Detective Fife and the Pool House Murder

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Detective Fife solves the murder of a well known wealthy man. The story leaves you wanting for more.

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Prologue

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He stood looking into the mirror of the bathroom smiling at himself. He had just shaved his head and as he carefully ran the razor across his chest he thought of the of love deed he was about to commit. He had already shaved the rest of his body careful not to nick the mole on his chin. He could feel the cool air from the air conditioner in his room flowing freely over his bare skin. He wanted to be careful not to leave any hair follicles to identify his DNA. Finished he turned off all the lights and drew apart the curtains of the bathroom window to check on the progress of the darkness of the woods outside. He had already charted his route and trained himself in the art of jogging the two miles or so to the mansion. Finally the night had fallen black and he eased his way out the window dropping silently to the black top below. He involuntarily shivered from excitement then padded into the night running at an even rate through the woods. His naked body, as planned, gave no resistance and he arrived a little sooner than he had planned so he crouched behind some bushes and watched as his victim arrived for his nightly swim. The pool house was under renovations and his intended victim was berating the construction worker who had stayed over to finish cleaning up for the weekend. The murderer knew the man, he was the contractor he had spoken to only hours before about the intended renovations and had befriended him. The killerâ s new friend had inadvertently given him the information he needed to carry out his revenge. He could not hear what was being said but he could tell by the body language of both men that the words coming from his target were harsh and cutting. This behavior only made him angrier and more sure than ever that his quarry had to die.

Once the construction worker left he could see the man inside begin his warm up exercises before his swim. Taking the key from his mouth where the soon to be murderer had transported it in his cheek, he quietly unlocked the service entrance from which the construction worker had exited. He was startled when the door gave an uncharacteristic squeaking noise. He froze listening but he could only hear the steady breathing of his victim as he continued his warm up. Stealthily he walked behind some stacks of wood and bricks to be used to finish the poolroom and positioned himself behind the man who was about to die. He carefully felt around beneath a small stack of wood to find the chloroform and a rag he had hidden earlier that day. Silently the killer came up from behind the man and using all his strength grabbed him from behind and placed the cloth covered with the drug over his face.

At first he was not sure he could hold onto his quarry as he was very strong, but soon the chloroform took hold and the victim fell into a limp slump on the floor. Looking about to be sure no one had heard the ruckus the killer was greeted with silence.

Dragging the man to the wall proved to be a challenge as the victim was larger than his slayer. After they reached their destination the killer carefully placed the unconscious man into a brick wall and covered him tightly with insulation. He then began to brick him in.

After only a few minutes the deed was done and the assassin left the way he had come leaving the man trapped.

The soon to be dead man awakened and at first did not remember what had happened. With sudden realization he remembered and felt around in the cocoon he was held in and began to panic. It was black inside the wall and the air was already beginning to fail. He began to yell but his mouth became full of insulation. Scratching he was able to reach beyond the insulation with his fingers but was met by brick and mortar. No longer able to

breath for the insulation he had inhaled his last thoughts were of his soul and itâ s place in eternity.

As it was the weekend no one would find him until Monday at the earliest.

The killer arrived back at the motel and climbed back through the bathroom window through which he had exited only an hour earlier. Smiling he realized how thoroughly thought out his plan had been. Giddy with success he put on his clothes, and placing a hat on his head to disguise his baldness, and exited the room. Getting into his car he drove off hidden by the moonless night and the rain that had begun to fall. No one saw him leave.

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Chapter One

Detective Abraham Fife stooped down and looked critically at the body of Alan Cart, Jr., which had been liberated from its tomb. A look of terror was frozen on the face of the decaying man and the stench from it was palpable. Nearby stood the contractor who had made the grim discovery. He had opened the wall thinking he would find several dead mice only to find Mr. Cart's remains. He was wracked with dry heaves even though it had been at least an hour or more since he had made his find. Fife stood to his full height of six feet and his 250-pound body was hidden beneath a cheap ill-fitting three-piece suit. The color of the suit was light beige making visible his dark olive skin, giving way his Italian heritage. Fifty years old he looked sixty as his career as a homicide detective in the large city of Springfield often involved the deaths of the poor and innocent. Single, Fife had no one to share the load of stress he faced everyday so he had started seeing a Psychiatrist. The detective wondered briefly what his shrink would say about he killer of this opulent young man.

As Fife walked about the crime scene he stopped for a moment to consider a photograph of a man named Henry Ladue who had been termed Employee of the Month. Beneath his name had been machine carved his name and his position at the mansion, the maintenance man. His detective skills honed in on the picture for a moment and he noticed a thirty something man, stocky build, his face smooth with the exception of a small mole on his the right side of his chin. He was cleanly shaven.

Leaving the Medical Examiner to her job of securing the body, Fife let himself out the side door of the pool house. He started to step down when he spotted a set of bare footprints, which had almost been totally destroyed by the previous evenings rain. The prints lead into the woods from the pool house. Fife called for his partner Detective Mark Petite.

Mark Petite did not fit his name. He was six feet five inches tall and, although he weighed 300 pounds, his height allowed him to carry his weight well. He was handsome and his demeanor was very friendly. He was known for his prowess with the ladies. Petite loped over to his friend. â What is it Abe?â he asked as he wiped sweat from his face with a handkerchief.

Fife pointed to the footprints. â Who do you think left us this clue?â he asked.

Hearing he sarcasm in his partnerâ s voice he stooped down to examine the closest one. â You think this is meant for us to find Abe?â

â The track is almost washed away. It was predicted to rain last night so the murderer knew the majority of his tracks would be useless. Heâ s taunting us.â answered Fife.

Petite looked up at Fife. â Taunting?â

Fife did not answer but stood on the step of the doorway and looked about. Soon he spied on one side of the door a set of car keys, and on the other a large pair of pruning shears. It was obvious that the clues were meant to be found.

Suddenly a bright light nearly blinded both detectives. As Fife tried to understand what was happening a microphone was thrust into his face and a womanâ s voice began speaking to him.

â Detective Fife, what can you tell us about the death of Alan Cart, Jr.?â

Abe was very angry but he chose his words carefully. â How the hell did you get back here? Watch where youâ re stepping, you may be destroying evidence.â Fife knew there was no more evidence to find but the news crew didnâ t know that.

Unaffected, the voice continued, â Is it true Detective Fife, that you have been called on this case by special request of Alan Cart, Sr. because of the Bitterman case?â

The detective flashed back to the form of Thomas Bitterman laughing hysterically as his bloodied body was carted away from the courtroom in which he had just been sentenced. The blood was not his own but belonged to a newly appointed detective who had just helped, through his expert witness, put Bitterman into prison for life. The murders he had committed were heinous climaxing with the murder of socialite Tammy Lee Adams. Bitterman had attacked Fife biting off the detectiveâ s ear lobe before anyone could respond. The pain had been excruciating made worse by the insane laughter of Bitterman.

From somewhere a uniformed policewoman appeared and Fife was grateful when she herded the reporters away.

The detective returned to the body, his knees still wobbly from his brief visit to the past. Looking about he was relieved that no one noticed the fear response he had felt at the mention of his most notorious case. Thomas Bitterman was a cannibal, choosing his victims by their oversized bodies. He had murdered twelve people they knew of and was implicated in twelve more. Fife had been witnessing fighting for Bitterman to be sentenced to life in a mental health facility and after the attack the request had been denied.

It was soon after that case that Abraham Fife had begun to see a Psychiatrist. He had been fighting feelings of depression and fear, especially at night. Since had been attacked Fife had dreamed of Thomas Bittermanâ s laugh, it filled his soul with terror and he would awaken soaking with sweat and his heart racing. He always lay there for a few fear filled moments reorienting himself to the fact that he was safe in his apartment. In truth Fife didnâ t expect he would ever feel safe again.

Detective Fife had solved the Bitterman case by utilizing the knowledge of people given him by his mentor and friend Alex Trudeau. How he wished he could speak with Trudeau now but his friend was in a hospice dying of lung cancer, a disease brought on by heavily smoking cigars for many of his eighty-five years. Fife made a mental note to visit Trudeau soon but rejected the thought of asking his opinion on the case.

As far as Fife could tell the only simulations between Bitterman and this case was the brutality of the crime.

The detective eyed the layers of pink insulation bats and jumbles of bricks, which lay strewn about the scene. He called a junior detective over and told him "Bag all this stuff, don't miss one brick or any piece of the insulation. There may be DNA evidence. Instruct the lab to process all the evidence we are collecting closely, including a pair of pruning shears and a set of keys you will find out back."

After the other detective had gone to use his cell phone to make preparations for the removal of the evidence detective Fife suddenly fell to one knee. Reaching out using a handkerchief he lifted one of the bricks and made a chilling discovery. The brick was scratched and a human fingernail still clung to its rough surface. For once in a long time at a crime scene Fife felt nauseous. He felt sympathy for the dead man and, no matter what he had done; Fife felt the he did not deserve to die so brutally.

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Chapter Two

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A few hours later found Detectives Fife and Petite attending the autopsy of Alan Cart Jr. The Medical Examiner was taking her time carefully weighing and exploring each organ while speaking into a hidden yet ever present microphone concealed somewhere in the room. For this reason as well as professional ethics both officers had remained silent during the procedure.

It was Fife who broke the spell of silence. â Dr. Adams, can you give us an approximate time of death?â

Dr. Adams glared at Fife from under her clear plastic mask for breaking her concentration, yet her voice sounded polite enough. â I estimate, going by the site evidence and here that he died three days ago.â

Fife was unsatisfied. â Is that the best estimate you can give doctor?â

Again she glared at him but this time her voice was strained. â Given the decomposition of the body that is the best I can do detective.â She answered than returned to her work.

Fife nodded toward the exit and Petite followed him out much to the relief of Dr. Adams.

â Weâ ll pick up her report later. Right now Iâ m interested in seeing how many security cameras we can find at the mansion. Odds are the ones in the pool house werenâ t working but the others might tell us who wasnâ t there.â said Fife to his partner.

Petite nodded in ascent and replied, â Iâ ll get right on it. Where you gonna be Abe?â

â I have an appointment with Alan Cart Sr.â he frowned, â Iâ m not looking forward to it.â

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Chapter Three

Alan Cart, Sr. sat across from Detective Fife obviously trying to determine if the man before him met his expectations. He did not. Cart had expected a much younger man and did not feel confident that Fife was good as his friend the Chief of Police had said. Yet he had solved the Bitterman murders.

Abraham Fife began to speak keeping his tone respectful and professional.

â My name is...â

â Yes, I know who you are Detective Abraham Fife. Your reputation precedes you.â Rising from his chair Cart crossed the room to pour himself a drink. â Would you like a shot Detective?â

Fife held up is hand, â No thank you sir. I donâ t drink.â

The detectives answer pleased Cart.

â Of course not Detective, forgive me.â Cartâ s apology sounded hollow because it was. â Are you going to find out who killed my boy?â He took a deep drink of the gin and tonic he had just poured.

â Well, sir, we are working very hard to do so.â answered Fife in a reassuring voice. â Did your son have any enemies? A jilted lover perhaps?â

Cart looked offended. â My son was a playboy detective. I wonâ t hide that from you. Neither was he an angel. He lived as hard as he died.â

The look of fear Fife had seen in Alan Cart, Sr.â s face haunted the detective. Yes, Cartâ s son had died very hard but he didnâ t wish to go there. â Was your son dating anyone on a regular basis?â

â There is one lady he has an off and on stormy relationship with. Her name is Alice Cooper.â Stated Cart then he took a great swallow of his drink. Fife knew the interview was over.

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Chapter Four

Detectives Fife and Petite met at the hospital waiting inpatient waiting room and now awaited the return of a nurse. They had not wanted to arrive unannounced and unexpected so they had sent a nurse to prepare her for their visit. Soon she returned and nodded for them to Miss Cooperâ s room.

Their first impression of Alice Cooper was that of a badly beaten woman. From the door she looked pitiful, her slight form engulfed by the hospital bed in which she lay. She had an IV in one arm and a cast on the other. It was her face that bothered Fife; it was a mass of bruises, with one eye was swollen completely shut. Swallowing hard he approached her.

â Miss Cooper,â he began in a soothing voice, â Who did this to you?â

Miss Cooper adjusted her covers as she spoke, â Heâ s dead isnâ t he?â

â Who Miss?â Petite asked also in a calming voice.

â Oh come on guys! I read it in the paper and itâ s been all over the television!â She was obviously insulted by Detective Petitesâ question. Her tone was very sarcastic.

Detective Fife realized Cooper felt insult mixed in with grief. â Please miss, was it Alan Cart Jr. who beat you and left you like this?â

â Yes.â She replied flatly.

Fife and Petite stood before Aliceâ s bed and had great difficult looking Miss Cooper in the eye. What kind of a man would do such a thing to a woman, especially one he was supposed to have loved?

â What set him off this time maâ am?â asked Petite.

From Aliceâ s good eye a tear flowed slowly down her black and blue face. â He loved me!â yelled Cooper, â Iâ m not a good person, thatâ s all!â It was obvious she blamed herself for her current condition.

Fife looked at his partner and nodded. The younger man removed himself from beside Aliceâ s bed and sat on a chair in the center of the room near the door so Miss Cooper wouldnâ t feel out numbered.

â Alice, may I call you Alice?â Alice nodded ascent. â Letâ s start over. My name is Abe and that handsome fellow over here is my partner Mark. Weâ re very sorry for your loss.â

Alice visibly relaxed and a deep sigh escaped from her frail body. A small sideways smile lit up her face. â My name is Alice Cooper, just like the rock star whose music my daddy dearly loved.â

Silently Mark watched as his partner plied his expertise, working one-on-one with a mistreated woman. As he watched Abe work his magic he worried over his partner for he knew that Abe had been seeing a psychiatrist for treatment of depression.

â Alice,â Abe began quietly. â We know it was Alan who beat you.â He stopped to allow Alice to absorb his statement. Sorrow played across her face. â Did anyone see the beating Alice?â

A whimper issued from Alice as she thought of that fateful night.

It was obvious to Abe that she was struggling. â If you donâ t wish to talk about that right now, we understand.â

Alice turned her good eye towards Fife and whispered, â Itâ s not that I donâ t want to tell you everything, itâ s just that I donâ t remember anything of that night!â

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Chapter Five

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The interview with Alice Cooper's had been disappointing. Detective Fife had hoped that the beating she had endured would point directly at the killer. So, with all the patience he and Petite could muster, they began to look at security camera videotapes. Fife had been correct in guessing that the cameras in the pool house were blank each having been systemically sabotaged. They had turned their attention to other cameras strewn about the mansion. There were literally hundreds of tapes to inspect but slowly, over the course of a week, a few important pieces of information surfaced. On the night of the murder there had been a dinner to celebrate Alice Cooperâ s birthday. Alice had no knowledge of the surprise that was to be visited upon her.

There were many suspects, all with visual alibis. There were housekeepers, a party planner, and the poor maintenance man being berated by the Head Chef in the kitchen as he tried to fix a broken pipe. Fife snickered while he watched the Head Chef eat the maintenance man for lunch, so to speak. He noted it was the same man he had seen in the picture in the pool house. â Employee of the month my butt!â He thought.

Fife turned his attention to the camera that had been located in Alice Cooperâ s bedroom. He questioned to himself why there would be a camera in a bedroom, but he was not there to judge the people on their morals, just their innocence or guilt of a crime. As he watched a man entered the room using a screwdriver. At first the detective thought it was the maintenance man, but soon he recognized the face of the gardener Michael Sage. Pausing the player Fife riffled through the files on his desk until he found one on the person of interest. Michael â Mickâ Sage was a seventy-year-old man who looked fifty. Reading the file compiled by a junior detective he found that Sage had a history of violence and instability going back to childhood when he had been arrested for brutally killing the pet dog of a neighbor. Skipping forward in the record he found that Mr. Sageâ s last offence had been landed him in prison for ten years for rape. Fifeâ s interest was peaked when he saw what had been his crime. His victim had been a twenty-year-old woman who attended the college where Sage had worked. What had been his interest the night of he beating? The detective pushed the play button and observed the movements of Sage carefully. He watched as his suspect, after searching for and finding Aliceâ s cell phone, hid himself in her closet.

Fife continued to watch as Alice and the victim entered the room. They were arguing. Apparently Alice didn't want a party for her birthday and was refusing to attend. Fife turned up the sound and slipped on his headphones to listen better.

"It won't change anything Alan!" Shouted Cooper. "I'm still leaving!"

Alan didn't like her statement and yelled back. "So help me God! You ARE going to the party and enjoy it!" His voice was cold and threatening.

"What? Are you kidding?" she gave a short chuckle. Alice stood facing the murder victim Alan Cart, Jr., who Fife had been told was her fiancé. She was obviously filled with fear because Cart was pissed and she knew she was in trouble. She decided to try to reason with him but before she could he punched her in the mouth. Falling to the floor Alice tasted blood.

Seeing his action had only, in his view, slightly wounded his quarry Cart kicked his victim in the stomach sending her flying a few feet away she landing on her back. Cart's ire grew and he lost complete control alternately punching and kicking Alice until she lay unconscious at his feet. His rage spent he tossed some money on Alice's crumpled body, as though she were a whore, then smiling to himself he let himself out of her bedroom door

So bad were Aliceâ s injuries that the EMTâ s quickly loaded her into an ambulance telling a put off policewoman she would have to wait until their patient was stable at the hospital. Sirens wailed as they sped away at a high velocity leaving the three witnesses of her beating standing a safe distance away concealed by

the throng of on lookers, which had gathered at the fence looking at the mansion.

The detective rewound and paused the tape. He looked long and hard at the face of Alan Cart, Jr. as he left his unconscious fiancé lying on the floor. He no longer felt empathy for him. Just then he noticed a shadow in the bedroom window. Yes, there was definitely someone standing there. Fife forwarded and rewound frame by frame but he the shadow would not reveal its source. Just as fife was taking notes on this aberration his cell phone rang.

â Talk to me.â he stated coyly.

â Itâ s Detective Sanderson sir.â stated the man on the other end of the invisible line. Fife knew the man with whom he spoke. He was a very good junior officer who was quickly working himself up the chain of command, one of the few who earned his way up.

â What can I do for you Sanders?â Asked Fife.

â Well detective, as you may or may not be aware, there was a computer in Alice Cooperâ s bedroom. The night of the beating it was turned on and linked to another computer. The link belonged to the driver Alex Anderson. Detective, it was an audio and video link. What was this chick into anyhow?â

Fife thanked Sanders and then returned to the darkness of his office. He had a new view of Aliceâ s chastity.

Gazing at the paused tape he contemplated. Who was the shadow? It was not the driver nor was it the gardener. Who could it be?

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Chapter Six

Abraham Fife and Mark Petite stood quietly at the back of the room at the funeral of Alan Cart, Jr. It was, of course, a closed casket affair. The only person who showed any sorrow was Alice Cooper who had been allowed to leave the hospital for the funeral after promising to return. Fife was glad he had not found it necessary yet to Miss Cooper with the pictures in his possession of her financeâ s blue body.

The two detectives were silently watching the crowd aware that often a killer will attend the funeral of his victim to gloat over the dead body.

Detective Fife suddenly became aware that the Gardner was staring at Miss Cooper. Fife nudged Petite and carefully pointed in the direction of Michael Sage. Petite pointed out to Fife the surrounding video cameras recording the ceremony from every angle. The detectives both shook their heads. The tapes would be helpful, but was nothing sacred any more?

Fife looked about for the driver Alex Anderson and was soon rewarded by the sight of the man standing in the back of the standing room only funeral. Anderson also had eyes only for Alice. Fife wondered if he and Petite had stumbled onto a loverâ s triangle with Alice Cooper in the center. Both men looked at Alice with lust more than admiration. Suddenly the camera in the bedroom made sense. The tapes produced by the device were souvenirs.

Had one of them killed Alan Cart, Jr. or had it been the man in the window? Two things Fife doubted; that the keys and the pruning shears had been carelessly left behind by the murderer, nor were the footprints usable in their case. The footprints in the mud had led to a motel room, which had been rented for one night over the Internet using Alice Cooperâ s freshly stolen credit card. There would be no paper trail. No one had seen the perpetrator as he arrived in the dark and had gone into the rainy night. There would be no definitive DNA evidence that could be used in a court of law, as there were hundreds of DNA contributors to the room.

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Chapter Seven

Abraham Fife found himself driving to the hospice center where lived his mentor. He didnâ t want to bother his old friend but the case had gone cold. Fife walked slowly down the hall to the sunny room belonging to Alex Trudeau.

The elderly man sat on his bed having been alerted to the imminent arrival of the man he considered his son. Trudeau had been keeping up on the murder of Alan Cart, Jr. and had wondered if Fife would call on him for help. Trudeau had been a homicide detective himself for thirty-five years and knew his trade well. Unlike Abraham Fife he had no mentor to help him understand the criminal mind. His moxy had come through hard work, research of his victims, and the experience he gained as he went along. Lack of experience had almost cost his life more than once and it was those lessons he passed on to Abe. A knock on the door revived Trudeau from his revelry. â Come in!â he called with joy, unsuccessful at hiding his excitement.

When Detective Fife stuck his head into the door he smiled broadly. He then entered the room and scooped the frail man up in his arms to give him a huge hug.

Alex began to weep.

Seeing his absence had injured his friend, Abe held Alex close and patted him on the back. â Please Alex,â he cooed, â Iâ m sorry itâ s been so long.â

Knowing he had shown emotion that caused Abe pain, Trudeau quickly regained his composure. "I'm sorry Abe. It's this dying thing. I'm not very good at it." Then he flashed his biggest smile.

Abraham drew his mentor closer to his chest; a few tears of his own sliding down his cheeks.

It was Alex who broke the embrace. "Please sit down and fill me in on your case." he said.

Abraham was never surprised when Alex knew he needed help. He set in telling the older man all the clues to the case and the apparent dead end he and his partner had reached.

Alex looked at the case file and after a long study of it including all the reports that came from the investigation. "It's not the people who don't have alibies you need to look for, they are all guitly of hatred of the man, but not his murderer. You are looking for someone with an aliby. He's there Abe. He's there in that case file. You just got to find him."

Fife was once again blown away by the older man's wisdom. "I'll get right on it!"

After several hours of lively talk and two games of chess Abe took leave of his friend not knowing if he would ever see him alive again or if in his absence Alex would die alone. Silently he promised himself he would visit again and he would not let that happen.

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Chapter Eight

Once back in his car and headed back to the city the detectives phone sounded. It was Petite.

"Alex!" shouted Petite. We have a confession! It is the gardener Michael Sage!" Fife was not excited; a fact with did not escape Petite. "What's up Abe?" he asked always respecting his patners instincts.

"I'm not sure it was him Mark, he's too obvious. Could he be taking the rap for someone else with some kind of agenda?" Fife said causiously.

Fife's words floored Mark Petite. "He confessed Abe!" stated Petite now alarmed.

"How did he confess Mark? Did he come to the office or confess over the phone?"

"He called us.â yelled Petite over the sound of his siren wailing. â We're on our way to his home now to arrest him!"

By we Fife knew Mark meant the Chief of Police and an armada of police officers. Fife's instincts, the ones that made him an excellent cop, kicked in. A shiver ran down his spine. "Be careful Mark. That one is unstable and a cop hater. Heâ s capable of anything. He'll be expecting you so be ready for him!" Abe's voice was full of foreboding.

Mark Petite, having heard the chill in his partners voice tried desperately to reach the Chief but his commanding officer smelled blood and another bonus in his paycheck for solving the case of a rich man's sonâ s murder. He would not answer nor acknowledge Petite's cell or radio calls. Petite cursed as he phonesâ s battery died.

Abe called his partner twice but he only got Petiteâ s voicemail. He then grabbed his red light out of his glove box and put in on top of his car to warn other drivers that he was going to go in an excellerated speed.

Petite caught up with the other officers and called for the Chief. He was cut short by a superior officer who ordered him to lead a team to enter the house of Michael Sage and serve a search warrant.

Against his better judgment, and under the thumb of his superiors Petite and his team cautiously approached the house. It was a small one-bedroom home in a cheap part of town. Upon entering the home Petite was met by the gardener who greeted him.

"Detective Petite! Thank you for coming! You know how much I love you men in blue!" Sage's voice was elated. After a broad smile he raised his hand up to reveal a remote control that had wires dangling from it. He then laughed hysterically and yelled â Have a good trip to hell!â

Too late Petite recognized the intent of Sage. The detective had only enough time to call out one word. "Mommy!"

Abraham Fife had heard the explosion and he could see the flames even from the miles he was from he scene. He stopped to regain his composure and temper as he knew instinctively what had happened and that his partner had been sent to his death by politics.

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Chapter Nine

After the funeral of Mark Petite Abe could cry no more and went back to his apartment. After calling for an appointment with his psychiatrist, he turned on his television. To his dismay they were showing him leaving the funeral tears streaming down his face. Quickly he turned it off. The Chief of Police and the Mayor of Springfield had dubbed the officers who had died as martyrs, giving their lives for the capture of a brutal murderer.

The sound of his landline ringing aroused him from his thoughts. It was Alice Cooper.

"Detective Fife?" she asked unsure of herself.

Upon recognition of Alice's voice Abe stiffened. "How did you get this number?" he asked in a disapproving voice.

"I'm sorry Alex. I got it from your partner before he...the last time we met. He was sure they had found Alan's killer and wanted me to go to a safe place, as they hadn't arrested him yet. I'm so sorry for your loss." The sympathy he heard in her voice calmed Fife.

"Thank you. He was a good man. We had no family but each other you know." Abe stated.

"I didn't know.â stated Alice in a whisper feeling sorry for the detective. "I wanted to tell you I'm going to France to finish my recovery. Iâ ve always wanted to go there. Alanâ s father is paying my way."

Fife's answer was cold. "Thank you for telling me. Enjoy yourself young lady."

After Abe hung up the phone sat in his apartment absentmindedly watching the security tape retrieved from the kitchen camera showing Henry Ladue, the maintenance man, as he tried to fix a pipe while being berated by the had chef. He had already seen the tape a dozen times. The manâ s face was fully visible as he plied his trade. Suddenly Detective fife flipped stop on the VCR and rewound it back to a segment that had caught his eye.

"Son of a bitch!" he yelled as he picked up his cell phone to call the Chief.

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ã Epilogue

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Finally free of her obligation to the police and the hospital Alice Cooper quietly sipped her tea letting its warmth trickle down her throat. Her injuries were nearly all healed but her throat remained sore and she rubbed her neck as if to help the pain she still harbored. She smiled to herself and gazed at the statue that stood in the little cafe in which she sat. Going to Paris had always been a dream of hers and now she was there, only a few yards from the entrance to the museum, which had gained critical acclaim. Having finished her libation she carefully counted out her euros leaving the waiter a generous tip. She then set off in the general direction of her hotel. Being in no hurry she decided to take the long way back admiring the sites. She began to dig through her purse looking for her two hotel keys. Not finding them she stopped and sighed. Thinking to herself she berated herself for leaving them in her room. Determined to make the best of her tour she pushed the incident to the back of her mind.

Two men had been carefully watching Alice from a table on the other side of the cafe. They were a set of mirrored twins one sported a recently shaved head covered in small spikes of new hair growth, the other a full head of dark curly hair. Henry Ladue smiled knowingly at his brother the mole on the right side of his chin blushing with excitement. His brother sported a mole on his left cheek. Henry and Louse Ladue had played the police in the US like a fiddle. Henry wondered, briefly, why the seemingly intelligent Detective Fife had not noted his mole being on the wrong side of his chin when his brother had stepped up to give him a rock

solid alibi by taking his place as maintenance man at the mansion. As Henry and Louise arose to leave Henry reached into his pants picket and retrieved a set of hotel keys. Both men laughed loudly as Henry jingled the keys playfully. After leaving a hefty tip also the two men walked off toward Alice's hotel taking the quick route.

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