

## INCIDENTAL DAUGHTER

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*To Louis Shapiro, 1964–66 University of Pittsburgh English professor who believed in the freshman from Podunk.*

If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

—James Kelly, *Scottish Proverbs, Collected and Arranged*

### <>ONE<>

A FAMILIAR BELLOWING in the outer office captured Liz Michael's attention. She slipped the contract for the purchase of William Penn Press back into its folder and navigated through the precisely-stacked piles of manuscripts to lift a slat of the blinds covering the door and floor-to-ceiling windows that faced the outer office. Addy Payne strained toward Mandy, pounded her desk, and demanded to see Liz. Paper clips, pens, and papers flew off her desk like hard rain.

Liz glanced at her watch. Only 2:17, but the flush of booze had already spread from her ex-husband's face to his scalp in sharp contrast to his sleek, white-blond hair. This bloated caricature was not the man she had once loved. She shook her head. No, she could not possibly have fallen in love with that.

As he headed for her office, trailed by Mandy, Liz considered escaping through the other door in her office, but she knew he'd keep coming back—best to deal with him now. She whirled back to her desk, sat, and pretended to peruse the documents in the William Penn Press folder. Addy whipped the door open, but held it, and peered at Mandy as though she were the intruder. Mandy's hazel eyes pleaded with Liz, and she shrugged her plump shoulders.

"It's okay, Mandy. Call Miriam and tell her I'll have the contract ready for her before four."

Mandy scurried out of the room like a rabbit frantic for cover. Addy smiled, shook his head, and closed the door. He removed a stack of manuscripts from a tan guest chair, sat, and adjusted his perfectly pressed pants. "You look well," he said.

Liz stood, marched to the blinds, and opened them. Mandy glanced up from her phone call to Miriam and nodded her readiness to call security at Liz's signal. Liz returned to her desk, sat, folded her hands, and calmly stared at him a moment. "What brings you here today, Addy?"

He glanced back at the open blinds, raised his brows, and looked back at her with a slow, feline smile. "What? No 'How are you? It's good to see you, Addy.'"

Liz stared back at him, unsmiling.

He shook his head. "Poor sales technique, Lizzie."

"I'm not selling anything. What do you want? I'm busy."

Addy glanced at the stacks of manuscripts and nodded. "I can see that. You used to be a lot neater."

She continued to stare.

He relaxed back into the chair, placed a leg over his knee, and rested his hands on the arms of the chair in one graceful movement. He considered her a moment. "I need money."

"You're wasting my time. Get a job."

His gray eyes darkened. "Pittsburgh isn't exactly the center of the advertising world."

"Not my problem. I told you the last time, no more loans—as if I'll ever see the money I've already given you." She cocked her head to one side. "Tell me, Addy, whatever happened to all of your contacts? Why don't you go to your family?"

He looked away from her and studied the awards on one wall and then the print of Cassatt's *The Boating Party* on the opposite wall. The muffled ring of Mandy's phone in the outer office underscored the silence.

"They don't know, do they? They think you're still the Great Ad Man, pulling off one outrageous magic trick after another."

He returned his gaze to her. "I want to start my own agency."

She gave him a tight-lipped smile and shook her head. "You don't know you've dropped off the edge, do you? You had quite a run taking risks with your accounts. . . . Oh, you had us all

fooled. Me. Your clients. We thought your three-martini lunches fueled your success, till your lack of follow-through took everything south. . . . Lay off the booze, Addy. Then go to New York, LA, Chicago. Find a job with an agency where they don't know you."

His whole body deflated. "It's been too long since the last job. Even if I were hired, I'd have to start at the bottom."

Liz leaned back in her chair. "Screwed everybody who could give you a good reference, huh? Why don't you try something else? Maybe banking? Or drive a cab? Who knows? You could end up head of the company."

He looked worse than he had the last time if that was possible. Now that he was sitting across from her, she could see tiny veins were beginning to sprout on his nose. "By the way, as I've said many times, AA has quite a history for turning people's lives around. Why don't you give them a try? What could it hurt?"

He sprang from his chair and, hands fisted, leaned on her desk. She scowled at the stink of whiskey on his breath. "Look, I'm not some jerk barfly from a dirty Pennsylvania steel town." His eyes bulged. "You know I come from one of the oldest families in Ohio. I have an MBA from Harvard. I've made three different agencies big money. And I know I can create the best ad agency this town that thinks it's a city has ever seen."

Liz rose from her desk. "Then I suggest you create a business plan—they did teach you how to write a business plan at Harvard, didn't they—and take it to the bank for a loan."

She jerked the hem of her linen jacket. "Now, I have work to do." She strode to the door, but before she could open it, he grabbed her arm.

"You've never forgiven me, have you?"

She froze, her face a rigid mask. "Let go of me."

Addy freed her and she opened the door. He left without another word.

## <>TWO<>

"NO, MANDY. LIZ is quite capable of taking care of herself. Call security only if she signals you to do so. Of course, if Payne appears threatening, get somebody up here right away. Please call me when he's left."

Miriam Kernan returned to the intern application. She nodded, and a smile crept onto her face.

Ah, yes, the past finds us when we least expect it.

Miriam's own past had intruded into her life recently, an opportunity that would allow her to bring a little justice into the world. Perhaps this incursion from Liz's past would be her opportunity for justice, for healing. Liz claimed to be content, but Miriam sometimes spied her staring at the Cassatt print of the man, woman, and child in a small sailboat that hung on a wall in her office. Would she disappear into that print of a close-knit family if she could? And which would she be—the woman or the child?

Miriam pressed the intercom button. “Martha, send in the intern candidate.”

When her door opened, she removed her reading glasses and glanced at the slender young man who nodded and greeted her before installing himself in the chair in front of her desk. His navy blazer opened over a pale blue shirt and a slightly askew tan striped tie. He settled his long legs and sat straight but unperturbed. Paddy Arnesson was not the least bit intimidated by the luxurious antique furnishings of her office—or her.

Yes, just like Liz, he has a strong sense of self.

He brushed back the lock of dark hair that kept falling over his forehead.

Ah, yes, he is one of that breed of Irishmen referred to as Black Irish, not a redhead like my Gerald. Some say they descend from some Spaniards from the Spanish Armada. Spaniards? Why not Jewish merchants? Yes, except for the dark hair, he would definitely pass for Liz’s brother. The space between his teeth confirms it.

“I’m curious, I see the name on your application is ‘Ivar Arnesson,’ but you go by ‘Paddy.’ Where does that come from?”

His smile crinkled his eyes. “I was born on March seventeenth.”

“Oh, yes. St. Patrick’s Day.”

“Since my parents decided I’d be their last child, and I’m the only boy, they named me after my father. They didn’t want to call me ‘Junior,’ though, so everyone calls me Paddy. My dad was Swedish, but Mom’s Irish.”

Miriam nodded and leaned back in her chair. “So, you want to be a writer?”

“Since I was twelve.”

“That’s pretty young to know what you want to do with your life.”

“My seventh grade English teacher turned me on to writing.”

“And how did she do that?”

“We did a lot of writing, and she worked with each of us individually. When she read my first story, she asked me where I got the idea. I found out much later that it was very similar to Sartre’s play, *No Exit*. I think she thought I must have seen it and used the idea, but she never accused me of plagiarism.”

“And did you borrow from that play?”

His eyes widened. “No! Back then, I’d never even seen a professional play. Dad didn’t know about that play either. He thought it was a great story and told me he was proud of me. I think Mom knew it was similar, but she never said anything—probably didn’t want to give me a big head.”

Miriam looked pleased and nodded.

“My teacher worked with me a lot, and I learned so much from her.” He blushed, lowered his eyes, and then looked up. “She told me I had talent, that I should always write, even if it was only a hobby. She said I’d always feel a little hollow inside if I didn’t.”

“Hm, yes. Her recommendation left me thinking you could be the next Steinbeck.” Miriam was pleased to see that Paddy had the grace to blush again. “I happen to know her very well, and she usually knows what she’s talking about.”

He cocked his head.

“We’ve published a number of her books.”

“But I’ve never—”

“She uses a pseudonym.”

His face split into a huge grin. “Right on, Ms. Brunet!”

Miriam laughed and glanced down at his application. “You indicate that you’ve been published—some school lit magazines, a few contests, and—most impressive—a piece in *Penwell*. You must be one of the youngest contributors they’ve published.”

His pale skin flushed again. “I was seventeen when they accepted it.”

“Hm. Not so long ago. Tell me about your work. Who does your editing? Things like that.”

He told her he did most of his editing as he wrote, but admitted to a few all-nighters when he couldn’t get an extension on an assignment that needed more revising.

“Have you submitted many pieces for publication?”

He rolled his eyes. “Oh yeah. Tons!”

“So, you’re no stranger to rejection slips?”

“Wall’s papered with them, but I keep writing.”

“That’s good. Ever sent a manuscript to us?”

“No. I’m working on my first novel, though.”

“Well, whether or not you are awarded an apprenticeship, I’d like you to send me some of your published pieces. Be sure to include the *Penwell* piece. And send me the first three chapters of your book with a synopsis of the rest. I don’t want Ms. Brunet shaking her finger at me because we missed the boat not publishing you if you do turn out to be your generation’s Steinbeck. . . . On second thought, forget the synopsis. Send me the whole manuscript.”

“I’m only on the third draft.”

Miriam pulled open a file drawer and wrestled a sheet from one of the files. “I’m sure we will be able to tell if it’s publishable from a third draft. I will be sharing it with our senior editor, Liz Michaels.” She glanced at his face but saw no hint of recognition. She then penned checks by a few of the entries on the sheet. “In the meantime, here is a list of agents. I’ve marked ones that have worked well with us and do a good job of looking after their clients. You may say I recommended them. Just to keep everyone honest, you should always have representation. They are accustomed to being interviewed, so choose someone you feel understands you and your writing.” She handed him the sheet.

“Mrs. Kernan, I don’t know what to say. Thanks!”

“Must be your Swedish side. The Irish are never at a loss for words.”

### <>THREE<>

LIZ NEARLY COLLIDED with a young man leaving Miriam's office. He excused himself and smiled at her. That smile stopped her a moment. There was something familiar about him, but she couldn't think why that might be, and he was gone before she could ask him if they had met before. She shrugged, entered Miriam's office, and handed her the file for William Penn Press.

"I've added a clause to the contract requiring Abe Perkins to remain on site two days a week the first year and as an off-site consultant for the following two years, with appropriate compensation, of course. Gerald and I can work that out with him before we finalize the sale," Liz said.

Miriam finished scanning all the other changes Liz had made and looked up at her. "You know, he might balk at being on site for a year. They're moving to Florida as soon as they can after the sale."

"We need to have a smooth transition if we want to preserve William Penn Press's traditions. I know that's a big concern of his, so I'll emphasize how important his input will be to accomplish that." Liz smiled. "Anyway, that house they're building in Naples may take another year or longer before it's ready. You know how Abe's wife is about changing things at the last minute."

"True, and I know how persuasive you and Gerald are. By the way, what did your suave ex-husband want? Mandy said he left rather abruptly."

"The same as always—money. He thinks he can start his own ad agency."

"That Shaker Heights *schlemiel* has family with money. Why doesn't he go to them?"

"Not even his mother knows he's been out of work so long. He would die before letting them see how he's screwed up."

"Arrogance, too many risks, and too much alcohol—a recipe for failure."

"I told him it wasn't my problem, and he should get help for his drinking, go elsewhere, and start over. But Addy is not one to admit he has a problem or start from scratch."

"And so he expects you to be there for him, even though he wasn't there for you when you needed him the most."

"Isn't that the way of a narcissist?"

"Well, we'll alert security not to let him up here again."

"Aw, Miriam, Addy goes wherever he wants. I can't worry about him. Don't bother security."

"If you say so." She lifted a folder and handed it to Liz. "I think you should see this."

"What is it?"

"The application of one of the intern candidates."

When Liz saw the name on the folder, she sat down and said nothing for a few moments, only stared at the folder. Then she raised stony eyes to Miriam. “Was that who just left your office?”

Miriam nodded. “Read his application.”

Liz did so, finished after a long perusal, and regarded Miriam with a frown. “Of all the publishers, why us?”

“Why not us? We set the standard in Pittsburgh and have a reputation for grooming talent. The others make gofers out of their interns.”

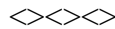
Liz bit her lip. “Do you think my father told his family about me after all?”

“If he had, wouldn’t they have insisted on meeting you?”

She glowered. “From the way he reacted, I don’t think his wife would have been happy about me.”

“I mentioned your name in passing, and he didn’t react.”

“They might not know I no longer go by ‘Migielski.’ Of course, it’s a matter of public record—if they cared to check.” Liz dropped the file on Miriam’s desk. “Well, if this boy is what we’re looking for, don’t hold the past against him. On the other hand, don’t give him an internship because he’s my brother. . . . I probably won’t run into him anyway.”



Miriam stared at the door for a very long time after Liz left. It was incredible to see this sophisticated professional woman revert to the wounded nineteen-year-old she had once been. Miriam drummed her fingers on the desk. It was long past time for Liz to rid herself of old hurts, time to vanquish old ghosts and live in the light—just as Miriam had.

## <>FOUR<>

ADDY HEADED FOR Busch’s Tavern. Aside from running multiple tabs without any of them getting too high, one of the perks of frequenting so many of these watering holes was the pool of resourceful drinkers he might not otherwise have met. Virgil was one of these talents who promised him something very special. It was part of Addy’s contingency plan, labeled as such in his flow chart in case Liz refused him the loan. Besides, when Busch wasn’t around, Emily sometimes refilled his flask without adding it to Addy’s tab. He always slipped her a few ones with the smile and melting eyes of a film idol.

The tavern was located in what had once been a 1940s drugstore and soda fountain on the Southside; really a long, narrow room with a bar on one side, booths on the other, and a few scattered tables between. An office, storage room, and restrooms at the back completed the area. The place suited the neighborhood locals just fine. Addy was one of maybe three outsiders who sometimes frequented the bar. Aside from the freebies, he liked the place because he could park his black Jag right out front where he could keep an eye on it. That ride was crucial to his image. He was still a player—just having a little run of bad luck.

His eyes soon adjusted to the dimly-lit bar, but he'd never get used to the odors of stale beer, Camel cigarettes, roasted peanuts, and disinfectant that did little to disguise the sulfurous aroma from the restrooms. A small TV high up over a corner of the bar, sound turned low, played some sports program no one was watching.

The bulk of Del Busch loomed over Emily, the woman working the bar. Stringy, bleached hair restrained by a black headband fluttered as she nodded. She rarely raised her eyes to the man who seemed to be giving her unwelcome orders. When he was finished, she looked up with watery blue eyes and spotted Addy. She smiled a welcome that revealed oversized dentures. Unfortunately, her smile only served to make her face pucker and wrinkle as though she'd been sucking a lemon.

"Addy!"

He managed not to wince at her squeaky-door voice. Busch turned and glared at him. He then masked his distaste with a stiff smile and a wave. "Hey, how's the *Hahvahd* man?" He glanced out at Addy's car parked right in front of his tavern. "See you're still driving that chick magnet."

"Not so much for the babes, Del. It's a tool of the trade in my line of work."

Still staring at the Jaguar, Busch nodded like a bobble-headed doll. "Yeah, your work. How's that going, anyway?"

"Oh good! Good. Big things happening in the next couple of days."

"Ya don't say? Glad to hear it." He turned to leave and looked hard at Emily. "Then maybe you can take care of your tab." Without waiting for an answer, he strolled back to his office.

"Hey, sweetheart, how about pouring me a double shot of Maker's Mark, no ice?"

Her smile disappeared. "Busch says you gotta pay some on your tab. You know if it was up to me, I'd let it ride."

Addy rolled his eyes and sighed. "What's the damage?"

Emily paged through a small notebook. "Gee, it is pretty high. \$78.67."

Considering how little Busch charged, Addy had done quite a lot of drinking here, not including the free flask refills. He pulled out his wallet and fanned the bundle of mostly ones, fives, and tens—\$558, all he had for the next two weeks, and he still had to pay Virgil.

He looked at her the way he always did, a twinkle in his pale eyes. "How about thirty-five?"

Emily looked at him like a kid who'd lost her puppy and shook her head. "Busch said at least fifty."

Addy peeled off four tens and ten ones. "Okay, here you go."

Her sour smile reappeared and she took the money, entering the payment in the notebook. "We're out of Maker's Mark. How about Wild Turkey?"

It was all he could do to keep from blanching, but, hey, whiskey was whiskey, and it was a lot cheaper than Maker's Mark, so it wouldn't inflate his tab so much. Besides, he wanted to get his deal done with Virgil. Addy had seen him in the back booth when he strolled in. "Sure."

Glass in hand, he headed for Virgil. The skinny, middle-aged, balding man still wore his gray janitor uniform—pretty clean, considering he kept the local police precinct in order. Virgil



compensated for his minimum-wage salary by occasionally acquiring what he called “happy finds.”

Addy slid into the seat across from Virgil “Do you have it?”

Virgil regarded him with pale brown eyes. “You have the money?”

Addy pulled out his wallet and counted out the bills. “Yeah, here’s the fifty.”

Virgil shook his head. “No. A hundred. I took a lot of chances to get this lock pick set.”

Addy stared at the little man and calculated his next move. “Look, a deal’s a deal. We agreed on fifty.”

“So go buy one from a locksmith. I figure the only reason you’re getting it from me is you don’t want no record. Take it or leave it.”

Addy pocketed his wallet, threw back his whiskey in one gulp, slid out of the booth, hitched up his pants, and turned to leave.

“Hey, let’s talk,” Virgil called after him.

“What’s to talk about?” Addy answered without turning around.

“Don’t you need this?” He glanced around to see if any of the other drinkers heard him.

Addy shrugged his shoulders and made as if to continue his exit; but Busch came from the back with a bottle of Maker’s Mark and placed it on the shelf with the rest of the liquors. He then disappeared into his back office again without a word. Emily grabbed the Maker’s Mark, glanced at Addy with a grin, and held out her hand. He crossed to the bar and handed her his flask.

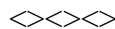
Virgil scuttled to his side. “Okay, okay.” He glanced around again and then held out the set to Addy.

Addy also scanned the bar before taking the set, but the few drinkers scattered around the smoky room seemed focused on some scene in their glasses. He passed over the fifty. Virgil kept his back to the room and counted it. Satisfied, he scurried back to his booth.

Emily finished topping off Addy’s flask with the Maker’s Mark and handed it to him. “How lucky was that?” she squeaked. “Didn’t see any Maker’s Mark when I looked in the storage room earlier. Seal’s broken. Busch must’ve been having a snort back in his office.”

“Emily, you are a real sweetheart.”

She grinned, and Addy palmed her a couple of dollars. He headed to the door but glanced back at her and winked. Emily raised her reddened hand and gave him a tiny wave.



When Addy pulled away in his Jaguar, Virgil got up to chat with Emily but sat back down again when Busch strode out from his office. The hefty man, strands of dark hair combed over the bald top of his head, reached into Emily’s pocket and seized Addy’s tip. Emily stiffened at the coldness in his eyes.

“I’ll take this—and I’ll take one week’s pay for all the free liquor you been giving that leech. Just be happy I don’t fire you.”

Everyone in the bar had to be furniture not to hear what he said. Emily, pink and wide-eyed, said nothing. Virgil glared at Busch.

“Now go clean the bathrooms and, this time, do it right.”

After she scurried off to do his bidding, Busch grabbed the bottle of Maker’s Mark and, frowning, held it over the sink, ready to pour. He looked around to see if anyone was looking, met Virgil’s stare, and instantly capped the bottle. He then snatched a glass from the bar and sauntered back to his office.

Sometime later, he returned with the bottle and replaced it on the shelf. Virgil stared at him, barely blinking. Busch raised his hand and cocked it at him like it was a gun. Then the big man huffed a laugh. Virgil jerked his eyes back to his drink and looked into it for the future that was just out of reach.

## <>FIVE<>

ADDY LEANED AGAINST one of the columns gracing the broad portico of Liz’s building. This was not the home they had shared. However, it was a residence that would have suited Addy if he’d had the money to live there. Manicured cypress trees filled the areas at the sides of the portico and on the landscaped island bordering the wide, covered drive.

The Lafayette, a five-story, pale granite building astride Mt. Washington was the newest and largest high-end co-op in the entire city. The residents on the top floor facing the city side enjoyed a spectacular view, for which they paid a significant premium. The building allowed those top units a deep balcony terrace large enough to host a party of twenty. The terraces remained private since huge gaps separated them, and high walls at the sides blocked the view of neighboring units. So large was the building that it could easily have accommodated three times as many less lavish units.

From his hiding place, he looked across the drive through the building’s glass doors. The gray-haired concierge who had ejected him from the building the previous week gestured at the doors and elevators for the benefit of another uniformed employee. The other man nodded, stepped out the door, and jogged to his car. The concierge occupied himself with arranging papers at the desk and answering the phone. With only the old guy on duty, Addy might sneak by him. However, the other guy returned carrying a little lunch cooler and a magazine tucked under his arm.

No way to get by the royal guard now.

The two talked further, and then the concierge headed for the doors. Addy retreated out of sight to one of the cypress trees and peered around it. The concierge pulled a set of keys from his pocket and headed for the parking lot.

Ah, going out for lunch, today? Good.

Once the old man drove out of the lot, Addy resumed his place behind the column. The young guy at the desk settled in and opened his lunch. Then, after glancing around the lobby, he pulled out his magazine. It looked like it might be *Playboy* or *Penthouse*.

Addy took a few swigs from his flask, and his pulse raced.

Wow! Haven't felt this great in a long time.

When he was sure the man was completely engaged with this month's Barbie doll replicas, he slipped through the glass doors and raced to the fire door on crepe-soled loafers. Liz's unit was on the top floor, but taking an elevator would have drawn too much attention. He inhaled the ever-present scent of hyacinth in the lobby and reached for the handle.

"Oh, no, you gotta be kidding!"

Addy froze and glanced at the desk only to realize it was not he but the enticing centerfold that had provoked the young man's exclamation. He hustled through the fire door, and, despite the fact that he was really out of shape, he made it to her floor without having to stop and catch his breath. Addy wondered at the adrenaline rush he felt but was grateful for it.

He peered through the little mesh window in the door to make sure no one was in the hall. He didn't want anyone to see him who might later remember passing a good-looking blond man. He tested the handle to make sure the fire door was unlocked.

His heart was now pounding so heavily that he could feel it in his ears. He fingered the lock pick set in his pocket, pressed through the fire door, and made a beeline down the burgundy plush-carpeted hall to the double doors of Liz's apartment.

After a few tries, Addy found the pick that freed the lock just as he heard the door of a unit down the hall opening. He managed to slip into Liz's apartment without being seen and engaged the lock. He turned, and the panoramic view of the Golden Triangle beyond the enormous terrace mesmerized him. The floor to ceiling windows of the living room had to be at least fifteen feet high.

Although he'd never seen her place and had more urgent things on his mind than exploring it now, he remembered the floor plan from the two-page newspaper spread that had come out for months when the units were being sold. In addition to this spacious living room, there was an en suite master, a guest room, a guest bath, a full kitchen, and a generous dining room. A wide gallery walkway from the foyer to the dining room flanked a wall that hid the kitchen and butler's pantry. Both the foyer and the dining room overlooked the living room, which could be reached by a flight of three steps from either end of the gallery. A waist-high ironwork railing along the gallery guarded against any chance of falling into the living room. He sighed. One of these aeries could have been his if his luck hadn't turned.

She still had Marisol's painting of a man, woman, and child in a boat hanging above the black granite fireplace. Marisol had titled it *The Boating Party* because Mary Cassatt's painting of the same name inspired it. The dark-haired, saucy Marisol was maid of honor at their wedding. Another time, another place, he would have done a little exploring with the little Spic from Santa Fe; however, he didn't much care for her paintings.

When Liz became pregnant, Marisol sent her the painting. Liz had burst into tears when she uncrated it. In the painting, the man and woman in the boat hovered over the child. The boat resembled a shallow nest floating on a mirror-like stream reflecting the threesome. Kind faces of old women were barely suggested in the trees along the bank and in the clouds. You really had to look to see them, but they were there.

Weird—fluffy, weird crapola. It was the only thing aside from her clothing Liz took when she left him.

The pregnancy. Babies didn't fit into his plans; she wasn't supposed to get pregnant when he was busy making it. In fact, he would have been just fine if she never got pregnant. Anyway, how could he be faulted for being out of town when she had the miscarriage? Then there were the months of depression when she wouldn't let him come near her. Hell, she'd only been pregnant for three months. It wasn't even really a baby. Besides, he didn't have the time and energy for boo-hooing. The pressure finally got to be too much, and he found the release he needed in greater quantities of alcohol, not to mention a one-night tryst whenever he could get away with it.

The memories of her unfairness used to make him angry, but today they didn't faze him at all. He was focused, really focused, on getting this job done. Today, she would help him without even realizing it. He threw up his hands and laughed. "Hello, payday!" Mother would be so proud of him when he opened his agency. Too bad Dad wasn't alive. The old man often begrudged Addy his accomplishments, but starting his own successful ad agency would have gotten the cold bastard's respect.

He flopped heavily into one of the bronze silk chairs and sipped from the flask while his heels pistoned against the pale Persian rug. Last night, he'd had a few beers before turning in. Beer seemed to put him to sleep faster than hard liquor. He'd been feeling a little tired these days, but now, now he was revved—so revved that he could barely stay still. Maker's Mark had never made him feel like this before.

He leaped up, opened the terrace door, and strode through to the sprawling expanse beyond. The late August breeze fluttered through his hair. What a view! All three rivers and the Point, not to mention the new PPG building—that black glass cathedral soaring into the sky—and the other high rises like the Gulf building mixed in with structures from earlier in the century branded the skyline unmistakably Pittsburgh. It could have been his view—would be his view in time.

He chugged a few gulps from the flask. Then he strode to the parapet and leaned against it. It was solid stone work up to his hips with a foot high crown of filigree ironwork above that. Anyone sitting in any of the terrace chairs still had a view through the ironwork.

Yeah, it'll work. A woman might stumble over the wall if she'd been drinking—or, if she'd become depressed and decided to end it all. Her mother did, so it wouldn't be too farfetched for the daughter. He swallowed more of the Maker's Mark, shook the flask, and pocketed it.

To the right, a low stone bench stood near the parapet. How convenient, especially if a shoe got left behind. He'd have to see to that. Addy sauntered to the bench.

If I'm standing on this bench when she gets here, she'll think I'm going to jump. She'll have to come out. He giggled. Then it's bye-bye, Lizzie, and hello to a cool half million!

He stepped up onto the bench. The view was even more spectacular if only because he felt like he was soaring as freely as a renegade kite. He hadn't felt this good in months. That's what really good booze could do for you.

Addy reached into his pocket for the lock pick set. Wouldn't do to have these if the law comes calling before I'm out of here. He wound up and pitched the set out so far that they landed

at the end of the property in some brush at the foot of the fence at the drop off. Not bad for an out-of-practice tennis player.

He then pulled out his flask and studied it. He'd be able to afford a much classier one than the old worn thing in his hand. Anyway, he needed to be clearheaded and steady when Liz got home. Addy giggled and lobbed the flask where he'd flung the picks. He came close to tumbling over the parapet himself.

Whoa! Careful, Addy-boy!

He glanced down five tall stories at all the rocks along the flagstone path. His heart raced and stuttered. He raised his eyes to vibrant blue sky and billowing clouds. That made him feel light headed, and he began sweating.

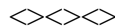
What's happening?

His ears started buzzing, and his stomach felt like it was coming up through his throat. The buzzing got louder when Addy suddenly registered a thump of pain in the center of his back that crawled to his chest.

"Who—?" No, she wouldn't! "Liz! What are—?"

Before he could turn back to see who was there, he toppled over the parapet, banging his legs and losing a shoe.

Darkness claimed him before his body crashed onto the rocks.



Liz's cab glided to the entrance of The Lafayette where two squad cars, a gray Crown Victoria sedan, and a white van with the seal of the Pittsburgh Police Department were parked. A bald black man in shirt sleeves was rummaging around in the back of the van. She opened the door after the cab came to a stop, paid the cabbie, and rushed inside.

In the spacious entertainment room off the lobby, a silver-haired man in shirt sleeves surrounded by several uniformed officers stooped over some cases containing cameras and what she supposed was forensic equipment. He reminded her of a well-coifed Mafia don from some mob film.

He handed a boyish-looking policeman a roll of bright yellow crime scene tape. "Here, Gambini, block off the scene outside. Make sure you cover the entire area." The don frowned and glanced around at the others. "I trust the other two boys in blue are still out there guarding the scene?" The small group nodded. He then put his finger behind his ear. "What's the first thing we do when we get to the scene?"

The officers answered in unison. "Secure the scene."

"We're lucky this wasn't a high traffic area." He shook his head. "Sloppy."

The young officer walked past her on his way out the door as she started towards the desk. The concierge and a new staff member were talking to a nice-looking, tall man in a summer-weight gray suit that appeared tailored to his athletic build. The short woman with the stocky peasant build beside him wore a tan pantsuit that did little for her. The man had curly, dark brown hair, blue eyes, and a face she suspected could bloom into a very appealing grin, one that seemed to be the sole property of certain charismatic Irishmen.

Seeing these two and the other police officers reminded Liz of what an ethnic smorgasbord Pittsburgh remained with its enormous immigrant population—Irish, Italian, German, Polish, Russian, Czech, Lithuanian, Swedish, Lebanese, Greek, Jewish to name only a few. She loved growing up in this town, hearing different accents and learning about different customs. When she was a little girl, everyone had a kind word for her, and sometimes a treat from their kitchens for the fatherless, little Polish girl. It was like being part of a huge multi-cultural family. And today, in 1982, the cultural distinctions lingered. Ethnic dishes in the restaurants and ethnic slurs on the streets were common. Liz wondered how long it would be before all of these unique cultures would become vague, blended flavors in the cauldron of America. She sighed. She would grieve when it all disappeared, but for now, she would enjoy the melting pot of Pittsburgh. Despite all the opportunities that would have taken her to more prestigious cities, there was no other place she cared to be other than this city with the small town ethnic heart.