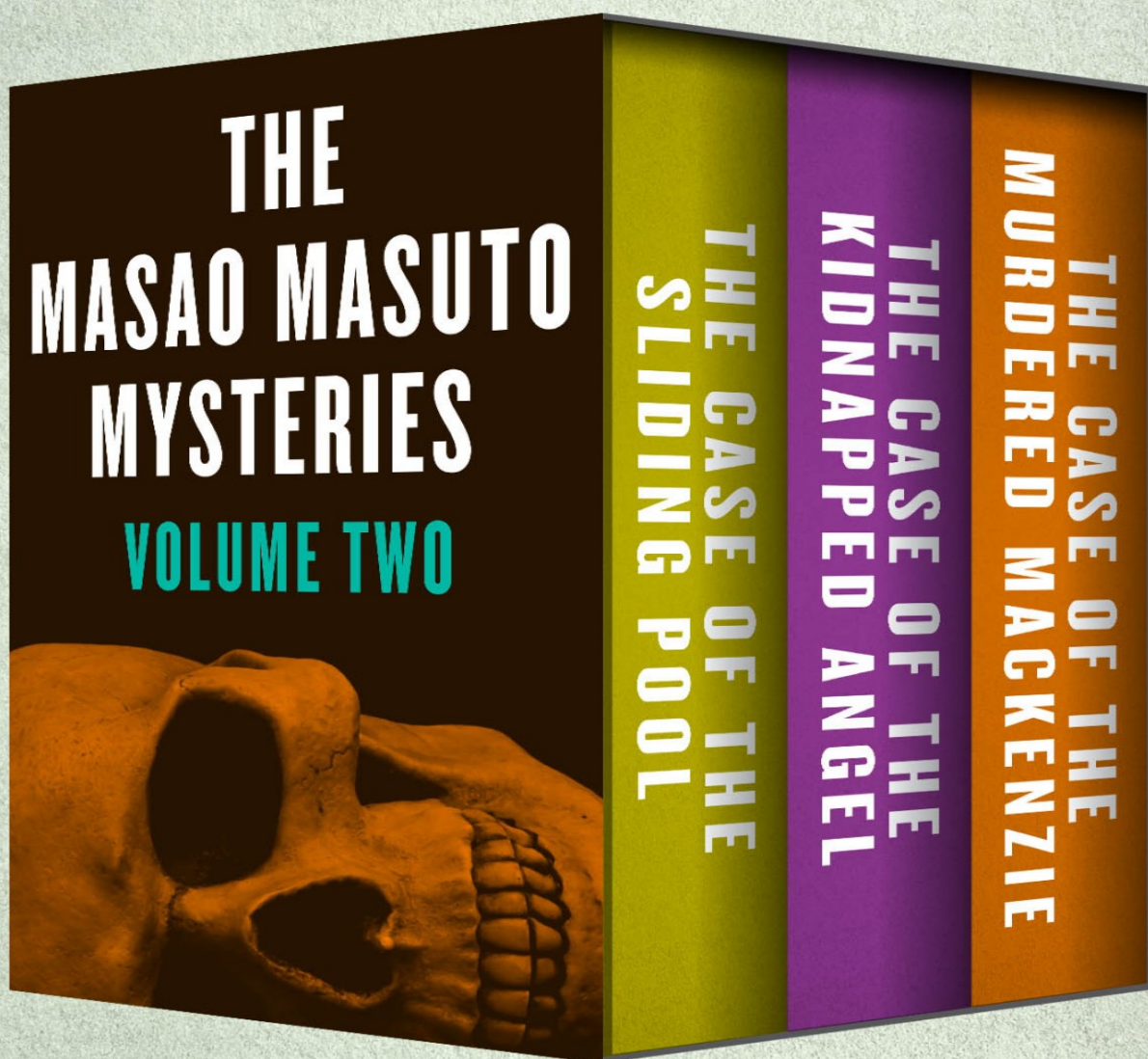


*#1 New York Times*—Bestselling Author

# HOWARD FAST

Writing as E. V. Cunningham



# THE MASAO MASUTO MYSTERIES

VOLUME TWO



# **The Masao Masuto Mysteries**

## **Volume Two**

**The Case of the Sliding Pool, The  
Case of the Kidnapped Angel, and The  
Case of the Murdered Mackenzie**

Howard Fast writing as E. V. Cunningham



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## A Biography of Howard Fast

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*—BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SPARTACUS*

# HOWARD FAST

Writing as E. V. Cunningham

## THE CASE OF THE SLIDING POOL

A Masao Masuto Mystery





# The Case of the Sliding Pool



**For Dolly, Maxie, and George,  
my Three disciples at  
Laurel Way**

# THE SLIDING POOL

Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto of the Beverly Hills Police Force was a Zen Buddhist, which meant that he was willing to accept his karma and his fate perhaps with as much resignation as any man might hope for. But on this day he rebelled. His fate, he felt, had become intolerable.

He was the victim of one of the many legends that abound in southern California. This particular bit of folklore held that it did not rain after the tenth of March, whereupon Masuto had scheduled a long awaited and long overdue week of vacation time to begin on the twelfth of March. The rains began in November, as they frequently do in southern California, and for the next several months it rained intermittently and at times constantly. On the twelfth day of March it rained, and for the next six days it rained. It rained with fury and anger, as it had all winter. Hillsides turned into mud and slid down upon houses and roads; houses left their foundations and were engulfed in mud, and the dry, concrete-lined flood channel, which was euphemistically called the Los Angeles River, became a roaring torrent of white water.

Masuto's beloved rose garden, which contained forty-three varieties of rare and exotic roses, and which was enclosed by a wall of hibiscus and night-blooming jasmine, and where he had planned to spend at least one full day nurturing and pruning, became a sodden bog, and his own small and treasured meditation room,

which he had built with his own hands, developed four separate leaks, so spaced as to make proper meditation impossible.

These two blows of fate were dealt to Masuto. What of his wife, Kati, and his two children—his daughter, Ana, who was nine years old, and his son, Uraga, who was eleven? Instead of the picnic at Malibu, the bicycle day on the path at Venice Beach, and the day to be spent at Disneyland, they were all cooped up, day after day, in their cottage in Culver City. Even though Masuto and his wife, Kati, were Nisei, which means that they were born in the United States of Japanese parentage, they had raised their children in the Japanese manner—whereupon neither Ana nor Uraga complained, as American children might well have done. And this only served to increase Masuto's frustration and unhappiness.

On the final day of his aborted vacation, at his wits' end for varieties of indoor amusement, Masuto produced his game of *go*. For those unfamiliar with the ancient Japanese game of *go*, it can only be said that it defies the Western mind and makes chess appear absurdly simple. According to Japanese tradition, the game of *go* was devised by the Emperor Yao in the year 2350 B.C. The true *go*—not the Western simplifications which Masuto would not tolerate in his home—is played on a board that is divided into squares by 19 vertical and 19 horizontal lines. This results in 361 intersections. Each player has 181 pieces with which to play, and the play proceeds in a manner which can conceivably be taught but hardly described.

Now, on this last day of Masao's vacation, Masuto was trying to entice Uraga into a game of *go* when the telephone rang. Perhaps providentially, for Uraga frequently won at *go*, and a defeat by his son would not at this moment have raised Masuto's spirits. Kati answered the phone and then came into the living room and informed Masuto that his boss, Captain Wainwright, chief of detectives on the Beverly Hills police force, would like to speak to him.

"Tell him I'm on vacation," Masuto said sourly.

"He knows you are on vacation. He is apologetic. But he would like to talk to you, Masao."

Masuto went to the telephone and listened as Wainwright sympathized. “I know what a pain in the ass this weather’s been, Masao, and the last thing in the world I’d do would be to break in on your vacation time if it wasn’t raining. But I told myself you’re bored as hell, and this is your thing.”

Which was Wainwright’s delicate way of announcing a homicide. There was no homicide squad as such on the Beverly Hills police force. With almost two dozen plain-clothes detectives in a city of not much more than thirty thousand inhabitants, there was no need for a permanent homicide detail. There were simply not enough murders, but when homicide did occur, Masuto and his partner, Sy Beckman, took over.

“If you’re interested?” Wainwright added.

Masuto glanced into the living room, where his son stared bleakly at the go board. “I’m interested,” he said, “providing I get an extra day next time.”

“Good. We’re up at Forty-four hundred Laurel Way. Take an umbrella. It’s raining like hell.”

As if Masuto didn’t know.

Kati did not try to dissuade Masuto—at this point it was a relief to have him out of the house; but she made him wear a raincoat and take an umbrella as well, and she kissed him and clucked sympathetically over the mess his vacation had been. “Take care of yourself, please, Masao.” But that was always on her lips when he left.

Driving north from Culver City across Motor Avenue to Olympic Boulevard and then to Beverly Drive, Masuto reflected on the fact that he was delighted to be back at work. He had once read somewhere that vacations are for amateurs. Could it be that he had lost the ability to enjoy anything but his work? Did he love being a policeman to that extent, or was it the puzzle, the question, the deeply mysterious and always disturbing problem of crime? Crime encapsulated the general illness of mankind, and as a Buddhist he was involved with mankind. Well, let that be as it might; it was a question he had turned over in his mind a hundred times. Answers were simple, so long as one did not dwell on the question.

Laurel Way—not to be confused with Laurel Canyon Drive, which is in Hollywood—is a Beverly Hills street that winds up into the Santa Monica foothills, a left turn off Beverly Drive just north of Lexington. The street follows the lip of a curving, ascending ridge, and the expensive houses on either side of the roadway overlook two canyons, one on either side of the ridge. Now, in the pouring rain, the road had become a shallow stream, and Masuto drove carefully, pleased that his old Datsun dealt so well with the elements; this was a day for elements. Forty-four hundred was a sprawling, stucco-covered, single-story house. There was just room in the driveway to park his car between Wainwright's Buick and a city prowler car.

As Masuto climbed out of his car and opened his umbrella, Detective Sy Beckman appeared on a path that seemed to circle the outside of the house. Beckman, a huge man, six feet three inches and built like a wrestler, grinned sympathetically. "It never rains but it pours," he said. "Me, I take my vacation in the summertime."

"Thank you. Now what have we got here?"

"Come and see. This one's a doozy."

He followed Beckman along the path, around the side of the house, through an alley of rain-soaked acacia to the terrace behind the house. It was a lovely terrace, about sixty feet long, paved in red brick, decorated with a proper assortment of palms and jasmine, with a splendid view of hills and canyons descending to the city below, and with a space in the center for a swimming pool. But the swimming pool was gone, and with it a goodly part of the terrace, leaving a gaping hole, or rather a three-sided gap in the outer rim of the terrace. Moving gingerly, Beckman led Masuto to where the outer edge of the terrace still survived, an iron railing originally placed there as a safety precaution. Where the hole was, the railing had been torn away. Now, leaning over the railing, Masuto saw the swimming pool sitting halfway down the canyon side, a wide gash in the mesquite marking its journey from its original position.

"Nothing like a little rain in Los Angeles," Beckman said. "Full of surprises."

"Masao, is that you?" Wainwright shouted.

He was in the hole left by the ambulatory swimming pool, and with him, in rain hat and raincoat, was Dr. Sam Baxter, the part-time

medical examiner of Beverly Hills. There were not sufficient homicides in Beverly Hills to warrant a staff medical examiner. Baxter, chief pathologist at All Saints Hospital, doubled as medical examiner when needed.

“Get down here, but do it carefully,” Wainwright told him. “I wouldn’t give you twenty cents for the rest of this terrace.”

Masuto folded his umbrella and let himself down into the hole that had contained the swimming pool. Beckman followed. The rain was tapering off, and in the distance, over the Pacific, the clouds were breaking apart, revealing gashes of blue sky.

“Now that your Oriental wizard has arrived,” Baxter said sourly, “I’d like to go. Never should have been here in the first place.”

Masuto had resigned himself to being ankle deep in mud, but the bottom of the hole was quite firm, the water having drained down into the canyon. Actually, the excavation was in that peculiar soft rock which characterizes most of the Santa Monica hills and which is called, locally, decayed granite; and while the force of the constant winter rains had loosened the pool, overflowed it and weakened its supports to send it finally sliding down into the canyon, most of the ground it had once rested on was intact and firm, sloping from the shallow end to the deeper part. Wainwright and Baxter stood in the middle section. Masuto joined them. Wainwright pointed at the ground in front of them.

“There it is, Masao.”

From the terrace a uniformed policeman called out, “The ambulance is here, captain.”

“We’ll be through in five minutes.”

“Can I go now?” Baxter demanded.

Masuto stared silently and thoughtfully at what Wainwright had pointed to. A groove about six feet long, two feet wide and a foot deep had been gouged out of the decayed granite upon which the pool had rested. The groove was half full of muddy water; the rest of the water apparently had been bailed out with a plastic pail that stood nearby. Lying in the water that remained, there was a human skeleton.

“Well, go ahead, ask me!” Baxter snorted. “Ask me what killed him and how long he’s been dead!”



“I wouldn’t dream of asking you that,” Masuto said mildly. “You said ‘he.’ It’s a man, I presume?”

“It was, and that’s all I know. When we pick up the bones and get them back to the lab, I may know more and I may not. Have you seen enough, or are you going to stand there gawking at it all day?”

“I’ve seen enough,” Masuto said.

“Then I’m going.”

Wainwright thanked him.

“For what? For getting a case of pneumonia?” He stalked over to the shallow end of the pool and climbed out. “Get all the bones,” he snapped at the two ambulance men, who were waiting with their basket. “And don’t mess things up.”

“Lovely man,” Beckman said.

“Where are the owners of the house?” Masuto asked.

“Inside. Nice people. They’re a bit shaken. Bad enough to lose a swimming pool—a skeleton under it doesn’t add to the pleasure.”

“No, I suppose not.”

“You talk to them, Masao. See what you can pick up about this. The pool’s been here about thirty years, so I suppose we’ll come up with a dead-end John Doe. Give it a shot anyway. We can’t just write the poor bastard off.”

The ambulance men finished collecting the bones and departed, Wainwright following them. Masuto said to Beckman, “Let’s get rid of the rest of the water in there, Sy.”

“Why?”

“Did they bury him naked? I wouldn’t think that shoes are biodegradable. Where are they? Buttons, belt buckle, even pieces of cloth. There was nothing on the bones.”

“Maybe it washed out. That was a damned heavy rain. It washed most of the dirt out of the hole.”

“Let’s look.”

Beckman sighed, picked up the plastic pail, and began to bail. He got the water down to a level of about an inch, and then he and Masuto explored the grave carefully with their hands. There was nothing but bits of decayed granite and loose dirt.

Wet and dirty, the two men looked at each other and nodded.

“Buried naked,” Beckman said.

“Which bespeaks a sense of thoroughness,” Masuto decided. “It’s a beginning.”

“How’s that?”

“First facts concerning the killer. He’s a careful man, a thorough man. Doesn’t like loose ends. A sense of neatness.”

“Providing he’s still alive. This was thirty years ago.”

“Providing he’s still alive. We also know he could operate a backhoe.”

“How do we know that—you don’t mind my asking?”

“He dug the grave. Conceivably, it could have been done with a pickax, but that would take hours. Anyway, here at the edge”—Masuto bent and touched two marks at the end of the grave—“that looks like the teeth of a backhoe. Most likely they had finished the excavation and the backhoe was still available. Maybe they planned to pour the concrete the following day. He could have come by at night, used the backhoe, cut out the grave, put in the body, and then packed it over with dirt.”

“That’s a lot of maybes.”

“Just the beginning.”

They were up on the terrace now. The rain had ended, the sky in the west was laced with pink and purple clouds that formed a curtain across the setting sun. The two men stared at it in silence for a minute or so, and then Beckman said, “There’s no way we’re going to break this one, Masao.”

“We’ll see. Let’s go in and talk to the people who own the place.”

# JOHN DOE

John and Mary Kelly were the fortunate “creative” proprietors of a soap opera; fortunate in the fact that it provided both of them with enough money to live in Beverly Hills, and creative in the sense that John Kelly, a writer, had originated the soap opera—which was called *Shadow of the Night*—and Mary, an actress, was its chief running character. John, tall, stoop-shouldered, and nearsighted, had banged out the script, day in and day out for five years, and Mary, blond, blue-eyed, and pretty, had played in it day in and day out for five years. Today, being Saturday, their single day of rest, they were at home, sitting in the living room, comforting themselves with white wine and trying to adjust to the loss of a swimming pool and the ownership of a long-deceased skeleton, both in the same day. They had already spoken to Wainwright and to their public relations man and to the network—so that the latter two might decide whether to make the most or the least out of these happenings—and they were now trying to make sense of their insurance policy when Masuto sounded their doorbell. John went to the door and stared with dismay at the two bedraggled men. Masuto showed his badge.

“We would like to talk to you and your wife, if we might. I’m Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto. This is Detective Sy Beckman, both of us with the Beverly Hills police force. We’re wet and dirty, so perhaps we should talk in the garage.”

“Absolutely not,” said his wife, Mary, coming up behind him. “You poor dears. Just give me your coats and come on into the living room. We have a fire going. Anyway, nothing so exciting has ever

happened to us before, and here are two in-the-flesh detectives, and John, if that isn't grist for your mill, I don't know what is."

"Right on," John agreed. "Forgive my rudeness, but you're a Nisei, aren't you? I mean, on the Beverly Hills force, that's something. I mean if we can demonstrate some sanity in Beverly Hills, it can happen anywhere, wouldn't you agree?"

"Absolutely," Masuto said.

A few minutes later, sitting in the living room and drinking hot coffee, and listening to Beckman discussing a soap opera with its creator, Masuto reflected, as he had so often before, on the wedding of the tragic and the ridiculous in his work. Beckman was explaining that while his wife never missed a segment of *Shadow of the Night* if she could help it, he only caught it on his days off. "When I tell her that we were here—well, never mind that. It's off the subject."

"Yes, of course," Kelly said. "But did you ever catch a segment with the narc—Henderson, the narcotics squad."

"Afraid not."

"No? That's a pity. I would have appreciated a professional opinion."

"I think," the wife said, "that Sergeant Masuto would like to talk about the swimming pool."

"Oh? Oh, absolutely. You know, when I think of all the laps I've done in that pool with some poor devil's corpse right under me—sorry, go ahead."

"Just a few questions. First of all, when did you buy the house?"

"Just about four years ago, when the show got rolling. It was the first windfall Mary and I had since we married. We never dreamed we could afford a place like this."

"Captain Wainwright said you told him the pool had been there for thirty years. How did you know?"

"Just the word of the real estate agent when we bought the place. He said it had been built in nineteen fifty."

"Who owned it before you?"

"Carl Simmons. Very rich. He traded for a place in Bel-Air. He's in the plastics business in Irvine."

Beckman made notes.

"And how long did he live here? Do you know?"

“Six years, I believe.”

“By the way,” Masuto said, “how certain are you that the pool and the house were built at the same time?”

“Only what my real estate man told me. This was one of the first houses built on Laurel Way, and it set the pattern.”

“And do you know the name of the pool builder? Most pools have metal plates set into them with the name of the builder.”

“I suppose they do, but not ours.”

“You sure about that?”

“Absolutely. I was curious about it. I asked our pool-care man about it once, and he said that back in those days, most pools were not gunnite, which is a way of spraying a metal form with concrete. Ours is—or was, I should say—just an enormous concrete tub, with walls eight inches thick. That makes a great pool, but I guess it was just too much weight for the hillside to carry after the rains we’ve been having.”

“That still doesn’t explain the absence of the builder’s nameplate.”

“No, but our pool man—”

“What’s his name?” Beckman asked.

“Joe Garcia. I have his address inside. He lives in Santa Monica. Do you want it?”

“Later,” Masuto said. “Go on.”

“Well, he said that probably the pool was built by the same contractor who built the house, and since he was not mainly in the pool business, he wouldn’t have a nameplate.”

“Do you know the contractor’s name?”

“I’m afraid not.”

“It was so long ago,” Kelly’s wife said. “Thirty years. Do you really think you could ever find out who put the body there—or even who the man was?”

“We have to try,” Masuto told her.

“You can’t write off a homicide,” Beckman added.

“But how can you be sure it was a homicide?”

“It generally is when they hide the body,” Masuto said. “But let’s get back to the house. We’ve accounted for ten years. Do you know who the owner was before Simmons?”

“We think it was Jerry Bender, the comic,” Mary Kelly said. “We still get some of his mail—can you imagine, after ten years.”

“But I think he only lived here a year or two,” Kelly told them.

“All right. You’ve been very helpful. Now I want you to think about this very carefully. In the time you’ve lived here, have you ever had a visit from a man you didn’t know? Let me be more explicit. This man is between fifty-eight and sixty-five years old. He might have offered some excuse, perhaps that he was from an insurance company or from some city agency or from the water company—but in any case, he would be interested in seeing your terrace.”

“Got you,” Kelly said eagerly. “After all, I write these things. You’re thinking that the killer might have come back, to see that his burial ground is undisturbed—am I right?”

Masuto smiled. “Quite right.”

“The trouble is,” Mary Kelly said, “that I can’t think of anyone who fits that description. Can you, John?”

“Not offhand, no.”

“But people do come around, I’m sure,” Mary Kelly said. “The trouble is that John and I spend so much time at the studio. He has his office there, where he writes the show, and when you do a daily soap, it’s very often eight or ten hours a day for me.”

“And who takes care of the house?”

“We have a sweet Mexican lady, whose name is Gloria Mendoza. She comes in every day, cleans, and cooks if we come home for dinner. We give her weekends off, so she’s not here today. But she’ll be here on Monday.”

“Perhaps we’ll speak to her on Monday. Meanwhile, in a few hours you’ll be besieged by reporters and media people. I would appreciate your not mentioning that either Detective Beckman or I are working on this case. If they ask you what the police are doing, you can refer them to Captain Wainwright.”

When they left, Masuto informed Beckman that there was an old road at the bottom of the canyon from which they could reach the swimming pool.

“You got to be kidding. Aside from the mud, the brush is soaking wet.”

“The way we look now, what difference will it make?”



It nevertheless made a difference, for by the time they reached the shell of the swimming pool, clawing up the brush-covered slope of the canyon, they were soaked from head to foot and their shoes and trousers had become soggy clumps of mud. Nor was anything to be found there, only the big concrete form, split along one side and perhaps destined to lie there on the hillside for years to come. There was no identifying plate or mark.

“Well, that’s that,” Masuto said.

“The hell with it,” Beckman concluded. “He’s been dead for thirty years, and another day or two won’t hurt. Let’s knock off and get into dry clothes.”

With the end of the rain Kati removed the four pans she had set out in Masuto’s meditation room to catch the leaks in the ceiling, thinking at the same time that she must have the roof repaired. She had heard that more roofs leaked in Los Angeles than in any other city because the rainy season was four months long, leaving eight dry months to lull the population into believing that it would never rain again. Well, it would, and this time she would make certain that the roof was repaired.

Tonight, the room was once again usable, but Masuto’s meditation was not successful. Again and again there intruded the image of a naked man, put to death thirty years ago. The moment he arrived home, Masuto had telephoned All Saints Hospital, only to be informed by the intern on duty in the pathology lab that Dr. Baxter had left for the day. It was understandable. The bones had kept for thirty years; they would keep for another day. But Masuto found the puzzle compelling. He felt that all of life was a puzzle, and most of it beyond answer.

Later, at dinner, with Masuto and his wife eating together after the children had been put to bed, Kati asked tentatively about what horror had called him out into the rain. Her questions were always tentative, voiced with the understanding that the worst things would be concealed from her.

“We found the skeleton of a man murdered thirty years ago.”

“How very awful!” But with a note of relief. If it had happened so long ago, there was surely no threat to her husband. That concerned

her most.

Masuto told her the story, stressing the fact that the couple who owned the house were very nice people. It was not often that he could bring Kati a story about nice people.

“But surely there’s no way you can find the killer now?”

“We’ll try.”

“I’m sure he’s dead,” Kati said firmly. “There are other punishments beside the police.”

“Possibly. In any case, we’ll try.”

“But not tomorrow,” Kati said firmly. “Tomorrow, the man on the television tells us, will be the first sunny day in a week, and we are taking the children to Disneyland.”

“I was supposed to check in,” Masuto told her, but without conviction. “Today is the last day of vacation. I do not work on Sunday.”

“You worked today.” She had changed a good deal since she joined a consciousness-raising group of Nisei women. “You can point that out to Captain Wainwright. No one else works on Sunday.”

“Except policemen.”

“We are all going to Disneyland.”

Masuto telephoned Wainwright, who unexpectedly admitted that the bones would keep. The Masuto family spent the day at Disneyland. And on and off, when Masuto glanced at his wife, he noted a strange, slight smile of satisfaction on her lips.

Monday morning Masuto stopped off at All Saints Hospital and made his way to the pathology room, where Baxter’s two young, bearded assistants leered at him knowingly, as if every corpse sent there by the Beverly Hills police was his own handiwork. Behind them Dr. Baxter bent over the skeleton, which he had laid out on an autopsy table.

“Well, here he is,” Baxter said unpleasantly, which was his normal manner. “I suppose you want his name, sex, age, and the details of what killed him?”

“Only because of my enormous respect for your skill.”

“Bunk! Anyway, his name is your business, not mine.”

“Very true.”

“Have you got it? No. Of course not. Do you know why some murders are solved? Because murder is an idiot game. Show me a murderer, and I’ll show you an IQ of ninety-five. When an intelligent man turns his hand to murder, your numbskull police force is paralyzed.”

“And is that what we have here?” Masuto asked gently. “An intelligent murderer?”

“You’re damn right, which is why the body stayed in its grave for thirty years. If not for these ridiculous rains, it would have remained there forever.”

“Perhaps, or perhaps nothing is forever. But acknowledging that neither of us knows the name of the victim, I’m sure you can tell me the rest.”

“You’re damn right I can. The deceased was a male Caucasian, about five feet eight inches tall, age between twenty-five and thirty, and killed by a knife wound, a hard, deep thrust from the rear. How do I know? Come over here.” Masuto took his place on the opposite side of the autopsy table. “This,” Baxter said, pointing, “counting down is the sixth of the thoracic vertebrae. Notice that scrape on the left side, actually nicked a piece of the bone. Tremendous force, drove right through the vertebral aponeurosis into the heart. A long, heavy blade, maybe something like a bowie knife, back to front, right through the body and heart and nicked this rib, right here. The son of a bitch who killed him knew what he was doing. I’ve seen a hundred knife wounds, but not like this. This gent had practice. Nobody drives a knife through the entire thickness of a human body unless he’s been trained to do it and has done it before.”

“You’re sure of that?”

“Was I there? I’m sure of nothing. I’m telling you what the bones say.”

“How do you know it was a white man?”

“It’s my guess—shape of the skull, relationships of tibia and femur, and here in the skull, the shape of the mesethmoid, right here where it holds the cartilage. Could be a black man, but not likely. Like I said, I wasn’t there.”

“And the age?”

“Condition of the teeth, good teeth, two missing—knocked out, I’d guess—but not one damn cavity for you Sherlocks to fool around with dental charts.”

“Why do you say knocked out?”

“Because I use my head. You can see the broken stump.”

Masuto ran his finger over the stump. “Worn smooth. Not a rich man. He could have had it capped. I think your conclusions are brilliant, doc.”

“You’re damn right they are!”

“Well, at least you don’t suffer from modesty.”

“Modesty is for fools. I ought to be chief medical examiner downtown, and instead I waste my years in Beverly Hills.”

“What about broken bones?” Masuto asked. “Any healed fractures?”

“Not a one.” He grinned at Masuto with satisfaction. “Really handed you one, didn’t I? You find the man who did in this stack of bones and I’ll take back every nasty thing I ever said about you.”

“If he’s alive, I’ll find him.”

“Talking about modesty—”

“As you said, it’s for fools.”

\* \* \*

Wainwright was waiting for Masuto in the police station on Rexford Drive. “I suppose you’ve seen the papers,” he said. “This city needs flashy corpses like I need a hole in my head. Would you believe it, the city manager’s blaming me for a murder took place thirty years ago.”

“Who else can he blame?”

“I told him to forget about it. This is a dead end. In a few days the newspapers will get tired, and we can close the file. I’m shorthanded enough without you and Beckman wasting the city’s money trying to find a murderer who’s maybe dead ten years ago. Especially when our chances of finding out who was zonked are practically zilch. Beckman spent half the day Sunday down at L.A. Police trying to spot a disappearance that would fit. Nothing. We got nothing, and we’re likely to get nothing.”

“Where’s Beckman now?”

“Over with the town records. They were closed yesterday. He’s trying to find out who the contractor was and when the pool was poured. But goddamnit, I know you, Masao. I don’t want any federal case made of this.”

“Ah, so,” Masuto said mildly. “Murder is done in Beverly Hills, and the captain of detectives is indifferent. A thousand pardons, but how does one explain that?”

“Don’t give me that Charlie Chan routine, Masao. I can see you licking your lips and getting set to chase ghosts for the next two months. Meanwhile, houses are being broken into and stores are being robbed.”

“Will you give Beckman and me a week?”

“Why? What have you got? Bones.”

Beckman walked in. He stood watching Wainwright and Masuto with interest.

“Bones that once belonged to someone, to a white man, five feet eight inches tall, in very good health, but poor, a laborer, I suspect, and truculent—oh, about twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old.”

“You got to be kidding,” Wainwright said.

“Who was murdered,” Masuto went on, “possibly on a Sunday by his friend, a man who had commando training in World War Two, who planned the murder very carefully, and who knew how to operate a backhoe.”

“And you also have an eyewitness,” Wainwright said sardonically.

“An assortment of intelligent guesses put together mostly by Dr. Sam Baxter, but it’s a starting point, isn’t it? I’m only asking for a week. And what a feather in the cap of my good captain if we can come up with the answer.”

“I’ll tell you what. Today’s Monday. If you can come up with a tag for the deceased and a motive by Wednesday, you got the rest of the week. If on Wednesday you still got nothing but Sam Baxter’s pipe dreams, we close the file.”

“You’re all heart,” Masuto said.

“I’m a sucker for your Oriental flimflam, that’s what I am.” He turned on Beckman. “Don’t stand around wearing down your heels. Get in there with Masuto and do something. I got a police

department to run,” he said with disgust. “Crime in this city is up eight percent from a year ago, and you work on puzzles.”

In Masuto’s office Beckman observed that Wainwright was in a lovely mood this morning.

“Just normal good nature. What have you got, Sy?”

“I got the name of the contractor. Alex Brody on Maple Street in Inglewood. Here’s the address, but whether he still lives there or is alive or dead, God knows. According to the records, the first building permit for Forty-four hundred Laurel Way was issued on May ninth, and the final inspection took place on August twelfth, both nineteen fifty. I got hold of the plans, which include the swimming pool, but there’s no way of telling from the records when the pool was poured or whether it was separately contracted. If it was, it would have been a subcontract, because only one set of plans was filed.”

“Was the house built on slab?”

“I thought of that,” Beckman said with satisfaction. “According to the building guys they were just beginning to pour slab foundations around that time. You’re thinking they would have poured the concrete for the pool at the same time.”

“It makes sense. It was a slab base?”

“According to the plans.”

“We’ll suppose they started on May ninth, the day they got their permit. They had to put down the footings, excavate, wait for an inspection, then bring in the plumbers and lay the pipes and the ducts. It has to be three weeks to a month before they pour the concrete. Let’s say the first of June—which means that our John Doe disappeared during the month of June nineteen fifty.” He took a file folder from his desk and labeled it John Doe. Inside, on a sheet of paper, he wrote, “John Doe, white, age 25 to 30, height 5/8, died June 1950.” He handed the file to Beckman. “There’s our starting point. What did you learn yesterday?”

“From the L.A. cops—nothing. They got this new computer, and we ran through every disappearance for three years, forty-nine, fifty, and fifty-one. We turned up a lot of kids and three adult women—but nothing like an adult male. Plenty of murders, but they always managed to lay hands on a body.”



“All right. I’m going to drive down to Inglewood and see if I can find the contractor. Meanwhile, check the county out with the sheriff’s office, and you might as well do the adjoining counties, Ventura, Orange, and San Bernadino. Try the F.B.I. too. They keep a file on kidnapings, but I’m not sure they have one on disappearances. Anyway, check them. You might also try San Francisco and San Diego and Long Beach—”

“You don’t think I’ll turn up anything, do you?”

“Why do you say that?”

“If you did, you’d include every county in the state.”

“And have Wainwright screaming about the phone bill?” Masuto shrugged. “Maybe you’re right, but give it a try anyway. You see, I don’t think this was a crime of passion, Sy. I think it was a coldblooded, planned execution. I think the killer selected John Doe because there wasn’t a soul in the world who cared whether John Doe lived or died. If you want to kill someone, you kill them. It’s not hard to kill a human being, and this killer was a pro. I think the killing was an adjunct to his intention and his need. His need was to make John Doe disappear—forever. That’s why the body was naked.”

“You’d think that with fifty thousand pounds of swimming pool on top of the body, he’d rest easy.”

“No. He was or is a very thorough man. Neat, cold, calculating—and orderly. And if he’s still alive, now that the body’s been uncovered, he will be very unhappy, very nervous, and as sure as there’s a thing in this universe called karma, our paths will cross—perhaps in the next few days.”

“Come on, Masao,” Beckman said, “I’ve seen you pull off some creepy ones, but this is way out. We may never find out who John Doe is, and now you’re telling me that the killer is going to play footsie with us? How? Why?”

“All right, Sy—you tell me. Why was John Doe stripped naked? Why was he put down under the pool? Why wasn’t the killer satisfied with a plain, old-fashioned murder?”

“You’ll have to ask the killer those questions.”

“Or perhaps not. I’ve wracked my brain for reasons, and I can come up with only one. It was not John Doe who had to disappear; it was our killer. And since in our very complex society it is not enough

to disappear, the killer had to become someone else. He had to have a new name, a new driver's license, a new social security card, a new birth date, a place of origin and in that place, a birth certificate. He was not content with changing his name—he was too ambitious; he planned his future. He had to have a whole new identity. Do you see it now?"

"You mean, when we find out who John Doe is—"

"Exactly. We find our killer. If John Doe was twenty-eight, somewhere there's a man of fifty-nine, living with John Doe's name and credentials."

But having recited this detailed program, Masuto felt ashamed of himself. He hated a childish display of cleverness in others, and he found it intolerable in himself. The dead man did not have to be twenty-eight at the time of his murder. He could have been two or three years younger or older. That the killer needed his identity was a guess; there could be other reasons why the body had been buried naked. And would they find the killer when they discovered who John Doe was?

"He might be dead," Beckman said, too worshipping of Masuto to list other flaws in his thinking.

"Or he might be ten thousand miles away and we might discover nothing in the end," Masuto admitted.

# MURDER MOST FOUL

The City of New York includes five counties, and Chicago is synonymous with Cook County, whereby the belief is current that the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County are one and the same thing. But while the City of Los Angeles is enormous and sprawling, the County of Los Angeles is even more enormous—larger in fact than a number of European countries. Aside from the City of Los Angeles, there are in Los Angeles County dozens of other civic entities, small cities, villages, and unincorporated areas; and to make the situation even more confusing, many of these independent communities, such as Beverly Hills, Inglewood, Vernon, Culver City—to name only a few—are entirely surrounded by metropolitan Los Angeles. Each of these civic entities has its own police force, while the unincorporated areas are the domain of the county sheriff and his several thousand brown-clad deputies. No one planned this crazy quilt of authority; it just happened. And since it was Los Angeles, it happened uniquely. Yet one positive result of this weird complexity was an unusual amount of cooperation among the respective police forces, a fact which Masuto was grateful for when he found two Inglewood prowl cars parked in front of the house on Maple Street, the house where the contractor Alex Brody had once lived.

On the other hand, he had a sinking feeling of unhappy anticipation, which combined with a wave of anger against his own insensitivity, the indolence and frustration which had permitted him to

spend the previous day wandering with his family through Disneyland. Even as he parked his car an ambulance swung in ahead of him, and two men with a litter got out and were ushered into the small, aged, and rather shabby house by an Inglewood cop.

Masuto showed his badge to the officer, who remarked that he was a long way from home and told him to go ahead inside. The small crowd on the street watched in silence.

Whatever Alex Brody had been, he had not been rich. The living room that Masuto walked into was neat and clean, but the cheap furniture was old, the carpet worn, the walls discolored. It was crowded with another uniformed policeman, two plainclothesmen, the two ambulance men, two frightened women who sat huddled on a worn couch, and a corpse that the two attendants were lifting onto the stretcher.

Masuto identified himself and asked to look at the corpse before they took it away.

"Be our guest," said one of the plainclothesmen. "My name's Richardson. This is Macneil," he added, nodding at the other. "What I want to know is how come a Beverly Hills cop gets here a half hour after that poor lady is killed?"

Masuto was staring at the corpse. It was a very old lady, perhaps eighty years old, with thin white hair, pale, pleading blue eyes, and savage marks on her face and head.

"She was beaten to death," Macneil said. "God almighty, what the hell is this world coming to?"

"Just two blows," Masuto said. "Crushed her skull."

"We been looking for something in the room might have done it. Nothing."

"Brass knuckles," Masuto said.

"You sure or guessing?"

"That's how she's marked." He turned away and studied the room. The two ambulance men moved out with the body. "Nothing stolen," Masuto said, more as a statement of fact than as a question.

"What's to steal? That old TV wouldn't bring five bucks at a flea market. Her bag's inside on the kitchen table. Three dollars and an uncashed social security check. I still want to know what brings you here, Masuto."

“Can we please go?” one of the ladies on the couch asked. They were both in their middle thirties, frightened, tearful.

“Just a few minutes more, ladies.”

“My kids will be coming home from school.”

“It’s only one o’clock,” Richardson said. “You’ll be back home long before school’s out.”

“What was the old lady’s name?” Masuto asked softly.

“That was Mrs. Brody, God rest her soul,” one of the women on the couch said. “Never harmed no one, never bothered no one. Why do these things happen? This was once a decent place to live.”

“How about it, Masuto?” Richardson reminded him.

“Let’s go inside,” Masuto suggested.

They sat down at the kitchen table, which was covered with a hand-embroidered blue and white cloth. A delft clock on the wall matched the cloth. The linoleum was scrubbed clean and worn through. As with the living room, the kitchen was spotless.

“Cigarette?” Richardson asked.

Masuto shook his head glumly.

“You sure as hell look miserable, Masuto. Did you know the old lady?”

“No, but she would have been alive now if I had used my head.”

“You’d better explain about that.”

“You read about the skeleton we found under where a swimming pool had been up in Beverly Hills?”

“I read what the papers had to say.”

“Well, the man who built that pool thirty years ago was Alex Brody. We got his name and address out of the town records. I imagine that he’s dead and the old lady was his widow.”

“And you figure Brody for the man who put the body under the pool?”

“Oh, no. No, indeed. I think the man who put the body there is still alive, and that he came here today and he killed Mrs. Brody. It was his style. He’s a man who long ago was trained to kill with his hands.”

“How do you know all this?”

“Some evidence, a lot of guesswork, educated guesses.”

“You got a name for him?”

“No.”

“You got a name for the skeleton?”

“No.”

“Seems to me you don’t have a hell of a lot, Masuto.”

“No, not a hell of a lot. Who are the two ladies outside? Did they see anything?”

“Maybe. Let’s ask them,” Richardson said. “You figure maybe Mrs. Brody knew something about her husband’s business which might have led you to the killer?”

“That’s why she’s dead.”

“Still guessing. We ain’t that smart down here in Inglewood. We don’t make four until we got two and two.”

They went back into the living room. “They live down the street,” Richardson explained. “This is Mrs. Parsons. This is Mrs. Agonian. They say they saw a man come out of the house in a hurry. They know the old lady and she don’t have many visitors. So they went to the door and the door was open and they found the body.”

The two women began to sniffle.

“Could you tell us something about the man?” Masuto asked kindly.

“Only from the back. We were almost a block away.”

“What was your immediate reaction to him? I mean, did you feel that he was a young man or an old man or middle-aged?”

“He wasn’t an old man,” Mrs. Parsons said.

“He wasn’t young. Maybe your age,” Mrs. Agonian said, pointing to Richardson, who appeared to be in his middle fifties. “I mean that he went down the street sort of half running, you know, walking very fast.”

“To his car?” Masuto asked. “Did you see a car?”

“No, he turned the corner.”

“How was he dressed?”

“A business suit. He wore a gray suit.”

“How tall was he?”

They both shook their heads.

“Visualize it if you can. One always has an impression of height—just your first impression. Try to remember?”

“He wasn’t small.”

"I think he was a big man, I mean broad, not fat, broad," Mrs. Agonian said.

"Is that all?" Richardson asked Masuto.

"I think so." He thanked the women. "You've been very helpful."

"I hope you catch him," Mrs. Parsons said. "She was a nice old lady. She never harmed a soul."

"One more thing," Masuto said. "Did she ever talk about relatives? Did she have children?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Agonian said.

"I know, I mean whatever there is to know, because she once mentioned a daughter," Mrs. Parsons told them. "But she hadn't seen her daughter for years and years. They had a terrible fight years ago when her daughter married someone she and her husband didn't want her to, and she didn't even know where her daughter was living now."

"What was the daughter's name?"

"Henrietta."

"And her married name?"

Mrs. Parsons shook her head.

"Did she have any close friends in the neighborhood?"

"Only Helen and myself. No one ever came to see her."

After the two women had left, Richardson said to Masuto, "It don't pay to grow old, it sure as hell don't. You got all you want? We got to seal up the place. We got a guy works on fingerprints, but he's off today."

"You won't find prints. I'd like to look around. Do you mind?"

"Make yourself at home. I'll tell them to hold it open until you leave."

It was a modest house, small, in the California bungalow style, with all the rooms on one floor—living room, kitchen, breakfast room, and two bedrooms. One of the bedrooms had been converted into a kind of den and TV room; the other was used as the bedroom, and on the dresser was a picture of a young man and woman. A wedding picture. The date on it was 1922. They were an attractive couple, Masuto thought. Another photo in a small silver frame revealed a teenage girl with light hair and light eyes, smiling. Masuto went through drawers reluctantly, the worn clothing of the old lady, some

child's clothes, a rag doll and some other mementos, a sad, poverty-stricken past. What had happened to Brody the contractor? What misfortune? Why this awful poverty?

Masuto was looking for records, payroll lists, tax reports. He found nothing. After half an hour of searching he gave it up and called the Beverly Hills police station. "What have you got?" he asked Beckman.

"Nothing, Masao. Absolutely zilch. June, nineteen fifty, was a lousy month for disappearances in the state of California, if you don't count lost kids. And only one of those is still missing, fourteen-year-old girl."

"What about the F.B.I.?"

"Same there. Nothing that fits in. They have a millionaire who was kidnaped in Mobile, Alabama on the sixteenth of June that year, and his body never turned up, but he was only five foot six and most of his teeth were capped. What have we got here, Masao? Can a man just walk off into thin air and disappear, with nobody putting in a complaint or a missing person?"

"It's a big country. It happens."

"What do I do now?"

"I want you to find out what services trained their men in close quarter killing during World War Two. I think the O.S.S. and the Rangers did, but there might have been others. I mean the hand-to-hand commando tactics. One thing we know about our man is that he's proficient at killing, and since that was a time when killing did not go unrewarded, he may have earned himself a bronze star or an oak leaf cluster or even a medal of honor. Who knows! So see what you can dig up. It's just a hunch, but all we got to play is hunches."

"What about Brody? Did you track him down?"

"He's dead, Sy, and an hour and a half ago, his wife was murdered."

"No!"

"Two quick blows to the head and neck. Brass knuckles. Crushed her skull and broke her neck."

"He's a real pro, isn't he?"

"When it comes to old ladies, he certainly is."

"Same address, Masao?"



“The one you dug up, yes.”

“Did you find anything?”

“Nothing.”

“Where are you off to now?”

“Whittier. That’s were Kati’s Uncle Naga has a contracting business. It’s time I talked to a contractor.”

But before he left the Brody house to go to Whittier, Masuto telephoned the Los Angeles Police Department and asked to speak to Lieutenant Pete Bones, who was in homicide, whose path had crossed Masuto’s a number of times in the past, and who had more than a little respect for Masuto’s ability.

“What Chinese puzzle are you working out now?” Bones wanted to know.

“I’m interested in homicide.”

“Oh? Anything special?”

“A killing without a gun. A knife or brass knuckles or even bare hands.”

“What in hell are you talking about?”

“I’m asking you whether you’ve had that kind of a homicide today,” Masuto said patiently.

“Why?”

“What do you mean, why? You’re in homicide. You would know.”

“So help me, Masuto, either you got a weird sense of humor or E.S.P. There was an old lady killed a couple of hours ago in Inglewood. We just got it from the Inglewood cops. Now what in hell are you up to?”

“I know about that. I’m sorry. I should have mentioned it. I’m calling from her house.”

“What in hell are you doing in Inglewood?”

“It’s a long story, and I’ll give it to you first chance I get. I’m talking about another homicide with the same M.O.”

“Tell me about it,” Bones said angrily.

“There’s nothing to tell. I’m asking you whether it happened.”

“Oh, you’re a doll, Masuto. You’re cute. Now will you tell me what in hell you’re talking about? Has someone been killed? Do you know about it? Or is someone going to be killed?”

“The latter is a possibility,” Masuto agreed, forcing himself to be patient.

“Who?”

“I don’t know.”

“You call me up and tell me that someone is going to be killed and ask me whether it has happened yet, and you don’t know who?”

“That’s about it. I’m sorry I bothered you, Pete.”

“Get your head examined,” Bones snarled, slamming down the telephone. To Masuto, the click was more like a crash. He sighed and walked out of the house.

## NAGA ORASHI

Naga Orashi, Kati's uncle, was among the Japanese immigrants who were rounded up and put in concentration camps during World War II. It was a shameful incident, best forgotten yet not easily forgiven, and since Naga Orashi had been brought to America at age three, he was hardly in any real sense an immigrant. By now Orashi had almost forgotten the concentration camps. Actually, though he was seventy-eight years old, he had an excellent memory, and for the most part forgot only what he chose to forget.

After the war, when he returned to Los Angeles, he built himself a cottage in Santa Monica, mostly with his own hands. By the time the house was complete his family had grown with the unexpected arrival of twins. He decided that the cottage was too small and he sold it for a substantial profit. He was then a carpenter; with the sale of the cottage he decided to become a builder and contractor, and in the years that followed he did well. His crowning achievement was to build a seventeen-story hotel in downtown Los Angeles for a group of Japanese investors. After that he turned over his building operation to his sons, content to sit on a rocking chair in the sun in the machine yard of his supply warehouse at the edge of Whittier, which is another one of the many independent towns that exist in Los Angeles County. It was there that Masato found him, a small, wrinkled, brown-skinned man, smoking an ancient pipe and missing nothing that went on around him.

He greeted Masato formally, if critically, explaining that "A family, Masao, is not something to be lost like rice husk in the wind. It is the

fabric of mankind, even if here in this land that fact is little known and less appreciated. Where is our family? It is a year since I have seen you.” He added, in Japanese, “It makes me unhappy, deeply unhappy.”

“How can I apologize?” Masuto asked him. “My wife’s family is more important than my own.”

“Your wife’s family is your family.”

“Yes, and I am cursed with being a policeman, and time, which is so precious, is denied to me.”

“Some of us have wondered about the life you chose.”

“It is my karma.”

“Don’t talk to me of karma,” Orashi said. “I am a Christian, as you know.”

“A thousand apologies.”

“I am being hard on you,” Orashi said, “but I still have affection for you—even though I know that it is your work and not your own affection that brings you here.”

“So, it is true. What can I say?”

“Nothing. I will tell you. You come here to talk about the skeleton found under the swimming pool in Beverly Hills.”

“Yes, but how—”

“Enough, Masao! I read the papers. I exist in the world. Who else will tell you anything about a house built thirty years ago?”

“Of course.”

“Have you been to see Mrs. Brody? I believe she still lives on Maple Street in Inglewood, though I have not been to see her since Alex died. So I am as culpable as you, Masao. She is very lonely, I imagine.”

“No. She’s dead.”

“Poor woman. When did she die?”

“She was murdered this morning.”

“God rest her soul. You come with bad news, my nephew.”

“I live with bad news.”

“Yes, I suppose you do. Do you know who killed her?”

“I think I do, but who he is, I don’t know.”

“Is it a game, Masao? You know who killed her, but not who he is? You have been too long with the Zen people. They teach you to talk

in riddles.”

“Not at all, my respected uncle. We will talk about that. Meanwhile, I am glad that you knew Alex Brody. Perhaps it will help me.”

“Thirty years ago I knew all the contractors in this area. I helped Brody. He was what the young people call a loser. He was one of those who never calculate a job properly, and in their eagerness for the contract, they underbid. Up until nineteen fifty both of us built only very small houses, bungalows, such as the one he lived in in Inglewood. He wanted desperately to move into a more profitable area, and he bid on the house on Laurel Way. I told him his bid was too low, that prices were going up, and that the hillside would present difficulties. In nineteen forty-seven he had worked for me on a job, and that was how we became acquainted. He respected my ability to calculate, and he would bring me bids to look over. I did it as a favor. He was a kind man, not too intelligent, but kind, and I liked him. He knew his bid was too low, but he felt that he could cut corners. He was too honest to cut corners, and he came out of the job eight thousand dollars in debt. Real dollars, not the ones we have today. He never recovered from that loss, poor man, and ten years later he died of a heart attack.”

“But he did complete the house on Laurel Way?”

“Certainly. And a very good job too.”

“And he put in the swimming pool?”

“Yes, and that was a mistake. He had never built a pool before, and his calculations were way off. He had to buttress the hillside, and that was where he took his loss.”

“May I explain my previous statement that you found confusing?” Masuto asked him.

With a twinkle in his eye, Naga suggested that perhaps they should speak in Japanese. “A difficult language, but not confusing. English is even more difficult and totally confusing.”

“My Japanese is confusing, believe me. It confuses both myself and the listener. What I meant before, when I said that I knew who killed Mrs. Brody, was that I am quite certain I can connect him with the other murder.”

“What other murder?” Naga asked innocently.

“The body placed under the swimming pool. I am quite certain, in my own mind, that the same person who put the body there murdered Mrs. Brody.”

“Ah, so,” Naga agreed. “And now you come to this poor old Japanese gentleman and you wish me to remember who was on Alex Brody’s crew when he built the swimming pool, and when I tell you that, you will sort out the various people and you will have the murderer.”

“Exactly.”

“And this, Masao, is how you built your reputation for brilliance in the field of crime?”

He disliked being teased, even by Kati’s uncle, whose years earned him that prerogative. “If I had such a reputation, it is undeserved. I poke around in the dark. I chase ghosts. And I hope for luck.”

“Nephew, how could I possibly know who worked for Alex? It was thirty years ago. For a swimming pool, you need backhoe men, pick and shovel laborers, masons. Was the swimming pool dug in dirt or in decayed granite?”

“Decayed granite.”

“And a groove was made for the body?”

“Precisely.”

“Then you have two possibilities, Masao. If the killer was strong and energetic, he could have come back to the job after the crew had left for the day, and by working very hard with a pickax and crowbar, he could have dug the grave in the decayed granite. It varies, you know.”

Masao shook his head. “I didn’t know.”

“Oh, yes. Sometimes it is so hard it must be blasted out. At other times it is as soft as gravel. How large was the hole where you found the remains?”

“About six feet long, two feet wide, a foot deep.”

“Ah, so. And when he finished, I imagine he packed the soft granite back into the hole, and then when the swimming pool slid down the hillside, the rain washed out enough fill to reveal the skeleton. You think he used a backhoe?”

“Yes.”

“Wrong, Masao. Shall I explain why? Over there.” He pointed to where a group of caterpillar-tread machines were parked across the yard. “Those with the long necks, like geese, those are backhoes.”

“I know what a backhoe is.”

“But do you know how a backhoe works? You describe a grave about six feet long.”

“Perhaps a few inches more,” Masuto said.

“Now, the ends of the grave. They were perpendicular, like the end of a coffin?”

“More or less.”

“Then we must ask, where did the scoop enter? It is not like a hand-held tool. That scoop must come down and dig its approach. It can’t make the kind of a hole you describe. Now, nephew, let us have a few words on the construction of a swimming pool. The backhoe scoops it out. But if the backhoe scoops out the entire pool, how does the backhoe get out of the hole?”

“That never occurred to me,” Masuto confessed. “I have never built a swimming pool.”

“A humble man wins my heart. I will explain. Only a part of the hole is dug with the backhoe inside. Then the backhoe moves out of the pool and completes the excavation from above. We can do that because the scoop has a long neck which rides up and down the main hoist. In effect, the backhoe leans over the edge of the pool and scoops it out. The final shaping is done by laborers with pick and shovel, working inside the pool. Now, your murderer plans to dig a grave and bury his victim. He must wait until the backhoe is out of the pool and the laborers are finished and the concrete is ready to be poured. Otherwise how can he be sure his work will not be discovered? So we must presume that he dug the hole with a pickax shortly before the concrete was poured, that he was a laborer and not a backhoe operator. In fact, since backhoe rentals are expensive, and since Alex Brody did not own one, by the time he dug the grave, the backhoe was gone from the scene.”

Fascinated by the old man’s line of reasoning, Masuto listened and nodded.

“You disagree?”

“Oh, no, not at all. I am everlastingly grateful. And now, if you will tell me where I can find this laborer, I shall be even more grateful.”

“After thirty years? No, for that you must go to one of your Zen magicians.”

“Zen masters are not magicians,” Masuto said gently. “Just people. Surely there must be some lead, some way of discovering who worked for Alex Brody.”

“Have you looked for his records? His payroll records?”

“If any survived, the murderer found them and took them.”

“In any case, the killer’s name would not be his real name,” Naga said. “He would have been very foolish to use his real name.”

“I am not looking for his name. I want the name of the man he killed.”

“Oh? You puzzle me, nephew.”

“Wasn’t there a foreman on that job?”

“There would be, yes.”

“Can you remember? Try.”

The old man knit his brows. “As much as I would like to help you, my dear nephew—it was so long ago. He once used Jim Adams, who came to work for me later, but Adams died two years ago. Ah, wait—Fred—Fred Lundman. I’m pretty sure he was on that job. Fred was a good man. He went out on his own after that, and he did very well building tract houses in the Valley. Yes, I do think he worked with Alex up there on Laurel Way.”

“Is he still alive?” Masuto asked excitedly.

“I think so.”

“Do you know where he lives?”

“Last I heard, he had built himself a fine house in Brentwood.”

“Uncle Naga, do you have a telephone? But of course you do!”

“Ah, yes. We have all the modern conveniences. Come with me.”

Containing an impulse to beg the old man to hurry, Masuto followed him across the yard to the main office. “You will use my office, and I will prepare some tea. Your aunt still makes the best tea cakes I know of, and we have been entirely too unceremonious. It is not fitting.”

Masuto found the number in the telephone book, Frederick Lundman, on the Bristol Circles in Brentwood, a very pleasant part of



Los Angeles which lies between Westwood and Santa Monica. He dialed the number and heard it ring. It rang again and again; it rang ten times before Masuto put down the telephone and whispered, "What a fool—what an incredible fool I am!"

He dialed again, this time calling Los Angeles police headquarters, and this time the phone was answered. Masuto asked for Pete Bones. When he heard Bones's voice, Masuto said, "Here's an address. I want a prowler car there, quickly please."

"Why?"

"Damn it, Pete! Will you listen to me for once." He gave him the address. "I'm over on the east edge of Whittier. I'll go straight there, but it takes time."

"Goddamnit, Masuto, you can't push us around that way. What's going on?"

"I don't know," Masuto said tiredly, convinced suddenly that it was too late, that this part of it was over. "I just don't know." He put down the telephone and turned to face his uncle.

"I see that we will not have tea," Naga said. "I have been making light of something that is terrible."

Masuto nodded.

"We inhabit an unhappy universe, Masuto. What has happened?"

"I don't know. Perhaps nothing."

"You think that Fred Lundman is dead."

"I hope not. I must make one more call."

"Please."

He dialed the number of the police station in Beverly Hills and asked for Beckman.

"I got nothing," Beckman said. "This John Doe of ours stepped out of nowhere and laid down under the swimming pool and died. That's where we are and that's what it adds up to. And you want to know about bronze stars and oakleaf clusters and purple hearts, the army can lend us maybe two, three thousand names, providing you want to make a trip to the Pentagon and go through their records. So I got another notion, schools that teach kung fu and jujitsu and that stuff you specialize in—?"

"Karate."

“Right, karate. So I did a little rundown just here in L.A., and we got over four hundred places—”

“Forget it, Sy. Forget the whole thing. I want you to meet me in Brentwood. You’ll get there first. It’s the home of a Mr. Fred Lundman, and if everything’s cool there, just hang in until I arrive. But in any case, wait there for me.” He gave Beckman the address.

“You will come again on a happier occasion, with Kati and the children?” Naga asked.

“I’ll come again, yes.”

Driving to Brentwood from Naga’s place, a disturbing thought nagged at Masuto. He had seen the toothmarks of a backhoe at the edge of the grave. Then why had Naga tried so hard to convince him that the grave had not been dug by a backhoe? Or had he been mistaken in believing that the marks had been made by a backhoe?

# FRED LUNDMAN

Lieutenant Pete Bones was standing on the lawn in front of the big stucco house at the Bristol Circles, arguing loudly with Sy Beckman when Masuto drove up and parked his old Datsun behind an L.A.P.D. prowler car. On the other side of the prowler car an ambulance was backed into the driveway, and beyond that the medical examiner's car and Bones's car and then another police car. It was a quiet suburban neighborhood, very upper middle class and unused to such attention. A circle of housewives, maids, and children stood gaping and whispering.

When he saw Masuto, Bones broke off his exchange with Beckman and strode over to the Beverly Hills policeman, telling him angrily, "You got one hell of a lot of explaining to do, Masuto."

"I suppose so."

"What in hell does that mean—you suppose so? Do you know what happened in there?"

"I can guess," Masuto replied morosely.

"You can guess! You and your goddamn guesses! There are two people dead in there, and you knew damn well what was coming down. Do you know what that adds up to? It adds up to something that stinks!"

"Suppose we go inside and talk about it there."

"And more quietly," Beckman said. He was three inches taller than Bones and at least six inches wider. "Who the hell do you think you are, lacing us out like that? You got something to say, say it like a colleague, not like some crumbum hoodlum."

“Just who the hell do you think you are, Beckman? I don’t take that crap from anyone!”

“Hold it, hold it,” Masuto said soothingly. “Come on, let’s not get all hot and angry. Pete’s got a point, Sy, and it’s my fault. I should have filled him in better, but I never thought it would happen like this. Not so quickly.”

As they headed toward the door of the house, Bones said, “You knew this was going to happen. You knew a man and a woman were going to be killed—”

“A woman?”

“That’s right. You knew it and you knew how they’d be killed and you didn’t lift a finger to stop it. And if that doesn’t stink, I don’t know what does. I ought to read you your rights here on the spot.”

“Don’t be an idiot!” Beckman snapped.

“That’s enough. Now you listen to me, Pete,” Masuto said harshly, “this is hard enough on me without you bearing down.” They were at the door now. “Hold on, before we go in there. I was afraid that something like this would happen. That’s why I called you this morning. But I didn’t know where or who, and the fact that I got Lundman’s name and address was a streak of luck. The moment I did I called you and told you to get a radio car over here. We were too late. Yes, that stinks, but the cases where cops can prevent a crime are few and far between. You know that as well as I do. Now just let me find out what happened in here, and I’ll fill you in on everything.”

Bones stared at him for a moment, then swallowed and nodded. “Okay. But you fill me in—with everything.”

He led them into the house. It was a well-made, well-furnished home, done in the Spanish colonial style, tile floors, good pictures on the white-painted walls. Unlike Alex Brody, Lundman had done well. In the living room there were two bodies, already on ambulance litters, two ambulance men, Lloyd Abramson, from the medical examiner’s office, a uniformed cop, a fingerprint man, two other Los Angeles plainclothes investigators, and a Mexican woman in a maid’s uniform who sat in a chair and sobbed.

Masuto went to the litters and stared at the two bodies. One was a woman in her middle fifties, an attractive mild-looking woman, her

face tormented with a mixture of pain and surprise. "Her neck was broken," Abramson said, pointing to the livid bruise. "I can't imagine what kind of an instrument would leave a mark like that. Pete thinks he used his hand. A karate chop."

"What about that?" Bones asked Masuto. "Could he kill her like that, with a single karate chop?"

"Yes, he could."

"Could you?"

"Yes, I could."

"What the hell is this?" Beckman asked harshly. "You making jokes? Masuto was in Whittier."

"Just a joke."

"A lousy joke," Beckman said.

Masuto went to the other litter. Lundman was in his late sixties, a heavy-set man, white hair, pale blue eyes wide open. "Same thing," Abramson told him. "Neck broken. You'd think he'd put up a struggle. He's old, but he's built like a bull."

"Pull up his shirt," Masuto said to one of the ambulance men.

Bones was watching him curiously. "Go on, pull up his shirt," Bones said.

Masuto pointed to a bruise directly under the rib cage. "A hard blow to the solar plexus. If you know how to deliver it, the result is temporary paralysis. The victim doubles over. Turn the body, please," he said to the ambulance men. They turned the dead man over, and Masuto pointed to the mark on the back of his neck. "A hard vertical chop."

"You're telling me that one chop with the bare hand would kill a man of his size?"

"His size doesn't matter. The weapon is the side of the hand. A chop like that, properly delivered, would split a plank an inch thick. The first blow doubled Lundman over, paralyzed him, and put his neck in position for the second blow, which broke his neck and killed him."

"Just like that?"

"Yes, just like that." Masuto stared at Bones quizzically. "Are you going to ask me whether I could do it?"

"Could you?"

“Yes. I take it the woman was Lundman’s wife?”

“Clara Lundman. Yeah. His wife.”

“And the maid? Where was the maid?”

“Downstairs in the basement doing the wash. She never heard a thing. She was still down there when the cops came.”

“On your call?”

“That’s right.”

“How long between the time she went down to the basement and the time she heard the cops?”

“About an hour and a half.”

“That’s a lot of wash,” Beckman said.

“She says she had ironing to do.”

“How long were they dead when you got here?” Masuto asked Abramson.

“Can they take the bodies away now?” he asked Bones, who nodded. “It’s hard to say exactly,” he told Masuto. “I got here after the cops, about a half hour later. Maybe two hours to the time I got here. A little more, a little less.”

“She said she served them lunch,” Beckman said. “Then she cleared up and did the dishes. It was about two o’clock, she thinks, when she went down to do the wash. I got here same time as the L.A. cops. That was just about three thirty.”

“I still don’t know what puts you and Masuto here at all, except for that weird tipoff. This is Los Angeles, not Beverly Hills. Sure I’m extending the courtesies—”

“You’re all courtesy,” Beckman remarked.

“—but there’s a limit. You read me a scenario about a guy who walks in here, takes a look at the woman who opens the door for him, kills her with a karate chop, then kills her husband the same way, and then makes his exit without even touching—hey, Steve”—he called to one of the L.A. investigators—“give me those envelopes with the possessions. Yeah, without even touching this stuff. Take a look.”

He emptied one envelope onto the coffee table. “Diamond ring. With the price of ice these days, it’s got to be maybe sixty, seventy grand. Gold bracelet. Emerald brooch—right on the front of her dress where he couldn’t miss it.”

Masuto picked it up and examined it, a large emerald set in a nest of rubies. "About thirty thousand dollars," he concluded. "Wouldn't you say so, Sy?"

"Just about."

"And a Swiss watch." He emptied the other envelope. "Lundman's wallet. Four hundred and twelve dollars in cash. Another Swiss watch. Sapphire pinky ring. And six credit cards. That killer is one indifferent son of a bitch."

"Or very rich and very careful. He's not a thief, he's a murderer. He takes no chances."

"Suppose we talk about him."

"Can you give me a little more time, Pete?" He grinned at Bones. "As long as you're not reading me my rights and we're cooperating?"

"All right. I shot off my mouth too quick. It's a habit."

"I want to talk to the maid and poke around the house. And I'd like Sy to talk to some of the people outside."

"We covered that. They see no evil and hear no evil."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing to write home about. One woman saw a car pull away down the street. She thinks it was a black Mercedes. She thinks a man was driving. No plate numbers, but she *thinks* it was a California plate. Could she describe the man? No. That's it, in a town where they're maybe five thousand black Mercedes."

"Two-door or four-door?"

"She thinks four-door."

"I'd still like Sy to talk to her."

"Okay. And what do I do—sit around and wait for you?"

"It's five o'clock now," Masuto said. "If you can make it at the Beverly Hills police station at seven, I'll give you all I have. I know that takes you out of your way, but Wainwright will be sore as hell if I spell it out for you and he doesn't know what's going on. Which he doesn't. Also, I haven't eaten all day."

"You're stretching it."

"I know."

"You got any more killings lined up for me?"

"I hope not."

“Okay. Wainwright’s office at seven.” He turned to Beckman. “Come on, I’ll introduce you to our Mercedes witness.”

The Lundman maid was full of grief and fear of the cold, unpredictable Anglo world that surrounded her. She spoke English, but Masuto felt that her own language would put her more at ease, and he asked her in Spanish what her name was.

“Rosita, señor.”

“Good. We will speak in your tongue. You cared deeply for the Lundmans?”

“She was like a mother to me. Who would do this?”

“An evil man. You must not think of death now, only of your own life which was spared because you were downstairs. In this house, only Mr. and Mrs. Lundman lived?”

“Yes, señor. Only the two.”

“Did they have children?”

“One son in San Francisco. He is an architect. I gave the police his telephone number and they called him. He was close to them. He will feel great sorrow.” She began to sob again, and Masuto waited.

“When you were downstairs, the door to the basement was closed?”

“Yes, señor.”

“Were any of the machines going? I mean the washing machine.”

“Yes, the dryer. I was ironing Mr. Lundman’s shirts, and the towels were in the dryer.”

“The man who came, he must have rung the doorbell. Did you hear it?”

“No, señor. In the basement, when the door is closed, you don’t hear the doorbell. When I work down there, I leave the door open.”

“Why did you close it this time?”

“Mrs. Lundman asked me to. She said she would get the door if anyone came.”

“Was she expecting someone?”

“I don’t know, señor.”

“But when the police came, they rang the bell and you heard it. How was that? Had the clothes dryer stopped?”

She looked at him bewilderedly. “Yes, it stopped.”



“But you said that even without the dryer going, when the door is closed, you don’t hear the bell.”

“Señor,” she whispered, “the door to the basement was open.”

Masuto stood up. “Come, Rosita, we’re going down to the basement.”

“Please, señor, not now. I am afraid.”

“It will be all right, Rosita. Just stay behind me.” He drew his revolver, and the remaining L.A. investigator, still in the living room, said, “What’s that for?”

“I’m not sure,” Masuto told him. “The killer opened the basement door. It’s a million-to-one shot against him still being there, but why take chances?”

“We looked in the basement.”

“We’ll look again. Is there an outside door to the basement?” he asked Rosita.

“Yes, there is.”

The door leading to the basement was in the kitchen, and the staircase was dark. Masuto flicked on the light. “Do you leave this light on when you work in the basement?”

“No, there is a switch at the bottom of the staircase. There are windows in the laundry room.”

“He didn’t leave by the basement,” the L.A. investigator said. “The basement door has a dead bolt and it was locked from the inside.”

They went down the stairs and searched the basement. There was a short corridor at the foot of the basement stairs. To the left was a room that contained the furnace and the hot water heater. The laundry room was to the right, and opening off the laundry room, Rosita’s room. Both rooms had high, narrow windows.

“You turned off the dryer,” Masuto said to Rosita. “What did you do then?”

“I was tired, señor. I went into my room and closed the door and lay down on my bed and smoked a cigarette.”

Masuto noticed an ashtray with a cigarette butt in it. “Then if he had looked in the cellar, he would not have seen you—unless he went into your room?”

“Oh, my God.”

“I was beginning to believe he made no mistakes.”

“How’s that?” the L.A. investigator asked.

“Maybe one mistake. I want to go through the house with Rosita.”

“The lieutenant said to give you your head.”

Masuto looked at Rosita. “How old are you, Rosita?”

“Twenty-three.” She was very simply, plainly beautiful, and it occurred to Masuto that when Mexican or Japanese women are beautiful, they have a kind of beauty that no Western European woman can match, a kind of earthy openness that harks back to the beginning of things.

“You are very young, and you have a long life ahead of you. We must see that you come to no harm.”

“I am so afraid.”

“Now you are with me, Rosita, and there is nothing to be afraid of. I promise you that. Now we will go upstairs.”

The L.A. investigator was listening to them. “She speaks English,” he said with some annoyance. “You got something I shouldn’t hear?”

“She’s more comfortable in her language, just as I imagine you are more comfortable in yours.”

“They come here and go on welfare; you’d think they’d learn to talk the damn language.”

“It was their country. We came here,” Masuto said gently, taking the girl’s arm and leading her up the stairs.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

He led her from room to room, two bedrooms, a den with a television set in it. “Look at everything, Rosita. Tell me if anything’s been touched or moved.”

In the bedrooms nothing had been touched. In the master bedroom, there was a jewel box on the dressing table. Evidently, the Lundmans did not believe in locking away their valuables in a safe deposit box. Masuto raised the lid and stared at the array of pearls, diamonds, and gold chains.

“She always kept them here, Rosita, like this?”

“She said they were insured, and that if she couldn’t enjoy them, there was no use having them.”

“She trusted you.”

“Yes, señor.” The tears began again.

In the den there was a large mahogany desk. It contained a file drawer. "That was opened," Rosita said.

"How do you know?"

"You see, it is not closed completely. I am careful. I keep the drawers closed."

Masuto opened the file drawer and glanced through it. "Mr. Lundman was retired?"

"Yes. Last year he retired."

Evidently, he had kept ten years of business and personal financial records. Even if his records had gone back thirty years, as the foreman on the job he would keep no records of workers. The killer must have known that. He had opened the file out of curiosity. As Masuto had already surmised, he was a curious and methodical man. He would give himself a specific length of time in the house, perhaps ten minutes, which he would consider a safe interval. He would check the house, check the basement.

Masuto shook his head in exasperation. I am working from the wrong end, he told himself. I am following him. He's too smart for that. The only way is to begin at the beginning, but what is the beginning and why?

"Do you have a family?" he asked Rosita.

"In Mexico City, señor."

"No one here? No dear friend?"

"I am only here three years, señor, and all the time working here for the Lundmans."

"No man you love and can trust?"

"Oh, señor!"

"Then you must trust me, Rosita. I'm going to take you with me. I'm not going to arrest you, but you must not stay here. You see, the newspapers and television people, who are outside by now, well, they will report that you were here when the murders took place. You didn't see the murderer, but there is no way that he can be sure of that. And that means that he will come after you."

"Dear Mother of God, señor, what will I do?"

"You will not be afraid. You will come with me and you will do what I tell you to do. Is that clear?"

"Yes—but the house?"

“The house will be sealed and an officer will remain here until Mr. Lundman’s son comes. We’ll go downstairs, and you will go to your room and change into a plain dress. Pack a small bag, a change of clothes, toothbrush, things of that sort, enough for a few days. Then wait for me in your room.”

They went downstairs, and as Rosita started for the basement door, the L.A. investigator demanded to know where she was going.

“To her room for the moment. I’m taking her with me.”

Beckman entered as the L.A. man shouted, “What the hell do you mean, you’re taking her with you! The lieutenant says she stays here.”

“For Christ’s sake, Billy,” Beckman said, “what’s with you guys? We’re on your side. If Masuto says he’s taking her, he’s got a damn good reason.”

“I’m meeting Pete Bones at seven,” Masuto said soothingly. “When I see him, I’ll have the girl with me. But meanwhile, I want to remind you that she’s not under arrest. She can’t be detained. She has the right to come and go as she pleases, and in a few minutes we’re going out through the back basement door, which you can lock behind us.”

“You’re building one big pile of trouble for yourself, sergeant.”

“We’ll try to live with it.”

Downstairs, Rosita was ready and waiting, and as they went out through the cellar door, Beckman said, “They are one lovely bunch, those L.A. cops. Just sweet, kind, gentle souls.”

“They do their job.”

“So do we. There are ways.”

# ROSITA

They stopped to eat at a Mexican restaurant in Westwood, halfway between Brentwood and Beverly Hills. Once a small, pretty college town, Westwood was now a contiguous part of Los Angeles, although still dominated by UCLA. The little restaurant was packed with students. Rosita watched them wistfully. “They seem so alive and happy,” she said in Spanish. “It’s hard to understand being happy.”

“Give it time,” Masuto said. “We’ll speak English. My friend, Detective Beckman, has trouble with Spanish.”

His mouth full of tamales and beans, Beckman was having no trouble with Mexican food. He finished chewing and said, “Four years of high school Spanish—it’s the way they teach, Masao, lousy. My wife says I should take a course in night school. Then I’d never see her. Maybe she’s right. Anyway, we got nothing from that dame who saw the Mercedes. Now she says maybe it was a Jaguar. But I found a kid who says it was a black Mercedes, a four-fifty SL. The kid is a mavin on cars, so what he saw is dependable, but he didn’t look at the plates or who was driving.”

“The four-fifty is a two-door sports car. Bones said the woman saw a four-door. It’s like confusing a grapefruit with a tangerine.”

“That occurred to me. So maybe we got nothing.”

“Which is what we had to begin with—a corpse that doesn’t exist and a killer who doesn’t exist.”

“Except that according to you, the corpse is the killer. Bones will love that.”

“I don’t think Bones loves anything, not even himself. Wait for me outside the station, Sy, and then I want you to take Rosita here into our office and stay with her. Also, call Kati and tell her I’ll be late.”

“What do I tell my wife?”

“Tell her you’ve started night school in Spanish.”

Rosita smiled. It was the first time Masuto had seen her smile. She was even prettier when she smiled.

When Masuto walked into Wainwright’s office at the Beverly Hills police station, three men were waiting for him along with Wainwright. There was Pete Bones and with him his boss, Captain Kennedy of the L.A. police, whom Masuto had tangled with before, and a short, hard-faced man who was introduced as Chief Morrison of the Inglewood police. On Wainwright’s face was a look of pained yet resigned sufferance, an expression Masuto was not unfamiliar with. “Sit down, Masao,” he said bleakly.

“I’m here in Beverly Hills when I should be at home,” Kennedy said, “because, goddamnit, you’re pulling one of your stunts again, Masuto, and so help me God, this time you’re going to give us the bottom line. The lieutenant here says he was ready to read you your rights, and maybe he went too far, but first you’re down in Inglewood on a murder nobody knows about yet, and then you call Bones and tell him today is killing day and then you turn up before the bodies are cold—and just what in the hell is this all about? You people turn up a skeleton that was put under a swimming pool thirty years ago, and now we got a slaughterhouse all over L.A. County.”

“It appears that way, doesn’t it,” Masuto agreed.

“What do you mean, appears?” Morrison snapped. “You’re a Beverly Hills cop. You think something’s going on in Inglewood, you call me. You don’t go barging down to our turf like you got a license for the whole county. Maybe that old lady would still be alive if you had followed proper procedure.”

“Would she?” Masuto asked mildly. “Or would you tell me that no crime has been committed and that there was nothing you could do? Or would you tell me that since she hadn’t testified or agreed to testify at a pre-trial hearing, the rules didn’t permit you to give her protection. I wasn’t born yesterday, hardly, and I’ve been a cop for a

long time. So if you're ready to listen to me and hear what I have, I'll spell it out for you. Otherwise, forget it. My boss is Captain Wainwright here. I don't owe the rest of you one damn thing."

"For Christ's sake, Masao," Wainwright exclaimed, "we're cooperating! We're not like the army and navy. We're all on the same side."

"Cool down," Kennedy said. "Maybe we're too hard on you. But if you let us in on things along the way, it would be easier."

"He don't even let me in," Wainwright said. "He's the Lone Ranger. The trouble is he's good. He's the best damn plainclothes cop this city ever had. So why don't we listen to him?"

"Go ahead," Kennedy said.

"All right," Masuto agreed. "Saturday it rained, on top of a winter of too much rain. A swimming pool on Laurel Way slid down into the canyon, and we found this skeleton under it. We pegged it as put there thirty years ago, and my partner, Sy Beckman, put in some work yesterday and got dates and the name of the builder out of the town records. I made some guesses. One: the killer worked in the excavation. Two: the victim worked in the excavation. I have reasons for my guesses, but I won't go into them now. Anyway, thirty years go by. You don't have to be a genius to decide that the first person to see is the building contractor, providing he's still alive. Let me underline something. It was *our* killing, a Beverly Hills homicide. Alex Brody was the contractor. I had his address and I drove down to Inglewood, but I was too late. Not for Brody. He died years ago, but too late to save his wife, who may or may not have known something. The killer took no chances. He read about the pool in the newspapers or saw it on TV, and he decided to kill Mrs. Brody. If there was anything in her house to incriminate him, he took it with him. Then I called Pete here and asked about any homicide with a similar M.O. Then I drove to Whittier, where I have an uncle in the home-building business. He's an old man, and he knows everyone who operates in L.A. County. He remembered that Lundman was the foreman on that Laurel Way job, and as soon as I heard that, I called Bones and I called my partner, Sy Beckman. I was too late. Do you think I enjoy living with that? But if you can tell me where I acted improperly, I'm ready to listen."

They were silent for a while after Masuto had finished. Then Kennedy said, "You tie it all together? You're convinced that the same man who killed the body under the pool did the killings today?"

"It's too tight to be a coincidence."

"Why now?"

"Because as long as his victim was safely under the pool, he had nothing to worry about."

"Suppose Brody and Lundman were alive? What could they give us? They didn't witness the murder. Why kill them?"

"They could give us the name of the man who was killed."

"Come on, Masuto. So you got a name for the victim," Bones said. "What does that change?"

"Everything. Because my guess is that the killer took his victim's name and identity. Once you have the victim's identity, you can find the murderer in the telephone book."

"What do you base that on?" Wainwright wanted to know.

"Bits and pieces. The body was put in the grave naked. The reaction of the killer today. What Kennedy here said. Why kill people who weren't witnesses? The mind, the ego, the personality of the killer."

"What in hell do you know about his personality?" Morrison asked. He had listened scowling, looking uncomfortable at being lectured to by an Oriental.

"A good deal. He's pathological, without conscience, indifferent to any usual standards of right and wrong. He's highly intelligent in terms of being able to plan and calculate precisely. He's careful. He leaves no loose ends. He's five feet eight or nine inches in height, muscular, well built, in excellent physical condition. He exercises regularly. He's well off, possibly wealthy, compulsively neat—"

"Bullshit!" Morrison exclaimed.

"As you wish."

The others began to laugh. Still not mollified, Morrison said, "You got a murder thirty years ago, and you tell me the killer's walking around knocking off people with his bare hands. That's a hard pill to swallow. You tell our cops that he killed the old lady with brass knucks, and now it's changed to a bare hands job."



“He analyzes. When he makes a mistake, he moves immediately to correct it. The brass knucks was an error. It involves a weapon, and a weapon is incriminating. He got rid of the brass knuckles.”

“And kills with his bare hands? One blow? I don’t buy that crap.”

“I can split a brick with one blow of my bare hand,” Masuto said quietly, watching Morrison.

“Maybe we should consider that.”

“Morrison,” Kennedy said, “will you lay off that tack. We asked for an explanation and the sergeant’s given us one.” He turned to Masuto. “If all we need to turn up this bastard is the name of the man he killed, providing you’re guessing right, there are ways. Someone must have put out a missing report or some kind of inquiry?”

“I don’t think so. A lot of laborers are drifters, no home, no family. They pick up jobs here and there, unskilled work, pick and shovel work, fruit picking, that kind of thing. We have no fingerprints and no dental work. The man never had a cavity filled. Beckman spent most of yesterday trying to get a lead that way. Nothing.”

“The F.B.I.?”

“Nothing.”

“Could we go back to that Laurel Way job? Maybe someone besides the contractor and the foreman?”

Masuto shrugged. “Thirty years. We can try. But the killer’s a lot more familiar with that job than we are, and if there are any leads in that direction, he’ll get rid of them. Was there another murder today?”

“Not that we know of.”

“Then I suspect he’s closed the doors.”

“What about the black Mercedes?” Bones asked.

“Beckman found a kid who says it was a two-door four-fifty SL.”

“So much for that.”

“Fingerprints?” Kennedy asked.

“This man wouldn’t leave prints.”

“Then we got nothing. Not one damn lousy thing.”

“We have something,” Masuto said. “The Lundmans’ maid, Rosita, was in the basement of the house when it happened. The killer made a quick tour of the house, but he missed her. That’s his only mistake to date.”

“What kind of mistake?” Bones demanded. “She didn’t see him.”

“But he doesn’t know that. The media’s told the world that she was there.”

“The media’s also told the world that she didn’t see him.”

“He can’t depend on that,” Masuto said. “That could be a ploy to put him off his guard. He has to get rid of her. He’s not a man who takes chances or depends on luck.”

“Where is she now?” Kennedy asked.

“She’s in my office with Beckman.”

“I told her to stay in the house,” Bones said.

“Yes. I asked her to come with me. She agreed.”

“What in hell do you mean, she agreed? Where do you come off countermanding my orders in an L.A. jurisdiction? There was a cop in the house. I wanted her there.”

“Just cool down,” Masuto said, his annoyance beginning to show. “She wasn’t under arrest. She can go where she damn pleases. I decided she wasn’t safe in that house, and she agreed and went with me.”

“With a cop there?”

“Yes, with a cop there.”

“All right,” Kennedy said. “You two can stop scrapping. She’s here. What now?”

“I want you to give her key witness protection, to put her up in some hotel with guards in constant attendance.”

“She’s not a key witness.”

“It comes to the same thing. Her life is in danger.”

“So you say, Masuto. The way I look at it, you’re pulling this whole scenario out of your hat. Maybe you’re right and maybe you’re wrong. But you know we can’t treat her as a key witness. She isn’t a witness. She can’t testify to anything, and we can’t bend the rules and spend a bundle of city money because you got intuition. She’s free to go back to the house, where there’ll be a cop on guard for the next twenty-four hours. That’s all we can do.”

“There’s something else you can do.”

“What’s that?”

“You can pay the burial expenses when she’s killed. She has no family here.”

“You got a big mouth, Masuto. It’s going to buy you a lot of trouble some day.”

When they had gone and Masuto was alone with Wainwright, the captain said to him, “Kennedy’s right, Masao. The last people in the world we need as enemies are the L.A. cops. You know that. We depend on them for a lot of things, not to mention those fancy computers they got down there. We’re a small city with a small police force. All right, we got a thirty-year-old murder up there on Laurel Way. The city manager isn’t breathing down my neck, and the mayor says the best thing we can do, since it’s nobody anybody ever heard about, is to let the hullabaloo die down and close the file.”

“You’re not serious?”

“I’m serious, Masao.”

“This lunatic has killed three people today, and you’re telling me to close the file?”

“It’s not our jurisdiction. The headache belongs to Inglewood and to Los Angeles, and we got enough headaches of our own. Anyway, this lunatic, as you call him, only connects with Laurel Way on your say-so.”

“Captain, you don’t believe that.”

“I believe what the city manager tells me to believe. Yesterday he was on my back. Today he’s off my back.”

“You said you’d give me until Wednesday, and if I turned up something then, you’d give me the rest of the week. I think I’ve turned up a good deal.”

“I said if you turned up the name of the deceased. That’s what counts. Find me a movie star or a hotshot businessman under the pool, and I’ll give you your head. But John Doe without even a name tag just doesn’t rate it.”

“But I have until Wednesday?”

“I said so, didn’t I?”

“And what about the girl, Rosita?” Masuto asked gently.

“What about her?”

“She has to be put in a hotel room with protection.”

“Come on, Masao, you heard what Kennedy said. Like I said, this is out of our jurisdiction. We got no obligation to this girl.”

“We have an obligation to keep a human being alive. What will it cost, a few hundred dollars and a few days of time for an officer?”

“You can take her back to Brentwood. They got a cop there.”

“And make her a sitting duck. No, thank you.”

“Masao, I’m not made of stone, but there’s no way I can justify this, no way.”

Masuto went back to his office, where Rosita was carefully improving Beckman’s bad Spanish. “*A qué se dedica usted?*”

“Got it. I’m a cop, right?”

“Right,” Rosita said.

“How did it go?” Beckman asked Masuto.

“As it always goes, like trying to swim in a pool of molasses.”

“Are they off your back?”

“For the time being.”

“And what do we do with the kid?”

“What would your wife say if you pulled duty for tonight?”

“You got to ask?” He nodded at Rosita. “Is that what you have in mind? I’ll tell you what she’d say. She’d say she isn’t too old to divorce me.”

“Then you’d better lie.” He pointed to the telephone.

“Now?”

“Do it now, Sy. But let me specify that this is outside the line of duty. I can’t force you.”

“She’s a sweet kid. If I was ten years younger—ah, what the hell!”

He called his wife, and while he made his excuses, Masuto said to Rosita, “I’m going to take you to a hotel, and Detective Beckman here will stay with you. I’m doing this because I feel you are in great danger. Hopefully, it will only be for a few days. But Mr. Beckman is a good, decent man and there’s nobody in the world I trust more.”

“If you say this, I believe you.”

“Which is more than my wife does,” Beckman said. “Where are we going, Masao?”

“To the Beverly Glen Hotel.”

“You got to be kidding. That’s the most expensive place in town. Wainwright would never spring for it.”

“I know that. We’ll give it a try anyhow. It’s the last place our karate expert would look for her. Eventually he’ll find her. But it gives us

time. Now listen, Sy. I'll go first, with her in the car. Give me a block or so, and then follow me. If you pick up a car following us and you're sure it's a tail, cut it off and don't hesitate to use your gun. I know you can take care of yourself but this one is something else. Don't give him a chance to get close to you and don't try to put cuffs on him."

"You're thinking of the black Mercedes?"

"He could change cars—no, I'm just reacting to this insane world we inhabit. He couldn't know about Rosita until he heard the six o'clock news, and maybe they didn't have it there. It's a thousand to one shot, but I don't even want those odds."

No one followed Masuto, and Beckman pulled up at the Beverly Glen Hotel a minute or so after Masuto arrived. The Beverly Glen, a large, rambling pile of pink stucco, was almost as famous as Beverly Hills, a watering place for New York agents, actors, international jet-set characters, business tycoons, Mafia chiefs, high-priced call girls, and rich tourists who wished to rub shoulders with the general assortment of boarders. The hotel was managed by Al Gellman, a harassed, balding man in his mid-forties, who in any given month encountered everything imaginable excepting a major earthquake.

Now, in his office, he shook hands with Masuto and looked dubiously at Beckman and Rosita. "What is it, sergeant?" he asked. "We've had a quiet day so far, no drunks beating up on women, no fights at the bar, no one trying to stiff us on a room—but the day isn't over, is it?"

"I need a favor, Al," Masuto said.

"Whatever I can do. I owe you."

"I want to put this lady in a room with Beckman here to guard her, and I want it very quiet."

"You're bringing me trouble, sergeant."

"No. No one knows she's here and no one will know."

"It will cost. The best I can do with two adjoining rooms is two hundred and twenty a day."

"You said you owed me, Al. The city won't pay for this. I want three days free."

"Free!"

"With meals."

“I can’t do it. It’s out of the question. There’s no way I can justify it.”

“You find a way, Al. We’ve helped you out of more rough spots than you can shake a stick at. I’ve bent the law a dozen times. You’ve parked a hundred cars illegally on the streets around here, not once, but maybe two hundred times. We’ve never shaken you down, not for a nickel. Suppose we were to tell you the streets were off limits for parking? How many weddings would you cater then, how many balls? All I’m asking is a humanitarian gesture that won’t cost you a cent. This is off season for you. You’ve got the space.”

“If this is straight, why won’t the city pay?”

“Because it’s out of Beverly Hills jurisdiction. I’m not trying to con you. I’m trying to save this kid’s life.”

Gellman was silent for a long moment, and then he asked, “Can this be kept among us? I can’t put it on the books and I can’t let them register—which means I’m breaking the law.”

“Let’s say bending it a little. I don’t want them on the register. Feed them sandwiches and coffee. They can survive on that for three days. Beckman will pick it up in the kitchen. And as far as we’re concerned, no one will know.”

“How about Wainwright?”

“He doesn’t know and he won’t know.”

“Aren’t you going out on a limb, sergeant?”

“I don’t think so. We’re breaking no law. There’s no failure to register with intent to defraud or commit a crime. We’re taking normal security precautions with a witness to a crime, and if the owners should come down on you, I give you my word I’ll pay up myself. It won’t be easy, but it won’t break me.”

Rosita, who had been listening intently, now said to Masuto in Spanish, “I have eleven hundred dollars in the bank I can pay.”

“You’ll need that money.”

“My Spanish is as good as yours, sergeant,” Gellman said, smiling. “I’ll give you the three days. What the hell, it’s a cold, hard world out there. I got a kid of my own her age.”

## DR. LEO HARTMAN

It was after nine o'clock when Masuto finally parked his car in front of his house in Culver City. Ever since Kati had joined a consciousness-raising group of Nisei women—with his encouragement—Masuto had been uneasy when a case kept him to late hours. There were days when he regretted his liberal stance on the question of women's rights. He had married a lovely woman who, while born in California, had been raised in the old-fashioned Japanese manner, and it was with a sense of unease that he watched the changes taking place in her character. Tonight, he expected at least some degree of annoyance from Kati. Instead, he was surprised and pleased when she greeted him with a kiss and a pleasant smile.

He undressed and lay for a few minutes in a steaming hot bath, deciding during that interval that he would make no mention of the fact that he had filled his stomach with tamales and brown beans. Even through the closed bathroom door he could hear the sizzle of tempura and faintly smell the delicate shrimp, the green beans, and the sweet potato, all of it fried to fawn-colored perfection. Kati's opinion of Mexican food would have been unprintable, had Kati been given to saying unprintable things, and Masao also knew that she had delayed her own dinner, feeding the children and putting them to bed, so that she might share her evening meal with her husband.

While he could not account for this defection from the rights of modern woman, he was in no way disposed to condemn it.

Clad in a black robe, his bare feet in comfortable sandals, he sat across the table from his wife and managed to deal adequately with the tempura. But he could not refrain from asking for some explanation of her behavior.

“Oh, I did consider being very provoked at your coming home at such an hour, but then I thought of how sweet and patient you have been for the past week, locked up in the house while the rain poured down, and never complaining while your vacation was completely spoiled. So I decided that a man with your qualities deserves tender loving care—unless of course this becomes a habit with you.”

“God forbid.”

“Also, my Uncle Naga telephoned and told me you had been to visit him, and he was very impressed with the respect you showed him. He feels that in this barbarian society respect for an old man is most commendable.”

“Your Uncle Naga never approved of our marriage. I don’t think he ever forgave you for marrying a policeman.”

“That’s nonsense. He gave us a set of sterling silver dinnerware. I think that’s very approving.”

“Or a suggestion that I could never afford such a set myself.”

“That is silly. Anyway, he told me that the skeleton on Laurel Way has turned into something horrible.”

“Yes, it has. Your uncle talks too much.”

“Uncle Naga is very clever. He said that from what you told him, you felt that the murderer had killed the man whose skeleton was found in order to steal his identity. Then the murderer could become someone else.”

“Yes, more or less.”

“But why should the murderer have to become someone else?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never had a case like this, Kati. There is absolutely nothing to go on. A man was killed thirty years ago, and there appears to be no way in the world to find out who he was. I’m convinced we’ll never find out who he was.”

“But isn’t it more important to find the man who killed him? If he took the dead man’s identity, then you will know who the dead man



was.”

“You make it sound very simple.”

“If he wanted a new identity, he must have done something terrible. He had to hide.”

“No doubt,” Masuto agreed.

“But what good would all this trouble and evil he went to do, if he could still be recognized?”

Masuto stopped eating and stared at her.

“Why are you looking at me that way, Masao?”

“Go on. Don’t stop. What were you saying?”

“I mean that if a man does something truly terrible and he has to kill someone to find a new identity, then wouldn’t the police everywhere be looking for him? Wouldn’t his picture be in the papers?”

“Yes, of course,” Masuto said softly. “There are really no limits to my own stupidity. Then tell me, Kati, what would he do in such circumstances?”

“He could go to Europe or Brazil. I read that such people go to Brazil.”

“No, he is here.”

“Why does he stay here?”

“I don’t know. Apparently, that was his plan from the beginning—to remain here.”

“Then, Masao, I think he would go to a plastic surgeon and have his face changed.”

“Yes, he would, wouldn’t he,” Masuto said slowly. “I know why I continue to be a policeman. It is because I lack the intelligence to be anything else. A plastic surgeon. He could have left the country, but apparently he didn’t want to.”

“Could such a man be in love with a woman?”

“Yes, but how could he explain plastic surgery to a woman?”

“Tell her he was in a bad accident, an auto crash?”

“Possibly. On the other hand, he may have determined to remain here simply because this is where he wanted to be. If it was plastic surgery, then there must be some record of it. On the other hand, knowing how he works—”

“Why don’t you see Dr. Leo Hartman?”

“Who is Dr. Leo Hartman?”

“The most important plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills.”

Once again Masuto stopped eating to stare at Kati. “How do you know such things?”

“I read newspapers and magazines, Masao. You can go everywhere. I must stay here with the children, so I read.”

As early as Masuto might arise, Kati was always awake first, and this morning, when he entered the kitchen at seven o'clock, his pot of tea and his bowl of rice was ready. Since he was already dressed in his working clothes, gray flannels and a tweed jacket, Kati expressed surprise at the fact that he apparently did not intend to meditate.

“I thought I would drive down to the Zendo,” Masuto explained. “I have not been there in quite a while, and I feel a need to talk to the Roshi.”

“Can he solve crimes?” Kati asked lightly.

“Only the crimes honest people commit.”

“Why, whenever I ask a question that relates to Zen, must you give me an answer that makes no sense?”

“Perhaps because Zen makes no sense.”

“Do you see? That is exactly what I mean.”

Masuto drove downtown thinking that his wife was a remarkable woman, whom he knew very little. Well, when it is so hard to know ourselves, why should we expect to know another?

The Zendo was a cluster of old frame buildings on Normandie Avenue off Pico Boulevard. The members of the Zendo, young married people, most of them from southern California, had bought the buildings cheaply—since they were in an old, run-down neighborhood—renovated them, connected the backyards, and turned the whole thing into a sort of communal settlement. One of the houses had been made into a meditation hall with two slightly raised platforms running the length of a polished floor, and stained glass windows at one end. It was done with loving care, a cool, contemplative place. A Japanese Zen master had been sent from Kyoto to guide them, and this Roshi—as a Zen teacher is called—had been with them now for eleven years.

Masuto was a frequent visitor to the Zendo, and this morning he entered the meditation hall, removed his shoes, and composed himself to meditate. The hall was open to any who wished to come there to meditate, but by now, at a quarter to eight, the regular meditation was finished, and only the Roshi still sat, cross-legged. Masuto took his place facing the old man, and for the next forty minutes, they both sat in silence. Then the Roshi rose, and Masuto also rose and bowed to him.

“To come here with a gun in your armpit,” the Roshi said, shaking his head.

“It is a part of my way of life.”

“You come here only when you are troubled, as if the answers to the evils you encounter could be found here.” He spoke in Japanese, and Masuto had to listen intently to follow his thought.

“And are there answers here?”

“If you are here, yes.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Of course not. You are a fool. Can a fool understand?”

“I try.”

“You know what a koan is, Masao. A koan is a question to which there is no answer. So you meditate upon it and find the answer.”

“Even when there is no answer?”

“Only when there is no answer. Would it be a koan otherwise?”

Driving back to the Beverly Hills police station on Rexford Drive, Masuto reflected on his brief conversation with the Roshi and admitted to himself that he had derived little sustenance from it. Possibly, the Roshi’s meaning lay in the fact that the question was also the answer. Then he would simply have to dwell upon the question.

When he reached the police station, Wainwright was waiting for him with a demand as to what in hell all this was with Beckman. “He said you assigned him to stay with the girl. Yeah, he called me. I told you we couldn’t provide protection for the girl.”

“It’s not costing the city a cent.”

“Who’s paying? You? Beckman?”

“Gellman’s giving us the room without charge.”

“Masao, that stinks! That’s taking. I run an honest force, and you’re the last man in the world I’d ever accuse of taking.”

“All right. If you feel that way, I’ll pay for it myself.”

Wainwright threw up his arms in despair. “Why? Why do you always put me on the spot?”

“I’m not trying to put you on the spot, captain. I just can’t see a human being killed when I can prevent it. And as surely as the sun will come up tomorrow, I know that if he can find that girl, he’ll kill her. The odds are that he will find her, but Beckman is there and I think Sy can get him first.”

“Look, Masao,” Wainwright said, “it’s not that I don’t have respect for the way you figure things. I’ve seen it work out too often in the past. But in this case you’re guessing, and I can’t go on your guesses. Morrison called me this morning. They picked up a black man who does windows down there, and they found a set of brass knuckles on him and they found his fingerprints in the old lady’s house. They’re holding him and they’re going to charge him with her murder, and that blows your theory all to hell.”

“You’re putting me on.”

“I damn well am not! Morrison says he’s going to charge him, and he feels he’s got a conviction in the bag.”

“I just don’t believe I’m hearing this. There are possibly ten thousand sets of brass knuckles in Los Angeles, and if this black man does windows, and maybe housecleaning too, since most of them do both, his fingerprints would have to be in her house. I hate these fingerprint tricks. Has he confessed?”

“Morrison didn’t mention that.”

“If it were a white man, they wouldn’t waste ten minutes on it. But Morrison figures he can stiff a black man and close the case and be a big hero. Well, Morrison is not only a fool, he’s a malicious and meretricious fool. Any lawyer can knock that case out of court, but so help me, if it comes to a courtroom, I’ll offer myself as a witness and blow Morrison’s case to pieces.”

“Masao, cool down! Morrison is only doing his job.”

“Like hell he is! All right, I’ll do something else. You gave me three days, and I’m going to hold you to your word. I’m going to hand you

the killer in three days, and we'll make Los Angeles and Inglewood eat crow. Do I still have the three days? What about that?"

"You got them," Wainwright said, shaking his head hopelessly. "I said three days. You got them."

Masuto turned on his heel to leave, and Wainwright called after him, "Masao!"

"Yes?"

"Forget about paying for that room. Gellman owes us maybe a thousand parking tickets. It's time he paid off with something more than a few tickets to our annual ball."

"You're all heart," Masuto said, grinning.

"Yeah, I've been told that before."

On his way out, Masuto stopped and spoke to Polly, who ran the switchboard. She was small, very pretty, and very blond and blue-eyed, and she said plaintively, "It's nine days since you last spoke to me. What did I do wrong?"

"I've been on vacation, Polly."

"Do you know what I hate? I hate married men. I hate the institution of marriage. I hate the fact that every handsome, decent man in this town is either married or queer."

"If I believed you, I'd divorce Kati tomorrow."

"You're a liar, sergeant."

"Sometimes, yes. Look, Polly, have you ever heard of a plastic surgeon name of Leo Hartman?"

"Who hasn't?"

"Myself, for one. How old do you suppose he is?"

"Very good looking, gray hair, gray mustache. I don't know. Maybe fifty-five, maybe sixty. You can't tell with these Beverly Hills types. Maybe they do facials on each other. Professional courtesy."

"How do you know all this?"

"I read the magazines, sergeant."

"Yes, that figures. Can you get me his address?"

"Take me a moment." She riffled through the pages of a telephone book. "Here it is. Camden, between Santa Monica and Wilshire. I'll write it down for you. But don't go through with it, sergeant. You're perfect just the way you are. Don't listen to those creeps who don't like Oriental faces. I love you just the way you are."

“I’ll think about it carefully,” Masuto agreed.

It was only a few blocks from Rexford Drive to Camden Drive. Hartman’s office was in a small, elegant medical building, and his tastefully furnished waiting room contained four ladies, none of whom, as far as Masuto could judge, was so unattractive as to require the attention of a plastic surgeon. But Masuto had discovered long ago that the only way to function as a police officer in Beverly Hills was to suspend all personal judgments and accept whatever came his way without question. He went to the little window through which Hartman’s receptionist gazed out upon the waiting room, and asked to see the doctor.

“You want an appointment?”

“I want to speak to him.”

“I can give you an appointment”—she consulted her day book—“oh, let us say in three weeks.”

“I’m afraid I must see him immediately.” Masuto showed his badge. “I’m Detective Sergeant Masuto, Beverly Hills police. It’s a matter of great urgency, and I must see him now.”

“But he’s with a patient.”

“He’s not operating, is he?”

“He does not operate here,” the receptionist said scornfully. “He operates in a hospital.”

“Then he can leave his patient for ten minutes. Will you please tell him that I must see him now.”

She stared at Masuto, who put on his sternest look, and then she rose and disappeared. A few minutes later she opened a door at one side of the waiting room. “Follow me, please.”

The doctor was waiting in his office, a large comfortable room furnished with a desk, two comfortable chairs, and several expensive potted palms. Polly’s description, Masuto decided, fitted him very well, except that in Masuto’s judgment, Hartman was well past sixty.

The doctor sat behind his desk, and stuffed a pipe with tobacco. “Please sit down, sergeant,” he said to Masuto. “Ordinarily, nothing short of an earthquake could make me break off an examination of a patient, but Miss Weller put your case strongly. What on earth can I do for you?”

“I’ll only take a few minutes of your time, and I’m very grateful that you could see me now. It is a matter of utmost urgency, and you’ll forgive me if I don’t explain. I have a few questions that perhaps only you can answer.”

“I am puzzled, but shoot.”

“We’ll go back to nineteen-fifty, over thirty years ago. Could you possibly tell me who was practicing plastic surgery in that year—or would it be so large a number of physicians that you couldn’t possibly name them?”

“Now hold on. It depends upon what you mean by plastic surgery. Reconstructive surgery was practiced in every hospital in southern California, but if you mean elective facial surgery, a field which to a degree centers around rhinoplasty, then that narrows the field considerably.”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I mean.”

“Then I can help you with this area. There was Amos Cohen, over in Hollywood, Ben McKeever, here in Beverly Hills, and Fritz Lennox, who worked at the medical center in Westwood. And, of course, myself. I opened my office here in forty-six, when I came out of the army. Yes, I’m older than I look, sergeant, and as yet I’ve had no face-lifts. I’ve thought of it, but I’m too old to care, and if there’s one thing a surgeon dreads, it’s to have some other surgeon operate on him. Now those three men I mentioned had the field practically sewn up, if you’ll forgive the pun. I know. I had the devil’s own time breaking in. Of course today I could give you a list of twenty, but back then cosmetic surgery was still something of a novelty, and most of those who elected it were aging actors. Today it’s different. Mothers bring me children of ten or eleven years, and there’s the men, more of them every year. We live in a time when beauty skin deep has become a national obsession. By the way, it’s odd that you should ask me about nineteen fifty.”

“Why?”

“Because that’s the year Ben McKeever died.”

“How did he die?”

“Terrible tragedy, terrible. His office was in a small, frame building, over on South Spalding. Lovely place. He had even fixed up his own operating room there, although for my part, I’ll work only in a

hospital. Well, it caught fire one night, and he and his nurse were burned to death. I don't suppose you'd be interested in the grisly details?"

"I would. Every detail you can remember."

"I really hate to go into it, hate to drag these things out of the past. It was pretty well hushed up at the time."

"It's of the utmost importance. Please. It will rest with me."

"Well, it would appear that he and his nurse were having an affair. Here's one reading of what happened. His nurse overdosed and died and either under the influence of some narcotic or in some insane fit of remorse, considering himself responsible for her death, he overdosed himself and set fire to the place. Now I'm not saying I believe this interpretation of the event. I knew Ben. He was a good man, and I never had any feeling that he was an addict, but who knows? Also, their bodies were badly burned, so I have doubts about the autopsy. When bodies are in a bad state, Beverly Hills autopsies could be slipshod. Then. Perhaps not now. We'll never really know what happened."

"What suggested suicide?"

"In a garbage container outside they found some hypodermic syringes which contained traces of heroin, and also a scrap of paper on which Ben had written something to the effect of, I know what I am going to do is wrong, but I am forced to do it—just about that, just a few words but enough to suggest suicide. But if he intended to write a suicide note, why was it found in the garbage? Why would he leave the syringes in the garbage? On the other hand, who is to say what a crazed man might do?"

"And I presume that all his records were burned, destroyed?"

"Yes. All of them. Why all the interest in Ben McKeever?"

"I'm sorry, I can't reveal that now. But tell me, doctor, when exactly did this happen? Even the month of the year would help."

"I can't remember the date. But I do know it was during the summer—July or August."

"Yes, that would be right. Just a few more questions and then I'll bother you no more. First of all, how completely can facial surgery change a person's appearance?"



“Well, that depends. The nose can be changed. The appearance of the eyes—to a degree. Ears can be changed. A hairlip can be corrected, but not too much can be done with a mouth. The marks of age in the neck can be removed and certain changes can be made in the cheeks. So a person’s face can be changed a great deal. Of course, the art of facial cosmetic surgery is to make changes that improve without calling attention to the operation. But the shape of the head or the jaw cannot be changed.”

“And if a man came to you for extensive cosmetic changes which he obviously did not need, what would you do?”

“That depends. I would try to talk him out of it if I knew something about his background. If there were any shred of reason in his request and I considered it psychologically needful, I might go along with him. If he were an actor, I might just accept his request.”

“Or if he was badly scarred?”

“That would make a difference, of course.”

“Or a hairlip?”

“Of course.”

“And just one more thing, the other two, Cohen and Lennox—what happened to them?”

“Cohen died of a heart attack two years ago, I believe. Lennox is retired, but still alive, as far as I know.”

“I’ve taken enough of your time,” Masuto said, rising. “You’ve been very helpful.”

“You wouldn’t care to tell me what this is all about?”

“Sometime, perhaps. Not now.”

# THE MIDTOWN MANHATTAN NATIONAL BANK

Disconsolate, filled with a sense of defeat and frustration, Masuto returned to the police station on Rexford Drive, dropped into his chair, and put his arms on his desk, his chin on his hands, and brooded. Every trail came to a dead end; every gate was closed. A cold, calculating killer who destroyed without conscience or compunction. If he had murdered the doctor who changed his face and the nurse who assisted the doctor, he had planned it perfectly. Masuto could speculate that the killer had knocked them unconscious, shot heroin into them, planted the syringes, found the scrap of writing to plant in the garbage with the syringes, and then burned the house, destroying the doctor's photographs and records. From the little Masuto knew about cosmetic surgery, there was at least the knowledge that every surgeon had before and after photographs. The evidence was all gone, and with it the reputation of the two people he had killed.

Masuto prided himself on being beyond hate, yet he now felt hatred welling up within himself. He was locked in a shadowy struggle with a man who was an affront to human dignity, to conscience, to every concept of good and evil, indeed to the human race. According to Masuto's own knowledge, this man had murdered four people, four people who had done him no harm, for Masuto was

certain that the skeleton under the pool had been a friend of the killer. Otherwise, how had the killer persuaded him to go there with him at night and alone?

The only thread was the girl, Rosita, and even there Masuto was beginning to have his doubts. The killer was careful. He might be quite certain that the maid had not seen him. This might very well be the end of the affair. Wednesday would come and go, and Wainwright would crack his whip.

Now it was twelve o'clock—noon, on Tuesday, and as if in answer to his thought, Wainwright entered Masuto's office, carrying two containers of coffee and two sandwiches.

"You look like hell, Masao. You look like you lost your best friend."

Masuto stared at him without answering.

"Here's coffee. I got corned beef and ham and cheese. Take your choice."

"I'm not hungry."

"That's a sorry note. I see you sitting in here like a whipped dog, and I buy you a sandwich, and you tell me you're not hungry."

"I'll have the ham and cheese."

"Good. I prefer corned beef."

"I know that."

"What in hell is it with you?" Wainwright demanded. "How do you get so damned involved in these things? You're a cop, not an avenging angel."

"I don't sleep well with a cold-blooded killer walking these streets or driving his Mercedes."

"How do you know he's walking these streets?"

"I know. Tell me, captain, if a question has no answer, the question should be enough—wouldn't you say?"

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

"Sit down and join me at lunch. Let's talk."

"Sure. I got nothing else to do. I just earn my pay by sitting around."

"You have to eat. I need someone to talk to."

"It takes me ten minutes to eat."

"Then let us talk for ten minutes," Masuto said, smiling.

“Okay. You got it. I’ll take half your ham and cheese and give you half my corned beef. That way we can both be happy.”

“No. I really prefer ham and cheese. How long have you been a cop, captain?”

“Too long. What is this?”

“Questions of crime. The question has to be the answer, I suppose, if I can find the right question.”

“Twenty-two years, if you can get off that Zen kick of yours.”

“Sixteen years for me. Thirty-eight years between us. A man sheds his identity. Why?”

“He killed someone. He jumped bail. He had to get out of the country.”

“No, he has to stay here. That’s the crux of it. He has to stay here. Or he wants to stay here.”

“He’s got family here.”

“Come on, captain. This man doesn’t give a damn about anyone.”

“How do you know?”

“I know him. I know how he thinks. I know how he operates. Your ordinary criminal loses himself. This man didn’t want to lose himself. He had other plans. And how did the cops know who he was? I mean, if they knew who he was, why didn’t they grab him?”

“Like I said, he jumped bail.”

“No, that’s not his style.”

“How in hell do you know what his style was?” Wainwright demanded. “Do you know how many people jump bail in any given month? Hundreds. A man knocks over a bank—”

“He’s not a bank robber,” Masuto interrupted. Then he leaped to his feet and grinned at Wainwright. “Of course, they were both in it. Together. God forgive my stupidity! That’s why it made no sense—because I always thought of one, a loner, but to plan it and execute it right from the beginning, there had to be two of them.”

“Will you calm down and tell me what the devil you are talking about?”

“No, sir. With all due respect, captain, I’m going to deliver this one to you signed, sealed, and rolled up.”

“Like hell you are! I’m your boss, and I damn well want to know what’s going on.”

Masuto studied him, smiling slightly. "All right, we'll make a deal."

"No deals."

"Don't you want to hear what I've got to say?"

"No deals! What do you mean, you'll make me a deal? You got one hell of a nerve, Masuto."

"Okay, you win. No deal."

"What do you mean, no deal?"

"Just that." Masuto shrugged. "The hell with it."

Now Wainwright studied Masuto shrewdly, and then he said in a low voice, "You know what I ought to do with you?"

"Ah, so—humbly request you fire me."

Wainwright shook his head and took the last bite of his corned beef sandwich. "You are one painful, miserable son of a bitch, Masao. All right. What's your deal?"

"In one hour, give or take a few minutes, I will give you the name of the killer. Not the name of the man whose skeleton we found under the pool, but the name of the man who killed him. I want you to know in advance that this name will do us no good—now. Maybe later. But the killer has become someone else, the man he killed, and that's the name we have to find."

"So you're going to give me the name of the murderer in one hour. That's bullshit, and you know it."

"Do I make idle promises? Have you ever known me not to deliver?"

"What's this business of two of them?"

"Do you remember what I said to you before, the question is the answer? And then, a moment ago, you asked me how I knew what his style is? But I know. Why would Brody remember him? Why would Lundman remember him? Because he had a friend, a pal, a buddy, someone close to him and with him all the time. You don't remember one laborer; you remember two. 'I remember them,' people say, 'they were always together.' And then, once I realized that there were two of them, it made sense."

"What made sense?"

"Give me the hour, and I give you the name."

"All right, you give me the name of the killer. What do I give you?"

"Four more days. I want a week."

“You got it.”

“A little more.”

“I thought so. What else?”

“Travel time and expenses.”

“What do you mean, travel time? Where do you have to travel?”

“I don’t know yet, but I’m sure it’s in the continental United States.”

Wainwright stood up angrily. “You bug me, Masao. You come up with these wild guesses. You know what nobody else knows, and you’re always pulling that Charlie Chan routine, grabbing things out of thin air. You promise to give me a name. How do I know it’s the right name? Anyway, if I’m to believe you, the name is no damn good to us.”

“Perhaps. Perhaps not.”

“Great. Just great. And now you want a blank check to travel anywhere in the United States.”

“Just plane fare. There and back. I promise not to stay overnight. No hotel bills. No perks.”

“How come you don’t know where?”

“I get that with the name of the killer.”

“How can you be so damn sure?”

“Because the pieces have been floating around in my mind for three days, and finally they’ve come together.”

Wainwright leaned back in his chair and stared at Masuto thoughtfully. Finally, he sighed. “I don’t know. I ought to be used to the way you work. All right. We got a deal. Now get me the name of the killer. In one hour. I’ll be in my office.”

Wainwright left the room, closing the door behind him. Masuto took a deep breath and stretched his arms. Suddenly, he felt alive, alert, filled with energy. Grudgingly—for it went against his practice of Buddhism—he admitted to himself that this was the kind of moment he embraced, the moment when ghosts ceased to be ghosts, when the quarry was almost in sight. It was embezzlement. It had to be. An ordinary thief made no sense. An ordinary thief ends up in jail or in the county graveyard. He doesn’t drive a black Mercedes thirty years later. A brutal senseless murder made less sense. This man was brutal but never senseless. The only thing that fit was an embezzlement, an embezzlement large enough to justify the

planning, the killing, and the apparent power of the man who drove the black Mercedes.

He picked up the telephone and buzzed Polly.

“You want a date, Masao? Any time.”

“No, dear. I want the coordinating department at the F.B.I. in Washington, the place where they have all those fascinating computers.”

Masuto waited, and a minute or so later, his phone rang. A voice said, “Williams, F.B.I.”

“Agent Williams,” he said in his most cordial tone, “this is Sergeant Masuto, Beverly Hills police. We have a problem of the most urgent nature.”

“Go ahead. I’ll see what we can do for you.”

“I’m talking of embezzlement. In the year nineteen fifty, between the first of April and the first of May, there was a major embezzlement in a bank. No, let me put it this way, during that time the facts of a major embezzlement came to light. We would like to have as many of those facts as you can give me.”

“Can you tell me anything more, sergeant? Be more definite?”

“I’m afraid not, except that we believe the sum was over a million dollars. If you have more than one in the area of that figure, I’d like to have whatever you dig up.”

“All right, sergeant. I’ll have to call you back to confirm, and then I’ll put it through the computer. I should have something for you this afternoon.”

“This afternoon?”

“You’re on California time, sergeant. It’s three forty-five here. I’ll get you the information within the hour.”

For the next half hour Masuto paced back and forth in his office. The telephone rang once, and he grabbed it eagerly. It was Sy Beckman at the hotel, to tell him that nothing had happened and he was bored to death and his Spanish was no better, and when could he go home. Masuto told him to calm down and that he would see him within an hour or so. “If I’m still a cop.”

“And what does that mean?”

“I’ll explain. I’ll explain.”

And then the telephone rang again, and it was Williams. "Masuto," he said, "I got it for you. Just one to fit your specifications in that time period, but it was a beauty. Two million eight hundred thousand dollars. How about that?"

"The only one?"

"The only one."

Masuto made notations on his pad. "What bank?"

"The Midtown Manhattan National Bank, upper Madison Avenue in New York. The culprit was the chief teller, name of Stanley Cutler." He spelled it out. "Twenty-five years old, Caucasian, American born, veteran with two decorations. Orphan, raised in a Buffalo orphanage, IQ of a hundred and thirty-seven, no priors. Honorable discharge, November nineteen forty-five, went to work at the Midtown Manhattan in January of forty-six, trained as a teller and rose rapidly. The embezzlement began during April, nineteen forty-nine, but wasn't discovered until an audit a year later. Classified as a brilliant piece of work, an innovation in bank embezzlement. By the way, what's your interest in this out there?"

"You'll receive a full report within the week."

"Well, the file is open, even after thirty years. No trace ever of Cutler or a nickel of the two million eight. If you've got anything, let us know."

"I certainly will. Do you have pictures and prints?"

"Both. I can wire you both and then send you a glossy through the mail."

"By the way, Williams, how tall was Cutler?"

"Five eight and a half."

"Can you send me a full description, eye color, hair, everything you have? Care of Sergeant Masao Masuto, Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, 90210."

"Right. What are you, Masuto, Japanese?"

"That's right."

"Poetic justice if you catch up with Cutler. He fought in the Pacific."

"So it goes."

"Good luck."

Masuto put down the telephone, took a sheet from his pad, and printed in block letters STANLEY CUTLER. He then went into



Wainwright's office.

"The hour's almost up," Wainwright told him.

"Not quite." He put the sheet of paper on the desk in front of Wainwright.

"What's this?"

"The name of our killer."

"Who the devil is Stanley Cutler?"

"I haven't the vaguest idea. I only know that he murdered six people."

"Six? Where do you get six?"

"The man under the pool. A doctor named Ben McKeever, his nurse, the two Lundmans and Mrs. Brody. The doctor and his nurse are pure guesswork, so we may have to scrap those two."

"Who the hell is Ben McKeever?"

"I'll tell you about it, captain. By the way, I'm flying to New York tonight on the red eye. It's the cheapest flight."

"It would be New York," Wainwright said sourly.

# BLIND ALLEYS

Masuto called Beckman at the Beverly Glen Hotel, and after listening to Beckman's woeful description of the state of his marriage, informed him that some respite was imminent. "You can leave her for a few hours. Have you had lunch?"

"Just finished."

"Then tell her to lock and bolt the door, and not to open it for anyone except you. Not for anyone. Make a simple code word between you, just in case she's too frightened to recognize your voice. Then get over here to the station."

"Will you talk to my wife?"

"I'll talk to her."

But talking to Sophie Beckman was not easy, and Masuto waited patiently to get a word in. "What do you mean, secrets?" she demanded. "What am I, the town crier? He can't tell me where he is or what he's doing? You're supposed to be cops, but you're beginning to sound like those creeps at the C.I.A. who won't tell Congress what they're doing, even if what they're doing is planning to blow up the world, which would be all right, but you're dealing with my husband who can't keep his eyes off any woman under ninety who comes by, and about his hands, I won't even mention—"

She paused for a breath, and Masuto said quickly, "I give you my word, Sophie, this is his assignment, and it's legitimate."

"For how long? When do I see him again?"

“Another day or two.”

“Not that I’m breaking my heart to see him, Masao, but it’s the way I’m treated.”

“He’s more miserable than you are.”

“I hope so.”

“Just another day or two, Sophie.”

“Is he with a woman?”

“Absolutely not.”

“You’re lying, Masao. I could draw you a picture of the woman he’s with—an oversized blonde with big boobs—”

“What did you say, Sophie?” Masuto asked with sudden excitement.

“I said I could draw you a picture—”

“Yes, of course. No, no, you’re misjudging Sy. He’s doing a hard and arduous job, believe me.”

Finally, he managed to calm her, fortunately, since while he was talking to her, an officer entered and put a telephoto on his desk.

“For you, sergeant, with the compliments of the F.B.I.”

Masuto stared at the picture, recalling with some guilt the times in the past when he had been less than generous in his opinion of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He had to admit now that if less than long on simple intelligence, when it came to the keeping of files and the use of computers, they were without peer. Wire photos are not of the best, nevertheless it was with great excitement that he stared at the photo of the man he hunted. Thirty years had passed since this picture was taken. He saw the face of a young man, most likely blond or with light brown hair, with pale eyes, a long, thin nose, a mole prominent on one cheek, a wide jaw, fleshy cheeks, heavy brows that almost met over the nose, and thin lips. There was a scar along the left side of the jawbone.

For at least five minutes he sat immobile, staring at the photo. Then he picked it up and went into Wainwright’s office, where he laid the picture on the desk in front of the captain.

“What’s this?” Wainwright asked.

“Our murderer, thirty years ago. Mr. Stanley Cutler, in the flesh.”

“Where did you get this?”

“Courtesy of the F.B.I.”

“Masao, if this is another one of your ploys—”

“That’s our man. Thirty years ago, he embezzled two million eight hundred thousand dollars from the Midtown Manhattan National Bank. That’s how the F.B.I. came into it. They never found him or the money.”

“Where does it connect? You’re guessing again.”

“Am I? Perhaps. But every instinct in my body tells me I’m right. This is the way I spell it out. The embezzlement took place over twelve months. He had a partner, whom he set up from the very beginning for the kill. That’s the way his mind works.”

“How the hell do you know how his mind works?”

“I told you before that I know him. Just ride with it. He needs the partner to open bank accounts, to spread the money around, maybe to buy various bearer bonds, governments, municipals. Conceivably, the partner comes to California, stashes the loot here. They take a whole year. I was going to New York to see the people at the bank and find out exactly how he did it, but that’s not important now.”

“You mean you’re not going to New York?”

“No, something came up.”

“What?”

“This picture. Anyway, it’s thirty years. Who knows if there’s anyone alive who can give me the information?”

“If this is our man, let’s spread the picture around.”

“No good, captain. It was thirty years ago. I told you he had his face done.”

“What about his prints? Get them from the feds. They don’t change. He worked in a bank. They got to have his prints.”

“Maybe. They didn’t come through.” Masuto smiled. “If they do, it won’t matter. He took care of things like that.”

“How do you take care of prints?”

“There are ways, believe me. If a man is tough enough, he can burn them off.”

“So what it amounts to is that you have nothing. You have his picture and his name, and you got nothing. Not one shred of evidence. Masao, I ought to have my head examined. I’ve put two men on the payroll of the City of Beverly Hills to work chasing

ghosts, and I've damn near talked you into making me believe in your ghosts."

"I've called off the New York trip. That's a boost to your budget."

"All right. What do you get in exchange?"

"I want you to call Kennedy and make peace with him and borrow his police artist for tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Because we can't afford a police artist of our own," Masuto said gently.

"That's very funny. You know, Masao, there are people who tell me the Japanese don't have a sense of humor. They're wrong. You let me talk the city manager into sending a man to New York, and now you don't have to go to New York. That's funny too. You just about tell Captain Kennedy that he's a horse's ass, and now you want me to talk him out of his police artist. That's even funnier."

"Give him a deal. Quid pro quo. He lends us the artist, we give him the murderer of the Lundmans."

"Masao," Wainwright said seriously, "I have more respect for you than you might imagine. We've worked together a good many years now, and I've seen you pull more rabbits out of the hat than you can shake a stick at. I'm even ready to believe that this is a photograph of the killer. But you still got nothing, not a shred of evidence, not one bit of anything I can bring to the D.A. That is, considering that you could find Stanley Cutler. I know you don't have a high opinion of the feds, but they got maybe the biggest facility in the world, and they've been looking for Cutler these thirty years, and they have come up with zilch. Maybe Cutler's dead, maybe in Brazil, and it's still not beyond the realm of possibility that some lunatic killed the Lundmans. God knows, there are plenty of them."

"The Lundmans and Mrs. Brody in one day—that would be stretching coincidence too far."

"It happens."

"No, I can't accept that."

"What then, Masao? You want me to promise Kennedy that we'll wrap this up and deliver him his culprit. Then we wash out. Where does that leave me?"

“You’re right,” Masao said after a moment. “You can’t promise that. But I need that artist.”

“Okay, I’ll try.”

He went back to his office. Beckman was waiting for him, and the telephone was ringing as Masuto entered. It was Williams, calling from Washington. “I’m sorry, Masuto,” he said, “but we don’t have prints.”

“You’d better explain that.”

“During the war Cutler pulled a man out of a burning tank. Seared his fingers. Got a citation for it.”

“What about prints when he went into the army?”

“He joined up in Europe. There are no prints, Masuto, there just aren’t any. Now look, if you people have a lead on Cutler, we want him.”

“What about the statute of limitations?”

“There’s none on retrieving the money, and we’ll let the lawyers worry about the rest.”

“Hold on a moment,” Masuto said. “Do you have anything on that soldier he pulled out of the tank? Did he recover? His name? Anything?”

“We thought of that. No way we could trace him.”

“Wouldn’t his name be on the citation?”

“Not necessarily. There were witnesses to the incident. That’s all you need for the citation.”

Masuto put down the telephone and turned to Beckman. “We have a beauty, Sy. We have a brilliant psychopath who goes in for perfect crimes. Your average criminal has an IQ of ninety or ninety-five. Cutler’s IQ is one hundred and thirty-seven. He climbed into a burning tank to save a G.I. and seared his ten fingers. At this point, I’m ready to believe he did it consciously and purposefully.”

“That’s crazy, Masao. No one burns himself on purpose.”

“No? Perhaps not. Will the girl keep the door locked?”

“Right. She’s scared enough. Did you square me with Sophie?”

“I think so. Now here’s where we are, Sy. I’m going to lay out everything we have.”

When Masuto had finished spelling out what he had from Williams and whatever other pieces he had put together, Beckman stared at

the picture and shook his head. “What does it add up to, Masao? A picture thirty years old of a man who had facial surgery, a name that doesn’t belong to him anymore, and no fingerprints. That’s a stacked deck. Suppose you find him? How do you prove his identity? With Lundman dead, how do you tie him into a crime that happened thirty years ago? As far as the Lundmans are concerned, there’s a perfect murder. No weapon, no witnesses.”

“Except Rosita.”

“Come on, Masao. She wasn’t a witness. You know that. The D.A. would laugh at it.”

“You’re sure she’s all right until five o’clock?”

“Unless he can walk through a steel door.”

“That wouldn’t surprise me either. Now I’ll tell you what we’re going to do. We’re going to visit banks, not the branches, but the main offices. Here’s the way I worked this out. I believe that Cutler planned this for years. He got out of the army and got himself a job in a bank. Meanwhile, he had worked out a pattern of embezzlement. That wouldn’t be too hard for a man of his caliber. There are plenty of books on the great embezzlements, and in those days they were going out of their way to give jobs to vets—especially vets who had won decorations. Cutler had a partner. For some reason, I believe, Cutler selected Los Angeles for his ultimate goal, perhaps because it was the other side of the continent, more likely because most of the money in L.A. is new money. Now Cutler had a problem. Money is a problem. Two or three million dollars is a huge problem.”

“I should have that kind of a problem.”

“Still a problem. What do you do with it? You can’t keep it under a mattress. So the way I see it, Cutler had a partner, a loyal, devoted partner who obeyed orders and who trusted Cutler with his life.”

“And who ended up under the swimming pool.”

“Exactly. How he got this partner we may never know. Possibly the man whose life he saved. In any case, Cutler would have chosen someone his size with the same eye and hair color, so that the driver’s license and everything else would fit. Cutler funneled the money through him; it would have been too risky to try to do it himself. I imagine that for the most part they bought bonds,

government bonds, company bonds, municipal bonds, all as good as cash. His partner could open accounts in half a dozen brokerage houses, and they spread their winnings over a year. But at the same time, a man like Cutler would see to it that they had some cash resources at their destination—namely L.A. At least that’s my guess. I’m trying to think the way he thinks, and by now I have a pretty good notion of how he thinks. Perhaps his partner made two or three trips to Los Angeles, and each time he’d open a few bank accounts—nothing spectacular, perhaps ten thousand here, five thousand there. His partner must have been overwhelmed at the way Cutler trusted him to open the accounts in his own name, but at the same time he was signing his death warrant. Again, we’ll never know how Cutler persuaded John Doe to sign on that job as a day laborer. Maybe it was simply a way to drop out of sight. You don’t look for a high-class embezzler on a construction job. But persuade him he did, and there he saw the opportunity to get rid of John Doe forever, and he took it.”

“And you figure we might get lucky and find two or three bank accounts for the same name?”

“It’s a long shot.”

“Too long, Masao. Thirty years too long.”

Masuto stared at him for a moment, then he picked up the telephone and asked Polly to get him the manager at the central office of the Los Angeles branch of the Crocker Bank. The phone rang, and Masuto picked it up, introduced himself, and stated his case. The man at the Crocker Bank, whose name was Johnson, sighed deeply and said, “I’m afraid not, sergeant.”

“Why not?”

“Because thirty years is just too long. We do have a central storage depot and we do have a great deal of material on microfilm, but to be able to find and compare the names of small depositors in nineteen fifty or in nineteen forty-nine—well, I’m just afraid it’s impossible.”

“How impossible?”

“Impossible, sir. Well, let me be honest. I’m not absolutely sure that those records don’t exist. I would have to go to our central office in San Francisco for full information. Then someone would have to spend days going through the microfilm—providing the records have



been kept. We do keep records of our own accounting over that period, but names of depositors? Most unlikely. But let me say this. Give me the name of the depositor, and I'll try to track it down."

"I don't have the name of the depositor."

"What? Are you trying to make a fool of me, sir? Is this really the Beverly Hills police?"

"You can call back if you wish. This is the Beverly Hills police. We are trying to find out whether the same name appears in several banks."

"Without knowing the name?"

"The fact of the duplication would establish the name."

"Sergeant, you're wasting my time. It's impossible."

Masuto looked at Beckman and nodded.

"What did he say?"

"He says it's impossible."

"I thought so. The L.A.P.D. might cover something like that, if they could put twenty men on it and take a month. We're too small, and who knows if the records exist? You want me to try another bank?"

"No, it wouldn't be any different."

"So what's left?"

"Rosita, the police artist, and, I think, my kinsman, Ishido."

"Who is Ishido?"

"He is Kati's father's cousin. He was an officer in the Japanese Imperial Army, and he has lived in Los Angeles these past thirty-three years. He has enormous interests in Mitsubishi and Sony, and before he retired he represented Mitsubishi on the West Coast. He is also Samurai, which may not mean much here, but still counts among the folk from the old country. Now he collects Japanese stamps and Chinese jade. He has more millions than we have fingers between us, and since he is what he is, and I am a policeman, you can imagine that he does not look too kindly upon me. I sometimes think that he has never forgiven Kati for marrying me. On the few occasions when I have seen him, he has been very courteous, but that's his manner."

"And you figure him as a connection?"

"I hope so."

"So we washed out with the banks. What do I do now?"

“Go back to the lovely Rosita.”

“You know,” Beckman said, “you are putting a large temptation in the face of an ordinary cop. I am human, Masao, and that kid is just too damn pretty.”

“Exercise restraint.”

“If Sophie ever found out, she’d cut my throat.”

“We’ll try to keep it a secret.” And then, as Beckman was about to leave, Masuto said, “Sy, if Cutler should get on to us and somehow get into that room with you, use your gun. Don’t try to take him and put cuffs on him. Use your gun, even if he’s unarmed. Shoot out a kneecap or something.”

“What? Are you crazy?”

“At this point, I don’t know.”

“He’s five eight. I’m twice his size. I’ve never met the man I couldn’t take, and I don’t go for that karate crap.”

“This might be the first time.”

“I’ll think about it.”

When Beckman had left, Masuto went into Wainwright’s office and stood waiting.

“Yeah,” Wainwright said. “I did it.”

“We get the police artist?”

“He’ll be over here at ten o’clock tomorrow.”

“Captain, you’re wonderful.”

“Yeah. Well, it’s your turn to be Mr. Wonderful. Pick up a box of one dollar Flaminco cigars. Make sure they’re genuine Flaminco and that they come from the Canary Islands, wherever they are. There are twenty in a box, so it will cost you twenty bucks.”

“What for?”

“For Kennedy. It’s part of the deal.”

Masuto went back to his office and called Dr. Leo Hartman. “I would like to see you tomorrow,” he said, “at about noon.”

“That’s impossible, sergeant.”

“Yes, I’ve spent the day hearing that things were impossible. Let me put it this way, Dr. Hartman. You indicated that Ben McKeever was a man you admired. Perhaps I can tell you that he was murdered and his nurse was murdered. If you will give me an hour of your time tomorrow, it’s possible I can bring in his killer.”

“My God, sergeant, that was thirty years ago.”

“His killer is still alive, free, and prosperous. Is it worth an hour of your time?”

“Are you being serious?”

“Very serious.”

“All right. Come in at twelve fifteen. I can give you forty-five minutes. Will that be enough?”

“I think so.”

“I’ll have some sandwiches sent in. Have you any preference?”

“Whatever you choose will be fine. I’ll be bringing another man with me.”

“I hope you’re right, sergeant. It was an ignominious way to die.”

Masuto met Wainwright on his way out, and the captain asked him where he was off to.

“Home,” Masuto said.

“It’s only half past four. You’re making an early day of it.”

“I got home at nine yesterday.”

“You’re a cop.”

“Sy’s wife is talking about divorcing him. Do you want Kati to divorce me?”

“I hear your people don’t go in for divorce.”

“So you hear.”

“I got three burglaries and a mugging. Right here in Beverly Hills. A car pulls up next to this lady’s car. Two guys jump out, open the doors, grab her purse, and drive off.”

“She should lock her doors.”

“All right. I gave you the week. I regret it, but I gave it to you.”

# THE POLICE ARTIST

A few minutes before the police artist arrived the following morning, the postman brought in a glossy photo of Stanley Cutler, which Williams had dispatched by express mail. The police artist arrived a few minutes before ten, a young man of about thirty, tall, redheaded, and with a Texas accent. "Well now," he said in a soft drawl, "I am mighty pleased to meet you. I'm Kenny Dawson, and you are Sergeant Masuto. I did suspect from your name that you would be some kind of Oriental. Japanese? Am I right?"

"You're right, Mr. Dawson."

"Now don't call be Mr. Dawson, sergeant. Kenny will do. I hear you got a problem that wants an artist? Of course, I would think that in a place like Beverly Hills, which I hear has more millionaires per square mile than any other spot in the U.S. of A., they would have a police artist of their own."

"We don't have call for one very often. Are you good, Kenny?"

"Good enough. Gotta admit that I put aside my dreams of being another Frederic Remington for a steady job, but that don't mean I have sold out. Now what have you got for me?"

Masuto handed him the glossy print of Stanley Cutler. "This picture was taken about thirty years ago. As you can see, it's probably an identity photo for a job record."

"Sure enough. Same technique as passport photos."

"I want you to draw it, but to change it to conform to thirty years of aging. I can tell you that the man has not gained much weight. He stays in good physical condition. Do you think you can do that?"

"I'll give it a try. You don't have a profile, do you?"

"Just this. And we have an hour and a half. Is that enough time?"

"Plenty."

"And one thing more," Masuto added. "Can you use a medium where you can erase and make changes?"

"Sure. I'll use charcoal without fixing it, and then we can pick it up with a kneaded eraser." He looked at Masuto curiously. "By the way, you wouldn't like to explain what I'm doing?"

"Well, you're doing what few men get to do, compressing thirty years in an hour, and then we're going to consult a plastic surgeon."

"Yes, that answers my question."

The telephone rang. It was Williams, calling from Washington, and he asked about the glossy print.

"We got it. Thanks for the cooperation."

"By the way, sergeant," Williams said, "there's a ten-percent finder's fee on the two million eight hundred thousand. Of course, the bank was paid off by the insurance company. That's Transwest National Insurance. They put the finder's fee on it back in nineteen fifty. I spoke to them this morning, and they say the fee is still in force, a very neat two hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Inflation puts a bite into it, but it's still a nice piece of change."

Wainwright was scowling at some papers on his desk when Masuto came into his office and sat down facing him.

"You got nothing to do," Wainwright said. "You and Beckman, you really stiffed me. He's shackled up with some cute Mexican babe, and you got nothing to do but sit here in my office with that Charlie Chan look on your face."

"So sorry, but the artist is at work, and meanwhile Agent Williams called from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and he tells me the Transwest National Insurance Company put a ten percent finder's fee on that two million eight embezzlement, and while thirty years has passed, the finder's fee is still in force."

"You got to be kidding."

"Oh, no. No, indeed."

“Masao, bums who pull off these jobs spend it quicker than you could walk to the bank.”

“Two million eight hundred thousand dollars?”

“It’s thirty years.”

“Let’s just suppose, captain, that this particular bum has other plans. He wants to be rich and powerful. The embezzlement money is his stake. He nurtures it, invests it. Possibly he goes into some business. These last thirty years have been very rewarding here in southern California. Today he has millions.”

“Still at it, Masao?”

“Suppose I’m right? All we have to do is to identify him.”

“If we can’t convict him for murder—and I don’t see a chance of a snowball in hell that we can—then the statute of limitations has run out in the embezzlement, and he can walk around and thumb his nose at us, that is considering that you ever find him.”

“Oh, I’ll find him,” Masuto said. “As far as criminal action is concerned, you may be right that we can’t touch him. But suppose the money can be reclaimed in a civil suit?. After all, there’s no statute of limitations on stolen property. I read where they’re still litigating World War Two disputes, and that’s forty years ago.”

“You may have a point there. But don’t get any notions about becoming a rich cop. If it ever came to that, the money would go to the City of Beverly Hills.”

“It might get us that ten percent raise we’ve been asking for.”

“I doubt it.”

“Well, one step at a time, captain. By tonight I expect to know who Stanley Cutler is.”

“It’s Wednesday,” Wainwright said. “I expected as much.”

“I’m sure,” Masuto said dryly.

When Masuto returned to his office, Dawson was completing the charcoal portrait. Very skillfully, he had aged the portrait, pushing back the hairline, allowing the cheeks to expand and sag a bit, putting wrinkles around the eyes, lines on the brow and around the mouth, and loose flesh and folds of skin on the neck.

“That’s very good,” Masuto said.

“No, it isn’t. Any art student could do as well.”

“I doubt it.”

“You should see my paintings. All this crap about naturalism and photorealism that’s coming up now. I was doing it ten years ago, when I was just a kid. But you want to know about the art scene in Los Angeles? It stinks. A few lousy galleries on La Cienega, a couple in Beverly Hills that are even lousier. New York’s the place, but they tell me you got to pay six, seven hundred a month for some small, rundown loft in Soho. I need a stake. You don’t know any of the local art collectors, do you, sergeant?”

“I’m afraid not.”

“Well, who does? Anyway, here it is. What do we do now?”

“We go to see Dr. Leo Hartman.”

“You want me to drag all my stuff with me?”

“You might as well. You have fixative?”

“What am I—an amateur?”

“Good. I’ll want to fix the drawing when we finish there.”

In Masuto’s car Dawson said, “The way I got it figured is this. This character ripped off something important thirty years ago and you’re after him now. It had to be a homicide, otherwise the statute of limitations would have wiped it out. I would be mighty pleased to be let in on your secret, Sergeant Masuto.”

“Sorry. You’ll just have to be patient and read about it in the papers.”

“I don’t read the papers, sergeant. It’s too depressing. I watch the news on TV with a pad, and I draw everything I see. That’s what’s responsible for the whole decay of the art scene. Nobody knows how to draw anymore. No standards. To me drawing is like playing the piano. You just have to stick with it every day of your life or you lose it.”

Hartman kept them waiting for half an hour before he was ready to see them, during which time Dawson attempted to sketch one of the women sitting in the waiting room and was told in no uncertain terms that she had not come there to be an artist’s model. He contented himself with sketching Masuto, and had achieved a fair likeness when the receptionist told them that the doctor could see them now.

In Hartman's office Masuto introduced Dawson while the doctor unwrapped sandwiches.

"Mighty kind of you," Dawson said. "I didn't expect lunch to come with it."

"My contribution to the good cause," Hartman said.

Masuto placed the glossy photograph of Cutler on Hartman's desk. "This is the man who may have murdered Ben McKeever. This picture of him was taken perhaps thirty-three years ago, when he went to work at the Midtown Manhattan National Bank. It's not the best picture in the world, but it's all we have. That appears to have been a rather bad scar on his jaw, possibly a war wound. Now Dawson, here, has drawn his likeness as he might appear today. Of course there's guesswork on Dawson's part, but it's a beginning. Here is what I would like you to do, doctor, if you will be so kind. The man in the photo comes into your office, as he came into McKeever's office. I don't know what went on there, and probably we never will know. But the fact is that he persuaded McKeever to change his face. Now just for the sake of our experiment, let us imagine that you are in McKeever's place. This man comes into your office and he persuades you to change his face. Now I know nothing about your practice, but I suspect that both you and McKeever would follow somewhat the same procedure. Or are there many alternatives?"

Hartman was studying the photograph. "No, not too many alternatives. Perhaps none. Is this the only picture?"

"As I said, the only one."

"If we only had a profile. But we haven't, have we."

"Here is Dawson's drawing."

Hartman put down the glossy and stared at the drawing. "It's damn good."

"Is it a reasonable reconstruction of the aging process?"

"Fairly so. I think you've made the neck too scrawny. The photo shows a very muscular neck. I would guess that he would wear a sixteen and a half or a seventeen shirt. Age would add flesh to it, and there would be some horizontal lines under the chin."

"He is a man who stays in excellent physical condition," Masuto said.



“Oh?” Hartman looked at him thoughtfully. “May I ask how you know that if you don’t know who he is?”

“In time. Could we get back to the photo? He comes into your office. You agree to change his face. What would you do?”

Hartman turned to Dawson. “How long would it take you to make a tracing of this photo—a line drawing but with all the features and marks?”

“About five minutes.”

“Do it. Meanwhile we’ll eat. You see,” he said to Masuto, taking a bite out of his sandwich, “there is not too much you can do with the human face. We’re not molding in clay. We work with flesh and bone. It’s very popular in novels and movies for the criminal to go to a plastic surgeon and order a new face. It really can’t be done. Now during the war I was a young surgeon in the Pacific, and since then I’ve done a great deal of work with people who are badly burned or injured in car crashes. In such cases, you very often do build a completely new face, but only because the old face has been destroyed, and in such cases the countenance is never quite normal.”

“Why couldn’t McKeever have done this with him?”

“Smash his face? Burn it? No, sergeant, we don’t do such things. Cosmetic surgery is limited, thank God.”

Dawson finished the tracing and handed it to the doctor. He laid it on his desk with the photograph beside it. “Suppose you change the neck on your drawing, and let me study these for a few minutes.”

For the next few minutes Hartman munched his sandwich and studied the tracing and the photo. Then he said to Dawson, “Move around so you can see what I’m doing. Then you make the changes in your drawing.”

“Okay, Doc. Got you.”

“First thing, we get rid of the scar.” He made marks on the tracing.

“Can you do that and show no new scars?” Masuto asked.

“If you’re good, and Ben McKeever was good.”

“Heavier neck and no scar,” Dawson said.

“Get rid of the mole.”

“Done.”

“Now, in getting rid of the scar, we make this incision on the other side of the jaw, cut here and here, and lo and behold we’ve changed the shape of his mouth.”

“How much?” Dawson asked.

“Just a trifle.” He made the change on his tracing. “But see how it changes his appearance. A rather petulant look, but his face would light up more when he smiles. It might give him a charming smile, and I suppose that with his nature, that would be an asset. Now the nose, and there’s the problem. The most prominent feature on man’s face, the nose. If we only had a profile. Do you know his name?” he asked Masuto.

“Is that important?”

“It might be.”

“Cutler. Stanley Cutler.”

“Anglo-Saxon. Or Irish, conceivably. Irish would account for that long, pointed nose—straight, long, and pointed. We’ll bob it, very simple, done it a hundred times. Here, young fellow.” He made the change on his tracing, and carefully using his kneaded eraser, Dawson changed the drawing to conform.

“Ah, now we’re beginning to see what the devil looks like. Now, one more simple detail, and we’ll have Mr. Cutler with a face that even his own mother wouldn’t recognize. Of course, that’s just an expression,” he explained to Masuto. “His mother might recognize him, but she’d want to know what he had done to himself. Then again, maybe she wouldn’t. I think if I were doing the job, she wouldn’t.”

“That one more simple detail?” Dawson suggested.

“Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. You see the way his brows come together? That’s perhaps the most noticeable feature on his face, that heavy line right across his brow. Well, we separate the brows. Remove a piece here, remove a piece here, and then, if we’re doing a really artistic job, we lessen the thickness of what remains by about a quarter of an inch. Like this.” He made the change on the tracing and pushed it over to Dawson. “See what he’s become? He’s no longer a sullen, miserable creature. He’s quite sensitive, isn’t he? The inquiring mind. Isn’t it marvelous what a raised brow will do? A trick actors learned long ago. There you are. McKeever has given him a

new face, a new look, a new character, and he could walk through the corridors of any police department in perfect security.”

“And you could do all this?” Masuto asked. “The man’s face would reveal no sign of it, no scars at all?”

“For the first few months the scars would show. After all, the trauma to the skin and flesh has been very severe.”

“How long?”

“Five, six, seven months. But they are fading. By now, all trace should be gone, even to close examination.”

“Is it possible for fingerprints to disappear with burns on the fingertips?”

“Yes, indeed. And even without severe burns, if one does work of a certain kind. Great mythology about fingerprints. But you have aroused my curiosity enormously. When do you expect to arrest this man?”

“As soon as I find him,” Masuto replied, knowing it was hardly that simple. “You’ve helped us enormously.”

“It’s been fascinating. Both of you very interesting.” He handed a card to Dawson. “Keep in touch. I use an artist quite often, and the work pays. Give me a call next week.” And to Masuto he said, “I have stifled my curiosity, but a Nisei detective on our little police force, I must say I like the notion.”

“It’s interesting work,” Masuto said for want of anything else to say.

Outside, Dawson said, “So it goes. Art for art’s sake. From police artist to the reconstruction of the faces of rich dames. I wonder what he pays?”

“Ask him.”

“Right. What do you think, sergeant, am I worth twenty dollars an hour?”

“Every bit of it.”

“It’s not what they pay me at the L.A.P.D., but this is Beverly Hills, isn’t it?”

“It certainly is.”

“You got kids, sergeant?”

“Two of them.”

“Well, if they want to be artists, discourage them. My uncle’s a rancher, but I saw cows branded once, and that was the end of it for

me. I'll ride back to your office with you and fix the drawing, and then if you're finished with me, I'll take in some of those lousy galleries on La Cienega. Might as well see what the competition is doing."

After Dawson had left, Masuto took the charcoal drawing into Wainwright and spread it out on his desk.

"What's this?"

"Stanley Cutler."

"Is this what you needed the police artist for? It doesn't even resemble the photo you showed me."

"No? Well, it's thirty years later and he's had a lot of cosmetic surgery."

Wainwright grinned and shook his head. "You are wonderful, Masao. I don't know what the hell to make of you, but you are something." He stared at the drawing again. "On the other hand, I could swear that I've seen this man somewhere."

"It's rather unique, isn't it?" Masuto said. "We discover the skeleton of a man murdered thirty years ago. The murderer has killed five other people. We know his name, and I think we know what he looks like and tonight I suspect I will know who he is, and we can't touch him."

"So you've come to that conclusion too?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Well, there it is," Wainwright said. "It happens. I think it happens a lot more than the public suspects. There's a lot of killers, a lot of criminals walking around on the streets, and the cops know it, and the cops can't touch them."

"I still have to know who he is."

"Why? What good will it do? You can't tie him into any of the murders. You can't even tie him into the embezzlement, because if he has no prints and his face is changed, there's no way ever to prove that he's Stanley Cutler."

"Don't forget," Masuto said, "that he has taken the name of the man he put under the swimming pool."

"So you say. Guesses. He could take any name. In the right places here in L.A. you can buy a social security card and a birth certificate, not to mention honorable discharge papers. So why stay with the name of the man he killed?"

“Because it gives him roots, a place of origin, a hometown. This man didn’t want to lose himself. He wanted to be a man of position and power. Those are his gods, wealth and power, and to have those things, he has killed without mercy.”

Wainwright looked at him long and thoughtfully. “You know, Masao,” he finally said, “we’ve been together a lot of years. If you weren’t Nisei, you’d be running this police force, although with your mind, I never understood why you wanted to be a cop. I know,” he continued, waving a hand, “it’s your karma. Only I don’t buy that. I don’t buy one little bit of it. It’s something else. I’ve watched you through a lot of cases, and particularly through this. And most of the time, I keep my mouth shut and give you a free hand. So this time I kept my mouth shut, which maybe I shouldn’t have done.” He tapped the drawing on his desk. “You’ve gone to a lot of effort. You figured out what kind of a crime led to that murder up on Laurel Way. You tracked it down. You got yourself a suspect. You got his name and background and you got a picture of what he might look like if he were alive today—and to get this picture you had to tie in a plastic surgeon and his nurse. But I’ve been asking around about Dr. Ben McKeever. Masao, he was an addict, and his nurse was an addict, and he had fouled up his life from A to Z. You took what Leo Hartman told you for gospel. Well, I don’t know what the relationship between Hartman and McKeever was, but either Hartman was taken in by McKeever, or he was covering. Well, that’s all right. McKeever was a middle-aged man and Hartman was just starting out, so maybe McKeever threw him some bones, so to speak.”

“Where did you get all this?” Masuto asked him.

“Where do you think? I called Chief Maddox, who ran the police force thirty years ago. He’s almost eighty, but he has all his buttons, and he told me the circumstances. They were having an affair. The nurse’s name was Mary Clancy. One of her kids smashed up a car and was killed. Mary overdosed and died. McKeever called the cops. When they got there, the house was in flames. The dirty stuff was hushed up. So this picture doesn’t mean one damn thing.”

“I think it does,” Masuto said slowly. “It’s been in back of my mind since I called the F.B.I. It’s been there, and I kept chasing it away.”

“What’s been there?”

“Just a notion. I chase it away, and it comes back and reverses everything. Let’s suppose that John Doe is Stanley Cutler, that it’s Stanley Cutler’s skeleton that we found under the pool, that his partner planned and executed the whole thing. Then there would be no need for concealment on the killer’s part, and no way to connect him with the embezzlement. He put Cutler into the bank, showed him how to operate, and then, when the proper moment arrived, killed him.”

“Then if you thought of this, why this whole business of the police artist?”

“Because I don’t know. You’re telling me that McKeever was in neck deep. All the more reason why he should do business with a man like Cutler. If he called the police, he could have done so at the point of a gun. But maybe that’s all a surmise with no foundation. Do you want me to drop it at this point? You’re the boss. You’ve been needling me about dropping it. Do you really want me to?”

Wainwright stared at Masuto for a long moment, and then he said, “Goddamnit, no! That murder thirty years ago was on our turf. I want you to find the bastard and bring him in.”

# ISHIDO

Even Masuto, who could look at the enormous wealth and very conspicuous consumption of Beverly Hills with objectivity and without envy, related to his wife's kinsman, Ishido, with awe. It was not simply that Ishido's wealth was larger than most Beverly Hills wealth; it was the way Ishido was. Whereas visitors to Beverly Hills have often noted that it specializes in vulgarity, Ishido epitomized taste. Actually, Ishido did not live in Beverly Hills, but a few miles to the west in Bel-Air, a neighborhood with a little more posh and perhaps a good deal more money than Beverly Hills. There Ishido lived alone—his wife having died seven years before—in a large, single-story Japanese-style house, surrounded by green hedges, a brick wall, and patrolled by two armed guards and two Doberman pinschers. Ishido himself was a small, deceptively gentle and pleasant man of some sixty-five years. At the age of twenty-five he had been a colonel in the Imperial Japanese Army. When the war ended, he was the youngest general in the army. He had come to California in 1947 to represent one of the new Japanese companies that were rising out of the ruins left by the war, and now, thirty-three years later, he was retired, a multi-millionaire, and a quiet power in the Los Angeles area.

Ishido had come from a moderately important Samurai family; but moderately important or not, his was still Samurai. Masuto's father had been a gardener; and Kati remembered this as Masuto finished his dinner and headed for the door.

"Masao," she called softly.

He paused and turned to her.

“You are going to see Ishido?”

“Yes, I told you so. It’s no great joy, but I have to see him. I don’t know who else can help me now.”

“Like that? The way you are dressed?”

He was wearing his brown tweed jacket and gray flannel trousers. The jacket was two years old and the trousers were wrinkled. He wore a white shirt without a tie and open at the neck. His brown shoes were scuffed and needed shining.

“This is the way I dress,” Masuto said with annoyance. “I am a policeman, a cop. Ishido knows that. He has been kind enough to see me on very short notice—insufferably kind—and I have no intention of deluding him with the notion that a Beverly Hills cop can afford to buy his clothes at Carroll’s,” he said, referring to the fine men’s shop at the corner of Rodeo and Santa Monica.

“But you might well convince him,” Kati said, smiling, “that a Beverly Hills cop has a wife who can press trousers most excellently.”

“Would it make you happy?”

“Please.”

Masuto took off his trousers, and sat glumly and unhappily in his underwear in the kitchen. When his son and daughter glanced in and began to titter, he snapped at them angrily.

“What has come over you?” Kati asked.

“I have reached a point where I can conceal my ignorance from everyone but myself.”

“Oh, Masao, the things you say!”

“Why didn’t I trust myself? I sensed it from the beginning. There were two men. One was strong, demonic, aggressive, pathological. The other was weak and malleable. Kati, if Cutler were the strong man, there would have been no need for him to kill Lundman. Because if he were Cutler, his face would have been changed, his fingerprints absent—then how could anyone identify him or accuse him? But the other man, John Doe, he was not wanted by the F.B.I. No one was looking for him—unless Lundman or Mrs. Brody remembered. And do you know why they would remember?”



Because he, John Doe, and not Cutler was the strong, demonic, and aggressive one.”

“I really don’t know what on earth you’re talking about,” Kati said.

“I should have known, sensed it, but no, I spend two days looking for evidence. Well, that’s over. Perhaps we’ll never find him, and certainly, we can never convict him. But we shall see.”

He pulled on his trousers and said to Kati, “I dislike going there. The last time I was there, I came as a kinsman and left as a policeman.”

“Be natural. When you are natural, you are the most charming man in the world.”

“Ah, so. Yes. I will try. Don’t wait up for me. I will probably be very late.”

In spite of Masuto’s apprehensions, Ishido appeared delighted to see him. He did Masuto the honor of answering the door himself, a small, smiling man in a magnificent black robe. Seated in Ishido’s living room, which was tastefully but sparsely furnished in the Japanese manner, Masuto accepted a paper-thin teacup from an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties. The tea was green and pungent, and after it had been poured the attractive young woman disappeared. Well, Ishido was a widower. He was entitled to live as he saw fit.

“In the past, Masao,” Ishido said to him, “you attempted a discussion in Japanese. Perhaps that was unfortunate.”

“We will talk in English if you prefer,” Masuto said.

“It will be better. It is the tongue you were born to and the tongue I have spoken for thirty-four years. There is a legend around, Masao, that I long for the old days. Nonsense! I love Los Angeles, and I shall die here. For a Buddhist, there is no foreign land.”

“I must agree with you.”

“You still meditate?” Ishido asked.

“Ah, yes. Indeed.”

“Good. And Kati and the children?”

“All well.”

“Good. Very good. Now what may I do for you, Masao? You have come with a rolled drawing in your hand. Do you desire my opinion

as an art expert?"

Masuto unrolled the sketch the police artist had made and spread it out on the low tea table.

"I will not give you my opinion as an art expert," Ishido said.

"The work of a police artist. He draws well, if mechanically."

"Of course. So very sorry for my levity. For that purpose it is excellent."

"Tell me, sir," Masuto said, "is it true what I have heard?"

"And what have you heard?" Ishido asked, smiling.

"I must go beyond common courtesy, but it is absolutely necessary if you are to help me."

"A situation not uncommon."

"I have heard that you are as wealthy as Norton Simon, with better taste and a wider circle of influence here in southern California."

"I have never counted Norton's wealth, but I have the most profound respect for his taste. Are you after him?"

"Oh, no. Certainly not." Masuto pointed to the police drawing. "Do you know this man?"

Ishido studied the picture thoughtfully. "I'm afraid not. No, I have never seen that face before. Do you know him, Masao?"

Masuto took a long, deep breath. "Yes, as a skeleton we found under a swimming pool in Laurel Way."

"Ah, so. Yes. I read about the skeleton. Who murdered the man, Masao?"

"I hope that before I leave here tonight, honored kinsman, you will tell me his name. Otherwise ..." Masuto folded his hands and shook his head.

"Am I a suspect, nephew?" Ishido asked undisturbed.

"Heaven forbid. Our suspect is five feet eight and a half inches tall, and he weights at least fifty pounds more than you do."

"Remarkable, Masao. You know how tall he is and you know how heavy he is. Do you also know the color of his eyes?"

"Blue, I'm quite certain."

"Ah, so! We have here a game in the old sense, when they used to say that the only game worth anything was one where a human life was at stake. You have made a presumption that this man is a part

of what the younger folk would call the southern California establishment.”

“With all due humility, yes. And I am told that you know them all.”

“Perhaps most, Masao. But satisfy my curiosity. Where did you get a picture of the man you found under the pool?”

“From the F.B.I. Except that I, being a fool, decided that this man is the murderer.”

“But he is not.”

“No, he is the victim.”

“You pique my curiosity and my sense of the game. Let us discuss the murderer. He is five feet eight and a half, blue eyes, heavily built—and wealthy? But of course he would be wealthy if you place him in the establishment.”

“In nineteen fifty,” Masuto said, “he embezzled two million eight hundred thousand dollars from a bank. The embezzlement was not done by the murderer, but by his partner, whom he subsequently killed. I suspect he transferred the wealth to Los Angeles.”

“Bearer bonds, some bank accounts,” Ishido guessed.

“Ah, so,” Masuto nodded. “But he is filled with a sense of power, aggressiveness. He must move into the community of power.”

“The business world?”

“So I would guess.”

Ishido poured some hot tea and sipped it. Then he closed his eyes and touched his fingers to his forehead. “Nineteen fifty-one—the latter half?”

“I can only guess, and I am reaching a point where I must doubt my guesses. The man under the pool was killed, I believe, in June or July of nineteen fifty. If it took him a year to establish himself—?”

“In what field?” Ishido asked mildly.

“I don’t know. I have given no thought to that.”

Smiling thinly, Ishido nodded. “Did I hear or read somewhere that these two people, the Lundmans, were killed with the bare hands of the murderer?”

“Perhaps I mentioned it. I am not sure it was in the papers.”

“Karate?”

“I think so.”

“So we add to our portrait, Masao. He is an enthusiast of the old art, which he perverts. To kill in karate is not only ignoble, but a perversion of all the excellence that endows the martial arts. Do you still practice, Masao?”

“Yes, when I can.”

“Masao,” Ishido said softly, “what hornets’ nest do you stir up here? Tell me, do you have any evidence you can bring against this man?”

“No.”

“So it is when you function in a democracy. Your police are very efficient, and at times, as for example with yourself, quite intelligent. But powerless. Here is a man who killed in cold blood—how many times did you say, Masao?”

“Six that I know of.”

“Each killing predetermined, planned, executed with assassinlike precision, and we know of the murders and we know who he is. But we cannot touch him.”

“Respected uncle!” Masuto said sharply.

“Yes?”

“You said we know who he is. True, we know who Stanley Cutler is. But I strongly suspect that Stanley Cutler is not the killer but instead is the victim.”

“Ah, so. I agree.”

“Then if you know who the killer is, you know who John Doe is.”

“Yes. I think so. Insofar as knowledge and truth have any meaning or substance. Frequently I doubt that they do.”

“Speaking philosophically, I agree with you. But in wholly mundane terms, uncle, do you know this man I seek?”

“I know one who fits your description. In nineteen fifty he bought a half interest in a small aerospace company in Orange County. I know him because we have had various business dealings and because we belong to the same country club, the West Los Angeles Club.”

Amazed that his uncle, still Japanese for all his wealth and power and taste, had been admitted to the West Los Angeles Club, which had built such solid ramparts against Jews, Mexicans, and other lesser breeds, Masuto attempted to conceal his response; but Ishido simply shrugged and asked him, “Why so astonished, Masao?”

“Not at all.”

“Come, come. You are absolutely amazed that they would admit me, a former officer in the imperial army, a Japanese, an Oriental, into their sacred precincts. But my dear Masao, I am inordinately wealthy—which is all that counts. Then my having been with the army of the enemy becomes romantic, being an Oriental becomes exotic, and my being rather small and withered is overlooked—and in any case, my manners are so much better than theirs. So, you see, I was invited to join. I don’t play golf, but I do frequently dine there, both for lunch and for dinner. The food is excellent. Ah, now!” He clapped his hands and grinned at Masuto. “We shall all dine there together, myself, you, and the murderer.”

“You can’t be serious?”

“But of course I am. Not only serious but enchanted. Can you guess who this man is who fits your description? Come, Masao, I have given you one hint already—the aerospace company. Let me give you another—the gift of twelve magnificent Picassos to the Los Angeles Museum of Art.”

“Incredible,” Masuto whispered. “It can’t be. Saunders Aerospace is the largest company of its kind in the West. It’s a prime supplier for the Pentagon. And Eric Saunders—you do mean Eric Saunders?”

“I certainly do,” Ishido said cheerfully.

“You mean Eric Saunders is either Stanley Cutler or—”

Ishido poured another cup of tea and handed it to Masuto. “Come now, nephew. It is time to end this confusion. You showed me that very clever drawing of Stanley Cutler as he would be today if he were made over by a plastic surgeon. There is no Stanley Cutler. The skeleton is Stanley Cutler. Eric Saunders is Eric Saunders, very clean, as they say here, very public. No secrets in Eric Saunders’s past, no need for plastic surgery or any of that nonsense. We are talking about one of a half dozen of the most distinguished citizens of southern California, an industrial tycoon of major national importance. He is the youngest son of the Earl of Hewton. You know, Masao, when the old Earl died and the estate was neck deep in debt, Eric bought it and made a gift of it to the British National Trust. Didn’t want it himself. He’s an American citizen, member of the Republican National Committee, president of Saunders Aerospace,

on a dozen boards, including several fine universities, a millionaire a hundred times over, and a member of the West Los Angeles Country Club.”

“And also a murderer?”

“Who knows? But what an incredible possibility! You know, he does fit your description. Came here in nineteen fifty or so with apparently unlimited funds. People took it for granted that he had a line of credit from his British bankers. But he might well have laundered the money through Mexico and back to England and then here. He’s about the height you want, blue eyes, fifty-nine or sixty, I would say, splendid physical condition.”

“Is he a friend of yours?” Masuto asked.

“Ah, that would be an unhappy turn of events. No. Neither a friend nor an enemy, although I should not enjoy having him as an enemy. But if he is the man you seek, he is certainly not your common murderer.”

“In some ways, yes,” Masuto said. “He is as much a psychopath as any downtown hoodlum. In other ways—well, he presents problems.”

“You must meet him of course?”

“Why should he care to meet me?” Masuto wondered.

“I will tell him that you are a master of the true Okinawan art.”

“Karate? He practices karate?”

“Of course.”

“Then he is my man,” Masuto said, nodding somberly.

“No, nephew. You have no evidence. He is possibly a murderer, but not your man. No one’s man.”

The young woman appeared again, bearing a fresh pot of tea. She wore a black silk kimono, embroidered in gold thread. She set down the teapot and left. Ishido poured the tea, and then looked inquiringly at Masuto.

“Something troubles you?” Ishido asked, a note of mockery in his voice.

“Why do you give him to me?”

“Ah. Isn’t it my duty to aid the police?”

“With all due respect, I cannot accept such an explanation.”

“Then let us simply say that my karma involves Saunders. You are a Buddhist. You comprehend karma.”

“How long have you known Saunders? You said he came here in nineteen fifty. Did you meet him then?”

Ishido smiled. “You are very clever, Masao, but you are also very presumptuous. I think we have talked enough. If you wish to know more about my relationship with Eric Saunders and why I lead you to him, join us for dinner as I suggested.”

A few minutes later Masuto left Ishido’s house, aware that he was being used and irritated because he had no notion of why and how he was being used.

## THE BOMB

The following morning, which was Thursday, Ishido telephoned Masuto at home. Kati answered the phone, and the fact that it was Ishido placed her in a quandary. For one thing Ishido was the most romantic and unapproachable part of her life. He was wealthy beyond Kati's imagination; women had threaded in and out of his life; and he would embark for Tokyo as casually as Kati might embark for the closest supermarket. On the other hand, Masuto was meditating when Ishido called, and Kati fiercely resisted interrupting him at his meditation.

"He will return your call in a few minutes, honored uncle. A thousand apologies."

"A thousand apologies are too many, my darling," Masuto told her a while later. "Your kinsman, Ishido, is both a hunter and a game player. Like all men of great wealth, his life is a struggle against boredom, and I have displaced his boredom with a new and fascinating game. Believe me, he will find me. I cannot evade him until he sees this new game played out."

"I don't understand—"

The telephone rang.

"Ah, so! Unless I miss my guess, there is Ishido again."

Kati answered the phone and then handed it to her husband. "It is my honorable uncle."

"I must apologize," Masuto told Ishido. "I was at my meditation."

"Of course. How insufferable of me to interrupt it. And now?"

"Now I am finished."



“Ah, so. Very good.” Ishido, for all of his imperturbability, could not keep the excitement out of his voice. “I have spoken to my old acquaintance, Eric Saunders, and in spite of the fact that he has one of the most active social and business schedules of perhaps any man in southern California, he will be delighted to dine with both of us at the club tonight.”

“Why?” Masuto asked coldly.

If Ishido caught the icy note in Masuto’s voice, he gave no sign of it, simply repeating, “This evening at my club, Masao.”

“I asked you why? Why should a man of affairs and of his importance take the time to dine with an ordinary policeman?”

“Perhaps because he understands that you are not an ordinary policeman. Perhaps because I mentioned your consuming interest in the skeleton that was discovered under the swimming pool.”

“No, that’s not enough. You are using me,” Masuto said angrily.

“And were you not willing to use me? Of course I am using you, and you in turn are using me. This is no common homicide, Masao. You are up against a titan.”

“No, sir, if you will forgive me. I am up against a sick and vile man, a psychopath, someone who should be locked up before he does more hurt to more people.”

“As you will.”

“Why did he agree to dine with us?”

“Because I told him you had discovered that the skeleton under the pool was that of a man named Stanley Cutler.”

“I see. And how did he react to that?”

“At first there was no reaction at all. Then he looked at me with a sort of malignant curiosity. Oh, yes, Masao, he would not hesitate to kill me should the occasion arise. Of course, I am not one of those who is easily killed, and perhaps he understands that. You see, he does respect me, or he would not have seen me so late at night and on such short notice. Yes, he agreed to dine with us.”

“What is the source of your own hatred?” Masuto asked.

“My hatred?”

“Yes, your hatred.”

“You press me back too many years, Masao. You are born in this country and you are not yet forty years old. Let me say only that our

paths crossed in Burma many years ago, and this man, Eric Saunders, shot a Japanese prisoner in cold blood. Such things were done by both sides, but Saunders—well, I waited, and my patience was rewarded.”

“There is no evidence that will convict him,” Masuto said angrily. “You know that as well as I do.”

“You will manage, nephew. I have faith in you.”

When he put down the telephone, Kati mentioned his irritation. “What has Ishido done to annoy you so?”

“He has put me in an impossible position.”

“I am sorry.”

“It will be all right,” Masuto assured her as he kissed her and then left the house. But would it be—and in what way? He found himself looking over his shoulder, and before he started his car, he looked underneath it and then under the hood. The threat of Eric Saunders was not simply the threat of a single man, but the threat of great amounts of money and of vast resources. Masuto knew that there was no protection against assassination, no protection against a determined killer. He might miss once, twice, three times—but in the end he would be successful. Well, perhaps Ishido was right to drive the thing to its end, whatever the end might be.

Instead of going directly to the police station, Masuto stopped off at the Beverly Hills office of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, where his cousin, Alan Toyada, was in charge of research.

“No, don’t tell me,” Toyada greeted him. “They have raised your wages. You have money to invest. You’re on the take now—”

“Your humor is puerile and infantile.”

“It’s not my humor, Masao. You’re always so damn bloody serious.”

“Unfortunately, I live in that world.”

“Forgive the humor. What can I do for you?”

“Eric Saunders.”

“Ah. And from what point of view?”

“To begin, an investment.”

“For yourself? I mean—well, who knows, it is possible that Ishido passed on suddenly. Supposedly, he has no children, but from what I have heard, his heirs might well pop up all over the place. On the

other hand, Kati would, I am sure, come in for a large piece of capital which should be properly invested.”

“I come to you as a policeman, not as an investor,” Masuto said, and possibly would have added that unless Toyada stopped babbling, nothing would be accomplished—except that Toyada was thin-skinned, as well as insensitive, a more common combination than one might suppose.

“Oh, yes, of course, Masao. But you asked me about Saunders as an investment.”

“I’m curious.”

“Excellent, excellent. Profits have gone up at least fifteen percent a year for five years now. Amazing record. The stock has doubled during the past twelve months.”

“How do you account for that?”

“Good engineers. Space contracts. And of course their new shuttle passenger plane. They have almost a billion dollars in back orders. It’s a short-haul shuttle, lands anywhere, carries two hundred and forty passengers, wide body, comfortable. Oh, yes, if I had the money, I’d buy.”

“And how much of this is due to Saunders himself?”

“That’s hard to say. He still plays an active role in the company, makes the hard decisions, but I hear he has his fingers in other pies as well—museums, films, politics.”

“What are his politics?”

“Well, he does government work, so he’s for the administration, but they say he plays both sides of the fence. I imagine he does.”

“And what about his morality?” Masuto asked.

“I don’t think you mean women, Masao?”

“No, I don’t mean women.”

“Well, you know as well as I do that you can’t discuss big business in terms of morality. Rules, yes, morality, no.”

“All right, Alan, rules. Does he break the rules?”

“No more than anyone else. I’m sure he pays off wherever it’s necessary, but who doesn’t? He doesn’t raid other companies, but then he doesn’t have to. He’s his own steamroller and he’s driving Saunders Aerospace right to the top.”

“Has he ever married?”

“No, which doesn’t mean he’s gay. He’s had a parade of women through his life.”

“How does that come into your financial research?” Masuto asked curiously.

“It doesn’t. I read *Los Angeles* magazine and a few of its lesser companion journals. He’s mentioned frequently. Tell me, why all this interest? What do you know that I don’t know, now that you’ve squeezed all that I do know out of me?”

“Nothing that would be helpful.”

“Have you got something on Saunders? Are you going to bust him? Should we go short on the stock?”

“No way I know of that I can bust him,” Masuto said.

“If you do, give me an edge.”

“I promise,” Masuto said.

Back at the station house, Masuto told Wainwright about his talk with Ishido and Ishido’s conclusions.

“You ask me,” Wainwright said, “your Uncle Ishido is leaping to some pretty dangerous and far out conclusions. Eric Saunders is not nobody. He’s one of the most prominent citizens in our town, nationally known, a man of wealth and power. If one word of our discussion were to leak out of here, Masao, he could sue us right off the face of the map. And he would too. What in hell makes this Ishido so sure of himself?”

“Ishido is hard to explain. You know that he was in the old imperial army. He will never return to Japan, but he also never forgets that he is Japanese. There is some indication upon Ishido’s part that he crossed paths with Saunders somewhere in the East, perhaps in Burma, and that he had a grudge against Saunders.”

“Which would certainly not promote any objectivity on his part.”

“Except for one thing, which worries me and complicates this even further. Last night Ishido either telephoned Saunders or saw him in person. Ishido told him that I knew the man under the pool was Stanley Cutler and that I also knew that Saunders had killed him. You see, tonight, Saunders, Ishido, and I will dine together at Ishido’s club, and I can think of no reason on earth why Saunders should have agreed to this dinner unless Ishido told him what I knew.”

“What in hell does Ishido think he’s up to?”

“He’s playing a game.”

“And where do we come in?”

“I don’t know,” Masuto said slowly.

“But since Saunders agreed, you feel there’s no question but that he’s our man?”

“None.”

“So to come back to the skeleton under the pool, the reason why there was never a report of someone missing is very simple. There never was anyone missing except Cutler, and everyone concluded that he had taken off. Saunders never had to hide. He took the money, laundered it, and appeared on the scene here as a young British millionaire. And there is not a damn thing we can do about it. Then why does he want to meet you?”

“I suppose it’s a conceit. He knows we can’t touch him, and a dangerous game is nothing new to him. Then there’s still our only ace in the hole—Rosita. I think he would like to know something about me. He is black belt karate and probably versed in all of the martial arts. Very often, Westerners who take up the martial art make a kind of pseudo-religion out of it—and I’m sure Ishido told him I have some skill in karate.”

“Come off that,” Wainwright said harshly. “No games!”

“The games are there.”

“If you are thinking of fighting Saunders in this goddamn Chinese wrestling art of yours, forget it.”

“Will he forget it?”

“You know, Masao, there’s one thing you damn well better get used to. Criminals go free. Some crimes are punished; a hell of a lot of them are not. There is no way, no way in the world that you could charge Saunders and make it stick. Quite to the contrary, he may be sitting with his lawyers right this minute ready to sue the city for all we’ve got.”

“Not really,” Masuto said. “There isn’t enough money on earth to make Saunders put himself on a witness stand or put me on a witness stand. We can’t do anything, neither can he. It’s a standoff.”

“You know I got to give this to the L.A. cops and to the Inglewood cops,” Wainwright said.

“Why?”

“It’s procedure. You know that, Masao.”

“Suppose they make waves? Suppose they decide to question Saunders?”

“That’s their privilege.”

“Would it hurt to hold off a day or two?”

“Would it help?”

“Maybe,” Masuto said. “Nothing about this case becomes simpler, only more and more complicated. We were sure that Stanley Cutler had murdered the man under the swimming pool. Then the man under the swimming pool became Stanley Cutler, and the killer is someone called Eric Saunders whom neither of us has ever met. Let me take it one step further—”

But Masuto did not take it one step further. The telephone rang. It was Sy Beckman at the hotel, and he said quietly, “Masao, I think both doors into the corridor, Rosita’s and mine, are booby-trapped. I heard some sounds, and I hiked myself up to where I could look over the transom. There’s a steel box sitting in front of each door, and from the look of it, they’re ratchet loaded. I alerted Gellman to keep the help away from the two doors. I thought maybe you and Wainwright should get the L.A.P.D. bomb squad over here and get here yourselves, because I’ll be damned if I know what to do.”

“Is there no way out except through the doors?”

“We’re up three floors, Masao. If those charges are big enough, the whole wing could go. We’re over the pool and the gardens, so you couldn’t even get a fire truck under these windows. It’s a hell of a situation, and if we ever get out of this, I’m going to get Wainwright to slap them with every violation under the sun.”

“Meanwhile, I want you out of there. Make a rope of bedsheets, bedspreads, and blankets and lower Rosita to the ground, and then you slide down yourself. Now. Right now! We’ll be there in ten minutes.”

Then Masuto called the hotel and spoke to Gellman. “Oh, it’s great,” Gellman said. “You’ve really done it, sergeant. Just a couple of rooms for a few days, and now I got to explain to the board how come half the hotel was blown away.”

“They haven’t blown anything yet,” Masuto said soothingly. “Just empty that wing and don’t touch the booby traps. That will keep you from facing lawsuits.”

“Beautiful. Now you’re protecting me.”

“I’m trying to.”

“What’s going on?” Wainwright demanded.

“Just let me call the bomb squad and I’ll explain.”

Driving to the Beverly Glen Hotel at top speed, Masuto said, “He uses us, manipulates us, controls us. He got her out of the room. That was all he wanted, but what could I do? What could I do? I couldn’t leave them in there and let both of them die.”

“For Christ’s sake, Masao, nobody’s died yet.”

That was not so. Rosita was dead by the time Masuto or the ambulance reached the hotel. She had been shot three times while Beckman was lowering her from the window, once in the head and twice in the body.

# ERIC SAUNDERS

As if she were his own daughter, he hid his face to hide his tears. It was not his style to weep over the dead. He observed the routine; the routine was a necessity. Half a mile away were high rise apartments, and within half an hour, the rifle, a beautifully crafted Mauser-type five shot, was found on the rooftop of one of the apartment houses. The rifle was identified by the L.A.P.D. gun expert as a small-shop product, probably made in Italy or France about twenty years before. Masuto was uninterested. Police channels and thoroughness were not made for criminals of this type. Eventually, they would find out who made the gun, who sold it, who bought it, and it would all lead nowhere.

Beckman said, "My God, Masao, I never thought of it. It never occurred to me."

"I know."

"I figured those damn bombs were going off any moment, and then after I spoke to you, all I wanted was to get her out of there. She was a lovely kid. I was falling in love with that kid."

"I know."

"Masao, just let me get my hands on the bastard who did it—"

The bomb men didn't want anyone in the hallway where they were working, but Masuto insisted and pushed past the guards.

"Sergeant, it's off limits, even to you."



Beckman followed him, as if one could not do penance apart from the other. Stevenson, from the bomb squad, who knew Masuto, explained what they were up against. “Beckman guessed right. It’s ratchet and spring. The contraption is attached with suction cups; it’s wound in and then when it’s flat up against the surface—in this case the door—the pawl latches on the fuse. The slightest movement blows it, and no way to get into it. It’s simple, foolproof, and deadly, and so help me God, Masuto, I don’t know how to handle this one.”

“Unless, of course, there’s no explosive in the metal box.”

“I don’t go in for such guesses. When I see a bomb, I function on the theory that it’s loaded. This one has a clock mechanism as well as the ratchet and pawl. We’ll have to empty the hotel.”

“He had his marksman waiting half a mile away on a rooftop. The only function of that damn box was to get the girl out of the window.”

“I can’t take the chance.”

“The hell with it!” Masuto said. “Come on, Sy, let’s get out of here.”

In the lobby downstairs Gellman stopped Masuto, pleading, “My God, sergeant, what are you doing to me? They’re emptying the hotel, and half of it may be blown to kingdom come. You try to be a good guy, and this is how it ends.”

“It won’t be blown away,” Masuto said tiredly. “I don’t know what else to tell you. I’m sorry this had to happen. The girl is dead, so she’s got the real short end.”

They left the hotel and Beckman said he needed a drink, and Masuto suggested a quiet place in Culver City, where they could sit and talk. Beckman had two double scotches and Masuto drank beer. “I don’t know,” Beckman said, “day and night together—I never met anyone like that kid, just a Mexican girl and an illegal, but the sweetest, kindest kid in the world.”

“Revenge is no good,” Masuto told him. “It solves nothing, satisfies nothing.”

“Goddamn you, Masao, you know who did it!”

“Yes.”

“I want him!”

“We all do. We’re not avenging angels. We’re not terrorists who make our own justice, and we’re not juries. We’re cops.”

“What are you telling me—that we can’t touch him?”

“No, we’ll touch him, even without Rosita. It’s not touching him—it’s trying to make some sense out of this, because right now it makes no damn sense at all.” He went to the telephone and called the Beverly Glen Hotel and asked for the desk. “This is Sergeant Masuto. What’s the situation with the bombs?”

“Duds, sir. They went off a few minutes ago. A couple of firecrackers in each one. No damage to speak of.”

Masuto walked back to the table where Beckman was working at the problem of getting drunk. “Go home, Sy,” Masuto told him. “Go home and finish a bottle and sleep it off.”

“What for? I got a lousy marriage. Home—home is to laugh, Masao. I’m not so old. I’m not forty yet. I could have married that Mexican kid and had everything I ever dreamed of having.”

“The only world is right here,” Masuto told him, putting an arm around the big man. “Come on, Sy, I’m going to drive you home.”

“What about Wainwright?”

“I’ll talk to him.”

Masuto dropped Beckman off at his home, and then he drove back to the station and told Wainwright that Beckman was drunk and sleeping it off.

“What in hell do you mean, drunk—it’s two o’clock in the afternoon!”

“I encouraged him. That Mexican kid meant a great deal to him. Stop pushing us. We’re both human.”

“Well, don’t get your ass up. Who’s pushing who?”

“Sorry, so sorry. I want this to be over.”

“I told you to leave it alone and let it be over.”

“Not that way.”

“You think Saunders shot the kid?”

“Himself? No,” Masuto said. “Did he hire the gun? A few hours ago I would have said yes, without any question. Now I don’t know.”

“You don’t want to talk about it?”

“Tomorrow.”

“You’re still going to see Saunders tonight?”

“Oh, yes. That I would not miss for anything.”

“Be careful, Masao.”

But no, Masuto told himself as he drove away from the police station. He was not threatened, nor was he in the line of fire—unless—no, that must be expelled from his mind. He must clear his mind and know exactly what he would say to his uncle, Naga Orashi. That was Monday when he had seen Naga; what was today? Wednesday? No, Wednesday was the day with the police artist. Today is Thursday, and the whole thing began only six days ago, when the heavy rains undermined a swimming pool and sent it sliding down into a canyon. And since then four more people had died.

He drove into the yard of Naga's construction company, and there was his wife's uncle Naga, sitting in his rocking chair, as if only a few minutes had gone by since Masuto had last seen him, nibbling at cold tea rice, caked and threaded through with ginger.

"Have some," he said to Masuto.

"Thank you. I am most grateful and very hungry, since I missed my lunch somewhere during the day."

"So? Indeed? So very busy, yet you find time to come and chat with this old Japanese gentleman."

"Why didn't you tell me that Ishido operated a back-hoe?"

Naga stared at Masuto for a long moment, and then he shook his head sadly. "Granted that you were born in this country, and granted that your Japanese is abominable, and granted that you have absorbed barbarian habits—granting all this, one would imagine that you still retain some comprehension of the fitness of things."

"We are not speaking of the fitness of things. We speak about the fact that I came to you as a policeman and you saw no reason to tell me that Ishido operated a backhoe."

"Perhaps you should not have come as a policeman, Masao."

"Oh?"

"Think about it. I am Kati's mother's brother. How would you characterize us in old Japan? Shopkeepers, perhaps. Ishido is tied by a marriage to Kati's father, so she is not of his blood. Ishido is of seven generations of Samurai. His father was an advisor to the old emperor. When Ishido was twenty-five years old, he was a colonel in the imperial army. He was decorated, honored; and when finally Japan fell, he could not remain there, shamed, dishonored. You

would not understand why he came here; it's an old form, the vanquished honoring the victor—a very old and honorable Japanese gesture, but one that evoked nothing from the conqueror who couldn't care less whether this young Japanese Samurai starved to death or not. Whereupon, I gave Ishido a job."

"And he learned to operate a backhoe?"

"Nephew, I did not conceal this from you. You never asked me, and it was so many years ago that the circumstances are most vague in my mind."

"But he did operate a backhoe?"

"Yes, as I recall. It was an opportunity for him to earn a bit more. Only for a while. Ishido was very clever."

"And did you perhaps rent this backhoe, driver and all, to Alex Brody when he built the house on Laurel Way?"

The old man knit his brows. "I don't know. Did I rent it or just lend it for a few days? It was so long ago."

"And Ishido with it? Come, dear uncle, try to remember."

"Possibly."

"You should have told me."

"You are chasing ghosts, Masao. The past is dead. We who are Japanese should know that better than others. How could we live if the past were not dead?"

"I am not Japanese," Masuto said unhappily. "I was born here in California. My wife was born here, and my children here."

"No, you are not Japanese," Naga agreed. "But in a manner of speaking, Ishido is your kinsman."

"I'll be back in a moment," Masuto said. He walked to his car, and from the trunk rack, he took the photocopy that the F.B.I. had sent to him. He brought it to Naga.

"You know this man?" he asked Naga.

"A thing like this," Naga said, blinking at the photocopy, "it could be anyone. It was so long ago—"

"Or someone."

"How did you come by this picture, Masao?"

Masao shook his head. "I can't explain that now. But when I leave, honored uncle, there is no need to telephone Ishido and warn him. He knows what I know."

“I have not spoken to Ishido in more than twenty years,” Naga said sadly. “I have no love or affection for him. But we are kinsmen. Of course, I am speaking out of a lack of knowledge. Mr. Lundman and his wife were killed, a terrible thing. Ishido did not do that.”

“And the skeleton under the swimming pool?”

“Who knows what went on there? Who will ever know?”

“You told me the grave could not be dug with a backhoe. It is your business to know such things. Now I must ask you again—could the grave have been dug with a backhoe?”

Still studying the photo and without looking up, Naga said, “This is a very strange picture indeed, Masao, not of any person, but—” He switched into Japanese. “A thing lurks in shadow and asks for recognition.” And then in English, “Is it not an article of your Buddhist thinking that the vibrations of the subject are in the drawing?”

“It is an article of damn nonsense!” Masuto said with irritation. “I asked you a simple question. Should I go elsewhere? There are twenty contractors in this city whom I can ask to join me on Laurel Way, and who will give me a plain answer as to whether that grave was dug with a backhoe.”

“Gently, gently, Masao,” the old man begged him. “Why such anger?”

“Because murder angers me.”

“All right. Listen then. Your twenty contractors could not give you a firm answer. If your backhoe had a ten-inch claw spread, then it could have gouged out the grave and made the final shaping easier.”

“Why didn’t you tell me that the other day?”

“You know why.”

“And what do you find there?” Masuto asked harshly, pointing to the photo.

“A resemblance.”

“To whom?”

“To a laborer, I think. It was long ago.”

“What? Or to Eric Saunders?”

“Not obviously. If I saw it somewhere, in a book or a newspaper, I would not think of Mr. Saunders.”

“But you do think of him now?”

“I don’t know—”

“Perhaps you have been thinking a great deal about Mr. Saunders?”

“Masao, Masao, we shelter our kinsmen when we can. I would do it for you. You would do it for me.”

“Uncle,” Masuto said with annoyance, “what kind of talk is that? Shelter a kinsman when he is hungry or cold, but a murderer?” He stalked over to the car, and this time he returned with the drawing the police artist had made under Dr. Hartman’s direction. “And this?” he demanded, thrusting the drawing at Naga. “This is not so long ago that your memory must fail you.”

“Am I a criminal that you speak to me so?” Naga asked unhappily.

“You are my revered uncle. But you must tell me the truth.”

“Yes, it’s Saunders. He had his face changed. I knew and Ishido knew—”

“Do you also know you are in terrible danger?”

“I am an old man. Each night I go to sleep with the knowledge that I may not awaken. I am not afraid of danger.”

For a long moment, Masuto studied his uncle. Then he asked, more gently, “What dealings did Ishido have with Eric Saunders?”

“I know very little of what went on there. I don’t even know how they met. I only remember that Saunders needed someone who could speak Japanese. There was a litigation of a landholding in the San Fernando Valley, land that had belonged to Japanese nationals and was seized by the government. I think it comprised eleven hundred acres. Saunders bought the land at auction, and then Ishido joined him to fight the litigation that the Japanese nationals brought against them. Eventually, they settled, and Ishido’s share was almost half a million dollars. That was the beginning of his fortune.”

“And the beginning of Mr. Saunders’s fortune?”

“No, he was already wealthy. The story was that he was a sort of cast-off son of an important British family.” The old man blinked his eyes and then stared at Masuto unhappily. “Of course, the story is a lie.”

“Yes.”

“And what happened at the hotel today?”

“How do you know about that?”

“As with all things today, Masao, it was on the air immediately. Is it connected?”

“Yes.”

The old man hesitated, then he said, “Be very careful, Masao.”

“I always am.”

“Don’t think of yourself as a kinsman. I assure you, they have stopped thinking of you in that fashion.”

“They? Why do you say they?”

The old man shrugged.

“Is there bad blood between Ishido and Saunders?”

“Why should there be?”

“I asked you.”

“Ah, so, of course. I would think not. From what my sons tell me, Saunders made it possible for Ishido to belong to the West Los Angeles Country Club. It is not a thing that pleases me, to see a member of the old aristocracy using influence to belong to a club where the only qualification for membership is to have money and to be neither Jewish nor Oriental nor black nor Mexican. I myself would have no part of such a place, but it was something Ishido desired.”

“But you say that he and Saunders have remained close all these years?”

“So I am told, so my sons tell me. In fact, I have heard that currently Ishido is engaged in negotiations with Tokyo Airlines for the purchase of some sixteen Saunders airbuses at a price of twenty-eight million dollars each—that is, acting for Saunders.”

“I feel like Alice in Wonderland,” Masuto said.

“Oh?”

“A children’s book.”

“Have I done something very wrong, Masao?”

“No—no, I think not, uncle.”

## THE GAME PLAYERS

Kati knew and understood Masuto better than he imagined. She understood the strange psychology operative in a man who earns twenty thousand dollars a year to protect those who make two hundred thousand and even two million. Being a policeman in Beverly Hills is certainly somewhat different from being a policeman anywhere else, and being a Nisei only complicates it further. Yet Masuto was not judgmental. He had neither contempt for wealth nor admiration for wealth. As an abstraction, he saw neither virtue nor evil in wealth; it was simply a fact of the society he worked in. Yet tonight, as he dressed himself in a clean white shirt, gray flannel trousers, and his best blue blazer—indeed his only blue blazer—Kati noticed that he appeared even more unhappy than the approaching evening should have caused him to be. She watched him toy with his gun, trying to make the shoulder holster unnoticeable under the well-fitted jacket. The jacket was too well fitted. When he stretched it to button, the gun bulged wickedly.

“Will you need the gun, Masao?” she asked gently. “Surely in the West Los Angeles Country Club an occasion to use a gun is not very likely. And anyone will know you have a gun there.”

“Regulations—” Masuto sighed and put the gun aside. He selected a knitted black tie, thinking that he, like Ishido, was still a victim of the old ways. In all truth, he did not want the gun. The game precluded it.



“Masao, with a white shirt—you have nicer ties. This striped tie I gave you for your birthday and which you have never worn, well, it is much nicer than a black tie. You’re not going to a funeral.”

“No?”

“I haven’t seen Ishido for years, but I do remember how charming and bright he is. It should be an absolutely delightful evening, if you would only relax and allow yourself to enjoy it. Who did you say the other man was?”

“Eric Saunders.”

“I don’t mind a bit. It’s very old country, three men having dinner with no women, except geisha girls.” Kati giggled. “In the West Los Angeles Country Club, geishas. Can you imagine?”

“Not very well, no.”

“Oh, Masao, you are so somber.” Kati was tying the striped tie now. “No one ever takes me to such a place. If they did, I would be quite happy about it.” She tightened the tie fold. “There. That looks elegant. Have you ever been to the club before?”

“It’s not a place I frequent.”

“Then you must tell me all about it.”

Not all of it, certainly, Masuto thought. Not the way the car jockey at the club looked at his old Datsun. Masuto had forgone the small conceit of using his police identification card, and in any case, it would have been out of place there and would have attracted attention to himself. He simply drove up to the door, taking his place in the line of Rolls-Royces, Mercedes, Jaguars, Lincolns, and Cadillacs. If one can conceive of a car held at arm’s length, slightly off the ground, faced with pinched nostrils, then one can understand Masuto’s irritation—which he fought, telling himself, This is not the time or place for irritation. Soon, the game begins. Stay cool and steady. Which was commendable advice, since he had been fool enough to leave his gun behind—a fact which he was beginning to regret a great deal.

Ishido was waiting for him in the lobby, and he welcomed Masuto with great cordiality. “Indeed, nephew, I had thought that perhaps you might not come.”

“Why? When I face a killer, I have what I might call my moment of truth. They are few and far between.”

“And you are convinced that Eric Saunders is your killer?”

“You convinced me, Ishido-san.”

Ishido stared at him thoughtfully. Then he bowed slightly. “Come and meet him, Masao.”

Masuto followed Ishido into the dining room, a charming room done in the Spanish colonial style, the floor and walls tiled, a handsome fireplace at one end.

The headwaiter recognized Ishido, expressed pleasure at seeing him, and led him and Masuto to a table in one corner of the room. The man already seated at this table rose as they appeared and welcomed Masuto warmly. “I have heard much about you,” he said.

“And I about you, Mr. Saunders.”

They stood face-to-face for a moment, Masuto taller, leaner, younger—but also aware of the tremendous strength in the hand that gripped his. Saunders was built like a bull, the build of a man who is overmuscled but fights his weight successfully. For a man close to sixty, he appeared to be in marvelous physical condition, the skin tight around his face and neck, his stomach flat.

“Please, sit down,” Saunders said. Masuto seated himself, Ishido on one side of him, Saunders on the other. The headwaiter was hovering over them. “I ordered champagne,” Saunders said, and turned to Masuto. “You do drink champagne? Just a taste for each of us, a drink to whatever we drink to. I think we should drink lightly and eat lightly.”

“For the sake of the game,” Ishido said.

“Naturally,” Saunders said.

When the champagne had been poured, Saunders raised his glass, but no one spoke a toast, or cheers, or anything of that kind.

“I hear from Ishido,” Saunders said, “that you are a most unusual policeman. I would guess that you are studying my face with such intensity to see whether you can detect scar tissue or suture marks. But before we go any further, Masuto, I must ask whether you are wired?”

“And if I were, why should you imagine that I would tell you?”

“A sense of honor.”

“Honor?” Masuto asked in amazement. “You really confront me with a thing called honor?”

"I speak of you," Saunders said. "Not of myself, not of Ishido. He tells me that you are a Zen Buddhist, that you practice meditation as well as the Okinawan art. If you tell me you are not wired, I believe you."

"I am not wired."

"I didn't think you were."

Masuto's mouth was dry. He sipped at the champagne. Actually, he did not care for champagne, and he had little desire to drink with these two men.

"I am not asking for truth," Masuto said. "To find truth between the two of you would be like seeking a lump of sugar in a pool of molasses. But you, Ishido, what advantage by lying to me?"

"Did he lie?" Saunders smiled. "Where does the truth end and a lie begin? Ishido said you very cleverly put together a picture of me, but that it did not resemble me at all."

"Then you are Stanley Cutler?"

"No, no, no, Masuto. What a dreadful mess you have made of everything. Thirty years, during which I live my life and Ishido lives his life, and then a rainstorm and a Nisei detective on a small-town police force destroy everything. I am not Stanley Cutler, Masuto, I am Eric Saunders. I was christened Eric Arthur Sutherland Saunders, and I am the youngest son of the Earl of Hewton."

"Then it was Cutler's skeleton?"

Saunders laughed. "No, no, indeed."

"I think we should order dinner," Ishido said. "We will eat lightly, but we should eat and preserve the amenities. What would your pleasure be, Masao?"

"Whatever you wish."

"Surely you have a preference? Or is the company so unpleasant that you have no appetite?"

"The chicken, since you insist," Masuto said, thinking that they were both quite mad. But then, are not all murderers quite mad, and might not one say that this madness had become the condition of a great part of mankind? They chatted over the food, hardly eating, only toying with the meal. If they meant Masuto to feel the strain, they succeeded, and finally, unable to contain himself, he asked them flatly, "Which one of you killed Stanley Cutler?"

“Why? Why, Masao?” Ishido asked him. “Thirty years. What good comes of this?”

“Let me explain,” Saunders said. “Since there is nothing you can ever do about it, since there is no way you can ever prosecute either of us, you should have your bone, the reward of the hunter. I would have rewarded you otherwise, but Ishido said no. Killing you would hardly be worth the price of Ishido’s enmity.”

“Hardly magnanimous,” Masuto said. “You still plan to kill me.”

“Who knows?”

“When dinner is over,” Ishido said, “you may leave here, and no harm will come to you. You have my word.”

“I am waiting for the explanation.”

“I created Cutler,” Saunders said. “He was killed in Burma. I was with him. I think I got the notion from his prints—or lack of them. Burned off in a flaming tank.” He held out one hand. “Doesn’t look much different, does it, but if you look closely, you’ll find no recognizable prints. I turned myself into Cutler. Oh, don’t think it was easy—it took months of planning, years to carry it out.”

“Cutler’s body?”

“I took his dog tags and blew his head off with a grenade. You have no idea how much confusion war engenders. We were of a size and he had no family, so I had the pleasant choice of being one of two persons, whichever I preferred.”

“You blew his head off with a grenade,” Masuto said. “Was he alive then, or was he dead?”

“Always the policeman. You want another murder to add to your list? I’m afraid I can’t oblige you. He was dead when I blew his head off. I got the job at Manhattan National Bank as Stanley Cutler.” He paused and smiled. Ishido took a cigar, clipped the end, and lit it. “Odd to think of it. I never fancied working at a bank, but embezzlement is so enticingly easy. Of course today with the computers everywhere, it’s even easier. When I finished the job and had soaked the money away here in Los Angeles as Eric Saunders, I simply put all that was Stanley Cutler, a few cards, one or two other things, down the toilet—flushed them away.”

“Then who,” Masuto asked, “was the skeleton under the pool?”

“Ah, yes—the source of all our unhappiness. You see, when I was very young, I did a bit of embezzlement, but awkwardly, on a London bank. I was caught and it was hushed up because of my family, and I went into the army. Then, when I did the job at the Midtown Manhattan Bank, this Scotland Yard chap who was in on the first screw-up, drew some conclusions, got himself a leave of absence, and turned up in Los Angeles—not to arrest me, mind you, but to threaten me into a split. Ishido happened to be with me that night. I had spotted some acreage in the San Fernando Valley and I needed a Japanese partner for the deal. The C.I.D. man was foolish enough to turn his back on me, and then there was the problem of what to do with the body. This one did have fingerprints, and I had to make sure that he vanished for good. Ishido was operating a backhoe on a job, and he suggested putting the body under the swimming pool. Well, once it turned up—there it was, with two people in L.A. who could put Ishido on that job and point a finger at both of us.”

“Two people?” Masuto asked.

“The old lady and Lundman. Lundman’s wife happened to be there. So it was with the Mexican girl.”

“Who never saw you,” Masuto said bitterly. “You damned, murderous bastard—Naga Orashi, the contractor, was the man who hired Ishido to drive the backhoe, and he’s alive!”

Saunders looked coldly at Ishido, who shrugged and said, “He is my kinsman. I told you he was dead.”

“You lied to me.”

“I have various loyalties,” Ishido said. “Don’t try to understand them.”

“It makes a debt you have to settle,” Saunders said thinly. “You upset the apple cart.”

“I changed the game slightly.” Ishido shrugged.

“You know where it puts me.”

“You do what you must do, Eric.”

“Another kinsman?”

“Not exactly. As I said, you will do what you must do.”

Listening to all this with increasing disgust, Masuto interrupted harshly. “Do you know, gentlemen, I am going to arrest both of you. I know I don’t have one scrap of evidence and that not one charge will

stick, but I can parade this before the media in a way that will convince the public. They will try you, even if no jury can.”

“So you came here,” Saunders said, “to satisfy your curiosity and to make a public spectacle of us. I would have to be childish not to have anticipated that. Look behind you, Masuto.”

Masuto turned. At the table behind him, two men were sitting. They both had long, hard, sallow faces, and when he glanced at them, they nodded coldly.

“A word from me, just a movement of my hand, and you will be dead, Masuto. Don’t try to arrest us. I have other plans.”

“Really? What other plans?”

Masuto glanced at Ishido. He had become passive. He sat with his hands folded—as if he had placed a hood over himself and between him and the two men.

“I am a devotee of karate, of the Okinawan style.”

“No, you are despoiler of a way. You desecrate and debase a noble thing. Karate is not to kill.”

“No? Then what is its purpose?”

“To defend, to bring some enlightenment to those who practice it with love and reverence. But you, Saunders, you have made it your own obscenity. You have taken something you don’t understand, something beyond the understanding of men like yourself, and turned it into an obscenity, an act of murder.”

“And when the old Samurai killed, Masuto, was that also an act of murder?”

Now Ishido came alive, turning to watch Masuto, who said, “If the Samurai was Samurai and he saw that the swordsman who faced him was weaker or afraid, then he did not use his sword. Do not think of yourself as Samurai, Saunders.”

“I would like to,” Saunders said, unperturbed. “Twelve years ago, I gave this club a karate room. I have made arrangements for its use tonight—by the two of us. I have explained to the athletic steward that we are both experts and that we intend to explore some movements. Robes and trousers have been placed there, and once we enter that room, we will not be disturbed. I am twenty years older than you, Masuto, perhaps a bit more—so I give you that sporting

advantage. I may as well tell you bluntly that once we are alone in that room, I intend to kill you.”

“And on my part, I am to kill you?”

“If you can.”

“Whether or not I can is beside the point,” Masuto said. “I am not an executioner, Saunders, I am a policeman. I do not kill people—not even people like yourself, who have surrendered all claim to being a part of the human race. Nor will I use karate to kill. That would be a betrayal of something very deep in myself.”

“What is your alternative, Masuto? You’re not even carrying a weapon tonight. Those two men have silencers on their pistols. They could kill you and be out of this room before your body fell to the floor. So it would appear to me that you must accept my challenge.”

Masuto looked at Ishido and then at Saunders. Then he stood up. “Very well. Let’s begin and get it over with.”

Ishido remained at the table. He avoided Masuto’s eyes. The two thin-lipped men in the dark suits also remained at their table, and moving in front of Saunders, Masuto left the dining room, passed through the lounge, and then was directed down a passageway, past a notice that said, LOCKER ROOM. It occurred to Masuto now that there were opportunities to bolt, to make a run for it. Possibly the exit points were covered by Saunders’s men, possibly not; yet Masuto rejected the notion. To run now was inconceivable, and once he ran, where would the running stop? He had no intention of attempting to kill Saunders, but neither had he any intention of becoming Saunders’s victim. No doubt Saunders was good, but then neither was Masuto an amateur. He was at a point where he had no plans, no scheme—and at such moments he resigned himself to the motion. Let come what would; underneath his Western exterior there was a very ancient fatalism.

They entered the karate room. It was forty feet by forty feet, and without windows. There were two large mats on the polished wooden floor, some hooks for kimonos and trousers, and a row of chairs at one end of the room. It was air-conditioned and intensely lit from above. Only a wall telephone connected it with the rest of the club.

In silence Saunders began to change. I am a middle-aged policeman, confined with a madman who believes he will kill me,

Masuto said to himself, and still I do not know whether I shall kill him.

"It's not too late," he told Saunders. "You know you can't be convicted. Games like this are for witless children and madmen."

"And sportsmen." Saunders had dropped his clothes. His body was squarely built, muscular, not an ounce of fat anywhere. He slipped on the trousers and kimono, treading lightly, flexing and unflexing his fingers. "Change clothes, Masuto!"

"Sportsmen," Masuto said with contempt. "Sportsmen who kill old women and young girls."

"What the game brings. Change clothes!"

"I think not," Masuto said. "I am not a witless child. Does your white kimono give you a license to kill? You are stark, raving mad, Saunders. Do you think that the trappings of a karate match will allow you to kill me and go free? You are a pompous, bloated fool. You are sick and full of decay."

With a roar of rage, Saunders launched himself at Masuto, his arm coming around in an outside inward swordhand strike. Masuto pivoted and let the strike pass over him. His own back-fist counterstrike missed. He sprang away, his feet, still in shoes, slipping on the floor, and Saunders was upon him with a driving upward elbow strike, which, if it had connected with the full force of Saunders's body behind it, might well have snapped Masuto's neck. It missed by a fraction of an inch, and Masuto, off balance, tried to find purchase for a shod kick to Saunders's groin. It was bad karate, but he was fighting for his life. Saunders was too quick for him, amazingly quick for a man his age, and a hard, high kick from Saunders connected with Masuto's shoulder, caught him off balance, and flung him to the mat.

For a fraction of a second Masuto was as close to death as he had ever been. He had sprawled on his back without purchase or any continuity of motion that could be turned to his defense and in that fraction of a second when he was defenseless, Saunders could have driven a kick to his throat that would have crushed his larynx and burst the blood vessels in his neck. All this Masuto knew, for in such moments the mind works with incredible speed. Then the fraction of a second passed, the lethal moment was over, and Masuto was able to whip himself off his back and into a crouch. Saunders had not



moved. He stood rocklike, his motion only half begun, and then he clutched at his chest, went down on his knees, and rolled over on his back.

Masuto got to his feet and approached the recumbent figure carefully. He was ready for anything from this man, any trick, any device; but the wide open, fixed blue eyes were a valid definition. He felt for Saunders's pulse and could not find it. No question about it, the man was dead.

Breathing deeply, his whole body still trembling, Masuto went to a chair and sat down. He sat very quietly for a minute or two, composing his thoughts—bringing himself together, as he would have put it. Then he went to the telephone. As he suspected, it was an automatic switchboard. He dialed nine, and when the dial tone came on, he called Sy Beckman's number. Sophie answered. "If you want him, the bum is sleeping off a drunk, and as far as I'm concerned, I've had it."

"I want him," Masuto said.

"You can damn well have him."

"How do you feel?" he asked Beckman.

"I'm all right."

"Sy, I'm at the West Los Angeles Country Club. They have a karate room here. I need you as quick as you can make it. Now outside this karate room you may find two gentlemen in dark suits and bulging jackets. You'll know them because they're that kind. They're Saunders's hoods, and very likely one of them killed Rosita. So you can take off the kid gloves, if you feel so inclined. Be quick."

Masuto sat down again. His hands were still trembling. He waited until his hands steadied, and then he called Wainwright at his home and told him what had taken place.

"Damn you, Masao, you killed him."

"No, sir, I did not, and he came very close to killing me."

"What about Ishido?"

"He won't run. Right now I want you over here with the ambulance from All Saints Hospital. I want to get his body out of here and have Sam Baxter do an autopsy before anyone knows he's dead."

"You mean no one knows he's dead?"

"I know it. I presume he knows it."

“Damn it, Masao, you know what I mean. You can’t sit on a corpse like that. He’s not just anybody. He’s Eric Saunders.”

“I’m not sitting on it, captain. We—myself and what was Saunders—are in the karate room at the club. I imagine Saunders’s two baboons are outside the door, and they’re both armed and nasty, and I see no reason to open the door and invite their reaction—since I am not armed. And Eric Saunders, I remind you, was a murderous pig.”

“Why didn’t you say that in the first place? I’ll have a squad car over there in a few minutes—”

“No.”

“What do you mean, no?”

“Sy Beckman’s on his way. Please, captain, let him take care of it.”

“You said there were two of them.”

“Let Sy take care of it, please.”

“No, sir. I am sick and tired of you two running around like this was your own private vendetta.”

“Well, as you wish—”

“Masuto, why do you pull these things on me? I’ve given you clowns more leeway than any sane chief would give a couple of cops, and now suppose the D.A. comes up with a vendetta killing—suppose he says you went overboard and took the law into your own hands? You know what I mean. How do I answer that?”

“I didn’t touch Saunders. He died of a heart attack.”

“Then why do you need an autopsy? The bastard is dead. It’s over.”

“I think he was murdered.”

“Oh, no, not again.”

“Yes, I’m afraid so,” Masuto assured him. Now sounds were coming from outside the heavy door to the karate room, and Masuto said, “I must hang up now. Please hurry.”

He went to the door and opened it. Beckman filled the doorway, a man in a dark suit hanging limply from each of his huge hands. He flung them into the karate room, where they lay on the floor, bleeding and moaning. Then, panting, he said, “What do you want me to do with these two loathsome bastards?”

“Cuff them and read them their rights, Sy. Concealed weapons, resisting arrest, and with a little luck, maybe murder one.”

“And who’s that?” Beckman asked, pointing to Saunders.

“Eric Saunders, alias Stanley Cutler. Very dead—very dead indeed, Sy. My God, what is today?”

“Thursday, all day.”

“And it was only last Saturday that we found the skeleton.”

“That’s right. Is it over, Masao?”

“Almost.”

“What’s left?”

“A few loose pieces. Odds and ends.”

“How come the cops aren’t here?” Beckman asked suddenly. “I don’t mean us. I mean the real cops, the guys in the blue uniforms?”

“Any moment now. I gave you a head start. I thought you’d want to deal with these two.”

“I dealt with them,” Beckman said.

# SAMURAI

It was almost midnight, and the pathology room in the basement of All Saints Hospital was deserted except for Masuto, Dr. Sam Baxter, and Dr. Alvin Levine, the resident pathologist whom Masuto had dragged out of bed and pressed into service. Naked and white and sliced open, Saunders's corpse lay on the table. Baxter, washing his hands, said to Levine, "You don't have to close. Just put him on ice. He'll hold."

"You'll be back tomorrow to close him?"

"Why? He's dead, isn't he? Any damn fool can sew him up. Even a witless ghoul like Masuto here can sew him up. Well?" he demanded of Masuto. "Are you satisfied?"

"With what?"

"With what I told you. Cardiac arrest."

"So you told me. What caused it?"

Levine, bending over a microscope, straightened up, took a test tube from over a flame, and shook it slightly. "I think I have it," he told Masuto. "You noted the high thyroid level?" he said to Baxter.

"So what?"

"It's triiodothyronine."

"He might have been taking it on prescription."

"Why?" Levine wondered. "He's not the type. Anyway, he took enough to kill him."

"How would it work?" Masuto asked him.

"The amount he had in him might result in a brief illusion of energy, then a very rapid heartbeat—so rapid that the heart muscle forces

itself into cardiac arrest.”

Baxter nodded. “That’s possible.”

Masuto went out into the street, and for a few minutes he stood in front of the hospital, breathing the cool, sweet night air. Then, with a deep sigh, he climbed into his car and drove to Bel-Air, to the home of his kinsman, Ishido. The electric gate that guarded Ishido’s driveway opened up for Masuto, and the servant who opened the door of the house for him said, in Japanese, “Come in. My master is expecting you.”

“It is very late—”

“No, he is expecting you.”

In the living room Ishido was pouring tea that had already been prepared. He wore a white gown and black slippers and sat cross-legged by the table.

“Join me, please,” he said to Masuto.

Masuto sat by the table and accepted a cup of tea.

“No doubt you come from the hospital, where an autopsy was done on that sick and worthless flesh.”

“You condemn a friend.”

“We were never friends,” Ishido said. “Circumstances drew us together.”

“You saved my life,” Masuto said. “It incurs an obligation.”

“Which you cannot repay.”

“Not in this life. Perhaps in another.”

“Ah, so—and you, the cold and enlightened policeman, you believe the old way, that we live and live again?”

“Who knows? I believe many things.”

“You are a strange policeman, Masao. Yes, I gave the thyronine to Saunders in his food, in his tea, so it is quite true that I have murdered him. But I also saved your life. Or did I? Could you have defeated him?”

“I don’t know.”

“And now you have come to arrest me?”

“If I had not come,” Masuto said, “others would come.”

“I understand.”

“Do you? I take no pleasure from this. I know of the Samurai only what I have read and what the old folks tell me and what I see in silly

films.”

“You are telling me, nephew, that I have dishonored my lineage?”

“Worse. You have dishonored yourself. And why did you lie to me about Eric Saunders and Burma?”

“That was not a lie. The man he killed was my friend.”

“And so you committed murder for the benefit of Eric Saunders. Come on, uncle, that is too much. This is a moment for the truth.”

“And what do you know of the truth? You are an American, Masao. I am something else, beyond your understanding. I could have killed Saunders thirty years ago. The punishment would hardly have befitted his crime. To me, death is not what it is to you. It is easy to die. So I did what I had to do, and it gave me a weapon to hold over Saunders. The whole story is in my vault at the bank. He knew that, so he could not kill me with impunity—and I waited. I let him build his empire, and I waited for the moment to bring him and his empire down in ruins.”

“And the moment was tonight?” Masuto asked sardonically.

Ishido smiled. “No, nephew, the moment was not tonight. Tonight I changed my plans. I had no desire to see you die. I seek no sympathy. There is simply a matter of the fitness of things.” He stood up now, and he made a slight formal bow to Masuto. “I shall not run away, nephew, but I need a few minutes to prepare for my absence and to change my clothes. If you will wait here?”

Masuto nodded. Ishido went into the next room. Masuto sat cross-legged by the table, staring at the tiny cup of green tea that Ishido had prepared for him.

And then he heard the woman scream, a piteous wail of grief.

Masuto rose and went into the next room. A woman was huddled in a heap on the floor, sobbing. Ishido knelt on a velvet cushion, a bit of incense burning before him and both hands clasping the knife that was buried in his breast.

Masuto helped the woman to her feet and led her out of the room. “He is gone,” Masuto told her, speaking Japanese slowly and carefully, “but he departed honorably. Now there are things we must do.”

A close-up, purple-tinted photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eye and lips. The image is used as a background for the book cover.

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*—BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SPARTACUS*

# HOWARD FAST

Writing as E. V. Cunningham

**THE CASE  
OF THE KIDNAPPED  
ANGEL**

A Masao Masuto Mystery





# The Case of the Kidnapped Angel

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## The Kidnapped Angel

As a Buddhist policeman on the Beverly Hills police force, Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto abhorred superstition. For one thing, it went against his Zen training, for another, it defied common sense; so when a day began not only badly but improbably and continued in such manner, he refused to blame anything other than coincidence. The day was early in November, close to his birthday, which marked him as a Scorpio; but his distaste for the nonsense called astrology—which pervaded Los Angeles—was as great as his distaste for any other superstition.

For all that, he found it quite extraordinary that he should be interrupted by a thief during his morning meditation. He had begun his meditation at six A.M., in the first faint gray light of dawn. His meditation room was a tiny sun porch at the rear of his Culver City cottage, where he lived with his wife, Kati, and his two children. Since the two children were of different sexes, there was no bedroom to spare. Masuto did not complain. Indeed, he was grateful for the nine-by-twelve sun porch, which was large enough, since it contained no furniture other than a meditation mat and pillow; and there he was, sitting on the pillow cross-legged in what is known as the lotus position, wrapped in his saffron-colored robe, when a sixteen-year-old Chicano boy forced open one of the windows, climbed through, and stood facing him.

For a long moment the Mexican boy stood motionless, staring at the nisei detective, who sat motionless, returning the stare. For Masuto, it was a double effrontery—first that a thief should invade a

policeman's house, and second that he should be interrupted in his meditation. Then the boy, digesting the fact that Masuto was alive, turned to flee, and Masuto thrust out a leg and tripped him. Then, with the boy's arm in a hammerlock, Masuto said, "Get up and don't struggle, because if you do, your arm will be broken."

Kati, alarmed by the commotion, arrived at the meditation room in time to hear this, and her comment was, "I don't believe this. A little boy, and you threaten to break his arm?"

She was right. The Chicano boy was quite small. Masuto let go of his arm and led him from the room by the collar of his shirt. Masuto was slightly over six feet tall and, at this moment, somewhat ashamed of himself. The boy was skinny and shivering.

"I didn't do nothing. Let me go," the boy said.

"He's a thief," Masuto explained to Kati. Now Masuto's two children, Ana, age eight, Uraga, age ten, were also watching, standing in their nightclothes and regarding Masuto with what he could only interpret as accusatory stares.

"Why don't you let him go?" Kati asked.

"He's a thief. I'm a policeman."

"You're a cop?" the boy said. "My God, I got as much brains as a cockroach, breaking into a cop's house."

"What's your name?" Kati asked him.

"Pedro."

"And you're hungry. Did you have any breakfast?"

He shook his head.

"And that did it," Masuto explained to his partner an hour later in the homicide office of the Beverly Hills police force. "This kid breaks into my house, and Kati feeds him."

"You know what it is, Masuto. It's those consciousness-raising sessions she's been going to. Did you call the Culver City cops?"

"No."

"You let him go?"

"I have to live with my wife. Anyway, he swore up and down he'd never done it before and wouldn't do it again, and the only weapon he had on him was a screwdriver. If I turn him over to the cops, it's

either a suspended sentence or juvenile. Either way, he gets a record and maybe worse.”

Masuto’s partner, Detective Sy Beckman, nodded. “Maybe you’re right. But I hate these stupid kids. Amateurs. We can deal with the professionals, but the amateurs screw things up. I don’t know—no more lines of professional pride. These days everything is amateur. Maybe this kidnapping too. It has the earmarks.”

“What kidnapping?”

“Angel Barton was kidnapped, and the captain’s car was stolen. The two ain’t connected, except that Wainwright’s sore as hell. That’s a coincidence—your house broken into and Wainwright’s car stolen. Do you suppose they’re after the Beverly Hills cops?”

“When did that happen?”

“The car?”

“No, the kidnapping.”

“Sometime last night. I just got here ten minutes ago, so I’m not filled in on the details. Wainwright threw these files at me to play shuffleboard with—they’re all on people associated with Mike Barton, but from here what we got is strictly nothing.”

“Where’s the captain now?”

“In his office with a roomful of civilian brass. He called twice to ask where the hell you were.”

At that moment the telephone on Masuto’s desk rang. He picked it up and Wainwright’s voice asked him where the hell he was.

“I’ll be right in.”

In the dozen steps between his office and Captain Wainwright’s—he was chief of detectives in the Beverly Hills police force—Masuto tried to remember and piece together what he knew about the Bartons. He knew at least a little and sometimes a great deal about most of the celebrities who lived in Beverly Hills, which is not to say that he knew many of them personally. What he knew of the Bartons had been gleaned from newspapers and from his wife, Kati, who was a much more enthusiastic movie fan than Masuto. Mike Barton was one of a half-dozen or so bankable stars, which meant that his name alone, associated with a film project, was enough to bring in the financing necessary to make the film. It was said that he had been paid a million and a half to star in his last film and that he was asking

two million for his next. He was a tall, well-built man, with a craggy face, russet hair, and blue eyes, and given the right director, he could perform as an actor. Masuto tried to recall him on the screen, and while he felt he must have seen one of his films, he was not absolutely certain.

Concerning Barton's wife, Angel, his information had come totally from Kati, who read the gossip columns and pored over the picture magazines and was absolutely enchanted by both the name and the public image of Angel Barton.

The most intriguing thing about Angel Barton was that she had no traceable past, not even a real name available to the columnists on *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Daily Variety*. When questioned on this subject, she simply smiled her wonderful smile, and her husband, in reply to the same question, told reporters that since her name was Angel, she had obviously dropped from heaven. He himself had christened her Angel, and neither of them would discuss any prior existence. This was taken by the media as a publicity stunt, and while several enterprising reporters set out to discover who Angel actually was, none of them were successful. The secret was well kept.

And as Kati had put it to her husband, "She does look like an angel." More precisely, she looked like the romantically remembered Marilyn Monroe, with the same golden curls and wide blue eyes. She had a very faint, almost undiscernable foreign accent which no one could place and a way of making any man she spoke to feel that he was the most important member of the male world. She and Mike Barton had been married two years ago, but whether it was her first marriage or not Kati had never mentioned. The rest of what Kati had told him about Angel Barton was of no great consequence, nor could Masuto recall much of it as he entered Captain Wainwright's office.

The small office was crowded. Joe Smith, the city manager, was there, along with Al Freeman, who was the mayor—an honorary, unpaid job—and three other men, introduced in turn as Frank Keller of the FBI, very young, very pompous; Jack McCarthy, Barton's lawyer; and Bill Ranier, Barton's business manager. McCarthy was in his late fifties, overweight, sure of himself, with a wide local

reputation among film people; Ranier was middle forties, thin, nervous, impatient.

Wainwright wasted no time. "This is Masuto," he told Ranier and McCarthy. "I'll settle for him and his partner, but I can't have hands off. Once Barton informs the police, it's a police matter."

"I know, I know," said McCarthy. "I advised him. But you know damn well, Captain, that a smart kidnapper will not pick up the ransom if he suspects a trap."

"Jack," the mayor said soothingly, "if there's one thing we're all together on, it's that nothing must happen to Angel. But Barton can't handle this alone."

"He's not alone. He has Bill and me."

"Not enough," Wainwright said. "You know that as well as I do, Mr. McCarthy. I'll tell you what I'll do. I know Barton's convinced that his house is being watched and that maybe there's even an inside connection, and we got to respect the threat that his wife will be killed if he even speaks to the cops. There'll be no phone taps, and the feds will use our place here as their command post. Now Sergeant Masuto here is the best man we got. A hell of a lot of gardeners are Japanese or nisei. We'll fit Masuto up with a gardener's pickup and he'll change his clothes and drive out to Barton's place and go in through the back door the way a gardener would. Barton's an actor, so he can raise hell with Masuto for interrupting him today if anyone's listening and then he can find a way to talk to Masuto alone."

"I don't know whether Barton will buy that."

"He'll buy it," Freeman said. "I'll drive out first and talk him into it. But when it comes to the drop he wants to be alone, absolutely alone."

"Let him work that out with Masuto," the city manager said. "Barton has the last word, but when there's a crime in our city limits and we're informed, we have an obligation to pursue it."

"I'll arrange for the car," Wainwright told them. "Nothing's going to happen until the banks open. I'd appreciate it if one of you filled Sergeant Masuto in. Then he can go home and change clothes, and still get to Barton's soon after nine."

“I’ll go there now,” Freeman said, and then asked McCarthy, “are you worried about carrying the money, Jack? I can meet you at the bank.”

“No sweat. You stay with Mike. He’s alone, and he’ll need all the support he can get.”

Freeman left with Wainwright. The mayor put his arm around McCarthy and assured him of the city’s support. “Everyone loves Angel. I wouldn’t want to be in the kidnapper’s shoes if anything happens to her. You tell Mike that we’re at his disposal. The whole damn city’s at his disposal.”

“That’ll help.”

They left McCarthy with Masuto, who said, “You’ll forgive me if my questions are blunt. I have to get home and change clothes, and I want to get to Barton’s as early as possible. First—how much is the ransom?”

“A million dollars.”

“Has Barton got it?”

“He’ll get it. Yes, he’s got it.”

“When did the kidnapping take place?”

McCarthy stared at Masuto thoughtfully for a long moment before answering. “They say you’re good. Are you that good?”

“I’m a cop,” Masuto said. “I do my job.”

“That’s fair enough. The Bartons have a place out at Malibu. Last night there was a party at the Malibu Colony. Mike felt rotten, headache, maybe a touch of the flu. He talked Angel into going without him, and he told her that if it got to be past midnight and she was enjoying herself, she shouldn’t try to drive home but stay over at their Malibu place and come in today.”

“That sounds like an understanding husband.”

“They have a good relationship. Mike went to sleep. At three in the morning he was awakened by the kidnapper’s call. The man told Mike he had Angel and that the ransom was a million.”

“Who gave the party?”

“Netty Cooper. She was married to Sam Cooper, the producer. They’re divorced. She got the house at Malibu.”

“What did Barton do then?”

“He drove out to Malibu. His house had been broken into. There were signs of a struggle—broken lamps, overturned chairs.”

“Did he then go over to Cooper’s place?”

“No. The kidnapper had warned him to keep it quiet. For all Mike knew, the party might still be going on.”

“Is his house in the Colony?”

“No, about a mile away.”

“He’s a cool-headed man.”

“Yes, he is.”

“And what was his next move?” Masuto asked.

“He telephoned me from the beach house and I met him here at his home in Beverly Hills. It was about six o’clock in the morning then. I persuaded him to call Al Freeman. The kidnapper had been very emphatic about what would happen to Angel if he communicated with the police, but Al felt he must call in the feds. Then I talked to Bill Ranier. A million dollars in cash is a very large order, Sergeant. No one bank carries that kind of cash. Fortunately, both Bill and I have good connections with a number of banks.”

“But you found the cash?”

“It’s promised. It’s being put together and it will be delivered to the Central Bank of Los Angeles by nine-thirty. I’ll pick it up there. The kidnapper said he’ll call in his instructions for the drop at noon.”

“Did Barton talk to his wife when the kidnapper called?”

“Oh, yes.”

“What did she say?”

“She was frightened. Mike says she could hardly talk. What does a woman say in a situation like that?”

“If he repeated her exact words and if you can remember them, I’d like to hear them.”

“What difference does it make? Time is running out.”

“It might be important.”

McCarthy shook his head and knit his brow. “I don’t know. ‘Help me.’ I think. ‘Get me out of this, please, Mike.’ Something like that. I didn’t press him.”

“Do they have a security system in their house at Malibu?”

“I think so, yes.”

“It connects with the Malibu police?”



“I really don’t know.” He looked at his watch. “Suppose you hold the rest of your questions for Mike when you get out there. I have to get over to the bank.”

Masuto nodded, and as McCarthy left, Wainwright entered the room. “The gardener’s rig will be downstairs in a few minutes, Masao. I swear I don’t like this. It’s lousy police method, and the feds are leaning on us and screaming special privilege. What in hell do they expect? It’s Beverly Hills not Hell’s Kitchen. There’s more weight in this town than at a fat farm, and it all leans on us.”

“When he goes to make the drop,” Masuto said, “should I try to follow him?”

“No. We have to leave him clear.”

“I don’t like it. It’s wrong.”

“I know. It’s lousy police work.”

“I don’t mean that,” Masuto said. “It’s wrong on his end.”

“What does that mean?”

“I don’t know. It just doesn’t wash.”

“Sure. And when you get something more than one of your goddamn Oriental hunches, I’ll talk about it. Meanwhile, keep an eye out for my car.”

“What do you mean, keep an eye out for your car?”

“My car was stolen. Didn’t Beckman tell you? My car—right here in Beverly Hills, standing in the driveway of my house.”

“That is adding insult to injury. Still, Captain, if you insist on driving a Mercedes, you take the risk that goes with it.”

“What do you mean, Mercedes? The car’s twelve years old. I bought it for nine hundred dollars and put three thousand into it. Sure it’s a Mercedes—ah, the hell with it! We’ll find it. Meanwhile, get into some old clothes and look like a gardener.”

“I am a gardener,” Masuto replied as he opened the door to leave. “I grow the best roses, the best tomatoes, and the best cucumbers in Los Angeles. It’s a relief to pretend to be something I understand.”

Masuto stopped to look into his office, where Beckman still labored over the files. “I hear you’ve turned gardener,” Beckman said.

“I wish it were permanent. What have you got?”

“Not much, but Mike Barton is an interesting guy. Angel isn’t her name and Barton isn’t his.”

“What is his name?”

“I’m not absolutely certain, but maybe it’s Brannigan. Also, he gambles.”

“Everyone gambles.”

“Big. Also, which I’m not sure about either, cocaine, and maybe the Angel sniffs a bit as well.”

“Can you find anything on her?”

“I’m looking.”

“Keep looking. From what I’m told, the drop will take place at twelve noon. This has to be kept very quiet, but the big brass convinced Wainwright to leave him uncovered when he makes the drop.”

“That’s crazy!” Beckman exclaimed.

“Maybe yes, maybe no. I don’t think it makes much difference. I’ll see you later.”

The gardener’s truck was downstairs, an old Ford pickup with two lawnmowers sitting in the loading area. There were also picks, shovels, two bags of lime and a rolled-up hose. It had a cranky clutch and it bucked as Masuto backed out of the parking area.

It was just nine o’clock when he parked the pickup in front of his house in Culver City. Unlike New York City, there was no regulation requiring Beverly Hills policemen to live in Beverly Hills. If there had been, they would have to have been very wealthy policemen indeed. The small cottage in Culver City, only a few miles from Beverly Hills, was Masuto’s base, his retreat, his argument that the world he lived in was not entirely insane and bloodthirsty. There was his home, his wife, his children, his tiny meditation room and his rose garden. Now his children were at school, the teen-age burglar had departed and evidently his wife, Kati, was out shopping, for the house was empty. He changed into old shoes, work pants, and a blue shirt, and as he was ready to leave, Kati entered, her arms full. Masuto took the bags of groceries from her and carried them into the kitchen, while Kati told him how delighted she was that he had been given the day off and was prepared to work in his garden.

“I am not going to work in the garden. In two minutes, I shall drive off in that truck parked in front of the house.”

“The gardener’s truck?”

“Yes.”

Kati shook her head bewilderedly.

“I have not become a gardener. It’s a costume for my assignment. I’ll tell you about it tonight. Until then—” He spread his hands.

“Ah, so. We are man and wife, but still I’m not to be trusted. Very old Japanese, Masao,” she said, shaking her head. Kati was the gentlest of souls, but since she had joined a group of nisei women in the process of consciousness raising, she had developed a vocabulary of protest and disapproval. “Old Japanese” was a part of it. Masuto kissed her, refused to argue the point, and left the house, reflecting that as a Zen Buddhist he was poorly developed indeed. He should have been able to see her point of view. Well, one day he would change all that—one day when he had completed his twenty-two years on the force and was in a position to receive his pension. When that time came, he would spend at least six hours a day in meditation in the Zendo in downtown Los Angeles. Until then, unfortunately, he was a policeman.

Or was he just that, a policeman and no more? What was the point, the focus of his existence? With all his years of meditation, he had not experienced enlightenment, or satori, as the Japanese called it. He was more romantically inclined than people suspected. His wife, Kati, knew that her husband was a most unusual man, but even she did not suspect that there were times when he saw himself as a member of the ancient samurai. That was sheer fantasy. His family was not of the samurai, but out of plain peasant people, for all their success here in this new country; but at a moment in history Zen Buddhism had been the religion of the samurai, and for all of his failings, Masuto was a Zen Buddhist—and how so different from the samurai? The film the Japanese had made, which was titled *The Seven Samurai*, fascinated Masuto. He had seen it three times, brooding over the mentality of these seven men who must save a village, even at the cost of their lives, a village where they had no connection—except perhaps the human connection. That was very Zen.

And was that why he lived out the role of a policeman?

Or did he live simply for the occasional puzzle that broke up the dull routine of robberies? In all truth, he loved his work. That was his

burden, his karma, to make his life out of the bleakest, the most horrifying aspects of what is euphemistically called civilization. Be that as it may, his problem now was to go disguised as a Japanese gardener, to the home of a film star, and to try to find out why said film star was unwilling to involve the police in the kidnapping of his wife. Wainwright would have seen it differently; he would have insisted that Masuto's responsibility was to find the kidnapper and to protect Angel Barton—if, conceivably, she could be protected. Why, Masuto wondered, did a part of his own mind reject that notion?

Then he put his thoughts aside. It was best not to think, not to speculate. More must happen.

Mike Barton's home was on Whittier Drive, north of Sunset Boulevard, at the extreme western edge of Beverly Hills. In a wealthy and elegant city, this was one of the wealthier and more elegant neighborhoods, enormous houses of twenty and thirty rooms sitting in manicured jungles of exotic tropical plantings. Barton's house suited the neighborhood, a strange combination of oversized Irish cottage and French chateau, painted white, surrounded by a whitewashed stone wall. A high iron gate opened to the driveway, and as Masuto turned into the entrance, the gate opened, indicating that someone was expecting him and had noted his approach. He drove around to the back of the house, as a gardener would, and as he got out of the car, Bill Ranier, Barton's business manager, came out of the back door to meet him.

"All right, Sergeant, you're here," Ranier said. "I don't know how good this idea is, but since your people insist, Mike agreed to go along with it. Just remember that he's pretty damn disturbed, so don't try to break him down. He's going to do this his own way, and any pressure or strongarm tactics can only hurt Angel—maybe kill her."

"I don't use strongarm tactics," Masuto said softly, "but it might be worth noting that in Italy, where the payment of ransom is forbidden by law, people have tried to operate this way, without the police. It doesn't help. The same number of kidnap victims are killed. If Barton would cooperate, we might get both the kidnappers and his wife and a million dollars to boot."

"Well, he won't. He's going to do it his way."

“Is the money here?”

“Inside. McCarthy got here a few minutes ago.”

“In what form? What kind of bills?”

“Fifties and hundreds. We have the numbers, but hell, there’s no problem with laundering it. Billions of petrodollars floating around the world, so I guess we can kiss it good-bye.”

“Possibly. I think now I’d like to talk to Barton. By the way, how many servants are in the house?”

“He keeps three in help, Joe Kelly chauffeurs and doubles as a butler when he has to, Freda Holtz—she’s the cook—and Lena Jones, the maid.”

“Does Kelly do the gardening?”

“No, Mexican gardener comes in twice a week, not today. Now look, here’s the scenario we worked out. I tell Mike you’re here. He yells and puts up a fuss. I calm him and tell him he might as well talk to you. That’s for any big ears. I tell him it will help to pass the time and ease the waiting. Then he comes outside and walks with you through the plantings. He’s got a small greenhouse at the other end of the property, so you can go in there and talk. It should make some sense to anyone who might be listening.”

“You only mentioned the three in help. Are there any others?”

“Just his secretary, Elaine Newman.”

“Is she here today?”

“Not yet. She comes in around ten, but she could be early or late. Mike doesn’t hold her to strict hours.”

“Does she know about the kidnapping?”

“No, and we decided not to tell her. When she comes in, I’ll send her over to my office to get some papers and my secretary will keep her waiting there and then she has to pick up a manuscript for Mike. That will keep her out of it until noon. This is still off the record, and according to the kidnapper, we have to keep it that way.”

“All right.” Masuto nodded. “I’ll wait right here for Barton.”

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## Mike Barton

Masuto had occasionally speculated on what makes a “bankable” star, a term very expressive in Hollywood if nowhere else in America. Certainly it was not theatrical talent, not appearance—though appearance was important—not beauty, not brains, but rather an indefinable thing which some called charisma for want of a better name. It was not connected with the way an actor lived his life, treated the other sex, was or was not a dooper, a drunk, a liar, or a thief. It was something that cut through all that, recognizable yet undefinable—and whatever it was, Mike Barton possessed it. He was onstage as he stepped out of his house, and he strode over to Masuto with a kind of assurance reserved for his narrow clan, yet lacking, Masuto felt, any of that tired inelasticity that comes from fear and sorrow. He was a star, but not a very good actor.

He shook hands and said, “Let’s walk, Sergeant. My house has big ears.”

“Whose ears?”

“Damned if I know.”

“Kidnapping for ransom is planned. It’s not decided on the spur of the moment. Someone must have known that your wife would spend the night at the beach house.”

“Who? I didn’t know it myself. Angel didn’t know. We decided that she should show up at the party because Netty’s a dear old friend. I had a splitting headache and I felt too rotten to trek over to Malibu. I told Angel that if the party was a drag, she should cut out of there at ten o’clock or so, but if she was having fun and decided to stay on,

she shouldn't try to drive back here. Hell, that's what the beach house is for."

"But the people at the party would know that she planned to stay overnight."

"Some of them, maybe. I suppose Netty would know. Where the hell is all this leading, Sergeant?"

"The woman who gave the party, Netty Cooper—did you talk to her?"

"Come on, come on. My wife was in trouble."

"Still," Masuto persisted, "someone must have known that she would be at the party—"

"Sure. People knew that."

They were at the greenhouse now. "I guess we ought to step inside," Barton said, "just in case someone's watching. It'll make some sense for me to be walking in the garden with you."

Inside the greenhouse Masuto asked him, "Who might be watching?"

"Goddamnit, Sergeant, you get me at the worst moment of my life and ask me questions that make no damn sense."

"I'm sorry."

"All I want is to get back into the house and wait for the phone to ring."

"I can understand that."

"Then it makes no sense for me to be out here talking to a gardener. You keep asking me who is watching. How the hell do I know? But someone knows every move I make and every move Angel makes, and they're going to think it's funny as hell for me to be out here with you. Furthermore, let me tell you this: If anyone follows me when I make the drop and Angel is hurt, I swear to God I'll sue Beverly Hills for every dollar they got in their treasury."

"No one will follow you."

"Then I suggest you get your truck out of here."

Masuto nodded, reflecting that to be a policeman in Beverly Hills was quite different from being a policeman anywhere else in the world. He watched Mike Barton stride across the garden to the house, the stride and bearing of a thoroughbred horse, and then Masuto walked to his truck, got in, and drove out of the place. A few

minutes later he parked the pickup at the police station on Rexford Drive, ignored a uniformed cop who wanted to know whether he had changed his profession, and then climbed the stairs to Wainwright's office.

"Back already?" Wainwright asked sourly.

"He didn't want me there. He raised hell and told me to get out."

"Great. We pay a hundred dollars to rent the truck for a day and we get ten minutes out of it."

"Beverly Hills can afford it."

"They don't pay for it. It comes out of our budget. Did you get anything?"

"Not really. Some impressions."

"Well, just sit on them. The city manager was in here and he wants us to keep hands off. Ranier and McCarthy are out there with Barton, and they'll be in touch with us once Barton pays the ransom. When Angel is returned, we can move in and investigate."

"And if Angel isn't returned?"

"Let's take it one thing at a time."

"I'd like to go out to Malibu now," Masuto said.

"What for?"

"I want to see his beach house and I want to talk to Netty Cooper, the lady who gave the party where Angel spent last night."

"The Malibu cops are handling that."

"I know, Captain. Nevertheless, she resides here. The Malibu cops would expect us to stick our noses into it."

"I don't want trouble with the brass, Masao. They want us to keep hands off."

"Absolutely. I'm not tailing Barton or interfering with him. I'm looking at a place where a crime was committed, a break-in and a kidnapping. It would be derelict on our part not to look into it, and it would undoubtedly open us to various charges that—"

"All right. Do it. I'm sick of being told when to be a cop and when not to."

"I'd like to take Beckman with me."

"What for? You need the company?"

"For protection. He's bigger than I am."

"Take him and get the hell out of here!"



His desk still covered with files, Beckman was talking into the telephone when Masuto entered. He put down the phone, and Masuto told him, "Come take a ride. We'll drive over to my house, I'll change clothes, and then we'll head out to Malibu. Unless you got something out of this morning?"

"We'll talk in the car," Beckman said. He was a big man, three inches taller than Masuto's six feet, heavy-set and slope-shouldered. He sat in Masuto's old Datsun scrunched over and observed that when you scratched the surface of anyone, what came up was pretty damn strange.

"How's that?"

"You want to know about Angel. Well, I put out every line we have. I called Gloria Adams at the *L.A. Times* and I called Freda Mons at the *Examiner*. Between them they know about every celebrity in the country, when they pee and when they cut their fingernails and who they're in bed with, and I even called Elsie Binns at S.A.G., who knows practically every actor in the world, and do you know that none of them could come up with even a license tag for Angel Barton. That is, before two and a half years ago, which was when she moved in with Mike Barton. So who is she and where was she and where does she come from?"

"How about her maiden name?"

"That, Masao, is a lulu. Nobody, but nobody, has the vaguest notion what her maiden name was, or whatever her last name was, maiden or not."

"What did they call her? They must have called her something."

"They called her Angel."

"What about the Motor Vehicles Bureau?" Masuto demanded. "Did you try them? If she drove a car before she was married, she had a license."

"I'm slow but not stupid, Masao. Sure I tried them. They're a pretty lousy organization to begin with and they don't break their backs doing things for the Beverly Hills cops, and when I told them that all I had was a first name and an address, they didn't exactly applaud me. Nothing. So I called the L.A. cops who got some good computers. Zilch. Zilch wherever I turned. Two and a half years ago, that lady just didn't exist."

“She existed. Now what about Barton?”

They were at Masuto’s cottage now, and Beckman suggested that they save Barton for the ride out to Malibu. “Otherwise, we got to talk about the weather, which doesn’t change, and football, which ain’t your game anyway.”

It was after eleven now, and Kati, delighted to see her husband at midday, immediately began to prepare food. “I’m not hungry,” Masuto said. “I’ll change and then we’ll have to go.” Beckman was hungry, and Kati fried a large hamburger, which he wolfed down with a glass of milk. “I expected tempura,” he explained to Masuto when they were back in the car. “You didn’t expect me to pass up an offer of Kati’s tempura.”

“You ate hamburger.”

“That’s what I got. I’d have to be a pig to turn it down and ask for tempura.”

“I guess you would.”

It was about twenty-five miles from Masuto’s home in Culver City to the old Malibu Road, the location of the Bartons’ beach house. When they were on the Pacific Coast Highway heading north, Masuto reminded Beckman about Barton. “You said his real name might just be Brannigan. Why ‘might just be’? A good many film actors change their names. It’s no great secret.”

“It is and it isn’t, Masao. In the old days Jewish and Italian and Polish actors used to sit on their real names, and sometimes their real names were absolutely secret, actors like Leslie Howard and Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis to name only a few. But after the war things changed and you got people like George Segal and Sylvester Stallone who don’t give a damn and lots of others too. But with Barton, it’s different.”

“How’s that?”

“Well, think about the way he looks, a kind of a cross between Robert Redford and Ronald Reagan. He’s got to be Irish or Wasp, so you don’t think of him changing his name. But his past is as blurred as the Angel’s. He turned up here in Hollywood in 1964 and it seems that for two years he did everything except act—washed dishes, waited on tables, pumped gas. Then he got some bit parts in TV, and

then he pulled off a major role in a series—and from there, zoom. He's one of the top ten. But who is he? Nobody seems to know."

"A hundred million people have seen his face. How does he hide?"

"Maybe he don't have to hide. You hide if you're on the run, if there's a want out for you. If it's just a background you're maybe ashamed of, or some kind of nastiness that won't help the image, or maybe even something you want to forget, you change your name."

"Then where did the Brannigan notion come from?" Masuto reminded him.

"I talked to Gloria Adams at the *L.A. Times*. She says that in the interviews with fan magazines and such, Barton just blurs his past—admits to being an Easterner from upstate New York, but she mentioned that two years ago she got a letter from back East. She tells me her column is syndicated all over the country, and this letter says that Barton's real name is Brannigan and that he comes from Schenectady in New York. So she asked Barton, and he says it's a lot of hogwash, so she just forgot about it, because crazy mail is a part of her job. She wanted to know how come the Beverly Hills cops were suddenly interested in Mike Barton, but I put her off and told her that if something broke, she'd be the first to know."

"Did you call the Schenectady cops?"

"I did that, but they don't have fancy computers, and they said that for anything seventeen or eighteen years ago it would take a couple of days to get into their old files."

Masuto nodded. "That's good work, Sy. From here on we'll just take it as it comes."

"You think he'll ever see Angel again?"

"Somehow, I do."

"It's almost noon. By now Barton's made the drop."

"I would presume so."

It was just past twelve when they turned left off the Pacific Coast Highway at old Malibu Road and pulled up in front of the Malibu police station. Joe Cominsky, the Malibu chief of police, had started out as a uniformed cop with Sy Beckman when they were both members of the Los Angeles police, and now he shook his hand warmly. "It's been a long time, Sy, many moons."

"I envy you. If you've got to be a cop, I suppose Malibu's got everything else beat."

"It has its points. Glad to meet you, Sergeant," he said to Masuto. "Maybe you're just what we need on this, because this Barton thing is sure as hell a Chinese puzzle."

"The sergeant's not Chinese. He's nisei."

"I know, I know. Just an expression. No offense."

"Forget it," Masuto said. "I know what you mean. I'd like to look at their beach house, and then I'd like to talk to Netty Cooper. I'm sure you've been talking to her."

"Just got back from there."

"Then you have a list of the guests last night?"

"It's a Who's Who of the film business. You know the kind of people we got out here in the Malibu Colony. Top directors, top stars, top producers. The thought of a couple of them sneaking down the road after the party to kidnap Angel Barton is just bananas."

"Were there no people from outside the Colony?"

"Fred Simmons, the producer, and his wife. Simmons is sixty-seven with a bad ticker. They left about eleven. Fred Simmons has more millions than you could shake a stick at. He's no candidate."

"How many people were there?"

"About twenty altogether."

"I'd like to talk to Mrs. Cooper."

"Absolutely," Cominsky said.

"And to have a look at the Bartons' beach house."

"Sure. Suppose we go along there now. I'd like another opinion. When I said Chinese puzzle before, I wasn't making an ethnic crack. I meant the puzzle part of it. It's just a mile down old Malibu Road. I'll drive you there."

"Then Angel never had to touch the highway. She just drove down Malibu Road. I suppose someone could have been waiting, watching for her car."

When they reached the Barton beach house, Cominsky pointed to the slope on the inland side facing the house. "Nothing there but mustard grass. No place to hide."

"On top?"

“Maybe. There’s a road up there, between here and the Pacific Coast Highway, so I guess they could have parked there and watched. But let’s look at the house.”

The house was one-story and brown-shingled, presenting a blank wall to the road. The entrance was on the beach side, and alongside the house, nestled between the Barton house and the adjoining house, an alley led through to the beach. Cominsky opened the door to the alley, explaining, “Most of the people here leave passkeys with us.”

“No garage?” Masuto asked.

“Not here. Very few of them. People park in the space in front of their houses.”

“I don’t see her car?”

“They took it—a yellow two-seat Mercedes. Worth over forty grand. We put out an APB on it, but no word yet.”

“And when they left, was the gate open?”

“Right. Hold that thought, Sergeant. The gate wasn’t jimmied. Either they opened it with a passkey, or they came around from the beach. And the nearest public pass-through to the beach is a quarter of a mile away. Just follow me through here.”

The passageway was no more than three feet wide, the house directly on the left making a windowless wall. In the Bartons’ house there were several side windows, all of them covered with fretted iron grillwork.

“What about these people next door?” Masuto asked.

“Divorced actor. He does westerns in Spain. Been there three months and not expected back until next month.”

They emerged into the blazing sunlight of Malibu Beach, the white sand stretching in front of them, a man walking a dog, a youngster in a wet suit trying to surf, and four pretty girls playing volleyball. The Barton house had a broad shaded porch facing the ocean, and in front of it and three steps down, a wooden terrace enclosed by a picket fence. On the terrace were tables under striped beach umbrellas—folded now—lounge chairs, and dining chairs. Cominsky opened the gate at the side of the picket fence and led them across the terrace.

“Barred on the road side, but not the beach side.”

“The water kills thoughts of evil,” Masuto said, and Cominsky glanced at him strangely.

“Yet the evil persists,” Masuto added, smiling. “Only the sand is washed clean. Forgive me, Chief. I’m also puzzled.”

“Oh? Yeah,” Cominsky agreed. “Just take a look at this front door.” He unlocked a police padlock that had been bolted to the door and stood aside. Masuto and Beckman stared at the door, which had been attacked in two places by a jimmy and forced open. In the lower corner of the window, next to the door, was a stick-on label with the legend HELMS SECURITY.

“Helms ties into police stations,” Masuto said. “Was this tied into yours?”

“You’re damn right, Sergeant.”

“You tested it? It was working?”

“Absolutely.”

“And you had someone on duty?” Masuto persisted.

“Even if we didn’t, there’s an alarm bell attached that can be heard a mile away on this beach.”

“In other words,” said Beckman, “she never turned on the alarm.”

“Come inside.”

They stood in the living room of the attractively furnished cottage—grass rug, wicker furniture with bright blue upholstery, good prints on the walls. Masuto stood staring, captivated. Two of the prints were askew, a lamp was knocked over and smashed, a chair was turned over, and the grass rug was pulled out of place.

“I want you to see the bedroom,” Cominsky said.

“In a moment.” He was trying to recreate a struggle in his mind and to fit it into what had happened in the room. Beckman, who knew him well, watched with interest. “All right,” Masuto said.

“There are three bedrooms.” Cominsky led the way. “This is the master.”

The bedclothes were rumpled, a nightgown on the floor. As Masuto studied the scene, Cominsky walked over and touched a switch next to the bed. Above the switch, a red light glowed.

“This is the alarm switch. The light’s on when the switch is off.”

“I should think it would be the other way,” Beckman said.

“No, this makes sense. You put out the lights, and then the red light reminds you about the alarm.”

“What time did she leave the party?” Masuto asked.

“About one P.M. When they all live in the Colony, the parties tend to run late.”

“But it was a weekday. Most of them would have to be in the studios very early.”

“Yeah. She was one of the last to leave.”

“And Barton got the call at three A.M. That leaves two hours. Unless they were stupid enough to make the call from here, they had to break in and take her somewhere. If they were watching her, why didn’t they intercept her? Why break in at all? And if she went straight to bed, why didn’t she reach out and turn on the alarm?”

“You tell me,” Cominsky said.

“And if she wasn’t asleep, why didn’t she reach out and turn on the alarm when she heard the door go?”

“Was the bedside lamp on?” Masuto asked.

“It was.”

“You had the place dusted?”

“Early this morning. We don’t look for anything there.”

“Can I use the phone?”

“Be my guest.”

He called Beverly Hills and got through to Wainwright. “It’s one o’clock,” Masuto said. “What do you hear from Barton?”

“Nothing.”

“Did he pay the ransom?”

“According to Ranier he got the call from the kidnapppers over an hour ago and left just before noon, taking the million dollars with him.”

“Never said where he was going?”

“Not a word.”

“Did Ranier listen in on an extension?” Masuto asked.

“He says he didn’t. He’s there with McCarthy, waiting for Barton to show. Where are you?”

“At Barton’s beach house.”

“Did you find anything?”

“Confusion. I’d like to talk to Netty Cooper while I’m out here.”

“Why not? Aside from the confusion, you got any ideas, Masuto?”

“Too many. If you want me, you can call the Malibu station. They’re right outside the Colony.”

He put down the phone and turned to Cominsky, who asked him if he had seen enough.

“I think so.” He picked up the nightgown and looked at it—white silk, white lace. He put it to his face to smell it. Cominsky grinned. Beckman said, “I never knew you went in for that, Masao.”

“Only lately.”

Cominsky padlocked the cottage door again.

“If the system is turned on with the bedside switch,” Masuto said, “then what happens when you open the door from the outside?”

“There’s a switch in the lock that turns it off. It’s not foolproof, but it’s a damn hard lock to pick.”

“Does your screen at the police station tell you when the alarm systems are on or off?”

“Yes. The officer on duty says it was off.”

“Here on this part of the old road,” Masuto said, “what kind of people live here?”

“Mostly the same kind you find in the Colony down the road, only with less money for the most part. Of course, some of them, like Barton, use their houses only on weekends, and some of the houses, like this one, are as classy as the houses in the Colony. Some people don’t want to live in the Colony, and then the houses at the Colony aren’t for sale very often. You get writers, actors, directors, lawyers—you name it.”

Masuto turned toward the ocean, staring at the incoming waves, apparently lost in thought. “I’d like to live here,” Beckman said. “I guess I’d rather live here than anywhere else.”

“Time was, and not so long ago,” Cominsky told them, “that you could buy one of these houses for forty, fifty thousand dollars. Now there isn’t one you can touch for less than half a million.”

Masuto smiled thinly and shrugged. “Let’s go back to the station house.” He had been thinking that Malibu Beach was very beautiful. But most of the world was very beautiful until men touched it.



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## Malibu Beach

Back at the Malibu police station, Masuto found a message to call Wainwright at the Beverly Hills station. He made the call and was put through to Wainwright, who said, "What was taken has been returned."

"Very cryptic and interesting."

"I got a room full of reporters. I'll call you back in five minutes."

Masuto put down the telephone and asked Cominsky, "How much has this leaked?"

"Who knows, Masuto? I did my best. The local news people were here. They always are when there's a break-in on the beach, but I didn't say word one about the kidnapping. They wanted to know were any of the Bartons in the house. I had no comment for that."

"What about Netty Cooper?"

"She had to know something was going on when I got the list of her guests. But I didn't mention the kidnapping. That won't help. It'll come out before the day's over."

"Angel's back."

"How do you know?" Beckman asked him.

"I spoke to Wainwright. He had a room full of reporters. I guess that means it'll be out. The chief's right. You can't sit on something like that."

"Well, thank God," Cominsky said. "She's a nice lady. I'd hate to think that anything happened to her. Is she all right? Did they rough her up?"

"I don't know. Wainwright didn't fill me in on any details."

"I'm starved," Beckman said.

"You can grab a bite at the drugstore in the shopping center across the road. It's not great, but it's all right. Or you can drive down to the pier and eat fancy."

"We have to wait for Wainwright to call back."

A few minutes later the call from Wainwright came through. "Masao," he said, "I'll be leaving for Mike Barton's place in about an hour, and I want you to meet me there."

"You said his wife is back?"

"Right. No harm done except some tape marks on her mouth and wrists. She says she was snatched out of her Malibu house by two men who wore stocking masks, taken somewhere, and finally dumped on Mulholland Drive, just to the west of Coldwater Canyon. She walked to the fire-house and they drove her home. McCarthy's with her, and that's the story he tells me. I got to meet with the mayor and city manager again, because they think they can sit on this and I got to tell them they're crazy."

"What about Mike Barton?"

"No sign of him yet."

"Did you put out anything on him? He should be back by now."

"Not yet, Masao. You know, he could have made the drop fifty miles from here. The kidnapers could have split up. One takes Angel, one goes to pick up the money. What are you thinking?"

"I don't know exactly what I'm thinking," Masuto said. "It's nothing I can put my finger on. It's just a smell. It doesn't smell right."

"No, it stinks, and I don't know why either, except when there's a crime and people tell the cops to keep hands off, well, that stinks for me."

"Who else is at his house?"

"Ranier's still there, and there's a uniformed cop I just sent over and told to sit in his car on the street, and if they don't like that, they can stuff it. What did you find in their beach house?"

"Puzzles. Questions."

"You might go straight to Barton's place."

"Well, we're here, so we might as well talk to Netty Cooper who had the party here last night. It's one-thirty now. I should be able to get to Barton's place by three or a little later."

“Okay. I’ll meet you there.”

“Try to hold McCarthy and Ranier there. Also the three servants and a woman called Elaine Newman. She’s his secretary.”

“Hold on, Masao. We can’t detain anyone. You know that.”

“Just ask them, politely.”

“I’ll try. But we got nothing to detain anyone on.”

“We’re not arresting them. All I want to do is talk to them.”

“I’ll try.”

They stopped at the drugstore where Masuto ordered a bacon and tomato sandwich and Beckman ordered ham and cheese on rye.

“Didn’t you just eat lunch at my house?” Masuto asked him.

“Sure, but that was a long time ago.”

“Yes, I suppose it was.”

It was only a couple of hundred yards from the police station to the gate to Malibu Colony. At that point, where one turns off the Pacific Coast Highway to the old Malibu Road, the Colony is directly to one’s left, a manned gate, and then beyond it a row of some of the most expensive houses in southern California. Masuto had frequently reflected on the lot of a detective trying to juggle the payment of bills, mortgage, doctor, dentist, grocery, insurance, etc., on a policeman’s salary while protecting people who earned more in one year than a policeman could earn in a lifetime.

At the Colony gate, the guard looked at Masuto’s identification and shook his head. “Heavy today—heaviest day we had in a long time. First the local fuzz and now fancy Beverly Hills cops. What goes on?”

Masuto shrugged.

“Come on, I’m on your side.”

“The creature came out of the sea,” Beckman said.

“Funny, funny.”

“Which is Mrs. Cooper’s house?”

“Down there. You can’t miss it, painted bright yellow.”

They drove through and parked in front of the yellow house. A Chicano maid opened the door and asked them to wait. In a few minutes she returned and asked them to follow her. Unlike the Barton house, this one had a proper entrance facing the road. It was

two stories, had striped awnings, an entrance way, a huge living room-dining room with baroque furniture painted white, and, facing the sea, tall glass sliding doors. Netty Cooper was sitting on the deck-terrace with a man—a tall, elegant, good-looking man of about fifty. He was dressed in gray flannels, sported a carefully combed and barbered head of iron gray hair with pale gray eyes to match—and a face that was vaguely familiar.

“Two Beverly Hills detectives,” Netty Cooper said with obvious relish. “I never knew they had any detectives on the Beverly Hills police force, only those handsome men in uniform with the pale blue eyes, and so polite, so very polite. But you do have to be polite to be a policeman in Beverly Hills, don’t you?” Her own eyes were very pale blue. She was a slender, attenuated woman in her middle forties, with a long face, long neck, long trunk, and long legs. Her dyed yellow hair was piled on her head, and her nail polish was so dark it was almost black. She wore a beach dress of pale green, and her sandals revealed toenails painted the same color as her fingernails.

“Yes, ma’am—very polite,” Beckman said. Those who didn’t know Beckman and took him at his appearance, that of an oversized running back, were often surprised by his irony. Masuto was watching the man. He recognized him now, Congressman Roy Hennesy.

“And of course you’ve come about poor Angel’s kidnapping.”

“How do you know that Angel Barton was kidnapped?”

“Oh, one knows. This is a very small place. What has happened to our Angel?”

“She has been returned unharmed.”

There was a pause, and then Hennesy said, “Thank God. Kidnapping is a horrible thing.”

“I am Detective Sergeant Masuto. This is Detective Beckman.”

“How nice! How very nice! And this is Congressman Hennesy, a dear friend. Masuto. How nice to think that we have a Japanese detective on the Beverly Hills police force. I spent three months in Japan, and I would love to chat about it. So many things I didn’t understand. You could be so helpful.”

“I’m afraid not. I’ve never been to Japan.”

“Really? Then you must go.”

“Yes. Thank you for the suggestion. Meanwhile, I’m much more interested in the Barton kidnapping.”

“Oh? Are we on the list of suspects?”

“So sorry,” Masuto said, “we have no suspects but would appreciate information.”

Beckman watched him narrowly. Masuto rarely displayed anger, but when he fell into what Wainwright called his Charlie Chan routine, he was provoked and dangerous.

“How disappointing! I always wanted to be a suspect.”

“Were you at the party last night?” he asked Hennesy.

“I was. But I assure you, I did not kidnap the Angel. If I had, I would never return her. I would give up my seat in Congress and find a desert island somewhere—a place where she and I could live out our lives in idyllic ecstasy.”

“Ah, so. And does she feel that way about you?”

“Sergeant, must you be so literal? Half the men in Los Angeles are in love with the Angel,” Mrs. Cooper said, and then to Hennesy, “but you are a very heartless man to sit there and tell me you dream of running off with the Angel.”

“My apologies, and the disclaimer must include the fact that I am here with you, while the Angel snuggles in the arms of her devoted husband. How devoted, I wonder? How much was the ransom, Sergeant?”

“I have no idea,” Masuto said.

“Close-mouthed—ah, well, an officer in pursuit of his duty.”

“Did you leave the party before or after Mrs. Barton?”

“I really don’t know.”

“You mean with all your talk about a desert island, you didn’t notice whether she was gone or not?”

“She left before Mr. Hennesy did,” Mrs. Cooper told him. “I don’t think any of my guests were candidates for a kidnapping—Jack Fellows and his wife, more millions than they know what to do with, the Tudors—well, a star does not dash around kidnapping people—Kennedy, only the most successful director in town, the Butterworths and the Goldbergs and the Lees. Not a very large party, Mr. Detective, and no one who is a potential for your kidnapper. If you

think that any of my guests walked out of here and went over to the Barton place and kidnapped Angel Barton, you are absolutely out of your mind.”

Masuto stared at her for a long moment; then he nodded. “We’ll be going now—oh, one thing. Which of your guests live here in the Colony?”

“The Lees and the Goldbergs. Are you going to grill them as well?”

“I haven’t grilled you, Mrs. Cooper.”

“The Goldbergs are four houses down, the Lees are the sixth house.”

“And, Congressman, when did you first learn about the kidnapping?”

“About two minutes before you arrived, Sergeant. I’ve been here about an hour, but Mrs. Cooper was upstairs doing her bath and things. I walked around to the beach side and made myself comfortable on the terrace. We’re old pals. And, by the way, I didn’t think you were serious about who left first, and I was rather put off by your questioning me. I did leave before Angel, if that matters.”

“Thank you,” Masuto said coldly.

Outside, Beckman let out his breath and shook his head. “They are a pair. She’s a normal Beverly Hills type phony. The congressman’s a fuckin’ pain in the ass. They almost had an indictment out on him once, and then it was squashed, and they go on reelecting him. You want to keep your hands in your pockets if you get too close to him.”

“What now?” Masuto asked him. “The Lees or the Goldbergs?”

“Let’s give the Goldbergs a shot.”

The Goldberg house was painted pink. Mrs. Goldberg was small, with dark hair, dark eyes, fiftyish, and had a schoolgirl figure and a good coat of tan. Her house was furnished in beach baroque, apparently de rigueur in the Colony, but with accents of pink. She asked them to sit down on the pink chairs on the terrace and poured Cokes for each of them.

“How exciting to have two real live detectives here. Wait until Joe gets home and I give him a blow by blow. Only poor Angel—”

“She’s safe, Mrs. Goldberg. She’s home, unharmed.”

“Oh? Then I’ll be bitchy and rescind my sympathy.”

"I take it you don't like her?"

"Ugh! You see, I don't hide my feelings."

"That sounds like very strong feeling."

"It is. You see, Detective Masuto—that is it, Masuto?"

"Yes, indeed. And this is Detective Beckman."

"You see, I wasn't born to this sun-drenched, orange-ridden, never-never land. Joe and I made it the hard way, and he's just about the best producer in the business, so I don't have to be a diplomat, or an ass-licker, whichever you prefer. Now this is not a place without its gonifs and stinkers, as I'm sure you know, but this Angel is a beauty. Yes, indeed—even for the film business." She stopped and shook her head. "But I'm sure you're not interested in Angel."

"But we are. Please go on."

"Where do I start and where do I stop? Don't ask me to go into Angel Barton on my own. Ask me questions."

"All right. We've just come from Netty Cooper's house. She told us that you and your husband were at the party last night."

"We were. Netty's all right. She just keeps hurting all over with rejected-woman syndromes, three divorces—but since we're a community-property state, she's done brilliantly financially. Joe says she's worth at least five million."

She has fangs and she's no one's fool, Masuto reflected, asking her, "How did you find out about the kidnapping?"

"Sergeant, Joe, my husband, is producing Mikey's new film. In this kind of trouble, he would tell Joe before he told his own mother. Mikey isn't poor, but to put together a million dollars in a few hours is not easy. Joe always maintains a large liquid position, just in case he wants to tie up some literary property or a director. Joe was able to put his hands on two hundred thousand or so, and with Bill Ranier and Jack McCarthy pitching in, they were able to supply what Mikey needed for the ransom. But a million dollars for the Angel—ah well —"

"You keep saying Mikey," Beckman put in. "You must be very close to Mike Barton."

"He's like a son to us. Joe ran into him over in West Hollywood one day, pumping gas. You see—" She paused. "You see, I want to

tell you this because I just don't like the smell of what's happening here, and both of you look like decent men. But please don't blow it all over town. Joe went to great effort to give Mikey a certain aura. So if this can be just among us?"

"I'll try," Masuto agreed. "We're involved with a crime, so I can't promise anything. But we'll try."

"Good enough. Mikey's father had a grocery store in Flatbush. That's in Brooklyn. We knew his father and we knew Mikey as a kid. His name then was Bernstein."

"You're kidding," Beckman said. "You mean he's Jewish?"

"What's so strange? You're Jewish, aren't you?"

"I look it."

"No law says you have to."

"And what about this rumor that his real name was Brannigan and that he came from upstate New York?"

"If you read Gloria Adams, you'll find a lot of rumors. When Joe and I were living in Flatbush and trying to make it the hard way, I saw Mikey every day, the sweetest, most willing, most decent kid I ever knew. The only kinkiness in him was that he wanted to be an actor. Then we came out to the Coast and lost touch with him, and then one day, about sixteen years ago, Joe met him at a gas pump. He brought the kid home, and we fed him and made him stay with us. Joe got him a part in a TV film, and he liked what he saw and got him an acting coach. From there on it was step by step, until he became the Mike Barton of today. We love Mikey, so I don't want to put Joe on a pedestal as Mr. Good Guy, but without Joe he would be another of the ten thousand unemployed actors around town. I don't say Joe didn't profit. He made eight films with Mikey, and six were enormous money-makers. But that's not why he did it."

"He had already changed his name to Barton when your husband met him?"

"Yes. He wanted it that way, and Joe let it stay. They decided on a mysterious past, and it worked, for what it's worth."

"And how did he meet Angel?"

"That's another well-kept secret—" She hesitated, studying Masuto and Beckman thoughtfully.



“But you’re going to tell me,” Masuto said deliberately. “You’re not a chatterer, but you’ve decided to tell me a number of things. May I ask why?”

“Is why important?”

“I think so.”

“I’m afraid. There’s something happening here ever since Mikey married her, and it frightens me. He’s changed. A lot of stars and semi-stars in this town cat around like they’re in competition. Mikey wasn’t that way. There were a few girls in his life whom he really cared for, but he didn’t marry until he met Angel. He lived with one lady for five years, and while they were together he never looked at another woman. He has one real weakness—one, maybe a dozen. Who hasn’t? Mikey wouldn’t win any prizes for smarts. He’s sweet and kind, but not too bright. But the one real weakness I’m talking about is gambling. It’s a sickness, and he’s a big loser. He met Angel in Vegas, where she was dealing blackjack, and he fell for her like a ton of bricks. She had been on the job only a few days, and already she had the reputation of wanting nothing to do with any of the studs around the place. She walked off the job with him the next day and they came back to L.A. together and she moved in—and it didn’t work, not one little bit. It was a rotten, screwed-up marriage from the word go.”

“Not according to the media,” Beckman said.

“You can talk to the media or you can talk to me. The Angel that the fan magazines write about—the sweet, gentle, compassionate creature—doesn’t exist. The real Angel is by no means a sweet, warm woman. She’s a controlled cake of ice.”

“They say she has a slight foreign accent.”

“She’s French. She claims to have learned her English dealing at Collingwood’s in London.”

“Which you don’t believe?”

“Joe’s been to Collingwood’s. He says they don’t have lady dealers.”

“If the marriage is so bad,” Masuto asked her, “why do they stay together?”

“You never met Mikey?”

“This morning. I talked with him at his house.”

“All right. He paid a million dollars for her. He adores her, pays his price, and gets nothing, absolutely nothing, in return. If you want reasons, talk to a psychiatrist. It’s nothing I understand, nothing Joe understands. If she told Mikey to lay down at the front door so she could use him as a doormat, he’d do it. The one real fight Joe ever had with Mikey was when Mikey wanted him to put Angel into a picture.”

“Why?” Beckman asked. “She’s beautiful.”

“Beautiful, Mr. Beckman,” she said patiently, “is a salable commodity in Grand Rapids or St. Louis. In Hollywood you can’t give it away. On any street in West Hollywood, you’ll see ten girls as beautiful as Angel, and if you walk through one of the studios, you’ll see a hundred. Of course, they don’t have her press, which comes from being married to Mikey.”

“Still, if Mike Barton wanted it—”

“When you have ten million dollars riding on a picture, you don’t make gifts of starring roles. Anyway, Joe agrees with me. She can work her charm in a living room, but she’s not enough of a woman to make it on the screen.”

“What exactly do you mean?”

“I don’t really know what I mean. I’m Jewish. I look at Detective Beckman here and decide that he’s Jewish. Maybe if I wasn’t Jewish I wouldn’t know. I’m a woman, and when I look at Angel and talk to her—well, something’s missing. It’s just a feeling. I can be very nasty when I put my mind to it.”

“One more thing, if you can still put up with our questions. At the party last night, who left first, Angel or Congressman Hennesy?”

“They left together.”

“You’re sure?”

“Quite sure. But if you think Hennesy’s involved in the kidnapping—no. It’s not his style. He’s a white-collar crook—payoffs, bribes, influence peddling.”

“You seem to know him.”

“Ah, Detective Masuto, you live here in the Colony, and you know a great many people, some nice, some not nice at all.”

“Where does Hennesy live?”

“A few miles from here.”

“Is he wealthy?”

“That’s hard to say. You see, a public servant is always so ready to sell at almost any price that it’s difficult to say whether poverty or larceny is the motivating factor.”

Masuto nodded, repressing a smile. “Thank you. You’ve been very helpful and informative.”

“How often do we get two good-looking city detectives out here in Malibu?”

“Even if you do look Jewish,” Masuto said to Beckman when they were outside in the car.

“She’s a tough little lady. I wouldn’t want to get on the wrong side of her.”

“Still, it’s puzzling,” Masuto said. “One loves Angel, one hates Angel. Nobody gives any reason why.”

“You’re going to look for reasons why a dumbbell falls in love, you got to be crazy.”

“You think he’s a dumbbell?”

“She does. She may love him like a son, but she don’t give him even passing marks. Anyway, Masao, I think that as far as we’re concerned, the case is closed. The feds will step in, and they want all the cards where a kidnapping is involved. Anyway, the break-in part of it and the snatch itself was in Malibu, so it drops into the lap of the Malibu cops. We might as well head back to Beverly Hills to Barton’s place, and then I can tell my wife I actually saw Mike Barton in the flesh. That’ll give her meat for the coffee klatch for the next two weeks. Unless you want to talk to Lee?”

“He’s a screenwriter, isn’t he?”

Beckman consulted his notes. “That’s right. Cominsky says he’s the hottest writer in the business.”

“We’ll skip him. I don’t want any more imagination. I already have too many notions of what happened here last night.”

They were on Sunset Boulevard, heading east toward Beverly Hills, when Masuto’s radio lit up. It was Polly at the switchboard at the station house.

“Where are you?” she asked him.

“Just east of Sepulveda.”

“Let me try to patch you through to the captain. He’s been trying to get you.”

“Masao?” Wainwright’s voice was flat and bleak. “Where the hell are you?”

“Just passing the university.”

“Well, get your ass over here to San Ysidro, just up from Tower.”

“Why?”

“Because Mike Barton is sitting here in his car with a bullet through his head.”

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## San Yisidro

San Yisidro is a road that winds up into the Santa Monica Hills, branching off from Tower Road a short distance from Benedict Canyon. For about a mile and a quarter San Yisidro is within the city limits of Beverly Hills, and then the road goes on into Los Angeles. It must be noted that Beverly Hills itself is an island, entirely surrounded, not by water but by the City of Los Angeles. San Yisidro is a very elegant neighborhood, but there are spots where the cactus and the mesquite still grow untouched as they have for the past hundreds of years.

It was at one such spot that Mike Barton's black Mercedes was parked, drawn up on the shoulder of the road, the central attraction for two Beverly Hills police cars, Wainwright's car and Dr. Sam Baxter's car. A uniformed policeman stood in the road, waving the curious by. Masuto and Beckman parked behind a prowler car and then joined Wainwright at the Mercedes. The door was open, and Baxter was examining the body of what had been Mike Barton. On the other side of the seat Sweeney, the Beverly Hills fingerprint man, was dusting the car and the dashboard.

"When did you find it?" Masuto asked Wainwright.

"Half hour. Officer Comdon was patrolling the road, and he saw the car. Barton looked alive just sitting there, which is why, I guess, other cars passed it by, but Comdon figured he might be lost or something."

"When was he killed?"

Wainwright nodded at Sam Baxter, and Masuto went over to the doctor and asked him.

“How the hell do I know?” Baxter snapped. “Was I here? All right, we’ll play the guessing game.” He looked at his watch. “It’s four-thirty now. I’d say he’s been dead four hours, and that’s just a guess, and if you put me on a witness stand, I’ll say it’s a guess.”

“Thank you, Doc. Next to your skill I admire your sweet nature most. What killed him?”

“A gun. What in hell do you think killed him?”

“Yes, of course,” Masuto said humbly. “I thought perhaps you could tell us what kind of a gun.”

“The bullet’s still in his skull. When I open him up and take it out, I’ll give you all the details. Meanwhile, from the entry hole, I’d guess it was a twenty-two, and since the bullet didn’t go through, I’d say it was a twenty-two short. A guess, you understand? But what the hell, if I did my work the way you people do yours, my whole life would be guesses.”

“Yes, our work is hardly as precise. How far away was the gun when the bullet was fired?”

“You’re sure you don’t want the name of the killer?”

“Only if you have it.”

“The gun was no more than twelve inches away. Powder burns. If you want me to do all your work for you, I’d say that his killer was sitting in the car with him. Barton turned away, and the killer put the gun to the back of his head and fired.”

“And then wiped every print from the inside of the car,” Sweeney said. “Took his time and polished the inside and the door handles like he was working in a car wash.”

An ambulance drew up now, and two attendants pulled a stretcher out. Beverly Hills was not large or violent enough to require its own morgue and pathology room, and they had a long-standing arrangement with All Saints Hospital for the use of both facilities. Sam Baxter, chief pathologist at All Saints, doubled as medical examiner when his services were required.

The ambulance pulled away, Baxter following it, and Wainwright, studying the car thoughtfully, asked Masuto whether he had any ideas.

“Too many.” He had squatted down by the rear wheel, feeling the dirt. “It rained day before yesterday. If the killer was parked here waiting for him, there should be tracks on the shoulder in front.”

Beckman anticipated him. “Right here, Masao.” Wainwright and Masuto joined him. “Do you know,” Masuto said wryly, “television has become an enemy. It gives the criminal the benefit of a writer’s imagination.” The tracks had been there, but they were deliberately scuffed out.

“Still,” Beckman said, “he was parked here, which means that two cars were sitting here, and maybe people don’t remember one car, but somebody’s got to remember two of them.”

“You know it makes no sense,” Wainwright said. “It’s happened enough times that kidnappers kill the kidnapped person, but why kill the man who’s making the drop?”

“Yeah, why?” Beckman added.

“It makes no sense only if there *was* a kidnapping,” Masuto said.

“Then what in hell was it?”

“Barton parks here to meet someone. He has a million dollars with him. The person he meets is parked in front of him. Is it a kidnapper? He doesn’t tell Barton to drop the money and drive on. Instead, he leaves his car, gets into Barton’s car, talks to him, and then kills him. No evidence of any struggle in the car, just a simple, friendly murder by your friendly kidnapper.”

“Just hold on,” Wainwright said. “If you’re talking about a faked kidnapping, tell me how it makes sense. Sure Barton had to have some help to raise the million on short notice, but it’s covered. He has over a million dollars in property and securities, so it’s his money. Now what in hell does he gain by faking a kidnapping and paying out a million dollars of his own money?”

“I have a notion,” Masuto said, “but I don’t know whether I’m right.”

“Suppose you let us in on your notion.”

“Let me find out whether it makes any sense, Captain. Then I’d like to talk to the lot of them at the Barton place, Ranier and McCarthy and the Angel and a lady by the name of Elaine Newman, and also the three servants. If any of them left the Barton house, I’d like you to get them back in there and have Sy sit on the place until I get there.”

“And that’s going to help you find out who killed Barton?”

“I know who killed Barton.”

“What!”

Masuto spread his hands and shook his head. “Not your way. I have no evidence. I see some kind of a crazy jigsaw puzzle, and I don’t know what it is or why it is. So don’t ask me to name any names.”

“Why the hell not?” Wainwright demanded angrily.

“Because I can’t do it that way. You know me a long time. This is like a dark tunnel and I’m feeling my way through.”

Wainwright stared at him for a long moment; then he nodded. “All right, Masao, I’ll play it your way for the next twenty-four hours. Then I want the name.”

“Fair enough.”

“Now what time at Barton’s?”

“It’s five now. Suppose we say between seven and seven-thirty.”

Masuto left Beckman with Wainwright, and from San Ysidro he drove to Woodruff Avenue in Westwood, where his cousin, Alan Toyada, lived with his wife and three children. Toyada, who had been chief research analyst at Merrill Lynch for a number of years, had resigned to teach economics at U.C.L.A. and to conduct his own investment business. Masuto hoped to find him at home, and his hope was rewarded. After a series of polite greetings to the wife and the three children, he sat down in Toyada’s study and explained that he had a problem.

“Which is why you’re here, of course. What has happened to us since we nisei have become Americans? We abandon all the old ways. Family counts for so little. Do you know how many months it is since we have seen Kati and your children?”

“Too many. One lives with so much nonsense that the important things go by the board.”

“How is Kati?”

“Very well. She has joined a consciousness-raising group, all nisei women. I think I approve.”

“Do you? You might remember that one of the great advantages of being nisei is that one usually has a nisei wife. When you salt the kettle too much, it’s very easy to spoil the stew.”



“Perhaps. But I think we should talk about women’s rights another time. Right now I have a problem that I present to your superior knowledge.”

“Oh? Possibly the Barton kidnapping?”

“How do you know about the kidnapping?”

“Caught it on the radio driving home. The Angel was returned and the Bartons are happily reunited.”

“Not quite. Mike Barton is dead—murdered.”

“My God! When did that happen?”

“A few hours ago.”

“Do you know how, why?”

“How—yes. Shot in the head. But why—” Masuto shook his head. “That’s why I come to you.”

“To tell you why Mike Barton was shot? I am overwhelmed, Masao. A simple investment counselor called upon to explain the evil that men do. Actually, I am very flattered.”

“You are by no means a simple investment counselor. You know more about the curious mythology of money than anyone else I might go to. So please try to help me.”

“How can I refuse?”

“Very well. I’ll be as brief as possible. Angel Barton was kidnapped. The ransom was a million dollars. The ransom was paid and Angel was released unharmed. My guess is that whoever received the ransom payment murdered Mike Barton. But it is the kidnapping itself that puzzles me.”

“More than the fact of a crime?”

“Much more. In the first place, I don’t believe that there ever was a kidnapping. I am convinced that Barton and his wife arranged a false kidnapping. But why?”

“Did he borrow the money?”

“No. But even if he had, his price is a million and a half dollars a film. But he didn’t borrow the money. Of course, since he had only a few hours this morning to put together the million dollars, he had to go to the banks for cash, and he was helped by his producer, his lawyer, and his business manager. But every dollar was backed by securities Barton owned. Which means that he arranged a

kidnapping and paid a million dollars of his own money to himself—or at least so he planned.”

“You’re sure the kidnapping was fraudulent?” Toyada asked him.

“If not, I should put away my police credentials and spend my declining years pumping gasoline. It was not only faked but stupidly faked.”

“And your problem is to understand why it should have taken place at all?”

“Exactly. You see, early this morning, when Barton rejected any intervention on the part of the police or the FBI, I began to suspect the validity of the kidnapping. Then, as events unfolded, my suspicions were confirmed. The only thing that makes no sense whatsoever is the reason for the charade.”

“But, Masao, when you found Barton’s body, did you also find the million dollars?”

“No.”

“Ah, so!”

“Yes, very Japanese. Do you do it purposely?”

“A habit of my father’s.”

“You would have made a good policeman, but my disgraceful profession is enough for the family to endure. Of course the person who killed Barton had motives easily understood. He wanted a million dollars. And this person also knew about the kidnap plot, whether or not he was directly involved in it. But Barton—?”

“Masao, you are a victim of the fact that policemen are grossly underpaid. The explanation is really very simple.”

“It is? I feel like a fool already.”

“Nonsense. It is simply outside your province. Mike Barton earned well over a million dollars a year. This money is paid as wages, and it is taxed by the government at a rate of fifty percent. But he also had very substantial additional income, which is categorized by the government as unearned income, and which in Mike Barton’s case would have been taxed at a rate of seventy percent. Now what this income is, I have no way of knowing, but it’s a safe guess that it was substantial.”

“What kind of income?”

“Dividends on security holdings. Rents from real estate. Possibly shares in profits of films, depending on how they might have been structured. Any number of sources for what the government calls unearned income. Now when an actor works in a film, regardless of how much he is paid, a substantial part of his wages is withheld, just as a part of your own wages is withheld for tax purposes. But to some extent he decides how much should be withheld, and if there is a difference in the government’s favor, he makes it up on April fifteenth, the date for filing. If there is a difference in his favor, the government sends him a check. Of course, you are aware of this. But with unearned income and with the income of self-employed professionals who are paid by fee as independent contractors, there is no withholding. The responsibility for the payment of taxes rests with the individual, and he must anticipate his tax and pay it to the government in four installments. Now keeping that in mind, let’s return to Mike Barton. We’ll propose that he needed a large amount of money desperately and quickly. Why? Was he being blackmailed? I leave that to you. You say that the million dollars was collateralized by securities? Are you sure? Have you checked? The money was put up by his friends—have they seen the securities? And how much of the million was an overdraft granted by the bank? If he has one of those enormous Beverly Hills houses, that would be security enough for an overdraft. But what have you checked?”

“At this point, nothing,” Masuto said unhappily. “I saw no reason to question his friends concerning the securities.”

“So we don’t know how much of that million was his, but we can accept the fact that a substantial part was. He would have to clean out his bank accounts. Anyway, he needs money quickly and desperately. What to do? He and whoever was in it with him concoct a plan. Fake a kidnapping. Pay out a million dollars in ransom, which he can claim was his own money, and then take a million-dollar deduction on his income tax. If the entire million is in the seventy percent bracket, he nets a cool seven hundred thousand dollars of clear profit—plus his original million. But even if it’s all in the fifty percent bracket, he has a very neat half a million dollars in profit. Of course, since the bills would be recorded, he’d have to launder the

money. But no difficulty there. He pays the ten percent fee. It's regular big business south of the border and in the Bahamas."

"And the treasury allows it?"

"Masao, when a child is kidnapped, people bankrupt themselves to pay the ransom, and most kidnappings are not faked. Internal Revenue is pretty damned heartless, but this is America, and you know how people's hearts go out to a kidnap victim."

"And it's more or less foolproof, isn't it?"

"Except for stupidity, which you tell me this is laced with. However, considering that he would have paid ten percent to the launderers, Mike Barton would be holding nine hundred thousand dollars in cash. That's a lot of cash. What would he have done with it?"

"That's the question, isn't it? When I know that, I'll have all the other answers."

"How's that?"

"Just a guess that whoever killed Mike Barton did it for the money. I find the money, I find a killer—or killers."

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## The House on the Hill

North of Sunset Boulevard, in Beverly Hills, the land rolls up to the Santa Monica Mountains. The gentle slopes and hillocks are cut by several canyons, and the real estate in this area constitutes one of the most expensive residential neighborhoods in the entire country. The Barton home was on a hilltop just high enough to look out over the Beverly Hills Hotel, a Spanish colonial house on an acre of ground.

It was dark when Masuto pulled into the driveway, and four cars were already standing in the parking area. Beckman was waiting outside the front door, talking to a uniformed Beverly Hills cop, and he greeted Masuto with relief. “You got a houseful of angry citizens,” he told Masuto, “especially McCarthy and Ranier, who insist that we got no right whatsoever to keep them here.”

“We haven’t. Why do they stay?”

“They tell it that the only reason they’re here is to protect the rights of the Angel and to keep her from being bullied by the cops.”

“Why do they think we’d bully her?” Masuto wondered.

“Because when they asked Wainwright whether they were suspects, he said that he had to take the position that everyone who knew about the kidnapping was to some degree suspect. He said it more diplomatically, but McCarthy blew his top anyway. Barton’s secretary—her name’s Elaine Newman—went to pieces when she heard about the murder.”

“Oh? And how did Mrs. Barton take it?”

"I don't know. She's been in her room since she got back. The doctor's been here to see her."

"What doctor?"

"Their family doctor, name of Haddam. He's gone now."

"And what about the FBI?"

"That kid, Frank Keller, was here. He nosed around and asked a few questions. Didn't seem to know what the hell he was doing."

"And the captain?"

"The captain went home to have dinner. McCarthy told him that any harassment of Angel Barton would result in an action, and that he'd sue the hell out of the city, and you know how the captain reacts when one of the wealthy citizens threatens to sue the city. He says that you can handle it, because since you know all about who murdered Barton, you can go easy on everyone else. What about it, Masao? Do you know?"

"Sort of."

"What the devil does 'sort of' mean?"

"I know and I don't know."

"Sure. That clears it all up."

Beckman led the way into the house. "What about the press?" Masuto asked him.

"They were here, also the TV guys. Wainwright and McCarthy spoke to them. I told Frank, the officer at the door, not to let anyone in, except first he talks to you."

Masuto was studying the house thoughtfully. Earlier in the day he had seen it only from the outside. Inside, it displayed the slightly insane baronial overbuilding of a film star's house of the nineteen thirties—tile floor, huge center staircase, stained glass windows, light fixtures like chateau lanterns, mahogany doors and trim and white plaster between heavy wooden beams.

"They're in the living room—or were—over there." He nodded at an archway.

Masuto went down two steps, through the archway, and opened a heavy door. The living room was at least forty feet long, with a high, beamed ceiling, an overstuffed couch, some easy chairs, and an enormous fireplace with a box large enough to take five-foot logs. No fire burned there now. The three people in the room were almost lost

in its immensity—McCarthy talking on the telephone, Ranier at a long deal table with papers spread in front of him, and in one of the big, overstuffed chairs, her legs drawn up under her, her eyes staring sightlessly into space, a very pretty, slender young woman who, Masuto surmised, was Elaine Newman. She had dark hair and dark eyes and wore almost no makeup, and her face had a chiseled quality that Masuto responded to immediately. After he and Beckman had entered the room and stood just inside the door for a long moment, the girl turned to look at him, but without curiosity. Ranier glanced up from his papers and McCarthy finished his phone conversation.

“We met this morning,” Masuto said. “I’m Detective Sergeant Masuto.”

“Yes.” McCarthy nodded. “I suggest you get on with your inquisition and let us get out of here. I already informed Wainwright that you have no damned right even to suggest that we stay and be questioned.”

“Only for you to help us,” Masuto replied gently, “as citizens and as friends of the murdered man.”

“They weren’t his friends,” Elaine Newman said unexpectedly and tiredly. “Don’t call them his friends.”

“Shut up, Elaine!” Ranier snapped.

“Why? Are you going to kill me too, you blood-sucking son of a bitch?”

Ranier leaped to his feet and came around the table. “I won’t stand for that! I don’t have to stand for that! I don’t have to listen to that foul-mouthed cunt!”

Beckman interposed himself, blocking Ranier’s advance. “Let’s all of us just take it easy,” he said. “Why don’t you sit down, Mr. Ranier?”

For a moment or two Ranier faced up to Beckman’s enormous bulk; then he retreated and dropped into a chair. Beckman turned to Elaine Newman and said, “Why don’t we go inside for a little while, Miss Newman. Suppose we find the kitchen and make us some coffee. I can use some, and I guess you can too.” He glanced at Masuto, who nodded, and then he helped the girl out of her chair

and led her to the door. “Can I go home?” she asked Masuto plaintively.

“In a little while. After we’ve talked. Go along with Detective Beckman and try to relax.”

After Beckman and the girl had left the room, Ranier turned to Masuto and told him angrily, “I resent this. I resent having to stand here and be accused of murder by that little bitch.”

“Bill, Bill,” McCarthy said, “no one is accusing you of murder. Elaine is just shooting off her grief, and it’s a relief to have some grief around here. Anyway”—he turned to Masuto—“Bill doesn’t have enough guts to kill anyone.”

“Thank you,” Ranier said sourly.

“And Mike was his meal ticket. Who kills the goose that lays the five percent?”

“He was your meal ticket too!” Ranier shouted. “Talk about bloodsuckers—you soaked him with fees that were unreal.”

“Which eliminates both of us as murder suspects. That ought to please you.”

“That’s enough of that,” Masuto said sharply. “The fact of the matter is that Mike Barton is dead and someone killed him, and I have to make some sense out of this. All this talk of suspects is meaningless. We have no suspects. We have every reason to believe that Mr. Barton was killed for the million dollars of ransom money. Why whoever received the ransom found it necessary to kill him, we don’t know. I’m hoping that one of you gentlemen can enlighten me.”

“Have you spoken to Angel?” McCarthy asked. “She saw the kidnapppers.”

“You spoke to her?”

“We both spoke to her,” Ranier said, “but she wouldn’t talk about it —”

“She couldn’t,” McCarthy interposed.

“Then she couldn’t. The doctor said she was in shock. Then when she heard about Mike’s death, she went to pieces completely.”

“Where is she now?”

“In her room.”



“We have reason to believe,” Masuto said, “that the person who killed Mr. Barton was known to him, perhaps a good friend.”

“Mike had lots of friends.”

“And no friends,” McCarthy put in. “You have friends when you earn less than two hundred thousand a year. Above that, you have appendages. When you’re a star, you have the star-fuckers, and the woods are full of them.”

“Were you his friend?” Masuto asked gently.

“I’m going to ignore the insinuation. I was his lawyer. Bill here was his business agent.”

“Yes, of course.” Masuto studied them thoughtfully. “Mr. Barton, it appears, was killed some time between twelve-thirty and one o’clock. Without any insinuations, believe me, I must ask you gentlemen where each of you were at that time?”

“Right here,” Ranier replied.

“Well,” McCarthy said, “you did run back to your office.”

“Later. Much later.”

“Come on, Bill, it was not much later.”

“What in hell are you trying to do?” Ranier demanded angrily. “Set me up?”

“I’m not setting you up. For Christ’s sake, what are you so jumpy about? No one’s accusing you of killing Mike. You’re the last person in the world who had any reason to kill him. But the plain truth of the matter is that Mike got the ransom call at twelve noon on the button, and he bombed out of here with the money two minutes later. You left about ten minutes after that, and it was half-past one when you came back.”

“I drove straight to my office.”

“And where is your office?” Masuto asked.

“On Camden. My secretary keeps a log. She logs me in and she logs me out. She can bear witness to that. I had some work that had to be attended to. I didn’t stay to finish it. I brought it back here with me.”

“And when did you get back here?”

“It was about one-forty-five, I think. “Lena Jones—she’s the maid—she let me in.”

“And while he was gone, for an hour and forty-five minutes, where were you, Mr. McCarthy?”

“You know you have no damned right to ask me any questions.”

“I know that. You don’t have to answer.”

“I was right here, in this room. I made some phone calls, but I was right here.”

“Alone?”

“Yes, alone. But Mrs. Holtz brought me a sandwich and coffee.”

“When was that?”

McCarthy shrugged.

“You know damn well when it was,” Ranier said. “You were eating the sandwich when I got back. You offered me the other one. I didn’t even take time for lunch,” he told Masuto.

“So what? I never left this room. Right now I would like to leave it. I’ve been cooped up here all day.”

“You are both free to leave whenever you wish,” Masuto said.

“If you’re going to subject the Angel to questioning, I think I’ll stay,” McCarthy told him. “I’m her attorney.”

“As you wish. And if you think of anything more you would like to tell me, I’ll be in the kitchen.”

“I’ll take you there,” Ranier said.

“I’m sure I can find the kitchen, and I would like to talk with Miss Newman privately.”

“Can he do that?” Ranier demanded of McCarthy.

“Why not? I’m not her attorney and you’re not her business manager.”

“You know what she’s going to say.”

“I have no idea,” Masuto said. He walked out of the room and through the hallway into what was apparently a butler’s pantry. A sallow-faced man in his sixties sat there, reading a copy of *Sports Illustrated*, and he looked at Masuto inquiringly but without speaking.

“Sergeant Masuto, Beverly Hills police.”

“I’m Kelly, the chauffeur.”

“You live here?”

“Over the garage.”

“I’d like you to stay in the house tonight. I want to talk to you later.”

“Where would I go?”

Masuto went past him and opened a swinging door into the kitchen. It was an old-fashioned kitchen in size, better than twenty feet square, and recently modernized into the glittering perfection that most Beverly Hills homes required of their kitchens—but with the color scheme, perfection fled. The floors were yellow tile. The refrigerator, stove, and sink were finished in pink, and the walls in tile of mauve and tan. In the center of the room, at a large butcher-block worktable, Beckman sat with three women: the secretary, Elaine Newman; a stout, middle-aged woman whom he introduced as Mrs. Holtz, the cook; and a thin black girl who dabbed at her swollen eyes and who was introduced as Lena Jones, the parlormaid. Beckman himself was finishing a plate of stew and the last of a large mug of beer, and imagining she saw a look of disapproval on Masuto's face, Mrs. Holtz said, "Let him eat. Better the food shouldn't go to waste. Nobody has any appetite today."

"You hungry, Masao?" Beckman asked him.

He shook his head, thinking nevertheless that it was past his dinnertime and that he'd hardly get home much before midnight.

Mrs. Holtz pressed him, and Masuto relented to the extent of a cup of coffee and a slice of pie. Then he asked the maid and the cook to wait in the dining room, telling them that he would like to talk to them later. When they had gone, he said to Beckman, "Get the chauffeur's full name and phone into L.A.P.D. See if they have any priors on him."

"His name is Joseph. Joseph Kelly," Elaine said. "He has a record, if that's what you're looking for. But he wouldn't kill Mike. Mike's the only one who's ever been decent to him. He was just a drifter without a hope in the world when Mike picked him up and gave him a job."

Masuto nodded at Beckman, who left the room. Sitting opposite the girl, he studied her thoughtfully.

"You're a nisei?"

"Yes."

"And you're the cop assigned to this case?"

"Yes."

"That means you have to find out who killed Mike."

"I hope to."

"Well, it's no big deal. I know who killed Mike."

“Oh? Who?”

“The Angel.” She said it with loathing.

“Inside, you suggested that Ranier killed Mr. Barton.”

“Maybe he did.”

“Both of them?”

“They’re both worthless bloodsuckers.”

“You hate people.”

“Some people. But I loved Mike. I was the only one around him who did, aside from Mrs. Holtz and Lena and Joe Kelly. All the rest”—her voice sank to a whimper—“oh, my God, it’s like killing a kid, like killing a little boy. Why? Why did they do it?”

Masuto waited until she had regained control of herself, and then he asked her, “What about Joe and Della Goldberg? Did they love Mike?”

“I guess so. But after he married Angel—”

“The relationship cooled?”

“Yes.”

“How long have you worked for Mike Barton?”

“Two years. Since right after he married Angel.”

“What did your work consist of?”

“His correspondence. Also, he always wanted to write a book. All the stars do. They have this guilt thing about being where they are, and mostly they can’t justify to themselves why they are where they are, and they feel that writing a book about themselves will be a way out. Poor Mike. He tried, but it was all too complicated.”

“He dictated to you?”

“Yes. But we didn’t get very far on the book. Twenty or thirty pages.”

“I would like to read it, if you would allow me.”

“Sure. Sure, why not?”

“Why do you hate Mrs. Barton?”

“The Angel? Because she’s a phony. Because she’s a mean, heartless bitch and because she gave Mike nothing but misery.”

“Why didn’t he divorce her?”

She thought about this for a while, and then she shook her head. “I don’t know.”

“Perhaps he loved her, the kind of love that demands nothing in return.”

“Bullshit!” she said angrily. “My heart isn’t broken because I lost a job. Mike has been my lover since almost the first day I was here. Are you going to tell me he loved that cold bitch?”

“I’m telling you nothing, only asking.”

“I don’t know why I’m talking to you at all.”

“Because we both want to find out who killed Mike Barton, and I must ask questions which will disturb you. I ask you again, why didn’t he divorce her?”

“He would never tell me. She had something on him.”

“What?”

“I just don’t know.”

“Guess. You must have turned this over in your mind a thousand times.”

“Ten thousand times.”

“You say he didn’t love her, yet he was willing to pay a million dollars ransom.”

“Come on, Sergeant.”

“What does that mean?”

“That whole kidnapping was a fraud. That little louse Ranier designed the whole thing.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know why. But I do know this, that if it were a real kidnapping, Mike wouldn’t have given twenty cents to get her back. Oh, he might have had to make a public display of some kind, but keep the cops out, keep the FBI out? No way. I can see how Mike might have paid the kidnappers a million dollars to keep her—but to get her back? You’ve got to be kidding.”

At this point Beckman came into the kitchen and said, “Masao, we got company. Della Goldberg is here with her husband, Joe, and Netty Cooper, and Roy Hennesy, the congressman from out in Malibu. They all claim to be dear friends of the deceased, so I put them in the living room.”

“Dear friends,” Elaine said bitterly.

“There are also a lot of media characters and Gloria Adams from the *Times*, and I guess I owe her.”

“Keep them out—no reporters. You don’t owe her that much. Let them go over to the station house and get it from our P.R.”

“What P.R.? We don’t have any P.R.”

“Mac Bendix—he always knows what’s going on, and he’ll pump the captain and keep them up-to-date. But no reporters in the house. Also, if you can, keep the maid and chauffeur apart from the guests.”

“Mrs. Holtz wants to make coffee. She says if you have guests, you got to feed them. The black kid is serving drinks. I don’t know how I can chase her out.”

“All right, let it go. What about McCarthy and Ranier?”

“They’re still here, hanging in.”

“I got a feeling they’re all going to hang in. Do me a favor, Sy. Call Kati and tell her I’m here open end. I don’t know when we’ll get home.”

Elaine Newman was staring at Masuto with interest. It was the first moment that some of the pain had left her face. As Beckman left, she said softly, “You know what you’re doing, don’t you?”

“I like to think so. I’m not sure.”

“How come a man like you is a small-town cop?”

“We can talk about that some other time, and Beverly Hills is not any small town. Right now we come back to Ranier. Why are you so sure he engineered the kidnapping?”

“Because poor Mike didn’t have enough brains to work it out, and the Angel has plenty of viciousness but not too many smarts.”

“Why do you think Ranier planned it? Mind you, I neither agree nor disagree. I just want to know why you think so.”

“Yes, I’ve been thinking. I got here about ten. I was here when you pulled that silly gardener charade—saw you through the window. Mike was in a black mood, not worried, not grief-stricken over the Angel, just mean and angry because he had been talked into doing something he didn’t want to do. Usually he’s gentle as a lamb. Or was. My God.”

“Easy,” Masuto said. “Try to relax. This has been very hard, but you’re young and your whole life is ahead of you.”

“You ever been in love, Sergeant?”

“Yes.”

“Then don’t tell me my whole life is ahead of me. I’m all right now. I was telling you about Mike’s mood. I tried to talk to him, but that was no good. He wouldn’t talk. I think I lost my temper and said something about if the kidnapping was real, why didn’t he bring in the cops and the FBI? Then he told me to get out of the room. Ranier was there, and the way he looked at me, he could have killed me right then and there.”

“You still haven’t told me why you think Ranier planned it?”

“He was Mike’s business agent. You work in Beverly Hills, so you know what a business agent is. He takes five percent of everything Mike earned, and do you know what Mike earned? It’s only November now, and already Mike earned over three million dollars. It sounds like a lot, doesn’t it? It sounds like enough to run a small country. But look what happens to it. First of all, Ranier takes his five percent off the top. Then McCarthy takes another ten percent off the top as Mike’s agent—my God, what’s wrong with me? I keep talking about him as if he were alive.”

“I thought McCarthy was Mike’s lawyer.”

“He is. But he also acts as his agent. That’s common enough. A lot of lawyers do it. He draws up the contracts with Joe Goldberg and takes his ten percent for that. Then again, as when Mike was sued by Bert Bailey, his stunt man, McCarthy defended the suit. His fee for that was seventy thousand dollars. Then the feds step in with their income tax, and every bum in town with his hand stretched out, and Mike’s family back East, and Mike never said no to anyone. I’m not saying that Mike doesn’t need a business agent. He could no more handle that kind of money than a five-year-old. But Ranier is a crook, and I bet that when it comes to probating Mike’s will, you’ll find that he doesn’t have twenty cents. Ranier’s taken care of that. That’s why Ranier rigged the kidnapping and he and Angel murdered Mike.”

“Tell me about Angel.”

“You don’t believe me.”

“I believe that you have passionate feelings,” Masuto said. “I can’t afford to have passionate feelings. I’m a policeman. I need proof, evidence.”

“Haven’t I given you enough evidence?”

“Not evidence, Miss Newman. Opinions. And I respect your opinions. I need your opinions.”

“You’re the strangest cop I ever met.”

“Perhaps you’ve met very few. You said Mr. Barton didn’t love Angel. Was there ever a time when he did love her?”

“I suppose when he married her.”

“You suppose? Didn’t he ever talk about it?”

“No! You keep asking me these questions. I’m sick. My whole world has gone down the drain, and you keep asking me about that bitch who killed him.”

“Because I must. How did she feel about him?”

“Indifferent. What shall I say? They had separate rooms. Sure they appeared together at parties now and then. That was P.R. Otherwise she went her own way and Mike couldn’t have cared less.”

“What was her own way?”

“I don’t know. No one knows. She has that little voice and that phony beatific smile, and it takes the whole world in.”

“Was she having an affair with Ranier?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you know where she came from?”

“France. Mike told me that once. It’s all he ever told me about her. He wouldn’t talk about her.”

“But you say Mr. Barton loved you.”

“Yes, yes, yes, damn you!”

“Then you must have discussed a future. That’s the way people are, people like yourself, people with strong feelings.”

“Yes, we discussed it. It was someday, always someday. When he no longer had to be a star,” she added. Her eyes were filmed with tears. “Being a star. What a beautiful fate! Take a sweet, decent dumb kid from Brooklyn and turn him into a symbol for a nation of lunatics. I’ll tell you what he said to me, Mr. Detective, and then you can make something out of it with your smart-ass, slant-eyed know-how!” Her anger poured out at the whole world and at Masuto, because he sat facing her. “He said he’d divorce that bitch just as soon as he could afford to face the world as a clown, as a ridiculous joke.”

“A clown?”



“Yes. You heard me. A clown!”

“Miss Newman,” Masuto said gently, “I can understand your feelings, but nothing is helped by venting your anger at me. We both want the same thing—to find out who killed Mike Barton.”

“I told you who killed Mike.”

“Then let’s say we want to prove it, and to do that, you have to help me. Will you?”

For a long moment she hesitated; then she nodded. “I’ll try.”

“Good. Now a moment ago you said that Mike Barton felt he would have to face the world as a clown. You’re sure that’s the word he used?”

“Yes, clown.”

“And a ridiculous joke?”

“That’s what he said. A clown. A ridiculous joke.”

“But why?” Masuto insisted. “Why those words? He could have said a fool, a turkey, a sucker, a shmuck—those are words used by a man out here who feels he has been taken to the cleaners by a woman. They’re like code words. But a clown?”

“What difference does that make?”

“I think it makes a difference. Perhaps we’ll talk about it again. You’re upset, Miss Newman. Let me help you a little.”

“How can you help me?” she demanded.

“Let me try. Empty your mind. Try to think of nothing at all. Just be here. We’ll go on with this discussion, but if you can, simply hear my questions and give me answers, but don’t evoke any images beyond that. Will you try?”

“It sounds crazy, but I’ll try. I’ll try anything. Otherwise I’ll just go out of my mind.”

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## The Returned Angel

“If you don’t mind,” Masuto said to Elaine Newman, “I’d like you to remain in the house for a while. That’s not a police order or even a demand. It’s just that you know a great deal about what went on here, and I’d feel comfortable if you were here.”

“I can stay,” she agreed listlessly. “There’s a room upstairs that I use when I work late—or when Mike wanted me to stay over. Angel didn’t object. I’d like to lie down for a while and see whether I can think my life into some kind of order.”

“Does the door lock?”

“Yes.” She looked at him curiously.

“Lock it.” And as she got up, “One more thing, Miss Newman, tell me about the house.”

“This house?”

“Yes. How many rooms, where they are—that sort of thing.”

“Sure. There are six bedrooms upstairs, the master bedroom, which is Angel’s, another bedroom which was Mike’s—they’ve been in separate rooms since I came here to work—the room I use when I stay over, and two guest rooms. Behind the kitchen, through that door”—she pointed—“two servants’ rooms. That’s where Mrs. Holtz and Jonesey stay.”

“Jonesey?”

“The black kid, Lena Jones. Joe Kelly sleeps in a little apartment over the garage. Through that door”—she pointed again—“the butler’s pantry. No butler, just the pantry, and that door at the other end of the kitchen leads to the breakfast room. From the pantry one

swinging door leads into the dining room, and the other opens into the hallway. You remember the way you came in with the big staircase facing you and the living room on your right. On the left there's the dining room, and at the front of the house, in front of the dining room, there's a library or den or whatever, and that's where I worked and took care of Mike's correspondence."

Beckman and Mrs. Holtz came into the kitchen while Elaine was speaking. "She insists," Beckman said.

"Because," Mrs. Holtz said, "it's after eight o'clock already, and some of these people eat no dinner. I don't have people in my house, I should let them starve."

"One more thing," Elaine said. "There's a game room with a pool table in the basement."

"You tell them," Mrs. Holtz said to Elaine. "Did Mr. Barton ever let anybody go hungry?"

"No, he fed the hungry."

"Where's Mrs. Barton?" Masuto asked Beckman.

"In her room. The doctor gave her a sedative and said she was to be left alone until he returned tomorrow."

"Crap! That's a load of crap!" Elaine exclaimed. "That lousy quack can't tell the living from the dead. I say she's up there in her room drinking champagne and eating caviar and celebrating."

"We'll see," Masuto said quietly, watching Mrs. Holtz, who had listened in silence to Elaine's outburst. "Right now, Sy, take Miss Newman here up to her room." When they had left the kitchen, he asked Mrs. Holtz, "Do you like Mrs. Barton?"

Her face stiffened. "I don't talk about the dead."

"Mr. Barton's dead, not his wife."

"To me, she's dead."

He went into the living room then. It was occupied by Netty Cooper, Congressman Hennesy, Della Goldberg, and her husband, Joe.

"Did Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Ranier leave?" Masuto asked them.

"Downstairs playing pool," Netty Cooper informed him.

"Yeah," Joe Goldberg said, "such is respect for the dead. Who are you?"

“The policeman I told you about,” his wife said. “He is Detective Sergeant Masuto.” Her eyes were red from weeping, and her voice trembled as she spoke. She fought inwardly to remain calm. “Where is Elaine? I want to see Elaine.”

“I sent her up to her room,” Masuto said. He went to the archway that led to the foyer and called Beckman. When Beckman appeared, he said to him out of the hearing of the others, “Take Mrs. Goldberg upstairs to Miss Newman’s room. Make sure she locks the door again.” And to Mrs. Goldberg, “If you go with Detective Beckman, he’ll take you to Miss Newman.”

After Della Goldberg left the room with Beckman, Hennesy asked Masuto whether he was new in the Beverly Hills police force.

“No, Mr. Hennesy, I’m not new to the force.”

“Then you know that we don’t browbeat people in Beverly Hills. We don’t push them around.”

“Yes, thank you for reminding me of that.”

“Now, if you don’t mind, we’ll leave.”

“Oh?”

“We’re not leaving the house. Not yet. With cops all over the place, Angel needs someone to protect her. When you go, we’ll go.”

“Yes, of course. But before you go, might I ask you where you were at twelve-thirty today?”

“You know where I was, Sergeant. I was sitting on Mrs. Cooper’s terrace out at Malibu, where you met me.”

“That was considerably past twelve-thirty.”

“That was considerably past the time I got there.”

“How long was he there?” Masuto asked Mrs. Cooper.

“This is insufferable!” Hennesy said. “What in hell right do you have to stand there and question us?”

“The same right you have to refuse to answer,” Masuto said, smiling.

“You’re goddamn pleased with yourself, aren’t you, taking over this house and pushing heartbroken people around.”

“Oh, don’t make such a fuss, Roy,” Mrs. Cooper said. “I’m delighted to answer this Oriental gentleman’s question. Do you know, Mr.—”

“Sergeant Masuto,” he said politely.

“Do you know, Sergeant Masuto, one of the most unpleasant things a hostess can do is to look at her watch while guests are present. It’s a crude signal that she wants them to leave. I wouldn’t dream of doing it. So if the congressman says he was on my terrace at twelve-thirty, why he was. That’s all there is to it.” With that she took Hennesy’s arm and they walked out of the living room.

“They’re a cute pair, Officer,” Joe Goldberg said. “They are that, a very cute pair.” He was a short, fat man, bald, with a pair of sharp eyes hidden under shaggy brows. He took out a cigar now, offering another to Masuto, who shook his head. He clipped the end of the cigar and lit it, took a sip of the drink on the table next to his chair, and then puffed deeply and with satisfaction. “Lousy ticker,” he said, “overweight, smoke too much, and here I am and poor Mike’s dead. It’s a stinking, fucked-up world, Officer, but I’m sure you know that.”

“It has occurred to me. Tell me, was Mr. Barton on a picture when this happened today?”

“My latest. Half filmed, and it goes into the cutting room trash can. Five million dollars down the drain.”

“But surely you were insured?”

“Yeah, insured. But that’s not the game, is it? It takes a year to set up a film before the cameras begin to grind, and that year isn’t insured. I lost my star and, like Della says, we lost a son too. Poor Mike—poor dumb bastard.”

“Who do you think killed him?” Masuto asked casually, dropping into a chair facing the producer.

“Come on, come on, since when does a cop ask you that? This is my first murder, Sergeant—Masuto, isn’t it? You’re a nisei, if I’m not mistaken?”

Masuto nodded.

“I think I’ve seen your name in the papers. You’re a pretty smart cop. The Japanese are damn smart, too smart for the rest of us, I’m afraid.”

“I’m just a policeman, and you produce motion pictures,” Masuto reminded him.

“I’m not sure that my job takes more brains than yours, and certainly a lot less guts. No, I have no idea who killed Mike, but I could name a lot of people who have a damn good reason for killing

him, and they're all in this house—his friends, horseshit, pure, unadulterated horseshit.”

“Please go on, Mr. Goldberg. You intrigue me.”

“Start with McCarthy. He and Mike got into an argument at the Bistro two weeks ago, and Mike hit him across the face with his open hand. I don't know what the fight was about, but they tell me Jack just took it and stalked away. I don't know whether that's a reason for murder, but I suspect that McCarthy hates his guts.”

“Still he rallied around this morning when the kidnapping took place.”

“Ah, money talks. Mike is his best client. As for Bill Ranier, I've been pressing Mike to dump him. Ranier's a crook, and a business agent who's a crook is something no one needs. Ranier knows Mike was about ready to part company with him. As for that little tart they call Angel, she's not shedding any tears over Mike's death. I imagine it was the answer to her prayers.”

“And the congressman and Mrs. Cooper?”

“She's a silly woman, and you can drop her off the list. Hennesy is another matter. Shady, and once very close to being indicted for bribe-taking. They say he's mad about the Angel, but that's a thin rumor. The Angel is shackled up with someone, but who it is I don't know. But then a million dollars talks pretty damn loud, doesn't it?”

“So they say. And yourself, Mr. Goldberg?”

“Sure.” Goldberg nodded, staring at his cigar ash. “Don't leave me out. I could have killed Mike ten times over—for being a horse's ass, for marrying that bitch, for not divorcing her, for letting Ranier rob him blind—ah, what the hell difference does it make now?”

“Why didn't he divorce her?”

“You know, there was a time when Della and me, we were like a mother and father to Mike. He would invite himself to dinner two, three times a week. He would bring his dates for our approval. He would beg Della to read his lines with him. Oh, I don't claim it was all disinterested affection for the kid. I made him a star and he was worth his weight in gold to me. But beyond that, we were both crazy about him—until—” He stared at Masuto. “You want to listen to all this garbage?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Okay. Until he met the Angel. She was dealing twenty-one in Vegas. That was two—two and a half years ago. Mike was a hot gambler, but the stories about him losing two or three hundred thousand in a session are pure bullshit. When Mike went to Vegas, he’d take a couple of thousand with him and when it was gone, he was finished. Well, as I said, he meets this Angel, it’s love at first sight, and she quits her job which she had only a few days. They’re married right there in Vegas and she comes back with him, and for a week or so Mike is happy as a clam, and then it’s over.”

“Same question, Mr. Goldberg. Why didn’t he divorce her?”

“Did you ask Ellie Newman? She’s a nice kid. She and Mike were in love with each other.”

“I asked her. She claimed she didn’t know, and the closest she ever came to an answer from Mr. Barton was his belief that it would make him a clown, a joke in the eyes of the world. I guess he intimated that it would end his film career.”

“Poor dumb kid. Well, that’s more of a reason than I ever got. She had something on him. I don’t know what it could be—” He shook his head hopelessly.

“And the kidnapping this morning. Did you buy it, Mr. Goldberg?”

“What do you mean, did I buy it?”

“I mean,” Masuto said slowly, choosing his words carefully, “did you feel that it was a real kidnapping or a faked kidnapping?”

“How the hell should I know? Sure I knew that Mike wouldn’t have given twenty cents to get her back, but the public wouldn’t buy that, and if Mike had refused to pay the ransom for his wife’s life, that would wash him out as a working star. We talked about that, and I agreed that he should pay it.”

“Did you also agree that he should keep the police and the FBI out of it?”

“Did he? I didn’t know that.” He shook his head worriedly. “Why would he do that? He had to pay the ransom, but I’d think he’d have the cops in there every step of the way.” He stared at the curl of smoke rising from his cigar. “Sergeant?”

“Yes?”

“How long do we have to stay here?”

“You don’t have to stay here at all. You can leave whenever you wish.”

“Well, I’ll wait until my wife finishes talking to Ellie.”

Masuto nodded and left the room. Beckman was in the hall outside talking into a telephone. Masuto waited. Beckman put down the telephone.

“Where are they?”

“Downstairs in the game room.”

“Any of them leave?”

Beckman shook his head. “It’s like they’re all watching each other. Mrs. Goldberg is still upstairs with Newman. Angel’s still in her room.”

“And Kelly?”

“He’s in the kitchen with Mrs. Holtz. The black kid is downstairs. They keep her running for drinks. By the way, Doc Baxter called. It was a twenty-two short, just as we thought, and he still fixes the time of death between twelve-thirty and one. One more thing—” Beckman paused, relishing the moment. “Wainwright had a couple of cops canvassing the houses on San Yisidro. They found a kid who saw a yellow two-seat Mercedes drive by at about twelve-thirty or so. He remembered it because it’s his dream car, and he never saw it before.”

“Did he notice who was driving, a man or a woman?”

“No. He was at an upstairs window, being sick with the flu, so he never saw who was driving.”

Masuto thought about it for a while, and then he said to Beckman, “Sy, I want to talk to Angel Barton, and I don’t want anyone else talking to her first. So go upstairs and wait for me outside her room. No one goes in—but no one. And if she wants to leave, just delay her. I won’t be more than ten minutes.”

“This Dr. Haddam said—”

“I don’t give a damn what Dr. Haddam said.”

“Okay, Okay, Masao. What’s eating you?”

Masuto laughed and shook his head. “I’m sorry, Sy. We live in an insane world.”

“What else is new?”



"I try to suspend judgment. Sometimes that's almost impossible. What did you find out downtown about Joe Kelly?"

"He has a record, like Miss Newman said. Seven priors. In and out, he spent maybe twenty years in jail, all of it theft, grand larceny, petty larceny. He's a thief, that's all. He got out on parole eight years ago, and Mike Barton hired him. He's been clean ever since."

"All right. Go upstairs now. I'll join you in a few minutes."

Masuto went into the kitchen. Kelly and Mrs. Holtz sat at the kitchen table, each with a cup of tea. Mrs. Holtz was a woman of at least fifty, possibly even sixty years. She was crying, yet seemingly unaware of the tears rolling down her cheeks. Kelly sat watching her, his long, lined and battered face impassive. But that, Masuto realized, could be misleading. A man who had lived Kelly's life would be beyond the point of revealing emotions facially. Masuto felt the tragedy of his own aloofness, but it was a tragedy mankind shared, the tragedy of being fragmented, of each person being walled away from the suffering of others. There was little left for those two people. In all likelihood Kelly could never find another job.

Masuto pulled a chair up to the table, waving Mrs. Holtz back to her seat as she started to rise. "Don't get up, please."

"I'll get you a cup of tea, Sergeant. A piece of cake."

"No. No, thank you. Just a few questions."

"You might as well know about me," Kelly said. "I got a record."

"I know."

"I never slugged anyone and I never shot anyone. I was never busted for carrying a gun."

"I know that."

Mrs. Holtz evidently did not know it. She stared at Kelly in astonishment.

"And I never left this place today."

"Yes. Then you saw Mr. Barton leave with the ransom money?"

"I was washing a car in front of the garage when he pulled out. He had a big brown suitcase, and he put it on the front seat of the car next to him."

"What time was that?"

"Maybe ten, fifteen minutes past twelve, because after he pulled away I turned off the water and came into the kitchen here for my

lunch.”

“That was twenty minutes after twelve,” Mrs. Holtz said. “I remember.”

“Why do you remember the exact time?” Masuto asked her.

“Because inside, in the living room, Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Ranier was having terrible argument. Joe heard it too. He said, ‘What do you think? Maybe they’re hungry.’ It was joke. I said, ‘No, it’s only twenty minutes after twelve.’”

“Did you hear what they were saying?”

“I don’t listen. Maybe Joe?”

He shook his head.

“Mrs. Barton was kidnapped,” Masuto said, “and in great danger. Yet you were able to joke about things.”

Mrs. Holtz shrugged. “Is terrible not to care about someone, but she was never nice to us.”

The telephone rang, and Masuto picked up the extension on the kitchen wall. It was Klappham, on night duty at the station house. “The captain left me this number, Masao,” he said. “Bones down at L.A.P.D. called and left this message for you. They picked up the yellow Mercedes. It was parked on Fourth Street downtown. No damage. Mint condition and the key in the lock.”

“Did they dust it?”

“I was just going to tell you, wiped clean.”

Masuto hung up the telephone and turned back to Kelly. “Did you ever drive for Mrs. Barton?”

“Sometimes.”

“Did you ever take her to meet anyone?”

“Maybe, but I don’t know who she met.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, a lot of times, I drive her down to the Music Center. I drop her off and she’d tell me when to pick her up. Same thing out to Malibu, if she didn’t want to bother to drive. We got that big Lincoln Continental chauffeur car, with a bar in it and a telephone and all that garbage, and I guess it made her feel pretty classy riding around in it. She didn’t like my driving, but when you been busted as many times as I have, you drive careful, and when she was alone with me she could really let go. She could talk pretty damn dirty. Sometimes

she'd cuss me out in French. I don't know the words, but from the way she spit it out I knew she was cussing me. She was always after Mr. Barton to dump me and hire someone else."

"Did you ever take her to meet a man—I mean did you ever actually see her with a man?"

"Once, when I had to pick her up at the County Museum, she was kissing someone."

"Who?"

"That's it. I was coming down Wilshire, maybe two, three blocks away. When I got to her, he was gone."

"Yes. Do you know whether either of the Bartons owned a gun?"

"Yes," Mrs. Holtz said. "Yes. She left it one day on her dressing table. No, not on it—inside. You know how the top comes up with a mirror. It was there, and Jonesey saw it. It scared her to death. Jonesey was cleaning the room, and she came running to me."

"Did you see the gun?"

Mrs. Holtz nodded.

"Can you describe it for me?"

"It was small, silver, very small. Like a toy gun. Like guns you see, but they're really cigarette lighters."

"Thank you. I'll talk to Miss Jones later. You've been very helpful."

Masuto went upstairs then and joined Beckman, who was waiting for him outside the door of Angel Barton's room. "Anything?" he asked Beckman.

"Quiet as a grave. Nobody in, nobody out. There's still reporters and TV characters outside, but Dempsey's held the line against them. You'd think the telephone would be ringing constantly, but the black kid they call Jonesey tells me that they have an unlisted number and they keep changing it. Still, you'd think a star would have loads of friends."

"You'd think so," Masuto said. He tapped at the door of Angel's room. "Where's Miss Newman and Mrs. Goldberg?"

"That room, down the hall," Beckman said, pointing.

Masuto knocked at the door again, waited a few seconds, and then turned the handle and opened the door. The room was pink and white—white carpet on the floor, pink walls, white bed, pink coverlet, two pink and white angels suspended by wire from the ceiling

fleeting over the bed, mirrors on one whole wall, white baroque furniture, a pink and white chaise longue, and lying on it, half-reclining, Angel Barton in a pink robe over a white silk and lace nightgown. Her hair was a hairdresser's triumph—long, spun gold, and two wide, innocent blue eyes stared at them out of a Marilyn Monroe face.

The two men halted just inside the door, staring at Angel, who returned their stare unblinking.

"Sy, close the door," Masuto whispered.

He closed the door and said, "Masao, what the hell goes on here?"

Masuto walked over to Angel Barton and picked up her arm. There was no pulse and the hand was cold.

"Is she dead, Masao?"

He pushed the lids down over the staring blue eyes. "Very dead, I think." On the floor next to the chaise longue there was an empty hypodermic needle. Beckman picked it up with his handkerchief.

"How long?" he asked Masuto.

Staring at Angel thoughtfully, Masuto said, "The hands are cold. Twenty minutes, half an hour." He was examining her arm. There was a single puncture mark. "What's the smell?" he asked Beckman, who was sniffing the air.

"Ether."

"I thought so. Go downstairs, Sy, and tell Dempsy that no one leaves the house. I've been stupid, and I don't want to go on being stupid. Then call the station and tell them to get another cop over here and to inform the captain. Then call Baxter and tell him we want him and an ambulance."

"He'll love that."

"We'll try to live with his displeasure."

Beckman was studying the hypodermic. "No prints."

"No, he wanted to get rid of it, so he wiped it and dropped it."

Beckman left the room. Masuto walked over to the dressing table and raised the lid. There was the gun Mrs. Holtz had spoken about. It was a small, expensive purse gun, twenty-two caliber and probably, Masuto guessed, of Swiss make. He took it out, hooking his pinky through the trigger guard and then brought it into the light of a lamp, studying it carefully. It bore a clear set of prints which, he

was convinced, would match those of the dead Angel. He then wrapped it in his handkerchief and dropped it into his pocket.

He then walked over to the dead Angel and stared at her thoughtfully. She was indeed a very beautiful woman, even in death. He tried to analyze his own feelings. Had he been the cause of her death? Was his own failure to anticipate it to be condemned? Should he have known? There was something missing. He was not attempting to exonerate himself. There was simply something missing.

He bent over the dead woman now and raised one of the eyelids he had closed before, peering at the cold blue eye it revealed. Then he lowered the lid again. There were two doors at one side of the bedroom. Masuto went to them now. One led to a bathroom, where tile and sink and tub were in varying shades of pink. The other door opened on an enormous walk-in closet.

Masuto flicked on the closet light, staring at the racks of dresses, slacks, and evening gowns. One entire wall of the closet was devoted to a shoe rack, holding at least a hundred pairs of shoes and, at the bottom, four pairs of riding boots. He then went through the racks and finally found, not on the racks, but carefully folded on a shelf behind the dresses, six pairs of whipcord breeches. What this added up to, Masuto could not for the life of him imagine. Possibly nothing. Possibly she liked to ride. In the detective stories he read occasionally, everything pointed in a specific direction. But here were things most curious that pointed nowhere.

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## The Departed Angel

“You don’t need me,” Dr. Baxter said sourly. “I don’t have to dance attendance on every corpse you clowns turn up. I was in the middle of my dinner—”

“It’s ten o’clock,” Wainwright said apologetically.

“Civilized people eat late, and if you think I’m going to spend all night doing an autopsy, you’re crazy. I’ll get at it in the morning.”

“All we want to know,” Wainwright begged him, “is why she died.”

“Because her heart stopped. It causes death.”

“Come on, Doc, be reasonable.”

“Are you reasonable? What do you think they pay me to be medical examiner for this silly town of demented millionaires. All right, you want to know what she died of? I’ll tell you what she didn’t die of. She didn’t die of an over-dose of heroin, if that’s what you’re thinking. She’s not a user.”

“Was she murdered?”

“How the hell do I know whether she was murdered? I’m not a cop, and I can’t read the minds of the dead. When I cut her up, I’ll tell you what I find.”

“You can take her away,” Wainwright told the stretcher bearers. They left the bedroom with the body, Baxter stalking after them.

“He’s a doll,” Beckman observed. “He’s just a sweet, good-natured doll.”

Sweeney, glancing up from his search for fingerprints, blamed it on Baxter’s profession. “You do that kind of work, it’s got to show.”

The photographer was still working his flashbulbs. "The body's gone," Wainwright said tiredly. "That's enough. Take what you got back to the station and develop it."

"I don't know how the word gets around. Maybe it's ESP," Beckman said. "But there's two TV crews outside and four or five reporters. Someone's got to talk to them."

"I'll talk to them. Just tell them to wait and be patient." Beckman left the bedroom. Wainwright slumped down on the chaise and said to Masuto, "What makes you so damn sure she was murdered?"

"It had to be. Only I didn't have enough sense to realize it."

"I don't know what in hell you're talking about, Masao, but I know one thing. This afternoon you told me you knew who killed Mike Barton. No more games. I want the name."

"All right. But it doesn't finish anything. Angel Barton killed her husband—but only in a legal sense. She was with a man, and the man pulled the trigger. Of course, she was part of it. They planned the thing together. And the stakes were high—one million dollars in cold cash, and if it worked, anything she was entitled to in his will." Masuto reached into his pocket and took out the gun he had wrapped in his handkerchief. "Here's the gun that killed Mike Barton."

Wainwright stared at it speechless. Sweeney came over, lifted the little pistol carefully by its trigger guard, and examined it in the light of a lamp.

"As lovely a set of prints as I've ever seen."

"Where did you get it?" Wainwright demanded.

"Over there—in her dressing table. Where the killer had placed it after he finished with Angel. The prints are excellent. He put them on the gun after Angel was dead, pressing her fingers to it."

"And how did he kill her?"

"I don't think we'll ever know that. My guess is that he knocked her out with something, perhaps ether, and then he injected her vein with air. I don't know whether that can be proven in an autopsy. They may find traces of something in the syringe. He was desperate and in a hurry, and I guess he decided to make it look like suicide. It was a stupid, witless crime from the moment it started this morning."

“Yeah, when it’s not stupid, we don’t even know that a crime took place. I guess you’re right about the gun, but we’ll let Ballistics decide. You said this morning, you think the whole kidnap caper was a rigged job?”

“A kid’s job. I think the husband, Mike Barton, was in on it, and then his Angel double-crossed him and brought someone else into it. Or maybe the whole thing started with the killer. I couldn’t make any sense out of the kidnap thing until I spoke to a cousin of mine who’s an expert on legal ways to cheat Internal Revenue, and he said that there would have been a big tax break for Barton.”

“Except that from what I hear, neither Barton nor the Angel were smart enough to figure it out.”

“Exactly. There’s another small matter,” Masuto said. “The killer is right here in this house.”

“You’re sure?”

“Very sure. No one came in when it was done, no one left.”

“That’s beautiful.” Wainwright rose and began to pace the room. “Pink and white, pink and white, she must have really seen herself as some goddamn kind of angel. They don’t want a cop for my job, they want a diplomat. Downstairs, we only got one of the most prominent lawyers in town, a top film producer, a hotshot business manager, and a congressman. Plus a chauffeur with a record long as my arm.”

“Not to mention a number of women who are probably a lot smarter than the men.”

“And a fed. That kid from the FBI pushed his way in and started bugging me about what was his role in all this. I told him how the hell did I know what his role was? He’s a goddamn idiot. He’s got a notion that the Mafia is mixed up in it because he heard we found a syringe in here.”

“Is he still here?”

“Prowling around downstairs. I can’t throw him out. We’ve had too many run-ins with the feds.”

“We’ll both be very kind to him.”

They had their opportunity almost immediately. As they went downstairs from the second floor of the Barton house, they saw Frank Keller waiting for them at the foot of the staircase, his pink-



cheeked, snub-nosed face set in a grimace of determination. He was wearing a carefully pressed gray flannel suit, a white shirt, and a tie with brown and maroon stripes. Masuto, who wore an old brown tweed jacket over rumpled trousers and a tieless shirt, had once been asked by another FBI man whether he always dressed that way or only when in disguise.

“I’ve been trying to work out my role here,” Keller said. “I don’t want to push in like a bull in a china shop.”

“That’s very considerate of you,” Masuto agreed.

“On the other hand, there’s been a kidnapping, even though both the victim and the ransom payer are dead. You know, it’s a national tragedy. I don’t think anything quite like this ever happened before. You think of Mike Barton and you think of Robert Redford, Al Pacino, John Wayne—although I don’t think it would have happened to John Wayne in just this manner.”

“I guess not,” Masuto agreed.

“Of course, the murders are a local matter, if murder is the correct term?”

“We think Angel Barton was murdered,” Wainwright told him. “We won’t know for certain until after the autopsy. We found a syringe and a puncture mark—which is all we know for sure.”

“You could do one thing that would be very helpful,” Masuto said.

“Be glad to.”

“We can be pretty certain that if Mrs. Barton was murdered, someone here in the house at this moment killed her. And we can work up a background on every one of them except Mr. Hennesy.”

“Congressman Hennesy?”

“That’s right.”

“But surely,” Keller protested, “you can’t suspect Congressman Hennesy of an act of murder.”

“I have to. I have to suspect every one of them.”

“We’re not accusing him or anyone else,” Wainwright explained, talking softly, since from their position at the foot of the stairs they could hear the chatter of voices from the living room. “Believe me, here in Beverly Hills, a thing like this is no picnic. One wrong move on our part and we could face a million-dollar lawsuit—and that fellow McCarthy in there is one of the sharpest lawyers in town.

That's why we'd like you to get us a rundown on Hennesy. Your office must have everything there is to have on him."

"I'll try. I don't know what they'll say in Washington. Is he involved in the kidnapping?"

"I don't know," Masuto said.

"Does anything point in that direction?"

"If you wanted to point it, you could. He was at the same party Angel attended the night she was kidnapped, but when we talked to him about it this afternoon, he seemed to have forgotten that he left the party with her. He offered a lie as an alibi without being accused of anything. I don't know what it adds up to, but if you want to make a connection with the kidnapping for the people in Washington, there's enough there."

"All right. I'll do my best. But it won't be sooner than noon tomorrow."

"We understand."

"You don't mind if I stick around for a while?"

"Be our guest," Wainwright said generously, and then he led the way into the living room.

They were all there—McCarthy and Ranier and Joe Goldberg and his wife, and Congressman Hennesy and Mrs. Cooper and Elaine Newman—with Beckman leaning his huge figure against a grand piano and watching them with calculated indifference.

"You have no right to hold us here," McCarthy said immediately. "You know that, Captain Wainwright. From what I gather, you don't know what caused Angel Barton's death. This is Beverly Hills, and I find it outrageous that this oversized officer of yours"—he indicated Beckman—"should tell us that we are not to leave."

"If he told you that, he was mistaken," Wainwright said placatingly. "Of course you are free to leave whenever you wish. I only suggested that we would like to have a few words with you, that is with any of you who don't have to leave immediately. You were friends of the Bartons, and in that capacity you could be very helpful. But if you wish to leave, Mr. McCarthy, there's no reason why you shouldn't."

"For how long?"

Wainwright turned to Masuto. "Ten, fifteen minutes," Masuto told them. "Your assistance would be invaluable. But as the captain said, any of you who wish to leave now are free to do so."

No one moved. Hennesy said, "Since as a concerned citizen I am to be part of this charade, I'd like a drink."

Wainwright nodded at Lena Jones, who was hovering in the doorway. She came forward slowly.

"Take orders from all of them," Masuto told her. "Is Kelly still around?"

"He's in the pantry. He'll make the drinks."

"All right. Bring back the drinks, and then we're not to be disturbed."

While the people gathered in the living room were giving their orders for drinks, Beckman walked over to Masuto and whispered, "Any way to smell their hands, Masao?"

Masuto chuckled. "Want to try? Ether leaves an odor, but there's soap and perfume."

"Just a notion."

To Wainwright, Masuto said softly, "I want to tell them that Angel was murdered."

"Will it help?"

"I think so."

"Is it one of them?"

"Or Beckman or myself or one of the three servants. No one else was in the house."

"Go ahead and do what you got to do."

"I'll step on toes."

"There's no other way. The city manager will be in my office tomorrow morning yelling his head off. But he'll yell at me, not at you. So just take it with a grain of salt if I put you down and save face."

"I'm all understanding."

Jones returned now with the drinks, and when she had left the room, Masuto said to the assembled company, "I must begin by telling you that Angel Barton was murdered, and we have every reason to believe that she was murdered by the same person who killed her husband. I must add that the murderer is still in the house, since no one entered or left this house since at least an hour before

the murder took place. That doesn't mean the murderer is in this room, not necessarily, since there are also three servants in the house. This information does not change what Captain Wainwright said before. There are no charges against any of you, and any one of you is free to leave when he or she pleases."

"And to be tagged as your mysterious killer!" Mrs. Cooper snorted.

"This whole procedure is outrageous," McCarthy said. "I challenge your statement that no one entered or left this house this evening. There are French doors, a kitchen door, a basement door—there are windows. How dare you come in here with your asinine conclusions and browbeat a group of people whose only sin is that they were the close friends of Mike and Angel Barton!"

"There'll be no browbeating, Sergeant!" Wainwright snapped.

"Terribly, terribly sorry," Masuto said. "Please forgive me if I gave any impression of browbeating. You may leave now, if you wish, Mr. McCarthy."

"I have clients here. I will not leave them without legal protection."

"Would anyone else like to leave?"

No one moved.

"Then I must tell you, as Mr. McCarthy certainly would have, that you have the right to ignore any questions I may ask you. I shall question each person in turn, and I would appreciate it if the others did not interfere. Except, of course, Mr. McCarthy, who will be duty-bound to advise his clients not to answer when he feels they should not answer."

"I'm not sure I want to answer any of your damned questions," Hennesy said.

"As you please, Congressman. I'll start with Mrs. Goldberg."

Beckman had moved behind them. He sat on the piano bench, his notebook out.

"Do you ride, Mrs. Goldberg? I mean horseback."

Della Goldberg observed him with interest, smiling slightly. "As a matter of fact, I do. I mean, I try. It's silly at my age, but most of the things one does out here are silly."

"Where do you ride?"

"In Malibu. My husband and I keep horses at the Grandview Corral."

“And you both ride?”

“We both try.”

“Thank you. And you, Mr. McCarthy, do you ride?”

McCarthy stared at him, his face set.

“Of course he does,” Mrs. Cooper said, “and I don’t blame him for refusing to answer a stupid question like that. And I ride, if you intend to ask me that dumb question. At the same Grandview Corral.”

“I ride occasionally,” Ranier volunteered. “I don’t know why you want to know and I couldn’t care less. At Crushanks, in the Valley.”

“And you, Mr. Hennesy?”

“I think I’ve had enough of your nonsense, Masuto. I didn’t like you when I met you this afternoon, and I like you less now. The abuse of police power is one of the things I like least in this democracy of ours. To have a very mournful occasion like this turned into a circus is more than I can endure. I think I’ll leave.” He stood up. “Will you join me?” he asked Mrs. Cooper.

“As a matter of fact, I was thinking the same thing.” She rose too.

“I’ll go with you,” McCarthy said, and to Ranier, “I’d advise you to do the same thing, Bill.”

“I’ll stay,” Ranier decided.

McCarthy, Hennesy, and Mrs. Cooper left the room. Masuto heard the door slam as they departed from the house, and Wainwright took the moment to whisper to Masuto that he was going home. “It’s your ballgame, Masao,” he said. “I’m going to get to the city manager tonight, before McCarthy shits all over us. And be careful,” he added, dropping his voice still further. “We got McCarthy and we got the congressman, and those are two mean bastards. So for God’s sake, keep it cool and don’t involve us in any lawsuits. And don’t make any arrests. These people aren’t going anywhere.”

The Goldbergs, Miss Newman, and Ranier sat quietly, waiting. When Wainwright had left, Joe Goldberg said, “What now, Sergeant? I’ll admit I am an appropriate candidate for murdering the Angel, if I had enough guts to murder anyone, which I haven’t, but poor Mikey I would kill only for his stupidity, and no one kills because someone they love is stupid.”

“Mikey wasn’t so stupid,” Della Goldberg protested. “He was trusting.”

“Which, carried to the extremes he carried it to, was simply another form of stupidity.”

“Will you two stop!” Miss Newman cried. “You just can’t stand the fact that Mike decided he didn’t need another mother and father. Calling him stupid because he loved people and trusted them!”

“I think you’d better go home, Miss Newman,” Masuto said gently. “You’ve had a long, terrible day.” And to Beckman, “Take her outside, Sy, and have a squad car drive her home.”

“I have my car here,” she muttered, the tears beginning.

“All right, if you wish. And please give Detective Beckman your address and phone number.”

“Anything more?” Goldberg asked after the girl and Beckman had gone.

“Yes. Do you know whether Hennesy rides?”

“He rides,” Ranier put in.

“What is this riding business?” Goldberg asked. “How does it fit in?”

“I’m not sure I know.”

Beckman came in then and told Masuto that Kelly had asked whether he could go to his room. “He sleeps over the garage.”

“Yes, he can go.” And then to Ranier, “How do you know Hennesy rides?”

“I was once a guest out at Albermarle, near San Fernando. They told me he keeps a horse there.”

“That would cost a bundle,” Goldberg remarked. “Hennesy doesn’t have a pot to pee in.”

“Hennesy’s on the take. When he needs money, he gets money. All right, I don’t smell of roses. It takes one to know one.”

“What kind of take?” Masuto asked.

“I can give you a list of what a congressman can do for you as long as your arm. He does it.”

Keller, the FBI man, spoke up for the first time since he had entered the room and said, “That’s a serious accusation, Mr. Ranier.”

Ranier looked at Masuto hopelessly. “Is he kidding?”

“I think not. He’s a federal officer.”

“And you work in this town,” Ranier said to Keller, “and you never heard that Roy Hennesy is a crook?”

“Come on, Bill,” Goldberg said, “you don’t call a man a crook until you can quote chapter and verse. Anyway, I’ve had enough of this whole thing. My wife and I would like to leave, Sergeant.”

“If you wish, of course.”

As he rose, he asked, “Are we still suspects?”

“Did you or your wife kill the Bartons?”

“You know damn well we didn’t!”

Masuto shrugged. “At this point, I know so little.”

The Goldbergs departed, leaving Masuto with Ranier and Keller. Ranier rose, took a few paces, leaned over the piano with his back to the two men, and then turned to Masuto and said, “I want to talk to you.”

“Very well.”

“Alone.”

“All right.” And to Keller, he said, “You might as well tie it up for the night, Mr. Keller. We’ve lost everyone except Mr. Ranier, and he wants privacy.”

Keller was not to be dismissed so easily. “Those are very serious charges, Mr. Ranier, and directed against a congressman, they become even more serious. Unless you can back them up with hard evidence, they are certainly actionable.”

“Screw him!” Ranier said angrily. “If Hennesy wants to sue me, let him sue me. I don’t give a damn. If your goddamn Justice Department knew its ass from its elbow, you wouldn’t have people like Hennesy making a career out of the take!”

“I don’t think this ought to go any further tonight,” Masuto told them. “We’re all tired and upset. If you want to go into this with Mr. Ranier, I suggest you do it tomorrow.”

Keller seemed ready to stand his ground. Then he nodded. “All right, I’ll take it downtown, and then we’ll see. Good night, Sergeant.” He showed his displeasure by not even glancing at Ranier as he left.

“Stupid son of a bitch,” Ranier said.

“You wanted to talk, Mr. Ranier.”

Ranier dropped into a chair and put his face in his hands. Tired, Masuto sat facing him. Masuto waited. He rarely urged anyone to speak; it was better to wait.

When Ranier looked up, his face was drained. It was the thin, parched face of a man who had run all his life without ever catching up with himself. "You got me pegged for Angel's murder," he said finally. "You got me pegged for Mike's murder."

"What makes you think so?" Masuto asked.

"Don't give me that soft Oriental shit, Masuto. I know who you are and how you work. I haven't lived in this town for twenty years without knowing which side is up. I know about you and how you work, and goddamnit, I won't go down for two killings."

"If you didn't do them ..." Masuto shrugged.

"Look, I'm going to come clean with you. I don't know whether what I did was legal or illegal, but it wasn't murder. Whatever you may think, the truth is that I was trying to help Mike. I liked Mike."

Beckman came in now. "What about it, Masao? Should I take off?"

Masuto nodded, and Beckman left. Ranier was staring at his hands. "I liked Mike," he said softly, "but he was a damn idiot. Who else but an idiot would marry Angel? And I didn't steal from him. I made good investments, but it was real estate and the money was tied up. He owed half a million dollars in taxes, and he didn't have it. The money should have been paid in September, and here it is November. And why? Because he'd sneak off to Vegas and drop a hundred grand in one night. So I cooked up the kidnapping. That's right, it was my idea, a stupid idea, but I'm not the first one to go stupid. We had to borrow most of the money, but we could pay it back after we laundered it, and we'd make half a million and better out of the tax deduction. Mike and Angel agreed to go along with me, and now they're dead."

"Was any of the money yours?"

"About a hundred thousand dollars."

"Suppose you tell me exactly how you laid it out."

"Some of it you know. Angel made the fake entry out at Malibu, and then she drove her car to my place. She had the key, and she was there until twelve o'clock. Then she made the call to Mike, and after that she was supposed to drive downtown to Fourth Street, where Mike would pick her up. They'd leave the car there, and the story would be that after Mike had made the drop on San Ysidro, or claimed that he made the drop, he was instructed by the phony



kidnappers to pick her up in Benedict Canyon, and then he was to bring her back here.”

“Why drive to San Ysidro at all? Why didn’t he go straight downtown and pick up his wife?”

“In case he was followed. He had two suitcases with him in the car. He was to park around a curve on San Ysidro, and wait to see whether he was followed.”

“And what was intended to be done with the money?”

“He would leave it in the trunk of his car until we turned it over to be laundered.”

“And who was going to launder it?”

Ranier hesitated now. Masuto waited. Then Ranier shrugged and said, “Hennesy.”

“Ah, so!” It slipped out. He disliked the expression. “Then Hennesy was in on the kidnapping?”

“No. I mean, not to my knowledge. Mike hated him. The Angel could have told him, but I don’t know. We were going to wait a few days until things quieted down, and then we’d make our deal with Hennesy.”

“And how do you know Hennesy wouldn’t blow the whole thing?”

“Hennesy? Come on, Sergeant. Mr. Hennesy has a reputation to uphold.”

“What did Angel do when her husband didn’t appear?”

“She waited for an hour, and then she took a cab. She dropped it a few blocks away and walked here to the house.”

“You met her when she returned?”

“That’s right. I opened the door for her, and as soon as I saw her without Mike, I knew that we’d screwed up. My first thought was that Mike had taken off with the money, but that made no sense. I told Angel to go up to her room and go into shock or something, and I’d call Dr. Haddam, and she wasn’t to talk to anyone until we found out what had happened to Mike and the money.”

“Where were McCarthy and Miss Newman when you spoke to Mrs. Barton?”

“He was in the living room. She was in the library. They came out while I was talking to Angel, and she threw a hysterical fit and rushed up to her room.”

“You spoke to Mrs. Barton in the hallway at the door?”

“Yes.”

“I presume they did not overhear you?”

“No. We were whispering.”

“And why are you telling me all this, Mr. Ranier?”

“I told you before. I’m not going to take a murder tap. I know I’m the prime suspect. Sooner or later you’d find the key to my apartment in Angel’s purse or somewhere. I said my secretary was in my office and saw me when I went back there. I lied. She wasn’t there, so I have no alibi for the time I was away. And then that bitch Newman accused me of murdering Mike. You put it all together, and you got enough to bring it to the D.A. That’s why I’m leveling with you.”

Masuto regarded him thoughtfully for a few moments, and then he said, “I don’t think you killed Mike Barton, Mr. Ranier, and I don’t think you killed his wife.”

“Well, thank God for that.”

“I might still bring it to the D.A.”

“Why? You just said you didn’t think I killed either of them! You going to frame me?”

“Not for murder. There are other matters.”

“What other matters? I’ve been stupid, but I committed no crime. There was no kidnapping as such. You can’t indict me for a dumb trick.”

“How about the million dollars?”

“I’ll pay it back if I have to ruin myself. I’ll be ruined anyway when this gets out.”

“And conspiracy to defraud the government?”

“Come on, Masuto, you know you could never prove such a conspiracy. If you testified, I’d deny it. I made no confession.”

“Well, that would depend on what the FBI decides. It’s a federal matter. On the other hand, they might be willing to make a deal with you.”

“What kind of a deal?”

“If you were willing to testify against Congressman Hennesy.”

“My life wouldn’t be worth a cent if I did. You know that.”

“Well, it’s up to you.”

“Why don’t you get Hennesy on this? He’s always been crazy about Angel. She could have tipped him off, and then with Mike dead, they split a million between them.”

“So you think Hennesy killed Barton?”

“Why not? It’s a good guess.”

“I think you should go home, Mr. Ranier. It’s almost eleven o’clock.”

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## Mrs. Holtz

They had all departed, the living and the dead, leaving Masuto alone in the house with the servants. He was tired and he was depressed. In its outer countenance, Beverly Hills was the most beautiful of cities—lovely palm-lined streets, immaculate lawns, splendid examples of every tropical plant that money could provide; and behind the façades of the million-dollar houses, a bitter commentary on the happiness that money buys. He thought about it for a while, and then he thought, as so often before, about giving it all up—and then wondered, as so often before, what else he could do. He had a profession, and he was very good at it, but it was too much like the pathology of Dr. Baxter; he cut and dissected and put the bits and pieces under his own peculiar microscope, and then he had to live with what he discovered.

He called his wife. She never asked when he would come home. The tone of his voice told her things. “You are unhappy and depressed,” she said to him. “Has it been bad?”

His thought was that he struggled to retain some faith in the human race, and when that slipped away, it was very bad indeed. But he said, “Not too bad, Kati.”

“I’ll wait for you. You haven’t eaten.”

“How do you know that?”

“I know you.”

He put down the telephone. A sliver of light gleamed from under the kitchen door, and Masuto went through the pantry and into the

kitchen. Lena Jones sat at the kitchen table with Mrs. Holtz. Their teacups were empty. They just sat there.

"I wait until you leave," Mrs. Holtz said to Masuto, "then I lock up. Go to bed," she said to the black girl.

"I'm afraid."

"Nothing will harm you, so go to bed."

"I won't be able to sleep. I'm too scared."

"It's all right," Masuto told her gently. "No one will harm you now. Tell me, Lena, where were you when Mrs. Barton returned this afternoon?"

"Upstairs, cleaning Mr. Barton's room."

"Did you happen to look out of the window? The room is at the front of the house, isn't it?"

"I did look, yes."

"Why? Was there some special reason?"

"The window was open. I heard Mr. Kelly call out."

"From where? I mean, where was Kelly?"

"I guess in his room over the garage."

"And you heard his voice. What did he say?"

"I think, hey, Angel."

"Angel? Not Mrs. Barton?"

"Once I heard him call her Angel," Mrs. Holtz said. "Like he was making fun of her."

"And from the window, you saw Mrs. Barton?"

Lena nodded. "Coming up the driveway. Walking slow, like she didn't hear Mr. Kelly at all."

"She didn't respond to his shout?"

"No."

"How did she look?"

"Terrible. She was dragging herself."

"Did you see a taxi pulling out of the driveway?"

Lena shook her head and began to sob.

"You go to bed," Mrs. Holtz said. "Right now, you go to bed."

Still sobbing, Lena Jones stood up and walked out of the kitchen.

"Sit down," Mrs. Holtz said to Masuto. "I make you a nice cup of tea. Or maybe coffee?"

"Tea will be fine."

She put a kettle of water on the stove and started the light under it. "A few minutes," she said. "Tell me, you like your tea strong like the British drink it or weak like the Americans drink it?"

"Weak."

"I'm sorry I don't have Japanese tea. It's green, yes?"

"Sometimes."

"And you're Japanese? I mean I know you was born here, the way you talk, and on the police."

"Yes, I'm Japanese. When we're born in America of Japanese parents, we're called nisei."

"I'm asking too many questions? I'm nosy?"

"Please feel free to ask me anything."

"Myself, I'm Polish. I was in a concentration camp." She pulled up her sleeve to show the tattoo mark. "I was a young girl. I don't like to talk about how I survived." As she spoke, she cut several slices of sponge cake and set the plate in front of Masuto. "Mike's favorite cake. Poor boy."

"It looks delicious," Masuto acknowledged. "But I'd rather not."

"Japanese don't eat cake?"

"Of course they do. But my wife is waiting up for me with dinner, and if I don't finish every bit of it, she'll be hurt."

"You're married! So if your wife is waiting, why don't you go home already?"

"Because I wanted to talk to you again, Mrs. Holtz."

"You give me credit for more brains than I have. Tell me something, I know you're not Jewish, so what are you, a Christian?"

"I'm a Buddhist."

She shook her head. "I think I heard about it, but I don't know what it is."

"It's a way of living, acting, being, of knowing who you are."

She poured the tea and placed it in front of him. "Sugar?"

Masuto shook his head.

"So tell me, please, how do Buddhists feel about Jews?"

"The same way they would feel about any other people."

"And none of them hate Jews?"

"Buddhists try not to hate."

“That’s nice.” She sat at the table, facing him, a shapeless woman whose lined face was etched with suffering. “That’s very nice, Mr. Masuto. Hate is so crazy, so unreasonable. Someone like Kelly, he has to hate Jews, he has to hate colored people, he has to make life miserable for poor Lena.”

“I thought he was very fond of Mr. Barton.”

Mrs. Holtz shrugged. “Not so fond. Sure, Mike was good to him. Maybe nobody was ever so good to Kelly as Mike. And Kelly liked his job. But he’d get mad at Lena and yell, ‘Get that lousy Jew nigger out of here.’ Then he’d complain about the Jew food I cooked. Not with Mike where Mike could hear him. And I’ll tell you something else. He has a gun.”

“How do you know?”

“Because Lena was cleaning his room and she saw it.”

“Perhaps Mr. Barton wanted him to have a gun.”

“Maybe. I don’t know.”

“We think,” Masuto said, “that Mrs. Barton was blackmailing her husband. Miss Newman seems to feel that strongly. Do you have any notion of what she might have held over him?”

Mrs. Holtz shook her head. “They had terrible fights at first, and then, about a year ago, they stopped fighting.”

“Do you know what the fights were about?”

“I wouldn’t listen. I liked Mr. Barton too much. I couldn’t bear to listen.”

“Did Lena listen?”

“Lena’s a good girl. She wouldn’t listen.”

“No, of course not,” Masuto said, his tone easy and without threat. “But you yourself, Mrs. Holtz, you live here, you must have known what went on in this house.”

“I’m not a spy,” she said with annoyance.

“No, of course not. And I’m not talking about ordinary blackmail on Mrs. Barton’s part. It was something she knew about him, or something about herself. Miss Newman indicated that it would wreck Mr. Barton’s film career if it came out—and that this was the reason he stayed married to Angel.”

“He must have had a reason. They weren’t like a man and a wife. They had separate rooms. Sometimes for days they didn’t even talk

to each other.”

“Was he in love with Elaine Newman?”

“You think Elaine killed Angel? You’re crazy, Mr. Policeman.”

“No, I don’t think she killed Angel.”

“She loved him, he loved her, that’s a sin?”

“Did Angel know?”

“What do you think? She knew and she didn’t care. She had Mike’s money. She lived like a queen.”

“Who do you think killed Mike Barton?”

Mrs. Holtz answered without hesitation. “Kelly. He killed both of them, and now Lena and me, we’re here alone with him. Why don’t you do something about that, Mr. Policeman?”

“I don’t think you’re in any danger, Mrs. Holtz. We’ll have a policeman in the front hall all night, and tomorrow we’ll go into the question of whether Kelly has a permit for the gun. Only one more question. Who were Angel Barton’s friends?”

“Who could want to be her friend?”

“I’m sure she had friends. She was a beautiful woman. Who did she go out of her way to see?”

Mrs. Holtz thought about it for a while, her face set. Then she shrugged. “Maybe they were her friends.”

“Who?”

“That congressman, Hennesy, and Netty Cooper.”

Masuto had finished his tea. “Thank you,” he said to her. “You’ve been helpful. Try to get a good night’s sleep.”

In the hallway, Officer Voorhis was dozing over a copy of *Sports Illustrated*. He blinked sleepily at Masuto. “I wasn’t really asleep,” he explained.

“Try being really awake.”

It was a cold night for southern California, the temperature down to forty-five degrees. Masuto drove through a Beverly Hills as dark and empty as a city long forgotten and deserted, as dark and empty as a graveyard. Too much had happened in a single day; he couldn’t cope with it or digest it properly, and he did what Zen had trained him to do. He emptied his mind of all thought and conjecture and let himself become one with his car, the dark streets and the night, along



Olympic Boulevard and south on Motor Avenue to Culver City. It was a half hour past midnight when he pulled into the little driveway alongside his cottage, entered his house, and embraced Kati.

“It’s so late. Why did you wait up for me?”

“Because my day doesn’t finish until I see you. I have good things for tempura. It will only take a few minutes.”

“I couldn’t face real food now,” Masuto said. “A boiled egg and some toast and tea.”

“Then have your bath and it will be ready. The tub is full, and there are hot towels.”

“The children are all right?”

“The children are fine. Ana won a prize for her ecology poster. She drew a beautiful picture of a deer. Do you think she will grow up to be an artist?”

Masuto laughed. It was good to be back in this world. “She is an artist,” he said to Kati. “Perhaps we all begin as artists. Then it leaves us.”

“Must it?”

“Perhaps not with Ana, if we are wise.”

“It’s very hard to be wise,” Kati said.

“The hardest thing of all, yes.”

“But much easier to be helpful. Have your bath and I’ll prepare some food.”

“In a moment. I want to step outside and look at the roses.”

“In the dark?”

“There’s a moon, and the smell is best at night. It’s some small consolation, Kati. November is the best month for roses, and I’ve hardly looked at mine.”

Of course they showed no color, even in the moonlight, but the air was full of the odor, subtly threading its way through the stronger scent of night-blooming jasmine. The rose garden was Masuto’s hobby, his delight, his own proof that even as a policeman he retained some small trace of the artist. His backyard was small, thirty feet wide and forty feet deep, but he needed no more space than that. Except for the explosive climbers that made a fence around the yard, the roses were spare, skeletonlike stems that burst into a

variety of glory. That appealed to Masuto—the thorny stems and the marvelous blooms of color and scent.

He stayed with the rosebushes a few minutes, but it was enough. Then he went into the house and had his bath.

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## The Zendo

When Masuto's universe was too greatly askew, when the face of reality dissolved into too many grotesques, he would rise early in the morning and drive to the Zendo for meditation. Ordinarily, he did his meditation each morning in his tiny room in the house; but to meditate with others in a place given to meditation was more gratifying. Now, dressed, he kissed Kati gently. She opened her eyes and complained that it was still dark.

"It's half past six. I go to the Zendo first."

"The children won't see you," she said plaintively.

"Perhaps I can get home early this evening. I promise to try."

The Zendo was in downtown Los Angeles, a cluster of half a dozen once-dilapidated California bungalows that the students and monks who lived there had restored. All around it was the decay and disintegration of the inner city. The dawn light was just beginning when Masuto parked his car in front of the Zendo, and then as he stepped out, he felt himself grabbed in a tight embrace from behind. A second young man appeared in front of him, put a knife to his stomach, and said, "Just take it easy, turkey." Then, still holding the knife to Masuto's stomach, he pulled aside his jacket and saw Masuto's gun. "Son of a bitch, the chink's a cop! We got us a fuzz!"

Masuto felt the grip around his arms slacken for just an instant, enough for him to drive his elbow into the ribcage of the man behind him, at the same time, pivoting, so that the knife thrust intended for him took the man who was holding him in the side. The wounded

man screamed and let go of him, and Masuto leaped away with his gun out.

Fifteen minutes later, a squad car drove away with one of the muggers, while an ambulance carried off the second one, and Masuto found himself abashedly and uncomfortably facing a group of monks in their brown robes. They made no comment, and Masuto, who was trying to frame an explanation or apology in his own mind, found none that would do. Whereupon, he bent his head and walked into the meditation hall. Half a dozen people were still there, sitting cross-legged on cushions on the two slightly raised platforms that ran the length of the room. At one end of the room, the old rashi, the Japanese Zen master, sat in meditation. The half dozen included two monks, a young, pretty woman, and three middle-aged men who looked like business executives. Masuto took off his shoes and joined them, his folded hands still shaking from his experience. He tried to fall into the meditation, but after what had happened outside, it was very difficult.

One by one, the other meditators finished, made their bow to the rashi, and left, until only Masuto and the old man remained. Masuto's half-closed eyes were fixed on the floor in front of him. He heard the rashi move, and then the old man's feet, encased in straw slippers, appeared in front of him. Masuto looked up.

"You bring violence with you," the rashi said, speaking Japanese.

"It met me on the street outside."

"Ask yourself where it came from."

"I am deeply sorry. I disturbed the peace of this place."

"Are you all right?"

"I am not hurt, if that's what you mean."

"I can see that you're not hurt."

"Then I must answer no."

"Then look into yourself. Even a policeman can know why he is a policeman."

"I will try, honorable rashi."

Leaving the Zendo, Masuto realized that he was ravenously hungry, and he pulled into a short order place on Olympic. Bacon and eggs and fried potatoes and four slices of bread and two cups of coffee helped to restore his equanimity. It was ten minutes to nine

when he arrived at the station house. Beckman was waiting for him, along with Frank Keller, the FBI man.

“Your hunch was pretty good,” Keller said to Masuto. “And this is confidential as hell, but we’ve been running an investigation on Hennesy for the past seven months. The Coast Guard grabbed a boat off San Diego and picked up a kilo of cocaine. Hennesy’s name was in the boat’s log. It could be another Roy Hennesy, because the name’s not that uncommon, but when you put it together with the other tidbits about Hennesy’s moral stance, it could mean something. The department’s cooking up a move against a number of public officials who are a little less than kosher, and they don’t want anything to upset the apple cart. So unless you tie him in directly to kidnap or murder, they’d just as soon let him be.”

“Have you ever known the goddamn feds not to tell you to keep hands off?” Beckman said with annoyance.

“Forget it,” Masuto said.

“I’ll be at my office downtown,” Keller said, his feelings bruised. He stalked out.

“You don’t have to lean on him,” Masuto told Beckman. “He’s a decent kid, for a fed.”

“What have you been drinking, the milk of human kindness? Anyway, the captain wants to see you right off. He’s in his office with Dr. Haddam—the one who came to see the Angel.”

“Out at Malibu,” Masuto asked him, “what kind of a dress was Netty Cooper wearing?”

“What?”

“Come on, think.”

“It was sort of like a kimono, pale green.”

“Yes. Long sleeves? Enough to hide needle marks?”

“I think so.”

“Good. Wait for me. This can’t take too long.”

In Wainwright’s office Dr. Haddam was protesting. He was a neat, stout little man, with steel-rimmed glasses, bald, and a high-pitched voice that proclaimed his irritation. “I find this whole thing highly annoying, if not unethical. Why didn’t you call me when Mrs. Barton died? I’m the family physician. The family—”

"I told you before, Doctor, there is no family. They are both dead. We have no indication of family beyond that. This is Detective Sergeant Masuto."

"Then I wash my hands of the whole matter."

"Yes, if you wish. But we'd like to ask you a few questions."

"I don't have to answer any questions. Indeed, I don't intend to. I'm a busy man. Call my nurse, make an appointment, and if I can find the time, I will talk to you."

He started to leave, and Wainwright said evenly, "A hypodermic syringe which contained something that was apparently the cause of Mrs. Barton's death was found beside her. Since you were the doctor in attendance, this puts you in an awkward position. Surely you realize that."

The doctor stopped short, turned slowly to face Wainwright, and growled—a valid growl for so short a man. "How dare you! That, sir, is actionable! I'm a practicing physician and a resident of Beverly Hills for twenty-five years, and you dare—"

"Please, sir," Masuto said, spreading his hands, "you read an implication that was not there. We found the hypodermic and Mrs. Barton is dead. We simply must ask you the circumstances of your visit to her."

"You found a hypodermic!" he snorted. "What was in it? What caused her death? Why didn't you call me then?"

"We don't know what caused her death," Wainwright said. "The autopsy is being performed right now at All Saints Hospital."

"You don't know! And you call yourselves police!"

"What did you do for Mrs. Barton?" Masuto asked. "What condition was she in? What did you prescribe?"

"I prescribed nothing."

"Oh?"

"Nothing."

"Did you examine her?"

"No. She wouldn't let me near her. In fact, that ill-natured woman drove me out of the room."

"But you were her physician."

"I was Mr. Barton's physician. Now I shall tell you what happened, and that's the end of it. Mr. McCarthy asked me to see her. I went

into her bedroom, and she snarled at me to get out—and used very abusive language, I may add. There are sides to that Angel the public never saw. Then Mr. McCarthy went into the room, and I heard her snapping at him. She threw a shoe at him as he left. She slammed the door after him. Then the maid appeared with a tall glass of ice and apparently Scotch whisky. I would presume at least four ounces of whisky over the ice. She said that their butler or chauffeur, what is his name?”

“Kelly.”

“Kelly. Yes, he had sent it up. Then Angel opened the door, took the glass, and so help me God, drained down most of it.”

“You were standing in the hall?” Masuto asked.

“Yes, with McCarthy. The maid was at the door. Mrs. Barton handed her the glass and slammed the door in our faces. Then I left. She did not strike me as a woman who required either a sedative or an examination. A psychiatrist, perhaps. Now you have my story, and I would like to leave.”

“Of course,” Masuto said. “You’ve been very helpful. We are most grateful.”

“Well, there you are,” Wainwright said, after the doctor had departed. “Unless he’s lying.”

“No, he’s telling the truth. He knows we can check it out with McCarthy. He’s a doctor, not an actor, and that beautiful indignation could not be manufactured.”

“Do you suppose Kelly killed her?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know. When this thing was ten minutes old, you told me you knew who killed Barton. Has your Chinese crystal ball collapsed?”

“Even Sweeney no longer classes all Orientals as Chinese—”

“Get off your high horse, Masao. They’re all leaning on me, like we were Scotland Yard instead of a two-bit small-town police force.”

“It was only yesterday. We’re making progress.”

“Tell me about it.”

“What the good doctor told us helps.”

“That’s bullshit, Masao, and you know it, and I know how you work. You got something, and you’re not opening your mouth about

it. Now, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to search that Barton house from cellar to attic, and I'm going to find that million dollars."

"It's not there."

"How the hell do you know?"

"Because I think I know where it is. Now, wait a moment," he said as Wainwright began to explode. "Just hold on. That doesn't mean I know where it is."

"Then what in hell does it mean?"

"It means that I could make a guess, and then if we act on my guess and go ahead and get a search warrant and search the place and find nothing, we'd be in for a lawsuit that would make your year's budget look like peanuts."

"All right, tell me—no, the hell with you. Get out of here and make this thing make sense."

"When will Baxter finish the autopsy?"

"He says by noon." Masuto started for the door. "One thing," Wainwright added, "how does Kelly figure?"

"I don't know."

"He's a part of it?"

"I think so."

As if he had heard the question, Beckman entered the office as Wainwright was saying, "Maybe I'm a cynical old cop, but I never trusted a reformed ex-con."

"You mean Kelly?" Beckman asked.

"That's right. I mean Kelly."

"Well, Dempsy just called. He took over at the Barton place from Voorhis, and he says that the ladies are worried because Kelly didn't show this morning and Kelly's place over the garage is locked, and what should he do?"

"Tell him to do nothing," Wainwright said. "You two get over there, and let me know what you find. If Kelly skipped with that million, you will have a hell of a lot of explaining to do."

"What did he mean by that?" Beckman asked Masuto as they left the building.

"He wants to search the Barton place. If Kelly skipped with the money, he'll blame us for not searching the place yesterday."



“Do you think he did?”

“No.”

“Then where is he?”

“I imagine he’s right there in his room.”

“Come on, you know Dempsy. He’d pound on the door and yell loud enough to wake the dead.”

“Nobody yells loud enough to wake the dead. Take your car, Sy. I’ll follow you to the house.”

“Wait a minute, Masao—what are you trying to tell me? That Kelly is dead?”

“Perhaps. Civilization, or what we have of it, stops short at a million dollars. It’s a strong inducement.”

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## The Loser

Officer Dempsey was waiting in the driveway when Masuto and Beckman pulled their cars up in front of the garage. A TV unit was there, photographing the house, and one of the men in the unit recognized Masuto and came over to ask whether there were any new developments.

“Not that I know of,” Masuto said. “Anyway, I don’t do the P.R. You know that. They’ll give you the story over at headquarters.”

“You know they give me nothing. Anyway, we want pictures. If I could talk to the servants?”

“Absolutely not.”

“I don’t have to talk to them. Let us photograph them.”

“No.”

He went back to his unit, and Dempsey said, “They’ve been driving me crazy, Sergeant. Anyway, the two ladies are too scared to come out of the house, and I wouldn’t let them in.”

“Good. Now where’s Voorhis?”

“Home, sleeping.”

“Wake him up and get him over here. Now, as I understand it, Kelly’s place is over the garage.”

“That’s right.”

“Two entrances,” Beckman said. “I checked it out yesterday. There’s one door at the top of that staircase outside”—he pointed to the farther wall of the garage—“and another at the end of a passageway on the top floor of the house. Same passageway leads to Mrs. Holtz’s room and the maid’s room. Both doors have those

locks with the little thing in the handle. You turn it, and then you can close the door from the outside and it's locked. No keys. I asked Kelly about that. He said there never were any keys while he worked here."

"You tried both doors?" Masuto asked Dempsey.

"Sure. The doors are the kind you can kick in, but I didn't want to try that until you gave the word."

"What do you think, Masao?" Beckman asked. "Can we force entrance, or will we be asking for trouble?"

"Who from? Both owners are dead, and if Kelly's alive, why would he lock the doors?"

"Do you have sufficient cause?"

"A man could be half dead in there. That's sufficient cause."

Before they went into the house, Masuto said to Dempsey, "No media inside the house. If Ranier or McCarthy or any other friends of the Bartons show up, tell them to wait and get me. And when Voorhis arrives, I want to see him. Now get him over here."

Masuto and Beckman went into the house and through to the kitchen. The two women turned from their work to stare woefully at the detectives.

"What happens now, Mr. Masuto?" Mrs. Holtz wanted to know.

"We'll see. I want to get into Kelly's room. I'm told there are no keys."

"That's right. Kelly never asked for them. He said he didn't need them, so Mr. Barton never had them made."

"Is it a single room?"

"No, two rooms, a bedroom and a little sitting room. The outside door is into the sitting room. Kelly always kept that locked, but he never locked the door into the hall upstairs."

"But we hardly ever went into his rooms," Lena said. "When we had to go in there and clean, it made him mad. He tell us to stay out, with a lot of badmouth talk."

"Mrs. Holtz," Masuto said, "I have to address you as the caretaker of the house, simply because there's no one else responsible. I'm informing you that I have good reason to believe that Kelly is injured and requires help. I want you to understand that considering these circumstances, I shall break down the door."

Mrs. Holtz sighed and shrugged. "If you must, you must."

"Servants' quarters," Beckman said as he led Masuto up the kitchen stairs and into a shabby hallway. "Four rooms here, and Kelly's place. I guess they don't build them like this anymore. That's it," he said, pointing to the door at the end of the hall."

"Kick it in, Sy."

Beckman raised his size fourteen shoe and let go at the door. It flew open, the bolt tearing out of the jamb, and they walked into Kelly's bedroom. There was a single bed, neatly made up, and pasted on the wall, several tear sheets from skin magazines.

"Super neat, some of these ex-cons," Beckman said.

Masuto opened the door to the sitting room. Kelly sat in an ancient armchair, a crooked smile on his face, his eyes wide open. There was a bullet hole in the center of his forehead.

"Poor bastard," Beckman said. "Poor dumb loser."

"It was his karma."

"Spends the best years of his life in jail and ends up like this, hates the whole world, hates Jews, hates blacks, and the poor dumb bastard never knew what he was doing."

"That's it. He never knew what he was doing."

"Why?" Beckman wondered. "Why did they kill him?"

"He wanted some of the million dollars. Probably, he didn't want too much. He was always a petty thief. But whatever he wanted, it was more than his life was worth."

"The same killer?"

"No, I don't think so," Masuto said slowly. "We have three murders, and we have three murderers."

"Come on, Masao, why? Why three?"

"Because I think I know who two of them are, and neither of them could have killed Kelly."

"I'll call the captain. What about Doc Baxter? He's doing the Angel's autopsy."

"I want him here. I want to know when Kelly died. Tell the captain that, and let him fight it out with Baxter."

For a while after Beckman had left, Masuto stood staring at the dead man. It would be comfortable, he felt, to believe, as his ancestors had, that people lived many lives, and that perhaps in one

of them Kelly would have found some peace. Now three people were dead, a simple, bloody case of greed—vulgar and grotesque.

Masuto went back into the bedroom and opened the top drawer of the old chest that served as Kelly's wardrobe. He pushed aside underwear and a rumpled shirt, and there was Kelly's gun, an ancient automatic pistol, rusted and clogged in the barrel. When he had worked out the clip, he saw that it was empty. If anyone had tried to fire the gun, it would have blown up in his face, a gun that Kelly had picked up somewhere, perhaps in a garbage dump. Aside from the gun, the two small rooms revealed nothing that could relate in any way to his death. No writing, no pens, no pencils. Perhaps Kelly had been illiterate. There were half a dozen magazines, *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, two suits in the closet, a pair of sneakers, an extra pair of shoes, a razor and shaving cream on the sink in the tiny bathroom and only aspirin and a laxative in the medicine chest. A plant with several red geranium blossoms served as the only touch of color or decoration.

Masuto closed his eyes and stood silently until he heard steps in the passageway. It was Beckman returning, and with him, Officer Voorhis.

"Oh, Jesus," Voorhis said. "When did that happen?"

"While you were on duty last night. What happened, Voorhis, did you fall asleep?"

"Sergeant, I swear to God—"

"I don't want that!" Masuto snapped at him. "I want to know whether you fell asleep, and I want the truth!"

"Jesus, Sarge, this place was quiet as a tomb. Maybe I dozed a little, but I didn't sleep."

"You can explain the difference another time. Where were you?"

"In the front hall."

"Did you go out and patrol the grounds?"

"Yes."

"How many times?"

Voorhis hesitated.

"The truth," Masuto said.

"Once."

"Great. Just great. And when was that?"

“About an hour after you left.”

“So from one o’clock until Dempsey relieved you, you just sat in the hall and dozed, as you put it. You didn’t sleep, you dozed. That’s a damn easy way to earn your pay.”

“I told you it was quiet as a tomb. Nothing moved.”

“When you were awake or when you were sleeping? Never mind. Did you hear anything, the shot, the sound of a car?”

“Nothing, Sarge. I never heard a sound.”

“Beautiful!” Beckman exploded. “You’re one smart cop, Voorhis. You’re put on duty to guard a house and a murder takes place right under your nose.”

“For Christ’s sake, what am I, a platoon? I was in the front hall. There’s an outside entrance to this place, and whoever killed him must have used a silencer. The ladies didn’t hear anything, so why are you leaning on me?”

“All right, Voorhis,” Masuto said. “Go back to the station and write out your report.” And to Beckman, “The ladies heard nothing?”

“Nothing. And the walls and doors in this servants’ wing are paper thin. So he must have used a silencer.”

“I suppose so.”

“That’s a steady hand. A gun with a silencer and pop—right between the eyes. That’s very professional shooting, Masao, and cool too. It wouldn’t be a contract, would it?”

“Not likely. There just hasn’t been time enough to set something up. This is the result of what happened yesterday.” Masuto peered closely at Kelly. “No powder burns. He probably stood across the room. Sy,” he said, turning to Beckman, “I want you to go out to Malibu and search the Barton place. You’ll have to sweet-talk Cominsky to get in there, but I don’t think he’ll mind.”

“He searched it, you know.”

“But he wasn’t looking for something.”

“What am I looking for? The million dollars?”

“No, it’s not there.”

“Then what?”

“I don’t know,” Masuto said.

“But not like Cominsky, I’m looking for something. Only I don’t know what.”

“That’s right.”

“If you say so.”

“And one more thing. After that, Sy, I want the war records, if any, of McCarthy, Goldberg, Ranier, and Hennesy. I want to know what they were in the service—rank, division, job, whatever you can come up with.”

“And who took commendations for pistol marksmanship?”

“That would help.”

“And where will you be?”

“Here, I suppose. Or at the station.”

Only a few moments after Beckman left, Captain Wainwright stalked in, followed by Sweeney with his fingerprint kit, Amos Silver, the police photographer, and Dr. Baxter, who said cheerfully, “Live in Beverly Hills. A short life but a merry one. What goodie do you have for me now?”

Masuto pointed to Kelly’s corpse, visible through the door to the next room.

“Went out with a smile,” Baxter said. “Few of them do.”

“You’re a damned ghoul,” Wainwright muttered.

“Pathology, dear Captain, is a ghoulish business. Let’s have a look at him. Would it surprise you if I said he died of severe trauma of the brain? No, it would not. No powder marks. I’d say the shot was fired from at least ten feet. Took the back off the skull, perhaps a thirty-eight. And of course you whiz kids are waiting for me to tell you when he died. Not easy. Not easy at all,” Baxter complained, flexing Kelly’s fingers and feeling his cheeks. “At least six hours. That’s the best I can do.”

“Which would put it back to four o’clock in the morning.”

“Give or take an hour.”

“And when you autopsy,” Masuto asked, “you can certainly pin it down more closely?”

“Ah, the autopsy. Just happen to be in the midst of an utterly fascinating autopsy—one Angel Barton.”

“What have you got?” Wainwright demanded. “What killed her?”

“Ah, there’s a question,” Baxter said, smiling impishly. “But, you see, I am not quite through, and not one word until I finish. I’ll have some surprises, depend on it. Tell you what, send our Oriental

wizard over to the hospital in an hour or so, and I'll give him chapter and verse. Now I'm on my way—unless there are any other questions about the deceased?”

When Baxter had departed, Wainwright asked, “Why do I hate that man?”

“He’s a good pathologist,” Masuto said. “I suppose it’s just his nature to be nasty.”

“Have you searched the place?”

“Nothing that means anything. As Beckman said, the poor devil’s a loser—all his life. This gun was in a drawer of the chest.”

“This gun can’t be fired. Why do you suppose he hung on to an old piece of junk?”

“It probably gave him a sense of security.”

The photographer finished his work, telling them, “I’ll have prints in an hour or two.” The ambulance men arrived as the photographer left, straightened Kelly’s body with difficulty, and carried him out.

“I hate this,” Wainwright muttered. “I hate this whole case. Is there any hope of winding it up, Masao?”

“Tonight perhaps.”

“You got to be kidding.”

“No. I know who killed Barton—”

“His wife? How the hell do you ever prove that? She’s dead.”

“You’re right. I don’t think we’ll ever prove it, and if she weren’t dead, I don’t think we could ever convict her. I’m not sure we could convict the other two—”

“Two of them?”

“I think so. One killed Angel, and someone else killed Kelly. We have three murders, three murderers.”

“Beautiful—that’s just beautiful.” He stared at Masuto. “I never know when you’re telling me something you know or handing me a line of crap. You think you can clean this up tonight?”

“I think so, yes.”

“All right, who killed Angel and who killed Kelly?”

“I think I know who killed Angel. Kelly ...” He shook his head. “But if you can get them here tonight, I think I can give it to you. Kelly and Angel both.”



“Who? Get who here? How do you get people here? Are you indulging in some goddamn literary detective fantasy?”

“McCarthy, Ranier, the Goldbergs, Mrs. Cooper, Miss Newman, and Hennesy.”

“Masao, have you lost your bearings. You don’t do such things.”

“It can be done.”

“How? Do I arrest them? Do I kidnap them?”

“Have someone reach each one of them and tell them that tonight we are going to expose the killers. You can’t force them to come, but they’ll come.”

“You read that in a book.”

“I don’t read murder mysteries,” Masuto said with some annoyance. “It’s bad enough that I live with it. Do you want me to read about it as well?”

“I read them,” Sweeney said. “You put them in one room and you get the killer. It’s pure bullshit. Every time I read one of them, I ask myself why those clowns don’t take a look at the way ordinary cops work. Like crawling around this place looking for fingerprints. From what I see, this Kelly never had a visitor. All the prints match up.”

“With what?” Wainwright demanded. “How the hell do you know that they match up?”

“Because,” Sweeney replied, smiling thinly, “when you tell me this joker has a record, which was yesterday, I pull a set of prints from the Los Angeles cops and I got it right here with me.”

“Yeah, you’re a real smartass cop,” Wainwright said and, turning to Masuto, “I don’t like it. Anyway, how can you be sure they’ll come?”

“I’m not sure. But look at it this way, Captain. There are two draws—curiosity and guilt. These people like to talk, and this is something to talk about, something to make them shine at a dinner party or whatever. On the other hand, the guilty ones will feel they’re pointing to themselves if they don’t show.”

“And how about this Angel business, Masao? Do you really think you know who killed her?”

“I’m guessing. I could be wrong.”

“And when you get them here, what then?”

“I think I know a way.”

“You’re sure it’s one of them?”

“Two of them,” Masuto said. “Will you give it a try?”

“All right. But I’ll be going way out on a limb, and so help me God, Masao, if you leave me hanging there, I’ll take it out of your hide. What time?”

“Let’s say nine o’clock. And I’ll need some money.”

“What do you mean, you’ll need some money?”

“You’ll get it back.”

“When?”

“Tonight.”

“All of it?” Wainwright asked suspiciously. “What the hell is it for if I get all of it back?”

“Trust me, please.”

“How much?”

“A thousand dollars.”

Wainwright regarded Masuto sourly. “All right. But I want it back, every cent of it. I’m going to the station house now, and I’ll pull a draft for you and you can cash it at the bank. Are you going to call these characters?”

“If you could do it,” Masuto said gently, “it would be much more meaningful. You’ve got the rank and they’ll be impressed with a call from you.”

Wainwright stared at him, shook his head, turned on his heel, and walked out. Sweeney, putting his equipment together, looked at Masuto with respect. “That was beautiful,” he said. “That was like Moses getting water from a rock. The captain will never be the same again.”

“I think he took it very well.”

“Look, Sarge, do you expect any significant prints from this place?”

“No.”

“Then why the hell do you let me work my ass off?”

“You’re fingerprints. If you don’t look for fingerprints, the captain would be very upset. You know that.”

“The hell with you!” Sweeney said, and stalked out. A minute or so later, Masuto followed him.

Downstairs in the kitchen Mrs. Holtz and Lena Jones sat at the kitchen table, depleted, their faces full of hopeless fear. Elaine Newman stood at a window, staring at the gardens behind the

house. She had come there while Masuto was upstairs in Kelly's quarters, and now as he entered the kitchen, she turned slowly to face him.

"Will it stop? Will you ever stop it?"

"It's over now."

"I didn't know a thing like this could happen here—in America—in Beverly Hills. How can such a thing happen here?" Mrs. Holtz said.

"I just don't know what to do," Elaine said to Masuto. "What do you do? Do we keep the house going? Do we close it up? Who pays the wages of Mrs. Holtz and Lena—yes, and myself. I know it's selfish and unfeeling to talk about such things, but what am I supposed to do?"

"Did you call McCarthy? Wasn't he Barton's lawyer?"

"I called him. He doesn't return my calls. He isn't very fond of me."

Masuto went to her and put his arm around her shoulders. "We'll finish it soon," he said softly. "You've been through your own hell, but that will end." Suddenly, her face was pressed into his jacket and she was sobbing uncontrollably. He held her like that for a moment or two, and then he said, "Will you help me? I need your help."

"Yes."

He took out his handkerchief and handed it to her, and she dried her eyes.

"Where do you work, Elaine? I mean in what room?" He quite deliberately called her by her first name. Masuto was not unaware of the fact that he was a very good-looking man, that women liked him and trusted him.

"Suppose we go there now. We'll talk." He turned to Mrs. Holtz and Lena Jones. "Don't be afraid. We have a policeman in the front hall. Let him answer the door."

"Will you be here?" Lena Jones asked desperately.

"For a little while. But the policeman will be here all day."

"You can't blame them," Elaine said as they walked to the library. "They're frightened. So am I. They live here. Where can they go?"

Dempsey was in the front hall. "Listen," Masuto said to him. "There are two women in the house, in the kitchen. I want you to look in there every half hour or so, make them feel comfortable. They're afraid."

“Sure.”

“And no one else comes into the house—no one. Except Miss Newman here. If she leaves, she can return. But no one else. And if anyone gets nasty about it, call the captain.”

She led Masuto into the library. It was more or less a standard Beverly Hills library or den, with wood-paneled walls, shelves of leather-bound books, tufted leather furniture, and bad pictures. There was a large desk and a typewriter.

“Sit down, please,” Masuto said to her.

She curled up in one corner of the couch. Masuto sat facing her. “I’m all right now,” she said.

“I know. You’re a survivor.”

“A woman alone in this town who isn’t a survivor—well, I don’t have to tell you.”

“No, you don’t. Now, you were here when Mike Barton left with the ransom money?”

“Yes. I told you that.”

“How big was the suitcase?”

“Oh, about this size.” She motioned with her hands. “You know the size you can bring on the plane with you? Well, I’d say it was a size larger.”

“Is it one of a matched set?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Could I see the set? Where would it be?”

“In the closet in Mike’s room. I’ll take you there.” She led the way upstairs. Unlike Angel’s room, this was plain, almost drab. The closet was a large, walk-in affair with, Masuto reflected, enough suits, jackets, and slacks to outfit the entire Beverly Hills police force. The luggage was lined up on a shelf, a space showing where one of the suitcases had been removed. Masuto pulled out the one next to it and studied it. “Just one of each size?”

“Yes, in that design, just one of each size. There are other suitcases in the storeroom.”

“The same design?”

“Oh, no, quite different.”

“Do you know where they came from?”

“They’re from Gucci.”

“The place on Rodeo Drive?”

“Exactly.”

“Do you suppose they’d have another just like it?”

“I’m sure they would. It’s a standard item.”

“Well, that helps. Would you mind coming with me to Gucci to make sure I get the right thing?”

“Sure, if it’s going to end this business.”

“I think it will.”

At Gucci’s, fifteen minutes later, Elaine selected the suitcase.

“How much is it?” Masuto asked.

The clerk, who had been observing Masuto’s creaseless gray flannels, his old tweed jacket, and his tieless shirt, said coldly, “Four hundred and twenty dollars.”

Masuto responded with stunned silence, and Elaine stepped into the gap and said, “This is Sergeant Masuto of the Beverly Hills police force. We need the suitcase only for a single day, not for travel purposes, but simply as an exhibit.”

Masuto took out his badge. “It will be returned, undamaged, tomorrow.”

“I’ll have to speak to the manager,” the clerk said, and when the manager was apprised of the situation, he told them that he was delighted to be of some service to the Beverly Hills police. “You might mention the name Gucci,” he said, “but only if it’s convenient.”

Outside, Masuto said to Elaine, “You, my dear, are a remarkable young woman.”

“I think you’re a remarkable cop,” she returned.

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## The Autopsy

Masuto deposited the Gucci suitcase in the trunk of his car and drove Elaine back to the Barton house, explaining on the way about the proceedings scheduled for that evening. "I want things to be as loose and easy as possible. Mrs. Holtz can have cake and coffee for those who want it. Can Miss Jones mix drinks?"

"I'll help her. But what makes you so sure they'll come?"

"They'll come. This is not simply Beverly Hills, it's the American dream factory. Each one of them has either a starring or a supporting role, and they wouldn't miss it."

"And that's what the suitcase is for?"

"Perhaps. You know, Miss Newman, there is a Zen belief that what one sees is illusion. The reality is what one refuses to see."

"Yes, and now it's Miss Newman again."

"I'm a policeman."

"And married?"

"And married."

"They always are."

Leaving her at the house, Masuto drove to All Saints Hospital and made his way down a flight of steps to the basement and the pathology rooms. Dr. Baxter was waiting to welcome him with a malicious smile.

"Finished, Doctor?" Masuto asked pleasantly.

"I, my Oriental wizard, am finished. You have just begun."

"I am sure you will make it less difficult for me."

“Oh, no. No, indeed. I intend to make it damned confusing for you. Not with Mike Barton. A simple case of a bullet in the head, twenty-two caliber. Not with Mr. Kelly, whose skull was blown open with a thirty-eight. But with the Angel—ah, there we have a nest of worms.”

“You know what killed her?”

“You’re damn right I do. I’m a pathologist, not a cop. Would you like to hear what killed her?”

“Very much.”

“Good. Then come over here and have a look at the body of the deceased. Having seen only one puncture hole on the arm of the deceased, you Sherlocks concluded that the Angel was not a user. Nothing of the kind. In her circle it is not fashionable to mark the arm. She used her thighs.”

Masuto turned away, and Baxter covered the body. “Squeamish, huh? Now let me tell you what killed her. It was a combination of three things—Scotch whisky, chloral hydrate, and a large dose of heroin.”

“Chloral hydrate?”

“The venerable Mickey Finn. My guess is that it was mixed into the whisky, which would put her to sleep, and while she was in slumberland, someone not concerned about marking the beautiful arm slipped in and shot her full of heroin.”

Masuto made no response to this, his carefully constructed puzzle tilting and crumbling, and Baxter watched him with satisfaction. Then his usually impassive face creased in unhappiness, and he whispered, “Oh, my God, what a fool I was.”

“Not alone, young fellow,” Baxter said cheerfully, “not alone by any means. One among many, because now comes the whammy. Brace yourself.” Silent, Masuto stared at him. “You can’t guess? Come on, throw a wild one at me.”

“I don’t know what the devil you’re talking about,” Masuto said tiredly.

“Kind of upset you with that three-way knockout. By the way, any one of those three, the Mickey, the whisky, or the heroin would probably not be lethal. Put them together, and you have a one-way ticket into the great beyond. Still waiting for the whammy?”

“Yes, my good doctor,” Masuto said coldly.

“Okay, here it is. Your Angel is not a woman. She’s a man.” Pleased with himself, he waited for Masuto’s reaction.

“Is this another manifestation of what passes for your sense of humor?”

“Really getting to you today,” Baxter said, rubbing his hands together. “As a matter of fact, it’s pretty damn funny, isn’t it?”

“You are the coldest, most inhuman imitation of a healer I have ever encountered!” Masuto said angrily.

“Healer? Hell, no. I am a pathologist, sonny, and don’t you ever forget that—and a damn good one. And what I said before goes. Your Angel is a man.”

“All right, I’m listening.” His anger passed. Now the last few pieces were falling into place. “Please explain it.”

“Have you ever heard of sexual reassignment?”

“You mean the medical change of a man into a woman?”

“Exactly. There have been half a dozen notorious cases and several thousand that the public never hears about. Now you take our Angel here. A rather small, delicately built man, not a homosexual, decides that he’s a woman in a man’s body. Some authorities feel it’s a fixation. Others that it’s a genetic error at birth. He goes to Denmark or France—or even up her to Stanford—where they’ve been doing it lately.”

“Just what do they do?” Masuto asked.

“You want the whole thing?”

“Yes.”

“All right. It begins with chemotherapy procedure. There are two families of hormones that play a major role in determining who is a man and who is a woman, the androgens and the estrogens. Both are present in both sexes, but in a man the androgens predominate and in a woman the estrogens predominate. The first step in sexual reassignment is to reverse the role and put the man on massive doses of estrogens. That starts a biochemical process of change. The male functions cease. The growth of the beard slows, the hips become rounded, then the entire musculature takes on a feminine aspect. Even the breasts begin to increase.”

“Just from the hormones?”



“You’re damn right, just from the hormones. But that’s just the beginning. Electrolysis takes care of the beard. That’s permanent. Then we go into the operating room. Silicone discs are implanted in the breasts. And then they do something called a bilateral orchiectomy, which, without going into details, mean, the changing of a man into a woman through operative procedure, removal of the testes and the conversion of the penis into an artificial vagina—and that’s what you have lying there on my table, a woman who was once a man. Would you like to have another look?”

Masuto nodded, and once again Baxter removed the rubber sheet that covered Angel Barton’s body. Even after having listened to Baxter’s detailed lecture, Masuto found it hard to believe that he was not looking at the body of a beautiful woman. Watching him, Baxter said, “You start with a very handsome young man, you get a beautiful woman.”

“Could she have intercourse?”

“After a fashion.”

“What does that mean?”

“She’s altered. That doesn’t make her a whole woman. We’re not God.”

“Then eventually Mike Barton would have known.”

“Unless he was a total idiot.”

“Poor fool in a kingdom of fools,” Masuto muttered. “The idol of millions married to a man who became a woman—his terrible secret. What clowns we are. That was his word. The only word. The proper word. How could he let the world know?”

Baxter covered the body. “Not a bad day’s work. As for our movie star. He danced—and he paid the piper.”

“I would appreciate it if you could sit on this for twenty-four hours.”

“I’ll be delighted to cooperate,” Baxter said. His victory had almost mellowed him, but he could not resist adding, “I regret that I haven’t handed you the killers on the same silver platter, but the city does pay you gentlemen for service.”

Masuto departed without replying. His car was parked behind the hospital in the lot, but he felt a need to walk, and as he walked, circling away from the hospital and toward Sunset Boulevard, he once again contemplated the ridiculous anomaly of a Zen Buddhist

policeman in Beverly Hills. Why did he go on with it? Why did he continue? What kind of karma brought him to this ultimate barbarism which was also the glittering crown of a monied civilization. These were questions he had proposed a hundred times before. They always remained unanswered.

He walked back to his car and drove to his home in Culver City. It was only one o'clock, and Kati was both alarmed and delighted.

"This is my spiritual and physical nourishment for today. I have eaten wretched food, and tonight I shall not be home before midnight. I have a half hour, dear Kati. Can you prepare something?"

It was a sudden descent and an imposition. She had just fed her two children and sent them back to school, and now she was in the midst of her ironing. The nisei women in her consciousness-raising class, which she had begun to attend a full year ago, would have voted to send Masuto out to a lunch stand. But since none of them were witness, Kati embraced her husband, and after she had assured herself that no injury or other tragedy had sent him home, prepared the tempura from the night before with amazing speed.

She sat opposite him, watching him eat. In spite of her consciousness-raising class, it was her pleasure to watch him eat.

"We live in a wilderness," he said.

"It's those terrible murders. I was listening to the news this morning, after the children left for school."

"Death is always terrible. But this is a sickness."

"Why do they do it, Masao?"

"Money, hatred, revenge."

"It frightens me so," Kati said. "Not because I expect anything to happen to me. I'm not afraid of such things. I wasn't afraid of that skinny Chicano boy who was such a foolish burglar. But because I lose my faith in the whole world."

"One should neither have faith nor lose faith. What is faith? This is the way things are."

"But why? Why are things this way?"

"Because we lose touch with what is real and then we invent what is not real."

"That's Zen talk," Kati said with irritation. "I don't understand it."

“Perhaps I don’t understand it myself,” Masuto said gently. “I need a few minutes to myself, a few minutes to sit and meditate.”

But Kati’s food helped more than the meditation, and driving back to Beverly Hills, he felt better, reflecting on what a primitive thing a man is, that a bellyful of good food could color the whole world differently. When he entered the police station, Beckman was waiting for him.

“Bingo,” Beckman said to him. “Do you want to hear about it?”

“In a few minutes. First, where’s Wainwright?”

“In his office. I got something for both of you to hear.”

In Wainwright’s office Masuto closed the door and faced Beckman and Wainwright.

“You’re getting them tonight—all of them,” Wainwright growled. “And so help me, Masao, you’d better come through!”

“Ah, so,” Masuto said. “Would the honorable captain listen and stop shouting at me?”

“Not if you give me that shogun crap.”

“I am trying to inject a note of lightness into a very miserable affair. I have been to All Saints Hospital, and I have been lectured to by our Dr. Baxter. It would appear that the Angel was a heroin addict. The glass of whisky that was handed to her when she returned was laced with chloral hydrate—”

“A Mickey,” Beckman said.

“Exactly. And when she passed out, someone came into her room and shot her full of heroin.”

“That would do it,” Beckman agreed.

“More to come. The Angel was a man.”

When Masuto had finished giving them every detail of Baxter’s story, they still were unwilling to accept the facts.

“I just don’t buy it,” Wainwright said. “You can’t turn a man into a woman—yeah, maybe into some kind of freak, but the Angel was no freak. She was one of the most beautiful dames I ever saw. She’s been photographed and interviewed.”

“She was stacked,” Beckman said. “Those weren’t falsies. Hell, that dressing gown didn’t half cover her. She was all woman and built like something out of a *Playboy* centerfold.”

“And she started out as a man. We may hate Baxter, but he’s no fool. I saw the autopsy. So let’s not waste time arguing about it. Now we know what she held over Mike Barton and what she blackmailed him with. As he saw it, if word got out that he had married a man, and that’s the way they would have put it, he was done, finished as a star.”

“No question about that,” Beckman said.

“Perhaps, perhaps not. But that’s the way he saw it.”

“Didn’t he know? I mean, when he married her?”

“Would you know?”

“You mean they could have slept together?” Wainwright asked.

“So Baxter tells me.”

“I’ll be damned.”

“Do you think they knew?” Beckman asked. “I mean, the others.”

“Maybe. If they did, they all lied. But maybe they didn’t know—except—”

“Except who?”

“Kelly,” Masuto said. “Well, we’ll see. You said they’re all coming?”

“That’s right.”

“Sy and I will get there by eight-thirty. We still have a few things to do.”

Back in his own office Masuto said to Beckman, “All right, Sy, let’s have it.”

Beckman was still bemused. “What was she, a man or a woman?”

“Baxter calls it sexual reassignment. It’s a long, complicated operative and hormonal procedure, and he says it’s been done thousands of times.”

“But how could Barton—”

“Come on, Sy. How could you? How could everyone else?”

“You tell me. It gives me the creeps. Was she an addict?”

“Yes.”

“Heroin?”

“Yes.”

“You know, Masao,” Beckman said, “if anyone else was working with you, and you say to him, go out and search, he might just ask you what he was searching for.”

“All right, you found it,” Masuto said, looking at his watch.

“Well, why the hell didn’t you tell me what I was looking for?”

“Because I didn’t know what you were looking for.”

“And now you know?”

“That’s right.”

“You are one weird son of a bitch, Masao. All right. I turned that place upside down. I found these in a jar of cold cream.” He took three small ampules, each covered with a stretched rubber top, out of his pocket and placed them on Masuto’s desk. “You know what they are?”

“Heroin?”

“Prepared stuff. I had Sweeney run a test. High grade, pure heroin, medicinally prepared, according to Sweeney, and legally imported from England.”

“Illegal. I don’t think a doctor can prescribe it in California, but I suppose that if you pay enough, you can get it. Well, that’s what killed her, that and the whisky and the chloral hydrate.”

“Where’s the fourth ampule?”

“In the garbage at the Barton place, I imagine, or in a garbage dump somewhere. It wouldn’t help us. Everyone’s too smart about fingerprints these days. That was good work, Sy, damn good. Now what about the war records?”

“I unloaded that one on Keller. You were very nice to him, so he was very glad that we don’t hate the FBI the way the L.A. cops and the New York cops do. I explained that we were a very small outfit and that we appreciated what the FBI could do for us. He said he’d call in the information as soon as Washington worked it up.”

“Today?”

“That’s what he said, this afternoon.”

Masuto looked at his watch again. It was twenty minutes to three. “How long to get to the bank from here?”

“Our bank? Five minutes.”

Masuto dialed the number of the Barton house. Elaine Newman answered, and Masuto said to her, “About that suitcase of money—did you see it open? Did you see the money?”

“Yes.”

“Can you remember the bills on top? Tens, twenties, fifties?”

“They were twenties. I think—no, I’m pretty sure. I heard them talk about it after Mike left. Twenties.”

Masuto did some quick calculations, and then he said to Beckman, “Sy, Polly has a draft for a thousand dollars waiting for us at the desk. Take it to the bank and get fifty twenty-dollar bills. Then stop at a stationery supply place and get ten reams of twenty-pound bond paper.”

“How do I pay for the paper?”

“Tell them to bill us. Better hurry.”

After Beckman left, Masuto sat at his desk, his eyes half-closed, his hands folded in his lap, and began to put the pieces together. He assembled them in his mind and let them fall into place, like the bits and pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. He was sitting like that when a cop opened his door and told him that Wainwright wanted to see him.

The city manager was in Wainwright’s office, and he offered Masuto a bleak nod. “The captain’s been telling me about tonight, Sergeant, and I don’t like it. I think you ought to call it off.”

“Why, if I may ask?”

“Because you’re playing with fire. Jack McCarthy is one of the most important lawyers in Los Angeles, and a resident of this town to boot. Joe Goldberg is one of the biggest producers in town, and Ranier is a damned important businessman. And Hennesy—Sergeant, he’s a member of the House of Representatives. You have money there and you have power, and sure as hell they’ll slap us with a lawsuit that’ll curl our hair.”

“On what grounds? No one’s being forced. No one’s being charged. They’re coming because they wouldn’t miss tonight for the world. They’re coming to see a killer exposed. I promise you that they will not be badgered or provoked. In fact, I won’t even question them.”

“Then what the devil do you want them for?”

“Because one of them murdered Joe Kelly, and because that man is an accessory to the murder of Mike Barton.”

“Sergeant, I have a lot of respect for you, and I know what your record is. But how do you know that?”

“What I know is meaningless and unimportant until I can prove it, and unless you let this take place tonight, I doubt that I’ll ever be

able to prove it.”

“Captain Wainwright tells me you’re convinced that Angel killed Mike Barton.”

“I am, yes.”

“Can you prove it?”

“Possibly. Tonight.”

“And who killed Angel?”

“I think I know, but I have no evidence, none whatsoever.”

“I’d still like to know.”

Masuto shook his head. “Then it would be an empty accusation. I don’t do that. But about tonight, I can assure you that there’ll be no heavy-handed police methods. I think you should allow it to proceed.”

The city manager looked at Wainwright. “Captain?”

“I’ll be there,” Wainwright said, “so you can have my word that whatever is done will be done with a light touch.”

“All right. But I’m holding you responsible. This kind of thing, three murders in one household, does the city no good. The sooner it’s cleaned up and forgotten, the better off we’ll all be.”

Masuto’s phone was ringing as he entered his office. It was Frank Keller, the very young FBI man, obviously pleased with himself. “I got it all, Sergeant,” he told Masuto. “Shall I send the records over?”

“Can you give me the salient points over the phone?”

“Can do. Start with Joseph Goldberg. World War Two. Enlisted in 1942. Field artillery. Do you want the unit and battle record?”

“No. What about marksmanship citations?”

“Goldberg ended up a lieutenant, field commission. Small arms—that’s common in the field artillery. McCarthy was World War Two as well, tank driver—can you imagine, with that paunch of his? Also small arms. Ranier was in the Korean War, quartermaster corps, no citations, and also in the Korean War, Hennesy served with the Coast Guard, rank of midshipman. That’s it, very briefly. Should I send the records over?”

“I would appreciate that,” Masuto said. “And thank you for your efforts.”

Beckman came in while Masuto was speaking. “Anything?” he asked.

“Not much. They all know how to use a pistol.”

“The paper’s in my car. Ten reams—do you know what that weighs?”

“About the same as a million dollars in twenty-dollar bills, more or less.”

“And the money’s here,” patting his bulging pockets. “It’s a nice feeling to walk around with a thousand dollars in your pockets.”

“Do you know where there’s a paper cutter—one of those power jobs?”

“We could try City Hall. They should have one. I get the drift of what you’re going to try, but what about the suitcase?”

“Courtesy of Gucci.”

“Same one?”

“So Miss Newman says. I promised to return it, so we’ll handle it carefully. Now let’s try for the paper cutter.”

Beckman took a packet of currency wrappers out of his pocket. “You forgot about these.”

“So I did. I wonder what else I’ve forgotten.”



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## The Suitcase

It was well after six o'clock before Masuto and Beckman finished cutting the paper and arranging the piles, topped by twenty-dollar bills, in the suitcase. While they were at work, Wainwright stopped by and watched them for a moment or two, and then said, "It's an old trick. What makes you think it will work?"

Masuto shrugged. "It's a shortcut. Maybe it won't work."

"You got anything else?"

"Something, not much."

"Whoever it is, he was in it with Angel."

"Yes."

"Then he could have killed Mike Barton."

"He could have, but I don't think he did," Masuto said.

"He could have killed Angel. One less to split."

Masuto shrugged.

"What does that mean?"

"I don't think he killed Angel. I think he killed Kelly."

"And what do we do about Angel?"

Masuto shook his head.

"You know," Wainwright said, "you are one secretive bastard, Masao. You're supposed to be part of this police force, not a goddamn supercop."

"I never think of myself as a supercop," Masuto replied, smiling. "I crawl through mazes and I try to guess what goes on in the minds of poor tortured madmen. Do you want me to drag you in with me every time I get some crazy notion."

“All I want you to do is to level with me.”

“I try.”

“And just keep an eye on that suitcase. I want that thousand dollars back.”

“Not to mention the suitcase,” Beckman said, “which cost four hundred and twenty dollars at Gucci.”

“Goddamnit!” Wainwright snarled. “Who paid for it? Did you charge it to us?”

“Gucci lent it to us, as a gesture of goodwill toward the Beverly Hills cops.”

“Clowns,” Wainwright muttered as he stalked out.

They ate at Cantor’s on Fairfax Avenue. Beckman wanted tempura, but Masuto had eaten tempura for lunch and he had no great love for Los Angeles Japanese restaurants. He told Beckman that he had a craving for chicken and matzo-ball soup so they went to Cantor’s. Masuto would not talk about the case. He dodged Beckman’s question and talked about the TV version of *Shōgun*, the matzo balls at Cantor’s, and the problem of inflation on a cop’s salary. Then, as they were leaving, he said to Beckman, “Do you know where to break the connection so that a car can’t start?”

“Nothing to it.”

“All right. Tonight, after they arrive, if there’s a key in the car, put it into your pocket, and if there’s no key, break the connection. But I don’t want the cars damaged, I just want none of them able to start.”

“No sweat.”

“And if anything happens, just let it play out. No rough stuff, no daring moves, no jumping anyone. Just watch me and play my game.”

“What are you looking for?”

“Just being careful.”

It was eight o’clock when they got to Mike Barton’s house, and the only car in the parking space was Elaine Newman’s Mustang. Dempsy, still on duty, came out to meet them.

“No one here yet?”

“Only Miss Newman. She’s been here all afternoon. The cook and the maid—that’s all.”

“Good. Now, listen, Dempsy, if something happens tonight, no guns or rough stuff. If someone has a gun, no shooting if you can help it. Play it very cool.”

“What do you expect, Sergeant?”

“I don’t know. Maybe nothing.”

Beckman carried the suitcase into the house. “You know, Masao,” he said, “I never thought of money being heavy. This is heavy.”

Elaine Newman had opened the door for them, saying, “Thank God you’re here, Sergeant. This place is spooky. What have you got in there?”

“About nine and a half reams of bond paper and some twenty-dollar bills. Do you have a closet in the library where you can stow it until we need it?”

“Absolutely.” She was alive this evening. She had broken out of the torpor of her grief. “Get him,” she said eagerly. “Get him, please. Not only for Kelly, but for Mike too.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Angel killed Mike, didn’t she? That’s what you think?”

“How do you know I think that?”

“You sit in this library, and you can listen to half the house. It’s these old-fashioned hot-air vents. I overheard you talking to the captain. You know she killed Mike, but if she was in it with someone else, then that makes him guilty too, doesn’t it?”

“Perhaps. I don’t decide matters of guilt or innocence.” He looked at her thoughtfully, reflecting that she was not beautiful, not even very pretty, but there was intelligence in the face and the wide-set, dark blue eyes were unusually striking. You saw the eyes before you saw anything else, and a head of rich thick brown hair framed them very well. She was an odd contrast to the woman Mike Barton had married and, very likely, Masato decided, a complete reaction.

“Then get the evidence,” she said evenly.

“I’ll do my best.” He turned to Beckman. “Cover the door, Sy, and steer each one into the living room. I don’t want them wandering around the house. Be gentle but firm.”

“It’s like a goddamn convocation of nobility.”

“Our nobility, for what it’s worth. Lend a hand, please,” he said to Elaine.

“Most of them I can’t stand to look at.”

Masuto smiled. “Rise above it. Serve coffee. Ask for drink orders. Be a sort of hostess.”

“Must I?”

“You’re all we have. Where are the ladies?”

“In the kitchen.”

Going to the kitchen, Masuto tried to remember when he had spoken to the captain about Angel being the killer. Had it been here in the house? Too much had happened in the past thirty hours. Things ran together. In the kitchen was the warm, homey smell of baking. Lena Jones was filling a tray with cups, saucers, and cake plates. Mrs. Holtz was slicing a loaf cake.

“It smells wonderful,” Masuto said.

“Have a piece.”

“I just finished dinner.”

“Have a piece. It won’t hurt you. I’ll pour a cup of coffee.”

He sat at the table and munched the cake. “You’re right. It’s absolutely delicious. Lena,” he said to the black girl, “yesterday, when Mrs. Barton died, Dr. Haddam tells us that you brought a glass of ice and whisky upstairs and that Mrs. Barton drank it. Can you tell me exactly how that came about?”

She was frightened. She stared at Masuto without answering.

“She’s just a child,” Mrs. Holtz put in. “You know what it’s been like in this house yesterday and today? I’ll tell you what happened. Kelly came into the kitchen. Lena and me were here. He says to Lena, ‘There’s a glass of whisky on the bar. Bring it up to Mrs. Barton.’ I tell him, ‘Why don’t you bring it up yourself?’ Then he curses. I don’t want to speak bad of the dead, but he had a foul mouth. Then he stamps out of the back door.”

Masuto nodded.

“You like sugar in the coffee?”

“No, just black. Lena,” he said to the maid, “don’t be afraid. Just tell me what you did then.”

She took a deep breath. “I go out then and get the glass.”

“What kind of glass?”

She went to the closet and took out a tall highball glass. “Same as this.”

“Can you remember how many ice cubes were in it?”

“Three, I guess.”

“You’re a very observant young woman. And how high was the glass filled?”

She touched the glass about three quarters of an inch from the top.

“The doctor,” Masuto said, “guessed that it was Scotch whisky.”

“That’s what she drank.”

“Scotch is not quite as dark as bourbon or rye. Would you guess that it was all whisky, no water.”

“Yes, sir, that’s what I thought.”

“And what did you do then?”

“I brought it upstairs. Mr. McCarthy and the doctor was just outside the door, and I hear it slam as I come upstairs. Then she opens the door, sees me, and grabs the drink out of my hand. She was shaking. She just drains it down and then pushes the glass back at me and slams the door again.”

After that Masuto sat in silence for a few minutes, finishing the cake and the coffee. Then he said to Lena, “Do you think you can serve our guests tonight?”

“Yes, sir.”

“They’ll be here soon. Miss Newman will help you. Most, I imagine, will want drinks. Some will have cake and coffee. Then, at about a quarter after nine, I’ll get up and speak to them. When that happens, I’d like you to leave and stay here in the kitchen with Mrs. Holtz.”

The Goldbergs were the first to arrive. They came at ten minutes to nine, and looking at the fat little man with a fringe of white hair around his bald skull, and thinking of the field artillery officer who got a field commission, Masuto reflected on the callousness of time. Captain Wainwright arrived a few minutes later, and then after him, Congressman Hennesy, Mrs. Cooper, and then Bill Ranier. It was ten minutes after nine before Jack McCarthy got there, completing the group, and he said to Wainwright, “I’m here only because Joe Smith asked me to come. Otherwise, I’d have no part of this nonsense.”

Wainwright thanked him for coming. Elaine Newman took orders for drinks. Lena Jones poured coffee, her hands shaking just a bit. Della Goldberg and Bill Ranier had coffee. The others had drinks.

Beckman stood unobtrusively at the entrance to the room. Elaine Newman took a seat apart from the others, who had seated themselves on three large couches that made a conversation area in front of the grand piano.

At half past nine Wainwright rose and spread his hands for silence. "I don't want you to think of this as an inquisition," he said. "Nothing of the sort. We asked you to come here tonight to help us inject some clarity into our thinking about this case. It's a shocking case, and it does the city no good, and until it's cleared up, it will engender fear where there's no reason for fear. Our procedure tonight will be very simple. Detective Sergeant Masuto will outline some of the salient points of the case, and when he finishes, anyone who wishes to can comment. That's about it."

Masuto stood up, and out of the corner of his eye he saw Lena Jones slip out of the room. There were no doors to the living room, but Beckman was planted solidly in the archway that led to the hall. The four men and the two women seated in the horseshoe of couches watched Masuto expectantly. Wainwright and Miss Newman were behind him.

Netty Cooper was finishing her second drink. "I think this is very thrilling," she said. "Our brilliant Fu Manchu is going to expose a murderer."

"Netty, don't be an ass," Hennesy said.

"Since you're an asshole, what difference does it make?" she replied.

"Lovely, lovely," Della Goldberg said.

"Oh, shut up and fry your own fish. Or make her the killer. Do make her the killer."

Masuto waited.

"I think we all ought to shut up and get this over with," McCarthy said.

"Can we begin?" Masuto asked. Silence. "Very well. Yesterday, Mr. Ranier informed me that the kidnapping of Angel Barton was not a kidnapping but rather a scam to defraud the government of income taxes."

"That was confidential!" Ranier cried. "You have no right—"

“I have every right,” Masuto said coldly. “You did not put it to me as confidential. You laid it out in an attempt to save your own hide.”

Ranier’s face tightened, but he said nothing.

“The plan, in brief, according to Mr. Ranier, included himself and Mr. and Mrs. Barton. According to Mr. Ranier, Mike Barton was in default to the government for half a million dollars in back taxes, to which extent he would benefit from the swindle.”

“Not true!” Goldberg snapped. “We had the same accountant. Mike was in default only fifty thousand dollars, and he had bonds to back that up.”

“I told Masuto what Mike told me,” Ranier protested lamely.

“Then, gentlemen and ladies, if Mr. Barton was not in default, we must look for another reason for his participation in so stupid and unworkable a scheme. Perhaps I can enlighten you—I mean those of you who are not already aware of what I am going to say. The woman, Angel Barton, had undergone a process of what is called sexual reassignment, a process which through hormonal treatment and surgery turns a man into a woman. This was the secret with which she blackmailed and controlled Mike Barton for two years.”

Masuto watched the faces. McCarthy’s face was full of disbelief. Goldberg was untouched. He knew. Della Goldberg burst into tears. Netty Cooper shook her head in disbelief, and Hennesy sat with his mouth open. Ranier’s face was unchanged, set tight. Masuto turned to look at Elaine Newman. She was staring at the floor.

“So the kidnapping now stands in a somewhat different light,” Masuto said. “Mike Barton was blackmailed into it, as he was blackmailed into remaining with Angel Barton, as he was controlled and manipulated—”

“I pleaded with him,” Della Goldberg burst out. “I begged him to let the world know and be damned. Joe offered him an unbreakable five-picture contract if he would divorce that devil, but he wouldn’t. He said it would be the end of his life, the end of his career.”

“The plan,” Masuto said, “as Mr. Ranier laid it out to Mike Barton, was for Angel Barton to meet him at San Ysidro, take the money, drive to downtown Los Angeles, park her car, and take a taxi back here. Instead, she altered the plan—with or without Mr. Ranier’s approval, we have yet to discover—and when she met her husband,

she sat down next to him in his car, diverted him somehow, took her gun from her purse, and shot him.”

“Without my knowledge or approval, if there’s a shred of truth in what you’re saying, which I doubt!” Ranier shouted, and then turning to McCarthy, “Jack, can he do this? Stand there and slander me?”

“If he’s slandering you,” McCarthy said coldly, “it’s actionable. You’re not required to say anything or even to remain here.”

“I damn well intend to remain here while he’s spouting this garbage!”

Without appearing to respond to the interruption, Masuto continued. “Then, her husband dead, Angel put the suitcase in her car, drove downtown, and then took a cab back here. When she arrived here, she told Mr. Ranier what had happened, and he asked her what she had done with the gun. To his horror, she had forgotten to dispose of it. She gave it to him and he probably hid it for the moment behind some books in the library.”

“I won’t even dignify this fantasy with a denial,” Ranier said.

McCarthy rose, one finger hooked on his belt. “You, sir,” he said to Masuto, “have concocted a story which points directly to a man who is a client of mine. You have offered not one shred of evidence. Indeed, if you had any such evidence, you would not have provoked this charade, and since you cannot arrest Mr. Ranier, you have chosen to slander him. Let me be precise. You accuse him of conniving with Angel Barton to steal a million dollars, a hundred thousand of which was his own money—”

“Or his clients’ money,” Goldberg snapped. “The man’s a business manager.”

“I’ll thank you not to interrupt me, Joe. But to get back to Sergeant Masuto’s actionable accusations. You charge that the money was placed in Angel’s car. You say she drove downtown, left the car, and returned here by cab. But when she returned, she had no money, no suitcase—”

As McCarthy spoke, Masuto nodded slightly at Beckman, who left the room.

“—which makes the first hole in your incredible concoction. And if Mike was being blackmailed so readily—” He stopped in mid-sentence as Beckman entered the room carrying what was



unquestionably a very heavy suitcase. He placed the Gucci bag on the floor in sight of the group and opened it. The sight of the open bag, filled with what were apparently neatly stacked bundles of twenty-dollar bills, drew a collective gasp from the audience, the response of people to a magician who takes a very large rabbit out of an empty hat. Masuto watched Ranier, whose tight, controlled face revealed nothing. The silence was drawn like a stretched rubber band, until Netty Cooper said shrilly, "Is that the ransom? Good heavens, did you have it all this time?"

"I didn't have it," Masuto said.

Coldly and angrily, Ranier said to McCarthy, "I want you to witness the fact, Jack, that my home was entered and searched illegally. I had no knowledge of the fact that Angel had put the ransom money in my house. I only discovered it an hour before coming here, and I intended to take up the matter with Captain Wainwright."

"Did you have a warrant to search his house?" McCarthy asked Masuto.

"No."

"Then I'm afraid you're in for trouble, Sergeant."

"Possibly." He nodded slightly at Beckman, who closed the suitcase and latched it.

"No, sir. Not possibly, but indubitably. Your conduct of this charade has been both disgraceful and actionable. You have read too many mysteries, sir. What fiction allows, the law prohibits—"

Still, Masuto watched Ranier.

"—and I am absolutely amazed, Captain Wainwright, that you could lend yourself to this. However, this is not the end of the matter, only the beginning."

"May I finish?" Masuto asked sharply.

"I see no reason why this slander should be continued," McCarthy said.

"Your client is free to leave," Wainwright said with annoyance. "He was not forced to come here."

McCarthy looked at Ranier, who rose but made no move to leave. "Let's hear the rest of what this turkey has to say," Ranier said bitterly. "We might as well get all of it."

“Joseph Kelly,” Masuto said, “was, as you all know, Mr. Barton’s chauffeur. He was a man with a long prison record. Barton gave him a chance and employed him. Last night he was murdered. He was murdered because, standing in the butler’s pantry, he overheard the conversation between Angel Barton and Mr. Ranier when she returned here after the kidnapping.”

“Just hold on!” McCarthy interrupted. “You’re digging your own grave, sir! You’re accusing my client—”

“Let me finish!” Masuto said harshly. McCarthy paused. “I’m not making any accusations that can’t be backed up. There were two women in this house last night, Lena Jones, the maid, and Mrs. Holtz, the housekeeper, and both of them were awakened by a loud gunshot. Miss Jones looked out of her window and saw Mr. Ranier leaving Kelly’s quarters.”

It came like a bombshell. Even Wainwright and Beckman had not been ready for this. Only Elaine Newman appeared not to be surprised, sitting relaxed, a tight smile on her lips. The others were staring at Ranier, who shouted, “That’s a damned lie, Masuto! That’s a concoction out of the whole cloth! You set out to frame me here tonight! Loud gunshot! You son of a bitch, you said yourself that the gun had a silencer and that no one heard anything!”

“Wrong, Mr. Ranier,” Masuto said. “No one except Captain Wainwright here and Detective Beckman knew about the silencer. How did you know, sir? How did you know that Kelly was killed with a gun that had a silencer?”

“You told me.”

“I did not.”

Ranier looked about him, stared at the three policemen who were standing calmly, then reached into his jacket, drew a gun, and stepped clear of the couches, covering the three policemen, who did not move.

“Nobody moves,” Ranier snapped. “Just put your hands up and keep them there.”

Just the slightest nod on Masuto’s part to Beckman and Wainwright. They put up their hands, as Masuto did.

“Bill, you’re crazy!” McCarthy cried. “What in hell are you doing? Can’t you see that this is a frame? You’re playing into their hands.”

“You—Newman!” Ranier said. “Pick up that suitcase and set it down by my side.”

“Of course,” Elaine replied. “I’m delighted to be of assistance, Mr. Ranier.” And with a show of strength amazing in a woman so slight, she lifted the suitcase, carried it over toward Ranier, and then deliberately stumbled so that the whole weight of the suitcase caught him in the side. As he doubled over, Masuto sprang, grasped the wrist that held the gun, pointing the gun down as it went off. An instant later Ranier was lifted off the ground in Beckman’s bearhug while Masuto forced the gun from his grasp. Then Beckman cuffed him.

“You bitch!” he snarled at Elaine Newman. “You filthy, lousy bitch!”

The room was in chaos, the others crowding around, Dempsy running in with his gun drawn, Elaine Newman smiling calmly, and Wainwright telling Masuto, “Read him his rights—slowly, carefully, every word of it. His lawyer’s listening, so I don’t want any mistakes from here on in.”

“I arrest you for the murder of Joseph Kelly,” Masuto said. “This is an admonition of rights. You have the right to remain silent—”

The voices were stilled. They stood in silence, listening to Masuto recite the formula as if it were some kind of prayer. When he had finished, Wainwright said to Dempsy, “Take him down to the station and book him for murder one and put him in the cage.”

“I’d like to talk to him,” McCarthy said.

“Downtown. Not here.”

“I’ll see Judge Lacey tonight,” McCarthy said to Ranier. “We’ll get bail.”

“I doubt it,” Wainwright said.

“We’ll see,” McCarthy said, and started to leave.

“One moment,” Masuto told him. “Detective Beckman here fixed all your cars so they wouldn’t start—just in case Mr. Ranier made it to his car. Give him five minutes.”

By ten-thirty the last of them had gone, leaving only the three policemen and Elaine Newman, who was in the library. She said she had bills to pay, odds and ends to clear up, and she wanted it all done with so that she could get away to San Francisco for a few days, see her mother, and begin to forget what had happened here.

Wainwright was staring unhappily at the Gucci bag. "What did you say was the price of this suitcase?" he asked Masuto.

"Four hundred and twenty dollars."

"Well, it has a bullet hole in it, so unless you can work it out with the Gucci people, that's four hundred and twenty dollars out of your pay, Masao."

"What? You wouldn't do that."

"Wouldn't I? After your performance here tonight? You miserable son of a bitch, with your wild-eyed guesses and Chinese insights. You had nothing when you came in here tonight, nothing, and you hornswoggled me into backing you up and putting my job on the line. If Ranier wasn't such a stupid slob, he would have laughed you right out of the force."

"Wise men don't murder."

"Bullshit on your goddamn philosophy." He held up the gun. "This is all we got. And if this isn't the gun that killed Kelly, we got nothing."

"I think it's the gun."

"You think so. God save me from what you think."

"Even if he should beat the murder charge, it's a good arrest. We have him for armed robbery, for using the gun to get the suitcase out of here, and the feds can bring a conspiracy to defraud Internal Revenue against him. Also, I suspect that when they go through his books, they'll find enough illegal use of funds to send him away for a while."

"Maybe."

"Why don't you wait until Ballistics tests the gun and matches it. Then you can let go at me."

"Resisting arrest," Beckman put in.

"I'm going home," Wainwright said. He gave the gun to Beckman. "Drop it off at the station." But at the door, he turned back and said to Masuto, "Who killed Angel?"

Masuto shrugged.

"Don't give me that goddamn inscrutable crap of yours. I asked you a question."

"I can't answer it."

"You mean you don't know? Was it Kelly?"

"No."

“You’re lying to me, Masuto. What is it? You got something you’re going to dazzle us with?”

“No.”

“Every damn reporter and wire service and TV camera in southern California is going to be at the station tomorrow. What do we tell them?”

“Tell them we have promising leads.”

“Do we?”

“No.”

“You think Ranier killed her and you got nothing to back it up.”

“I think the person who killed Angel Barton was sitting in this room tonight, and we haven’t one shred of evidence to back up a charge, and I don’t think we’ll ever have any.”

“I’ve never known a lack of hard evidence to stop you before.”

“It stops me.”

“You can tell the media that a finger of suspicion points to Kelly,” Beckman said. “The poor bastard’s dead and that takes us off the hook.”

“I hate that kind of thing.”

“Then keep the file open,” Masuto said. “Something may turn up.”

Wainwright left. Beckman put the gun in his pocket, stretched, and yawned. “What about this Gucci suitcase?” he asked Masuto.

“Bring it down to the station, Sy, and separate the real bills and put them in the safe. I’ll go over and plead my case with Gucci tomorrow.”

“Okay. You coming?”

“I’ll have a word with the two women in the kitchen. They must be pretty frightened. You go ahead.”

“See you tomorrow,” Beckman said as he went out.

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## Evidence

Masuto went into the kitchen, where the two women were sitting at the kitchen table. They had not left the kitchen since Lena returned there and they sat at the table in a kind of rigid expectation.

“What was the shot we heard?” Mrs. Holtz asked Masuto. “We were afraid to go in there.”

“Nothing. Mr. Ranier’s gun went off, but no one was hurt.” Except myself, he thought ruefully, to the tune of four hundred and twenty dollars.

“Mr. Ranier?”

“Yes. He was the one who killed Kelly. We arrested him.”

“A man like that! In his position!” Mrs. Holtz shook her head.

“Did he kill Mr. Barton?” Lena asked tremulously.

“No. Mr. Barton’s wife killed him.”

“How terrible!”

“Yes.”

“And what happened to her?” Mrs. Holtz asked.

“Someone killed her.”

“Death, death—it’s so terrible.”

“It’s over now,” Masuto told them. “It’s all over. You’re absolutely safe here.”

“Should we just stay here?”

“I think so. As I said, it’s absolutely safe. You can go on charging whatever food and supplies you need, and according to what Mr. Goldberg told me, payment will come out of the estate—as will your wages. Mr. Goldberg thinks that the house and most of Mr. Barton’s

estate was left to Miss Newman, but there's a bequest of ten thousand dollars to each of you—again according to Mr. Goldberg, so that should be helpful."

"Ten thousand dollars?" Both women looked at him in amazement and disbelief. "I can't believe it," Mrs. Holtz said, and Lena said, "I never in all my life—I'm just a black woman. Why he leave me that money?"

"He was a generous man. He knew how it felt to be poor," Mrs. Holtz said.

"Miss Newman is still here," Masuto told them. "She's in the library. So don't be alarmed if you hear someone walking around. I'll be going now. As I said, there's no danger, nothing for you to worry about."

He left the kitchen then and went to the library. The only light there was a green-shaded desk lamp. Elaine Newman sat at the desk, writing. She glanced up as Masuto entered, her face quite lovely in the dimmed light.

"May I come in?" he asked.

"Please. I'm just trying to tie up some loose ends. Mike's mother and father are dead, but there are a few relatives in the East who must be notified. The funeral's tomorrow, and while Mr. Goldberg's taking care of that, he wants me to write something for him to read at a memorial meeting which will be held a week later. It's not easy."

"No, I suppose not—to write about someone you love. No, it wouldn't be easy."

"You're a very sympathetic man, Sergeant Masuto."

"For a cop."

"I didn't mean that."

"No, I'm sure you didn't. You're leaving tomorrow?"

"After the funeral. I must get away for a while, and my mother will fuss over me, and I guess I need that right now. I feel very bereft and alone in the world."

"That's understandable."

"Won't you sit down, please?"

Masuto dropped into a chair, facing her.

"How did you know it was Ranier?" she asked him.

"I knew it, but I had to confirm it. That silly trick with the bag did it."

“But how did you know it?”

“There was a hundred thousand dollars of his own money in the bag—or his clients’ money. That would make no difference. It was money he had in his hands. He was taking no chances. He would kill before he ever let that money out of his hands.”

“And the money’s at his house?”

“We’ll have a search warrant in the morning, and we’ll pick it up.”

“I still don’t understand how you knew,” she said.

“The first thing he asked Angel when she entered the house was whether she had dropped the money at his house.”

“But you weren’t here when she came back.”

“But you were, Miss Newman, here in this library. So you heard Angel—you yourself mentioned how the air vents carry sound—and I imagine Kelly, who was in the pantry, heard it as well.”

“Really?” She put down her pen and looked at Masuto with new interest. “But there’s no way you could have known whether or not I was here in the library, since you were not in the house.”

“Perhaps.”

“And I suppose you’re also guessing that Kelly was in the pantry and that he overheard from there. Do you think that is why he was shot?”

“Yes. Probably he tried to shake down Ranier for part of the million dollars.”

“And Ranier killed him.”

“Yes.”

“You still haven’t explained how you knew about Ranier.”

“Ah, so.” Masuto stared at her thoughtfully. “You told me,” he said.

“What?”

“Yes, Miss Newman, yesterday in the living room, after Mike Barton was killed, you lashed out at Ranier. You said something to the effect of, ‘Are you going to kill me too?’”

“Did I? Truly?” She appeared not at all disturbed.

“Yes, you did.”

“Well—” Elaine sighed. “I was upset, distraught, and I had to lash out at someone. Bill was there. I never liked him, and I begged Mike to get rid of him. He was stealing Mike blind. But come now,



Sergeant, you didn't build your whole case on what I blurted out in a fit of grief and anger?"

"No, I didn't. You're absolutely right. And I wasn't wholly certain until our little ploy with the suitcase worked. But on the other hand, Miss Newman, I never for a moment believed that you would have indulged in that outburst unless you knew something. You're not the type. You are very cool, very collected, very much in control of yourself. There was also no doubt in my mind that Angel Barton had killed her husband. Of course, I could have been wrong."

"I don't think you were wrong."

"I know you don't," Masuto said, "because you were here in the library, and you heard Ranier ask Angel whether she had taken care of Mike, and you heard Angel tell him that she had. Then, I suppose, Ranier asked her what she had done with the gun, and she said she had forgotten to get rid of it. Ranier must have been very angry, and he took the gun from her and dropped it behind a row of books in here—"

"And never noticed I was here?" Elaine smiled.

Masuto pointed to the door. "You see how it opens inward. You simply stepped behind the door. Very cool and quick-thinking. If Ranier had seen you, he would have killed you."

"How amazing!" Elaine looked at him and nodded. "What a remarkable man you are, Detective Masuto! I had always thought that policemen had no imagination, but you have a marvelous gift of fancy. Please go on. I can't wait until I hear what happened next."

"You must have brooded about it for a while. I'm sure you loved Mike Barton a great deal. You would have made him a good wife."

"You're damn right I would!" she said, almost harshly, and then she began to cry. "Forgive me, please." She wiped her eyes with a tissue. "I'm all right."

"Can I get you anything? A drink?"

"No, I'm all right."

Masuto watched her and nodded. "You, you would have made him a good wife. You would have mothered him, and you have the wit and intelligence he lacked."

"Stop it! I don't want to hear about that! If you wish to continue your fairy tale, then do so. Otherwise, please go."

“I’ll continue, Miss Newman. I don’t know where you got the chloral hydrate, but I can guess. I would say that Angel had it and you found it in her medicine cabinet when she was out, and deciding that she intended to use it against Mike, you appropriated it. How you must have hated her! Of course, you knew her secret. Well, you waited for the proper moment, and it came when you heard Kelly shouting for Lena to get the drink and take it up to Angel. You had the chloral hydrate. You stepped into the hall and dropped it into the glass of whisky. Kelly had meanwhile gone into the kitchen. Then you waited until the coast was clear, took the gun from its hiding place, slipped up to Angel’s bedroom, and found her unconscious, the chloral hydrate having done its work. Apparently, you knew where she hid her syringe and heroin—I don’t think anyone else could have known that—and you gave her a large dose of heroin. I don’t know why you took the ampule with you, possibly you were startled by some sound. You would have used the gun if you had to, but there was no need. You put the gun in her dressing-table drawer and you left. I suppose you flushed the ampule down a toilet. Yes, you must have hated her a great deal.”

Elaine was herself again, and she smiled with approval. “What a stunning pattern of events you’ve invented. And you make it all fit together as neatly as a jigsaw puzzle. You’re right about one thing, Sergeant. I hated Angel. Of course I knew about the sex change, but since it was Mike’s secret in life, I was determined that it should be his secret in death. His Angel was a devil in human form, and I shed no tears for her. I’m glad she’s dead. But tell me, do you actually believe this fairy tale you’ve put together?”

“I’m afraid I do.”

“Are you going to arrest me for the murder of Angel Barton?”

“Only if you are willing to make a confession and sign it.”

“And wouldn’t I be a fool to do that, Sergeant Masuto? You haven’t one tiny shred of proof or evidence to back up this complex story of yours. Not even enough to arrest me.”

“I know that.”

“And if you did, Mr. McCarthy, who was Mike’s lawyer too, would be so happy to slap the City of Beverly Hills with an enormous false-

arrest suit, not to mention defamation of character and mental stress.”

“I know that too.”

“I worshipped Mike. I adored him. He was my lover and my child at one and the same time. Bill Ranier was as guilty as Angel of Mike’s murder. She pulled the trigger, but he was an accessory before the fact and after the fact. And I’ll tell you something, Mr. Detective, in three years he’ll be out of jail. You lied about Lena Jones. She’s no witness. So what will they get Ranier for? Conspiracy to defraud the government? Resisting arrest? You said it yourself. He’ll be out in three years or less.”

“Possibly,” Masuto agreed. “Unless you testified against him.”

“You do so want life to fit your fantasies. But, you see, I wasn’t in the library and I did not kill Angel, and I’m afraid we must leave it there.”

Masuto stood up. “I don’t believe in revenge, Miss Newman. The person who takes the revenge pays too great a price.”

“But justice? Do you believe in justice, Detective Masuto?”

“I’m not sure that any of us are wise enough for justice. I’m not sure I know what justice is.”

Elaine walked with him to the door. “I wish I could know you better, Mr. Detective. You’re a very strange and interesting man.”

“We never truly know another person,” Masuto said. “Even Angel Barton had a spark of something human and wonderful buried inside her. Perhaps no one ever tried to find it.”

“Whatever you think I’ve done,” Elaine Newman said, “you’re not making it any harder for me to live with it. I knew Angel Barton. You did not.”

She stood at the door, watching him as he walked out and over to where his car was parked.

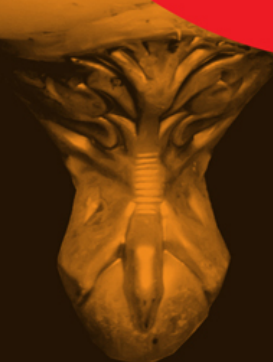
#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*—BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SPARTACUS*

# HOWARD FAST

Writing as E. V. Cunningham

**THE CASE  
OF THE MURDERED  
MACKENZIE**

A Masao Masuto Mystery





# The Case of the Murdered Mackenzie

**For Barbara, welcome**

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Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto, his wife, Kati, his twelve-year-old son, Uraga, and his ten-year-old daughter, Ana, all departed for Japan on the very same day that Eve Mackenzie—as the subsequent indictment said—murdered her husband. The two events had no connection other than the fact that Masuto, had he been in Beverly Hills, would have investigated the murder. As it happened, Masuto was in a Pan Am plane, high over the Pacific, leaving the investigation to his partner, Sy Beckman, and to Beckman's boss, Captain Wainwright.

The trip to Japan was something that Masuto and his wife, Kati, had discussed through the years, not as any sort of reality, but as a pleasant fantasy. Every dollar they could put aside went into a fund for the children's college education, and the stories they'd heard of astronomical hotel and restaurant prices, on top of very expensive airplane fares kept the Japanese excursion in the area of fantasy. Both Masuto and Kati were Nisei, which meant they were American-born of Japanese-born parents. Kati was less eager than her husband to visit the land of her ancestors. She was a nest-builder, and her own small universe—her cottage in Culver City, her two children, and her husband—satisfied her completely.

Masuto, on the other hand, was a Zen Buddhist, and he had often dreamed of meditating in one of the Zen temples in Kyoto—or perhaps listening to the wisdom of some famous Roshi, promising himself that before that unlikely moment arrived, he would do something to correct his very poor Japanese. However, it arrived very suddenly. His greatuncle Ishu, who lived in San Jose and who was very old, and who had little faith in the inheritance laws, sent Masuto a gift of round-trip plane tickets to Tokyo for his entire family. For a whole evening, Masuto and his wife debated the pros and cons of the trip, the money that would have to be spent even if they went only to Tokyo and Kyoto—but what of other cities where there would



be relatives who had to be visited as a minimal act of courtesy? In the end, agreeing that the opportunity might never come again, they decided to take the plunge. Masuto had a month of vacation time coming to him, and he managed to talk Captain Wainwright, his chief on the Beverly Hills police force, out of another month, and since it was already late in June, the children would miss only a few days of school.

The family tour, like all family tours, was both wonderful and depressing. Masuto emerged with new respect for Kati, whose Japanese was so much better than his, and Kati willingly stayed with the children while Masuto was guest of honor at a police banquet where, alas, no wives were present.

The prices were depressingly higher than anything either of them had anticipated—and for Masuto, his dreams of the pure beauty of Kyoto was brought down to earth by the sight of a bustling city of over a million people. As poor as Masuto's spoken Japanese—and perhaps even worse—was his ability to read the printed Japanese characters; and since after a few weeks away from California he began to feel isolated and totally divorced from both past and present, it was indeed fortunate that Tokyo had several English-language newspapers. It was there, in the *Japan Times* that he first heard of the Mackenzie affair.

Eve Mackenzie was one of five women who had appeared in a picture called *The Old Gang*, which was released in 1961. The picture was a great hit, and all five of the women, who played in a film about a high school reunion five years later, went on to a sort of stardom. Eve Mackenzie had married Robert Mackenzie just before the film was made. In the film she played under the name of Eve Hardin. She played in five more films, became pregnant, lost the child in the seventh month, appeared in a few more films after that, and then eclipsed. That was not unusual; indeed, that was in the nature of the new Hollywood. Stars were created and died in less than a lifetime.

Robert Mackenzie, the victim of Eve's passion or anger or frustration, was Scottish-born, an engineer, brilliant, and when alive employed at the Fenwick Works, which nestles in the hills to the east of Malibu and which, as they say, has more millions in war contracts

than one can shake a stick at. The marriage had not been a happy one, and Eve's friends told reporters that she had been driven to the act. Kati, reading the account of the crime to Masuto as he sprawled on a couch in their Tokyo hotel, responded indignantly to the suggestion that anyone might be driven to murder.

"How inhuman! To solve anything with a murder!"

"Yet it is done every day, my dear Kati."

"You justify it? How can you?"

"Of course I don't," Masuto said. "You know me better than that, Kati. Yet our civilization, here as well as at home in the States, has laid the basis for the act and the justification."

"No! How?"

"War. What else is war?"

"You know I can't argue with you about such things. You know that, and you make me feel so foolish."

"My dear Kati, I don't mean to make you feel foolish. You're not. You're a very wise woman." And then he went to her and held her in his arms, which proved his love if not his sincerity.

But he knew that the crux of it was the fact that a murder of major consequence had taken place in Beverly Hills, where murder is certainly not an everyday occurrence, and he had been thousands of miles away. It was the first murder in Beverly Hills in eleven years that he had not investigated.

In Morioka, where he had gone to speak with a Roshi who was an old friend of the Roshi at the Zendo in Los Angeles, he was unable to find an English-language newspaper.

His irritation was such that it caused Bukko, the venerable Zen Roshi he had come to Morioka to meet, to ask Masuto whether there was some serious family difficulty or loss that disturbed him. This question served at least to bring Masuto to his senses.

"I was so mortified before the Roshi," Masuto explained to Kati later, "that I lied to him, and for that I cannot forgive myself."

"But from what you have told me about Zen masters," Kati said gently, "he would know that you were lying."

"Of course he knew."

"Then did you explain to him?"

“What was I to explain to him?” Masuto said unhappily. “It is bad enough to enter a temple and reveal that I am a policeman. Should I add to it the fact that I have become so irritable and unpleasant over a murder committed in Beverly Hills while I am here in Japan?”

“But we are here in Japan,” Kati said, “and it is filled with such delightful things. Can we enjoy them—please, Masao?”

“Of course. And I promise you, there will be no further mention of this Mackenzie business.”

He kept his word, and he even rejected the notion of a long distance call to his partner, Sy Beckman. This for two reasons: firstly because of its cost, and secondly because he felt it would be both unprofessional and unfriendly to insert himself into the first homicide that Beckman had undertaken alone.

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But it was Beckman who brought up the matter of the Mackenzie case after Masuto had reported in on his first day back. Masuto shook hands with his colleagues, responded to the necessary jokes about geisha girls and massage, blew the dust off his desktop, and asked himself whether or not he was pleased to be back in sunny, smog-laced Beverly Hills. He could not help but contrast this quiet, orderly community with the turbulent, explosive and marvelously vital life in Tokyo; yet for all of its gilt-edged lethargy, Beverly Hills had a particular fascination for a policeman. For one thing; it was the largest per capita concentration of wealth in the entire world, and for another, with a population of thirty thousand or so, it contained thirty-five banks, twenty savings and loans, and more jewelry stores than any comparable area anywhere on earth. The gross deposits in Beverly Hills banks amounted to over seven billion dollars, which made the work of a Beverly Hills policeman absolutely unique.

Masuto was always aware of these facts. Rich people are a race, a subculture. Different. “Was he rich?” he asked Beckman, referring to the murdered man, Robert Mackenzie. It was the initial identification.

“What’s rich? Compared to us? House on Lexington Road, house at Malibu—that adds up to a couple of million. A million more or so in securities. She’s well fixed. Pity she can’t use it.”

“Pity?”

“Damn it, Masao, I like the woman. And just between us, I don’t think she did it.” Beckman, a huge, overweight, overmuscled hulk of a man, shook his head with irritation.

“You brought in the evidence,” Masuto said gently.

“Hell, it was there. What could I do? So help me God, I wish you had been there, Masao.”

“It’s your case, Sy. I don’t want to interfere.”

“Bullshit. Anyway, you can’t interfere. Wainwright’s closed the book on it. She goes to trial tomorrow, and there’s at least a chance they’ll convict.”

“The case is that good? You know, I’ve been dependent on the bits and pieces in the Tokyo English-language papers.”

“It’s good, yes. Not great but good.”

“Unseemly haste, as they say. Why so quick to go to trial?”

“Very unseemly. You ask me, she has a pair of lousy lawyers—her husband’s lawyers. Can you beat that? Just imagine—her husband’s lawyers.”

“They may believe she’s innocent.”

“Not the way I hear it told,” Beckman said. “The gossip goes that they don’t give a damn and they’d just as soon see her put away for life. Evidently, they’ve snowed her in some way. Why on God’s earth does she use these lawyers? I just don’t understand it.”

“Why do you think she’s innocent?” Masuto asked. “That’s more to the point. If you have anything, Sy, put it together and we’ll try to make something out of it. Wainwright won’t stand in our way.”

“I got nothing—nothing. That’s why she’s on trial, Masao. Please—come into this.”

“I’ll talk to Wainwright. But with nothing new in the way of evidence, he won’t welcome me.”

“The woman’s on trial,” Captain Wainwright told Masuto. “You know, Masao, I damn near cabled you in Japan when this thing broke to tell you to cut off the vacation and come back here. You know the kind of flak we take when there’s a murder in Beverly Hills, and this one had to be a hotshot engineer working on some of the fanciest gadgets in the defense field. And done by a movie star. Well, just as well I resisted the temptation. Sy had a full-fledged investigation like this coming to him, and he put together enough for the indictment. It’s out of our hands now. We’ve closed the file.”

“We could open it.”

“What in hell are you after, Masao?” Wainwright asked angrily. “Because someone else did the investigation? Jealousy?”

“That’s not fair, and you know me better than that. Sy thinks she’s innocent. He asked me to talk to you.”

“You know Beckman when it comes to a beautiful woman. They can do no wrong. And this one’s beautiful.”

“I also know that Sy’s a good cop. He has good insights.”

Wainwright sighed and spread his arms. “Who knows? Maybe he’s right, maybe he isn’t. I got a police department, Masao, and I got to go by the book, and this is no longer a police matter. We made the arrest and we put together the evidence and we turned it over to the district attorney. Now it’s out of our hands. Let the court decide, which is why we got a thing called trial by jury. I don’t want to hear any more about it. I’m glad you’re back, Masao, but maybe getting into one of these damned arguments with you isn’t the best way to start off.”

“No argument, Captain. It’s your position, and it’s plain enough.”

Back in his office, where Beckman was waiting, Masuto shook his head. “No go. He says it’s out of our hands.”

Beckman shrugged. “He’s right.”

“I think he’s mellowing,” Masuto said. “Time was when he would have bitten my head off for even suggesting that a case in court should be reopened for investigation. Anyway, after that case where a film star took a few too many and then fell off a yacht and drowned, and the investigation was squeezed right out of existence—”

“Not to mention the Belushi case—”

“They were off our turf, but someone has to pay the piper, and I’m afraid it’s Eve Mackenzie. She’s the symbol of a blind justice that chooses no favorites, rich or poor or whatever, except when she’s already been hurt too much for the rich and famous.”

“And don’t think the jury won’t be licking their lips over that.”

“You think she’ll be convicted?”

“And not with my smarts, Masao. She lined it all up against herself.”

“Deliberately?”

“No ...” He hesitated. “No, I don’t think so. It just came together that way. You know, someone who’s not in our business will give you a lot of mathematical crap about the improbability of coincidence. But I’ve seen too many coincidences to look at it that way.”

“And this case is loaded with them?”

“You can say that again.”

“There is one thing,” Masuto said thoughtfully. “The laws of probability are based on reality. Sometimes they appear to break down, but sometimes they’re tampered with.”

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Beverly Hills, a self-governing and independent city possessed of its own fire department, its own police department, its own school system, and its own table of social and civic services, is nevertheless totally surrounded by the City of Los Angeles. A number of communities in Los Angeles are in a similar situation—one which possibly exists nowhere else in the nation—and in the case of Beverly Hills, the judicial system reaches only as far as a municipal court. Criminal cases are tried in the nearest superior court, in this instance in Santa Monica, which nestles along the Pacific shore about ten miles from Beverly Hills.

It was there, in Santa Monica, that Detective Sy Beckman had to appear as witness for the prosecution. As his superior in the tiny Beverly Hills homicide bureau, Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto went with him—tentatively, since he expected Wainwright to demand what the hell Masuto was needed for out there in Santa Monica.

But Wainwright said nothing. It was a very quiet moment in the criminal history of Beverly Hills—no assaults, only two robberies, no purse-snatchings.

“It’s routine,” Beckman said. “You’d be here anyway if we’d both done the investigation.”

“No. He’s gone soft.”

“Not Wainwright.”

“Do you realize he’s given me the day off?”

“Come on,” Beckman said. “You’re going to sit in that courtroom. What kind of a day off is that?”

“The kind I’m looking forward to,” Masuto said.

“You been reading. You think she’s innocent?”

“I wish I could understand why you think so.”

“Maybe I dream about leaving my wife and staking out a pup tent on Malibu Beach with Eve Mackenzie. God knows why!”



Masuto knew Beckman's wife. He could understand Beckman's feelings, and recalling Eve Mackenzie's beauty on the screen, he found that her films did not exaggerate the attraction of the living woman. How could one look at the comely and charming woman sitting at the defense table and think of her as a murderer? Beckman was outside in the witness room, which gave Masuto a chance to watch Eve Mackenzie undisturbed—the pale but good skin in this land of forced tan and sunburn, calm, wide gray eyes, ash-blond hair that might just have been natural, and no pretensions to less than her forty-one years. What would describe her? And then he caught an answer. Dignity. She was possessed of a calm and unusual dignity. Possibly she was playing a role, since she was a gifted actress; if so, she was playing it very well.

Her lawyers arrived in court, one of them a heavysset, thick-featured man in his fifties—that would be either Cassell or Norman—and the other, one of those bright young men who finds a place in the best legal firms, cut from proper cardboard, with a proper head and nose and mouth, interchangeable with ten thousand others. As people filed into the courtroom, Masuto heard the name Cassell addressed to the heavysset man. But why Cassell? Why did the dead man's attorneys choose to defend the accused murderer of their one-time client? Beckman's explanation was that Cassell and Norman had been family attorneys; but that was hardly good enough to satisfy Masuto.

The judge entered, Judge Harry Simpkins, firm but human as Masuto saw him. The jury was in place, eight women, four men—too many women, too many of them old and bitter. Everyone rose. The judge seated himself and the court sat down. The judge had white hair. Passion lay somewhere in his past.

Today, Beckman was the first witness. "Call Seymour Beckman!" the clerk announced.

It always gave Masuto a start to have Beckman identified as Seymour. The big, slope-shouldered detective went poorly with his name. He was big but not clumsy; he moved like an athlete as he came down the aisle and took his place in the witness box. The clerk took his oath, and then Mark Geffner, the district attorney, began the

questioning. Masuto had worked with Geffner in the past. Geffner was not brilliant, but decent, straightforward, and honest.

“State your name and position, please,” he said to Beckman.

“Seymour Beckman, detective, Beverly Hills police force.”

“How long have you been with the Beverly Hills Police Department?”

“Sixteen years.”

“And how long with homicide?”

“When Detective Sergeant Masuto was assigned full-time to Homicide, I was given the assignment of working with him. When he needed me. That was nine years ago.”

“And in the case of the Mackenzie murder, I take it that Detective Masuto was out of the country.”

Cassell was on his feet with a bellow of objection.

“On what grounds?” the judge asked mildly.

“The state has not yet proven that Robert Mackenzie was murdered. We hold that his death was accidental.”

“Quite so.” The judge nodded and said to Geffner, “Remember that, please, Mr. Geffner.” He then told the stenographer to strike it from the record. Masuto’s impression was that the judge would be meticulously fair. Since the courtroom was loaded with reporters and artists, everyone—judge, attorneys, defendant, and jury—must have been conscious of playing roles in a national drama.

“Nevertheless,” Geffner said, “you were in charge of the investigation.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Would you tell us, Detective Beckman, what happened on the day of June twenty-second.”

Beckman took out his notebook but did not consult it immediately. “I signed in at the police station at a few minutes before eight A.M. At about eight-thirty, Captain Wainwright—”

“Would you identify Captain Wainwright?”

“Chief of Detectives—also the head of the force. Well, he told me that there was a situation at the Mackenzie home on Lexington Road that might or might not be a homicide. It had been reported as an accident, but the ambulance from All Saints Hospital—I mean the men on the ambulance—they certified Mr. Mackenzie as dead and

were unwilling to remove the body until our medical examiner, Dr. Sam Baxter, had seen it.”

“Yes, just what were these suspicious circumstances, Detective Beckman.”

“If you would let me tell it my way,” Beckman said, consulting his notebook now.

“Yes, of course.”

“I left for the Mackenzie house immediately. It’s on Lexington, just past Benedict Canyon Drive. I knew the house. It’s part of my work to know most of the houses that important people live in. When I got there, Officer Keller was sitting in his car in the driveway, waiting for me. It’s general practice to have a car standing by in a situation like this, even if there’s no hard evidence yet of a crime. The ambulance had left, but I saw Dr. Baxter’s car in the driveway.”

“Is Dr. Baxter the same man who did the subsequent autopsy?”

“Yes. We don’t have a regular pathology department in Beverly Hills. We use All Saints’ pathology room and morgue. When we need him, Dr. Baxter acts as our medical examiner.”

“Yes. Go on, please.”

“I spoke to Officer Keller, and he informed me that only the housekeeper and Dr. Baxter were in the house.”

“Would you identify the housekeeper, please.”

“Feona Scott, widow, thirty-nine years old, been with the Mackenzies four years.”

“You went into the house then?”

“Yes, sir,” Beckman said. “I went into the house. That is, Mrs. Scott opened the door for me and told me that Mr. Mackenzie’s body was upstairs in the main bedroom. She directed me to the bathroom off the master bedroom and separated from it by a dressing room. As I entered the master bedroom, Dr. Baxter yelled at me to tell Mrs. Scott to phone All Saints and get the ambulance back here. I asked him whether that meant that Mackenzie was alive. I’m afraid it meant that Mackenzie was dead and he wanted the ambulance to take the body to the pathology room.”

Masuto smiled, thinking of what Baxter had probably said, something to the effect of, Alive as you are from the neck up. Baxter

was hardly a pleasant person, and he regarded every homicide as a personal affront to his time and dignity.

“I then asked Dr. Baxter what was the cause of death, and he said that until he did an autopsy he was guessing. Possibly Mr. Mackenzie had been electrocuted while taking a bath. However, he indicated an ugly bruise at the deceased’s temple. Dr. Baxter suggested that a small radio in the bathroom might have been the cause of electrocution if he had been electrocuted—that it might have either been thrust into the tub or fallen into the tub. He also said that the blow to the head might have killed Mackenzie.”

Cassell rose to object to this as provocative guesswork and hearsay, and the judge asked Beckman whether he could substantiate his statements. Before he could answer, Geffner announced that he intended to call Dr. Baxter and both ambulance attendants as witnesses. “Detective Beckman,” Geffner said, “just tell us what happened without any inferences or suggestions.”

“I was only telling you what Dr. Baxter said.”

“I understand. Please go on.”

“Well, I know a little something about electricity, and when you’ve been a cop as long as I have, you seen practically everything, and we had incidents where an electric appliance had fallen into a tub or a pool. The radio in the bathroom was wet, and when I shook it I could hear water sloshing around inside. At the same time, the light in the bathroom was still working. It’s possible for someone with a bad heart to be killed by an appliance dropped into a tub, but one expects the appliance to blow the fuse or snap the circuit breaker. So the first thing I thought about was where was the fuse box. I asked Mrs. Scott, and she led me to it. I opened it. It was the old-fashioned kind of fuse box, not circuit breakers, and there were notations for each fuse. But the fuse next to the bathroom label had been removed, and in its place a copper penny had been inserted.”

At this point Geffner said, “Excuse me, Detective Beckman. It is possible that some members of the jury are unaware of what this signifies. Would you explain to them.”

“A fuse is a safety device,” Beckman told the jury. “So is a circuit breaker, but the circuit breaker is an improvement because it’s hard to tamper with. The purpose of a fuse is to limit the amount of

electricity that can be drawn over a single circuit. When the electrical demand exceeds the bearing capacity of the fuse, the fuse blows out and breaks the circuit. Without fuses we'd have an endless stream of fires—in fact, I guess you couldn't have electric power without fuses or circuit breakers. But if you want a real shot of electric power, you can take out the fuse and replace it with a conductor—in this case, a copper penny. But there's one catch to that, and a very dangerous one. If the radio had dropped into the tub and was left there, at some point the wiring would have burst into flame—unless someone had unplugged the radio cord within a minute or so after it was put into the tub.”

Cassell objected and Geffner fought back, and Judge Simpkins called both of them up to the bench and told Cassell that a scientific fact was not an unfounded premise. “On the other hand,” he said to Geffner, “I presume you will put an electrical engineer on the stand?”

“That has been arranged for, Your Honor.”

“Then let the engineer go into the scientific background and hold Beckman to what he saw and did.”

Geffner then asked Beckman what his next step was.

“I telephoned Captain Wainwright, and I told him that the Mackenzie thing had every appearance of being a homicide. You see, Dr. Baxter wanted the ambulance from All Saints to pick up Mackenzie's body, but that would only wash if we were dealing with a homicide. If it was an accidental or medical death, it would be up to the family where they wanted the body taken or whether they wanted an autopsy.”

“But at that moment, Detective Beckman, there was no family present?”

“No, sir. Only Mrs. Scott. Mrs. Mackenzie came home about a half hour later. She said—”

“Never mind what Mrs. Mackenzie said. We'll get to that later. I want to know what happened after you telephoned Captain Wainwright.”

“Well, he said to leave the body where it was, in the tub, until we could contact someone in the family. Then Mrs. Scott—”

“The housekeeper.”

“Yes, sir. Then Mrs. Scott brought me Mrs. Mackenzie's notebook.”

“Did you ask for it?”

“No, sir. At that point I didn’t know of its existence.”

Geffner handed Beckman a black vinyl-covered looseleaf notebook. “Is this the notebook in question?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How can you be sure without opening it?”

“It has my mark—that bit of tape.”

“Would you glance through it just to make sure.”

Beckman glanced through the notebook, after which Geffner entered it as evidence.

“Officer Beckman, did you ask Mrs. Scott whether she knew the contents of the notebook?”

“Subsequently, I did.”

“And what was her answer?”

“She said she did not know what was in the notebook, but since she suspected that Mrs. Mackenzie had killed her husband—”

Cassell was on his feet, objecting angrily. The judge called him and Geffner up to the bench, where Cassell whispered hoarsely, “This is unconscionable. Mrs. Scott is not on the witness stand, and her opinion is not evidence, and when you put her opinion in the mouth of a homicide detective, you do my client an irreparable injury.”

“I don’t think so,” Simpkins said gently. He was a soft-voiced man, white-haired and fatherly. “However, I shall sustain your objection and instruct the jury to ignore Beckman’s answer.”

“Your Honor,” Geffner said, “that notebook is central to the people’s case—”

“Softly, Mr. Geffner. No one is attacking the notebook. There are other ways to get at its contents.”

The judge instructed the jury to ignore Mrs. Scott’s opinion, and Geffner said to Beckman, “We will return to the notebook later, but at this point, Detective Beckman, I would like to stay with the sequence of events so that the jury may have a clear idea of what you saw that morning at the Mackenzie home. You have testified that Captain Wainwright of the Beverly Hills police instructed you to go there to look into what might or might not have been a homicide—”

“Are you summing up so early in the trial, Mr. Geffner?” the judge asked gently.

“No, Your Honor. But this is a complicated sequence of events. I am trying to clarify it.”

“I think that proper questioning will simplify it and clarify it.”

Geffner nodded and referred to his notes. “About what time was it that Mrs. Scott gave you the notebook?”

“It was exactly nine fifty-one.”

“How can you say exactly, Detective Beckman?”

“In a homicide investigation, I note the time if something happens that I consider of importance.”

“And you considered the notebook a matter of importance?”

“After Mrs. Scott—”

Geffner anticipated Cassell’s objection. “Simply yes or no, Detective Beckman.”

“Yes.”

Geffner was making a timetable for his own use. “You left the police station about eight-forty, arrived at the Mackenzie home before nine, made your investigation, and received the notebook at nine fifty-one. Is that correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And what time did Mrs. Mackenzie arrive at the house?”

“Ten thirty-three.”

“I presume that once again you noted the time and consulted your watch?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And since we’re being precise about time, Detective Beckman, in the forty-two minutes that elapsed between Mrs. Scott handing you the notebook and Mrs. Mackenzie arriving home, did you have any opportunity to digest at least part of its contents?”

“I don’t know what I digested,” Beckman replied. “Mrs. Scott practically insisted that I begin to read the notebook right then and there.”

“Did she? How very interesting. Now, let’s get back to Mrs. Mackenzie. Did the officer outside make her aware of what had happened?”

“Well, I opened the door for her. She knew something had happened. She asked me who I was. I told her and showed identification. Then I told her there had been an accident and her husband was dead.”

“How did she react to this information?”

“She was cold and—maybe you’d call it withdrawn—”

Cassell was already on his feet, objecting.

“On what grounds, Mr. Cassell?” the judge asked patiently.

“This witness is a policeman. He is not competent to analyze a person’s reactions on the basis of a facial expression.”

“I’m not asking for an analysis,” Geffner argued. “The question is how does a person look. We ask and answer that question every day of our lives.”

“I tend to agree with that. I’m going to let it stand.”

Geffner thanked the judge and then had the stenographer read the question and answer.

“You said cold and withdrawn, Detective Beckman. Could you elaborate on that?”

“Well, ordinarily if you inform a woman that her husband has been badly hurt or killed, which I have had to do at times, she has a violent reaction.”

“Explain what you mean by a violent reaction, please.”

“Hysteria, screaming, fainting—sometimes just a frozen sort of paralysis.”

“And Mrs. Mackenzie’s reaction was none of these.”

“No, none of them. I told her that her husband was dead. She nodded. Then she asked how it happened. Did someone kill him? I asked her why she should think so, and she replied that with a house full of cops, it was more or less evident. Then she asked me again how it had happened. I told her, and then she nodded and shrugged her shoulders.”

Cassell was on his feet again, demanding that this testimony be stricken as prejudicial. “This policeman is, in fact,” he shouted, “telling the jury that my client is a soulless person. On what basis? On the basis of the fact that her husband’s death drew a particular response from her!”



“That’s enough, Mr. Cassell,” Judge Simpkins said. “My hearing is excellent. There is absolutely nothing improper about this testimony and I intend to allow it to stand. You will have your turn with Detective Beckman. Until then, I suggest you be patient.”

“And then, Detective Beckman?” Geffner asked.

“I told her that the ambulance from All Saints Hospital would be there in a few minutes to pick up the body, and that since there was reason to believe that a crime had been connected with her husband’s death, an autopsy was scheduled, but if she wanted to get in touch with her lawyers, she could have the autopsy postponed. She said, no, she had no objection. Then I asked her whether she wanted to see her husband’s body. She said, yes, she would.”

“And where was the body at that point in the sequence of events?” Geffner asked.

“It was still in the tub. Dr. Baxter said that rigor mortis had already set in and that we might as well leave it where it was until the ambulance arrived. We covered it with a sheet.”

“I presume that the water had been let out of the tub?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You told Mrs. Mackenzie where her husband’s body was?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What was her reaction to that?”

“She just shook her head and mumbled something about her husband not using the tub—something about him taking showers. I led the way to the bathroom. Dr. Baxter had already left the house. Joe Garcia, one of our officers, was stationed outside the bathroom door.”

“This was a large upstairs bathroom—the master bathroom?”

“Yes, sir, there are five bathrooms in the Mackenzie house, if you count the powder room. This one had to be entered through the master bedroom.”

“All right. Continue.”

“I mentioned that her husband was naked but covered with a sheet and I asked her if she wanted me to go into the bathroom with her. She said she’d rather go in alone. She left the door open, and from outside I saw her pull the sheet off and stare at the body in the tub.

She was a very cool lady. She turned around and left the bathroom, and as she came out, she said—”

Geffner tried to stop Beckman with “You can—” but let it go when he realized that it was too late.

“That dead man is not my husband,” Beckman finished.

The reporters in the courtroom broke for the door in a mad rush, while the judge pounded his gavel for order.

Masuto had listened carefully to every word of testimony, and this last bit, the statement by Mrs. Mackenzie, via Beckman, that the dead man was not her husband, intrigued him completely. What had been, so far as the newspapers had reported it, a straightforward and mundane Hollywood scandal, now showed indications of becoming something else entirely. Masuto was interested and fascinated, but examining the source of his own interest, and given to a good deal of introspection, he wondered whether it was not simply the woman who fascinated him—the woman whose control allowed her to walk into that bathroom without hysteria or apparent fear.

Geffner sighed and said, “I would like you to repeat Mrs. Mackenzie’s remark, now that it’s on the record.”

“She said, ‘That dead man is not my husband.’”

“You were interrupted before. Please go on.”

“I asked her what she meant. I told her that the body had been identified by Mrs. Scott, who told us it was her husband. Then she kind of snorted and shrugged.”

“Snorted?”

“Like this.” Beckman gave an imitation of someone snorting. “Then I asked her where she had been.”

“Yes? Go on, Detective Beckman.”

“She asked me if she was under arrest. For what, I asked her. Then she said—” he consulted his notebook—“everything around here points to the fact that you people believe someone has been murdered.”

“Did she refer to her husband?”

“Not at that time, no. Later—”

“We’ll take later in due time. Please stay with the sequence of events.”

“Yes, sir. At that moment Mr. Cassell arrived.”

“You mean Henry Cassell, Mrs. Mackenzie’s attorney.”

“Yes, sir. The gentleman sitting there.” Beckman pointed to the defense table.

“Do you know who had called him to the house?”

“I did not then. Subsequently, I learned that Mrs. Scott had telephoned his office and left a message for him to come to the Mackenzie house as soon as he arrived.”

“Very well. Mr. Cassell arrived. What then?”

“He demanded to know who I was. I identified myself. He then told Mrs. Mackenzie that she did not have to speak to me or answer any questions, and she said she would like to go to her room, and he said she could, and then she noticed her notebook, which I had left on a small credenza. She grabbed it, very angry. I told Mr. Cassell that it was evidence in a criminal situation, and he persuaded her to let me have it. She was disturbed, and she went to her room. I guess she was very disturbed.”

Geffner looked at Cassell, waiting for an objection, but he said nothing.

“And then, Detective Beckman?”

“Mr. Cassell asked me if he could see the deceased. I then took him upstairs. Mrs. Mackenzie was at the door of her room, which would be the master bedroom. But she said she would lie down in her room.”

“Do you mean the master bedroom? You identified that as her room.”

“No. I meant that it was a bedroom I thought she and her husband both used because it was the master bedroom. But I learned that they slept in separate rooms.”

“Then it was not to the room with the body that she went?”

“No, sir. She was just standing there next to the policeman who was on duty there. Then she walked down the hall to her own room. Mr. Cassell and I went into the master bedroom and then into the bathroom where the deceased was. I removed the sheet and Mr. Cassell looked at the body.”

“How did he look at it? I mean, did he simply glance at the corpse or what?”

“No, sir. He stood there for quite a bit of time before he asked me to cover the deceased again.”

“Did you tell him what Mrs. Mackenzie had said?”

“I did. He said the deceased was Robert Mackenzie, no question about it. I asked him why he thought the defendant said what she said, but he could offer no explanation.”

At this point the court broke for lunch.

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“There is a rather good Japanese restaurant on Ocean Avenue,” Masuto told Beckman. “It hides itself in one of those old Victorian houses. That’s a syndrome we still carry over from World War II. An unwillingness to be noticed. But if we get a table at the window, we can look out over the ocean.”

“I’m starved, so if the tempura’s good, I’m with you. I’m not made for the job, Masao. I’m a lousy witness.”

“Not so. You’re a good, straightforward witness. That’s the best kind of a witness to have. It’s not you—it’s this damn strange situation of the Mackenzies.”

Masuto was able to park directly in front of the restaurant, and the owner, flattered by Masuto’s patronage, gave them the best table at the front windows. This was not difficult, since only two other tables were occupied; nevertheless, they could look through the palms to where the sun glistened on the Pacific. They had two hours before they had to return to the court.

“A very large plate of tempura for my friend,” Masuto said. “For myself, I’ll have sushi. Rice and tea. No sake so early in the day.”

“I wanted to help her,” Beckman said, “but every word I spoke tied the rope tighter.”

Masuto was watching the gulls, bemused by the birds’ incredible eyesight. To see made a seer. The gulls were seers.

“Who else identified the body?” he asked Beckman.

“You know, I try to think the way you think. I’m not putting myself down, Masao, but we’ve been a lot of years together. They had taken the body over to the pathology room at All Saints, but I persuaded four of the men from Fenwick who had worked with Mackenzie to come to All Saints and look at the body.”

“What did they say? Was it Mackenzie?”

“No question about it. I wasn’t easily satisfied, Masao. I’m not as thorough as you are, but I tried to be.”

“Stop apologizing.”

“I compared photographs. The family doctor came to All Saints. He’s a Dr. Sheperdson from Westwood. He identified the body.”

Their food came.

“Let’s eat,” Masuto said. “Plenty of time to talk about it. Out there”—he gestured through the window at the ocean—“all is very peaceful. A very beautiful place. I have heard that it is like the south of France. I’ve never been to France, never anywhere in Europe, and yet all that distance to Japan.”

“I never had a chance to ask you about the trip,” Beckman said, his mouth full of fried shrimp.

“A very interesting trip. Very much so. And still she insisted that it was not her husband?”

“The Mackenzie woman?”

Masuto nodded.

“At first. Then she clammed up on that. Then she came back to it after we arrested her.”

“Why?”

“Why?”

“I mean, why did you arrest her? I read her story in the papers. She had a fight with her husband, whom she apparently detested. She stormed out of the house—her claim at midnight—and then drove to Santa Barbara, where she spent the night with her sister. Then back to the house in the morning.”

“She claims, to pack her stuff and leave him.”

“So it comes down to the notebook, doesn’t it? What’s in the notebook?”

“The whole story of the murder, very precise, very specific.”

“No!”

“Absolutely.”

“And you kept it away from the press?”

“That wasn’t easy, Masao, but that’s the way Geffner wanted it.”

“What was in the notebook?”

“She was writing a screenplay,” Beckman said somewhat sadly. “And it wasn’t just something she put up as an alibi. It was a screenplay, and the whole shtick was in there, the penny in the fuse box, the radio in the bathtub—”

“Come on!” Masuto exclaimed, pushing away his plate of food. “That’s it?”

“I know it’s circumstantial.”

“Circumstantial! It’s not even a shadow of a case. Unless there’s something you haven’t told me.”

“Background stuff. She hated her husband. Constant fights. He beat her up once or twice. He threatened to kill her if she ever decided to leave him. Some kind of sex relationship between Mackenzie and this Feona Scott—although to my way of thinking, given a choice between that Scott dame and Eve Mackenzie, I wouldn’t have to think twice.”

“All this information supplied by the helpful Feona Scott?”

“Yes.”

“What was Doc Baxter’s guess about the time of the murder?”

“You know Baxter. It’s hard enough to get an opinion on time of death in the best of circumstances. In a bathtub—well, was the water hot or cold? Did it remain in the tub? How long? All he would commit to was that Mackenzie died sometime between midnight and five in the morning.”

“And when did Eve leave the house?”

“She doesn’t know. Never looked at her watch. Maybe around midnight.”

“And what does the helpful Scott say?”

“She hates Eve Mackenzie. She’s one of those tall, cold types—as emotional as a fish. She brought me the notebook. She says Eve left the house well after one in the morning.”

“It’s meaningless. It’s all senseless. Who the devil ordered the arrest? Was it Wainwright?”

“You know him better than that. It was the D.A.”

“Geffner?”

“That’s right.”

“That’s crazy, Sy. I know Geffner. He’s too smart for anything like this. And why the devil would he come into Beverly Hills and ask for an arrest?”

“Beats me. I couldn’t make head or tail out of that.”

“You know,” Masuto said with pleasure, “this case grows more interesting by the minute. Let’s finish eating and spend a half hour in

the sun.”

They walked along Ocean Avenue, found a bench that sat on top of the high cliff facing the ocean and dulling the roar of traffic from the Pacific Coast Highway below them.

“So Geffner persuaded Wainwright to issue the arrest order,” Masuto said. “Will wonders never cease?”

“I don’t follow you,” Beckman said uneasily. “I figured the case was open and shut.”

“You’re in love with Eve Mackenzie. You are a hopeless romantic, Sy.”

“Come on.”

“So are a hundred thousand others,” Masuto said gently. “That got in the way. You were sure that Geffner would hound her to surrender and that an angry jury would convict. No way. Sy, this case is never going to get to a jury. The judge will throw it out.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s full of holes and without a shred of worthy evidence.”

“But look at the way it lines up. She never meant for that notebook to be found. A week before, she tossed it into the garbage to be rid of it.”

“Let me guess. Feona Scott found it—just happened to be rooting in the garbage that day.”

“You’re making me feel like a damn fool, Masao.”

“No, sir. You followed a chain of events. You were caught up in them. You were supposed to.”

“I was supposed to use my head. The same evidence would point to Scott. But she had no motive—what do you mean, I was supposed to? You think she was framed?”

“I don’t know what to think at this moment,” Masuto said, “except that this is a damn strange bundle of facts. Start with Geffner. We’ve seen him operate. He’s smart, and he goes in like a tiger. Today, he was diddling. He knows the judge is going to dump it.”

“You could be wrong.”

“We’ll see. Meanwhile, Eve Mackenzie is defended by the dead man’s lawyer. Next point: She says the dead man is not her husband. How do you explain that?”



"I figured she was desperate," Beckman said. "Just pulled something from out of the hat."

"It would be a lunatic kind of desperation, and she's no lunatic. The reality is always there, but we refuse to look at it. Or we look at it and refuse to see it. If she insists that the dead man is not her husband and everyone else insists that he is, then we must look at the reality as she does. By the way, from the way the press reacted today, I would suppose that you've kept that business quiet."

"About the corpse not being Mackenzie?"

Masuto nodded.

"She kept it quiet after her first statement."

"Ah, so," Masuto said softly. "We come to the first bit of sanity in an otherwise senseless picture. If she were under the illusion that she would have a real trial, then it would be very smart indeed to keep that bit of information quiet. Then Cassell puts her on the stand and she proves that the dead man is not Mackenzie. Thus, no motive. Thus, she is on trial for killing a man who may not be dead. Thus, down the drain with the case. But neither she nor Cassell could have anticipated a real trial. After all, Cassell is a smart lawyer."

"And how was she going to prove that Mackenzie was not Mackenzie?" Beckman was smiling.

"You couldn't get his fingerprints," Masuto said.

"Exactly. Fenwick builds missile components and the plumbing for atomic bombs. All that top secret crap. I asked for a comparison with the dead man's prints, and they said to send them a set of his prints. I asked for a Xerox of the prints card from their records, and they said they don't do things that way, but to send them a set of prints and they'd make the comparison."

"You did it, and they said it was Mackenzie."

"Masao, I'm a damn fool, and maybe I'd give every cent I got to spend a weekend with Eve Mackenzie, but that's not why when she says it's not her husband I believe her. You said before that we should look at the reality as she does. What do you mean by that?"

"Everyone else who looked at the corpse said it was Mackenzie. But when Eve Mackenzie looked at the body she saw something that was meaningless to the others. She saw a naked man. None of the others had ever seen Mackenzie naked—"

“Scott?”

“Believe me, whatever goes on there, Scott is in on it. Her testimony is tainted. But the others identified a man clothed. Only Eve knew the naked Mackenzie, and she saw something, perhaps a birthmark, that made her certain. Was there a birthmark?”

“I just don’t know. I wasn’t looking for one. But if it wasn’t Mackenzie—”

“It was someone who looked enough like him to be his twin brother. And that’s precisely what we have, a corpse that is Mackenzie’s twin brother.”

“That doesn’t make any sense either,” Beckman said. “But at this point, maybe none of it does.” He looked at his watch. “Time’s up. You coming back to court with me?”

“No. I think I’ll talk to Doc Baxter.”

“The pleasure is all yours,” Beckman said.

It took Masuto about twenty minutes to drive from Santa Monica to All Saints Hospital. The pathology room was in the basement, where the odor of formaldehyde substituted for air and where two grinning, bearded young men assisted Dr. Baxter. Baxter himself, short, waspish, astringent, always worked up his general state of unpleasantness at the sight of a policeman. He considered it an act of ungenerous fate that chose All Saints as the Beverly Hills replacement for a real morgue and himself as a part-time medical examiner; and now he regarded Masuto sourly.

“I heard you had gone off to the home of your ancestors. What brings you back?”

Masuto resisted the impulse to say that it was an ill wind or Pan Am. Baxter had to be handled gently and with a certain degree of humility if one desired anything in return, and Masuto told him that he was pleased to be back, and being back, was interested in the Mackenzie case.

“Well, bless your heart. Can’t stand it that one got away from you.”

“I’m curious. Where’s the body?”

“The body. Now, what did you imagine, my Oriental friend, that I’d have it sitting here in the icebox against the possibility that you’d return one day and ask to contemplate it?”

“I merely asked.”

“Indeed. Well, I have to inform you that Mr. Robert Mackenzie, having gone to his reward, whatever that may be, is reposing quietly about six feet below the surface of that Rolls Royce of all cemeteries, namely Forest Lawn, where the Mackenzies have a family plot. Ah, thus liveth and dieth the rich.”

“When you did the autopsy,” Masuto said, “did you notice anything unusual—some birthmark or such—on the body where the clothes would have covered it.”

Baxter looked at him shrewdly. “You got some smarts, Masuto. I give you credit for that. You’re wondering why she took one look and said it wasn’t her husband. But suppose nothing was there?”

“Then it was the absence of something, which amounts to the same thing. Suppose it was an operation. What’s most likely?”

“Appendectomy.”

Masuto sighed and shook his head.

“You could cover the L.A. hospitals,” Baxter said. “That’s not impossible. Of course, it could have been done twenty years ago. How old was Mackenzie—fifty-three? It might have been done when he was a kid. And I can assure you that the corpse, had no surgery—large or small.”

Masuto shook his head again. “It’s pretty hopeless. But one other thing. There was a blow to the head.”

“Skull fracture.”

“Would the blow have rendered him unconscious?”

“Absolutely. In fact, odds are that it killed him.”

“The blow was on the right side?”

“You’re a real smartass detective, aren’t you, Masuto. And Mackenzie was sitting with his right side against the wall. So if his wife knocked him out, she had to lean over behind him. I told that to your brainless partner, but he has imagination. He said that if Mackenzie had twisted around to talk to his wife, she could have hit him there. Just turn around a little more, sweetheart, and bend your head so I can knock your brains out. Cops! God help us with that kind of law and order! Tell you something, they subpoenaed me as a witness and I’m going to blow this case right out of the courtroom.”

“I’m sure you will,” Masuto agreed. “Very grateful. Thank you.”

It was good to be out of there, back in the fresh air, away from the stink of open bodies and formaldehyde. Masuto drove to the police station at Rexford Drive in Beverly Hills. After parking at the station, he sat in his car for a few minutes brooding over as essentially wrong a situation as he had ever encountered. Then he stepped into the sunshine that almost always bathed Beverly Hills, and then he went into the police station.

Captain Wainwright had locked his office door, enjoying his after-lunch cigar in premises where smoking was forbidden. Masuto could

smell it seeping under the door, whereby he knocked and named himself at the same time. Wainwright opened the door and asked what his business was. "I'm still out to lunch," he said.

"We have to talk."

"You were out in Santa Monica. I told you to take the day and sit in court and hold Beckman's hand. You going to look a gift horse in the mouth?"

"That's right. This horse has three legs."

"I do declare, Masuto, that you can make my life as miserable as a dog's hind side on an anthill, and I damn well do know what you're going to say. Leave it alone. Why the hell couldn't you stay another week in Japan?"

"We got a funny city, Captain, and a lot of rich people, and we're sort of a freak as cities go, and we got Rodeo Drive, where a man can buy a shirt for two hundred dollars and a suit for twelve hundred dollars, and we have the highest-priced hookers in the world, and we got houses that sell for three million dollars, but I never heard anyone accuse us of having dirty cops. They accuse Beverly Hills of everything else, but not a crooked police force."

"You're going too far, Masao. I've put up with damn near everything from you—"

"Just tell me why you arrested and charged Eve Mackenzie, and I'll swallow everything I said."

"I don't have to tell you one damn thing!"

"So sorry, Captain Wainwright." Masuto turned and opened the door.

"Where the hell are you going? And don't give me any of that Charlie Chan routine!"

"I'm going to sit in my office and decide whether I want to work here anymore."

"Close that door and stop being a horse's ass!" There was a slight smile on Masuto's face that disappeared as he turned around. "Now, sit down," Wainwright said to him. "Talk. Get it off your chest."

"All right. I listened to Beckman's testimony. Then I had lunch with him. Then I went over to see Doc Baxter. He's going to testify that there's no way in the world Eve Mackenzie could have killed her husband."

"I know that."

"You know that, and you withheld it from Beckman. Sy Beckman's been my partner for years. He has more courage and decency than any man I ever worked with, and you've made a fool of him, and you've withheld evidence from him and you made him the arresting officer in as rotten and ridiculous a case as I've ever seen."

"That's so."

"Why?"

"I don't have to tell you why, Masao, and don't push me. I'm tired of being pushed. What's the difference? The public won't yell, because they don't know the difference between a good case and a rotten case, and in another day or two the judge will throw the whole thing out of court, and Eve Mackenzie gets a million dollars worth of publicity, which ain't bad for a washed-up movie star, and we close our file and that's the end of it."

"And the killer walks away, and we never even know *who* he killed or where the real Mackenzie is, if there is a real Mackenzie."

"You been sniffing around."

"That's what I get paid for."

Wainwright got up and stalked around his desk and stood staring out the window. "Times I hate this place and times I love it, and times the goddamn sunshine makes me sick. Look, Masao, this is tied into the Fenwick Works and a lot of other things. They come to me and they tell me to close the book on the Mackenzie case. Indict the wife and then let the case fall apart. She walks out of court free, and that's the end of it. I tell them we don't do things that way."

"Who?"

"There's no who. I gave my word about it. Then they start turning the screw. They put the heat on the city manager, and then the calls come in from Washington, and then more heat—and all along the rationale is that nobody hurts. They want to bury the case. They want an unhappy wife who gets rid of her husband, only there's no good evidence to convict her. Baxter thinks he's going to testify, but Geffner will forget to call him."

"But why? What's behind all this? You tell me that Geffner's in on it, but Geffner's honest."

"We're all honest."

“Is the judge in on it too?”

“Don’t put me in the middle of some lousy conspiracy. If we had one small notion of who the real killer is, it would be a different ball game.”

“And you don’t? Not even one small notion?”

“I want you to stay out of this, Masao. It’s done with.”

“You know it’s a beauty, Captain. For some reason Eve Mackenzie knows what she shouldn’t know, so they frame a case around her and put their own lawyers in to defend her, and tell her that she takes her choice—keep her mouth shut and walk out of there a free woman or talk and sit in jail for ten years. Only it’s so damn stupid it has to fall apart. What happens then?”

“We’re cops. We don’t make laws and we don’t run the country. We’re just cops.”

“Sure.”

“And now, suppose you get out of here. Lunch is over. I got work to do.”

“Would you mind if I looked around the Mackenzie house?”

“I sure as hell would mind. Stay out of there.”

Angry, puzzled, and to a degree bewildered, Masuto returned to his car and drove down Lexington Road to the Mackenzie house. He parked his aging Datsun across the street from the big, expensive house, a two-story brick painted white, with a tile roof and high walls on either side to hide the grounds behind the house, and to the left of the house a gated driveway. While Masuto sat there the front door opened and a woman stepped out, a tall, well-built lady of about forty, her hair dark, her figure a bit heavy but still attractive. She stared directly at Masuto for a minute or so, and then she went back into the house.

A few minutes later a Beverly Hills prowl car pulled up alongside Masuto, and the officer driving said, “I didn’t know it was you, Sergeant. The lady in the house called in a suspicious car. You got to admit that Datsun of yours is pretty suspicious in the neighborhood.”

“I guess it is,” Masuto admitted.

He drove back to the police station, studied the blotter, and found nothing to interest him. Sensible professional criminals, with some exceptions, steered shy of Beverly Hills. It was too heavily policed.

Burglaries, house break-ins for the most part, were done by amateurs or kids. Car thefts led the list. Masuto was staring at the list without actually seeing it when Wainwright entered his office.

“When Beckman finishes at court,” Wainwright said, “he’ll fill you in on the follow-ups. Today, you might as well knock off.”

“I want to talk to Geffner.”

“That’s your affair, Masao. Do it on your own time.”

Masuto drove back to Santa Monica and got into the crowded courtroom by flashing his badge. Beckman was still on the stand, being cross-examined by Cassell.

“And you actually believe,” Cassell was saying to him, “that this woman, Eve Mackenzie, who weighs a hundred and fourteen pounds, could bend over her husband while he sat in the tub and knock him unconscious? Come on, Detective Beckman.”

“If she used a hammer—” Beckman began.

Geffner interrupted with an objection. “The question calls for a conclusion,” he said. “Detective Beckman is not a physician.”

“I’m going to allow it,” Judge Simpkins said. “I must say that I’m not thrilled by any of the evidence you’ve presented thus far, Mr. Geffner, and with this witness you’ve opened every door imaginable. Don’t ask me to close them. Anyway, it’s almost five o’clock. I think we’ll adjourn.”

Beckman spotted Masuto and joined him, and Masuto told him that he intended to talk to Geffner and that it wouldn’t be possible if Geffner’s star witness listened in.

“This is one time I wish I could.” Beckman sighed. “It’s been a long, stupid day. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Geffner was surrounded by reporters, and Masuto waited until he had worked his way out of them. Then Masuto fell in next to him as Geffner walked out of the courthouse, and Geffner said, “So you’re back, Masuto. I wish you had been here. This mess might have been less messy.”

“Not likely. I have to talk to you.”

“That can only mean grief. I have enough grief.”

“You can’t make the grief go away, and at least I don’t print what I hear.”



“All right. I’ll meet you at the bar of the Seaview, Ocean Avenue just off Wilshire.”

“I know the place.”

In the dark comfort of the bar at the Seaview, slumped in a heavy carved wood and black leather chair out of another era, Geffner said, “Masuto, I’ve practiced law for twenty-five years, and this is the first dirty trick I’ve ever been caught up in, and so help me God, I can’t make head or tail of it, and I don’t know whether I’m being honest or dishonest or what.”

“I think you should talk about it,” Masuto said.

“You know something, I’m going to, because if I don’t talk to someone about this, I’ll go out of my mind. Beckman was the arresting officer, but the file came to me via Wainwright. Very curious. I told him that there simply wasn’t enough clean evidence to go into a preliminary hearing with, that it wouldn’t wash. He just shrugged it off and he tells me I got to, you got to. I said no, no judge would move to indict. Then I get a call from Washington. Not direct. First Senator Haitman calls. I know him. I know his voice. He tells me a very important top-secret call from Washington is coming in. Who? What? Nothing but innuendo. Then the call comes. From the White House. Not the President. Gives me an extension and tells me to call back. I call back. This is the White House, she says. I give her the extension and the guy tells me to take the Mackenzie case and see it through. I tell him it’s a rotten, tainted case. You take it and see it through, he tells me. I argue that any sane judge will dump it at the preliminary. Just present it, he tells me, if they dump, they dump.”

“And you don’t know who he is—this voice?”

“Not a glimmer. But the preliminary hearing was before Judge Specker. He’s crazy as a bedbug on the film business. Hates it. The film people ruined California, according to him. He gives us our indictment. So there I am scheduled to go into court without enough evidence to convict this lady of robbing a gumball machine. Well, you saw the beginning. The only other witness I have is that ridiculous Mrs. Scott. I can’t put Baxter on. He’d blow the whole thing.”

“Eve Mackenzie—she’s out on bail?”

“A hundred thousand—very low for murder one. The Fenwick outfit put up the bail.”

“And the lawyers were from the same place?”

“Exactly.”

“Gets stranger and stranger. What will you do?”

“Finish my case. If Cassell doesn’t make a motion—well, he has to make a motion to dismiss, and that’s the end of it.”

“The judge dismisses, and she walks out free.”

“That’s about what it adds up to. I suppose Wainwright closes the book then. But to what end, Masuto? That’s what drives me crazy. A man who works for Fenwick is killed. Everyone—Washington, Fenwick, your bunch there in Beverly Hills—everyone wants his wife charged with the murder. But they know there’s no evidence. They know she’ll walk out. Why?”

“That’s quite a question.”

“Obviously, someone read the notebook and framed the lady. My candidate is Feona Scott.” He ordered a second double Scotch. “Who ever heard of a name like that?”

“British. Scottish.”

“She’s attractive until you see the eyes. Gimlet eyes. Mackenzie says it’s not her husband. Mackenzie. I mean Eve, Mrs. Mackenzie, she says it’s not her husband.”

“Maybe not. Tell me, do you know who her agent is?”

“Eve Mackenzie? I don’t even know whether she has one. She hasn’t done any films lately.”

“Ah, so. What’s your guess about Washington?”

“That’s it. It makes no sense. Even if Mackenzie was involved in some super-secret stuff, why prosecute his wife without evidence? Unless they felt that in this way the real killer would be protected. But how? And who’s the killer? Feona Scott? How about that?”

Masuto shook his head.

“I wish I were defending the lady,” Geffner said moodily. “I’d tear the state’s case to shreds. I’d be another F. Lee Bailey. You know, in England that’s the way it works. Lawyers switch from the prosecution to the defense and back again. Makes more sense than the way we do it. Well, what do you intend to do about all this, Masuto?”

“I work for the city. That doesn’t leave me much choice. I argued with Wainwright, but I guess the same voice from Washington

convinced him to close the book. He won't reopen the case. Unless  
—"

"Unless what?"

"Just a notion, but unlikely. One more thing. Did you talk to Eve Mackenzie?"

"The formal stuff. I asked her whether she wanted to plead. She smiled at me and said, 'No, Mr. Geffner, we must have a trial.'"

"She wasn't disturbed?"

"Not a bit. Cool as a cucumber."

Masuto paid the check. "I'll be off now. Thank you."

"Thank you for nothing," Geffner said.

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What Masuto's wife, Kati, disliked most about those times when he would become totally engrossed with a case was his habit of withdrawal; and this evening, when he returned to his cottage in Culver City after talking with Geffner, it was immediately apparent. He answered questions with monosyllables and he listened without hearing. Kati had once mentioned to him on such an occasion that his Zen Roshi in downtown Los Angeles might not respond well to someone who listened without hearing. It was very un-Japanese on the part of Kati, but since she had become part of a Nisei consciousness-raising group, she did a number of things that were un-Japanese.

When they were in Japan, Kati had been less impressed than Masuto by the food, holding that her mother's cooking was better. She also thought that her own cooking was in most cases superior, but that was a thought she would never voice. However, tonight she had prepared a complex and unusual dinner, a little bit of tuna sushi to begin, then suimono, a delicious soup flavored with ginger and dashi, and then oyako domburi, a chicken dish that takes long and patient preparation. When her husband ate without commenting, Kati said, "If I were an Anglo lady, I would be very angry. I might even shout and scream at you. I might even leave you."

"Kati, what on earth are you talking about?"

"About what your Roshi would say if you spoke to him without hearing what he said."

"Kati, you're making no sense."

"You've eaten the sushi and the suimono. Now you are eating oyako domburi."

"Of course."

"But no comment. Is it good, bad, indifferent? Better than what we ate in Tokyo? Worse? You never even noticed what you were eating."

“Of course I did. Delicious.”

“You’re just saying that.”

“I say it and I mean it. And I appreciate it.”

“What did you have for lunch?”

He took refuge in an outright lie. “Hamburgers,” he said.

She was mollified. “How can you eat such food! I’m a thoughtless wife. I should pack a lunch basket for you. But I become jealous and thoughtless when you have one of those dreadful murders, and at first I was so happy that we were in Japan when it happened, but now I can see that it waited for you.”

“Well, I work in Beverly Hills, Kati. You must know how I feel.”

“I think murder is awful, but when a woman kills someone, it’s so much worse.”

“You mean Eve Mackenzie?”

“Yes.”

“She didn’t kill her husband, Kati.”

“How do you know that? Because she’s so pretty?”

Masuto leaned back. “The dinner was wonderful, Kati, and I love you, and the children are in bed, and I’m so glad to be home in our own house. I’m thirsty too, so I’d love a pot of tea and some cake. I know I don’t talk much about my cases, but I want to talk about this one and see if I can straighten some of it out in my own mind. Would you like that?”

Kati smiled and nodded, and Masuto felt that he had made up in some degree for his boorishness about the food. Kati was quite right about his not listening. In another person it might be forgivable; in him it was not. Kati poured the tea and sat facing him, and once again he reminded himself that his wife was a truly lovely woman.

“Will you ask me questions?”

“If you wish me to. You mean when I am confused. I heard on the TV this afternoon that she said the dead man was not her husband. Can you tell me what she meant by that?”

“Exactly. What is apparent, everyone sees. What is not apparent is not seen. If a tree is cut down, it’s invisible, even though it was there before.”

“Now if you begin that kind of Zen talk that always confuses me—”

“No. I promise you, although in a way what is happening here is very Zen. It’s the work of an illusionist, but not a very bright one, I think. You asked me about Eve Mackenzie’s husband. No, she did not kill him. I’m quite sure she killed no one, but specifically not her husband.”

“But the dead man?”

“Not her husband.”

“She wasn’t married? That’s what the man on television said, that the only explanation for Mrs. Mackenzie’s statement was that they had never been married.”

“Hardly. And if he weren’t lazy and had checked some records, he would have discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie were married.”

“But the dead man?”

“He was not her husband because he was not Robert Mackenzie. A number of other people identified him as Mackenzie, but that was because they had seen Mackenzie only with his clothes on. His wife had seen him naked, and when she looked at the body in the tub she saw something that was missing, and as I said before, what is missing is invisible.”

“Ah, so—yes!” Kati exclaimed. “An operation scar, a birthmark, of course. Then who is the dead man?”

“Who do you think he is, Kati?”

“Only one person can look so alike. It’s Mr. Mackenzie’s twin brother.”

“Good!” Masato said with pleasure. “Again, Kati, the apparent and the unapparent. When Mrs. Mackenzie said that the man was not her husband they put it down to the unreliability of a woman’s mind or witness. If one has contempt for women, then one puts no stock in a woman’s statement.”

“Yes, yes,” Kati agreed. “We were discussing that at our consciousness-raising group. And I think, Masao, it’s even worse among Nisei women—”

“Perhaps.”

“I didn’t mean you, Masao,” Kati said apologetically.

“You must. I’m as bad an offender as any. But you do see the position of Mrs. Mackenzie. She declares the dead man is not her husband. A dozen men swear that she is mistaken. The dead man is

her husband. But can a woman be mistaken on such a question? Hardly, and since all the male witnesses plus Mrs. Scott insist that the dead man is Robert Mackenzie, it is accepted and Mrs. Mackenzie is arrested.”

“Then she did not kill her husband. Did she kill his twin brother? Why did his clothes have to disappear? I don’t understand that,” Kati said.

“He was found naked in the bathtub. Why? Why did he have to be sitting naked in the tub unless to provide a reason for his clothes to disappear. There are a hundred ways to kill a man. Why go to something so exotic as an electrocution in a bathtub?”

“But that was in her notebook.”

“Yes, which meant that the media and the police and everyone else would be looking at the notebook instead of wondering where the dead man’s clothes had gotten to.”

Kati shook her head. “I don’t understand, Masao.”

“No? Of course, it’s murky. It’s the kind of thing that fills one with a sense of foreboding and horror. But let me reconstruct it as a playwright might to put together a scene. Mackenzie has a twin brother. The twin brother appears and must be killed.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know that. Kati, I know none of this, and I try to spin something out of invisible cloth. So I invent a twin brother who must be killed. Since he was killed, I presume that he must be killed. Since he was found naked, I presume that his clothes must be disposed of. He was knocked unconscious by a blow to the head. Now he lies unconscious. Two choices: dispose of the body, dispose of the clothes. Which choice? It’s not easy to make a body vanish—easier to make the clothes vanish.”

Kati shuddered. “How can you live with this, Masao? Day and night.”

“It’s my karma.”

Kati shook her head.

“No more?”

“Yes,” Kati said. “Please go on. Does it help? I mean for me to listen and ask questions.”

“A great deal.”

“Yes—the choice is to make the clothes vanish. But why? Why must the body be naked? Ah, so!” he exclaimed. “I am as witless as the others.”

“Why?”

“One or two of three people are present at the murder. Perhaps others, but certainly one or more of three. Because there are three people who presumably knew the contents of Eve Mackenzie’s notebook.”

“Yes, yes,” Kati agreed excitedly. “Her husband, Mrs. Scott, and Mrs. Mackenzie. That’s why they arrested Mrs. Mackenzie. But why couldn’t they arrest the other two?”

“Kati, Kati, the presumption was that Mr. Mackenzie was dead. And Mrs. Scott had no motive, and she told of a terrible fight between the Mackenzies. I’m sure that if the trial lasts long enough to put Mrs. Scott on the stand, she will testify that Mrs. Mackenzie threatened to kill her husband.”

“But you don’t think she killed him?”

“Oh, no. Mrs. Mackenzie is a small, slender woman. She can’t weigh more than a hundred and ten or fifteen pounds. According to Sy Beckman, the man in the tub weighed at least two hundred pounds. Mrs. Mackenzie could never place his body in the tub.”

“But Mrs. Scott?”

“Stronger, a very well-built woman. No, I don’t think so, and that leaves Mackenzie as the murderer of his twin brother. Or does it? Any number of different people could have been there. We have no motive. It’s not a random killing, not a burglary, not some lunatic lying up in the hills and shooting at cars on the freeway. No, indeed. This is murder with malice aforethought. But why? And why did Eve Mackenzie suddenly stop insisting that the man in the tub was not her husband?”

“Until the trial,” Kati said.

“But why the trial? Why did she subject herself to the trial? You see, Kati, the state’s case was built on the fact that Mackenzie was taking a bath when his wife struck him with a blunt instrument and then executed him. But if it turned out not to be Mackenzie, then he would not be calmly bathing in Mackenzie’s bathtub and there would be absolutely no case against Mrs. Mackenzie. And why the refusal



to give Beckman Mackenzie's fingerprints? Senseless, stupid—and horrible.”

“Murder is always horrible.”

“Yes—” It flickered in his mind. It was a picture unreal, like a television screen out of focus, waving, the sought-for images mixed with images unsought. He had called himself witless, and properly as he thought about it now. Eve Mackenzie had been dealt into whatever game was being played here. A deal had been made with her agreement. That's why she stood trial with such aplomb, and that's why her bail had been 'no more than a hundred thousand dollars, paid for by the Fenwick company, even as Fenwick had supplied her legal defense. The Fenwick Works, Mackenzie, his twin brother, Eve Mackenzie, a trial that was ridiculous and would be thrown out of court and then the book closed. But why the trial?

“They wanted the trial—” Masuto began.

“Who, Masao?”

“Just listen to me, Kati, and let me say it aloud and try to have it make sense. Eve Mackenzie hates her husband. She wants a divorce. He will not give her a divorce. There could be any number of reasons for that. They have a fight, not unusual, and she drives to Santa Barbara to spend the night with her sister. That night, Mackenzie's twin shows up. Possibly, Mackenzie is not alone. He or they kill the twin. Maybe Scott is in on it, maybe not. What to do with the body? Notebook—frame Eve Mackenzie. But something is missing from the twin, a birthmark or operation scar. That gives Eve the upper hand. She will play ball for a price.”

“What price could justify her lying to cover up for a murder?”

“My dear Kati, all women are not like you. She might have desired to divorce so desperately she would tell any lie to get it. She may want money. What do we know about her—or about any film star? The image we see on the screen is not the person.”

“Masao?”

“Yes?”

“May I be permitted a doubt?”

Masuto smiled and nodded.

“Of course it was on the news today. She said that the dead, man was not her husband. She did not keep a promise of silence. Then

what happened to the deal you say she made?”

“I don’t know. She might have been frightened, she might have felt that the others would double-cross her. Perhaps she feels it is time to look after herself.”

“None of it makes sense to, me,” Kati said. “Does it make sense to you, Masao?”

“No, not much.”

“And if the case is dismissed, as you say, if it’s thrown out of court, will you go on looking for the murderer?”

“I don’t know. That’s up to Captain Wainwright, and my guess is that he doesn’t know either.”

“I must do the dishes,” Kati said. “I feel that I have been with you into one of those horrible investigations, but still I must do the dishes.”

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Masuto bathed, put on his saffron terry-cloth robe, and went into the tiny sun room at the back of his cottage which he somewhat abashedly called his meditation room. There was on the floor only a mat and a small round pillow. Masuto had found that even a half hour of Zen meditation cleared his mind and renewed his body. But tonight he was not to have a half hour of meditation. He had been sitting there for only minutes when he heard the doorbell ring. The house was small, and the hearing of a meditating person is very keen, and to his astonishment, Masuto heard the voice of Geffner, the district attorney, asking for him.

“You come at an unfortunate time,” Kati protested.

“It’s all right,” Masuto called out. “Put Mr. Geffner in the living room. I’ll be right there.”

Masuto put on his street clothes before he went into the living room. It would embarrass Geffner to face him with a saffron robe, and Geffner was embarrassed enough. “It’s almost eleven o’clock,” he said to Masuto, “and I just can’t tell you how awkward I feel about barging in here like this. But I had to see you, Masuto, and it was on my way.”

“On your way?” Masuto asked, puzzled. “The court is in Santa Monica and you live in Encino, so how can Culver City be on your way?”

“I was downtown, Masuto. The judge asked me to come to his chambers down there. He’s going to throw out the case tomorrow. I agree with him. But then, while I was there, we got the news that Eve Mackenzie is dead.”

“What? No—Eve Mackenzie?”

Geffner nodded.

“I’ve been a fool—a total, stupid fool!” Masuto exclaimed. “A woman is dead. She was murdered.”

“Oh?” Geffner stared at him. “Why do you say that?”

“How did she die?”

“A car accident.”

“Where?”

Geffner stared at him thoughtfully. “Why murder?”

“First tell me where she died and how.”

“Malibu Canyon. You know the road—one of the most dangerous in the county. The story is that she was driving too fast and she went over the edge, through the guardrail, and into a seventy-foot ravine.”

“Whose story? Who did you talk to?”

“The California Highway Patrol.”

“Mental giants.”

“Masuto, they’re pretty good with accidents.”

“Then why are you here?”

“Because I think what you’re thinking—that it was no accident.”

“And you ask me why I think so?” Masuto said angrily. “This is the most idiotic frame and contrivance I have ever heard of. And you lent yourself to it, and now the woman is dead. Of course I said murder. The moment she blurted out that the man in the tub was not her husband, she was doomed.”

“Don’t come down on me, Masuto. I didn’t lend myself to it. I was told what to do, and at that point I didn’t know what was valid evidence and what was not.”

Masuto nodded. “Sorry. I should not have said that. Tell me, what was Eve Mackenzie doing at night on the Malibu Canyon Road?”

“I don’t know. I would guess she was at the Fenwick Works. That appears to be the source of everything in this insane case. I want you to come with me to Malibu Canyon tonight, Masuto. I want to look at the wreck, and I want you with me.”

“You can’t be serious. I’m a Beverly Hills policeman. The accident belongs to the highway patrol, and they’re there already. If there’s any suggestion of criminal action, they’ll turn to the Malibu Sheriff’s Station. The sheriffs are not very nice people to begin with, and if they see a Beverly Hills cop putting his nose into things, they’ll skin me.”

“It’s in the county and I have jurisdiction,” Geffner said, “and if they can prove I haven’t, we’ll be out of there before they find the right page in the book. I won’t introduce you as a Beverly Hills cop. Joe

Hendricks is waiting outside in my car. He's the L.A.P.D. accident consultant, and I'll introduce you as his assistant."

"I work for a living," Masuto said. "All I know is being a cop and growing roses. If Wainwright hears about this—"

"Damn it, Masuto, you're doing nothing wrong. I'm asking for your help as a private citizen."

Masuto sighed. "All right. Wait for me outside. I'll talk to my wife."

But Kati did nothing to soften Masuto's doubts. "I didn't want to listen, Masao," she said, "but in this house you can't help overhearing. It's eleven o'clock, and you're doing something that isn't right, and I won't sleep—"

"What I'm doing is perfectly all right."

"Is it? The story you told me tonight makes me terribly afraid."

Masuto understood that. There was a thread of madness running through it that would make any normal person afraid.

Hendricks was a large, overweight man with the broad, heavy hands and splayed fingers of a garage mechanic. As a matter of fact, he had been a mechanic a good part of his life, and there was, as Geffner put it, nothing about cars that he did not know.

"I don't buy the perfect murder," he said to Masuto as they drove north on the Pacific Coast Highway. "I don't buy it at all. You fix a car and somewhere it's got to show. You cut a brake line, it shows. You fix the wheel, it shows."

"But suppose you do nothing to the car," Masuto insisted. "You knock out a person and put her behind the wheel. Do it on a downhill stretch in a place like Malibu Canyon. She goes through the guardrail. What then?"

"Suppose the car burns," Geffner said.

"Sure, those things can happen, but mostly they don't. Every time you turn on the television you see a car go out of control and burst into flames. You ever see a car in a highway crash burst into flame?"

"Once or twice," Masuto said. "I didn't actually see it happen, but I was called in."

"Never saw it myself," Geffner admitted.

"Tell you how they do it, Mr. Geffner. They use a small incendiary charge. Sometimes they blow it by remote control, sometimes it's set to go off on contact."

"The car didn't burn. I didn't talk to the highway patrol myself. Evidently, they phoned it in to the county sheriff in Hollywood and he called Judge Simpkins. I guess he felt that Simpkins ought to know as soon as possible."

"What about the media?" Masuto asked.

"We'll know when we get there. I hope we get there first."

"What are you going to tell the highway cops?" Masuto asked.

"We'll see what they tell us. The highway patrol likes to feel that they own the state. It's not exactly the truth."

At the Malibu Colony, Geffner made a right turn off the Pacific Coast Highway and into the hills. Driving that way, they could see the night lights of the Fenwick Works, built on a low hill and facing the Pacific, a great, sprawling complex of buildings, with a lit sign that said: TOMORROW IS TODAY AT FENWICK. The Malibu Canyon Road ran eastward, connecting the Pacific coast with the San Fernando Valley, and in the course of its ten-mile journey from the coast to the Valley, it ran through some of the most splendidly scenic country in the West. While not unusually high, the mountains that bordered the road were precipitous, shelves of raw rock that climbed a thousand and fifteen hundred feet from a road frequently gouged out of the rock itself. Daytime, the road was as beautiful as it was dangerous; at night, it was simply dangerous.

They had come over thirty miles from Culver City, and Masuto wondered what compelled a district attorney who, at best, could only claim to have lost a comely defendant.

“No,” Geffner said. “I’ve been had. The state’s been had. It stinks. Someone is playing dirty games, and for them the law means nothing and the court means nothing. Maybe I simply want to validate the way I earn a living.”

“It’s not easy,” Masuto said. “I’ve tried.”

There were lights up ahead, enough light to make a glow over the road, and then there were the cars lined up on the narrow shoulder, CBS News and ABC News and NBC News and the press cars and the independent TV stations and some traffic and a tow truck trying to get through, and two long, sleek black limousines which, Masuto guessed, might be the property of Fenwick Works, and, their lights flashing, two highway patrol cars and a sheriff’s car out of Malibu Station. It was a large company, but the violent death of a star is not an everyday occurrence, and the death of a star on trial for murder is worth everything the media can give it, and the media would certainly give it Masao Masuto among other things. Masuto felt that he should have realized this before he ever allowed Geffner to lure him out of his meditation chamber.

They squeezed onto the shoulder behind the two black limousines. The windows of the limousines, darkened glass, were quite opaque. The chauffeurs, men with hard, expressionless faces, stood by their

cars. Masuto made a mental note of the license plate of the car in front of them. Masuto, Geffner, and Hendricks got out of their car and walked down the road to where a lieutenant in the highway patrol stood center-stage to a circle of news and television people.

“I know him,” Masuto told Geffner. “The lieutenant. That’s Archie Delt. Not the sweetest man in the world. He’ll be sore as hell to see a Beverly Hills cop out here in Malibu.”

“The hell with him!”

“I’ll hold that thought,” Masuto said wryly.

The tow truck was trying to maneuver into a position near the break in the guardrail where it might drop a hook from its winch, and Masuto wondered why the haste to bring up the wrecked car, since the woman’s body had been removed. Another part of his mind was following the questions and answers—questions thrown by the TV people and reporters.

“Who pronounced her dead?” a reporter asked. “Was there a doctor on the scene?”

“Patrolman Gilbert climbed down to the car. It was not entirely dark. As I said before, Mrs. Mackenzie’s neck was broken. She had numerous other injuries and she had no pulse. Then Patrolman Anderson arrived on the scene and the two of them managed to remove Mrs. Mackenzie from the car and carry her up to the road.”

“Why was she sent to All Saints Hospital? Why not to a local hospital?”

Lieutenant Delt was patient with the questions, even though they tended to be repetitive. He was not unaware of the TV cameras fixed on him as he stood in the glare of the emergency lights.

“If Mrs. Mackenzie had not been dead, she would have been rushed immediately to the nearest hospital. But she was dead and had been dead for at least an hour before we brought her body up to the road. She was taken to All Saints because that’s the Beverly Hills hospital and that’s where her physician instructed us to take the body and she is a resident of Beverly Hills. Does that answer your question?”

Delt finally excused himself. The tow truck was in place, and the emergency lights were turned on the canyon. The car could be seen now, a small, two-seater Mercedes, apparently not too damaged.



The press was drifting away. Masuto noticed two men in civilian clothes in whispered conference with Delt, and one of them glanced at him and then nudged Delt and whispered to him. Delt walked over to where Hendricks, Geffner, and Masuto were standing. Meanwhile, the tow truck crew were feeding the cable down into the ravine.

“Far from home, Sergeant,” Delt said to Masuto. “You didn’t just happen to be driving through the canyon?”

“I’m afraid not,” Masuto said. “We heard that a very unlikely thing had happened here, and District Attorney Geffner and—”

Geffner nodded slightly.

“—and Officer Hendricks of the Los Angeles police and myself—well, we’d like to look at the car when they bring it up.”

“It would appear to me,” Delt said, “that you’re all a little outside of your jurisdiction.”

“Just hold on,” Geffner said coldly. “This is L.A. County, so don’t read me any lessons on jurisdiction. The dead woman was arrested and charged in Beverly Hills, and as far as Officer Hendricks is concerned, he’s here as an assisting officer, courtesy of L.A.P.D., and his specialty is car crime, and I want him to look at Eve Mackenzie’s car. Any objections?”

During this the two men who had been talking to Delt moved up to join the little circle, and one of them, a tall, well-built handsome man of about sixty years, with white hair and cold blue eyes, said quickly and firmly, “Of course we have no objection. On the contrary, I’m certain Lieutenant Delt is as delighted as we are. If there have been any dirty tricks around this awful accident, we are more eager than anyone to clear them up.”

Delt was silent, and Geffner asked, “Who are you, sir, and who are the we?”

“I’m Alan Soames. I’m general manager at the Fenwick Works.” And nodding to his companion, “This is Mr. Slocum. And if you’re curious about why we’re here, well, the highway patrol informed us immediately.”

“Was Mrs. Mackenzie with you this evening?”

“I’m afraid so. Tragically. Otherwise she might not have been driving through the canyon and this awful thing might never have happened.”

“Could I ask what she was doing at the Fenwick Works?” Masuto said.

“No, I don’t think so, Sergeant—what did you say your name was?”

“Masuto.”

“Masuto? Japanese—or as you say, Nisei. You’re a policeman?”

“I’m afraid so. My name is Masao Masuto, Beverly Hills police force. And just for the record, Mr. Soames, may I have it that you refuse to answer any questions regarding Eve Mackenzie’s reasons for being at your plant and driving home through the canyon?”

“No, you may not. You’ve twisted my words out of shape, and I don’t like that, Masuto, not one bit. I did not say I refuse to answer questions. No, sir! I simply said that I deny your right to ask them.”

“Ah, so. Very plain.”

With that Soames turned on his heel and walked off, followed by Slocum, who remained unidentified. Delt stared at Geffner and Masuto, his hands on his hips. “What is it you want?” he asked them. “Another murder? Someone tampered with her car and dumped her over the cliff? Or is it just that the California Highway Patrol is too damn stupid to know which side is up—until a Beverly Hills cop decides to tell us?”

“Come on, Lieutenant,” Masuto said softly. “We have no vendetta going, so let’s not start one. Soames will get into his big limo back there and go off to wherever such people go. You and I, we remain cops. I need a favor, you need a favor.”

“Okay, we’ll cool it. But how the hell would you feel if we walked into Beverly Hills and told you that you didn’t know what the hell you were doing.”

“Mostly we don’t.” Masuto grinned. “So any time you feel like, come by. I’ll welcome you with open arms.”

“Bullshit.”

“So what do you think?” Masuto asked him. “That little Mercedes down there is one of the best cars in the world. Why did she go through the guardrail?”

“Because the best cars in the world are no better than who drives them. Maybe she was loaded.”

“Will there be an autopsy?”

“Masuto, I can’t ask for an autopsy until I have some indication that a crime was committed. You know that.”

“But her family can,” Geffner said. “She has a sister in Santa Barbara.”

“That’s up to them.” Delt turned to Hendricks. “Are you really good with car accidents?”

“So they say.”

“All right.” And to Masuto, softly, “I don’t like being pushed around any more than you do, and I don’t work for Soames or Fenwick and I don’t like being told what to do and what not to do. I wasn’t going to stand between you and that car wreck. Hendricks can go over it with a fine-tooth comb, and if he finds something, then sure as hell it was done between here and the Fenwick Works.”

But Hendricks found nothing—at least nothing in the way of mechanical manipulation of the car. He spent almost an hour going over every inch of it, and he found no severed brake lines, no steering wheel tampering, no loosened wheels—none of a half dozen other possibilities. Nothing that was done, only something that was not done.

“What was that?” Delt asked him.

“She was not wearing her seat belt.”

“How do you know?”

“On this model Mercedes, there’s no automatic return.”

“What does that say?”

“Well, look at the car,” Hendricks said. “This happens once in a while. It hit the guardrail and popped that log right off, which shows how much that guardrail was worth. But the car was hardly damaged from that blow. Then it went right down that face with no obstruction at all until it hit the mesquite, and then the mesquite cushioned it. The steering wheel is still on its mount. If that lady in the car, even without her seat belt, had hung on to the wheel, she could have come through it with no more than a bad scare.”

“What are you getting at?” Delt asked him.

“What do you think, Lieutenant? There was nothing wrong with the car. That little car drives like a dream. So why’d she go through the guardrail?”

“Drugged,” Masuto said.

“Or drunk.”

“They couldn’t be sure there won’t be an autopsy. So it would be something simple,” Masuto said. “Something she could have used herself.”

“Who are *they*?” Delt asked him. “And with that scenario, why didn’t her head go through the windshield?”

They turned to Hendricks, who said, “It wouldn’t necessarily. She might have fallen over on the seat while still up here on the road. Then her head would hit the dashboard, where there’s a good deal of blood. Look at it yourselves.”

There was blood all over the car seat and the dashboard. Delt pressed Masuto. “You’re so goddamn sure she was murdered. They did this and they did that. Who?”

Masuto shook his head. “It’s a presumption, that’s all.” There was a lot that Geffner might have said, but Masuto could appreciate the position of a district attorney who had been prosecuting a case that was no case, only to have his suspect killed. There were still a couple of reporters hanging around and a photographer from the *L.A. Times* was snapping pictures of the wrecked car. Anything Geffner said could be flushed back in his face. A D.A. who allows himself to be persuaded by pressure from Washington to take a stupid case that won’t hold is in no position to court publicity.

Delt’s face was blank.

“A very good and sound presumption, I think,” Masuto said. “You know what the situation is out here in the canyon, Lieutenant. It’s an unincorporated area, and if you drop that line of inquiry, the Malibu sheriff’s office sure as hell is not going to pick it up.”

“What’s it to you, Masuto? Just tell me what’s in it for you that you got to push like this. You’re a Beverly Hills cop and you’re thirty miles from home. The woman’s dead.”

It was not easy to explain, and Masuto was not even certain that he could explain. One’s work took over, the man became the work, and the work became the man. That was not anything Delt would comprehend.

“She lived in a town I’m supposed to protect.”

“That’s a load, Masuto, and you know it. I can see Mr. Geffner’s point. He’s involved. But the way I look at it, you’re not involved.

Don't put down the sheriff's deputies out here in Malibu. They ain't totally brainless. I never seen a city cop didn't think the country boy was a working moron."

"Time I was getting back home," Hendricks said.

"Time we all were," Geffner agreed. His glance at Masuto said to keep the situation in low key. No use turning Delt into an enemy.

Masuto nodded. "Things come back home. I'll return the favor one day, Lieutenant."

"You've been damn cooperative. I'll remember," Geffner said.

Delt shook hands with the district attorney. "Almost two in the morning," he said. "I get frayed around the edges when these things push away a man's sleep. You figure you've seen everything and nothing gets to you, but I watched her movies when I was a kid and to see her pulled out of that car like a smashed, bloody bundle of rags was not nice."

"I can understand that," Masuto agreed.

"Okay, Sergeant. See you at the races."

They walked back up the road to where the car was parked. Aside from the police cars, only a few autos were still parked alongside the road. The two big limousines had departed. Hendricks got into the backseat, leaving the front seat next to the driver for Masuto.

"I'll go on down into the Valley," Geffner told them. "Ventura Freeway and then the San Diego Freeway. It's the quickest way and it takes us right through Culver. City. You'll be home by two-thirty," he said to Masuto. "That's not too bad."

"No, not bad at all. I'm glad you played it straight with Delt. I don't love him, but he's an honest cop."

"We're all honest," Geffner said. "That's what beats the hell out of me. If we were crooks or takers or on some kind of a pad, we wouldn't be here in the canyon at a quarter to two in the morning trying to make sense out of something that makes no sense. My mother calls me every day. Tomorrow she'll call me and ask me where I was last night, and then I'll try to explain to her why I'm here. Only—"

He had pulled out into the road and started down toward the Valley, his lights on, picking up speed on the straight downward stretch after the curve where the car went through the guardrail, and

now suddenly he broke off what he was saying. There was a long moment of silence.

“Hendricks?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I have no brakes.”

The car was picking up speed.

“The hand brake! Slow, even pressure.”

The hand brake was between the front seats. Masuto eased it back and said, “No hand brake!”

“Now, listen,” Hendricks said quickly. “Into the left lane, Mr. Geffner, and lay the car up against the cliff. Now! But easy, easy, just shave the paint.”

On the right, the canyon dropped away, fifty, a hundred feet; on their left, the canyon wall rose up above them. They were doing almost fifty miles an hour as Geffner moved into the left lane and let the car touch the canyon wall. The screeching, grinding sound of metal bent and torn by the rock sidewall brought forth a moan of despair from Geffner. The car jerked and rocked under the continuing impact, but the speed was cut, and Hendricks shouted above the noise, “Hang on, Mr. Geffner! I want you to put her into reverse. Do it quickly with a snap motion, and then brace yourself.”

“You’re going to destroy my car!” Geffner wailed.

“But we’ll live to see it done. Now, Sergeant!”

Masuto drove the automatic shift handle into reverse, and the car shuddered to the tearing sound of stripped gears and then came to a stop against the cliff face, the radiator steaming and, behind it, for almost a mile up the road, a trail of torn parts—mirrors, a fender, the rear bumper, the rear left door, bits and pieces of assorted glass and metal. For a long moment the three men sat in silence, not moving. Then Hendricks drew a deep breath and said, “We’d better get out of the car.”

“What’s left of it.”

“Can it be repaired?” he asked Hendricks.

“No, it’s totaled.” He pointed back in the darkness. “There—that’s a wheel. We lost that just as we were stopping. Torn off the axle. We got out of it just in time. Do you have a flashlight, Mr. Geffner?”

Geffner found a flashlight in his glove compartment and handed it to Hendricks, who crawled under the car.

Shivering, Geffner shook his head. "I don't want him to find what he's looking for."

"It's something we're not used to," Masuto said. "In other countries perhaps, but not here. It's new here. To kill whatever stands in your way, whatever interferes with you. You, me, Hendricks—that's all we have in common. We interfered."

"For God's sake, Sergeant, I've had trouble with the brakes on this car ever since I bought it. Don't invent anything. Don't be imaginative. This is not Iran. This is not El Salvador. We live in a country of law. We've had a bad accident, and we've lived through it."

Hendricks crawled out from under the car. "Somebody doesn't like us," he said wryly.

"What does that mean?"

"It means the brake lines were cut. No foot brake, no hand brake. If it wasn't for your damn brilliant driving, Mr. Geffner, we'd all be nicely dead."

"You're sure?"

"About the brakes? Absolutely."

The night was cold, but not cold enough to account for the chill that went through Masuto.

Geffner had a radiophone in his car, and they put him through to Delt. "We're about a mile or two down the road," Geffner said. "We have problems."

It was four o'clock in the morning when Masuto walked into his cottage in Culver City. There had been a time when Kati, worried sick, would have been waiting up for him. Time had forced her to accept the fact that he could be away half the night yet return in one piece. Tonight, or this morning, depending upon one's point of view, Masuto was too tired even for his nightly bath, and in the morning he overslept, missing the time he usually set aside for his meditation. He kissed Kati and fled from the house, and drive as he might, it was still nine-twenty when he reached the police station in Beverly Hills. Since he was expected to clock in at eight-thirty, he was almost an hour late. Polly, at Reception, informed him that the boss was steaming.

He went into the office he shared with Sy Beckman, and Beckman informed him that Wainwright had called his office twice this morning and had appeared in person once—the latter not very difficult since he was directly down the hall.

"What could you have done between yesterday and today?" Beckman wondered. "That kind of burn takes a lot of doing. I see she's dead. What in hell does this case add up to, Masao?"

"Confusion?"

"Poor dame, first that crazy trial and now this."

Captain Wainwright switched to voice contact. Having heard that Masuto was in the building, he stepped into the hall and shouted, "Masuto, get your ass in here!"

Masuto walked down the corridor, nodding to the sympathetic glances of various patrolmen, and went into Wainwright's office. Wainwright was standing there, room center, awaiting him, and for a long moment they stood face to face. Then Wainwright wheeled and took his seat behind his desk.

"Sit down," he told Masuto.

Masuto sat.



“All right. Tell me about it. I try to be a reasonable person. I have been known to get angry at times but with good cause. So just explain it, and let me see it your way.”

“Explain?” Masuto smiled. “If I could comprehend and explain anything in this world, I would be an enlightened person, which I am not.”

“No, sir.” Wainwright’s voice dropped. “Don’t give me any of that Charlie Chan bullshit, Masao. I want to know what in hell you were doing up in Malibu Canyon last night with Geffner and that high-class grease monkey from the L.A.P.D.”

“I can tell you that. Mr. Geffner was disturbed. He appears to have been more or less disturbed since this crazy trial started. Last night, after court, Judge Simpkins told Mr. Geffner that he intended to throw the Mackenzie case out of court the following day. Then Geffner heard that Eve Mackenzie was dead. He suspected murder, and he asked me to drive out to Malibu Canyon with him.”

“You’re a Beverly Hills cop.”

“I’m aware of that.”

“Then what in God’s name were you doing out there in Malibu Canyon? Whatever happened there, it’s out of our jurisdiction.”

“Eve Mackenzie was a resident of Beverly Hills.”

“And if she was shot in Paris, would you tell that to the Sûreté?”

“Malibu’s closer.”

“Masao,” Wainwright said more gently, “you and me go back a long time and I’ve cussed you out plenty for bending the rules and maybe breaking them now and then. But I’ve apologized too, and I’ve never said that you weren’t the smartest cop that ever worked for me. Well, eight o’clock this morning the city manager walks in and he says to me, ‘What would you say, Captain, if I told you to fire Masuto?’ Just like that.”

“What did you say?”

“I asked him what he was doing—was he telling me to fire you, and if so, just why? Or was he just posing the question?”

Masuto waited, smiling slightly.

“No comment?”

“I could go to Hawaii,” Masuto said. “I think the children would be happy there, and they don’t mind hiring Nisei cops, and if you put the

kiss of death on me, I can always work as a security guard or something of the sort—”

“Will you cut out that goddamn crap and be serious for one cotton-picking minute. I told the city manager that if he instructed me to fire you, he could find someone else to run his police department.”

“Thank you,” Masuto said. “I appreciate that.”

“He said he felt the same way. The city manager.”

“Then what was it? An exercise in rhetoric?”

“You can bet your sweet life it was not. A guy from the C.I.A. woke him up at two o’clock in the morning—”

“Name of Slocum?”

“I think so, Slocum. Made it important enough to get our city manager out of bed and give him a lecture on what in hell you were doing up in Malibu Canyon in the middle of the night, and this same C.I.A. character informed Abramson that you were impertinent, destructive, and given to dropping dangerous innuendos, and very likely a man engaged in something dirtier than being a cop. Now what in hell gave him that notion, Masao?”

“I might have said that I suspected Eve Mackenzie’s death was no accident.”

“You had to. You couldn’t keep your nose out of it. They have a highway patrol and a sheriff’s department, but that don’t cut no ice with you. No, sir. You’re damn lucky that Abramson doesn’t frighten. He told this Slocum guy that the C.I.A. doesn’t do the hiring and firing on this police force, and that until he was ready to bring some concrete charges against you, he, Abramson, would take no action. So much for the city manager. Now comes my part of it. Stay out of the Mackenzie case. The book is closed. His wife was charged with the murder, and she’s dead. As far as we’re concerned, it’s over.”

“You have to be kidding.”

“Like hell I am!”

They sat silently facing each other for about thirty seconds. Then Masuto reached into his pocket, took out his wallet, and opened it to reveal his badge. He unpinned it carefully and placed it on Wainwright’s desk. Then he took his gun and placed it on the badge. Then he stood up and said, “So sorry, Captain, so very sorry.” He left the office, closing the door gently behind him.

He had taken three steps in the corridor when he was almost physically assaulted by Wainwright's bellow. "Masuto, you get your ass back in here!"

Masuto halted and waited. Doors opened. Heads poked out. Wainwright opened his door and shouted, "You got nothing better to do?" The doors closed. "Masuto, inside!"

Masuto returned to Wainwright's office, closing the door behind him as gently as he had before.

"Sit down!" Wainwright snapped. "What in hell is eating you, Masuto? Haven't I always treated you decently? Didn't I fight to get the first Oriental cop on this force? Haven't I stood behind you and backed you up every time they yelled for your scalp? And then when I get into a situation where I can't back you up, first thing you do is dump your badge and gun and walk out—which is another part of your phony routine," he yelled, thrusting a finger at Masuto, "just like that 'so sorry' crap that you picked up watching the late show—and you got to be the number-one horse's ass to walk out on a job like yours in maybe the best police spot in the country, not to mention our pension plan. So will you pick up your gun and badge, and let's try to talk like two civilized people."

"You're absolutely right about the pension," Masuto said, picking up the gun and badge. "Never thought of it."

"Don't put me on. Just tell me plain and straight why you can't leave this thing alone."

"No, sir. You tell me, Captain, why, when a murder takes place on your turf, you're ready to let the killers walk away scot-free."

"That's not fair, Masao."

"Why not? We both know Eve Mackenzie didn't kill her husband. As a matter of fact, no one killed her husband because the dead man was not her husband. She was pushed into a trial because certain forces wanted it that way, and if I had to guess, I'd guess C.I.A. and Fenwick. And then they murdered her because their whole stupid plan couldn't stand up and they thought she was going to blow the whistle on them, and last night they tried to kill Geffner, Hendricks, and me, and I think that if Hendricks wasn't with us, they might have pulled it off."

"What? Just say that again!"

“They cut the brake lines on Geffner’s car while we were looking at the car Eve Mackenzie drove, and it was on a spot just before that long slope in Malibu Canyon, and if you think I’m building up an incident to impress you, call Hendricks down at L.A.P.D. and he’ll tell you all about it.”

“I don’t have to call Hendricks,” Wainwright said quietly. “I believe you. Who did it?”

“I don’t think there’s much question about that. They had two big black limos parked there and a couple of thugs as drivers. That’s a guess, but I think it’s a damn good guess.”

Wainwright sat and stared at his desk. Masuto waited. A clock on Wainwright’s desk ticked away the seconds. Finally, Wainwright looked up at Masuto and smiled forlornly. “Well, Masao, we’ve done some good work together.”

“We’ll do more.”

“Maybe. Only there’s a lot of muscle on the other side.”

“If they can get away with it here, in this country, kill anyone who stands in their way, manipulate the police, manipulate the courts—well, we let them, don’t we? It’s our fault. We’re the ones who make murder easy—just by keeping our hands off.”

“That’s right.”

“So—what then, Captain? What do we do?”

“A man was murdered in the Mackenzie house. He may have been Mackenzie. Most likely, he was not. When a homicide occurs here in Beverly Hills, it’s your responsibility and your department. So I expect you to bring in the killer, and I don’t give a damn if the President of the United States calls you down to Washington and stuffs you full of caviar and tells you to lay off. I am sick and tired of being told to keep my nose clean. If Abramson comes down and tells us that we’re both fired—well, okay, we’ll pack it up. But until then—”

“I’ll stir up a lot of garbage. I have to know who killed Eve Mackenzie, if she actually was murdered, and who tried to kill us, and I might have to do some telephoning.”

“I don’t have to instruct you.”

“No, you don’t. Thank you, Captain.”

“For what?”

Masuto did not say that it took guts and principle to do what Wainwright was doing. Wainwright would not have taken kindly to such a statement.

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Beckman was waiting for Masuto, and asked him whether he was still working for the Beverly Hills police force. Masuto repeated his conversation with Wainwright, and Beckman wanted to know what it added up to and where it made any sense.

“Mackenzie is killed, or someone who looks enough like him to be his twin brother, and then his wife, and then they go after you and Geffner and Hendricks like they’re running a goddamn butcher shop—and why? We don’t even have a smell of a motive.”

“Just a smell. They wanted Eve Mackenzie dead because she knew too much. But what did she know? She wasn’t there when the man in the tub was killed. Did she know who he was? And how does Fenwick figure? Whatever Mackenzie’s employment card had on it could have been masked out when they Xeroxed it. So why wouldn’t they send you his fingerprints?”

“They knew it wasn’t Mackenzie?”

“No question about it. So that wasn’t Mackenzie. But why this strange charade? If they wanted to get rid of the twin, why not a shotgun blast in the face. A prowler, and Mackenzie kills him in self-defense. No questions asked, the way people feel today. Mackenzie would come out a sort of hero, and that Fenwick crowd would hardly be disturbed by blowing away a man’s face. But instead they work out that ridiculous bathtub murder, as described in Eve’s notebook.”

“And then they kill her,” Beckman said.

“If we can prove it.”

“Give it a try, Masao. I know it’s outside our turf, but there has to be some way.”

Masuto took a deep breath. “All right, first step.” He picked up the telephone and called All Saints Hospital. They gave him the pathology room, and a moment later he heard the rasping voice of Dr. Baxter.

“Who? Masuto? Yes, I’ll talk to him.” And then, on the phone, he snapped, “No, there won’t be any autopsy.”

“What?”

“You calling about an autopsy for Eve Mackenzie? Well, I got her in the icebox, and there she stays until they make some funeral arrangements.”

“Yes, I was going to ask about an autopsy. I thought I’d get over and see you sometime today.”

“Save yourself the trip. No crime, no autopsy, unless her sister says so. Her sister doesn’t.”

“When are they moving the body to a funeral home?”

“Today, I imagine.”

“Can you delay it?”

“Why should I?” Baxter asked sourly.

“Let’s say the poor woman’s been murdered. We owe her at least that much.”

“We? I don’t owe her one damn thing.”

“Would a court order delay it?”

“I suppose it could. And now you’ve taken up enough of my time with your fancy guesswork—”

Masuto put down the phone and turned to Beckman. “I took it for granted that Baxter would do an autopsy on Eve Mackenzie. He won’t. He says there’s no evidence that a crime has been committed, and therefore no legal reason for an autopsy. That means I have to hit Wainwright for permission to delay the funeral, which will leave him pretty unhappy. But I’ll get—”

“He can’t authorize an autopsy, Masao.”

“I know. But maybe he can order a hold on the body before the lawyers grab it. Meanwhile, you go up to Santa Barbara and find the sister and talk her into ordering the autopsy. All she has to do is write the request on her stationery. You witness it. If you can get her in front of a notary public, even better, but not absolutely necessary. If she’ll come back with you—well, that’s the best way. Her name is Jo Hardin. Talk her into coming back with you or get authorization, and take off now. Let’s move while we can, because sooner or later they’ll go all out to stop us.”

Wainwright listened unhappily. “If we go to pathology at All Saints and put a hold on the body, it’s like sticking our hand into a nest of wasps. Suppose we find out that Eve Mackenzie was murdered. Think about it: Star on trial for husband’s murder murdered. And you know what we add to that, Masao? She was murdered on the Malibu sheriff’s turf and the crime was investigated by the California Highway Patrol, and neither outfit had the brains to find out what was going on. The murder is solved by the Beverly Hills police. We pin an asshole badge on both outfits. But, Masao, it’s not our murder. We just happen to exist in the State of California. We got to live with the highway patrol and we got to live with the sheriff, but show them to be assholes—well, as I said, we got to live with them.”

“And with ourselves.”

“All right, all right.” Wainwright sighed and spread his arms. “All the way. She lived here, and we got a right not to have our citizens murdered.”

“I’m sorry,” Masuto said.

“The hell with sorry. We’ll do it the hard way. In this case, everything’s going to be the hard way.”

“I’m going to see Sweeney. If you can order that hold on the body, I’ll pick up the papers and take them to Judge Simpkins myself, and maybe get him to back us up.”

Sweeney, the fingerprint man, was skinny, dyspeptic, and slightly paranoid about the fact that Masuto put little stock in fingerprints at the scene of a crime. He was defensive the moment Masuto set foot in the small room he called his laboratory, and he stood silent and suspicious, glaring at Masuto.

“Just a small favor, Officer Sweeney,” Masuto said in his most beguiling tone. “I’d like to have the Robert Mackenzie fingerprint file.”

“The what?”

“The fingerprints of the dead man, Robert Mackenzie.”

“You mean the one whose wife scragged him?”

“If you put it that way, yes.”

“There ain’t no file.”

“You mean no background information, but you do have the prints?” Masuto said, clinging to hope.

“No.”



“No what?”

“No prints,” Sweeney said.

“You’re telling me that you have no prints of Robert Mackenzie?”

“That’s what I’m telling you, Sergeant.”

“All right,” Masuto said coldly. “Suppose you tell me how it happened.”

“In the first place, Sergeant, before you jump all over me, you got to remember that it is not procedure to take the prints of murder victims. Sometimes we do it, sometimes we don’t.”

“Didn’t Detective Beckman tell you that he wanted to match Mackenzie’s prints with a set of prints from the Fenwick Works?”

“Yes.”

“And didn’t he tell you to pick up the dead man’s prints?”

“Yes.”

“Then where the devil are they?”

“Now, just wait a minute, Sergeant. I follow procedure. When Detective Beckman told me that he couldn’t get the prints from Fenwick, I destroyed the prints I took from the dead man. We got no procedure for filing prints for murder victims. We don’t even have a file for it.”

Of all problems that were a part of his work, Masuto was least equipped to deal with stupidity. He had always tried not to hate Sweeney. He tried not to hate him now. He tried to understand him, to sympathize with him, to approach the matter as a sincere Zen Buddhist should. It simply did not work, and after a long moment and several deep breaths, he said quietly, “Sweeney, have you ever taken the prints of a man dead two months?”

“What?”

“Didn’t you hear me, Officer Sweeney? Robert Mackenzie has been dead two months.”

“Then how in hell can I take his fingerprints?”

“That is up to you, isn’t it? I intend to exhume the body this afternoon, and I expect you to be there with your trusty fingerprint kit.”

“Dead two months, he won’t have no fingers!” Sweeney shouted.

“We’ll just have to wait and see, won’t we?” Masuto looked at his watch. “I think about four o’clock this afternoon. I want you to be

ready with your equipment.”

“He’ll be rotten, Masuto, rotten! He will stink!”

“We’ll manage.”

Back in Wainwright’s office, Masuto presented his case for exhumation.

“You have to?” Wainwright asked moodily.

“I must have the prints. Captain, this whole crazy puzzle rests on a question of identity. I’m convinced the dead man isn’t Mackenzie. Then who is he? When we know that, I think we’ll know who killed him and why.”

“All right, I can give you a police order for the exhumation, but since the case is still in the court, at least technically, even with Eve Mackenzie dead, you have to get Geffner to countersign it. That puts us on safer ground, and the way this case is moving, I’m not giving up any safe ground unless I have to.”

At that moment a uniformed patrolman, Oscar Clint by name, put his head into Wainwright’s office and said, “Oh, there you are, Sergeant. Your car is blocking mine.”

“I’ll move it—”

“Give him the key,” Wainwright said, “and let’s finish with these requests. I got to fill the city manager in on this, so let’s get both these orders out of the way before I’m canned.”

Masuto tossed the car keys to Clint, who caught them and closed the door.

“You sign right here,” Wainwright said to him. “You’re the officer in charge. This one for holding the body goes to Judge Simpkins for his signature. The other one, as I said, gets Geffner’s signature. Masao, I’m pushing you on this one because I feel we’re in some kind of a race. We stop and they—”

He never finished. The explosion rocked the whole building. Masuto raced outside, Wainwright after him, down a staircase packed with police, office help, frightened people.

Outside, where the cars were parked, lay the twisted, blasted remains of Masuto’s Datsun. The first flames were licking at the wreck as Masuto, Wainwright, and two other officers fought to get the door open. Then someone passed Masuto a crowbar, which he drove into the door and literally tore it from its frame. They pulled

Oscar Clint out of the wreckage, gently, carefully, but it was too late.  
He was already dead.

There were things to do. An ambulance had to be summoned to take away the broken remains of what had been Oscar Clint, and Wainwright had to rehearse what he would say to Mrs. Clint, who was the mother of four children. Statements had to be given, newspaper and television people satisfied, and Mr. Abramson, the city manager, spoken to with whatever explanations could be mustered. There had been some minor cuts from flying glass, and around the city hall, of which the police station was part, several cases of hysteria. As one of the newspaper people wrote, "Generally speaking, Beverly Hills is the most peaceful place in the world. This day was an exception."

But when Wainwright asked Abramson, "Do you want me to pull everyone off it and let it sit? That's what they want. That's why they tried to kill Masuto." The city manager shook his head.

"No, sir. If they—whoever they are—can come in here and turn the place into a slaughterhouse, it won't be worth very much to live here. Let's just say we're protecting the price of the property, because I hate classy sentiments."

Masuto, in the room by virtue of being the target, said, "They'll try again."

"You could take another month off," Wainwright said.

"I had my vacation."

"Bring him or them in," Abramson said. "I'll back you up to the hilt. We'll all sleep better when it's done."

With one thing and another it was almost noontime before Masuto left the station house and drove out to his home in Culver City. His two children were at lunch when he got there. Kati opened the door for him, and he asked angrily, "Is that how you open a door? Someone rings the bell, and you don't ask who it is—you just open the door?"

“Masao, why are you shouting at me? We live on a quiet street in Culver City, not in some jungle.”

“No, we live in a jungle,” he said, pushing by her into the house. “Close the door and listen to me. As soon as the children finish eating, pack a bag for each of them and pack a bag for yourself. I’m taking the three of you to Uncle Toda’s place.”

Uncle Toda, Masao’s mother’s brother, owned an orange grove at the northern end of the San Fernando Valley. He was very fond of Kati and her children, even though, as an old man who had lived through the difficult years of World War II, and had spent two of those years in an internment camp, he looked dubiously upon his nephew’s role as a policeman. Nevertheless there were areas in which he admired Masato, and when his nephew telephoned him about the possibility of Kati and the two children visiting for a few days, he and his wife received the suggestion with pleasure.

But now Kati asked, “How? Have I ceased to exist as a person? You don’t ask me—you don’t tell me why you have made this decision. Well, I can’t go. There are only five days before the children must return to school. There is the party at the center downtown, and the Japanese festival in Anaheim, and I promised them—”

“Stop it!” Masato interrupted. “I have no time to argue.”

Kati stared at him in astonishment and not without a little fear. He had never taken such tones with her before, not Masao; other husbands perhaps; but not Masao.

“You will have them ready in ten minutes, no longer!” Masato snapped. “Look upon me as an old-fashioned Japanese husband if you must, and obey me. Do you understand?”

“No,” Kati whispered. She was not very frightened, not of her husband nor of other things, but she was a Japanese woman, for all that she had been born in America, and she did what he told her to do. She packed the suitcases, scrubbed the children’s faces, closed the windows in the little cottage, and followed her husband through the door.

Outside, Kati and the children stared at the car that the department had provided as a replacement for Masato’s Datsun.

“Where is your car?” Kati asked.

“We’ll talk about it later.”

They were in the car, driving toward the freeway, before Kati said softly, “Something very awful?”

“Yes.”

The children were silent. They sensed something menacing, but they knew that their father disliked speaking in their presence about his work as a policeman.

“I’m sorry,” Masuto said finally. “I behaved badly, but I was worried, and time is of the essence.” He spoke very softly, but still the children heard him.

Kati began to cry. The children had never seen their mother cry before. It frightened them.

“Please, don’t cry,” Masuto said.

“You never spoke to me like that before.”

“I never faced anything like this before. But you know I love you, Kati. You and the children are precious to me.”

“Where is your car?”

“We’ll go to Uncle Toda’s place. Then I can tell you what happened.”

Gradually, as they drove north, the children’s glumness disappeared. It was far from punishment to spend a week with their Uncle Toda, who had ten acres of orange groves, a holding pond where they could swim, a wife who adored them and spoiled them, and an endless fund of stories about the old days; and by the time they got there, Uraga and Ana had almost forgotten their mother’s unhappiness at this unexpected vacation.

Taking his wife and his uncle aside, away from the charming white cottage and into the edge of the grove, Masuto summed up the events of the past twenty-four hours.

“I think you must know about the danger,” he said. “If the danger is too great, I can take Kati and the children somewhere else. I was impetuous in exposing you to the danger. I had no right to do that.”

“You had every right, and I am too old to worry about danger,” Toda told him.

“We are safe, and they will kill you,” Kati said bleakly.

“They will not kill us. Rest assured.”

“How can I?”

He took her in his arms and held her very tight. “You are my dear wife. I was almost insane before with the thought that they might get to you first. Now you are safe, and I promise you that I will put an end to this thing.”

But driving back to Los Angeles, Masuto wondered whether the odds were not greater on their putting an end to him. For the most part, he accepted the world as it was, with all its horrors and obscenities. That was a policeman’s world. Either one accepted that or one did not become a policeman, yet there were times when he could not help longing for a limit to reality. Such longings were not very Zen-like, but neither, he felt, was he a very good Zen Buddhist. He could remember as a small child spending lazy summer weeks at his Uncle Toda’s grove. The San Fernando Valley was like a Garden of Eden then—pecan groves, orange groves, peach orchards, the wind full of perfume, the sky blue and clear. Today Uncle Toda’s place was one of the last large groves in the Valley. Half a million tract houses covered the Valley like an ugly carpet; the sky was yellow with smog; and “Valley girl” had become a national symbol for insularity and ignorance.

It was after three before Masuto reached Judge Simpkins’s chambers in Santa Monica, and fortunately Geffner was with the judge.

“Tying up the loose ends,” Geffner explained. “I heard about what happened in Beverly Hills this morning. They don’t give up, do they? They weren’t warning us. They’re dead serious.”

“I took a dim view of Geffner’s accusations concerning what happened to both of you last night,” the judge said. “In light of this morning’s events—well—well, for the love of God, Sergeant, who do you think is behind all this?”

“I don’t know.”

“Fenwick? They’re a company. Yes, they do Pentagon work, but so do a thousand other companies.”

“I was thinking about that,” Masuto said. “There were two black limousines and two large, hard-looking men employed as drivers. We leaped to the conclusion that they had cut our brake lines—deciding that they looked like men who would do a thing like that. It was late and we were tired and frightened and had just almost died.

That's what our judgment was worth. When Beckman gets back from Santa Barbara, and if we're lucky, the sister will permit an autopsy. Maybe we'll know something then."

"We're going to clear Eve Mackenzie," Geffner said. "There was no case against her, and speaking for myself, my face is red as hell. I suppose it's no comfort to Eve Mackenzie, but if anyone does care, it was an innocent person who died last night."

Masuto said nothing to that, and a few minutes later, both documents countersigned, he left. The whole business of rehabilitating the dead woman left him cold and not a little disgusted, and it was only after he was well on his way toward All Saints Hospital that he remembered the precautions he had not taken. He had not looked under his car or under the hood for another bomb, and why should he imagine that they did not know about his substitute car—a Ford—and his itinerary. He shook his head unhappily, provoked with himself, with his inability to accept the danger he was in, once he felt satisfied that his wife and children were safe.

He had often said that where professional killers were engaged there was actually no way to protect their potential victim. His only security, he felt, was in moving quickly, very quickly, and unraveling the knot of this very strange case. But why himself as a target? Actually, his first real involvement in the case had been when he met Geffner the previous day, and why should they try to kill him rather than Geffner? What did Geffner know? Whatever it was, Geffner had not told him. They might well imagine that Geffner had told him, and of course it had to be their belief that Geffner had talked. It could be nothing else.

His speed slowed. Driving east on Wilshire Boulevard, he had just about reached the veterans cemetery, where thousands of crosses bore witness to the virtue of war. He pulled over to the curb and sat for a long moment with his chin on his clenched fist. Then he turned the Ford around and drove back to Santa Monica. Judge Simpkins was surprised to see him.

"Mr. Geffner?" Masuto asked him.

"Gone. Left here right after you."

"Do you know where he went, Your Honor?"



“I’m afraid not?”

“Do you know where his home is?”

“Why don’t you talk to my secretary, Sergeant. She has that kind of information.”

Outside in the anteroom, the secretary, a bright-eyed Chicano lady of about thirty, said pleasantly, “You’re a Nisei, aren’t you, Sergeant. And me a Chicano—almost makes you feel we’re going somewhere. Why do you want to know about Mark Geffner? Going to arrest him?”

“I want to keep him alive.”

“Somebody want to waste him?”

“Possibly.”

“Why? He’s a sweetheart. Why should anyone want to kill him? I will tell you something, Sergeant Masuto, the whole world has gone bonkers. I’ll tell you something else. Nobody needs a reason to kill anyone. They just do it. How about this lunatic who took his rifle up over Sepulveda and spent a whole hour shooting motorists until the cops got him. He killed five people.”

“About Mr. Geffner, where does he live?”

“He lives in Mandeville Canyon, but he’s not there now. He’s on his way to Santa Barbara.”

“Do you know why?”

“I think he’s got a lady there. But, look, Sergeant, you’re not getting anything from me, and if you really have to find Mr. Geffner before someone gets to him, you should talk to his secretary. She knows a lot more about him than I do.”

“He’s not married, is he?”

“No. Let me try his office. His secretary’s name is Lucy Sussman.” She dialed the number, and then told Lucy Sussman, “Honey, this is Rosita, over at Judge Simpkins’s office. I got a Sergeant Masuto from the Beverly Hills cops who thinks your boss is in trouble.” She paused and listened. “No, not that kind of trouble. Yeah—” She turned to Masuto. “You were with Mr. Geffner last night?”

Masuto nodded.

“Same guy, yes.” She handed the telephone to Masuto.

“Sergeant,” Lucy Sussman said, “I don’t know what to tell you. He’s very disturbed. He’s frightened, too, so I can believe it when

Rosita says he's in danger. He's in Santa Barbara, but I have no address or phone number for him there."

"Does he go there often?"

"No, only the past two months—maybe less, maybe six, seven weeks."

"Would that coincide with his involvement with the Mackenzie case?"

There was a long pause, and then the voice on the telephone said, "I don't know that I should be giving you any information of this kind, and certainly I can't give you confidential information of any kind."

"I'm not asking for confidential information. I simply want to reach Mr. Geffner."

"I can't help you. I don't know where he is."

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Masuto gave up hunting for Geffner and drove to All Saints Hospital. This time he looked under his car and under the hood, shrugging off the fact that from here on his behavior would be slightly paranoid. He was not the only one with a trace of paranoia. When he handed the court order to Dr. Baxter, the medical examiner snorted bitterly.

“You sweethearts spend your days thinking up ways to make my life impossible. In one hour from now the hearse from the Bethlehem Funeral Chapel will be here for her body. You have an order; they have an order. Just tell me, my brilliant Oriental swami, what do I do?”

“This order is countersigned by Judge Simpkins.”

“Their order will come from the sheriff’s office. They covered the accident. They sent the body here; they release it.”

“Our order takes precedence.”

“And for how long am I supposed to fight for possession of the body?”

Masuto looked at his watch. “It’s four-twenty now. Beckman should be back from Santa Barbara no later than five. Well, let’s say that by five-thirty I should be able to tell you to go ahead with the autopsy or release the body.”

“That will make me reasonably happy.”

“Did you examine Mrs. Mackenzie’s body at all, Doctor?”

“I’m a pathologist, not a ghoul. If I’m instructed to do an autopsy, I do an autopsy. If I am not instructed to do one, I leave the body alone.”

“Yes, of course,” Masuto said. He had years of practice dealing with Dr. Baxter: Baxter was a part-time medical examiner who bitterly resented the fact that Beverly Hills, which he regarded as a somewhat wealthier place than Saudi Arabia, refused to employ him on a full-time basis, claiming that there were simply too few murders

to justify it. But Baxter was very good—good enough for his fits of anger and contempt to be tolerated.

“But,” Masuto went on apologetically, “even without an autopsy I know how much you can deduce from a cadaver. You know, her car was not badly smashed at all. It was one of those lovely little two-seat Mercedes. The windshield was smashed, but not the car’s frame.”

“Really?” Baxter’s interest was awakened. “Did the car fall through the air?”

“No. Oh, no. It rolled down a steep angle and crashed into a stand of mesquite.”

Baxter thought for a while before saying, “She was out, if that’s what you’re looking for, Masuto. If she had been wearing a seat belt or hanging on to the wheel, her injuries would have been different.”

“Thanks. And just in the possibility that we may not be able to do an autopsy, how could she start to drive away and then pass out?”

“There are twenty answers to that question. She might have had a heart attack; she might have had a few drinks and some Nembutal on top of it. They might have slipped her something with an enteric coating, and just in case you don’t know what an enteric coating is, I’ll explain. It’s a coating for a pill that dissolves at a certain speed, depending on how thick you make it. You can take some deadly poison that kills instantly, wrap it up in enteric coating, give it to someone, and have it kill them five minutes or an hour later. But maybe one day you’ll develop some minimal intelligence in your own outfit, and I won’t have to solve every problem you come up with.”

“Yes, possibly,” Masuto agreed. “Just one more thing, Doctor. You refer to what they gave her. You conclude it’s murder?”

“I don’t even have to be smart for that.”

“Smarter than the sheriff’s deputies.”

“There you’re dealing with real class.”

A TV sound truck was still parked outside the police station when Masuto returned, and a man with a microphone cornered him. He had been waiting for hours and he would not be put off.

“You are Detective Sergeant Masuto?”

“I have no comment,” Masuto said. “There’s a public relations officer inside.”

“Were they trying to kill you instead of Officer Clint? Was it the wrong car and the right man? Come on, Officer, give me a break. I’ve been waiting five hours for you to return.”

Masuto pushed past him and went inside. Wainwright cornered him in the hall. “Abramson’s burning mad about Clint being killed. He said we either bring the killer in or there’ll be hell to pay with the whole department, and at this point he doesn’t give one goddamn about what the State Department or the White House has to say. He went with me to see Clint’s wife, and there’s something I don’t want to go through again. So be careful, Masao, be damn careful. And by the way, what did you say to Sweeney?”

“Can you imagine that he didn’t have Mackenzie’s prints?”

“We went over that. What did you say to him?”

“I told him he’d have to take the prints now.”

“Oh, I see. It didn’t occur to me that Mackenzie’s been in the ground two months. What in hell happens to a body in two months, Masao?”

“Your guess is as good as mine. But we’ll see.”

“Sweeney’s sick. He’s been throwing up. He never had a strong stomach, and I guess thinking about the corpse got to him. I sent him home.”

“Captain, I must have those prints.”

“You got the exhumation order?”

“Right here in my pocket.”

“Okay. Young Anderson spent a year with the paramedics before he became a cop, and he’s been helping Sweeney and he’s not afraid of cadavers. He’ll go with you. Beckman telephoned out to Forest Lawn and they’ll have gravediggers waiting for you. But try to do it quick.”

“Where’s Beckman?”

“Inside. I’ll tell Anderson to meet you downstairs, and if you see someone crawling around your car, it’s a mechanic from the city motor pool. Abramson is determined no more cars will blow up in our faces.”

Beckman was on the phone to his wife, explaining. It sometimes appeared to Masuto that the best part of Sy Beckman’s life was

spent on the telephone, explaining to his wife his whereabouts for the past twenty-four hours.

“No,” Beckman said patiently, “there is just no way I can get home in time to be a fourth for bridge. Where am I going? I’ll tell you where I’m going. I’m going to dig up a cadaver.” He was not believed, and his explanations continued. Finally out of it, he said to Masuto, “Next time around, a Japanese girl. You don’t get that from Kati.”

Masuto had heard it before. “Tell me about Santa Barbara.”

“Well, she doesn’t actually live in Santa Barbara. She lives in Montecito. That’s a community or neighborhood or whatever just on this side of Santa Barbara. Beautiful spot. You ever been there?”

Masuto nodded.

“You could be a thousand miles from anywhere. A dirt road, and then a house of cut stone, with a million roses, a tiled roof, a terrace of Mexican tiles—and this Jo Hardin. You say to yourself, Eve Mackenzie was a beauty, the sister must be a plain Jane. No, sir. Just as pretty as her sister. Supposed to be fifty-one. You’d never believe it. She could pass for thirty. Ever heard of a famous Western badman and outlaw, name of John Wesley Hardin? She claims to be a relative of his.”

“Did she agree to the autopsy?” Masuto demanded impatiently.

“No luck there. She claims there is no reason for it, that her sister suffered enough. I talked and argued, but she wouldn’t give an inch.”

“But why? She knows her sister died a violent death. She might well have surmised that her sister was framed. Why shouldn’t she agree to an autopsy?”

“I tried, Masao.”

“Did you make it plain to her that we’re convinced that her sister was murdered?”

“I did. She just kept saying that she wanted to forget the whole thing.”

“What was her attitude? Did she appear to have an affection for her sister?”

“Not much. She’s a pretty cold fish.”

“Does she live alone there?”

“As far as I could tell. Well, not absolutely alone.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, like I said, Masao, there’s a dirt road leads up to the place. Pretty narrow, so if you’re going to pass another car, you got to slow it down almost to a walk. Well, I was leaving there when I saw a car coming, and I had to slow it down, like I said, almost to a walk. So I had a good look at who was in the car. You want to take a guess?”

“Mark Geffner.”

Beckman’s face fell. “How did you know?” he whispered.

“Did he see you?”

“Had to. What made you say Geffner?”

“A guess. And knowing you, Sy, you’ve gone into his background. What have you got?”

“Just what popped up on the computer. He’s Mr. Clean. U.C.L.A., Stanford Law, Judge Advocate in Vietnam, and then the state. He’s forty-six years old, divorced four years ago, and that’s it.”

“No, only the beginning,” Masuto said.

Masuto, Beckman, and Anderson waited while the city mechanic went over their cars with a fine-tooth comb. Then Masuto decided that they would all go in Beckman's car. "You drive. I want to think," Masuto told Beckman.

"I like to think while I'm driving," Beckman said.

"Yes, that's one way. Another way is to empty your mind, stop your thoughts."

"Then how're you thinking, if you'll forgive me, Sergeant?" Anderson asked.

"Well, you are, but in another way. You're letting something happen in your mind. In a way, it's what most people do. You try to remember something and it's impossible. Then you put it away, and then suddenly you have the answer, apparently out of nowhere. But your mind does it for you. Maybe it will do it for me. There must be some sanity, some logic, to this wretched business,"

"Why? We live in a world full of lunatics."

Masuto shrugged, closed his eyes, and sank back in his seat while Beckman drove over Coldwater Canyon into the Valley below, where the smog lay like a heavy yellow blanket. Masuto finally opened his eyes as they left the Ventura Freeway and turned north on Barham.

"Got it?" Beckman asked him.

"Not a glimmer."

"You think we can get this done before dark, Masao?"

"We'll try. It shouldn't take more than half an hour or so."

"Are you nervous, kid?" Beckman asked Anderson.

"A little. I never did anything like this before. I asked to work with Officer Sweeney because I heard he's due to retire next year, but until now I've only taken prints off people who are alive."

"Nothing to it. They don't pull away when they're dead."

"But this one's been dead a long time. You think he's got a record, Sergeant?" he asked Masuto.



Masuto smiled and shook his head. “I don’t know what to think. We’ll see.”

It seemed there was always smog at the eastern side of the San Fernando Valley. Masuto could remember a time when there had been no smog in the Valley—but then so many other things had changed.

They turned into Forest Lawn Drive, and a few minutes later they were entering the cemetery, halted by a guard and then waved on to a chorus of alto voices singing an obviously specifically composed song about a host of angels welcoming the loved ones into the heavenly gates.

“Loudspeakers concealed in the ground,” Beckman explained.

At the cemetery office, which was built in a strange, Romanesque style, the cemetery director was waiting for them. He was appropriately a tall, thin, somber-looking man, and beside him, a man in black with a ministerial collar stood with his hands folded.

“I’m Detective Sergeant Masuto. This is Detective Beckman and Officer Anderson, who will take the fingerprints. Since it’s almost seven o’clock, I think we should start immediately.”

“Yes—yes, indeed. You’ll be pleased to know that after your Captain Wainwright telephoned me, I had the gravediggers open the grave.”

“Have they removed the coffin?” Masuto demanded, annoyed.

“No, sir—oh, no. No, indeed. But they set up the sacre-lift, our name for the mechanism we use to lower the coffin and the loved one, and that means reeving the canvas straps under the coffin. You can’t just lift the coffin out of the grave—not a large bronze coffin that weighs a quarter of a ton.”

“Can we get on with it?”

“Certainly, certainly, Detective Masuto. Only one or two small matters. The gravediggers go off at four o’clock. That’s union rules—nothing I can do about that. Which means double time, fourteen dollars an hour, and I’m afraid you must sign this acknowledgment and order before I let you go to Mr. Mackenzie’s grave.” He held out a clipboard. Masuto scanned the paper, then signed it, wondering how Wainwright would respond to ninety dollars for the two gravediggers.

Beckman, standing behind Masuto and looking over his shoulder, answered the question. "He'll take our ass off, Masao."

"We don't get double overtime," Anderson said.

The director now removed the top contract from the clipboard and handed it back to Masuto.

"What's this?"

"The Reverend Peterson here," nodding at the man next to him. "It's cemetery policy that no grave should be opened or closed without an accredited clergyman present. Reverend Peterson's fee is only thirty dollars, little enough when you consider he's been waiting since our normal closing time of four o'clock. And may I remind you that I am taking no fee for my extra hours, but acting out of a devotion to a civilized and law-abiding country."

"For which we are grateful," Masuto said, signing a bill in which the City of Beverly Hills was charged for thirty dollars for the services of Reverend Avril Peterson. "Now, if you would please lead us to the Mackenzie grave, we can get this over with."

The director led the way, explaining that ordinarily, even with the judicial order, the close relatives would have to be notified. "We do not play dirty pool with the dearly beloved," he said, choosing, Masuto decided, a very odd metaphor indeed. "But do you know, Sergeant, Mr. Mackenzie had no relatives—close or otherwise, that is—after the death of his wife. What a pity that a man should live that way. Don't you think so, Reverend Peterson?"

"Oh, yes. The family is the rock of hope," Reverend Peterson said.

"All alone. No one. Do you know, I called the Fenwick Works. Lovely people. Such lovely, cooperative people. They put me through to the manager himself. There was no need for that. I simply asked for the personnel department, and they put me through to Mr. Soames." He turned to Masuto, who had stopped short.

"You called Fenwick and spoke to Mr. Soames?" Masuto said icily.

"Oh, yes—yes, indeed."

"And you told him why you were calling? That the Beverly Hills police were going to exhume the body?"

"Oh, yes. I didn't think it was a secret."

"And when did you do this?"

"After your Captain Wainwright called me. An hour ago?"

“It would take them almost an hour to drive here,” Beckman said.

“You spoke to Soames?” Masuto reminded him. “What exactly did you say to him?”

“What I said, of course.”

“Would you please repeat what you said as exactly as you can.” They were in sight of the grave now, a metal frame around it, a pile of fresh-dug dirt alongside and two gravediggers waiting. From some hidden loudspeaker, a baritone voice, muted, told anyone listening that “seated one day at the organ, I was weary and ill at ease, and my fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with anything,” the director protested.

“Let’s say out of your devotion to civilization, as you put it before. And isn’t there any way to turn off that damned voice?”

“It will stop automatically, Sergeant Masuto, and I am not surprised that an Oriental does not respond to so intrinsically Western a thing as *The Lost Chord*.”

“Of course. We all have limitations. To get back to Mr. Soames.”

“If you wish. I told him that I was attempting to locate Some relative of Mr. Robert Mackenzie. He asked why—oh, very politely—and I told him that Captain Wainwright of the Beverly Hills police had called me and informed me that Sergeant Masuto would be coming out to exhume the body and take fingerprints and that I might have the grave opened, since it was late in the day.”

“And what did he say to that?”

“Mr. Soames?”

“Yes, Mr. Soames.”

“Oh, he said that as far as he knew, Mr. Mackenzie had no relatives other than his wife—no blood relatives at all.”

“And that’s all?”

“Well, he did say that he was sorry I was being put to so much trouble.”

“Thoughtful of him,” Beckman said.

Now a great orange globe of a sun was sinking toward the hills that made the western wall of the San Fernando Valley, and Masuto said to Beckman, “Sy, get the coffin up and opened and get the

prints and let's get out of here before dark." He didn't add that Forest Lawn turned his stomach and offended every decent sensibility.

"Did Mr. Soames appear in any way disturbed?" he asked the cemetery director.

"I hardly think so."

Which, again, made Masuto wonder as he stared at the emerging coffin. They all moved closer to the grave and stood in silence as the coffin rose smoothly, cranked up by a pair of winches, hand operated by the two gravediggers. Finally the coffin hung on a level with the ground, and the gravediggers slid it off the mechanism.

"I hope your Officer Anderson has a strong stomach. These things can be upsetting."

"Open it," Masuto said to the gravediggers.

It was a large, ornate bronze coffin. It had four bolts on each side, and when they were removed and the heavy cover lifted, the men standing around were braced for horror and disgust. But aside from a profusion of quilted white silk and velvet, the coffin was empty.

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Wainwright was so intrigued by the empty coffin that he forgot to complain about overtime for the gravediggers. Abramson, the city manager, had been in to see Wainwright about illegal parking around some of the larger hotels, and when he heard about Masuto's expedition, he decided to await his return. Like Wainwright, the notion of the big bronze coffin being empty fascinated him.

"Who ordered the burial and paid for it?" Wainwright asked.

Masuto shook his head. He had been in Japan. Beckman said, "That was Eve Mackenzie."

"But why that coffin? You say it weighed a quarter of a ton."

"Because it would still carry heavy, even without the body."

"What does one of those things cost?"

"Plenty," Abramson said. "I just buried my mother-in-law. She was a religious lady and specified a plain wooden box, but I priced a few of the fancy ones. You could be buried in a Cadillac for that kind of money."

"Do you suppose we'll ever turn up the body, Masao?"

"No. They don't want the body or the prints found. They probably wrapped it in chains, took it out in a boat, and gave it to the sharks. No, we'll never see it."

"Why?" Abramson demanded. "You keep saying *they*, Sergeant. Who are they?"

"I don't know. I know what they do, and I'm beginning to understand how they think, but who they are—"

"And now, with the body gone, the murderer goes free?"

"No, not quite, Mr. Abramson. What they say about the absence of a corpse doesn't apply here. We know the murder was committed. It doesn't matter whether the body is buried at Forest Lawn or at the bottom of the Pacific."

"Then we can find the killer and convict him?"

"No, I don't think so."

“Masao,” Wainwright exploded, “is this another one of your damn tricks? Do you know who killed Mackenzie?”

“Even if I know, it doesn’t help. We have no evidence, and before we’re able to scrape some up, the killer will be dead.”

There was a long moment of silence while they all stared at Masuto, and then Wainwright said coldly, “What in hell are you talking about?”

Masuto was tired, close to exhaustion after a day that had been too long and too terrifying, and in no mood to argue or convince. “All things,” he said without enthusiasm, “have a pattern and a rhythm. We live in patterns and think in patterns and act in patterns. They have a pattern. Their minds are lazy but brutal. They kill for solutions. They act hastily. The charade in the bathtub was clumsy and hasty. They felt that the man in the tub was dangerous, so they killed him. Now they will kill the killer, because the killer is dangerous.”

“Goddamnit, Masao, if you know who it is, bring him in. We’ll cook up a charge.”

“We can’t do that,” Abramson said. “Not in Beverly Hills, Captain Wainwright. You know that.”

“It wouldn’t matter,” Masuto said moodily.

“The hell with it,” Wainwright said. “Let’s call it a day.”

“The mechanic’s still there,” Abramson told them. “He’ll check your cars.”

Walking out of the police station with Beckman, Masuto asked him, “About Mackenzie’s birthplace—did you say Glasgow?”

“Edinburgh.”

“Where did you get that?”

“From Mrs. Scott. Fenwick confirmed it.”

“Ah, so! Very interesting. That they gave you, but not the fingerprints. Did you also get the date he arrived in America?”

“Nineteen sixty-one. He was thirty-one.”

“Also from Fenwick?”

“Oh, yes. They were cooperative.”

The mechanic informed them that both of their cars were clean.

“I’ll see you in the morning, Sy,” Masuto said.

“By the way, I almost forgot. Polly said Doc Baxter would like to see you. He’ll be working late. This late—well, I don’t know.”

It was enough to prompt Masuto to drive to All Saints Hospital. In any case, he had no place to go. His home was empty; his wife and children were with Uncle Toda in San Fernando. It was a new situation for him. He was very much a householder, and his little cottage in Culver City was his rock. Now, suddenly, he was alone, homeless, for he had no desire to go home and sleep in an empty house—a place at this moment not only empty but very dangerous.

At the pathology room in the basement of All Saints a lonely figure sat at a laboratory table under a bright light; peering into a microscope. In all the years he had worked with Dr. Baxter, Masuto had never inquired as to whether the small, bitter medical examiner had a wife or a family. That was poor human behavior on his own part, he told himself, and even worse Zen behavior—at which point in Masuto’s thinking, the doctor looked up and said, “It took you long enough to get here, my Oriental Sherlock. Did you expect me to wait all night?”

“You mean you were actually waiting for me?”

“I wasn’t sitting here whistling Dixie. Now, listen to me. I was letting you and your boss, the brilliant Wainwright, who is possibly brain-damaged according to his behavior, run around in circles, and then my conscience took over and I reminded myself that we’re on the same side. The point is, Masuto, you don’t need an autopsy for what you want. I simply took some blood from Mrs. Mackenzie and I ran a lot of tests. She was not poisoned or drugged, unless you think of alcohol as both of those things, which it is. Eve Mackenzie was drunk—sodden, stinking drunk. She was absolutely loaded—with nothing but alcohol. Now, if you’re going to ask me whether she could drive a car in her condition—well, I would have to know what kind of a drunk she was.”

“You just told me that,” Masuto protested.

“No, sir. I told you how much alcohol there was in her blood. What kind of a drunk she was is something else. There are folks who have that kind of alcohol level in their blood, and they would get up out of a chair and fall flat on their face. Someone else walks away and you

don't even know he's loaded. Tell me, did her sister approve the autopsy?"

"No."

"Now you know why."

"You mean her sister knew she was an alcoholic, and she figured now that Eve is dead there's no need for the world to know."

"That would be my guess."

"And you think she could get in her car, start the motor, drive two or three miles, and then pass out?"

"Absolutely."

"And you feel nothing more could be gained by an autopsy?"

Baxter shrugged. "What more do you want? Conceivable but not likely. I don't think she had any drugs. The liquor did it."

Masuto thanked him. "I'm very grateful."

"Tell that to Abramson. Remind him that what I'm paid by the richest city in America is a national disgrace."



Back in his car, Masuto sat and brooded. He reminded himself of an ancient Zen story. The student comes to the Zen master and says to him, “Master, my father sends me here to study Zen, but why should I study Zen?” To which the Roshi replies, “So that when the times comes, you will not be afraid to die.”

Masuto did not know whether or not he was afraid to die. The times when he faced death left no moments for reflection, and he had always considered himself a very poor Zen Buddhist; but he was also a practical person, and he felt that to go home to his house in Culver City tonight would be foolhardy indeed. Instead, he drove downtown, taking precautions to see that he was not followed.

It was almost eleven o'clock when he reached the Zendo in downtown Los Angeles. The door to the meditation hall was always open, and he went in there, taking off his shoes first. The meditation hall was thirty feet long and twelve feet wide. Running the length of the room on either side, there was a section five feet wide and raised six inches from the ground. A single lamp lit the polished wood of the hall with a soft, flickering radiance.

Masuto took a pillow and mat from where they were piled at the end of the hall, set the small round pillow on the mat, took off his jacket, loosened his belt, and then settled himself into the lotus position. He began his meditation, and then found himself falling asleep. The soft light in the long empty hall had a hypnotic effect, and it had been an endless day since the bomb planted in his car blew Officer Clint into eternity. He fought to stay awake. Another Zen tale told of the monk who, having slept through his meditation, cut his eyelids off in remorse. A story Masuto hated, but which came to his mind now as he fought to remain awake—even resorting to the device of counting each breath.

It did not help, and a voice speaking in Japanese reached into his consciousness, saying, “Masao, Masao, what must I think to see a

man pretending to meditate and sound asleep, with a gun under his arm in this place where no weapon is permitted?”

It was always difficult for Masuto to understand Japanese, and coming out of sleep even more difficult; and now he could only mumble, “Roshi, I slept in my meditation.”

“It is past midnight,” the old man who was the Roshi there told him. “Go home and sleep, Masao.”

“I sent my wife and children away. My home is a dangerous place.”

The old man shook his head unhappily. “Why must you earn a living this way, Masao?”

“It is my karma.”

“Don’t talk nonsense to me!” he snapped. “It is your choice. Now, come to my house and I’ll spread a mat on the floor for you. Sleep is not meditation, and I think you need sleep more.”

Masuto slept well on the floor of the little house behind the Zendo hall, and in the morning, after a bowl of rice and several cups of tea, he looked upon the world more cheerfully. He put through a call to Kati, who informed him that Uruga and Ana were already swimming in the holding pond and very happy, and Uncle Toda and his wife were darling to them, but that she, Kati, wanted to be home with her husband where she properly belonged.

“Another few days,” Masuto promised her.

“And you will be careful. Every time I think of the work you do, I die a little.”

“I am the most careful man in California.”

Since he was already in downtown Los Angeles, he stopped off at Fred Toyota’s place for a shave. Toyota was a cousin of Kati’s three or four times removed, somewhere in the tangle of relationships that Japanese families clung to, a plump, birdlike little man, who guessed that it was the Zendo that had brought Masuto down here “where a haircut is still five dollars—and just as good as the thirty-dollar cuts in Beverly Hills. But myself, Masao, I’m a Presbyterian. I have given up that old-country nonsense—”

“Very commendable. I’m in a hurry.”

“When I shave, I talk.”

Humbled but clean-shaven, Masuto drove to the police station in Beverly Hills. Beckman was sitting in his office, feet up on his desk,

reading the sports section of the *Los Angeles Times*, and he greeted Masuto with the proposition that one can't say never. "I mean, Masao, that if anyone had told me that football players would form a union and strike, I would have said never. Absolutely never."

"You're right," Masuto said. "You can't say never. Now, tell me something. What's the situation at the Mackenzie house? From the time of his murder."

"You know," Beckman said, dropping his feet and putting the newspaper aside, "I never thought of that. It is goddamn strange."

"What is?"

"Well, look—you heard the testimony the other day in court. The whole damn thing was Feona Scott's little ploy. Suppose Eve Mackenzie could have been found guilty. It would have been Scott who put her away. But Eve was out on bail, and there they were, both of them living in the Mackenzie house."

"You're sure of that?"

"Yeah—"

"And you never thought it strange before?"

"I suppose I should have. But nothing in this case makes sense."

"Or everything. I'll tell you what I want you to do, Sy. Go out to Santa Monica and see Judge Simpkins and get a search warrant for the Mackenzie house. Then go in there and find something that will give us a break in this case."

"What?"

"I don't know. But there has to be something in that house that will shed a little light on the fact that a man who isn't Robert Mackenzie but who everyone wants to dispose of as Robert Mackenzie is murdered in a crazy Rube Goldberg manner, and everyone—accused, accusers—everyone loves everyone, except that someone wants to kill anyone who puts his nose into it. So, damn it, be careful! We've Clint's funeral tomorrow. I don't want to go to yours the next day."

"Where will you be?"

"I'm going across to the library, and then I'll be back here."

The Beverly Hills library is unique, one of the finest public libraries in California, and housed in a splendid building across the street from the police station. The quality of the library grew out of two

things; the wealth of the town, and the patronage of motion picture and television people, who needed a well-equipped library close at hand. At the cost of twenty-five dollars a year, a non-resident could be a member, but Masuto's membership derived from his job. He was an assiduous reader and a familiar figure at the library, especially to Miss Clarissa Jones. Miss Jones confirmed Masuto's belief that marriages should be arranged. Miss Jones, slender, very attractive behind her glasses, tall, and possessed of a decent sense of humor, was still unmarried at age thirty-seven because, as she put it, she had never gotten around to it. Masuto always thought of it as a tragic waste, and even today the thought crossed his mind as he informed Miss Jones, the librarian he most preferred, that he was interested in Scotland.

"Scotland, Sergeant? That's a large subject. We must have two hundred books on Scotland. Have you ever been there?"

Masuto shook his head. "Not England, not Scotland. I am very insular, Miss Jones."

"I don't believe that for a minute. Suppose we narrow it down. Where in Scotland—or just Scotland?"

"Edinburgh."

"Well, you've just lucked out, Sergeant. I took my vacation last month, and a week of it was in Edinburgh. Shall I inform you, or do you want a book?"

"I haven't time for a book."

Miss Jones whispered a few words to another lady behind the desk, and then led Masuto to a table. "All right, here goes for a quick rundown on Edinburgh. Ask away."

"How large?"

"Half a million people."

"Crime?"

"Not so I noticed, but you might say that in L.A. too, if you were a tourist. Not too much, I'd say."

"Nice people?"

"Delightful, but I'm prejudiced. I'm half Welsh and half Scot."

"Factory town?"

"No, no, indeed. That would be Glasgow. I felt that Edinburgh was one of the loveliest cities I've ever seen. A great old castle sits above

the town, and its location on the Firth of Forth is simply splendid.”

“And what about hospitals, medical places? Are they up-to-date?”

“Sergeant, you really don’t know much about Scotland. It’s not a wild, primitive place, and except for festivals they don’t wear kilts, and they really are absolutely civilized. Their hospitals are as good, as any in Europe, and in many areas of medicine they have led the world. You should know that both the Welsh and the Scots are very smart people.”

“I’m delighted to hear that. Then you don’t think it would be ridiculous on my part to call the chief of police in Edinburgh and ask about records half a century old?”

“Wow. Is that what you’re going to do?”

“I’m thinking about it.”

“Not ridiculous at all. But listen carefully, Sergeant. They have a very peculiar accent.”

Wainwright, on the other hand, stared at Masuto glumly and asked why he couldn’t send a telex.

“I have to talk to him, and then he’ll have to call me back.”

“To the tune of how much?”

“I don’t know—fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty—I just can’t say.”

“We blew a bundle on those damn gravediggers and came up with nothing.”

“Not really nothing. We know the grave is empty.”

“That’ll buy you a stale taco and a flat beer. What pisses me off, Masao, is that I sit here and you stand there and play games about knowing who’s running this show—”

“I don’t know who’s running it. All I can do is make an educated guess about who killed Mackenzie.”

“Then educate me, goddamnit!” Wainwright shouted.

“All right. I think that Feona Scott killed him—and it’s not Mackenzie. We keep saying Mackenzie. It’s another man.”

Wainwright pursed his lips and whistled softly. “Feona Scott.” He stared with interest at Masuto. “Why Feona Scott?”

“That’s it. As I told you, I don’t have enough evidence to fill a thimble.”

“Then just put it together so that it makes some sense to me, Masao, because the way it is it don’t make one damn bit of sense.”

“All right. But keep in mind that this is a creation out of the whole cloth. I don’t know what happened there at the Mackenzie house that night any more than you do, but I think I see a pattern and I try to fill in on the pattern. Mackenzie, I think, is not home. That’s only a guess, because regardless of what Mackenzie is—and I’ve come to think of him as a cold-blooded bastard—I don’t see him moving behind his twin brother and knocking him out with some kind of blunt object. Not that he couldn’t kill, but differently. Eve is out of the picture. She was an alcoholic according to Doc Baxter, and that wonderful calm and dignity of hers was probably a habit of desperate concentration to keep from falling over. So that leaves Feona, and I’m quite certain she knocked out the man in the tub.”

“And how did she get him into the tub? Granted she’s a strong, well-built woman, maybe five foot seven or eight, but Mackenzie weighed over two hundred pounds. I saw the body, Masao. Someone had to undress him and then put him in the tub.”

“Not Mackenzie—the twin. We go on with my invention. Mackenzie comes back. The twin is lying there—”

“There was a skull fracture,” Wainwright remembered. “He was zapped good and hard.”

“Feona has been reading Eve’s notebook, which makes more sense as the creation of a drunken mind. She shows the notebook to Mackenzie or he already knows about it. Let’s put him into the tub and electrocute him. Follow Eve’s formula and Eve has to be charged with the murder.”

“Which they must have known would not stand up.”

“They needed time,” Masuto said. “And they had certain problems. They had to get rid of the twin’s body or his clothes. The clothes were easier, and since they couldn’t get rid of the body, they left it in the tub and Mackenzie decided to vanish.”

“Why? You can’t have it that they couldn’t get rid of the body, Masao. No, sir. They could have put it in a car and driven somewhere and dumped it.”

“Yes.”

“Well, damn it, what is it? Yes or no?”

“It could be one of two things. Either they couldn’t get rid of the body or they didn’t want to. From here on, there’s just too much lunacy and uncertainty attached to it. Mackenzie goes to Soames and Fenwick and tells him that he and Feona just murdered his twin brother and framed his wife, Eve, as the killer. Soames understands and approves of this, and he gets all sorts of important people in Washington to jump in and insist that Eve be tried for a crime she could never be convicted of. Eve agrees and accepts the Fenwick lawyer as her defender. The judge decides to throw out the case. Eve has dinner in the Fenwick dining room at Malibu and gets so drunk she drives her car over a cliff and kills herself and when Beckman drives up to Montecito to talk to her sister, who does he see as he is leaving?”

“You tell me.”

“Mark Geffner.”

“No. No, that’s too much.”

“Nothing is too much. This whole thing is framed in lunacy.”

“And you still feel that Feona Scott will be killed?”

“I’m afraid so,” Masuto admitted. “There’s a cold-blooded killer at work here. I’ve been thinking about what you said. What can we do?”

“Truthfully, not much. You know how Abramson feels about false arrest. And suppose we did arrest her. Her lawyer would have her out of jail in an hour. We could put a cop outside the house—”

Masuto shook his head. “That won’t help. By the way, who is her lawyer—well, I mean the Mackenzies’ lawyer?”

Wainwright furrowed his brow. “If I remember correctly, it was Dave Pringle.”

“But Henry Cassell defended her.”

“Yes. Pringle’s a theatrical lawyer. I suppose if we picked up Feona, Cassell would come around—or maybe not. I don’t know. But if we’re going to arrest her, we need enough concrete evidence to convince Abramson that we’re not just making a grandstand play.”

“Yes, I’ll try. Meanwhile—”

“Meanwhile, hell. You drop a bombshell about Geffner and then walk out?”

“No, sir. All I know about Geffner is what Beckman told me. He was driving out; Geffner was driving in.”

“Did you talk to Geffner?”

“Captain, I returned to Beverly Hills four days ago. Since then, my car has been blown up, someone tried to send me over a cliff in Malibu, I’ve had to send my wife and children away, I dug up an empty coffin, and I haven’t changed my clothes in two days. No, I haven’t spoken to Geffner.”

“I’m not pushing you, Masao.”

“No, I’m pushing because I want to stay alive. What about this call to Scotland?”

“Okay, okay. You got it.”



But first Masuto looked up Dave Pringle's number and called the lawyer and got through to him without any problem and told him that they were reopening the Mackenzie case.

"I'm glad," Pringle said. "I'm damn glad. And I hope that at the same time you're giving attention to the very strange death of Mrs. Mackenzie. I find the accident that killed her very disturbing. You must know, Detective Masuto, that she was my client, not her husband."

"Yes, I do know that. I have a very strong feeling that a deal of some sort was made with Mrs. Mackenzie, and that she agreed not to fight the indictment in return for—well, I don't know what for. But my feeling is that in return for her silence as to who the man in the tub actually was and in return for her being on trial, it was agreed by Cassell that there would be no contest over her husband's estate. Was Mr. Mackenzie a wealthy man?"

"You appear to know a great deal, Detective Masuto, but before I continue, I would like you to hang up, and I'll call back."

"That's reasonable," Masuto agreed.

Almost five minutes passed before Masuto's phone rang. It was Polly at the switchboard, who said, "Masao, Pringle, the lawyer. He wanted to know everything about you from day one. I'm giving him to you now."

"Sergeant," Pringle said, "how much do you actually know about Eve Mackenzie?"

"I know she was an alcoholic."

"Yes. Well, we tried to keep it a secret and we succeeded pretty well. But she hadn't worked in years, and she had no future in films—poor thing. So many of us loved her, and there was absolutely nothing we could do. There is nothing as awful as giving your heart to an alcoholic. Now, you asked me before whether Mackenzie was a wealthy man. Hardly. He had no money to speak of, although

Fenwick paid him a hundred thousand a year. He was a mean, vicious bastard, and if I speak ill of the dead, I do so deliberately. The only kind thing you could say about him is that he left Eve alone and that he did not throw her out. It was his house, and I suspect that there were reasons I don't know for his keeping her there. They never entertained, and the Scott woman was apparently, according to Eve, his mistress. Eve had made a good deal of money in films when she was a star and much in demand, and I did try to husband it, but it was hopeless. She threw it away. The car in which she died used up her last bit of personal funds."

"And the man in the tub?"

"Mackenzie's twin brother. But she told me this under a pledge of silence as her lawyer."

"Then why did she go on trial?"

"Because Soames, the manager at Fenwick, offered her fifty thousand dollars to accept the indictment and keep quiet about the twin brother. He assured her that the case would be thrown out of court, and I agreed with that judgment. Mackenzie also signed a new will, which they back-dated, and which leaves the house and a good packet of stock options in Fenwick to Eve. I did not learn about this until after the fact and I was sworn to silence. It was privileged. I would not be telling you this now had it not been for Eve's death the day before yesterday. Poor girl, I wanted desperately for her to have some security, to have the house and a few dollars. Now I feel that this is information the police should have."

"Mr. Pringle," Masuto said slowly, "I'm not trying to be dramatic or to alarm you unnecessarily, but unless you take precautions, an attempt will be made on your life, and very possibly a successful one."

"Come on, Sergeant. I'm a lawyer. I've been involved in legal matters, that's all."

"You have been given very dangerous information. Too dangerous."

"I don't believe that at all. But since you're so sure I'm in danger, what do you think I should do?"

"Yes, I will tell you what to do. The moment we finish, call the *Los Angeles Times*. Give them the whole story, every word, every detail.

They'll run it on the front page, and if you live until the paper appears tomorrow, you're safe."

"Sergeant, I can't do that. Look at the position it puts me in. And what does it do to Eve's memory? I would betray her."

"You betrayed her the day you allowed her to go into that stupid charade," Masuto said harshly.

"You can't talk to me like that."

"Why not? You can hang up and brush me off as another arrogant cop. But you're still the target."

"What can I do?"

"Pack a bag, get out to the airport without being followed, and take the next plane to San Francisco. And try to understand what I'm telling you. Eve Mackenzie took you into her confidence, and the information she gave you is dangerous. Now, it's true that I know what you know, and Captain Wainwright knows it too, but the killer isn't aware of that. Go away for a few days."

"I'll think about it."

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"No, Sergeant. I'm afraid not."

"Well, let's say I've done my civic duty."

"If you wish, Sergeant!"

Of course, Masuto said to himself. He'd be a fool to believe me. People don't go around killing people senselessly, not in Beverly Hills.

He went into Wainwright's office and asked him whether he knew what time it was in Scotland.

"Haven't you made that call yet?"

"I was talking to Pringle, the lawyer."

"My guess would be somewhere between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. What about Pringle?"

"You know, English is a remarkable language. I don't think there's any word in Japanese that's precisely the equivalent of horse's ass, which you can be and still get through law school."

"What the hell does all that mean?" Wainwright demanded.

"It means that Soames, the manager at Fenwick, offered Eve Mackenzie fifty thousand dollars to keep her mouth shut about the man in the tub being Mackenzie's twin brother and to go on trial until

the case was thrown out of court, and this damn fool, Pringle, advised her to accept the offer. And then, when I told him that he knew too much and might be a target, he refused to believe me.”

“How about me refusing to believe you?”

“I wouldn’t blame you.”

“We live in a world of idiots, Masao.”

“It’s the occupational, disease of the human race, but if we could put a uniform in front of his building for the next day or two, it might help keep him alive. His office is in Beverly Hills?”

“Four-fifty North Roxbury. But that means putting a man on overtime.”

“Let’s be spendthrifts.”

“Yeah, what the hell, this case is tearing our budget to shreds, so we might as well go all the way, and I got to have a meeting with Abramson and the city attorney. We never had anything like this before. What the devil was Soames up to with a crazy play like that? And was he breaking the law or not—and who put the body away? I can’t make head or tail of this twin-brother business. Can you?”

“I get a glimmer, but then it won’t stay with me.”

“You know, Masao, I think you got to go out there to Fenwick and put it to Soames just flat out—how about the payment and who in hell cut the brake lines on Geffner’s car?”

“I was thinking of that. Of course, they’ll deny everything, and with Eve dead—”

“And I want to know what the devil Geffner was doing with her sister.”

“That’s touchy too. We have no right to question Geffner about anything in Montecito.”

“It ties in, doesn’t it?”

“Sort of. I suppose I can talk to Geffner.”

As he was leaving the room, Wainwright said to Masao, “Tomorrow’s poor Clint’s funeral. Ten o’clock, Church of Our Lady. He’s the first man killed on the force in five years, and it hasn’t been nice, Masao. It surely hasn’t been nice.”

“I have my own guilts.”

“Stifle your guilts. You didn’t know the car was wired any more than he did.”

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Masuto told the operator that he did not know the man's name, but that Edinburgh, like any other city, must have a chief of police. The operator was not at all sure that there was anyone with that title, and Masuto said he would settle for police headquarters. When a voice with a heavy burr informed him that this was Edinburgh Police, Masuto gave his own title and rank and said that he was calling from police headquarters in Beverly Hills, and since the police station was also by default police headquarters, Masuto was not straying from the fact. After a long, long pause, which Masuto estimated cost the City of Beverly Hills at least five dollars, another voice told him that he was speaking to Inspector Angus Macready.

"Now, are you putting me on?" Macready said to him. "Or am I really speaking to a policeman in Beverly Hills? Because, laddie, if this is your notion of a bloody joke, you will regret it."

"No joke, sir. I am Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto of the Beverly Hills police force."

"Devil take me! What kind of a name is that?"

"Japanese name because my parents were Japanese."

"Would you spell it?"

"Masuto. M-a-s-u-t-o."

"And you're actually a policeman there in Beverly Hills?"

"Yes, absolutely."

"Well, I will be damned! I cannot wait to tell my wife—Beverly Hills."

"Inspector," Masuto began.

"Tell me something. Suppose there I am, walking down the street in Beverly Hills, would I be likely to meet—oh, say, Paul Newman?"

"It could happen, yes. But, Inspector—"

"Robert Redford? Now, there's someone I'd like to meet. Now, suppose my wife and I were to take one of those package trips—"

“Inspector,” Masuto said firmly, “I am calling on a most important police matter.”

“Of course. Sorry. It’s a habit of thinking Americans are very rich.”

“We are a small police department with a limited budget, and we are required to account for every long distance call. I would love to chat with you about Beverly Hills, but—”

“Of course. Please, I must apologize. What can I do for you, Sergeant—is it Masuto?”

“Masuto.”

“Odd name. Well, here I am at your service.”

“Thank you. I have a rather peculiar request, Inspector, but important in a homicide investigation we are conducting. I want to know whether in the year nineteen thirty twins were born to a couple named Mackenzie, or to several couples with that name, and if possible, what has been the history of those twins.”

“That’s it?”

“Just about.”

“Well, that’s a tall order, Sergeant. Mackenzie’s a common name in Edinburgh, but truthfully I have no notion of how common twins are.”

“Can it be done?”

“If our hospitals were computerized, it would be the work of an hour or so. I’m not sure myself what condition the records are in or if they ever segregated the twins. It does mean putting manpower into it, and since it is not a local matter, we should have to charge you.”

“How much?”

“Say I put a man on it, and say the job takes three days. It has to be overtime because we’re pretty tight. Could you put out six pounds an hour?”

“In dollars?”

“About eleven dollars an hour.”

Masuto sighed and shook his head. “Tell me something, Inspector. Why must we go to the hospitals? Don’t you have a city hall of some kind in Edinburgh where every birth is noted and filed? How do you people get birth certificates for passports and that kind of thing?”

“Well, sure, lad, we have a town hall. We are not savages out here.”

“Oh, no,” Masuto said quickly. “I didn’t mean that at all. But wouldn’t they have birth records?”

“And how would you know if they were twins or not?”

“If you give me the number, I’ll try.”

Masuto jotted down the number and thanked the inspector and then called the operator for charges.

“Forty-two dollars and fifty cents,” the operator said.

Masuto took a deep breath and then put through his call to the Town Hall at Edinburgh. He asked for birth records, and a cheerful feminine voice told him that he had reached the proper destination.

“This is Mrs. Gordon. What can I do for you?”

“My name is Masao Masuto, detective sergeant on the Beverly Hills police force. I am calling from California on a very important police matter which has to do with a homicide.” He got it all out in one breath, pressured by the fact that this was the second call and he had absolutely nothing.

“How exciting! Beverly Hills!” He was becoming used to the Scottish burr and had to strain less hard to understand it. But if he had heard the accent in California, he realized, he very likely would not have known that it was Scottish.

“And your name is Japanese,” Mrs. Gordon went on. “We had three seminars on Japanese influences in California and Hawaii. Absolutely fascinating. And since you have no accent except your American one, you must be a Nisei, as they say, and on the police force in Beverly Hills.” Mrs. Gordon did not bother to explain the seminars, or what they were, or where they were, but plunged right on into the wonders of long distance telephoning. “Because I do hear you as clearly as if you were in the next room—”

“Mrs. Gordon,” he begged her, “this is an urgent police matter.”

“Of course. But before you say another word—I’m not sworn to silence, am I? I can tell my friends?”

“Absolutely. Now, here’s the problem. I have to know whether in the year nineteen thirty, twins were born in Edinburgh to a woman whose name was Mackenzie.”

“Would you know the twins’ names?”

“One was named Robert. The name of the other I don’t know.”

“No problem. We file the birth proof alphabetically within each year. Oh, it might take ten minutes.”

“Really. And would it take much longer for the years twenty-eight and twenty-nine?”

“A few minutes more.”

“You know, Mrs. Gordon, I got through with a bit of luck. The overseas operator said it might take an hour or so, but somehow I did get right through. If we keep this connection open, do you suppose you can come up with the information in ten minutes—all three years?”

“I think so.”

“I’ll hang on. Go to it and bless you.”

Masuto sat at his desk, phone in hand, staring at his wristwatch and hoping that Wainwright would not appear and demand to know what he was up to.

It did not take ten minutes. Nine minutes by his watch, the cheerful voice of Mrs. Gordon called him out of his reverie. “Sergeant Masuto—I am pronouncing it right, Masuto?”

“Yes, Mrs. Gordon.”

“No heather on the hills, as we say. Dry run. No Mackenzie twins in twenty-eight, twenty-nine, or thirty, not a one. I have Macwortels, Stevenson, Cavendish, MacSwains—just changed on all those. But no Mackenzie twins, and we do have a lot of Mackenzies here in Edinburgh. Are you terribly disappointed?”

“Not at all,” Masuto said. “It’s what I expected, and you are a charming and generous lady.”

The charges, Masuto learned from the operator, came to sixty-three dollars and sixty cents, and since he felt that a man must face what he must face, he went to Wainwright’s office.

“How much?”

“Two calls. Forty-two dollars and fifty cents and sixty-three dollars and sixty cents.”

“Two calls.”

“This,” Masuto said, trying to control himself, “is the richest city in the world.”

“I know that. I’m not taking it out of your pay.”

“Thank you.”



“What did you learn?”

“The Mackenzie twins were not born in Edinburgh, unless their name was some other than Mackenzie. Not in Scotland, I’m willing to swear. Captain, you’re always burned up when I say I know something and I don’t have a shred of proof to back it up. I knew Mackenzie was not a Scot, but I had to have some confirmation. Sure, he could have come from Glasgow or some other Scottish city, but if he did, why lie and say Edinburgh?”

“All right, if that’s what you wanted and you need it, you got your hundred dollars worth. I don’t see it, but it’s your case. What now?”

“Fenwick. I have to talk to Soames.”

“You watch your step, Masao. There’s money and power and the Pentagon involved with Fenwick. You don’t play games.”

“I have no death wish. I may feel guilty as hell that poor Clint died in my car, but I have no wish to join him.”

“Yes, but when you go up there, Masao, you’re on your own. I can’t send any cops up there with you. The sheriff’s department would eat my ass off. He’s always screaming that his four thousand deputies are as good as any cops. That’s bullshit. I wouldn’t leave it to his deputies to track a diarrhea victim to an outhouse, and if the deputies miss you, there’s the highway patrol.” He spread his hands. “We’re a small city with a handful of cops and we’re surrounded.”

“I’ll be careful.”

The telephone in his own office was ringing. It was Beckman, and he told Masuto that he finally got Judge Simpkins's signature on the search warrant.

"Should I head in to the Mackenzie place now, Masao?"

"No, I'd rather we did it together. Anyway, I need a little life insurance. I'm going up to see Soames at Fenwick. Give me an hour, and then drive up there and tell them you were to meet me there. If they put you off or tell you that you can't see me or tell you that I left before you got there, you raise all kinds of hell. But don't go busting in there. Get the captain on your radio and tell him what happened and then sit tight."

"You got to be crazy, Masao. Let's go in there together."

"I'm not crazy and I don't think anything's going to happen and I think they'll be as polite as punch. So just do as I say, Sy. Wait an hour and then drive up there, which will give me thirty or forty minutes with Mr. Soames."

Downstairs, the city mechanic was leaning against Masuto's borrowed Ford. "I been waiting for you, Sergeant," he said. "There are three places they're likely to put a bomb, under the hood—" he raised the engine hood "—here or here. Mostly they don't trigger it to the hood, but to the ignition, but even so, I'd raise the hood very slow, looking for wires." He then got down on his knees and pointed under the car. "Place number two—right there under your seat. And place number three, back there against the gas tank. Then you really go out in a blaze of glory. You know what I would do if I were in your shoes, Sergeant?"

"Tell me."

"You know, the people in the mob, they live with this kind of thing, so they developed a piece of mechanism small enough to fit in your pocket. You can stand a hundred feet from your car and turn on the

ignition. You can buy it for forty-five bucks downtown in Meyer's Hardware, and if you ask me, the department ought to pay for it."

It had never occurred to Masuto that one could live like this for a lifetime. He thanked the mechanic and drove off. An hour later he was on the approach road to the Fenwick Works.

Begun forty years ago by Lyson Fenwick, who owned some four thousand acres of the hills to the east of Malibu Beach, the Fenwick Works was devoted at first to his dream of a plane with vertical takeoff. After Fenwick's death, the direction of the plant was switched to esoteric guidance systems, bombsights, and target-seeking missiles. The plant, a complex of white stone buildings, was situated on a high bluff, overlooking the Pacific in one direction and the canyons of the coastal range on the other. The approach road, twisting up toward the plant, reminded Masuto of pictures of medieval castles, and the twelve-foot-high chain link fence that surrounded the place and the two ten-foot guardposts that flanked the gates did nothing to lessen the feeling. Two men, dressed in the gray uniforms of private guards, each of them armed with a holstered pistol, stopped his car and asked, very politely, what his business might be.

He identified himself and said that he wished to see Mr. Soames.

"Do you have an appointment?"

"I'm afraid not."

"You're a long way from Beverly Hills," the other guard said.

"Suppose you call Mr. Soames and tell him I'm here."

The two guards stared at him, their faces blank. There are no intelligence tests for armed guards, and Masuto could almost follow their laborious attempt to figure out which would bring them the good conduct medals, roughing him up and turning him away or calling Soames's assistant, since Soames was beyond their level of direct approach. They decided for the latter and used the telephone, and then they opened the gate and told Masuto, "The big building on the left. Just park opposite and go in. Someone will meet you. Pin this on your lapel." He handed Masuto a badge while the other guard stuck a card on the Ford's windshield.

Masuto parked his car in the paved area opposite the big building that formed the center of the complex, and then he walked toward

the entrance. As he approached the double doors, they opened and a pretty, young blond woman stepped out, smiled, and informed him that he was Sergeant Masuto. Masuto agreed with her conclusion, and nodded.

"I'm Marion Phelps, Mr. Soames's secretary. He asked me to escort you to his office."

"That's very thoughtful of him," Masuto said.

"Mr. Soames is a very thoughtful man."

That ended their conversation. They entered the building, where Miss Phelps smiled at an armed guard who sat at a table covered with lights that blinked on and off, panels of switches, and two telephones; and then they turned to the left and went through a pair of glass doors into a room furnished in what might be called industrial modern: leather and metal chairs and couches, chrome, and polished stainless steel.

"If you will wait here just a moment," Miss Phelps said.

Masuto remained standing, and it was no more than a minute until Soames appeared. He was absolutely genial. He shook hands with Masuto. "Glad you finally turned up," he said. "I consider it an experience. Your reputation goes before you."

"We have reopened the Mackenzie case," Masuto said with stiff formality.

Soames looked at his watch. He was one of those large, good-looking men who had learned and mastered all the gradations and inflections of graciousness, and who knew how and when to use them. "It's twelve-forty," he said. "I usually don't lunch until one, but I'm sure you're hungry, Sergeant, and it gives us time for one drink. We have our own dining room here, and I don't think I'm boasting when I say that we set the best table in southern California."

"I'm sure you do," Masuto agreed, "and I'm most grateful. But I have luncheon plans, so why don't we use the twenty minutes to talk."

Soames regarded him thoughtfully before he said, "As you wish. My office is through this door."

The office was large but not opulent. If anything, it was, Masuto decided, expensively severe. On the desk, no pictures of wife or child, and on the walls, large abstract paintings in tones of blue and

gray. A controlled man, a man who never let the situation get out of hand. There would be no anger today, no rage, no raised voices.

“Please sit down, Sergeant,” Soames said. “Do you smoke? I have excellent Cubans, Romeo and Juliet, if you’re a cigar smoker. Or a cigarette?”

“Thank you. I don’t smoke.”

“And I am sure that you’d refuse a drink. Ascetics have always puzzled me.”

“I’m not an ascetic. I don’t drink on duty.”

“Of course. Then it’s not a part of being a Zen Buddhist?”

Masuto smiled. “Did you have me investigated, Mr. Soames? Do you also know my tastes in travel and women?”

“In any area that concerns us, we inform ourselves.”

“Yes, I am sure. But since your time is limited, could we get to the substance of what brought me here?”

“Of course.”

“You know who David Pringle is?”

“Yes. Of course. He’s a theatrical lawyer who took care of poor Eve’s affairs.”

“I spoke to him this morning. He told me a number of things that confirmed my own conclusions. Mine were simply conclusions from scanty evidence. He spoke of what he knew. He told me that the dead man in the bathtub in the Mackenzie home was not the Mackenzie you employ but his twin brother.”

“Oh?”

“You don’t appear surprised. But of course you knew that.”

“What else did Mr. Pringle tell you?”

“That you offered Mrs. Mackenzie fifty thousand dollars not to reveal this and to accept an indictment and trial. And incidentally, if anything happens to Mr. Pringle—well, let me simply say that we will find the perpetrator.”

“That’s rather dramatic, isn’t it, Sergeant?”

“Did you know the body was not Robert Mackenzie?”

“Yes, we knew.”

“Where was Mr. Mackenzie?”

“He was in Canada the night his brother was murdered, so he could not have been involved.”

“Where in Canada?” Masuto demanded.

“I can’t tell you that.”

“Why was he in Canada?”

“I can’t tell you that either. It has nothing to do with this matter.”

“I think it has.”

“That’s your privilege, Sergeant.”

“Did you offer Mrs. Mackenzie fifty thousand dollars to stand trial?”

“Of course not. Think about it, Sergeant. It’s absolutely absurd.”

“Then Pringle was lying?”

Soames leaned back in his chair and stared at Masuto thoughtfully. Then he spread his hands. “All right, but this is confidential, sir, on your honor as a gentleman. Anyway, the poor woman’s dead. Eve Mackenzie was a hopeless alcoholic, but the kind of alcoholic who could go about things and give the appearance of being cold sober. She always moved very slowly, which gave her an appearance of great dignity. Now, she could tell her lawyer or anyone else anything, invent anything. You’re not surprised?”

“I knew she was an alcoholic.”

“That answers your question.”

Masuto shook his head. “Hardly. Tell me, Mr. Soames, did you know that Robert Mackenzie’s name was not Robert Mackenzie and that he was not born in Edinburgh?”

Soames looked at his watch. “Just one o’clock, Sergeant. Are you sure you won’t break bread with us?”

“I think not.”

“Do you know, Sergeant,” Soames said, “a wise man knows when to stop asking questions. A wise man knows when a nuisance becomes an impediment. Don’t press your luck.”

“That’s not a threat, is it?”

Soames laughed. “Would I engage in threats? Sergeant, even a man so experienced as yourself falls into the trap of believing the nonsense one sees in films and on television. We don’t eliminate people and we don’t kill people. When I asked you not to press your luck, I simply meant that overreaching could have unpleasant consequences in terms of your employment, pension plan—that sort of thing.”

“But, you see, I am lucky. In the past three days there have been two attempts to kill me, and I survived both.”

“Yes, I know about that. I assure you, we had nothing to do with either of those stupid acts. If I should find it necessary to take some action—ah, but why talk that way? Why not let the whole thing drop? What’s done is done. I think that’s a good Zen position—the moment is now, and that is all that matters.”

“For action,” Masuto said. “Not for memory.”

“You refuse to lunch with us. In any case, I would like you to stay here this afternoon. There are people coming from Washington whom I would like you to meet.”

“I’m afraid not this afternoon. I have work to do.”

“I think you must stay, Sergeant. I was asked to have you here. I don’t think you should make a scene. It’s only for a few hours.”

The door to his office opened and two armed guards stepped into the room. At the same time, the telephone on Soames’s desk rang. Soames picked up the telephone, listened, and said, “He’s on his way.” Then he turned to Masuto. “You do have a way with you, Sergeant. There’s an oversized man standing at our gate who claims to be a Beverly Hills detective and who is holding his gun to the throat of one of our guards, and who says that if you don’t walk out of here in the next five minutes, he’ll have to shoot the guard. Now, that’s a little outrageous and totally uncalled for. Please get over there and put an end to it.”

The two guards escorted Masuto out more hurriedly than he had entered. He got into his car without recalling the city mechanic’s advice about the bomb and drove to the gate. The gate was open. On the outside, Beckman was holding a guard by his shirt front, half off the ground, the muzzle of Beckman’s revolver pressing against the underside of the man’s chin. Three other guards, shotguns pointed at Beckman, stood around the two.

“Go down the road,” Beckman shouted to Masuto.

Masuto drove down to the access road, stopped, got out of his car, and turned around. Beckman shouted to the shotgun guards, “I’m taking this baby down to the main road. He can walk back from there.” He herded him into his car and then said to him, “You behave

while I'm driving or I'll break your neck. I need only one hand for that."



They had lunch at Alice's Restaurant on the Malibu Pier, two tall men, one heavy and slope-shouldered, the other slender and wiry, each noticing the other's hand still shook a bit. Beckman had a hamburger. Masuto had cold fish. It was tasteless, but then anything would have been tasteless the way he felt. He had eaten here in the past with Kati and the children. The food had always been very good.

"It's me," he muttered, pushing the plate away.

"I know," Beckman said, but he went on eating. "Masao, what was that all about?"

"I don't know," Masuto said slowly. "I just don't know. I think I'm beginning to get a glimmer, and then it's turned on its head. We never had anything like this before."

"What do you suppose they planned to do with you up there at Fenwick?"

"Nothing. I think they had some brass coming up from Washington, and they were going to put the heat on me with no holds barred. Nothing physical, but I think they felt that if they had me there, they could talk me into dropping the investigation—or maybe threaten and frighten me into it. But why? Why are they so damned eager to close the case and to make the world forget that a man was killed who was Mackenzie's twin brother?"

"Masao, who are they? Who are we up against?"

"I don't know that either. I think it's the C.I.A., and then I have to ask myself, why would the C.I.A. want me dead? I don't put it past them, but why? No, it's not that simple, and it's not just Fenwick and the C.I.A., and where's Mackenzie, who isn't Mackenzie, and I don't think he's a Scot either."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, I called Edinburgh this morning and discovered that no Mackenzie twins were born in the possible years. But what intrigues

me a lot more is that I spoke to three different Scots, two men and two women, not to mention the local operators. The accent is fascinating. I mean it sounds a bit German, a bit Dutch. First time I ever really listened to—I mean listened from a certain point of view. Didn't you once tell me that you have a psychiatrist in the family?"

"Sarah's side of the family. They're the intellectuals who regard me as a dumb cop. Her cousin, Alvin Shapiro. Nice guy. Whenever I see him, which is at weddings, bar mitzvahs, and funerals, he's got a whole list of questions about being a cop."

"Do you suppose he'd answer a question or two for me? From what I hear, they keep a ten-minute spot between patients. Where's his office?"

"On Camden."

"Good. We can hit it on our way over to the Mackenzie house. Suppose you call him now."

A few minutes later, Beckman returned to the table and informed Masuto that Dr. Alvin Shapiro would see them at exactly ten minutes to four. "And when he says exactly, he means it."

"It's all right—just about as much time as we need. Give me the address, and I'll meet you outside the building."

Dr. Alvin Shapiro's office had a couch, leather with a headrest. There were also two armchairs and a desk, and blinds muted the room to soft lamplight, even though the sun still shone outside. Dr. Shapiro was five feet five inches on top of three-inch heels, an alert birdlike man with the brightest blue eyes Masuto had ever seen. He shook hands with them eagerly. "So you're Sy's partner. Heard a great deal about you. You have a fan there. According to Sy, you're a cross between Sam Spade and Mr. Moto."

Masuto burst out laughing. "That is delightful—Sam Spade and Mr. Moto."

"Who the hell is Mr. Moto?" Beckman wanted to know.

"A pre-World War II creation of J. P. Marquand. But let's get down to your question. A Beverly Hills psychiatrist is a prisoner of time and greed. What can I do for you?"

"About brothers," Masuto said, "fratricide, the ancient Cain and Abel syndrome, how common is it?"

"There's a name for it. It happens."

“But compared to matricide or patricide?”

“Ah—there you’ve put your finger on an interesting fact. I was just reading a statistical study of this last month. Fratricide is much less common. It would almost appear that the link between brothers, or brother and sister, or sisters is deeper than between parent and child. But that kind of thinking can also be deceptive, since parent and child are separated by a generation gap and very often by a large cultural gap—neither of which would be present in a sibling relationship. Sibling jealousy and rivalry play another kind of a role.”

“I see. Now tell me about twins, if you would.”

“Identical twins or fraternal twins?”

“Identical twins. How likely is the cold-blooded murder—not rage and anger, but cold-blooded murder of one twin by another?”

“Premeditated and deliberate? I presume you are discussing an actual case, Sergeant, and that you didn’t come here for an instructive dialogue.”

“An actual case.”

“How old are these twins?”

“Fifty-three.”

“You know, Sergeant, identical twins are one of the great psychological mysteries of our profession. If I were to wax somewhat poetic, I might describe such twins as the appearance of one soul divided between two bodies. The syndrome is absolutely fascinating. Do you know, there have been cases of such twins separated as small children, living their lives a continent apart, never seeing each other, yet choosing identical professions and wives who were enough alike to look like sisters, and even choosing the same type of house to live in. It brings up all sorts of absolutely fascinating speculations, and I think that if I were really loaded, I’d take off two or three years and devote them to the study of identical twins. But you were talking about murder, cold-blooded, deliberate murder.”

“Yes, murder.”

Shapiro scratched his head and wrinkled his brow. “Do you know, Sergeant, I’ve never heard of such a case. That doesn’t mean it hasn’t happened. It could have happened any number of times, and my reading is limited. No—if it had happened with any kind of frequency, one of the journals would have written it up. You know,

such a murder would be more difficult to undertake than suicide. The murderer would destroy the non-participating self.”

“But it could happen?”

“Sergeant, anything can happen. I simply feel that it is very unlikely, very unlikely indeed.”

Masuto stood up and thanked him.

“On the other hand,” Dr. Shapiro said, “since I’ve given you at least fifty dollars worth of Beverly Hills shrink time on the cuff, I want in return the privilege of taking both of you to lunch when this is all over and hearing the solution.”

“Be glad to lunch with you,” Masuto said glumly, “but as to a solution—”

“There’ll be a solution,” Beckman promised him.

Downstairs, Masuto said to Beckman, “What makes you think so?”

“I know you.”

“I liked your cousin. He’s no fool.”

“Except,” Beckman said, “that I had Mackenzie absolutely pegged for the killing of his brother.”

“No, it made no sense. I wanted some way to get him off that mental hook, and your cousin gave it to me. Feona Scott killed the twin, Feona and Mr. X. Why all the Scots? Who helped her? It wasn’t Soames—that makes no sense at all. Sy, you have the search warrants?”

“Right here in my pocket.”

“All right. We’ll drive over to the Mackenzie house. If the lovely Feona is there, I’m going to arrest her for the murder of the twin.”

“Come on, Masao. You told me I had no case against Eve. What kind of a case do you have against Feona?”

“I’ll put something together. She had access to the notebook. She was there when it happened.”

“And what was her motive?”

“When I find Mackenzie—”

“For God’s sake, Masuto, this thing is getting to you. If you arrest her, they’ll have her out in ten minutes flat. I’ve never seen you like this before.”

“She’s the key to it. Look at me, Sy, I’ve sent my wife and kids away, I keep looking over my shoulder, Clint died in my car—and

right there—there's your car and there's mine. Did you get a neat set of instructions on how to look for a bomb in your car?"

"I got them."

"All right. Let's see if our cars are clean. If they are, I'll meet you at the Mackenzie place."

Lexington Road, about a mile in length, begins at Sunset Boulevard, goes north, and then curves west to end at a street called Whittier, and in this rather short distance displays some of the most expensive real estate in the world. There is probably no house on Lexington Road that could be bought for less than a million dollars, and there are a good many houses that would fetch well over two million dollars. The Mackenzie house was somewhere in between, a big two-story white house in what was loosely called the Mediterranean style.

Beckman had just gotten out of his car when Masuto's car pulled up and parked next to his. A large curving driveway in front of the house bent in the middle to provide an area where a dozen cars could be comfortably parked, and from this point a wide path led into the house. Beckman wondered by what virtue Feona Scott continued to occupy the premises, and Masuto thought it was simply a matter of not allowing the house to stay empty.

"Even here in Beverly Hills, an empty house is a provocation."

"But she was here while Eve was still alive."

"Eve Mackenzie was not very alive. She was a drunk, Sy. She couldn't be alone."

"And who owns the house now?"

"That's hard to say. It may be Eve's sister, if Mackenzie made a will to favor Eve. Maybe when we have enough time to breathe and can stop running, I'll explain the whole thing. Meanwhile, let's face the good Feona."

"Are you really going to bust her?"

"I am."

"And you're sure she killed the twin?"

"She and someone else, so ring the bell and let's get on with it."

Beckman pressed the bell button. It was one of those electric chime affairs, and the chimes sounded simultaneously all over the house. It was a strange arrangement, but logical where the occupant

was an alcoholic, and standing in front of the house, Masuto could hear the tinkling sound behind every window. But there was no sound of anyone stirring inside the house.

“Try again,” he told Beckman. The tinkling sounded once more.

“Looks like she’s out.”

“Let’s have a shot at the lock,” Masuto said.

“Breaking and entering?”

“There’s a Westinghouse alarm system, but it’s turned off. Either she’s careless or she doesn’t give a damn. As far as this lock is concerned, a hungry wolf could blow his way through it.” Masuto took out of his pocket a key ring without keys. Instead, four oddly shaped pieces of metal were hooked on to it. He selected one of the metal probes, worked it into the lock, and then worked the door handle. The door opened.

“We could have waited,” Beckman said uneasily.

“Maybe not.”

“What does that mean?”

“We’ll see. Go upstairs, Sy. I’ll take the downstairs.”

“What am I looking for?”

“I don’t know exactly—photographs, papers, passports, a wall safe, books that don’t fit—shake the books. A book can have a lot in it that isn’t printed.”

“I’m with you.”

“See if there’s an attic entrance.”

“Right.”

Beckman started up the stairs and Masuto went into the library, a room facing him on his left. Unlike Beckman, he had never been in the Mackenzie house before. There were many Japanese—Niseis too—who believed, as the Chinese did, that the ghosts of those who died in a house were trapped there for years after. Of course, there are Westerners who believe the same thing, but Masuto heard many stories of rich Hong Kong Chinese, eager for a foothold in Los Angeles, who would buy only new houses. Himself, he deplored superstition, but from the moment he had set foot in this house, he had sensed a miasma that made his skin prickle and tightened his muscles. He went into the library with the same tense alertness with

which a hunter might step into the jungle, and as he studied the wall of books, he heard Beckman's shout.

"Masao! Up here!"

He took the steps three at a time. A man who shouts like that could be in desperate trouble, but it was with more muted tones that Beckman called him into the big master bedroom.

"I'm here—in the bathroom, Masao."

He joined Beckman in the bathroom. In the bathtub, which was empty of water, Feona Scott was sitting. She was stark naked, and two thin streams of dried blood ran down her face from a bullet hole square in the middle of her forehead.

“It is now four forty-five P.M.,” Dr. Baxter, who enjoyed being specific, announced. “I make it some time this morning—anywhere from eight to ten hours ago.”

“I found her clothes,” Beckman announced from his position under the bed. Somehow he had squeezed himself under there. Now he was trying to work his way out.

For the third time, Brody, the firearms expert, asked Baxter when he could have the bullet.

“You don’t hear, do you? You don’t listen, you don’t hear. You have as much brains as your colleague over there, Mr. Sweeney, crawling around and trying to pick up fingerprints.”

“You give me a pain in the ass,” Sweeney said.

“Look, Doc, I was only pushing because I got a theory. I got a theory that hole in her head was made by a thirty caliber. Now, that’s not a usual caliber, thirty.”

Beckman, spreading her clothes on the bed, said, “I will be damned. These were ripped off her.”

“She is stacked,” Brody said.

“What are you, some kind of ghou?” Beckman demanded.

“He’s a dimwitted necrophile. But in a cop, nothing surprises me,” Dr. Baxter snorted. “Where’s Wainwright?”

“Downstairs with the sergeant,” Brody said.

“Don’t keep staring at her. What is with you characters—haven’t you ever seen a naked woman before? Get a robe or a blanket or something and cover her up.”

“Where?”

“In the closet, you lackluster moron.”

Beckman went to the closet with Brody. “Don’t mind him. He hates these things,” he whispered to Brody. “I think it scares him. All he wants is to stay in the pathology lab in the basement of All Saints



Hospital and cut people who have died of ordinary causes like screwed-up operations.”

“Cover her up,” Baxter said. “I’m going downstairs to talk to the brain trust.”

“What’s a necrophile?” Brody asked him.

“What!”

“What’s to get sore about? I’m no doctor. How should I know what a necrophile is?”

“Eat more fish. It’s good for the brain.” As he started down the stairs, Beckman called after him, “Tell the sergeant I found her clothes.”

Officer Keller was at the bottom of the stairs, and Baxter said to him, “Where are they?”

“In the kitchen.”

The kitchen was a large room, twenty feet by twenty feet, festooned as were most kitchens in Beverly Hills with the newest wonders in stoves, refrigerators, and small kitchen appliances. Wainwright and Masuto sat at a big butcher-block table, drinking coffee. On the table was a large brown purse, its contents spread out across one end of the table.

“Have a cup of coffee,” Wainwright said.

“What is with you people? Up there, Brody comments on how stacked this Feona Scott was, and now you two sit here drinking coffee.”

“Why not?”

“Why not? Why not? This is a house in which a murder took place.”

“You’re a medical examiner, not a damn preacher,” Wainwright said.

“Then pay me what a medical examiner should be paid. You got the excuse that nothing happens in Beverly Hills to require a full-time medical examiner. Then what’s that upstairs? You’ll soon have them dropping out of the trees.”

“It’s just instant coffee,” Masuto said gently, “two spoonfuls. The water stays hot in that cooler affair. You see, it’s got two—”

“I know what it is. No thank you.”

“When was she killed?”

“Between seven-thirty and eight-thirty this morning. Your brilliant Brody thinks it was a thirty-caliber bullet, but he’s wrong, and anyone who makes a mistake like that shouldn’t pose as any kind of an expert. But what can you expect of Rexford Drive?” naming the street where the combined City Hall—police station was located.

“What did kill her?” Wainwright asked respectfully.

“Twenty-two short. Far enough away to leave no powder marks and expertly placed. I’m no arms expert, but I’d say the man carries a semi-automatic, one of those magazine things that spray bullets.”

“Yet he used only one bullet,” Masuto said.

“He’s good. Well, I’m taking off now. I’ll send the ambulance for the body. Do you want an autopsy?”

“Will it reveal anything?” Masuto asked. “I saw no needle marks. Do you think she was a dooper?”

“No reason to think so. What about it, Captain?”

“I don’t know. You’re specifying the cause of death. What do you think, Masao?”

“I think she was shot and killed, and that’s it.”

“Then skip it,” Wainwright said.

“All right. But what about the body?”

“Put it in a cold locker.”

“We got just so many cold lockers. I have to fill in a report for the hospital and tell them just how long that locker will be occupied—for which, I may remind you, they charge us twenty dollars a day. Now what is with this Feona Scott? Does she have a relative?”

“There was some talk that she was Mackenzie’s mistress. And having seen her in her birthday suit, I can believe it. And I’ll tell you something else. There is nobody we’d rather talk to right now than Mr. Robert Mackenzie, but where he is, God only knows.”

“We’re trying to find some connection with Feona Scott,” Masuto told him, “so just put her on ice for a few days and then we’ll see.”

“As you say, as you say. By the way, your oversized snoop upstairs says he found her clothes.” With that, Baxter departed.

“So what do we have?” Wainwright asked.

Masuto pointed to the contents of the purse. “A hundred and sixteen dollars. A lot of cash for a housekeeper to carry. Small checkbook for an account at Crocker. Balance—nine hundred and

twelve dollars, fourteen cents. Checks very normal, cash checks mostly under one hundred dollars, check to Ralph's supermarket, check to Thrifty drugstore, check to Robinson's. Driver's license. Social security card—tell me, Captain. Suppose we put this card on the wire to Washington. They must be computerized, so they could give us the facts, where she was born, et cetera.”

“No problem. But they're three hours later on the time belts, so it'll have to wait for tomorrow.”

“Yes. Keller!” Masuto called.

“Yes, sir?” the officer asked, coming into the kitchen.

“Would you go upstairs and ask Beckman to come down and bring the clothes with him.”

“What clothes?”

“He'll know.”

Keller departed and Dr. Baxter returned and said, “Something I forgot to tell you, thought you'd like to know.”

“Oh?”

“About the cadaver that was Eve Mackenzie.”

“What about it?”

“Well, her sister came and signed for it and had it shipped over to a funeral home for cremation.”

“That's what you came back to tell us?” Wainwright demanded sourly.

“No.”

“Then what in hell are you talking about?”

“Thought you'd be interested in who was with her.”

“Mark Geffner?” Masuto asked softly.

“What!”

Wainwright burst into laughter.

“How did you know that?” Baxter asked, chagrined.

“We have ways. No, we're grateful to you, Doc, really. Tell me something before you leave. What did the man in the tub die from—the man they thought was Mackenzie?” Wainwright was being very polite for Wainwright.

“Cardiac arrest.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means his heart stopped beating. What do you think it means?”

At that point, Beckman came into the kitchen, carrying the clothes. He paused at the door, behind the doctor.

“But you specified electrocution as the cause of death,” Masuto said.

“Now, wait a red-hot minute, my Oriental wonder. You were in Japan when the man was killed, which was two months ago, and now you sit there and tell me I specified death by electrocution!”

Masuto turned to Beckman. “Sy, didn’t you tell me that Doc here made a determination?”

“I think I told you the twin was electrocuted, but I don’t think I said that Dr. Baxter made the determination.”

“Well, did you?” Masuto asked Baxter.

“Did I what?”

“Specify electrocution, or the blow on the head? You keep changing your diagnosis.”

“Does it matter now?” Wainwright asked. Baxter’s fits of spleen always made him nervous.

“Yes, it matters,” Masuto insisted.

“I told you what I determined to be the cause of his death. Cardiac arrest. What happened that night killed him, but whether it was the blow to his head severe enough to fracture his skull or electrocution, I don’t know. I wasn’t there.”

“Then there was no way to discover whether he had been electrocuted or not?” Masuto asked.

“His body wasn’t burned—no, no way.”

“So the whole electrocution thing might have been a scene set to direct attention away?”

“Could be.”

“Away from where?” Wainwright asked.

“I’m not sure, not yet.”

“And I’m going home,” Baxter said, shaking his head hopelessly and stamping out of the room.

“What eats him?” Wainwright wondered.

“I don’t know that anything eats him. I think he just enjoys being the way he is.” He gave the social security card to Wainwright, swept everything else back into the purse, put the purse on a counter, and

said to Beckman, “Bring the clothes over here, Sy, and let’s spread them out on this tabletop. By the way, where were they?”

“Just pushed under the bed.”

“Interesting,” Masuto said to Wainwright. “Last time, the twin’s clothes disappeared—never found, just as his body disappeared. Both told a story they didn’t want us to read.”

“Not this time.”

“No, indeed,” Masuto said, spreading the bundle of clothes. “Look at this, Captain. Cotton dress, ripped open from the neck down—great anger. Here—this is a blood spot, so she was dead already when he undressed her. Tore the clothes off her, I should say.”

“Why?”

“It’s a reprise, Captain. She killed his brother and then put the dead man through the ridiculous indignity of sitting dead and naked in a bathtub.”

“Mackenzie? You’re saying that the real Mackenzie killed her?”

“No question about it as far as I’m concerned. No proof yet, no evidence, but I’m ready to go out on a limb.”

“That still leaves one loose end,” Beckman said. He held up a bronze statuette about two inches in diameter and ten inches high, Atlas holding the earth as a globe above his head. “I found this in the library or den or whatever you call it. The legs make an easy grip, and the globe acts like it was meant for a sap. I don’t know what else she could have used, and I can’t find anything that she maybe just picked up and sapped him with. So what I mean is that if she did that downstairs, there’s no way in the world that lady could have gotten the twin upstairs and into the bathtub.”

“You’re right. No way,” Masuto agreed.

“That leaves a place open,” Wainwright said. “If it wasn’t Mackenzie.”

“If it were Mackenzie,” Masuto said, “then the scene in the bathroom upstairs is absolutely senseless. I don’t think it’s senseless. I don’t think Mackenzie had anything to do with killing his brother—except possibly in a roundabout way. He was spelling out his revenge brutally and dangerously when he put Feona into the bathtub. But he wasn’t talking to us. He was talking to the third party

—the man who helped Feona kill the twin and drag the body upstairs.”

“Masao,” Wainwright said with annoyance, “I’ve watched you spin out these guesses of yours too many times not to put a lot of faith in them. But this time we’re not playing parlor games. One of my men is dead. We’re going to his funeral tomorrow. And that was the second attempt to kill you.”

“I was aware of that.”

“Don’t get cool on me. Nobody’s that cool. Who was the man with Feona?”

“I don’t know.”

“You’re lying.”

“That’s flattering, Captain. I wish I had the crystal ball you credit me with. I don’t. I don’t know who was with Feona that night. I don’t know why they killed the twin. I think I could make twenty wild guesses, but what good is that? You could do the same, Sy could do the same. I don’t know why they wanted to kill me. I don’t know who wanted to kill me.”

Beckman had wandered out of the room during this. Sweeney and Brody came down and stood in the kitchen entrance.

“I got everything,” Sweeney said. “Can I go?”

“Have you got the dead woman’s prints?” Masuto asked him.

“What?”

“I said, do you have the prints of that woman in the bathtub upstairs?”

“Do you want them?”

“Officer Sweeney,” Masuto said deliberately, “do you remember that I was rather provoked with you when you told me you didn’t have Mackenzie’s prints?”

“Sergeant, I told you it was not procedure.”

“Sweeney,” Wainwright roared, “get your ass upstairs and take a set of prints from the woman in the tub! Both hands! Perfect!”

“Nothing more I can do upstairs,” Officer Brody said as Sweeney hurried past him.

“Take a post at the door—outside.”

“What’s a necrophile?”

“A what?”

“Fascination with dead bodies,” Masuto told him.

“You’re kidding.”

“No, that’s what it means.”

Brody walked away, shaking his head, and Beckman came back and announced, “They’re here.”

“The media. There’s a CBS sound truck outside, and there’s a young kid from the *L.A. Times*.”

“That’s the beginning. What do you think, Masao? Should we talk to them?”

“There’s no way in the world you can keep a lid on it now. Two naked dead bodies in the same tub two months apart, one a man, one a woman. It has to be the juiciest bit of kinky madness that they’ve had to play with in a long time. You can hint that it’s a copycat murder that some lunatic put together, but the trouble is there’s no sign of breaking and entering.”

“I put in a call for Abramson an hour ago,” Wainwright said. “I wish to hell I knew what the public relations implications of this are. Today a cop can’t just be a cop, and especially in Beverly Hills.”

Masuto looked at his watch. “It’s seven o’clock. I think the evening is just beginning.”

“That’s instructive. What in hell do I say?”

“I don’t know. You called Mr. Abramson.” Masuto shook his head. “Until he comes and decides how he wants to handle this, I say nothing.”

“What’s nothing?”

“Just no comment.”

“The ambulance is here for the body,” Beckman announced.

“Beckman—I want those All Saints people to keep their mouths shut,” Wainwright told him.

“I’ll try, but they’ll blab. They been pushing Officer Garcia out front, and he let out that it’s a murder.”

“You tell him one more word out of him or anyone else and I’ll burn their asses good and plenty.”

“Did you call about the alarm?” Masuto asked Beckman.

“Never turned on.”

“He had a key. He could have let himself in or she could have let him in.”

“Where do you suppose he’s been these two months?”

“According to Soames, Canada.”

“Doing what?”

“Heaven only knows,” Masuto said. “Sy, in the original investigation, did it come out what kind of engineer Mackenzie was?”

“Chemical engineer. His specialty was missile fuel.”

“Fascinating.”

Beckman left to spell out the law of silence to the cops outside. The ambulance people came down the stairs carrying Feona Scott’s remains, and Abramson, the city manager, was let in by Beckman and brought to the kitchen.

“Just tell me whether what I hear is true?”

“Do you want a cup of coffee?”

“How about a stiff Scotch?”

“It’s in the library,” Masuto said, “but I don’t think drinking his Scotch goes with the territory.”

“What did you hear?” Wainwright asked him.

“Well, the poop is that this is another Manson affair, that a gang busted in, broke up the place, and disemboweled the housekeeper.”

“It’s kinky but not that kinky,” Wainwright said. “Masuto and Beckman came here with a search warrant signed by Judge Simpkins, all very aboveboard and legal, and they found the housekeeper dead in the bathtub.”

“I’ll be damned. Electrocuted?”

“Shot through the head and naked.”

“Well, I will be damned. Was it a break-in? Was the door open?”

Wainwright turned to Masuto. “Was it open?”

Masuto shrugged. “No. Truth is, I picked the lock.”

“Naked and in the bathtub. What in God’s name does that mean?”

Masuto told him what it meant, spelling out his entire theory and trusting that Wainwright would be sufficiently distracted to forget about illegal entry. He was. He listened to the recitation, and then said bleakly, “So that’s what we got—the kind of thing that’ll boost the circulation of the *National Enquirer* through the sky.”

“I needed this!” Abramson complained. “I needed this like a hole in the head. Why can’t they do these things in Pasadena or in Palos Verdes or in Bel-Air if they want a fancy neighborhood? We run a



quiet city, we don't push people around, we offer a decent place to live—oh, Lord, I want to put my head on the table and weep—unless you're putting me on. Naked in the bathtub with a bullet in her head—you're not putting me on?"

"That's it," Masuto said.

"Well, we have to figure out how to handle this. We've had enough bad publicity. I can't repeat that story you told me. It's just too insane. What happened two months ago was bad enough."

Wainwright turned to Masuto. "Come on, Masao, give us something."

"It's not that much of a problem. The housekeeper, living here alone, was shot by an intruder and killed. That's all you have to say."

"And when they come up with the story about the bathtub?"

"You know nothing about any bathtub. We can keep our own men quiet, and if you talk to Baxter, he can put a lid on the ambulance people."

"It might just work."

"Worth a try."

"Where are you going, Masao?" Wainwright asked him.

"I, Honorable Captain, am going to pack it in. I'm going outside and examine my car and see whether some demented idiot placed a bomb in it, and then when I prove to myself that I will not be blown up, I shall drive through the San Fernando Valley to where my Uncle Toda grows oranges and lives like a normal human being. I shall see my wife and children, who are refugees there, since I consider my home in Culver City unsafe, and I shall eat some excellent Japanese food and sleep like a baby, guarded by several intelligent German shepherds. More intelligent than most people. Saner, too."

"You won't forget the funeral—ten o'clock?"

"I'll be there."

Wainwright turned to the city manager, who nodded. "I'll be there, Captain."

"And in uniform," Wainwright said to Masuto. "And that goes for you too, Beckman. I want you both in uniform."

"Captain," Beckman said, "I gained twenty pounds. I can't get into my uniform."

"Then either lose the twenty pounds or open the seams."

“Yes, thank you.”

Masuto walked with him to the door. “Tomorrow, Sy,” he said, “I want you with me all day, and then I want you to stay over at my house. Can you manage it?”

“Culver City?”

“It’s the only one I have.”

“She won’t believe me, but I’ll manage.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“Drive carefully.”

Masuto felt increasingly foolish each time he looked under his car; nevertheless, he went through the routine of checking it out for bombs. He tried to form a picture in his mind of this man who wanted so persistently to kill him, but the picture eluded him. The only factor he felt reasonably sure of was that he was dealing with a professional. In that case, someone had hired him. But who?

He had to know and he had to end this. He was a sensitive man. No one thought of policemen as sensitive men, but so many of them were. Even if he could go on living with the constant threat of death, he could not endure a life where Kati and his two children lived under the same threat.

Absorbed in these thoughts, Masuto had turned into Coldwater Canyon to cross over the pass into the Valley. The rush hour, the bumper-to-bumper flood of cars out of Los Angeles and over the Coldwater pass to the endless rows of tract homes in the Valley, was over. Coldwater had become quiet again, and in this quiet, with only an occasional car in front of him and behind him, Masuto began to feel that he was being followed.

For most of the distance between Beverly Hills and the San Fernando Valley, Coldwater Canyon is a two-lane road, with no way for one car to pass another, and in the deepening twilight, accentuated in the cleft of the canyon, it was not possible for Masuto to support his feeling. The car directly behind him was a Cadillac Seville, driven by a woman, he thought, and in any case a pro would not tailgate him. The car behind that appeared to be a Mustang, but he could not get a clear enough look at it to infer anything about the driver. But once over the mountain and out of the narrow, twisting road, it was four lanes to Ventura Boulevard, and now the Cadillac pulled into the right-hand lane and the Mustang took its place behind him. It was almost dark now and the Mustang had its lights on. His rearview mirror gave Masuto no image of the man behind the wheel,

and he was inclined to dismiss his suspicions as the product of an active imagination.

The light on Ventura Boulevard changed, and Masuto drove north on Coldwater Canyon Boulevard. The Mustang followed, but that was reasonable, Masuto decided. It made sense that anyone coming over Coldwater at this time of night would make for the Coldwater Canyon entrance to the Ventura Freeway, going either left toward the Valley neighborhoods or right toward Hollywood. Since Masuto intended to do neither of these but to drive past the freeway before turning left and then right on Woodman Avenue, he was grateful that here he could dispense with his suspicion.

But the Mustang did not go into either entrance to the freeway. It continued north after Masuto, remaining fifty yards behind him. When he increased his speed, the Mustang increased its speed; when he slowed, the Mustang slowed.

There was a street ahead of him that Masuto remembered, where the road ran for a quarter of a mile through a mesquite tract that had been in litigation for years and thereby undeveloped. Masuto turned his car into this street, slowing to ten miles an hour. When he saw the Mustang make the same turn, put on its bright lights, and increase its speed, Masuto braked to a stop and opened his door. As the Mustang came to a screeching stop alongside his car, Masuto rolled out of his seat and through the open door onto the ground. Simultaneously, two barrels of a sawed-off shotgun smashed into the driver's seat of the Ford Masuto had been driving, and one barrel fired immediately after the other.

Masuto moved with the speed of a snake striking, rolling over onto his feet, racing around the back of his car, and coming between the two cars after the second barrel had been discharged. The nose of the sawed-off shotgun still protruded from the open window of the Mustang, and Masuto grabbed it and yanked it toward him with all his strength. A yell of pain from the man in the driver's seat told Masuto that he had probably broken the man's trigger finger, a supposition that was confirmed later. Masuto flung the gun away, opened the door, and grabbed the wrist of the man's left hand, which held an automatic pistol, the safety catch of which he was trying to release. With both hands Masuto twisted the wrist sharply. He heard

the bone snap and the gunman screamed in pain, yelling, "You mother fucker, you broke my wrist! You lousy yellow bastard, you broke my finger and you broke my wrist."

"And I'll break your neck if you don't shut up," Masuto said, dragging him out of the car. "Stand up!" The man was lean, well-dressed, about five foot ten, blond, blue-eyed. "Turn around and put your hands behind you!" Masuto cuffed him.

"Goddamn you, you put that cuff on a broken wrist. I can't stand it. My finger's bleeding. I need a bandage. I could bleed to death."

"The world could just endure the loss. Now, I am arresting you, and I am making a statement of your rights. What follows is an admonition of your rights—"

"Are you crazy? I need a doctor."

It sounded crazy to Masuto, standing there on that dark deserted road and saying, "You have the right to remain silent. If you give up the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak with an attorney and have the attorney present during questioning—"

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"

But Masuto went on, calmly reciting until done. "Whereupon, I arrest you for the murder of Oscar Clint—"

"Who the hell is Oscar Clint?"

"The man who died in my car. And I arrest you for the attempted murder of Masao Masuto. Now, move."

The two shotgun blasts had left Masuto's car a ragged mess of broken glass. Masuto put the gunman in the Mustang, where he whimpered and pleaded that his wrist hurt. He got in next to him, in the driver's seat, and said quietly, "I want to concentrate on my driving. If you interfere with me in any way or make sounds that are intolerable, I will kill you. You are a professional hired assassin, so you must know that the act is not too difficult. In my case, since I am a karate expert, I will do it, if you provoke me, with a blow to your throat, which will crush your windpipe and give you a slow, lingering death."

"What the hell are you, some kind of crazy Chinese spook?"

"I don't like my driving interfered with."

“You got me cuffed behind. I’m leaning against a broken wrist and a finger bleeding all over my car seat.”

“You won’t have much use for the car,” Masuto assured him, wondering how he could even invent that kind of bestial threat. He decided that he was not meditating enough, that he was falling too readily into the spell that violence and fear had cast over the country, losing the thought that even this sick, depraved specimen was human. It was too easy to fall into that, and when the pressure of this case eased up, ten or fifteen hours of *seshin* meditation would be called for, meditation that went on hour after hour and which would, if he were fortunate, restore his membership in the human race.

His voice was less harsh when he asked the gunman his name.

“Suck off, you bastard.”

Masuto shrugged, and wondered whether he would actually kill the man if he tried a violent move—or was it simply an empty threat?

At the Beverly Hills police station, Masuto had to help him out of the car. His finger had stopped bleeding but he insisted that the pain of his wrist was killing him. Masuto marched him inside and up the stairs and told Officer Purdy, who had night watch, to lock him in a holding cell. Sergeant Cooper was at the night desk, and he asked Masuto what he had there.

“I think I have the man who killed Oscar Clint.”

“No! You’re kidding.”

“It looks damn like it. He tried to kill me tonight. He emptied both barrels of a sawed-off shotgun into the rental Ford I was driving and put it out of commission. Luckily, I could take him. I broke his wrist, so you’ll have to call Doc Baxter and persuade him over here.”

“He’ll be sore as hell. He’ll take my head off. We could call the paramedics.”

“I’d rather have Baxter.”

“Masuto, I hope to God it was a righteous arrest and that you read him his rights.”

“I did.”

“Then why don’t we book him?”

“Because I arrested him in Los Angeles. We were down in the Valley.”

“Oh, no.”

“Yes, and where do we stand? I think we can book him, but I’m not certain. That’s why I want to get Wainwright over here, and I want Sweeney here too, just in case the L.A. cops come for him. I want his prints. He won’t give his name.”

“If the captain can’t make it, do we call anyone else?”

“No, and for the moment I don’t want any of the media in on this. My car’s out in the Valley, shot to pieces and full of broken glass, and first crack of dawn, someone’s going to see it and report it to the L.A. cops.”

“You’re entitled to hot pursuit wherever it takes you.”

“I thought of that. Trouble is, he was in pursuit of me, and while I might fake it for a while, the L.A. cops are bound to ask why I was chasing him.”

When a tired and provoked Wainwright got there, and when Masuto had repeated his story, the captain’s annoyance vanished and he shook his hand heartily. “There’s my blessing, Masao. If this is the loathsome son of a bitch who blew up Oscar Clint and tried to kill you, then this is one good day. But why didn’t you call the L.A. cops and let them make the collar?”

“Because there’s no way they’d just hand him over to me and say, take him home and question him, Sergeant Masuto, and when you and Captain Wainwright have no more use for him, you can give him back to us. You know that. They’d take him downtown and book him and work him over and if what he came up with interacted with our murder yesterday, they’d inform us, but they might also inform the C.I.A. and the Justice Department.”

“Sooner or later, we’ll have to hand him over.”

“After we talk to him.”

“Masao, do you think he killed Feona?”

“Oh, no. Absolutely not.” He had considered the possibility that Feona had employed him. “Believe me, Captain, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind. Mackenzie killed Feona. But that doesn’t mean I can tie it together. I say to myself that I’ll sleep better, tonight anyway, knowing we have him caged. But tomorrow, they—whoever they are—can hire another gun. It occurred to me that Feona did the hiring, but not alone, and believe me, Feona is no housekeeper.”

“Then what is she?”

“What do you think?” he asked Wainwright. “I saw her dead in the bathtub, and that doesn’t tell me too much. But you interrogated her the first time, when the man in the tub was murdered. What was your impression of Feona Scott?”

“She was in command,” Wainwright said. “You got the sense of what command means in the army, and it never leaves you. I would see a line officer killed, and the sergeant who should have taken over would turn into crud, and then some guy would step in and take command. It wasn’t that she dumped on Eve Mackenzie; she just took over and apparently she always took over wherever she was. At least, that was my feeling.”

“She was no housekeeper, right?”

“No, no way. She was a pro, Masao—but in what line I don’t know.”

“Do you think she was his mistress?” Masuto asked.

“Not in that sense. I mean not as a mistress. She was something else. Sex? That’s something else. Sure, maybe they had sex.”

Sergeant Cooper interrupted to tell them that he had finally located Dr. Baxter, having dinner at La Scala.

“He eats in fancy places. What do you want him for?”

“Will he come?” Masuto asked.

“When he finishes eating,” Sergeant Cooper replied. “He wasn’t very pleasant about being interrupted at dinner.”

“*Pleasant* is a word he don’t know,” Wainwright said.

“Captain, what do I do about this guy the sergeant brought in?”

“We’ll let you know.”

“What about Sweeney?” Masuto asked.

“Be here in ten minutes.”

“Let us know as soon as he arrives. I want his prints and I want them quickly.”

Then he and Wainwright went to the room where the gunman sat under the observant eye of Officer Garcia. It was not an interrogation room. It would not have done for so civilized and quiet a place as Beverly Hills to have an interrogation room, but it served the same purpose, and the gunman sat backward on a wooden kitchen chair, his wrists still cuffed behind him.



“For Christ’s sake,” he begged them, “take them damn cuffs off. They’re killing me. You the boss?” he demanded of Wainwright. “This goddamn Chinaman of yours, he broke my wrist and he broke my finger. Look at my pants—they’re soaked with blood.”

“You don’t like pain, do you?” Masuto said. He went behind him and removed the handcuffs. Officer Garcia stood at the door.

“Outside,” Wainwright said to Garcia. “Stay at the door.”

“Can I take a leak?” the gunman begged them.

“I don’t know,” Wainwright said plaintively. “I swear to God I don’t know what is happening to this country. Do you know who Norman Rockwell was, Masao? Or are you too young?”

“I remember the covers he used to do for the *Saturday Evening Post* when I was a kid.”

“Well, look at this loathsome turd sitting there, this miserable and disgusting imitation of a human being. He could have stepped out of one of Norman Rockwell’s paintings, with his pretty face and his blue eyes and his blond hair. If he isn’t a faggot already, they’ll turn him into one three days after he sets foot in San Quentin, but that won’t last. After he’s been gang-raped forty, fifty times, he goes to the gas chamber. After all, an easy way to die. Or do they keep them in solitary until the execution?”

“I don’t know,” Masuto said. “You can’t be sure he’ll be executed. Maybe we can’t prove he killed Clint.”

“You’ll prove it. He’s Masao Masuto,” he said to the gunman. “You know what his record is? There has not been a murder in this city over the past ten years that he hasn’t solved, not to mention attempted murder. You didn’t take the money you were paid to kill a nobody. Your contract was for someone special—and that is why you have a ticket to the gas chamber.”

“I didn’t kill no guy named Clint! I don’t know anybody named Clint!”

“Attempted murder,” Masao said thoughtfully. “That’s no problem. Two blasts from a sawed-off shotgun. We have the car, or what’s left of it, the gun, and this poor misguided fool here. What would he get on the attempted murder, Captain? Fifteen to thirty?”

“They’d bugger him to death the first six months, but we’re going to send him to the gas chamber.”

“Well, if he cooperated—what’s your name?”

“Hank Dobson.”

“Your real name?”

“I told you. Look, I got a right to a lawyer. I got a right to a doctor.”

“I’m sure you have,” Wainwright agreed.

Officer Garcia opened the door a crack and said, “Sweeney’s here.”

“Come on in, Sweeney. Got your stuff?”

“All right here. I’ll use this bench,” Sweeney said.

“I want good prints,” Wainwright said. “You make any fuss, mister, we break the other arm.”

“I’m not making any fuss,” he pleaded with Sweeney. “But my wrist is broken. It hurts like hell every time you touch my hand.”

“You can make it hard on yourself or you can make it easy on yourself,” Masuto said.

“I told you, I don’t know nobody named Clint.”

“Who hired you?”

“I don’t know.”

“You know something,” Wainwright said. “If you had killed an L.A. cop and they had you like this, incognito so to speak, you’d never walk out of that door alive—”

“Pray none of this ever gets to the L.A. cops,” Masuto said to himself.

“—but here in Beverly Hills,” Wainwright went on, “well, it’s a different picture. We can’t use torture or force, but suppose you have to go two or three days with that broken wrist. Maybe you’d never use that hand again. Now the sergeant here, he wants to be kind to you. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s all this Oriental crap he’s mixed up in.”

“I’d like to help him,” Masuto said. “A human being—”

“A turd!” Wainwright interrupted. “A shitheel!”

“Come on, come on, Captain. You’re being too hard on him. He’s human. If we can help him, we should.”

“If he lets us.”

“Got ten beautiful prints,” Sweeney said.

“Put them on the wire for the F.B.I. Get everything they have.”

“Help us help you,” Masuto said to the gunman. “Who hired you?”

“I don’t know. I told you I don’t know. I wasn’t lying.”

“What you’re saying makes no sense,” Masuto said ingratiatingly. Wainwright allowed Masuto to take over now. “We know you’re a pro. That shotgun thing tonight was absolutely the work of a pro. So when you say you don’t know who hired you—well, it makes no sense at all.”

“I don’t.”

“You know, you could do a lot of good for yourself. It’s not that we don’t care about you. We do. But our real interest is in the people who hired you. I’m not saying you’re not in trouble; you are neck-deep in trouble, but wouldn’t it be a nice thing for you if we could go to the district attorney or even to the judge and say, this fellow—what did you say your name was?”

He didn’t slip. “Hank Dobson.”

“Okay, we say to them, this fellow Hank Dobson, you know, without him we never would have made the bust, and we really busted somebody. That would help.”

“Look, Sergeant, I keep a place in San Francisco. I don’t mind telling you because I figure there’s no bail anyway, and anyway I don’t keep a place very long. People in the business know about my place, and you work by recommendation. Three days ago, I got a phone call—”

“Man or woman?”

“Man.”

“Any accent?”

“Careful, correct talk. He was a foreigner, but that’s just a guess. Asks me if I’m free and can take on a job. I say it depends. He tells me it’s a Beverly Hills cop. I tell him that’s thirty thousand dollars. A half hour later, a messenger comes with the money and your name.”

“That’s a sleazy story,” Masuto said, “full of loose ends. I don’t buy it. How did you know where to find me? How did you know I’d be up in Malibu Canyon? How did you find out which was my car? Nobody followed me to the Mackenzie house. You were sitting there waiting. And where’s the money?”

“Shit on all that,” he said, and grinned and shook his head.

Wainwright went to the door and called for another cop named Sandy, and told the two of them to search Dobson, pile his

possessions, and then stay with him. At the same time, a very short-tempered Dr. Baxter entered the room.

“I’m a medical examiner, not a doctor. Who’s going to pay for this, that miserable chintzy city you work for? And why was I led to believe it was a corpse?”

“I can take care of that, Doc, if it’s going to make you happy. This is the bag of human garbage murdered Oscar Clint. He’d be a lot prettier as a corpse.”

“What is this?” Dobson shouted at Wainwright. “You going to leave me with these creeps?”

“He has a broken wrist, Doc.”

“And a broken finger.”

“Then why don’t you take him to the hospital?”

“He likes it here.” Wainwright drew Baxter out into the corridor. “We have a problem. He doesn’t belong to us. He belongs to the L.A. cops. But we’re pretty certain that he killed Clint by setting that bomb, and he tried to kill Masao here tonight.”

“Did he?” Baxter asked, smiling evilly. “You don’t have a scratch, Sergeant. He’s a bungler.”

“That’s very amusing,” Masuto said. “Nevertheless, we have a problem. The captain will have enough explaining to do downtown. We’ve had some run-ins in the past, and they don’t exactly love me, so we have to put our best foot forward—”

“Did you break his wrist?” Baxter demanded.

“It was unavoidable.”

“Patch him up nicely,” Wainwright said. “The cops downtown will jump on anything, and what we don’t need is any charge that we’re torturing that miserable offal in there.”

Baxter shook his head in disgust. “Cops,” he said. “Cops.”

“I can’t figure him,” Wainwright said as they went into his office. “All these years he worked for the city and I still can’t figure him.”

“He’s a complex man,” Masuto said.

In Wainwright’s office, he telephoned Kati at his Uncle Toda’s house, and she said to him, “We were expecting you, and then when you didn’t come I called the police station. They said that someone had destroyed your car but you were all right.”

“What idiot told you that?”

“I don’t know, Masao, because I was too frightened even to ask his name, and all I could think of was how poor Oscar Clint had died in your car—”

“Please don’t cry,” he said to her. “I’m all right. I don’t have a scratch on me. Please, Kati, don’t cry.”

“Will you come?” she begged him.

“If I can find a car—”

“Take one of the prowl cars,” Wainwright said. “Bring it back in the morning and we’ll find you a rental.”

“In about an hour,” Masuto said to Kati.

“Have you eaten?”

“I’m not hungry.” In his state of tension and excitement, food was the last thing on his mind. “How are the children?”

She was crying again as she told him that the children were fine.

“You can’t blame her,” Wainwright said. “I never had anyone put a price on me. I don’t know how I’d take it. But maybe since we got that blond turd inside, you can rest easy.”

“Not until we find out who hired him and why.”

“Then for God’s sake, be careful.”

“I’m always careful,” Masuto said.

Sweeney came into the room with the F.B.I. response to the fingerprints. “They also sent the stuff on your question about the social security card.” He handed two sheets of paper to Wainwright.

“Well, you were right about his name,” Wainwright said to Masuto. “According to the F.B.I., his name is Albert Dexel, and he’s got a reputation on several continents. They’ve never been able to hang it on him here at home, but they want him for murder in Paris and in Copenhagen, and they think he has some connection with the P.L.O. That’s pretty good for something out of a *Saturday Evening Post* cover. And it also gives me a shoe-in with the L.A.P.D. We’ll hand the collar over to them, and it’s just classy enough for them to forget that you busted the creep on their turf. Now, this one—” He was reading the report on Feona Scott. “I’ll be damned. Feona Scott was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1941. She died in a car crash in Dallas, Texas. So the good Feona’s card was not only a forgery, it was a forgery based on an actual card. How the hell do they do that?”

“Either steal the original or have access to the records.”

“Either way, the F.B.I. wants, us to file a report on why we made the inquiry and on anyone using the card. Masao, what in hell are we dealing with?”

“I intend to find out.”

“Well, try to stay alive until you do—if that’s not too much to ask.”

“Its not too much to ask.” The captain handed him the two F.B.I reports, and Masuto glanced through them.

“What about blue-eyes in there?” Wainwright asked him. “You want to have a shot at him again?”

Masuto shrugged. “I don’t know. I think that he was telling the truth—at least part of the truth. I don’t think he knows who hired him. I think he may have had contact and taken directions from Feona, but that doesn’t mean he knows any more about her than we do, which isn’t very much. You can work him over, but it’s been a long day for me. I’m tired. I want to see Kati and the kids and then sleep.”

“Go ahead,” Wainwright said magnanimously. “It’s been three long, lousy days. The city doesn’t pay for twelve- and fourteen-hour days. So take off and get some rest.”

Masuto broke the speed limits, one of the privileges of being in a prowl car. Kati was waiting for him. Masuto was persuaded to eat a cheese omelet, and he and Kati sat at the kitchen table in the silent, sleeping house, whispering. A hot bath was waiting. And after that, Masuto lay in bed with his wife in his arms, forgetting a world he lived in but had never made.

The morning was lovely. There was a rumor in southern California that in the San Fernando Valley the months of July, August, and September were hot, smoggy, and unbearable, but all rumors are unreliable, and here was a morning at the end of August as cool as a mountaintop and as sweet as honey. The aroma of oranges lay over Uncle Toda's place like an olfactory blessing, and the air was full of glistening green hummingbirds, suspended over flowers in the heady joy of a hummingbird's existence. Masuto had never seen so many hummingbirds, and he had a feeling that they lived perpetually in the satori that he dreamed of achieving.

He was up with the sun, dressed and outside by six o'clock, as were Ana and Uraga, and with one of his children hanging on to each hand, he took a morning walk down to the irrigation canal and back, fending off the stream of questions the children directed at him, and thinking of a kinder day in the past, when children did not watch television news programs.

"But why should they want to kill you?" Ana pleaded. "You're good. You're the best daddy."

"No one wants to kill me, darling, believe me."

Uruga, taking a defensive and knowing stance, told his sister that it was a lot of hooey. "You think those reporters know what they're talking about? No, sir. They just think they do. Nobody's trying to kill Pop. They wouldn't dare. They couldn't."

Kati made pancakes, and Masuto found himself filling his stomach with a great mound of pancakes soaked with honey. His aunt and uncle had only tea and rice cakes for breakfast. Kati asked when they might go home. Uruga didn't want to go home, ever. Ana loved both places equally. The aunt and uncle smiled and begged them to stay; it was so wonderful having children and young people around.

"Tomorrow, I hope," Masuto said. "School starts next week."

"Will it be over tomorrow, truly?" Kati asked him.

“I hope so.”

Driving back to Beverly Hills, he tried to work it out in his mind. It was full of imponderables, but his life was always threaded with imponderables. He would create a schematic of many-shaped pieces and hope that they would all fall into place. Sometimes they did; more often they didn't. Now he felt uneasy as a civilian driving a prowl car, and when he stopped for a light at Ventura Boulevard, an L.A. motorcycle cop pulled up alongside of him and stared suspiciously. Rather than submit to the motorcycle cop tailing him into Beverly Hills and then explaining that the sight of an Oriental in civilian clothes was suspicious, Masuto flashed his badge.

At the police station, Beckman was waiting for him in full uniform, his oversized bulk bulging at the seams, the brass buttons ready to pop.

“I'll just go inside and change,” Masuto said. “We'll use your car today, if you don't mind.”

“Everyone says it's the end of a very nice Dodge. They got you pegged as a car destroyer. But I'm insured.”

“Good. We won't worry about it.”

“As long as we're not inside it when it goes.”

Masuto grinned and went into the station.

“You put me to shame,” Beckman said when Masuto reappeared in full uniform. “You haven't gained an ounce.”

“Japanese food. It's not fattening. Now, what about tonight, Sy? Did you explain to your wife?”

“I tried. What a ball my life would be if her suspicions were only true. That's what burns me up, not that she's suspicious, but that I don't measure up.”

“That's only because you don't have the time,” Masuto consoled him. “Not because you're unattractive. You're a hard-working cop.”

“No talent,” Beckman muttered.

At the Church of Our Lady, the uniformed cops were grouped outside under the direction of one Lieutenant Chester. He instructed Masuto and Beckman to join the four pallbearers already selected. “I think it's only proper, Sergeant. Don't you?”

Masuto nodded.



“You’ll be sitting at the front of the church. The rear rows are reserved for the honor guard. When the honor guard leaves, we’ll form two rows. Hats off in a civilian salute. No guns or anything like that.”

“Out of the church and into the funeral car? Is that it?” one of the pallbearers asked.

“That’s right.”

“What about the cemetery?”

“We have a limo for cops. Four men who were close to Clint are signed for it. We can take two more.”

Two hands went up. Masuto felt a twinge of guilt, but it would have been a pretense if he had volunteered. He had never been friendly with Clint. While they were standing there, Clint’s wife and children went into the church. She looked strangely at Masuto. Well, that was only to be expected. In a way, as unreasonable as it was, she had to hold him at least partly responsible for her husband’s death.

In the church, Masuto sat uncomfortably, feeling eyes turned toward him, feeling strange in his uniform. In spite of the fact that Buddhism excluded no other faith, Masuto never felt at ease in a church, and in this case, every word of the priest’s remarks appeared to seek him out. Beckman’s whisper into his ear was welcome.

“Who do you think is sitting seven, eight rows behind us?”

“I’m not turning around,” Masuto muttered.

“I’ll fill you in. Mark Geffner and Jo Hardin, namely Eve Mackenzie’s sister.”

Masuto had the next twenty minutes to brood about that bit of information—until with the other pallbearers, he slid the coffin into the hearse. Then he even managed to say a few necessary words to Mrs. Clint, who was no doubt saying to herself, why not him instead of my husband? But it was managed, and then the funeral cortege pulled away, and Masuto was left there vowing that he would not go through this again, not if it meant resigning from the force. And then he turned around and saw Geffner and Jo Hardin talking to Beckman.

Masuto joined them. Geffner shook hands with him enthusiastically and remarked that he looked very good in uniform,

and then introduced him to Jo Hardin, a tall, remarkably beautiful woman for her age, which was fifty-one.

“What we would like,” Geffner said, “is to talk to both of you, and if you’re free for lunch, that would be a very good time, since Jo has to get back to Montecito this afternoon.”

“Nothing would please me more,” Masuto agreed.

“I got to get out of this uniform,” Beckman said. “I’m choking, and if I bend over too far, everything goes.”

“We’ll change and meet you at Mario’s at twelve-thirty. You, know the place?” he asked Geffner.

“On Olympic?”

“The food’s edible and the prices are within a cop’s budget. You know we got to go dutch.”

“Wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Geffner and Jo Hardin were already there and waiting when Masuto and Beckman arrived. They ordered their food and then made some conversation about the funeral, Geffner sympathizing with Masuto’s discomfort.

“I would have crawled out of it,” Geffner said. “She has to resent you—her husband killed in your car with a bomb intended for you. It must have been a very rough morning.”

“Very rough, but no use to talk about it. It’s done. When a man’s life is taken, nothing puts it back.”

“No, of course not. But that isn’t what we want to talk to you about, Sergeant. Let me first put the record straight about Jo and myself. This is a woman I love very much, and we’ll be married in about a month from now. I think I fell in love with Jo the first time I saw her, which was shortly after Mackenzie’s death—or rather after the death of the man in the tub. After her sister’s death followed so soon by the death of Feona Scott, Jo felt that we must talk.”

“On the wedding,” Masuto said, “congratulations. On your desire to talk to us, well, I’m grateful. We need every bit of help we can get.”

“First of all,” Jo Hardin said, “you know that my sister was an alcoholic?”

Masuto nodded.

“A most peculiar kind of alcoholic. You know there are alcoholics that pass out, that become disgustingly drunk—others who are

unable to talk, others who become sick and nasty. My sister was none of those. Drunk, she assumed great dignity, and the drunker she got, the greater the dignity. She spoke slowly with great calm, and she could fool most people. But she was still sodden drunk, her judgment, her mind—well, that was her condition. I loved her very much. I don't know what drove her to destroy herself, but she killed herself as surely as if she had put a gun to her head. When her car went over the cliff side, it may or may not have been deliberate, but if it hadn't happened then, it would have happened sooner or later. When Robert was around, he almost never permitted her to drive."

"We heard that he beat her," Masuto said, "that she hated him."

"That's nonsense. Beat her! Indeed! That's the stuff that those people at Fenwick put out when they talked her into going on trial. They offered her money, the house—all sorts of things. Robert never beat her. He had such patience—he must have loved her very much, and you would understand that if you knew my sister. Drunk or not, she was a beautiful and charming woman."

"I'll buy that," Beckman said.

"Did she know why they wanted to put her on trial?" Masuto asked. "That's at the crux of this matter, and I can't make head or tail out of it. I have theories—"

"So have I," Geffner cut in. "Let's hear yours."

"There's really only one explanation that holds water," Masuto said. "Everything else I've thought of breaks down."

"Go on," Geffner said eagerly.

"Well, there's no question in my mind that Feona Scott killed the man in the tub, not alone, but I have the feeling that she conked him over the head. So I have to draw the conclusion that they worked out the charade with Eve Mackenzie to cover up Feona's guilt."

"You mean once Simpkins closed the book on her, threw the case out of court, it was over."

"Something changed," Masuto said. "Your sister's death, the empty coffin. Let's look at it this way: there are a number of people in Washington who don't want Feona prosecuted for murder. Why? If she's one of their agents, if she's C.I.A., then they surely would try to avoid the scandal and smell of murder. But—" he turned to Jo Hardin —"what do you think? Do you think Feona Scott was a C.I.A. agent?"

"I don't know—why? Why would the C.I.A. plant an agent in my sister's home?"

"It was also Mackenzie's home."

"Yes—but—"

"How long ago did Feona come to work at the Mackenzies'?"

"About four years ago."

"Do you know how they hired her, how they found her?"

"No, I'm afraid not," Jo said.

"Tell me something else, Miss Hardin. Your brother-in-law, Robert Mackenzie—did he have a heavy Scottish accent?"

"Rather heavy—yes."

"Did he ever tell you where he was born and educated?"

"Oh, yes, Edinburgh. But, you know, whatever you're thinking of Robert—well, all I can say is that he was endlessly tender and patient with Eve. When Eve heard that he would never come back—"

"What!"

"You never mentioned that to me," Geffner said.

"Didn't I? But I was sworn to silence about so many things, and it's only a few days since Eve died. You see, Eve knew immediately that the man in the tub was not Robert. Not only were certain scars that Robert had missing, but a woman knows. Of course, it must have been Robert's twin brother. Well, they told her that Robert had left for Canada before the murder. Eve did not drive up to my house. Robert brought her to my house and left the car there. I drove him to the airport, and then the following morning Eve insisted on returning to Beverly Hills. But Robert was actually in an airplane on his way to Canada when the murder took place. So neither he nor Eve could have done it."

"No, of course not," Masuto agreed, "but you mentioned something about Eve finding out that her husband would not come back."

"Yes. You see, at the beginning, when they talked Eve into that ridiculous trial, they insinuated that when it was over, Robert would come back and they could resume their life in Beverly Hills. Poor Eve was out on bail, staying with me at that moment and talking about her life with Robert when he returned and what she would do, and possibly joining Alcoholics Anonymous and even adopting a child, and most of it was the bottle talking, except her statement that

Robert would return. I asked her who told her that, and she said her lawyer, Mr. Cassell. Well, you can imagine that I did not tell her how ridiculous it was. It would have been too much for her to bear. But a few days later, I was in Beverly Hills and I went to Mr. Cassell's office and asked him how he dared to delude my poor sister in this manner. How could Robert ever return? They were moving heaven and earth for the world to believe him dead. How could he return?" she demanded of Masuto.

"He couldn't. But how did Mr. Cassell persuade you to remain silent?"

"For Eve's good, for Eve's benefit, just be patient, no, it doesn't mean she'll never see her husband again, just give us time to straighten this out and everything will fall into place, and then Eve can join her husband. But I don't think they ever intended Eve to join Robert again. They intimated that a drunk could not be dealt with. Poor Eve—to be so badly used, and all her beauty and talent just wasted—" She was close to tears.

"Miss Hardin," Masuto said gently, "during those years when your sister and Robert Mackenzie were together, you would see them?"

"Of course."

"Fairly often? Once a week? Once a month?"

"No—Christmas, Easter, once or twice a year they'd invite me to go sailing with them. Robert was a good sailor. He had a twenty-seven-foot sloop—"

"You say he had it. Did he sell it?"

"I don't know. It never entered my mind."

"And where did he berth it?"

"At Oxnard, which was convenient for me, halfway between here and Santa Barbara."

The men exchanged glances. Geffner was about to speak when Masuto shook his head slightly, and Geffner swallowed his words.

"I was wondering," Masuto said, "whether in the time you knew Robert Mackenzie—whether during that time any questions arose in your mind?"

Geffner and Beckman had both of them put away large plates of pasta. Masuto had nibbled at a sandwich. The salad in front of Jo Hardin remained untouched.

“Questions?”

“About Robert Mackenzie.”

“Well, he was a rather depressed personality. But that is not unusual among the Scots, is it?”

“I don’t know. Did you ever doubt that he was Scottish?”

She thought about it. “No—no, not really. I remember on New Year’s Eve, he sang ‘Auld Lang Syne’ with a wonderful Scottish accent, and not just the first verse but the whole song. It was wonderful.” She wiped her eyes. “I seem to cry at everything today. It’s the funeral, I think, so soon after poor Eve’s cremation. And once in a while, he’d read to us from Robert Burns. I never knew how Burns should sound or what it meant until I heard Robert read it. You know, there’s a sound in Scots that is almost impossible for Americans to make—the sound *och*. You see, I can’t really make it either, and I remember one night he was trying to teach us how to do it—it was such fun.”

“Then there’s no doubt in your mind, Miss Hardin, that Robert Mackenzie is a valid Scot?”

“Oh, no—no. I have sat and listened to him narrate the history of the Mackenzies, and they were such great people. Robert was descended from the famous Scottish lawyer, Sir George Mackenzie, who was born in Dundee in 1636. You see, I remember the date, Robert spoke of him so often, and of Sir George’s defense of the Marquis of Argyll, who was tried for high treason. You see, Robert’s branch of the family became very poor and stayed poor, so while many other Mackenzies are in *Who’s Who*, Robert still had that as his goal, as if to vindicate the Mackenzie name in what he felt was the stain placed upon his father and grandfather.”

Listening to her, Masuto had the impression that she was not a little enraptured with her sister’s husband—perhaps all unknown to herself.

“Yet he wasn’t in *Who’s Who*, was he?”

“I’m afraid not, Sergeant Masuto.”

“Yet I’ve heard him described as one of the most brilliant engineers in America.”

“By whom?” Geffner wondered.

“Oh? Let me see.” He turned to Beckman. “What about it, Sy?”

“Did you tell me that, Masao?”

“If you have any doubts about Robert’s brilliance, you can set them at rest. He perfected the heat-seeking automatic pilot that guides a missile to its target.”

“Yet he isn’t in *Who’s Who*,” Masuto said.

Geffner said, “I’m afraid you’re wrong, darling. I was reading about that particular weapon. I don’t think it was devised by a Robert Mackenzie.”

“I’m not wrong,” she said with irritation. “Eve told me.”

“Well, I could be wrong,” Geffner said gently. “I think we’ve told Sergeant Masuto and Detective Beckman all that we know that might be helpful.” And to Masuto, “Are you sure we can’t pick up your check? Heaven knows, it’s small enough.”

“Small enough for us to pay it,” Masuto insisted.

Outside, and in Beckman’s car, Masuto said to Beckman, “Come on, I want your reaction—quick and off the top of your head.”

“I think she had a case on her sister’s husband. I hope Mark can live with it. He’s a nice guy.”

“He’ll live with it. What about Mackenzie?”

“He’s very good, isn’t he? Very big with Scottish patriotism or culture or whatever you’d call it. You ever heard of this Sir George Mackenzie?”

“I’m not up on Scottish history, but I’m sure that if we look him up, we’ll find him there, just where Robert says he’s supposed to be.”

“You know, Masao, we never had a case like this one, where everything is stood on its head, and we never had a case where not one damn bit of it made any sense.”

“Oh, I think it’s beginning to make a little sense.”

“For you, maybe.”

“No, it’s when people do things contrary to law and decency that it becomes turgid and beyond understanding. Understanding is conditioned by some rules of humanity. When you drop all the rules, understanding revolts. So much for that. Now, let’s go back to the station house where I can yell my head off at Sweeney.”

“Because he hasn’t come up with Feona Scott’s prints?”

“Precisely.”

“Blame me. I should have told you. Shelly Langer at Records called me in early this morning and told me that the F.B.I. showed nothing for our Feona. I told her to wire every source, including Scotland Yard. She should have something when we get back.”

But back at the station house, Shelly Langer had only an inviting smile. As for Feona Scott, “This lady never existed,” Miss Langer said.

“She existed. She was alive and now she’s dead.”

“But no fingerprints anywhere, Sergeant. Either she was careful, or she was a farm gal who lived a life of great purity and never set foot out of Kansas.”

“It gets curiouser and curiouser,” said Masuto, who read *Alice in Wonderland* to his children.



"It's half past two," Beckman said. "Would you mind giving me an agenda for the rest of today? Didn't you mention that you told Kati she could come home with the kids tomorrow?"

"I said she might, and I shouldn't have said that. Where did Geffner and his new lady say they were going?"

"To Eve's house, I think. Geffner got her the key."

"Yes, of course. Eve died intestate, and with Mackenzie legally dead, the whole thing goes to Jo."

"But Mackenzie isn't dead."

"Oh, no," Masuto said. "Mackenzie is dead. The State of California declared him a murder victim and tried Eve for his murder."

"Technicality."

"Sy, we live in a very technical world. Let's stop over at Lexington Road. One very important question I never asked Jo Hardin."

Both Geffner and Miss Hardin were surprised to see the two policemen, and Geffner said to Masuto, "It shakes you, because the guilt in this thing is so tenuous, so amorphous, that you begin to feel a part of it."

"No, we have no suspicions, please believe me. Only I forgot to ask Miss Hardin what were the relations between Eve Mackenzie and Feona Scott."

"Eve hated her."

"Ah, so!" Masuto shook his head with annoyance. "All that time at lunch, I never asked you the important question. Of course, you intrigued me with your description of Robert Mackenzie, but afterward, thinking about it, I remembered that you had called him depressed. But your description was not of a depressed man—no, indeed. You described an ebullient man."

She thought about it for a while. "Yes, I suppose I did."

"Now, please, think about this, Miss Hardin. Depression is an illness that affects a man's entire personality. Unhappiness is simply

a condition of being human. A person could be deeply unhappy without having a pathological case of depression. So please tell me, were there long periods when Robert Mackenzie was not depressed?"

Again, she thought about it. "Yes, I believe so."

"Ah. Before Feona Scott arrived?"

"Yes, now that you mention it."

"Do you think," Masuto asked slowly, "that he was having an affair with Feona Scott?"

On this, she didn't hesitate. "Good heavens, no!"

"Why so violent?"

"Because he detested her."

"But kept her on and paid her wages. You told me before that you saw your sister only occasionally. How can you be so certain about the relationships in their household?"

"Come on, Masuto," Geffner protested, "there's no reason to interrogate Jo in this manner. She came forward to volunteer the information."

"I am not interrogating her. I am investigating a case in which three people have already been murdered, and you and I survive only by virtue of luck and your superior driving. I have to ask questions, Mr. Geffner. You know that as well as I do."

"Mark, please let me answer. You see, Sergeant, you can see people only once in a while yet be very close to them, and I was close to my sister and Robert. I once asked him why he hired Feona Scott, and he said something about how hard it was to find someone willing to take care of an alcoholic. That happens to be true, and I suppose that's the reason why he kept her on. But he did not sleep with her and he did not like her."

"Did he ever say what part of Scotland she came from? She was born in Scotland?"

"I think he once mentioned the slums of Glasgow."

Masuto and Beckman were back in the car, driving out on Sunset Boulevard toward the Pacific, when Masuto said, "Twins from Edinburgh who never existed and a maiden fair from Glasgow. Trouble is, she drew a better name than Mackenzie. I've never looked at a Glasgow telephone book, but I presume there are more

Scotts there than one could shake a stick at and even a few Feonas.”

“And now,” Beckman said, “since you suggested that we drive west on Sunset, I presume we’re returning to the Fenwick Works. I see it on television all the time, the stupid cops walking into the bad guys’ trap. Suppose they put us in a vat or something and dissolve us with some fancy acid.”

“I think they’ll be very polite, and anyway, it’s a nice day for a ride along the Pacific.”

It was such a day. There was no smog, and the sky over the ocean was alive with small cumulus clouds, a rare thing for this time of the year. At the gate to Fenwick, Masuto showed his badge, and after a few words on the phone the guard waved him in. The same efficiency at the door of the main building, after which they were told that Mr. Soames would be delighted to talk with Sergeant Masuto and Detective Beckman. They had to wait ten minutes, but during that time they were served coffee by a tall, pretty, young woman.

In his office, Soames greeted them pleasantly and told them to sit down. “What can I do for you gentlemen?”

“I would like to ask you some questions,” Masuto said. “Of course, you have the right not to answer and you also have the right to tell us to leave. But I’m sure you’re aware of that.”

“Indeed I am.”

“All right. Have you ever heard the name Albert Dixel?”

“No.”

“Why did you try to detain me the other day?”

“It was a clumsy and stupid effort, for which I apologize with all my heart. For an American businessman to resort to any such thing is utterly deplorable. But I had two people coming up from Washington, and they were most eager to talk to you, and they begged me to keep you here even if I had to handcuff you to do it.”

“Then why didn’t they come to the Beverly Hills police headquarters and talk to me there?”

“After our discussion, they changed their minds.”

“Yes, of course. Do you know where Robert Mackenzie is?”

“No, I don’t. But I presume he’s still in Canada.”

“No, he isn’t—or at least he was not in Canada yesterday. Yesterday he killed Feona Scott.”

“Oh? I saw no such accusation in this morning’s paper. Or is this another secret of the Beverly Hills police?”

“Isn’t it time we stopped playing games, Mr. Soames. This is not an entertainment we’re discussing. It’s murder, and Robert Mackenzie is guilty of that murder. You know it and I know it, and we both know why he shot Feona Scott. Let him give up and be tried—”

“No!”

“Scott killed his twin brother. You have the best lawyers in California. You can certainly get a mitigated sentence.”

“Sergeant Masuto,” Soames said, “I am trying to be very patient with you. You are a fine and honest policeman, and I respect anyone who does a good job of work. I am not trying to hoodwink you or to tamper with the law. But you function on a certain level, and there are other levels in this great nation of ours. The Mackenzie case is closed, and for all purposes, legal and otherwise, Robert Mackenzie has ceased to exist. This is not from me, but from people far more powerful and important in the scheme of things.”

“Are there levels,” Masuto wondered, “where murder is not murder?”

“Sergeant, we live in a different world than what existed when we were children. Murder has become a way of international relationship. Consider Iran, the P.L.O., Libya, Bulgaria—murder is simply a word, and in defense of national policy and national security, it is condoned.”

Masuto felt a shiver run up his spine. What does one say? What is good and what is bad? “I am a policeman who works in Beverly Hills,” Masuto said quietly. “When a murder is committed in a house in Beverly Hills, I must find the perpetrator.”

“That’s simply rigid and unthinking.”

“Perhaps.”

“You will not find Mr. Mackenzie. Give it up.”

“It used to be simpler to be a cop,” Beckman said once they were outside.

“You can say that again. Where now?”

“Oxnard?”

“Why not? A boat is a good place to hide. He could sail out to one of those uninhabited islands off the Santa Barbara channel and really go to earth.”

“You think so?”

“No, but we’re partway there, so why not? You see, Sy, the good folk who have been trying to kill me are now after Mackenzie. It has to play that way. He killed Scott, and now he must disappear. Whatever the game is, he’s played it for a long time. At first he was a stranger, a blank face, but bit by bit he comes into focus. He must have loved Eve Mackenzie; that’s the romantic part of him; but it was a passion that survived her alcoholism, and if you ever dealt with an alcoholic, you know what that means.”

“I can see what you’re getting at,” Beckman said. “He was her husband. Your wife dies—”

“Yes, he must have come back on that basis. Consider that he’s been waiting for an opportunity to revenge himself on Feona. He takes it, but where does he go to ground—hotels? No, too dangerous. No friend could be trusted.”

“Jo Hardin.”

“I think so. The question is, did Geffner know?”

“Come on, Masao—that’s his life, his career.”

“I hope he didn’t know.”

They drove on to Oxnard, Masato still trying to think his way out of the maze of the past four days. But the short drive to the Oxnard marina left no time for mental escape, and the white boats, lying so still in the golden sunlight, vitiated any concept of the forces of evil. The marina manager, after he had looked at their credentials, shook his head and said, “Funny, that boat’s been here for months, and no one gave a damn about it. You’re the third one to come asking about it today.”

“Two other people asking about the Mackenzie boat?”

“That’s right.”

“Cops. Officers of any kind?”

“Nope.”

“Which boat is it?” Beckman asked.

“Slip thirty-two.”

“Which way?”

“I’ll take you over there,” he said with a snicker. They followed him out onto a long wooden deck to a slip that was numbered 32.

“I don’t see the boat,” Beckman said.

“You’re looking the wrong way. Down there.” He pointed into the water, and there beneath them, sitting in twenty feet of water, was a beautiful sloop.

“Last night,” the marina manager said, “someone opened the cocks. Down she went.”

“Anyone in there?”

“No, we sent a diver down. No one in it.” He stepped aside to give them a clear view, and then he said, “There’s the guy looked at it before.”

He stood at the end of the pier, a tall, broad-shouldered, well-dressed man, blondish hair, steel-rimmed glasses. Both Masuto and Beckman plunged into action, racing down the pier, Beckman, for all his size and weight, a trifle faster than Masuto. When the man at the end of the pier saw them coming, he sprinted across the marina and across the road, dodging the cars like an open-field runner, and then up a slight bluff onto a field of dry, parched grass. Beckman gained on him as he was trying to scramble up the bluff, Beckman taking it by sheer momentum, and then, as he started across the field, Beckman tackled him above the knees, bringing him down with a mighty thud. As Masuto joined them, Beckman had gotten up and the man he tackled had rolled over and was trying to sit up.

“You big, dumb ape,” the man on the ground said. “You’ve gone and broken my glasses and maybe busted a couple of ribs too.”

“Who the hell are you calling an ape, mister? Just get the hell up out of there and identify yourself.”

“Easy, Sy,” Masuto whispered. “I think he’s some kind of cop.”

“You’re damn right I am,” the tackled man said, handing his identification to Masuto.

“God save us, he’s a G-man, name of Peter Thatcher. Well, Peter,” he said, handing the wallet back, “why did you run? Having done no wrong, which I trust was the case, why did you run?”

“Because, Masuto, having been told to avoid a smartass Jap cop under all circumstances, I tried to obey orders.”

“That’s very praiseworthy, but out here in California, and in other places too, I expect, the language you used is considered insulting and degrading. I would appreciate an apology and some confession of ignorance.”

“Otherwise,” Beckman said, “well, who is to say how hard you fell when I tackled you. A few more broken ribs can be explained.”

“Come on, come on,” Thatcher said. “I’ve been knocked over and maybe broke a rib and lost my glasses, so a little anger can be excused. Sure, I’m sorry. We’re on the same side.”

“Maybe.”

“You guys just looking for Mackenzie, or do you know where he is?”

“Why did they tell you to steer clear of me?”

“I don’t know.”

“Does your bunch ever talk to the C.I.A.?” Beckman wondered.

“Can you drive?” Masuto asked him.

“I guess you don’t know where Mackenzie is,” Thatcher said. “If you did, you wouldn’t be down here looking at his boat.”

“Send an optician’s voucher to our office, and they’ll refund whatever the new glasses cost. Can you drive?”

“I always keep a spare pair in my car. Part of the burden of wearing glasses. But a word of advice, Masuto. They told me about an Oriental cop and that I should keep an eye peeled for him. Someone else might have opened up on you.”

“That’s part of the burden of being a Jap—as you put it,” Masuto said. “But tonight I’m going to shed my burden. I’ll be at home, in what I call my meditation room, meditating. It’s a way of getting rid of some of what the world does to you.”

“Oh, yes. You’re a Zen Buddhist, as I recall.” He offered his hand. “No hard feelings anyway.”

They shook hands, and Thatcher strode off. Beckman stared at Masuto thoughtfully.

“Well?”

“That’s what you’ll be doing tonight, sitting there in your little meditation room, meditating?”

“Yes.”

“I thought we were working together tonight. Did I have to talk my wife out of believing that I would be shackled up with some lady of small virtue and large boobs tonight—or was that just an exercise in persuasion?”

“You’ll watch me.”

“Yes, of course,” Beckman mumbled. “That’s as reasonable as everything else in this case. Sure. I’ll enjoy watching you. Anyway, I think Thatcher took it all pretty well. I hit him like a ton of bricks.”

When they were in the car, driving south on the Pacific Coast Highway, Masuto said to Beckman, “Stop at Alice’s Restaurant. I want to use the phone there.”

At the restaurant, Masuto put through a call to Los Angeles headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Switched to Personnel, he said, “This is Detective Sergeant Masao Masuto of the Beverly Hills police force. I’m not there now, but here’s my badge number, and I’ll wait while you call them and verify. But make it quick. I’m in a phone booth, calling long distance.” The lady at the other end said she’d take his number and call back. Beckman came in to see what was happening. Then the pay phone rang, and the lady from the Justice Department asked what she could do for Sergeant Masuto.

“I want to know whether there is a Peter Thatcher here in Los Angeles or in any other part of the service.”

The computer was quicker than such mundane tasks as personal phone calls. The lady at the other end of the wire assured Masuto that no one named Peter Thatcher worked for the Justice Department, in the Bureau or anywhere else.



Wearing his saffron-colored terry-cloth robe and Japanese thong sandals, Masuto entered the living room, where Beckman sat eating peanuts and poring over an album of the pictures the Masutos had taken in Japan. Somewhat abashed, Masuto explained that the color of the robe had nothing to do with the quality of his meditation. "It's true the saffron color is favored by some orders of Buddhist priests, but it means nothing. It's a little conceit of mine. Some people who meditate burn incense. I don't—it makes me feel that I'm choking."

"You're sure about this—this meditation thing?"

"Well, yes, Sy—as sure as I can be about anything in this curious business. They've been here. They were careful, but not careful enough. They moved certain things and replaced them a bit off. Oh, they were here. They know all about me, but of meditation in any real sense, I'm sure they know nothing at all. Such people simply cannot comprehend what meditation is, and they will regard it as some sort of religious devotion that I must perform."

"I'm not sure that I know any more than they do."

"That's only because there's so very little to know. Meditation is a very simple matter, but this is not an age where simple matters are understood. Now, let's examine the battlefield." He turned down all the lamps except one. "I haven't thrown the bolt on the front door, so they will be able to slip-card it. They will come through that little vestibule and into the living room. There, through the living room to the sun porch. I call it my meditation room. Please." He motioned to Beckman to follow him, and then opened the glass doors to the sun porch. "We'll leave these wide open so that from the front door they will be able to see me sitting here and meditating."

For all the years he had known Masuto and worked with him, Beckman had never seen this small room before. It was about eight feet deep and ten feet wide, a porch with windows, built onto the back of the Culver City bungalow. Masuto had put grass blinds over

the windows, grass-colored paper on the walls, and yellow vinyl on the floor. The room was completely bare, unfurnished except for a black mat and a black pillow.

Beckman shook his head. "Mostly I go along with you, Masao. But this—well, I just don't know why."

"Let me try to explain the way I see it—no, *feel* it is better, because I have only a sense of what may happen. Remember, nothing may happen: We may wait all night—and then nothing. But if they come —"

"Who?"

"You keep asking me, Sy. I don't know. Tonight we may find out, and I have to find out. I can't live like this. I find fear deplorable, and I have been constantly afraid. I don't enjoy being afraid."

"All right. You dropped the word with Thatcher—"

"Maybe. We look at it differently. From our point of view, they are watching the house. This is terribly important to them. Think of what ends they have gone to, removing the body, hiring Albert Dixel, and Thatcher—and who knows how many others. Apparently, money is no object."

"Damn it, who are they and what do they want?"

"This we find out tonight. Now, come with me." He led Beckman into Ana's bedroom, all pink and white. "You leave here by the front door, Sy, circle about ten blocks, and come in on the street behind us. The couple in that house—" he pointed through the window "—both work the night shift down at the airport. Go to the end of their driveway, and there's my hedge. Work your way through it and you're right there in the backyard. Your eyes will be used to the dark. I'll kill the light in this room, but you'll see me here. The window will be open, and you'll crawl through. We'll just hope that no one sees you, but they must be convinced that I am alone in the house."

Beckman sighed and nodded and left the house by the front door. Exactly seven minutes later, Masato helped him crawl through Ana's window.

"You're right," he admitted. "They're in a car down the street."

"Yes, I imagined so. Now, over here, this French door leads from Ana's room onto the sun porch. I always keep it closed and the grass shade drawn, but as you can see, with the lights out here and the

lamp on on the sun porch, you have a good view of the whole porch. I don't mind the children watching me meditate. I hope they're inclined to imitate me, but mostly I meditate before they awaken or after they sleep."

"I still don't understand why the meditation."

"All right, let me try to explain. They know I have a reputation for karate, but I don't want a contest. I don't want them coming in with guns. I sit in the lotus position, and a simple inquiry will tell them that in such a position, I am immobilized. I cannot leap to my feet. I am more or less defenseless. I want it that way. Even if they come to kill me, I want them to feel free to talk."

"That's great. Even if they come to kill you. That's great. That's absolutely brilliant. I hate to say this, Masao, but you sound like the number one shmuck of southern California."

"I suppose so."

"There's got to be another way to do this."

"No." His voice hardened. "We'll do it this way."

"What is with you? Can't I make a suggestion?"

"I'm putting my life in your hands," Masuto said. "We're too long good friends for you to get angry now. If at a point they try to kill me—well, it's up to you."

"Great. I need that."

"I trust you, Sy."

"Sure, I can see myself explaining to Kati why you're dead. Explaining it to Wainwright, thank God, will not be necessary. I'll be fired first."

"We'll both stay alive. And, Sy—"

"Yeah?"

"Don't interfere. Don't stop it. Don't breathe—unless it means my life or someone else's life. You can hear everything through this door. So take your position, and then we wait."

Sitting on a chair in the darkness behind the French door, Beckman watched Masuto remove his shoes and then compose himself in the lotus position on the small round cushion which he had placed on the black mat. He placed his hands together on his lap, one on top of the other, thumbs touching. His lids drooped as he stared at the floor in front of him and he became motionless, with

only the rise and fall of his breath to say that there was life in the saffron-robed figure. It had been a long and difficult day, and in Ana's dark room, Beckman struggled to remain awake. He had drawn a chair up to the door, and he sat there, his big forty-five caliber automatic pistol in his hand, staring at the motionless figure of Masuto.

They must have decided to wait half an hour after Beckman had pretended to leave. The little house was hardly soundproof, and the noise of the door opening brought Beckman back from his half-doze, awake now and intent.

The man who entered the house and walked across the living room to face Masuto was about five feet nine inches, a tight body, a lined, severe face, intelligent blue eyes, and thin sandy hair. He was about forty-five years old. As Masuto looked up at him, he held out a hand, palm down, and said, "No, please don't rise Mr. Masuto. I prefer you in this position, and I have heard too much about the lethal power of your hands to want them on my level. Indeed, if you insist on rising, I will have to draw my gun, and I much prefer a conversation that is not at the point of a pistol."

"I have no intention of rising," Masuto assured him. "It is you who interrupt my meditation."

"For which I apologize." His English was excellent, but with a slight accent which Masuto guessed was Russian. "Let me introduce myself. My name is Alexander Brekov, and I am legal counsel to our ambassador in Washington. But that is simply a mutually understood subterfuge. I am actually a part of the K.G.B., and I tell you this without hesitation because it is well known to your F.B.I. and also to your C.I.A."

"Or possibly because you intend to kill me before you leave?" Masuto wondered.

"You are an interesting adversary, Mr. Masuto. Feona decided that you had to be destroyed. She was foolish, and the foolish die. I decided that you're a reasonable man. Zen Buddhists are reasonable men. I see no reason why you should be different."

"I like to think of myself as a reasonable man. Tell me, Mr. Brekov. Who was Feona Scott?"

“K.G.B.” He half smiled. “You Americans love those three letters. She was a Russian agent.” He shrugged. “Not the best. Let me explain. The man you know as Robert Mackenzie is a Soviet agent whose real name is Andre Rostikoff. Years of effort—very expensive effort—went into his training, from age fourteen. I can’t tell you what it takes to take a Russian and turn him into a Scot—his memory of history and family, his language, his manner, his walk, his reactions—so that he becomes even more Scottish than a man born in Scotland. And do you know how Mr. Mackenzie, né Rostikoff, repaid the Soviet people? By becoming a double agent. We were not sure of this at first, but certain things in his reports aroused our suspicions, and Feona, whose real name was Sonia Dukovsky, was sent to join him and to find out what was going on. This she did. She obtained the proof that he was indeed working with the C.I.A., and that through his efforts, two of our agents were uncovered.”

“And then, unexpectedly,” Masuto said, “his twin brother appeared.”

“Yes—I suppose that was obvious to you. His twin brother was one of those who attack us because we do not see civil liberties in the Western manner. He was a poet of sorts, a dissenter, and finally he was given the right to emigrate. Now, how he tracked down his brother out here in California, I don’t know. Possibly there had been some communication; I suspect so. In any case, he showed up at the Mackenzie house at an unfortunate moment, with both Robert and his drunken wife away. I’m sure you know what happened. Feona lost her head and killed him, and then she phoned me, and I sent the man you know as Thatcher over there. His name is Gregory Roboff, and he’s not very smart. By the way, he is sitting in the car across the street, and while he is not bright, he is an excellent shot. Just a remark. He allowed Feona to talk him into that crazy business of putting poor Ivan Rostikoff into the bathtub, because she read it in that drunken woman’s notebook. Well, that is why Robert Mackenzie shot her. He is a sentimentalist. He avenged his brother’s death.” Now Brekov took out a package of Turkish cigarettes. “May I smoke?”

No one had ever smoked in his meditation room.

“There is an ashtray in the next room. You may bring it in here if you wish. You say Feona Scott desired me dead. Why? I did her no harm.”

“She knew your reputation. She was sure you would find out too much too quickly.”

“And you are here tonight to complete her unfinished business?”

“Oh, no. No, indeed. I am here to strike a bargain, to make a deal, as you people say, to create a mutually advantageous situation. I am sure you know what I want.”

“Robert Mackenzie.”

“Exactly. We are quite certain that you know where he is. I want you to tell me where he is.” He reached into his jacket pocket and took out a packet of currency. “Here I have fifty hundred-dollar bills. I have four such packets, twenty thousand dollars. That is a great deal of money for a policeman, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Yes, a great deal of money.”

“And what am I asking, Mr. Masuto? The man is a traitor and a murderer. He has betrayed those who nurtured him and loved him. What call has he upon you?”

“I have never had to think that through,” Masuto said, “because I don’t know where he is.”

“Come, come. Of course you do.”

“Considering that I do know, Mr. Brekov, why should I take sides in your quarrel with him? I sit here doing a very simple thing, bringing harm to no one, sitting with my legs crossed and meditating in the manner of my ancestors. My master in downtown Los Angeles is an old Roshi. Would he be permitted to teach me in your country? Is there a Zendo anywhere in your country?”

“That is not the point. What is this country you are being loyal to? The only country that ever used the atom bomb—and used it to wipe out two Japanese cities—men, women, and children. This is the country you are being loyal to?”

“More than that, Mr. Brekov. My father and mother and I as a small child were taken to the concentration camp at Madigan. But my loyalty is not to people who drop atom bombs or make concentration camps or wipe out free speech and free press as you do. No, not at all. My loyalty is to the human species, which century after century

suffers the malignant stupidity of men like yourself and your masters. I hate spies and I loathe your K.G.B. as much as I loathe our C.I.A. And my distaste for those organizations and what they stand for is so great that even if I knew where Robert Mackenzie is, I would not tell you.”

“Hear! Hear!” a voice cried. “Bravo, Masuto! Turn around, Brekov, but slowly, carefully.”

He had been hidden by Brekov’s legs. Now, as Brekov stepped aside, Masuto saw him, Mackenzie at last, and recognized him though he had never seen him before. He held a heavy automatic pistol in his hand, and he said to Brekov, “Back up. Move in back of Masuto there.” Mackenzie stood between the open French doors, just inside the meditation room. “If you’re thinking of that idiot Thatcher, Brekov, and of him charging in here to rescue you, forget it. Mr. Thatcher is dead, very dead. Before Feona died, she confessed that Thatcher had done the job with her. So now I’ve evened it out, haven’t I, you loathsome bastard. Can you believe that Thatcher was stupid enough to let me get into the car with him and to congratulate me on my readiness to give myself up. He saw you getting him the Order of Lenin. It was the last thing he saw before I strangled him. You know, I have only one regret—that I have to kill Masuto here. The poor yellow bastard did me no harm, but he’s a witness—”

He was cut off by a voice that roared, “Police! Drop it, Mackenzie!”

Mackenzie spun around and flung a shot toward the French door to Ana’s room. Beckman shot through the door, hitting Mackenzie in the chest, and as Mackenzie collapsed, the gun falling from his hand, Beckman was shouting, “Don’t touch your gun, Brekov, or I’ll kill you where you stand!”

Brekov smiled and raised both hands. Masuto untangled himself from the lotus position, picked up Mackenzie’s gun, and then Beckman came through the French door.

“Sy, thank you,” Masuto said to him.

“Believe me, I do not have a gun,” Brekov said. “I never carry a gun.”

Beckman was bent over Mackenzie. “He’s dead.”

Masuto ran his hands over Brekov. He had no gun.

“You saved my life,” Brekov said to Beckman.

“I’m Jewish,” Beckman snarled. “You hear me, you son of a bitch, I’m Jewish! So don’t thank me!”

“You’re also an accessory to two murders,” Masuto said to Brekov. “Mackenzie’s brother and a policeman named Clint.”

Brekov shrugged. “I have diplomatic immunity. And since what I came here for has been accomplished, there is no reason for me to remain. So I say good night, Mr. Masuto.”

“Is that right?” Beckman demanded indignantly.

“I’m afraid so,” Masuto said. “But you’ll have to wait here, Mr. Brekov, until the Culver City police get here. Apparently, there’s a dead man in your car across the street, and you can’t walk away from either him or the car.”

“You have no right to hold me here.”

“Goddamn you, shut your mouth and sit down!” Beckman yelled. “Your immunity won’t keep me from beating the shit out of you. Just sit down and try not to be a total asshole.” Beckman was shaking now. He took off his jacket and covered Mackenzie. “I won’t sleep for a week. Why do we go on with this lousy job, Masuto?”

Masuto poured a glass of gin, neat. “Get this down.”

Beckman gulped it, coughed, and said, “You call the cops and Wainwright, Masao. I can’t talk to anyone.”

“The Culver City cops, the captain, the State Department, the C.I.A., the F.B.I.—I know what you mean, Sy. Oh, the hell with it. I might as well start calling.”

It was four o’clock in the morning before it was all finished, and the Culver City cops and the Beverly Hills cops and the two F.B.I. men and the man from the C.I.A. had all finished and departed, and Beckman had gone home to his wife, and the bodies had been removed, and Brekov had taken his diplomatic immunity back to Washington—and that was when Masuto finally got to cleaning up. He swept up the bits of glass and then scrubbed at the vinyl floor until the bloodstains were gone. There were two bullet holes in Ana’s door and a bullet hole in the wall of her room—from the single wild shot Mackenzie had gotten off. Wainwright had given him the following day off, if he made up the time, which he promised to do. He decided that he would sleep for three hours, then find a glazier



and have the glass replaced, cover the bullet hole with some plaster of Paris, and then drive out to Uncle Toda's place.

Perhaps if he got there early enough, he could bring Kati and the kids home before dark.



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## A Biography of Howard Fast

Howard Fast (1914–2003), one of the most prolific American writers of the twentieth century, was a bestselling author of more than eighty works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and screenplays. Fast's commitment to championing social justice in his writing was rivaled only by his deftness as a storyteller and his lively cinematic style.

Born on November 11, 1914, in New York City, Fast was the son of two immigrants. His mother, Ida, came from a Jewish family in Britain, while his father, Barney, emigrated from the Ukraine, changing his last name to Fast on arrival at Ellis Island. Fast's mother passed away when he was only eight, and when his father lost steady work in the garment industry, Fast began to take odd jobs to help support the family. One such job was at the New York Public Library, where Fast, surrounded by books, was able to read widely. Among the books that made a mark on him was Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, containing prescient warnings against fascism that set his course both as a writer and as an advocate for human rights.

Fast began his writing career early, leaving high school to finish his first novel, *Two Valleys* (1933). His next novels, including *Conceived in Liberty* (1939) and *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943), explored the American Revolution and the progressive values that Fast saw as essential to the American experiment. In 1943 Fast joined the American Communist Party, an alliance that came to define—and often encumber—much of his career. His novels during this period advocated freedom against tyranny, bigotry, and oppression by exploring essential moments in American history, as in *The American* (1946). During this time Fast also started a family of his own. He married Bette Cohen in 1937 and the couple had two children.

Congressional action against the Communist Party began in 1948, and in 1950, Fast, an outspoken opponent of McCarthyism, was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Because he refused to provide the names of other members of the

Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, Fast was issued a three-month prison sentence for contempt of Congress. While in prison, he was inspired to write *Spartacus* (1951), his iconic retelling of a slave revolt during the Roman Empire, and did much of his research for the book during his incarceration. Fast's appearance before Congress also earned him a blacklisting by all major publishers, so he started his own press, Blue Heron, in order to release *Spartacus*. Other novels published by Blue Heron, including *Silas Timberman* (1954), directly addressed the persecution of Communists and others during the ongoing Red Scare. Fast continued to associate with the Communist Party until the horrors of Stalin's purges of dissidents and political enemies came to light in the mid-1950s. He left the Party in 1956.

Fast's career changed course in 1960, when he began publishing suspense-mysteries under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham. He published nineteen books as Cunningham, including the seven-book Masao Masuto mystery series. Also, *Spartacus* was made into a major film in 1960, breaking the Hollywood blacklist once and for all. The success of *Spartacus* inspired large publishers to pay renewed attention to Fast's books, and in 1961 he published *April Morning*, a novel about the battle of Lexington and Concord during the American Revolution. The book became a national bestseller and remains a staple of many literature classes. From 1960 onward Fast produced books at an astonishing pace—almost one book per year—while also contributing to screen adaptations of many of his books. His later works included the autobiography *Being Red* (1990) and the *New York Times* bestseller *The Immigrants* (1977).

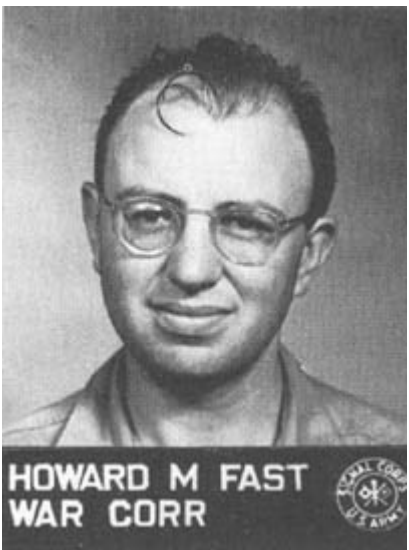
Fast died in 2003 at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut.



Fast on a farm in upstate New York during the summer of 1917. Growing up, Fast often spent the summers in the Catskill Mountains with his aunt and uncle from Hunter, New York. These vacations provided a much-needed escape from the poverty and squalor of the Lower East Side's Jewish ghetto, as well as the bigotry his family encountered after they eventually relocated to an Irish and Italian neighborhood in upper Manhattan. However, the beauty and tranquility Fast encountered upstate were often marred by the hostility shown toward him by his aunt and uncle. "They treated us the way Oliver Twist was treated in the orphanage," Fast later recalled. Nevertheless, he "fell in love with the area" and continued to go there until he was in his twenties.



Fast (left) with his older brother, Jerome, in 1935. In his memoir *Being Red*, Fast wrote that he and his brother “had no childhood.” As a result of their mother’s death in 1923 and their father’s absenteeism, both boys had to fend for themselves early on. At age eleven, alongside his thirteen-year-old brother, Fast began selling copies of a local newspaper called the *Bronx Home News*. Other odd jobs would follow to make ends meet in violent, Depression-era New York City. Although he resented the hardscrabble nature of his upbringing, Fast acknowledged that the experience helped form a lifelong attachment to his brother. “My brother was like a rock,” he wrote, “and without him I surely would have perished.”



A copy of Fast's military identification from World War II. During the war Fast worked as a war correspondent in the China-Burma-India theater, writing articles for publications such as *PM*, *Esquire*, and *Coronet*. He also contributed scripts to *Voice of America*, a radio program developed by Elmer Davis that the United States broadcast throughout occupied Europe.

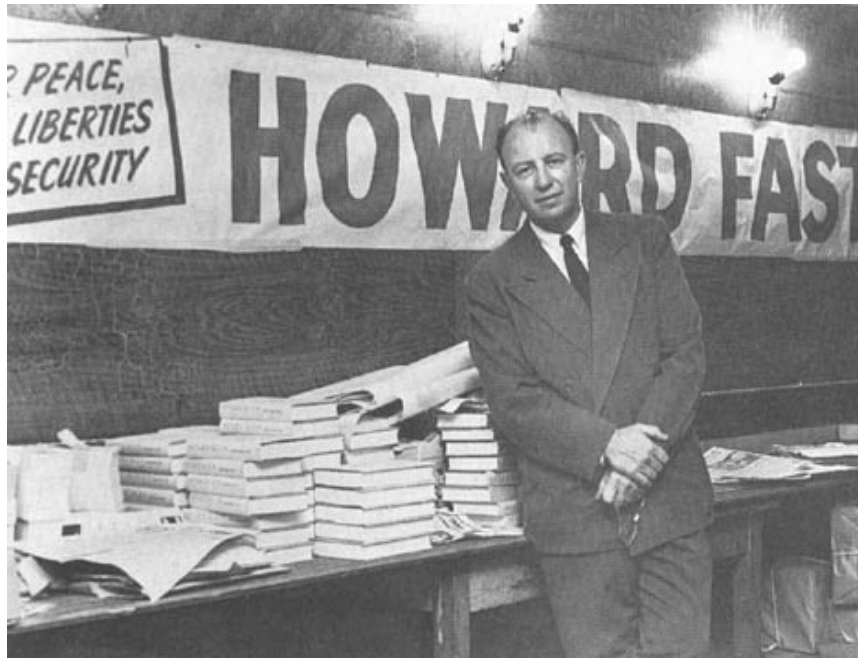




Here Fast poses for a picture with a fellow inmate at Mill Point prison, where he was sent in 1950 for his refusal to disclose information about other members of the Communist Party. Mill Point was a progressive federal institution made up of a series of army bunkhouses. “Everyone worked at the prison,” said Fast during a 1998 interview, “and while I hate prison, I hate the whole concept of prison, I must say this was the most intelligent and humane prison, probably that existed in America.” Indeed, Fast felt that his three-month stint there served him well as a writer: “I think a writer should see a little bit of prison and a little bit of war. Neither of these things can be properly invented. So that was my prison.”



Fast with his wife Bette and their two children, Jonathan and Rachel, in 1952. The family has a long history of literary achievement. Bette’s father founded the Hudson County News Company. Jonathan Fast would go on to become a successful popular novelist, as would his daughter, Molly, whose mother, Erica Jong, is the author of the groundbreaking feminist novel *Fear of Flying*. (Photo courtesy of Lotte Jacobi.)



Fast at a bookstand during his campaign for Congress in 1952. He ran on the American Labor Party ticket for the twenty-third congressional district in the Bronx. Although Fast remained a committed leftist his entire life, he looked back on his foray into national politics with a bit of amusement. “I got a disease, which is called ‘candidateitis,’” he told Donald Swaim in a 1990 radio interview. “And this disease takes hold of your mind, and it convinces you that your winning an election is important, very often the most important thing on earth. And it grips you to a point that you’re ready to kill to win that election.” He concluded: “I was *soundly* defeated, but it was a fascinating experience.”



In 1953, the Soviet Union awarded Fast the International Peace Prize. This photo from the ceremony shows the performer, publisher, and civil rights activist Paul Robeson delivering a speech before presenting Fast (seated, second from left) with the prestigious award. Robeson and Fast came to know each other through their participation in leftist political causes during the 1940s and were friends for many years. Like Fast, Robeson was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthy era and invoked his Fifth Amendment right not to answer questions. This led to Robeson's work being banned in the United States, a situation that Robeson, unlike Fast, never completely overcame. In a late interview Fast cited Robeson as one of the forgotten heroes of the twentieth century. "Paul," he said, "was an extraordinary man." Also shown (from left to right): Essie Robeson, Mrs. Mellisk, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, Rachel Fast, and Bette Fast. (Photo courtesy of Julius Lazarus and the author.)



Howard and Bette Fast in California in 1976. The couple relocated to the West Coast after Fast grew disgruntled over the poor reception of his novel *The Hessian*. While in California, Fast temporarily gave up writing novels to work as a screenwriter, but, like many novelists before him, found the business disheartening. “In L.A. you work like hell because there is nothing else to do, unless you are cheating on your wife,” he told *People* after he had moved back East in the 1980s. Of course, Fast, an ardent nature-lover, did enjoy California’s scenic beauty and eventually set many of his novels—including *The Immigrant’s Daughter* and the bestselling Masao Masuto detective series—in the state.

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