have uncovered your daughter’s remains. I want....”

There is a loud scream and a loud thud come over the telephone.

Tony picks up the telephone and asks, “Who is this? What have you told my wife?”

“This is Officer Miller in Saint Louis. Is your wife all right?”

“She fainted. My mother is with her now. Let me speak with you from my office. I am walking there now.”

“I can wait.”

“I can speak now. How is my daughter? Did she finally call you?”

“No, sir. I am afraid I have incredibly sad news to report.”

“I am sitting down. Go ahead with the news.”

“Atlanta Police have discovered your daughter’s remains in a makeshift grave just outside Atlanta.

“My God, My God, No.”

“A Detective Carter from Atlanta Police Department will be calling you soon. He is speaking with the Medical Examiner who also is on scene.”

“Who found my daughter?”

“A smart dog named, Timber. The dog belongs to Steve Williamson. He loaned the dog to a Ralph Torres, who owns the Fish Camp fishing hole just outside of Atlanta.”

“You are positive this body you discovered is my Carol?”

“Yes. Your son-in-law made the positive identification. He said it is the same black dress she wore to her birthday dinner. He also said it is her, from the long blond hair.”

“This location my daughter is located at, can you describe it for me?”

“I can try. Detective Carter said there is a dirt road called Rainbow Lane, with a large row of trees on both sides. The body was in a shallow grave

covered with a white powder type substance, concrete mixed with lime and potting soil I think.”

“Why those three items covering the body?”

“To hide the smell as the body decomposes.”

“You are arresting my Son-In-Law, right?”

“Not at this time. Detective Carter said he was going to interview him, then call you. So just hang in there, be strong for your wife. Either me, or Detective Carter will be calling you soon.”

Tony is crying when he says, “Thank you for your very sad, sad call.”

The Medical Examiner, Doctor Edwards, inspects the corpse and says, “The female body has been in the makeshift grave for at least five days. I will know a closer time of death once I examine the corpse at the M. E. Office. There are no bullet holes visible. You can unbury the whole body now. My team will transport to my office.”

“Can you provide me with an age, any tattoos, height, Doc?”

“It is a white female, 25 to 35 of age with one tattoo of a small red heart on the left wrist. Height looks to be near five’ feet two inches.”

Detective Carter watches the helpers of the M.E. remove the body from the makeshift grave.

Detective Carter walks over to Steve Williamson.

The Detective motions for Steve to come sit in the Detective’s police vehicle.

“You are not under arrest, and you are free to leave at any time. I need you to answer my questions honestly.”

Steve lies, “No problem.”

Steve looked like he had been crying, his eyes were very red. What the Detective does not know is, Steve brought a raw onion with him to make him cry.

“Sorry for your loss, Mr. Williamson.”

“Please, call me, Steve.”

“Alright, Steve. When was the day and time you last saw your wife?”

“Saturday night last week. We had dinner at Red Lobster We came home and drank wine and had a piece of cake I bought from Robert’s Bakery.”

The bakery has three locations. Which one?”

“I do not recall the Street or Avenue. The store has a clerk named Tammy.”

“After you had dessert what did you both do?”

“We went for a swim in our pool, then made love before we fell asleep around one am. I had to leave early, so I took a quick nap and drove to the hotel before 5 am.”

“That is the last time you saw Carol alive, about four am on Sunday when you left your residence?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you speak to her after that time?”

“I tried to, but Alice always answered for her. When I asked to speak with Carol, Alice would say, your wife is on a walk, sleeping or shopping. I

only received these three postcards. One is from Natchez, the second one is from Dallas, and the third one is from Saint Louis.”

“Can I keep them?”

“I will loan them to you. These are my last memories of my wife. I want to place them on my fridge,” lies Steve with a straight face.

“This is your wife’s handwriting?”

“It is.”

“You sure this is her handwriting?”

“Yes, she always did a loop on her l’s.”

“Did Carol have any tattoos?”

“Yes, a small red heart on her left wrist.”

“You have seen police shows where the husband is a prime suspect, right?”

“I have. I planned on a divorce upon her return from her trip. Question Alice, she fooled me into thinking my wife was with her. My wife was a Gold-Digger, no way would she let Alice control the four thousand I gave her. I have a recording of Alice telling me in Dallas that Carol was on a walk.”

“Save it for my next interview at the police station. I plan to speak with Alice tomorrow. I have my hands full at this time.”

“Carol and Alice were lovers; did you know that Detective?”

“I did not.”

Steve lies and says, “Carol came home one night drunk and admitted her love affair with Alice. She said Alice wanted Carol to divorce me and move in with her.”

“What did your wife say to that idea?”

“No way, no how. I want a rich man, not a poor woman.”

“How long had this affair been going on?”

“Carol said on and off for two-weeks.”

“Do you know when to when this relationship was going on?”

“No. I refused to make love to my wife when she told me. The only time we made love was her birthday night. I gave in because it was her birthday.”

“Steve, are you willing to take a polygraph?”

“I will never take a polygraph. I told you that already. I will say one more thing and I will not speak to you again without my lawyer being present.”

“What do you want to tell me?”

“I have had two affairs of my own besides Alice. Ellen at the Acura dealership and Valerie at American Reality.”

“You stopped your affair with Alice, when and where?”

“The night Carol told me they were Lesbian. Alice did not deny the affair when I told her Carol just told me.”

“Do you have life Insurance out on your wife?”

“No, but she has a Million on me.”

“Anything else you want to tell me before I return to the crime scene?”

“Carol’s purse and cell phone were on the laundry machine but hidden by a dirty towel. I know now, Alice hid the items.”

“You think so?”

“Polygraph her and see I am telling the truth.”

“I will do that.”

“Does Carol’s parents in Paris know of their child’s death?”

“Yes. Officer Miller spoke to them earlier.”

“Can I go to be with my friend, Ralph?”

“No. This is a murder investigation now, not a missing person’s case. I am treating everyone that had contact with Carol as a suspect.”

“Can I go home?”

“Yes, you are not under arrest, yet.”

“What do you mean, yet?”

“Mr. Williamson, you are...”

“Call me, Steve please.”

“Steve, you are calm and collected, not worried or sad about your wife gone missing and now murdered. You did not even ask how she died.”

“Why ask? You would not tell me anyway. I looked up murder statistics and gun shot was second to a knifing.”

“Steve, we will know soon enough. The Medical Examiner will be performing the autopsy this afternoon.”

“Maybe she was killed by someone that was doing a burglary on my friend’s Fish Camp, and they killed her to shut her up.”

Detective Carter says, “We could stand here all day and do what ifs. Go home. I have your phone and your address if I need to speak to you or arrest you.”

“If anyone you need to take a hard look at it is Alice. In her backseat I saw Carol’s wig. Why is it out of the suitcase? Alice pretended Carol was with her on the trip, she mailed postcards from Carol that she gave me for her travel board. Why do that? Why mail me and her mom postcards making us think Carol was alive. She is dirty. You told me she failed her polygraph at first.”

“I did not tell you no such thing.”

“Maybe it was Officer Miller that told me, anyway someone told me she passed some questions and failed some others.”

“Make it simple on me, let me eliminate you as a suspect, take a polygraph.”

“No way, no how. I will never take a polygraph. You can have that machine. I saw a show once on the polygraph and the host said, ‘The exam is as accurate as the examiner is competent. They gave an example. The guilty person passed.’”

9

CHAPTER 9

“What was the question and what was the given answer?”

“A man robbed a bank and stole 5,000 dollars. The bank manager lied and said 10,000 was missing. The manager took the other 5,000 dollars. The examiner asked the robber, Did you steal the 10,000 dollars and he said no, and passed the polygraph, because he stole only 5,000 dollars. What the examiner should have asked was, did you steal any of the missing money. Then when he said no, the machine would show he lied.”

Steve says, “No polygraph for me, no way, no how. I am going home now for a swim. The next time I see you I will have my lawyer with me.”

“I understand. Now do not hit your head and drown.”

Steve just shakes his head and walks away.

Steve stops at a McDonald’s and buys himself fifty large bags of fries.

Steve drives back to his residence. He leaves the fifty bags of fries scattered all over the backseat of the Volvo on purpose. He spills coke on the backseat floor rug.

Steve leaves the Volvo in his driveway. He needs the morning sun to be his friend and kill any smell of Carol’s body being in the backseat.

Detective Carter calls Officer Miller in Saint Louis.

“This is Officer Miller.”

“This is Mark in Atlanta. Do you have time to talk to me at this moment?”

“I do. What is up?”

I was thinking of Steve Williamson being our primary suspect. He has the motive in wanting to end his relationship with a Gold-Digger spending his money, He had the opportunity as he is the owner of a hotel and no boss over him, so he had the time to plot and act out his murder. He had over seven days to coverup his crime by making the world believe his wife was on a twelve-day road trip with Alice Samberg.”

“Officer Miller says, “He used his lover to do his dirty work.”

“You are exactly right,” says Detective Carter.

“Our suspect told me a few minutes ago why we need to be looking at his lover, Alice Samberg as Carol’s killer.”

“What did the man have to say?”

Alice mailed the postcards to him and to Carol’s mother, Alice wore a wig on the trip saying to people she was Carol, when Steve called asking to speak with his wife, it was Alice that made excuses why Carol could not come to the phone.”

Officer Miller says, “He will say she wanted Carol for herself as she is a Lesbian, and Carol refused her advances, so she killed his wife. Alice wanted to blame the murder on Steve by burying the body at his best man’s wedding’s property.”

Detective Carter adds, “The only video footage we can find is Alice alone on this trip out West. He will say that Alice failed the polygraph given to her as proof she was the one that harmed Carol. Steve will say Alice tried to blame Carol’s disappearance on a man named Walter who owned an airplane.”

“Officer Miller says, “Steve will show he believed his wife would return safely after her 12-day tour, this is why he paid for her clothes, shoes and signed a year’s lease for her travel agency he was buying her.”

Detective Carter laughs and says, “I can picture Steve Williamson wearing Angel wings, and underneath the costume is his Devil’s attire.”

Officer Miller says, “I bet when you get his cell phone records in Atlanta it will show his phone on when visiting clients and going to his hotel, and the phone will be off when he is involved.”

“You are right. Steve will say Alice Samberg hid his wife’s cell phone so he could not talk to her. When he called Alice asking to speak to his wife, she controlled the situation by making excuses why Carol could not come to the telephone. Steve Williamson says he has a recording from Alice in Dallas saying Carol cannot come to the telephone.”

Officer Miller says, “Did you listen to the recording?”

“No. I was busy at the crime scene. I told him I will listen to the recording when I finish taking his statement at the station.”

Officer Miller says, “Alice was in love with Steve, but to him, Alice was another disposable lover. Didn’t you say you uncovered two other lovers already?”

“Yes, I did.” says Detective Carter. Two professional women. One named Ellen in car sales, and Valerie, a real estate agent.”

Officer Miller says, “I wish I was a Detective in Atlanta right now; I would love to arrest that playboy for the murder of his wife.”

“I will do my best to place Steve Williamson under arrest for the murder of his wife. I will update you soon on my progress. Be safe. Bye.”

“Bye, Mark.”

Detective Carter calls the State Attorney who is on call for the week.

“This is SA Joe Wiggins.”

“Hello, sir, This is Detective Mark Carter. I want to have search warrants on three properties of my main suspect, Steve Williamson in the murder of his wife, Carol Williamson.”

“What will you be looking for on the searches?”

“Cell phones records, his computers, diagrams, notes on the crime of murder, his bank account records, the search of his two personal vehicles for the smell of decomposition of his wife’s body which we believe he used to transport the body. Digging equipment like shovels and picks, his credit card records for any purchase of cement, potting soil, and quicklime.”

“Come see me, let us talk about it.”

“Thank you,” says Detective Carter. I will call you in an hour. I am at the crime scene right now.”

“Tell you what I will do. Give me the address of your crime scene. I will come to you, and we can discuss what you will need to give me so I can get a Judge to issue the search warrants. What is the address?”

“214 Rainbow Lane.”

“Leaving now. See you shortly, Detective.”

“Thank you, sir for coming to me.”

“No problem. I am stopping at Burger King for a meal, can I bring you anything?”

“A large black coffee. Thanks.”

“See you shortly with your coffee.”

Detective Carter calls Office Miller back.”

“Officer Miller.”

“This is Mark again. I just spoke to the State Attorney on call, a Joe Wiggins. He is coming to my crime scene to discuss what I will need for him to argue for Search Warrants in front of a Judge.”

“What is your plan?”

“I will call Steve Williamson in for questioning. He will bring his lawyer with him. While I conduct the interview my team will search his house, his cars, and his hotel for evidence of him committing murder.”

“That is a good plan. How long have you been a Detective?”

“I have been a Detective two months.”

“What, you landed a murder case in your first year as a Detective? You normally start out handling minor items like a theft.”

“It started that way. This case started as a missing person case called in by you and Carol’s mother in Paris. Once it became a murder, the department assigned me a team of experienced Detectives to help me. I am working with one right now. I have to go; Detective Doug Bean is calling me.”

Detective hangs up his cell and says, “Yes, Doug.”

“A reporter friend of mine is coming out to our crime scene. Escort her around. Let her take photos from a distance but have her only talk to you.”

“What is her name?”

“She is with the Atlanta Tribune. Her name is Windy Maples.”

“Did you tip her off, Doug?”

Doug Laughs, “You can lose your job doing that. Windy listens to police scanners. The dispatcher said over the air, a forty-one code and she picked it up. She then called me, and I confirmed I was on the case. She wants an exclusive.”

“How does she know a 41 is our code for murder?”

Detective Bean smiles and says, “Hell if I know.”

“I will go to the entrance of the property and look for her. What does she look like?”

“A white female, 25 years old with short brown hair and glasses. She drives with her camera operator; his name is Peter. They normally drive up in a white station wagon.”

Ten minutes go by when Detective Carter sees a white station wagon coming down the road.

Detective Carter walks forward with his shield in one hand and his other arm raised for the station wagon to stop.

When the vehicle stops, he sees a very pretty woman with brown hair driving.

“Are you Windy Maples?”

“I am.”

I am Detective Carter. I am the lead Detective on the case.”

“I thought Detective Bean is in charge of this case.”

“He is my helper.”

“You are young for a Detective.”

“You are too young to be a reporter.”

“They both laugh.

“I have basic rules. This is my crime scene. We stick together, you can only speak to me, and you have to ask me if you want to roll film or snap photos. One more thing, do not touch anything.”

“We will follow your rules.”

Detective Carter gets a call from one of his officers helping on his murder case.

“Detective Carter.”

This is Officer Carmody, “You were right about your hunch. I traced the route from Steve Williamson’s residence to the interstate from last Saturday six pm to Monday morning. I was looking for his black F-150, the blue Volvo or the white Honda 4-door belonging to Alice Samberg.”

“What did you find for me?”

“Three cameras with footage of Alice’s white Honda with a second person in the vehicle at six-twenty-five pm Sunday. The footage quality is not the best, but you can see a female figure in the passenger-side wearing a seatbelt.”

“Fantastic.”

“There is more. I have a receipt in my hand of Alice inside a McDonald’s by the Interstate, exit forty-four ordering two hamburger meals. No camera footage outside, just of her inside ordering the two meals.”

“Great news. Alice drove her to the Fish Camp and killed her.”

“The Fish Camp is just two more exits down, exit forty-two. So, she kills Carol then goes on her road trip alone.”

“Anymore cameras to help our case?”

“Nope, too dark then, no lights anywhere. I found a bank ATM machine, and two gas stations in well-lit areas.”

“No cameras in Steve Williamson’s neighborhood?”

“I checked, too dark outside. I just have a white Honda driving in the neighborhood at 6 pm.”

“Good work, Carmody. Please put your report on my desk. Now for your second assignment. Ready to copy?”

“Ready to copy.”

Drive the route from Steve Williamson’s residence to the Fish Camp where his wife’s body was. Do the Red Lobster Restaurant to the Fish Camp.”

“What time frame are we looking at?”

Last Saturday evening from 9 pm to Sunday morning 7 am.”

“I will work on it right now, We are looking for cameras on residential homes, businesses, and bank ATM’s, correct?”

“Yes. Perfect. Good luck.”

“Besides me putting the video on a link, how many video discs would you like me to copy for you?”

“Make me six. Thanks.”

Detective Carter walks up to Detective Bean and says, “The reporter arrived with her camera operator.”

Detective Bean looks up from the grave site and says, “Morning, Windy, and Peter. You can film the crime scene from a distance of one hundred yards. You can interview Detective Carter or myself only. I will make you a disc of our findings later this week. We may make an arrest soon. If we are going to, I will call you ahead of time of the arrest location. Then you and Peter can have an exclusive.”

The reporter looks at Detective Carter and says, “Are you ready to be on camera?”

“Not really.”

“I will make the interview quick; I promise.”

“If you make it fast, I am ready now.”

“This is Atlanta Tribune reporter Windy Maples. I am at a crime scene with Detective Mark Carter. They have discovered a body on Rainbow Lane. Detective, fill my viewers in on what is going on in regard to a murder here on Rainbow Lane.”

“The owner’s dog named Timber dug a hole in the dirt to sit in while the owner spoke with a gate construction company about installing a gate. The dog started parking like crazy. The men walked over and observed a human leg sticking out of the ground.”

“Do you have a positive identification of the body?”

“Yes, we do. It is Carol Williamson, the wife of Steve Williamson, the owner of the Williamson Inn.”

“Is there an arrest in this murder?”

“No, not at this time. We are still gathering evidence.”

“Do you know the manner of death?”

“No. The Medical Examiner will tell us the manner of death.”

“Can you.....”

Detective Carter says, “That is all the information I can give you at this time.”

Peter puts down his video camera.

Detective Carter says to Windy Maples, “I need your contact information. Office, cell phone, and email address, please. When, I know more, I will call you. Remember, any video has to be filmed one hundred yards away from where we are standing.”

“Will do, and thanks for the brief interview.”

Detective Carter laughs and says, You welcome.”

“One more quick question, and off the record, “You are a Rookie Detective, right?”

“Yes. I was in Uniform Patrol till two months ago. I have been learning the ropes from more experienced Detectives. The Captain gave me my first missing person case, which now is a murder. I am in charge of this case, but I have help to make sure I make no mistakes.”

The reporter with her camera operator turn to leave when Detective Carter asks, “When will this broadcast?”

“Ten pm tonight.”

Detective Carter walks over to Detective Bean and says, “We will be on the 10 pm news.”

Detective Carter walks over to Ralph sitting in his truck with Timber in the bed of his truck.

Timber starts barking.

Ralph says, “Timber, be quite, sit.”

“Timber stops barking and sits.

Detective Carter says, “Sorry to keep you waiting. I need you to print the name of the man, his company name, and phone number, of the gate company that was with you when your dog uncovered the body.”

“I told him not to leave but he said, “I am out of here.”

Ralph writes down the man’s name, his gate company and their phone number and hands it to the Detective. “Here you go, Detective.”

Detective Carter reads the paper aloud, “Allen Boone, Boone Gate Company, 470-488-4992.”

“Correct, Detective.”

“I will call him now to return to my crime scene. You are free to go, but do not stop at this crime scene anymore. Do not talk to your good friend, Steve Williamson either. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sir, may I ask why I cannot speak to my good friend?”

“I am treating you and him as suspects at this time. How do I know if you did not help bury his wife on your property?”

“You don’t.”

“This Steve Williamson may say you and Alice killed and buried his wife and tried to cover it up with this fake road trip.”

“I see your point.”

“For your protection avoid your friend till I get to the bottom of this murder.”

“Will you contact Steve and tell him to stay away from my property?”

“I will do that, plus I will tell him to avoid my crime scene, too.”

“I hope you catch the killer of Carol. She was a nice woman.”

“I plan to make an arrest very soon. I cannot tell you more at this time.”

Ralph drives back to his Fish Camp with his trusted pet, Timber.

Windy Maples and her camera operator drive up to a residence and knock on the door.

Alice Samberg opens to find a woman with a microphone in her hand with a man with a large video camera on his shoulder.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Windy Maples, a reporter with the Atlantic Tribune Newspaper. Our company also owns television stations WXYZ.”

“What do you want from me?”

“Your side of the story on Carol Williamson’s murder. The police uncovered her body at Rainbow Lane this morning.”

“My God, what have I gotten involved in?”

“A dog named Timber uncovered her decomposing body at nine am. I just left the crime scene.”

“Did the police make an arrest in Carol’s murder?”

“No.” Windy lies and says, “Detective Carter told me to see you. He said you took a polygraph and passed.”

“I did take a polygraph in Saint Louis. I admitted I took a fake road trip claiming I was with Carol Williamson.”

“Detective Carter said you also admitted to mailing postcards in Carol’s handwriting to her husband and her mother to convince them Carol was alive and with you.”

“Yes, that is true.”

“The Detective said that Steve Williamson is blaming you for the murder of his wife. He claims you are a Lesbian and you wanted Carol to move in with you. She said no and you killed her, and you are trying to blame him for the murder you committed.”

“That is a lie. I am not a Lesbian. I know now that my lover set me up to take the fall for his wife’s murder. Last Saturday night he had his wife’s body in his Volvo. He took her out and buried her on Rainbow Lane. That is the road to the Fish Camp Resort owned by his best friend, Ralph Torres.”

“Did you see Carol’s body in the Volvo?”

“No. Steve told me that was where the body was.”

“Detective Carter wants the media to help him find videos of Steve’s route to the Fish Camp that night. That is why I am here. To help him expose Steve Williamson as the killer, not you.”

“How can I help?”

“Let us take your recorded statement in the privacy of your own home. I will then air it on the 10 pm news tonight.”

“Come in. Have a seat in my living room.”

Steve gets into his swimming trunks and jumps into his pool.

Betty gets a phone call on her cell phone.

“This is Betty.”

“Afternoon, Betty. This is Chief Robinson. How have you been?”

“Hello, Chief, wow, calling me on a Sunday, your day off.”

“Why not, your mother and I are good friends. Why do you want to speak with me?”

“The Williamson Inn started a program called PAD, which stands for Police Appreciation Day. We want to honor a weekend a month to a police officer of your choice a weekend at our hotel, all expenses paid, plus a day of fishing at the Fish Camp. The police are under tremendous heat across the nation for doing their job.”

“That is a true statement. The PAD program sounds great. When do you want to start this free weekend for my officers?”

“Is next weekend too soon?”

“It is. Drop me something in the mail on this PAD program. I will get back with you. I think next month around the second weekend will work. Tell your boss thank you for this PAD award. It is a great idea.”

“I will put something in the mail tomorrow.”

“Do that and say hello to your mother for me. Bye.”

“Bye, Chief.”

An Officer Carpenter walks into American Reality’s Office.

The receptionist says, “Can I help you, Officer?”

“I need to speak with Valerie Main, please. This is official police business.”

“Let me page her. Have a seat, please.”

The older woman dials a number and speaks to someone. “Valerie will be right, out.”

A minute later Valeria walks up to the Police Officer in uniform.

“Good Afternoon. I am Valerie Main. What do you need from me?”

“The Officer motions for her to have a seat.

Valerie does.

“I am Officer Carpenter. Detective Carter asked me to speak with you.”

“What about?”

“He says you lied to him about not being in a relationship with Steve Williamson. The man himself said he slept with you at your house on Thursday evening. We just want the truth.”

“Sorry, I lied. Yes, we slept together. I know he is married, but he said he was getting a divorce.”

“I may be charging him with murder. His wife’s body was located this morning at nine am. It will be on the 10 pm news at WXYZ television.”

“Steve Williamson is not a killer. He comes across as a nice man.”

“The Detectives are still gathering evidence. I just needed to get the truth from you about your relationship with Steve Williamson. We are checking out his story about what he did all week. He listed your place, your bed on Thursday night.”

“Tell the Detective that it is true, he was with me on Thursday night. This will not be on the news, will it?”

“No. Your secret is safe with the Atlanta Police. Have a great weekend.”

Valerie opens the front door, and the Officer says, “Thanks for your time.”

Officer Carpenter calls Detective Carter.

“This is Officer Carpenter. I spoke with Valerie Main. She admitted to me that she slept with Steve Williamson on Thursday evening.”

“Thanks for the call. Draft your report and drop it on my desk when you can.”

“I will do that today.”

Betty sees she had a missed call. She plays back the message.

“Betty, On Monday I will be hiring two women, friends of mine. A Tammy Smith and her mother, Frances. Hire them for the front desk. They have good people skills. I will tell you on Monday the pay an hour I want to stat them at. See you on Monday.”

The Crime Scene office contacts Detective Carter.

“Detective Carter, speaking”

“Afternoon, Detective, this is Alfred at the Crime Lab. I lifted DNA off the scarf label. Now we just need a match.”

“Thanks, Alfred. I will be sending you DNA to compare sometime this week, even today.”

“My boss said this is a rush. I will do it for you. If I am off, I will come in, just call me.”

“I will do that. thanks for the call. We will speak soon.”

Officer Robin Miller calls Detective Carter.

“Detective Carter.”

“I have good news for you, Detective?”

“What good news Officer Miller?”

“Video inside the Cowboy Boots Bar of Alice wearing a wig and acting drunk.”

“No way, I thought there were no cameras in that place.”

“There are six hidden cameras. Two covering the front door as you arrive and when you exit, plus over the pool tables. The cameras are in clocks on the walls of the place. The owner did it for lower insurance premiums.”

“What video do you have?”

“Like I said, Alice disguised as Carol in a wig acting drunk and flirting with the men playing pool. I see at least four men placing their contact information down Alice’s bra.”

“Email me the footage, plus to Windy Maples. I will give you her email address. Let me look it up.”

“Who the hell is Windy Maples?”

“Sorry, she is a reporter for the Atlantic Tribune newspaper that also owns a television station called WXYZ.”

“Have her send me the broadcast footage from Atlanta. I will get in shown here in Saint Louis. I can find extra witnesses that Alice posed as Carol and see what the men have to say.”

“I will get the video to you around five pm. Email me your video from Saint Louis. I will air it here in Atlanta at six pm.”

“I am emailing the video to you now. It is four minutes long with date and times.”

Is it in black and white or color?”

“Black and white. Color is too dark for inside the bar”

Detective Carter says, “I must run. Thanks for the video news. Bye.”

The surveillance team watching Alice Samberg’s residence calls Detective Carter.

“Afternoon, Defective. This is surveillance team number two. We are watching the residence of Alice Samberg. She has a visitor from the

Atlanta Tribune Newspaper. A woman reporter and a camera operator with a camera over his shoulder.”

“How does the reporter know about Alice Samberg?”

“We do not know, sir. What do you want us to do?”

Detective Carter looks over at Detective Bean flirting with a crime scene technician and says, “I will call you right back in five minutes.”

Detective Carter walks over to his partner and says, “Your report friend is now at Alice Samberg’s residence. How did she know to go there?”

Detective Bean shrugs his shoulders and says, “I have no clue, beats me.”

Right in front of his partner Detective Carter calls back Team Two.

“Knock on Alice Samberg’s door and get the reporter out of there. Call for a unit to transport her down to my office. Confiscate their cell phones and camera. Do it now.”

“Yes, sir.”

Detective Carter smiles and says, “If you will not admit to me that you leaked Alice Samberg’s address to your friend at the tribune, I will get the information from her. Now what gives?”

“We want Steve Williamson under arrest, right? By using the Media. I am hoping witnesses watching the news will give us a call on our Crime Watch tipline.”

“Let me tell you again, Detective Bean, this is my murder case, not yours. You are just helping me investigate the crime. One more time of you releasing information to anyone and I am going to Internal Affairs. Do I make myself clear?”

“You do.”

Team Two calls back the Detective.

I have the reporter and her camera operator in our backseat. They look worried about something.”

“Put her on the phone, please.”

“Hello?”

“Reporter Maples, this is Detective Carter. I know Detective Bean has been feeding you information on my case. Do not do anymore reporting. If you do, I will have you both arrested for obstruction, do I make myself clear?”

“You do.”

“What did Alice Samberg say to you?”

“She is worried that Steve Williamson set her up to take the fall for the murder of his wife. She was mentioning the postcards Steve wanted his wife to write before she took a trip she never took. Then a Police Officer knocked on the front door.”

“You will be transported in a police vehicle to the police station by a Police Officer. Just wait in the lobby for me. I have to speak to the State Attorney that is coming to the crime scene. Then I am coming to the police station. Put the Officer on, please.”

“Team Two.”

Drop off the reporter and the camera operator in the lobby. Then keep an eye on them from out front of the station.”

“Yes, sir. Transporting now.”

A man in a blue suit walks up to Detective Carter at the crime scene.

“Afternoon, Detective Carter I am State Attorney Joe Wiggins.”

Both men shake hands.

Detective Carter says in front of the crime scene personnel, and Detective Bean.

“SA Wiggins let us discuss my plan in my unmarked police vehicle.”

As both men walk toward the main road, Detective Carter says, “Too many ears were listening back there. I already had someone tip off the Atlanta Tribune reporter we were out here. The same reporter left here and went to Alice Samberg’s residence to talk to her. That is not good.”

“Fill me in on who is who in your murder investigation.”

Both men have a seat in the unmarked police vehicle. Detective Carter starts the vehicle, turns on the a/c and says, “It sure is a hot day today.”

S.A. Wiggins opens his notepad and takes out his ink pen.

“The murder victim is Carol Williamson, the wife of my primary suspect, Steve Williamson. Alice Samberg is the lover of Steve Williamson. Alice went on a road trip claiming Carol was with her. Alice files a missing person report on Carol in Saint Louis.”

“What cities did Alice travel to?”

“Natchez, Mississippi, Dallas, Texas, and Saint Louis.”

“Give me a list of all your suspects.”

“Steve Williamson, Alice Samberg, Ralph Torres, and an unknown Burglar.”

“Give me a run down on each suspect.”

“Alice Samberg conducted the fake road trip and mailed out postcards in Carol’s handwriting to Steve Williamson, and Carol’s parents in Paris. The postcards give my main suspect, the husband, an alibi. He is claiming Carol went on a road trip with Alice, then found a rich man with an airplane to fly her to Las Vegas.”

“Were the postcards in Carol’s own handwriting?”

“Yes, they were. An Officer Robin Miller in Saint Louis gave Alice a polygraph. The suspect then confessed she went on the road trip by herself, but pretended she was with Carol. Alice wore a wig and walked the different streets posing as Carol.”

“How did Alice get Carol to write the postcards ahead of time?”

“Alice claims Carol wrote the postcards out for her husband who said he was making a travel wall for her new travel agency he was buying for her. Then Alice mailed the postcards out from the different cities making it look like Carol was alive. Steve Williamson is saying he never knew his wife wrote the postcards out ahead of taking the trip.”

“This case seems complicated already.”

“You are right, but there is more. Carol’s body was on the property of Ralph Torres. Ralph was the best man at Steve and Carol’s wedding.”

“Did Ralph have anything to do with Carol’s murder?”

“I do not know yet. I will be giving him his own polygraph in the coming days. Did Ralph and Steve kill Carol and bury her on Ralph’s property, did Ralph act alone or with Alice, or did someone just bury her on his

property without his knowledge? I am hoping the polygraph he takes will answer those questions.”

“What about an unknown burglar?”

“Did Carol go see Ralph, but was greeted by a burglar, who killed her and buried her at the entrance to Ralph’s property?”

“Did Steve Williamson take his polygraph already?”

“He refused to take one. He claims the machine is as accurate as the examiner is competent.”

“Just to let you know the machine is called an instrument.”

“I will make a note of that for my report.”

“Tell me about the subpoenas you want, who are they for, and what will you be looking for?”

“The subpoenas are for Steve Williamson, Ralph Torres, and Alice Samberg. We are looking for a shovel, bags of lime, potting soil, and cement.”

“Why are you looking for those three items?”

“Carol’s body had those three items covering her. The killer or killers did that to hide the smell of decomposition.”

“What else do you want to be listed on your search warrants?”

“Cell phone records, credit card receipts, their computers, any murder list, maps of where the body was found, and vehicles to see which one transported Carol’s body to and from an unknown crime scene.”

“I will visit a judge now. You can pick up your subpoenas at nine am tomorrow.”

“Perfect. I plan to interview the three main suspects.”

“Anything else you will be doing without the knowledge of the suspects?”

“Yes, I will be offering Alice a cold drink with a straw. I need her DNA to compare to DNA discovered on a scarf found in the grave of Carol. Her husband said the scarf is not his wife’s.”

“Your voice tells me you think the scarf was planted and not dropped by accident.”

“You are right. Steve Williamson is setting his lover up to take the fall for the murder of his wife.”

“This Steve Williamson sounds clever.”

“He is clever, but I am smarter.”

“Let us talk some more in the morning when you come for your subpoenas.”

“Sounds good. Thanks for coming to my crime scene to meet me.”

“No problem, Detective.”

10

CHAPTER 10

Detective Carter watches the State Attorney drive away from the crime scene. He walks back to speak with Detective Bean, who is flirting with the woman crime scene photographer.

Detective Carter says, “Detective Bean, I need you to remain here with the Officer in the street till I can arrange crime scene protection. I have a unit coming soon with metal detectors. We are looking for a shovel.”

Detective Bean laughs and says, “I doubt we will find anything buried out here besides the body we uncovered.”

Detective Carter walks away from the other Detective and the crime scene tech named Paula Kimble.”

Detective Carter drives back to the Atlanta Police Department and walks inside the lobby. He walks over to the reporter and the camera operator and says, “Follow me. We will not be long.”

Once at his desk Detective Carter pulls up two chairs and says have a seat.”

Once seated, Detective Carter says, “This is my murder investigation. I am in charge, not Detective Bean. Listen to me only. If you listen to anyone else and you act on information told to you about my case, I will lock you up, and charge you with obstruction. Do I make myself clear?”

Both people say at the same time, “Yes, Detective.”

“What ever you two said and heard over at Alice Samberg’s residence I need in writing. Here are notepads and pens. Start writing. Do you want something to drink?”

The reporter says no, and the camera operator says, “Yes, please. I would like a coffee with cream and sugar.”

“I will be right back, then I have to make a long-distance phone call. I will be in the next room watching you both. When finished writing, just wait for me to finish my phone call. I will walk you both out.”

Five minutes later Detective Carter places the coffee in front of the camera operator. I will be right back.”

Detective Carter closes the vacant office door and dials a phone number.

“Hello? Ashley speaking.”

“I know it is early Paris time, sorry, I woke you. This is Detective Mark Carter with Atlanta Police Department. I want to fill you in on what has been going on in my murder investigation.”

“Can I call you, Mark?”

“Yes, you can. First, I want to give you, my deepest condolence on the loss of your daughter. I was hoping in my heart Carol would fly back from Las Vegas with the stranger.”

“I was praying for the same thing. Have you arrested my son-in-law yet?”

“Let me warn you, it may never happen.”

“What? Why do you say that? Mark?”

“Steve fooled your late daughter into writing him and you postcards from Natchez, Mississippi, Dallas, Texas, and Saint Louis. Then he had his lover, Alice Samberg go on a fake road trip and mail the postcards to you and to Steve, This makes it look like Carol was alive and with Alice.”

“I know he is tricky. I never liked him. This is why I did not attend my daughter’s wedding.”

“Then he had Alice call him every day because he knew I would pull cell tower records. Steve says he asked to speak with Carol each time he called Alices’ phone, but Alice would give him excuses why Carol could not come to the telephone.”

“What excuses did Alice give?”

“Carol cannot come to the phone, she is napping, out on a walk, shopping, or drinking at bars.”

Steve covered his tracks some more by having Alice make the missing person report in Saint Louis.”

“How can he explain where my daughter was found buried in Atlanta?”

“He does not have to. He just has to say Alice made him believe Carol was on her road trip. He can say Alice buried your daughter on Rainbow Lane, to blame the killing on him. Alice knows Steve travels on Rainbow Lane all the time to visit his friend that owns the Fish Camp Resort.”

“Wow, this is complicated.”

“It is. I have enough evidence now to charge Alice Samberg with murder, but nothing yet to charge your son-in-law.”

Ashley starts to cry.

“I cannot prove it yet, but I believe Steve stole April’s scarf and placed it in your daughter’s makeshift grave. He did this to make it look like Alice dropped the scarf when dropping the corpse into the makeshift grave.”

“You need to find a way to charge him with my daughter’s murder. I just bought my airline ticket on Delta. I arrive at six pm tomorrow.”

“I will pick you up. I will have a uniform Officer with me. I will greet you at the gate. I have so much to do, so I will fill you in when I see you of my actions from now till, I pick you up. Have a safe flight, see you soon. Bye.”

“Bye, Detective.”

Crime Scene Technician, Paula Kimble walks in where Detective Carter is sitting and says, “Make sure I never work a crime scene again with Detective Bean. All he wanted was my phone number.”

“When I walked away, what did my assigned partner say?”

“Between us, Detective Bean said, “Rookie, he knows nothing. I cannot believe the Chief made him the lead Homicide Investigator on this case.”

Detective Carter sees the reporter waiving to him to get his attention.

“I have to go. Let us have a coffee someday, would that be all right in your book?”

“Yes. Speak to you soon, Detective.”

“Please, call me Mark.”

“Call me, Paula, all right?”

“Will do. Bye.”

Detective Carter walks out to meet the reporter and her camera operator. They hand the Detective their notes on their contact with Alice Samberg.

“He looks over their notes and says, “For your cooperation in this matter I will give you both an exclusive when and where we are making an arrest in this murder investigation. Just keep this information secret.”

“Wow, fantastic news,” says Windy.”

Detective Carter pulls out his cell phone. I will add your contact number to my phone list, what is your cell number?”

Windy gives her number to the Detective. She watches him input her numbers into his cell phone as she speaks.

“Let me walk you both out. One more thing, if Detective Bean contacts you again regarding my murder investigation I need to know about it.”

“I will call you,” says Windy.

Detective Carter escorts the pair out of the police station.

Steve contacts Team 2.”

Team 2, here”

“This is Detective Carter. Get hold of Teams 1, 3, and 4. Have everyone meet me at Dunkin Donuts on River Road tomorrow at 5 am. Tomorrow we will serve subpoenas on all the people we are watching.”

“What time will be serving the subpoenas? Detective Carter.”

“The State Attorney said they will be ready at nine am. To play it safe at 10 am. I will be calling Steve, Ralph, and Alice to come to the station at nine am tomorrow. Follow them all to the station. I will hand you the subpoenas to serve at that time. Serve them while I am interviewing the suspects.”

“What time do we break off today?”

“Follow the reporter home, then break off. See you all tomorrow at Dunkin Donuts.”

Detective Carter makes the phone calls to Steve, Ralph, and Alice. He tells them all to be at the station at nine am tomorrow with their lawyers. A marked police unit will escort you. If you fail to show, I will arrest you for the murder of Carol Williamson. So, show for your interview.”

Detective Bean calls Detective Carter.

“The two crews with the metal detectors are here.”

“Have one crew walk one side of the road and the second crew do the same on the opposite side of the road. Walk all the way down to the Fish Camp. Then they switch sides of the road and do the same thing back to the main road.”

“Will do.”

“Call when they are all done, please.”

“Will do.”

Detective Carter calls Officer Robin Miller.

“Officer Miller.”

“Hello, Robin, Mark here in Atlanta.”

“Any arrest yet?”

“No, I am serving search subpoenas on Steve, Ralph, and Alice’s residences at ten am tomorrow. They all will be down at the station with my crew interviewing them while we search.”

“Good luck.”

“I spoke to Ashley. She is flying in on Delta tomorrow. I will pick her up at the Atlanta Airport at six pm.”

“Have her come to Saint Louis if she has time. I will pick her up at the airport, as well.”

“I will mention it to her. I have to go. Speak to you tomorrow.”

Detective Carter sits in his unmarked police car and writes out the questions his crew will be asking Steve, Ralph, and Alice.

He writes:

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your current residential address including city, and zip?
3. What is Carol Williamson relationship with you?
4. How long have you known Carol Williamson?
5. Did you have anything to do with harming Carol Williamson?
6. Were you aware Carol Williamson was on no field road trip with Alice Samberg?
7. What is your cell phone number including area code?
8. What is your email address?
9. Are you employed?
10. If yes, where and what is your occupation?
11. Have you been to Rainbow Lane?
12. Did you dig the makeshift grave Carol Williamson’s body was in?
13. The scarf I am showing you today, have you seen that Scarf?
14. If yes, which people were wearing it and how long ago?
15. Did you have anything to do with Carol Williamson writing six postcards to Steve Williamson or to her mother, Ashley?
16. Did you plan to assist anyone in harming Carol Williamson?
17. Did you use or loan a shovel to anyone?
18. Are you willing to take a polygraph regarding your answers to these seventeen questions?
19. Who do you suspect of killing Carol Williamson?
20. Why do you suspect this person of killing Carol Williamson?

21. Has all your answers to the above 20 questions been truthful?
22. Is there anything you want to add to your statement?
23. How do you think Carol Williamson was murdered?
24. For Steve Williamson, was your wife a Gold-Digger?
25. Did you plan to divorce your wife?
26. Are you having love affairs with anyone, if yes, what are their names and how long has the affairs been going on?
27. If asking Ralph or Alice, were you having a love affair with Carol Williamson.
28. If asking Alice, did you wear a wig belonging to Carol Williamson on your road trip?
29. Did you pose as Carol Williamson on your road trip?
30. Did you hide Carol's cell phone from her before you left on your road trip?

Detective Carter looks at his watch and departs in his unmarked police cruiser from the Atlanta Police Department.

Steve calls Betty.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Betty. This coming week, the hotel will be slow enough to allow you to fly to Dallas to meet with Jake Welch. Take this week off from my hotel, fly to Dallas and take the Momma Mia Franchise Tour. Take good notes because we will be opening our franchise unit upon your return from Dallas.”

“I will fly out on Monday.”

“Fantastic news. Thanks for going for me.”

“The Williamson Inn is my second family. Glad to do it. Bye.”

The Medical Examiner, Doctor Edwards, contacts Detective Bean.

“Detective Bean, Speaking.”

“Good evening, Detective, Doctor Edwards here. I have the death information on a Carol Williamson.”

“That was fast, Doc.”

“Detective Carter said it was a rush. He needed the information as he is interviewing suspects tomorrow.”

“What can you tell me about the victim’s death?”

“Carol Williamson was smothered. Time of Death is on the weekend of last week. I am still examining the body. If I uncover anything else, I will reach out to you.”

“Thanks for the call. I will contact my partner.”

Detective Bean calls his partner.

“Detective Carter.”

“This is Detective Bean. The M.E, Doctor Edwards just called me. He is still examining Carol Williamson’s body. He says the manner of death is by smothering, and the time of death was last Saturday or Sunday.”

“What is the status of the two groups with metal detectors. Anything of value?”

“They just finished. Nothing of value related to our case.”

“Thanks. Do you have a relief?”

“Yes, he just showed. Officer Mathews, badge 1246.”

“Tell him I will send a relief at midnight for him.”

“I will tell him. I am returning to the office.”

“Thanks for your assistance, Detective.”

“No problem, Partner.”

Ralph calls, John.

“John, speaking.”

“Hi, John. Ralph here. I have to be brief, Come to my Fish Camp next Monday if you can. We will sit down and make a work schedule.”

“Great news, I will be there around ten a.m.”

“See you then. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Ralph calls his three dogs over. He gives them each a meat bone. He makes Timber’s bone a big one.

Betty calls Tammy.

“Tammy, here.”

“Tammy, this is Betty Cooper. *Have to go out of town tomorrow. I will contact you next week to see me for your jobs.*”

“*Thanks for calling. I will tell mom. Have a safe trip.*”

“*I am going to Dallas to look at our franchise we landed called Mama Mia Sandwiches.*”

“*My mom would love that gig. She is a great cook.*”

“Why not. Talk to you when I return from Dallas. Bye.”

“Bye, Betty.”

Steve arrives in his neighborhood. He knocks on Ted’s front door.

Helen opens her door and says, “Hello, Steve. Sorry for your loss. A reporter just broke the story of Carol’s body being discovered on Rainbow Lane.”

Steve looks at his watch. It is almost seven p.m.

“Time flies. I am giving the police an interview in the morning.”

“Make sure you have your lawyer with you.”

“I do. Speak soon. Tell Ted I said hello.”

“He is taking a nap. I will tell him over tea.”

“Bye.”

“Goodbye.”

Steve drives home and parks his vehicle in the garage. Once inside the kitchen he calls his lawyer.

“This is Joey.”

Steve here. Do you have a lawyer to sit with me tomorrow for my interview with Detective Carter?”

“I will be there. The Judge is sick, Trial starts next Monday. Let me pick you up at 8 a.m. We can stop for a coffee,”

“Deal. See you then.”

Steve calls Anna.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Anna, Steve here. I need you to be acting manager this week. Betty is in Dallas for me, and I will be in court.”

“I can manage it, Steve. Jack can help me if I get stuck.”

“Thanks, Anna. Good night.”

“Bye, Steve.”

Steve changes into his swim trunks, grabs a root beer and sits in his patio lounge chair. He drinks his beverage as he thinks about tomorrow.

Olivia Porter calls Steve.

“Steve here.”

“Hi, Steve, this is Olivia Porter. Do you have a minute?”

“I do.”

“There is a Fire Chief’s quarterly meeting coming up in five months. They will be taking a vote on Tuesday on where the location will be. I mentioned to the Chief here in our area, we can offer a fireman’s package of a reduced hotel rate, one free dinner and four hours at the Fish Camp fishing. He was all for it. What do you think of my Fireman package?”

“That works for me, plus we will be having a good group of men staying in our hotel. When do you have to get back with him on our offer?”

“Him and I will have a coffee at Dunkin Donuts at nine am on Thursday.”

“Go for it, Olivia. I like the offer.”

“Thanks, Boss. I mean, Steve. Have a fun week.”

“You do the same. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Betty calls Steve.

“Steve here.”

“Hi, Steve, I just wanted you to know I fly out on Delta at 7 am for Dallas. Jake Welch said he will pick me up.”

“Have fun, call me tonight.”

“I will call about eight. Joey said I can fly back Wednesday afternoon.”

“See you on Thursday, then. I have Anna as acting manager till your return.”

“Where are you going?”

“I have Court, plus the police officers want to speak to me again about Carol. I am going for my interview with my lawyer tomorrow at nine.”

“Good luck.”

“Thanks, Bye.”

“Bye,” says Betty.

Monday morning June 14th, at 7:30 am.

Steve takes a shower and dresses in his lucky blue suit. He then walks out his front door and waits for his ride.

Joey pulls up in a Cadillac.

“Just in time. I like a punctual lawyer.”

Joey laughs. “Give me directions to which Dunkin Donuts we are going to.”

“Take this road to “Diamond Drive, turn right. The Dunkin Donuts will be about a mile up the road on the left.”

Team One surveillance calls Detective Carter.

“Carter.”

“Team, One reporting in. Steve Williamson just left the residence with a second man, should be his lawyer. I will run the license plate.”

“Thanks for the call.”

Steve and Joey make small talk. Joey uses the drive-up window to order two breakfasts. They park in a Dunkin parking spot to have their meal.

Joey says, “When our interview starts, wait three seconds between each question before answering. I need time to object if I do not like the question. If I say, do not answer, then stay silent. I will tell the Detective you refuse to answer.”

“I can and will do as instructed.”

Joey says, “If they ask for you to take a polygraph say no.”

“I will play it cool. I will say, I tried to speak to my wife on her road trip, but Alice lied and made excuses why Carol could not come to the phone. I

tape recorded a phone call between me and Alice when she was in Dallas, and I was asking to speak with my wife.”

“You did? Play it for me, now.”

“Steve plays his lawyer the recording he made of his conversation with Alice.

“This proves Alice made you believe Carol was with her. It is the police that have to prove you harmed your wife.”

“Let us get this over with. Have the police take me first as I have a hotel to run.”

“Let us go now. I will speak with Detective Carter about interviewing you first.”

Team, One calls Detective Carter.

“Carter.”

Team One, here. A Joey Anderson is driving with Steve Williamson as a passenger. They just left Dunkin Donuts headed your way.”

“Thanks Team One for the update. Remember, come in the backway, and see Detective Bean. He will hand you the subpoenas for Steve Williamson’s residence, cars, and business. Search all three.”

“What are you hoping to find?”

“The list is on the subpoenas. I am looking for cement, potting soil, quick lime, anything on his computers regarding a plot to kill his wife, a pick-ax, and shovel. Good luck.”

“On the way now to see Detective Bean. Steve Williamson just arrived at our Police Station.”

When Joey and Steve arrive at the police station, the front desk Officer tells them to have a seat. The Officer makes a phone call, then says, Detective Carter is on the way down.”

Detective Carter exits the elevator but hold it. “Come with me, Gentlemen.”

Inside the elevator Detective Carter says, you will be in interview room one.”

“I request my client go first. He has a hotel to run.”

“Have a seat. I will be right in.”

Detective Carter grabs his questions and his note pad and walks into interrogation room number one.”

“Thank you for coming. You are free to leave at any time. I need your help in finding out yours and Carol’s timelines.”

“Fire away, Detective.”

“I will be asking you about thirty questions.”

“Fire away, Detective, Fire away.”

“State your full name”

“Steve Williamson.”

“What is your correct residential address, including city, state, and zip?”

Detective Carter goes down his list, and Steve Williamson answers.

Detective Carter asks, “Will you take a polygraph regarding your late wife?”

Steve waits three seconds to answer. “No. I will not take a polygraph.”

“Did you dig the makeshift grave Carol was found in?”

“I did not harm my wife. You need to be interviewing Alice Samberg.”

Detective Bean knocks on the interview room door and hands his partner a note.

Detective Carter reads that Team Two is following Alice Samberg to the police station. Team Three is following Ralph to the police station.”

Detective Carter whispers in the ear of Detective Bean, “Have them wait in the lobby till I come for them.”

Detective Bean nods in the affirmative.

Detective Carter studies his questions list, then asks, “The scarf I am showing you now, have you seen your late wife wearing it?”

“No. Not my wife, but I have seen Alice wearing it when coming to my house to visit my late wife.”

“Who do you suspect of killing your late wife?”

“Where my late wife’s body was found, either Ralph or Alice or both harmed her, or the burglar that committed a crime at Ralph’s Fish Camp harmed her.”

Did you conspire with Alice Samberg to make everyone think your late wife was on a road trip?

“I thought my wife was on a road trip. Every time I called Alice’s cell phone, Alice would answer and say, Carol was shopping, out on a walk, or taking a nap. I have a recording of me asking Alice in Dallas to speak with my wife. Alice lies and says Carol is out walking.”

“Let me hear the recording.”

Steve pulls out his cell phone and plays the recording between Steve and Alice, while Alice was in Dallas.

“Steve’s lawyer says, “This proves Carol was alive and traveling with her best friend.”

Detective Carter cuts Steve’s lawyer off and says, “One last question, “Is there anything you want to add to your statement?”

Steve says, “Yes. Here is a list of people that contacted me while Carol was on her alleged road trip. I bought shoes and clothes she ordered, I spoke to a transport bus company and a cinema as Carol had something planned for her travel agency, and I rented a travel agency space for her. The agent and the location rented are on this list.”

Steve hands the list over to Detective Carter.

Steve says, “One more thing, I found Carol’s purse and cell phone hidden behind the laundry basket in the laundry room. I know now, Alice hid it, but claims Carol forgot to bring them with her on the road trip.”

Detective Carter says, “I have two more people to interview. I may call you back for a second interview. You are free to go.”

Steve stands and says, “For the record, I loved my wife. We were tying for children. I hired a new manager to take my place. Carol and I were moving to Colorado. Her road trip with \$4,000 in cash was a birthday present. Please find my wife’s killer.”

Detective Carter just lets Steve talk.

Steve says, "I tried calling my wife on her road trip. Alice lied about what she was doing. We had a special birthday dinner; I bought her a Canon Camera for her trip. I gave her 4,000 cash for her trip. I bought the shoes and clothes she ordered, rented her travel agency, I was expecting my wife to come back from her road trip."

"You are free to go. Let me ride down with you to the lobby. I will then bring up my second person I need to interview. My search teams are at your residence. They also are searching, your cars, and business."

Attorney Joey Anderson says, "You have subpoenas, right?"

"Yes, your client's copy will be left at each location searched."

Steve says, "Alice Samberg is framing me. I loved my wife. We were tight. Yes, we had problems, but we were working them out. I bought her six blank postcards for her trip. Arrest Alice as the killer of my wife."

The elevator opens on the ground floor. Detective Carter says, "Come with me Ralph Torres."

Ralph rides with Detective Carter in the elevator to interview room two.

Steve smiles at Alice and says, "Tell the truth."

Alice just look at her former lover but says nothing.

Detective Carter says to Ralph, "You are free to leave at any time. I have about thirty questions to ask you."

Ralph asks, "Can we save time and have your polygraph examiner ask me the questions?"

"You want to take a polygraph?"

“I do. I know I am innocent. I am just a friend of Steve’s caught in the middle of his late wife’s murder.”

Detective Carter leaves the interview room and calls Officer Sam Green.

“Sam here.”

“Sam, I need you to polygraph a Ralph Torres. He is in interview room two.”

“I will be right up to escort him to my polygraph room.”

“Stop by interview room three and pick up the list of questions I want asked.”

“Will do.”

Detective Carter walks back into interview room two.

“An Officer Sam Green will be up in a minute to take you to our polygraph room. I will wait for the results, then I will speak to you again in interview room two. Sit tight.”

Detective Carter rides the elevator down to the lobby. He says, “Alice Samberg come with me.”

Detective Carter enters interview room three with his prime suspect. He says, “You are not under arrest. You can leave at any time. I have about thirty questions to ask you.”

Sam knocks on interview room three’s door.

Detective Carter steps out of the room to speak with Sam. Ralph makes eye contact with Alice and smiles.

Detective Carter hands Sam the list of questions, then he whispers in Sam's ear, "Ask Ralph was he having sexual relations with Carol Williamson or with Alice Samberg."

"Will do."

Detective Carter watches as Ralph and Sam catch the elevator to the floor below. He then enters interview room three.

"State your full name."

"Alice Samberg."

Detective Carter goes down his list of questions. He asks, "Did you have anything to do with the killing of Carol Williamson?"

"I did not harm her. All I did was go on a fake road trip to make everyone think we were together. I did this for my lover, Carol's husband, Steve Williamson."

"Did you or were you there when Carol's makeshift grave was dug?"

"No."

"How many times have you been down Rainbow Lane, the road Carol's body was found on?"

"I have never been down that road alone. I did go down that road as a passenger in Steve Williamson's truck or his wife's Volvo, but again, never alone."

"Have you seen this scarf before?"

Alice looks at it and says, "That is my scarf. Where did you find it? I thought I lost it somewhere."

“The scarf was found with Carol’s body inside the makeshift grave.”

“It was planted there, because I never have been to that makeshift grave.”

“Are you willing to take another polygraph to prove you have never been to that makeshift grave?”

“Yes, I will take a second polygraph.”

“As soon as Officer Green finishes giving a polygraph to Ralph Torres, you will go next.”

“I did not harm Carol. Her and I were friends.”

“Were you two ever lovers?”

“No. The only lover I had was Steve Williamson.”

“On your road trip did you wear a wig and pose as Carol Williamson?”

“I did, but only because Steve Williamson asked me to.”

“Who do you think killed Carol Williamson?”

“No doubt in my mind, her husband, Steve Williamson.”

“Why do you think that?”

“He visited his lawyer who told him in a divorce, Carol would receive fifty percent of his assets. He was mad he did not have a prenup with Carol.”

“Did you hide Carol’s purse and cell phone behind a laundry basket in Steve Williamson’s residence?”

“I did, but only because Steve told me to.”

“Do you think Steve Williamson is setting you up to take the fall for his wife’s murder?”

“I do. I let my love for Steve Williamson overrule my judgement.”

Steve Williamson says you made Carol write the postcards you mailed to him and to her mother to convince them Carol was alive.”

“The postcards were filled out already by Carol. Steve said mail these postcards when you arrive in Natchez, Dallas, and Saint Louis.”

“Why did you file a false missing person report on Carol Williamson in Saint Louis?”

“Steve Williamson told me to.”

“Why did you say a rich man with an airplane flew Carol Williamson to Las Vegas?”

“I did lie for my lover. He told me what to say and do. I admit I was stupid to listen to him.”

“Steve Williamson claims he tried calling his wife every day of the road trip, but you lied and made excuses why Carol could not come to your cell phone.”

“Steve knew Carol was not on the road trip. He said he would call me every day to make it look like he was speaking to his wife. He later changed his story to say I was making excuses why his wife could not come to my cell phone.”

Detective Carter says, “Steve Williamson killed his wife, dropped your scarf in her makeshift grave, had you on a fake road trip to make it look like his wife was with you and having fun. He made his wife write the postcards ahead of time. He got her to do it, by claiming it was for a travel board for her travel agency he was buying her.”

“You are one hundred percent, right.”

Detective Carter says, “he set you up to take the fall. He can sit home and say his wife was on a road trip with her best friend. He can claim he tried reaching her nightly. He can claim you hid his wife’s purse and cell phone. He also claims you and Carol were lovers.”

“We were not lovers, just friends.”

“What happens if you fail that lover question on your polygraph? Best to admit you were lovers now to me. I ask you again, were you two lovers?”

Alice pauses, puts her head down and whispers, “We were lovers for two weeks. She broke it off.”

“Steve Williamson claims you killed his wife because you wanted her for yourself. She refused to be your lover anymore and you were mad, hurt, and angry, so you killed her.”

“I would never hurt her or anyone.”

“My problem is I have to look at evidence uncovered, and you are my prime suspect. I am subpoenaing everyone’s cell phone to see what is on there. Sit tight. Let us see what your second polygraph looks like. Can I bring you something to drink while you wait?”

“Yes, please. A coke or water with a straw.”

“I will be right back.”

Detective Carter instructs Detective Bean to take her drink from her or from the trash when he escorts her to the lobby. He wants her DNA to compare to the scarf label.”

Officer Green returns with Ralph Torres and his three polygraph charts. He says in front of Ralph, "This gentleman is honest. No deception on any question."

Detective Carter smiles and says, "That is good to hear. Ralph, let me walk you to your vehicle. Let us take the stairs, I need the exercise."

Ralph asks, "What happens now?"

"Go on with your life. I advise you not to meet or speak with Alice Samberg or Steve Williamson. They are suspects in the murder of Carol Williamson."

"I will have no contact."

"What vehicle are you driving?"

"A black Ford F150 with white stripes."

Detective Carter stops in front of Ralph's truck and says "Good to hear. You are free to leave. Bye."

"Bye, Detective."

Steve calls the surveillance team watching Ralph.

"Did you find anything in your search of Ralph's residence?"

"No. No tools, soil, nothing. Just three friendly dogs."

"End the surveillance, take the rest of the day off, Ralph Torres passed his polygraph."

"Will do. Speak to you tomorrow."

"Call after ten."

“Will do.”

Detective Carter returns to the interview room where Alice is waiting, sipping on her coke.

“Thanks for waiting.”

“I am ready for my polygraph.”

Detective Carter says, “Steve has a tape recording of you telling him while you were in Dallas that Carol was out shopping and taking a walk. He is setting you up for the murder of his wife.”

“I know now that you are 100 percent, correct.”

“Leave your drink and follow me. I will walk you one floor down to Officer Green’s polygraph room.”

Alice leaves her drink on the table and follows the Detective.

Once out of sight, Detective Bean collects Alice’s drink can, and straw, and carries it to the lab on the fifth floor.

Detective Bean says to lab technician, Holly, “Do DNA on this drink cup belonging to murder suspect, Alice Samberg. Compare the DNA to the scarf you already did DNA on, see if the DNA is a match. Call me or Detective Carter with your results.”

“I will work on the DNA now for you.”

“Thanks, Holly.”

“No problem, Detective.”

Detective Carter knocks on Officer Green's closed office door. He opens and Detective Carter says, Give Alice Samberg the same thirty questions you just gave Ralph. I will be upstairs."

Officer Green walks to his polygraph instrument's room next door.

"Have a seat and relax. I will attach components to your chest, and fingertips. I will ask you a series of questions. Answer yes or no. Do not move during the test. Let us go over the questions I will be asking you today. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

Officer Green reads the questions he will ask Alice, as he attaches the polygraph components to Alice's chest and finger.

Officer Green turns his instrument on and says, "I will run three charts on the questions I just read you. Are you ready to begin?"

"I am ready."

"Remember, do not move, and answer yes or no."

"Alright."

"Is your first name Alice?"

"Yes."

"Is today, Monday?"

"Yes."

"Do you plan to answer all of my questions truthfully, today?"

"Yes."

“Did you have anything to do in harming Carol Williamson?”

“No.”

“Was Carol Williamson your lover?”

“Yes.”

“Have you been to Rainbow Lane alone at any time?”

“No.”

“Did you use a shovel to bury Carol Williamson?”

“No.”

“Did you pour lime, potting soil or dry cement on Carol Williamson’s corpse?”

“No.”

“On your road trip did you wear a wig and pose as Carol Williamson?”

“Yes.”

“Did you hide in the laundry room at Steve Williamson’s residence, Carol Williamson’s purse and cell phone?”

“Yes.”

“Did you have Carol Williamson write out any postcards?”

“No.”

“Did you mail postcards in Carol Williamson’s handwriting to Steve Williamson?”

“Yes.”

“Did you mail postcards in Carol Williamson’s handwriting to her mother in Paris?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think Steve Williamson is setting you up to be charged for the murder of Carol Williamson?”

“Yes.”

“Were you and Steve Williamson lovers?”

“Yes.”

“Do you plan to have any contact with Steve Williamson once you leave the police station today?”

“No.”

“The first chart is complete. We will wait a minute, then I will conduct test two with the same questions.”

“Alright.”

A minute later Officer Green says, “I will start the questions. Answer yes or no, and do not move.”

“Alright.”

Officer Green says, “The Three charts are finished. Follow me back to Detective Carter’s interview room.”

Officer Green sees Detective Carter talking with Detective Bean and says, "No deception on Alice Samberg's polygraph."

"Thanks, Sam."

"Detective Carter says to Alice Samberg. You are free to go. Let me walk you to your vehicle. What are you driving?"

"A grey in color Honda Accord."

"Let us walk to your vehicle. Do not leave town and do not speak with Ralph Torres, Steve Williamson, or to Carol's mother, Ashley Beckman. She is flying in at six pm tonight."

"I will not. Can I speak with Carol's mother? I want to tell her I had nothing to do with her child's death?"

"I will ask her if she wants to meet with you."

Detective Carter watches Alice drive away in her Honda.

Detective Carter calls Surveillance Team Four."

"Team Four."

"Any luck in your search of her residence?"

"No, it was clean, no evidence."

"Stay on her 24/7. She might flee."

"I will get two more investigators to relieve us at midnight."

"Sounds good."

Detective Carter calls Surveillance Team One.

“One here.”

“Any evidence in Steve Williamson’s residence, vehicles, or business?”

“His Volvo backseat had fifty large bags of McDonald’s French Fries scattered all around. The backseat floor was damp. It smelled like coke.”

Detective Carter says, “He is trying to hide the smell of his wife’s corpse.”

“It worked. I only smelled French Fries.”

“Where is he?”

“Back at his residence. He went to his lawyer’s office for two hours, then to a McDonald’s, then back to his residence.”

“Make sure your surveillance team stays on him 24/7. He may flee.”

11

CHAPTER 11

Detective Carter meets Ashley's plane at the gate. He holds up a sign that reads, Ashley B.

A middle-aged woman exits the plane and walks up to Detective Carter.

"I am Ashley B."

“Evening, Ashley. I am Detective Carter.”

“You are young for a Detective.”

“How was your flight?”

“Long. I was able to take a nap. I feel rested.”

“Let us get your luggage, then stop at IHOP Restaurant for a coffee.”

“I have not had pancakes in years. I will have one now.”

After picking up Ashley’s suitcase, they drive over to IHOP and enter.

The Hostess asks, “How many?”

“Two. A quiet corner booth, please,” asks Detective Carter.

After ordering their meals, Detective Carter says, “I interviewed today, Steve Williamson, Alice Samberg, and Ralph Torres.”

“Who is this, Ralph Torres?”

“It was on his property that your daughter’s body was found.”

“I see. How did the interviews go?”

“I know Steve Williamson killed your daughter. I just cannot prove it, yet. His accomplice was Alice Samberg. Steve is setting her up to take the rap for your daughter’s murder.”

“Fill me in, please with all details.”

“Your daughter’s body was located on Rainbow Lane. I will take you there in the morning. Steve claims Alice buried Carol on this road, knowing he drives this road often to visit Ralph’s Fish Camp Resort. He

claims Alice is setting him up. Alice is claiming Steve is setting her up by planting Alice's scary in with your daughter's body in the makeshift grave."

"It is just sad, this whole thing. My daughter and I were close. I knew right away something was not right when she did not tell me about her upcoming road trip."

"Alice first lied on her polygraph given to her by the Saint Louis Police. She then came clean and said she was on this road trip by herself. She brought Carol's wig and took pictures pretending to be Carol. She did this so Steve could claim his wife was alive and on a road trip."

"Why did this Alice go along with this ruse?"

"She was in love with Steve Williamson. They have been lovers for months. Alice filed a false missing person report saying Carol left with a stranger, a rich man with an airplane. She flew with him to Las Vegas."

"What a bunch of dog poop. What a story she made up."

Steve claims Alice killed your daughter when Carol did not want to be her lover anymore."

"My daughter was straight."

"Afraid not. Carol and Alice were lovers for at least two weeks. This is true because Alice passes her polygraph on that question. Steve claims Alice killed her as Carol was returning to him. She said, I want a rich man, not a poor woman."

"What about the postcards written in my daughter's handwriting?"

"Steve claims he bought his wife six blank postcards for her trip. Alice claims Steve had your daughter write the six postcards ahead of the trip,

by making her think the postcards were for a travel board Steve was making.”

“You don’t know who to believe anymore, do you?”

“No, Ashley we do not. Let us have dinner, get you checked into your hotel, and let you catch up on your jet lag. I will pick you up at nine am and we will drive to Rainbow Lane.”

“Alright. I sure am hungry.”

Detective Carter and Ashley Beckman make small talk as they have dinner.

After Dinner, Detective Carter checks Ashley into her hotel, The Days Inn on Collins Avenue.

“I will pick you up at nine am.”

“I will be ready.”

Detective Carter drives to his residence and falls asleep still in his suit.

Tuesday morning June 15th, 2022, at six am.

Detective Carter’s cell phone rings.

“Detective Carter”

“Morning, sir, Team Two speaking. Alice Samberg is on the move in her Honda. She just pulled up to DRE CPA Firm at 3661 Dutton Street.”

“Stay on her. I may be charging her with murder this morning. If I do, I want Team Two to make the arrest.”

“Team Two standing by.”

Detective Carter makes himself a cup of coffee.

Team, One calls.

“Detective Carter”

“Team, One speaking. Steve Williamson just arrived at the Williamson Inn in his Volvo.”

“Stay on him. I might be charging him.”

“We copy.”

Holly, a crime lab technician calls.

“Detective Carter.”

“Morning, Detective. This is Holly in the Crime Lab. I have your DNA results.”

“Is the DNA on Alice’s straw a match for Alice Samberg’s scarf?”

“They are a match.”

“You must have worked day and night on this for me.”

“I did.”

“Before you go, can you place the DNA results on my desk?”

“Of course. I will do it now.”

“Thanks for helping me.”

“You welcome.”

“Detective Carter makes a phone call.

“State Attorney Wiggins.”

“Morning, sir. I have enough evidence at this time to charge Alice Samberg with the murder of Carol Williamson. My final piece of evidence just came in.”

“What final piece of evidence are you talking about?”

“Alice’s scarf found in Carol’s makeshift grave matches her DNA from a straw from a drink she had while being questioned.”

“I will prepare the arrest warrant. I am pulling up to my office now.”

“I will come by in thirty minutes for the warrant.”

“See you then.”

“Bye, sir.”

Detective Carter makes a call to a reporter at the Atlantic Tribune.

“Windy Maples, speaking.”

“Windy, this is Detective Carter. I am going to be at DRE CPA Firm in an hour to arrest Alice Samberg for the murder of Carol Williamson. You can have an inclusive scoop if you want.”

“I do want an exclusive scoop.”

“Come to 3661 Dutton Street in an unmarked vehicle with dark window tint. I will go inside and bring her out in handcuffs.”

“Thanks for the scoop.”

“You welcome.”

Detective Carter calls the Days Inn and asks for Ashley Beckman’s room.

“Hello?”

“Ashley, this is Detective Carter. I have to go to the State Attorney’s office to pick up a warrant. I will then come by and pick you up. We will go together to serve the arrest warrant.”

“On Steve Williamson, right?”

“I wish it were him, but I am arresting Alice Samberg. The DNA off her straw matches the DNA found on her scarf in your daughter’s makeshift grave. I am still working on arresting Steve Williamson. I just do not have any evidence at this time.”

“I will take a quick shower. What about breakfast?”

“We will pick something up from McDonald’s I guess.”

“Toot the horn when you get here.”

“I will. What room are you in?”

“Room 110.”

“Bye, see you soon.”

Detective Carter arrives at the State Attorney’s office and is directed to where State Attorney Wiggins is.

“Morning, Joe.”

“Morning Detective. That was quick. I just called you.”

“I am excited to make my first arrest for murder.”

“I forgot; you are a Rookie.”

Detective Carter laughs at that comment.

“Here is your arrest warrant.”

“Thanks, Joe for helping me on my first murder case.”

“No problem, glad to help.”

Both men shake hands.

Detective Carter drives over to the Days Inn and toots his car horn in front of room 110.

Ashley exits her room dressed in blue jeans with a pink blouse.

Detective Carter says, “I have the media standing by at the arrest site. This will make the six and ten pm newscast.”

“I guess you did this so, Steve Williamson will know he is next?”

“I will look into the camera and say, “We plan to make an additional arrest in the next 72 hours.”

Detective Carter pulls up o the DRE CPA office at 3661Dutton Street.

“Wait here. I will be back.”

As Detective Carter exits his vehicle a dark window Toyota Camry toots their horn.

Detective Carter enters the DRE Office and asks to speak with the manager.

“Can I help you, Sir?”

Detective Carter shows the middle-aged woman his Detective shield and replies, “I am here to arrest Alice Samberg for murder.”

“She went out the back and borrowed my car. She said two men were following her in a white van.”

“What is the make, model, color and license plate number of your vehicle?”

“I drive a silver Dodge Charger with Georgia tag 436GYU.”

“Did she say where she was going?”

“No, but I heard her on the telephone making airline reservations.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Maybe an hour ago max.”

“You have been very helpful, what is your name?”

“Patty Jackson.”

“Here is my Detective’s business card. If Alice returns or calls you, let me know right away, please.”

“I will, Detective.”

Detective Carter stands outside the CPA office building and makes a telephone call to his partner.

“Detective Bean.”

“This is Carter, contact the Atlanta Airport and check with the airlines, ask has an Alice Samberg bought an airline ticket in the last hour.”

“I am on it.”

Detective Carter calls the Atlanta Airport Police office.

“Officer Williams, speaking.”

“This is Detective Carter Atlanta Homicide. Check with all airlines, see if an Alice Samberg is on any outgoing flight. We lost sight of her an hour ago. She is a murder suspect. If you have her on an upcoming flight then call my station, have them get hold of me, or my partner, Detective Bean.”

“Yes, sir.”

Detective Carter calls Surveillance Team Two.

“This is Carter. Where are you?”

“In the parking lot watching Alice’s car.”

“Are you driving a white van?”

“Yes, why?”

“She slipped out the back. She borrowed her boss’s car, said a white van was following her.”

“No way.”

“Yes, she is onto your van. She may be at the airport trying to catch a flight. Go to the airport and look for her, and the car she borrowed, a silver Dodge Charger with Georgia tag number of 436GYU.”

“On the way.”

Detective Carter calls the reporter.

“This is Windy.”

“Carter here. Alice slipped out the back, she spotted my surveillance team. She borrowed her boss’s silver dodge Charger with Georgia license plate 436GYU. If we locate her, I will call you with the location. I need her arrest to be on the evening new tonight.”

“We are in your corner, Detective.”

“Good to know. I have units checking the airport now.”

“I will drive over there and check the parking lots.”

“Thanks for assisting me.”

“Our pleasure. Bye.”

Detective Carter returns to his vehicle and says to Ashley, “Alice slipped out the back an hour ago. She borrowed her boss’s silver Dodge Charger. Alice spotted our surveillance van following her. I have units now at the airport seeing if she bought a ticket out of town. Let us drive there and see if any of my units can locate my murder suspect.”

Detective Carter drives fast and with sirens blaring as he speeds to the airport.

The dispatcher calls Detective Carter on his police radio.

“Detective Carter.”

“Airport Police just called. Alice Samberg is on Delta flight thirty-four to New York. The plane is fourth in line to take off.”

Contact the tower, order the flight to return to the gate. Tell the Pilot to say the plane has to pick-up additional passengers. Do not let any of the passengers disembark. What gate will that be?”

“Standby”

“Gate 12, Delta Terminal.”

“I copy.”

Detective Carter contacts Team Two.

“Team Two.”

“Go to gate twelve, Delta Terminal and wait for me. Alice Samberg is on flight thirty-four. The plane is returning to the gate as I speak. After I arrest her, remove her luggage from the cargo hold and meet me at the Detective Bureau.”

“Yes, sir.”

Detective Carter calls the reporter.

“Windy here.”

This is Carter. Alice Samberg is on Delta flight thirty-four to New York. Her plane was fourth in line to take off. Delta has ordered their pilot to return to Gate 12, Delta terminal. Meet me there. You can film me boarding and removing the murder suspect.”

“On the way. Thanks for the tip.”

“Do not tell anyone who your source is.”

“I will keep it under my hat.”

“Good. See you soon. I am just pulling up now to the Delta Terminal.”

“We are just a few minutes away.”

Ashley says, “Can I come with you?”

“Yes, have a seat in the waiting room at Gate 12. You can watch the arrest from there. Once I walk away with Alice in cuffs, follow me to the car.”

“This is exciting.”

“Sad at the same time, right?”

“You are right, Detective.”

12

Chapter 12

Detective Carter, Team Two, and Windy the reporter, wait for the plane to taxi back to Gate 12. The Gate Agent starts to let everyone off the airplane.

At the gate, the Pilot says over the intercom, “Folks, we will reboard in twenty-minutes once the additional passengers arrive.”

Detective Carter calls Officer Miller in Saint Louis.

“Officer Miller.”

“Hi, Robin, Mark here at the Atlanta Airport. I wanted you to know we are arresting Alice Samberg for the murder of Carol Williamson. Her DNA matched the scarf label found in Carol’s makeshift grave. I will call you back later in the week. Alice is exiting flight thirty-four as we speak.”

The passengers start walking into the terminal. Detective Carter spots Alice wearing a wig and walks up to her.

“Alice Samberg you are under arrest for the murder of Carol Williamson. Turn around and place your hands behind your back.”

Alice places her hands behind her back.

Windy and her camera operator video the arrest.

“Detective Carter removes her wig. He instructs the female officer from Team Two to pat her down.

Detective Carter slowly walks her out of the airport. He asks, “Why were you escaping to New York?”

“The city I was going to did not matter. I just wanted to take the next flight out of Atlanta.”

“Standing behind me is Ashley Bateman. She flew in from Paris. Do you have anything to say to her?”

Ashley leans around Detective Carter and makes eye contact with Ashley.

“Sorry for your loss. I did not harm your daughter. Carol was my friend. Steve Williamson is framing me.”

Ashley says in a soft voice, “I believe you; I believe you.”

Detective Carter places Alice in the waiting Police prison van.

Detective Carter says to Alice, “Running from the law makes you look guilty.”

Windy, the reporter approaches Detective Carter and asks, “Can I have a minute of your time?”

“Make it fast. I need to interview Ashley Samberg down at the police station.”

“Will there be any other persons of interest charged with Carol’s murder?”

“We are working on gathering evidence to charge one more person.”

“What happens now to Alice Samberg?”

“She will go in front of a Judge. The State will ask for no bond, that Alice Samberg is a flight risk.”

Detective Carter waves off any further questions. He enters his unmarked police vehicle and departs the Atlanta Airport.

Ellen Johnson rings Steve’s doorbell.

Steve is surprised to see Ellen standing there.

“He lets Ellen in and says, “This is a surprise. What time is it?”

“Ellen says. “It is three pm. Time to kiss me.”

Steve laughs at her comment.

“I was about to take a dip in the pool, care to join me?”

“I would love to.”

“I will get one of Carol’s swimsuits for you. Go to my master bathroom. I will bring the swimsuit there. Then join me at the pool.”

Ellen says, “Ok.”

Team, One calls Detective Carter.

“Detective Carter.”

“Team, One here. A female named Ellen Johnson just went into Steve Williamson’s residence.

“Thanks for the update. We arrested Alice Samberg at the Atlanta Airport.”

“What about the man we are watching?”

“I am working on gathering evidence. You did not find a shovel, or potting soil at his residence, in his vehicles, or his place of business, did you?”

“No, it was all clean, too clean if you know what I mean.”

“I do. Stay on him. Thanks.”

Steve and Ellen swim for thirty minutes. They then go inside and undress. They make love, then lay in bed talking and flipping television channels.

Steve stops at a channel that has breaking news flashing on the screen.

The female reporter says, “Detective Carter caught up with his murder suspect fleeing for New York on Delta flight thirty-four. He charged her

with first degree murder of Carol Williamson. I asked Detective Carter if there would be any more arrest in the murder of Carol Williamson. He says, No. Not at this time.”

Steve kisses Ellen and says, “Alice and Carol were lovers. She killed my wife when Carol wanted to break off their relationship.”

The reporter on the television says, “Detective Carter asked the State Attorney for no bond for Alice Samberg. He says Alice is a flight risk. This is Windy Maples reporting for WXYZ.”

Steve turns off the television and says, “Ellen, be my girlfriend.”

“I would love to be your girlfriend, but you have to promise to be faithful to only me. Detective Carter told me you have multiple lovers.”

Steve looks into Ellen’s eyes and says, “I had multiple lovers.”

“I like the word, had,” says Ellen with a smile on her face.

Steve looks into Ellen’s eyes and lies, “I promise to be faithful and true.”

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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James resides In Gulfport, Mississippi.

James was a military Police Officer for three years, a Police Officer In Miami Beach, Florida for 12 years, and has been a private Investigator since 1986.

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