

THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9TH PRECINCT

THE DERELICT WARRIORS

PART 3

THE 9TH PRECINCT EMPLOYEE PARKING LATER THAT NIGHT:

After giving Neal's house the once over to make sure there was nothing dangerous there, Steve made sure the house was locked tight, and after he had called the locksmith for Neal, Steve drove back to the Precinct.

The employee parking area was blocked off with a cinder block wall and a gate, which opened automatically, after you punched in a code. So Steve thought it was strange that there was somebody, he didn't recognize standing next to Neal's car. How did he get in here? The lighting back here was not the greatest so he was hard pressed to identify him. He was dressed like many of the homeless men that were around here. And he was carrying a duffle bag.

Steve parked further down the lot and then he got out. He slowly made his way in between the other cars that were parked there and when he got close enough, he drew his gun.

"Freeze!" Steve says to the guy as he points his gun at his back. The guy stops what he is doing and he stands still. "Drop the bag." The guy drops the bag on the ground. "Now put your hands on the car. Slowly." The guy slowly puts his hands on the car then Steve holster his weapon as he approaches him. Kicking the duffle bag out of the guy's reach. "How did you get back here?" Steve asks him as he starts to frisk him.

"Steve."

Steve stops in mid-frisk and he takes him by his arm and he turns him around. "Neal?"

"Yeah it's me."

Steve grabs him by his arm and he drags him underneath the street light. "What in the hell are you doing? Why are you dressed like that? It's too early for Halloween!"

Neal takes his hat off. "Damn it! I was hoping to be gone before you got back here!"

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"What do you mean by 'be gone' and you were going to leave without telling me? Why do I suddenly feel like a bride that's been left at the altar?"

"Steve give me a ride to the city limits and I'll tell you everything."

Steve just stands there looking at him then without saying a word he turns and walks off towards Neal's car. Neal follows him and he picks up the duffle bag and he tosses it in the back seat. Then he gets in beside Steve.

They drive for a few minutes then Steve finally says, "You were just going to leave and not tell me anything?"

"I left a note in your locker." Neal replies.

"Thanks a heap. What about the Captain?"

"He didn't say no but then again he didn't really say yes either. You're mad aren't you?" Neal replies and Steve just looks at him.

"Where did you get those clothes?" Steve asks.

"You remember my cousin Jeremy, the one that was in Nam?" Neal replies.

"How can I forget, he used to pick on me when we kids and he did the same thing to me when we became adults."

Neal scratches his head. "Remember when he stayed with me back when I still had my apartment? Well he left some clothes behind and last week I found them in the garage, I boxed them up and I was going to mail them off to him. I just hadn't gotten around to it and they were still in the trunk of the car. The jacket and hat are his, likewise the boots, the shirt and jeans are....yours."

"Did you have a search warrant to go thru my locker? What about the eye patch? Isn't that overdoing it?"

"No not really I have to make it look good." Neal replies.

"Neal are you sure that you've thought this thru?"

"No not really. Tonight while taking Ruby to the airport she was hysterical. Ruby is not prone to hysterics, she's the toughest woman I know. Steve, as long as I have known her I never seen her act like that. That image is up here forever." Neal replies as he taps his head. "These people threaten my wife and my son! My family! That was the absolute last straw!"

By now they had reached the city limits and Steve pulled over to the side of the road and he stops.

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"They are my family too! What would they do if something happened to you! What would I do?" Steve replies.

"We already talked about that. You would take care of Ruby and the boys besides it can't be that bad." Neal replies.

"Tell that to Robert who's in the Morgue!"

"Robert didn't know to fight, Mark said so. I know how to fight. I have been in plenty of fights."

Steve laughs. "You egotistical smuck! You don't know what kind of fighting they do! They might use baseball bats, tire irons, brass knuckles! And if you go down there wearing that Army jacket you're just asking for trouble! You know how people feel about that war! You were never over there, what if people start asking you question about what outfit you were in and stuff like that."

"Jeremy told me a lot of things about the outfit he was in and where they were and what they did. And for the other stuff I don't know about I'll just tell them I don't want to talk about it. You tell me another way to do this. I want to, no I need to find out what's going on! There are too many avenues in this case and they all lead to different places! If it's just homeless men getting their rocks off by fighting why kill people? Why torch an office? Why killed a guy you helped and that was your friend for just talking to us. Why threaten my wife and son? Why hurt Lola? Why do any of that just because homeless men are fighting?"

"Laura."

"What?" Neal replies.

"Lola. Her real name is Laura."

"Oh. And I chose this jacket for a reason."

"Which is what?" Steve asks.

"Didn't you tell me that Mark told you that you had to be invited to fight?"

"Yeah?"

"I think this jacket says I am just dying for an invite."

"Do you have any money?" Steve asks.

"Forty dollars. So if I get stopped by a cop I won't be popped for being a vagrant. I left my gun, wallet and badge in your locker."

"Why did you want me to drop you off at the city limits?"

"To make it look good, if anybody sees me they will think I'm hitchhiking. The story is I hitched all the way from Colorado."

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"Colorado?" Steve replies.

"I'm going to walk back into town and go to the soup kitchen."

"That's five miles!" Steve replies.

"So! I will work up an appetite and make it in time for breakfast. What time do they open?"

"Seven."

"What are you going to do?" Neal asks.

"I'm going to go back to that Judge and get that search warrant, I think now we have enough evidence." Steve replies.

Neal gets out of the car and after he grab his bag out of the back he goes over to the driver's side window and he leans down and he puts his hands on the window.

"That is a good idea but what I meant was, what are you going to do?" Neal asks as he raises his eyebrows at him.

Steve laughs. "Oh you meant what am I going to do?"

Neal laughs mockingly. "Yeah what are you going to do?"

"Well Neal, old buddy old pal, you will never know what I might do! I might run some interference or the old flea flicker!" Steve replies as he pats Neal on the cheek.

"What does that mean?" Neal asks.

"See ya later....Parker." Steve replies as he looks at the name on the jacket.

"Steve!" Neal replies as he holds onto the door as Steve starts to drive off. "What did that mean?"

Steve drives a little faster and finally Neal is forced to let go and he watches as Steve circles him creating a dust cloud then Steve blows him a kiss as he drives off.

"Moron!" Neal yells after him then he picks up his bag and he starts to walk back to Oceanview in the dark.

THE MISSION SOUP KITCHEN 1400 BALBOA:

Neal had an uneventful walk back into town. It gave him time to think and to get his story straight and to remember everything Jeremy told him and by the time he got to the soup kitchen it was 7:30. By then the city had started to wake up and people who had places to go

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where going there and the people who didn't have places to go or things to do ended up here. Neal found himself waiting in line. After fifteen minutes of waiting the line started to move and it moved right inside into the soup kitchen. Right away Neal noticed a big sign on the wall. "NO ALCOHOL, NO FIGHTING, NO SWEARING."

Neal grabbed a tray from the stack and a plate and some plastic ware. It was cafeteria style, like back in school, the food all laid out in big metal containers and volunteers behind them spooning food onto the plate. Neal handed his plate over for some bacon and at the next stop there were potatoes, then at the next stop was eggs and that is when Neal looked up to see Steve standing there. He was wearing a hair net, apron and in one gloved hand he was holding a large spoon that held scrambled eggs. Steve raises his eyebrows at him.

"Eggs?"

It took Neal a minute to recover. Then he handed his plate over. "Sure." Steve puts eggs on the plate then he added a slice of toast.

"Coffee is over there." Steve replies as he points.

Neal puts his plate back on his tray. "Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

Neal grabs his tray and he goes over to get a cup of coffee then he then he spies an empty table and he walks over to it.

"Hey you!! You! I'm talking to you! You the baby killer!"

Neal stops then he turns around to see a man, a little bit taller than him and heavier approaching him. "Yeah you! What do you think you're doing?"

"Eating breakfast like everybody else."

Then the man reaches out and he knocks the tray out of Neal's hands.

"Not anymore you aren't baby killer!!" The guy replies as he points his finger at Neal.

"Back off!"

"Or you'll do what?" The guy replies.

Neal then reaches out and he grabs the guys hand and he bends it backwards bringing the guy down to his knees.

"Let go! You're going to break my hand!"

Then somebody grabs Neal from behind. "Let him go!"

Father Owens comes running from the back pushing his way thru the crowd. "Stop it you two!"

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"My hand!"

"Let him go I said!" Steve replies.

When Neal finally let's go Father Owens helps him to his feet.

"My hand! You almost broke it!" The guy repeats as he holds it.

"If I had wanted to break it then I would have!" Neal replies.

"What's going on?" Father Owens asks.

"I don't know why don't you ask him? I was minding my own business! All I wanted to do was get something to eat!" Neal replies.

"Fred?" The Father asks as he looks at him.

"He's telling the truth." Steve replies as he points to Neal. "He had just gotten his food when Fred started to yell at him. This guy here," Steve points to Neal. "Didn't do anything."

"He's a baby killer he shouldn't be allowed in here!" Fred repeats.

"Fred you know everybody is welcome here, come with me I have some work for you to do at the Mission." Father Owens and Fred walk off.

"Alright everybody the excitement is over go back to whatever you were doing." Steve says to the crowd. "Why don't you, what's your name?"

"Parker." Neal replies.

"Okay Parker, I'm going to clean this up and then I'll bring you some more food. There are tables out back, go ahead and sit out there."

"Thanks." Neal grabs his duffle bag and he goes outside to wait.

A few minutes later Steve opens the door and he goes outside to where Neal is waiting. He sits the tray down on the table.

"You're going to say it aren't you?" Neal replies.

"Told you so." Steve replies.

"You didn't have anything to do with that did you?" Neal asks him.

Steve looks at him. "Wait! You think I set you up in there?" Steve replies as he points to himself. "Why would I do that?"

"To prove a point."

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“To prove a....look I’m one of the people who don’t want you to get hurt! Fred is a loud mouth, hot head, even more so when he drinks!” Steve replies.

“I just thought....”

“That’s the problem! You thought! I ought to slug you myself!” Steve replies as he raises his voice then he realizes where he is. “I have to go I have work to do.”

“Look I’m sorry.” Neal replies.

“Save it!” Steve replies as he opens the door and goes back into the soup kitchen. All Neal could do was watch him leave.

LATER THAT DAY:

Steve was pissed. Then again Steve couldn’t remember a time when Neal didn’t piss him off, this wasn’t the first time and he knew it wouldn’t be the last. Steve finished his volunteer work at the soup kitchen, handing out breakfast and then after he helped prep for the lunch crowd that was going to come, he went back to the precinct. He grabbed the search warrant paperwork then he went to the courthouse to find a judge.

Steve was mad at him. Which as things go that wasn’t unusual. Neal was running that around in his head as he wander the streets of Oceanview. This was probably the first time in his life that he didn’t have a place to be, things to do, he was looking at the city from a whole other perspective. He noticed that people stayed away from him. People walking on the sidewalk went out of their way to avoid him, if he stopped at a store to look in the windows whoever worked in the store would come out and point to a sign that read “No Loitering” so Neal would be on his way after that. Seeing the city roll by from a car was certainly different than being out here on the streets. Now he noticed how dirty certain parts were. How the people that lived here looked tired, worn out, hopeless.

By midday the heat was getting to him so he took off the jacket and he stuffed it in the duffle bag and that is when things changed. He went to a hamburger stand and he was waited on quickly and he went to a liquor store and bought a paper, no problem there either. He took his lunch and paper and he went to the docks, where the ocean breeze was cool and he found himself some shade and he settled in for a while. But of course his mind was on Steve and he wondered how he was doing.

GREYHOUND BUS STATION, DOWN TOWN OCEANVIEW, 936 FULLER:

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“The Manager isn’t here right now.” The guy behind the counter at the bus station replies. “I’m not authorized....”

“This....” Steve shoves the search warrant at him. “Gives you the authority. Now I need the key to locker 147.”

“Who are you again?”

Steve gets a deep breath as he reaches into his back pocket and takes out his badge and shows it to him again. “I am Detective Steve Perry from the Homicide Division of the Oceanview Police Department. And these two fine specimen behind me are Patrol Officers Wilde and Carter.”

“Expecting trouble?” The guy behind the counter asks as he looks at them.

“One never knows does one? Now can we have the key to locker 147?” Steve asks again.

“I have to go with you and unlock it.”

Steve raises his arms in the air. “Fine! Okay! Good! Let’s do it then! Now would be good!”

The guy looks at the paper again. “Okay I’ll be right back with the key.”

“Thank you.” Steve replies.

A few minutes later the guy returns with the key and Steve and the two officers follow him. Locker 147 was in the second row and Steve and the two officers watched as the guy put the key into the lock and he turned it and then he opened the door.

“Thanks we got it from here.” Steve replies.

In the locker was a duffle bag and underneath the duffle bag was a journal.

“Officer Can I borrow your night stick?” Steve asks Officer Wilde.

Officer Wilde looks down at it then he hands it to him. “Sure.”

Steve takes the night stick and he places it underneath the handles of the duffle bag and he lifts it out of the locker and he places it into a paper bag that Officer Carter is holding open. After giving the baton back to Officer Wilde he uses a handkerchief to pick up the journal and he places that in another paper bag.

TWO HOURS LATER AT THE CAPTAIN’S OFFICE:

“Okay Cap everything in the duffle bag was taken out and tagged and photograph and inventoried. Clothes, wallet, toiletries, things like that. And his Journal.” Steve replies as he holds it up.

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"Have you read it to see if it has anything of value in it?" The Captain asks.

At this Steve scratches his head. "You know Cap it's written in some sort of gibberish, I can't make heads or tails out of it."

"Can I see it?"

"Be my guest." Steve replies as he hands it to him then the Captain opens it.

"This isn't gibberish Steve." The Captain replies.

"No? What is it then?"

The Captain picks up his phone then he hits a button. "Alicia can you come in here for a minute? Thanks. It's written in shorthand."

"Shorthand?"

A minute later Alicia comes into the office and she smiles at Steve. "Yes Captain?"

The Captain hands her the book. "I was assuming that was written in shorthand?"

"Yes Captain you would be right. Do you want me to translate it for you?"

"Yes Alicia we would." The Captain replies.

"It's a big Journal it'll take some time. Do you want me to start on it now?"

"Steve?" The Captain asks.

"If you don't mind Alicia the sooner the better." Steve replies.

Alicia smiles at him. "I'll start on it right now." Steve watches her walk out of the room.

"She's a hard worker." The Captain replies as he smiles.

Steve turns his head back around. "I'm sorry. What?"

The Captain laughs. "I said she's a hard worker."

"Oh yeah she is that." Steve replies.

The Captain laughs. "It's five o'clock are you staying or going?"

"I'm staying I have some paperwork to catch up on and maybe Alicia will find something interesting in that journal."

"Okay see you tomorrow."

"Goodnight Cap."

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TWO HOURS LATER THE 9TH PRECINCT SQUAD ROOM:

Steve had finished his dinner which consisted of a sandwich from the Deli and a crème soda and he just hung up from a phone call from Ruby when Steve looks up to see Alicia standing in front of his desk. Holding the journal in her hand and she has an odd expression on her face. A mixture of shock and disbelief.

“Alicia is something wrong?”

“You could say that. Could I talk to you in the Captain’s office?” Alicia replies as she looks around at the other people in the room.

Steve follows her eyes. “Sure I guess.”

Steve gets up from the desk and he follows her into the office and she shuts the door behind them.

“Alicia what’s wrong I don’t think I’ve ever seen you so spooked before.”

Alicia shows him a scribble in the book. “See this right here?” Alicia says as she points at it and Steve looks at it.

“Yeah what does it mean?”

“It means we have a big problem.” Alicia replies.

“Alicia what do you mean we have a big problem?” Steve replies as he feels the hair stand up on the back of his neck. “Something tells me you’re going to tell me something that I am not going to like.”

“The word is Mayor.”

“Mayor? You mean like Mayor Carpenter?” Steve asks.

“Yes do you know another Mayor?”

“Well no! You mean Robert mentions the Mayor in his Journal?”

“Yes and Ronald Jackson from the City Permits Department, Mark Stovall from Bids and Beverly Sims the Mayor’s Assistant!!” Alicia replies as she jumps up and down. “This book is like a Who’s Who in Oceanview! “

“What? You’ve got to be kidding me!!”

“There’s a few other words he uses in connection with these people!”

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"Alicia...."

"Corruption is one and kickbacks another and how about this one Steve? Bribes?" Alicia replies as she tosses the journal onto the sofa.

"Oh holy shit!!!! Alicia...." Steve takes her by her hands. "Don't take this wrong but are you sure?"

Alicia starts slapping his hands away. "Yes damn it I am sure! Come with me!" Alicia replies as she takes Steve by one hand and she picks up the journal with the other.

Steve opens the door for her. "Where are we going?"

"Back to my desk!"

Alicia is holding tight to Steve's hand as she pulls him across the squad room over to her desk where she hands him some typed pieces of paper.

"Here read it for yourself!"

Steve reads over it then his eyes widen. "Boxing?" Steve replies as he looks up at her.

"Oh yeah that's mention in there as well but I don't know what the connection might be."

Steve reads a little further then he sees something that makes him stop his eyes wide.

"Alicia call the Captain and tell him what you found okay?" Steve replies as he hands the papers back to her as he turns and starts to walk away.

"Okay. Steve where are you going?" Alicia asks.

"To find Neal!" Then he stops and he goes back to Alicia's desk and he takes a rubber band out of the tray then this time he runs out of the office.

TWO HOURS LATER THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT:

Neal was sleeping and somebody was trying to wake him up by kicking at his foot, when he opened his eyes he was expecting to see Steve but then he remembered. This guy was a Stevedore who was wielding a hook.

"Come on buddy, move along, you can't sleep here." The guy replies as he points the hook at him.

"Yeah, yeah let me just get my stuff."

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So Neal grabbed his duffle bag and he beat a hasty retreat. Neal walked. He left the docks behind for the warehouse district. He knew there were a lot of empty warehouses that a lot of the homeless men gravitated to. The first one he came to seem to be a beehive of activity, men playing cards, dominoes or dice and when Neal walked up everything stopped and all eyes were on him. After Neal left the docks he pulled the jacket out of his duffle bag and he put it back on. He knew they weren't looking at him for his good looks. Even though this warehouse was abandoned they were still some remnants left of its former life which was a picnic table and since no one else was sitting there, he sat there. He sat his duffle bag down on the table while he rooted around in it for his pack of smokes. After finding the pack of aforementioned smokes he put one in his mouth while he rooted around for his lighter.

While he was rooting around for his lighter he glanced to his left and that is when he saw a guy standing there holding out a lighter. Neal glances up as he lights the cigarette. Late 30's, tall and skinny, long salt and pepper hair, pulled back into a pony tail. He didn't look like the other homeless guys around here, his clothes were clean, blue jeans and a t-shirt, a sweatshirt tied around his waist.

"Can I sit down?" He asks.

Neal shrugs. "It's a free country. Thanks for the light."

"Don't mention it. My names Randy."

"Parker." Neal replies as he points to the name on the jacket.

"You must be new around here, I don't think I've ever seen you around before. Where are you from?"

At that Neal starts to laugh.

Randy smiles. "What's so funny?"

"Sounds like something I said to a chick in a bar once. Man if this is a come on I don't swing that way."

Randy puts his hands up. "I don't either man I'm just making conversation."

"Colorado. That's where I'm from. Telluride."

"Pretty part of the county. How did you end up in California?" Randy asks.

"After I came back state side my old lady had ran off with the neighbor...."

"Man that's rough. It ain't bad enough that you're old lady took off with some other guy but the guy next door?" Randy replies as he shakes his head.

"I didn't say it was a guy now did I?" Neal replies as he blows a smoke ring up into the air.

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"Wow! Man that is just wild. I've heard about that sort of stuff happening but never experienced it myself."

Neal shrugs. "It happens I guess. Well after that Colorado sorta left a bad taste in my mouth, if you catch my meaning, I heard that California has a nice climate. Sand, surf and chicks in bikinis. I thought I would give it a try. I hitched from Colorado. I was hoping to find some sort work around here."

"I might be able to help you with that."

"Oh really? Do you have anything to do with these warehouses around here?"

"No not really. How long were you in country?" Randy asks.

"Three tours. You?" Neal asks.

"Four. What kind of rifle did you use?"

Neal looks at him. "M-16A1 a 5.56 mm."

"What happened to your eye?"

Neal touches to the patch. "Shrapnel."

"I saw you at the soup kitchen and I saw how you took care of Fred."

Neal shrugs. "He was a loud mouth."

"You could have broken his hand." Randy replies.

"I could have broken him in half."

"Why didn't you?" Randy asks.

Neal drops his cigarette on the ground and he crushes it. "I want to start over in a new place and you can't do that from jail."

"That job I mentioned before?" Randy asks.

"Yeah?"

"How do you feel about fighting for money?"

Neal thinks on this for a minute. "Good money?"

"It can be if you don't mind getting down and dirty." Randy replies.

"How dirty?" Neal asks.

"Meet me tonight at midnight at the Soup Kitchen and we'll give you a tryout."

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As they sit there and the sun is slowly sinking in the west two police cruisers come into the warehouse parking lot, and following behind them was a truck with bars on it. They circle once then they come back and one of them park in front of Neal and Randy. The minute the police cruisers come into the parking lot, some of the men, run like roaches when the kitchen light is turned on. Jumping off the loading docks.

"Uh oh it's the paddy wagon." Randy replies.

"What's going on?" Neal asks.

"Oh about once a week or so they do a roundup."

"A roundup?" Neal asks.

"Yeah they roundup some of the homeless, checking for vagrants, drunks, people who are wanted. You're not wanted anywhere are you?" Randy asks him.

Neal puts his hands in his jacket pockets. "Hell I'm not even wanted at home. So I guess the answer is no."

Randy laughs as two of the uniform officers approach them.

"Something funny?"

One of the officers asks as he hits his nightstick against his hand.

"Not a thing, uh...Officer Perry." Randy replies as he tries to read his name plate.

"Lieutenant Perry." Steve replies.

"Nothing's funny Lieutenant Perry sir."

Neal rubs his one good eye.

"Jack why don't you go and see if you could help them catch those other guys."

"Yes Lieutenant." Jack replies as he walks off.

"Who's your new playmate?" Steve replies as he points at Neal.

"This is Parker."

"Parker? What's the J. stand for?" Steve asks.

"Jeremy....Jeremy Parker."

"Do you have any I.D. Jeremy?" Steve asks.

"No I...." Neal tries to answer.

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"Look man why are you hassling us? We haven't done anything wrong. We're just having a friendly conversation."

Steve comes closer to Randy as he continues to hit his nightstick against his hand.

"This property is owned by the city so technically I could pop all you cats for Trespassing, but I won't because I'm a nice guy. Now, Randy if you don't mind I'm trying to do my job! Stay out of it!"

Randy takes a few steps back as he raises his hands in the air.

"Now Jeremy, as I was saying, do you have any I.D.?"

"No I don't." Neal replies as he shakes his head.

"How much money do you have?" Steve asks him.

Neal puts his hand in his pocket and he pulls out some money then he counts it. "Thirty five dollars."

"Oh now you see that's a problem." Steve replies.

"What do you mean?"

"You need at least seventy five dollars."

The look on Neal's face is priceless. "What? No I thought...."

"Come on you're going with me." Steve replies as he grabs Neal by his arm.

"Wait! What? What do you mean I'm coming with you?" Neal replies as he looks over his shoulder at Randy. "Steve what in the hell are you doing and where did you get that uniform? When you were a beat cop you weren't a lieutenant." Neal replies as Steve drags him closer to the Paddy wagon.

"None of your business where I got it!" Steve replies.

"Steve I am not getting in there!" Neal replies as he drags his feet.

"Here you go Jack here's another one for you!" Steve replies as he shoves Neal in Jack's direction and Jack grabs him by his arm.

"Let's go buddy." Jack replies as he helps him into the paddy wagon then he closes the door in Neal's face.

AN HOUR LATER AT THE 9TH PRECINCT, THE CAPTAIN'S OFFICE:

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"So?" Neal replies after he read the shorthand translation from the Journal.

"So? Steve repeats. "Didn't you read the part about two by fours, or chains, or what about the part about brass knuckles, didn't that grab your attention?"

"It's probably an exaggeration." Neal replies as everybody in the room groans.

"An exaggeration!!" Steve says loudly. "Wally was right when he called you a lunatic! Because you are!"

"I was this close to finding out for myself that is until you rolled up with that paddy wagon! Which you shoved me into! Randy invited me to the soup kitchen tonight which you probably blew out of the water Lieutenant Perry!"

"I had to make it look good and do you have any idea how long it took me to find you? I had to find you to tell you what was in that Journal!! This...." Steve replies as he gestures. "Was the only way I knew how to do it! I wanted you to know what you might be getting yourself into, you big, dumb lummox!!"

"And try to talk me out of it, right?" Neal replies loudly.

Steve hesitates just a moment. "Yes damn it and try to talk you out of it, all of us to try and talk you out of it!" Steve replies as he gestures around the room at Alicia and the Captain.

"Alright Cap are you giving me a direct order not to do this?" Neal and Steve look at the Captain.

The Captain takes a deep breath. "Well no I don't think so."

"Captain!" A shocked Steve replies.

"I wish you won't do it." The Captain replies as he looks at him.

Neal looks at the clock on the wall. "It's almost midnight maybe I can catch Randy." Neal replies as he turns to leave.

"Damn it Neal!" Steve replies as he follows him for a feet then he says, "Ruby! She's worried about you!"

Neal stops for just a second then he turns and looks at Steve. "Don't follow me! Got it!" Then he turns back around and he heads out of the squad room doors.

THE NEXT DAY ON THE STREETS OF OCEANVIEW:

"Don't follow me!" Neal saying it bounced around in Steve's head and it made Steve laugh. Neal really was a lunatic if he thought that Steve wasn't going to follow him. So he did. Steve

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had to find a way to get around the city quickly, without using his car and it had to be faster than walking. So he went down to the 'Unclaimed Property' room and found it.

It was a bicycle. It was a little banged up and the tires needed air but other than that it was fine. Steve also had a duffle bag that he hung off the handle bars that he would use to carry his gun and various other things. Add to that a baseball cap, a blue jean jacket, sneakers and a big wad of bubble gum and the illusion of being a teenager was complete.

Steve knew that Neal was way passed the stage to get him to come back so all he could was to keep an eye on him. That is if he could find him. By now it was noon and the soup kitchen would be starting to hand out their lunch so Steve went there. And he found out that he didn't have to wait long.

THE MISSION SOUP KITCHEN 1400 BALBOA:

Truth be told Neal was hungry and tired. Tired from sleeping out on the picnic bench at the old warehouse, his head on his duffle bag so nobody would steal it. Every noise woke him up and when those noises woke him up he would instinctively reach for his gun, which he didn't have. Then he remembered. So he would try and go back to sleep and the cycle would repeat itself. He didn't feel like breakfast but now he was regretting he missed it. Neal once again was standing in line when he felt a tap on his shoulder.

"Randy." Neal replies happy to see him. "Hey I'm sorry I missed our appointment last night."

"So am I. What happened with the police?"

"Well after they found out who I was and that I wasn't wanted they let me go. I slept on that picnic table all night or I tried to." Neal replies.

Randy smiles. "Let me buy you lunch. I know a greasy spoon place just down the street. You're going to need your strength for tonight. Come with me." Randy replies as he grabs Neal by the arm and pulls him out of line and they walk a little ways.

"I can't pay you back....what do you mean I'm going to need my strength?"

"You don't have to pay me back you're going to need your strength because tonight you're on the dance card. You're going to fight."

Neal laughs. "Are you serious? You mean I don't get a try out or an audition or anything like that? How do you know I can even fight?"

"Well because you were in Nam and over there you had to know how to take care of yourself." Randy replies.

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“What kind of fighting are we talking about here?”

“Street fighting, using anything that you can get your hands on. Come on let’s eat and I have a Motel room you can use to get some rest before tonight.” Randy replies as he puts his arm around Neal’s shoulders as they walk to the diner.

From Steve’s vantage point and with the help of binoculars he could see Neal and Randy real well, too bad though he couldn’t read lips. He watched them talk then he watched them walk down to the diner. After about an hour they came out of the diner then he followed them on his bike as they walked two blocks over to a Motel. After about ten minutes Randy came out alone. Steve was sitting on his bike across the street from the Motel in front of the liquor store when the door open and the owner came out.

“Hey kid!” The man yells at Steve but Steve ignores him then the man walks over to him.

“Hey kid I’m talking to you!”

Steve points to himself as he looks around. “You’re talking to me?”

“No the guy behind you! Yes wise ass I’m talking to you! Can’t you read?” The man replies as he points to sign nailed to the front of his store.

“Yeah I can read!” Steve replies.

“What does that say then?” The guy asks.

“No Loitering.” Steve replies.

“Well what are you waiting for and how come you aren’t in school?” The guy asks him.

“Its summer time pops!” Steve replies as he rides off on his bike.

Ten minutes later after Steve circles the block he goes back to the Motel and after stashing the bike he grabs the duffle bag off of the handle bars and he goes into the lobby. The place was rundown, tired, the linoleum on the floor needed to be replaced, likewise with the furniture and the fake plants needed a good dusting. But at the moment all Steve was interested in was the Coke machine that sat in the lobby.

“Hey kid what are you doing in here! This is an adult establishment!” The manager asks him as he comes out of the office holding a trash can.

“Ah cool it man don’t pop your clutch I just want to get a Coke!” Steve says back to him.

“Well make it snappy I can’t have Juvenile Delinquents in my establishment! I have an image to uphold!”

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"Yeah, yeah and yeah!" Steve replies as he watches him go back into the office and then he creeps over to the front desk and he peeks around the corner when he doesn't see anybody he reaches to turn the guest register around when the manager suddenly comes up behind him.

"Hey kid what are you doing?"

Steve jumps as he grabs his chest. "Don't do that! You almost gave me a heart attack!"

"You can't look at that, it's private." The manager replies.

Steve then opens his duffle bag and he pulls out his badge case and he shows it to him. "Does this help any?"

The manager looks at it then he laughs. "Come on! Is that even real? I have shoes older than you!!"

Steve laughs sarcastically. "Yes it's real I didn't find it at the bottom of a Cracker Jack Box!! I want you to tell me a room number of one of your guests!"

"I don't know Junior Detective....I mean Detective Perry that info is confidential you know. My guests are entitled to their privacy."

Steve looks at the floor as he laughs then he readjusts the baseball cap on his head. "I don't care about people cheating on their spouses, I don't even care about the girls that might be hooking out of this place...."

"Wait one minute...."

Steve holds up one finger. "All I care about is one person who is registered here and all I want is his room number." Steve then stands up to his full height and looks the guy straight in his eyes his hands on his hips. "And if you don't give it to me I will call the head guy at City Code Enforcement...."

The manager clears his throat. "Code Enforcement?"

"Yeah Code Enforcement. By the looks of this dump it wouldn't take much for them to shut you down, bucko! Now do we understand each other?"

"Oh yeah sure!" The manager replies as he goes back into the office and once behind the counter he looks at the guest book. "What's the name?"

"Jeremy Parker."

The manager runs his finger down the list. "He's in room 12 that's uh Randy Whitakers room."

"Randy Whitaker?"

Yeah he told me, that guy, Jeremy was going to be staying there. The room is paid up for two days."

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"Oh okay thanks. Oh just one more, tincey, wincey thing." Steve replies.

"What?"

"If Jeremy comes down here asking if somebody was here looking for him you never saw me! Got it! He's about my height, wild curly hair that looks like a perm gone bad. Understand?"

"Sure! Never saw you."

Steve starts to walk off then he stops and he comes back. "Oh yeah I almost forgot."

The man looks perturbed. "Yeah? What now?"

Steve holds up a dollar. "Change?"

The manager takes the dollar and he gives him four quarters.

ROOM #12:

Neal had almost forgotten how good it felt to take a hot shower and as he sat on the bed trying to dry his hair that is when fatigue sank in. He tossed the towel on the back of a chair. He curled up on his side to go to sleep when the phone rang.

Neal looked at it as it rang. Should he answer it? It might be for Randy. He knew it couldn't be for him. So Neal raised up on one elbow and he answered it.

"Hello?"

"So do you miss me yet?" Steve asks.

Neal pushes back the covers as he sits up. "Steve! I told you not to follow me!!" Neal then jumps out of bed and he goes over to the window and he pulls back the shade and looks outside.

"You moron I didn't follow you! I have my sources you know." Steve replies.

"Where are you?" Neal replies as he continues to look out the window.

"Where do you think?" A couple of blocks away Steve is sitting on his bike talking on a pay phone. Steve picked one far enough away that if Neal, looked out the window, he wouldn't see him. "I'm at the Precinct."

"Don't try to...." Neal replies.

"I'm not going to try and talk you out of it I just wanted to tell you to be careful, that's all. And I'm going to try and find out some more stuff about that guy Randy. I know I popped him a few

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times in the past I just can't remember what for and I want to check out his known associates if he has any."

Neal yawns.

"Am I boring you?" Steve asks.

"No I'm just tired that's all. I need some sleep."

"Okay sleeping beauty go take a nap and be careful!"

"Okay thanks."

"You didn't answer my original question, do you miss...."

"Goodbye Steve."

Neal hangs up the phone then he pulls on a pair of jeans and he goes down to the lobby. Where the Manager is sitting at the counter reading a paper.

"Hey I'm in Room 12 was there anybody here looking for me? A guy, my height, long hair and big nose?"

"No." The manager replies as he goes back to reading his paper.

"Are you sure?" Neal asks.

"Absolutely, positively, sure." The Manager replies as he looks at Neal's hair.

"What?"

"I was just wondering is that a....perm?" The manager asks.

Neal holds a strand of his hair out. "Who would do this to themselves on purpose? No it's natural? Why?"

"Just curious." The manager replies as he goes back to reading the paper and Neal goes back upstairs.

A FEW HOURS LATER:

While Neal was busy sleeping Steve was busy checking out Randy Whitaker's background. And Steve had arrested him before, no serious charges, and no known associates. For all intent purposes Randy was clean. While Steve was running background on Randy he was thinking of a plan and now at 10:30 pm he was off to try and execute that plane. He rode his bike back over to the soup kitchen and at this time of night the place was closed but that didn't matter.

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He rode his bike around to the back then he found a place to stash it behind some trash cans. Then he walked around behind it looking for windows or something. Something so that he could see inside, but there was nothing except a locked door that went down to the basement.

“Hey buddy got any spare change?”

Steve looked to his left and he saw that it was Fred.

“Fred.” Steve grabbed him by his arm. “Remember me from the soup kitchen? I’m Steve.”

“Oh yeah Steve. You got any change?”

“I was supposed to go to this fight that they have here in the basement, but it’s all locked up. Do you know what happened?” Steve asks.

“Oh yeah sure, they needed more room so they moved it to one of the warehouse. A new guy is fighting.”

“You mean one of those abandoned warehouses?”

“Yeah one of those.”

“Great Fred here’s two dollars.” Steve puts it in his hand.

“Hey thanks Buddy.” Fred says as he wanders off.

Steve glances at the clock on the bank building. It’s almost 11p.m. now but it won’t take long to get there so Steve goes back to where he left the bike but now it’s gone. He looks again searching behind the other trash cans then he stops, sensing somebody behind him.

“Looking for this?”

Steve turns around. “Jake.” Jake is holding the bike by one of the handle bars.

“Remember me cutie pie?”

“How did you get out of jail?” Steve asks. “Don’t tell me you made bail?”

Jake laughs. “There are other ways to get out of jail. Surprised to see me or are you scared?”

“Scared of you? Not hardly.” Steve replies.

“Maybe you should be scared.”

“I’m not a 16 year old boy, I’ll give as good as I’ll get.” Steve replies.

“Oh I certainly hope so. You know you’ll a tough guy to pin down but you were right about one thing.”

“And that was?” Steve replies.

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"Oceanview is not that big of a city. They let you roam the streets by yourself? Where's your curly headed boyfriend?"

"You know he's not around and I can take care of myself. Look I don't have time for this...."

"I do." Jake replies as he looks at him. "All I thought about was you."

"Really? I didn't think about you. Like I said I don't have time for this."

Jake picks up the bicycle and he tosses it into the trash cans. "Get by me and I'll let you go."

Steve stands there, his hands on his hips, looking at him. Steve takes off his hat and he tosses it aside. He knew Jake was lying and he also knew if Jake got his hands on him, then it would be over.

"Come on sweetheart what you're waiting for, chicken?"

Steve takes a few steps back then he runs at Jake. He fakes to the left then when Jake leans to the left Steve then heads for the right. Steve might have made it if it wasn't for the trash can. Steve tried to jump it but he tripped and just before Steve hit the ground Jake reached out and grabbed him by his belt loop.

Jake pulled him back into his arms and he holds him tight. One hand over his mouth as Steve struggles.

"I'll be gentle I promise." Jake whispers to him. Steve mumbles something behind Jake's hand. "What?" Jake says as he moves his hand away.

"I said I won't be gentle." Steve then takes Jake's hand and he bits him. He bits him hard enough to draw blood. Jake yells and he drops him. Steve then hits Jake in the stomach with two quick hard elbow jabs. Then when Jake is doubled over Steve hits him on the chin. Jake is a big guy and he knows these little love taps won't be enough to bring him down, but at least he can get away. So he does or he makes an attempt to until Jake grabs him by his leg but this time all he gets is his shoe.

"Come back here!" Jake yells.

Steve takes off and he runs around the corner. Dimly lit streetlights show him the way out to the street. Looking around he sees a few cars. "Shit! Where's a cop when you need them?" Steve looks behind him then he sees it. Running away from him may solve the immediate problem but he needs a way to contain him until he can find a cop. Then he spots it. He ran right by it. A dumpster. He goes back over to it and opens the lid, reeling from the stench he removes three garbage bags and to make it look good he takes off his jacket. He drapes over the lip and he shuts the lid down over it. Then he finds a place to hide.

Jake doesn't disappoint because a few minutes Steve sees him running down the alley. Every so often he would stop and rummage behind trash cans.

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"Okay sweetheart I know you're out here somewhere." Then he comes up on the dumpster with the jacket Steve left behind. Smiling he looks around. "Hiding in there? You aren't very smart are you?"

Jake opens the lid to the dumpster and he leans down into it trying to see and that is when Steve who had been hidden by the shadows in the alley comes out. Steve quickly goes over to the dumpster and grabbing the lid he slams it down hard, once, twice and three times for good measure down on Jake's head. It happened so fast Jake couldn't react. Steve then grabbed Jake by one leg and hoisted him into the dumpster then he closed the lid.

Steve couldn't leave him here because once he came around he would be on the loose again. Then Steve noticed the dumpster was on wheels. Then he looked out onto the street. Roll it out into the street, somebody might hit it and then they would call the police. So Steve did just that.

He pulled it out from its place by the wall and to his surprised it rolled easily enough. He rolled it down the alley and then he gave it a good hard shove out into the street. And that was when he heard the horn blow then he heard the crash and peeking out from around the corner is when he saw that it was a police car that had hit it.

The police car had rammed it and pushed it across the street to where they both rest, the dumpster pushed up against a light post. Steve then ran out, crossing the street, he ran up to the police car and he jumped on the hood. Running across the hood of the car he jumped on the lid of the dumpster and sat on it just as the police officer gets out of the car.

"Hey what in the hell is going on?" The police officer asks as he shines a flashlight at Steve.

"Officer I am so glad to see you!!" Steve replies.

"Did you push that dumpster out into the street?"

"Yes I did you see...."

"You know kid there's a curfew? It's passed ten o'clock. Where's your parents?" The cop asks him as he continues to shine the flashlight at him. "You know you look familiar? Is your dad a cop?"

"No! My dad isn't a cop! I'm the cop!"

The police officer starts to laugh. Then the lid on the dumpster starts to move. Steve shifts his weight on the lid as he looks at the cop.

"Hey who's in there? What are you two up to? I know, this is some kind of prank! This is one of those fraternity stunts isn't it? What happened to your other shoe?"

"Officer look!! I'm not a kid and this isn't a college stunt!" The lid on the dumpster continues to move. "I'm a cop! Really! Here let me show you my....shit!" Steve replies as he reaches around to his back pocket and he realizes his badge and gun at back with the bicycle.

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“What is it?”

“Shit! My badge and my gun I left them....”

“In your car?” The officer asks.

Steve looks at him because he knows how it’s going to sound. “....No on my bicycle.”

The police officer starts to laugh. “On your bicycle?”

The lid on the dumpster moves some move and then Jake reaches out and he grabs ahold of Steve’s ankle. Steve uses his other foot to knock his hand off. “Let go of me you scumbag!! Look officer I know this looks really strange....”

The officer stands there with his arms crossed over his chest.

“But I am telling you the truth! Call dispatch! The guy in the dumpster is Jake Barlow! He’s wanted out of L.A. for rape and probably for escape!! By now there might even be a B.O.L.O. out on him!”

“You really have the lingo down kid.”

The dumpster lid moves again. “Look officer I’m not a kid!! I know the lingo BECAUSE I AM A COP!!”

“Hey don’t raise your voice at me son!”

“Look call dispatch! My name is Steve Perry, Homicide Detective. I’m a Sergeant and my badge number is 196! This guy’s rap sheet is as long as my leg! Busting him will look good in your jacket!! Please call dispatch! I don’t think I can keep this guy much longer in this thing!”

“Hey sweetheart let me out of here!!!” Jake yells from the dumpster then Steve looks at the cop.

“Please!!”

The officer just looks at him then reluctantly he backs up and he gets back in the car and Steve can see him on the radio. Five minutes pass and when the officer gets out of the car and comes back over to Steve he looks sick.

“There is a B.O.L.O out on a Jake Barlow.”

“No shit!!!” Steve replies.

“Mr. Perry....I mean Sergeant you are a homicide detective.”

“No shit again!”

“I’m sorry I didn’t believe you.”

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Steve waves him off. "It happens all the time! Let's get this scumbag out of this dumpster, then you need to get back on the horn to dispatch. Have them send another car out here, I need to borrow yours! Okay?"

"Oh yes sir Sergeant."

THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT:

Neal was still standing, he wasn't sure how, but the other guy was on the floor. The crowd around him was yelling and screaming their approval. Neal had managed to hold his own against his opponent, even thou the guy was probably 6'2 and weighted 250 and Neal, well Neal was lacking in such areas.

Neal's opponent had gotten in a few good swings. The one good eye was swollen and he could barely see out of it. Neal had used a few cop moves on him but toward the end he resulted to guerilla type tactics. He had grabbed a two by four and now his opponent was out for the count, literally.

Stay down. Stay down. Neal was saying to himself. The referee was kneeled down beside him counting down to ten and when his opponent didn't move the bell was rung and Neal's arm was lifted in victory. Randy came up and draped a towel around his neck.

"Parker! That was some hit! The guys really like you! Come on let's have the nurse look at your eye."

"There's a nurse here?" Neal asks.

"Yeah she's in the back." Randy replies as he takes Neal by his arm.

With the matches over everybody was leaving the warehouse. Randy and a few of his helpers were cleaning the place up and Randy was counting the money when Steve came running into the warehouse.

"Randy! Where's everybody?"

"The matches are over, you missed them."

"Where's Neal?"

"Who?"

Steve closes his eyes. "I meant Parker. Where's Parker?"

"After he saw the nurse he went back to the Motel." Randy replies.

"Nurse? Was he badly hurt?"

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“No! He did a great job! He had a dandy of a black eye and some bruises but other than that he was okay.” Randy replies.

“You let him walk back to the Motel?” Steve asks as he turns around and runs back to the door.

“It’s not that far and he wasn’t hurt!” Randy yells after him.

Steve gets back in the squad car and he follows the route that he knew Neal would have to take. It wasn’t long and even with the dimly lit streets Steve spotted Neal up ahead and as he was just about to pull up next to him, a big black sedan races to get by him and they swoop in, blocking Steve as they jump the curb also blocking Neal’s way on the sidewalk. The driver of the sedan slamming on the brakes causing the car to rock back and forth. Neal drops his duffle bag in an effort to retreat but it is useless. The back door of the car opens up and a big guy with no neck gets out and he takes a few steps and he grabs Neal. He wraps a big arm around Neal’s neck just as Steve gets out of the car pointing his gun at the guy’s back.

“Let him go.” Steve replies.

The guy turns around and now Steve can see that the guy is holding a gun to Neal’s head.

“Drop it or I’ll shoot him.” The guy replies.

Steve is looking at Neal and he sees him shake his head no. “Steve don’t...”

The guy jams the gun harder into the side of Neal’s head as he closes his eyes. “Don’t be a hero. Toss the gun on the roof of the car! Do it or I’ll kill him!!!”

Steve slowly stands up raising both hands in the air making sure he sees the gun in his hand then he slides it across the roof of the squad car.

“Good boy! Now toss the keys to the car to me!”

Steve reaches into the car.

“Slowly!”

Steve slowly leans into the car and after he turns it off he pulls the keys out of the ignition and tosses them to him. The keys land on the pavement and the driver picks them up.

“Good. Stay off that radio. Don’t call for back-up. If I even see a squad car I’ll kill your friend here. Got it?”

“Yeah I got it. Neal?”

“It’ll be alright Steve.” Neal replies.

“Get your ass in the car!” The guy shoves Neal into the back seat of the car then he follows. He slams the door shut just as the driver backs the car off of the curb and gunning it, the tires spinning on the pavement as they drive up the street. Steve slams the door to the squad car

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then he runs out to the street, watching as the car turns right at the corner, disappearing into the night.

TO BE CONTINUED: