

## Chapter 5

Jake Smith spends a quiet New Year's Eve sitting alone on a tall uncomfortable barstool in the Cactus Club off University Avenue, five blocks from his apartment. He walks over knowing he will need to walk home later.

Hours pass with him drinking neat double Scotches. Smith is a handsome man, dark almost black hair with a light tinge of graying temples. He's slim and fit, of average height. He spends the evening rebuffing women wandering in and out of the bar looking for a date. He uses the payphone a couple of times trying Jellybean's place with no answers.

A little after eleven o'clock, he had drunk his sorrows away and walks home.

At midnight, he is sitting on his couch, chain-smoking Marlboros alone in the dark apartment listening to the thunderous sounds of exploding fireworks in the distance, and honking horns throughout his neighborhood coupled with a few gunshot sounds. The year just rolled over to nineteen-seventy.

Late New Year's morning, Jake wakes, still slumped on his sofa. He stumbles to his kitchen alcove and makes a strong pot of coffee to go with a handful of aspirin.

Just before noon, he decides to try Jellybean's number again. Still no answer! Justifying in his mind, he resolves to drive over and make sure she is okay.

After pulling into her apartment's underground parking garage, Jake maneuvers his dark-green Chevrolet Beretta around to Jill's assigned spot. The ADA doesn't own a car; living downtown it's not a necessity. Most places she goes, work, courthouse and police station, is an easy stroll, besides it's the only exercise keeping her sleek. And there is always an abundance of cabs close-at-hand if needed. Moreover, if she wants to get away for a weekend, Jill simply rents a car.

There is an unknown automobile already parked there. Jake pays it no mind, frequently there are strange vehicles parked in her unused space. Smith drives to the front of the garage and takes one of the empty visitor's spots.

He takes the elevator to her seventh-floor unit and rings the bell. No answer! Now he is sure she needs him and lets himself in with his key.

Not calling out, he wanders down the hallway and stands to view the living room and kitchen areas. Jellybean, standing with her back to him is wearing only a white t-shirt covering her half-exposed derriere while drinking coffee and cooking bacon.

A few seconds of watching, Jake says good morning. Shocked Jill spins, “Jake, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!”

“I’m sorry. I rang the bell.”

“I heard it. There’s no law that says I have to answer it!”

“I’m sorry, but when I haven’t been able to get a hold of you, I thought I better check.”

“I’m fine. You need to leave!”

A tall athletic built man, wearing only a wrinkled pair of unbuttoned slacks appears at the bedroom door, “Is everything all right Jill?”

Smith recognizes him from the District Attorney’s office though never introduced.

“No it’s NOT!” she blurts out. “Jake, I told you to leave!”

Smith fidgeting, “I...I thought you might like to spend the day watching some college football at my place?”

“I’m busy; as you can see. Goodbye Jake!”

“I think you’d better hit it, buddy,” the calendar appearing pin-up interrupts.

“I’m not your BUDDY!”

Without choice, Jake turns and leaves. He aimlessly strolls around downtown ending at Horton Plaza Park across the street from the historic U.S. Grant Hotel and plops on a bench beside the fountain. Being New Year’s Day all the stores and shops are closed and the city is a ghost town.

Standing and conversing feet away from him is two transvestites, of which, are part of a group that frequents the park trying to pick up wayward sailors.

The detective flashes his badge. They understand and ignore the lone man, eventually moving on leaving Smith alone with his thoughts.

Jake tries to formulate a plan to regain Jellybean’s affection. Nothing magically appears in his again throbbing head. Concluding he has blown it, Smith solemnly returns to his car and drives home.