

THE DETECTIVES OF THE 9TH PRECINCT

THE ROUGH

TRADE

PART 1

"Neal what are you reading?"

"A letter from Kathleen about Joey."

"Really? There's nothing wrong with him is there? I mean he's okay isn't he?" Steve asks.

"Oh sure he's fine. She's just telling me about the latest phase he's going thru."

"And that is what? What is young man Joey interested in this time?" Steve laughs. "Ah! I remember when Joey was in love with Cinderella! Oh man he couldn't get enough of her! I also remember Cinderella started a very big case for us too! So what is it this time?"

"Wonder Woman."

Steve whistles at this. "Wow!! Joey certainly knows how to pick em!! Wonder Woman is a fox!! I mean she can lasso me anytime she wants to!!"

"Steve."

"I mean I would love to ride in that invisible plane with her!! If you know what I mean!! Yowzer!" Steve replies.

"Steve!!!"

"She's an Amazon! Island! She's from an island full of women! She's from an island full of Amazon women!!" Steve replies as his eyes slowly start to glaze over. "She's from an island full of single Amazon women! I would be the only man!!"

"Steve!!!!" Neal replies as he taps his fingers on the desk.

"I would need to get a really, really big desk calendar!" Steve replies as he grabs a calculator and a notepad. "Let's see, 365 days in a year...."

"Steve!!!!" Neal repeats.

".....12 Months in a year...."

"STEVE!!!" Neal yells while snapping his fingers.

"WHAT?!"

"Focus man focus! Kathleen also says that Joey has her poster above his bed and that he stares at it for hours on end."

"So! I would too if I had her poster above my bed. Actually I would probably never leave my room...WHAT!!?"

Neal looks at him. "She's just concerned about it that's all. It's all he thinks about, talks about..."

"Remember when we had a crush on Raquel Welch?!" Steve points out.

Neal's eyes light up. "Oh yeah!! Oh boy did we ever!!"

Steve laughs "Bah! See the apple doesn't fall far from the tree! Leave the boy alone! He has good taste!! It was the same thing with Cinderella and he eventually got over her. He'll be alright!"

"Yeah true and I think we should talk about that case. What are you looking for?" Neal replies as he watches Steve as he starts looking through the desk drawers.

"Move!" Steve replies as he rolls Neal's chair out of the way.

"Hey! What are you doing?" Neal replies as he rolls out of the way.

"I'm looking for something!"

"Well no shit I already know that!" Neal replies.

"Neal!" Steve replies with his hands on his hips. "If you already knew that then why are you asking?"

Neal points his finger at him. "Because I don't know what you're looking for that's why!"

"The tape measure of course!" Steve replies as he throws his hands up in the air.

"Oh of course the tape measure!!" Neal mimics him as he also throws his hands up in the air. "Why do you need the tape measure?"

"To measure something of course!" Steve replies.

So that is where Neal finds himself now. A beautiful Sunday morning. The sun was shining. The sky was blue. The birds were singing. Neal parks his car behind his mother's in the driveway. He gets out of the car humming to himself. When he gets to the porch he leans over and he picks up the Sunday paper and the bottle of milk that had been delivered. Then he rings the doorbell. He can hear it echo thru the house. He waits. No answer. So he rings the bell again. He looks at his watch. He reasons maybe she is in the shower. Then he hears it. The sound of the door being unlocked from the other side. Then the door opens.

"RAY!?"

Neal is surprised. His eyes widen. Actually shocked might be a better word. Flabbergasted. So much so that he drops the bottle of milk and it shatters on the porch. Neal ignores the milk. He can't take his eyes off of Ray. Standing there. Wearing his monogram bathrobe that Steve had bought him for Christmas last year. Bare feet. His hair wet from the shower. Answering his mother's front door. The real life definition, in bold and living color, the undeniable aftermath of an intimate situation.

"NEAL?!" Ray exclaims his hand resting on the doorknob.

"RAY!?" Neal exclaims.

"NEAL?" Neal's mother exclaims.

Neal looks over Ray's shoulder.

"MOM!?"

"Neal what are you doing here?" His mother exclaims as she comes closer to the front door. Standing behind Ray.

"What?" Neal laughs. "What am I doing here?" Neal replies as he points to himself with the rolled up Sunday paper his voice just slightly a higher pitch. "What is HE doing here?" Neal points to Ray.

There is silence for a moment as they all look at one another.

"Isn't this where somebody is supposed to say Neal this isn't what it looks like?" Neal replies just slightly hysterical as he gestures.

His mother looks at Ray then she looks at Neal. "Just what do you think it looks like Neal?"

"That Ray spent the night...here?!" Neal replies as he squirms and points to the inside of the house.

"Yes honey. Ray did spend the night here." His mother replies as she puts her hand on Ray's shoulder and they look at each other.

Neal sees that look pass between them. Neal swallows hard. "On the....sofa?"

Ray then reaches his hand out to Neal. "Neal, son why don't you come in and have a cup of coffee with us?"

Neal takes a few steps back. "No. I think I have to go."

His mother takes a few steps forward. "Neal, honey come inside I think we need to talk to you."

"No! I think it's too late for that now! Don't you think you should have thought of that before? Told me before? Just how long? How long have you two been...? I don't think I can even say it!" Neal replies.

"You mean lovers?" Ray replies.

Neal tenses up and he closes his eyes his hands balled up into fists. "Ohhh don't say that!"

"Neal, baby, I'm a grown woman and I'm single!" She replies as she reaches out to touch Neal.

Neal shies away from her. "You're also my mother! I have to go! Here's your paper!" Neal replies as he thrusts the paper at Ray who takes it then Neal turns and walks off the porch.

"Neal!!" His mother yells after him.

Neal doesn't even look back at her. He walks runs at a fast clip down the walkway to the driveway where he gets in the car.

"NEAL!!"

He starts the car throwing it into reverse haphazardly backing into the street. Then he guns it, the tires spinning as he takes off up the street.

His mother runs out the front door side stepping the broken glass and milk as she jumps off the porch. She runs down the walkway and out into the street. Jumping up and down. Yelling His name. Waving her arms above her head.

"NEAL! NEAL!!"

But to no avail. All she can do is watch him drive away.

As Neal watches her get smaller in his rearview mirror.

LATER THAT MORNING STEVE'S APARTMENT:

It was annoying and loud. So much so the pictures on the wall were vibrating. It was coming from the front door. And it woke Steve up from a sound sleep. Startled. He rolled off the bed tangled in the sheets. Now in Neal's state of mind, or lack thereof, Neal was tired of waiting. So he used his key. Even when he got the door unlocked the night chain was still on the door. Any other time Neal would be giddy at the thought of Steve's security consciousness but now was not a good time. So Neal stuck his arm thru the opening in the door waving it around.

"STEVE!!!" Neal yells. "STEVE!!!"

Steve came out of the bedroom into the hallway. Looking around the corner. His hair a mess. Rubbing his eyes. Naked as the day he was born. Holding his gun.

"Who is it? I'm armed!! I'm a cop!!" Steve yells loudly.

"No shit!! What a coincidence I'm a cop too! And look I'm armed too!!" Neal replies as he waves his arm around. "And what do you mean who is it...who do you think it is!? Who else has a key to your apartment?!! It's me! Open the door Steve!! Now!!"

"Neal!? What do you want? Do you know what time it is?" Steve asks yawning as he looks around the corner.

"What do you mean what do I want? I don't care what time it is! I want to come in! Open the door! Now!!"

"Alright already!! Holy shit! Hold your horses! Let me find my pants!!" Steve replies as he turns around and goes back into the bedroom putting his gun away.

A few minutes later he comes back into the living room wearing a pair of pajama bottoms as he walks over to the door brushing the hair out of his eyes.

"Move your stupid arm!" Steve replies as he bats at Neal's arm.

"All right already!! Hurry up why don't ya!!" Neal exclaims as he pulls his arm back out of the door.

"Hold your horses!!" Steve yells again.

Steve shuts the door then he takes the night chain off. Neal then pushes the door open and he comes in slamming the door behind him.

Steve runs his hands thru his hair as he watches Neal pace the living room. "What in the hell is wrong with you? Your face is beet red and that vein on your forehead is bulging. Which always happens whenever you are really, truly pissed off about something. Something happened didn't it? What happened? Did you and Ruby have a fight?"

Neal makes another circle around the coffee table then he walks over to Steve with his hands on his hips. Their noses practically touching.

"I sincerely hope I didn't interrupt anything!! It took you long enough to answer the front door!!"

"No you scared her off. When you started banging on the front door she jumped out the window. She thought it was her husband looking for her." Steve replies as he waves his arms around.

"WHAT!!!" Neal replies as he jumps up and down.

"SSSShhhhhh! For the love of Pete it was a joke! I was sleeping! Alone! What in the hell is wrong with you!! Neal! Calm down!"

"Don't tell me to calm...Steve! I don't think I can breathe!" Neal replies as he puts his hands up on his chest trying to catch his breath.

"You're hyperventilating! Here sit down! I'll be right back."

Steve guides him over to the barstool which he shoves Neal down onto then he runs into the kitchen. When he comes back he is carrying a paper bag.

"Here put this over your nose and mouth and breathe into it!"

"It...smells...like...onions."

"Who cares!? I'm trying to save your life! Now do it!!" Steve replies.

Neal looks at him then he puts the paper bag over his nose and mouth and he begins to breathe into it.

Steve puts his hand on Neal's shoulder. "Feel better?"

Neal doesn't answer he just nods his head.

"So." Steve replies as he crosses his arms over his chest. "Why are you blowing a gasket?" Neal looks at him as he continues to breathe in and out of the bag then in the form of an answer he points to some pictures on the bookcase. Steve walks over looking at them.

"You and me at the Academy when I graduated?" Steve asks as he points.

Neal closes his eyes and he shakes his head no.

"My mom and Marv?" Steve points again to another picture.

Neal shakes his head no even more vigorously.

Steve scratches his head. "This one?" Steve replies as he points to a picture of Ray.

Now Neal starts slapping his hand down on the bar behind him. Nodding his head as he jumps up and down on the bar stool.

Steve looks at him squinting. "Ray? So this has something to do with my dad? My Ray?"

"Do you know another Ray?" Neal replies around the paper bag.

"No." Steve replies as he yawns. "How do you feel now?"

"Better. Where did you learn how to do this?" Neal replies as he puts the paper bag down on the bar.

"Marcus Welby." Steve replies.

"And who says you can't learn anything from T.V.?" Neal replies.

"Not me. Coffee. I'm going to make some coffee. Want some?" Steve asks as he heads towards the kitchen.

"Why does everybody kept asking me if I want some coffee? I rather have a beer!!"

"Neal! It's too early for a beer! Just sit there and try to calm down."

Neal laughs. "CALM DOWN?! CALM DOWN?! You have no idea....what I've seen with my own two eyes! What I saw!! What I heard!!"

"Neal...."

"I went by my mother's house!! To help her clean up after the party! And do you have any idea...? No! No you don't!"

"Neal...."

"YOUR FATHER ANSWERED THE DOOR! IN THE BATHROBE YOU GAVE HIM FOR CHRISTMAS!!"

Steve stands in the kitchen, his hands on his hips, looking at Neal as he sits on the bar stool on the opposite side. Neal's eyes wide as saucers.

"Is that all?" Steve asks.

Neal laughs. "Is that all you ask? Is that all? Isn't that enough? Your father and my mother! My mother and your father!! Together!!"

"It could have been worse." Steve replies.

"HOW?!" Neal asks loudly.

"He could have answered the door in just a towel." Steve replies as he shrugs.

Neal makes a face at this. "You're enjoying my misery aren't you?"

"That's beside the point." Steve replies.

Neal gives him a sideways glance.

Steve takes a deep breathe. "I think it's groovy." Steve replies.

"Groovy?! Wait?! You! You already knew about this?! Didn't you?" Neal replies as he points at him. "You did! And you didn't tell me!? Me!! Your best friend?!"

"No. I didn't know for sure but I suspected it. You know they both came out for your wedding and I guess they hit it off. After that Ray always asked about your mother. And then last night at the party they were always together. Dancing. Eating. Their heads were together. Laughing. They would disappear into the kitchen. You didn't notice that?" Steve asks as he gestures.

Neal shakes his head. "No. I was too busy with Ruby. You know it was the first outing we had out in months."

"Ray has always asked about you too." Steve replies.

"Me?" Neal replies as he points to himself.

"Sure. He always asks how you're doing. He thinks of you like another son."

"He does?" Neal replies.

"Sure he does." Steve replies.

"Oh this whole thing has given me a headache." Neal replies as he puts his hand on his forehead.

"I'll get you some aspirin. The coffee will be ready soon."

Steve reaches into one of the cabinets in the kitchen and takes out a bottle of aspirin and he shakes out two then he gets a glass of water and he hands them to Neal.

"There you go."

"Thanks." Neal replies then he takes the aspirin then he drains the water glass. "He did call me son. On the front porch when they asked me to come in."

"Wait. You mean you had this discussion on the front porch of your mother's house? In front of god and the neighbors?"

Neal nods his head. "Yeah pretty much."

"Nitwit! Why didn't you go in the house when they asked you? Sounds like they wanted to talk to you about it. You know explain."

"You got to be kidding me! I couldn't go in that house! Knowing what they were doing in that house?! Had been doing?! In my mother's house!! I just couldn't do it! It was bad enough to see your father answer the door in his bathrobe!! HIS BATHROBE! That means he has clothes there! That means it wasn't a spur of the moment thing!! They planned this!!"

Steve takes a deep breathe. "Come on Neal you didn't have trouble being over there last night at the party!"

"That was before I knew what was going on..."

"You mean your mother and Ray sleeping together?"

Neal tenses up as he makes a fist. "Ohhhh don't say that!!"

"Would you rather it was a one night stand?!" Steve asks as he looks at him brushing his bangs out of his eyes.

"WAIT??! WHAT!?! No! No! No! My mother would never have a one night stand!!" Neal replies loudly.

"Neal..."

"No!! I can't hear you! La! La! La! La!" Neal replies as he puts his fingers in his ears.

"SEX! It's called sex Neal." Steve replies as he laughs shaking his head.

Neal covers his eyes with his hands as he leans on the bar. "Oh my god!! Don't say that!!" My mother would never do that!!"

Steve laughs hysterically. "Neal how do you think you got here?!"

Neal opens his fingers slightly as he looks at Steve.

"How do you think any of us got here?" Steve asks as he gestures.

"Ohhhhh I don't want to think about it!!" Neal replies as he groans.

"Neal your mother is a grown, single woman."

"She did say that." Neal replies as he nods his head. "She did."

"Uh huh. She is also beautiful and I can see why Ray would be attracted to her. I mean I have been..." Steve replies.

"Wait what?" Neal looks at him sideways.

"...At one time.."

"At one time? You! Wait! You mean to tell me you were attracted to my MOTHER? My best friend? Attracted to my MOTHER!? I can't believe it!" Neal replies.

"Oh yeah when I was a kid I had a big crush on her." Steve replies.

"A cr...Crush!?" Neal replies as he stutters. "You...you had a crush on my mother? MY MOTHER??!! The woman who saw you naked when you were six?"

"Gotcha!!" Steve replies as he laughs banging his hand up and down on the counter.

"Jackass!! That is not funny!!"

"Would you be this upset if she was sleeping with somebody other than my father? Or is it just Ray that you don't like?"

"Don't say sleeping with!! I have nothing against your father, I like him and you know I do. Even if he is a bit of a wolf!!" Neal replies.

"What? What in the hell does that mean?" Steve replies.

"A wolf!! A womanizer! A Casanova! He went out with Ida for a while and who knows who else! He probably met a lot of women in L.A. and you didn't fall far from that tree bucko!!"

"Me?" Steve replies as he points to himself.

"Yes you! Have you forgotten about the desk calendar at work? The one with all the women's names on it! I've never seen one man juggle so many women!" Neal replies.

"It's an art let me tell you!" Steve replies as he winks at him.

Neal slams his hand down onto the bar. "Okay! How long has this been going on and why didn't somebody tell me!"

"A couple of months or so."

"See you did know! You smuck!! Why didn't you tell me! You're my best friend!!" Neal whines.

"Because we all knew you would go nut job crazy! Sorta like now!! Didn't your mother date when she lived in Hanford?"

Neal waves his arms around. "Maybe!! I don't know if she did or not! I wasn't there to see it! Whenever I went to visit a strange man never answered the door!! That...was over there! In Hanford!" Neal replies as he gestures. "This is here!!"

"Would you feel better if they got married?" Steve replies as he looks at Neal as he taps his fingers on the bar.

"Married?"

"Yeah married." Steve replies.

"My mother and your father?" Neal asks with his head bent to the side with a quizzical look on his face.

"Yep."

"I mean...are they that serious? I mean...MARRIED?"

"Yeah. It's possible." Steve replies as he shrugs. "Then you and I would be brothers for real. I would like that." Steve smiles at the memory. "When we were kids that was all we talked about. Being brothers for real. Remember that?"

"Yeah I do. Technically we would be half-brothers." Neal points out.

Steve shrugs again. "So. We would still be brothers. Or..."

Neal sits up straighter. "Or....?"

"Or they could just live together. Ray did mentioned something about moving to Oceanview."

"WHAT? Ray is going to move?! Here?!" Neal replies as he points to the floor his voice high pitched.

"Yes Neal he might." Steve takes a deep breath as he rubs his eye. "It doesn't mean he's going to move in with your mother."

"Oh my god I can't believe this is happening!!" Neal replies as he rocks back and forth on the bar stool.

Steve shakes his head as he pours Neal a cup of coffee. "Nut job crazy."

Just as Steve is about to pour himself a cup of coffee the phone rings and they both look at it. Neal sits up on the bar stool and he points. "Don't answer it!!"

"Goofball! I have to answer it!"

Steve goes over to the phone hanging on the wall in the kitchen and he picks up the receiver. "J...ello? Dad?"

Neal looks at him.

"Is Neal here?" Steve replies as he looks over at Neal.

Neal gets up from the bar stool and he runs into the kitchen wildly gesturing mouthing the word "NO!" as Steve looks at him.

"No Dad Neal's not here. Why would he be here? Oh? OH? He freaked out?" Steve replies as he looks at Neal. "Uh huh. Yeah nut job crazy."

Neal sticks his tongue out at him.

"His mom wants to talk to him too? Okay. Well if I see him I'll tell him. Okay. I love you too. Bye." Steve hangs up the phone.

"You heard that right."

"Yes I heard that."

"Your mother wants to talk to you." Steve repeats.

"Yes I heard that too but I can't talk to them now! I need time to...to..."

"To what Neal? Fret on it? Worry about it? Make yourself even crazier over it? Huh? What is it about my father and your mother that's doing this to you?"

"I love my mother and I don't want her hurt! I..."

"Neal...here sit down." Steve replies as he pulls out a chair from the dining table and Neal sits down then Steve pulls out another chair and he sits down facing him. "It's about your father isn't it?"

Neal rubs his face. "Yeah. I know he's been gone awhile now but I still remember him and how my mother felt about him. She always told me that he was the first man that she ever loved. They met when they were 16 and I guess I'm hurt by the fact that she met somebody...somebody that might replace him."

And not to mention the fact that our parents were friends. Your mother and my mother were best friends. I guess it feels like a betrayal somehow. You know what I'm trying to say Steve?"

"Yeah Neal I do. When Ray told me how he felt about your mother I wasn't sure either and I even brought up mom. Ray told me they had made peace, he and mom. She forgave him for everything he did and Ray was sad that she had gotten married again but he knew that Marv loved her...and all he wanted was for her to be happy. Your mother will never forget your father and she doesn't want to replace him Neal. There is no way she ever could. Our parents deserve to be happy and it doesn't matter how old we get we will still be their pequeninos."

"What's that?" Neal asks.

"Little ones." Steve replies as he smiles. "We will always be their little ones."

Neal smiles as he looks at the floor. "That's true."

Steve slaps Neal on the leg then he looks up at him. "Your mother loves you Neal and you should give her a chance to tell you how she feels. Don't you think so?"

Neal nods his head.

"I know she wants to hear from you too." Steve replies.

"Oh it's already been a long day and its still morning." Neal replies as he laughs.

"It was a shock I bet. Do you still feel up to it to take Joey to see Cinderella this afternoon? I mean I could..."

"No! I mean yes! Oh hell!" Neal replies.

Steve laughs.

"I already got the tickets and I promised the little guy that you and I would take him. Uncle Steve this and Uncle Steve that! He goes on about you so much I think I'm jealous!" Neal replies.

Steve smiles at this.

"So yes we are taking him to the movies this afternoon."

"Give your mom and Ray a chance, okay?" Steve replies.

Neal nods his head. "It might take me awhile, I mean, for me to get the nerve up to talk to her. My head today is not in the right place. Do you understand?"

Steve smiles at him. *"I do understand and Neal whatever happens with them, you know I will always love your mother. I know it's hard, but Neal your mother is a very smart woman. She knows what she wants and she will always love you too."*

"Thanks for that."

Steve leans over and he wraps his arms around Neal and he gives him a hug then he pats him on the back. *"Tell you what. You wait here. Have a cup of coffee. Relax. I'll take a shower then we're go back to your house. You take Ruby out for a great big breakfast while I watch the kids. I'll make pancakes for Joey. It is Sunday and Sunday is for pancakes. Then this afternoon we're take Joey to the movies."*

"Okay. The kids were still asleep when I left. I'll call Ruby so she can get ready."

"Great! I need a cup of coffee then I'll jump in the shower."

"Thanks Steve."

"Anytime Neal....anytime."

LATER THAT AFTERNOON THE OCEANVIEW MOVIE THEATRE:

"Wow! Look at the line!" Steve replies pointing to the winding line that extended out to the sidewalk as they walk up to the movie theatre. Holding tight to Joey's hand as Neal holds the other.

"Awwwww shucks dad!" Joey exclaims as he looks up at Neal.

"It's alright son I already got tickets! See!!" Neal replies happily as he takes them out of his pocket and he waves them around.

Joey claps as he jumps up and down. "Yeah dad! You're the best!!"

Neal and Steve both laugh. "Look Joey there is a special window just for us!" Steve replies as he points.

"Come on! What are we waiting for?!" Joey yells as he grabs Steve's hand and he pulls him along.

"Yeah Neal what are we waiting for?" Steve says back over his shoulder as he lets Joey pull him along.

"Nothing that I know of!! Wait for me!!" Neal replies as he runs to keep up.

TEN MINUTES LATER:

“Neal this place is packed! I had no idea that Cinderella was so popular.” Steve replies as he looks around the theatre, crowded with kids and their parents, for Joey who they had sent out on a reconnaissance mission to find seats.

“I didn’t either.” Neal replies as he looks around.

“Dad! Uncle Steve! I found three seats down here!!”

They look to see Joey waving at them from the sixth row from the front.

“Is his eyesight bad?” Steve asks.

“No! Of course not! He just wants to get as close as he can to Cinderella. When he found out we were going to see her that was all he talked about.” Neal replies as they walked down the stairs to where Joey is waiting.

“He does know we’re old right and sitting this close will hurt our necks?” Steve replies.

“Speak for yourself!” Neal replies.

“Look! Look! We can see Cinderella really good from here!!” Joey replies as he jumps up and down.

“We sure can little man! Steve you sit here on the end.”

“Neal you know I don’t like to sit on the aisle.” Steve replies as he takes a sip of his coke one hand on his hip.

“Yeah dad you know Uncle Steve doesn’t like to sit on the aisle.” Joey replies as he mimics Steve with one hand on his hip.

“I forgot. Okay. I’ll sit on the aisle and Joey you’ll sit in between us.”

“Cool!” Joey replies as he plops down in the seat and Steve sits down next to him. Neal is just about to sit down when Joey says, “Dad can we have some popcorn?”

“Yeah Neal get some Goobers while you’re at it.” Steve chimes in.

Neal stands back up. “Something wrong with your legs Steve?”

“No. You’re sitting on the aisle buddy.” Steve replies as he smiles.

"Only because you didn't want to sit on the aisle, buddy!" Neal replies.

Steve takes out his wallet and he hands Neal some money. "That is why I don't sit on the aisle, buddy."

"While I'm up anything else?" Neal asks.

"Yeah a hotdog." Steve replies.

"Daddy! Can I have a hotdog too?" Joey replies.

"I guess. What do you say?" Neal replies.

"Please!!" Joey replies.

Neal crosses his arms as he looks over at Steve.

"Oh for the love of....please!" Steve replies.

"I'll be back in a minute or two." Neal replies as he turns and walks off.

Steve puts his arm around Joey. "So you really love Cinderella?"

"Oh yes I do! She is so beautiful! Like Ruby! Uncle Steve can I ask you a question?" Joey asks as he looks seriously at Steve.

"Sure little man what do you want to know? You can ask Uncle Steve anything." Steve replies as he takes a sip of his drink thru the straw.

"What does shacking up mean?"

Steve starts to choke and then he starts to cough. He hands Joey his drink as he continues to cough. Patting himself on the chest.

Steve tries to clear his throat. "Where..." Steve coughs again. "Where did you hear...?" Steve clears his throat again. "That?"

"I heard daddy and Ruby talking about it this morning. They thought I was asleep but I was in the bathroom."

"Do you know who they were talking about?" Steve asks.

Joey nods his head. "Uh huh. Grandma and somebody named Ray?"

"Oh" Steve coughs again.

"Is it something bad?" Joey whispers.

"Why?"

"Because when daddy said it he used that voice that he always uses when he's mad."

"You mean the high pitched one?" Steve asks.

Joey nods his head. "Uh huh. Is it against the law?"

Steve rubs his face. "Your dad thinks it is."

"Uncle Steve is grandma doing something bad?" Joey whispers again.

"Oh no honey. You know later you might want to ask your dad. I think he should be the one to explain it to you."

"You mean just like the birds and bees one?"

"The what...?" Steve asks surprised.

"You know the birds and the bees. Ruby told me to ask daddy about the birds and bees one too. I asked where my little brother came from and she told me to ask daddy."

Steve scratches his head. "Hmmm."

"Uncle Steve?"

"Yes Joey?" Steve asks with just a hint of hesitation.

"You're going to tell me to ask daddy too aren't you?"

"Ah yes I think so." Steve replies as he takes his drink back from him.

Joey shakes his head then he takes a sip of his drink. "Adults."

"Hey what are you two talking about?" Neal asks as he suddenly appears out of nowhere causing Steve to jump.

"Nothing." Steve and Joey both say at the same time.

"Okay." Neal replies suspiciously. "Here's your hotdogs, popcorn and oh yeah Steve, your Goobers." Neal replies as he hands out the food.

"Thanks." Steve replies as he takes the food. "Change?" Steve asks.

Neal makes a face at him. "No. I'm keeping the change. Consider it a shipping and handling fee!"

"Hmmm." Steve replies as he settles back in his seat.

They eat the hot dogs and dive into some of the popcorn and Joey finishes his coke as they make small talk.

"Dad."

"Let me guess you have to go to the bathroom now?" Neal replies as he looks at him.

"I can go by myself." Joey replies.

"Oh no you don't! Steve?" Neal replies as he looks over Joey's head.

Steve just looks at him.

"I know I'm sitting on the aisle." Neal stands up and he takes Joey by the hand.

"Get some more drinks while you're out there and hurry back it's going to start soon." Steve replies.

Neal just stands there looking at him one hand on his hip the other holding Joey by the hand.

"What? I can't leave somebody has to stay here and hold our seats!" Steve replies as he gestures around.

Neal takes a deep breath. "Come on son lets go."

As they go up the aisle Steve puts one finger up to his lips as he looks at Joey and Joey does the same back to him.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER:

"What took you two so long?" Steve asks as they return to their seats.

"Look at all the people here! The attendant said this place has never been so busy! We would still be waiting in line if old Joey here was a girl!" Neal replies as he messes up Joey's hair. "The line at the Women's restroom was this long!" Neal replies as he holds his hands far apart.

Joey looks up at Neal at the mention of him being a girl. "Yeah dad why was the line for the girl's restroom longer than ours"

"Yeah Dad? I would like to know that myself?" Steve replies as he looks over Joeys head and he winks at Neal grinning his chin resting in his hand.

"Well it just takes them longer that's all." Neal replies as he scratches his head. "It's complicated."

"Complicated for who? The girls going to the bathroom or you trying to explain it?" Steve replies as he smiles.

"Yeah dad?" Joey asks wide eyed.

"Yeah dad???" Steve asks wide eyed.

Neal points at Steve. "You know why!!"

"I know I do I just want to hear you explain it to him, dad!" Steve replies as he smiles.

"Joey, you see it's like this..." Just as Neal was trying to come up with something clever to say the lights in the movie theatre dimmed.

"Awwwww shucks!!" Joey replies as he plops back down into his seat.

"I'll explain it to you later Joey." Neal replies as he sits back down.

"That's what adults always say! Just like with the Birds and the Bees!" Joey replies.

"Wait?! What?! Steve?!" Neal replies from the darkness.

"Sssshhh! The previews are starting!!" Steve replies as he puts some popcorn in his mouth settling back in his seat.

As the movie theatre goes dark the raised voices of excited children are finally lowered to a whisper, then they become quiet as the first of the movie previews are shown. As The Apple Dumpling Gang, Escape to Witch Mountain, the Adventures of the Wilderness Family and a few others flash across the screen Joey would lean over to Steve and tell him which ones he would like to see. By now Joey and the million or so other children in the theatre were bored with the coming previews and they were ready for Cinderella. As the previews ended and the movie screen went dark the children began to clap as the name Cinderella finally took up most of the screen and the music filled the theatre.

And that is where any sense of normalcy ended.

The movie went from living bold Technicolor to black and white and grainy.

"Neal?" Steve whispers over Joey's head. "Is it supposed to look like that?"

"No I don't think so." Neal replies as he whispers back to him.

"Daddy?" Joey replies.

By now everybody else has also noticed the strange quality of the film by the gradual rise of the level of voices of the people in the audience. The film rolls and flips until it finally comes to a stop on two people on the screen, one of which seems to be Cinderella, wearing a long white gauzy see through type of dress and a tiara, and a man who seems to be the Prince but whom bears a striking and a unsettling resemblance to Steve. The film flips and rolls again.

"Neal I thought this was a cartoon sort of movie?"

"Yeah me too. You know I have a really bad feeling about this." Neal replies.

Joey tugs on Neal's sleeve. "Daddy who are those people?"

"Well honey I'm not sure..."

The film snaps back into place and now the principle players, Cinderella and the Prince, have by now removed their clothes. At that moment there is a huge collective gasp and exclamations from the adults in the audience at the actions of the two people on the movie screen. Not to mention the accompanying sound of pleasure from the two people involved which by now is filling the theatre. A sound never to be forgotten. Bouncing off the walls. To Steve's and Neal's educated adult eyes and to the other adults in the room, Cinderella and the Prince are engaging in, what only can be called in the vernacular, sex. The adults grab their child and cover their eyes. While still others grab their children and they try to leave. Struggling to get out of their seats. The raised, angry voices of adults and the voices of stunned confused children now practically drowning out the sound from the movie screen.

"What in the hell?" Neal exclaims as people run up the aisle next to his seat.

Steve grabs Joey and he covers his eyes.

"Uncle Steve!! I can't see!" Joey replies as he bats at Steve's hands.

"That's the point." Steve replies.

Neal stands up, along with the other adults who were left in the room, waving and yelling at the little space in the wall behind them where they see the projector and where they know the projectionist should be. In the midst of this confusion Steve picks Joey up and he takes him outside and soon after any parents that were left were picking their children up and carrying them out as well. Or dragging them out by their hands.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER:

“Where’s Joey?” Neal asks as he finally makes his way out of the theatre.

“What took you so long? He’s over there playing with a bunch of kids.” Steve replies as he points leaning up against the car reading the paper.

“What do you mean what took me so long? Look at all these people!” Neal replies as he gestures. “I was also trying to stop some people from killing the Manager!! Is Joey okay? Did he say anything?”

Steve scratches his head. “He’s okay. He just wanted to know what happened.”

“And?” Neal asks.

“And I told him they showed the wrong picture.” Steve replies as he shrugs. “It made sense to me and he bought it. What did they say happened?”

“That they showed the wrong picture.”

“Uh huh! Are you going to get your money back?” Steve asked turning the pages of the paper.

“Yeah. It might take a while because we had tickets.” Neal turns and he points at the Theatre. “You...do know what that was in there don’t you?”

“Yes Neal I’ve seen a porno movie before. That one was really bad quality thou. I would like to know how it ended up here.”

“You and me both.” Neal replies as he walks closer to Steve, his head tilted sideways, looking hard at him.

“What?” Steve replies putting down the paper as he watches Neal walk back and forth in front of him. “WHAT!!”

Neal points at him. “You know if I didn’t know any better...”

“Don’t say it.” Steve replies as he points at him throwing the paper on the hood of the car.

“That guy in the movie...”

Steve rubs his eyes. “Oh you’re going to say it aren’t you?”

“He really looked like you!!” Neal replies as he slaps Steve on the arm.

"No he did not look like me!" Steve replies.

"Oh yes he did! If I didn't know any better...."

"You said that already!! What? You're not thinking what I think you're thinking, are you?"

Neal smiles at him.

"You are! You are thinking what I think you are thinking!!! You dog you!! That wasn't me!!" Steve replies as he jumps up and down.

"He had your...ahhh...sideburns." Neal replies as he laughs.

"Ha ha and ha! How can you even think such a thing?" Steve replies.

"Oh I don't know but you have been doing a lot of moonlighting lately!" Neal replies.

"Working at Sears! Not doing that!" Steve replies as he points to the theatre. "Yeesh! Talk about performance anxiety!! I couldn't do that with all those people watching! I would have to wear a mask or, or a disguise of some kind! Besides I'm too shy to do that!!"

"Uh huh. Shy my ass and besides no disguise would hide your...." Neal replies as he grins.

"Watch it!!" Steve replies as he points at him.

Neal puts his hands up in the air. "Nose!! I was going to say nose!"

"Uh huh!!" Steve replies.

"Or hair. You would have to cut it." Neal replies.

Steve puts his hands on his chest. "Shame on you!!!" Steve laughs. "Want me to find another movie theater playing Cinderella?" Steve asks as he points behind him at the newspaper.

"No I think we have had our fill of movies today. After today I may never go to another movie ever again."

Steve laughs as he pushes him. "Yes you will. Let's take Joey to the arcade, they have ice cream and pinball machines." Steve replies as he winks at him then he puts his arm around him as he leads him over to where Joey is playing.

"Pinball?" Neal asks.

"Yeah I feel lucky." Steve replies as he pats him on the back.

"Oh. You know I was just joking about the porno movie thing? Right?" Neal replies.

Steve pats him on the back as he replies. "It's too late."

"Oh."

TWO DAYS LATER AT THE PRECINCT:

Neal jumps batting Steve's away. "Ow that hurts!!" Neal exclaims as Steve tries to clean the cut on Neal's leg.

"Stop it!!" Steve replies as he looks up at him from his seat on the bench. "Hold still you big baby! The way your carrying on you would think your leg was cut off or something."

"This is your fault you know!! Ow shit!!" Neal exclaims.

"It doesn't hurt that bad!! You make the biggest deal out of nothing!!" Steve replies as he daps at the cut.

"My...my fault? How is this my fault? I told you that chain link fence was there!!"

"Yeah but not the dog Steve!! Ow!!" Neal replies as he jumps.

"If you haven't noticed that dog got me too!! Look! He ripped my good pants! I have twigs and leaves in my hair!!" Steve replies as he points to his hair.

Neal reaches over and he quickly pulls a twig out of Steve's hair.

"OW!!! Shit!! That hurts!" Steve replies as he grabs his head looking up at Neal. "Don't touch my hair!"

"Big baby!!! It doesn't hurt that bad!! You...make the biggest deal out of nothing!!" Neal repeats back to him as he drops the twig onto the bench. "You left the part out about our perp's grandmother and the fact that she wields a mean baseball bat! If I hadn't ducked I could be dead right now!" Neal replies as he jumps. "Ow shit!" Neal slaps Steve on the shoulder.

"I guess she missed the part about us being cops and all. There! All cleaned up and bandaged!" Steve replies as he slaps Neal on the leg. "Now that wasn't so bad was it?"

Neal looks at the big band aid on his leg. "No. I guess not. Thanks. You make a great nurse."

"Uh huh." Steve replies as he stands up and opening his locker he looks in the mirror taking the rest of the greenery out of his hair. "They always run. Why do they always run?" Steve asks.

"Maybe because you always yell 'Stop! It's the police!'"

Steve looks around the locker door at him as he pulls his shirt off over his head then he throws it in his locker. "What should I say? I got it! Oh please Mr. Bad Man, please stop shooting your gun at me! You're under arrest! Please! Better?"

Neal stands up and he opens his locker. "Have you ever heard the saying that everybody likes a little ass but nobody likes a smart ass?" Neal unbuttons his shirt then he hangs it up on the hook on the locker door. "Do you have a pair of pants I can borrow?"

Steve laughs. "You know you're a piece of work! You call me a smart ass then you ask to borrow a pair of pants from me."

"I love you." Neal replies as he looks around his locker door at Steve smiling.

"Damn it! Okay here!" Steve replies as he tosses a pair of pants at him then he takes the pants off that he is wearing. "I liked these pants." Steve replies as he tosses the pants into his locker then he grabs a towel and he wraps it around his waist then he slams the locker door shut. "I'm going to take a shower."

"No shit! I thought you were going to go streaking!" Neal replies as he laughs hanging the pants over the locker door.

"Wise ass!!" Steve yells back over his shoulder.

Neal laughs as he removes his pants being careful around the bandage that Steve had put on.

"Neal! What happened to your leg?"

Neal jumps ten feet at the eerily familiar voice behind him. Grabbing and scrabbling for his pants that he had just taken off holding them in front of him as he turns around.

"MOM!!! What are you doing here? I'm not dressed!" Neal replies.

"Oh phish tosh! I've seen you naked before! I changed your diaper, remember?!" Barbara replies.

"That was when I was a baby Mom! What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at work?"

"It's my lunch hour. I thought since you won't return any of my phone calls I would come here to see you. I raised you better than that!" Barbara replies.

"Mom you can't be down here!" Neal replies.

"Who says?!"

"That sign says so!" Neal points to the sign on the wall. "Authorized Personnel Only!"

"I'm your mother I'm authorized to be anywhere you are!"

"Mom this is the men's locker room! How did you get down here?" Neal replies.

She looks around. "I don't see anybody else down here and Alicia."

"Alicia? She let you down here?" Neal asks.

"Well no not exactly. She was going to bring me down here but the phone rang so I can down here by myself."

"Mom!" Neal exclaims.

"You didn't answer my first question. What happened to your leg?" Barbara replies as she points.

"This? It's nothing mom!" Neal replies as he gestures. "It had to do with a chain link fence, a perp..."

"A what?"

"A bad guy mom!! I was chasing a bad guy! It's alright! Steve took care of it."

"STEVE?!" She exclaims.

"What?" Steve yells from the shower.

"Look at this mess!!!" She replies as she starts to pick up a bloody paper towel and wrappers from the bandages that were left on the bench.

"Mom. You don't have to do that."

"Oh don't be silly! You boys! Steve should have cleaned up after himself!" She replies as she walks over to the trashcan and tosses it inside.

"WHAT?" Steve yells.

"Nothing!" Neal yells back to him.

"It might need stitches. You boys! Did Steve even clean it properly?! Let me see it."

"WHAT?! Neal?" Steve yells. "Are you calling me? What's going on?!"

"Nothing! Nothing is going on!!" Neal yells back to him again. "Mom it's fine really!"

"Neal I'm coming out there." Steve yells from the shower.

"No!! Steve my mom..."

Steve comes around the corner then when he sees Neal's mother he stops.

"Oh shit!" He exclaims as he finishes wrapping the towel around himself jumping back behind the corner of the lockers.

"Stephen! Your language!"

"I'm sorry Mrs. Schon!" Steve replies as he looks around the corner of the lockers.

"Stephen, call me Barbara."

"Neal why didn't you tell me your mother was here?!" Steve replies as he looks around the corner.

Neal laughs. "I tried!"

"What is she doing down here! How did she get down here?" Steve asks.

"We already been thru all of that!" Neal replies as he waves him off.

"I wasn't here!!" Steve replies.

"I wanted to talk to Neal! He's been avoiding my phone calls." Barbara replies.

"Mrs. Schon, I mean Barbara! I told him to call you!!" Steve replies as he points at Neal.

"You're a good boy Stephen." Barbara replies.

"Awww shucks thank you Barbara." Steve replies as he blushes.

"Suck up!!" Neal replies.

"Barbara did you hear that?" Steve replies.

"Neal Joseph Schon!!" Barbara replies.

"Uh oh! She used your whole name!!" Steve replies.

Neal gives him a menacing look. "Well he is mom! Even when we were kids he would do that!!" Neal replies as he gestures.

"Do what?" Steve asks.

"That!! Ratting on me to my mother!!" Neal replies.

"Oh!! I did no such thing!!" Steve replies as he puts his hands on his hips.

"Oh yes you did..." Neal replies. "You were always getting me in trouble with my mother!!"

"ME!" Steve replies as he points to himself taking a step out from behind the lockers. "You were the tattle tale!!!"

Just then a shrill whistle echoed thru the air bouncing off the metal lockers causing Neal and Steve to grimace as they cover their ears.

"Boys! Don't make me separate you two!!" Barbara replies.

"Awww mom!!!" Neal replies.

"MRS. SCHON!" Alicia yells causing all of them to jump.

"Barbara." The three of them say together.

"Barbara. What are you doing down here? You aren't supposed to be down here." Alicia replies.

"See mom I told you!" Neal replies.

"She's down here!" Barbara replies as she points at Alicia.

"Mom she works here!!!" Neal points out.

"Neal you said no women were allowed down here!! Naked men and all of that!" Barbara replies.

"Mom she's not a woman she's our secretary!!" Neal replies.

"What?" Alicia replies as she puts her hands on her hips.

"Oh for the love of...you knew what I meant!!" Neal replies.

"Naked men?" Alicia looks around. Oh you mean these two? I've seen these two naked before!"

"Alicia!" Neal replies as Steve groans covering his eyes.

"Oh come on Neal it was an accident but Steve..." Alicia looks over at Steve as she smiles. "Was on purpose!"

Steve covers his eyes as he shakes his head.

"I turned my back for a minute to answer the phone and she was gone!" Alicia replies as she points to Barbara.

"Neal was not returning my phone calls..." Barbara replies.

"I told him to call you!" Alicia replies.

"Another country heard from! Don't look at me like that mom, she tells me to call everybody!" Neal replies.

"Is this about your mother sleeping with Steve's father?" Alicia asks.

"Alicia!! I told you that in confidence!!" Steve replies as he stamps his foot.

"Sorry!" Alicia replies as she shrugs.

"STEVE!! You told her! How many people knew about this before I did? Oh brother!!"

"Not that many." Steve replies as he shrugs.

"WHAT?!" Neal exclaims.

"Neal I would really like to talk to you about me and Ray." Barbara replies.

"Mom this isn't really the best time..."

"You two have a 10-54." Alicia replies.

"When?" Neal asks.

"What's a 10-54?" Barbara asks.

"Just now." Alicia replies.

"Now?" Steve replies.

"Yes Now. Sam was notified."

"Who's Sam and what's a 10-54?" Barbara asks.

"Where?" Steve asks.

"On the other side of town. Moe's." Alicia replies.

"OH F...!!" Neal replies.

"NEAL JOSEPH SCHON!!" Barbara replies.

"Uh oh! She used your whole name again!" Steve replies.

Neal glares at him. "Sorry!!!" Neal replies.

"Not the fifth circle of hell!!" Steve replies.

"Who's Moe?" Barbara asks.

"Mom it's too complicated to talk about now! You should really go. Steve and I have work to do."

"Neal we need to talk maybe we can have dinner one night?" Barbara replies.

"Yes mom I know we do. I'll talk to you later okay. Alicia could you..."

"You could at least walk me out." Barbara replies.

"Yeah Neal!"

"You stay out of this!" Neal replies as he points at Steve.

"Well!" Neal replies.

"Well what?" Barbara asks.

"Turn around so I can put my pants on." Neal replies.

"Why bother everybody here has seen you naked anyways!" Steve replies as he smiles.

"Wise ass!" Neal replies.

"Neal!" Barbara replies.

Steve sticks his tongue out at Neal. Neal then takes a deep breath, turning slightly sideways, he lowers the pants that he has been holding up to cover himself with then he puts them on.

"Come on mom I'll walk you out." Neal replies as he looks back over his shoulder sticking his tongue out at Steve.

MOE'S SALVAGE YARD:

"Damn it!" Neal replies as he rips his pants on a rusty bumper of a car. "I hate this place."

"Those are my pants you know." Steve points out.

"Thank you! Your concern for my well-being is overwhelming! That bumper was rusty! I could get lockjaw you know!" Neal replies.

"Imagine that! Then you would have another excuse not to call your mother!!" Steve replies as he stops with his hands on his hips looking at Neal.

Neal points at him. "That was uncalled for I must say!!"

"And another thing! Little pitchers have big ears!!!" Steve replies.

Neal takes a step forward his hands on his hips. "What in the holy shades of Hannah does that mean?"

"Oh look Neal its Moe. I wonder where Larry and Curly are." Steve replies changing the subject pointing over Neal's shoulder.

Moe laughs. "You know Steve every time you and what's his name come here..."

"How quickly they forget." Neal replies as he turns around.

"Don't call me Steve our first names are Detective and the last time we came here I told you that."

"Like I was saying, Detectives, every time you come here you say the same stupid shit. Can't you two come up with something new and original?"

"If we didn't have to come here, Moe, than you wouldn't have to hear the same stupid shit." Neal replies.

"I forget Neal what was it three weeks ago?" Steve asks.

"Stolen cars." Neal replies.

"Oh yeah that's right." Steve replies as he snaps his fingers.

"That was the tow truck driver!! That had nothing to do with me!" Moe replies.

"He was just your employee that's all!!" Neal replies.

"Now a dead body in the trunk of a car. Bad news Moe." Steve replies.

"I stopped him before he crushed the car!! What more do you want me to do?"

Pushing Neal out of the way Steve walks up to him. "Okay Moe do you want us to tell you what we want you to do? We would like it if you would do us all a favor and close this shit hole down. Do you know how many times we've been out here in the past six months? Well do you!!?"

"What are you saying? This dead body isn't my fault! I called you morons out here remember!"

"Nothing is ever your fault Moe! Stolen cars, employees that are criminals, and now Moe you finally made it to the big time! A dead body! On your property!! This place isn't a business it's a dump and you are a piece of..."

That is when Moe took a swing at Steve. Steve reached out and he grabbed ahold of Moe's arm bringing him effortlessly down to the ground.

"Now you can add stupid to that list!" Steve replies as he puts his knee into his back.

"Stop it! Get off of me!!" Moe yells as he kicks his feet.

Steve reaches behind him for his handcuffs then he puts them on Moe's wrists.

"Okay if you insist." Steve replies as he gets off of him then he hoists him to his feet then he pushes him into the arms of a waiting Patrol Officer. "Take him back to the cruiser and we'll deal with him later."

"I'm I under arrest?!" Moe yells at him.

"No you're being detained." Steve replies as he brushes off his pants. "There's a difference you know! Now get him out of here!" Steve replies as he gestures.

Steve turns and walks off to where Sam is waiting on them and Neal falls into step beside him.

"You baited him." Neal replies.

"And he took it. I didn't want him hanging around, bugging us! Looking over our shoulders trying to figure his way out of this one! So I got rid of him." Steve stops and he looks at him. "Do you have a problem with that?!"

Neal puts his hand on Steve's shoulder. "Yeah I do." He says seriously. "The problem is I didn't think of it myself." Neal smiles.

"Come on partner Sam is waiting on us." Steve replies as he smiles back at him shaking his head.

They weeded their way thru a trail that cut thru, what seem to be miles of crushed cars that were stacked high until they came to a clearing of sorts. Roped off by yellow crime scene tape. In this clearing was a huge piece of machinery. A car crusher. With a huge magnetic disc that would lift the car to be crushed into place. The car was once a Ford or Chevy but by this point it was hard to tell. Phil was already taking pictures as Sam supervised.

"Boys." Sam replies.

"Sam." They both reply at the same time.

"Where's Moe?" Sam asks as he looks around.

"Sitting in the back of a patrol car. He won't bother you anymore." Steve replies as he walks over to the trunk of the car.

"Whatcha got?" Neal asks.

"A young woman dead in the trunk Detectives." Sam gestures.

As they come closer they both look down to see the body of a woman lying in the fetal position wearing a long dress, which by now the color of was hard to tell.

"Whew! She's been here awhile." Steve replies as he and Neal hold their noses.

"At least two weeks or longer by the looks of it." Sam replies as he leans in over the body.

"Don't you smell that?" Neal asks still holding his nose.

"Smell what?" Sam replies as he moves her head back and forth. "Decomposition is a fascinating thing boys." Sam looks back over his shoulder at them. "See the maggots?"

"Where?" Steve replies as he leans in closer next to Sam.

Neal closes his eyes as he gestures with his other hand. "Never mind that!! What was that on her head?" Neal asks.

"A tiara." Steve replies as he stands back up grabbing the notepad out of his pocket and quickly writing in it. Doing a double take as he looks up to see Neal and Sam staring at him.

"A what?" Neal asks with just a slightly high pitched voice.

"A tiara and those rhinestones aren't real. What?!" Steve replies.

Neal rubs his eyes. "Well Sam what's your opinion?"

"My opinion? I'm impressed that Steve knows what it is." Sam replies.

"Uh huh." Steve replies as he continues to write.

"No! Not that! I mean what's your opinion on what killed her!" Neal replies as he waves his arms back and forth.

"He's testy today. He found out about his mother didn't he?" Sam replies.

"Holy shit!!! Steve!! Sam knows too!!?" Neal replies loudly.

Steve scratches his head then he gestures. "It wasn't on purpose it was an accidental utterage as it were!!"

"From what I can tell she was strangled." Sam replies.

"Who?" Steve and Neal both say at the same time.

"The girl in the trunk of the car. Strangled. See." Sam gently turns her head as Steve and Neal lean in closer.

"Are those hand prints?" Neal asks.

Sam turns his head as he looks. "Would seem so. Yes."

"Damn! They would have to be strong whoever did this to her." Neal replies.

"Earrings? She was a pretty girl at one time. How did she end up here? Was she raped?" Steve replies.

Sam shakes his head. "I can't tell but she's been redressed. See the seams? The dress is inside out." Sam replies as he points.

"Oh yeah I do see that." Steve replies as he leans in closer.

"Sam can you turn her head back up toward the light?" Neal replies.

Sam reaches in and he turns her head back up.

"How's that?" Sam replies.

"Better. Steve look closer. Doesn't she look familiar?"

Steve leans in closer. "Yeah. It's a little hard to tell but now that you mention it. Yeah she does."

"Do you two know her?" Sam asks.

"In a roundabout sort of way." Steve replies.

"We met her at the movies Sam." Neal replies.

"The movies?" Sam replies as he looks down at her. "I don't understand."

"She is Little Miss Cinderella. Right Neal?"

Neal crosses his arms over his chest. "Right. But you left out one important part."

"I did? What did I leave out?" Steve replies as he squints at him.

Neal looks down at her. "She's our Little Miss Cinderella now."

TO BE CONTINUED.....

