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IN THE NIGHT

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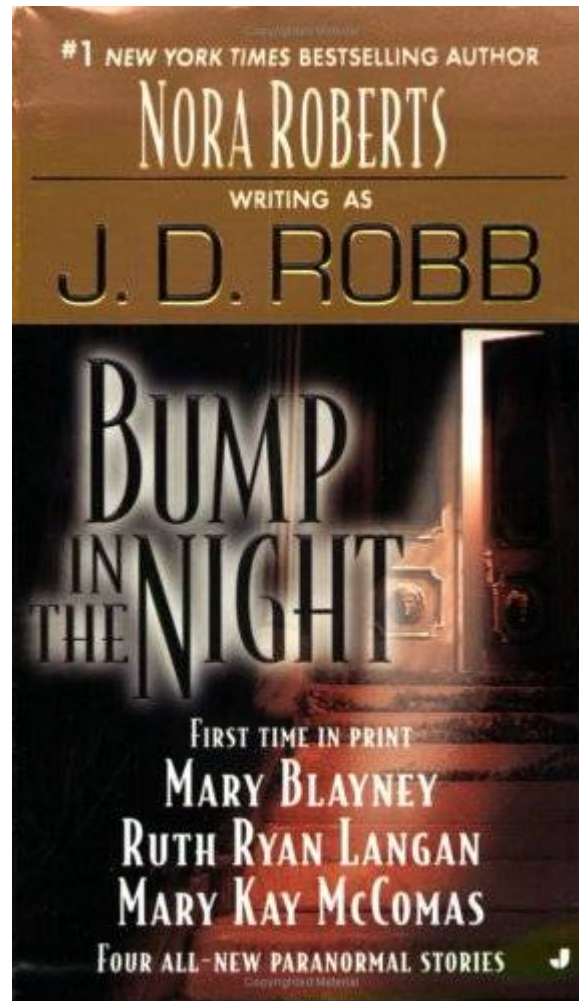
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FOUR ALL-NEW PARANORMAL STORIES





Haunted in Death
Eve Dallas – Book 26
(In Anthology Bump In The Night)
By J.D. Robb

There nearly always is method in madness.

– G. K. Chesterton

There needs no ghost, my lord,
come from the grave to tell us this.

– *William Shakespeare*

One

Winter could be murderous. The slick streets and icy sidewalks broke bones and cracked skulls with gleeful regularity. Plummeting temperatures froze the blood and stopped the hearts of a select few every night in the frigid misery of Sidewalk City.

Even those lucky enough to have warm, cozy homes were trapped inside by the bitter winds and icy rains. In the first two weeks of January 2060 – post-holiday – bitch winter was a contributing factor to the sharp rise in domestic disturbance calls to the New York City Police and Security Department.

Even reasonably happy couples got twitchy when they were bound together long enough by the cold ropes of winter.

For Lieutenant Eve Dallas, double d's weren't on her plate. Unless some stir-crazy couple killed each other out of sheer boredom.

She was Homicide.

On this miserable, bone-chilling morning, she stood over the dead. It wasn't the cold or the ice that had killed Radcliff C. Hopkins III. She couldn't say, as yet, if the blue-tipped fingers of winter had been a contributing factor. But it was clear someone had put numerous nasty holes in Radcliff C.'s chest. And another, neatly centered on his wide forehead.

Beside her, Eve's partner Detective Delia Peabody crouched for a closer look. "I've never seen these kinds of wounds before, outside of training vids."

"I have. Once."

It had been winter then, too, Eve remembered, when she'd stood over the first victim in a series of rape/murders. The gun ban had all but eliminated death by firearm, so gunshot wounds were rare. Not that people didn't continue to kill each other habitually. But the remote violence and

simplicity of a bullet into flesh and bone wasn't often the method of choice these days.

Radcliff C. might have been done in by an antiquated method, but it didn't make him any less dead.

"Lab boys will rub their hands together over this one," Eve murmured. "They don't get much call to play with ballistics."

She was a tall woman, with a lean build inside a long black leather coat. Her face was sharp with angles, her eyes long and brown and observant. As a rare concession to the cold, she'd yanked a black watch cap over her short, usually untidy brown hair. But she'd lost her gloves again.

She continued to stand, let her partner run the gauge for time of death.

"Six wounds visible," Eve said. "Four in the body, one in the right leg, one to the head. From the blood spatter, blood trail, it looks like he was hit first there." She gestured a few feet away. "Force knocks him back, down, so he tries to crawl. Big guy, fleshy, with a strong look to him. He maybe had enough in him to crawl some, maybe to try to get up again."

"Time of death, oh-two-twenty." Peabody, her dark hair in a short, sassy flip at the base of her neck, looked up. Her square, sturdy face was cop solemn, but there was a gleam in her eye, dark as her hair. "ID confirmed. You know who he is, right?"

"Hopkins, Radcliff C. With the fussy Roman numerals after."

"Your lack of interest in culture trivia's showing again. His grandfather was Hop Hopkins, and made a couple of fortunes in the swinging Sixties. Nineteen-sixties. Sex, drugs and rock 'n roll. Night clubs, music venues. L.A.-based, mostly, before the big one hit California, but he had a hot spot here in New York."

Peabody shifted her weight. "Ran hot for a couple of decades, then hit a serious patch of bad luck. The even more legendary Bobbie Bray – she was – "

“I know who Bobbie Bray was.” Eve hooked her thumbs in her pockets, rocking back on her heels as she continued to study the body, the scene. “I’m not completely oblivious to popular culture. Rock star, junkie, and a cult figure now. Vanished without a trace.”

“Yeah, well, she was his wife – third or fourth – when she poofed. Rumor and gossip figured maybe he offed her or had her done, but the cops couldn’t find enough evidence to indict. He went spooky, did the hermit thing, lost big fat piles of dough, and ended up OD’ing on his drug of choice – can’t remember what it was – right here in New York.”

Peabody pushed to her feet. “From there it’s urban legend time. Place where he OD’d was upstairs from the club, that’s where he’d holed himself up. In the luxury apartment he’d put in on the top floor. Building passed from hand to hand, but nobody could ever make a go of it. Because...”

Peabody paused now, for effect. “It’s haunted. And cursed. Anyone who’s ever tried to live there, or put a business in, suffers personal and/or physical misfortunes.”

“Number Twelve. Yeah, I’ve heard of it. Interesting.”

Hands still in her pockets, Eve scanned the large, dilapidated room. “Haunted and cursed. Seems redundant. Guess maybe Radcliff C. figured on bucking that.”

“What do you mean?” Then Peabody’s jaw dropped. “This is the place? *This?* Oh boy. Jeez.”

“Anonymous tip does the nine-one-one. Gonna want to review that transmission, because it’s likely it was the killer. What I’ve got is the vic owned the building, was having it rehabbed, redesigned. Maybe looking for some of his grandfather’s glory days. But what’s our boy doing hanging around in a cursed, haunted building at two in the morning?”

“This is the place,” Peabody repeated, reverently now. “Number Twelve.”

“Since the addy’s Twelve East Twelfth, I’m going to go out on a limb and say, yeah. Let’s turn him.”

“Oh, right.”

When they rolled the body, Eve pursed her lips. “Somebody really wanted this guy dead. Three more entry wounds on the back. Lab will confirm, but I’m thinking...”

She crossed the room toward a set of old circular iron stairs. “Standing about here, facing the attacker. Pow, pow. Takes it in the chest.” She slapped a hand on her own. “Stumbles back, goes down. The smeared blood trail tells me the vic tried crawling away, probably toward the doors.”

“Doors were locked from the inside. First on scene said,” Peabody added.

“Yeah. So he’s crawling, and the killer moves in. Pow, pow, into the back.” *The sound of the shots must have blasted the air in here, Eve thought. Must have set the ears ringing.* “But it’s not enough. No, we’re not finished yet. Body falls, has to be dead or dying, but it’s not enough. Turns the body over, puts the barrel of the gun to the forehead. See the burn marks around the forehead wound? Contact. I did a lot of studying up on firearms during the DeBlass case a couple years ago. Puts the barrel right against the head and pow.Coup de grace.”

Eve saw it in her head. Heard it, smelled it. “You put a gun like this.” She pressed her fingertip to her own brow. “You put it right against the skin and fire, it’s personal. You put that many steel missiles in somebody, you’re seriously pissed off.”

“Vic’s got his bright, shiny wristwatch – looks antique – his wallet – cash and credit inside – key codes, ppc, pocket ‘link. Killer didn’t bother making it look like robbery.”

“We’ll run the electronics. Let’s have a look at the ‘link.”

Eve took the ‘link in her sealed hands, called up the last transmission. There was a whispering, windy sound which Eve had to admit tingled her spine just a bit. The husky female voice wove through it.

Number Twelve. Twoa.m. Bring it. Bring it, and we’ll party.

“Maybe robbery plays in after all.”

“Did you hear that voice?” Peabody sent a cautious look over her shoulder. “It sounded, you know, unearthly.”

“Funny, sounded computer-generated to me. But maybe that’s because I know ghosts don’t make ‘link transmissions, or shoot guns. Because – and this may be news to you, Peabody – ghosts don’t exist.”

Peabody only shook her head, sagely. “Oh yeah? Tell that to my great-aunt Josie who died eight years ago and came back half a dozen times to nag my great-uncle Phil about fixing the leaky toilet in the powder room. She left him alone after he called the plumber.”

“And how much does your great-uncle Phil drink?”

“Oh, come on. People see ghosts all the time.”

“That’s because people, by and large, are whacked. Let’s work the case, Peabody. It wasn’t a ghostly finger that pulled the trigger here. Or lured the vic to an empty building in the middle of the night. Let’s do a run. Spouse, family, beneficiaries, business partners, friends, enemies. And let’s keep it to the corporeal.”

Eve re-examined the body, wondering if he’d brought whatever *it* was. “They can bag and tag. Start checking doors and windows. Let’s find out how the killer got out of the building. I’ll have another talk with the first on scene.”

“You want me to stay in here? To wander around in here. Alone?”

“Are you kidding?” One look at Peabody’s face told Eve her partner was absolutely serious. “Well, for God’s sake. You take the first on scene. I’ll take the building.”

“Better plan. You want crime scene in now, and the body transported?”

“Get it done.”

Eve took a visual sweep on the main floor. Maybe it had been a hot spot in the last century, but now it was derelict. She could see where some of the work had begun. Portions of the grimy walls had been stripped away to their bones to reveal the old, and certainly out-of-code, electrical wiring. Portable lights and heating units were set up, as well as stacks of materials in what seemed to be tidy and organized piles.

But the drop clothes, the material, the lights all had a coat of dust. Maybe Hopkins had started his rehab, but it looked as if there'd been a long lag since the last nail gun popped.

The remains of an old bar hulked in the center of the room. As it was draped with more dusty protective cloth, she assumed Hopkins had intended to restore it to whatever its former glory might have been.

She checked the rear exit door, found it too secured from inside. Through another door she found what might have been a store room at one time, and was now a junk heap. The two windows were about big enough for a cat to squeeze through, and were riot barred.

The toilet facilities on the main level were currently pits, with no outside access.

“Okay, unless you’re still here, waiting for me to cuff you and read you your rights, you found a way up and out.”

She glanced at the ancient elevator; opted for the spindly iron stairs.

The sweepers were going to have a hell of a time finding usable prints or physical evidence, she thought. There were decades of dust, grime, considerable water damage, what seemed to be old scorching from a fire.

She recorded and marked some blurry footprints smudged on the dirty floor.

Cold, she thought. *Freaking cold in here.*

She moved along the second floor landing, imagined it packed with tables and people during its heyday. Music pumping out to shatter ear drums, the

fashionable drugs of the time passed around like party favors. The chrome safety railings would have been polished to a gleam, flashing with the wild colors of the lights.

She stood as she was a moment, looking down as the ME drones bagged the body. Good view from there, she mused. See whatever you want to see. People ass to elbow below, sweating and grinding on the dance floor and hoping somebody was watching.

Did you come up here tonight, Hopkins? Did you have enough brains before they got blown out to come early, scope the place out? Or did you just walk in?

She found the exit at a second story window, unlocked and partially open, with the emergency stairs deployed.

“So much for that mystery. Suspect most likely exited the building,” she stated for the record, “from this point. Sweepers will process the window, stairs and surrounding areas for prints and other evidence. And lookie, lookie.” She crouched, shined her light on the edge of the windowsill. “Got a little blood, probably vic’s. Suspect may have had some spatter, or transferred some blood to his clothing when he moved in for the head shot.”

Frowning, she shined the light further down, onto the floor where something sparkled. “Looks like jewelry. Or... hmm. Some sort of hair decoration,” she amended when she lifted it with tweezers. “Damn if it doesn’t look like diamonds to me, on some kind of clip. About a half inch wide, maybe two inches long. No dust on it – stones are clean and bright in what I’d guess to be a platinum setting. Antique-looking.”

She bagged it.

She started to head back down, then thought she heard the floor creak overhead. Old buildings, she reminded herself, but drew her weapon. She moved to the back wall, which was partially caved in, and the old metal stairs behind it.

The sound came again, just a stealthy little creak. For a moment she thought she heard a woman's voice, raw and throaty, singing about a bleeding heart.

At the top of the stairs the floors had been scrubbed clean. They were scarred and scorched, but no dust lay on them. There was old smoke and fire damage on some of the interior walls, but she could see the area had been set up into a large apartment, and what might have been an office.

She swept, light and weapon, but saw nothing but rubble. The only sound now was the steady inhale, exhale of her own breath, which came out in veritable plumes.

If heat was supposed to rise, why the hell was it so much colder up here? She moved through the doorless opening to the left to do a thorough search.

Floors are too clean, she thought. And there was no debris here as there was in the other smaller unit, no faded graffiti decorating the walls. Eve cocked her head at the large hole in the wall on the far right. It looked as though it had been measured and cut, neatly, as a doorway.

She crossed the room to shine her light into the dark.

The skeleton lay as if in repose. In the center of the skull's forehead was a small, almost tidy hole.

Cupped in the yellowed fingers was the glittery mate to the diamond clip. And near the other was the chrome gleam of a semi-automatic.

"Well son of a bitch," Eve murmured, and pulled out her communicator to hail Peabody.

Two

“It’s her. It’s got to be her.”

“Her being the current vic’s ancestor’s dead wife.” Eve drove through spitting ice from the crime scene to the victim’s home.

“Or lover. I’m not sure they were actually married now that I think about it. Gonna check on that,” Peabody added, making a note in her memo book. “But here’s what must’ve gone down: Hopkins, the first one, kills Bobbie, then bricks the body up in the wall of the apartment he used over the club.”

“And the cops at the time didn’t notice there was a spanking new brick wall in the apartment?”

“Maybe they didn’t look very hard. Hopkins had a lot of money, and a river of illegal substances. A lot of connections, and probably a lot of information certain high connections wouldn’t want made public.”

“He bought off the investigation.” Whether it happened eighty-five years ago or yesterday, the smell of bad cops offended Eve’s senses. But... “Not impossible,” she had to admit. “If it is the missing wife/girlfriend, it could be she wasn’t reported missing until he had everything fairly tidied up. Then you got your payoff, or classic blackmail regarding the investigators, and he walks clean.”

“He did sort of go crazy. Jeez, Dallas, he basically locked himself up there in that place for over ten years, with a body behind the wall.”

“Maybe. Let’s get the bones dated and identified before we jump there. The crime scene guys were all but weeping with joy over those bones. While they’re having their fun, we’ve got an active case, from this century.”

“But you’re curious, right? You gotta wonder if we just found Bobbie Bray. And the hair clips. Is that spooky or what?”

“Nothing spooky about a killer planting them. Wanted us to find the bones, that’s a given. So connecting the dots, the skeleton and our vic are linked, at least in the killer’s mind. What do we have on Hopkins so far?”

“Vic was sixty-two at TOD. Three marriages, three divorces. Only offspring – son from second marriage.” Peabody scanned her memo book. “Bounced back and forth between New York and New L.A. with a couple of stints in Europe. Entertainment field, mostly fringe. Didn’t seem to have his grandfather’s flair. Parents died in a private plane crash twenty-five years back. No sibs.”

Peabody glanced over. “The Hopkins line doesn’t go toward longevity and propagation. Part of the curse.”

“Part of birth control practices and lousy luck,” Eve corrected. “What else – salient – do we have?”

“You gotta wonder,” Peabody went on. “I mean Hopkins number two was married four times. Four. One surviving son – or surviving until now. He had a daughter from another marriage who drowned when she was a teenager, and another son – still another marriage – who hanged himself when he was twenty-three. That’s the kind of consistent bad luck that says curse to me.”

“It says pretty irrelevant background data to me. Give me something on our vic.”

“Okay, okay. Rad Hopkins went through a lot of the money his father managed to recoup, and most of what he’d inherited from his mother, who was a socialite with some traces of blue blood. He had a few minor smudges for illegals, solicitation, gray-area business practices. No time served. Oh, no collector’s license for firearms.”

“Where are the ex-wives?”

“Number one’s based in New L.A. B-movie actress. Well, B-minus, really. Number three’s in Europe, married to some minor English aristocrat. But Number two’s here in New York. Fanny Gill – dance instructor. The son’s

Cliff Gill Hopkins – though he dropped the Hopkins legally at age twenty-one. They run a dance studio.”

“New York’s an easy place to get to and get out of. We’ll run them all. Business partners?”

“None currently. He’s had a mess of them, off and on. But he was the sole owner and proprietor of Number Twelve Productions, which has the same address as his residence. He bought the building he died in at auction about six months ago.”

“Not much work done in there in six months.”

“I tagged the construction company from the name on the building permit. Owner tells me they got called off after three weeks. Their scuttlebutt is Hopkins ran out of money, and scrambled around for some backers. But he said he had a call from the vic a few days ago, wanting to schedule work to start up again.”

“So maybe he got some money, or wheeled some sort of deal.”

She found the miracle of a street-level spot a half block from Hopkins’s building.

“Decent digs,” Eve noted. “Fancy antique wrist unit, designer wallet, pricey shoes. Doesn’t give the appearance of hurting financially.”

She flashed her badge at the doorman. “Hopkins,” she said. “Radcliff C.”

“I’ll ring up and let him know you’d like to speak with him.”

“Don’t bother. He’s in the morgue. When’s the last time you saw him?”

“Dead?” The doorman, a short, stocky mixed-race man of about forty, stared at Eve as his jaw dropped. “Mr. Hopkins is dead? An accident?”

“Yes, he’s dead. No, it wasn’t an accident. When did you last see him?”

“Yesterday. He went out about twelve-thirty in the afternoon, came back around two. I went off duty at four. My replacement would have gone off

at midnight. No doorman from midnight to eight."

"Anybody come to see him?"

"No one that checked in with me. The building's secured. Passcodes are required for the elevators. Mr. Hopkins's apartment is on the sixth floor." The doorman shook his head, rubbed a gloved hand over the back of his neck. "Dead. I just can't believe it."

"He live alone?"

"He did, yes."

"Entertain much?"

"Occasionally."

"Overnight entertaining? Come on, Cleeve," Eve prompted, scanning his brass name tag. "Guy's dead."

"Occasionally," he repeated and puffed out his cheeks. "He, ah, liked variety, so I couldn't say there was any particular lady. He also liked them young."

"How young?"

"Mid-twenties, primarily, by my gauge. I haven't noticed anyone visiting the last couple of weeks. He's been in and out nearly every day. Meetings, I assume, for the club he's opening. Was opening."

"Okay, good enough. We're going up."

"I'll clear the code for you." Cleeve held the door for them, then walked to the first of two elevators. He skimmed his passcode through the slot, then keyed in his code. "I'm sorry to hear about Mr. Hopkins," he said as the doors opened. "He never gave me any trouble."

"Not a bad epitaph," Eve decided as the elevator headed up to six.

The apartment was single-level, but spacious. Particularly since it was nearly empty of furnishings. There was a sleep chair in the living room, facing a wall screen. There were a multitude of high-end electronics and carton after carton of entertainment discs. It was all open space with a colored-glass wall separating the sleeping area.

“There was art on the walls,” Eve noted. “You can see the squares and rectangles of darker paint where they must’ve hung. Probably sold them to get some capital for his project.”

A second bedroom was set up as an office, and from the state of it, Eve didn’t judge Hopkins had been a tidy or organized businessman. The desk was heaped with scribbled notes, sketches, memo cubes, coffee cups and plates from working meals.

A playback of the desk ‘link was loaded with oily conversation with the recently deceased pitching his project to potential backers or arranging meetings where she supposed he’d have been doing the same.

“Let’s have EDD go through all the data and communication.” The Electronic Detective Division could comb through the transmissions and data faster and more efficiently than she. “Doesn’t look like he’s entertained here recently, which jibes with our doorman’s statement. Nothing personal in the last little while on his home ‘link. It’s all about money.”

She walked through the apartment. The guy wasn’t living there so much as surviving. Selling off his stuff, scrambling for capital. “The motive’s not all about money, though. He couldn’t have had enough for that. The motive’s emotional. It’s personal. Kill him where the yellowing bones of a previous victim are hidden. Purposeful. Building was auctioned off six months ago? Private or public?”

“I can check,” Peabody began.

“I got a quicker source.”

It seemed to her the guy she'd married was always in, on his way to or coming back from some meeting. Then again, he seemed to like them. It took all kinds.

And she had to admit when that face of his filled her screen, it put a little boost in her step to think: *mine*.

"Quick question," she began. "Number Twelve. Any details on its auction?"

His dark brows raised over those intense blue eyes. "Bought for a song, which will likely turn out to be a dirge. Or has it already?" Roarke asked her.

"You're quick, too. Yeah, current owner's in the morgue. He got it on the cheap?"

"Previous owners had it on the market for several years, and put it up for public auction a few months ago after the last fire."

"Fire?"

"There've been several. Unexplained," he added with that Irish lilt cruising through his voice. "Hopkins, wasn't it? Descendent of infamy. How was he killed?"

"Nine millimeter Smith and Wesson."

Surprise moved over that extraordinary face. "Well now. Isn't that interesting? You recovered the weapon, I take it."

"Yeah, I got it. Fill you in on that later. The auction, you knew about it, right?"

"I did. It was well-publicized for several weeks. A building with that history generates considerable media attention as well."

"Yeah, that's what I figured. If it was a bargain, why didn't you snap it up to add it to your mega-Monopoly board?"

"Haunted. Cursed."

“Yeah, right.” She snorted out a laugh, but he only continued to look out from the screen. “Okay, thanks. See you later.”

“You certainly will.”

“Couldn’t you just listen to him?” Peabody let out a sigh. “I mean couldn’t you just close your eyes and listen?”

“Snap out of it, Peabody. Hopkins’s killer had to know the building was up for sale. Maybe he bid on it, maybe he didn’t. He doesn’t move on the previous owners, but waits for Hopkins. Goes back to personal. Lures him, kills him, leaves the weapon and the hair clips with the skeleton behind the brick. Making a statement.”

Peabody huffed out a breath. “This place doesn’t make much of a statement, personal or otherwise.”

“Let’s toss it anyway. Then we’re going dancing.”

The Gill School of Dance was on the third floor of a stubby post-Urban War building on the West Side. It boasted a large, echoing room with a mirrored wall, a barre, a huddle of chairs and a decorative screen that sectioned off a minute desk.

The space smelled of sweat heavily covered with floral air freshener.

Fanny Gill herself was skinny as an eel, with a hard, suspicious face and a lot of bright blond hair tied up with a red scarf. Her pinched face went even tighter as she set her tiny ass on the desk.

“So somebody killed the rat bastard. When’s the funeral? I got a red dress I’ve been saving for a special occasion.”

“No love lost, Ms. Gill?”

“Oh, all of it lost, honey. My boy out there?” She jerked a chin toward the screen. On the other side, a man in a sleeveless skinsuit was calling out time and steps to a group of grubby-looking ballerinas. “He’s the only

decent thing I ever got from Rad the Bad. I was twenty-two years old, fresh and green as a head of iceberg.”

She didn’t sigh so much as snort, as if to signal those salad days were long over.

“I sure did fall for him. He had a line, that bastard, he had a way. Got married, got pregnant. Had a little money, about twenty thou? He took it, *invested* it.” Her lips flattened into one thin, red line. “Blew it, every dollar. Always going to wheel the deal, strike the big time. Like hell. Cheated on me, too. But I stuck, nearly ten years, because I wanted my boy to have a father. Finally figured out no father’s better than a lousy one. Divorced him – hired a fucking shark lawyer – excuse the language.”

“No problem. Cops hear words like *lawyer* all the time.”

Fanny barked out a laugh, then seemed to relax. “Wasn’t much to get, but I got my share. Enough to start this place up. And you know, that son of a bitch tried to hit me up for a loan? Called it a business investment, of course. Just a couple months ago. Never changes.”

“Was this business investment regarding Number Twelve?”

“Yeah, that’s it. Like I’d have anything to do with that place – or Rad.”

“Could you tell us where you were last night, Ms. Gill? From say midnight to three?”

“In bed, asleep. I teach my first class at seven in the morning.” She sniffed, looking more amused than offended to be considered a suspect in a homicide. “Hey, if I’d wanted to kill Rad, I’d’ve done it twenty years ago. You’re going to ask my boy, too, aren’t you?”

“It’s routine.”

Fanny nodded. “I sleep alone, but he doesn’t.”

“Dead? Murdered?” Cliff lowered the towel he’d used to dry his damp face. “How? When?”

“Early this morning. The how is classified for the moment. Can you give us your whereabouts between midnight and three?”

“We got home about one. We’d been out with friends. Um... give me a second.” He picked up a bottle of water, stared at it, then drank. He was a well-built thirty, with streaked blond hair curling in a tail worn halfway down his back. “Lars Gavin, my cohab. We met some friends at Achilles. A club uptown. We went to bed right after we got home, and I got up about seven, seven-thirty. Sorry, I think I want to sit down.”

“We’re going to need names and contact information on the people you were with, and a number where we can reach your cohab.”

“Yeah, sure. Okay. How? How did it happen?” He lifted dazed eyes to Eve’s. “Was he mugged?”

“No. I’m not able to give you many details at this time. When’s the last time you had contact with your father?”

“A couple months ago. He came by to try to hit my mother up for some money. Like that would work.” Cliff managed a half smile, but it wobbled. “Then he put the line on me. I gave him five hundred.”

He glanced over to where Fanny was running another group through barre exercises. “Mom’ll skin me if she finds out, but I gave him the five.”

“That’s not the first time you gave him money,” Eve deduced.

“No. I’d give him a few hundred now and then. It kept him off my mother’s back, and we do okay here. The school, I mean. We do okay. And Lars, he understands.”

“But this time he went to your mother first.”

“Got to her before I could steer him off. Upsets her, you know? He figured he could sweet talk her out of a good chunk for this investment. Get rich deal – always a deal.” Now Cliff scrubbed his hands over his face.

“They fight about it?” Eve asked him.

“No. My mother’s done fighting with him. Been done a long time ago. And my father, he doesn’t argue. He... he cajoles. Basically, she told him to come by again when Hell froze over. So he settled for me, on the sly, and the five hundred. He said he’d be in touch when the ball got rolling, but that was just another line. Didn’t matter. It was only five. I don’t know how to feel. I don’t know how I’m supposed to feel.”

“I can’t tell you, Mr. Gill. Why did you remove Hopkins from your legal name?”

“This place – Gill School of Dance. My mother.” He lifted his shoulder, looked a little abashed. “And well, it’s got a rep. Hopkins. It’s just bad luck.”

Three

Eve wasn't surprised MD Morris had snagged Hopkins. Multiple gunshot wounds had to be a happy song and dance for a medical examiner. An interesting change of pace from the stabbings, the bludgeonings, strangulations and overdoses.

Morris, resplendent in a bronze-toned suit under his clear protective cape, his long dark hair in a shining tail, stood over the body with a sunny smile for Eve.

"You send me the most interesting things."

"We do what we can," Eve said. "What can you tell me I don't already know?"

"Members of one family of the fruit fly are called peacocks because they strut on the fruit."

"Huh. I'll file that one. Let's be more specific. What can you tell me about our dead guy?"

"The first four wounds – chest – and the leg wound – fifth – could have been repaired with timely medical intervention. The next severed the spine, the seventh damaged the kidney. Number eight was a slight wound, meaty part of the shoulder. But he was dead by then. The final, close contact, entered the brain, which had already closed down shop."

He gestured to his wall screen, and called up a program. "The first bullets entered at a near level angle." Morris continued as the graphics played out on-screen. "You see, the computer suggested, and I concur, that the assailant fired four times, rapidly, hitting body mass. The victim fell after the fourth shot."

Eve studied the reenactment as Morris did, noting the graphic of the victim took the first two shots standing, the second two slightly hunched forward in the beginning of a fall.

“Big guy,” Peabody commented. “Stumbles back a little, but keeps his feet for the first couple shots. I’ve only seen training and entertainment vids with gun death,” she added. “I’d have thought the first shot would slap him down.”

“His size, the shock of the impact,” Morris said, “and the rapidity of fire would have contributed to the delay in his fall. Again, from the angles by which the bullets entered the body, it’s likely he stumbled back, then lurched forward slightly, then went down – knee, heels of the hand taking the brunt of the fall.”

He turned to Eve. “Your report indicated that the blood pattern showed the victim tried to crawl or pull himself away across the floor.”

“That’d be right.”

“As he did, the assailant followed, firing over and down, according to the angle of the wounds in the back, leg, shoulder.”

Eyes narrowed now, Eve studied the computer-generated replay. “Stalking him, firing while he’s down. Bleeding, crawling. You ever shoot a gun, Morris?”

“Actually, no.”

“I have,” she continued. “Feels interesting in your hand. Gives this little kick when it fires. Makes you part of it, that little jolt. Runs through you. I’m betting the killer was juiced on that. The jolt, the *bang!* Gotta be juiced to put more missiles into a guy who’s crawling away, leaving his blood smeared on the floor.”

“People always find creative and ugly ways to kill. I’d have said using a gun makes the kill less personal. But it doesn’t feel that way in this case.”

She nodded. “Yeah, this was personal, almost intimate. The ninth shot in particular.”

“For the head shot, the victim – who as you say had considerable girth – had to be shoved or rolled over. At that time, the gun was pressed to the

forehead. There's not only burning and residue, but a circular bruising pattern. When I'm able to compare it, I'm betting my share that it matches the dimensions of the gun barrel. The killer pressed the gun down into the forehead before he fired."

"See how you like *that*, you bastard," Eve murmured.

"Yes, indeed. Other than being riddled with bullets, your vic was in reasonably good health, despite being about twenty pounds overweight. He dyed his hair, had an eye and chin tuck within the last five years. He'd last eaten about two hours prior to death. Soy chips, sour pickles, processed cheese, washed down with domestic beer."

"The bullets?"

"On their way to the lab. I ran them through my system first. Nine millimeter." Morris switched programs so that images of the spent bullets he'd recovered came on screen.

"Man, it messes them up, doesn't it?"

"It doesn't do tidy work on flesh, bone and organ either. The vic had no gunpowder residue on his hands, no defensive wounds. Bruising on the left knee, which would have been inflicted when he fell. As well as some scraping on the heels of both hands, consistent with the fall on the floor surface."

"So he didn't fight back, or have the chance to. Didn't turn away." She angled her own body as if preparing for flight. "No indication he tried to run when and if he saw the gun."

"That's not what his body tells me."

Nor was it what it had told her on scene.

"A guy doesn't usually snack on chips and pickles if he's nervous or worried," Peabody put in. "Run of his entertainment unit showed he last viewed a soft porn vid about the time he'd have had the nibbles. This meet didn't have him sweating."

“Somebody he knew and figured he could handle,” Eve agreed. She looked at the body again. “Guess he was dead wrong about that one.”

“Number Twelve,” Morris said as Eve turned to go.

“That’s right.”

“So the legend of Bobbie Bray comes to a close.”

“That would be the missing woman, presumed dead.”

“It would. Gorgeous creature, Bobbie, with the voice of a tormented angel.”

“If you remember Bobbie Bray, you’re looking damn good for your age, Morris.”

He flashed that smile again. “There are thousands of Web sites devoted to her, and a substantial cult following. Beautiful woman with her star just starting to rise vanishes. Poof! Of course, sightings of her continued for decades after. And talk of her ghost haunting Number Twelve continues even today. Cold spots, apparitions, music coming from thin air. You get any of that?”

Eve thought of the snatch of song, the deep chill. “What I’ve got, potentially, are her bones. They’re real enough.”

“I’ll be working on them with the forensic anthropologist at the lab.” Morris’s smile stayed sunny. “Can’t wait to get my hands on her.”

Back at Central, Eve sat in her office to reconstruct Hopkins’s last day. She’d verified his lunch meeting with a couple of local movers and shakers who were both alibied tight for the time in question. A deeper check of his financial showed a sporadic income over the past year from a shop called Bygones, with the last deposit mid-December.

“Still skimming it close, Rad. How the hell were you going to pay for the rehab? Expecting a windfall, maybe? What were you supposed to bring to Number Twelve last night?”

Gets the call on his pocket 'link,she mused. *Deliberately spooky. But he doesn't panic. Sits around, has a snack, watches some light porn.*

She sat back at her desk, closed her eyes. The security disc from Hopkins's building showed him leaving at 1:35. Alone. Looked like he was whistling a tune, Eve recalled. Not a care in the world. Not carrying anything. No briefcase, no package, no bag.

"Yo."

Eve opened her eyes and looked at Feeney. The EDD captain was comfortably rumped, his wiry ginger hair exploding around his hangdog face. "Whatcha got?"

"More what you've got," he said and stepped into the office. "Number Twelve."

"Jeez, why does everybody keep saying that? Like it was its own country."

"Practically is. Hop Hopkins, Bobbie Bray, Andy Warhol, Mick Jagger." For a moment, Feeney looked like a devotee at a sacred altar. "Christ, Dallas, what a place it must've been when it was still rocking."

"It's a dump now."

"Cursed," he said, so casually she blinked.

"Get out. You serious?"

"As a steak dinner. Found bricked-up bones, didn't you? And a body, antique gun, diamonds. Stuff legends are made of. And it gets better."

"Oh yeah?"

He held up a disc. "Ran your vic's last incoming transmission and the nine-one-one, and for the hell of it, did a voice-print on both. Same voice on both. Guess whose it is?"

"Bobbie Bray's."

“Hey.” He actually pouted.

“Has to figure. The killer did the computer-generated deal, used Bray’s voice, probably pieced together from old media interviews and such. Unless you’re going to sit there and tell me you think it was a voice from, you know, beyond the grave.”

He poked up. “I’m keeping an open mind.”

“You do that. Were you able to dig up any old transmissions?”

He held up a second disc. “Dug them out, last two weeks. You’re going to find lots of grease. Guy was working it, trying to pump up some financing. Same on the home unit. Some calls out for food, a couple to a licensed companion service. Couple more back and forth to some place called Bygones.”

“Yeah, I’m going to check that out. Looks like he was selling off his stuff.”

“You know, he probably had some original art from his grandfather’s era. Music posters, photographs, memorabilia.”

Considering, Eve cocked her head. “Enough to buy Number Twelve, then finance the rehab?”

“You never know what people’ll pay. Got your finger pointed at anyone?”

“Talked to one of his exes, and a son. They don’t pop for me, but I’m keeping an open mind. Going through some business associates, potential backers, other exes. No current lady friend, or recently dumped, that I can find. Fact is, the guy comes off as a little sleazy, a little slippery, but mostly harmless. A fuck-up who talked big. Got no motive at this point, except a mysterious something he may or may not have taken with him to Number Twelve.”

She eased back. “Big guy. He was a big guy. Easy for a woman to take him down if she’s got access to a gun, reasonable knowledge of how it works. Second ex-wife is the kind who holds a grudge, hence my open mind. I’ve got Peabody trying to run the weapon.”

“The thing is,” Peabody told her, “it’s really old. A hundred years back, a handgun didn’t have to be registered on purchase, not in every state, and depending on how it was bought. This one’s definitely from the Hop Hopkins/Bobbie Bray era. They discontinued this model in the Nineteen-eighties. I’ve got the list of owners with collector’s licenses in the state of New York who own that make and model, but...”

“It’s not going to be there. Not when it was deliberately planted on the scene. The killer wanted it found, identified. Lab comes through, we should know tomorrow if the same gun was used to kill Hopkins and our surprise guest.”

She considered for a moment, then pushed away from her desk. “Okay, I’m going to go by the lab, give them a little kick in the ass.”

“Always entertaining.”

“Yeah, I make my own fun. After, I’m going by this collectibles place, scope it out. It’s uptown, so I’ll work from home after. I’ve got Feeney’s list of transmissions. You want to take that? Check out the calls, the callers?”

“I’m your girl.”

Dick Berenski, the chief lab tech, was known as Dickhead for good reason. But besides being one, he was also a genius in his field. Generally, Eve handled him with bribes, insults or outright threats. But with her current case, none were necessary.

“Dallas!” He all but sang her name.

“Don’t grin at me like that.” She gave a little shudder. “It’s scary.”

“You’ve brought me not one but two beauties. I’m going to be writing these up for the trade journals and be the fair-haired boy for the next ten freaking years.”

“Just tell me what you’ve got.”

He scooted on his stool, and tapped his long, skinny fingers over a comp screen. He continued to grin out of his strangely egg-shaped head.

“Got my bone guy working with Morris with me running the show. You got yourself a female, between the age of twenty and twenty-five. Bobbie Bray was twenty twenty-three when she poofed. Caucasian, five-foot-five, about a hundred and fifteen pounds, same height and weight on Bobbie’s ID at the time of her disappearance. Broken tibia, about the age of twelve. Healed well. Gonna wanna see if we can access any medical records on Bobbie to match the bone break. Got my forensic sculptor working on the face. Bobbie Bray, son of a bitch.”

“Another fan.”

“Shit yeah. That skirt was *hot*. Got your cause of death, single gunshot wound to the forehead. Spent bullet retrieved from inside the skull matches the caliber used on your other vic. Ballistics confirms both were fired from the weapon recovered from the scene. Same gun used, about eighty-five years apart. It’s beautiful.”

“I bet the killer thinks so, too.”

Sarcasm flew over Dickhead like a puffy white cloud in a sunny blue sky. “Weapon was cleaned and oiled. Really shined it up. But...”

He grinned again, tapped again. “What you’re looking at here is dust. Brick dust, drywall dust. Samples the sweepers took from the secondary crime scene. And here? Traces of dust found inside the weapon. Perfect match.”

“Indicating that the gun was bricked up with the body.”

“Guess Bobbie got tired of haunting the place and decided to take a more active role.”

And that, Eve determined, didn’t warrant even sarcasm as a response. “Shoot the reports to my home and office units, copy to Peabody’s. Your sculptor gets an image, I want to see it.”

She headed out again, pulling out her ‘link as it beeped. “Dallas.”

“Arrest any ghosts lately?”

“No. And I’m not planning on it. Why aren’t you in a meeting about world domination?”

“Just stepped out,” Roarke told her. “My curiosity’s been nipping at me all day. Any leads?”

“Leads might be a strong word. I have avenues. I’m heading to one now. The vic was selling off his stuff – antique popular culture stuff, I gather – to some place uptown. I’m going to check it out.”

“What’s the address?”

“Why?”

“I’ll meet you. I’ll be your expert consultant on antiques and popular culture. You can pay my fee with food and sex.”

“It’s going to be pizza, and I think I’ve got a long line to credit on the sex.”

But she gave him the address.

After ending the transmission, she called the collectibles shop to tell the proprietor to stay open and available. On a hunch, she asked if they carried any Bobbie Bray memorabilia.

And was assured they had the most extensive collection in the city.

Interesting.

Four

He beat her there, and was being served coffee and fawning attention by a young, elegant redhead in a slick black suit.

Eve couldn't blame the woman. Roarke was ridiculously handsome, and could, if it served him, ooze charm like pheromones. It seemed to suit him now as he had the redhead flushed and fluttering as she offered cookies with the coffee.

Eve figured she'd benefit from Roarke's charisma herself. She hardly ever got cookies on the job.

"Ah, here's the lieutenant now. Lieutenant Dallas, this is Maeve Buchanan, our hostess, and the daughter of the proprietor."

"Is the proprietor here?"

"My wife. Straight to business. Coffee, darling?"

"Sure. This is some place."

"We're very happy with it," Maeve agreed.

It was pretty, bright – like their hostess – and charmingly organized. Nothing at all like the cluttered junk heap Eve had expected. Art and posters lined the walls, but in a way she supposed someone might arrange them in their home if they were crazy enough to want things everywhere.

Still, tables, display cabinets, shining shelves held memorabilia in a way that escaped the jumbled, crowded stocking style many shops of its kind were victim to. Music was playing unobtrusively – something full of instruments and certainly not of the current era. It added an easy appeal.

"Please, have a seat," Maeve invited. "Or browse if you like. My father's just in the back office. He's on the 'link with London."

"Late for business over there," Eve commented.

“Yes. Private collector. Most of our business is from or to private collections.” Maeve swept a wave of that pretty red hair back from her face. “Is there anything I can do for you in the meantime?”

“You’ve bought a number of pieces over the last several months from Radcliff C. Hopkins.”

“Mr. Hopkins, of course. Nineteen-sixties through Eighties primarily. We acquired a number of pieces from him. Is there a problem?”

“For Hopkins there is. He was killed last night.”

“Oh!” Her cheery, personal-service smile flashed into shock. “Killed? Oh my God.”

“Media’s run reports on it through the day.”

“I... I hadn’t heard.” Maeve’s hands were pressed to her cheeks, and her round blue eyes were wide. “We’ve been open since ten. We don’t keep any current screen shows or radio on in the shop. Spoils the... the timeless ambiance. My father’s going to be so upset.”

“They were friends?”

“Friendly, certainly. I don’t know what to say. He was in only a few weeks ago. How did he die?”

“The details are confidential.” *For the moment*, Eve thought. There were always leaks and the media couldn’t wait to soak them up, wring them dry. “I can tell you he was murdered.”

Maeve had a redhead’s complexion, and her already pale skin went bone white. “Murdered? This is horrible. It’s – “ She turned as a door in the back opened.

The man who came out was tall and thin, with the red hair he’d passed to his daughter dusted with a little silver. He had eyes of quiet green, and a smile of greeting ready. It faded when he saw his daughter’s face.

“Maeve? What’s the matter? Is there a problem?”

“Daddy. Mr. Hopkins, he’s been murdered.”

He gripped his daughter’s arm, and those quiet eyes skimmed from Roarke to Eve and back again. “Rad Hopkins?”

“That’s right.” Eve held out her badge. “I’m Lieutenant Dallas. You and Mr. Hopkins had business?”

“Yes. Yes. My God, this is such a shock. Was it a burglary?”

“Why would you ask?”

“His collection. He had a very extensive collection of antique art.”

“You bought a good chunk of that collection.”

“Bits and pieces. Excellent bits and pieces.” He rubbed his daughter’s shoulder and drew her down to the arm of the chair as he sat. The gesture seemed to help both of them compose themselves.

“I was hoping to eventually do a complete appraisal and give him a bid on the whole of it. But he was...” He pushed at his hair and smiled. “He was canny. Held me off, and whet my appetite with those bits.”

“What do you know about Number Twelve?”

“Number Twelve?” He looked blank for a moment, then shook his head. “Sorry, I’m feeling muddled by all this. Urban legend. Haunted. Some say by Hop Hopkins’s ghost, others by Bobbie Bray’s. Others still say both, or any number of celebrities from that era. Bad luck building, though I admit I’m always on the lookout for something from its heyday that can be authenticated. Rad managed to acquire the building a few months ago, bring it back into his family.”

“Do you know how it got out of his family?”

“Ah, I think Rad told me it was sold off when he was a boy. His father inherited it when his grandfather died. Tragically, a drug overdose. And it was Rad’s plan to bring it back to its former glory, such as it was.”

“He talked about it all the time,” Maeve added. “Whenever he came in. Now he’ll never... It’s so sad.”

“To be frank,” Buchanan continued, “I think he might have overreached a bit. A huge undertaking, which is why he found it necessary – in my opinion – to sell some of his artwork and memorabilia. And because I have a number of contacts in the business who might have been helpful when and if he was ready to outfit the club, it was a good, symbiotic relationship. I’m sorry this happened.”

“When was the last time you had contact with him?”

“Just last week. I joined him for a drink, at his invitation. That would be...” He closed his eyes a moment, held up a finger. “Wednesday. Wednesday evening of last week. I knew he was going to try to persuade me, again, to invest in this club of his. It’s just not the sort of thing I do, but he’s a good client, and we were friendly.”

When he sighed, Maeve covered his hand with hers. “So I met with him. He was so excited. He told me he was ready to begin the rehab again, seriously this time. He projected opening next summer.”

“But you turned him down, investmentwise.”

“I did, but he took it well. To be frank again, I did a bit of research when he first approached me months ago. Nothing thrives in that building. Owners and backers go bankrupt or worse. I couldn’t see this being any different.”

“True enough,” Roarke confirmed. “The owners before Hopkins had plans for a small, exclusive spa with restaurant and retail. The buyer fell, broke both his legs while doing a run-through with the architect. His brother and cobuyer were brutally mugged just outside the building. Then his accountant ran off with his wife, taking the bulk of his portfolio.”

“Bad luck happens,” Eve said flatly. “Could you tell me where you were last night, between midnight and three?”

“Are we suspects?” Maeve’s eyes rounded. “Oh my God.”

“It’s just information. The more I have, the more I have.”

“I was out – a date – until about eleven.”

“Eleven-fifteen,” Buchanan said. “I heard you come in.”

“Daddy...” Maeve rolled her eyes. “He waits up. I’m twenty-four and he still waits up.”

“I was reading in bed.” But her father smiled, a little sheepishly. “Maeve came in, and I... well...” He sent another look toward his daughter. “I went down about midnight and checked security. I know, I know,” he said before Maeve could speak. “You always set it if you come in after I’m in bed, but I feel better doing that last round. I went to bed after that. Maeve was already in her room. We had breakfast together about eight this morning, then we were here at nine-thirty. We open at ten.”

“Thanks. Is it all right if we take a look around?”

“Absolutely. Please. If you have any questions – if there’s anything we can do...” Buchanan lifted his hands. “I’ve never dealt with anything like this, so I’m not sure what we can or should do.”

“Just stay available,” Eve told him. “And contact me at Central if anything comes to mind. For now, maybe you can point me toward what you’ve got on Bobbie Bray.”

“Oh, we have quite a collection. Actually, one of my favorites is a portrait we bought from Rad a few months ago. This way.” Buchanan turned to lead them through the main showroom. “It was done from the photograph taken for her first album cover. Hop – the first Hopkins – had it painted, and it hung in the apartment he kept over Number Twelve. Rumor is he held long conversations with it after she disappeared. Of course, he ingested all manner of hallucinogens. Here she is. Stunning, isn’t it?”

The portrait was perhaps eighteen by twenty inches, in a horizontal pose. Bobbie reclined over a bed spread with vivid pink and mounded with white pillows.

Eve saw a woman with wild yards of curling blond hair. There were two sparkling diamond clips glinting in the masses of it. Her eyes were the green of new spring leaves, and a single tear – bright as the diamonds, spilled down her cheek. It was the face of a doomed angel – lovely rather than beautiful, full of tragedy and pathos.

She wore thin, filmy white, and between the breasts was deep red stain in the blurred shape of a heart.

“The album was *Bleeding Heart*, for the title track. She won three Grammys for it.”

“She was twenty-two,” Maeve put in. “Two years younger than me. Less than two years later, she vanished without a trace.”

There was a trace, Eve thought. There always was, even if it was nearly a century coming to light.

Outside, Eve dug her hands into her pockets. The sky had stopped spitting out nasty stuff, but the wind had picked up. She was pretty sure she’d left her watch cap in her office.

“Everybody’s got an alibi, nobody’s got a motive. Yet. I think I’m going to go back to the scene, take another look around.”

“Then you can fill me in with what must be a multitude of missing details on the way. I had my car taken home,” Roarke continued when she frowned at him. “So I could get a lift with my lovely wife.”

“You were just hoping to get a look at Number Twelve.”

“And hope springs. Want me to drive?”

When she slid behind the wheel, she tapped her fingers on it. “What’s something like that painting going to go for on the open market?”

“To the right collector? Sky would be the limit. But I’d say a million wouldn’t be out of the park.”

“A million? For a painting of a dead woman. What’s wrong with people? Top transaction in the vic’s account from Bygones was a quarter of that. Why’d Hopkins sell so cheap?”

“Scrambling for capital. Bird in the hand’s worth a great deal more than a painting on the wall.”

“Yeah, there’s that. Buchanan had to know he was getting bargain basement there.”

“So why kill the golden goose?”

“Exactly. But it’s weird to me neither of them had heard by this time that Hopkins bought it at Number Twelve. They eat breakfast at eight? No media reports while you’re scoping out the pickings on the AutoChef or pulling on your pants?”

“Not everyone turns on the news.”

“Maybe not. And nobody pops in today, mentions it? Nobody say, ‘Hey! Did you hear about that Hopkins guy? Number Twelve got another one.’ Just doesn’t sit level for me.” Then she shrugged, pulled away from the curb.

“Hit the lab before this. The same gun that killed Hopkins killed the as yet unidentified female whose remains were found behind the wall at Number Twelve.”

“Fascinating.”

“Weapon was bricked up with her. Killer must have found her, and it. Cleaned the weapon. You see those, the hair jewelry, she had on in the picture? Recovered at the scene, also clean and shiny. One by the window which the killer likely used to escape, one left with the bones.”

“Someone wants to make sure the remains are identified. Do you doubt it’s her?”

“No, I don’t doubt it’s her. I don’t doubt Hop Hopkins put a bullet in her brain, then got handy with brick and mortar. I don’t know why. I don’t

know why someone used that same gun on Hop's grandson eighty-five years later."

"But you think there's a connection. A personal one."

"Had to reload to put the bullet in the brain. That's extremely cold. Guy's dead, or next to it. But you reload, roll the body over, press the barrel down hard enough to scorch the skin and leave an imprint of the barrel, and give him one last hit. Fucking cold."

Five

Eve gave him details on the drive. She could, with Roarke, run them through like a checklist, and it always lined them up in her mind. In addition, he always seemed to know something or someone that might fill in a few of the gaps.

“So, did you ever do business with Hopkins?”

“No. He had a reputation for being generous with the bullshit, and often short on results.”

“Big plans, small action,” Eve concluded.

“That would be it. Harmless, by all accounts. Not the sort to con the widow and orphans out of the rent money, but not above talking them out of a portion of it with a view to getting rich quick.”

“He cheated on his wives, and recently squeezed five hundred out of the son he abandoned.”

“Harmless doesn’t always mean moral or admirable. I made a few calls – curiosity,” he explained. “To people who like to buy and sell real estate.”

“Which includes yourself.”

“Most definitely. From what I’m told the bottom dropped out of Twelve for Hopkins only a couple of weeks after he’d signed the papers on it. He was in fairly deep – purchase price, legal fees, architects and designers, construction crew, and so on. He’d done a lot of tap dancing to get as far as he did, and was running out of steam. He’d done some probing around – more legal fees – to see if he could wrangle having the property condemned, and get back some of his investment. Tried to wrangle some money from various federal agencies, historic societies. He played all the angles and had some success. A couple of small grants. Not nearly enough, not for his rather ambitious vision.”

“What kind of money we talking, for the building and the vision?”

“Oh, easily a hundred and fifty million. He’d barely scratched the surface when he must have realized he couldn’t make it without more capital. Then, word is, a few days ago, he pushed the green light again. Claimed Number Twelve was moving forward.”

“I’m waiting on the lab to see if they can pinpoint when that wall was taken down. Could be talking days.” Her fingers tapped out a rhythm on the wheel as she considered. “Hopkins finds the body. You get a wealth of publicity out of something like that. Maybe a vid deal, book deals. A guy with an entrepreneurial mindset, he could think of all kinds of ways to rake it in over those bones.”

“He could,” Roarke agreed. “But wouldn’t the first question be how he knew where to look?”

“Or how his killer knew.”

“Hop killed her,” she began as she hunted for parking. “Argument, drug-induced, whatever. Bricks up the body, which takes some doing. Guy liked cocaine. That’ll keep you revved for a few hours. Has to cover up the brick, put things back into reasonable shape. I’m trying to access the police reports from back then. It hasn’t been easy so far. But anyway, no possible way the cops just missed a brand new section of wall, so he paid them off or blackmailed them.”

“Corrupt cops? I’m stunned. I’m shocked.”

“Shut up. Hop goes over the edge – guilt, drugs, fear of discovery. Goes hermit. Guy locks himself up with a body on the other side of the wall, he’s going to go pretty buggy. Wouldn’t surprise me if he wrote something down, told someone about it. If cops were involved, *they* knew or suspected something. The killer, or Hopkins does some homework, pokes around. Gets lucky, or unlucky as the case may be.”

“It takes eight and a half decades to get lucky?”

“Place gets a rep,” Eve said as they walked from the car toward Number Twelve. “Bray gets legend status. People report seeing her, talking to her. A lot of those people, and others, figure she just took off ‘cause she couldn’t handle the pressure of her own success. Hop has enough juice to keep people out of the apartment during his lifetime. By then, there’re murmurs of curses and hauntings, and that just grows as time passes. A couple of people have some bad luck, and nobody much wants to play in Number Twelve anymore.”

“More than a couple.” Roarke frowned at the door as Eve uncoded the police seal. “The building just squats here, and everyone who’s tried to disturb it, for whatever reason, ends up paying a price.”

“It’s brick and wood and glass.”

“Brick and wood and glass form structure, not spirit.”

She raised her brows at him. “Want to wait in the car, Sally?”

“Now you shut up.” He nudged her aside to walk in first.

She turned on the lights, took out her flashlight for good measure. “Hopkins was between those iron stairs and the bar.” She moved across the room, positioned herself by the stairs. “From the angles, the killer was here. I’m seeing he got here first, comes down when Hopkins walks in. Hopkins still had his coat on, his gloves, a muffler. Cold in here, sure, but a man’s going to probably pull off his gloves, unwrap his scarf, maybe unbutton his coat when he’s inside. You just do.”

Understanding his wife, Roarke moved into what he thought had been Hopkins’s standing position. “Unless you don’t have the chance.”

“Killer comes down. He’d told Hopkins to bring something, and Hopkins walks in empty-handed. Could have been small – pocket-sized – but why would the killer shoot him so quickly, and with such rage, if he’d cooperated?”

“The man liked to spin the wheels. If he came empty, he may have thought he could work a deal.”

“So when he starts the whole Let’s talk about this, the killer snaps. Shoots him. Chest, leg. Four shots from the front. Vic goes down, tries to crawl, killer keeps firing, moving toward the target. Leg, back, shoulder. Eight shots. Full clip for that model. Reloads, shoves the body over, leans down. Looks Hopkins right in the eyes. Eyes are dead, but he looks into them when he pulls the trigger the last time. He wants to see his face – as much as he needs to echo the head shot on Bray, he needs to see the face, the eyes, when he puts that last bullet in.”

She crossed over, following what she thought was the killer’s route as she’d spoken. “Could have gone out the front. But he chooses to go back upstairs.”

Now she turned, started up. “Could have taken the weapon, thrown it in the river. We’d never have found it. Wants us to find it. Wants us to know. Cops didn’t put Hop in the system. Why should we do anything about his grandson? Took care of that himself. Payment made. But he wants us to know, everyone to know, that Bobbie’s been avenged at last.”

She stopped in front of the open section of wall. “ ‘Look what he did to her. Put a bullet in that young, tragic face, silenced that voice. Ended her life when it was just getting started. Then he put a wall up, locked her away from the world. She’s free now. I set her free.’ ”

“She’ll be more famous, more infamous, than ever. Her fans will make a shrine out of this place. Heap flowers and tokens outside, stand in the cold with candles for vigils. And, to add a cynical note, there’ll be Bobbie Bray merchandising through the roof. Fortunes will be made out of this.”

Eve turned back to Roarke. “Damn right, they will. Hopkins would have known that. He’d have had visions of money falling on him from the sky. Number Twelve wouldn’t just be a club, it would be a freaking cathedral. And he’s got the main attraction. Fame and fortune off her bones. You bet your ass. Killer’s not going to tolerate that. ‘You think you can use her? You think I’d let you?’ ”

“Most who’d have known her personally, had a relationship with her, would be dead now. Or elderly.”

“Don’t have to be young to pull a trigger.” But she frowned at the cut in the wall. “But you’d have to be pretty spry to handle the tools to do this. I just don’t think this part was Hopkins’s doing. Nothing in his financials to indicate he’d bought or rented the tools that could handle this. And he doesn’t strike me as the type who’d be able to do this tidy a job with them. Not on his own. And the killer had the gun, the hair clips. The killer opened this grave.”

The cold was sudden and intense, as if a door had been flung open to an ice floe, and through that frigid air drifted a raw and haunting voice.

In my dark there is no dawn, there is no light in my world since you’ve been gone. I thought my love would stand the test, but now my heart bleeds from my breast.

Even as Eve drew her weapon, the voice rose, with a hard, throbbing pump of bass and drums behind it. She rushed out to the level overlooking the main club.

The voice continued to rise, seemed to fill the building. Under it, over it, were voices, cheers and whistles. For an instant, she thought she could smell a heavy mix of perfume, sweat, smoke.

“Somebody’s messing with us,” she murmured.

Before she could swing toward the stairs to investigate, there was a shout from the nearly gutted apartment above. A woman’s voice called out:

“No. Jesus, Hop. Don’t!”

There was the explosion of a shot and a distinct thud.

Keeping her weapon out, she vaulted up the stairs again with Roarke. At the doorway, his hand clamped over her shoulder.

“Holy Mother of God. Do you see?”

She told herself it was a shadow – a trick of the poor light, the dust. But for an instant there seemed to be a woman, her mass of curling blond hair

falling over her shoulders, standing in front of the open section of wall. And for an instant, it seemed her eyes looked straight into Eve's.

Then there was nothing but a cold, empty room.

"You saw her," Roarke insisted as Eve crawled around behind the wall.

"I saw shadows. Maybe an image. If I saw an image, it was because someone put it there. Just like someone flipped some switch to put on that music. Got some electronics set up somewhere. Triggered by remote, most likely."

He crouched down. Eve's hair, face, hands were all coated with dust and debris. "You felt that cold."

"So, he dropped the temp in here. He's putting on a show, that's what he's doing. Circus time. So the cop goes back and reports spooky happenings, apparitions. Bull- *shit!*"

She swiped at her filthy face as she crawled out. "Hopkins left debts. His son is beneficiary of basically nada. Building's no-man's-land until it goes up to public auction. Keep the curse crap going, keep the price down. Snap it up cheaper than dirt."

"With what's happened here, discovering the body here, that could go exactly the opposite way. It could drive the price up."

"That happens, you bet your ass someone's going to have some document claiming they were partners with Hopkins. Maybe I was wrong about it being personal. Maybe it's been profit all along."

"You weren't wrong. You know you weren't. But you're sitting there, in a fairly disgusting state, I might add, trying to turn it around so you don't have to admit you've seen a ghost."

"I saw what some mope wants me to believe is a ghost and he apparently pulled one over on you, ace."

“I know electronic imagery when I see it.” The faintest edge of irritation flickered into his eyes at her tone. “I know what I saw, what I heard, what I felt. Murder was done here, then adding to it, the insult, the callousness of what was done after.”

He glanced back into the narrow opening, toward the former location of the long-imprisoned bones. And now there was a hint of pity in his eyes as well. “All while claiming to be so concerned, so upset, offering rewards for her safe return, or for substantiated proof she was alive and well. All that while she was moldering behind the wall he’d built to hide her.”

“If her body never left here, why should her spirit?”

“Because – “ With a shake of her head, Eve scattered dust. “Her body’s not here now. So shouldn’t she be haunting the morgue?”

“This place has been home to her for a long time, hasn’t it?” *Pragmatism*, he thought, *thy name is Eve*. Then he took out a handkerchief, used it to rub the worst of the dust and grime from her face.

“Homemade crypts aren’t what I’d call home, sweet home,” she retorted. “And you know what? Ghosts don’t clean guns or shoot them. I’ve got a DB in the morgue. And I’m ordering the sweepers, with a contingent from EDD in here tomorrow. They’re going to take this place apart.”

She brushed some of the dirt from her shirt and pants before picking up her coat. “I want a shower.”

“I want you to have a shower, too.”

As they went downstairs, she called in the order for two units to search Number Twelve for electronic devices. If she thought she heard a woman’s husky laugh just before she closed and secured the door, Eve ignored it.

Six

When she'd showered and pulled on warm, comfortable sweats, Eve gave another thought to pizza. She figured she could down a slice or two at her desk while she worked.

She was headed toward the office she kept at home when she heard Bobbie Bray's voice, gritting out her signature song.

Broken, battered, bleeding, and still I'm begging, pleading Come back. Come back and heal my heart Come back. Come back and heal my heart.

With her own heart thudding, Eve covered the rest of the distance at a dash. Except for the fat cat, Galahad, snoring in her sleep chair, her office was empty.

Then she narrowed her eyes at the open door that joined her office to Roarke's. She found him at his desk, with the title track beginning its play again through the speakers of his entertainment unit.

"You trying to wig me out?"

"No." He smiled a little. "Did I?" When she gave him a stony stare, he shrugged. "I wanted to get better acquainted with our ghost. She was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and according to this biography, left home at sixteen to migrate to Haight-Ashbury, as many of her generation did. She sang in some clubs, primarily for food or a place to sleep, drifted around, joined a band called Luv – that's L-U-V – where she stood out like a rose among weeds, apparently. Did some backup singing for one or two important artists of the time, then met Hopkins in Los Angeles."

"Bad luck for her. Can you turn that off?"

"Music off," he ordered, and Bobbie's voice stopped. "She bothers you," Roarke realized. "Why is that?"

“She doesn’t bother me.” *The correct term*, Eve thought, *would be she creeps me*. But damned if she was going to fall into the accepted pattern on Number Twelve, or Bobbie Bray.

“She’s part of my investigation – and a secondary vic, even though she was killed a half century before I was born. She’s mine now, like Hopkins is mine. But she’s always part of the motive.”

“And as such, I’d think you’d want to know all you could about her.”

“I do, and I will. But I don’t have to hear her singing.” It was too sad, Eve admitted to herself. And too spooky. “I’m going to order up some pizza. You want in on that?”

“All right.” Roarke rose to follow her into the kitchen attached to her office. “She was twenty when Hop scooped her up. He was forty-three. Still, it was two years before her album came out – which he produced, allegedly hand-picking every song. She did perform during that period, exclusively in Hopkins’s venues.”

“So he ran her.”

“All but owned her, from the sound of it. Young, naive girl – at least from a business standpoint, and from a generation and culture that prided itself on not being bound by property and possessions. Older, canny, experienced man, who discovered her, romanced her, and most certainly fed any appetite she might have had for illegal substances.”

“She’d been on her own for five years.” Eve debated for about five seconds on pepperoni and went for it. “Naive doesn’t wash for me.”

“But then you’re not a sentimental fan or biographer. Still, I’d lean toward the naivete when it came to contracts, royalties, business and finance. And Hopkins was a pro. He stood as her agent, her manager, her producer.”

“But she’s the talent,” Eve reasoned and snagged some napkins. “She’s got the youth, the looks. Maybe her culture or whatever said pooh-pooh to big piles of money, but if she’s bringing it in, getting the shine from it, she’s going to start to want more.”

“Agreed. She left him for a few months in 1972, just dropped off the radar. Which is one of the reasons, I’d assume, he got away with her murder three years later. She’d taken off once, why not again?”

He stepped out to choose a wine from the rack behind a wall panel. “When she came back, it was full-court press professionally, with a continual round of parties, clubs, drugs, sex. Her album hit, and big, with her touring internationally for six months. More sex, more drugs, and three Grammys. Her next album was in the works when she disappeared.”

“Hop must’ve gotten a percentage of her earnings.” Eve brought the pizza in, dumped it and plates on her desk.

“As her manager and producer, he’d have gotten a hefty one.”

“Stupid to kill the goose.”

“Passion plus drugs can equal extreme stupidity.”

“Smart enough to cover it up, and keep it covered for eighty-five years. So his grandson ends up paying for it. Why? My vic wasn’t even born when this went down. If it’s revenge...”

“Served very cold,” Roarke said as he poured wine.

“The killer has a connection with the older crime, the older players. Financial, emotional, physical. Maybe all three.”

She lifted up a slice, tugged at the strings of cheese, expertly looping them up and over the triangle.

“If it’s financial,” she continued, “who stands to gain? The son inherits, but he’s alibied and there isn’t a hell of a lot to scoop once the debts are offset. So maybe something of value, something the killer wanted Hopkins to bring to Number Twelve. But if it’s a straight give-me-what-I-want/deserve, why set the scene? Why put on that show for us tonight?”

When Roarke said nothing, Even chewed contemplatively on her slice. “You don’t seriously believe that was some ghostly visitation? Grab a little

corner of reality.“

“Do you seriously believe your killer has been dogging that building, it’s owners, for eight and a half decades? What makes that more logical than a restless, angry spirit?”

“Because dead people don’t get angry. They’re dead.” She picked up her wine. “It’s my job to get pissed for them.”

Roarke studied her over his own glass, his gaze thoughtful, seeking. “Then there’s nothing after? As close as you’ve been to me dead, you don’t see something after?”

“I don’t know what I see.” This sort of conversation always made her uncomfortable, somehow sticky along the skin. “Because you don’t see it – if it’s there to see – until you’re dead. But I don’t believe the dead go all *whoooo*, or start singing. The original Hopkins paid an investigation off, this killer wants to weird one off. It’s not going to work.”

“Consider the possibility,” he suggested. “Bobbie Bray’s spirit wants her revenge as much as you want justice. It’s a powerful desire, on both parts.”

“That’s not a possible possibility.”

“Closed-minded.”

“Rational,” she corrected, with some heat now. “Jesus, Roarke, she’s bones. Why now then? Why here and now? How’d she manage to get someone – flesh and blood – to do the descendent of her killer? If Hop Hopkins *was* her killer – which hasn’t yet been proven.”

“Maybe she was waiting for you to prove it.”

“Oh yeah, *that’s* rational. She’s been hanging around, waiting for the right murder cop to come along. Listen, I’ve got the reality of a dead body, an antique and banned weapon used in a previous crime. I’ve got no discernible motive and a media circus waiting to happen. I can’t take the time to wonder and worry about the disposition of a woman who’s been

dead eighty-five years. You want to waste your time playing with ghosts, be my guest. But I've got serious work on my plate."

"Fine then, since it pisses you off, I'll just leave you to your serious work while I go waste my time."

She scowled at him when he got up and carried his glass of wine with him to his office. And she cursed under her breath when he closed the door behind him.

"Great, fine, fabulous. Now I've got a ghost causing marital discord. Just makes it all perfect."

She shoved away from her desk to set up the case board she used at home. Logic was what was needed here, she told herself. Logic, cop sense, facts and evidence.

Must be that Irish in Roarke's blood that tugged him into the fanciful. Who knew he'd head that way?

But her way was straight, narrow and rational.

Two murders, one weapon. Connection. Two murders, one location, second connection. Second vic, blood descendent of suspected killer in first murder. Connect those dots, too, she thought as she worked.

So, okay, she couldn't set the first murder aside. She'd use it.

Logic and evidence dictated that both victims knew their killer. The first appeared to be a crime of passion, likely enhanced by illegal substances. Maybe Bray cheated on Hop. Or wanted to break things off professionally and/or personally. She could have had something on him, threatened exposure.

Had to be an act of passion, heat of the moment. Hop had the money, die means. If he'd planned to kill Bray, why would he have done it in his own apartment?

But the second murder was a deliberate act. The killer lured the victim to the scene, had the weapon. Had, in all likelihood discovered the previous body. The killing had been an act of rage as well as deliberation.

“Always meant to kill him, didn’t you?” she murmured as she studied the crime scene photos on her board. “Wanted whatever you wanted first – but whether or not you got it, he was a dead man. What did she mean to you?”

She studied the photos of Bobbie Bray.

Obsessed fan? Not out of the realm, she thought, but low on her list.

“Computer, run probability with evidence currently on active file. What is probability that the killers of Bray, Bobbie and Hopkins, Radcliff C. are linked?”

Working...

Absently, Eve picked up her wine, sipping as she worked various scenarios through her head.

Task complete. Probability is eighty-two-point-three...

Reasonably strong, Eve mused, and decided to take it one step further. “What is the probability that the killer of Hopkins, Radcliff C. is linked with the first victim, Bray, Bobbie?”

Working...

Family member, Eve thought. *Close friend, lover. Bray would be, what... Damn math*, she cursed as she calculated. *Bray would be around about one-oh-nine if she’d lived. People lived longer now than they did in the mid-twentieth. So a lover or tight friend isn’t out of the realm either.*

But she couldn’t see a centenarian, even a spry one, cutting through that brick.

Task complete. Probability is ninety-four-point-one that there is a connection between the first victim and the second killer...

“Yeah, that’s what I think. And you know what else? Blood’s the closest connection. So who did Bobbie leave behind? Computer, list all family members of first victim. Display on wall screen one.”

Working... Display complete.

Parents and older brother deceased, Eve noted. A younger sister, age eighty-eight, living in Scottsdale Care Center, Arizona. Young for a care center, Eve mused, and made a note to find out what the sister’s medical condition was.

Bobbie would have had a niece and nephew had she lived, and a couple of grandnieces and nephews.

Worth checking into, Eve decided, and began a standard run on all living relations.

While the computer worked, she set up a secondary task and took a closer look at Hopkins.

“Big starter,” she said aloud. “Little finisher.”

There were dozens of projects begun, abandoned. Failed. Now and then he’d hit, at least enough to keep the wolves from the door, set up the next project.

Failed marriages, ignored offspring. No criminal on any former spouse or offspring.

But you had to start somewhere, she figured.

She went back to the board. Diamond hair clips. Bray had worn them for her first album cover – possibly a gift from Hop. Most likely. The scene told Eve it was likely Bray had been wearing them when she’d been killed, or at least when she’d been bricked up.

But the killer hadn’t taken them as a souvenir. Not a fan, just didn’t play. The killer had shined them up and left them behind.

“She was a diamond,” Eve murmured. “She shined. Is that what you’re telling me? Here’s the gun he used to kill her, and here’s where I found it. He never paid and payment needed to be made. Is that the message?”

She circled the boards, studied the runs when the computer displayed them. There were a couple of decent possibilities among Bobbie’s descendents.

They’d all have to be interviewed, she decided.

One of them contacts Hopkins, she speculated. *Maybe even tries to buy the building but can’t come up with the scratch. Has to get access though, to uncover the body. How was access gained?*

Money. Hopkins needed backers. Maybe charged his murderer a fee to tour Number Twelve. Get in once, you can get in again.

How’d you find the body? How did you know?

What did she have here? she asked herself. Younger sister in a care facility. Niece a data drone. Nephew deceased – Urban War fatality. Grandniece middle-management in sales, grandnephew an insurance salesman. Rank and file, no big successes, no big failures.

Ordinary.

Nothing flashy. Nobody managed to cash in on Bobbie’s fame and fortune, or her untimely death.

Nobody, she mused, except Hopkins. That would be a pisser, wouldn’t it? Your daughter, sister, aunt is a dead cult figure, but you’ve got to do the thirty-five hours a week to get by. And the grandson of the bastard who killed her is trying to rake it in. You’re scraping by, getting old and...

“Wait a minute, wait a minute. Serenity Bray, age eighty-eight. Twenty-two years younger than Bobbie. Not a sister. A daughter.”

She swung to the adjoining door, shoved it open. “Bobbie had a kid. Not a sister. The timing’s right. She had a kid.”

Roarke merely lifted an eyebrow. "Yes. Serenity Bray Massey, currently in Scottsdale in a full-care nursing facility. I've got that."

"Showoff. She had a kid, and the timing makes it most likely Hop's. There's no record of a child. No reports from that time of her pregnancy. But she separated from him for several months, which would coincide with the last few months of her pregnancy and the birth."

"After which, it would seem, she gave the child to her own mother. Who then moved her family to a ranch outside Scottsdale, and Bobbie went back to Hop, and her previous lifestyle. I've found some speculation that during her period of estrangement from Hop she went into rehab and seclusion. Interviews and articles from the time have her clean and sober when she returned to the scene, then backsliding, I suppose you could say, within weeks."

He angled his head. "I thought you were leaving Bobbie to me."

"The ghost part's yours. The dead part's mine."

Seven

They were into their second year of marriage, and being a trained observer, Eve knew when he was irritated with her. It seemed stupid, just *stupid* to have a fight or the undercurrent of one over something as ridiculous as ghosts.

Still, she brooded over it another moment, on the verge of stupidity. Then she huffed out a breath.

“Look,” she began.

After a pause, he sat back. “I’m looking.”

“What I’m getting at is... shit. Shit.” She paced to his window, to the doorway, turned around again.

Rules of marriage – and hell, one of the benefits of it, she admitted – were that she could say to him what she might even find hard to say to herself.

“I have to live with so many of them.” There was anger in her over it, and a kind of grief she could never fully explain. “They don’t always go away when you close the case, never go away if you leave a crack in it. I got a freaking army of dead in my head.”

“Whom you’ve defended,” he reminded her. “Stood over, stood for.”

“Yeah, well, that doesn’t mean they’re going to say Thanks, pal,’ then shuffle off the mortal whatever.”

“That would be coil – and they’ve already done the shuffle before you get there.”

“Exactly. Dead. But they still have faces and voices and pain, at least in my head. I don’t need to think about one wifing around sending me messages from beyond. It’s too much, that’s all. It’s too much if I have to start wondering if there’s some spirit hovering over my shoulder to make sure I do the job.”

“All right.”

“That’s it?”

“Darling Eve,” he said with the easy patience he could pull out and baffle her with at the oddest times. “Haven’t we already proven that you and I don’t have to stand on exactly the same spot on every issue? And wouldn’t it be boring if we did?”

“Maybe.” Tension oozed back out of her. “I guess. I just never expected you’d take something like this and run with it.”

“Then perhaps I shouldn’t tell you that if I die first, I’m planning to come back to see you naked as often as possible.”

Her lips twitched, as he’d intended them to. “I’ll be old, with my tits hanging to my waist.”

“You don’t have enough tit to hang that low.”

She pursed her lips, looked down as if to check. “Gotta point. So are we good now?”

“We may be, if you come over here and kiss me. In payment for the insult.”

She rolled her eyes. “Nothing’s free around here.” But she skirted the desk, leaned down to touch her lips to his.

The moment she did, he yanked her down into his lap. She’d seen it coming – she knew him too well not to – but was in the mood to indulge him.

“If you think I’m playing bimbo secretary and horny exec – “

“There were actually a few insults,” he interrupted. “And you’ve reminded me that you’re going to get old eventually. I should take advantage of your youth and vitality, and see you naked now.”

“I’m not getting naked. Hey! Hey!”

“Feelyou naked then,” he amended, as his hands were already under her sweatshirt and on her breasts. “Good things, small packages.”

“Oh yeah? Is that what I should say about your equipment?”

“Insult upon insult.” Laughing, he slid his hand around to her back to hold her more firmly in place. “You have a lot of apologizing to do.”

“Then I guess I’d better get started.”

She put some punch into the kiss, swinging around to straddle him. It would take some agility as well as vitality to pull off a serious apology in his desk chair, but she thought she was up to the job.

He made her feel so many things, all of them vital and immediate. The hunger, the humor, the love, the lust. She could taste his heat for her, his greed for her as his mouth ravished hers. Her own body filled with that same heat and hunger as he tugged at her clothes.

Here was his life – in this complicated woman. Not just the long, alluring length of her, but the mind and spirit inside the form. She could excite and frustrate, charm and annoy – and all there was of her somehow managed to fit against him, and make him complete.

Now she surrounded him, shifting that body, using those quick hands, then taking him inside her with a long, low purr of satisfaction. They took each other, finished each other, and then the purr was a laughing groan.

“I think that squares us,” she managed.

“You may even have some credit.”

For a moment, she curled in, rested her head on his shoulder. “Ghosts probably can’t screw around in a desk chair.”

“Unlikely.”

“It’s tough being dead.”

At eight-fifteen in the morning, Eve was in her office at Central scowling at the latest sweeper and EDD reports.

“Nothing. They can’t find anything. No sign of electronic surveillance, holographic paraphernalia, audio, video. Zilch.”

“Could be it’s telling you that you had a paranormal experience last night.”

Eve spared one bland look for Peabody. “Paranormal my ass.”

“Cases have been documented, Dallas.”

“Fruitcakes have been documented, too. It’s going to be a family member. That’s where we push. That and whatever Hopkins may or may not have had in his possession that his killer wanted. Start with the family members. Let’s eliminate any with solid alibis. We’ll fan out from there.”

She glanced at her desk as her ‘link beeped – again – and, scanning the readout, sneered. “Another reporter. We’re not feeding the hounds on this one until so ordered. Screen all your incomings. If you get cornered, straight no comment, investigation is active and ongoing. Period.”

“Got that. Dallas, what was it like last night? Skin-crawly or wow?”

Eve started to snap, then blew out a breath. “Skin-crawly, then annoying that some jerk had played with me and made my skin crawl for a minute.”

“But kind of frigid, too, right? Ghost of Bobbie Bray serenading you.”

“If I believed it was the ghost of anyone, I’d say it was feeling more pissy than entertaining. What someone wants us to think is we’re not welcome at Number Twelve. Trying to scare us off. I’ve got Feeney’s notes on the report from EDD. He says a couple of his boys heard singing. Another swears he felt something pat his ass. Same sort of deal from the sweepers. Mass hysteria.”

“Digging in, I found out two of the previous owners tried exorcisms. Hired priests, psychics, parapsychologists, that kind of deal. Nothing worked.”

“Gee, mumbo didn’t get rid of the jumbo? Why doesn’t that surprise me? Get on the ‘link, start checking alibis.”

Eve took her share, eliminated two, and ended up tagging Serenity Massey’s daughter in the woman’s Scottsdale home.

“It’s not even seven in the morning.”

“I’m sorry, Ms. Sawyer.”

“Not even seven,” the woman said testily, “and I’ve already had three calls from reporters, and another from the head nurse at my mother’s care center. Do you know a reporter tried to get to her? She has severe dementia – can barely remember me when I go see her – and some idiot reporter tries to get through to interview her over Bobbie Bray. My mother didn’t even *know* her.”

“Does your mother know she was Bobbie Bray’s daughter?”

The woman’s thin, tired face went blank. But it was there in her eyes, clear as glass. “What did you say?”

“She knows, then – certainly you do.”

“I’m not going to have my mother harassed, not by reporters, not by the police.”

“I don’t intend to harass your mother. Why don’t you tell me when and how she found out she was Bobbie’s daughter, not her sister.”

“I don’t know.” Ms. Sawyer rubbed her hands over her face. “She hasn’t been well for a long time, a very long time. Even when I was a child...” She dropped her hands now and looked more than tired. She looked ill. “Lieutenant, is this necessary?”

“I’ve got two murders. Both of them relatives of yours. You tell me.”

“I don’t think of the Hopkins family as relatives. Why would I? I’m sorry that man was killed because it’s dredged all this up. I’ve been careful to separate myself and my own family from the Bobbie phenomenon. Check,

why don't you? I've never given an interview, never agreed to one or sought one out."

"Why? It's a rich pool, from what I can tell."

"Because I wanted *normal*. I'm entitled to it, and so are my kids. My mother was always frail. Delicate, mind and body. I'm not, and I've made damn sure to keep me and mine out of that whirlpool. If it leaks out that I'm Bobbie's granddaughter instead of a grandniece, they'll hound me."

"I can't promise to keep it quiet, I can only promise you that I won't be giving interviews on that area of the investigation. I won't give out your name or the names of your family members."

"Good for you," Sawyer said dully. "They're already out."

"Then it won't hurt you to answer some questions. How did your mother find out about her parentage?"

"She told me – my brother and me – that she found letters Bobbie had written. Bobbie's mother kept them. She wrote asking how her baby was doing, called my mother by name. Her Serenity she called her, as if she was a state of mind instead of a child who needed her mother."

The bitterness in the words told Eve she wasn't talking to one of Bobbie Bray's fans.

"Said she was sorry she'd messed up again. My mother claimed Bobbie said she was going back into rehab, that she was leaving Hop, the whole scene. She was going to get clean and come back for her daughter. Of course, she never came back. My mother was convinced Hop had killed her, or had her killed."

"What do you think?"

"Sure, maybe." The words were the equivalent of a shrug. "Or maybe she took off to Bimini to sell seashells by the seashore. Maybe she went back to San Francisco and jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge. I don't know, and frankly don't much care."

Sawyer let out a long sigh, pressed her fingers to her eyes. “She wasn’t, and isn’t, part of my world. But she all but became my mother’s world. Mom swore Bobbie’s ghost used to visit her, talk to her. I think it’s part of the reason, this obsession, that she’s been plagued by emotional and mental problems as long as I can remember. When my brother was killed in the Urbans, it just snapped her. He was her favorite.”

“Do you have the letters?”

“No. That Hopkins man, he tracked my mother down. I was in college, my brother was overseas, so that was, God, about thirty years ago. He talked her out of nearly everything she had that was Bobbie’s or pertained to her. Original recordings, letters, diaries, photographs. He said he was going to open some sort of museum in California. Nothing ever came of it. My brother came home and found out. He was furious. He and my mother had a horrible fight, one they never had a chance to reconcile. Now he’s gone and she might as well be. I don’t want to be Bobbie Bray’s legacy. I just want to live my life.”

Eve ended the transmission, tipped back in her chair. She was betting the letters were what the killer had been after.

With Peabody she went back to Hopkins’s apartment for another thorough search.

“Letters Bobbie wrote that confirm a child she had with Hop. Letters or some sort of document or recording from Hop that eventually led his grandson to Serenity Massey. Something that explosive and therefore valuable,” she said to her partner. “I bet he had a secure hidey-hole. Security box, vault. We’ll start a search of bank boxes under his name or likely aliases.”

“Maybe he took them with him and the killer already has them.”

“I don’t think so. The doorman said he walked out empty-handed. Something like that, figuring the value, he’s going to want a briefcase, a portfolio. Guy liked accessories – good suit, shoes, antique watch – why

miss a trick with something that earns one? But... he was hunting up money. Maybe he sold them, or at least dangled them.”

“Bygones?”

“Worth a trip.”

At the door, Eve paused, turned to study the apartment again. There’d be no ghosts here, she thought. Nothing here but stale air, stale dreams.

Legacies, she thought as she closed the door. Hopkins left one of unfulfilled ambitions, which to her mind carried on the one left by his father.

Bobbie Bray’s granddaughter had worked hard to shut her own heritage out, to live simply. Didn’t want to be Bobbie Bray’s legacy. Eve recalled.

Who could blame her? Or anyone else for that matter.

“If you’re handed crap and disappointment – *inherited* it,” Eve amended, “what do you do?”

“Depends, I guess.” Peabody frowned as they headed down. “You could wallow in it and curse your ancestors, or shovel yourself out of it.”

“Yeah. You could try to shine it up into gold and live the high life – like Hopkins. Obsess over it like Bray’s daughter. Or you could shut the door on it and walk away. Like Bray’s granddaughter.”

“Okay. And?”

“There’s more than one way to shut a door. You drive,” Eve said when they were outside.

“Drive? Me? It’s not even my birthday!”

“Drive, Peabody.” In the passenger seat, Eve took out her ppc and brought up John Massey’s military ID data. She cocked her head as she studied the photo.

He'd been young, fresh-faced. A little soft around the mouth, she mused, a little guileless in the eyes. She didn't see either of his grandparents in him, but she saw something else.

Inherited traits, she thought. Legacies.

Using the dash 'link, she contacted police artist Detective Yancy.

"Got a quick one for you," she told him. "I'm going to shoot you an ID photo. I need you to age it for me."

Eight

Eve had Peabody stop at the bank Hopkins had used for his loan on Number Twelve. But there was no safety deposit box listed under his name, or Bray's, or any combination.

To Peabody's disappointment, Eve took the wheel when they left the bank.

She couldn't justify asking Roarke to do the search for a safety deposit box, though it passed through her mind. He could no doubt pinpoint one, if one was there to be pinpointed, faster than she could. Even faster than EDD. But she couldn't term it a matter of life and death.

Just a matter of irritation.

She put in a request to Feeney to assign the task to EDD ace, and Peabody's heartthrob, Ian McNab while she and Peabody headed back to Bygones.

"McNab will be so completely jazzed about this." Smiling – as if even saying his name put a dopey look on her face – Peabody wiggled in the passenger seat. "Looking for a ghost and all that."

"He's looking for a bank box."

"Well yeah, but in a roundabout way, it's about Bobbie Bray and the ghost thereof. Number Twelve."

"Stop saying that." Eve wanted to grip her own hair and yank, but her hands were currently busy on the wheel. She used those hands to whip around a farting maxibus with a few layers of paint to spare. "I'm going to write an order forbidding anyone within ten feet of me from saying *Number Twelve* in that – what is it – awed whisper."

"But you just gotta. Did you know there are all these books, and there are vids, based on Number Twelve, and Bobbie and the whole deal from back then? I did some research. McNab and I downloaded one of the vids last

night. It was kind of hokey, but still. And we're working the case. Maybe they'll make a vid of *that* – you know, like they're going to do one of the Ilove case. Completely uptown. We'll be famous, and – “

Eve stopped at a light, turned her body slowly so she faced her partner. “You even breathe that thought, I'll choke you until your eyes pop right out of their sockets, then plop into your open gasping mouth where you'll swallow them whole. And choke to death on your own eyeballs.”

“Well, jeez.”

“Think about it, think carefully, before you breathe again.”

Peabody hunched in her seat and kept her breathing to a minimum.

When they found the shop closed and locked, they detoured to the home address on record.

Maeve opened the door of the three-level brownstone. “Lieutenant, Detective.”

“Closed down shop, Ms. Buchanan?”

“For a day or two.” She pushed at her hair. Eve watched the movement, the play of light on the striking red. “We were overrun yesterday, only about an hour after you left. Oh, come in, please. I'm a little flustered this morning.”

“Overrun?” Eve repeated as she stepped into a long, narrow hallway brightened by stained glass windows that let in the winter sun.

“Customers, and most of them looking for bargains. Or wanting to gawk over the Bobbie Bray collection.” Maeve, dressed in loose white pants, a soft white sweater and white half boots led the way through a wide doorway into a spacious parlor.

Tidy, Eve thought, but not fussy. Antiques – she knew how to recognize the real thing, as Roarke had a penchant for them. Deep cushions in rich colors, old rugs, what looked to be old black-and-white photographs in pewter frames adorning the walls.

No gel cushions, no mood screen, no entertainment unit in sight. Old-world stuff, Eve decided, very much like their place of business.

“Please, have a seat. I’ve got tea or coffee.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Eve told her. “Your father’s here?”

“Yes, up in the office. We’re working from here, at least for today. We’re buried in inquiries for our Bray collection, and we can handle those from home.”

She moved around the room, turning on lamps with colored shades. “Normally, we’d love the walk-in traffic at the shop, but not when it’s a circus parade. With only the two of us, we just couldn’t handle it. We have a lot of easily lifted merchandise.”

“How about letters?”

“Letters?”

“You carry that sort of thing? Letters, diaries, journals?”

“We absolutely do. On Bobbie again?” Maeve walked back to sit on the edge of a chair, crossed her legs. “We have what’s been authenticated as a letter she wrote to a friend she’d made in San Francisco – ah... 1968. Two notebooks containing original lyrics for songs she’d written. There may be more, but those spring to mind.”

“How about letters to family, from her New York years?”

“I don’t think so, but I can check the inventory. Or just ask my father,” she added with a quick smile. “He’s got the entire inventory in his head, I swear. I don’t know how he does it.”

“Maybe you could ask him if he could spare us a few minutes.”

“Absolutely.”

When she hesitated, Eve primed her. “Is there something else, something you remember?”

“Actually, I’ve been sort of wrestling with this. I don’t think it makes any difference. I didn’t want to say anything in front of my father.” She glanced toward the doorway, then tugged lightly – nervously, Eve thought – on one of the sparkling silver hoops she wore in her ears. “But... well, Mr. Hopkins – Rad – he sort of hit on me. Flirted, you know. Asked me out to dinner, or drinks. He said I could be a model, and he could set me up with a photographer who’d do my portfolio at a discount.”

She flushed, the color rising pink into her cheeks, and cleared her throat. ‘That kind of thing.’ “And did you? Have drinks, dinner, a photo session?”

“No.” She flushed a little deeper. “I know when I’m getting a line. He was old enough to be my father, and well, not really my type. I won’t say there wasn’t something appealing about him. Really, he could be charming. And it wasn’t nasty, if you know what I mean. I don’t want you to think...”

She waved a hand in the air. “It was all sort of friendly and foolish. I might have even been tempted, just for the fun. But I’ve been seeing someone, and it’s turning into a thing. I didn’t want to mess mat up. And frankly, my father wouldn’t have liked it.”

“Because?”

“The age difference for one, and the type of man Rad was. Opportunistic, multiple marriages. Plus, he was a client and that can get sticky. Anyway.” Maeve let out a long, relieved breath. “It was bothering me that I didn’t mention it to you, and that you might hear about it and think I was hiding something.”

“Appreciate that.”

“I’ll go get my father,” she said as she rose. “You’re sure you won’t have coffee? Tea? It’s bitter out there today.”

“I wouldn’t mind either,” Peabody put in. “Dealer’s choice. The lieutenant’s coffee – always black.”

“Fine. I’ll be back in a few. Make yourselves comfortable.”

“She was a little embarrassed about the Hopkins thing. She wanted to serve us something,” Peabody said when Maeve left the room. “Makes it easier for her.”

“Whatever floats.” Eve got to her feet, wandered the room. It had a settled, family feel about it, with a thin sheen of class. The photos were arty black-and-whites of cities – old-timey stuff. She was frowning over one when Buchanan came in. Like his daughter, he was wearing at-home clothes. And still managed to look dignified in a blue sweater and gray pants.

“Ladies. What can I do for you?”

“You have a beautiful home, Mr. Buchanan,” Peabody began. “Some wonderful old pieces. Lieutenant, it makes me wonder if Roarke’s ever bought anything from Mr. Buchanan.”

“Roarke?” Buchanan gave Peabody a puzzled look. “He has acquired a few pieces from us. You’re not saying he’s a suspect in this.”

“No. He’s Lieutenant Dallas’s husband.”

“Of course, I forgot for a moment.” He shifted his gaze to Eve with a smile. “My business keeps me so much in the past, current events sometimes pass me by.”

“I bet. And speaking of the past,” Eve continued, “we’re interested in any letters, journals, diaries you might have that pertain to Bobbie Bray.”

“That’s a name I’ve heard countless times today. Maeve might have told you that’s why we decided to work from home. And here she is now.”

Maeve wheeled in a cart holding china pots and cups.

“Just what we need. I’ve put the ‘links on auto,” her father told her. “We can take a short break. Letters.” He took a seat while Maeve poured coffee and tea. “We do have a few she wrote to friends in San Francisco in 1968 and 1969. And one of our prizes is a workbook containing drafts of some of her song lyrics. It could, in a way, be considered a kind of diary as well. She wrote down some of her thoughts in it, or notes to herself. Little

reminders. I've fielded countless inquiries about just that this morning. Including one from a Cliff Gill."

"Hopkins's son?"

"So he said. He was very upset, nearly incoherent really." Buchanan patted Maeve's hand when she passed him a cup. "Understandable under the circumstances."

"And he was looking specifically for letters?" Eve asked.

"He said his father had mentioned letters, a bombshell as he put it. Mr. Gill understood his father and I had done business and hoped I might know what it was about. I think he hopes to clear his family name."

"You going to help him with that?"

"I don't see how." Buchanan spread his hands. "Nothing I have pertains."

"If there was something that pertained, or correspondence written near the time of her disappearance, would you know about it?"

He pursed his lips in thought. "I can certainly put out feelers. There are always rumors, of course. Several years ago someone tried to auction off what they claimed was a letter written by Bobbie two years after her disappearance. It was a forgery, and there was quite a scandal."

"There have been photos, too," Maeve added. "Purportedly taken of Bobbie after she went missing. None have ever been authenticated."

"Exactly." Buchanan nodded. "So substantiating the rumors and the claims, well, that's a different matter. Do you know of correspondence from that time, Lieutenant?"

"I've got a source claiming there was some."

"Really." His eyes brightened. "If they're authentic, acquiring them would be quite a coup."

“Were you name-dropping, Peabody?” Eve gave her partner a mild look as she slid behind the wheel.

“Roarke’s done business there before, and you guys went there together. But he doesn’t mention Roarke at all. And being in business, I figured Buchanan would keep track of his more well-heeled clients, you know, and should’ve made an immediate connection.”

“Yeah, you’d think. Plausible reason he didn’t.”

“You’d wondered, too.”

“I wonder all kinds of things. Let’s wonder our way over to talk to Cliff Gill.”

Like Bygones, the dance school was locked up tight. But as Fanny Gill lived in the apartment overhead, it was a short trip.

Cliff answered looking flushed and harassed. “Thank God! I was about to contact you.”

“About?”

“We had to close the school.” He took a quick look up and down the narrow hallway then gestured them inside. “I had to give my mother a soother.”

“Because?”

“Oh, this is a horrible mess. I’m having a Bloody Mary.”

Unlike the Buchanan brownstone, Fanny’s apartment was full of bright, clashing colors, a lot of filmy fabrics and chrome. Artistic funk, Eve supposed. It was seriously lived in to the point of messy.

Cliff was looking pretty lived-in himself, Eve noted. He hadn’t shaved, and it looked like he’d slept in the sweats he was wearing. Shadows dogged his eyes.

“I stayed the night here,” he began as he stood in the adjoining kitchen pouring vodka. “People came into the studio yesterday afternoon, some of

them saying horrible things. Or they'd just call, leaving horrible, nasty transmissions. I've turned her 'links off. She just can't take any more."

He added enough tomato juice and Tabasco to turn the vodka muddy red, then took a quick gulp. "Apparently we're being painted with the same brush as my grandfather. Spawn of Satan." He took another long drink, then blushed. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, what can I get you?"

"We're fine," Eve told him. "Mr. Gill, have you been threatened?"

"With everything from eternal damnation to public flogging. My mother doesn't deserve this, Lieutenant. She's done nothing but choose poorly in the husband department, which she rectified. At least I carry the same blood as Hopkins." His mouth went grim. "If you think along those lines."

"Do you?"

"I don't know what I think any more." He came back into the living area, dropped onto a candy-pink sofa heaped with fluffy pillows. "At least I know what to feel now. Rage, and a little terror."

"Did you report any of the threats?"

"She asked me not to." He closed his eyes, seemed to gather some tattered rags of composure. "She's embarrassed and angry. Or she started out that way. She didn't want to make a big deal about it. But it just kept up. She handles things, my mother, she doesn't fall apart. But this has just knocked her flat. She's afraid we'll lose the school, all the publicity, the scandal. She's worked so hard, and now this."

"I want you to make a copy of any of the transmissions regarding this. We'll take care of it."

"Okay. Okay." He scooped his fingers through his disordered hair. "That's the right thing to do, isn't it? I'm just not thinking straight. I can't see what I should do."

"You contacted the owner of a shop called Bygones. Care to tell me why?"

“Bygones? Oh, oh, right. Mr. Buchanan. My father sold him some memorabilia. I think maybe Buchanan was one of the backers on Number Twelve. My father mentioned him when I gave him the five hundred. Said something like Bygones may be Bygones, but he wouldn’t be nickel-and-diming it any more. How he’d pay me back the five ten times over because he was about to hit the jackpot.”

“Any specific jackpot?”

“He talked a lot, my father. Bragged, actually, and a lot of the bragging was just hot air. But he said he’d been holding onto an ace in the hole, waiting for the right time. It was coming up.”

“What was his hole card?”

“Can’t say he actually had one.” Cliff heaved out a breath. “Honestly, I didn’t really listen because it was the same old, same old to me. And I wanted to get him moving before my mother got wind of the loan. But he said something about letters Bobbie Bray had written. A bombshell, he said, that was going to give Number Twelve just the push he needed. I didn’t pay much attention at the time because he was mostly full of crap.”

He winced now, drank again. “Hell of a thing to say about your dead father, huh?”

“His being dead doesn’t make him more of a father to you, Mr. Gill,” Peabody said gently.

Cliff’s eyes went damp for a moment. “Guess not. Well, when all this started happening. I remembered how he talked about these letters, and I thought maybe he’d sold them to Bygones. Maybe there was something in them that would clear my grandfather. Something, I don’t know. Maybe she committed suicide and he panicked.”

He lowered his head, rubbed the heel of his hand in the center of his brow as if to push away some pain. “I don’t even care, or wouldn’t, except for what’s falling down from it on my mother. I don’t know what I expected Mr. Buchanan to do. I was desperate.”

“Did your father give you any indication of the contents of the letters?” Eve asked. “The timing of them?”

“Not really, no. At the time I thought it was just saving face because I was giving him money. Probably all it was. Buchanan said he hadn’t bought any letters from my father, but I could come in and look at what he had. Waste of time, I guess. But he was nice about it – Buchanan, I mean. Sympathetic.”

“Have you discussed this with your mother at all?” Peabody asked him.

“No, and I won’t.” Any grief seemed to burn away as anger covered his face. “It’s a terrible thing to say, but by dying my father’s given her more trouble than he has since she divorced him. I’m not going to add to it. Chasing a wild goose anyway.” He frowned into his glass. “I have to make some arrangements for – for the body. Cremation, I guess. I know it’s cold, but I’m not going to have any sort of service or memorial. I’m not going to drag this out. We just have to get through this.”

“Mr Gill – “

“Cliff,” he said to Eve with a weak smile. “You should call me Cliff since I’m dumping all my problems on you.”

“Cliff. Do you know if your father kept a safety deposit box?”

“He wouldn’t have told me. We didn’t see each other much. I don’t know what he’d have kept in one. I got a call from some lawyer this morning. Said my father’d made a will, and I’d inherit. I asked him to ballpark it, and the gist was when it all shakes out, I’ll be lucky to have enough credits to buy a soy dog at a corner cart.”

“I guess you were hoping for better,” Peabody commented.

Cliff let out a short, humorless laugh. “Hoping for better with Rad Hopkins would be another waste of time.”

Nine

“You have to feel for the guy.” Peabody bundled her scarf around her neck as they walked back outside.

“We’ll pass off the copy of his ‘link calls to a couple of burly uniforms, have them knock on some doors and issue some stern warnings. About all we can do there for now. We’re going back to Central. I want a quick consult with Mira, and you can update the Commander.”

“Me?” Peabody’s voice hit squeak. “Alone? Myself?”

“I expect Commander Whitney would be present as you’re updating him.”

“But you do the updates.”

“Today you’re doing it. He’s going to want to set up a media conference,” Eve added as she got into their vehicle. “Hold him off.”

“Oh my God.”

“Twenty-four hours. Make it stick,” Eve added and pulled out into traffic as Peabody sat pale and speechless beside her.

Mira was the top profiler attached to the NYPSP for good reason. Her status kept her in high demand and made Eve’s request for a consult without appointment similar to trying to squeeze her head through the eye of a needle that was already threaded.

She had a headache when she’d finished battling Mira’s admin, but she got her ten minutes.

“You ought to give her a whip and a chain,” Eve commented when she stepped into Mira’s office. “Not that she needs one.”

“You always manage to get past her. Have a seat.”

“No thanks, I’ll make it fast.”

Mira settled behind her desk. She was a sleek, lovely woman who favored pretty suits. Today's was power red and worn with pearls.

"This would be pertaining to Number Twelve," Mira began. "Two murders, nearly a hundred years apart. Your consults are rarely routine. Bobbie Bray."

"You, too? People say that name like she's a deity."

"Do they?" Mira eased back in her chair, her blue eyes amused. "Apparently my grandmother actually heard her perform at Number Twelve in the early Nineteen-seventies. She claimed she exchanged an intimate sexual favor with the bouncer for the price of admission. My grandmother was a wild woman."

"Huh."

"And my parents are huge fans, so I grew up hearing that voice, that music. It's confirmed then? They were her remains?"

"Lab's forensic sculptor's putting her money on it as of this morning. I've got the facial image she reconstructed from the skull, and it looks like Bray."

"May I see?"

"I've got it in the file." Eve gave Mira the computer codes, then shifted so she, too, could watch the image come on-screen.

The lovely, tragic face, the deep-set eyes, the full, pouty lips somehow radiated both youth and trouble.

"Yes," Mira murmured. "It certainly looks like her. Something so sad and worn about her, despite her age."

"Living on drugs, booze and sex tends to make you sad and worn."

"I suppose it does. You don't feel for her?"

Eve realized she should have expected the question from Mira. Feelings were the order of the day in that office. “I feel for anyone who gets a bullet in the brain – then has their body closed up in a wall. She deserves justice for that – deserves it for the cops who looked the other way. But she chose the life she led to that point. So looking sad and worn at twenty-couple? No, I can’t say I feel for that.”

“A different age,” Mira said, studying Eve as she’d studied the image on screen. “My grandmother always said you had to be there. I doubt Bobbie would have understood you and the choices you’ve made any more than you do her and hers.”

Mira flicked the screen off. “Is there more to substantiate identity?”

“The bones we recovered had a broken left tibia, which corresponds with a documented childhood injury on Bray. We extracted DNA, and I’ve got a sample of a relative’s on its way to the lab. It’s going to confirm.”

“A tragic waste. All that talent snuffed out.”

“She didn’t live what you could call a careful life.”

“The most interesting people rarely do.” Mira angled her head. “You certainly don’t.”

“Mine’s about the job. Hers was about getting stoned and screwing around, best I can tell.”

Now Mira raised a brow. “Not only don’t you feel for her, you don’t think you’d have liked her.”

“Can’t imagine we’d have had much in common, but that’s not the issue. She had a kid.”

“What? I’ve never heard that.”

“She kept it locked. Likelihood is it was Hop Hopkins’s offspring, though it’s possible she got knocked up on the side. Either way, she went off, had the

kid, dumped it on her mother. Sent money so the family could relocate – up the scale some. Mother passed the kid off as her own.”

“And you find that deplorable, on all counts.”

Irritation shadowed Eve’s face, very briefly. “That’s not the issue either. Female child eventually discovered her heritage through letters Bray allegedly wrote home. The ones shortly before her death, again allegedly, claimed that she was planning to clean up her act – again – and come back for the kid. This is hearsay. The daughter relayed it to her two children. Purportedly the letters and other items were sold, years ago, to Radcliff C. Hopkins – the last.”

“Connections within connections. And this, you believe goes to motive.”

“You know how Hopkins was killed?”

“The walls are buzzing with it. Violent, specific, personal – and somehow tidy.”

“Yeah.” It was always satisfying to have your instincts confirmed. “The last shot. Here’s what he did to her. There’s control mere, an agenda fulfilled, even through the rage.”

“Let me see if I understand. You suspect that a descendent of Bobbie Bray killed a descendent of Hopkins to avenge her murder.”

“That’s a chunk of it, buttonholed. According to Bray’s granddaughter, the murder, the abandonment, the obsession mined her mother’s health. Series of breakdowns.”

“You suspect the granddaughter?”

“No, she’s covered. She’s got two offspring herself, but I can’t place them in New York during the time in question.”

“Who does that leave you?”

“There was a grandson, reported killed in action during the Urbans.”

“He had children?”

“None on record. He was pretty young, only seventeen. Lied about his age when he joined up – a lot of people did back then. Oddly enough, he was reported killed here in New York.”

Pursing her lips, Mira considered. “As you’re one of the most pragmatic women I know, I find it hard to believe you’re theorizing that a ghost killed your victim to avenge yet another ghost.”

“Flesh and blood pulled the trigger. I’ve got Yancy aging the military ID. The Urban Wars were a chaotic time, and the last months of them here in New York were confusing from a military standpoint. Wouldn’t be hard, would it, for a young man, one who’d already lied about his age to enlist in the Home Force, to put his official ID on a mangled body and vanish? War’s never what you think it’s going to be. It’s not heroic and adventurous. He could’ve deserted.”

“The history of mental illness in the family – on both sides – the horrors of war, the guilt of abandoning his duty. It would make quite a powder keg. Your killer is purposeful, specific to his goal, would have some knowledge of firearms. Rumor is the victim was shot nine times – the weapon itself is a symbol – and there were no stray bullets found on scene.”

“He hit nine out of nine, so he had some knowledge of handguns, or some really good luck. In addition, he had to reload for the ninth shot.”

“Ah. The others were the rage, that slippery hold on control. The last, a signature. He’s accomplished what he meant to do. There may be more, of course, but he has his eye for an eye, and he has the object of his obsession back in the light.”

“Yeah.” Eve nodded. “I’m thinking that matters here.”

“With Bobbie’s remains found, identified, and her killer identified – at least in the media – he’s fulfilled his obligation. If the killer is the grandson – or connected to the grandson, as even if he did die in the Urbans, it’s certainly

possible to have produced an offspring at seventeen – he or she knows how to blend.”

“Likely to just keep blending,” Eve added.

“Most likely. I don’t believe your killer will seek the spotlight. He doesn’t need acknowledgment. He’ll slide back into his routine, and essentially vanish again.”

“I think I know where to find him.”

“Yancy does good work.” Eve held the photos of John Massey – youth and maturity – side-by-side.

“He does,” Roarke agreed. “As do you, Lieutenant. I doubt I’d have looked at the boy and seen the man.”

“It’s about legacies. Redheads ran in Bray’s family. Her father, her daughter. Her grandson.”

“And Yancy’s work indicates he’s alive and living in New York.”

“Yeah. But even with this I’ve got nothing but instinct and theories. There’s no evidence linking the suspect to the crime.”

“You’ve closed a case on a murder that happened decades before you were born,” Roarke reminded her. “Now you’re greedy.”

“My current suspect did most of the work there. Discovered the body, unearthed it, led me to it. The rest was basically lab and leg work. Since the perpetrator of that crime is long dead, there’s nothing to do but mark the file and do the media announcement.”

“Not very satisfying for you.”

“Not when somebody kills a surrogate figuring that evens things up. And plays games with me. So it’s our turn to play.” Eve shifted in the limo. She felt ridiculous riding around in the big black boat.

But no one would expect Roarke to ride the subway, or even use a common Rapid Cab. Perception was part of the game.

“I can’t send you in wired,” she added. “Never get a warrant for eyes or ears with what I’ve got. You know what to say, right? How to play it?”

“Lieutenant, have a little faith.”

“I got all there is. Okay,” she added, ducking down a little to check out the window when the limo glided to the curb. “Showtime. I’ll be cruising around in this thing, making sure the rest of this little play is on schedule.”

“One question. Can you be sure your suspect will hit his cue in this play of yours?”

“Nothing’s a given, but I’m going with the odds on this. Obsession’s a powerful motivator. The killer is obsessed with Bray, with Number Twelve – and there’s a sense of theatrics there. Another legacy, I’d say. We dangle the bait, he’s going to bite.”

“I’ll do my best to dangle it provocatively.”

“Good luck.”

“Give us a kiss then.”

“That’s what you said last night, and look what happened.” But she gave him a quick one. When he slipped out of the limo, she pulled out her ‘link to check on the rest of the game.

Roarke walked into Bygones looking like a man with plenty of money and an eye to spend it as he liked. He gave Maeve an easy smile and a warm handshake. “Ms. Buchanan? I appreciate you opening for me this afternoon. Well, it’s nearly evening, isn’t it?”

“We’re happy to oblige. My father will be right out. Would you like a glass of wine? I have a very nice cabernet breathing.”

“I’d love one. I’ve met your father, though it’s been three or four years, I suppose, since we’ve done business.”

“I’d have been in college. He mentioned you’d bought a particularly fine Georgian sideboard and a set of china, among other things.”

“He has an excellent memory.”

“He never forgets a thing.” She offered the wine she’d poured, then gestured to a silver tray of fruit and cheese. “Would you like to sit? If you’d rather browse, I can point you in a direction, or show you whatever you’d like. My father has the piece you inquired about. He wanted to make sure it was properly cleaned before he showed it to you.”

“I’ll just wait then, if you’ll join me.” As he sat, he glanced toward the portrait of Bobbie on the far wall. “It’s actually Bobbie Bray who put me in mind to come here.”

“Oh? There’s always interest in her and her memorabilia, but in the last day it’s piqued.”

“I imagine.” He shifted as he spoke so he could scan the black-and-white photographs Eve had told him about. And two, as she’d mentioned, were desert landscapes. “Just as I imagine it won’t ebb any time soon,” he continued. “Certainly not with the publicity that will be generated from the case finally being solved.”

Maeve’s hands went very still for a moment. “It’s certain then?”

“I have an inside source, as you might suspect. Yes, it’s certain. She’s been found, after all these years. And the evidence proves it was Hopkins who hid her body.”

“Horrible. I – Daddy.” She got to her feet as Buchanan came into the shop. He carried a velvet case. “You remember Roarke.”

“I certainly do. It’s good to see you again.” They shook hands, sat. “Difficult circumstances when you were here recently with your wife.”

“Yes. Terrible. I was just telling your daughter that they’ve confirmed the identity of the remains found at Number Twelve, and found Hopkins’s – the first’s – fingerprints on the inside of the wall, on several of the bricks.”

“There’s no doubt any longer then.”

“Hardly a wonder he went mad, locking himself up in that building, knowing what he’d done, and that she was behind that wall, where he’d put her. A bit of ‘The Telltale Heart,’ really.”

Keeping it conversational, Roarke settled back with his drink. “Still, it’s fascinating, isn’t it? Time and distance tend to give that sort of brutality an allure. No one can speak of anything else. And here I am, just as bad. Is that the necklace?”

“Oh, yes. Yes.” Buchanan unsnapped the case, folded back the velvet leaves. “Charming, isn’t it? All those little beads are hand-strung. I can’t substantiate that Bobbie made it herself, though that’s the story. But it was worn by her to the Grammy Awards, then given by her to one of her entourage. I was able to acquire it just last year.”

“Very pretty.” Roarke held up the multistrand necklace. The beads were of various sizes, shapes, colors, but strung in a way that showed the craftsman had a clever eye. “I think Eve might like this. A memento of Bobbie, since she’s the one who’s finally bringing her some sense of justice.”

“Can there be, really?” Eyes downcast, Maeve murmured it. “After all this time?”

“For my cop, justice walks hand-in-hand with truth. She won’t let the truth stay buried, as Bobbie was.” He held up the beads again. “I’m hoping to take her away for a quick tropical holiday, and this sort of thing would suit the tropics, wouldn’t it?”

“After this New York weather?” Maeve said with a laugh as she lifted her gaze once more. “The tropics would suit anything.”

“With our schedules it’s difficult to get away. I’m hoping we can find that window. Though with what they’ve found today, it may take a bit longer.”

“They found something else?” Buchanan asked.

“Mmm. Something about a bank box, letters, and so on. And apparently something the former Hopkins recorded during his hermitage. My wife said he spoke of a small vault in Number Twelve, also walled in. Hopkins must have been very busy. They’re looking for it, but it’s a good-sized building. It may take days.”

“A vault.” Maeve breathed the words. “I wonder what’s in it.”

“More truth?” But Buchanan’s voice was strained now.

“Or the ramblings of a madman, one who’d already killed?”

“Perhaps both,” Roarke suggested. “I know my wife’s hoping for something that will lead her to Rad Hopkins’s killer. The truth, and justice for him as well.”

He laid the necklace on the velvet. “I’m very interested in this piece.” Roarke sipped his wine. “Shall we negotiate?”

Ten

In Number Twelve, Eve stood in the area that had once held a stage. Where there had been sound and light and motion, there was silence, dark and stillness. She could smell dust and a faint whiff of the chemicals the sweepers used on-scene. And could feel nothing but the pervading chill that burned through the brick and mortar of an old building.

Still, the stage was set, she thought. If her hunch was off, she'd have wasted a lot of departmental time, manpower and money. Better that, she decided, than to play into the current media hype that the curse of Number Twelve was still vital, still lethal.

"You've got to admit, it's creepy." Beside Eve, Peabody scanned the club room. There was a lot of white showing in her eyes. "This place gives me the jeebies."

"Keep your jeebies to yourself. We're set. I'm going up to my post."

"You don't have to go up right this minute." Peabody's hand clamped like a bundle of live wires on Eve's wrist. "Seriously. We've got plenty of room on the timetable."

"If you're afraid of the dark, Detective, maybe you should've brought a nice little teddy bear to hold onto."

"Couldn't hurt," Peabody mumbled when Eve pulled free. "You'll stay in contact, right? I mean, communications open? It's practically like you're standing beside me."

Eve only shook her head as she crossed to the stairs. She'd gone through doors with Peabody when death or certainly pain was poised on the other side. She'd crawled through blood with her. And here her usually stalwart partner was squeaking over ghosts.

Her footsteps echoed against the metal steps – and okay, maybe it was a little creepy. But it wasn't creaking doors and disembodied moans they had

to worry about tonight. It was a stone killer who could come for letters from the dead.

There were no letters, of course. None that she knew of, no vault to hide them in. But she had no doubt the prospect of them would lure Rad Hopkins's killer into Number Twelve.

No doubt that killer was descended from Bray and Hopkins. If her hunch didn't pay off tonight, she was going to face a media storm tomorrow – face it either way, she admitted. But she'd rather deal with it with the case closed.

Funny how Bygones had old-timey photos of the desert. Maybe they were Arizona, maybe not, but she was laying her money that they were. There'd been old photos of San Francisco, too, before the quake had given it a good, hard shake. Others of New York during that time period, and of L.A. All of Bobbie's haunts.

Coincidence, maybe. But she agreed with one of the detectives in her squad on a case recently closed – a case that also included switched identities.

Coincidences were hooey.

She crossed the second tier, and started up to the old apartments.

Eve didn't doubt Roarke had played his part, and played it well. With the bait he'd dangled, she was gambling that Radcliff C. Hopkins's killer, and Bobbie Bray's murderous descendent, would bite quickly. Would bite tonight.

She took her position where she could keep the windows in view, put her back to the wall. Eve flipped her communications channel to Peabody's unit, and said, "Boo."

"Oh yeah, that's funny. I'm rib-cracking down here."

"When you're finished with your hilarity, we'll do a check. Feeney, you copy?"

“Got your eyes, your ears and the body-heat sensors. No movement.”

“You eating a doughnut?”

“What do you need electronic eyes and ears for, you can tell I’m eating a cruller from in there?” There was a slurping sound as Feeney washed down the cruller with coffee. “Roarke bought the team a little something to keep us alert.”

“Yeah, he’s always buying something.” She wished she had a damn cruller. Better, the coffee.

“You should have worn the beads, Lieutenant.” Roarke’s voice cruised on. “I think they might have appealed to Bobbie.”

“Yeah, that’s what I need. Baubles and beads. I could use them to – “

“Picking up something,” Feeney interrupted.

“I hear it.” Eve went silent, and as she focused, the sound – a humming – took on the pattern of a tune, and a female flavor. She drew her weapon.

“Exits and egresses,” she murmured to Feeney.

“Undisturbed,” he said in her ear. “I’ve got no motion, no visual, no heat-sensor reading on anything but you and Peabody.”

So it was on a timer, Eve decided. An electronic loop EDD had missed.

“Dallas?” Peabody’s voice was a frantic hiss. “You read? I see – “

The earpiece went to a waspy buzz. And the air went to ice.

She couldn’t stop the chill from streaking up her spine, but no one had to know about it. She might have cursed the glitch in communications and surveillance, but she was too busy watching the amorphous figure drift toward her.

Bobbie Bray wore jeans widely belled from the knees down, slung low at the hips and decorated with flowers that twined up the side of each leg.

The filmy white top seemed to float in a breeze. Her hair was a riotous tangle of curls with the glitter of diamond clips. As she walked, as she hummed, she lifted a cigarette to her lips and drew deeply.

For an instant, the sharp scent of tobacco stung the air.

From the way the image moved, Eve decided tobacco wasn't the only thing she'd been smoking. As ghosts went, this one was stoned to the eyeballs.

"You think I'm buying this?" Eve pushed off the wall. But when she started to move forward something struck out at her. Later, she would think it was like being punched with an ice floe.

She shoved herself forward, following the figure into what had been the bedroom area of the apartment.

The figure stopped, as if startled.

I didn't know you were up here. What's it about? I told you, I'm bookin. So I packed. Don't give me any more shit, Hop.

The figure moved as it spoke, mimed pouring something into a glass, drinking. There was weariness in the voice, and the blurriness of drugs.

Because I'm tired and I'm sick. I'm so fucking messed up. This whole scene is fucked up, and I can't do it anymore. I don't give a shit about my career. That was all you. It's always been all you.

She turned, stood hipshot and blearily defiant.

Yeah? Well, maybe I have lapped it up, and now I'm just puking it out. For Christ's sake look at us, Hop. Look at yourself. We're either stoned or strung out. We got a kid. Don't tell me to shut up. I'm sick of myself and I'm sick of you. *I will stay straight this time.*

The image flung an arm out as if heaving a glass against the wall.

I'm not humping some other guy. I'm not signing with another label. I'm done. Don't you get it? I'm done with this, and I'm done with you. You're fucking crazy, Hop. You need help more than I do. Put that down.

The image threw up its hands now, stumbling back.

You gotta calm down. You gotta come down. We'll talk about it, okay? I don't have to leave. I'm not lying. I'm not. Oh God. Don't. No. Jesus, Hop. Don't!

There was a sharp crack as the figure jerked back, then fell. The hole in the center of the forehead leaked blood.

"Hell of a show," Eve said, and her voice sounded hoarse to her own ears. "Hell of a performance."

Eve heard the faint creak behind her, pivoted. Maeve stepped into the room, tears pouring down her cheeks. And a knife gleaming dully in her hand.

"He shot me dead. Dead was better than gone – that's what he said."

Not John Massey, Eve realized. The Bray/Hopkins legacy had gone down another generation.

"You look alive to me, Maeve."

"Bobbie," she corrected. "She's in me. She speaks through me. She is me."

Eve let out a sigh, kept her weapon down at her side. "Oh step back. Ghosts aren't ridiculous enough, now we have to go into possession?"

"And he killed me." Maeve crooned it. "Took my life. He said I was nothing without him, just a junky whore with a lucky set of pipes."

"Harsh," Eve agreed. "I grant you. But it all happened before you were born. And both players are long dead. Why kill Hopkins?"

"He walled me up." Her eyes gleamed, tears and rage and madness. "He paid off the cops, and they did *nothing*."

"No, he didn't. His grandfather did."

“There’s no difference.” She turned a slow circle as she spoke, arms out. “He was, I was. He is, I am.” Then spun, pointed at Eve with the tip of the knife. “And you, you’re no different than the cops who let me rot in there. You’re just another pig.”

“Nobody pays me off. I finish what I start, and let me tell you something: this stops here.”

“It never stops. I can’t get out, don’t you get it?” Maeve slapped a hand over her lips as if to hold back the gurgle of laughter that ended on a muffled sob. “Every day, every night, it’s the same thing. I can’t get away from it, and I go round and round and round, just like he wanted.”

“Well, I’m going to help you get out of here. And you can spend every day, every night of the rest of your natural life in a cage. Might be a nice padded one in your case.”

Maeve smiled now. “You can’t stop it. You can’t stop me, you can’t stop it. ‘You’re never leaving me.’ That’s what he said when he was walling me up in there. He made me, that’s what he said, and I wasn’t going anywhere. Ever. Fucking bastard killed me, cursed me, trapped me. What the hell are you going to do about it?”

“End it. Maeve Buchanan, you’re under arrest for the murder of Radcliff Hopkins. You have the right to remain silent – “

“You’ll pay for leaving me in there!” Maeve hacked out with the knife she held and missed by a foot.

“Jesus, you fight like a girl.” Eve circled with her, watching Maeve’s eyes. “I’m not an overweight dumbass, and you don’t have a gun this time. So pay attention. Stunner, knife. Stunner always wins. You want a jolt, Maeve?”

“You can’t hurt me. Not in this place. I can’t be harmed here.”

“Wanna bet?” Eve said, and hit Maeve with a low stun when the redhead charged again.

The knife skittered out of Maeve's hand as she fell back, hit hard on her ass. There was another swipe of cold, this time like ice-tipped nails raking Eve's cheek. But she pushed by it, yanking out her restraints as she dragged Maeve's arms behind her back.

Maeve struggled, her body bucking as she gasped out curses. And the cold, whipped by a vicious wind, went straight down to the bone.

"This stops here," Eve repeated, breathless as what felt like frigid fists pounded at her back. "Radcliff C. Hopkins will be charged with murder one in the unlawful death of Bobbie Bray, posthumously. That's my word. Period. Now leave me the hell alone so I can do my job."

Eve hauled Maeve to her feet as the wind began to die. "We're going to toss in breaking and entering and assault on an officer just for fun."

"My name is Bobbie Bray, and you can't touch me. I'm Bobbie Bray, do you hear me? I'm Bobbie Bray."

"Yeah, I hear you." Just as she heard the sudden frantic squawking of voices in her ear and the thunder of footsteps on the stairs.

"I couldn't get to the stairs," Peabody told her. "All of a sudden the place is full of people and music. Talk about jeebies. My communication's down, and I'm trying to push through this wall of bodies. Live bodies – well, not live. I don't know. It's all jumbled."

"We went to the doors soon as communications went down," Feeney added. "Couldn't get through them. Not even your man there with his magic fingers. Then all of a sudden, poof, corn's back, locks open, and we're in. Damned place." Feeney stared at Number twelve as they stood on the sidewalk. "Ought to be leveled, you ask me. Level the bastard and salt the ground."

"Maeve Buchanan rigged it, that's all. We'll figure out how." That was her story, Eve told herself, and she was sticking with it. "I'm heading in, taking her into interview. She's just whacked enough she may not lawyer up straight off."

“Can I get a lift?”

Eve turned to Roarke. “Yeah, I’ll haul you in. Uniforms are transporting the suspect to Central. Peabody, you want to supervise that?”

“On it. Glad to get the hell away from this place.”

When he settled in the car beside Eve, Roarke said simply, “Tell me.”

“Maeve was probably already inside. We just missed her in the sweep. She had a jammer and a program hidden somewhere.”

“Eve.”

She huffed out a breath, cursed a little. “If you want to be fanciful or whatever, I had a conversation with a dead woman.”

She told him, working hard to be matter-of-fact.

“So it wasn’t Maeve who bruised and scratched your face.”

“I don’t know what it was, but I know this is going to be wrapped, and wrapped tight tonight. Buchanan’s being picked up now. We’ll see if he was in this, or if Maeve worked alone. But I’m damn sure she’s the one who fired the gun. She’s the one who lured Hopkins there. He had a weakness for young women. He’d never have felt threatened by her. Walked right in, alone, unarmed.”

“If she sticks with this story about being Bobbie Bray, she could end up in a psychiatric facility instead of prison.”

“A cage is a cage – the shape of it isn’t my call.”

At Central, Eve let Maeve stew a little while as she waited for Mira to be brought in and take a post in observation. So she took Buchanan first.

He was shaking when she went into interview room B, his face pale, his eyes glossy with distress.

“They said – they said you arrested my daughter. I don’t understand. She’ll need a lawyer. I want to get her a lawyer.”

“She’s an adult, Mr. Buchanan. She’ll request her own representation if she wants it.”

“She won’t be thinking straight. She’ll be upset.”

“Hasn’t been thinking straight for a while, has she?”

“She’s... she’s delicate.”

“Here.” Peabody set a cup of water on the table for him. “Have a drink. Then you can help us help your daughter.”

“She needs help,” Eve added. “Do you know she claims to be Bobbie Bray?”

“Oh God. Oh God.” He put his face in his hands. “It’s my fault. It’s all my fault.”

“You are John Massey, grandson of Bobbie Bray and Radcliff Hopkins?”

“I got away from all that. I had to get away from it. It destroyed my mother. There was nothing I could do.”

“So during the Urbans, you saw your chance. Planted your ID after an explosion. Mostly body parts. All that confusion. You walked away.”

“I couldn’t take all the killing. I couldn’t go back home. I wanted peace. I just wanted some peace. I built a good life. Got married, had a child. When my wife died, I devoted myself to Maeve. She was the sweetest thing.”

“Then you told her where she’d come from, who she’d come from.”

He shook his head. “No. She told me. I don’t know how she came to suspect, but she tracked down Rad Hopkins. She said it was business, and I wanted to believe her. But I was afraid it was more. Then one day she told me she’d been to Number Twelve, and she understood. She was going to take care of everything, but I never thought she meant... Is this ruining her life now, too? Is this ruining her life?”

“You knew she went back out the night Hopkins was killed,” Eve said. “You knew what she’d done. She’d have told you. You covered for her. That makes you an accessory.”

“No.” Desperation was bright in his eyes as they darted around the room. “She was home all night. This is all a terrible mistake. She’s upset and she’s confused. That’s all.”

They let him sit, stepped out into the hall. “Impressions, Peabody?”

“I don’t think he had an active part in the murder. But he knew – maybe put his head in the sand about it, but he knew. We can get him on accessory after the fact. He’ll break once she has.”

“Agreed. So let’s go break her.”

Maeve sat quietly. Her hair was smoothed again, her face was placid. “Lieutenant, Detective.”

“Record on.” Eve read the data into the recorder, recited the revised Miranda. “Do you understand your rights and obligations, Ms. Buchanan?”

“Of course.”

“So Maeve.” Eve sat at the table across from her. “How long did you know Hopkins?”

A smirky little smile curved her lips. “Which one?”

“The one you shot nine times in Number Twelve.”

“Oh, that Hopkins. I met him right after he bought the building. I read about it, and thought it was time we resolved some matters.”

“What matters?”

“Him killing me.”

“You don’t look dead.”

“He shot me so I couldn’t leave him, so I wouldn’t be someone else’s money train. Then he covered it up. He covered me up. I’ve waited a long time to make him pay for it.”

“So you sent him the message so he’d come to Number Twelve. Then you killed him.”

“Yes, but we’d had a number of liaisons there before. We had to uncover my remains from that life.”

“Bobbie Bray’s remains.”

“Yes. She’s in me. I am Bobbie.” She spoke calmly, as if they were once again sitting in the classy parlor in her brownstone. “I came back for justice. No one gave me any before.”

“How did you know where the remains were?”

“Who’d know better? Do you know what he wanted to do? He wanted to bring in the media, to make another fortune off me. He had it all worked out. He’d bring the media in, let them put my poor bones on-screen, give interviews – at a hefty fee, of course. Using me again, like he always did. Not this time.”

“You believed Rad Hopkins was Hop Hopkins reincarnated?” Peabody asked.

“Of course. It’s obvious. Only this time I played him. Told him my father would pay and pay and pay for the letters I’d written. I told him where we had to open the wall. He didn’t believe that part, but he wanted under my skirt.”

She wrinkled her nose to show her mild distaste. “I could make him do what I wanted. We worked for hours cutting that brick. Then he believed.”

“You took the hair clips and the gun.”

“Later. We left them while he worked on his plan. While, basically, he dug his own grave. I cleaned them up. I really loved those hair clips. Oh, there

were ammunition clips, too. I took them. I was there.”

Her face changed, hardened, and her voice went raw, went throaty. “In me, in the building. So sad, so cold, so lost. Singing, singing every night. Why should I sing for him? Murdering bastard. I gave him a child, and he didn’t want it.”

“Did you?” Eve asked her.

“I was messed up. He got me hooked – the drugs, the life, the buzz, you know? Prime shit, always the prime shit for Hop. But I was going to get straight, give it up, go back for my kid. I was gonna – had my stuff packed up. I wrote and told my old lady, and I was walking on Hop. But he didn’t want that. Big ticket, that’s what I was. He never wanted the kid. Only me, only what I could bring in. Singing and singing.”

“You sent Rad a message, to get him to Number Twelve.”

“Sure. Public ‘link, easy and quick. I told him to come, and when to come. He liked when I used Bobbie’s voice – spliced from old recordings – in the messages I sent him. He thought it was sexy. Asshole. He stood there, grinning at me. I brought it, he said.”

“What was it?”

“His watch. The watch he had on the night he shot me. The one I bought him when my album hit number one. He had it on his wrist and was grinning at me. I shot him, and I kept shooting him until the clip was empty. Then I pushed the murdering bastard over, and I put the gun right against his head, right against it, and I shot him again. Like he did to me.”

She sat back a little, smiled a little. “Now he can wander around in that damn place night after night after night. Let’s see how he likes it.”

Epilogue

When Eve stepped out, rubbed her hands over her face, Mira slipped out of observation.

“Don’t tell me,” Eve began. “Crazy as a shithouse rat. ”

“That might not be my precise diagnosis, but I believe we’ll find with testing that Maeve Buchanan is legally insane and in desperate need of treatment.”

“As long as she gets it in a cage. Not a bit of remorse. Not a bit of fear. No hedging.”

“She believes everything she did was justified, even necessary. My impression, at least from observing this initial interview, is she’s telling you the truth exactly as she knows it. There’s the history of mental illness on both sides of her family. This may very well be genetic. Then discovering who her great-grandmother was helped push her over some edge she may very well have been teetering on. ”

“How did she discover it?” Eve added. “There’s a question. Father must have let something slip.”

“Possibly. Haven’t you ever simply *known* something?

Or felt it? Of course, you have. And from what I’m told happened tonight, you had an encounter. ”

Frowning, Eve ran her fingers over her sore cheek. “I’m not going to stand here and say I was clocked by a ghost. I’m sure as hell not putting that in my report. ”

“Regardless, you may at the end of this discover the only reasonable way Maeve learned of her heritage was from Bobbie Bray herself. That she also learned of the location of the remains from the same source. ”

“That tips out of the reasonable.”

“But not the plausible. And that learning these things snapped something inside her. Her way of coping was to make herself Bobbie. To believe she’s the reincarnation of a woman who was killed before her full potential was realized. And who, if she’d lived – if she’d come back to claim her child – would have changed everything.”

“Putting a lot of faith in a junkie,” Eve commented. “And using, if you ask me, a woman who was used, exploited and murdered, to make your life a little more important.”

Now she rubbed her eyes. “I’m going to get some coffee, then hit the father again. Thanks for coming down.”

“It’s been fascinating. I’d like to do the testing on her personally. If you’ve no objection.”

“When I’m done, she’s all yours.”

Because her own AutoChef had the only real coffee in all of cop central, Eve detoured there first.

There he was, sitting at her desk, fiddling with his ppc.

“You should go home,” Eve told Roarke. “I’m going to have an all-nighter on this.”

“I will, but I wanted to see you first.” He rose, touched his hand to her cheek. “Put something on that, will you?” Until she did, he put his lips there. “Do you have a confession?”

“She’s singing – ha-ha. Chapter and verse. Mira says she’s nuts, but that won’t keep her out of lockup.”

“Sad, really, that an obsession with one woman could cause so much grief, and for so long.”

“Some of it ends tonight.”

This time he laid his lips on hers. “Come back to me when you can.”

“You can count on that one.”

Alone, she sat. And alone she wrote up a report, and the paperwork that charged Radcliff C. Hopkins I with murder in the first degree in the unlawful death of Bobbie Bray. She filed it, then after a moment’s thought, put in another form.

She requested the release of Bobbie Bray’s remains to herself – if they weren’t claimed by next of kin – so that she could arrange for their burial. Quietly.

“Somebody should do it,” she stated aloud.

She got her coffee, rolled her aching shoulders. Then headed back to work.

In Number Twelve, there was silence in the dark. No one sang, or wept or laughed. No one walked there.

For the first time in eighty-five years, Number Twelve sat empty.

The End