

## Chapter 1

The disgusting man lies face down on his one bedroom studio apartment floor in front of an old, barely working, black & white cabinet television set. A twenty-year-old *Gunsmoke* rerun is blaring, though barely loud enough to pierce the man's hearing aids. Blood is oozing from the back of his head. The old dirty green shag carpet sopping up the dark sangria-red liquid.

Slowly the killer walks around the worn out green and yellow striped fabric recliner from whence his victim fell. He lays the unidentifiable firearm down on a dry patch of carpet and stands inches outside the ever-expanding thick pool, inspecting his work. Two minutes steadily tick past. The man, dressed in newly purchased midnight-black attire, forms a smile beneath the wool skeleclava, pulled tightly over his head. His eyes enlarged from his hard deep-lined face.

The assailant bends low stretching his gloved left hand out toward the middle-aged leaking corpse. He lightly wiggles and gently tugs the end of a high-polished stainless-steel rod, protruding through the sticky matted hair on the back of the head. As the rod breaks free a tiny released suction of stale air sighs softly out the hole.

The dark figure stands. He pulls a new handkerchief from his rear pants pocket and methodically wraps the four-inch projectile. After shoving it back into the pocket, he picks up the unidentifiable weapon and conceals it up his right arm coat sleeve.

The dead man's apartment located one block east of the Pacific Ocean. Until tonight, he worked the late shift at a dingy old cluttered liquor store around the corner, a block and a half, in the opposite direction. Longhair beach bums, clutter the area, most too young to drink legally. The dead man sold cheap fifths of Thunderbird wine to anyone with a buck. Most of the young skaters and surfers only put up with the heavily pock-faced "old man" because of his disrespect for the California liquor laws.

The state subsidizes a share of most tenant's rent in this small eight-unit weather-beaten apartment block. The murdered man was no different, his portion only a couple hundred dollars a month. The remainder of his meager pay went for cheap Russian Popov vodka, the British distillery's liquor being Russian only in name. When out of money, he simply helped himself to his employer's stock. The man's miserable life, as a constant drunk, scarcely afforded him an existence above homeless level.

The intruder walks to the exit door, turns and stands to bask in satisfaction while taking a final look over the room. The man's content there is no evidence he had ever been in the apartment and reaches to the wall and flicks off the low-watt dim light.

After closing the door from the outside, the assassin reverse-follows his previous route along the heavily cracked cement exterior walkway and down the single-level staircase to the parking lot below. He is not in a hurry, but keeps a steady gate continuing to the sidewalk beyond, and melts into the night.