

## THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> PRECINCT

### THE DOPPELGANGER

#### PART 2

##### A WEEK LATER NEAL'S APARTMENT AT 4:00 A.M.:

*At first blush Neal thought he was dreaming. Then he thought it was coming from a neighbor's apartment and he was just about to go into cop mode and go find the offending neighbor, when he realized that someone or a lot of someone's was banging on his own front door.*

*He turns on the light in his bedroom as he rubs his eyes. Whoever it was, was still banging on his front door threatening to tear it off its hinges. Neal comes into the living room turning on a light making his way to the front door.*

*"Alright already!! Holy fucking shit!! Stop it! I have neighbors you know!"*

*The door shakes as Neal turns the deadbolt and takes off the night chain and the door is barely open a crack when three people rush him and they push him back up against the wall of the living room. His chest up against the wall as his arms are held behind him.*

*"Hey! Who in the hell are you?! What's going on?" Neal replies.*

*"You guys spread out!! Look everywhere! LAPD!!" This guy whoever he is says to Neal as he shows him a badge. We want your partner! Where is he?"*

*"Hank?" Neal replies when he recognizes the voice. "What are you doing here?! Let me go!!" Neal replies as he struggles. "He isn't here! It's four o'clock in the morning I don't know where he is!!! But I know where he isn't and it isn't here!!"*

*Hank turns him around as they stand nose to nose. "He's not at his apartment Neal! Some things never change and you two are always together! Always!"*

*Neal pushes him back. "Touch me again and I swear to god I'll deck you!! Contrary to popular belief and whatever evil shit goes on in that head of yours I don't sleep with him!!"*

*"I doubt that!" Hank replies.*

*Just then the other two come back into the living room. "Nothing. He's not here."*

***"No shit!" Neal yells. "I told you that!!"***

***"Get dressed you're coming with us." Hank replies.***

***Neal laughs. "Screw you! I'm not going anywhere with you until you tell me what's going on!"***

***"Jerry." Hanks motions to Jerry and he walks over and he grabs Neal by his arm. "Come on Neal let's go."***

***"Hey let me go! Hank!"***

***"Help him to get dress if you have to and make sure he stays away from the phone."***

### **THE CAPTAIN'S OFFICE:**

***Neal feels like he's going to have a stroke as he looks at everyone. "What did you just say?"***

***"I said we have a warrant for his arrest." Hank replies.***

***Neal laughs at this. "A warrant? You guys have to be out of your mind? A warrant for what?"***

***"A week ago there was an armed robbery at a liquor store...."***

***"And you morons think Steve held up a liquor store?" Neal replies.***

***"He was identified." Hank replies.***

***"By who?" Neal asks.***

***"The owner's son." Hank replies.***

***Neal points at him. "You and I both know Hank that eyewitnesses account aren't reliable. Especially in that situation because all they see is the gun!"***

***"He identified him from the picture that was in the newspaper." Hank replies.***

***Neal slams his hand down on the table. "I told the Captain and I told I.A. and now I'm telling you! There's a loose wing nut out there running around the city pretending to be Steve! He looks so much like him he's causing trouble. Steve wouldn't, couldn't hold up a liquor store!!"***

***"You're his partner you're bias." Hank replies as he points his finger at him.***

***Neal pushes his finger out of the way. "If there was any kind of concrete proof that Steve had done this I..." Neal points to himself as he leans into Hank. "...Would hunt him down myself and bring him in!"***

***"You forgot Neal I used to work here and I know how you guys are! Your close! Too close for my liking! You two protect each other! You both are so caught up with each other that you can't see past each other!!"***

***Then Neal grabs him by the front of his jacket and Neal pulls Hank to him which causes the Captain and one of the other LAPD detectives to run over to them.***

***"Neal! Let him go!!" The Captain replies.***

***"You little piss ant! You're wrong about Steve!" Neal replies as he lets him go.***

***"Where's this other guy you say is impersonating him?" Hank asks.***

***Neal stands there with one hand on his head the other on his hip as he looks at the floor. "I...I don't know. I've been trying to find him."***

***Just then the phone rings and the Captain answers it.***

***"It's for you." The Captain replies as he holds the receiver out to Hank who takes it.***

***"Hello? Yeah. When did that happen? Okay. What did the D.A. say? Okay. Thanks for letting me know." Hank hangs up the phone.***

***"I need you to page Steve."***

***By now Neal has found his way to a chair his head resting in his hands as he looks at the floor and after Hank makes that request Neal shakes his head back and forth.***

***Neal looks up at him his eyes dark. "Page him yourself." Neal replies slowly.***

***"I need for him to come to the Precinct."***

***Neal stands up and he crosses the room lessening the distance between them.***

***"There is no one in this room, including the Captain and including I.A. and especially not you Hank who can get me to page Steve and have him come into this set-up! I won't do it!"***

***"Neal we need to sort this out. I know Steve didn't do this either but a B.O.L.O has been issued for him. He might get hurt...." The Captain replies.***

***"In all due respects Captain you can write me up, suspend me, take my badge, hell take my pension but I won't page him!"***

***"It's changed." Hank replies.***

***"What do you mean it's changed?" Neal asks.***

***"It's now Felony Murder."***

***An audible gasp was heard from the Captain. "What?"***

*"What happened?" Neal asks.*

*"The owner of the liquor store is dead. He died about an hour ago."*

*"Was he shot?" Neal asks.*

*"No. He had a bad heart. Steve fired a round off into the floor to get his son to open the safe. The shock was too much. He had a heart attack and he's been in a coma. You do know what Felony Murder is, don't you?"*

*"Yes I'm a cop remember! Any death which occurs during the commission of a felony is first degree murder. Like robbing a liquor store."*

*Then Neal glances up. Looking over Hank's shoulder he sees the other two LAPD detectives looking out into the squad room. Then he notices Hank also looking. Actually they look like hunting dogs on point when they spot their prey. Then Neal turns his head to see what they are looking at.*

*It's Steve.*

*He had come into the squad room and now he was standing at the desk putting the strap of his bag over the chair. Steve looks around the squad room then he looks at the Captain's office. Then he sees Neal.*

*In the office Neal's eyes met Steve's then he bolts for the door to the office. Hank grabs Neal trying to stop him but Neal drags Hank the distance to the door and when Neal gets his hand on the door knob he flings the door open.*

*"Steve! Run!"*

*Hank takes Neal to the floor as Steve bolts for the doors to the squad room and behind Neal in the office the other two LAPD Detectives jump over them in their haste to get out of the office. Neal in a desperate attempt to stop them he grabs ahold of one of the detectives legs. But that only serves to have the detective kick him in the face and he can only watch as he runs after Steve.*

*Hank and Neal struggle for a few more minutes until the Captain breaks them up.*

*"Stop it!" The Captain yells at them. "Stop it the both of you!"*

*The Captain grabs Hank and pulls him to his feet then Neal gets up.*

*"I hope he gets away!" Then Neal balls up his fist and he hits Hank square in the face.*

*"NEAL!!"*

*At the sound of his name Neal runs out of the office thru the squad room and he hits the double doors running that go out to the hall.*

**“NEAL!!”**

*Neal makes it out into the hall, skidding to a stop just in time to see one of the LAPD detectives dragging a handcuffed Steve down the hall. Steve fights against him when he sees Neal.*

**“Neal! What’s going on! They say they have a warrant!! Neal! Stop them!”**

**“Steve! I can’t! Where are you going with him?”** Neal replies as he runs further up the hall in their direction.

**“For now we’re going to put him in your holding cell.”** The detective replies as he drags Steve along beside him.

**“Neal!!”** Steve yells again.

**“I want him arrested!!”** Neal looks to see Hank standing there holding a bloodied handkerchief up to his nose.

**“The holding cells? No! You can’t put him down there!! Captain!! They can’t put Steve down there!! If there are other prisoners down there....Steve!”**

**“NEAL!! Help me!!”** Steve yells as he continues to fight against him. **“Don’t touch me!! Let me go!!”**

*The detective continues to drag Steve down the hall as Neal runs after them. As they get to the elevator Neal is just a few feet away...the detective punches the button on the elevator and the door opens....the detective with a strong grip on Steve’s arm drags him into the elevator....Neal is now just an arm length away. The detective now in the elevator with Steve punches the button for the basement....Neal reaches his hand out...*

**“NE....”** Steve words are cut off as the doors to the elevator close and Neal runs into them. Resting his head against the cool metal of the door he hits the elevator door with his hand.

**“Steve! Steve!”**

### **AN HOUR AND HALF LATER:**

*Steve sits on the bench in the holding cell with his knees up to his chest as he rocks back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and...*

**“STEVE!”**

*At the sound of Neal’s voice Steve jumps off of the bench and he runs over to the corner of the cell.*

*"Neal! Oh my god look at your eye!" Steve replies as he reaches out between the bars to touch Neal's face. "Did Hank do that to you? That was Hank wasn't it?"*

*Neal holds tight to the bars as Steve looks at his eye.*

*"Yes that was Hank and no he didn't do this to me. It was Jerry, one of the other detectives. I was trying to stop him, he kicked me in the face."*

*Steve, holding onto the bars rests his head against them as he slides down to the floor of the cell as Neal on the outside does the same thing.*

*"Neal tell me what's going on. He said there was a warrant out for my arrest in L.A"*

*Neal looks at him. "They think you robbed a liquor store Steve."*

*Steve rubs his eyes.*

*"I tried to tell Hank that it wasn't you. I tried to tell him that some freaky dipshit was running around the city...."*

*"Did anybody get hurt?" Steve interrupts him.*

*Neal doesn't answer he just looks at the floor.*

*Steve exhales as he closes his eyes. "Felony murder."*

*"The guy fired into the floor to get his point across. The owner had a bad heart. They managed to pry the bullet out of the floor."*

*"So now you're going to tell me that the slug from the floor matches my Colt." Steve replies as he rests his forehead against the bars.*

*"I told Hank, and he knows this already, your gun is not police issued! Anybody, anywhere can buy that same gun! It's not unique to the job! Oh god, I'm so sick to my stomach right now." Neal replies.*

*"Me too." Steve replies.*

*"Something you ate?" They both say at the same time then they both smile and laugh.*

*"No, it's because you're in jail." Neal replies then Steve replies at the same time. "No, it's because I'm in jail." Once again they both laugh and smile.*

*"Where were you?" Neal asks.*

*"Which time?"*

*"Let's start with last night."*

*"I was at Monica's place."*

*"And Friday two weeks ago?" Neal asks.*

*"Neal I've been lying to you." Steve replies.*

*"About what exactly?"*

*Steve takes a deep breath. "I have been taking classes three nights a week. That's where I've been. In class."*

*Neal sits up. "Classes for what."*

*"To be smart like you." Steve replies and Neal looks at him.*

*"What! Come on you're smart already!"*

*"No I'm street smart. Not so much book smart and I'm tired of being the cute one! The college has night classes. I've been taking English, History stuff like that. I'm trying to better myself. How do you think I came up with the word doppelganger?"*

*Neal laughs. "Why didn't you tell me you goofball?"*

*"I wanted to surprise you. Hey Neal look what I done, sort of thing. It seems silly now. I guess here lately everybody wants to be somebody else. Remember when I told you that I was on a date with Amy?"*

*Neal nods his head.*

*"Amy's the teacher."*

*Neal reaches into the cell and he puts his hand on Steve's arm. "We have at least one thing in our favor."*

*"And that is what?"*

*"The Captain somehow managed to convince Hank and his boys to give me time. Time to find this guy. They got you right where they want you. They made us a deal. They gave me the weekend. If the weekend comes and goes without me finding your doppelganger then come Monday they take you to Los Angeles."*

*"That means my ass will sit here in this jail all weekend. And you know what happens on Fridays. It's cage cleaning day at the zoo. You know on Friday nights they send out the paddy wagon. They round up all the drunk and disorderly, all the public intoxications. And they bring them here!"*

*"I have to find that guy! Damn it I just don't know where to start or even how to get there."*

*"The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see. Winston Churchill said that. I learned that in school." Steve replies.*

*"Which means what?"*

***"It means you have to remember where you heard 'Neal's good for it' the first time. I know. Go get another massage. You're too tense. You're no good to me tense."***

***Neal laughs. "Are you daft? Me go and get a massage now? With all of this going on and you in here?"***

***"You need to relax. You think a lot better when you're relaxed. You're so tense your shoulders are up to your ears."***

***Neal rubs his neck. "I've had a bad morning. First, at four o'clock this morning those three goons from the LAPD were banging on my door! I wouldn't be a bit surprised if my landlord reprimands me for that. I had to get dressed in front of one of them! Then they hauled my ass down here, they wanted me to page you but I refused! Then I got into a fight, probably broke Hank's nose and then I took a size 13 shoe to my face! My face! Look!" Neal replies as he points. "If that doesn't say love then I don't know what does! So yes I am tense!"***

***"The fact that you're going thru a dry spell has nothing whatsoever to do with it? Does it?" Steve asks.***

***"Okay! Well maybe a little!"***

***"Neal all men go thru dry spells you know. Even me." Steve replies.***

***"You!!" Neal laughs. "You've got to be kidding!!"***

***"No I'm not. So get a massage. Let Misty put those hot rocks on your back. Relax. Let your mind wander."***

***Neal rests his head against the bars of the cell. "I can't believe this stuff is happening!"***

***"You know what I can't believe?" Steve asks.***

***"What?"***

***"That we're both sitting on this dirty, filthy, disgusting floor!! I mean look at it! You know they don't clean down here! There's no telling what's on this floor! Right now we could be catching syphilis or gonorrhea! And if I'm going to catch them I want to have some fun doing it! If you know what I mean!" Steve replies as he wriggles his eyebrows up and down.***

***Neal laughs. "Has anybody ever told you that you're weird?"***

***"Yeah but I don't mind when you do it." Steve replies as he puts his hand on top of Neal's head. "So go. While I'm in here I might as well go to sleep." Steve yawns. "I didn't get a lot of sleep last night at Monica's."***

***"Yeah go ahead and rub it in." Neal replies.***

***Steve laughs as he pats Neal on the head. "Go ahead partner. You need to find this guy and if getting a massage is going to help, then go do it."***

*"Alright. I will say you seem awful calm." Neal replies.*

*Steve shrugs. "Because I'm innocent. I know that wasn't me robbing that liquor store. What do they say? The innocent laugh and the guilty cry? Or is it the other way around? I don't know. Go Neal. Go find this guy." Steve replies.*

*Neal slips his arm thru the bars and he puts it around Steve's shoulders. "I hate to leave you here." Neal replies as he rests his forehead on the bar of the cell.*

*"Come on Neal don't get all mushy on me." Steve replies as he puts his hand on Neal's arm his head moving closer to the bars. "I know you do and I hate the fact that you have to leave me here too. I trust you. I trust you're do the right thing. Be careful that's all I ask."*

*Neal remove his arm from between the bars then he stands up then he helps Steve to his feet.*

*"I'll see you later okay?" Neal replies.*

*"You better."*

*Neal takes a few steps away from the bars then he looks back. Steve is holding tight onto the bars his hair messed up from the morning's activities his normally, happy bright eyes now dull and tired.*

*"I..."*

*"I know I do too." Steve replies.*

*Then Neal turns and walks away.*

### **AN HOUR AND HALF LATER:**

*Neal had an epiphany. Another moment when that old light bulb went off over his head. He had completely and utterly gave himself over to the massage. He floated and drifted back in time then suddenly he had remembered. His eyes flew open and he knew he had jumped a foot which startled Misty. Steve would have been happy to know that he had been right. He had the revelation now it was time to set it into motion.*

*Neal rolled up to Steve's apartment. Remembering the thing that he was looking for was at Steve's place. Steve had borrow them. Neal parked his car and using his key he goes into Steve's apartment. He makes a right turn into the living room looking for them and when he doesn't find them there, he heads for the stairs.*

*Rounding the corner to the stairs the hair on the back of his neck stands up. Cop mode engaged. He draws his gun as he looks up. Standing there at the top of the stairs, at the*

*entrance of the bedroom, was a mirror image. A somewhat warped mirror. It was Steve. But then again it wasn't. Because the real Steve was back at the Precinct. In jail.*

*Neal stands at the bottom of the stairs looking up. His eyes wide. A surprised look on his face. One foot on the bottom stair the other on the handrail. It was the longest minute of Neal's life as they both look at each other.*

*This Steve had the long hair, wearing a blue jean jacket, jeans, a faded t-shirt. Tennis shoes. This doppelganger was wearing Steve's clothes. A lopsided smile covered his face as his head tilted to one side.*

*By now the apartment surrounding them had ceased to exist as their world became this small, piece of real estate. This staircase. The only sound for miles was the sound of their breathing. That is until....*

*"What's wrong Neal? Old buddy. You look like you have seen a ghost."*

*By now it was high noon. The bright California sun high up in the sky. Every part of Steve's apartment was lit up from the sun even the window in the bedroom. Which was behind this Steve imposter and it had sunlight streaming thru it. All was bright and shiny. Except this staircase. This staircase was dim, grayish. Neal knew above in the ceiling was a light and he also knew....it didn't work.*

*Neal was stunned. His hand that held the gun seem to stop functioning. Neal was transfixed but when he came to, out of the corner of his eye, he saw movement. The movement was the Colt automatic in the doppelganger's hand as he raised it and fired.*

*Neal's reflexes were in overdrive as he backed up and hid himself around the corner. The bullet lodged itself in the front door and even before the smoke cleared Neal ran up the stairs after him. The only place to go was the bedroom and once there the doppelganger made for the bedroom window but before he got there he turned and fired one more time. This time the bullet shattered a lamp on the bedside table but it created the desired effect. It gave him time to get away.*

*This time Neal hit the floor and he got up just in time to see the back end of him going out the bedroom window. When Neal got to the window he saw him shimmy down the palm tree that was there. Neal broke and ran thru the bedroom, flying down the stairs taking them two at a time and once in the living room he jumped over the sofa. He fumbled with the sliding glass door finally unlocking it and by the time he had flung it open, and by the time he vaulted over the patio railing, the doppelganger was gone.*

*Neal ran out to the beach and he turned and looked in the direction that he thought he might have gone in. Pursuit was futile. Neal then, his energy gone, sunk down to the sand on his knees.*

**TWO HOURS LATER BACK AT THE HOLDING CELL:**

*"What do you mean you lost him?" Steve replies as he stands in the corner of the cell.*

*"I lost him! Gone! Flew the coop! Took a hike! Took a long walk off a short pier! I lost him!"*

*"How did that happen?" Steve asks.*

*"He went out the bedroom window!"*

*"How did he get in? Didn't you say the front door was locked?" Steve replies.*

*"Yes Steve the front door was locked but when you leave your bedroom window open...."*

*"My bedroom window is on the second floor and I like to air the place out!"*

*"There is a palm tree there Steve!"*

*"Well I didn't think anybody would be stupid enough to climb up it to get into my apartment!"*

*"Steve you have used that same palm tree before to climb into your window to get into your apartment!"*

*"Well so! That's me! It's my apartment Neal!"*

*Neal rubs his eyes. "Besides I was too busy dodging bullets...."*

*Steve holds tighter to the bars. "You had a shootout in my apartment?"*

*Neal drops his arms. "No! There was no shootout! He shot at me twice! I didn't even get a chance to return fire! You should be grateful he's a bad shot otherwise I could be dead right about now!"*

*"Neal was there....?" Steve asks slowly.*

*Neal looks sideways at him. "Was there any....what?"*

*"You know...."*

*"Steve, I'm sorry I'll buy you another one."*

*Steve eyes widen. "Another what? Oh wait! You were in my bedroom and in my bedroom is the....OH NO!"*

*"Steve I'm sorry...."*

*"Not the lamp! You shot the lamp that you gave me as a house warming gift when I moved into that apartment!?"*

***“No I didn’t shoot it! It was your doppelganger that shot it! I’m sorry I’ll buy you another lamp.”***

***“I was really attached to that lamp!”***

***Neal was just about to spout a witty comeback when they were interrupted by two men on the opposite side of the room talking loudly.***

***Neal leans his head closer to the bars. “What are they bitching about?” Neal asks.***

***“The same thing everybody bitches about when they are in jail! Their bitching about being in jail! And their bitching about the cops that brought them here.”***

***They were getting louder by the minute that was until Neal put his fingers in his mouth and blew a very loud shrill whistle which causes Steve to cover his ears.***

***“Hey! Can the chatter we’re trying to have a conversation over here!!” Neal yells at them.***

***“Neal!” Steve replies.***

***“Mind your own damn business!!” One of them yell back at Neal.***

***“Screw you! Why don’t you come out here and say that! Oh! That’s right you can’t because you’re in Jail!!” Neal laughs.***

***“Neal! What are you doing?” Steve replies as he looks over at them.***

***“And furthermore my buddy over here told me you two are bitching like two old women!!” Neal replies as he points at them.***

***Then one of the guys comes closer to Steve. “Oh yeah!”***

***Steve laughs. “No! I didn’t say that!! Neal”***

***“Hey Jailer we need some help down here!!” Neal yells.***

### **TEN MINUTES LATER:**

***“You know you could have given me some advance warning you were going to do that!” Steve replies.***

***“It seemed like a good idea at the time. I needed to get you by yourself so we could talk.” Neal replies.***

***“Neal we both know that aren’t any good ideas just convenient ones. This is the cell where they stash the looney birds.” Steve makes a circular motion next to his head with his finger.***

***"It was the only one that was available. Steve I have to tell you something."***

***"What?"***

***"I found your blue jean jacket." Neal replies.***

***"Oh good! Where?" Steve asks.***

***Neal scratches his head. "You other half was wearing it." Neal replies sheepishly.***

***"What?!"***

***"As a matter of fact he was wearing....all your clothes." Neal replies as he grimaces.***

***"WHAT!"***

***"Steve calm down."***

***"CALM DOWN! Calm down? There's a guy out there who looks likes me, whose slipped his lease and he's running around loose in the neighborhood, wearing my clothes! He's been in my apartment going thru my stuff! My stuff Neal! You know how I hate that! A stranger touching my things! He probably found my stash of Playboy magazines...."***

***"Wait you have a stash of Playboys....?"***

***"NEAL!!"***

***"Sorry. There's something else." Neal replies.***

***"What now?"***

***"He left dishes in the sink." Neal replies as he closes his eyes.***

***"He's wearing MY clothes as he's raiding MY refrigerator?! What's wrong with this guy!! I don't know what's worse, he's wearing MY clothes or he doesn't do the dishes?!" Steve replies as he runs his hands thru his hair. "I feel so dirty and violated."***

***"What's that noise?" Neal asks.***

***"That was my stomach growling." Steve replies.***

***"WHAT?! They haven't feed you? You've been in here practically all day!! Don't they know you're a delicate flower and you have to eat?"***

***This causes Steve to laugh.***

***"I knew that would get you." Neal replies as he smiles.***

***"No Neal they don't know!"***

***"I'm going to go the cafeteria and get us something to eat then I'll come back here and go over what we need to do."***

*"I'm hungry and all of that but I really don't want to sit on that dirty, nasty floor and eat."*

*"You aren't going to because I'm going to be in there while we eat sitting on that bench."  
Neal replies as he points.*

*"They won't let you do that."*

*"Watch me." Neal replies seriously.*

### **FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER:**

*"Do you want some more French fries? Steve asks.*

*"Yeah." Neal replies as he takes a few. "Didn't you say that you went to class three days a week?"*

*"Yeah. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Sometimes if we got out of class early a few of us went to the diner. Sometimes on Fridays I went to the study group in the library."*

*"Do you have a class schedule?" Neal asks.*

*"Yeah it's on my desk at the apartment." Steve replies as he eats another French fry.*

*"No it isn't." Neal replies.*

*"Oh well then it's on the...."*

*"No it's wasn't on the refrigerator either." Neal replies.*

*"So you're saying he took more than my clothes?"*

*"That's how he knew where you were going to be! He couldn't put on his Steve Super Suit and walk around and do things when we were together. It was when we were apart...."*

*"He wanted you to think it was....me? But why?"*

*"I don't know. Maybe he wanted us separated. Wanted us not be friends anymore. Twist it just to see how far I would jump. He wanted me to doubt you."*

*"It's not the first time. You know Hank was the one who started all those rumors about us. He was pushing hard for I.A. to investigate us. Neal..." Steve puts his hand on Neal's arm. "I didn't understand then and I still don't understand it now."*

*"He never had a partner he was close to. Like us. He was jealous. Which leads me to here."  
Neal reaches for the Junior High School Annual he finally found in Steve's apartment and he holds it on his lap.*

*"Do you remember elementary school?" Neal asks.*

*"Vaguely. I remember we were always together. In class, recess, lunch." Steve smiles at the memory. "The teacher even tried to separate us once, I remember pitching a royal fit. The other kids thought we were weird."*

*"I remember Steve. I remember where I heard it."*

*Steve moves closer to him on the bench. Their shoulders touching.*

*"Where."*

*"Fifth grade. You were out that day I think. I was standing in the lunch line and I didn't have enough money to get a carton of milk. There was this kid next to me. Every time I saw him he reminded me of you."*

*"He looked that much like me?" Steve replies.*

*"There was a resemblance. I had forgotten all of that. That is until all this strange shit started to happen. Anyway, I was short a quarter for a carton of milk. He gave me a quarter. I told him that my mother wouldn't like me taking money but I did want a carton of milk. I told him I would bring him a quarter tomorrow. And he told me not worry, he knew I was good for it." Neal turns his head and he looks at Steve.*

*"A fifth grade kid said that to you?" Steve replies.*

*"Yeah. At that time for me I had never heard that phrase before. I didn't even know really what it meant. I was in fifth grade! My mother explained it to me. He must've heard it from an adult I guess."*

*"So now that you remembered that how do we find out who this cat is?" Steve replies.*

*Neal holds up the Junior High Annual. "That's why I have this." Neal finds the page that he marked and he opens the Annual to that page and Neal points to the picture.*

*"Hey!" Steve laughs. "Look how adorable I was!" Steve replies as he points to the picture.*

*Neal pushes him with his shoulder. "You're still adorable but Steve that isn't you."*

*"What do you mean? Of course that's me! Who else would it be?"*

*"This is Billy Mitchell and this is you." Neal shows the picture on another page he had marked.*

*"Wow!!" Steve takes the book from him as he looks at the picture.*

*"Maybe there was something your mother didn't tell you Steve."*

*"Maybe! Wow! That certainly is creepy. How come I don't remember seeing him?"*

**Neal shrugs. "I don't know. Maybe kids don't realize when there is a double running around. Maybe as kids we didn't notice. I'm having records do a background check on Billy there. Wants and Warrants. The whole shebang. You know Steve there was something I never told you."**

**"It sounds serious. What is it?"**

**"That summer you moved away to Lemoore I was devastated. I had lost my best friend. I was inconsolable. My mother was so worried about me, she came this close...." Neal holds up his two fingers. "...To putting me away somewhere. I moped around for months. For a whole year I was a loner. I didn't make any new friends. Nothing. I was miserable!! I was never as close to anyone else as I was to you."**

**Steve smiles. "A year after we moved I was going to run away from home."**

**"Where were you going to go?" Neal asks.**

**"Back to you of course. I packed everything in a suitcase and I walked out of town and I started to hitchhike. I was standing on the side of the road with my thumb out."**

**"Did somebody stop and pick you up?" Neal asks.**

**"Yeah my mother!"**

**"Oh." Neal laughs.**

**"My mother. God rest her soul. She understood. She always seem to understand. I loved it when we got to visit each other."**

**"I did too it was just hard to see you leave again." Neal rubs his face. "God that was a lifetime ago."**

**"Then why does it seem like it was just yesterday?" Steve replies.**

**They are both quiet for a moment thinking.**

**"Were you really going to give up your pension....for me?" Steve asks quietly.**

**"Yeah I was. I wasn't going to betray you for something I know you didn't do. Did the Captain tell you that?"**

**"Yeah he came to see me."**

**Neal looks at his watch. "Do you have another copy of your class schedule anywhere else?"**

**"Yeah I do it's in my wallet. Do you want it?"**

**"Yeah I'm going to go back and talk to everybody who saw your doppelganger. And see if the days match. When you went to class how do they know that you were there?"**

*"Oh there's a sign in sheet."*

*"Okay I'm going to go to the College and see if I can get copies of that sign in sheet for the Friday night that the liquor store was robbed then I'm going to shove them down Hank's throat. Here write down the names of the people in your study group I'm going to see if I can get witness statements from them. Just more proof that you were there that Friday."*

*Steve writes down the names then he hands the notepad back to Neal.*

*"You know I could always...."*

*Steve shakes his head. "No."*

*"You don't belong in here." Neal replies.*

*"I know I don't but you can't break me out. If you do I'll be a fugitive and you'll be the fugitive's helper. I can't have you risk everything that you have worked so hard for. So no. It'll just make things worse." Steve replies as he stands up.*

*"Okay. I guess I better go I have things to do. I'll leave the Annual for you to look at." Neal replies as he stands up collecting the trash from their lunch. Steve grabs his arm.*

*"Be careful."*

*"I will. Remember he's a bad shot." Neal replies.*

*"But you're not." Steve replies as he looks Neal in the eyes. "You're not."*

*Neal just looks at him and he nods his understanding.*

*"I'll see you later."*

*"You better." Steve replies as he smiles.*

*"Hey Jailer I'm ready to go." Neal replies.*

*The watch as the Jailer comes down the hall and he unlocks the cell door then he lets Neal out then he locks it back.*

*"I..." Neal replies as he stops.*

*"I know you do I do too."*

*Neal smiles at him then he walks off down the hall and he feels better just knowing it.*

**TO BE CONTINUED....**

