

**A Scottish Proverb Comes to Life in
Satan's Boots Don't Creak
By
Don Lewis**

Book Review

by Jane Smith, Journalist

Staff Writer for the Meadville Tribune, Meadville, Pa.

“Satan’s Boots Don’t Creak” by Don Lewis, former Crawford County District Attorney, is every bit as good as “Presumed Innocent” by Scott Turow or other detective novels. Told in a quick, matter-of-fact fashion, it is the story of a man charged with the murder of his wife.

Lewis weaves a story of intrigue, which keeps the reader guessing right up to the end. Through the eyes of Attorney J.D. Banks, Lewis takes the reader from the beginning when police are notified about the death, through the investigative steps taken by the police and the defense attorney’s office to the trial.

But “Satan’s Boots Don’t Creak” encompasses more than the story of Conklin. It delves into some side stories which complicate the investigation and keep the reader guessing. Was the husband the real killer? Was his wife killed by somebody she was having an affair with while he was in jail? Or, was she strangled by her boss to prevent her from giving potential damaging business information to the authorities?

Those are but three of the suspects in “Satan’s Boots Don’t Creak.” Several more are thrown in with an expert touch and believable motives.

Having covered criminal trials as a reporter for more than 25 years, I can vouch for the realistic approach Lewis takes in his writing. That makes the book particularly appealing. For anyone who enjoys a good detective story, “Satan’s Boots Don’t Creak” will be a real page-turner.

Reader’s reviews

Don,

I just finished reading *Satan's Boots*, and I can't tell you how impressed I was! The plot, the action, character development, dialogue-- it was all first rate. I really enjoyed reading it, and I think it's as good a legal mystery as anything else out there; as good as anything by Grisham or Steve Martini. All those years of legal work must have taught you to

organize you mind. And it probably didn't hurt your imagination any either!!
Art Tripp, Mississippi

Mr. Lewis,

I finished your book yesterday. It was great!!! I couldn't wait to get back to it each time. Outstanding job!

Bob Meinert – Private Investigator, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Don,

I just finished reading your book and I am most impressed! I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it and, once I got started, I couldn't put it down. The book would make a great TV mini-series or a full length movie for that matter.

Thank you again for sending the book and for the personal inscription. It is one which will remain in my permanent library! I am looking forward to your next publication.

Best personal regards,

Bill Fussner - Sun Lakes, Arizona

Chapter 1

The day of reckoning had arrived. The courtroom was a study in quiet oppression, a highly polished box of impersonal indifference. The only color in the sterile enclosure was found in the flags of the United States and Pennsylvania displayed to either side of the bench where the judge sat in a severe black robe, high and imperious, as though deigning to look down upon all beneath his exalted person. Even the flags seemed to be on his side, both literally and figuratively: We the government stand over against the accused.

Farm Conklin stared transfixed at the circular clock behind the judge. The red second hand snapped to each minute mark in tediously slow staccato. Seven months in prison had taught Conklin well the meaning of “doing time.” Where every second was a minute, every minute an hour, every hour an eternity of monotonous languor. Time had etched fatigue and anxiety into his ruggedly handsome features. Everything conspired to exacerbate the tension. Conklin was barely conscious of the long discourse of the prosecutor, who to him, was droning on in sonorous rhythm, like a worrisome fly, his only companion of late buzzing incessantly about his gray concrete cell.

In actual fact, the prosecutor was a skilled orator on fire with righteous zeal. He repeatedly stabbed an accusatory finger at the defendant as he castigated him in a devastating tirade of demeaning adjectives denouncing his unconscionable criminal act. He raised his fist in the air like a country preacher booming hellfire and damnation to come. His mien softened as he looked to the victim and opened his arms wide as though to welcome her into his protective embrace. He had saved the poor, innocent little lamb from the viciously malevolent wolf, who deserved no less than the maximum punishment the law allowed for his wicked deed.

Satisfied that he had delivered an eloquent exposition against which no argument could prevail, he rested his case.

Conklin's attorney stood up, adjusted his thick-lens, horn-rimmed glasses, and motioned for his client to follow him to stand before Judge Dennis Flynn for sentencing. Conklin shook himself from a dream-like numbness and pulled himself to his full six-

foot, one inch height, visibly embarrassed by his blue prison garb. His mouth was parched and his hands sweaty. “Good,” he choked, cleared his throat, and then continued. “Good morning, Your Honor.”

“Good morning, Mr. Conklin,” the judge replied impersonally, perusing the papers before him.

Farm mistakenly believed the judge was reaching out to him. “How are you this morning, Your Honor?” Farm ventured.

Judge Flynn’s curt response disabused him of the notion. “I’m fine, Mr. Conklin,” Judge Flynn said flatly, glaring at him. “Now, are we finished with the greetings? If so, we have some business to conduct here today, if that’s alright with you,”

Conklin winced at the caustic remark. He dropped his head and his shoulders sagged under the weight of the solemnity of the proceedings. The dreamer was awake, reality had set in; hopes were dashed. The Manchester County Court was in session.

“Mr. Conklin,” the judge thundered, his resonant voice breaking through Conklin’s agony of apprehension, “you have been found guilty by a jury on charges of Attempted Murder, Aggravated Assault and Reckless Endangering ...”

Every crime enunciated was as a solid punch to Conklin’s head and as a blow to his sense of self-worth. He felt like a fighter out on his feet, reeling with every impact.

“... all of which could bring a sentence of incarceration in excess of twenty years.” The words “twenty years” echoed as the judge paused. “Now is your opportunity to address the Court on these matters. Do you or your attorney have anything you wish to say on your behalf?”

Conklin cast a painful glance at his lawyer. “If the Court please, Your Honor,” Farm’s attorney began, “this is my client’s first offense, and I would point out to the Court that Mr. Conklin has never denied striking his wife — “

“Excuse me, Counselor,” the Judge interrupted in a loud and intimidating voice, his twisted expression betraying his annoyance, “I would remind you that the jury determined that your client did much more than just strike his wife. They were convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that he tried to kill her.”

Conklin felt himself drifting back into a dream-like state. It all seemed so surreal. Seated high above them in an ornately hand-carved – a throne, really – the judge was larger than life, powerful, omnipotent, and patently hostile; a lion. His attorney was frail, shaky, seemingly unsure of himself, and Conklin’s one faint hope was trying his best to provide a buffer between the Judge’s resolute anger and Conklin’s future. Conklin felt his knees go weak. *How did he get here? Was he really here? Was this really happening?*

“Yes, sir,” the nebbish Public Defender countered quickly.

“I am aware of that, Your Honor, but I’m addressing the question of intent.” The mouse had backbone. “Though Mr. Conklin did commit a serious assault upon his wife, there were some extenuating circumstances,” he continued, groping for words that might defuse the judge’s apparent anger. “If I might be allowed to address those, with the Court’s permission, I will proceed.”

“Go on,” the Judge relented.

“Thank you, Your Honor. As the Court already knows, Mr. Conklin is a decorated and wounded veteran of the Vietnam War, and, as you have seen from our

sentencing memorandum, until his wounds caused him to retire from the Army he had a very distinguished military record.”

The Judge nodded, but said nothing.

Nervously pushing his reading glasses back up on the bridge of his nose, and looking down at his notes, the lawyer continued. “My client is forty-two years of age, and has no prior record. In fact, he was once awarded a citation by the Chief of Police of Rock Creek for assisting the police in subduing a burglary suspect.

“The trial made it clear that this trouble between my client and his wife arose over my client’s abuse of alcohol, which began several years after his return from the Gulf. As the testimony indicated, our psychiatrist, Doctor Seavers, believes Farm’s heavy drinking was directly attributable to his service overseas and was aggravated by the crib death of his daughter. Eventually, he became an alcoholic. We believe, and I’m aware,” he continued, turning to glance at the defendant’s wife, “that Mrs. Conklin concurs in the belief that Farm’s actions against her were caused entirely by his addiction to alcohol.”

Lorraine averted his gaze, fidgeting with the handle of her purse. Her eyes were filled with a tortured mix of anger and sadness.

The attorney continued, “Mrs. Conklin has said during this trial that, prior to the time Farm began drinking so heavily, he was a model husband and was both loving and generous with her.

“I’m sure you’ll find in the file many letters from Mr. Conklin’s employer, supervisors, and fellow workers, testifying to the quality of his work, and to his gentle and kind nature. And, of course, you heard Mr. Conklin, himself, express his regret for what he did. Mr. Conklin testified, and continues to insist, that he never intended to hurt his wife, and that he has no recollection of the events of that night. We know, from the Commonwealth’s own evidence, that my client’s blood alcohol level that night was 0.39, an almost lethal concentration that, according to Doctor Seavers, very well could have caused Mr. Conklin to black out during the assault, and have no recollection afterward.” The attorney paused, waiting in vain for an amen from the Judge. “And so ... uh ... Your Honor, because this crime goes completely against my client’s character, and because of his exemplary background, and we would ask the Court to impose a probationary sentence upon him. He has already suffered from the knowledge of what he did to his wife, and has spent the last seven months in jail thinking about it. Nothing this court can do would further any need for rehabilitation. Mr. Conklin has expressed his commitment to getting his drinking problem under control, and changing his life. A long jail sentence might only serve to destroy his resolve, and eventually release him into society in worse shape than when he went in. We believe that the key to Mr. Conklin’s conduct is controlling his drinking habits. He has remained sober since the day of this terrible incident, and intends to remain so. That’s all I have. Thank you, Your Honor.”

“Mr. Conklin, do you have anything to say?” the Judge asked.

“Yes, sir, I do,” Conklin answered contritely. “I would most like to address my remarks to my wife, if that’s okay with you, Judge.”

“You may do that, sir,” the Judge allowed.

Farm Conklin turned to his wife, who was sitting in the first row of seats behind the Prosecutor’s table. Lorraine stopped fidgeting with her purse and riveted her attention on Farm. Tears pooled in her eyes and ran down her cheeks as her husband spoke softly to her, as though they were the only two souls in the room.

“Lorraine ,” he began, perspiration sliding down the side of his face, “I can’t tell you how sorry I am for what I did to you. I appreciate your being aware that it was the booze. I’ve lived in hell ever since that night, and I have prayed for you, and for myself. I’ve loved you since we were kids, and I do now, maybe more than ever.”

Lorraine leaned forward in her seat as though she might go to him. A tortured expression of immense sadness barely masked her intoxicating beauty.

Farm took a half step forward and faced her directly, his back turned to the judge. “I want you to know I don’t blame you for not having any contact with me since that awful night. I’m glad that you’ve recovered, at least physically. I hope someday you’ll find it in your heart to forgive me.”

Their eyes locked, each searching for the meaning in the other’s gaze. Lorraine looked as though she might speak but no words escaped her lips.

Farm wiped tears from his eyes with the back of his hand and reluctantly turned back around to face the judge. “Thank you, Judge. That’s all I wanted to say.”

Conklin’s apology, coupled with Lorraine’s obvious enduring love for him, had taken the starch out of the judge’s demeanor. Stern indignation yielded to cordial professionalism. The judge addressed Lorraine. “I have received and read your letter, Mrs. Conklin; is there anything else you wish to say?” he asked.

Lorraine shook her head. “No,” she said, barely audibly. “No, Your Honor.”

A large, middle aged woman with the body of a prize hog and the countenance of a bulldog, sitting to Lorraine’s right, reacted with surprise and nudged her in the side with her elbow

Lorraine pulled away. “Please, Millie,” she said, “not here.”

“Mrs. Conklin,” the Judge repeated. “Are you certain there is nothing more you wish to say about the sentence?”

Millie Beck nudged Lorraine again, then leaned over and whispered something in her ear. Lorraine shook her head. “Yes, Your Honor,” she said softly, “I have nothing more to say.”

Millie looked disgusted.

“Mr. Conklin,” the Judge said, returning his attention once again to the defendant. “I’m impressed with the sincerity of your apology to your wife. The prosecutor has asked that I impose the maximum sentence in this case. In some circumstances, that might be appropriate. In this case, however, in light of your exemplary background, and the fact that you have no prior violations of the law, and because of the circumstances of your alcohol addiction, I think the recommendation is somewhat harsh. I would also note that your wife has sent me a letter requesting leniency.”

Farm turned his face once again to Lorraine, but she was distracted by Millie.

Millie turned suddenly toward Lorraine. “What is the matter with you?” Millie rebuked her, loudly enough to be heard in every corner of the courtroom.

The judge swiftly banged the gavel with a loud crack. “Madam,” the judge growled, glaring at Millie, “would you please keep your voice down? I don’t appreciate the competition!”

Chastened, Millie nodded an assent, and then earnestly whispered to Lorraine. “For chrissake, Lorraine, tell the judge you want that bastard sent away for the max,” she urged.

Lorraine shook her head vigorously and slid several feet down the bench away from Millie.

“Still, if I were to follow your attorney’s recommendation and sentence you to a period of probation, I would not be doing justice to the severity of the acts that you have committed.”

The Judge looked down at the writing pad in front of him, considered diligently a few seconds, and then said to the court reporter, “You may take this sentence. And now, this twenty-seventh day of May, nineteen hundred and ninety-one, on Count Three of the Information, Recklessly Endangering, the defendant is hereby sentenced to incarceration for seven months and three days, the time he has already served awaiting trial. “The Court further paroles the defendant on that charge, effective immediately.”

Conklin breathed a sigh of relief, but his attorney touched his arm and shook his head, drawing his client’s attention to the fact that the judge had not yet finished.

“On Count One, Attempted Murder,” the Court continued, “the defendant is sentenced to a term of two and a half to five years in the State Correctional Institution. This sentence is to run consecutively to the sentence imposed at Count Three. On Count Two, Aggravated Assault, the Court sentences you to a term of from two and a half to five years in the State Correctional Institution. This sentence is to run concurrently with that imposed on Count One.”

Conklin was bewildered. It sounded like a lot of years stacking up. He seemed to collapse in on himself, withdrawing again from the burden of present reality.

“What all this means in plain English, Mr. Conklin, is that you will be required to serve a minimum of two and a half years in prison, beginning today, so that your entire sentence will have kept you in jail for a little over three years. Do you understand?” he asked the defendant.

Conklin nodded without answering, the piercing words of the Judge’s sentence still echoing in his head. Standing tense and motionless, he was suspended between relief at not doing twenty, and utter despair at doing three. He saw his bleak prison cell in his mind’s eye, and considered that the sentence was as long as his initial Army enlistment. He would much prefer combat to confinement.

Then, as the law requires, the judge explained the defendant’s appellate rights. When the *pro forma* ritual was completed, when the last humiliating ordeal was over, two uniformed sheriff’s deputies stepped up to him. As they handcuffed him, Conklin looked over at the prosecutor, who was smiling smugly. The deputies escorted him out of the courtroom stood. It was clear to all who observed, that Farm Conklin was dazed in disbelief at the severity of the sentence. Pausing at the door, he turned over his shoulder for one last glimpse of his wife, perhaps looking for a sign of forgiveness.

When their eyes met, they spoke more in a glance than words could convey in oration, and cut them both to the heart. Lorraine, her sympathetic eyes glistening with tears, looked away, unable to bear any longer the plight of the man she had loved since she was a young girl.

CHAPTER 2

Rain fell steadily in heavy, driving sheets from ominously black clouds hugging the earth, broken here and there on the western horizon by pearl gray skies. Blustery winds rendered useless the shelter of umbrellas and challenged the efficacy of raincoats.

The Wagon Wheel diner, a renovated old railroad car, looked right at home in the little town of Manchester, Pennsylvania. The two conspired in perfect ambiance. On such a bleak day, the diner was a beacon of comfort. Bright lights, hot culinary delights, congenial atmosphere, and nostalgic music offered welcome refuge for the cold, the wet and the hungry. The lonely, too, found here a sense of belonging.

Lorraine Conklin sat alone in a window booth staring out at the rain pounding against the glass and running rapidly down in perpetual rivulets. It felt thoroughly satisfying to watch the storm from such a vantage point.

Millie Beck came into the diner in breathless exasperation. She was wet and disheveled and pissed about being both. She had a marvelous affect on small people and animals. Children hid behind their mother's skirts, cats hissed bitchy disapproval and dogs muttered deep-throated curses under their breath whenever she passed them by. She was oblivious to all this, of course, as her social awareness did not extend beyond the end of her snout. She was the center of her universe; a small, sad little world lacking intellectual curiosity, urbanity, or wit. However, she did have needs, and she needed people to fulfill them. To that end, she could be as relentless as a Harpy.

She saw Lorraine seated at her booth and headed toward her. She removed her raincoat, shook it off and hung it on the post hook on the outside of the booth before seating herself with effort across from Lorraine.

"Thanks for coming, Millie," Lorraine welcomed.

"Sure is wet out there," Millie remarked.

Lorraine smiled weakly, but didn't respond.

"What's the matter?" Millie wondered. "You look terrible."

Lorraine's brilliant hazel eyes darted evasively, but she said nothing.

"Jesus, what is it?" Millie demanded urgently, her husky voice resounding through the cozy diner.

"Farm is getting out in two weeks," Lorraine said finally, staring down into her coffee cup. Her nut-brown curls fell over her petite shoulders, almost covering her face.

"I know that," Millie retorted, "but don't worry about it, honey, he's not going to bother you. He wouldn't dare."

Lorraine didn't respond.

Millie continued. "He knows if he goes anywhere near you, he'll be in violation of his parole. He's not going to risk going back to jail."

Lorraine looked up at Millie, her eyes glistening with tears. She spoke softly, almost in a whisper. "I really appreciate everything you've done for me over the last couple of years, Millie; I really do."

"I know that, dear. Come on, out with it, Lorraine, what's going on?"

Lorraine took a deep breath. "I'm in a terrible mess." Tears began to run down her cheeks.

"What on earth are you talking about, Woman?" Millie bellowed.

Lorraine pulled back, startled by the harshness of Millie's tone, but she did not answer.

"Who is he?" Millie demanded, reaching across for Lorraine's hand.

Lorraine allowed her to take her hand, but remained silent.

"I'm beginning to lose my patience here," Millie growled, shoving Lorraine's hand away. Her intimidating expression was amplified by a round, beefy face. Her shark-like eyes made her look positively hideous when they bulged out in anger. "*You* called *me*, remember? What the hell is going on? It's a man, isn't it?" she pressed, thrusting her ample double chin toward Lorraine.

Lorraine, taken aback by the harshness of Millie's tone, only nodded in the affirmative.

"Who is it?"

"Farm," Lorraine blurted.

"What?" Millie asked in obvious surprise and consternation.

"Please don't be mad at me," Lorraine pleaded. She paused while Millie glowered. "I've been visiting Farm on the weekends for the last year, almost. He's changed...he really has changed."

Millie slumped back in the booth, her eyes widening and her arms falling to her side, as though she were just slapped in the head. Her confusion transmuted to disbelief.

Lorraine went on. "I heard all those things you said to me and I was listening. But, I can't help it. I love him and he's promised that there won't be any more problems. He joined the AA in prison and he's been going to church regularly."

Millie was already in a snit, spoiling for a fight when she joined Lorraine, and now she had reason to vent her anger, which was building from simmering to full boil. She pointed a stubby index finger at Lorraine. "You little bitch!" she hissed through pinched fat lips. "After all I've done for you! After the way I put my neck out for you! How could you do this?"

Lorraine tried to speak, but Millie cut her short.

Millie's voice raised several decibel levels as she ranted. She became shrill. "Do you know what you're doing to me? Do you know what you're doing to the organization? For Chrissake, Lorraine, what are you thinking about?" Now Millie was almost yelling. Other patrons, especially men, turned toward the commotion. She stared daggers back at them. "Mind your own fuckin' business!" she screamed, bobbing her head at the onlookers.

Lorraine slid to the end of the booth and rose to her feet.

"Don't you go anywhere!" Millie ordered and grabbed Lorraine's arm.

Lorraine jerked her arm away. Her vision blurred with tears, her mouth gasping for breath, she looked at Millie with an expression of anger and deep hurt.

Millie's brain was nearly opaque, but just translucent enough for some light to penetrate. She suddenly realized that she had overstepped her bounds. "All right, I'm sorry," she sputtered. "I'll quiet down. Stay, please?"

Lorraine hesitantly sat back down and looked pitifully at Millie. She spoke not a word.

"I'm sorry," Millie reiterated more calmly. "This is just such a shock. Why are you doing this?"

"I already said why. I love him and I believe in him, and I don't want to be alone anymore." She swallowed hard.

Millie awkwardly moved around to the other side of the booth and squeezed in next to Lorraine. She put an arm around Lorraine's shoulder. "You don't have to be

alone, dear,” she said softly, her attitude seeming to do a one-eighty. “I’m always here for you. You know that.”

“I know, Millie, and I appreciate it.”

“Don’t do this, Lorraine,” Millie implored. “This guy is crazy. He’ll kill you this time, Dear, I’m telling you. He’ll kill you for sure.”

Lorraine shook her head in insistent denial. “No,” she countered.

“Oh, yes he will; If not this time, then the next. He’ll do it. Believe me.”

Lorraine remained unmoved by her warnings.

Seeing that she was getting nowhere, Millie shifted gears again. “You know, my credibility is on the line here, Lorraine.” Her tough tone re-emerged. “I’ve put you up front in this fight we’re in. Everybody knows you’ve been supported by the organization, so if you go back with that bastard now, we’ll all look like fools. I’ll look like a fool. Is that what you want?”

Lorraine shook her head no.

“Well, then, do the right thing,” Millie pressed. “If not for me, then for yourself, for God’s sake.”

“Millie,” Lorraine whispered. “I owe you everything, but I have to get on with my life. I can’t keep on like this, being a burden to you and everyone else. I can’t help how I feel about Farm. I simply can’t turn my back on him now. He needs me now, just like I needed you then.” She looked up into Millie’s eyes. “I’ve made up my mind,” she said with resolution.

Noting the grim line of determination on Lorraine’s lips, seeing her immutable posture, Millie’s attitude once again turned sour. “You’re gonna get it, Woman, I’m telling you. You’re gonna pay for this decision,” she warned, her piercing eyes glaring at Lorraine. “Then, I’ll say, ‘I told you so,’ but it’ll be too late for you.” Millie pulled her ponderous girth out of the booth and stood for a moment, silently scowling down at Lorraine. She shook her head violently in frustrated vexation, grabbed her raincoat, turned abruptly and stormed back out into the rain.

Lorraine remained in the booth awhile, trying to regain her composure. She wondered whether she was doing the right thing.

CHAPTER 3

For the first time since she had taken control of the Manchester chapter of the National Women’s Forum, Millie Beck was facing the possibility of a serious defection. Lorraine Conklin, the woman they had, for several years, been putting out in front of their group as a shining example of why Millie and her group were so vital to the proper order of things, was leaving. Worse, Lorraine was going back to her husband, who had been, at the time of his wife’s beating, the focus of one of the most bitter and publicized attacks in the history of the local chapter. Millie was aware that there were several other members who were struggling with the thought of going back with their husbands, and was concerned that Lorraine’s defection might well cause ripples through the organization that could result in the group’s ultimate demise.

The personal humiliation for Millie would be devastating. She would be the laughing stock of Manchester. All of the nearly five years of hard work she had put into

organizing the local chapter and trying to provide a voice for the abused women of the community would have been wasted. Her promising future with the national organization would be crushed. Her life would be ruined. Worst of all, the hated dick-waving male of the species would have won — again. Truth be told, it was more her antipathy toward men than her empathy for women that nurtured her zealotry.

Millie went directly from her conversation with Lorraine at the diner to the apartment of her friend and close associate, Anne Steiger. She trusted her friend's advice and sought it often.

The upstairs apartment was modest but comfortable. The walls were full of pictures and posters of intelligentsia and arty events. The shelves and bookcases accommodated Hummel figurines and countless other such knickknacks, as well as a virtual jungle of house plants. The only things out of place were the stacks of text books and reams of Master's theses and Doctoral dissertations patiently awaiting a critical eye. Her living room desk was a maelstrom of open books and research materials. The computer displayed as a screensaver a caricature of Einstein chalking arcane mathematical formulas on a green board, until his head exploded to reveal a universe full of galaxies. Big bang in a big brain. Issues of *Psychology Today* filled the couch end tables.

Steiger was a smallish, plain looking bespectacled woman of high intelligence. She had a pinched, tight face shaped perfectly for peering into deep cones. She was a full and tenured professor of psychology at the local University and a long time member of the NWF. She spun around in her banker's chair at her desk, facing Millie seated on the couch.

"There has to be some way to stop this from happening," Millie railed nervously after relating the gist of her meeting with Lorraine.

"Slow down a little. We'll think of something," Anne said, softly responding to the panic in Millie's voice. "Maybe we should both talk with Lorraine about this."

"I don't think it would do any good," Millie said, shaking her head. "She said she's been thinking about this for a long time. I think she's made up her mind."

Anne started to say something, but was interrupted by Millie. "Can you imagine what this will do to our group...to our efforts?" she asked.

"She's obviously had a lot of pressure brought on her to do this, so we need to show her it isn't in her best interests to go back with him," Anne said. "Telling her of the effects of her actions on you or on the group isn't going to change her mind. She's got to be made to see that she's the one that will be hurt. You've got to convince her that her husband is just playing on her sympathy and, as soon as they get back together, the abuse will start again and it will be more difficult for her to get away the next time. You have to make her see that this is a very important, even critical, decision. See if she'll be willing to come in front of the group before she commits to this."

"I don't know. She sounded pretty firm to me."

Anne reached for her lighter and put the flame to a Virginia Slim cigarette. "It won't cost anything to try. Getting angry at her won't help anything. Besides, what if she does go back with her husband and you're right? She gets beat up again, you say I told you so, you take her back into the group, and we get stronger."

"In the meantime what about Lorraine?" Millie asked.

"The hell with Lorraine! She made her bed, let her lie in it," Anne said coldly.

“Yeah and maybe die in it,” Millie replied.

“Every war has its casualties,” Anne concluded, puffing out a perfect smoke ring.

CHAPTER 4

One month later

A black and white police cruiser, blue and red lights flashing, sped through a quiet neighborhood, and slid to an abrupt stop in front of a small traditional Cape Cod cottage on Spring Creek Road. The cottage was finished in varnished natural wood, highlighted with white trim. The used-brick chimney wearing a thick coat of climbing ivy promised winter a homey atmosphere. The ample front yard was well manicured and lush, shaded by several mature oaks and maples. Along the cottage front, red roses eagerly clambered up white trellises. A long gray stone walk meandered from the front door granite stoop to the mailbox at the road. White and yellow pansies ran along either side in cheerful profusion. The cottage exterior was the very picture of idyllic serenity, belying the sinister secret hidden within.

Verifying the address, the cops in the cruiser called in their location, switched off the engine and roof lights, got out, and looked around the property, making an initial assessment of the situation.

Officers Scott Young and Michael Hampsey had been on routine patrol in Manchester when they received a call reporting a violent domestic disturbance in Freedom Township. It was out of their jurisdiction, but the State Police were unavailable and in such instances, when an emergency is at hand, the Manchester police are authorized by the County Sheriff to cover the call. Seeing no cars in the driveway or in the open garage at the rear and to the right of the house, Officer Young carefully walked up the long walk to the front door. He rang the doorbell while his partner stood back a few feet, hand poised over his service revolver, the safety strap unsnapped. Hampsey respected Young and as a rookie he was a quick study. He hung on Young’s every word, and read his body language. When Young looked concerned, Hampsey went on high alert.

There was no response.

Young knocked on the door, this time calling for an answer. “Police! Is anyone at home?” he yelled. He waited for a reply, but there was none. “Stay here,” he instructed the junior officer. “I’m going around back. Look alive.”

Young stepped to the side of the cottage where a white picket gate led through a neatly trimmed hedge. The hedge arched over the gate. He moved cautiously and deliberately around the house, guardedly looking into each of the two windows he passed, being certain not to present himself as a target. He had good reason to be so cautious, having been shot once already while answering a domestic call. The veteran officer knew from that near-fatal experience that the most dangerous of all police calls involved domestic violence. In many such cases, the adrenaline pumping on overdrive through the veins of people in strong emotional states such as rage, often cause reckless and sometimes violent behavior by the husband or wife, or both, against the officer. Young approached the three steps that led up to the rear door.

There was no back porch, and no cover, only three naked steps that would expose him to anyone inside. He approached the doorway but remained to the side of the steps and against the outside wall. He reached out and banged the handle of his revolver against the door. No answer. Again, he knocked and called out for someone to answer. After several attempts with no reply, Young returned to the front of the house and instructed Hampsey to find suitable cover and wait there until he called it in. He walked over to the cruiser, reached through the open driver side window, and retrieved the radio mike. "Manchester, car 17," he said, keying the mike.

The dispatcher put Young in touch with the officer-in-charge. "Anything in the driveway?" the OIC asked.

"Nothing. I don't think anyone's home."

"Do you have back-up?"

"No."

"Try the door again," the OIC instructed. "In the meantime I'll call Prenatt and have him and Phillips get over there. Wait for them before you try to go inside. Don't enter unless you have an open door or reason to believe something is wrong. If you go in, call me as soon as you clear the house."

Irritated by too much instruction about the patently obvious, Young held the mike at arms length and looked at it, as though facing the OIC, as he listened and bounced his head back and forth as if to say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." All he needed was backup. The rest he knows.

The OIC rambled on. "If there's a phone in there, use it," he instructed. "Let's keep this off the air if we can."

Young silently nodded affirmatively, hung up the mike without acknowledging the OIC's instructions, blew an exasperated breath, then went back to rejoin Hampsey.

When Officers Alan Phillips and Terry Prenatt arrived several minutes later, the four officers huddled up. Young announced, "I'm going to the door again." Then to Hampsey, he said, "You stay here till I call you up. And, cover me." Young and Hampsey looked at one another. Young almost smiled. He knew the kid always had his back.

Prenatt suggested that he and Phillips would go around and cover the rear entrance. Young agreed and knocked at the front door again, this time much harder. Still no reply. He tried the door latch. It wasn't locked. He banged on the door once again. He pressed the latch again and the door swung open. Young snapped back, moving to one side. There was no movement or noise coming from inside. He jerked his revolver from its holster, poked his head in, and glanced quickly around. Seeing nothing that would stay his progress, he positioned himself just inside the door, and called out. "Police! Is anyone here?"

There was no answer. Keeping his eyes focused in front of him, Young reached outside with his left arm and motioned Hampsey to come ahead. A moment later both officers were standing in the entrance hall. Again, Young called out. Again, there was no answer.

"Stay with me," Young instructed, and stepped out in the direction of the living room. Room by room, the two officers began a search of the house. "Clear!" they called out to one another when each room was deemed safe. When they came to the bedroom, Young opened the door only a couple of inches. Hearing nothing, he slowly opened it

further. As he did, he could see two bare feet and part of a leg. Someone was lying on the floor. He motioned Hampsey to the other side of the doorway, and with their backs to the wall, Young called out once more. When there was no answer, he carefully stepped inside the room and saw the body of a woman lying on the floor between the bed and the door. Seeing that there was no one else in the room, he motioned Hampsey inside. Moving closer to the body, Young saw that she was motionless and discolored. There was a belt wrapped around her neck. Her dull eyes were only slightly open. The light of life that once shone through them had been switched off. He leaned down and searched for a pulse. She was cold to the touch. He needn't have bothered.

The two officers searched the rest of the house, being careful not to disturb what might later be deemed evidence. When they finished, they returned to the bedroom.

“Call it in,” Young instructed. “Tell ‘em it’s a homicide and tell ‘em we need a state police investigator, the crime scene unit, and the coroner.”

Officer Hampsey reached for his hand-held.

“No! Use the telephone,” Young ordered, pointing the direction.

Hampsey went to the telephone in the kitchen, picked up the receiver in a manner that would not disturb prior fingerprints, punched the touch-tone keys with a pen for the same reason, and called the OIC to report the homicide. The officers were instructed to protect the house until the PSP investigator and crime scene investigators arrived. Hampsey took out his handkerchief and wiped the sweat from his brow. This was his first homicide. Like many young officers, he had imagined that it would be quite exciting. He discovered that it was nothing but revolting.

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