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Despite his lack of character Jason Rapp did not deserve a death sentence. I had enjoyed a pleasant shuttle flight from Orbitus to Mars until Rapp's call rattled my zip connection. The wind howled and sand grains pattered against his rover's bubble top, suggesting a severe dust storm. He said someone in a silver terrain suit, brandishing a pinpoint pulser, had hiked through the Martian ridge shadows. Rapp sensed murderous intent.

At first I wanted to chide him for not meeting me for breakfast on Orbitus. Just ten hours ago he slipped me important information, coinciding with my trip to Mars, about a cover-up in the Turcotte ore refining operation on the planet. The security chief for the Turcotte operation told me the same thing, but my attention now swung toward Rapp's pleas for help.

As the pinpoint was aimed at the bubble he frantically described the tinted face shield of his potential killer. Twenty-five years at the Space Investigative Bureau alerted me to the shrill crescendo of a pinpoint pulser's thin red beam. I heard the bubble rip as Rapp cried out for mercy. The outward gush of air into the cold, diminished Martian atmosphere was soon replaced by his mournful whimper. He pushed out my name in his last remaining gasps. “*Cobb...*”

“Rapp, Rapp can you hear me?” I sat up fully in the recliner and gripped my perforated zip. The signal went out. “Rapp!”

The Fitton Chronicles

The Dust of Mars

The pulverizing sand and wind gusts were louder now. I leaned toward the shuttle's oval portal. Behind the backdrop of stars, Mars cast a rusty glow beyond the shuttle's gray wing. Thousands of kilometers away Rapp lay dead somewhere on the planet's surface.

I flipped up the recliner tray as images of Rapp in his dark tuxedo at Orbitus's black jack tables shot through my brain like bursts from the pinpoint. My shoes connected to the floor force and I started down the aisle. The forward hatch looked sealed.

One of the attendants, an affable young woman with bouncy blonde hair, stared from the adjacent alcove and flashed her white teeth before she spoke. "Mr. Cobb, if you're looking for the bathroom, it's to the rear of this section."

"I need to speak with the navigator," I said brusquely.

"The navigator?" she asked as if the question had transcended her usual answers about food, drink or rest pillows. "I don't understand."

"Miss, I'm a private investigator, former SIB agent. One of my clients is in trouble on the planet. I need the navigator's assistance."

"Yes, of course."

I removed my license and retired bureau disks and placed them in her smooth palm. "Let the pilot check these."

She squinted, seemed confused, but complied with my request. Her long red fingernails tapped out a code on the side panel. The hatch slid open and remained open as she walked down a narrow corridor. Silhouetted cabin figures were positioned in front of glowing console panel lights and

the encroaching, brown Martian sphere. I glanced briefly at the hint of upper ice caps as I exhaled.

The attendant leaned over a man seated at a darkened alcove containing numerous window monitors. She held out her hand and pointed toward me as she spoke. The man glanced at me and took both disks from her hand. I could see him lean over one of the window screens. Then he nodded and waved me up front. I checked my zip window, now set to standard time at the Livingston Dome. It was 1:44 PM.

I squeezed my large frame through the hatch and moved sideways down the connector corridor. The young man stood in his light blue neck liner and dark pants. He extended his hand quickly and I wondered if he approved of my long bureau record. “ Mr. Cobb, what can I do for you?”

I studied his black name badge embroidered into his neck liner at the shoulder. “ Moss... I need an enhanced scan of the planet’s surface. I just received a distress call from a potential informant and think he’s been murdered.” I handed him my zip.

“ Last call coordinates are locked in my zip memory.”

Moss nodded once and positioned my zip on his station counter. He immediately hooked in a relay, punched a few buttons on the panel, and a Mercator map of Mars appeared on his window monitor. A green dot flashed in the northern hemisphere, center of the Elysium Planitia. I recognized the area because it was my destination. Moss looked up. “ He’s eighteen kilometers out from the Livingston Dome. On Turcotte land... Looks like there is an industrial plant five kilometers back and another

twelve kilometers ahead. Actual heading is: thirty-five point two north and one hundred and eight west longitude.”

“ I was afraid of that.”

“ What do you mean?” asked Moss.

“ Ongoing investigation, son. Can you bring me an image from the signal’s center?”

“ That will not be a problem, sir.”

“ Excellent.” As he worked the panels under the huge window monitor, I unclipped my zip and placed a call to Jahn Patenaude in Livingston’s security office.

Moss now had a full picture of Mars and adjusted the complete clarity as my zip buzzed. After a brief rustling on the other end, Patenaude’s raspy voice came over my zip speaker. “ Jahn Patenaude.”

“ Jahn, this is Harry.”

“ Harry, my boy... Calling to put in your dinner menu at the Excelsior?”

“ They know what I like. Jahn, we have a problem the other side of IP-5. Twelve kilometers toward IP-7.”

Patenaude cleared his throat and his voice assumed its professional, authoritative tone. “ What happened?”

“ Guy named Jason Rapp. He has info on problems at IP-5. Somebody just shot a pinpoint at him through his rover bubble.”

“ Poppycock.”

“ I’m not kidding, Jahn. You need to get somebody out there.”

“ *Really...*”

“ The navigator has the area on screen. Bad dust storm.”

Moss reduced the screen to a current six hundred square kilometer resolution. The Livingston Dome and smaller surrounding support domes were clear, but across the brown, rock strewn, crater punched desert, a wispy gray dust cloud, measuring several hundred kilometers back, swirled toward IP-5 and support domes. Tracking a potential killer was now impossible.

I heard Patenaude calling troopers on another zip. Then he came back on my zip connection. “ Harry, I can visibly see that storm?”

“ The rover site is in the thick of it.”

“ Listen, I’ll request Kranz and some troopers head into that storm.”

“ Kranz?” I grit my teeth. Kranz was an obnoxious, power hungry puppet of Norman Burkhart. As Livingston’s security chief Burkhart was bought and paid for by the Turcottes. “ Does it have to be Kranz?”

“ He’s the only one crazy enough to fly out there in a dust storm... Besides you and me.”

I thought back to the numerous times Kranz had interfered with my investigations both with the bureau and after I retired. “ Whatever. You’d better call Ed Stanton, too. He’s the Turcotte security chief. Let him know what’s going on.”

“ I’ll call him. Look, you and I will trace the IP-7-Livingston Road.”

“ What, from thirty-thousand feet?” I asked as Moss scanned the storm edges. Readings showed the dust had advanced another kilometer toward Livingston.

“ This is a bad storm,” said Moss.

Patenaude cleared his throat. “ Harry, I’ll meet you at the port. What is your ETA?”

“ Four twenty-five,” said Moss.

“ I heard him,” said Patenaude. “ I’m also going to try and get a security satellite image. Maybe we can get scans through that storm.”

“ Brief me, I’m not going anywhere.” I shut off the zip and turned to Moss. “ Thanks for your help, Captain.”

“ Anytime, sir. We’ll let you know if the storm clears.”

After thanking both Moss and the attendant and I retreated down the corridor. I glanced at the packed shuttle, sat in the recliner and folded my arms across my chest. Last night was a night of hope and promise. When I wandered from my hotel room into the Orbitus casinos, I saw Ariana Cervantes’ fluffy dark hair and deep eyes. She sipped the contents of a thin glass in the restaurant overlooking the gambling floor. My stomach tingled and I stalled above the gambling hall. No friend or foe could thrill me so quickly and so fully.

I leaned on the brass railing, amidst a plethora of conversation, crashing slot machine levers, black jack callers, and music. She tilted her head back slightly and with a gracious smile, seemed amused by her young dinner companion. Even from across the floor, her skin was luminous, and gold rings, gaping with colorful gems, adorned her fingers. Ten years had passed since we spent four days alone in the Barsoom Dome along the Valles Marineris canyons.

My professional instinct, responsible for rational decisions during my career with the bureau, held me back, but a romantic flair, filled with desire

and intense longing, pushed me forward. I descended the stairs onto the smooth green gambling room carpet and stepped between the slot machines. The men and woman strenuously shifted the slot machine levers, but I focused on Ariana's wide cheekbones and stunning brown eyes. I cautioned myself against approaching this woman whom I deemed above me in class and breed.

Near the blackjack table a tall, handsome man and maybe ten years younger than me, handed over a wad of blue droits to the caller. Frustration revealed itself in the hardening crevice developing down his sloping forehead. His huge fists were clenched and he shook his head as he turned.

“Damn,” he said loud enough for me to hear him.

His blue eyes brightened, he pointed and called out my name through the crowd noise, but I didn't know him. I pretended not to hear him and eyed Ariana, now enjoying a colorful sherbet at the upper table. He finally reached me and grabbed my arm as I passed the table. I looked down at his hand as he breathed rapidly. “You're Harry Cobb.”

“And who the hell are you?” I asked, my heart still beating fast in anticipation of seeing Ariana again.

His teeth were straight and white. “A man who can help you.”

“I don't like riddles, mister,” I told him. “Who are you?”

“Jason Rapp.” He shook my hand, tightly as if he were holding on for comfort. “Stanton called you to check the Turcotte iron smelting plant.”

“Yeah, so what?”

“I know the truth about what really happened in that plant over the last year.”

I raised my brows, viewing Ariana out of the corner of my eye. “ And what, pray-tell is that?”

Confidence left his face and his teeth chaffed his lips. “ I can’t do that right now.”

“ You’re wasting my time,” I said and started across the floor again.

“ Wait, there are financial considerations here.”

“ You just lost a full wad of droits.” I said and faced him squarely.

“ Listen, Stanton is concerned product was not properly manufactured, but he can’t prove anything because it happened months ago.”

Rapp rubbed his mouth. “ Look, Cobb. Meet me in the breakfast room here in the hotel. What time are you on?”

“ Livingston Standard.” I gave him my zip address. His shifting eyes indicated a man under pressure. He told me to meet him at seven a.m. and then bolted back to the gaming tables.

I alternated glances between Ariana and Rapp, and continued across the room. Less than fifty feet above me, Ariana sat in a sleeveless blue velvet dress and her layered dark hair was nestled on her bare shoulders. Again, I wanted to flee to the hotel shops, but instead, trudged up the marble staircase’s oriental runner. I slowly rose above the leafy plants atop the retaining wall. Within the aromatic cuisine, the small restaurant’s patrons were isolated within a cone of soft classical music, clean air, and sensual red light.

I reached the upper level. Ariana slowly lowered her glass when she saw me. The young man held her wrist as he turned. She set her glass on the table linen and stood. Her friend watched her saunter around the restaurant

tables. She was not a tall woman, but had a slim waste and well defined figure, accentuated by the form fitting dress to the knee. Her lips parted and brown eyes filled as she extended her hands. Then she hugged me. “ God, I thought I would never see you again, Harry.”

Her sensual perfume and warm touch brought me back to the chateau inside the Barsoom Dome. I remembered nestling against her smooth white skin as the warm breezes wafted through the chateau. “ Why did you leave, Ariana?”

“ Some things are better left in the past.” Her eyes brightened as she smiled. “ But you’re here now.”

“ I saw you from across the floor.”

She looped her arm under my arm. “ And you fought the urge all the way across the floor.”

“ Maybe...” I was fixed on her alluring, dark eyes. “ You look just *wonderful...*”

She walked me to a brass railing above the gaming tables. “ I often think of that time at Barsoom. I don’t think I’ve ever felt so far away. Leaving my whole life somewhere else.”

She kept her arm locked. Her touch was warm and charged my body with just an inkling of the thrill I experienced ten years ago. “ Let me guess: as usual you are here on business.”

“ I am.”

“ I was sorry to hear about the death of your father. He founded an empire in Amalgamated Sureties.”

The Fitton Chronicles

The Dust of Mars

Moisture glazed her eyes and her arm tightened. “ Father, died before his time. None of us expected it.”

“ I was always amazed at how he inspired his people. I heard the pep talks. He was the main speaker the night we met.”

“ People, when properly following instructions, are the heart and soul of any operation.” She turned like a window scanner slowly panning, released her arm, but held my hands. “ I want to go out. Find a quiet place away from the fray and talk about old times.”

“ What about your dinner date?”

“ You’re my dinner date. What do you say?”

I kicked myself for having doubts when I earlier crossed the gambling floor. Her presence before me seemed like a dream. “ Sure.”

2

I opened my eyes when my zip sounded. The fuzzy window image revealed I had slept on the shuttle for nearly two hours. I sat up in the recliner, tightened my brow and lifted the zip to my ear. “ Cobb, “ I said in a low voice.

“ Is that you, Harry?”

“ Desmond?” I expected somebody had apprised the eldest Turcotte about the trouble in the desert between his two industrial plants.

“ Harry, I have to tell you I am not a happy man at this moment.”

I was fully awake now. “ I’m sorry to hear that.”

“ While I support Ed Stanton asking for help, I am outraged that you chose not to notify me you were involved in the investigation at IP-5!”

“ Oh?”

“ No mind.”

“ Ed only told me someone is responsible for what he called in mess up in production. I-”

“ Well, Ed should mind his own business,” stated Desmond.

“ He’s your head of security.”

“ I offered you that position,” said Desmond. “ I want to know exactly what you have found out in your investigation.”

“ Absolutely nothing. Ed called me and I moved up my trip from next week to this week. I’m a consultant with my own clients.”

“ I don’t want to hear a list of your accolades, Harry old boy.” I was a little upset Desmond referred to me as old. “ You tell me right now what you know.”

“ The dead man, Rapp, had information for me, but dead men make lousy informants.”

“ He’s dead on my property. Security forces are all over the place!”

“ Who is the plant engineer at IP-5?” I asked.

“ Joe Lockheed. Don’t be sticking your nose into places you shouldn’t.”

“ What are you worried about?” I asked and awaited more cackle.

“ Burkhart does you bidding.”

“ There’s a storm going on here. When it clears I’ll have my men bring me out.”

“ Then you don’t think Rapp’s death has anything to do with what he knew about IP-5?” I asked.

“ What did he tell you? If you’re holding back...”

“ I know as much as you do... But I plan to find out a whole lot more.”

After a pause the frequency disconnected. I created a memo to Sadie on my zip. I wanted Renie, Max, and Jody aware of Rapp’s murder and I needed a background check on him. I stood and stretched in the aisle. Fatigue now followed me like a weight strapped to my back. When I was younger I could easily survive on an hour’s sleep. I headed to the forward cabin and spotted the attendant checking packages in the stow

compartments. “ Mr. Cobb, I was going to wake you. Captain Moss has additional images from the surface.”

“ Bless you. I guess I needed my beauty sleep.”

“ I think anyone approaching forty needs more sleep.”

I smiled and squeezed her wrist. “ Bless you. Approaching forty. Thank you.”

She smiled, raised her brows and opened the hatch. I was in the corridor before the door slid all the way back. I didn't see Moss at his console, but he soon appeared up front. He briefly introduced me to the pilot and the rest of the crew. Then he sat me in front of his window screen. The pictures from the surface, although recorded, were more detailed than a few hours ago. Utilizing reconnaissance satellites, Moss had captured a blurred depiction of a careened rover near a crater ravine.

“ Scans indicate the bubble was pierced.”

“ That would coincide with what Rapp told me.”

Later frames showed the arrival of tracers in the sky and crews had constructed a small, white containment dome around the rover.

“ By the way,” said Moss. “ Inspector Patenaude from the Livingston Dome has contacted us three times. I told him you were sleeping.”

“ Bad habit, sleeping,” I said and Moss smiled perfunctorily.

“ Is he still at Livingston?”

“ He is. I believe at the port,” said Moss as a frequency address appeared in the lower corner of the screen. “ You can use this station if you wish.”

“ Thanks.”

Moss accessed the address and handed me the station zip. I stared at the rover and the rounded dome base on the window as the frequency connected. “Jahn Patenaude.”

“Jahn, it’s Harry.”

“Ah, the old man awakes from his afternoon nap.”

“What is this with the old remarks?” Anyone else would have upset me with the quip. “You’re as old as I am, gramps.”

“Touché.”

“Fifty-two years does not qualify either of us for the dust bin.”

I thought back to last night when I walked Ariana into a quiet cafe away from the gambling floor. “What do you have on the Rapp thing, Jahn?”

“Kranz confirms what you said about the pinpoint pulser. Directly through the rover bubble. Rapp was not wearing a terrain suit or any protection. Wouldn’t have done him a damn bit of good. He bled to death inside that rover. Everything was frozen.”

“What about the area around the rover?” I asked and continued to look at the screen image from half an hour ago.

“With that wind? Are you kidding? Everything is wiped clean. We got the satellite images and relayed them to Moss up there. There was a gap of fifty-three minutes to get through channels. More than enough time for anybody to leave the murder scene.”

“That’s not good. The killer had fifty-three minutes to escape.”

“Over an hour until we had scans of the connector roads,” said Patenaude. I had roads blocked to Livingston, but with that storm, anyone with a decent rover could have looped around and then continued. I have a

report pending on all rented rovers and rovers leaving the Livingston exit gates over the past twenty-four hours.”

“ Unless the killer didn’t come from Livingston.” I nodded and sat down again. “ Jahn, Desmond called me on the zip. He is not too happy.”

“ Tell me about it. He is demanding my office inform him about what we know about the IP-5 problem. I don’t know what the hell he’s talking about.”

I cleared my throat. “ Apparently, this IP-5 thing is bigger than Ed or any of us thought. Listen, Jahn, my zip has a playback of the attack.”

“ And?”

“ I’m concerned about the pinpoint pulse frequency. I’ll memo the playback to you and the bureau can trace the manufacturer.”

“ That was my next request, sir. Now get your rump down here and we’ll take a little trip into the desert.”

“ Will do. Cobb out.” I looked at the rover scan and then into Moss’s blue eyes. “ Captain, again, thank you for your help here.”

“ Any time, Commander,” said Moss with a quirky grin.

“ Ah, you checked my bureau record.”

“ Yes, sir. Standard procedure-”

“ No need to explain, Captain,” I said as I stood and patted him on the back. “ I’ll be back in my recliner if anything else comes in.”

“ Understood,” he said as I turned, “ Sir.”

“ I’m retired,” I said halfway down the corridor. I admired Moss’s thoroughness and ability to follow regulations. I grinned at the attendant and returned to my recliner.

The Fitton Chronicles

The Dust of Mars

I plugged the zip into the recliner window and immediately accessed the plea from Rapp, captured only two hours ago. After memoing Patenaude I pushed the playback. Rapp made no mention of any suspicions about his assailant nor did he provide any description other than someone in a t-suit, wielding a pinpoint. His wails and the ensuing high-pitched pinpoint prompted me to close the zip.

I thought about checking his background myself, but shut down the zip window. Sadie was a proficient coordinator and would provide me with a complete check. I was not bothered by the stress of the case or the Turcotte pressure, but I was plagued with thoughts of Ariana and the time we spent last night on Orbitus. Her business trip would end in the Whittemore Dome on Mars. As we talked last night at the Orbitus cafe's corner table, my tension had eased and I wondered why I had ever let her go. I sensed she had similar feelings when she suggested we meet at the Excelsior Hotel's restaurant in Livingston tomorrow night.

3

I drifted between the edges of sleep and a full realization the man supposed to provide vital production information at this morning's breakfast lay dead, covered with icy blood in the desert. Mars's brown, crater dotted soil, lifeless from a thousand kilometers out, was bright against dark space. I sat up as the Orbitus shuttle slowed amidst an assortment of beeps and a recliner sweep by the attendants. After traveling to the murder sight with Patenaude, my next move, if I stuck my nose into this mess, might involve a roverbus trip to Industrial Plant Five, and interviews with all plant personnel. I was, however, acutely aware of Desmond's fierce opposition to an evolving investigation. He would proceed only if he had control of the situation at the plant.

As the craft banked and fully rotated a hundred and eighty degrees for entry into the thin Martian atmosphere, many views were visible on the recliner window screen, but I had other things on my mind. Foremost was how Jason Rapp had any information at all about the goings on inside a plant thousands of kilometers away from his inner solar system stomping grounds. The shuttle fully faced the crisp yellow sun, reduced slightly in size from Orbitus, but noticeably from Earth. The tinted radiation shields darkened now and I shut my eyes. Rapp skipped breakfast, maybe an oversight, and headed directly to Mars, within kilometers of IP-5. In fact, on

the way to the murder scene he had to pass or stop at IP-5, unless he took the long way around from Livingston via IP-7 and retreated along its connector road.

The craft shuddered at the atmospheric edges and my eyes remained closed. I didn't know Rapp personally, but his appearance at the black jack tables and sensitivity to losing the wad of droits, lent itself to another speculation, albeit unsubstantiated. His avoidance of the breakfast might reveal another plan; a plan to procure money. Obviously, he was aware the Turcottes were engaged in something nefarious at IP-5 or at least aware something was rotten in production. How Rapp came to know about that information was irrelevant right now, but blackmail could point toward his killer.

I pulled out my zip and pushed Patenaude's address. The transmission was scratchy through the atmosphere and he sounded as if he had a mouth full of his favorite dessert. "Jahn Patenaude."

"Are you eating the real cheesecake or the doctor recommended version?"

"The real thing. The hell with the doctors. Couldn't you wait another half an hour, Harry?"

"I can't get this thing off my mind. I need to talk to people at IP-5."

"Funny you should mention IP-5," said Patenaude, taking in more cheesecake. "The plant manager, Joe Lockheed."

"What about him?"

“ Not around. Not at the plant. Not at his habitat connected to the IP-5 dome. Get this: Logs indicate Lockheed checked out a company rover at 12:47 PM.”

“ Rapp was killed an hour later, eight kilometers from the plant. Why would Lockheed leave the plant during a dust storm?”

“ Good question, Harry,” said Patenaude. “ Strawberry cheesecake. Very good. Almost as good as cherry.”

“ You’d better watch your diet,” I told him. “ We need witnesses at the plant. Somebody who might have seen Rapp and Lockheed together.”

The frequency wavered as the shuttle descended. “ Well, Ed Stanton gave me the rover information and is supposed to get back to me, but he says the Turcottes, Brandon and Desmond are both out at IP-5.”

“ Something stinks and I don’t like it.”

Patenaude’s signal went out. The brighter edges of the atmosphere separated a well-defined line against the outer space darkness. I clipped the zip on my belt and leaned back. Rapp was blackmailing Lockheed. What other explanation would fly against his quick departure from Orbitus? I wanted to know more about Rapp, but as we surged into the upper atmosphere, my anger toward Desmond Turcotte mounted like the pressure of an over-inflated dome on the planet’s surface

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I saw the enveloping dust cloud from several thousand meters over the planet's surface. The charcoal tinted Livingston Dome rounded beautifully, bouncing sporadic bursts of reflected sunlight outward, but my eyes were drawn across the darkening rocky desert, blanketed by the sweeping gray storm. The digital overhead clock showed the shuttle was exactly on time as we swung over Livingston and prepared to bank for the port atop the dome.

I leaned against the portal's cold transparent silcoplast. Even IP-5 was hidden under the sand and wind. I rubbed my nose several times as I anguished about the source for Rapp's information. He needed someone to provide the IP-5 improprieties in order to pressure Lockheed. I knew I was forming an unavoidable list of facts into a theory dependent on my own prejudices and misconceptions. Underlying everything was the image of Rapp handing over the blue droit wad on Orbitus.

My shoulder pushed against the outer wall as we circled toward Livingston. The long gray runways crisscrossed the open area along the top of the dome. As we neared the upper area, the rest of the rounded enclosure below, vanished, and I had the sense as I always did, of landing on a flat planetary surface. I studied the pointed blue control towers and the hotels inside the clear silcoplast bubbles dotted like blisters on the top. The landing gear popped and we raced above grainy runway, finally making contact three seconds from four-thirty. Huge air lifters slowed the craft outside the port.

I was compelled to look back across the desert. The dark cloud lurked more ominous from here, but a surface tracer, captained by an experienced pilot, would very easily traverse even an ionized dust storm. I moved my

leg rapidly up and down as we taxied back toward the port's transition surrounds.

I thought about my own people. Max and Jody were working on a minor customs case along the transport barriers outside lunar orbit. I smiled when I realized how the bionic Jody's rational personality forever grated on the suave Max's nerves, yet he somehow stayed working with her. Renie was another matter. I first met him when I arrested him five years ago for smuggling in the Hampshire Colony gutter districts. I saw a cleverness and a sensitivity Renie refused to believe he possessed. Renie could find anyone or anything and had the daring to pull it off. Somehow Sadie kept them all in line.

The surrounds diagonal doors revealed a hundred fingered locks as they slid open. An inner protective silcoplast transparency moved upward once the outer doors meshed back together. We soon rolled onto the port's inner runways. I yawned and tried to stop jiggling my leg, but Rapp's death gnawed at me like an incurable disease infecting my thoughts. I looked across the linear surface to the smooth tan hotel facade basking in a dim sunlight similar to arctic bases on earth. Somewhere inside the adjacent tower Patenaude was waiting for an immediate departure via surface tracer, and perhaps he now had additional information.

* * *

I carried my containment bag down the ramp corridor into the crowded terminal. My gray haired, slightly overweight, friend spoke with several of his red uniformed security troopers. Patenaude never wore an official uniform. His blue succo fit his rounded body and the gold snaps were unbuttoned. The white neck liner bulged out of the succo. I scanned the terminal and checked the communication windows along the wall. I wanted to call Sadie and see what she had on Rapp.

Patenaude broke away from his men. “ Harry, I’m glad you’re here.”

“ Why, have you solved the Rapp murder?”

I remained deadpan, throwing off his concentration. “ Solved it? I don’t even have the rover rental reports yet and Kranz is being difficult.”

“ Kranz is a pain... What about Rapp?” I asked as we headed for containment release and the rest of my bags.

“ Ah... Spent two years in the detention wheel when he was nineteen and made his initial contacts with the Divone group.”

I stopped and faced him. “ Jahn, I spent my career chasing the Divone people. Frankly, they’re too powerful and I don’t want to waste my time.”

“ Rapp’s been married four times. A real ladies man.”

I started walking again. “ Jahn, you’re not listening.”

“ I am. Rapp’s a gambler. He learned his trade in the detention wheel under the wing of the Divone people. Had a murder charge against him, but the Divone lawyers got him off because he worked in the Primo. A good place to pick up women.”

“ A real nice place the Primo.” I stepped onto the mover and set my containment on the black, bubbled surface. “ The Primo: Heartland of vulgarity and heathens... I miss it.”

Patenaude smiled. “ We should have rover reports before we board the tracer. My men can bring your containments to the Dillon.”

“ That’s fine. I need to get to a window and call Sadie. How’s Gwen?”

“ With the kids and grand kids.”

“ I can’t believe you’re a grandfather. Makes me feel old.” The mover dipped down toward the containment release. “ This Rapp thing has a distinct Turcotte odor to it. Whatever happened over IP-5 must have been big.”

“ That investigation is not my concern right now.” The mover leveled and I stepped onto the solid surface near the containment release. The clear transport tubes were empty and I headed toward the window kiosks.

“ Where are you going. Harry? We need to get to the tracer hanger.”

“ I’m calling Sadie.”

“ Okay.” Patenaude whipped out his zip and shouted out orders about getting my containments to the Dillon.

I sat in front of the window and plugged in my zip. As containments shot through the clear overhead tubes and more passengers gathered around the deposit bins, my zip connected to my Orbitus office. Sadie sat at a keyboard in her bright blue succo. She smiled when she saw me. “ Well, I see the shuttle made it in one piece and I still have a job.”

I grinned “ Oh?”

“ I have an extensive report on Rapp. I was about to memo into your zip.

“ He was a Divone man.”

“ Does the word scoundrel come to mind?” she asked.

“ It does. Sadie, I’m trying to figure out how Rapp came into information about production problems in Turcotte Industrial Plant Five.”

“ I can have Renie track that down.” I nodded and looked into her green eyes. “ I think he’s in the transaction locus.”

“ Not surprising. Listen, I’m about to leave on a tracer with Patenaude. We should be at the murder sight in about half an hour.”

“ Who are we working for in this one?” she asked.

“ Purely curiosity at this point. I want to know why a guy who was supposed to meet me with information is now dead. The main focus is the Ed Stanton thing, which I guess will put me on the Turcotte payroll.”

Patenaude took a seat behind the petition and activated the window.

“ Harry, Max and Jody are wrapping up the Norris case. Can they reach you by zip later tonight your time?”

“ Of course. I don’t know if I’ll have window access, but yes, have them call. I should have a better idea what my status is here and whether Ed Stanton wants me looking into any of this.”

“ Very well. You have a nice little trip into that dust.”

“ Just what I wanted,” I said, trying to hear who Patenaude was talking on the window. “ A journey across the dust of Mars. Thanks, Sadie.”

I unclipped my zip and stood. Patenaude spoke to a man wearing a smooth green succo and a Livingston gate identification badge. The man explained something about rover rentals. I walked around the panel and Patenaude raised his finger as he spoke. “ Yes, I understand, Mr. Forest, I have the list in my zip. What about times of rental?”

“ Yup.”

“ And droit payment?” asked Patenaude.

“ Yup.”

“ Can I call your people about any questions concerning these individuals?”

“ Yup.”

“ Would they be on security windows?”

“ What windows? We have privacy rights involved here.”

“ Thanks a lot,” said Patenaude.

“ Yup.”

“ Well, he’s a wealth of information.”

Patenaude stood and tucked his zip in his succo. “ I’m sick of hearing about privacy rights. We have a man dead in the desert.”

“ Privacy rights end when people get murdered,” I said.

“ Easier said than done. Listen, I have a memo from Stanton.”

I raised my brows and tilted my head. “ Lockheed is definitely missing.”

“ The IP-5 plant manager.” We headed toward the containment deposit bins. One of my containers sat cockeyed in the transparency. “ Now, that is odd, Jahn. I wonder where he is.”

Three of Patenaude's men appeared by the mover and headed toward the bins. "Do, you have a manifest number?"

I punched my zip. "Three-five-seven."

"Gentlemen, MN-357. Mr. Cobb is listed in the Hotel Dillon down in the dome."

"Yes, sir," said one of the young men.

"Come on, Harry," said Patenaude, picking up the pace toward the security elevator across the tubes. "Let's get up to the hanger and out to the murder sight."

* * *

I was surprised the flight was so rough. Fifteen years ago I was aboard a crashed tracer flight maybe six hundred kilometers away. One man was killed and rescue tracers didn't arrive for six hours. This present, ill conceived flight into the dust storm now covering the Livingston Dome was worse. Two items Patenaude found on separate rover rental lists diverted my attention from the storm. A Turcotte employee named Jim Oakley drove his rover through LG-42 and onto the connector road to the Turcotte industrial plant managed by Lockheed. I thought we should check out Oakley's story and Patenaude agreed.

Patenaude's list showed a Samantha Evans rented a rover and departed through the same Livingston gate as Oakley. She had an attendant procure a rover at 10:16 a.m., nearly forty-five minutes after Oakley headed

toward IP-5. The name Samantha Evans evoked memories of a possible bureau investigation or perhaps a long ago local security operation.

“ That name sounds familiar,” I told Patenaude. He imputed both names into his zip for background checks.

“ Old girlfriend?” he asked.

I half grinned as the pilot began a vertical descent. He looked back at Patenaude. “ Inspector, we’re docking at the portable dome set up by Lieutenant Kranz and his men. We won’t be affected by the storm.”

“ It’s by God’s grace we’re here at all,” I said. The pilot nodded slowly. All of Patenaude’s five security men looked relieved. “ Jahn, the name Samantha Evans relates to a some case I wasn’t directly involved in. Could be five or six years ago. I remember reading reports. Something about a disappearance. Might have been on earth.”

“ You always remember every useless fact and case you ever heard of...” Patenaude stroked his chin. “ Unless, the Turcottes invited Evans, why did she travel out to an industrial plant?”

“ Another thing on our list of questions for Desmond Turcotte.”

The tracer magnetically locked into the top of the portable dome. I was relieved we were on the ground, but the barrage of sand grains battering the tracer’s outer shell persisted. Two of Patenaude’s men remotely slid the hatch and Kranz’s grating voice shot through the ladder tunnel. I looked at Patenaude and shook my head.

“ He’s not that bad.”

“ The man likes to give orders because he sure as hell didn’t like to follow orders when he was with the bureau.”

“ People do grow into their jobs, Harry.”

Patenaude and I stood together as one of Kranz’s men popped his head through the floor opening. “ I trust you gentlemen enjoyed the ride.”

“ Ride, yes. Enjoy: no,” I said.

“ You must be Harry Cobb. The Lieutenant requests you get clearance from the Security Chief Burkhart before entering the dome.”

“ What kind of malarkey is that?”

“ Lieutenant’s orders, sir.”

“ Okay, maybe some people don’t grow into their jobs,” said Patenaude. He walked up to the opening and motioned the man back. Then he positioned himself on top of the stairs and moved in a surprisingly agile manner into the tiny dome.

I crossed my arms and tried to remember more about Samantha Evans, but every time I tried to recount those days, memories of the arrogant Kranz ran rampant. I specifically recalled an incident on a lunar base where I directly told Kranz to search an abandoned warehouse and he brought his men in slowly, just to upset me. I put him on report and although I couldn’t prove three contraband runners escaped through one of the basement locks, I blamed Kranz. The runners escape did not annoy me half as much as Kranz’s obstreperous defiance.

Patenaude stuck his head up. “ You may enter the royal castle now.”

“ What did you do, bribe him?” I asked and walked toward the ladder.

“ Let’s just say I know certain things about the good lieutenant.” Patenaude had a twinkle in his blue eyes. “ Come on, before they put the body in the containment bin.”

A cocky smile broke across my face. “ Was the dear boy being naughty?”

“ You might say that,” said Patenaude from below.

“ Tell me more,” I said and climbed onto the ladder.

“ Then it wouldn’t be a secret.”

I moved my hands over the abrasive rungs as the air-cooled and the sand hit the thinner dome walls. Hebon towers shined white blocks of light across a rusty, sand laden, half buried rover. The bubble top was pierced open as if someone had cut through the silcoplast with a thin blade and the tire treads were mostly buried in the sand. Red glowing coils from Kranz’s field heaters pushed a semblance of warmth into the dome, but the air was still cold enough to see your breath. An air purifier hummed behind Rapp’s rover near the locks connecting Kranz’s security tracer.

Three security men with velvet blue outer coats hovered around a dark containment bin. Kranz, in a maroon realball cap and the bureau’s red military fatigues, sat on scaffolding above the rover. When he saw me he smiled. “ Well, Commander Cobb. We meet again.”

“ You’re out of uniform, Kranz.”

“ You’re lucky I let you in here.”

I looked over at Patenaude by the rover. He rolled his eyes and then peered inside. “ Oh, I don’t know how much luck had to do with it.”

Kranz thought about that for awhile and then yelled at the men near the containment bin. “ Get the body out.”

“ Wait,” said Patenaude. “ Harry, take a look at this.”

I glanced at Kranz huffing under his breath and studied the melted silcoplast on Rapp’s rover. Only a pinpoint pulser would sliced the silcoplast. When I rounded the bin I saw Jason Rapp’s contorted face. “ Looks, like he was gasping for air.”

“ Dead is dead, Cobb,” said Kranz.

I didn’t acknowledge him, but instead looked at the dried blood on Rapp’s blue fatigues. His head was dipped on his shoulder and his once neat brown hair was matted on his head. “ Do we have pulser fire angles and intensity?”

“ The preliminary investigation is complete, compadre. Let’s put him in the bin and get the hell back to Livingston.”

“ Where is Stanton?” I asked.

“ Who cares?” replied Kranz. “ Get the body out.”

“ No wait. What’s the damned rush?” I asked and now stared at Kranz. “ We just got here.”

“ And we’re all hungry and tired. We’ve been out here for three hours.”

“ Even dogs have to be fed,” I whispered to Patenaude. “ Any other pinpoint murders around Livingston recently?”

“ Save your babbling for the courtroom. Nobody hired you anyway.”

“ Harry is here on my authority,” said Patenaude and he stepped back from the rover opening. “ Yeah, as a matter of fact. The end of June. One of

the tram operators between domes. Guy named Burroughs. We can look into it when we get back. Check pulser frequencies.”

“ Yeah, you do that,” said Kranz, jumping down from the scaffolding. “ Time to fold up tent. You saw the body, he’s dead. What do you say, Inspector?”

Patenaude looked at me and I nodded. “ I would suggest you go back into your tracer, Lieutenant, and munch on the food provisions.”

Kranz grit his teeth and motioned his men back through the little dome’s bottom lock. I watched him disappear into the other tracer and then I peered into Patenaude’s crisp blue eyes. “ If I were a man of revenge I’d send that son of a bitch on permanent patrol in the transaction zone.”

“ He’s be right at home,” said Patenaude, pulling out his zip.

As I stared at Rapp’s smooth hands, Patenaude called his office back in Livingston. I pieced Rapp’s disjointed life together with the limited information Sadie and Patenaude had given me. And Lockheed was missing, but until I could place him on this connector road around quarter of two this afternoon, I discounted him as involved in the murder. It was more than coincidence Rapp made an appearance at a plant involved in covering up some manufacturing irregularity and had knowledge of that plant’s problems. How he came into such information might prove critical as to why he was killed.

“ I have the manufacturer of the pinpoint that killed Burroughs,” said Patenaude, breaking my concentration. “ A facility in a commerce colony midway between earth and us. Manufactured 2134 and sold to a man named Cauldwell, residence in numerous places.”

“ Who the hell is he?” I asked.

“ We’re checking. One of my investigators, Tom Doherty says not many people went out Livingston’s south gates with the storm brewing. He’s concerned about this guy Oakley who did arrive at IP-5 around quarter past twelve and, according to the foreman, Orby, he left a half an hour later on the IP-7 connector road. Same as Rapp, but-”

“ Oakley was on the same road as Rapp?”

“ So was Lockheed, my friend. He left from a different IP-5 lock. Orby was talking with Tommy Doherty when Desmond Turcotte himself cut off the conversation.”

“ Orby’s testimony is critical, Jahn. We need legal action on this.”

“ I know. It means breaking the Turcotte hold on the court magistrates.”

I told Patenaude I still had connections in the bureau and would use them against the Turcottes if necessary to procure Orby’s testimony. I scanned the rocks and sand around rover as the storm pummeled the portable dome. “ Has anyone surveyed the sand here? We haven’t even read Kranz’s report. I’d also like soil samples to compare the magnetic alignment to both Lockheed’s and Oakley’s rovers.”

“ Wherever the hell those rovers are,” said Patenaude, motioning to one of his men. He sent the kid into the lock to get Kranz’s report.

“ And Samantha Evans.”

“ Doherty has her vehicle impounded,” said Patenaude.

“ Really?”

Patenaude turned toward the lock as his man returned into the dome.

“ What’s the problem?”

“ He has the report in his zip and he’s transmitted a copy to the security port.”

I pressed my lips together and felt the frustration mounting. Patenaude held my arm briefly as I left the rover and marched past the kid into the connector lock. Kranz was seated, gnawing on ship’s provisions, in the command recliner, and his feet were propped on the forward console. He laughed when he saw me. He threw a palm size disk toward me.

“ You’re a pain in the ass, Cobb.”

I bent over and held the disk in my hand. As much as I wanted to knock my fist into his jaw, I moved into the lock. I could hear him mutter something back in the tracer. I gave the disk to Patenaude and we studied the reading on one of the enlarged security zips. Most everything was in order, which annoyed me, but no soil samples were taken. We filled a few containers and I gazed back toward Kranz’s lock.

“ Let’s get out of here, Jahn.”

“ What about Kranz?”

I shook my head. “ Let’s go.”

4

The meal at the Excelsior erased the emotional onslaught of the day's investigation. I sat with Patenaude and a few of his officers at a huge round table next to a six-foot square zip window. Gwen Patenaude, her white hair cut short, stood in their habitat with Patenaude's daughter, son-in-law, and three young grand children, darting like errant meteorites across the room.

I lifted a second stein of Amber Chill, a high potency beer from a well-known lunar company. "And Jahn, of course, watches the children."

Gwen laughed. "Just like when the kids were growing up. He arrives home and is the hero."

"You wouldn't catch me hanging out around the house. I'd rather be under pulser fire in the transaction zones." Patenaude moved a white silcoplast fork through the large ripe strawberries and scooped up a syrup covered chunk of smooth yellow cheesecake. "It's safer!"

"What about you, Harry?" asked Gwen. "You stayed devoted to your career and never married."

"Sometimes fate has a life of its own," I said, wondering if I was too profound. "I do have a lot of nieces and nephews."

"Here on Mars?"

“ Earth. My family is mostly on earth. Los Angeles and northern California.”

“ Jahn and I had a wonderful trip down the California coast five years ago.”

Patenaude gulped his jafrin from a magenta mug. “ Try nine years ago, Gweny.”

“ Time flies,” she said.

A red memo flashed in the window’s lower right corner. “ We have a memo,” said Patenaude. “ I’ll be back in less than an hour, sweetheart.”

“ I’ve heard that before,” said Gwen as one of the kids jumped into her lap.

“ Bye, granddad,” said the little girl.

“ Good-bye, Jenny. Bye Matt. Bye Karen.”

The window closed into a small dot and quickly reopened to a playback of the thin Doherty in his blue fatigues. A dusty rover was parked in a security lab and surrounded by narrow amber pulses. The lower digit clock noted the report was made ten minutes ago. “ Jahn, Samantha Evans’ rover is behind me. A couple of things. This rover’s dust aligns magnetically with the particles you brought back.”

“ Thank you, Harry,” said Patenaude.

I shrugged my shoulders as Doherty’s memo continued. “ This rover was rented at ten sixteen this morning by woman five foot seven, blonde hair, and blue eyes. I have conflicting reports here. Her credit listing puts her on Banfield Lunar Colony in a small habitat. According to calls I placed

to neighbors, Evans is away all the time. Habitat was purchased six years ago.

But I have an additional report from earth. Baltimore.”

“ That was it!” I said. “ A pinpoint attack and the woman disappeared. I’m sure it was Samantha Evans.”

“ A pinpoint attack and the woman disappeared,” said Doherty. Patenaude smiled. “ Some rumors suggest she faked a pinpoint attack. More than likely I think she just disappeared. This woman also had a criminal background, including arrests for fraud and grand larceny. That’s it from here, Jahn. We’ll go over the rover again tomorrow. Oh, I called Oakley’s habitat like you wanted. His wife reports he’s not around. Never around. She had already called the local security port. I’ll talk to you.”

“ Well, well,” said Patenaude. “ Our little Miss Evans has a past.”

I pinched my chin. Doherty’s report left me unnerved. “ Rapp was from Baltimore, Jahn.”

“ Oh, boy,” said Patenaude. He finished the jafrin and looked across the restaurant.

“ Jafrin will keep you awake.”

“ I may need to stay awake. ”

I turned as Desmond Turcotte, his black hair brushed back perfectly marched ahead of his shorter brother into the restaurant. Even at this late hour Desmond wore a red succo with gold buttons and a gold neck liner. His dark eyes focused on Patenaude. “ I see the good inspector has ample free time on his schedule.”

Patenaude stood, but I remained seated. I remembered Desmond as a smart mouthed little brat running around Jarred Turcotte's office twenty years ago. Patenaude quickly shook Desmond's hand. "Why are you here, Desmond?"

"Why am I here?" he asked and smiled at his brother. "Brandon, he hasn't used his brilliant powers of deduction to understand my concerns."

"Seems as though you have *ample* concerns," I said loudly.

Desmond quickly turned toward me. He raised his left brow and nearly smiled. "I thought you were in retirement."

"Technically, I am on your payroll."

Brandon's brow creased, but Desmond was unfettered. "A call from Ed Stanton does not warrant any association with the Turcotte name. Only I will deem who is and is not on the Turcotte payroll."

I stood and walked by Patenaude. Desmond didn't flinch when I moved within centimeters of his taller frame. "Does your father have a working knowledge of the operations of Industrial Plant Five?"

"Father has a more intra-solar system role nowadays," said Desmond, his voice shifting from confrontational to charming. "My father, always admired your bureau record, Harry. Please consider yourself always a friend of the Turcottes."

"That is reassuring. Where is your father now?"

"In the Caribbean," said Brandon.

"Oh," I said, raising my brows, but I soon found Desmond's arm around my shoulder. He walked me a few feet from the table.

“ Jarred is fully aware of certain production problems in IP-5. Things that have been changed and are not important now.”

I looked at his hand, still on my arm. He released his grip. “ You think Jason Rapp thought those problems were important?”

“ Rapp is dead and on my property. My chief engineer in IP-5 is missing. I want you to find the truth.”

I stared at him for a few moments. “ Do you?”

“ Why, yes, of course.”

“ Desmond, I don't trust you.”

He tilted his chin up and laughed. “ That's why I always liked you. You speak your mind and you're so cynical. I can assure you I want my IP-5 engineer cleared.”

“ Oh? Where is he?”

“ Finding him is a priority.”

“ My guess is he's hiding out with or without your help in one of your facilities. IP-5 or IP-7.”

“ Then, can I credit you a thirty droit retainer?”

“ I want a fifty droit retainer with expenses,” I said and tried to second-guess how much he really wanted me in the investigation.

“ Okay.”

“ And tell me what was going on at IP-5.”

“ I shant go that far. Ed wanted you to look at the overall picture. But with specifics, we're talking about trade secrets.”

“ Desmond, you risk not having my services.”

“ No mind...”

“ I’ll follow this up under certain conditions. You let me have full run of your facilities here on Mars. I want to speak with Ed Stanton and all personnel. And I want Patenaude with me.”

“ Agreed.”

“ And don’t be holding back anything or I’m off the case.”

Desmond produced his overbearing, fixed smile. “ I wouldn’t think of putting the investigation in jeopardy.”

“ Oh, yes, you would.”

I walked by him and he uttered something about not bothering to call his father. Brandon was enjoying a stein of Amber Chill and talking with Patenaude about a realball game he went to last night. Patenaude looked at Desmond, now at the bar, and then at me. “ What’s the good news?”

“ I’m officially working for the Turcottes on this.”

“ Really?”

“ Great,” said Brandon, shaking my hand with a grip stronger than Desmond’s feeble grasp. “ My father always speaks well of you.”

I thought about asking Brandon about IP-5, but figured Desmond had already browbeat him into silence. “ I look forward to your father’s return.”

“ Desmond gave him and my mother an extensive trip.”

“ I bet he did.” I was beginning to question whether Jarred knew about IP-5 or if he did maybe he was letting Desmond handle it. “ Brandon, did you know Jason Rapp?”

Brandon shook his head and sipped some more chill. He made eye contact and I believed he was telling the truth. “ No, but I’m not sure about Joe Lockheed.”

“ Neither am I.” I was more convinced as Desmond cantered back across the restaurant, whatever improprieties occurring at IP-5, as illegal or nefarious as they might seem, were far less important than Rapp’s possible blackmail of Lockheed. “ What kind of a man was Lockheed?”

“ Joe Lockheed,” said Desmond upon his return. “ Was a no-nonsense man who did his job well.”

“ No-nonsense meaning he wouldn’t take any guff from anybody?” I asked.

“ No... the man did his job.”

“ He lived his job,” said Brandon.

“ My brother is correct. You could always rely on Joe.”

I sat down at the table again and thought about the cocky Rapp. “ Listen, Desmond. I know you can’t tell me the inner workings of your plant, but what if Rapp knew what you knew.”

“ Blackmail, the oldest game around.” He gazed toward a taller woman with long brown hair back at the entrance. “ Almost the oldest game. That’s a great theory, Harry, except Joe did nothing to be blackmailed about.”

“ No, *he* didn’t.”

“ I will overlook that remark. We have to be going,” he said, looking at the brunette again. “ Come on, Brandon.”

“ Nice chatting with you,” said Brandon, leaving the stein on the table.

Everyone exchanged handshakes. Desmond and Brandon parted company. Desmond rendezvoused ahead and slithered his arm around a woman by the bar. I turned to Patenaude. “ I think Ed wanted answers that

Desmond wouldn't give him. But I tell you: I want to know what the hell is going on out at IP-5."

"So, do I, but he's not going to tell us."

"Damned Turcotte power. It might take months to get the trade boards to look into it. Desmond would block it all the way."

"Hence, the arrogance," said Patenaude.

"Well, I'm contacting Jarred Turcotte."

"Good luck. I'm sure Desmond somehow controls access to his father, too. Very clever how he moved Jarred into space. Jarred handles expanding the Turcotte holdings, giving Desmond full reign here."

My mind drifted. I daydreamed about being with Ariana tomorrow evening. Old memories of the towering Gondola falls, cascading off the sunlit jagged mountain cliffs materialized in my head. Ten years ago I had flown in from an investigation on earth and met her at an Mars social gathering. From the first moment we were attracted to each other. We stayed out all night and she booked the time in the dome. I was tired from months of continuous work and Barsoom's mystery was just what we both needed.

I let my mind wander back to the mountain top chateau above the rope bridge bowed over the canyon. Ariana wore only a velvet red succo as we walked up the stones to the chateau. My thoughts were shattered when Patenaude touched my wrist.

"Sorry, Jahn," I said with a smile. "I'm having dinner tomorrow night with Ariana."

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Patenaude raised his bushy brows. “ Well, well, I see old fires can be rekindled.”

“ I am afraid you might be right.”

“ She is a powerful woman now that Cervantes is dead. Amalgamated Sureties is no small potato. Well, before the evening fireworks, kindly meet me in my office tomorrow morning. I want to get this case over el pronto. I don't like bucking the Turcottes. I want the murderer in custody and then go back to my run of the mill cases.”

“ What time?” I asked.

“ Meet me at eight-thirty. Maybe we can get out to IP-5 and interview Orby.”

“ Tomorrow?”

“ Don't worry, I'll have you back in Livingston before evening. I just hope you know what you're doing, Harry.”

“ So do I, Jahn. So, do I.”