

THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9TH PRECINCT

THE DERELICT WARRIORS

PART 2

INTERROGATION ROOM THE 9TH PRECINCT:

"Okay you've had a sandwich and a coke. Anything else?" Neal asks him from across the desk.

"Where's that other guy?" He asks.

"Other guy?" Neal replies.

"Yeah, you know the cute one, with long hair. The one that almost broke my arm."

"Oh him? Well I don't really know. So you won't talk to me is that it?" Neal asks.

The guy smiles. "Let's just say he's more my type."

"Alright I'll go and see if I can find him. Don't go anywhere." Neal replies as he picks up the coke bottle and the sandwich wrapper.

"Smart ass." The guy replies.

Once out in the hallway Neal throws the trash away then he goes over to Steve who has been watching thru the one way glass, his arms crossed over his chest, his head titled to one side, contemplating.

"I guess you heard that?" Neal replies.

"Yeah."

"Why are we doing this again?" Neal asks.

"Oh because it's Sunday night and we can't get a warrant signed until tomorrow and I want to know who sent him to beat me up. Also while you were in there with twinkle toes I found something out about him."

"Oh really what?" Neal asks.

"He has a warrant out for his arrest from Los Angeles, they'll be here in a couple hours to pick him up and take him back." Steve replies.

"An arrest warrant for what?"

Steve pauses. "Rape."

Neal looks at the floor. "Oh. How old was she?"

"16 and it was a boy. He almost killed him from what I've been told."

The silence settles around them for a few minutes.

"Steve, you don't have to go in there."

Steve nods his head. "Oh yes I do. He's made it perfectly clear he won't talk to anybody but me. The cute one. I don't want to go in there, personally, he creeps me out but I want a name."

"Don't worry about him he's chained to the floor." Neal replies.

"It's not him I'm worried about." Steve replies as he looks over at Neal. "I've been thinking, he's really, really likes me. I could use that to my advantage, I have what he wants, and I might as well give it to him. I remind him of that 16 year boy, back in L.A. and I just might have to say some stuff you might not like hearing. I just want to make sure you still respect me in the morning." Steve replies as he leans closer into Neal.

"Maybe we can get his name another way?" Neal replies.

"How?"

"Maybe Robert wrote his name down in his notes." Neal replies.

"And if he didn't?" Steve asks. "He can't touch me, physically. I'll make him a deal, tell him he won't go to jail for assaulting me if he tells me the name, but he doesn't know about the warrant from Los Angeles." Steve glances up at the clock. "Time is running out."

"In this job we've all play parts and this will be just another part you're playing. I've seen you strut your stuff before partner." Neal replies as he smiles. "And I'll still respect you in the morning."

"Promise?" Steve asks.

"Scouts Honor." Neal replies as Steve laughs. Remembering he said the same thing to the goon in the room there.

"Alright." Steve takes off his jacket and gun and hands them to Neal. Then he takes a lollipop out of his pocket, unwraps it and he puts it in his mouth, then he reaches down and readjusts himself.

"I own it I might as well sell it. Wish me luck." Steve replies.

"Good luck."

Steve opens the door to the interrogation room and he goes in causing the guy at the table to raise his head.

Steve stands close to the table but not too close so this goon can get a good look at him. Steve stands with one foot out, his hand on his hip the other holding the lollipop.

"I heard you wanted to see me, so here I am. How's the wing?" Steve asks.

The man smiles at him. "You almost broke it."

"Almost? I was hoping that I did break it." Steve replies as he continues to suck on the lollipop.

"Do you do anything else with that mouth besides suck on that lollipop?" The man asks as he smiles.

Steve starts to walk around the table the man's eyes never leaving him.

"I hate to break your heart, sweetheart, but you aren't my type. Now, just between you and me that curly haired dude that was just in here, yeah, he's more up my alley. No pun intended." Steve replies.

"If only I wasn't chained to this floor. You really turn me on. Are you sure you're a cop?"

Steve sucks on the lollipop. "Positive. I'm a duly sworn officer of the law, I went thru the police academy and everything." Steve takes his badge case out of his back pocket. "Want me to come closer so you can see it?"

"No I think I can see it from here." The man sees as he smiles not looking at Steve's badge but at his groin.

Steve smiles. "You're not very subtle are you?"

The man smiles back. "No baby I'm not. Not when I see something I like."

Steve smiles then he moves closer to the table, and since the guy's hands are shackled to his leg irons and Steve knows he can't touch him, Steve moves closer still until he is standing right next to him, taking up his personal space. Then he leans over. Steve can hear him breathing hard.

"I want to play 'Let's Make A Deal'." Steve replies slowly.

"I'll take door number 3 if you're behind it." The man replies.

"Oh there's something better behind door number 3 than me."

"Such as?"

"Freedom."

The man turns his head and looks at him. "Freedom?"

"Yeah freedom. See this is how it's going to go down, by the way, what's your name?" Steve asks.

"Jake."

"Jake." Steve says it slowly and seductively to him. "Jake I want you to tell me the name of the guy that sent you to beat me up that day in the alley and I won't press charges on the assault, or the fact that you propositioned me. You'll walk out of here, free and clear, all I want is a name."

"How do I know you not shining me on?" Jake asks.

"You see, Jake, it's very simple. After you give me that name you'll walk out of jail and then you'll be on the street. Doing whatever it is that you do but you know what else?"

"What?" Jake asks as he looks at Steve.

"I'll be out, on those streets too, those same streets that you will be on. Oceanview is a big city, Jake, but it isn't that big. One night while I'm out on those streets you'll find me, because all things being equal, you will find me....Jake." Steve says in his ear. Then he moves around to his other side and leans in close to his ear. "And when you do find me, you'll do to me what you can't do in here. Right. You'll drag me again into another alley and take by force what I won't give....willing....right Jake." Steve replies as he slams his hand down hard on the table and Jake jumps as he looks at him. "Think about it, you'll have me all to yourself, in that alley but it won't happen as long as you're in here."

"You know baby you drive a hard bargain." Jake replies as he looks at him.

"You know Jake right about now, I'm betting, that bargain isn't the only thing that's hard. If you know what I mean." Steve replies. "Think about it. Get the picture in that head of yours....you and me..."

"ALRIGHT! His name is...." Jake yells.

On the other side of the glass Neal writes down the name not even sure if he heard it right. Neal looks up to see Steve pat Jake on the back as he walks around the table and stands in front of it.

"Was that good for you Jake? I hope so because that was your last shot....with me." Steve replies as he sucks on the lollipop.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I forgot to tell you about the warrant for your arrest." Steve replies.

"The warrant for my arrest? What warrant?" Jake asks.

"The one out of L.A. you do remember L.A. Jake? They should be here any minute to take you back and when they do, you'll going to go away for a long time. So take one last good look because it will be the last time, you see it." Steve replies as he turns and walks away and when he leaves the room Jake explodes.

Even with his hands shackled he manages to turn the table over yelling at the top of his voice. Calling Steve every name he can think of.

Once out of the room Steve goes over to Neal and he takes his jacket and gun then he turns and walks quickly off.

"Where are you going?" Neal yells after him.

"To take a shower!" Steve replies as he walks away.

THE LOCKER ROOM, THE 9TH PRECINCT, THE NEXT MORNING:

"So how many showers did you take?" Neal asks as he comes into the room seeing Steve at his locker his hair still damp.

"I stop counting at 2." He replies as he looks in the mirror hanging from the door of his locker. "Maybe I should cut my hair?"

Neal smiles. "I don't think that would do much good." He replies as he rests his foot on the bench. "Where did you sleep last night?"

"Here. You know they have the cots in the back."

"Wow that couldn't have been comfortable." Neal replies.

Steve shrugs. "It was alright. I wanted to be alone." Steve pauses. "How did it go with the guys from L.A.?"

"Oh once they got him out of the room he was yelling and screaming, he wanted to know where the little prick was that had jerked him off."

Steve covers his face. "He said that?"

"Oh yeah those poor guys from L.A. didn't know what was going on, I bet that was a joyous ride back to L.A." Neal replies. "That was quite a hat trick you pulled back there. You had that guy eating right out of your hand."

Steve shrugs. "I just did what the girls used to do to us back in High School. Remember that Neal?"

"Vaguely. Damn I'm an adult and women still do that to me." Neal replies. "But back then it wasn't life or death and it was in the back seat of our father's car."

"We sure thought it was." Steve replies as he pulls a t-shirt over his head.

"Seriously. What if something bad happens in L.A. and he gets off..."

"Could you use another word?" Steve replies.

Neal looks at the floor then he looks back up. "What if he's found not guilty or he makes bail he'll come right back here and he'll track you down. He'll take great pleasure in hurting you, even killing you."

"It won't happen." Steve replies.

"How can you be so sure?" Neal asks.

"Because I have great faith in our criminal justice system, that's why." Steve replies as he sits down on the bench. He puts his tennis shoe on and as he ties it the shoelace breaks. "Damn it!"

Neal sits down next to him. "Let me see it."

Steve hands him the shoe. "I'll fix it. Joey is always breaking his shoelaces." Neal ties the two ends back together then he hands it back to Steve. "There that will hold you for a little while."

"Thanks."

"So what you did....it was worth it?" Neal asks.

"Yeah it was I got what I wanted." Steve replies as he finishes putting his shoes on.

"Jack Carpenter." Neal replies.

"Yep that is what he said."

"You do know who that is right?" Neal asks.

"Yes I know who that is, I read the paper, watch the news." Steve looks at him. "I know what you're thinking...."

"Enlighten me."

"That bozo back there plucked that name out of thin air and hand feed it to me, just so I would let him go so he could have his way with me later?"

"Something like that...."

"No exactly like that." Steve replies as Neal looks at the floor as Steve leans closer. That guy back there didn't strike me as the type to keep up with current events. His name came to him

from contact. He knows him somehow.” Steve pats Neal on the back as he stands up. “I’m starved! Let’s go and get breakfast then we go to the courthouse and find a Judge. Okay?”

“Sure.”

Steve straps his gun on then his jacket then he shuts his locker door. He steps over the bench as Neal stands up and he turns around.

“There is one thing that bothers me.” Neal replies.

“And that would be....?” Steve asks as he looks back over his shoulder at him.

“When you told that creep in there that curly haired dude was more up your alley, you were joking, right?”

Steve just smiles at him.

“Steve you were just joking right? Right?”

“Sure Neal.” Steve winks at him then he starts to walk off and Neal tries to follow him but he bangs his shin on the bench.

“Shit! That hurt!” Neal exclaims as he rubs his shin.

“There’s a bench there Neal.”

Neal steps over the bench trying to keep up with Steve.

“Steve come on!”

THREE HOURS LATER BACK AT THE PRECINCT:

Steve and Neal both hit the doors at the same time as they enter the squad room and both doors make a loud bang as they the hit the walls. They side step other people coming the opposite way and when they get to their desks they see the Captain standing there putting a folder on their desks.

“There you two are how did it go with the Judge? Did he sign the search warrant?”

Neal takes his jacket off and he drapes it over the back of his chair as Steve throws the folder containing the search warrant on his desk then he takes his jacket off.

“No he didn’t sign it!” Neal replies angrily.

“What do you mean he didn’t sign it?” The Captain asks.

"He didn't sign it Cap he didn't think it was proper to go rooting around a locker without more evidence!" Steve replies.

"Without more evidence? What more did he want?" The Captain asks.

"There's a dead guy in the morgue that had a key in his stomach and he didn't think THAT was enough evidence!" Neal replies.

"He said there are too many holes in this story." Steve replies.

Neal picks up the other folder that the Captain had put on his desk. "That's from the crime lab."

"Well this is certainly joyous news! They didn't find any fingerprints in Wendy's apartment. And Mrs. Rosencrantz won't be any help, she didn't hear anything, she's deaf as a post!" Neal replies.

Steve stands with his hands on his head. "What do we do now?"

"Well I think we should find out who Terry Williams really is." Neal replies.

"How do you suggest we do that?" Steve asks.

"We go down to patrol and talk to the Watch Commander and have him issued a B.O.L.O. with the description of the truck and license plate number, and we let them find him and when they do..." Neal shrugs. "We improvise. Cap?"

"Sounds good to me. Go ahead boys."

They grab their jackets and they go down to Patrol.

TWO HOURS LATER AT HARVEY'S BAR AND GRILL:

Those patrol guys don't waste any time." Steve replies.

"You know how to use that thing right?"

"Yes Neal I know how to use this thing." Steve replies back.

"It has batteries?"

"Yes it has batteries." Steve replies.

"It's in focus?"

"Yes it's in focus." Steve replies as he looks thru the view finder.

"Is the lens cap off?" Neal asks.

Steve hesitates then he reaches around and takes off the lens cap. "It is now."

"Uh huh. You want to make sure to get a good, clean, shot of Terry."

"Do you want to do this?" Steve asks.

"Oh no you go ahead." Neal replies.

"You know I bet he's eating, a big juicy steak with a baked potato, and drinking a cold beer right about now." Steve replies.

"God I'm hungry, hopefully he will come out soon so we can take his picture then we can go and get something to eat." Neal replies.

After a few moments of silence and Steve checking out the telephoto lens he finally says, "I didn't sleep with Wendy."

"What? Oh no! No, I never thought you did and I never said...." Neal replies.

"Liar. You might have never said it but I know that you thought it. I could tell by that look on your face." Steve replies.

"Okay I'm sorry but you two sure look cozy that day in my car and you knew the layout of her apartment and her cat, Geraldine!"

Steve laughs. "You don't have to be sleeping with somebody to know what the inside of their apartment looks like or that they have a cat! And as for being cozy she was sitting on my lap! Not that I minded it. And Neal, you of all people should know that looks can be deceiving. I went to her apartment to talk to her about writing stories for the newspaper, you know, the case with Grace's stepfather? I promised her an exclusive if she helped us."

"Oh yeah I kind of forgot about that." Neal replies. "I feel sorta stupid right now."

Steve smiles. "Don't worry it happens to the best of us."

"Steve look he's coming out now." Neal replies as he points and Steve waits for him to get in a better position and then when he does Steve starts taking pictures.

"Who is that with him?"

"I have no idea." Neal replies. "I don't think I have ever seen him before."

"Okay I think I have enough." Steve replies.

"Let's have Phil develop them and while he's doing that we can get something to eat. Let's go."

LATER THAT NIGHT:

"Everybody is out on the street tonight." Steve replies.

"Well it's summertime and the living is easy." Neal replies.

Steve shakes his head as he laughs. "I wish it was just as easy to find out who this guy really is."

"We're in the area lets go and talk to Lola. She might be working tonight. She's helped us out before."

Steve shrugs. "Couldn't hurt."

They drove a few more blocks east until they reached the part of downtown that was just a little on the seedy side. The Club, the Pier 6 was close to the docks and it was frequented by both sailors and the men that worked on the dock, and they were both a rowdy bunch. The name always made Steve laugh because it reminded him of a Pier 6 brawl. Which has happened a lot here. The place had been there forever, it was dirty, grimy, and loud and the parking lot was full this night. The fleet was in.

Steve and Neal approached the bouncer guarding the door.

"What do you two what?" Mario asks.

"Oh come on Mario. You can't say good evening?" Steve asks.

"Good evening. Now what do you two what?" Mario asks as he crosses his arms over his chest.

Steve looks at the ground as he laughs.

"We what to see Lola." Neal replies.

"Why?"

"Mario don't bust our chops man we just want to talk to her. She's not in any trouble." Steve replies.

"It's my job to protect the girls, especially Lola."

"Mario we aren't going to hurt her. We're the good guys here." Neal replies.

"Yeah the men with the white hats." Steve replies.

Mario thinks about it then he takes a deep breath. "Alright wait here." Mario replies then he goes into the club.

Five minutes later a tall, brunette comes out wearing a short robe, her hair piled on top of her head.

"You guys want to see me?" Lola asks.

"Yeah let's go to the car to talk." Neal replies

They walk her over to the car and Steve opens the door for her and helps her into the back seat where he joins her and Neal sits in the driver seat.

"Can I have a cigarette?"

Neal shakes one out of the pack and he hands it and the lighter to her. Steve takes the lighter from her and he lights it for her.

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

"We have a picture we want you to look at." Steve says as he takes it out of his pocket and Neal turns on the overhead light.

"That's Spencer Williams." Lola replies.

"Spencer Williams?" Neal asks. "We thought his name was Terry Williams."

"Oh no Terry is his kid brother, that picture is of Spencer."

"How do you know him?" Steve asks.

"We're from the same town in Indiana." Lola replies.

"That's why we came to you, we saw from Terry Williams's background check that he was from Indiana." Neal replies.

"Oh yeah I'm surprised that you haven't heard of them." Lola replies.

"The Williams's? Why would we have heard of them?" Steve asks.

"Only because his father, Sam and Spencer's older Brother Seth were the biggest racketeers to come out of that town. They had a trucking company and they ran everybody else out of business. If the farmers didn't use their trucking company to move their produce, crops or cattle, then the William family made life very difficult for you. I should know he did it to my family."

"You mean strong arm tactics? Things like that?" Steve asks.

"Exactly like that. Then about three years ago something happen, the Feds moved in and they went to the Federal pen. Sam and Seth both ended up there. They couldn't pin anything on Spencer so he walked."

"So Spencer is using his kid's brother name?" Steve asks. "Why?"

"Because his brother is ten, never been in trouble. When you look up Terry Williams you will find nothing because he's ten!" Lola replies.

Steve scratches his head. "Wow."

"That is pretty smart." Neal replies.

"Is that all you wanted? I need to go back to work." Lola

"Yeah here's twenty for your trouble and if you ever need anything, here's my card." Steve replies as he hands them to her.

"Steve you don't have to pay me."

Steve shrugs. "No we don't have to we just want to." Lola leans over and she kisses him on the cheek. "You know if you ever decide to do something different, the city is always hiring clerks and secretaries."

Lola laughs. "Are you kidding me? Do I look like I could be a secretary or a clerk? Thank you Steve I'll keep it in mind."

Steve gets out and he opens the door for her and he helps her out and Mario escorts her back to the club then Steve gets in the front seat. "I think she would make a great secretary."

"So do I. Let's go back and run Spencer's rap sheet." Neal replies.

TWO HOURS LATER:

"Four pages long." Neal replies as he drops it onto the desk.

"Wow! It certainly runs the gambit doesn't it?"

"Oh yeah Spencer has certainly been a busy little boy." Neal replies.

"How does a convicted felon become a foreman of a construction company? I thought it would be difficult to be bonded and to get jobs if you had a felon at the helm?" Steve replies.

"I wonder who the owner of the construction company is." Neal replies.

Steve shrugs as he yawns. "I don't know but I do know it's almost three in the morning and I'm tired. Let's call it a night and start fresh tomorrow."

"It is tomorrow." Neal replies as he smiles. "I don't know how much sleep we will get Junior will be up soon for his feeding."

"That okay as tired as I am I can sleep thru his crying, let's go."

CITY HALL 1201 MARCUS LATER THAT DAY:

After they found a parking space for the car they walk over to City Hall when Steve sees someone he knows.

"I'll catch up with you I want to talk to Mark."

Neal continues up the stairs as Steve goes over to talk to Mark.

"Hey Mark!"

"Steve!" Mark replies as he shakes Steve hand.

"You look great! How's the job going?"

"Oh it's great! Just great! I am the Day Porter, see!" Mark replies proudly as he shows off his uniform.

"I see, Mark you really look great. How long now?" Steve asks.

"Thanks to you I have six months of sobriety, this time I going to kick it! And the Mission help me get this job with the City!"

You did a lot of it yourself, I didn't really do anything." Steve replies.

"You just arrested me that's all! After spending another weekend in jail because of smack I decided I didn't want to do that ever again. It took everything away from me." Mark replies.

"So what do you do?" Steve asks.

"Sweep the sidewalk, clean the offices, and take out the trash, clean the bathrooms. Whatever else they ask me to do. And pretty soon, with the Mission's help I will get my own apartment."

"You still go to the soup kitchen?" Steve asks.

"Oh sure."

"I was wondering if you have seen this guy around there." Steve asks as shows Mark Robert's picture.

"Oh sure yeah that's Bobby. Haven't seen him lately tho. He liked to talk. Always asking questions but he couldn't fight worth a damn!"

"Fight?" Steve asks.

"Damn! I'm not supposed to say anything." Mark replies. "You see there's a basement."

"A basement? I didn't know the soup kitchen had a basement."

"Oh yeah. That's where they fight. You have to be invited." Mark replies. "I really can't say anymore."

"No I understand. Do you think somebody else at the soup kitchen would talk to me?" Steve asks.

"About this?" Mark laughs.

"Yeah. I volunteer all the time over there, they know me." Steve replies.

Mark continues to laugh as he shakes his head. "Yeah you volunteer but you're a cop. It's not exactly legal."

"Gotcha." Steve replies. "Hey Neal what did you find out?"

Neal comes down the stairs and he shakes Mark's hand. "Hey Mark, you're looking great. The new job suits you well."

"I have Steve to thank."

"No Mark come on, you helped yourself, and you just needed a hand that's all." Steve replies.

Neal smiles as he puts his hands in his pockets. "They were closed for lunch. So I guess we come back later."

"I want to help you guys out, what do you need?" Mark asks.

Neal looks over at Steve. "Well we trying to get the name of an owner of a company." Neal replies.

"It's called Oceanview Construction." Steve replies.

Mark takes a notepad out and he writes it down. "Oceanview....okay I got it. Tell you what before I knocked off for the day I'll get the name for you. I'll come by the precinct, is that okay?" Mark asks.

"Sure that's fine. Thanks Mark." Steve replies.

"Thanks Mark. See you later."

LATER THAT NIGHT AT THE PRECINCT:

"It's late I wonder what happened to Mark?" Steve asks.

Neal shrugs. "Maybe he had to work late, he had a date, forgot. It happens. That's the report on Robert Stone?"

"Yeah Sam found his family in Nebraska. His parents, brother, sister and a wife." Steve replies as he looks over the top of the folder at Neal.

Neal whistles. "If I was a betting man I would say that Wendy didn't know about the Mrs. Maybe she's an ex-wife?"

"Doesn't say but I think we should keep that tidbit to ourselves." Steve replies.

"I don't think Marks going to show, we'll find him tomorrow. Let's go home, I'll take over baby duty so Ruby can take a hot bath and you?"

"I going to call Nancy and if she isn't busy maybe we can talk. It's been awhile and I miss her voice." Steve replies.

Neal puts his arms around him. "We actually have plans for the evening! So let's go!"

"After you, age before beauty." Steve laughs.

5TH AND GLENN, ALLEY, 4 A.M.:

"Officer! Don't let Detective Perry back here!" Neal yells from the alley just as Steve is stopped at the crime scene tape by the Officer who holds him by his arms.

"Neal!! Let me go! Neal!"

"You heard him, you have to stay here."

"Let me go! Damn it Neal! What's going on? Whose back there?"

Then Neal comes into view followed by a gurney that is carrying a sheet covered body that is being pushed by two attendants. He holds the crime scene tape up so the gurney and Sam can pass underneath it then he takes Steve by his arm.

"I've got him now. Come on Steve let's go over by the car."

"Neal why didn't you wake me up and tell me we had a call? Whose is it? Neal! For god's sakes..." Steve replies as he keeps looking back to the gurney.

"It's Mark." Neal looks at him as he holds him tighter by his arms but not sure it registered the first time he repeats it. "Steve, its Mark."

Steve just looks at him. "Dear god, are you sure?"

"Yes Steve I'm sorry, we're sure it's him."

Steve then breaks away from Neal, his back to him, his hands entangled in his hair as he holds his head. "Sam. Does Sam knows what happened to him?"

Neal, with his hands on his hips, takes a deep breath as he looks at the ground. Then Steve turns to face him.

"Neal?"

"You have to understand he's not sure...."

Steve comes closer to him then he grabs Neal by his jacket pulling him so fast to him Neal is surprised that he doesn't have whiplash.

"I have never known a time when Sam wasn't sure! Now tell me what happened!?"

"Sam thinks...."

Steve shakes him. "Sam thinks what?"

"Mark overdosed on Heroin."

Neal finally said it and Steve holding Neal by his jacket, their noses touching, just looks at him. Searches his face for something. Then he pushes him away.

"No Mark was clean for six months. He told me so!"

"Mark relapsed, it's not unheard...."

Right then and there Steve took a swing at him but Neal saw it coming and he ducked just in time. He then grabbed Steve by his arm and he swung him around, Steve's back up against Neal's chest. Neal holding him from behind as he folds Steve's arms against his chest. Then Steve starts to cry.

"Steve I'm sorry." Neal whispers in his ear. "I'm sorry."

"I don't understand. Why? He was so happy and excited about his new job and his new life. I don't know why he would go back to the old one." Steve says thru his tears.

"That's why I didn't want you to go back there, I wanted to spare you seeing him like that. Heroin is tough to kick, Steve. Maybe the pull was just too great." Neal whispers in Steve's ear. "As much as I love holding you like this, people will talk. If you promise not to take anymore swings at me, I'll let you go, okay?"

In spite of it all Steve smiles as he wipes his eyes, he nods his head then Neal lets him go.

"Neal I'm sorry."

"Don't be, you didn't do anything. Did he have a family?" Neal hands Steve a handkerchief.

"Yeah, let me think. He....he has a sister in Anaheim, she has two boys. He wanted to be an uncle to them, he was awfully proud of them. I'll have to call her." Steve replies.

"I'll take care of it. Why don't you go back home and help Ruby take care of the baby? It'll give her a break and Ida too."

"But what the murder case we're working on?"

"I think one day won't matter. I can do some research on Robert Stone, find out more about our victim. I might even talk to Wendy."

"The Captain?"

"After I tell him what happened he won't have a problem with me sending you home." Neal replies as he puts his hand on Steve's shoulder and Steve nods.

"Okay."

"Can you drive?" Neal asks.

Steve nods his head as he puts his hands in his pockets. "Later." Steve replies as he turns and walks off.

"Later."

LATER THAT DAY THE MORGUE:

"Detective. Is Steve with you?" Sam asks as Neal comes into the lab.

"No I sent him home for the day. I think he had enough bad news for one day. Why?"

"That was a good move on your part." Sam replies.

"So I take it Mark didn't die from a heroin overdose?"

"Oh no he did die from a heroin overdose but the problem is he didn't give it to himself."

"So he was...."

"Murdered? Yes Detective he was. At the time he was injected he was unconscious. Somebody had put the sleeper hold on him. There was bruising around his neck and head, he had pitikia in his eyes. Classic symptom of being strangled or having oxygen cut off to the brain. The heroin was about 85 percent pure, he had been clean for six months, no new needle marks. Even if he hadn't been unconscious at the time just the fact that he had been clean, and how pure the heroin was, it would have killed him outright."

"Did he suffer?"

Sam looks at the body. "No he was unconscious, he didn't feel anything."

Neal rubs his face. "Well I guess that is some consolation. Is there any way Sam that you can keep this info from Steve?"

"Tell me how exactly you want me to do that?"

"When he comes back tomorrow the first place he's going to come to is here."

"Again, tell me how exactly you want me to do that?!" Sam asks.

"Can't you misplace the folder or something? It just accidentally slips down between the wall and the desk?" Neal asks.

"How long should it be misplaced as it were?" Sam asks.

"Oh I don't know two or three or even four months?" Neal replies as he grins.

Sam takes a deep breath as he taps his chin thinking. "Oh alright." Sam replies reluctantly.

Neal jumps up and down. "Thank you Sam I owe you a big favor!"

"That you do Detective that you do. Now get out of here I have work to do."

"Alright Sam and thanks, see you later."

THE NEXT DAY, THE 9TH PRECINCT SQUAD ROOM:

Neal was sitting at his desk looking over some paperwork when Steve comes into the room with a folder tucked under his arm.

"Now I know how a woman feels when her boyfriend comes to dinner, spends the night, and he takes off without a word the next day when she is in the shower. Doesn't say goodbye, I love you, I had a great time last night, thanks for the dinner or thanks for the roll in the...."

"What are you talking about?" Neal asks.

"I'm talking about last night. I made an excellent dinner last night, Ruby thanked me profusely, but you didn't. And this morning you took off when I was in the shower. You're acting like you're avoiding me or something, either we're having a lovers spat or it has something to do with this." Steve replies as he throws the folder down onto the desk.

Neal can't take his eyes off of it. "Ah where did you....?"

"Sam's secretary found it behind the desk, she was nice enough to give it to me." Steve replies just as the phone rings at Neal's desk.

"Uh Detective Schon. What? No Sam you're too late but thanks anyway. Yeah bye." Neal hangs up the phone. "Steve you know I was just trying to...."

"Trying to save me some additional heart ache or guilt?" Steve asks.

“See I knew if you found out that you would react this way!”

“React what way, exactly?” Steve asks.

“It’s not your fault he’s dead.” Neal replies.

“Funny, it sure feels that way. He was talking to me the day of.” Steve replies.

“He was talking to us the day of. There are other explanations you know.” Neal replies.

“Convince me.” Steve replies as he crosses his arms over his chest.

“Well...” Neal sits up straighter in his chair. “Okay, he was a reformed junkie maybe he owned some money to one of his dealers?”

“That’s it?” Steve asks.

“That’s all I got. I looked thru his personal effects that he had on him and there was nothing that had to do with the owner’s name of the construction company. No scrap of paper, nothing.”

“Either he didn’t have a chance to get it or whoever killed him took it from him.” Steve replies.

“Steve I’m sorry I know he was your friend.” Neal replies.

“Thanks Neal and he didn’t deserve this. He was trying, he was trying so hard. Somebody killed him for what he told us or...”

“Or what they thought he had told us.” Neal replies.

“All of this over homeless guys fighting or the name of a company? Wendy’s apartment tossed like a salad and now Mark, I just don’t get it.” Steve replies.

“I called Mark’s sister.” Neal replies.

“How did she take it?” Steve asks.

“Not good. I told her as soon as Sam releases the body I’ll call her back and she’ll come down to make arrangements. I told her because Mark worked for the city there is a special burial fund to help with burial expenses.”

Steve looks across at Neal then he smiles. “We’re the special burial fund I take it?”

“Yeah we’re pay whatever their short.” Neal replies.

“Softie.” Steve replies. “So what’s on the agenda for today?”

“Well yesterday I didn’t get a chance to go to Wendy to ask her about Robert. You know more background on him.”

"The further backward you look the further forward you can see." Steve replies.

Neal tilts his head as he looks at him with a quizzical look on his face.

"Winston Churchill."

"You know Steve sometimes you just amaze me." Neal replies.

"Funny, that's what she said too!" Steve laughs. "Come on let's go."

Neal laughs as he grabs his jacket.

HOURS LATER BACK AT THE PRECINCT SQUAD ROOM:

"You know Wendy is quite a talker. We filled up three whole notebooks." Neal replies as he tosses them on the desk.

"Yeah I probably should have warned you about that. But at least she apologized for hitting you."

Just as Neal goes to get a cup of coffee the phone rings at Steve's desk.

"Detective Perry Homicide. Yes speaking. What? Are you sure? No that's fine, I'm glad you called. What hospital again? Yes I'm on my way. Thanks."

"Did you say something about a hospital?" Neal asks.

"Uh yeah." Steve replies as he gets up and puts on his jacket. "It's Lola she's in the hospital, Mercy General."

"Well let's go."

MERCY GENERAL 1200 WESTERN BLVD:

"Excuse me my name is Steve Perry and this is Neal Schon, I had a phone call from somebody here that told me that a Lola Stephens was here?"

The nurse sitting behind the Admittance Desk pulls a file. "Yes Mr. Perry that was me. The doctor wanted me to page him just as soon as you got here." The nurse picks up the microphone. "Paging Dr. Webster to Admitting, Paging Dr. Webster. He should be here any minute."

"What happened to her? Is she alright?" Neal asks.

"The doctor will be able to answer all your questions just as soon as he gets here."

With that answer they both move away from the desk to the lobby where only after a few minutes, a young doctor, breezes thru the doors and he goes over to the desk and he picks up the file.

"Mr. Perry? I'm Doctor Webster."

"What happened to Lola, is she alright?" Steve asks.

"Follow me I will take you to her room. She was brought in late last night, she had been roughed up, and she had a concussion. A broken arm and a black eye."

"Oh my god where did this happen?" Neal asks.

"According to what the police told us about a block away from a club called the..."

"Pier 6." Steve finishes.

"Yes that's right. I see you two are familiar with it."

"Yes unfortunately." Neal replies.

"Was she able to say anything, tell you who did it?" Steve replies.

"No, about two hours ago she begin to come around and about an hour ago her purse was found in the ambulance. In her purse we found your card, on the back it said, in case of Emergency. So we called you. I hope that was alright?"

"Yes, yes that's alright." Steve replies.

"Doc is she going to be okay?" Neal asks.

"Yes in time. She's doing better than the man that was with her."

"Where is he?" Neal asks.

"Downstairs in the morgue."

Steve and Neal look at one another.

"We couldn't find a wallet, could one of you identify him?" The doctor ask.

"Sure Doc I'll go down there." Neal replies. "Steve why don't you go and check on Lola, I'll catch up later."

"She is in room 7, down the hall to the right."

"Thanks Doc."

They separate. Steve goes to Lola's room while Neal and the Doctor go down to the Morgue. When Steve gets to the room he slowly opens the door and he looks in and he sees a nurse next to the bed holding up a cup of water for her as she drinks thru the straw.

"Look you have a visitor." The nurse replies as she puts down the cup.

"Is it okay to talk to her?" Steve asks.

"Of course. I'll leave you two alone, if you need anything just ring the buzzer."

"Thanks Nurse."

Steve approaches the bed and he takes her good hand. She had quite a shiner and a bandage wrapped around her head, her arm encased in a case that was being held up by a sling. Her face swollen. When she turns her head to look at him her eyes begin to tear. Steve takes a tissue from the box by the bed and he wipes her tears.

"Steve."

"Lola can you tell me what happened?"

Lola swallows. "Mario was walking me home, I live across the street, at the Lodge Motel. We got to the parking lot, it was dark, and somebody jumped us. Mario, Mario, he tried to save me. He pushed me out of the way. Out of the way. Mario pushed me. But one of them came over to me and he beat me up, I played dead. Didn't move."

"Could you see them honey?"

"Two big guys. Big. Bigger than Mario. I remember walking pass a black car. Mario? Where is he? Nobody will tell me what happened to him. Please. Steve?"

"Yes honey?" Steve lays his head closer to hers.

"Tell me the truth. He's dead isn't he?"

"Yes I'm afraid so."

Then she begins to cry in earnest. She lays her head against Steve's chest and Steve holds her by her hand. "Why? Why did somebody kill him? He never hurt anyone. Oh Steve I loved him."

"I know you did. I don't know why he died but I'm going to find it. Cry as long as you want, I'm going to stay right here."

TWO HOURS LATER MERCY GENERAL:

"Thanks Cap, yes we're be back there shortly. Bye." Neal hangs up the phone then he joins Steve in the waiting area.

"Well?" Steve hands him a bottle of Coke.

"Thanks. He agreed with us, he's going to send a car over to the office of Oceanview Construction to pick up Terry....I mean Spencer, whatever that cat's name is. And bring him back to the office so we can talk to him. Sam's going to make arrangements to have Mario picked up and brought back to our Morgue so he can do an autopsy. Damn! Wendy was right, I am a bastard and if I don't feel like one right about now. The last time we saw Mario we gave him a hard time...."

"Neal I'm going to tell you what a wise, old, very old person once told me."

Neal scratches his forehead, smiling, as he looks at the floor. "And that was what?"

"That this badge." Steve shows it to him. "Doesn't make us psychic. Do you remember who say that to me?"

"I did."

"Do you remember when?" Steve asks.

"When you were a rookie detective." Neal replies.

"Right. With Mario there was no malice, on either of our parts. Like you said we all have parts to play. Let's call it a fandango. From what Lola told me about him, Mario was a great guy, very protective. Lola told me he was her boyfriend and you know what else she told me?"

"What?" Neal asks.

"He admired us. And the only people who are blaming us for this....is us. Let's go back to the precinct and get ready for Spencer."

TWO HOURS LATER, THE INTERROGATION ROOM, 9TH PRECINCT:

"Have a seat, we're glad that you could join us." Steve replies.

"It's hard to say no when there's a squad car parked outside your office." Spencer replies as he sits down. Then he starts to laugh.

"Do you want some coffee or a coke? What's so funny?" Neal asks.

"You guys and you're interrogating techniques. A chair that's lopsided? Meant to keep me off balance and uncomfortable? Wild."

"This isn't an interrogation, it's more of a fact finding mission." Steve replies.

"Yeah you know the conference room wasn't available so this is it. We can get you another chair if you want." Neal replies.

Spencer waves them off. "So what facts do you want to know?"

"Well to begin with, we know your name isn't Terry Williams." Steve replies.

"Oh really? So what is my real name then? Rumpertumskin?" He asks as he laughs.

Neal opens the folder and slides it across the table at him. "Spencer Williams. The Indiana William's. The same Williams that used to own William's Interstate Freight."

"That the Feds shut down. Your brother and father are in the Federal Pen, aren't they?" Steve asks.

"So. The Feds cleared me. As for the name change it's not against the law to change one's name."

"True. But if you're doing it to keep one step ahead of the law, then it is against the law." Neal replies.

"Tsk, tsk using the name of your ten year old brother. Dirty pool." Steve replies.

"I was trying to move on. All this stuff right here, was ten or so years ago."

"Not to mention the fact it would be hard for a convicted felon, such as yourself, to get employment. By, let's say a construction company. And that brings us to another fact we would like to know." Steve replies.

"Such as?"

"The name of the owner of Oceanview Construction." Neal replies.

Spencer laughs. "You got to be kidding! You brought me all the way downtown to ask me that? You can go to the city and find that out for yourselves!"

"That's not the only reason we wanted you to come down here." Steve replies. "We thought we could kill two birds with one stone. If you catch my meaning?"

"No I don't catch your meaning!"

"Okay where were you two nights ago? About midnight? Were you anywhere near the Pier 6 bar?" Neal asks.

"Why?"

"Do you know her?" Steve shoves a picture of Lola across the table to him.

"No. She's a beautiful girl but no I don't know her."

"Well you probably should she's from the same town in Indiana that you're from." Steve replies.

"So? Just because we're from the same place doesn't mean I know her."

"What about him?" Neal asks.

"Him again? No I already told you I never saw him before."

"Where were you two nights ago?" Neal asks again.

"I wasn't at the Pier 6 bar if that is what you're asking me, that place is a pit. I was at Harvey's Bar and Grill doing paperwork."

"Doing paperwork? Isn't that what your office is for Spencer?" Steve asks.

"I like the atmosphere and the food. I was there until closing. Two a.m."

Neal leans on the table in his direction. "We're asking these questions because this beautiful girl was beat up, her boyfriend killed, about two nights ago. This guy, whose body was found on a construction site that you manage was a freelance writer, Robert Stone!"

"So!" Spencer gets to his feet knocking the chair to the ground. "His name means nothing to me! I don't know him! Or Her! You two think I had something to do with that?"

"Directly or indirectly." Steve replies.

Just then there is a knock on the door of the interrogation room and when it opens they see the Captain standing there.

"Boys this is Mr. Baker. Mr. Williams lawyer."

Mr. Baker pushes the Captain out of the way as he enters the room sitting his briefcase on the table.

"Detectives." He says like it leaves a bad taste in his mouth.

"So that is why it took you so long to get here, you were talking to your lawyer!" Steve replies.

"Everyone Detective is entitled to legal counsel. Terry don't say another word. My client looks tired Detective, do you mind? You don't mind do you?" Mr. Baker as he motions to the chair that is on the floor.

"Oh no not at all." Neal replies as he puts the chair upright and Spencer sits down.

"Now whose idea was it to send a marked police car to pick up my client?"

Steve sits down on the desk. "Its standard operating procedure, you know that."

"My client is a hardworking man, he runs a large construction company. Well known in the community and to have a police cruiser parked in front of his place of business, just smacks of intimidation. He has a reputation...."

Neal starts to laugh.

"Oh is there something funny Detective? Do I have to remind you two about the Fifth Amendment?" Mr. Barker asks.

Neal clears his throat. "We aren't interrogating him, this is just a fact finding mission." Neal replies.

"Highly unlikely. You probably told him that the conference room wasn't available, is that right?"

Neal and Steve look at one another.

"Is my client under arrest detectives?"

"No." Steve replies.

"Has he been charged with anything?"

"No." Neal replies.

"Did you read him his rights?" Steve and Neal look at each other again. "Well did anybody bother to read him his rights?"

"No." Steve replies. "It was a fact finding mission."

"To me this smacks of a fishing expedition. You might have better luck at Lake Tahoe. Let's see, intimidation, getting my client over here under false pretenses...."

"Wait! No we didn't...." Neal replies.

"Trying your best to weave a story together from loose threads at my client's expense. Tsk, tsk Detectives. I expect so much better from you Detective Schon and you too Captain Reynolds, after all you two are seasoned veterans now with your partner over there...." He points to Steve. "He's still wet behind the ears."

Steve comes off of the desk. "Now wait a minute."

"Stay away from my client Detectives. If you need to speak to him again you go thru me. Are we clear?"

"Crystal." Neal replies.

"Come on Terry let's go, I'm sure you have a lot of work to do."

Terry gets out of the chair and goes over and he stands next to his lawyer.

"Just so we don't have any misunderstandings, I reiterate, stay away from my client. If you two don't you're be walking a beat in Tijuana."

"You can't threaten us!" Steve replies.

"Oh no Detectives, that's not a threat, it's a promise. Come on Terry let's go."

The Captain holds the door open for them as they file out of the office Steve and Neal following right behind Terry. Then Terry stops and he waits for them to catch up and when Steve is standing next to him he leans over into his personal space and he whispers to them.

"Back off or you're be sorry." Then he walks off looking back over his shoulder smiling at them.

"WHAT! What did you just say? Neal?"

"Yeah I heard him too." Neal replies.

"You sorry piece of shit!" Then Steve takes off and he runs around the desk then Neal takes off running around the opposite side and he just barely caught Steve before he could get his hands on Spencer.

"You piece of shit! Neal! Did you hear that! He threaten me! He threaten us! Let me go!" Steve replies as he does his level best to get around Neal.

"Yeah Steve I did hear him." Neal replies as he looks back over his shoulder. "Get him out of here I don't think I can hold him much longer!"

"Captain?" Mr. Baker replies.

"I think you're done enough damage here for one day, get out of my squad room."

"He threaten us! Captain!" Steve replies still pushing against Neal. "Let me go!"

As they leave the squad room Terry looks back at them smiling. Then Neal picks Steve up and he throws him over his shoulder while the rest of the squad room looks on. "Neal put me down now!!" Steve yells and screams, kicking and flailing his arms as Neal carries him quickly into the Captain's office where the Captain locks the door behind then Neal drops Steve onto the sofa.

"What in the hell are you doing?!! Neal!!" Steve replies as he recovers and he stands up.

Neal stands in front of the Captain's door with his arms crossed. "Let me out of here! You heard what he said!"

"I did but you aren't going anywhere until you calm down." Neal replies.

"Neal! Get away from the door!"

"Kiss my ass! It's not happening!" Neal replies.

"He told us to back off or we're be sorry! You heard that too didn't you! I know you heard it!"

"Yes Steve I heard it."

"Detective calm down." The Captain replies.

"Or what?" Steve snaps back.

"Or I'll lock you in a cell until you calm down, I'm still your boss remember."

This causes Steve to laugh. "That guy just threaten us and you're going to lock me in a cell?! This is unbelievable!"

"You heard what his lawyer said if we do anything to his client we're be spending our days walking a beat in Tijuana and at night, for entertainment, we're be watching those donkey shows with the girls we're heard so much about." Neal replies.

"Do it." Steve replies.

"Do? Do what?" Neal replies.

"Lock me in a cell just for tonight."

"Dear god son I think you're serious." The Captain replies.

"I am serious. If I see that guy I'll kill him. Besides I need some sleep, run this case thru my head. None of it is making sense."

"Well Cap he's right there none of this is making sense. You're sure you want to do this?" Neal asks him.

"I'm sure."

"Cap?" Neal replies as he looks over at the Captain.

The Captain shrugs. "If that's what he wants take him downstairs and put him in a holding cell."

"Alright Steve let's go."

Steve takes his badge out of his back pocket and he takes his gun out of its holster and he puts them on the Captain's desk.

"You won't take off will you?" Neal asks.

"No."

"Not that I don't trust you but walk in front of me and I'll hold onto your belt. Okay."

"Yeah okay."

They left the office like that, Neal holding onto Steve's belt from behind, which wasn't missed by the other detectives in the room and Neal took him down to the holding cell. After he was given a blanket, a pillow, notepad and a pencil and after the door was slammed shut, the jailer locked him in and he could not help but stare.

"What?" Steve replies.

"It's a full moon tonight he turns into a werewolf." Neal replies as the jailer walks away shaking his head.

"So, you're going to be okay?"

"Yeah. I need some sleep." Steve replies.

"I understand it's hard to sleep with a baby in the house."

"No it isn't that so much. This case. None of this is adding up. I don't see how any of this connects. I need to think about it." Steve replies.

"Okay I'll come back in the morning and collect you for breakfast."

"Alright good night Neal."

"Night Steve."

THE NEXT MORNING AT THE HOLDING CELL:

"Knock, knock sleeping beauty I brought you some coffee." Neal replies as the jailer unlocks the door for him and after he opens it Neal goes in and he sits down at the end of the bench. Steve is still covered by the blanket. Most of it covering his head which Neal grabs a hold of and pulls down.

"Wakey, wakey eggs and bakey."

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock straight up." Neal replies.

"Speaking of straight up can you give me a hand?" Steve replies.

Neal peels the blanket off of him then he grabs his hand and helps him to set upright.

"Here's your coffee. How did you sleep?"

"This bench is a little hard and I think my butt is numb but other than that I slept pretty well."

"It was your idea to do this remember?" Neal replies.

"Yes I know. After I had a hot shower and brushed my teeth I'll be fine. So how's the baby?" Steve asks.

"He's fine."

"How's Ruby?"

Neal grins. "She is better than fine."

Steve pushes him. "You two kids better be careful you know you have to wait 6 weeks."

"We hit the six weeks period the day before yesterday."

"You old dog you." Steve stands up then he stretches. "I'm going to go to the locker room and take a shower."

"That might have to wait." Neal replies as he stands up.

"Wait why?"

"Something's happened." Neal replies.

"Who's dead?"

"Nobody as far as I know. Come on let's go."

Steve picks up his notepad. "You mean I have to wear the same clothes today that I wore yesterday?"

"Yes that is what I'm saying."

"You really know how to hurt a guy." Steve replies.

CITY HALL 1201 MARCUS:

"Hey Detective, nobody's dead the place was empty." The Battalion Captain replied.

"That's good. Its part of a case we're working on, you don't mind if we stick around do you?" Neal asks.

"Oh no of course not."

"Can you tell us what happened?" Steve asks as he pulls out his notepad.

"Well it's definitely arson. Somebody broke in and drenched the place in gasoline then they lit a match. Luckily it was only confined to this first floor. Whoever it was they open up file

cabinets and made a bonfire in the middle of the room. The sprinkler system kicked on but not before there was a lot of damage."

"So what departments were on the first floor?" Steve asks.

"Building permits, construction permits, plans, bids for projects and names of businesses that operate in Oceanview and that includes the names of business owners." Neal replies.

"That's right." The Battalion Captain replied. "So I guess they did quite a number on your investigation?"

"Yes they did." Steve replies.

"They don't make it easy on you guys, do they?" The Battalion Captain replies.

"No they never do."

"Times like these I'm glad I joined the Fire Department. Oh no offense guys."

"None taken." Steve replies.

"Just as soon as everything is done I'll send a copy of the report over to your offices, okay? Homicide? Perry and Schon right."

"Right. And thanks Cap." Steve replies as they watch him walk off.

"Coincidence?" Steve asks.

"No such animal." Neal replies.

As they stand there they pagers go off. "It's the Captain." Neal replies.

Finding a pay phone on the corner they call the Captain. "Cap? Yeah? Okay. Yes Steve is just fine. Sure we're on our way. See you then." Neal hangs up the phone. "He wants us back at the office."

"Well then let's go." Steve replies.

THE CAPTAIN'S OFFICE:

"This came by Courier early this morning." The Captain replies as he holds up a folded, thick, piece of paper.

"What is it a subpoena?" Steve asks.

"Nothing that boring I'm afraid." The Captain replies.

"Well then what?" Neal asks.

"It's a Court Order from Terry Williams's attorney to unlock the gate at the Cherry Hill Duplex construction site and return it back to the construction company."

"Cap it's a crime scene." Neal replies.

"Not according to them it isn't. They think two weeks is enough time to process a crime scene. I already talked to the City Attorney and he says we have to compile today or risk a lawsuit. As much as I hated to do it I called Mr. Baker and I told him within the hour that Detective Schon will be there to unlock the gate and turn it back over to Mr. Williams."

"Detective Schon? But what about...." Neal replies.

"He requested that Steve not be there. He said that he fears for his client's safety." The Captain replied.

Neal laughs as he shakes his head. Steve stands with his hands on his hips looking at the floor.

"That's alright I was going to go and see Lola in the hospital, anyway."

"Neal I think you should get going." The Captain replies.

"Oh yeah sure. Okay, I guess I'll see you later Steve."

Neal leaves the office shutting the door behind him.

"Am I in trouble?" Steve asks.

"No although Mr. Baker thinks you should be hanged from the highest light pole in Oceanview."

"I'm not sorry for the outburst just that you saw it. I guess I made a fool out of myself." Steve replies.

"To tell you the truth Steve I wanted to punch him myself and his lawyer too." The Captain replies. "I was like you once. I voiced my opinions loud and clear, let my emotions get the best of me sometimes, every victim had a story and I wanted to know all of it. I took a lot of it home with me. I don't know how my wife stayed with me or why. I also had my share of write-ups and suspensions."

"You?" Steve asks surprised.

"I used to think my Captain took early retirement because of me."

Steve laughs.

"You and Neal are like the two sons I never had and I give you two a lot of leeway because I know you two won't abuse it. I trust your judgment and instincts. I think every so often people need to know that their doing a good job. You and Neal you do a good job."

"Thanks Cap."

“So where are you going now?” The Captain asks.

“First I’m going to go and take a shower, change my clothes, then I’m going to go to the hospital to see Lola. She’s going to make me a list of things to pick up at her motel room for her.”

“How is she doing by the way?” The Captain asks.

“Like anything else Cap it takes time. I’ll talk to you later Cap and thanks.”

“See you later.”

2340 CHERRY LANE. THE CHERRY LANE DUPLEXES:

“If I had known that the news media was going to be here I would have worn a tie and shaved.” Neal replies as they stand at the gate to the duplex construction site. With the news circling them and mixed in with them were the construction workers waiting to get back on the job.

“It’s big news Detective to see how the mighty have fallen.” Mr. Baker replies.

Neal laughs. “This isn’t big news. What happened at City Hall is big news.” Neal replies as he puts the key in the padlock and he turns it.

“What happened at City Hall?” Terry asks.

Neal takes the padlock off then he removes the crime scene tape. “It was torched as if you didn’t know.”

“Oh that’s a shame. It really is.” Terry replies.

Neal opens the gate and as he does so Terry begins to walk thru it while at the same time Neal sticks his foot out and Terry trips over it and he lands on the ground.

“Oh that’s a shame. It really is.” Neal replies as he looks down at him.

MERCY GENERAL ROOM #7:

“So some clothes and toiletries? Is that all you want?” Steve asks her.

“I hope you don’t mind.” Lola replies. “I guess I’m going to be here awhile.”

“A concussion is a serious thing they want to keep an eye on you.” Steve replies.

"Also...."

"Yes Lola what is it?"

"In one of my desk drawers there is an address book, it has the name and address of Mario's family. He's from Philadelphia. Somebody has to tell them I don't think...."

Steve holds her hand. "Its okay honey I can do it."

"Why do you care so much?"

Steve sits down on the side of the bed. "What do you mean why do I care so much?"

"I meant normal people like you don't usually care about people like me. I mean I'm a stripper...."

Steve laughs. "You think I'm normal?"

"You're a cop. You came from people that love you, you've been to school and you live in the suburbs...."

Steve continues to laugh. "Boy I fooled you didn't I? My family did love me, as for school I did finish high school and I don't live in the suburbs. There is nothing wrong with you Lola. I am a lot like you."

Lola just looks at him.

"Okay want to hear a story?"

Lola nods her head.

"Okay Neal and I go way back. We grew up together in the old neighborhood, went to school together. Thick as thieves, we got into all kinds of mischief, we were stuck to each other like glue. Then one day in Junior High I moved away. The next time I saw Neal was six years ago and do you know how we met again?"

"How?" Lola asks.

"I stole his car!"

"You stole his car?" Lola replies.

"And he arrested me but you know he gave me a second chance. He helped me to become a cop. If that hadn't happened I don't know where I would be now."

"That's a true story?"

Steve raises his right hand. "I swear."

"I been thinking about what you told me about becoming a clerk for the city? I decided to give it a try."

“Oh Lola that’s great! I’ll look into it right away!”

“I think I’m going to take a nap.”

“Okay you take a nap and I’ll to your place and get the stuff you need and the address book. I’ll see you later Lola.” Steve replies as he slides off the bed.

“Steve.”

Steve stops with his hand on the doorknob as he turns to look at her.

“Laura. My name is Laura.”

“That’s a beautiful name, see you later, Laura.” Steve replies smiling at her as goes out the door.

LATER THAT DAY IN OCEANVIEW:

While Neal was busy with giving back the crime scene to the construction company and Steve was at the hospital, Ruby was out doing errands. The baby was at home with Ida, who loved nothing better to babysit. Which was a good thing because Ruby had a lot to do. Pick up the dry cleaning, go shopping for clothing that was not maternity and finally go to the grocery store.

It was late afternoon by the time she got done at the grocery store and after she had put the grocery bags in the car is when she noticed it. The paper was white and it was folded in thirds and placed underneath the windshield wiper blade on the driver side.

Ruby looked at it, the free end of it moving in the breeze. Then she looked around. There were people around, walking along the sidewalk, driving by on the street. It could have been anyone of them or no one. It was just a piece of paper but it made the hair stand up on the back of her neck. She got closer to the car and leaning over she lifted the wiper blade and took out the piece of paper, then just trying to hold it by the corners she opened it and read it.

Her first impulse was to drop it and run, get in the car and go home, but she forced herself to hold onto it as she got into the car. She gunned it as she back out, almost hitting a car behind her, then after she straightened out she stomped on the gas, tires spinning, running red lights, all the way to the house.

TWO HOURS LATER AT THE 9TH PRECINCT SQUAD ROOM:

“Steve! There you are!”

“Neal what’s going on? I got your message and I got here as fast as I could. What’s Ruby, Ida and the baby doing here?” Steve replies as he sees them sitting in the Captain’s office.

“Here read this!” Neal thrusts a letter at him that is in a plastic evidence bag.

“Ruby, Ruby fly away home. Your house is on fire and your child is at home...Oh my god Neal! They used letters cut out of magazines. It’s virtually untraceable. Where did you get it?”

Neal takes a deep breath as he grips the edge of the desk. “Ruby was out shopping and when she came out of the grocery store that letter was underneath the windshield wiper of her car! That means they followed her. Ruby went back to the house and they packed their bags and they came here. They followed her Steve, they followed her and they put that letter on her car! They threaten my wife and child!” Then in a burst of anger Neal yells and he knocks everything off of his desk onto the floor. Then seeing his coffee cup on the floor he picks it up and hurls it against the wall, where it shatters. Everyone in the Captain’s office turns and looks.

“It had to be Spencer Williams. What are you going to do now?”

“Ruby and the baby are going on a plane and they are going to her parent’s house. I want them out of the state of California. A police officer is going to ride with her on the plane and when she gets there, the sheriff is going to meet her. The Captain and I are going to take her to the airport.”

“What can I do?” Steve asks.

“Go back to the house and go over it with a fine tooth comb! Make sure nothing is there. Tomorrow I’ll call a locksmith. Could you also take Ida home?”

“Sure.”

“Thanks Steve.”

“Can I say goodbye to them?” Steve replies.

“Sure.”

They both go into the Captain’s office and Steve hugs Ruby, he could tell even though she tried to hide it she was scared. This was the first time that Steve can recall seeing her that way. Then he held the baby for a few minutes, cooing at him and talking to him. Then it was time to go, Steve handed the baby back to Ruby as Neal grabbed their bags. Steve stood in the squad room watching them go.

TO BE CONTINUED....