

THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9TH PRECINCT

MOONLIGHTING

PART 3

THE CAPTAIN'S OFFICE THE NEXT DAY:

"Neal is this right?" The Captain asks as he looks at the report.

"Yes sir I'm afraid so. He ran it at least three times to make sure it was right."

"Steve....?"

"He's going to be okay." Neal replies.

"It says here that each stick of gum contained different amounts. They aren't consistence."

"No sir. You see the way Doctor Turbin explained it to me is the gum was just used as a convenient transport system. It wasn't meant for human consumption. So each stick of gum would have different amounts. Some less and in Steve's case he got one that had more. You see, gum isn't hard to make. You just need gum base and a few other ingredients' and instead of using sugar...."

"They used heroin?" The Captain replies.

"Yeah. Heroin. And once it got to where it was going they would just extract the heroin. Actually, I hate to admit it but it is in genius. I mean, if they were stopped and their load was checked out, it would look like chewing gum. Because essentially that is what it is, chewing gum. It just has a kick to it. Chewing gum, in and above itself, is not against the law. It's no telling how long they have been doing this."

"How does Ivan fit into this?" The Captain asks.

Neal scratches his head. "Somehow Ivan figured out what he was hauling. I'm not sure how exactly. But he did. Maybe the same way Steve did. Doctor Turbin told me that Ivan complained to him about not feeling well, and Ivan thought the gum was the problem. So maybe Ivan got a stick of gum that had a small amount in it. But when he got that report back he saw dollar signs. A way to make enough

money to bring his family here. That report was his meal ticket. He was looking for a buyer and that report was his proof. Ivan wasn't stupid. He knew an opportunity when he saw it. Trouble was the people he took it from, wanted it back. But we don't know who that is and we don't know who he was planning on selling it to. So..." Neal shrugs.

Before the Captain can answer the phone rings at his desk. "Captain Reynolds. Yes he's here." The Captain replies as he looks over at Neal then he hands the phone to him. "It's dispatch."

Neal takes the phone from him. "Yeah? Really? Give me that address again." Neal writes down the address. "Has Sam been notified? Okay. Yeah. It'll take me about twenty or so minutes to get there. Yeah go ahead and show me 10-8 from here. Yeah. Thanks." Neal hangs up the phone.

"This address looks familiar. Neal, don't tell me?" The Captain replies as he looks at him.

"Yeah it is. And whoever killed Ivan...just upped the ante." Neal replies.

TIDWELL'S ROOMING HOUSE:

"Sam." Neal replies as he comes into the room as the officer holds the crime scene tape up for him.

"Detective." Sam replies as he looks up at him as Neal squats down next to him and the body Sam is examining. "A bullet to the back of the head." Sam replies as he points.

"How long?" Neal asks.

"Well since they left the window open and its November, he's out of rigor, early Saturday morning I'll say. He shows signs of being choked. He put up a struggle. And I think soon after that he was tortured. See his hand." Sam holds it up and shows it to him.

"Jesus. They broke his knuckles?"

Sam nods as he gently puts the hand back down. "He didn't go out easy."

"They were looking for something. He gave it up and then they took him out."

Sam looks around. "Not before they ransacked the place."

"No it looked like this before." Neal replies.

"You knew him Neal?" Sam asks.

"Yeah. Roger Tidwell. He owned this rooming house."

"Friend of yours..." Sam asks.

"Not exactly."

"What are you thinking?" Sam asks.

"I'm thinking when you pull that slug out of his head send it to ballistics I want to see if it matches the one in our first victim, Ivan."

"You think these two are connected?" Sam asks him.

"I do Sam I do."

"Hey Detective come here."

Neal stands up and he walks over to the crime scene officer who is standing in the doorway of the office. "Sam, make sure Phil gets a lot of pictures. What you got?" Neal asks.

"Well I'm not sure."

Neal follows him into the office and over to a bookcase. It's not the bookcase itself that's interesting but what is scattered around it. Which the officer points out to Neal then he points to the top shelf of the bookcase. It's not so much what's up there now but what had been up there is what Neal finds interesting.

"What do you think it was?" The officer asks him.

Neal looks at the top shelf his hands on his hips. "It was a box. A good size box too. See the space it left." Neal replies as he points.

"Uh huh. Is this what I think it is?" The officer asks Neal as he gestures to the items on the floor.

"What do you think it is?" Neal asks.

"It looks like sticks of chewing gum. A lot of chewing gum." The officer replies.

"Your right. It's chewing gum. Make sure Phil gets pictures of this and the top of the bookcase. Also bag all of this up."

"Chewing gum?"

"Yes officer chewing gum. And if you find any more like this, anywhere, bag it."

"Yes Sergeant. You're the detective." The officer replies.

"Oh by the way do you know who found the body?" Neal asks.

Neal went out to the patrol car to talk to the person who had found Roger's body. He was sitting in the back seat with the door open still trying to regain his composure.

"Mr. Jackson?" Neal asked as he walked up to him. "I'm Detective Schon with...."

"I know who you are. I was Roger's lawyer."

"Oh I see. When did you talk to him last?" Neal asks.

"I talked to him Friday on the phone. We had an appointment for yesterday, Monday. When he didn't show I tried calling him on the phone. No answer. So I came by here. He didn't answer the door. I knew he was here I saw his car. So I went around to the window in the back and I found him."

"Are you going to be okay?" Neal asks him.

He nods his head and he rubs his eyes. "I guess so. I've never seen anything like that before. It was a shock."

"It can be. Does he have any family?" Neal asks.

"No he was a bachelor. His parents are gone." Both of them look to see Sam and two attendants wheel a sheet covered body on an gurney out to the wagon and slid it in. "When can I...?"

"Give me your contact information and when the investigation is finished we're have our Coroner give you a call."

He nods his head. "He didn't have a lot of friends. This rooming house kept him busy. I met him 15 years ago when he bought this rooming house. He was rough around the edges and he knew some shady people." He looks up at Neal. "He would tell me things, dealings he had with people. Not nice people mind you. And he also knew of that pesky little thing called 'Lawyer Client Privilege' he would tell me things that he knew I had to keep to myself."

"Do you know anything about what he was into lately?" Neal asks.

He shakes his head. "No. But with Roger you never knew." He snaps his fingers as he looks up at Neal. "He did say he was going to come into a lot of money. He was going to pay me what he owed me."

"Did you ask him what he meant? Was he going to sell this place?" Neal asks.

"I really didn't ask him it was better if I didn't. I didn't really want to know."

"I understand."

He reaches into his pocket and he hands Neal a business card. "I'm sorry about the suspension thing."

Neal puts the card in his pocket. "It was better than being fired. If you have anything else to tell me you know where you can reach me."

He nods his head. "Okay."

"Do you need somebody to give you a ride home?" Neal asks him.

"No I'll be all right I'm just going to sit here a while longer if that is okay?"

"Take your time. I have work to do." Neal replies.

LATER THAT DAY AT SEARS:

Again Neal was looking for Steve. Neal called him. No answer. Neal went around to his apartment. Not there. While Neal was there he decided to page Steve. Steve thought it funny that Neal was paging him from his own apartment.

"What are you doing in my apartment?" Steve asks him. "I'm not there!"

"Moron! I know you aren't here! Why do you think I'm here! I'm looking for you!" Neal replies.

"Silly! Of course I'm at Sears!!"

"Of course! Why didn't I know that before?" Neal replies.

"I have no idea and you call yourself a Detective!?" Steve laughs at this. "Meet me in the Jewelry Department! I have to go! He's on the move!!" Steve replies then he hangs up.

"I'm a homicide detective not a psychic detective! Wait!! Who's on the move? Why are you at Sears?" Neal yells into the phone then he realizes that Steve had hung up so he hangs up too.

Now Neal is at Sears. Walking around. Making his way thru the people. Heading towards the Jewelry Department.

"Neal!"

Neal stops when he hears his name being called looking around but he doesn't see anyone he knows so he keeps walking.

"Neal!"

Once again he stops and this time it sounds like it's coming from behind him. So he looks behind him. It's Steve. He's wearing a Security Guard Uniform. Which includes the hat, jacket, gun and badge. He pushes the hat up on his head as Neal walks over to him.

Neal looks him up and down then he laughs. "What are you doing?"

"What does it look like I'm doing? I'm working! I'm doing Security for Sears! I've already arrested two people today for shoplifting! You should be happy!"

"Why should I be happy?" Neal asks as he points to himself.

"I'm keeping my clothes on!!" Steve replies. "Now what did you want?"

Neal stands with his hands on his hips. "What do I want? What do I want? I saved your life! You don't write! You don't call! I was worried about you!! I wanted to make sure that you were all right! You big dope! And..."

"And...hold that thought. Hey!! Hey you!! Yes you! I saw that! "

Steve yells and points at a kid who had just walked away from the jewelry counter. The kid stops and he looks around pointing to himself. "Me?"

"Yes you! Put it back! Put it back now!!" Steve replies as he walks up to him.

"I don't know what you're talking about I don't have anything!" The kid says back to him.

"Yes you do I saw you put it in your pocket! I have been following you all over this store!! Now put it all back!!" Steve says to him.

The kid laughs at him. "You ain't no real cop!"

Steve shoves the hat back up on his head. "First of all ain't, ain't a word! Second of all do you want to bet that I'm not a real cop kid? Oh I forgot! You can't bet because you don't have any money! You're shoplifting! You can either take the stuff out of your pockets by yourself or I'll turn you upside down and shake it out of you! Then after that I'll arrest you! So do it now!!"

The kid just looks at him then he goes back to the counter and he takes all the stuff out of his pockets that he had picked up thru the store giving Steve a dirty look. Then when he's finished he starts to walk off.

"Oh no you don't! Give!" Steve replies as he puts his hand out wriggling his fingers at him.

The kid just stands there looking at him. "I don't have anything else I swear!"

"You're lying!! Give it to me now!!" Steve replies then he watches as the kid bends over and he rolls up his pants leg and he takes a bracelet out of his sock and he hands it to Steve. "Now get out of here and never come back! If you do I'll arrest you for Trespassing! Mr. I'm not a real cop!! Now get!!" Steve stomps his foot and the kid bolts for the door and Steve watches as he goes out of it then he puts the bracelet back on the counter.

"So when you said that he was on the move you meant him? Right?" Neal asks.

"Yeah! I've been following him thru the whole store! Brat!! Juvenile Delinquent! What are you looking at? There's nothing to see here!" Steve yells at the crowd that has formed. "Kids these days Neal! Junior better not turn out like that!! What were you saying? And...?"

"Oh and that I missed you."

"Ah shucks!" Steve replies as he looks at the floor.

"I miss you doing all the paperwork I have to do it all now." Neal replies as he smiles.

"Uh huh. What else did you want?" Steve asks him as he pushes the hat back up on his head.

"I want to talk to you about our murder case. There's been a new development. When do you get off?"

"Do you mean from work or just in general?" Steve asks him.

Neal laughs. "From work?"

Steve glances at his watch. "In 45 minutes."

"Wow this place is busy."

"Their having a sale in Housewares. Dishes. Pots and pans. Thanksgiving is coming up you know." Steve points out.

"Oh hell! I forgot all about Thanksgiving!"

"How could you forget about Thanksgiving?" Steve asks as he pushes the hat back up on his head.

"Oh I don't know maybe because I have been busy?! We deal with turkeys every day. They shoot at us we shoot at them. They run we chase them. We arrest them. So what's another day? In this case we get to eat turkey. On that day we win!" Neal replies.

Steve readjusts his uniform. "Maybe this year we can have Ham."

"Ham? Ham is not traditional. It's always turkey. The Pilgrims didn't have ham."

"How do you know that? Were you there? No you weren't!" Steve replies as he tightens his belt. "Besides it's Junior first Thanksgiving." Steve points out.

"I'm aware of the fact that's it Junior's first Thanksgiving and you weren't there with the Pilgrims either! Steve...?"

"Yeah Neal?"

"That's not your hat is it?"

"Now what ever gave you that idea?" Steve asks as he pushed the hat back up on his head.

"Everything is too big." Neal replies.

"No shit! This whole thing was a last minute decision...."

"Was it a wham bam thank you ma'am sort of decision or I'll call you tomorrow sort of decision?" Neal asks.

Steve looks at him. "I came here looking for a job. Little did I know they were shorthanded and when they found out that I was a cop, everything sort of happened fast!" Steve replies as he gestures wildly. "So I guess it was the former and not the latter. They told me next time they would have a uniform in my size."

"Next time?" Neal asks him.

"Yes next time! I like working here! I like the atmosphere, the fast paced environment and the people Neal! I am a people person you know!!" Steve replies as he pats himself on the chest.

"Uh huh. It doesn't hurt that most of those people that work here are women? Right?"

Steve hesitates as he takes off his hat and he scratches his head. "Maybe."

"You know what our mothers said about wearing other people's hats?" Neal replies as seriously as he can.

"Uh huh."

Neal scratches his forehead. "Did you take the bus again?"

"Yeah gas is..."

Neal holds his hand up. "I know 45 cents a gallon. I'll wait until you get off and we can go to the Cops and Robbers Bar. I need to run some stuff by you."

"Okay I have to go back to the office and do some paperwork. The office is down that hall there."

Neal looks to where Steve is pointing. "Okay. While I'm here I might as well look around. Get some ideas for Christmas. Where's housewares?"

"Why?" Steve asks him suspiciously.

"What do you mean why? I just said to get some ideas for Christmas. Ruby and my mother!"

“Neal you big dunce!!” Steve hits him with his hat. “No woman wants housewares for a Christmas gift! No pots no pans. No appliances!”

“Ruby did mentioned needing a new blender!” Neal points out.

“No!! The jewelry department is right there! If she wants a blender I’ll get her a blender! You’re her husband! You should get her a bracelet, a watch or a necklace! A ring! Maybe a ring! Something intimate and personal!”

“We already have a baby, I would say that already qualifies as being pretty damn intimate and personal don’t ya think?!! She already has an engagement and wedding ring too! How many more rings does she need?”

Steve points with his hat. “Go to the jewelry Department! Now! Look around! You can always come back after Thanksgiving. That’s when they put the Christmas stuff out!”

“All right! Damn you’re pushy! I think this security gig has gone to your head!” Neal replies back over his shoulder as he wanders off.

“No it hasn’t! Hey you! You kids there! Can’t you read? That sign says no loitering! Now move along!! NOW!!”

LATER AT THE COPS AND ROBBERS BAR:

“He’s dead?!” Steve replies.

“Yeah. Shot in the back of the head just like Ivan. Tortured just like Ivan. I’ll bet a box of donuts that the slugs in their heads will also match.”

“Roger had a box of chewing gum in his room?” Steve asks.

Neal nods his head. “Yeah. It was a big box too.”

Steve finishes his beer. “So you think when Roger was snooping around in Ivan’s room he found that box of gum and the letter explaining what it was?”

“Bingo!” Neal replies as he points at Steve. “So he took it. He told his lawyer that he was going to come into some money. A lot of money from what he told him. He was going to be able to pay what he owed him.”

“So he had plans to sell it to someone too? But who? How did Ivan and Roger find out where to go? They had to talk to somebody? There is always a middle man, right?”

“I would think so.” Neal replies.

“You know some people may think we killed him. Or at least I killed him.” Steve points out.

Neal shakes his head. "Nope. According to Sam when he was killed we were together. Going out of town in that truck. So that is not even up for discussion."

Steve shrugs. "Nobody heard anything? Not even a gunshot?"

Neal shakes his head. "I and two other officers canvassed that whole building. Nobody heard anything or they say they didn't hear anything. They probably used a silencer. That place doesn't have a back door so they probably came in that window. Surprised him. The rest they say is history. Personally, just between me and you and this bottle of beer." Neal holds it up. "Even if those people did hear something I don't think they would be too forthcoming, if you catch my drift. He was not a well-liked individual. Hell I don't even think his lawyer liked him very much."

"Hi guys. Do you two want another beer?" Gwen asks as she walks up to the table.

"Na." Neal looks at his watch. "I think I better get going."

"I don't have any place to go so yeah I'll take another one."

"Good. That lady over there bought this for you." Gwen replies as she sits it down in front of Steve.

Neal looks over to the bar as Steve looks back over his shoulder at her.

"Hey Steve!" Neal laughs. "Isn't that your Eve to your Adam? You know at the Women's College?"

"Yeah that would be her." Steve replies as he turns back around to see Gwen still standing there smiling.

"So it's true!" Gwen smiles.

"What's true?" Steve asks her.

"That you were just wearing a fig leaf? I thought she was kidding?!"

Steve scratches his head as he looks over at Neal who is grinning from ear to ear. "No she wasn't kidding. Really it wasn't a big deal." Steve laughs as he looks up at her.

"That's not what she said." Gwen replies as she winks at him then she pats him on the shoulder before she turns and walks off.

"I have to go." Neal replies as he gets up grinning.

Steve reaches out and he takes him by the arm. "Don't leave me here!"

Neal laughs then he pats Steve on the hand. "You're a big, big boy you're be okay!" Neal starts to walk off and Steve jumps out of the booth to go after him.

"Neal!"

Diane steps off the barstool and she blocks Steve's path to freedom.

"Hi Steve want to join me for some dinner?" Diane asks.

Steve smiles at her. "Okay sure why not?"

THE NEXT DAY IN THE SQUAD ROOM:

"How did you get home?"

Neal can hear Steve on the other end of the phone as he takes a deep breath. "Diane."

"You mean Eve don't you Adam?" Neal asks as he laughs.

"Uh huh." Steve replies.

"So...she gave you a ride or was it the other way around?" Neal asks as he continues to laugh.

"Nothing happened it was just dinner." Steve replies.

"I bet." Neal laughs.

"When you see somebody naked it kind of ends the surprise factor if you know what I mean." Steve replies.

Neal rubs his eyes. "Not to her I bet!"

Steve takes a deep breath. "I don't have anything she hasn't seen before."

Neal laughs. "Not if you're the only man on the face of the earth Adam!!!" Neal replies as he hits the desk with his hand. "Then everything would be a surprise wouldn't it? If you were the only man on the face of the Earth then she wouldn't have a ruler to gauge it by, now would she?" Neal laughs.

"Actually it would be a yard stick." Steve pauses then he says. "You're enjoying this aren't you?" Steve asks.

"Immensely!" Neal replies.

"You just wait." Steve replies.

"Ha! And you're do what? You aren't here!!"

"I won't always be on suspension you know." Steve replies.

"I love you." Neal replies.

"Oh don't do that! Don't try and butter me up!" Steve replies.

"Is it working?" Neal asks.

"Maybe...a little. I have to get ready for work."

"Work? You mean at Sears?" Neal asks.

"Yes at Sears."

"The person that hired you it was a woman, wasn't it?" Neal asks.

Neal can hear Steve hesitate on the other end of the phone. "Maybe."

"Uh huh I knew it! Be careful." Neal replies.

"You too and yes Neal I love you too."

Neal smiles. "Glad to hear it. Talk to you later."

"Later."

After hanging up Neal starts on some paperwork and he was just making some headway when the Captain called him into his office.

"Neal I have somebody here I want you to meet." The Captain replies as he stands in the doorway of the office blocking Neal's view then he steps back a few steps letting Neal into the office.

"You? What are you doing here?" Neal replies to the man sitting on the sofa.

"Neal this is Jack Harris." The Captain replies as he shuts the door.

Jack gets up off of the sofa putting his hand out to shake Neal's hand but Neal just stands there.

"What is this? I arrested you that day on the dock! I shot your buddy!"

"Yes you did and I will say you're a good shot." Jack replies.

"Not really I was trying to aim higher. What is this Cap?"

"Neal. Jack is an FBI Agent." The Captain replies as he sits on the end of the desk.

Neal points his finger at him. "That explains it! I wonder why that shooting sailed thru IA so fast. You must've talked to them."

"I did." Jack replies as he nods his head. "I've been working undercover at the dock. Hell, I've been undercover for so long I've haven't seen daylight in years."

Neal laughs at this. "That sounds familiar. So why did you come here?" Neal asks.

"We could use your help. We know that you and your partner know about the gum. We're trying to get a handle on where it's coming from but what we really want to know is...where it's going to."

"You want my help? As big as the FBI is you can't figure that out on your own?" Neal asks.

Jack looks at the floor. "It's better for all involved if we work together."

Neal crosses his arms over his chest. "Really? That hasn't been my experience with you guys. My partner and I have worked on cases, hell for months, then the FBI decides to come in and take over. We do all the work and you guys get all the credit."

"In this case that won't happen. My boss told me to make contact with you and your partner. We need some local heat. We already know about your moonlighting gig, driving the truck to Bakersfield. By the way where is your partner?"

Neal looks at the Captain. Then Jack sees the look that passes between them then they both look at the floor.

"Uh oh. I seem to have struck a nerve. He's not...?" Jack asks.

Then Neal realizes what he means. He waves his hand back and forth. "No he's not dead."

Jack takes a deep breath.

"He's been suspended for a month." The Captain replies.

"Oh." Jack replies.

"Something stupid we both did." Neal replies as he looks at the Captain. "We're trying to make amends."

"I'm guessing it has something to do with this crazy gum thing?" Jack asks.

"Yeah. We have two homicides now. Both victims had that gum in their possession."

"Do you have any strong leads?" Jack asks.

"A lot of theories but nothing concrete. The common denominator is that gum." Neal replies.

"Neal we need your help."

"I think we covered that ground already. What can we do that you can't?" Neal asks.

"They know you. You and your partner. You have driven for them a couple of times now. They seem to trust you two."

Neal laughs. "I guess you didn't hear the part about when we were crossing the desert and two goons pointed a shotgun at us and Steve took them out."

"We need you and Steve to make another delivery to Bakersfield."

"You're crazy!" Neal laughs.

"If you have a tail ignore them." Jack replies.

"What?"

"We're keep an eye on the warehouse in Bakersfield to see who picks up that delivery. I can't do this but you and your partner can." Jack replies. "We're checked you two guys out."

"Wait? What do you mean you've checked us out?" Neal asks.

"You're trustworthy. Hard working. This Precinct has the highest rate of arrests and convictions. You two have balls. You're willing to take risks nobody else is willing to take."

"Jesus." Neal replies.

"There's just one more thing."

"That would be what?" Neal asks.

"You can't tell Steve anything about this." Jack replies seriously.

“WHAT? Now I know you’re cracked! Not tell Steve? Not tell Steve?” Neal replies as he walks around the office. “Oh you’re really trying to get me killed aren’t you? You don’t know Steve! He doesn’t like it when people keep stuff from him. And when I do it he goes crazy! He pouts! Stomps his feet! He’s worse than my wife in the making me feel guilty department! See this eyebrow?” Neal replies as he points to his eyebrow over his right eye.

Jack nods his head as the Captain rubs his forehead.

“I kept something from him and when he found out about it he shaved this eyebrow off in my sleep!! Just so I would never forget it! Now you tell me again how I can’t tell him anything about this?!”

Jack tries not to laugh. “The less people know about it the better.”

“Better for whom? Not for me! I have to live with him! I had to walk around with one eyebrow for weeks until it grew back!” Neal replies.

“It’s all arranged you two pick up the load on Friday and take the same route you did before to Bakersfield.”

“I didn’t say yes yet!”

“I said yes for you.” The Captain replies as Jack and Neal look at him. “I told Jack that you and Steve would give him your full cooperation.”

Neal looks at the floor. “Yes sir.”

The Captain gets up from the desk and he walks over to Neal and he puts his hand on his shoulder.

“It’s a start to making amends. Right Neal?”

Neal looks at him covering his hand with his own that is still on his shoulder. “Yes Captain.” Neal then goes over and he now shakes Jack’s hand. “All right you’ve got a deal.”

TWO DAYS LATER FRIDAY NIGHT:

“Neal are you all right?” Steve asks as they walk out to the truck.

“I’m just peachy. Why?” Neal asks.

“I don’t know you seem uptight or something.” Steve replies as he opens the passenger side of the truck and he climbs up into the seat. Neal gets in the truck on the driver’s side and once in the seat he hangs the clipboard up behind the passenger seat.

“I’ve been talking to my mother.” Neal replies as he starts the truck.

“Oh well that would certainly do it.” Steve replies.

Neal takes a deep breath. "She's coming down for Thanksgiving. Probably stay a few days after to look at some houses. You know, take a look at some neighborhoods that sort of thing."

"Oh. Well that's good. She can babysit. You and Ruby can go out on the town. You know some grown up time."

Neal grumbles.

"Is that all that's bothering you?" Steve asks.

Neal looks over at Steve. "Isn't that enough?" Neal asks as he pulls out onto the road.

Steve shrugs. "I can't believe they want us to take another load to Bakersfield. I mean after what happened last time."

"They don't know that we know about the gum." Neal replies.

"Neal are you sure everything is all right? I mean it is isn't it? All right I mean."

"Yes Steve everything is fine. Just fine."

"I'm getting a bad vibe that's all." Steve replies.

Neal looks in the side mirror. "How's Sears?"

"Fine. They gave me a uniform that fits now."

"Oh they did that's good." Neal replies.

"I'm thinking about working there part time during the holidays. You know for extra cash. To put some money down on that cow I'm going to buy, you know from Jack, that cat that has the beanstalk."

"Really? I think that's a good idea. A good idea."

"You didn't hear anything I just said did you Neal?"

"What? Oh sure I did. Working part time at Sears during the holidays so you could put money down on the cow...you...want..to..buy?" Neal replies as he looks over at Steve.

"Uh huh." Steve replies as he leans back in the seat with his arms crossed over his chest.

"I have a lot of things on my mind."

"I understand. How about some music? I brought my transistor radio." Steve replies.

"Cool. Yeah let's have some music." Neal replies.

They drove through the night. The lights of Oceanview falling off into the distance behind them. Steve slept then when they pulled over for fuel and food they switched places. Neal slept while Steve drove. The radio keeping him company. This trip through the desert was uneventful. Maybe too uneventful and quiet. No one was tailing them as far as Steve knew. For most of the drive they seem to be the only vehicle on the road. Every so often Steve would glance over at Neal. Something was eating at him. But what he didn't know.

Early Saturday morning and they arrive in Bakersfield. Once at the warehouse Steve backs into the dock and he honks the horn. The man comes out and they talk to him. Once again they rent the pick-up truck from him and they leave the box truck there. Steve drives the pick-up truck to the Motor Coach Motel. This time they are able to get a room with twin beds. After they put all their bags in the room and pick which bed they wanted they decided to sleep for a few hours.

LATER THAT DAY IN BAKERSFIELD:

A few hours' sleep turned into rest of the day sleep. Steve only woke up because his stomach was growling and when he woke up he woke Neal up. After they took their showers and got ready to go they headed for the diner where Neal grabbed a newspaper to check out the nightlife in Bakersfield.

They decided on a movie. They decided to see the movie they didn't get to see the first time around, Jaws. After the movie they cruised through the city just looking. Every so often they would stop, get out, and look at something. Steve was enjoying himself.

But Neal wasn't enjoying himself. None of it. Through this whole trip Neal was waiting. Waiting for the other shoe to drop. He was tense throughout the whole drive. And tired. He didn't sleep well the night before. Thinking about what Jack had told him. That is why he overslept. Not to tell Steve. He was waiting for something bad to happen. Something or someone to come out of the desert and run them down. Then someone be at the warehouse, then at the Motel. But none of that transpired. So Neal decided to take a breath. He let Steve lead him around through the different shops up and down the boulevard. Record stores. Woolworth's. They even stopped at a bar for a while.

By the time they got back to the Motel it was late. Steve driving as they rolled into the parking lot. They parked in front of their room.

"You jumped like a foot!" Steve replies as they get out of the truck.

"No I didn't!" Neal protests.

"Yes you did! I was sitting right next to you and you jumped a foot when that damn, big fish came out of the water. You spilled popcorn everywhere!" Steve replies.

"I was startled okay!"

Steve laughs as he shakes his head walking up to unlock the door to their room. Going into the room Steve turns on the lamp then Neal grabs the ice bucket.

"Do you want a soda? I'm going to go and get some ice."

"Yeah sure." Steve replies as he surfs the TV channels with the remote.

"Find something good. This place has cable right?" Neal asks.

"Yup."

"See if they have Playboy."

"Hmmm." Steve replies as he scratches his head.

Neal shuts the door behind him then he walks up the sidewalk and turns the corner. At the back of the building was the ice machine and coke machine and next to them a cigarette machine. Neal rooted around in his pockets for some money. He found enough money for two sodas and a pack of cigarettes then he got a bucket of ice. He walked back to the room and when he got to the door and turned the door knob he found it was locked. He sets the stuff on the ground.

"Steve! Hey! Why is the door locked?" Neal asks as he knocks on the door. "Steve! Don't tell me you found a woman that fast! Steve!"

"NEAL!"

Neal hears Steve yell. Neal pounds on the door. Then looking at the door he takes a few steps back and raising his foot he kicks it open. It didn't take much and once the door was open Neal rushes into the room. To see Steve standing in front of him being held from behind by a big guy who has one arm around Steve's neck and in the other hand a switchblade. Wearing a ski mask.

Behind Neal the door is slammed shut by another guy who is holding a shotgun and also wearing a ski mask.

"Put your hands up." The man orders and Neal does so then he starts to frisk him not taking his eyes off of Steve and the man holding the switchblade.

"Hey watch it!" Neal replies.

When the man finishes he shoves Neal hard in the direction of the bed then he levels the shotgun at him.

"Where in the hell is it?" The man asks Neal.

"Where's what?" Neal asks as he looks over at Steve.

"What do you think Jackass? That load you dropped off this morning! Now where is it?"

Neal laughs. "At the warehouse you moron!!"

"I tried to tell him that!!" Steve replies then the guy standing behind him shakes him hard causing Steve to put his hands up on his arm trying to pull it away from his neck.

"Shut up cutie!!"

"Not that the fake one you dropped off! Where's the real load!" The man says to him.

Neal sits up straighter. "What do you mean the fake one?"

"All those boxes you dropped off were full of chewing gum. Regular, garden variety chewing gum and nothing else!! Now! Where's the real shit! I'm losing my patience!"

"We don't know what you're talking about! We didn't know what were in those boxes!! We never touched them!" Neal replies.

"I'll cut him if you don't tell us." The other man replies who is holding Steve as he holds the knife up. Steve follows the knife with his eyes.

"Wait!!" Neal replies as he puts his hand out in Steve's direction. "I can't tell you where it's at because I don't know! We didn't take anything!" Neal replies.

"Let me go!" Steve replies. "We're telling the truth!"

"You have to come with us." The man replies.

"Come with you? Where?" Neal asks.

"If you and your friend there wasn't too forthcoming with information then we were supposed to bring you back. Our boss wants to see you."

Steve starts to struggle. "We can't tell you anything because we don't know anything!"

"Come on do it! We're wasting time!" The man replies to his partner.

Neal stands up as the man holding Steve puts the switchblade knife away then he repositions his arm around Steve's neck while the other is on the side of his head. Steve tries to stop him by putting his hand on his arm.

"No! Don't do that! Neal! Stop it!!" Steve replies as he tries in vain to struggle looking over at Neal.

"Wait! Don't do that! You could kill him." Neal replies.

The man with the shotgun stands in between him and Steve. "We don't want any trouble. One of you needs to be out and we choose him." The man replies as he looks closely at Neal. Every time Neal tries to go around him the man stops him. Using the shotgun as a barrier.

"STEVE!" Neal yells as Steve looks at him his eyes frightened.

Neal can only watch helplessly as Steve slaps the man's arm, once then twice, but it doesn't do any good because within a space of a few minutes Steve's eyes open then close. He stops struggling as his head drops down to the man's arm that is still encircling his neck. Steve's hands slip down from the man's arms. Steve's own arms now hanging limp. Once Steve is out, the man slings him over his shoulder roughly and then he carries him out to the car.

"Come on let's go. Nice and easy." The man replies as he pushes Neal with the shotgun towards the door.

LATER SOMEWHERE IN BAKERSFIELD:

"Steve! Steve! Are you awake" Neal replies back over his shoulder to Steve who is tied to a chair behind him.

"Hmmm." Steve replies as he slowly starts to come around.

"Steve! Man! Get a grip! Wake up." Neal replies as he rocks the chairs back and forth.

Steve raises his head and he looks around him. "Oh shit! My head is killing me!"

"It was that sleeper hold that guy put on you!"

"Sleeper...where in the hell are we? What's going on?!" Steve asks as he looks behind him.

"I don't know where we are and for what's going on we are both tied to chairs! I hate being tied to chairs! This is the second time this year!!"

"Hey!" Steve sits up straight or as straight as he can. "Neal! We're tied to chairs!"

"No shit Sherlock! I just said that!" Neal replies.

"Where are we?" Steve asks.

"I don't know but I am willing to bet it's somebody's house!"

"Why are we here?" Steve asks.

"Don't you remember anything? Two goons came to our Motel room and their kidnapped us! They accused us of stealing their merchandise! That load we dropped off was real gum!"

"What?! Real gum?" Steve replies as he tries to turn around and look at Neal.

"Yes real gum! They think we substituted real gum and took the drug gum!"

"They can't be serious!" Steve replies.

"Doesn't this look like their serious Steve?! We're tied to a chair!"

"What would we do with that much gum? Where would we put it?" Steve asks.

"How in the hell would I know!!" Neal replies.

"Not to mention the fact we would have to buy a helluva lot of gum to replace it!! Neal do you have any idea how much money..."

"Steve!"

"What?"

"While you were sleeping I was trying to figure out how to get us out of here." Neal replies.

"You know Neal I didn't want to be sleeping! It was not exactly my choice!"

Neal takes a deep breath. "Anyway. Our arms are tied behind us to the chair back."

"Yeah?"

"Can you reach my right ankle if I bend my leg up?" Neal asks.

"Hang on I might be able to slide this rope over a little more. Okay bend your leg up."

Neal bends up his leg up. "There's a knife in my sock. See if you can get it out."

After a couple failed attempts and just as Neal's leg was getting a cramp in it Steve was able to maneuver well enough that he was able to grab the knife out of Neal's sock.

“Okay good let’s rest for a few minutes. “ Neal replies as he puts his head back. “Hold the knife and I’ll see if I can move the ropes across them I think they left enough slack. Hold it tight!”

“Yeah yeah I know. I thought that guy frisked you?” Steve replies as he holds the knife tight as Neal starts to rub the ropes against it.

“Yeah but not very well obviously. I think he wanted to feel me up more than anything. Neal replies.

“Keep rubbing.” Steve encourages.

“I feel it. Just a little bit more. Right there! I’m glad I took the time to sharpen it!” Neal replies.

Just as his ropes were about to break a man opened the door to the room they were in and he looked in on them. “Hey! I’ve been looking for you...”

Neal doesn’t wait for him to finish because by now the rope they used to tie his hands to the chair had been cut in two. Neal is up and out of the chair and before the man can react Neal crosses the space between them and he grabs him dragging him into the room. The door shutting behind him. Struggling Neal drags him into the room and the man takes a swing at Neal. Neal ducks then Neal hits him with a haymaker which drops him to the floor.

Neal then runs over to Steve and he unties him from the chair. “Come on let’s go.”

They both run over to the door and opening it slowly they see a big living room with a fire in the wood burning fireplace, sofas and chairs, lamps but the room is empty. Opening the door further they take a better look around and when they see that no one is around they go out into the room. Across the room is a set of French doors which they make their way over to. Opening them they go out to the patio that is there and jumping over the hedges that encircle it they run across the back yard and that is when they are stopped. Out of the darkness they hear a gunshot. Neal grabs Steve by the arm and both of them keeping low, he drags him over to the corner of the house. Then they hear another gunshot.

“Hey!! Hold your fire!! What in the hell are you doing? They are with us!!”

“Jack?” Neal yells out into the darkness. “Jack? Is that you?”

“Jack? Who’s Jack?” Steve asks.

“Neal? Yeah it’s me! Come on out. We didn’t know it was you.”

Neal grabs Steve by the arm as they come out from around the corner of the house. Now the lights from the cars have been turned on and they are able to see men standing around. And still other men being led away in hand cuffs. Some of them being placed in a paddy wagon. As Steve and Neal approach them Jack walks out to them.

“What are you doing here?” Neal asks him.

“We just staged a raid on the house. I sent one of our men in to find you. Did you see him?”

Neal looks over at Steve then he looks back at Jack. “Ahhh yeah. You might want to go and check on him. I didn’t know he was...” Neal replies as he points back over his shoulder.

“Is he knocked out?” Jack asks.

“Cold.”

Jack scratches his head. “Hey Peter can you go and find Wilson?”

“Sure.” Peter replies as he walks toward the house.

“He’s, ah, in the room that’s off the living room.” Neal replies. “Jack, this is Steve Perry, my partner. Steve, this is Agent Jack Harris.”

Steve steps up and they shake hands. “Steve nice to meet you.”

“Agent? It’s nice to meet you too.” Steve replies.

“I’m with the FBI.” Jack replies.

“Oh.” Steve replies. “So you and Neal know each other?”

“Yeah. Let’s go over to the car and talk.” Jack replies.

They walk over to a near-by car and while Jack gets in the driver’s seat Neal picks the passenger side. Steve gets in the back seat.

“So you two know each other?” Steve asks again.

“We just met recently. Right Neal?”

“Yeah. Recently. So who’s all here?” Neal asks as he gestures around.

“FBI. The Sheriff’s office and the Bakersfield police department.” Jack replies.

“You said that you were staging a raid? Whose house is this?” Steve asks.

“His name is Cyrus Proctor.” Jack replies.

“Wait his name is what?” Neal asks.

“Cyrus Proctor.” Jack repeats. “Rings some bells for you?”

“Yeah big, huge Big Ben type bells. He wouldn’t by chance own Proctor Labs, would he?” Neal asks.

“Yeah among other business in Bakersfield. Why?” Jack asks.

“Because our first victim Ivan took some samples of that gum to that lab!” Neal replies.

“When those guys kidnapped us they said something about taking us back to their boss! This guy is their boss! He’s the one who’s been getting those deliveries of that gum!” Steve replies.

“That’s his warehouse we’ve been delivering to isn’t it?” Neal asks.

“Yeah it is.” Jack replies.

“Damn it!” Neal replies. “Wait. How did you know to find us here?” Neal asks. “Because earlier you said you didn’t know who was getting those deliveries?”

Jack doesn’t answer he just scratches his head.

"Neal what do you mean by earlier?" Steve looks at Neal. "And what did you mean when you said they are with us back there?" Steve asks as he points at Jack.

"Jack you set us up?!" Neal yells.

"You two planned this together and Neal you didn't tell me?" Steve replies.

"Steve no it wasn't like that..." Neal replies.

"Neal..." Jack replies.

"Jack?" Neal replies.

"Neal!!" Steve replies.

"Steve." Jack replies.

"Calm down." Neal replies.

"Don't Steve me and don't tell me to calm down!! I guess you have forgotten about the eyebrow incident?" Steve asks Neal.

Neal rubs his finger over his eyebrow as he looks at Jack. "No, no I haven't."

"I see how it is! I'm not around for a couple of days and you find a new partner!!" Steve replies.

"No Steve! It's not like that! Jack didn't tell me everything either!"

Steve laughs. "You still knew more about this than I did!! Well you know what? You two can kiss my ass! I'm leaving!!" Steve replies as he opens the car door and after he gets out he slams the door hard. So hard the car rocks back and forth. Neal watches him in the side mirror as he stalks off.

They both sit in silence. Neal rubbing his eyes and Jack looking out into the darkness his fingers tapping the steering wheel.

"You know, I thought you were joking when you told me that he would be upset..."

"Everybody thinks I'm joking." Neal takes a deep breath. "You don't know him like I do. He's sensitive." Neal replies.

"How long have you two...?"

"Since we were five years old."

Jack whistles. "I was going to give you two a ride back to the Motel."

"Oh, I wouldn't be a bit surprised when I got back to the Motel if Steve hasn't already gotten another room."

"Sorry."

"You did set us up, didn't you?" Neal asks.

"Yeah we replaced the drug gum with real gum. We knew when they found out they would eventually track you down." Jack replies.

"Jesus! You couldn't tell me that? What if they decided to kill us?" Neal asks.

"Neal I'm sorry. Only a few people were supposed to know about that. It was a chance but we didn't think they would hurt you..."

"Holy shit! Thanks one helluva lot!! Do you always take chances with other people's lives like that?!" Neal asks now slightly perturbed his fingers tapping on the dashboard. Thinking.

"Neal, we would have stepped in and stopped them before that happened. We knew they wouldn't hurt you two because they thought you knew where the gum was. You two were the only link." Jack replies. "Besides the obvious what else are you thinking about?"

"I'm just thinking if Doctor Turbin, who works at Proctor labs, if he knew about the fact that his boss had a sideline. Maybe he's the go between. Maybe he's selling it to the competition? He's stealing his bosses stash or he gets a cut. Ivan went to him for help. He wanted that gum analyzed. What if the good Doctor Turbin made him an offer?"

"But you don't know that for certain." Jack asks him.

Neal shakes his head. "No not for certain. The fact also bothered me why didn't he go to the Bakersfield Police when he got that gum? When he found out what it contained why didn't he inform them? I'm thinking any other law abiding citizen would. It's a gut feeling. He was going to turn Ivan on to somebody."

"Most of the time all I have is a gut feeling to go on." Jack replies.

"Yeah I know. Us too. But we don't have jurisdiction here." Neal replies.

"No but I do. We can help each other out. Maybe you can go in there...."

Neal shakes his head. "No he knows me. But...." Neal replies as he looks over at Jack who raises his eyebrows at him.

THE NEXT DAY AT THE MOTOR COACH MOTEL:

Neal ducks just in time as Steve throws an ashtray at his head. "Bastard!!"

"Steve! Take it easy now!" Neal replies as he puts his hands out.

"Take it easy my ass!! You have some nerve! First you take me for granted! Secondly, you have the unmitigated gall to come in here and ask me to help....help...what's his name?!"

"Jack."

"WHAT?" Steve yells.

"Jack! His name is Jack."

"He wants me to play footsie with this guy just to see what happens? He doesn't know for sure and neither do you if this guy is a go between or not? Just go in there and wing it? Make it up as I go along is that it? Where is this guy getting these brilliant ideas from?"

"Actually, it was my idea." Neal says quickly.

"WHAT?"

"I said it was my idea!!" Neal replies quickly again.

"Oh holy shit! You're just racking them up aren't you? First, I take a few days off and when the mouse is away." Steve points to himself. "The cat will play is that it Neal? Whatever his name is..."

"Jack."

Steve takes a deep breath. "Asks you to do something and keep it from me. Me!! Then come to find out he set us up!!!"

"Steve, I didn't want to keep it from you. I told him exactly what would happen! How you would feel. He didn't believe me obviously. "

"You told him about the eyebrow incident?" Steve asks as he stands with his hands on his hips his foot tapping.

"Yes! Yes I did! The Captain said yes for both of us!"

"The Captain?"

"Yes Steve the Captain. Our Captain. He thought it would be a good way for us, for me, to make amends. I wanted to tell you!! I felt like shit cause I couldn't tell you. This thing will help both of us out. We could find out who killed our two victims and it will help Jack out. He wants that other buyer in this equation. When this is all over Doctor Turbin will be ours, he will turn him over to us. You're the only one who can do this. He doesn't know you. Hasn't seen you."

"Did you tell what's-his-name how long we've known each other?" Steve asks.

"Yes I did."

"Neal you should have told me the truth."

Neal rubs his face. "I'm sorry Steve honestly."

"You really want me to do this?" Steve asks.

Neal puts his arms out to his sides. "Yes Steve I do. My gut is telling me this guy knows something. He knows somebody. He's getting a cut or a percentage, something! His boss, who takes these shipment of this drug gum owns a lab! A lab! And this guy works there!!" Neal replies as he slaps his hands together for emphasizes. "It's not a coincidence! Doctor Turbin is playing both sides against the middle!! He's involved somehow! I'm begging! Come on Steve! We can make a date for later where you can beat me up! Yell and scream at me. Do whatever!"

Steve thinks about this. "Okay I'll do it."

"Oh thank you Steve! Thank you."

"Ah not so fast!! On one condition." Steve replies as he holds up one finger.

Neal clears his throat. "On one condition? What's the condition? Oh I get the feeling that I'm not going to like this, am I?"

"No probably not. When all of this is over, you'll do what I'll say."

Neal looks at him suspiciously. "In regards to what exactly?"

"That will be for me to know..."

Neal drops his head as he looks at the floor his hands on his hips.

"...And for me to find out? Right?"

"Right! Well what do you say? Yea or nay?" Steve asks with a smug expression on his face his arms crossed over his chest.

Neal looks sideways at him then he smiles at him. "It won't hurt will it?"

"Oh I don't know I haven't decided yet."

"Alright I probably deserve it. Friends?" Neal replies as he puts his hand out to him.

Steve smiles then he crosses the space between them and he takes Neal's hand. "Always."

Neal pulls him into a hug. "You know I love you." Neal replies.

"I know. It must be love because nobody can piss me off like you do. That says love." Steve replies as he laughs hugging Neal back then they let each other go.

"I know. Let's go and get something to eat then we can run some ideas around the table. Come up with a story for you."

"Okay." Steve replies as he grabs his jacket and he follows Neal out the door.

TWO DAYS OR SO LATER SOMEWHERE IN BAKERSFIELD:

Neal and Steve know this. In matters of Government and Law Enforcement saying and doing are two different things. There are certain channels you have to go thru. Experts in hoop jumping. Only when all the I's were dotted and all the T's crossed, only when all the permissions were granted by all the powers that be from every camp involved, it was then and only then, they could proceed.

It started with surveillance. Surveillance of the Lab and Doctor Turbine's habits. Which were pretty routine. They had staked out his house. Wanting to see who was around. Who came and who went. They had mapped out Steve's story. Replayed it. Reran it until it was a reel to reel tape in Steve's head. This he was used to. Playing a part. This was going to be a cake walk. Slipping into somebody else's skin and walking around in it. Easy peasy.

"That is a big house." Neal replies to Jack as they both stand in a bucket truck, elevated in the air, next to a street light which they are pretending to work on. Neal adjusts his hard hat.

"I don't know how much a director of a lab makes these days." Jack replies.

"I don't either. He is a Doctor after all..."

"Don't be so sure. From what I found out his medical license was yanked...Are you okay? You don't look so good." Jack replies.

"Usually heights don't bother me but this thing freaks me out. Just don't move. That's all. Are you sure two people can be up in this thing?"

"Positive. Look here's comes the Doc now." Jack replies as he nods his head in the direction of a Cadillac coming up the street. They watch as the car pulls into the driveway, then just a second later, the garage door opens and the car goes into the garage then the door goes down.

"Lucy the Doctor is home." Neal says into a microphone that is on his jacket.

A few seconds later. "I told you don't call me that!!" Steve yells back to him thru his own microphone.

Neal and Jack laugh as they watch a Mercedes turn the corner and come up the street.

"So did he forgive you?" Jack asks.

"Maybe. Forgiving and forgetting at two different things."

From their perch they watch as the Mercedes pulls into the driveway of the Doctor's house and stops. The driver's side door opens and a Chauffeur gets out then he goes around to the passenger side rear back seat and he opens the door. Steve gets out wearing his best suit and a fur coat. He walks to the front door and he rings the bell.

Inside the house the housekeeper goes to the den and after she knocks on the door she goes in.

"Sir there is a Mr. Perry to see you."

The doctor looks over his glasses at her. "Who? I don't know anybody named..."

Then Steve comes into the room pushing pass the housekeeper puffing on a cigar blowing a smoke ring into the air.

"That's all right Doc I know you. Tell her she can go now." Steve replies.

"Beatrice it's all right. You can leave us alone."

"Yes sir." She replies as she gives Steve the evil eye as she turns and leaves the room shutting the door behind her. Steve then goes over to a liquor cabinet in the corner which contains many, different kinds

of liquor, he opens the cabinet door then he stands there looking tapping his finger against his lips. He sets the cigar down in an ashtray that is there.

"Can I help you with something Mr. Perry?"

"No not yet." Steve then chooses a bottle of whiskey. He finds a glass then he pours himself some then he takes a drink. "Hmmm not bad. Not the best but not bad. I wouldn't do that if I were you." Steve replies as he glances back over his shoulder at him. By now the Doctor has picked up the phone and he was just about to dial it when Steve stopped him.

"If you don't get out I'll call the police."

Steve smiles as he turns around then he walks over to the desk and taking a box out of his pocket he tosses it down onto the desk. Then after he finishes his glass of Whiskey he sets it down on the desk.

"Oh no you won't."

The Doctor hangs up the phone. "What is this about?"

"Cyrus Proctor. You do know who he is, don't you?" Steve replies.

"Yes of course he owns the Lab."

"Did you also know that the Feds raided his house a few nights ago? He's looking at a long stretch in jail. The Federal Pen actually." Steve replies.

"I..."

"I'm taking over his operation." Steve replies.

"What? I don't know who you are!! He never mentioned your name to me ever! Where did you come from?! He told me!!" The Doctor replies.

Steve leans on the desk. "You!" Steve replies as he points at him. "Don't need to know who I am or where I came from!! That is none of your business! All you need to know is I'm taking his place!" Steve laughs. "He told you what exactly. That if anything ever happened to him that you would be the next in line?"

"We were partners!!"

"Really? From what I understand he didn't trust you very much, did he?" Steve asks.

"I don't know what you mean." The Doctor replies.

"Oh no? Look at this place. How can a man who runs a Lab afford all of this, huh? That Cadillac? And a housekeeper?" Steve leans in closer. "How do you afford this?"

"I'm a Doctor!"

Steve starts to laugh. "A Doctor? A Doctor? You're medical license was yanked wasn't it Doc? Something about Malpractice wasn't it?"

"It was a misunderstanding!"

Steve laughs again. "Somebody died because of your negligence didn't they?" Steve slams his hand down hard on the desk which causes the Doctor to jump. "I said didn't they?"

"Yes! All right they did! Nobody in the medical field would hire me after that. Cyrus was an old friend of mine. He hired me to run his lab." The Doctor replies.

"And you couldn't make it on what he was paying you. So you found out about his sideline and you decided to help yourself. I know about Ivan." Steve replies.

"Who?"

Steve, in a fit of anger, pushes everything off of the desk and onto the floor then he reaches across the span of the desk and he grabs him by the front of his shirt and he pulls him over the desk.

"Don't do that!! Understand me? There's a new Sheriff in town and I'm him!! I know everything. I know about that Russian cat, Ivan! I also know that you're a go-between! A lackey begging for crumbs!! I want whoever is on the other end of that pipeline!! And I know there's somebody!! Their paying you to send business their way!! I want to make a deal with them!!! Got it!!"

"What about my deal with them?"

"I'll make you a deal! I'll let you live!!" Steve replies as he shoves him back hard and he lands in the chair. "You." Steve replies as he points his finger at him as he walks around the desk and he spins the chair in his direction. "Turn them on to me. Set up a meeting. And I'll make sure you're get your share. I need you. It will be enough to keep you in the style that you have become a custom to. Now get on the horn and call them. Tell them I want a meeting."

"They don't trust anybody but me. They may not want to meet with you without me being there."

"Tell them I'm a nice guy! Here." Steve takes a card out of his pocket and he tosses it to him. "That is where you can reach me. And just so there's no misunderstanding about what we're talking about, here's this." Steve picks the box up and he tosses it into his lap. "Test it if you like. It's from the latest shipment."

"It may take some time to get ahold of them."

"You have two days! Got it!? I have to run now I have a beautiful, young lady waiting on me. Call me Doctor. You don't want me coming back here." Steve replies as he walks out of the room.

Now since darkness has fallen on Bakersfield Neal and Jack had moved from the bucket down into the truck itself where they were listening to the conversation.

"He's quite the actor." Jack replies.

"He is that. He can turn it on and off at will."

"I hope you two got all of that?" They hear Steve say throw the microphone.

"Yes we did and it was perfect." Neal replies.

"Naturally." Steve replies.

"We're meet you back at the Motel. Pack your bags you're going to be moving up in the world." Jack replies as Neal looks at him.

THE NEXT DAY SOMEPLACE IN BAKERSFIELD:

Neal whistles as he comes into the foyer carrying two duffle bags, looking around at everything, including the maid as she shuts the door behind him.

"Who is it Martha?" Steve asks as he leans over the railing up on the second floor.

Neal looks up at him. "It's Little Orphan Annie!! Who in the Holy Shades of Hannah do you think it is Steve?"

Martha looks over at Neal. "He says his name is, Neal Schon, and he's here to see you Sir."

Neal looks back at her then once again he looks up at Steve. "Sir? I brought you the rest of your stuff!! And my name is Neal! He knows me for goodness sakes!!"

"I told him there was no soliciting allowed Sir." Martha replies seriously.

Neal laughs. "Oh come on!! I think your overdoing it just a little!! You're such a ham!!!" Neal replies.

Steve starts to come down the stairs. "It's all right Martha. You may go."

Neal watches her watching him as she turns and walks out of the room. "What in the hell was all that about?! No Soliciting Allowed? Do you know how long I had to park my ass out there until she deemed me worthy to come in here?! It's freezing out there!! What are you wearing?!"

"This old thing? It's called a smoking jacket." Steve replies.

"You don't smoke!!" Neal replies as he drops the duffle bags to the floor.

"What's all that?" Steve asks.

Neal scratches his head. "Your stuff! You know from the Motel room! And my stuff! This house is plenty big I am sure there is a room for me here, somewhere!"

Steve doesn't answer him he just reaches into the pocket of his smoking jacket and he pulls out a bell which he rings. A few minutes later a Butler comes thru the curtains.

"Yes sir? You rang?"

Neal starts to laugh. "A Butler? You've got to be kidding me?!"

"Is there a problem sir?" The Butler asks as he looks at Neal.

"No Jacob. Could you please take this bag and put it in my room and then take Mr. Schon's and put his in the room next to mine?"

Jacob picks the bags up. "Of course sir." Then he walks across the Foyer and then up the stairs.

"Neal!!! I've always wanted a Butler!! Isn't this cool!!" Steve replies smiling as he slaps Neal on the arm.

"Uh huh. Isn't this over doing it just a bit? By the way who are all these people?" Neal asks.

"No not really. Besides this was all Jack's idea and their Agents. It seems this is how all the big drug lord's live these days. If I'm going to play the part I need to play it to the hilt!! If somebody checks up on me they need to know I am legit! Besides I think I deserve some pampering. You certainly haven't shown me any love lately." Steve replies as he gestures.

"You're never, ever going to let me forget that, are you?" Neal replies as he stands with his hands on his hips.

"No, no I am not!!" Steve replies.

"So where did Jack get this house?" Neal asks.

"The same place he got the Mercedes and the Rolls Royce."

"The Rolls Royce?" Neal asks.

"It's in the garage. The FBI seized them. They used them for undercover operations like this one."

"Sir Breakfast is ready." Martha replies as she comes back into the room.

"Hungry? We have anything you could ever want." Steve replies.

"Waffles?" Neal asks.

"Yes."

"Grapefruit with the strawberry in the middle?" Neal asks.

"Yes."

"Chocolate milk?"

Steve stops and looks at him. "Yeah sure."

"Crème of wheat?" Neal asks again.

"Now you're pushing it." Steve replies.

A FEW HOURS LATER:

"Wow! This a huge house!" Neal replies after Steve took him on a tour. "What was that thing next to the toilet in the Master bathroom?"

Steve looks at him. "Don't you know anything? Don't you have any savoir-faire? Any couth? Where have you been lately?"

Neal scratches his head. "With you! What does any of that have to do with the thing that was in the bathroom?"

"It's not a thing! I've have you know it's a Dubai." Steve replies.

"A Dubai? Oh well that certainly clears that up!! What in the hell is a Dubai?" Neal asks.

"I'll explain it you later. You haven't seen the best part yet! Come on."

Steve takes him out back and next to the pool is a Hot Tub.

"Wow!!! Look at that!! Does it work?" Neal asks.

"Sure it works." Steve replies.

"Have you tried it out?"

"No not yet." Steve replies.

"Why in the hell not!?" Neal asks.

"Well for one thing it's November!"

"Well yeah no shit Steve that is why they call it a hot tub!!" Neal replies.

"Oh yeah! I don't have any swimming trunks!"

"So! I know you have some underwear! Go put it on and I'll go and change in the pool dressing room there. We'll meet back here." Neal replies.

A FEW MINUTES LATER:

"This is the life isn't Steve?" Neal replies as they sit in the hot tub together.

"I'll say."

"You know I wonder how much this set up costs. Ruby would love a hot tub. Hey this would be a great Christmas gift!" Neal replies excitedly. "Romantic evenings together in the hot tub."

Steve laughs. "Yes romantic evenings together sipping on cold glasses of Kool Aid because if you buy one of these babies Kool Aid is going to be all you can afford to drink!! You have to work moonlighting jobs for the rest of your career!!"

"I didn't say it would be for this Christmas now did I? Besides that is what they have credit for! I wonder if they take plastic."

"Sir I'm sorry to interrupt..."

Steve looks over to see Martha standing in the doorway as Neal looks back over his shoulder at her.

"Yes Martha what is it?" Steve asks.

"There is a Doctor Turbin here to see you..." Martha replies.

"Who? What? Did she just say that Turbin was here?" Neal asks quickly.

"Yeah I think so. Martha did you say Doctor Turbin...?" Steve asks.

But before she can answer he comes out of the house passed Martha, quickly before he can see Neal, Steve reaches out and putting his hand on Neal's head he shoves him under the water as he kicks and sputters.

"Doctor Turbin? This is a surprise! Why didn't you call first?" Steve asks just as Neal is able just to bring his nose above water. Then he slaps the water as he looks up at Steve who still has his hand on his head.

"I'm sorry but I thought I would come by..."

"Stop it!" Steve replies.

That causes the Doctor to stop talking.

"Not you!!" Steve replies as he grabs Neal by his hand. "Go ahead Turbin you were saying."

"I feel like I'm interrupting something." The Doctor replies.

"Just my drowning!!" Neal replies as he spits out some water.

"Shut up!! Just stay down there!! Go back in the house and I'll meet you in the den." Steve replies.

The doctor then turns around and he goes back into the house and Steve waits until the door is closed.

"What are you doing? You know he can't see you!!" Steve replies as he looks down at him.

"You were drowning me! What did you expect me to do?" Neal replies.

"I hope he didn't recognize your voice, you moron!!"

"He probably didn't even hear me!! This thing makes a lot of noise." Neal points out. "He's early. Is the house wired?"

"Yeah the den is. You can sneak in thru the kitchen and call Jack." Steve replies.

"Yeah okay."

Steve gets out first and after he grabs his robe and towel he goes back into the house and into the den where the Doctor is waiting on him.

"I'm sorry I guess I should have called first. But you said that you wanted to know right away." Turbin replies. "I hope I didn't interrupt anything with your...boyfriend?"

Steve waves him off. "He'll keep but not for long. Now what did you want?"

"I got a hold of the people you asked me to." The Doctor replies.

"So are they willing?" Steve asks.

"Yes they are. I have to go with you. I told you before they only trust me. We have to go to Nevada tomorrow."

"Nevada?" Steve repeats. "They won't come here?"

"Oh no!! Like I said they don't know you! The only way they agreed to this is if we go there!! Tomorrow they are sending their plane for us. We need to be at the Bakersfield Municipal Airport..."

Steve laughs at this.

"What's so funny?" The Doctor asks him.

"What's funny is they think I'm going to get in their airplane and fly there! I don't know them! I could get on that plane and disappear! So no way! We can go in my plane! I'll call them later and have it ready to go for tomorrow."

"Yes all right I will let them know that."

"And tell them this also. I will have my own car meet us there as well. Just make sure you get good directions! No funny business! Understand?" Steve replies as he points at him.

"Yes, yes I understand. I'll go back home right away and call them."

"You do that Turbin and I'll let you know what time to be at the airport tomorrow. Got it?" Steve replies.

"Yes. Ahhh yes sir."

"Come on I'll show you to the front door." Steve replies as he walks him thru the foyer to the front door then he opens it for him. "I'll talk to you soon. Toodles." Steve replies as he waves his fingers at him then he shuts the door behind him. Steve then looks up to see Neal looking down on him from the second floor.

"An airplane?" Neal asks.

"I bet they have one somewhere." Steve replies as he shrugs. "I ask you what drug kingpin doesn't have a plane."

"Uh huh." Neal replies.

"Jack told me to make it convincing." Steve replies.

"Uh huh."

"I think I'm going to go back to the hot tub." Steve replies as he gestures.

"That's all right. I'll call Jack for you. Don't worry your pretty head about it." Neal replies.

"I won't." Steve replies as he walks off.

"Don't stay in that hot water too long you're end up looking like a big prune!!" Neal yells after him.

"Yeah, yeah!"

"I swallowed some of that water!! You better hope I don't catch anything!! Steve! Steve!"

Neal watches as Steve walks away waving at him as he goes out of sight.

"Moron!!!" Neal yells after him.

TO BE CONTINUED....

