

THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9TH PRECINCT

THE DERELICT WARRIORS

PART 1

“Alright Neal put em up!” Steve replies as he takes a boxer’s stance holding his fists up that are covered by boxing gloves.

“Hey where did you get those?”

“Storage room.” Steve replies as he starts bouncing around the room shadow boxing. “They’re brand new I thought Joey might like them.”

“Steve be careful you might break something.” Neal replies as he watches Steve trade punches with the water cooler.

“Nah I won’t hurt myself.” Steve replies as he bobs and weaves.

Neal smiles. “I wasn’t talking about you.”

Steve looks over at Neal as he winks back at him. Steve stops then he puts his hands on his hips.

“That is a fine how do you do I must say.” Steve replies.

Neal laughs. “Did you say that Joey might like them?”

“Yeah.” Steve replies as he takes them off then after he tosses them to Neal he grabs a cup and gets some water from the cooler.

“They’re little big don’t you think?” Neal replies as he tries them on.

Steve shrugs. “He’ll grow into them.”

“You mean like the football uniform, cowboy boots and the police duty belt, you just happen to find somewhere. Now boxing gloves. I thought you were leaning towards Joey being a cop?” Neal replies.

“Hey, who’s to say that Joey can’t be all of those things?” Steve replies as he crumbles up the paper cup and he tosses it into the trash can then Steve raises his arms in victory. “Two points!!”

Neal exams the boxing gloves. “So I guess this means we’re going to talk about this case?”

Steve comes over and he leans on the desk. “We could pick another if you want, we have plenty to choose from, but....”

“But this one was important.” Neal replies.

“Yeah it’s not every day we bring a city to its knees, right partner.” Steve replies as he gives Neal a little shove.

“Right partner and not to mention the fact that I got my ass royally kicked.”

“Well you knew the job was dangerous when you took it super chicken.” Steve replies as he smiles.

“I did volunteer. When we finally move out of this place I’m going to miss it, you know, the memories.” Neal replies as he looks at the boxing gloves.

“I know what you mean, like when the landlord kicked me out of my old apartment, sometimes I really missed that place.” Steve replies.

“Yeah your new apartment is what started all of this, this mess!” Neal replies as he holds up his fists.

“Wait, what do you mean by my new apartment?! You make it sound like I own the whole apartment complex or something! Which I don’t! Technically it wasn’t mine yet!” Steve replies.

“Didn’t you give them a deposit? You know a deposit? A deposit is money that exchanges hands, sort of like a promise, so they can hold it....”

Steve waves his hands. "Yes Neal I know what a deposit is! So I guess we can start there."

"You're changing the subject." Neal points out.

"No, no I'm not it's the same subject just a different version of the same....subject. As it were." Steve replies as he clears his throat.

"Okay. It started something like this." Neal replies.

XX

Neal's and Ruby's House Early Saturday Morning:

"Ruby honey I thought I told you to go back to bed, I'll take care of the baby."

"Sorry sweetheart I guess I didn't hear you." Steve replies as he comes into the room.

Neal looks back over his shoulder then he laughs while at the same time trying to comfort his crying son.

"Steve! Sorry I didn't know...."

"Don't worry about it. Who do we have here?" Steve asks as he goes over to Neal and he takes the baby's hand. "Wow he's already got a grip!"

"I'm sorry if the baby woke you up. I made Ruby go back to bed."

"Here I'll take him." Steve replies as he holds his arms out.

Neal looks at the baby then he looks at Steve. "Are you sure? He's awful fussy."

"Sure I'm sure. I'll hold Junior while you get his bottle ready."

“He’s awful delicate, you know you have to support his head like this, see.” Neal shows Steve.

“Yes dad I know.” Steve replies as he holds his arms out.

“Steve now you have to be careful he’s a tinny, tiny baby.”

“Yes Neal I know. It’s not like I haven’t ever held a baby before, you know! So give him to me.”

Neal looks down at the crying baby. “Alright son, this is Steve. You might not remember but you have met him before.”

“Neal!”

“Oh alright. Gently now!” Neal replies as he gingerly places the baby into Steve’s arms and he cradles him. “I’m just going to be right over here, getting his bottle ready, okay?”

“Neal you aren’t going to Siberia! We will be fine, won’t we, Junior. Yes we will.” Steve replies as he talks to the baby. While Neal is at the sink the baby stops crying.

“Steve what did you do?” Neal replies as he tosses the kitchen towel over his shoulder and still holding the baby bottle he goes over to Steve who is slowly rocking the baby back and forth.

“It’s called the sway. You just gently sway back and forth. Babies just love it. Isn’t that right junior? Yes it is! Yes it is. My mother told me this always stopped me from crying.” Steve replies as he talks to the baby.

“That is amazing!”

“Neal?” Steve replies.

“Yeah?”

“Did you test the milk?” Steve asks.

Neal looks at the baby bottle. “Test it?”

“Yeah you have to test it to make sure it isn’t too hot.” Steve replies matter of factly.

Neal looks at the bottle again then he looks at Steve. “Well no how do you do that?”

“I’ll show you, here take him, plant your feet just like this and sway gently back and forth.” Steve hands him the baby then he takes the baby bottle from him and they go over to the sink. Where Steve takes the baby bottle and he puts a drop on his wrist.

“See just like that. That’s how you tell if it’s too hot or not. This one is just fine, here you go dad.” Steve replies as he hands Neal the bottle.

“Oh. Steve how do you know all of that.” Neal replies.

Steve pours himself a cup of coffee. “The library.”

“The....the library?!” Neal asks.

“Yeah Neal the library. They have a ton of books about babies. Do you want a bowl of cereal?”

Neal doesn’t answer he is too busy watching his son.

“Neal?”

“What?”

“I said do you want a bowl of cereal?”

“Oh. Maybe later.” Neal replies.

Steve gets two bowls and a box of cereal down from the cabinet and he goes over to the table and he sits them down. Then he gets the milk and silverware. Then he pulls out a chair for Neal.

“Here sit.”

Neal sits down and Steve sits down across from him and he pours himself a bowl of cereal.

“You can say it out loud you know.” Steve says.

“Say what?” Neal replies.

“That you’re nervous or even scared.” Steve replies.

“But I’m not....” Neal looks down at the baby.

“Liar.” Steve replies as he moves the cereal around the bowl.

“Am I that transparent?” Neal asks.

“Like glass. It’s alright you know, everybody is nervous with their first baby. Ray told me they were terrified when I was born, somehow they figured it all out, and you will too.”

“For nine months you wait, hope and pray everything will be alright and it didn’t seem real until that day in the hospital when I saw Ruby holding him. Steve, I didn’t know I had that much love, and when I got to hold him, I thought my heart was going to burst. Do you know what we did that first night after Ruby and I brought him home?”

“What?” Steve asks.

“We watched him sleep.”

Steve smiles as he looks down at the table.

“We were so worried that something was going to happen to him we couldn’t let him out of our sight.” Neal replies as he strokes the baby’s head. “That’s normal isn’t it?”

“It’s a natural thing to want to watch him. The little guy can really eat. He finished that whole bottle.” Steve replies as he rests his chin in his hand.

Neal holds the bottle up then he sits it on the table.

“Want some help dad?” Steve asks.

“No I think I got it.” Neal stands and as he holds him up he rests his head against his shoulder as he burps him. When he is done he puts him back down in the bassinet.

"Have a cup of coffee and some cereal." Steve replies as Neal sits back down.

"So what are your plans for today?" Neal asks.

"I'm going to go by the soup kitchen and help out there for a few hours then I'm going to come back here and help you clean out the garage, remember."

"Oh yeah how can I forget the garage." Neal replies as he looks thru the brochures that are on the table. "Steve are you sure you can afford this place? It sure looks pretty ritzy for a cop on a budget."

"It's only twenty five more dollars a month than my old place."

"But it has covered parking."

"Technically they call it a carport. And it's on the bus route." Steve replies.

Neal snorts at this. "You don't ride the bus!"

"Neal its brand spanking new! Neal I have never lived in a brand new place before, this will be the first apartment I had where my butt is the only one that has sat on the toilet seat!" Steve replies as he laughs. "That is when they get finished building them."

Neal rubs his eyes. "You put a deposit down on a place that isn't even finish yet?"

"Well yah it's called pre-order Neal! They should be ready in a couple more months and then I'll be out of your hair."

"You know you can stay as long as you want." Neal replies.

"Yes I know but eventually I will put a huge cramp in yours and Ruby's style, if you know what I mean. " Steve replies as he stands up. "I'm going to jump in the shower."

Neal laughs. "Alright I'll guess I'll clean up the kitchen. Wait, do you hear that?" Neal asks as he looks around.

"Pager." Steve replies as he looks around the kitchen.

“Yeah but where is it?” Neal asks as Steve shrugs. “Oh look I found it. It was in the bassinet.” Neal replies as he holds it up.

“How did it get in there?” Steve asks.

“Whose knows, maybe Ruby put it there to keep junior entertained. Uh oh it’s the Captain. “Neal replies as he looks at the pager.

Neal goes over to the phone hanging on the wall and he dials the number.

“Hey Captain. Yeah let me get a pen and paper.”

Steve hands Neal a notepad and a pen. “Okay go ahead.” Neal writes down the address then he looks at it. “Give me that again. No, no I got it. Okay. Yeah Steve and will be heading that way soon, we’re check in with dispatch. Bye.”

“We caught a case?” Steve asks.

“Yeah I forgot we were on call this weekend.” Neal replies as he looks at the address again.

“Well I better go and take a shower.” Steve replies as he walks out of the room.

“Hey Steve.”

Steve stops and he looks back over his shoulder at Neal. “Yeah.”

“What’s that address again at your new apartment?” Neal asks.

Steve turns with his hands on his hips and he looks at him. “Why?”

2340 CHERRY LANE. THE CHERRY LANE DUXPLEXES.

“You would pick a place to live with the word cherry in it.” Neal replies as they walk to where Sam is, down on one knee, examining the body.

“Don’t be rude.” Steve replies.

Neal looks around at the construction and the carport where the body is and the nearby concrete truck.

"So Steve you put a deposit down on this place?" Neal asks.

"Yeah."

"Maybe you can get your deposit back." Neal replies.

"Good morning boys." Sam replies.

"Sam." They both reply.

"So did I hear Neal right when he asked you if you put a deposit down on this place?" Sam asks.

Steve looks up at the sky then he takes a deep breath. "Yes. Where we are standing was supposed to be my carport and that over there," They look to where Steve is pointing. "Is my half of the duplex. My brand new duplex where my new bathroom is with the new toilet that no one, but me, would have been sitting on! Which is now a crime scene! Happy?"

"Well maybe you can get your deposit back." Sam replies.

"Where's the responding officer?" Neal asks as he rubs his eyes.

"Right here Detectives, Officer Palmer at your service." The officer replies as he shakes hands all around.

Steve takes out his notebook. "Tell us what you got."

"At about 06:45 this morning the crew working on this construction arrived for work and as they were just getting ready to pour the concrete, they found the body. Then they told the foreman, I have their names if you want them. They are pretty well shaken up but I'm afraid they don't speak much English."

Steve puts his hand on the officer's arm. "That's alright neither do I. Let's go."

The officer looks at him. "What?"

"Well Sam any early observations?" Neal asks as he squats down next to him.

"How long as he been here?" Neal asks as he takes notes.

“Well he was dumped sometime last night, he’s out of rigor. Does anybody know when they knock off work here?” Sam asks.

“Well we can find out. It’s summertime so I would guess they would work until it got dark but then last night was Friday night. Any blood?” Neal asks.

“At first glance, no. He looks to be in his thirties and probably homeless, look at his appearance. Dirty clothes, his fingernails are dirty, his hair likewise, he hasn’t had a bath in days. But he seems well fed and muscular but look at his hands.” Sam replies.

“You said his fingernails were dirty.”

“Yes but beyond that, notice anything?” Sam replies as he holds one of his hands up as Neal looks closely at it.

“Well I see a tan line, like where a ring used to be, some sort of sticky looking stuff and bruises.” Neal replies.

“Very good Detective, I’ll turn you into a Medical Examiner yet!” Sam replies.

“I guess you didn’t find any I.D.?” Neal asks.

“None but we can go thru his pockets better once we get him back to the lab.”

“Okay Doc lets have the crime lab boys bag his hands and have Phil take a lot of photos. And you know Doc we might have gotten lucky on this one.” Neal replies.

“How so?”

“If it been darker out they might have just poured that concrete and nobody would even know that he was here.” Neal replies.

“That could have been what somebody was hoping for Detective.” Sam replies as he looks down at the body. “Could have been exactly what they were hoping for.”

“I’ll get back to you later Doc. Hey Steve get anything?” Neal asks as he gets up and he goes over to Steve.

Steve taps his pen on the notepad. "No not really. They were supposed to be here to pour concrete at my apartment....I mean at the apartment....and when they saw the body they stopped. One of the concrete operators flagged down the patrol officer. The foreman came over and I told him to wait in the trailer, maybe we can get some coffee." Steve replies.

"Let's go."

They walk over to the trailer and up the stairs to where they see the foreman on the phone.

"Yes I know that!! Well what do you expect me to do? I don't know what happened! The police are crawling up my ass!!" He looks up from the phone to see Steve and Neal standing there. "I know what a deadline is! Yes! Alright! I'll try and take care of it! What? Yes Sir, I meant I will take care of it. Bye!" He hangs up the phone.

"We're Homicide Detectives Perry and Schon from the Oceanview Police Department." Neal replies as he and Steve show their badges to him.

"I'm Terry Williams the foreman. Do you want some coffee? Donuts? Cops eat donuts right?" Terry replies as he walks over to the table where the coffee pot is.

"Right. Mr. Williams what time did you get here this morning?" Steve asks.

"About 5." He replies as he hands Neal a cup of coffee.

"That's early for a Saturday morning isn't Mr. Williams." Neal asks.

"Call me Terry." He replies as he hands Steve a cup of coffee. "No not really, not when you have a deadline and the corporate big-wigs are breathing down your neck. And having a dead body in the midst of it doesn't help matters."

"We noticed the chain link around the perimeter of the property isn't the gate locked after your guys leave for the night?" Steve asks.

"Yeah I am usually the last to leave and last night I locked the gate." Terry replies.

"Who else has a key?" Neal asks.

“Just me and there’s an extra one locked in the apartment office.” Terry replies.

“Do the leasing agents have access to that key Terry?” Steve asks.

“I don’t know why they would need it. I mean the models they show to people are outside the fence, they really don’t have a reason to come back here.” Terry replies as he sits down and he rubs his face.

“Terry are you alright?” Steve asks.

“I’ve never seen a dead body before, I thought he was asleep. He looked homeless and I don’t know why he would sleep outside when he could get into any of these vacant apartments. I thought he was asleep. I tried....” Terry looks up at them. “...To wake him up. I touched him. I touched a dead body.”

“Have you ever seen him before?” Neal asks.

Terry shakes his head. “No I don’t think so. Why would somebody dump him here?”

Neal and Steve look at each other. “That is a good question. Look Terry I’m going to leave you my card, if you think of anything else just give us a call.” Steve replies as he hands him the card.

“You don’t have any projects out of town do you?” Neal asks.

“No why? You don’t think I had something to do with this, do you?” Terry asks with just a slight tone of indignation.

“No Terry we’re just beating the trees to see what falls out.” Neal replies.

“What my partner means it might be better if you stay put. Catch my drift?” Steve replies.

“Yeah sure.” Terry replies.

“Oh just one more thing. What time did your workers knock off last night?” Neal asks.

“At 4 o’clock. It was Friday and payday.” Terry replies.

“Well okay thanks for now, can we come back and talk to you again, that is if we have to?” Steve asks.

“Sure no problem.” Terry replies as he waves at them.

“See ya.” Neal replies.

Terry watches them leave the trailer then when they are gone another person comes out of the back room and he stops and looks out the blinds.

“Who are they?” They asks.

“Trouble.” Terry replies.

“We’re just beating the trees to see what falls out?” Steve asks as they walk along. “Where did you get that?”

“Kojak. You know I think it’s odd that they have a deadline but he lets his workers knock off early on a Friday? Catch my drift? Where did you get that from?” Neal replies.

“The Mod Squad. Well maybe he was expecting a delivery and he didn’t want anybody around to see it.”

“You know something about old Terry back there bugs me. Did you notice how he kept looking towards the back, like he was expecting somebody else to show up?” Neal asks.

“He wasn’t alone. “ Steve replies.

“Exactly. I think we need to find out more about him.” Neal replies as they get into the car.

THE MEDICAL EXAMINER’S OFFICE LATER THAT DAY :

“That is just fascinating! Continue!” Sam replies as he continues to take notes.

“Neal even had labor pains!!” Steve says around the sandwich he’s been eating just as Neal blew in thru the door.

“There you are! How can you eat down here?” Neal asks as he holds a folder.

“Easy! I’m hungry and they’re submarine sandwiches. What one?” Steve asks as he holds one out to him.

Neal makes a face. “No. Maybe later back at the desk. What was that about labor pains?”

“Sam here is writing a book about men having sympathy pains when their wives are pregnant. Like when you had morning sickness and I’m telling him about the time when Ruby had labor pains and so did you!!”

Neal takes a deep breath. “I told you before they weren’t labor pains they were gas.”

“Bah!” Steve laughs. “They were labor pains! You had that same look on your face when you had kidney stones!”

“Fascinating!” Sam replies.

“Is that the file on Terry Williams?” Steve points.

“Yes and thank you for asking. Nothing!” Neal replies as he throws the folder on the desk and Steve picks it up. “So what’s the word on our John Doe back there?”

“He’s dead.” Steve replies as he looks thru the folder.

“Wow Steve nothing gets passed you does it? Moron! I know that already!”

“Nothing!”

“I said that already. Once again somebody else with a life even more boring than yours. “Neal replies. “Sam watcha got.”

“He was beaten to death.” Sam replies as he looks at his notes.

“Beaten to death?” Steve repeats.

“Yes he was beaten within an inch of his life. Come on boys I want to show you something.” Sam replies as he gets up from the desk and they follow him out into lab. Once there Sam takes a corner of the sheet and he pulls it back.

“He was in pretty good shape for a homeless guy. “ Neal replies.

“Exactly. He has great muscle tone. He has broken ribs, contusions, bruises and some old injuries. Sometime in the last couple of days he received a blow to the head and that killed him. His head struck a stationary object.” Sam replies.

“What about his hands?” Neal asks.

“Once we cleaned him up we found out his hands were well kept, manicured that sort of thing. Except for this sticky substance on them.” Sam replies as he holds one of his hands up.

“Well did you find out what it was?” Steve asks.

“Yes it’s adhesive.” Sam replies.

“Adhesive? Like from what exactly?” Steve asks.

“Tape.” Sam replies. “His hands were wrapped in tape.”

“So he was tied up somewhere with tape?” Neal asks.

“No not tied up, wrapped, like in boxing.” Sam replies.

Steve and Neal look at each other. “Boxing?”

“So our homeless guy was a boxer?” Steve replies. “Did you find any I.D. on him?”

“No nothing. I was able to get his fingerprints.” Sam replies.

Neal rubs his chin. “Well they are only a handful of places in the city where they train boxers. We’re need a good picture to show around.”

“Well if he was a boxer he wasn’t at it long and he wasn’t very good at it either.” Sam replies.

“It was like a hobby you mean Doc?” Steve asks.

“Possibly, it wasn’t his first profession. I still have more work to do on him. I’ve have him finish soon then you’re get my final report.”

“Just between us Doc what do you think?” Neal asks.

“Homicide.” Sam replies as he covers his back up.

“Thanks Doc, we’ll have Phil come down and take some candid shots for the canvas.” Steve replies.

“Okay I’ll go ahead and wash his face so he looks a little better.” Sam replies as he goes over to the sink.

“Thanks Doc see ya later.” Neal replies.

“Bye boys.” Sam replies.

“So what do we do now?” Steve asks.

“Let’s go back to Sam’s office and call Phil and while we wait on him to do his thing, we’re take the sandwiches back upstairs to our desk....” Neal replies.

“Why don’t we just eat down here?” Steve asks.

“Look Steve I told you before I am not eating down here in the morgue!” Neal replies as he points to the floor.

“Technically Neal we’re eating in his office NOT out here!” Steve replies.

“Sam’s office is IN the morgue!”

“Look Neal they don’t care if you chew with your mouth open they’re dead!”

“I don’t chew....”

“BOYS!”

Neal and Steve both turn and look at Sam.

“I’m not dead.” Sam replies as he looks over the top of his glass at them.

“Oh yeah sorry Doc, besides I need to call Ruby and check on her and the baby.”

“Good idea!” Steve replies as he walks off.

Neal raises his arms in the air. “Good idea? I’m glad you think so....”

Sam shakes his head and smiles as he watches them walk off.

A FEW HOURS LATER:

“Alright the sketch of our John Doe has been sent out on the wire to all the newspapers in town and we’re in time to make the morning addition. And we also have the photos of him that Phil took, do you want some more coffee?” Steve asks.

“No I am just about all coffee out, while you were gone, the Captain told us to go home and get some sleep.” Neal yawns. “I have never been so tired.”

“Want me to drive?” Steve asks.

“Yeah I can barely keep my eyes open. Before Alicia left she made us a list of all of the places in Oceanview that trains boxers, has boxing classes or has something to do with boxing.” Neal replies.

“How many are there?” Steve asks.

“Only six. We can check on those tomorrow.”

“It’s already tomorrow.” Steve replies as he looks at the clock.

“So it is, okay later today then. Let’s go home. You drive son.” Neal replies as he tosses Steve the car keys.

“Thanks dad don’t mind if I do!”

HOURS LATER THAT SAME DAY:

“Well we cross the first two off our list they are closed.” Neal replies.

“Where’s the next one?” Steve asks as he sucks on a lollipop.

“Hmmm a couple of blocks away. I have an idea, why don’t we split up. You take these two and I’ll take these two.” Neal replies as he tears the paper in half and he hands the bottom of the paper to Steve. “I’ll drop you off at the corner.”

"See ya later dad." Steve replies as he gets out at the corner.

"Steve, just how long are you going to keep calling me that?"

Steve leans in the window. "Oh probably for the next twenty years or so." Steve smiles and winks at him as he turns and walks off.

It's a beautiful summer day Steve notices, the haze from the morning had burned off and now it was warm and breezy and it was an easy walk the four blocks to the address he had. Once he got there he stops in front and he looks at it and then he realizes it's no longer a gym, but a laundry mat. So Steve decides to go inside and take a look around.

"Can I help you with something?" Asks a big guy from the back that comes out with a broom.

"Yeah I'm just wondering how long this place has been here?"

The man looks him up and down. "Who's asking?"

Steve takes a deep breath then he puts the lollipop back in his mouth as he roots around his back pocket. "Me. That's who's asking." Steve replies as he holds his I.D. up.

"You don't look like a cop."

"Yeah, yeah and yeah I've heard that before. I thought there was a gym here?" Steve asks.

"Nah not for three years now. I own this place."

"Okay well maybe you have seen this guy." Steve shows him the picture.

The man puts his glasses down on his nose. "Nah what happened to him?"

"He's dead." Steve replies.

"Dead? Sorry can't help you."

"No? Well okay thanks for looking. Oh by the way can you tell me where this address is?"

The man looks at the address. "By the docks, it's about 5 blocks."

“Oh okay thanks.”

After Steve leaves the man goes over to the phone, lifts the receiver, then he dials the number.

Steve is enjoying the four block walk, the wind blowing back his hair, the blue sky and he covers the distance quickly and just up around the corner, he sees the sign for the gym. He steps off of the curb, just about to cross the alley when he is grabbed by his arm and yanked off of his feet and into the alley.

The next thing Steve knows he is being held from behind by a bruiser of a guy, his huge arms around his neck as he is being drugged further back into the alley. Steve’s hands are wrapped around his arms in a dire attempt to keep from being choked to death.

“You....you can have my wallet. It’s in my back pocket. Just don’t hurt me.” Steve manages to say.

“I don’t want your wallet.” He man says into Steve’s ear.

“Hey man you can have whatever you want just don’t hurt me.” Steve begs this time.

“We want you to stop asking questions little man, got it? I could break you in two right now but on second thought, I could use a little fun. You’re kind of cute, what say, you give me a...” The man whispers in Steve’s ear and Steve closes his eyes.

“Hey man if it gets me out of this alley alive, I’ll do it, but you have to let me go first. Okay?” Steve replies.

“You promise to behave?”

“Yeah man Scout’s Honor.” Steve replies.

The man thinks about this then he slowly lets him go. His hand on Steve’s right shoulder.

“Have you ever heard the old saying the bigger they are, the harder they fall?” Steve asks him.

Steve looks over his shoulder at him and he can see him thinking. “No I don’t....”

The next thing he knows Steve grabs his hand that is on his shoulder and he pulls his arm tight under his neck then he reaches around with his other hand and puts it on the back of his head and Steve flips him over his shoulder. The man lands with a dull thud in the alley on his back. Steve then grabs his arm and he twists it until he is on his stomach, lying face down in the dirty alley.

“OW HOLY SHIT! LET GO OF MY ARM!”

In response Steve holding the same arm twists it up and he holds it tightly by the hand, bending it back. He places one foot on the back of his neck. Pushing his face further down onto the pavement. Causing the man to yell and kick.

“Ow! You’re going to break my arm! Let it go!”

“Not until you tell me who sent you? Huh? Who was it?” Steve lifts his arm little higher which causes the man to yell. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself picking on a poor, helpless, little guy like myself! Now who sent you?”

“Screw you!!”

In reply Steve lifts his arm again which causes him to yell again and kick his feet.

“Using that kind of language! Tsk! Tsk! Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?” Steve asks.

“It was a joke! I was kidding!”

“Oh really? Then how do you like this for a punch line? You sorry scum bag, I’m a cop!” Steve replies.

The man coughs. “A cop?!”

“Yeah man the fuzz! And you’re under arrest for assault of a police officer! Say Uncle!!!” Steve applies some more pressure to his arm.

“UNCLE! HOLY SHIT! UNCLE!” The man yells as he kicks and pounds the pavement with his hand.

“That’s better!” Steve says as he smiles reaching behind him for his handcuffs.

“Oh and one more thing....” The man looks up at him. “I was never a boy scout!”

TEN MINUTES LATER:

“Where were you if you don’t mind me asking?” Steve asks Neal as they watch the guy being put in the back of a squad car.

“I was sitting right over there.” Neal replies as he points.

“And you couldn’t, oh I don’t know, come over and help?” Steve asks.

“To me it didn’t look like you needed any help, I was watching to make sure that nobody else came into the alley. I especially like the part when you told him to say ‘Uncle’.” Neal replies.

“Yeah that was good wasn’t it?” Steve replies.

“So what did he say to you that made you so mad?” Neal asks.

“He wanted me to give him a blow job.” Steve replies.

“You’ve got to be kidding! Shocking! A young man like yourself can’t even walk down the street anymore.” Neal replies.

“Do tell.”

“So he wouldn’t give up who sent him?” Neal asks.

“Nope.” Steve replies as he shakes his head. “This is a lot of excitement over a homeless dead guy and we don’t even know who he is yet.”

“Hey Detectives dispatch is trying to get ahold of you.” One of the officers say to Neal as he walks by.

“Thanks.”

Neal goes over to the car and gets in and a few minutes later he comes back with a piece of paper in his hand.

“Where’s a pay phone?”

“Over there.” Steve points.

Steve follows him over to it. “Do you have a dime?” Neal asks.

“A dime? Yeah I think so.” Steve puts his hand in his pocket and he comes out with one. “Who are you calling?”

“Wendy.”

“Wendy?” Steve replies as he watches Neal dial the number.

“Yeah Wendy, its Neal. Wait! What? I can’t hear you.”

Steve tugs on his arm. “What is she saying? What does she want?”

Neal tries to shake him off. “Stop it! No not you, Steve. Now what? Right now?” Neal looks at his watch.

“What’s going on?” Steve asks.

“I guess 15 or 20 minutes. Wait say that again? Wendy slow down I can’t understand you. Okay we’ll meet you out back. Yeah, yeah I got it. Bye.” Neal hangs up the phone.

“What did she want?”

“She wants us to meet her.” Neal replies.

“Why?”

“I don’t know she was talking so fast I could barely understand her, I think she wants to tell us something. Let’s go.” Neal replies as they both walk to the car.

OCEANVIEW CITY ZOO 1200 BROADMOORE:

“Are you sure she said Zoo?” Steve asks as they wait behind the Zoo.

“Yes she said Zoo.” Neal replies.

“Maybe you misunderstood her.” Steve replies.

“No I didn’t misunderstand her. She said Zoo. Zoo has three letters! Z-O-O. She said Zoo!! How can you misunderstand the word ZOO?”

“Where could she be?” Steve asks as he looks around.

“Why are you asking me? I...”

The next thing they know there is a young women, wearing a zookeeper outfit, a pith helmet and carrying a butterfly net knocking on the passenger side window.

“Let me in!!”

“Well Steve let her in.” Neal replies.

“Oh yeah.”

Steve opens the door and gets out with the intention of letting her in the backseat but the minute Steve opens the door Wendy pushes him back in and lands on his lap.

“DRIVE!!” Wendy yells.

“Hey what’s going on?” Steve asks.

“Just go!!” Wendy replies.

Neal looks at her as he puts it into drive and he hits the gas with Steve scrambling to shut the door.

“You could at least take the pith helmet off!” Steve replies as Wendy hits him in the forehead with the brim. “Ow!!”

“Sorry!” Wendy replies as she takes the helmet off and tosses it into the back seat.

“Is that what I think it is?” Neal asks.

“Maybe. What do you think it is?” Wendy asks as she adjust herself on Steve’s lap.

“A butterfly net?” Neal asks.

“Bingo! Give that man a cigar!” Wendy yells as she tosses the butterfly net into the back seat.

“Well that certainly fits with all the weird shit that has been going on today.”

“What’s with the get-up?” Steve asks as he motions with his hands.

“I was in disguise!!” Wendy replies.

"Nice legs." Steve replies.

"Oh thanks." Wendy says.

"You were in disguise as a zookeeper?" Neal asks.

"Boy Neal nothing gets passed you, does it?" Wendy asks as she glances out the back window and Steve laughs.

Neal throws Steve a look. "Where are we going by the way?" Neal asks.

"I don't care anywhere!" Wendy replies as she looks out the back window again.

"What are you looking for?" Steve asks.

"I'm being followed!!" Wendy replies. "That's why I'm wearing this get-up! They followed me to the Zoo and I changed my clothes!"

"Who is they and why are they following you?" Neal asks.

"I don't know!! If I knew that do you think I would have called you two lug nuts?!" Wendy yells.

"Okay that did it!!!"

Neal guns it to pass another car then he heads for the nearest place he can find to pull into, a rest stop. Once there he slams on the brakes and he skids to a stop on the loose gravel in the parking lot, causing Steve and Wendy to stop their headlong plunge into the dash by putting out their hands to catch themselves, while Steve uses his other arm to hold onto Wendy.

"Neal! What in the hell are you doing! Are you trying to kill us!!?" Steve yells at him.

Neal throws the car into park. "I want to know what in the hell is going on! And I want to know now! First of all, you two, look just a little cozy."

Wendy and Steve look at each other.

"And second, Steve here almost got beat up by a goon in an alley just for asking questions about our dead guy!"

Wendy looks at Steve. "Oh did he hurt you?" Wendy asks.

“Not as much as you’re hurting me right now.” Steve replies as he squirms underneath her.

“Am I sitting on your keys?” Wendy asks.

“Oh no sweetheart that ain’t my keys.” Steve replies.

The next thing they know they hear Neal mumbling something as he kicks open the driver’s side door and he gets out, slamming it, then he walks around the car to the passenger side door and he opens it.

“Alright get out of the car!” Reaching inside he grabs Wendy by her arm and pulls her off of Steve’s lap.

“Hey!” Wendy yells.

“I want to know what in the hell is going on! We’re not even halfway into this investigation and already we have muscle bound goons coming out of the woodwork! We don’t even know his name yet!” Neal replies.

Wendy wrestles her arm away from Neal. “That’s why I called you two, I know who he is, I know his name!”

Neal takes his notepad out of his pocket. “Great, what’s his name?”

“Robert, Robert Stone. He’s a freelance writer.”

“Where’s he from?” Neal asks.

“You mean originally? Nebraska. But he’s from all over, he travels across the country, he’s even been overseas, following story leads and writing about them. He’s been known for his investigative stories, he has a way of finding out about scandals and cover-ups, things like that. He wrote that story about that factory in Maine that was dumping sewage, he was instrumental in getting it shut down.” Wendy replies.

“Wait. He wrote that? It was a series of articles, I read those. They were good!” Steve replies.

“Wait, you just said that he writes about scandals and cover-ups? Why was he here in Oceanview? What’s going on here?”

Wendy shrugs. “I don’t know he didn’t tell me.”

“He didn’t tell you?! I thought you were a reporter? I thought you knew everything that went on in this city?” Neal replies.

“Well obviously you were wrong!” Wendy replies.

“You said that you talked to him? When was that?” Steve asks.

“The last time? A couple of months ago.” Wendy replies.

“A couple of months ago? You didn’t think to call the police and report him missing?” Neal asks.

“I didn’t say he was missing, he was working! When he writes his stories he goes undercover, it might take him a year to get enough info for a story. He might surface every so often but usually you don’t see him unless he needs something.” Wendy replies.

“Okay let’s start over.” Neal replies. “When was the very first time you heard from him?” Neal asks.

“December. He called me from the bus station downtown and he asked me to pick him up, so I did. We went back to my apartment and he stayed there a couple of days. He asked me questions about the city.” Wendy replies.

“What sort of questions?” Steve asks.

“Questions about the homeless men downtown, the soup kitchen....”

“The soup kitchen?” Steve asks.

“The soup kitchen and gyms.” Wendy replies.

“Gyms?” Neal asks. “Wendy?” Neal scratches his head.

“What?” She looks at him. “What? Spit it out! Oh I get it! You want to know if we were lovers or not?”

Steve looks at her.

“Yes we were. Feel better now? We met in Journalism school and it was nothing serious, just a casual, sexual relationship. No strings attached. Haven’t you ever heard of that kind of relationship before?”

Neal looks over at Steve.

“Why are you looking at me?” Steve asks as he points to himself.

Neal scratches his head. “When you saw him last where was he?”

“Out on the street, I didn’t recognize him, he was panhandling. I almost told him to take a hike but then I saw who it was.”

“How did he look?” Steve asks.

“Like he had been in a fight.” Wendy replies.

“Didn’t you ask him what had happened to him?” Neal asks.

“Of course I did! But he wouldn’t tell me, he just said he was working on an angle. Or in layman’s terms....” Wendy gestures at Steve and Neal. “A story.”

“So what’s this big story he was working on?” Steve asks.

“I don’t know.” Wendy simply replies.

Neal laughs. “You....you don’t know?”

“No I don’t know. He didn’t tell me and I didn’t ask.” Wendy replies.

“He has been in the city for almost a year now, you’re sleeping with him, you didn’t ask him what he’s writing about and he didn’t tell you?” Neal asks.

“The first thing you learn in this business is your colleagues are also your competition! Any story you’re working on you keep it to yourself!! It’s a hard lesson to learn, I know. Reporters by default are selfish. We have to be. Robert was selfish. No I don’t know what he was working on.”

“How did Robert know to come here?” Neal asks.

“I don’t know what you mean?” Wendy asks.

“He means that somebody would have had to give him a tip.” Steve replies.

“Reporters are like cops, I mean, you have your sources right?”

“Right.” Wendy replies.

“Somebody, somewhere knew what was going on and they gave Robert a tip to come down here and write a story.” Neal replies.

Wendy laughs. “It wasn’t me, I told you I don’t know what’s going on!”

“Wendy, Robert was basically lured down here.” Steve replies.

“Not by me.” Wendy replies.

“Did Robert have a hotel room or a car?” Neal asks.

“No.”

“When you two, got together, where did you go?” Steve asks.

“Back to my apartment.” Wendy replies.

“If Robert didn’t have a hotel room or a car where did he keep his stuff? I mean he had to keep notes, you keep notes right?” Neal asks.

“Yeah all reporters keep notes but I don’t know where he kept them.” Wendy replies.

“He didn’t leave them at your place?” Steve asks.

“No! I don’t even keep my notes at home, they are at another place.” Wendy replies.

“What about your desk at work?” Steve asks.

“No he never went there. I’m telling you for the hundredth time I don’t know anything!”

Neal rubs his forehead. “Okay what about these people you say...”

“I say?” Wendy repeats.

Neal takes a deep breath. “What about these people that are following you? When did you first noticed them?”

“I’m not sure, probably Thursday. They are driving a big, black sedan. Today I was leaving the newspaper after I saw the teletype you sent out, I was on my way to the Precinct. I saw them sitting at the curb. Instead of going to my car I did the first thing I thought of, I hopped on the bus and that bus was going to the Zoo.”

“You know a lot of things bother me about this case. I’m bothered by the fact you don’t know anything about this guy, what’s he doing, what’s he writing about. This guy who has been in your apartment, who you have been sleeping

with. But you know what really, really bothers me the most. Is that you don't seem to care!"

Wendy reaches out and she slaps Neal hard across the face. "You're a bastard, you know that."

Steve gets to his feet and he gets in between them and taking Wendy's arm he steers her to the back of the car.

"Okay time out."

Steve watches as Neal walks over to the Coke machine and he gets a bottle of coke then he goes over to the nearby picnic table and he sits down.

"He has no right to say that to me! He doesn't know anything about me!"

"Wendy, he's just trying to sort this out."

"So am I!" Wendy holds his arms. "I am telling you the truth. He didn't tell me anything about what he was writing about."

"Let us go back to your apartment and take a look around, he might have left something there. He could have gone there when you weren't there and hid something, intending to come back later to get it. Do you have a spare key hidden anywhere?" Steve asks.

Wendy shakes her head. "No but the bedroom window's lock is broken, Robert knew about that."

"Okay, do you want a coke?" Steve asks.

Wendy nods her head.

"Okay I'll be back." Steve replies as he walks over to the coke machine and he gets two cokes, sitting them on the picnic table.

"Does it hurt?" Steve asks Neal.

"Nah you've hit me harder."

"She said we can go over to her apartment with her and look around." Steve replies.

"You believe her don't you?" Neal replies as he looks up at him.

Steve rests his foot on the bench between Neal's feet as he leans over.

"If I say yes you won't kick me out of your house, will you?" Steve asks as he smiles.

Neal smiles as he shakes his head. "Why?"

"Because as cops we're selfish too."

"I'm not following." Neal replies.

"We work a case, like this one, and somebody else gets the credit. Like when the FBI comes in and takes over. We deserve the collar but they get it. Like the time when we were working a case for a week and the Captain gave it to somebody else, remember how we felt? It's ours. Understand now?"

Neal looks over at Wendy. "Yeah I think I do."

"Come on let's go to Wendy's apartment." Steve extends his hand and Neal takes it as he pulls him off the picnic table.

3612 ROYAL COURT APT 3B:

"I just want to warn you it might be a little messy." Wendy replies as she walks up the hallway, ahead of them, to her apartment taking keys out of her pocket but when she gets to the door she stops.

"What's wrong?" Steve asks.

Wendy looks at them. "It's open."

"I take it you didn't leave it open?" Neal asks.

"No, I always lock it."

Steve takes Wendy's arm and he pushes her in the direction of the elevator.

"Stand over there."

Moving together they both removed their guns from their holsters as they take positions on opposite sides of the door.

“Ask her the layout of this place.” Neal whispers to Steve.

Almost immediately Steve replies. “Living room, kitchen to the left of the door, bedroom and bathroom are at the back and the balcony, oh yeah, the fire escape outside the bedroom....window.” Steve winds down when he sees Neal looking at him.

Neal just shakes his head. “I’ll open it, you call it.” Neal whispers to him.

Using his foot Neal kicks the door open. “Oceanview Police if anybody is in there come out now!” Steve yells. “Anything?”

“I don’t see anything.” Neal replies. “On the count of three?” Neal holds up three fingers.

Steve nods his head.

Neal counts to three and on three they make entry. Neal enters the living room, then in the kitchen, while Steve searches the rest of the apartment. When Steve comes back into the living room he holsters his gun. “Wow she wasn’t kidding about being messy.”

“I’ll say.” Neal replies putting its gun back in its holster as he looks around.

The room, for all intense purposes, was a disaster. Everything in the living room was either turned over, turned out, pictures removed from the walls, a bookcase was emptied, the contents scattered about the room.

“The bedroom looks pretty much the same.” Steve replies.

They hear a gasp from the front door where Wendy is standing, her eyes wide as saucers, hands covering her mouth as she looks around.

“Don’t come in.” Steve stops her.

“Oh my god!” Wendy replies.

“Neal they weren’t amateurs, the lid from the toilet tank was removed, they even took the vent covers off the wall.”

“Yeah all the box stuff in the kitchen was cut open and dumped on the floor.” Neal replies. ~~“Likewise with the flour, sugar and coffee containers that were on the counters.”~~

“Obviously we’re not the only ones who thinks something was here.” Steve replies.

“Oh my god! Geraldine! I almost forgot about Geraldine!” Wendy replies.

“Who or what is Geraldine?” Neal asks.

“Her cat.” Steve replies as Neal looks at him.

“Geraldine! Here Kitty, kitty! Come to Momma! Oh she must have been so terrified! Steve, can you please go and find her?”

“Yeah Steve go find her, you have a lot of experience with p....”

Steve points his finger at Neal. “Don’t say it! Alright already. Geraldine. Here Kitty, Kitty come to Steve.” Steve calls as he walks off into the bedroom emerging a few minutes holding Geraldine, a calico cat.

“Here you go, she was hiding in the closet.” Steve replies as he puts her in Wendy’s arms.

“Poor baby.” Wendy replies.

“They came in thru the fire escape, it looks out over the alley, and the building next door, and there are no windows on that side.” Steve replies.

“What about the neighbors?” Neal asks.

“There is Mrs. Rosencrantz across the hallway, the apartment next door is vacant. What am I supposed to do now?” Wendy asks.

“Well you can’t stay here, we have a safe place for you to stay.” Steve replies.

“I have a bag at the newspaper office and Mrs. Rosencrantz can watch Geraldine.” Wendy replies.

“Okay since that’s settle I saw a phone downstairs, I’m going to go down and call the Crime Scene boys to come out.” Neal replies as he steps over things on his way out the door then Steve follows behind him to join Wendy out in the hall.

“It was those guys that were following me, wasn’t it?” Wendy asks.

“I think those guys were following you so that you would run from them.” Steve replies.

Wendy thinks on this a minute. “Huh?”

Steve takes a deep breath. “They didn’t want you here so they chased you off, they didn’t want to hurt you, yet. They wanted what was in your apartment.”

“But there was nothing there. Wait you said yet. They didn’t want to hurt me, yet?”

“You’re like the dessert after a meal, they’re saving you for last. If they didn’t find what they wanted at your place you’re the next stop.” Steve replies.

“I don’t think I like the sound of that.” Wendy replies.

“I don’t either that is why we are going to take you to a safe place. Since we’re going to the newspaper office anyway, you should take a look thru your desk, just in case.”

“Steve.” Wendy says as she looks Steve in his eyes.

“Yeah.”

“It’s not true what Neal said, about me not caring, I do. It’s just that....”

“I understand. It’s easier so if something happens it doesn’t hurt as bad but it... still hurts.” Steve replies as he puts his arms around her.

“Robert was a nice guy and he didn’t deserve this. I wish I could help....”

Wendy replies as she lays her head against his chest, his hand on the back of her head, holding her as she cries. Just then Neal comes out of the elevator and when he sees them he stops. Steve sees him his chin resting on the top of Wendy’s head and Steve holds up five fingers, meaning give him five minutes.

Neal nods as he hits the button on the elevator and when it opens he gets in and goes back downstairs.

[1700 CLARK AVENUE THE OCEANVIEW DAILY NEWS:](#)

They follow Wendy into the newspaper building and up to the floor where the reporters desk are and the room is filled with noises from telephones, typewriters and general chaos.

“Wow how do you concentrate in here?” Steve asks as they make their way over to Wendy’s desk.

“You get used to it.” Wendy replies as she sits down and starts to go thru her desk.

“Hey! What are you two looney tunes doing in here?”

Wendy looks up. “Uh oh, it’s the Editor Wally.”

“I said what are you two looney tunes doing in here?” He asks again as he goes right up to Neal and stands in front of him.

Neal points to himself. “Are you talking to us?”

“I think I’m offended.” Steve replies as he stands behind Wendy’s chair.

Neal reaches into his back pocket as Steve does the same and they show him their badges. “We’re Homicide Detectives Schon and....”

“I know who you two are! You’re the brain and he’s the cute one!” Wally says as he points to Steve which causes Wendy to laugh.

Immediately they all look at her. “Sorry.” Wendy replies.

Steve scratches his head as he looks at Neal.

“What I want to know is why you are here in my reporter’s bullpen?!”

“In the what?” Steve asks.

“It’s what they call the reporter’s area....here.” Wendy replies as she moves her finger around.

“Oh.”

Neal crosses his arms. “The last time I looked, Wally, it was a free country and we can go where we please, whenever we please.”

“Not in here you can’t. This is not open to the general public!” Wally replies.

“Wendy invited us.” Steve replies.

“Do you have a warrant?” Wally asks which causes both Steve and Neal to laugh.

“For what Wally? We need a warrant so Wendy can look thru her own desk? It is her own desk isn’t it? And she is looking thru it, by herself! We haven’t touched anything! Have we Steve?” Neal replies as he looks over at Steve.

Steve holds both of his hands up. “No siree Bob! My hands have been in plain sight the whole time.”

“Is Wendy under arrest or something?” Wally asks.

“More like something.” Steve replies.

“What in the hell does that mean? If this is your idea of foreplay I don’t have time! You’ve heard of the 4th amendment I take it? I don’t like cops being in my bullpen!”

“Right now Wally I’m liking it less and less myself.” Neal replies. “All we want to know Wally is do you know who this guy is and have you seen him here before?” Neal asks as he takes out the picture of Robert and shows it to him.

“Everybody in the Journalism world knows who he is, that’s the Freelance writer, Robert Stone, and he was nominated for a Pulitzer last year. What about him?”

“He was murdered and we need to know if he worked here, or used one of your desk, or if you have just seen him here?” Steve asks.

Wally looks at Steve. “It’s called Freelance for a reason here look it up!” Wally then picks up the dictionary that is sitting on Wendy’s desk and he throws it at Steve who catches it.

“Now look!” Neal replies as he is slowly losing his patience.

“No you look DETECTIVE! He was never here! He didn’t use any of these desks and he never worked here! I never saw him here!”

By now everyone else in the room has stopped working and they were all looking at them.

“What are you people looking at? Get back to work!” Wally yells back at them.

“What about all these other people? Maybe they saw him? Can we talk to them?” Neal asks.

“No! They have work to do! You can’t talk to them! You two aren’t the only ones who have come here asking questions about Robert.”

Steve perks up as does Neal. “Who else has been here?” Neal asks.

“Were they the Feds?” Steve asks.

Wally laughs. “Not hardly!”

“Where they flashing badges?” Neal asks.

“No they were flashing something else and his was bigger than yours! Happy?” Wally replies as he points at Neal’s gun. “I told them to go and take a flying leap!”

“Is this what they call a pissing contest?” Wendy asks as they all turn to look at her.

“What did they look like?” Neal asks as he looks back at Wally.

“Big guys. No necks. All brawn and no brains.” Wally replies.

“Alright Wally, Wendy there is going to need at least a week off....” Neal replies

“No make that two weeks off....with pay!” Steve chimes in.

“WHAT!”

“Yeah two weeks with pay.” Neal repeats.

“You two guys are lunatics you know that? Why should I?” Wally asks.

Neal moves in closer to him with his hands on his waist. “Because Wally we are conducting a homicide investigation....”

“It’s called homicide for a reason here look it up!” Steve replies as he tosses the dictionary back to Wally who catches it.

“Wendy is an important part in this case and we need her help and if you don’t cooperate with us we can arrest you for obstruction of justice....”

“Impending an investigation.” Steve replies.

“Are you two threatening me?” Wally asks.

“Steve did you hear me threaten him?” Neal asks as he looks at Wally.

“What I heard was more of a suggestion Neal.”

“Also we want to make sure her job will be here when she gets back.” Neal replies.

“Yeah Wally when she gets back.” Steve says as he comes up and he stands behind Wally.

“Alright two weeks with pay and her job will be waiting for her when she gets back. On one condition!” Wally replies.

“What’s that?” Neal and Steve both say at the same time.

“You two don’t ever come back here....again! Got it?” Wally says loudly.

“You got it Wally old boy!” Steve replies as he pats him on the back.

“I have a paper to get out!” Wally says as he walks off.

“Alright Wendy finish looking thru the desk and where do you keep your extra clothes?” Neal asks.

“The locker room down in the basement.”

“Okay when you get finished we’ll take you down there.” Steve replies.

Wendy smiles. “You know, what you two just did there, that was impressive I must say!”

Steve blushes. “Ah no not really it was nothing!”

“Yeah he that can do, do, he that can’t, don’t!” Neal replies as he shrugs.

Wendy and Steve both look at him. “What in the hell was that!” Steve finally asks.

Wendy finishes looking thru her desk then she stands up. “There was nothing there let’s go to the basement.” They walk behind her as they head towards the elevator.

"That made no sense!" Steve replies.

"I thought it was pretty good." Neal replies.

"You would." Steve replies as the doors shut on them.

AN HOUR OR SO LATER:

After they took Wendy to the safe house and after making sure she was settled in they got back in the car to go to the Precinct when dispatch called them.

"Victor 7 come in Victor 7."

Steve picks up the mike. "This is Victor 7 go ahead."

"The Captain wants to see you two, right away." Dispatch says.

Steve and Neal look at each other. "Well that certainly didn't take long did it?" Steve replies.

"I'm sure old Wally broke the land speed record getting to the phone." Neal replies.

"10-4 Victor 7. ETA 20 minutes give or take."

"10-4." Dispatch replies back.

CAPTAINS OFFICE THE 9TH PRECINCT:

"Come on in boys and shut the door." The Captain replies.

Steve and Neal file into the office and Steve shuts the door behind him.

"Did you two just threaten the Editor of the biggest newspaper in Oceanview, Wally Woodson?"

Steve and Neal look at each other.

"Oh I don't know did we Cap?" Steve asks.

“Did he say we did Cap?” Neal asks as he rocks back and forth on his heels.

“Well I’m not sure. He was yelling so loud I could barely understand him, let alone get a word in edgewise. He did say something about you two sticking your badges up into a certain part of your body and when I pointed out to him that was anatomically impossible he began yelling even louder.”

They all laughed.

“We were trying to protect a witness.” Steve replies.

“Who’s the witness?” The captain asks.

“A reporter from the newspaper, Wendy Carmichael. She gave us the name of our John Doe. Robert Stone.” Steve replies.

“Robert Stone? Robert Stone? Why does that name sound familiar?” The captain asks.

“He was a freelance writer, Wendy told us he wrote some big stories. Investigative type stories. Last year he was nominated for a Pulitzer.” Neal replies.

“Wait a minute.” The captain replies as he gets out of his chair and he goes over to the magazines that are stacked on a table. After a few seconds of rifling thru the stacks he finds what he is looking for and he hands the magazine to Neal.

“That was the first story about the factory in Maine. Read it. It’s very impressive. This guy wasn’t a hack and he didn’t write fluff, so what was going on in Oceanview that was worth writing about?” The Captain asks.

Neal sits back on the sofa as Steve hands out coffee. “Thanks. That is a good question Cap. We have no idea.”

Steve sits next to Neal on the arm of the sofa. “Somebody led him here.”

“What about Wendy?” The captain asks.

“Wendy says she knows nothing about what’s going on, has no idea what he was working on, or who called him to come here. She says she didn’t do it.” Neal replies.

“Do you two believe her?” The captain asks.

Neal and Steve look at each other. "Yeah, yeah we do Cap." Steve replies. "According to Wendy reporters, keep their story ideas to themselves. They don't want their ideas stolen and have another reporter take credit for it."

"Yeah Cap cops are sorta like reporters." Neal replies as he looks at Steve and Steve smiles.

"How so?" The Captain asks.

"We're both selfish." Neal replies.

Just then they hear a knock at the door.

"Come in."

The door opens and they see Alicia standing there. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything?" She asks.

"No Alicia what is it?"

"Sam wants Steve and Neal down in the morgue as soon as possible."

"Alright thanks we're on our way." Steve replies.

"Everybody wants us today." Neal replies.

"Yeah there goes dinner." Steve replies.

"Keep me posted boys." The Captain replies.

"Sure thing Cap."

THE MORGUE:

"Hey Sam." Steve says as they walk into the morgue.

"Well you two certainly got down here fast."

"We were just upstairs. What's so important?" Neal asks.

"I found something very interesting in our John Doe."

"Did you just say you found something interesting in our John Doe?" Neal asks.

"Oh by the way he has a name, Robert Stone." Steve replies.

"Oh good I'll change the paperwork then, any next of kin?" Sam asks.

"None yet, all we know is he's from Nebraska." Steve replies.

"Come over boys I'll show you what I found."

Sam leads them over to the table where a tray sits with an object in it that Sam picks up with a big pair of tweezers.

"Is that what I think it is?" Steve asks as he squints at it.

"Yeah is it?" Neal asks.

"Yes boys it is a key." Sam replies.

"Wow where did you find it?" Steve asks.

"In his stomach." Sam replies.

"In his....?"

"Stomach?!" Steve finishes for Neal with just a slight twinge of revulsion. "How did it get there?"

"Well at this point I would assume that he swallowed it. He swallowed it a couple of hours before he died, it takes 3 to 5 hours for food to reach the small intestines."

"Man that would really hurt when he went to the bathroom, do ya think?" Neal asks.

"Well he probably swallowed it so somebody else wouldn't get it, he might have known what was going to happen to him. And swallowing it was the safest place he could think of at the time." Sam replies.

"Now the question is what is it a key to?" Neal asks.

"Wait it looks like I see numbers on it. Doc do you have a magnifying glass?" Steve asks.

"Sure I think it's over here." Sam replies as he puts the key back down into the tray and he goes over to the cabinet across the room. Sam comes back with the

magnifying glass and he picks the key back up with the tweezers and he holds the magnifying glass up in front of it.

“Wait what is that? I think that’s a...yeah that’s a 7.” Neal replies.

“Four? Yeah four.” Steve replies.

“And that’s a one.”

“147. 147! I know what it goes to! I think we just found where Robert kept his stuff and boys....we’re going to need a warrant.” Steve replies.

TO BE CONTINUED....