

PEGASUS  BOOKS

PARNELL HALL



"Parnell Hall succeeds in making Stanley Hastings one of a kind." —*Wall Street Journal*

STAKEOUT

A STANLEY HASTINGS MYSTERY



STAKEOUT

PARNELL HALL



PEGASUS CRIME
NEW YORK LONDON

For Jim and Franny

Contents

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64

1

I STAKED OUT THE MOTEL.

I love saying that. It's what a tough PI would say. In a book, I mean. Or on TV. It's the thing they always have in the movies to show detective work is boring—the private eye staking out the motel. It makes me laugh, because I'm a private eye, and that's not boring. That's exciting. That's surveillance. I interview accident victims, and photograph cracks in the sidewalk. Compared to which, sitting in a car outside a motel really rocks.

I was on stakeout, and happy to be there. The dame—if this were a 40's noir movie she'd be a dame—came to my office and asked me to tail her husband. At least she said he was her husband—in this business you take nothing for granted. I certainly didn't. I got a retainer and I got it in cash.

The broad was named Julie. When I pressed her for a last name she didn't want to give it. Which was pretty silly. Knowing who *he* was, finding out who *she* was wouldn't be that difficult. Julie had short blonde hair, a little ski-jump nose, and knockers that wouldn't quit. I'm not sure what era that expression's from. And I'm not sure what it means. Knockers that wouldn't quit. As opposed to what? Knockers that *would* quit? *I thought we were getting along great. Then her knockers quit, right in the middle of dinner.*

Anyway, little miss steadfast knockers hired me to tail her husband and see if he was stepping out on her, and I was on the job.

Which was not going well. Not surprising, really. So few of my ventures go well. And I don't think it's me. I think it's just life. I think most ventures are doomed to failure. In the private eye trade, it's the nature of the business. We're attempting to provide an elusive and volatile product. There's so much room for error. Tail her husband to see if he's having an affair. All well and good if he's having one. A fruitless task if he isn't. How long do you keep it up? The answer, of course, is as long as the wife is willing to pay.

I was getting fifty bucks an hour, otherwise I wouldn't have been doing it. I suppose I should have asked for more. For my regular ambulance chasing job I get twenty bucks an hour. Fifty seemed like a whopping increase. A hundred seemed like the impossible dream. I suppose in retrospect it was a possible dream and I should have dreamed it. But the idea of charging somebody a hundred bucks an hour to sit in a car and do nothing just boggled the mind.

So far I'd been staking out the motel for three hours. That was a hundred and fifty bucks for sitting on my keister. A tough job, but someone had to do it, and if anyone was going to get paid for sitting on my keister it ought to be me.

The motel was in Fort Lee, New Jersey, just off Route 4. I'd followed the guy there

from Manhattan after work. Julie's husband was an insurance salesman for Aflac. She'd made a face when I asked if he knew the duck. I liked that. It meant at least that part of her story was probably true.

As for the rest of it, I was rapidly losing faith. I mean, three hours and no one's shown up? If the guy was meeting someone, where was she?

I was playing little mind games and trying not to pee. From detective fiction, you probably know that private eyes who stake out motels pee in bottles. What they don't tell you is where they get the bottle. It's not like you were going to look for it on the street, find some homeless man with huge plastic bags of deposit bottles and beat him to the next one. I can't see doing that somehow. Basically, you want your own bottle.

A Gatorade bottle is perfect. Only I don't drink Gatorade, I drink Diet Coke. And you can't pee in a Diet Coke bottle. You can't get your dick in. And if you could, you wouldn't admit it. So a quart Gatorade bottle's the ticket. Only problem is, you can't buy an empty Gatorade bottle, you gotta buy a full one. To get an empty bottle, you gotta drink the Gatorade. Only you don't wanna drink the Gatorade, because it'll make you pee. You have to drink it the day before. Only you don't have it the day before, because you didn't have the job the day before, you just got it today.

I wound up buying a quart of Gatorade and pouring it down the sink.

My cell phone rang.

I flipped it open, said, "I thought I told you not to call me on stakeout."

Alice said, "Stanley?"

"Sorry," I said. "Not funny?"

"Hilarious. Listen, are you about done?"

"I'm not even started."

"What do you mean?"

"I tailed a guy to a motel."

"So?"

"He's there alone."

"This is a guy from Manhattan?"

"Yeah."

"He drove out of town and got a motel room alone?"

"That's right."

"Where's the motel?"

"It's in Ft. Lee."

"New Jersey?"

"Yeah."

"What the hell's he doing in New Jersey?"

"Exactly."

"That's ridiculous."

"Yes, it is."

"No one drives over the bridge to Jersey just to rent a motel room. Why in the world would he do that?"

"That's what I'm being paid to find out."

"How are you finding out?"

"By watching the motel."

"If you sit outside watching the motel all night what will you learn?"

“That he wasn’t seeing anyone.”
“Then what was he doing?”
“How should I know?”
“Doesn’t your client want to know?”
“Yes.”
“Then there’s only one way to find out.”
“What’s that?”
“Ask him.”
“She doesn’t want to ask him. She wants me to find out for her.”
“How?”
“By watching the motel.”
“You’re going around again.”
“You’re leading me around again. What do you want from me?”
“I want you to do the job and come home.”
“Why?”
“We need milk.”
“Oh, for Christ’s sake.”
“What’s the matter?”
“You can’t go out and buy milk?”
“I could. But if you’re coming home anyway.”
“I’m not.”
“You don’t know that. She could show up any minute.”
“Who?”
“The woman he’s seeing.”
“We don’t know he’s seeing a woman. I gotta get off the phone.”
“Why? Is something happening?”
“No.”
“I don’t understand.”

She didn’t. I don’t know if it’s true of all wives, or just mine, but an inability to see that they are driving their husband crazy seems deeply ingrained. Alice is a very bright woman, two steps ahead of me on almost any subject. Does she really not recognize the point at which braindrops start dribbling out my ears and I am incapable of following whatever train of thought she wishes to torment me with?

Anyway, I flipped the cell phone closed, prayed she wouldn’t call back. Of if she did it would not be an aggrieved phone call, wanting to know why I hung up on her.

Another hour ticked by. A rather uneventful hour. The only item of note was I managed to fill the Gatorade bottle. I also managed to empty it. There was a storm drain on the corner. While I would have made quite a spectacle of myself standing there peeing into it, I had no problem whatsoever walking over there and pouring the bottle down it. Which was a big relief. I had been wondering what I was going to do if I passed my one quart limit. Which wasn’t fair, since I wasn’t drinking anything. I mean, the cops in the movies are always drinking coffee, with no adverse effects.

Now and then it occurs to me I’m a private detective. See, in my job chasing ambulances for Rosenberg and Stone I don’t get a swelled head. I don’t swagger around thinking, gee, I’m a big PI. I just go tripping up the stairs in crack houses in a suit and tie hoping like hell the junkies hanging out in the stairwells aren’t going to

mug me on the way. And they never do, because they think I'm a cop. But the underlying fear that grips me in such circumstances is enough to remind me rather forcibly that any resemblance between me and a TV detective is coincidental and not to be inferred. Nor is the fact that the case I'm investigating invariably involves someone falling down, breaking a leg, and wanting to sue the city of New York. That kind of takes the glamor out of the job. It's only when I get hired by someone else, not Richard Rosenberg, but some walk-in off the street, a person who has no idea who I am or what I do and doesn't realize they are putting their fate in the hands of someone barely competent to do the job—and I use the phrase *barely competent* generously, allowing for the chance that I might actually do something right—and I wind up doing the type of detective work you see in the movies or read in books. Only then do I get a forbidden thrill out of the fact that, at least for the moment, I'm a goddamned private eye.

This was one of those situations. As I say, staking out a motel is classic PI schtick. I mean, here I am, sitting on stakeout, waiting for the jane to show. To all intents and purposes, even Sam Spade couldn't be doing a better job. I was, at least for one evening, living the dream.

It didn't help, knowing I had to pick up a quart of milk on the way home.

2

THE PROBLEM WITH MY WIFE, and without years of psychoanalysis, I doubt if I could ever come close to understanding the problem with my wife, is that she thinks she's smarter than I am. I don't know where she gets this notion. Unless it's from the fact that she *is* smarter than I am, as anyone who's ever met the two of us can attest. Since she knows she is, she thinks she knows what's best for me. And it's hard to dispute the fact, because she is smarter than I am, and I've never won an argument with her in my life.

At any rate, after bitter experience I've learned that immediately following any conversation with her of any length, it would be wise to analyze what she said, and try to ascertain what nuances had escaped my detection. For, among other things, Alice is a master of the Socratic method, and leaves hints to steer me in the right direction, giving me the opportunity to believe I've come up with the ideas myself.

At any rate, I went over the conversation we just had to see if I'd gotten anything out of it besides milk.

Alice seemed to be gently ridiculing my stakeout. Which I was reluctant to admit, since my stakeout was the only thing that pleased me about the job. And there she was, asking me what I expected to accomplish. When I said ID'ing the woman, she asked me what I expected to accomplish if the woman didn't show up. I said the only way to find out is to ask him, and I said the client doesn't want to ask him. And what did she say then? I couldn't remember, exactly. Whatever it was it bothered me. It bothered me because it was one of those how-can-he-be-so-dumb comments. She was waiting for the penny to drop and me to make the obvious conclusion. All I had to do was figure out what Alice was trying to tell me.

Okay, if the woman never shows up I won't know who she is. Nothing wrong with that statement. Seems perfectly simple and straightforward. Let's break it down. The woman hasn't shown up, so I don't know who she is. That has two parts: the woman hasn't shown up; and I don't know who she is. Of those two statements, *I don't know who she is* was undoubtedly true.

That left *the woman hasn't shown up*.

I whipped out my cell phone, called information, got the phone number of the motel. I called it, got the manager.

"Route 4 Motel."

"Yeah. I want to rent a room."

"That's what we do."

"You got two cabins with adjoining doors?"

"Not at the moment."

"What do you mean by that?"

"They're rented."

“They’re all rented?”

“We only have two. One of them, both units are rented, the other one, just one.”

“The one they’re both rented—they staying together?”

“Why?”

“If they’re rented together, they’ll leave together.”

“Well, they’re not. So I can’t help you. But we’re not the only motel on the strip.”

“You’re the best.”

“Yeah, right,” the guy said, and hung up.

So. The motel had units with connecting rooms. If the husband rented one, what was to stop the woman he was seeing from renting the other?

That set up an interesting hypothesis. If the woman had entered the motel room by the elaborate ruse of using the connecting door from an adjoining unit that someone else had rented, then this meeting was more clandestine than your average, run of the mill tryst, in fact, something my client would really want to know. Because what Alice was underlining in her other not-so-veiled advice was that the only way to find out what the guy was doing was for my client to ask him. Which she wasn’t going to do. Which should have ended the discussion. So why didn’t Alice drop it?

Hell.

My client did not want me to go to her husband’s place of business, pretend I was interested in life insurance. She didn’t want to do anything that would put him wise to the fact he was being tailed. Then he might get cautious and cancel his rendezvous with the woman. I hadn’t done that, and the woman hadn’t shown up anyway. That was no longer a concern. The situation had gone to hell. It was up to me to save it.

I got out of my car, slammed the door, crossed the street. Went up the motel driveway to unit seven. I took a breath, banged on the door.

There was no answer.

I banged again.

Still nothing.

I leaned my head against the door.

It swung inward.

Just an inch, but enough to freak me out.

The door was open!

I didn’t care what motivations, rationalizations, or fear of ridicule might be in play at the moment. I knew one thing for certain. I did not want to open that door.

I whipped a handkerchief out of my pocket, used it to grip the doorknob, pushed the door open.

There was no one there. Not surprising, what with no one opening the door. Still, I had seen the guy go in. He had to be there. Unless he’d climbed out the bathroom window. Or went through the connecting door to the adjoining unit. If he did, he could have walked the hell out of there with a hat down over his eyes and I wouldn’t have known it.

What a series of depressing ideas.

That was probably what had happened.

I figured I’d better make sure.

I pushed the door closed with my hand in the handkerchief. The doorknob clicked. I wondered if that meant it was locked. I hadn’t turned the doorknob, just pushed in on

it, since the door was already open. No matter. It would open from the inside.

I walked around the bed and stopped short.

The body of a man lay face up on the floor. He'd been shot once at close range. A pillow had been used to muffle the shot. There were bloody feathers adhering to the side of his head.

I took deep breaths, tried not to throw up. If you ever find a dead body, that's a good tip. Throwing up is an amateur move. Cops can get DNA from vomit if you choose to leave, and they'll make fun of you if you choose to stay.

I calmed myself down, got my stomach under control. Took a look at the body.

He certainly looked like the man I'd been following. Of course, that man didn't have a hole in his head.

I hadn't decided if I was getting out of there or not, but before I did, I wanted to make the ID. I knelt down, fished in his pocket for his wallet.

The door was kicked in, and the room filled with cops.

3

THEY TOOK ME TO THE Major Crimes Unit, chained me to the wall. That's not really as bad as it sounds. I'd been chained to one in Atlantic City, back when I started this job, just around the dawn of recorded time. They hadn't gotten me for murder then. As a precedent, that had to be a very good sign.

A beer-bellied plainclothes cop, whose white shirt threatened to pop a button at the waist, was riding herd over me. Not that he needed to, what with me being chained and all. The guy was actually reading the *New York Post*.

The door opened and a plainclothes detective came in who looked as if he'd been sent over from central casting to play the role of a crooked cop. With my track record for judging character, I figured that probably meant he had a heart of gold.

He snapped his fingers at the fat cop, said, "Okay, Morgan, what we got?"

Morgan flipped open his notebook. "Stanley Hastings, suspicion of murder."

"Who'd he kill?"

"Philip Marston."

Well, that was something. With everything falling apart, it wouldn't have surprised me if the guy turned out to be someone else entirely. But, no, that was the name my client had given me.

"Why'd he kill him?"

"I don't know. You have to ask him."

"How'd he kill him?"

"Shot him."

"Where's the gun?"

Morgan held up a plastic evidence envelope.

My mouth fell open. I hadn't seen a gun at the crime scene, and it hadn't occurred to me there was one.

"He have it on him?"

"No. He kicked it under the bed."

"That's pretty dumb."

Morgan looked at me. "No, he's a smart boy. Probably didn't figure on being arrested. Thought he'd be long gone before the cops came."

"His prints on the gun?"

Morgan shook his head. "He wiped it clean."

I got the impression this was a routine. The bad cop knew the answers to the questions before he asked them. He and Morgan were playing a little scene in front of the suspect, to rattle him and break down his resistance.

They needn't have bothered. I was born rattled. And my resistance was virtually nonexistent. Of course, if they never asked me a question, I wouldn't have to answer.

The cop who wasn't Morgan stood there looking at me. "Forgive me if I stare. Hardly ever see a killer. Leastwise, not a white one. I wonder what his bag is." He looked at Morgan. "Is he a fag? I bet he's a queer. I bet this was a lover's quarrel gone bad."

Oh, great. I not only got a bad cop, I got a homophobic racist too. And the son of a bitch still hadn't asked me a question. He just kept dancing around, playing his little game. I sat and seethed.

I knew what he was doing. He was frustrating me. He was not letting me talk to make me want to talk. He knew before he even asked I wasn't going to cooperate. I was an out-of-town PI, from New York City, no less, a species regarded somewhere between paramecium and pond scum. So he wanted to soften me up for an interrogation he knew would be like pulling teeth.

"Okay, you're a private eye from New York. You tailed this guy to a motel, staked it out to see what happened. When nothing happened, you went in and found him dead."

I looked at him in surprise. "How did you know?"

He shrugged. "Unless you shot him, that's what happened. You gonna say you shot him?"

"Hell, no."

"Then that's your story. You know it, I know it. The only one who doesn't know it is Morgan, who's too damn dumb. So if you didn't kill him, it's not your gun, you didn't even know it was there. Unless you shot him and kicked the gun under the bed. But that would be too dumb, even for Morgan."

"Thank you," Morgan said.

"Anyway, if you shot him we could prove you fired the gun with a paraffin test. Unless you wore gloves. You know the problem with that, Morgan?"

"If he wore gloves, where are they?"

"Right. So, let's say, just for the sake of argument, you didn't shoot him. In that case, someone else did. If you were on duty, as a private investigator, watching that unit from the time the guy checked in, while you may be a rather unpromising murder suspect, you sure as hell are a promising witness. You saw the murderer. The arrival and departure of the murderer will be logged into your detective's notes. Along with a thumbnail sketch of the killer.

"So, we looked through your possessions when we brought you in here. We also obtained a warrant, and searched your car. Guess what? No notes. So, you're either the world's worst private detective, or you killed him."

He took a breath. "Now, we could go on, but I'm not big on guessing games, and you're probably not big on sitting there being insulted. What's it gonna be? You have the right to remain silent, but that doesn't mean you have to. What do you have to say for yourself?"

4

I TOLD THEM EVERYTHING.

I know, I know, that blows my image as a PI. I was supposed to hold out on the cops, follow the clues myself, solve the case ahead of them. Only in this case there seemed no reason. I'd been hired to find out if my client's husband was cheating. Well, he wasn't, at least, not tonight, and certainly not anymore. My client hadn't hired me to find out who killed him. Granted, he wasn't dead when she did, but even so. There was absolutely no reason to hold anything back, so I didn't.

Not that the cops were the least bit grateful. On the one hand, they despised me for talking. On the other, they didn't believe a word I said.

Bad Cop regarded me with disgust unlikely to have been equaled in the annals of the New Jersey police department.

"You just walked in and found him dead?"

"Yes."

"You expect us to believe that?"

"It's what *you* said I did."

"It's what I said your *story* would be. I didn't say it was true."

"I'd have to be the stupidest guy alive to shoot the guy and kick the gun under the bed."

"What's your point?"

"How can you not believe my story?"

"It has a few significant gaps."

"Like what?"

"I'd say the most glaring was the arrival and departure of the killer."

I said nothing.

He continued, "According to your story, no one had an opportunity to kill him except you."

"Not at all."

"What do you mean, not at all?"

"If you searched the motel room, perhaps you noticed the connecting door."

"That was locked."

"Of course it was locked. The killer locked it when he went out."

"How'd the killer get the guy to open the door?"

"Maybe this meeting was part of some prearranged plan."

"The guy planned to be killed? I tend to doubt that."

"He didn't plan to be killed. He planned to take part in some shady deal. He was sneaking through a connecting door to meet someone in a motel room so they wouldn't be seen entering his."

“Or he wouldn’t be seen entering theirs,” Morgan said.

Bad Cop looked at him in surprise. “You buy this guy’s story?”

“No. But in case it happens to be true, no reason why the dead guy’s so all-fired important. Maybe there’s a big meeting next door that this guy doesn’t want to be known to take part in, so he arranges to rent the next unit so he can be there without being seen entering. As far as I’m concerned, that makes more sense than these guys rented a unit so they could call on him.”

“Yeah, fine,” Bad Cop said. “But that’s only if we buy this guy’s story. Which there’s no reason to do.” He turned back to me. “We searched your car, and you know what we found?”

“Not much.”

“Well, we found a Gatorade bottle smelled like piss. I suppose you have some romantic idea guys on stakeout piss in ’em. But we didn’t find a gun permit.”

“I don’t have a gun permit.”

“Why don’t you have a gun permit?”

“I don’t have a gun.”

“What the hell kind of PI are you, you don’t have a gun?”

“Your basic, law-abiding type.”

“Yeah, sure. Now I’ll tell you what happened. You followed the guy to a motel where he was shacking up with a hot babe. You phoned the wife, she came racing over, burst in, shot him dead.”

“What happened to the hot babe?”

“She went home. She’s married, she doesn’t want to get involved. That leaves you with the wife. You’re freaked, you probably would have split, except she’s got a gun. She offers you a ton of money to stake out the place until the police arrive so you can swear she was never there.”

“That’s not what happened.”

“All right. Let’s ask her.”

The door opened and my client came at me like a harpy from hell. Her hair was a mess, her lipstick was smeared, her eyeliner was running down her cheek. “You son of a bitch!” she screamed, and came flying across the room, an outraged goddess swooping down to disembowel the mortal chained to the stake.

Morgan intercepted her in the nick of time, steered her away. She slumped into his arms, weeping uncontrollably. She twisted from his grasp, backed off, and stood there like a beast at bay, panting, her chest rising and falling in a way that I had to remind myself was not the least bit erotic. This was difficult as she was wearing a tank top not designed to stifle such thoughts.

“You’re supposed to be a PI. You’re supposed to help people. How could you do it? Oh, my God! My God!”

Bad Cop said, “Just so there’s no mistake, ma’am, this is the man you hired?”

“Of course it’s him.” She looked ready to go across the room again. Morgan took a protective step between us. “I can’t believe it. I just can’t believe it.”

“You hired him to follow your husband?”

“That’s right.”

“Because you thought he was having an affair?”

“Yes.”

“He didn’t call you, tell you your husband was at the motel?”

“No, he didn’t.”

“You didn’t try to find your husband at the motel?”

“Of course not.”

“This is the first time you’ve seen him since you hired him?”

“Yes, of course it is. Why are you asking me these questions?”

“Sorry, ma’am. We just have to keep the record straight. The fact is, you haven’t seen him until just now?”

“That’s right.”

“There now, ma’am. We won’t inflict him on you any longer. If you’ll just come with me.”

Morgan ushered her out. I was glad to see her go. I would have liked to talk to her, but not in front of the cops. Not in her current mood. Good God, what a shock. Yesterday her biggest problem was her husband was stepping out on her. Today he’s a corpse.

Bad Cop turned to me. “So, what do you have to say for yourself?”

“I’ve already said it.”

“Do you confirm that’s your client?”

“I thought she confirmed it.”

“She did.”

“Do you dispute it?”

“No, she’s my client. At least she was. I have a feeling this may terminate the employment.”

Morgan came back in the door.

“How’s she doing?”

“Okay. She’s sort of mad at him.”

“Of course she is. He killed her husband.”

“So she says. Of course, she’s not a good witness. She couldn’t testify to it. Unless she saw him do it.”

“I doubt it. Her anger seems genuine. If she watched him do it, why would she be pissed off?”

Morgan shrugged. “Some broads are like that. They ask you to do something, they’re angry when you do.”

“What’s the matter, Morgan. Have a fight with your wife?”

“Leave my wife out of it.”

“You’re the one always bringing her up.”

“I can bring her up. She’s my wife.”

“You’re saying I can’t talk about her?”

“You can talk about her when I talk about her. That’s friendly. Bringing her up when I don’t talk about her is something else.”

My head was coming off. They’d forgotten about me. My client’s widow had just tried to kill me, and they could have cared less. There was only one reason for that. They’d made up their minds. My client’s accusation had cinched it for them, they were going to hold me come hell or high water, and now they were just waiting for some prosecutor or other to show up and haul me in front of a judge.

I wondered if I should call Richard. But it seemed strange to demand an attorney

when no one was questioning me. I had to wait till they did. It couldn't be long. They couldn't keep up the small talk forever. It would drive them nuts. It was driving me nuts.

Bad Cop turned back to me. I braced myself, ready to stick up for my rights.

"Okay," he said, "you can go."

I stared at him. "What?"

"We'll bring you back if we need to talk to you some more, but right now we're done."

Morgan was on his feet. Standing he looked portlier than ever. He unlocked the handcuff, ushered me over to a side door. I followed him down a dark corridor into an anteroom where four men in plain clothes were hanging out. I thought they were cops until Morgan said, "Okay, guys, let's go," and I realized they were suspects just like me. Well, not *just* like me. Some of them were probably guilty.

Morgan pushed the door open, and out we went.

It was another dark hallway, so dark the guy behind me kept bumping me into the guy in front of me.

I was just wondering why they didn't turn on the lights when someone did. Suddenly it was so bright I could barely see my hand in front of my face.

A voice said, "Stop moving. Stand straight. Face front."

I stopped, looked around.

Behind me was a white wall with black height markings on it.

I was in a police lineup.

5

I GLARED AT BAD COP. "I can't believe you did that."

He shrugged. "What do you mean, me? I didn't do anything. You're the killer."

"If you wanted me to take a lineup, all you had to do was ask me to take a lineup. You didn't have to trick me into it under the guise of letting me go."

"What do you mean, 'trick' you into it? No one tricked you into anything. Everything was by the book. We put you in a lineup, and the witness picked you out."

"Picked me out as what?"

"As the killer, of course."

"Yeah, right," I scoffed. "You got an eyewitness saw me pull the trigger."

"Are you worried we do?"

"I'm not worried at all, because I know you don't."

"We've got the next best thing."

"What's that?"

"Eyewitness evidence *and* circumstantial evidence. You put the two together it makes quite a convincing case."

"Yeah, well I'm not convinced. You gonna let me go, or do I have to call my attorney?"

"You have the right to an attorney. You always *have* had the right to an attorney, and you always *will* have the right to an attorney. He's not going to do you any good, since we got you dead to rights on a murder rap, but you certainly have the right to one."

"I want to call my attorney."

"Your request is duly noted. We'll be sure to accommodate you at our earliest convenience."

Bad Cop went out the door and returned moments later ushering in a twitchy-nosed gentleman who looked not at all happy to be there.

"Is that the guy?" Bad Cop demanded.

I stared at him. Since I didn't know who "the guy" was, I had no idea if the twitchy-nosed gentleman was him.

It turned out he wasn't talking to me.

Twitchy-nose was a little man with a whiny voice. "You said I wouldn't have to meet him," he complained.

"Oh, come on. He's handcuffed to the wall."

"Now he is," Twitchy-nose whined. "What about later?"

"There's not going to be any later, if we get him for murder."

He shuddered. "Yeah, murder. You got me face-to-face with a killer."

"So. This is the guy you saw?"

"I don't like this."

“The quicker you get through it, the quicker you’ll be out of here.”

“Yeah, that’s him.”

“What did he do?”

“Walked across the parking lot, knocked on the door of unit seven.”

“What happened then?”

“Someone opened the door and let him in.”