

# **THE EVIDENCE**

**By  
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**A Hawaii Five-0 Story**

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## Chapter One

The phone began to ring and Richard Quinn answered it before it even completed its first cycle. “Five-O, Quinn,” he said curtly. He listened carefully to the voice at the other end. It was the call he had been awaiting. “When?” he asked. “Where?” He glanced at his watch. “Okay.” He hung up the phone. He issued a deep sigh and sank back into the desk chair contemplating everything that was happening.

There was no one in the department he could consider a friend let alone a confidant. No one liked him here and it did not surprise him. *Maybe the only surprise I ever had was the phone call from Max Connor two years ago asking me to come to Hawaii in the first place. My friends all told me it was the opportunity of a lifetime to get away from the filth and grime of Minneapolis and move to the tropics. Well, things are rarely what they seem.* Although he’d been roommates with Connor in college, he had never really had the opportunity to restore the friendship before Connor had been shot to death. After that had come the time in hell working for McGarrett. Legendary in Hawaii, McGarrett had moved back into the department as interim chief like he had something to prove to these young guys. Everyone treated McGarrett like God himself – and maybe he was. It had been a relief when Governor Masakaski had finally picked a permanent new chief of Five-O – at least until Jackson DeWitt had arrived. Now Quinn found himself sneaking around his own office like a common PI, digging patiently away at the foundation of what was becoming an uglier Five-O everyday unable to trust a single soul in the department.

Richard turned away from the late afternoon sun in his window and dialed the phone. He got an answering machine and disappointedly hung up. He understood the value of backup and having an ally in such a delicate matter as he was embarking. *If what I am about to do is discovered, I will be dead in minutes. But I will have to go it alone.*

He rose from the desk and walked out into the hallway. The secretary had gone, but there was light gleaming from beneath the closed oak door of DeWitt’s office. DeWitt was in. He almost always was. Quinn turned away and left the office. He hopped into the small Toyota and headed for his rendezvous; still wishing he could contact the only person he had trusted. Along the way, he tried the number again on his cell phone and got the answering machine again. He decided to leave a message. “It’s me. The final piece is in.” He hung up. No one but the intended would understand that – he hoped.

Two little girls skipped rope, chanting a song in time. Another little Hawaiian girl sat on the curb nearby pushing a stroller containing a sleeping baby back and forth. Quinn got out of the car and glanced quickly around. He didn’t want to stand out in the open for long. He moved a little closer to the frame building to look less obvious. As he did, the girl with the baby looked up. “Do you jump rope?” she asked him.

He glanced down at her, recognizing the password. “Not since I was five,” he gave the response, hating the informant who had involved this child.

She smiled and pulled a manila envelope from behind the sleeping baby.

Quinn did his best to make it vanish inside his jacket, nervously glancing around again.

She still stood there watching him intently.

Richard pulled out the small business envelope and handed it slowly to her. Giving five hundred dollars in cash to a small child wasn't something he found easy to do.

She smiled sweetly, stuck it behind the baby and walked away pushing the stroller before her.

He stared after her for a moment, and then moved towards his car trying to look unhurried. He got in and drove away.

The phone rang in the office and Jackson DeWitt answered it. "Yes."

"He's in.," announced the quiet masculine voice and the phone hung up.

DeWitt carefully placed the receiver back on the cradle considering the options for a moment. *It will be messy – unfortunately. How can I use the manpower to my advantage?* There was, of course, Reggie Zito. Jackson did not like Zito any more than he liked any of the people working for him, but Zito possessed the kind of experience and talent that DeWitt needed. Short, overweight and balding, Zito fit the stereotype of a gangster which could be helpful when DeWitt needed a heavy hand played with the Kumu. Zito had brought with him an unpleasant and ill-tempered young man named Sergie Booth who, in addition to having no people skills whatsoever, had no taste in clothing. Loui Ahuana and Richard Quinn had been brought into Five-0 by DeWitt's predecessor, the late Max Connor. Loui was dumb enough to be useful, Richard was inept and troublesome. Gary Newman and Kono Kalakaua rounded out the team. DeWitt was looking for an excuse to get rid of Gary that should be not long in coming. Jackson had kept Kono around for looks. He was, after all, one of the original Five-O team – and full Hawaiian. But Kono operated on what Jackson had heard called "Hawaiian Time." Not detailed on some things, too detailed on others. Jackson was never quite certain how to use him. Most of the time Jackson just kept him out of the way. *This time he could be the loose cannon -- the loose canon I must tie down.*

Quinn had gone two blocks when he noticed the brown car following at a discreet distance. His heart quickened. Trying to tell himself he was over-reacting, he picked up the cellular phone and talked again to the answering machine at the other end. "It's done. I think I've been noticed." He tried to sound less frightened than he was. "Can't believe it – he's sent the company car." It was brazenly flagrant that Richard was being followed by a car he would recognize. The message was Richard would not live long enough to tell anyone about it.

He slipped off into a side street, increased his speed slightly and watched in the mirror as the brown car made the turn behind him. He dialed the phone again. "I'm going to try to lose this guy," he reported. "For the record, it really is the company car." He left the phone active on the seat beside him as he made another turn. When thirty seconds had passed, the answering machine cut off. He skipped around a moving van and made an illegal entrance onto the freeway. He hit the accelerator and the car shot ahead.

Quinn redialed the phone, watching his mirror. "I'm on the freeway, looks like I might have lost him. Maybe he broke it off." He knew the person tailing him was a

professional. The pursuer would have activated someone less obvious to find Richard. Richard knew he could not stay on the highway for long. He took the first exit off and made a sharp right turn into a parking lot behind a Burger King, then bounced over the curb into the alley and through the back of a dry cleaner out onto the city street once again. Everything looked innocent.

“I don’t know where to go,” Richard admitted to the answering machine. He hesitated. “I’ll use the wings.” He kept trying to fabricate something which only one person could understand. Sitting at a traffic light, he dug out his wallet. There were only two first class stamps inside. Not enough, it would arrive postage due, but it would arrive. The light changed and he started to drive again, scribbling a name and address on the manila envelope as he did. Too many places to look: traffic, envelope, behind for pursuers. “If they’ve got me on the sly right now, I’ll never know it,” he reported to the machine. He made a quick left into the post office drive-through and dropped the envelope into the box. “I’ll owe you something,” he said into the phone.

He needed to get somewhere safe. If he could get rid of the car, he could melt into somewhere and wait till he could get help. He had not seen the brown car again, but didn’t know if another he wouldn’t recognize might be there somewhere. He pulled up to another light. He dialed the phone again. “I’m going to be at your old friend’s place.”

There was a tap on his window.

He turned and the silenced gun discharged, its bullet shattering the window and Quinn’s head.

DeWitt stood to one side, moodily taking in the pandemonium of the crime scene. The shooting of a police officer was always a media event and they were out in full force. HPD officers and Five-O men examined everything with grim determination. DeWitt watched Reggie Zito as he dug through the car, and over the body of Quinn that still lay slumped across the front bucket seats. Jackson turned as Kono’s car pulled up. Even before the officer could speak Jackson ordered, “Go with the body and have the pathologist get me that slug. Right now it’s all we have.”

Kono glanced at Quinn’s car. All he could see was Zito’s large butt as he routed through the vehicle. It looked more like the man was looking for something in particular than for evidence. “How did this happen?”

DeWitt shrugged. “We’d don’t know anything right now. Get that bullet and we have more.”

Kono nodded. Jackson DeWitt was a cold, unemotional man and it did not surprise Kono that he had shown no emotion at Quinn’s death, but it still bothered Kono. A life was gone; there should be something personal in the resolution of that.

Zito turned, holding up an open cellular phone with a handkerchief.

DeWitt’s eyes lit up. “Better yet – trace any calls made on that phone.”

Kono nodded. He was aware he was being kept away from the physical scene itself – he knew DeWitt did not like him anymore than he did Quinn. Kono turned away to comply with his orders.

Zito straightened his suit and smoothed his thinning hair as he walked over to Jackson.

DeWitt did not look at him when he spoke. “Well?”

“Nothing there.”

“Has to be.”

“I tell you, nothin’s there,” he persisted. “Maybe the shooter got it.”

DeWitt shook his head. “The shooter did not hang around long enough for anyone to ID him; he wasn’t going to go digging around in the car.”

Zito shrugged. “So?”

DeWitt gave him a tolerant glare. “So, he hid the evidence, Reggie.”

“Where?”

“If I knew that, I wouldn’t need you.” DeWitt started for the car. “Wrap this up here. See what Kono turns up at the phone company.”

“I’ll only be a minute,” Lonnie Williams promised Steve McGarrett as he hopped out of the old pickup. The door creaked when he slammed it.

Steve watched the boy go up to the cottage, unlock the door and disappear inside. The retired cop rested his elbow on the open window ledge. *I’ve come a long way from my black Mercury Brougham days.* Steve still enjoyed the nightlife, but the small ranch had really given him an insight to physical work he’d never known. He liked it. He enjoyed cleaning the horse barn and hauling feed out to the cattle. There were less than fifty head, which was fine. Ranching was, he kept reminding himself, his retirement hobby. Having Lonnie with him the past week had been great. The boy was an aggressive worker, loved to work outside, had no fear of the large animals, and was a natural horseman. A little sadly, Steve wondered how much longer he’d see much of Lonnie. Once Carrie and Danny married, Lonnie would have a second parent in her. Lonnie had had a lot of change in his life the last year, first when Audrey came to live with them, then when Danny and Carrie began dating. There were times Steve, like Lonnie, wished for the old days when the three of them used to sit on the porch of the cottage and swap cop stories while the breakers rolled in. Steve glanced at his watch and wondered what was keeping Lonnie.

Lonnie burst into the warm, semi-dark cottage and hurried back to feed his goldfish. He stood patiently watching as the four small carp swam up to the water surface to eat the flakes he had sprinkled into the tank.

“Hungry, guys?” he asked them. He looked around for his baseball mitt. He had a game in two hours. The closet was a mess. Shoes, dirty socks, old broken toys flew as he searched. At last, the baseball mitt was unearthed and, snatching it up, he raced back towards the door.

The light blinking on the answering machine caught his eye. Twelve messages. Yesterday there had been none. Curiosity overcame him and he pressed the play button.

McGarrett could tell right away that Lonnie was agitated as he dashed towards the car – no baseball mitt, but something else in hand. “Steve! Steve! You gotta hear this tape! There’s the same guy over and over – saying stuff like a code. Then I think somebody shot him!”

Steve felt himself stiffen as he shifted into the old instant alert mode he used to live in. “Slow down, Lonnie, what tape?”

Lonnie caught his breath as he repeated. “The answering machine tape. I think I know the voice. I think so.”

“Did you lock the house?”

He shook his head.

“Get your glove, lock the house. We can play the tape back at home,” Steve instructed, calmly, but his attention was on the small cassette.

Lonnie nervously bounced around as Steve placed the small tape in his machine and rewound it.

“All right. Now, let’s see.” He punched the button.

The voice was slightly static filled. “It’s me. The final piece is in.” There was a beep as the message ended.

Steve searched his memory. He knew the voice.

The tape continued. “It’s done. I think I’ve been noticed...I can’t believe he sent the company car.” Beep. “I’m going to try to lose this guy. For the record, it really is the company car.” Beep.

“That’s Richard Quinn,” Steve suddenly said, finally recognizing the voice.

The next message was noisy with engine sounds like Quinn was traveling at high speed. “I’m on the freeway. Maybe I lost him. Maybe he broke it off.” Steve could hear the fear in the voice. He knew Richard was always prone to panic anyway, but this was different. Quinn was definitely trying his best to supply information and keep his wits. There were several messages with a few cryptic comments about turning and no one in sight. Two had nothing but background car noise as though Quinn had just wanted to maintain the contact for security. “I don’t know where to go,” the desperate voice admitted and Steve felt pity for a man who would resort to an answering machine to keep from losing his nerve. “I’ll use the wings.”

*What did that mean?*

“If they’ve got me on the sly, I’ll never know.” Beep. “I’ll owe you something.”

*Another obscure message?*

“I’ll be at your old friend’s.” There was the sound of a tap on the glass window, then of breaking glass and a short guttural cry. There was a long silence until thirty seconds had completed and a benediction of the find beep.

Lonnie’s eyes were large and round. “Is he dead?”

“I don’t know,” Steve said quietly. He needed time to think this through. “If a police officer is killed, it isn’t a secret for long.”

“Call Five-0!” Lonnie announced.

Steve turned on the television. A commercial about mouthwash was running. “Was Quinn seeing your dad?”

Lonnie shrugged. “I don’t know. Not at the house.”

“Phone calls?”

He shrugged again.

Steve realized that if Quinn and Williams had ended up on some kind of investigation, Danny would never have permitted any part of it to come within miles of his home. If they were. Danny had been called away with Audrey on an emergency trip back East. Lincoln Adair was dying. *Would Danny have left in the middle of an investigation? Maybe. Without telling me?* That bore a little more thought and McGarrett had to admit to himself that it was DeWitt now calling the shots in Five-0. If DeWitt had asked Danny to advise on a case, that was their business, not Steve’s. *And what of Carrie?* It was no secret that Carrie did not want her fiancé in law enforcement. Danny

had pledged to keep his law enforcement in the classroom. *Is he doing covert work for DeWitt?*

Steve stared at the screen silently as two more commercials played, then cartoons came on. Lonnie picked up the remote and began channel flipping. At last they found a reporter talking with a black-banded badge on the blue board behind him.

“...makes the first officer killed in the line of duty this year. We can only hope he is the only one.” It was the end of the report.

Lonnie shook his head. “He’s dead, isn’t he?”

McGarrett flipped quickly through the pages of his small address file, then picked up the phone.

“You calling Five-0?” Lonnie asked.

He did not reply. It was ringing. “Hello?” answered a sleepy voice.

“Gideon?” Steve called into the line. “This is Steve McGarrett in Hawaii. May I speak to Dan Williams please?” He glanced at his watch; it was nearly midnight in New York.

Gideon fumbled around with the phone for a while. It took three tries to get him to understand. Then there was an intolerably long silence while the old man walked to the other end of the huge mansion. Finally Danny was on the phone, sounding remarkably alert for the late hour.

“Steve? Is Lonnie okay?”

“He’s fine,” Steve assured him.

“Hi, Dad!” Lonnie yelled over Steve’s shoulder.

McGarrett winced. “It’s Richard Quinn. He’s been killed.”

There was silence at the other end.

“Danno? You there?”

“Yeah,” he answered carefully. “What happened?”

Steve detected the hesitation and knew instantly Danny had been working on something with Quinn – something very hot. “I don’t have a lot of the details, but he left messages on your answering machine – including one as he was shot.”

“Good Lord. Do you have the tape now?”

“Yes.”

“Steve, bury that tape deep – and don’t go anywhere near the cottage. Call the real estate gal and have her cancel all showings. I’ll be on the first flight I can catch. There are no safe people there for you.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed raising one eyebrow. “I’d sort of gathered that.”

“I’ll be there tomorrow. One more thing, Steve. Don’t let Lonnie go to school tomorrow – keep him with you at all times.”

“Done,” Steve replied. It seemed a little odd to reverse the roles. For over twenty years Steve had been issuing the orders to Danno and now he was receiving them.

DeWitt paced his office like a prowling lion, impatiently awaiting word from his detectives. The death of Quinn was important only in that the valuable information he had received was missing. Jackson was certain the shooter would not have taken the time it would have required to look for the evidence, so Quinn must have ditched it somewhere before he was hit. But where?

There was a knock at the door and Zito entered, looking very nervous. “Nothing, Boss. No clues in the car and no goods either.”

DeWitt ground his teeth. “I want the shooter.”

He nodded. “Can do. Alive or dead?”

“I want all he knows any way you can. Then he can have an accident – no long court battles about police brutality. Understood?”

“Sure,” Zito answered simply and left.

DeWitt spotted Kono coming in the office door. “You’d better have me a phone number.”

Kono handed him the phone company’s listing of all numbers called off the cellular phone for the day. DeWitt’s attention was drawn like a magnet to the twelve entries to one number listed at the end. “You check out an address on those?”

“Didn’t need to,” Kono answered. “It’s Dan Williams’ place.”

Jackson scowled in surprise. “Why would he be calling Williams?”

Kono shrugged. “Want me to call Danny?”

DeWitt waved him off. “You get that slug to ballistics yet?”

“Was on my way now.”

“Get on that then.”

Kono turned away, following orders, but could not explain a sudden sensation of concern he felt. *Why would Richard Quinn have been calling Williams? And what had Zito been looking for in the car so earnestly? And why am I being kept out of the case?*

Steve had just gotten into bed shortly after eleven thirty when the phone rang. He picked it up on the first ring. “Hello?”

“Steve, this is Taki Woo with HPD.” The line was static-filled meaning the officer was on a mobile unit. “Is Dan Williams out of town?”

Steve felt his defenses kick into high gear. “He is unavailable.”

“Well, maybe you should get out to his old cottage then. Somebody torched it.”

The fire was out. Fire and police vehicles were still numerous, flashing white, red, blue and yellow lights illuminating the beachfront. The front of the old cottage was now crumbling blackened beams, still smoking. Red embers glowed here and there as the fire fighters prodded through the mess. The porch supports had collapsed and the roof sagged towards the ground on one side giving the house a misshapened smile.

McGarrett got out of the car, grim professionalism set on his face. He locked the car door behind him, but only Jackson DeWitt noticed the action and he was not in the least pleased to have McGarrett there – however expected it might have been.

“McGarrett,” Jackson greeted with a nod.

“Arson?” Steve asked in a word.

“Fire chief is looking into it.”

“HPD called me and reported it was torched.”

“HPD was premature,” DeWitt bit off his words. “We probably won’t have a cause before morning.”

Both men turned as the fire marshal came through the burned door, a charred gasoline can in one hand.

Steve raised an eyebrow.



Jackson shrugged. “Well, it was a good thing Williams and his family are out of town.”

“Are they?” Steve asked, faking innocence.

DeWitt cursed. “Cut the crap, McGarrett. I know Williams took a flight out to the mainland with his little girl twelve days ago. The boy’s been in school, so he must be staying with friends – or you. I imagine you can reach Williams – wherever he is – and get him back here.”

*Why has DeWitt been looking into the whereabouts of Danny?* “The insurance adjuster and fire marshal can handle this till he gets back,” Steve answered appearing unconcerned.

DeWitt opened his mouth to say something, but Kono appeared. He seemed relieved McGarrett was present and promptly reported to his old boss instead of his current one: “There’s a body.”

Jackson fired a look of contempt towards Kono. The last person DeWitt would have wanted to hear about a body was McGarrett. He did not want the old Five-0 king nosing around in this. It was time to make sure both Kono and Steve remembered who was now the authority. “McGarrett, this isn’t a request, it’s an order from a law official to a citizen: Get on the horn and get Williams back here. I want to know the flight he’s on and I want him in my office as soon as he arrives or I’ll arrest you both for withholding evidence.” He jabbed a finger towards Steve with each word.

Steve and a small self-assured smile and, without an answer, unlocked the door, got into his car and drove away.

Jackson DeWitt angrily turned back to the investigation. People only lock car doors to protect something valuable – in this case he suspected Lonnie Williams had been the something in that car. And that very action told Jackson that McGarrett did not trust him. That was ominous. Jackson spotted Zito coming from behind the house. “Reggie.”

Zito looked miserable. “The body didn’t burn like—“

“Keep Kalakaua away from it – and that lazy Gary Newman as well. You got that?” Jackson snapped. “I want that pathologist’s report by morning and I want it to only me. Tell Dr. Rush I want the records sealed.”

Reggie gave a vigorous nod of the head and darted away.

Steve lay awake thinking most of the night, a loaded .45 beside him. Richard had been killed because of what he knew – or had obtained. Somehow the young detective had managed to hide whatever it was. And the person who had been so intent on getting that evidence that he had killed Richard had made the link to Danno. How? And why burn the cottage? Was the person hoping that if he could not find the evidence, he could burn it? And who was the dead man in the cottage? Why and how had he died? Just before daylight, Steve slipped into a fitful sleep, gun still on the table beside him...

...The sun was up full and bright when there came a thumping on Steve’s front door. Old Doc, the barn dog, was barking wildly out back, attempting to warn Steve of the trespasser. The banging came again and Steve rose, rubbing a hand over his tired eyes. He blinked.

The pounding came again.

“Somebody’s at the door,” Lonnie announced coming to the bedroom doorway, also having been roused from sleep. “Want me to get it?”

“Get out of sight,” Steve snapped, picking up the gun as he slipped on a robe and started for the door.

Lonnie had not missed that Steve felt a need for protection. Without another comment, he vanished towards the back of the house.

McGarrett opened the front door a crack. “Yes?”

“Zito, Five-O,” came the blunt response as the badge flashed.

Steve had only a moment to ponder the odd events that had placed him on the side of the door facing a Five-O detective with cause to beware. “Good morning, Reggie,” he commented, opening the door wider, but not feeling the good will he showed.

Reggie did not express any friendliness. “When will Williams be back?” he demanded.

“When he gets here.”

“Don’t be cute with me.”

“Zito, you aren’t much on grace. Let me put this to you plainly. Yes, I spoke with Dan Williams last night and he said he would be returning quickly. He needed to make flight arrangements and hasn’t spoken to me since. Do you understand that?”

Zito had spotted the small bulge in Steve’s right robe pocket and knew that Steve was armed and aware there was something to be on guard about. “Somebody wants what Quinn had. He will kill to get it.”

*So it is a tangible piece of evidence, not knowledge that could have perished with Richard.* “What did he have?” Steve asked.

Zito cracked a small smile. “You are better off not knowing. You didn’t see Quinn yesterday?”

“No.”

“Talk to him?”

“No.”

“He didn’t give you a package?”

“No.” Steve gave the small confident smile he reserved for when he wanted his opponent to know that he was in control. *Am I in control?* “Reggie, do you have a warrant for this questioning?”

Reggie gave a power grin of his own. “Better. I have a warrant for your detention.” He held it up. “Let’s go, McGarrett.”

Steve just barely concealed his surprise.

## Chapter Two

DeWitt's expression was one of pleasure as Reggie delivered Steve to the new Five-O chief's office. "Have a seat, McGarrett," he offered cordially.

Steve quietly did so with almost regal elegance. It was more than a little uncomfortable to be in the old office facing DeWitt. "Speak your mind, DeWitt."

Jackson gave a grunt of a response and sat down behind the desk. "I told you last night to come clean with me."

"Regarding what – *exactly*?" Steve asked poker-faced.

"Richard Quinn was killed because he got into something over his head. You knew him; he was inept, stupid, a real bad police officer who blundered everything he touched."

"Then he was not on assignment from you?" Steve asked.

Jackson scowled. "He was part of a team effort – but he went off on a tangent that was not authorized. I'd never have let him go after hot evidence alone like that. I might as well have put that gun to his head myself."

Steve mulled the comment for a moment. "I still am not certain what role you think I have."

"Richard was too stupid to get that far alone. He had help from outside the office. Was it you?"

"No," Steve replied, but longed to be asking more about just where Richard's investigation had taken him. *There is no one safe for you*, Danno's words rang in his head.

"Was it Williams?" Jackson demanded.

"Ask him."

DeWitt was getting more agitated. "I can't find him. You can. You spoke with him last night – I hope."

"I already told Zito I did. Danny will call when he's on a flight home," Steve replied, praying Danny would not. "What ties Quinn to Williams?" Steve did not actually think DeWitt would answer.

But he did. "Quinn's cellular phone. He made 12 calls to the answering machine at Williams' address. But the tape was missing from the recorder. We think it contained information about where Quinn hid the evidence. Not too many people would have gone out that way. My guess is somebody looking to destroy the evidence got sloppy last night and burned himself up."

"That's pretty sloppy," Steve remarked. Outwardly he remained passive, but internally he was stunned by the sudden revelation that Quinn and Williams must have been investigating Five-O itself. A leak in DeWitt's office could have been the tip-off about Danno's cottage. "Do you think that the msn who burned got the answering machine tape?" Steve asked, watching carefully for DeWitt's response.

Jackson became aware that McGarrett was now conducting the questioning. "That doesn't concern you. I want you to know this very clearly: You are a civilian. You are required to turn over any information you gather – or that comes into your possession – to me. You understand that? I want Williams in protective custody when he's found and the boy, too."

Steve felt all his protective fight or flight instinct rush into gear. "What do you mean?"

“The boy is at risk,” DeWitt commented. “I want him in juvenile hall where he can be protected. Where is he? I checked with the school and he isn’t there.”

“You can’t lock him up without his father’s permission.”

“I can with a court order. Do I need to get one?”

“I’d say you do,” Steve replied hotly.

“Is he with you?”

“Not just now,” Steve answered carefully.

DeWitt sneered. “You had him in the car last night. I should have taken him then.” He glanced at the clock. “Tomorrow morning at eight. They’d better both be here.”

Steve lifted an eyebrow. “I can’t make any promises for Williams. Am I free to go?”

DeWitt nodded, grudgingly.

“Oh, one more thing,” Steve said in feigned innocence. “What about that body in the house? Any ID?”

DeWitt sneered again. “Good day, McGarrett.”

Steve left, feeling not anger but regret for the disgrace Five-O was going to go through.

Zito, tailed by Gary Newman, entered DeWitt’s office as Steve left.

“Well?” DeWitt glanced at Gary, whose gaze had followed Steve.

Gary shook his head. “That fire last night was amateurish. Splashed gas, a match – poof. Back half of the house still okay. Place was tossed though. Somebody lookin’ for something.”

Jackson nodded, appearing bored. “Fine, Newman. I want you off this for now. I need somebody to tie up the details for Quinn’s memorial. You knew him. I want you to do that.”

“What?” Gary could not believe his ears.

“Do it.”

He was angry. DeWitt was obviously pulling him to a boring detail and away from the action. Why? He stomped away from the office looking for Kono.

Zito pursed his lips as he watched Gary go. “Not happy, huh?”

Jackson gave him a cold look. “And you?”

He pulled his hands out of his pockets. “Answering machine has no prints but those of Williams and his kid. If McGarrett has that tape, he wore gloves.”

“If McGarrett had that tape – and understood whatever it said – he wouldn’t have been in here playing twenty questions just now,” Jackson replied. “So he either doesn’t have it, or can’t understand it.”

“That’s good, right?”

DeWitt looked at him with contempt. “Williams may understand what Quinn’s messages were. And if McGarrett doesn’t have that tape, the kid does.”

“So, we find Williams and let him and the kid lead us to the tape?”

“Damn the tape. Williams will lead us right to Richard’s goods.” DeWitt paced the office for a moment. “Keep someone on McGarrett’s place with a night scope. Any movements at all I want to hear about – but take no action, you got that? And another thing.”

Zito looked at him, question on his face. “Yeah?”

“Whoever gave the information to Quinn could give it to someone else. Get Loui tracking that.”

“Loui? You sure you want him?”

“Yeah. These locals talk to each other. If it gets too hot, we can just cut him off.”

Kono entered the morgue and found Dr. Rush right away. She was young, but still pre-dated DeWitt’s arrival at Five-O. People like that were getting hard to find.

“Hi, Kono,” she said with a friendly smile.

“Hi.” He tried to sound casual, appreciating the cheerful greeting. Those were hard to find around here, too. “You got the report on the fried dude from the arson last night?”

A small frown crossed her features. “DeWitt sealed those records.”

“I know. I need to see them.”

“To everybody,” she added. “His access only.”

Kono looked intentionally unintentional. “Those orders don’t usually mean Five-O staff, do they?” he replied.

“No, but—” she hesitated, “—he sounded like he really meant it.”

“Of course he meant it,” Kono agreed. He paused. “Please, Ginger. I really need to see the records, life and death.”

“Yeah – maybe my life and death. I can’t,” she said regretfully. “Orders, you know.”

“Yeah,” he murmured quietly.

“I know they aren’t treating you fairly,” she said in a whisper. “Word is Jackson is going to force you to retire before you can qualify for your pension. I think something is really wrong around here – everyone does. I think it’s that Zito.”

“Oh?” Kono tried not to sound too interested.

“Well, everyone just thinks he’s a real snake.”

“Maybe it’s just that he’s a mainlander. They think differently,” Kono remarked.

Dr. Rush touched a file that slid off the desk and landed on the floor. “Oh, pick that up for me, will you?”

Kono bent down and realized he was looking at the file on the body from the arson. It took less than a minute for him to scan the pages as he picked them up for Ginger. “Well, I’ll see you later,” he said and winked. “Thanks.”

The phone rang and Steve glanced at his watch – just past five p.m.. He picked up the receiver, praying it was not Danno calling from the airport. *He told me to be cautious, certainly he would do the same.*

The man’s voice was muffled in an attempt to disguise it. “You’ve got live stock out on Kiwi Road.” There was a click of the disconnect.

Steve scowled. Someone wanted him out of the house. It could be a set up. But everyone knew that livestock on the loose needed to be attended to. *Who is at risk? Lonnie or me? I dare not take him with me, but I dare not leave him alone.* Steve picked up his loaded pistol.

Lonnie bounded into the kitchen. “Was that Dad?” He stopped, his attention on the weapon.

“No.” Steve walked away from him, back to the bedroom and returned with a small .32 gun. “I need to go out. Cattle have gotten loose.”

“I can come help,” Lonnie offered casually.

“It may be a trick. I can’t risk having you with me,” Steve replied. He sized up his godson. Lonnie looked deceptively younger than he was. In his brief 12 years he’d gone through more than many people did their entire lives – including a daring rescue of Kono and Danno a few months ago. “Lonnie, I need you to listen to me.”

Lonnie’s expression sobered.

“I don’t know everything that is happening, but Richard Quinn was killed because he knew something. I think your dad knows what Richard was after. The same people who killed Quinn are going to be looking for your dad. They will use you or me to make that happen if they can. Do you understand me?”

He gave a quick nod.

“We have to be smart and careful. I need to check out that call. It might really be a loose cow, or someone may be trying to reach me. I don’t know. But I cannot risk having you with me.”

Lonnie gave another nod, eyes widening a little. “But what if someone wants to make you leave so they can get me?”

Steve was pleased that Lonnie had arrived at the second half of the dilemma by himself. “Exactly my next thought.” He held out the .32.

Lonnie looked back in shocked surprise.

“Take it.”

Lonnie felt the cool weight of the small gun. “I’ve only fired guns at the gun club range.”

“And let’s hope it stays that way. Protection only. If someone comes and you can hide – hide. No heroics. Understand? I want you to go to the barn and stay there until I come back.”

“What if you don’t come back?” Lonnie asked in a hush.

Steve forced a smile. “If I am not here by dark I want you to call Kono – no one else.”

Lonnie opened the screen door to the kitchen and walked down the three wooden steps in the direction of barn. He stopped and glanced over his shoulder. “You watch out, okay?”

“You bet,” Steve replied confidently. As the boy vanished into the barn Steve whistled for Doc. The sheltie came bounding expectantly to his master, tongue lolling with joy at having been summoned. Steve patted the dog’s head. “Doc, guard the barn.”

Doc barked his acknowledgment and ran for the barn door.

Steve pulled the old truck off the road by the pasture that faced Kiwi Road, not very surprised that all the cattle were accounted for. Parked beneath the shade of a tree near the curve was Gary Newman’s old black Chevy. Danno’s warning to trust no one flashed before Steve’s mind. He felt the comfort of the gun in his jacket pocket. “Gary, did you call me out here?”

Gary stepped away from the car. “Figured your phone was tapped.” He had noticed the bulge of a gun in Steve’s pocket. “Nothin’s what it seems anymore.”

Steve did not reply. It was painful to realize that Danno's warning might include Gary Newman. *I wish it was Kono here. I can trust Kono.* "Why did you call me, Gary?"

"You were in to see DeWitt today," Gary said. "Do you know what Richard was after?"

Steve gazed out across the fenced property.

"Steve, I know there's trouble in the department." Gary stopped and glanced around as if someone might be hiding behind a tree. "It's so bad you can feel it. Zito's dirty. Be careful of him. I think Richard was gonna prove it. We can't make the pieces fit, but I think he could."

*Who is 'we'?*

"That body last night at Danno's place got burned pretty bad – but not bad enough."

Steve focused on Gary in silence.

"Kono saw the autopsy report. The guy was tortured first. He didn't light no match."

"Tortured?" McGarrett repeated.

"Right hand went through the garbage disposal. One eye orbit was exploded – like the eye was gouged out. Massive brain contusions, rupture liver. Steve, I don't know why the guy was dumped there, but he wasn't the fire bug." Gary stopped talking, hoping Steve would pick up the conversation, but the former chief remained silent. Gary nervously licked his lips. "Jackson pulled Kono off the investigation. I never got close in the first place. That's why Kono had me come. He's afraid he's marked. Zito's running the case." Gary paused once again. "I – um managed to get out to the cottage and pulled the disposal. I got it in a box in the car." He jerked his thumb towards the trunk. "A few good prints offa the faucet, too."

Steve wrestled internally with wanting to trust Gary, but not being sure. It was hard to believe the officer would have such a vital piece of evidence bouncing around in the trunk of his car. "How deep does this go?" he finally asked.

Gary shook his head. "I don't know. Kono is keeping a journal. He said you'd know where it is. He's real scared he's gonna be next."

"Is HPD clean?"

"I don't know that either," Gary admitted. "Damn, I guess you don't even know if you can trust me. At least I know I can trust you, huh?" He cracked a grin.

"Stay low," Steve advised. "Tell Kono to get off the Island if he can find the excuse. Keep your eyes open and wait. I don't have to tell you how dangerous Zito and whoever may be working with him are. If they thought they could get away with it, they'd kill us all."

Gary started to move towards the car, uncomfortable with the length of time he'd spent with McGarrett. "Keep Danno away from Five-0. Zito will see to it he never talks to DeWitt."

Lonnie lay back in the sweet scented straw listening to the flies buzzing around the two horses as they placidly swished their long tails back and forth. Doc lay asleep beside him in the warm sun. Somewhere up in the loft, the mother cat was bathing one of her new kittens and the little mews of protest could be heard. *Everything seems to quiet, so normal, so safe.* The black pistol lying beside his right leg seemed oddly out of place.

Lonnie wondered how much time it would take Steve to return. *What if it was an ambush? What if someone has been waiting for Uncle Steve and shot him and he 's laying out there bleeding to death with no one to help.* Lonnie did not want to think about that. His heartbeat quickened as he considered everything that could go wrong. *What if they come here looking for me? What if I have to use this gun? Can I do that?*

Doc suddenly lifted his head gave a soft woof.

"What is it, boy?" Lonnie whispered, fear rushing over him.

The dog was up on his feet now and issued another soft bark as he started for the door.

Lonnie scooped up the gun, clutching it tightly in both hands and pressed himself flat against the barn wall, heart pounding and mouth dry. He could hear someone on the other side of the barn door. He could hear the latch moving as the door began to open.

Doc was barking loudly with excitement now – but his tail was wagging.

"Hey, Lonnie, are you in here?" came the sound of Danny's voice.

"Dad!" he exclaimed in relief, tossing the weapon aside. He ran for the door.

Danny gave him a quick hug as he stepped inside the barn and shut the door.

"Dad, you won't believe what's going on around here!" Lonnie started. "Richard Quinn called a bunch of times on the answering machine, then somebody killed him. Then they trashed the cottage and tried to burn it down last night. And Mr. Zito made Uncle Steve go talk to Jackson DeWitt this morning." He suddenly stopped talking. "How did you get here? Uncle Steve said they'd be watching the airport."

He grinned. "They're watching domestic flights. I took a flight to Dallas, then Mexico City. I used a fake name and came through international routes."

"Cool, like a spy," Lonnie approved with proud grin.

"Why did Steve have you stay out here?" Danny bent down and picked up the small pistol realizing that Steve had to have been pretty worried to have Lonnie out in the barn armed with a gun.

"Somebody said there was a cow loose. I don't think so. Maybe somebody is trying to set him up," Lonnie commented knowingly. "I'm glad you're here now. Can we go find him?"

"Nope," Danny replied, giving a quick glance out the crack of the barn door. "We're sitting tight right here and waiting for him. No one is going to try to hurt him right now. It isn't him they are after."

Lonnie scowled. "What do they want, Dad? Who are they?"

"I'm not real sure, Lonnie. We just need to be very careful."

Steve returned to the barnyard only minutes later, pleased and relieved that Danny had evaded detection in the airport. But he knew that the house was probably being watched and it would be difficult to keep Danny's presence a secret for long. They slipped carefully back into the house and Steve retrieved the answering machine tape from its hiding place. He played it, watching Danny's expression as the former Five-0 detective sat on the couch, chin in his hands listening intently.

When it was done, Danny slowly shook his head. "I was really afraid for Richard. He was determined he would go through with this but --" he paused, "--he was always so worried, so nervous. I didn't want him to go it alone but he was afraid to trust anyone



inside. If he'd trusted someone else maybe he'd have lived. I should have made him trust Kono. I might as well have shot him myself for letting him go on."

Steve noted with surprise that Danny had used the same expression Jackson had earlier. "Any ideas about what information he had? It seems to be pretty hot stuff."

Danny was silent for a minute or two, thinking back over the history of Richard's investigation, weighing the risks of bringing in Steve. *I need help now -- and there's no one in the world I'd rather have in my corner than Steve McGarrett.* "Richard came to me already knowing something about Zito's past. A snitch named Marco had told him Zito had a mob connection in Seattle. Snitch conveniently died of a ruptured aneurysm a week later. But Richard had his statement on tape. Richard came to me after he'd already brought in a PI he knew in Minneapolis."

"PI?" Steve shook his head in disbelief.

"Yeah, not the conventional way to deal with this sort of thing, but then Quinn was pretty paranoid himself. DeWitt hated him. Zito was dirty. God only knows about the others. Even Kono had no respect for Richard. I tried to get Richard to talk to Kono, but he wouldn't. I tried to get him to take it to Travis at HPD. He said he would after the PI finished the work up and he was sure HPD was clean."

"Is that work up the information they killed him for?"

Danny nodded. "At least I think so. I looked into the PI myself. Lana Taylor. Squeaky clean."

"A woman?" That was also unexpected for Steve.

"Yeah." Danny gave a little laugh. "Welcome to sexual equality. For all his blundering, Richard was full of surprises. I guess an unorthodox problem calls for unorthodox treatment."

Steve considered all Danny had said for a moment. "Do you have an idea from the tape where that information is?"

Danny looked up in surprise. "Sure." He seemed shocked that Steve did not already know. "The mail -- with postage due so that it won't be delivered to the cottage..." His voice trailed off as a look of fear settled over him. "It should be at the post office, but it won't be." He jumped up.

Steve jumped up after him. "Danno, you're talking in riddles."

"Carrie. Carrie was getting the mail while I've been gone. She will have gone to the post office by now and picked up the envelope. She must have it at her place. Steve, we have got to get out there."

"Hang on," Steve cautioned, grabbing Danny's arm. "My guess is this house is being watched. They see you and you'll lead them right to Carrie and the evidence."

"I don't want Carrie dragged in. If I don't appear in Five-0 they will expand their pressure to include Carrie. And if they discover her with the envelope, they'll kill her. Reporters are as dangerous to them as honest cops -- maybe even more dangerous."

"But right now they don't know what she has -- she doesn't know what she has," Steve persisted. "They haven't heard the tape." Steve's mind raced to come up with a solution. The phone might be tapped, so they couldn't call her. "Right now they don't know you are back on the Island, Danny, so that is our one advantage. They are watching me and they're watching Lonnie. I'm going to take the old Mercury and go down to the airport for a while to watch the planes take off. They will expect that. And they will follow me. Take the old truck and slip out over the pasture. Get to Carrie's and find the

evidence. Keep Lonnie with you. If Zito or any of his people get itchy, I don't want Lonnie with me at the airport."

Ten minutes later, as if on his way to meet someone, Steve's black car pulled slowly out of the old gravel drive of the ranch and onto the blacktop road headed for Honolulu. Just as he had hoped, a brown Five-0 car dropped in behind him as if they did not even care that he knew of their presence. He cast a quick glance around to see if anyone had remained behind and could see no other cars. He picked up the cellular phone and dialed his number at the house, let it ring twice, and hung up.

## ***Chapter Three***

The old ranch pickup left by the northern pasture and started for town by a different route.

Danny parked a block away from the small residential home that he and Carrie had recently bought. She'd move in from her apartment with plans that as soon as there was a buyer for the cottage and the wedding date set, he and the kids would move in. Danny had not been pleased about bringing Lonnie, but agreed that he was safer than with Steve or left behind in the barn with a .32 pistol. Danny donned a baseball cap and sunglasses as they exited the truck. They walked casually up the block, cut through the yard of the neighbor behind Carrie's, over the white picket fence and across the small flower-edged back yard to the back door. Danny knocked and waited. There was no response.

"Where is she?" Lonnie mutter with irritation.

Danny glanced at his watch, knowing it wasn't working hours for his fiancé. "She must be out shopping or something."

"Who would she be going out with anyway?" Lonnie demanded.

Danny gave him a wry look. "We're not married yet. Even if we were, she is still entitled to her own life you know." He got out his penknife and slipped the blade under the latch of the window screen.

"How come you don't have a key to this place?" Lonnie whispered angrily. "Sam's mom gave her boyfriend a key to her place. She let him move in. They're not even getting' married."

The blade slid the latch to the side and the screen popped loose. Danny carefully took the screen out and slid open the window.

"Cool trick," Lonnie remarked.

"I learned something in junior high, too," Danny responded.

"You learning breaking and entering in school?" Lonnie smirked.

Danny grinned, but did not give a reply. He quickly pulled himself up onto the windowsill and deftly stepped down inside into Carrie's kitchen. "Come on." He turned back and pulled Lonnie up through the open window, then slid the storm window shut.

Lonnie stood uncomfortably in the kitchen he had visited many times. He liked the small house much better than Carrie's old apartment. That had been too clean, too neat. He knew that this would someday be home and that was still hard to imagine. He picked up a flower catalog from the counter the flipped through the pages of wedding arrangements. He paused to look at the picture of the very young smiling blonde in a photo that focused on her bridal bouquet. *Girls sure make a big deal about weddings and flower and stuff.* He glanced at Danny who was carefully making his way towards the front of the house. *Dad thinks Carrie is a big deal – but I don't think he likes weddings either. Maybe we'd talk about it if he did. Audrey talks about it. Carrie talks about it. We don't. It must be a girl thing.*

Danny walked through the semi-lit house out to the dining room where the mail Carrie had collected for him was stacked on the table in a pile carefully organized by size. It took only a moment to spot the manila envelope. The address had been scribbled across the front in haste and Danny could visualize Richard trying to write as he

attempted to evade his eventual killers. Danny picked it up realizing this was what Quinn had died for.

“Dad!” Lonnie whispered anxiously, “There’s cops pulling up out front!”

A squad car had pulled to a halt outside. A door slammed as the officer exited.

Danny raced back to the kitchen dragging Lonnie with him and pulled the back door open. He cast a quick glance around, but the officers had not made it to the back yet. The father and son bolted down the back steps, over the fence and out into the back neighbor’s yard. Once they had cleared three houses, Danny grabbed hold of Lonnie slowing them down. It took all of Danny’s discipline to keep the pace at a casual walk.

“What happened?” Lonnie panted.

“Some nosey neighbor spotted us going in the window and reported it,” Danny guessed.

“You’re limping,” Lonnie observed.

“Yeah,” he grunted. The subject of the pin in his lower left leg was a delicate one. The temporary pin that had been placed to help the bones heal following the tragedy at Kipahulu Valley should have been removed a month ago. Danny kept putting the second surgery off.

“You told Carrie you’d get that pin out before your wedding,” Lonnie declared sounding like a scolding parent.

“Yeah.” They had reached the truck and Danny unlocked the doors. “Get in. Let’s get out of here.”

“So maybe you don’t want to get married.”

“What?”

“Well, you didn’t get the pin out,” Lonnie concluded.

Danny made a face. “Will you stop with the amateur shrink hour?” He started the engine and pulled away from the curb just as the unwitting squad car cruised slowly around the corner, its occupants looking, thankfully, the wrong way.

Reggie Zito stalked Carrie’s small house, rage just barely in concealed. He was furious with himself; he should have anticipated or remember her possible connection in this thing.

“Nothing is missing,” Carrie was telling the uniformed officer.

“Are you sure?” the cop asked patiently. He wasn’t quite sure why Five-0 had taken an interest in a routine burglary where apparently the crook had been scared away. Zito made him nervous. “Have you checked all your valuables?”

She gave a sweet smile to him. “I told you – everything is here. If someone was going to rob me, wouldn’t he have started with the VCR and TV?” She pointed to those items. “And there was cash on my dresser – still there.”

*Because they weren’t after your valuables, Reggie thought hotly. What were they after? Is she hiding something for Williams? Is he back? What was here?* His gaze settled on the table of mail addressed to Danny. “Have you spoken with your fiancé?” Reggie suddenly asked, breaking in to the conversation.

A puzzled look crossed her face. “Who? Danny? No, why?”

“No phone calls?”

“No,” Carrie felt her pulse begin to quicken. She could tell that Zito was fishing for something. “Hey, I am the victim here, Zito, not the criminal. It was *my* house broken in to, remember?” she fired back at him.

He glared at the table again and commented to the men dusting the back screen door for prints: “Do that table, too.” He prowled from the kitchen back into the dining room again as if to gain something. *Williams has been here, I’m sure of it. Whatever Quinn had must have been here. And now Williams has it. And has vanished. That means that Williams doesn’t trust us...*

Carrie watched Zito intently. *He’s upset about something. What is it? That big envelope I had to pay postage on is gone. Why? Who has it? The cops were here before I was. Do they have it? Somehow Carrie knew they did not. She also knew that it must be what Zito was after. Why? Has Danny been here? But he’s on the mainland – or is supposed to be. If he is here, why didn’t he tell me?* The answer seemed obvious. *Something bad is happening here and he is right in the middle of it. He’s a teacher, not a crime fighter – or is he?*

Zito handed the post office delivery route to Jackson DeWitt. The chief of Five-0 calmly accepted the rolled document, then spread it out across the desk, but his jaw muscles were flexing in rage.

“They lost Richard here – but just for a minute,” Zito pointed to the freeway.

“You don’t think he threw the evidence out the window, do you?” Jackson snapped.

Zito sighed. “Here, too, only a minute or two.” He pointed to a side street.

Jackson’s index finger jabbed at the public mailbox indicated on the postal map. “Your team screwed up, Reggie. That stupid Quinn was smarter than you.”

Zito seethed silently.

“So, the future Mrs. Williams had the evidence,” Jackson walked away from the desk and gazed out on the lawn of the state house. “Does she know what she had?”

“I don’t think so.”

“*You don’t think so?* She is a *reporter*, Reggie – a reporter for the hottest news team in Honolulu and you *don’t think so?*” Jackson shook his head. “Keep someone on her. Get her phone tapped. And Williams is back here – he has to be somewhere.” “McGarrett’s?”

“Only if he’s a fool. He’s probably dug a deep hole and pulled it in after him. He was able to get into Honolulu undetected; he’ll be smart enough to stay here undetected. He’s got contacts all over the place.”

“Kono?”

DeWitt stopped to consider that. “Where is that buffoon?”

“He’s organizing the memorial for Quinn like you asked.”

“I want his place watched.”

Zito nodded, but knew that his manpower was limited. He began to wonder how he could justify watching McGarrett’s, Donogan’s, and Kono’s residences.

The phone rang on Jackson’s desk. “Five-0, DeWitt...got it.” He hung up. “That’s your boy Sergie. McGarrett has left the airport and is on his way back to the ranch – *alone*. He threw us a red herring and we snapped it up. Williams has got to be here.” Anger flashed in DeWitt’s eyes. “Forget about that reporter, I want McGarrett.”

Ordinarily the crime lab was a boring place for anyone but Ken Edwards. He was the specialist who picked apart everything from clothing lint to automobile air filters for little scrapes of information. It was a tedious job, but he enjoyed it. He liked details. Today had been unusual.

He could tell from the look on Gary Newman's face when he brought in the box that this was something big. Newman had said little, just to compare whatever he found in the garbage disposal to the remains of the body from the Williams' house fire. That seemed pretty grizzly. But the hand made finger print lifts with scotch tape Newman also gave him had really started Edwards' wheels turning. No one but amateurs ever turned in fingerprints on scotch tape, certainly not Five-0 officers. But Newman's parting words to keep the results quiet until he or Kono returned was the most curious of all. It was no secret there was division in the office and Newman and Kono were on the outs. Edwards was sorry about that: he liked Newman. Then again, he'd liked Quinn, too.

Edwards had spent about fifteen minutes picking out bits of rotted vegetables, bone fragments, a meat from the disposal when the door to the lab opened and Zito burst in, a fistful of professional fingerprint cards in his hand. Ken gently kicked the cardboard box under the desk.

"I need this now," Zito snapped holding out the cards. "I've got twenty-six prints. How long?"

Edwards quickly examined the quality of the work. "About half an hour, if the person's got a file on Hawaii."

"I'll wait." Zito had noticed Edwards toe the box and wondered what it contained, but did not ask.

The new state-of-the-art cards were computer coded, Edwards could drop them into the proper scanner, enter a few codes and anyone on the islands with a record or driver's license would come up. "What are you looking for?" Edwards asked to fill the time.

Zito picked his teeth with a fingernail. "Just a robbery of a lady's place."

Edwards shrugged. He didn't usually receive fingerprints on robbery. Homicide was much more his line. The screen blipped it was ready and he fed the entry to scan the license file. He hit the print screen. "Here you go. Carrie Donagon."

"Her place," Zito snapped. "Check the rest."

"Hang on, it's still working. Some of those were partials you know." Edwards defended the computer. Another print ran. "Dan Williams." Zito grabbed it off the printer.

"You're no social butterfly, Zito," Edwards remarked, "He wouldn't rob her – he's engaged to her. Computer's still working, so we have something else." A window finally came up claiming to have no file on the final prints. "These." Edwards brought the two up on the screen.

"Those came off the window sill," Zito remarked.

"They are probably your guy. I'll run them through criminal files."

Before Zito could object, Edwards launched the request. Reggie decided to play along, but knew he had what he wanted. *Williams is back. No matter what DeWitt thinks, my guess is Williams will try to outfox us by being in the obvious place – McGarrett's ranch.*

Edwards face lit up. "Told you so! We have a match."

"Huh?" Reggie's attention was pulled back from thought.

"Oh." Edwards's elation waned. "Never mind. It's just the juvenile record on Danny's son."

"What?" Zito looked over Edwards' shoulder. With a curse, he ripped off the print identifying Lonnie's prints. *What if McGarrett knew about the envelope and sent the kid?*

The sun had set shortly after Lonnie and Danny had snuck back into the ranch. They dared not turn on any lights just in case a surveillance team was still outside. Danny began to examine Richard's documents by flashlight. The phone rang and Lonnie jumped. On the fourth ring, the answering machine intercepted it.

"Steve?" It was Carrie's voice, edged with fear. "Steve, this is Carrie. Something really strange is going on here. Reggie Zito was here claiming that Danny is back in town. He acted like he was hunting him like a criminal."

*Good observation*, Danny thought.

"Please call me. I need to know what's going on." She hung up.

"You should have talked to her," Lonnie judged.

Danny glanced up at him. "Why?"

"She's scared. She doesn't know what's happening," Lonnie replied.

"Better scared alive than knowing and dead, which is what she'd be if Zito thought she knew anything. Besides there could be a tap on the phone."

Lonnie drew his legs up from where he sat on the floor. "Dad, is somebody trying to kill you?"

Danny wrestled with the truth. "Maybe, Lonnie. We need to be very careful."

There was the slam of a car door outside. Lonnie was startled by how quickly Danny was beside the door, gun in hand, peering around the edge of the curtain. The tension seemed to bleed away from Danny's posture and Lonnie knew it was okay.

A key jangled in the door and Steve opened it and entered. He motioned Danny and Lonnie down, then turned on light. Nonchalantly, Steve moved to the front window and slid the drapes closed. After double-checking all the other windows, he motioned the Williams' who rose from the floor.

"What did you find?" Steve asked motioning towards the pages.

Danny stacked up the papers. "Zito had his hand in a little of everything on the mainland. Accusations of evidence tampering on a drug case, but not enough to prove it. He took payoffs from three different prostitution rings for protection. Before Seattle, he was into the gambling bit in Las Vegas. Supposed to be inspecting the tables, keeping them straight. Sounds like the fox was guarding the hen house. Ms. Taylor unearthed a bank account he deposited \$10,000 a month into weekly during that time."

Steve gave a low whistle. "Didn't know Las Vegas cops got paid so well. We're in the wrong town."

"He also took time to get married and divorced three times in the last six years. No kids. Was convicted of police brutality charges early on when he was at his first job in El Paso. They just slapped his wrist over it."

"What did he do?"

"Doesn't say."

“How about running a guy’s hand through a garbage disposal?”

Danny looked up. “What?”

“I have a feeling that’s what he did last night. Gary said the burned body at the cottage was tortured first.”

Lonnie made a face. “That’s sick.”

They both stopped and looked at him. Steve regretted that he’d forgotten Lonnie was there. Without another word, McGarrett turned and walked back to the kitchen where he began to pull out food for dinner.

Danny followed him, after assuring himself that the kitchen window blind was down. “We can’t stay here, Steve.”

Steve glanced at him. “We need to get Lonnie out of here.”

“Where? I can’t think of any place that they won’t look for him,” Danny replied in frustration. He shook his head. “Remember all those times we were glad Honolulu was an island? Only so many places for the bad guys to hide? Now we’re the bad guys.”

McGarrett shot a hot look at him. “We are *not* the bad guys.”

Danny pursed his lips. “We’d might as well be.”

Steve began to cut up a pineapple with great vengeance. “How did you get into this mess?”

“Quinn did not know where to go. He came to me.”

“You couldn’t bare to turn him away?” Steve snapped.

Danny stopped, open-mouthed. “You think I should have?”

“You have two children, Danno. Did you think of them?”

“Now you sound like Carrie,” Danny remarked coldly.

Steve stopped the conversation, attempting to control the anger, the fear, and the frustration. He took a deep breath. “I’m sorry, Danno,” he said more calmly. He carried the cut fruit out to the living room where Lonnie was sitting on the floor looking through the papers. Steve took the evidence away from him and handed him the fruit. He carried the papers back to the kitchen and Danno. “What else is in here? Anything recent?”

Danny accepted the stack of paperwork and sifted through several pages. “The work here is a little more sketchy. Some photos of Zito with Kumu leaders, but that doesn’t say much.”

Steve glanced at the pictures. One was of Zito with a blonde woman who was scantily dressed, pressed up next to him kissing his cheek. Zito was not objecting. “This is one of Cha La’s girls. Getting kissed by a whore isn’t exactly major league stuff.”

Danny passed over a copy of a title deed. “How did he wing this?” It showed that Zito had paid \$500,000 cash deposit on a beachfront property.

Steve knew he needed to talk to DeWitt as soon as possible. DeWitt had hand picked Zito himself, the new chief would really have to eat crow over this. Then it struck him: “Danno, is DeWitt clean?”

He looked at the floor. “There’s about fifty pages here, I’ve only gotten through about thirty. I don’t know – but I wouldn’t risk my life on it.”

Steve squinted. “Could he have missed Zito’s history?” He found it painful to consider that Five-0 might be corrupt to the very top.

As if sensing Steve’s reluctance to expand the case, Danny commented: “Maybe he’s just been too busy to follow up with Zito.”

Steve set his jaw and decided to face the possibility. “What did Richard think?”



Danny cracked a grin. "Richard didn't trust anybody. He didn't trust you."

"But he was on his way here when he was killed," Steve observed. "He was not on his way to DeWitt."

Danny nodded as he scanned the next page. "Okay, here's a tie with Reggie to the Kumu and a mainland organization called Fidel."

"Fidel? Are you sure?" Steve demanded sharply.

"Yes – out of New Orleans."

"DeWitt was chief of police in New Orleans for ten years before coming here," Steve commented.

Jackson glared hotly at Zito who stood sweating in the office on the unusually hot evening. There was no breeze. "So, Williams is here."

"Yes."

"And he is at McGarrett's?"

"Yes."

"With the boy."

"Yes."

"And the evidence?"

"I've got to assume they have that, too."

Jackson circled his desk as he paced slowly in silence for several minutes. "Last night was a butchery. Who did that mess?"

Zito swallowed once. "I told Sergie to see that he burned."

"Sergie." Jackson made another circle. "And sealing the records wasn't enough. I sent Loui after the garbage disposal and it was gone – the sink had been dusted. Who the hell do you think did that? Why would it have been done if they hadn't seen the body or the report?"

Zito stared at Jackson, mouth agape. "Is Edwards reporting to somebody else?"

"You tell me, Reggie. This is a nasty piece, Zito. I need you to contain this fiasco right now. I brought you here because you were supposed to be the best at this kind of thing."

"I didn't count on that little bastard Quinn."

"Hum." Jackson seated himself behind the desk in regal manner. "The only way to turn this off quick is to do something eye catching, some that will make everyone forget all about poor Richard and about that house fire and the body; some sad, unfortunate tragedy which will take the Island's attention to something else. Do you understand my drift?"

Reggie stood there, uncertain.

Jackson ground his teeth. "You get Sergie out on the street and get some help that cannot be tied back to us. I hear junkies on angel dust will do all kinds of appalling things to people when they are strung out. I want that evidence in my office before morning. I want McGarrett and Williams silenced – for good."

## Chapter Four

By midnight, Lonnie had wandered away to the guest room to get some sleep and Steve and Danny had plowed through most of Richard's material.

"I've never seen anything turn so bad so fast in all my days," McGarrett remarked. Names of politicians, city officials, officers in HPD and Five-0 had turned up all through the reports. "And I trust this lady, Taylor, will come back to Hawaii and back all this up."

Danny shrugged. "I've got her card but I never met her. Richard thought highly of her. I'm certain she won't come till after arrests. She considers Zito and DeWitt to be lethal people."

"DeWitt," Steve remarked bitterly. The idea of a corrupt chief of Five-0 was unthinkable. "What about Masakaski himself? He sure jumped on hiring DeWitt."

"Nothing here on the governor," Danny replied. "Sure won't look good for him though. Maybe the biggest question is to whom can we go?"

"FBI," Steve answered simply. He yawned. "I recall a young agent who's risen through the ranks there. I know I can trust him. Mark Lawson."

"Want to call him tonight?" Danny asked.

Steve shook his head. "The phone is probably tapped. There's probably a watch on the house. If anything unusual happens here, Lawson would never arrive in time. I'll go to Honolulu in the morning. We need to get Lonnie to safety then as well."

Danny nodded, tired. Jet lag was taking a heavy toll. "We get him to Andy's."

Steve walked to the back door and called Doc in. The sheltie bounded for the door, tail wagging, tongue lolling in delight. It was an unusual privilege to be called into the house. He spent most of his nights protecting the ranch from the outside. Steve patted the old dog's head. "Guard the house," he ordered. That done, Steve went to his room, Danny to the guest room where Lonnie already slept. Both men had loaded guns under their pillows.

The flashlight beam illuminated the front window of the ranch house, then traveled down the side, across the shrubbery to the door.

"Nice place," Ari whispered to his two friends.

"Yeah," Tuck, who was not very bright agreed. "Lots of money."

The third member, Mitch, said nothing. He had no use for Tuck. *This moron's a retard. Leave it that acidhead Ari to pick up this kind of loser.* He was sure the man who had contracted him was a law enforcer of some kind, which wasn't rare, but a little unusual. He had at first been suspicious that the man was setting him up, but the advance of \$10,000 had gone a long way to change his mind. There would be twice that waiting for him when he found the envelope that had been described to him. For another fair price he would dispose of his partners. He grinned to himself. *Of course the pretty cherry will be my fee to remain silent -- that comes later.*

Ari recalled the man who had given him the best stuff and greatest high he'd had in months. The man told him that there was more stuff in this house and that there were lots of other things, too. Ari felt so good now he wouldn't allow anybody to keep him from more. "Be careful, dudes, I was told the guy here may be packing a rod. He says the guy will shoot so we need to shoot first."

Tuck shivered. "Don't wanna hurt nobody."

Ari winced. He had not wanted to bring Tuck, but he needed a third guy – a big guy – and Tuck was the only person he knew he could get on short notice. “Hey, Tuck, I’m your friend, right? You don’t want nobody shootin’ me, do you? So, we may have to shoot him instead. Understand?”

Tuck gave an unknowing nod.

“Now, Tuck, we’ve gotta bust the door open,” Ari continued. “You’re the strong guy. You gotta do that.” He froze as he heard a low growl. “Jeeze, he’s packing a dog, too.” *This guy must have really good stuff if he’s protecting it so well.*

“I don’t wanna hurt no puppy,” Tuck muttered.

Mitch listened for a moment. “We can give the dog something to eat.”

Ari shook his head. “Got nothing.”

“Let’s just do this, okay?” Mitch grumbled. “I’ll go round back.”

Ari nodded.

“Ari, is he gonna hurt the dog?” Tuck asked innocently.

“Naw, he’ll just get him out of the house.” Ari waited another moment. “Okay, Tuck, we’re gonna bust the door. You ready?”

“Uh-huh,” he answered.

“Get the door then.”

Tuck threw his weight against the door with a crash. At the same instant there was loud smashing and wild barking. A single shot was fired, silencing the bark with a yelp. The front door shattered.

But the warning had been given. In a flash, both Danny and Steve were completely awake and alert, weapon in hand, heading carefully up the hall.

“You hurt the dog!” Tuck wailed, looking down at the body of Doc.

Ari crouched, pistol ahead in the dark, fumbling for a light switch.

Steve reached it first, blinding them with the brilliant overhead light. “Drop it!” he shouted moving into the room, Danny at his side.

Ari hesitated, confused. Things were already not going his way.

“I said drop it!” Steve repeated.

He slowly dropped the gun on the carpeted floor.

“Hands over your head.”

As Steve ordered Tuck and Ari to the wall, Danny glanced around, surprised that anyone sent by Zito had been so easily overcome. Something wasn’t quite right. He stepped back towards the darkened kitchen. Nothing. There came a sudden movement from the darkened hallway.

“Not so fast, fellahs,” Mitch appeared, gun in hand, Lonnie before him. “Now, *you guys* drop your guns.”

They froze.

“Come on here, let’s do this friendly,” Mitch warned. “We just want your stuff.”

Steve and Danny carefully placed the guns down. “What do you want?” Steve demanded.

Ari, still feeling his high, bounced back from the wall with a giggle, snapping his weapon up. “You really thought you had us,” he said with a grin. “Surprise!”

“What do you want?” Steve repeated, deadly serious.

“What do we want?” Ari laughed. “I’d like a beer. Definitely.” He went to the kitchen and starting routing through the refrigerator. He gave a grunt of disgust. “No

beer! What kind of place is this?" He came out with two cans of Coke, shook one up, then opened it, spraying the contents all over the walls and several valuable original paintings Steve had hanging in the living room. Ari giggled again. "Like my art?"

Mitch glanced at Steve. "You don't like that, do you? Wanna try and stop him?" He poked Steve's shoulder.

McGarrett set his jaw, trying to keep his rage in check. *Show nothing and wait for your chance*, he counseled himself as the brown soda dripped down the walls. "What do you want?" he repeated the question.

"Ari here wants a good time," Mitch replied diverting his attention towards Ari who was starting to go through the china cabinet in the dining. Plates, platters and cups smashed to the floor as he tossed them aside. Mitch motioned to Tuck. "Get this kid." He transferred his grip on Lonnie over to Tuck. "Don't let him go," Mitch ordered Tuck sternly.

Lonnie squirmed angrily against the big man's grip.

"Hey, there!" Tuck shouted. "You stop that now. I don't wanna hurt you!"

"Ari, the couch," Mitch ordered, keeping his attention fixed on Steve and Danny.

Ari threw the pillows off the leather couch. He pulled a marine style knife and began rip apart the cushions, then the rest of the couch. Padding floated through the air.

Lonnie whimpered. "Uncle Steve! Your couch!"

"It doesn't matter, Lonnie," he said quietly.

Mitch turned to Lonnie who stared back with large eyes. "You know what we're looking for, don't you?" Mitch asked.

"What?" Lonnie murmured.

"I need those papers your Daddy got," Mitch whispered. "Or I'll kill your daddy right now – right here in front of you." He leveled the pistol on Danny. "Don't want that to happen, do you? That would be your fault."

Lonnie's mouth went dry.

"Leave him alone, he doesn't know anything," Danny said hotly.

Mitch moved to face him, staying out of arm's reach. "He doesn't huh? Sure you can't say the same though, can you?" He gave a half grin. "Maybe I should shoot the kid. Where's the papers?"

"Go to hell," Danny muttered.

Mitch punched him once in the stomach and he bent over with a gasp.

Lonnie came battling forward in rage, only to be grabbed more tightly by Tuck who pinned the boy's arms behind him. "Let me go! Let me go!"

"Stop fighting me!" Tuck shouted his panicked plea. "I don't wanna hurt no kid! Hold still!" His grip tightened.

"Lonnie!" Steve ordered, trying to keep the boy in control.

Mitch's was attention taken momentarily by the ruckus. Danny, still bent double, brought up a two fisted blow to Mitch's jaw, sending him stumbling back. Danny made an attempt at Mitch's gun hand but the intruder was faster, slamming the gun butt against Williams' forehead. He collapsed forward, facedown to the carpet.

Even as his friend was still falling, Steve took his chance, leaping for Mitch, but as he moved, Ari issued a high soprano scream and leaped for Steve's back, knife swinging. They both went down on the floor, the knife claiming mostly Steve's robe, but it left a shallow slice up his left forearm.

In the midst of this, Lonnie began yelling and fighting Tuck with all his might. “Stop wiggling!” Tuck screamed at Lonnie.

There was a sudden, audible snap. Lonnie gave a cry of pain, his knees buckled. “My arm!” he wailed as Tuck in horror released him. He sank to the floor, clutching his left arm.

“I said stop, Mitch! I told him not to!” Tuck blubbered. “See what he made me do?”

Mitch glanced at Tuck in disgust. “Stick the kid in the bathroom. Lock him in there.”

“I didn’t wanna hurt no kid!” Tuck shouted. “He made me, Ari! You saw!”

Ari was still trying to untangle himself from McGarrett who lay on his side, watching Mitch who, anger seething, had the gun leveled on him with a shaking hand. Ari scrambled to his feet and gave Steve a vicious kick in the back. “Don’t worry none, Tuck. Kid ain’t worth anything.” He glared without sympathy at the sobbing Lonnie who was gingerly cradling his injured arm. “Lock him up, Tuck.”

Tuck led Lonnie to the bath and opened the door. “You be a good kid and be quiet. Nothing more bad’ll happen then,” he advised. He shut the door and yanked the doorknob out of the wood to make certain it there would be no opening it from the inside. He grinned, pleased with himself.

Mitch glanced around the living room in disgust. Ari had done a good job of trashing everything in sight, but had not contributed to finding the prize. He glared at McGarrett. “You think you’re a big shot,” he snarled.

Steve did not reply.

“Get on your belly.” Mitch decided McGarrett would be a lot saver in a submissive position.

Steve complied, lying down on the floor next to the tattered couch.

“Now, Ari, we’re just gonna look around here a bit is all, understand?” Mitch said patiently.

“You said he had expensive things here,” Ari complained.

“He does. Silverware. Maybe a safe in the wall with jewels – but we have to find it,” Mitch explained.

Steve wondered just how gullible Mitch’s accomplices really were.

Mitch squatted down next to Steve. “Know where those papers are?” he asked.

“No,” Steve replied. “They aren’t here anymore. They are in a safe place.”

“Safe place? Safe place where?”

Steve gave a smile. “You don’t expect me to tell you that unless you provide us something first, do you?”

Mitch kicked him hard in the ribs. Steve heard one crack. “How about I won’t do that anymore?”

Steve tried to hide the pain. “Do you even know what you’re looking for – or why?”

Mitch gave him another kick. “I could kill you just because I wish it,” he bragged.

“What would be in that for you?” Steve replied. The pain in his ribs caught the air in his throat when he breathed in.

Mitch shrugged. "I like to kill things, ya know? Like the dog. Gives me a real turn on. To kill a person – that has got to be the ultimate rush."

"Isn't all it's cracked up to be," Steve answered. "I hope you got paid in advance for this little venture. You aren't going to be around long enough to spend it."

"Pretty big talk from where you are," Mitch said with a smirk.

Steve took another painful breath. "Let's guess. Guy who paid you is a cop, right? He paid you something up front with a bigger pot on completion. What he's really gonna do here after you give him those papers is use you to be a hero. He'll turn around a look like a super-smart cop by arresting you for our murders cause a lot of people are going to get steamed about this. You'll not only fry for this little gig, but probably for the guy who burned in that fire the other night. You can't win."

Mitch's rage began to boil. "You think I'm stupid or something? I can take care of myself."

"If you're smart – and if you find those papers – take them to the FBI. No money but you'll be alive."

Danny moved, groaned, and rubbed his bruised forehead.

Mitch, still furious with Steve, grabbed Danny up by the shirt. "Those papers – where are they!" he shouted.

Danny squinted at him. "What papers?"

Mitch, in fury, hit him in the mouth with the gun, drawing blood, released Danny and jumped to the wall where he, in rage punched two holes in it. He turned and gave the mortally wounded couch a vicious kick, knocking it over.

Steve stared at the large deep-sea fishhook laying on the carpet before him. He hadn't gone deep-sea fishing in ages and he couldn't explain how it came to be there, but he quietly closed his hand over it.

Lonnie sat on the commode cover for a few minutes, able to do nothing but weep from the pain on the wringer fracture. Already his elbow was swelling and pain still shot from his shoulder to his fingertips. Gradually, he began to realize that he needed to take advantage of where he was. Like most old farmhouses build on peer and beam foundations, there was a drop hatch beneath the house located in the bathroom closet. He knew where it was, he'd found it years ago as a small child. Opening the closet door, he rolled back the carpet revealing the hatch. He opened it up, laying the carpet across the top so that when he closed it, the carpet would again cover the hole. Getting down under the house was a different matter. Thick cobwebs criss-crossed in a tangled mass between the beams and stretched from dark, damp ground to the underside of the house. Beetles, bugs and slugs were everywhere. Gritting his teeth, Lonnie at last slipped down under the house. He shivered as the cobwebs clung to his skin and face. He closed the door and lay on the smelly earth, trying to get relief from the pain in his arm and waiting – hoping help would come.

Tuck clicked with his tongue as he observed Mitch's temper raging out of control. "Don't be mad now. Don't be mad now," he chided. "Count to ten – one...two..."

"*Shut that retard up!*" Mitch screamed at Ari, waving the gun wildly.

Ari threw another dinner plate against the wall and the pieces scattered amongst the pile of others growing on the floor. He didn't care much about the papers Mitch was

ranting about, he was having fun destroying things. The man hiring them had said they would get a great high out of this – smashing things came close. He hit the power button on the stereo and spun the dial to a heavy metal station. He cranked the music up so that the very windows began to rattle.

His action did little for Mitch's mood. Cursing, he grabbed Danny by the shirt and pulled him to his feet, slamming him against the wall so hard, it crushed the drywall. "You're the guy with the answers," Mitch snarled in his face.

Steve moved his leg and Mitch caught the action out of the corner of his eye. "Ari! Get over here and make yourself useful!"

Ari gave an Indian-like war whoop and leapt onto the overturned sofa, then down to the floor beside Steve. He jammed the small pistol he had taken from Steve earlier against Steve's head. "Let's kill somebody."

"Contain it, Ari," Mitch snapped, then gave his attention back to Danny. "I could let him kill your boy."

Danny, having already noted that Lonnie was not in the room, let the idle threat go by.

"Come on," Ari begged, giving a malevolent smile, "I can just shoot this one. They're all gonna die anyway."

"Shut up," Mitch growled.

Danny managed a smile of bravado. "Why should I tell you where the papers are? You'll kill us either way."

Mitch gave a contemptuous look at Ari. "You are so lame."

Danny took the momentary diversion as an opportunity and lunged for Mitch's gun hand. Simultaneously, Steve punched Ari in the face with a left cross and flung the fishhook from his right hand into Mitch's face. Mitch gave a shriek of surprise as the hook dug into his cheek.

Danny had a grip on Mitch's gun hand and they struggled for control.

Steve dove for Ari's gun, but the young man gave him a vicious kick in the abdomen, and jumped to his feet. In open fear and confusion, he kept waving the weapon around trying to decide whether to shoot Steve or Danny and trying to get a clear shot at the latter. He squeezed his eyes tight as he tightened the trigger.

Just as Ari fired, Danny turned, forcing Mitch between them like a shield.

The bullet struck Mitch in the back of the head, spraying blood and tissue. As he went limp, Danny thrust him against Ari, hoping to gain a footing.

Ari, more confused than ever, and not quite understanding what had just happened, stumbled to the floor under the weight of Mitch. He pulled his gun hand free, trying to aim at Danny again.

Danny stepped towards Steve, looking for Mitch's gun at the same time.

"Run, Danno! Just run!" Steve ordered.

Danny looked up just as Ari fired. He stumbled backward towards the hallway, losing his balance.

Steve thought Williams had been struck, but Danny turned, rolling to his feet and, in a flash, dashed down the hall and into the bedroom where he slammed and locked the door. Ari was after him instantly, yelling for Tuck who continued to stand, mouth agape, stunned by the pandemonium.

Just as Ari reached the bedroom door, there was the sound of shattering glass. “He went out the window!” Tuck announced in wonder.

Ari pointed the gun at the doorknob, but as he tried to fire into the lock, it made a hollow click. He threw the gun aside. Ari raced for the front door. He spent a precious moment also looking for Mitch’s gun. Also unable to find it, he remembered the weapon they had taken earlier from Danny and found it in Mitch’s pocket. “Keep the gun on him!” he ordered pointing at Steve. “If he moves, shoot him!” He threw open the door and dashed down the porch. Moments later, the engine of the small Audio cranked over, revved loudly, and gravel spun as Ari raced out across the pasture.

Danny raced through the field trying to put as much distance as he could between the ranch house and himself. He felt a twang of embarrassed guilt at abandoning Lonnie and Steve, but knew full well he was the one Zito really wanted. Stuffed under his shirt was the bait he needed to draw Zito and his youthful incompetent hoodlums away. He could hear the whining engine of the small car as it attempted to negotiate through the pasture, zigzagging to and fro looking for him. The headlight beams shimmered and flickered with each punishing pothole the wheels encountered. He ran on through the darkness, heart pounding, and pain in his right side digging at him. After several minutes, his left leg began to protest the abuse as the metal pins in the tibia ground against the bone. He knew if he could stay beyond the reach of the lights, he was safe and the field peppered with potholes would eventually break an axle.

The front door of the ranch flew open with a horrendous bang and Reggie Zito entered the living room. It had been only moments after Ari’s quick departure. He gazed at the disorderly mess, chewing placidly on his gum. He carefully stepped over Doc’s body and the broken porcelain and walked over to where McGarrett still lay under Tuck’s watchful gaze.

Zito grinned at Steve. “Somebody here call a cop?”

“I did what Ari said,” Tuck announced. “I wanted him real good.”

Zito gave him a barely tolerant sidewise glare. “Get the boy.” He squatted down next to McGarrett. “Got a call that there was a break in here. Let me help you up,” he added cordially.

Steve got off the floor, refusing Zito’s hand.

Tuck hurried back to the bath and kicked the door open. His mouth dropped open in surprise. He looked behind the door, in the tub and closet. “He’s gone!” he called back to Zito as he hurried back up the hallway.

Steve gave a smug grin. *That-a-boy, Lonnie. Like your dad always says: ‘Move the target.’*

Reggie shook his head. “You lost a kid – a twelve year old kid! Your buddy is out chasing Williams through a cow pasture! Did you guys get anything right?”

“No,” Tuck replied simply, fixing his gaze upon Mitch’s bloody body.

Zito heaved a deep sigh to keep his stress level in line. “The chair, McGarrett.” He gestured to an overturned kitchen chair that lay in the living room near the kitchen doorway.

Oozing dignity, Steve slowly walked over, righted the chair, the sat calmly down. *Too much has gone down here. Zito cannot let me live. He isn’t even trying to cover this. But he could have already killed me. Why is he waiting? The evidence.*



Reggie stood, arms crossed, before Steve. “I told you not to keep anything from us.”

“Us?” Steve asked.

“Obstruction of justice, McGarrett. That’s a crime. Harboring a fugitive – another crime.”

“Fugitive? Who’s the fugitive? You wanted Williams back – he came back. We would have come by for him to hear out your questions in the morning. There is no warrant out for Williams, he’s just a law-abiding citizen – like me. If you want to talk about crimes, how about embezzling funds, accepting bribes, arson, murder,” Steve replied calmly. “I can tell you what you already know. Quinn was able to get the goods on you, enough to take you out of commission – permanently. It was a good job, very complete. He mailed the report to Williams who was out of town, so the post office held it. Carrie Donagon, not knowing what it was, picked it up. Williams broke into her house to get the file when she wasn’t home so you couldn’t use her.” He stopped.

“Where’s the file, McGarrett?” Reggie demanded.

He looked Zito in the eye. “I don’t know. It’s not here.”

He suddenly punched Steve in the jaw, snapping his head back and rocking the chair wildly on the back two legs. “Where is it?!”

Steve gave no answer, just a small smile. Zito hit him again. Tuck stood by staring at the events. His friends were cruel and he was used to violence. He was not shocked, just fascinated.

Lonnie lay under the house praying something would happen to rescue them. He had heard thuds, gunshots, running feet. A car he did not know had arrived and things had gotten much quieter. He wondered if it was safe to come out. No one had called for him so he decided to stay put a little longer. He kept brushing bugs off himself. It was too dark under the house to see and there was no moon out. He was shivering from the shock of his injury and was tired. Every time he started to doze off, the pain of his arm would awaken him again.

Kono had waited until well after one in the morning, hoping DeWitt would leave the office and go home, it seemed like he was waiting for something. It wasn’t too much of a secret what it was. In some ways, as long as Jackson remained in the office, Kono knew Zito had not found Williams. Kono wasn’t sure which side of the law Jackson was on, but he was beginning to believe it was the wrong side.

At last, Kono slipped away and went to the crime lab undetected. Ken was still there, sleeping on a stool, propped against the wall. He jumped when Kono entered, then relaxed. “Scared me,” the scientist muttered. “I’m not used to this cloak and dagger stuff. Will you tell me what the hell’s going on around here?”

Kono did not answer. “You got my results?”

“Yeah. The disposal matches blood and tissue from the deceased. The prints are Reggie Zito and Sergie Booth.”

Kono blinked. The idea that Reggie would have done his own dirty work was surprising.

“Now, come clean with me, Kono. Why shouldn’t I go to DeWitt with this? You’re running around with Zito’s prints, Zito’s running around with prints on Williams. Everybody’s hush about a body in the morgue.”

“You know and you could get killed,” Kono murmured softly. “For your own sake, keep this to yourself. If you got some sick or vacation time – use it and get out of here – now. Hopefully I’ll live long enough to explain it all someday.”

Danny had covered the mile of pasture at a dead run and by the time he reached the far end, was out of breath and the stitch in his side and leg could no longer be ignored. Crawling into some shrubbery, he tried to get comfortable and catch his breath. The stitch was fierce and he rubbed his side with his hand. When he did, the pain shot through him, surprising and shocking him. His hand was wet. It was too dark for visual examination, but when he smelled the moisture, it was unmistakably blood. He realized that he must have been shot. He needed to decide what to do, where to go. And he had to get help back to Steve and Lonnie. But right now, he needed to rest just a little...

Ari stumbled in the back door of the ranch and instantly felt the deep foreboding upon seeing Zito present and McGarrett’s bruised and bloodied face.

“Well?” Reggie demanded of Ari.

He shrugged. “It’s dark out there and my car’s stuck in a hole.”

Zito, in rage, slapped Ari hard, then grabbed the teen by the shirt. “Did he have the papers on him?”

Ari rubbed his sore face, glaring at Zito and wondering a little about this cop who’d promised him so much before. “I don’t see how. I don’t know.”

“Then get back in that bedroom and search it. Search the whole damn place!” Zito ordered. He glanced at Tuck and decided he didn’t think too much of the large man’s searching abilities. “You. Watch McGarrett, but don’t get too close. Understand?” He gestured to Danny’s pistol still in Tuck’s hand. “He makes a move – any move at all – kill him. He’s not worth much to us anyway.” Reggie stormed away to scour the other bedroom.

Tuck sank down on the edge of the destroyed couch watching Steve through dull, tired eyes, mouth hanging open.

“Are you tired, Tuck?” Steve asked him gently.

“Yeah,” he muttered.

“Me, too. How did you get into this?”

“Ari, he’s my friend. He always helps me out. He asked me to come help him cause Randy, the guy who usually helps him is locked up right now. He said we could trash a house and have lots of fun.”

“Having any fun?”

He looked sad. “No. Mitch told me he wouldn’t hurt the dog. He lied.” He glanced at Mitch’s pallid body. Most of the blood had pumped out onto the carpet. “And Mitch is dead now, too.”

Steve allowed Tuck to dwell on the moment before commenting. “Zito will kill you and Ari. He can risk having you talk to someone.”

“Naw, he’s gonna give us money. He gave Ari some really good stuff earlier. He had the most excellent high.”

*Great, add drug dealing to Reggie's list,* Steve thought.

"Ari told me so. He knows these things," Tuck finished sincerely.

"You seem smarter to me than Ari is," Steve commented.

Tuck flushed. "You're just saying that. Ari know things. Lots of things."

"Tuck, you need to be the one to decide if you will help me stop Zito from killing Ari. You need to decide this for yourself." Steve heard something crash in the back of the house. *How much more time do I have?*

"Ari says I'm too stupid to get out of my own way." Tuck grinned. "He's right, you know."

"Tuck, this is important. They are making you do things you know are wrong. They killed the dog. Lonnie got hurt. Mitch is dead. Tuck, you can change this. You can decide to stop this."

"How?"

Steve tried to sound parental and kind. "Just give me the gun."

He drew back. "Oh no. I'm supposed to shoot you if you move."

"I won't move. You can just put the gun into my hand. See?"

Question clouded Tuck's face.

Zito suddenly appeared in the hallway. "Is he trying to trick you, Tuck?"

Tuck turned in surprise. "I don't know. He's a nice man. He said nice things to me."

"Hum," Zito murmured knowingly as he walked over to Tuck. "A regular charmer, huh? What did he want?"

Worry furrowed Tuck's brow. "He said I should give him the gun."

Zito glanced smugly at Steve who looked away. Zito took the weapon from Tuck. "Well, let's give him what he wants." He pointed the gun at Steve and fired. The impact of the bullet knocked Steve and the chair over backward.

Headlights suddenly gleamed in the window.

Zito cursed. He had expected no one and the sound of the shot could not have been missed by whoever had just arrived.

Outside, Kono was just pulling up to the ranch when he heard the shot. Picking up the radio he called: "Backup to McGarrett's ranch. Shots fired!" Not waiting for the confirmation, he leapt from the vehicle, gun drawn.

Zito grabbed Ari and Tuck and shoved them out of the kitchen door, then followed himself. He quickly wiped the gun and dropped it into the rose bush. "Get back to town. Stay off the main road. I will make sure no one follows you."

"My money, man!" Ari ignorantly hissed.

"There's a dead cop in there!" Zito snarled jerking his thumb towards the house. "Get out of here. I've got a friend named Sergie. He'll meet you at that tattoo parlor we were at yesterday. He'll give you your money later. Just get out of here." He watched the two slip away into the dark undergrowth knowing he'd send Sergie to quiet them permanently later. He heard the front door slam open.

Kono burst in the door, crouched, gun first, not knowing what to expect and was met by silence. His attention was drawn first to the body of Mitch. One quick glance and he knew the man had been dead over an hour. He looked around the room again and almost as quickly he saw Steve on his back against the overturned chair.

“Dear God,” Kono uttered, holstering the weapon and racing to his side. A large bloody chest wound was oozing blood out onto Steve’s shirt. Kono touched the carotid to reveal a rapid thready pulse. There was a heartbeat, but Steve was not breathing. Kono tilted Steve’s head for puffed two breaths past the gray-blue lips, hoping he would begin to breathe again on his own. He did not. Kono began rhythmically breathing into McGarrett. “Come on, Steve,” he begged. “Hang on. Breathe, bruddah!”

Zito stepped through the door Kono had left standing open, gun in hand. “What happened here?” he demanded, playing the part. “I was on the surveillance at the front road and heard the shot.”

“Don’t know,” Kono gasped. “Call 911.”

“Oh, yeah,” Zito remarked and went to the phone.

Gary noticed Steve’s color was a little less blue – he hoped he was doing some good. But McGarrett still did not breathe for himself, so Kono kept pushing the air in every five seconds. Kneeling on the floor, trying to wipe away blood between breaths, it was hard to believe there was any chance for McGarrett’s survival at all.

Zito stood watching. “Kono, you sure he’s alive?” *How can he be alive? I should have done a headshot. Damned bad luck if this old warhorse is too stubborn to just die like he should.*

The satellite aid station was less than a mile from the ranch and EMTs were on the scene in less than three minutes. Uniformed police officers were only moments behind them. Kono gratefully surrendered care of Steve over to the medics and watched as they quickly assessed the severity and began to “bag” Steve with the mask to literally pump air into him. By the speed at which they worked, Kono knew things were pretty critical. It took less than five minutes for the team to have him on a stretcher and out to the ambulance.

Just as the ambulance turned out of the ranch, the headlight of the first news team came up the drive. Carry Donagon jumped from the passenger side as her cameraman scrambled for his gear.

Kono was shocked, Zito angered. “No cameras!” Zito shouted.

A uniformed officer entered the kitchen door with the gun held by a plastic glove. It was slid into a plastic Ziploc bag and handed to Zito.

Carrie had already noticed the body of Mitch as an officer covered it with a bed sheet. “What can you tell me about what happened here?” she bravely asked. “Who shot that man?”

Kono gripped her arm fiercely. “Get the hell out of here, Carrie,” he murmured hotly.

Her eyes met his. “This is my job, Kono.”

“This is *your* life, Carrie.”

“Where’s Steve? Where’s Lonnie?” she persisted.

“Wait outside, there will be a statement. But get out of here right now,” Kono almost begged, trying to keep any eye on Zito who continued to circle the room.

Carrie yielded. “I’ll be right outside.”

With her gone, Kono turned to face Zito. “What’s going on around here?”

Zito had lifted the corner of the sheet and was examining Mitch’s body. “Why don’t you answer that? You got here first. And we know this guy didn’t do it. He’s been dead too long.”

“You know who he is?” Kono asked.

He shook his head. “Nope. Nor what he was doin’ here.” He gazed at the gun in the bag. “This one ‘s been fired. I’m sure it was just used to shoot McGarrett.”

Kono did not ask by whom. In his wildest fears he would not have pictured Zito being so brazen as to kill McGarrett, but now it seemed obvious. He walked back into the kitchen to wash the blood off his hands. He tried to piece it together. If the dead man was hired by Zito, he’d been dead awhile. Who shot him? Had Steve managed to take out the potential assassin, so Zito did it himself?

Zito marched into the kitchen as Kono turned off the water. Zito was shaking his head and scratching his neck. “I just don’t get this whole thing. McGarrett was a good cop. I don’t know why he got fooled into this thing.”

“What thing?” Kono asked.

“Quinn was collecting evidence on a real hush-hush underworld connection. You knew that, right?”

Kono scowled and did not acknowledge.

“Williams tricked McGarrett into thinking it was DeWitt, or something like that. The information was incriminating Williams – that’s why he was trying to keep it away from us.”

Kono just stared at Zito. Based on what he knew to be true, this was impossible. He frantically tried to piece together what he was supposed to know from what he really knew. And he was aware of at least three uniformed cops who were hearing every word.

“Damned shame McGarrett bought into it,” Zito repeated as he examined the serial number on the gun through the bag. “I’ll bet this is Williams’ piece.”

Kono felt anger rising, but Zito was trying to be convincing. It took tremendous effort to remind himself the man was lying. “If Quinn was compiling evidence on Williams, why did he call him?”

“Hey, Kono, it’s a dirty world out there. Maybe Quinn was selling it for a price.”

“That’s insane! You’ve got nothing to base that on!” Kono blurted.

Zito gave a grin and his gum snapped. “Maybe Williams arranged for Quinn’s murder, too. First Quinn, now McGarrett.”

“Williams wouldn’t shoot Steve. Never!”

Zito gave a sly grin. “That’s what he wants you to think. This isn’t for good old days, Kono. I’m putting out an APB on Williams. Armed and dangerous.”

## Chapter Five

Lonnie had heard voices, sirens and commotion overhead. There were lights flashing out in front of the ranch and he wondered if it was safe to come out. He recalled Steve's apprehension at the cottage the night before and realized that even though the police were there it might not be safe. He slid his way through the grime and dirt to the edge of the porch and peeked between the slats of the latticework just as he heard the thundering diesel engine of the ambulance rev up. The big tires rolled past the porch, blocking his view then, as the siren rose to a scream, it raced down the gravel drive towards town.

*Who's hurt?* He peeked out again and saw the TV news truck and Carrie standing before the house, holding a microphone loosely in her hand. *Carrie! I know I can trust her!* He prepared to kick out a slat when he heard a voice. He looked up to see Reggie Zito exit the house.

"Can you give us a statement, Officer Zito?" Carrie was asking, but she seemed less authoritative than usual.

He gave a grunt. "We had an incident. McGarrett has been shot," he said bluntly.

"But what happened?" she asked with genuine concern.

He spat out his well-chewed gum. "We've got what looks like a break-in. One unidentified guy dead in there."

*Steve is shot! Someone is dead!* Lonnie's heart began racing in dread.

"We got nothing more to say right now," Zito remarked.

"Can I do a short interview live with you?" she asked, wishing she was nowhere near this man. She could not forget the exchange back in her house.

He hesitated. "Live?"

She gave a quick nod.

"At 2:30 in the morning? Who watches TV at 2:30am?" He gave a chuckle.

"Sure, why not?"

She motioned the cameraman who brought up the tungsten lamps. Just as he did so, another news team pulled into the drive. "Hurry, Marty."

"Go, we're live," Marty commented.

"This is Carrie Donagon coming live from the TwoB Ranch outside of Honolulu, residence of ex-Five-0 chief Steve McGarrett. In an apparent foiled robbery Chief McGarrett was shot tonight. I have Officer Zito from Five-0 with me. Officer Zito, can you tell us anything about McGarrett's condition?"

Zito tried to look pleasant for the camera. "He was still alive when they left here a moment ago." He almost sounded disappointed.

"Can you tell us anything else about this incident?"

"It looks like there was an argument of some kind. Shooting resulted from that."

"Argument?" Carrie was shocked. *He didn't say this a second ago.* "What kind of argument?"

"We've had an investigation going on for awhile. It is likely this is connected to the Quinn killing from yesterday."

Carrie stared. *Why is he saying all this on live TV? A minute ago he was so closed mouthed.* Trying to come up with a quick question she asked: "Do you have any suspects?"

“As a matter of fact, we do,” Zito blurted. “We have the gun that was used on McGarrett, we have the motive. The suspect was seen running from the residence. There isn’t too much doubt but that it is Dan Williams.”

Carrie nearly dropped the microphone in astonishment. *I have just been used!!*

Lonnie gasped in shock.

“That’s all for now,” Zito added, delighted at the shock on Carrie’s face. He patted her shoulder. “We’ll keep you informed of any updates.” He walked away with a chuckle.

Carrie attempted to recover. “There you ... have it. Back to the studio.” She gave a cutthroat gesture and Marty cut the lights.

“Jeeze, Carrie,” Marty muttered. “We were live.”

She threw the microphone in the window of the van and it clattered to the back.

“Like he said – who watches TV at 2:30am? We can keep it from running again at six.”

Marty jumped into the driver’s side. “Can we do that?”

She slammed the door. “We’re gonna try.”

Lonnie, under the house, watched in astonishment as the TV van flinging pebbles everywhere spun away before he’d ever had the chance to get help from Carrie. After Carrie left, it was quiet outside again. The police were mostly inside and around the back of the house. With the van moved, Lonnie could now see Kono’s old black Mercury parked near the house. Carefully, he kicked out two slats of the lattice work and pulled himself out from under the house with his good arm. He crept to the car, opened the back door, and hid himself on the floor of the back seat.

Kono glanced at his watch. It would soon be dawn and Zito was still storming around the ranch watching officers like a hawk as they meticulously took apart every room. No file of evidence appeared. Kono had evaluated the body of Mitch. He knew the forensics team would pick a bullet out of his head and wondered if it would match the pistol they’d found. Upon rolling the dead man over, they’d found another gun – a cheap Saturday night special. Someone might have shot him in self-defense. There had been some kind of scuffle, that was obvious. Kono recalled the massive bruises on Steve’s face and looked around at the destroyed house with all the signs of intentional vandalism. And there was the dog. Doc’s body was near the kitchen. He would remind the coroner that they needed the bullet from the dog as well. No doubt Doc had died trying to protect his family.

What had the slain man been here after that would have made him willing to take on a watchdog? Had he been hired by Zito to find the evidence? Had he been hired to kill Steve? But he had not done the job – he’d been dead long before Steve was shot, so who had shot Steve? Kono paced the floor again and noticed something he’d missed before. Making sure Zito’s attention was elsewhere, he rubbed his finger across the edge of the wallpaper in the corner of the hall where he’d seen the small hole. There was a bullet lodged in it. He picked the slug out and tucked it away into his pocket. He plotted a course back towards where Mitch had fallen and began to examine the carpet. About half way between Mitch and the entrance to the hallway, he noticed the stain, bent down and cut off a few fibers of the carpet that he slipped into the little bag with the bullet. Just as Kono was rising, Zito turned. “Find something?”

Kono shook his head. “I’m going to check with the hospital about Steve.”

Zito pulled him aside. “You don’t say anything about McGarrett to anybody, you got me? Not about the scene, findings, nothing.” He paused for a moment. “It’s murder now. Jackson just called me on the radio. McGarrett died before they got him to the hospital. Anybody hears anything about anything we find here and it’ll be your skin. You got that?”

Kono turned on his heel and headed out of the ranch house. He knew he was numb, unthinking and in a state of shock. *Steve dead*. It was incomprehensible. He could vividly recall how McGarrett had appeared and how desperate he felt. Should it be surprising that a man in that condition had died? Kono wished it had come from someone other than Reggie Zito. He sighed as he started the car engine. *What do I do now? To whom can I go? If what I have in my pocket reveals anything, who can I tell?* He was exhausted, unrested, completely demoralized and needed to go back to Ken. As the car left the gravel road, turning onto the asphalt he heard a sound. “That you, Danno?” he asked quietly. *How will I tell Danno that Steve is dead and he is the prime suspect?*

“No,” Lonnie whispered to Kono’s surprise. “It’s me. My arm really hurts.”

The sun had been up almost an hour, the yellow buttercups nodded in the gentle breeze and honeybees danced from bloom to bloom collecting nectar.

Danny gave a start, opening his eyes to see the large, moist nostril of a cow, inches from his face. She chewed unconcernedly on the sweet grass, nudged him a bit as if wanting him to get off her breakfast. It took a moment to recall why he was sleeping behind a Spanish bayonet plant at the edge of the pasture. As he stretched his aching muscles, his side twinged, reminding him of his injury. He checked the wound and was relieved to see that it did not seem terribly serious. Aside from the pinkening edges that warned of early infection, the bleeding had stopped. There were both entrance and exit holes in his right side. The manila folder he’d had stuffed inside his shirt had bloodstains on it by the small hole in one corner – quiet testimony to the significance to what he carried. He shifted it back inside his shirt and struggled to his feet as he could hear a truck approaching.

Gary Newman did not like having to drive clear around to the north shore in the midst of everything that was happening, but the tone of Kono’s voice telling him he needed a package delivered had left no room for questions or disagreement. As he now drove northward, Lonnie dozing in the back seat, it was obvious that the boy was in need of medical attention. A local doctor could not be trusted. Gary’s cousin’s wife’s brother was a veterinarian up along the coast, maybe he would help. Kono had remained behind to run interference for Gary’s absence and to await Ken’s latest reports.

The animal hospital was clean and smelled fresh – but then it was only eight-thirty in the morning when Gary arrived. Leaving Lonnie in the car, he went inside. A lady with her cat gave him a critical eye as he approached the counter.

“Excuse me,” he said to the secretary, “has Dr. Kauki come in yet?”

She gave a sweet smile. “He’s with a patient.”

*A patient? They are just stupid animals and I have a child in desperate trouble outside.* But he said, “Can you ask him if his sister, Fran, talked with him this morning? She was to tell him I was coming.”



She looked puzzled, but walked away from the desk. In a few minutes, she was back. “He says to go around the back door. He’ll meet you there.” She clearly thought he was a large animal owner. “Your horse trailed should be able to make the turn back there okay.”

He just nodded and tried not to run out the door. Back in the car he said to Lonnie, “Help’s coming, buddy. It’s almost over.”

Lonnie just nodded through white lips. He was exhausted, frightened and confused. All he could think about was what Zito had told Carrie. *Uncle Steve is dead and they are trying to hurt my dad. They are supposed to be the good guys.*

Dr. Kauki opened the door and ushered them into his back surgery. Gary was surprised how much it resembled a real human operating room. “Well, young man, I hear you’ve had a little accident.”

Lonnie just stared at him.

The doctor knew right away that the boy was in shock. “Can you tell me your name?”

“Moki,” Gary said quickly.

Kauki turned back to Lonnie. “Does your arm hurt, Moki?”

Lonnie looked down at his arm and back at Kauki wordlessly.

“Let’s see.” Kauki gently took hold of the swollen, bruised arm and examined the injury. His look hardened as he turned back to Gary. “Is he your boy?” Gary hesitated. “My friend’s son. He’s away and I was watching him. Did Yvonne talk to you?”

“Yes, she talked to me. She said you all need to keep this quiet, that there was a custody case going on. I shouldn’t be doing this, you know. I could get into a lot of trouble. Now, how did this injury happen?”

“Wrestling with another kid,” Gary supplied the answer Kono had given him.

“Look, you’d better come clean with me. No kid did this. This is first-rate child abuse. If you weren’t family, Gary, there’d be not way I would have come this far. Now, I want to know what happened to this kid.”

Lonnie bit his lip, a tear slipped out of one eye. “Mr. Newman didn’t hurt me,” he whispered. “Won’t you please help?”

Kauki came close. “Who hurt you?”

Lonnie looked at Gary. Gary cleared his throat. “I promise you, Alex, nothing bad will happen to you – and nothing more will happen to Lon – Moki. We need the arm treated and that is all.”

Kauki rubbed his chin. “I’ll help you, Moki – if that really is your name. Don’t worry about that. I’d like to give you something to take away the pain.” He walked over to the drug cabinet and took out a vial and syringe. “It’s going to mean a shot.”

Lonnie voiced no objection. The dose of morphine took effect quickly and the drug combined with his exhaustion had him asleep in less than five minutes. Kauki proceeded to manipulate the misplaced joint much as he would have on a dog, but he could feel something was not right. On taking an x-ray the twisted fracture in the ulna was plain to see. He carefully set the fracture with external manipulation, rechecked it with a new x-ray. With Gary’s assistance, he applied the cast.

“Haven’t done all that on a human since premed,” Kauki remarked as he washed the plaster off his hands. “Now, you are going to tell me the real truth.” He shut off the

water and walked over to look at his sleeping patient. "Even up here we know that there's trouble afoot in Five-0. A cop was killed a couple of days ago. It's all over the radio that McGarrett was gunned down by an ex-officer last night."

Gary raised his eyebrows. "I tell you, Bruddah, the less you know, the better it is for you. This is Danny Williams' boy."

"They're looking for this boy!"

"Yeah, and probably because he can prove his Dad didn't do it. There are people out there who'd like to see this kid's next accident be a fatal one."

Kauki exhaled slowly and shook his head. "Then hide him well, Gary. I'll give you some antibiotics for him. Take the x-rays with you. When the heat's off, get him to an orthopedic, okay?"

"Yeah." Gary scooped the slumbering Lonnie up into his arms. "Thank, Bro."

Danny dozed in the hot morning sun, nestled amongst the melons as the old truck lumbered slowly towards Honolulu. It took real effort to keep from dropping into a sound sleep. He was hungry, tired and thirsty. Just outside of Pearl City, the truck pulled to a halt at the traffic light.

Danny sat up, tapped on the cab and waved to the driver. "Thanks, Bruddah!" He climbed out of the back, hopping down to the pavement. His left leg gave a complaint. He cursed himself for his procrastination. How many times had Carrie reminded him that he needed to make the time to have the pin removed? Now, with all the strenuous exercise, he knew it was twisting away from the partially healed bones, taking the bone with it. He went to the payphone under a palm tree. Giving a quick glance around and noticing a patrol car, he turned his face to the phone and dug out his pocket change. *This is all I have. My wallet is on the dresser back in Steve's guest room.* The coin gave a melodic chime as he dropped it into the phone and dialed. He knew Carrie would be under surveillance, but he hoped her phone at the news desk would not be tapped. She answered her private line on the first ring. "Hello?" Her voice was filled with apprehension and tension.

*Carrie, I am so sorry that you have ended up in this.* He hesitated, considering hanging up. *Is there any other choice?* He could not think of one.

"Hello?" She repeated.

"Carrie."

"Oh my God! Danny!" She gasped into the receiver. "Where are you? Are you all right?" Her words tumbled out as she fought her emotions. "What's going on?"

"Stay calm," he commented.

Mild indignation set in. *Of course he's right. Swallow the feeling, be professional.* "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. Where's Lonnie?"

"No one knows," she imparted regretfully. "Danny, Steve is dead."

He gripped the receiver, trying to contain the shock. *Zito had nothing to gain by keeping Steve alive after I escaped. I should have stayed. No, we'd all be dead now. What has Zito done with Lonnie? Is my son dead, too? I need to keep my head. I have to bring justice to this. They will not get away with this.* He gripped the envelope under his shirt.

"Danny? Are you there.?"

"Yes," he managed to say. "I need your help."

She glanced around the newsroom. "Okay."

"I have some things I need to finish .I need you to go get Audrey's medicine for me."

Carrie scowled. *Audrey? She's in New York! He means something -- what is it?* "Okay," she agreed a little slowly.

"Do remember when she broke the bottle of perfume?"

Carrie quickly tried to piece the information together. She could recall the perfume incident. Audrey had dropped a small bottle of children's cheap toilet water in a drug store. It broke and spattered all over Lonnie. He had been outraged. *Is he telling me about Lonnie or the drug store?*

"Audrey's prescription should be ready. Will you get it?"

*He wants me to go to the drug store in Pearl City.* "I'll go now."

"Good. If you have to wait for it, just leave the car unlocked."

"Danny, I love you," she said anxiously.

"Love you, too." He hung up the phone.

Carrie snatched up her purse and keys. It would be a twenty-minute drive to Pearl City. If the line was tapped, seconds would count and she would probably be followed. She hoped Danny anticipated that.

Danny started for the drug store that was just a few blocks away from the pay phone, careful of everyone around him. He knew that when Carrie came, she would probably be tailed, but he hoped his plan would still work. Each step brought new complaint as he limped on the leg and he pressed his right elbow into his wound, trying not to let the blood stain show. He got an occasional questioning glance from passersby and hoped between his odd gait, dirty attire and unshaven face they would take him for another drunk.

Loui Ahuna stood petrified as stone before Jackson DeWitt totally astonished at the rage that spewed from his boss.

"Where did you get this?!" the chief demanded. He shook in anger and disbelief at the report in his hand.

"Lab gave it to me," he muttered. "Lab tech girl said that Ken told her to give to Kono. So she gave to me to pass on." He stopped talking.

Jackson laid it down on his desk. "And what about the leads on Quinn's material you were to check out?"

"Lots of people knew about a haole female mainlander who came throwing lots of money, asking questions -- you know -- deep questions. The expensive kind."

"Lady got a name?"

Loui shook his head. "One guy thought it was Taylor. Real common -- if it's not a fake. She's gone anyway. Nobody seen her in a week." Loui found himself wondering why Jackson was not addressing the unusual report he'd given him. Gary's evidence clearly indicated Williams had not shot McGarrett, but was running and probably injured himself. A new question arose -- who had perhaps shot Williams and why? And why was he running? To Loui the answers were plain. Zito was as dirty as the informants had cautioned him. It was all mind-boggling.

"Loui," DeWitt repeated hotly.

He jumped. "I-I'm sorry. Up all night. Tired."

"I said: 'where are Gary and Kono?'" DeWitt demanded.

"I haven't seen Gary all morning," Loui answered quickly. "I thought Kono was working up the memorial for Quinn."

"If Kono is planning a memorial, what's he doing down in forensics?" DeWitt scowled at the report. "Why is he keeping evidence like this a secret?"

Loui just looked at him open-mouthed. *Does he expect me to know?* "Um -- maybe he's scared of Reggie?" he offered weakly.

DeWitt shook his head. "Maybe he's protecting Reggie. I want Kono and Gary in here. Go find them."

Reggie paced the floor in Queens General Hospital outside ICU in thoughtful silence. An observer would have quickly concluded that he was deeply concerned about a patient inside and rightfully, he was -- he was concerned that Steve McGarrett would manage to survive. The world had already been told of his death, but somehow the old cop held on. To the few doctors and nurses who provided his care, McGarrett was a "john doe" with enough bruises to his face to make him not quickly identified as the former Five-0 chief. The hospital staff were around Steve constantly, so Zito saw little opportunity to push the odds to a sure thing. He had developed a plan in his head, but hoped destiny would still complete the job for him.

He wondered if Sergie had found Williams yet. The five-0 cop turned professor was a bit hard to predict. Reggie wondered if Williams had created some kind of a psychiatric profile on him that kept Williams one guess ahead of them. *He has got to go to Donagon or contact her. There is no one left -- or is there? And where is the boy? No one ever found him at the ranch. Little kids are pretty good at staying hidden if they want to, but they get hungry sometime.* He'd left a two young innocent looking cops at the ranch with instructions to bake brownies. Maybe they could bring the boy to the surface. He still wasn't sure he could convince young Lonnie of his twisted tale. *If I cannot, what happens then? This list keeps getting longer.* Reggie was capable of doing whatever a job required without conscience, but was not happy with the job called for killing -- let alone the degree of killing that this was adding up to. Killings were messy affairs that did not go away easily. When a job went well, no one died, and no one was the wiser. *Dammit, Quinn of all people. Who would have picked that little worm to throw a wrench into the works. Maybe the error had been in failing to see the danger he was. And it was DeWitt who made that mistake, not me.*

The elevator door opened and Zito was mildly surprised to see Jackson DeWitt exit from the car and, with a glance, head in his direction. When they were within quiet speaking distance, DeWitt turned to gaze out of the same window that had had Reggie's attention the moment before. "How's McGarrett?" he asked softly.

"No change. He held on through the repair of a hole in his heart and cardiac tamponad. That old man has the constitution of an ox," Reggie muttered unhappily.

DeWitt continued to stare out of the window. They were alone in the hallway, but their voices were still hushed. "Can I assume that you met the demands of last night's workers?"

Reggie hunched his shoulders. "They have no complaints to voice. No one will find them."

Jackson handed Reggie the report Loui had presented.

Zito quickly scanned the incriminating sheets. "Damn. I don't believe this."

Jackson turned a cold eye on him. "So now what? Do we add Ken Edwards, Newman and Ahuna to the list? And what about the boy and Donagon? She's a well known reporter, Reggie. How many more bodies have to fall to protect you? Your people said you did clean work."

*Strange, Zito realized I'd just had these same thoughts, but somehow it was DeWitt at fault.*

"Where's Sergie?"

"Following Donagon. I think Williams will contact her."

"What's she done?"

"I don't know. Sergie hasn't got a phone. I guess he'll call in."

"I want him called off now."

Zito started to protest.

"Look at these findings!" DeWitt's voice rose and he shook the folder. "With these findings, how do I justify a manhunt on Williams?"

"The file of Quinn's--"

"It's too late for that now, Reggie. This whole thing is caving in. I sent Loui to find Kono and Gary. I want you here keeping an eye on McGarrett. If Williams shows up, call me but don't touch him -- you got that? He did not see you at McGarrett's."

"What about McGarrett?"

Jackson shook his head slightly. "You'd better keep praying that old coot kicks the bucket, huh?"

"And the evidence?"

DeWitt gave a small sigh and broke eye contact with Zito. "When I was a chopper crewman in Vietnam we did rescue operations. We'd go in and pull out trapped troops. Sometimes we'd have them hanging from the helicopter by ropes cause there were too many to get inside." He stopped talking for a moment, took another deep breath, and still staring at nothing continued. "A few times there were so many men that the ship couldn't fly -- it was too heavy. To save everyone else, we had to cut a few ropes and let them fall." He turned to face Zito. "It was a hard thing to do, but better to lose one or two than the whole ship." He turned on his heel and left.

Zito stared after him understanding full well his meaning knowing that there was little hope, but any there was lie in the death of McGarrett.

## Chapter Six

Carrie arrived at the Rexall Drug in Pearl City and gave quick consideration to the strategy of where to park. The diagonal spot in front closest to the side alley was available and she took it. Trying not to look around, she exited the vehicle. She did not have to look to know that the brown Mercury that had followed her at a distance from Honolulu was still at the corner. *Danny is right, I am being watched.* It was a frightening prospect. *What happens next?* Trying to appear natural, she walked into the small pharmacy and browsed among the isles of greeting cards and small ceramic knickknacks, her mind racing in fear. She wasn't sure what to expect, but was confident that when she returned to the car, Danny would be there – somehow. *How long to do I wait? Five minutes? Ten? An hour?* She stole one quick look through the front window at the brown car parked half a block away – the stalker had full view of the pharmacy, but not of the drivers' side of her car. *Maybe I should just call 911 on the phone a report a stalker.* Somehow she was skeptical that they would be of any help. *How did I get into this mess? How did Danny get into this? He promised me he was out of police work. He promised me!* She paused near the greeting cards the congratulated the couple on their marriage. *Marriage, tears gathered in her eyes, we are supposed to be married. Will we live to see it?*

At last, twenty minutes after she entered the drugstore, Carrie walked back out into the heat having purchased nothing, got into her car and started the engine. She resisted the urge to look over the back seat.

"Head for the highway. We're going to the FBI," came Danny's weary voice softly.

"God, Danny, what is happening?" she managed to get out around the fear in her throat. The tears sprang back to her eyes in relief that he had actually made it – apparently undetected – and in dread of the Mercury that had just pulled away from the curb a short distance behind them.

Sergie watched from his brown Mercury as Carrie's car turned out of the shop and headed east on Kamehameha Highway towards Highway 1. He wanted to keep his tail tight, but was afraid of spooking Donagon. The lady reporter would be alert to anything. He knew she had not come all the way to Pearl City to wander about a drug store and buy nothing. Although he'd not seen it, he was pretty sure she had somehow picked up Williams.

"He's back there," Carrie murmured through tight lips, feeling her heart pounding.

"It's okay," Danny replied from the floor of the back seat. "Don't worry about him."

"Don't worry!" she snapped. "What the hell is going on?"

He considered telling her everything for about a milli-second. *I got her into this mess as much as I tried not to. But if this doesn't work, she will be better off not knowing.*

"You know that they think you killed Steve."

He did not reply. He'd been trying hard not to dwell on McGarrett's death by convincing himself that it was a ploy. *They don't think anything, Carrie. Reggie Zito is trying to cover his tracks – and doing pretty badly.*

"Tracks about that?" she demanded sounding more like a reporter. She made the entrance onto Highway 1.

The increased engine noise bought Danny a little time. “Carrie, this isn’t a good time –“

“Danny, there is a guy back there. Why is he there?”

Danny bit the inside of his lip. “Richard Quinn obtained incriminating evidence on Zito.”

“He was killed over it,” Carrie pieced in.

“Yes.”

“But Zito must think you have it. Why does he think that? Is that why he was at my place? At Steve’s?”

He did not answer.

“Is that why Steve died? Protecting you?”

“Not now, Carrie,” he insisted quietly.

She gripped the steering wheel, her knuckles whitening, and pressed harder on the accelerator. “If we are caught, will that guy back there kill you?”

Danny gave an audible sigh. “Most likely.”

“You don’t think he’s going to just let us drive all the way back to downtown Honolulu to the FBI, do you?”

“There is a curve about another mile up where the highway bridge is. Will he lose us from view for a few seconds?”

She glanced into the rear view mirror. “He’s about thirty seconds behind. We should be out of view about twenty seconds of that.”

Danny had hoped for more. “As we hit the curve, slow down. I’m going to hide out in the brush. You continue to town, go back to the station and call Mark Lawson of the FBI. Tell him where I am.”

“You are not jumping from a moving car, Danny.”

“Get it down to about 10 miles an hour,” he insisted.

“No, Danny, you can’t – this isn’t some super cop movie!”

“Carrie!” he shouted. “Slow it down or I’ll jump at 65 miles an hour. Your choice!”

The curve was upon them. Cursing under her breath, she hit the brake hard and the speedometer dropped from nearly 75 to 10 in just under six seconds. "Hurry, Danny!"

Danny popped open the back door. "I love you, Carrie!" Even at ten miles an hour, the force of hitting the pavement rolled him several times. The tires burned as Carrie floored the gas. As Danny came to his feet and turned towards the guardrail he needed to clear before Sergie spotted him. As he moved, his left leg suddenly twisted under him causing him to stagger. He nearly fell. The stabbing pain caught his breath and his mind screamed at his limbs to obey. He made three limping, nearly hopping steps in the direction of the guardrail that divided the highway from the hundred-foot drop-off before Sergie's car came around the bend fifty yards away.

Sergie grinned. This was better than he'd hoped. No other cars in sight, a simple hit-and-run fatality. Pedestrians weren't supposed to be on the highway. What a tragic accident. He steered for Williams.

With no time for other considerations, Danny leapt from his good right leg for the guardrail and pulled himself over. The loose ground on the other side was less than four inches wide and he missed his footing. Dirt kicked away from the edge of the hundred-foot cliff and he was left dangling over the chasm as he clung to the backside of the guardrail.

Moments later, Sergie's car hit the metal rail with a scream of burning rubber and sparking of metal against metal. The car traveled another forty yards down the curve popping and snapping rivets, tearing away fiberglass and sheet metal from the car itself.

Danny pulled himself back up over the railing, wanting to make it to the dense brush only twenty-five yards down the road before Sergie could collect his wits enough to chase him. But as he tried again to run, his left leg refused to take the weight and he stumbled again. There was the blare of a horn and he spun as Carrie's Toyota appeared from the far end of the curve traveling back the wrong way on the highway at top speed.

Sergie was still in his car attempting in vain to start his engine.

Carrie closed the distance in seconds, spinning the small car with the deftness of a racecar driver so that it stopped between Danny and Sergie.

Danny, thankful that Sergie seemed too stupid to realize he could easily outdistance his quarry on foot, hobbled towards the Toyota, each movement of his left leg bringing agony. He noticed a blood stain just below his left knee – the pin had twisted free in his leg, taking part of the partially healed bone with it.

Just as Carrie brought the car to a complete halt, she saw Sergie pull his gun. "Danny!" she screamed, laying across the front seat to open the passenger door. "Hurry!"

There was a sudden popping and twanging of bullets hitting the side of her car. Danny had less than thirty feet to cover, but the pain was so great it seemed like a mile. Just as he finally dragged himself into the car, there was a loud pop of an explosion.

"The tire!" Carrie gasped.

He pulled the door shut, still staying low. "Drive on the rim!"

The shooting at stopped for a moment, Sergie was reloading as he climbed out of the car window and ran towards Carrie's car.

Carrie sat up, threw the car into reverse and hit the gas. A gray cloud of burning rubber billowed from the good right rear tire.



Sergie, still running towards them, fired three rounds into the engine of the Toyota; it gave a hideous whine and a gasping cough and was silent. A little wisp of smoke floated from the grill.

Carrie stared at Sergie, his gun leveled on the windshield aware that her mouth hung open in an undignified manner. “What now, Danny?” she whispered.

A slight smile curled Sergie’s lips. “I don’t want you, lady – just him.” He shifted the target through the windshield from Carrie to Danny. “Keep your hands where I can see them,” he ordered Danny as he carefully walked around to the passenger side of the car.

“I am unarmed,” Danny advised, raising his hands anyway. Unbidden Images of Lani’s death flooded his mind.

Sergie yanked the passenger door open. “Out.”

Danny slowly got out, hands still raised. He was ready to do anything to protect Carrie and Sergie knew it.

“Okay, Danny, where’s the stuff?” Sergie demanded.

“Safe,” he replied. “I want you to guarantee her safety.”

Sergie grinned. “I don’t think you’re in a position to demand anything, do you? What the hell, sure – I don’t want her.”

“Danny!” Carrie interjected.

“Be quiet,” he snapped hotly.

“So, where is it?” Sergie got back to his subject.

“I told you. Safe. We have to go to it. You don’t think it’s in the car, do you? Doesn’t look like either of these vehicles is running to me,” he added sarcastically.

Sergie did not reveal that he had hoped the evidence was in the car. Danny’s sarcasm brought Sergie’s anger to the boiling level. He punched Danny across the side of the head with his gun hand, knocking Williams off his unsteady feet.

As Danny hit the ground hard, his head thumped against the doorsill of the Toyota.

Carrie gave a cry of shock. “You don’t have to—“

“Shut up!” Sergie snarled, waving the gun at her.

“Sergie!” Danny shouted, trying to get the attention off Carrie. *If she would only stay quiet!*

Sergie looked back down at him and gave a humph of a chuckle. “Okay, Williams, you want your woman safe? Where’s the papers? No more cute stuff, just tell me. You are dead no matter what – you know that. Tell the truth and Carrie and I will go get them. Once I have what I want she goes free. Lie, or I don’t find them and I kill her. Real simple. And time is up.” He pointed the gun at Carrie.

“Okay,” Danny whispered, raising one hand. “Okay.” He pulled out his shirttail, then tugged the manila envelope of evidence from under his belt.

Sergie gave a weak laugh. “Son of a bitch,” he muttered taking the envelope. He noticed the bloodstains and hole through one corner.

“You’re next you know,” Danny commented. “Zito won’t let you live with what you know.”

“Save it,” Sergie remarked with a grin. “Reggie and I go way back. He won’t shoot me any more than you’d shoot McGarrett.” He laughed at his own joke.

There was the hum of an approaching vehicle on the highway from the other side of the freeway. Sergie hesitated, licking his lips, gun still on Danny.

Carrie glanced back hopefully, and felt a brief moment of elation – it was a police car.

The squad car pulled to a stop and turned on his bubble light. “Hey! Sergie!” The officer exited the car and hurried towards them.

“Hey! I need some help here!” Sergie shouted, trying to quickly formulate his next step. “I’ve got Williams! He was trying to escape!”

The patrolman jumped the divider and hurried towards them. “That’s what I needed to tell you! DeWitt cancelled the APB! There’s been a break on the case. Williams isn’t a suspect any longer.”

“He – what?” Sergie shook at the news, trying to decide what to do with the large Hawaiian officer before them. *Something has gone very wrong. I hope Reggie has a way out of this for us. What am I supposed to do now? Is this a trick?* He glanced at Danny who wore a cautious smile and resisted the urge to kick him. “You need to call Reggie Zito,” Sergie tried to sound authoritative. “This could be a trick of some kind. Williams has lots of friends in the department.”

“No trick, Bruddah,” the officer replied. “Mr. DeWitt said he’s on his way out here. You to stay put.”

Sergie stood there, feeling uncomfortably foolish, gun still in hand. The officer stood near the roadway, motioning the occasional car to keep moving and not rubberneck at what an unknowing driver would think was an accident.

Carrie remained in the driver seat of the Toyota, still gripping the steering wheel of the now useless vehicle. “What are we waiting for?” she murmured to Danny. Until things had come to this sudden anti-climactic halt, she had not even seen Danny, let alone assessed his well-being. The delay was giving her plenty of time to determine that he could certainly use some medical intervention. “Shouldn’t they be calling an ambulance or something?”

From where he continued to sit on the ground beside the car he muttered: “You only call an ambulance for someone you intend to keep alive.”

“But the officer said...” she whispered, it was slowly dawning on her that the police were not the good guys in this event.

DeWitt’s large black Cadillac finally arrived almost simultaneously with two more squad cars. “Sergie,” he murmured with contempt. He thought of Sergie as a hired thug; as a law enforcer he was a laugh.

Sergie realized he was still holding his gun. “I tailed them, just like Zito said to. She was aiding and abetting a fugitive. They ran – so I stopped them.” He handed over the envelope. “You want this?”

DeWitt’s gaze stopped for a moment on the coveted information. He also noticed the bloodstains and hole. *How many people have shed blood for this?* He walked casually over and squatted down next to Danny. “Didn’t make a very effective bullet-proof-vest, did it?” He attempted to sound friendly. He inspected Danny’s side wound, then glanced back at Sergie. “Did you call for paramedics?”

He shook his head.

“Moron.” DeWitt turned back to Danny. “Sorry, Williams, I took Reggie into my confidence. Bad mistake. I thank you and Quinn for setting this business straight.” He

looked at Carrie, still shivering behind the steering wheel. "I'm sorry about all this, Ms. Donagon. It must have been a living nightmare for you." He forced a smile "Maybe a Pulitzer prize winner in it?" He turned to a police officer. "Arrest this ass." He pointed at Sergie who started to protest.

"Charges?" the officer asked.

DeWitt winced. "Poor impersonation of a office officer." He turned back to Danny. "Williams, let's get you to my car. I'll get you to the hospital myself and get you patched up. Can you walk?"

"Yes," he declared, but he could not. The left leg would bare no weight and DeWitt himself helped Danny into the back of the Caddie.

Carrie slid in beside him, heaving a sigh of relief. She had felt comforted by Jackson's gentleness. *He knew Zito was crooked; he is arresting that madman who would have killed us. The nightmare is finally ending.* It was already hard to recall that moments before Sergie, who was now being handcuffed had been ready to kill them. Trying to make things seem more normal she remarked. "I told you to get that stupid pin out four weeks ago. Now they're probably going to cast it all over again."

Danny decided not to reply.

"I swear you'll give me a heart attack someday," she complained. "I suppose you're going to use this to postpone the wedding again, huh?"

"Heart attack?" he commented, glancing through the back window at Jackson who was talking to the uniformed officers. "Sounds fatal."

"Stop patronizing me," Carrie grumbled.

"Carrie," he said softly, still keeping an eye on DeWitt, "we are not out of this yet."

"What are you talking about?" she asked in sudden fear.

"DeWitt is as dirty as Zito. We've gone from the frying pan into the fire."

Her mouth hung open in shock.

"They've got what they want now. Our only hope is to create a diversion."

"Diversion?"

Kono arrived at the trailer home of Gary and Mandy Newman so tired he thought he could sleep on his feet. He'd heard calls for Gary and himself over the radio numerous times and ignored them. He knew Carrie had not reported to work, that Danny was still missing. He could only hope they had found each other. In the yard by the trailer, the children were playing kick ball inside the chain link fence.

"Uncle Kono!" the oldest, Karli, ran towards him, her dark curls flying. The children saw their uncle was their favorite playmate and were thrilled at his unexpected appearance in the middle of the day.

Mandy came the door of the trailer, baby on her shoulder and fear on her face. "Kono, where have you been! Where is Gary! Five-0 and HPD keep calling and calling. Loui has been here twice. That man is frightened – where is Gary? Is he all right?" She paused for breath. "What is happening?"

He took her by the elbow and stepped into the trailer. "I can't begin to explain it all, but I promised Gary and I would assure you that he is all right. I don't know when he will be home, but he is safe."

"He is in trouble, isn't he?"

Kono knew that Mandy deserved the truth and that nothing would ever force her to reveal it. "He's on the north shore hiding Lonnie Williams."

"Lonnie! The radio says –"

"Damn the radio," he blurted. "I don't know what is truth and what is not. I do know that Danny did not shoot Steve and the last time I saw Steve he was alive. I'm pretty sure that Lonnie can tell us a lot and that is why they want him."

"They?"

"Mandy, I have told you all I can. Gary is safe."

"Danny, are you sure about this?" Carrie whispered intently. "What if you are wrong?"

"I'm not," he said firmly. "Ask Jackson about Steve."

"Danny, I told you Steve is dead."

"Is he? Why, cause Zito said so? Did you see the body?" Danny demanded stubbornly.

"No, but – Danny, you are not just not wanting to accept reality."

"Reality?" He rubbed his tired eyes. "Does anyone know what reality is right now?"

Jackson was approaching. He opened the driver's door and got in. "Well now. Sorry to keep you waiting. I am going to get the full story from Sergie on everything he knows about Reggie's activities. That little worm is so scared he'd rat on his own mother." DeWitt placed the manila envelope on the seat beside him. "I can't believe how Quinn mishandled this. If he'd just come to me – that's the problem you have nowadays. Hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys." He started the engine and swung the car into the lane and away from the scene.

"How's Steve?" Carrie asked, maintaining her poise.

DeWitt glanced back at her in the rearview mirror. "You reported his death yourself, Ms. Donagon. Why are you asking?"

"Well, yes," she stumbled over her words. "it's just that...I was hoping..." She fired a glance at Danny.

"Officer Kalakaua tried valiantly to revive him as did the emergency personnel but he died on the way to the hospital – that is a painful fact. I am sorry if you had hoped otherwise." Silence closed over the car for a moment. "Hum, Williams, where is your son?"

Danny stared at him in the mirror, his expression betraying he did not know. "I, um, left him at the ranch," he murmured, attempting a recovery.

"Hum. I guess I'll send another patrol out that way. They said they did a search but – well you know how kids are," DeWitt chatted on, "they can stay hid if they want to."

Danny noticed they had missed the exit to town. *We will never leave this car alive. I don't know what DeWitt has in mind, but it won't be good for us. Here goes nothing.* Heaving a quick breath, he suddenly gripped his left arm and gave a yell. Carrie jumped.

DeWitt spun in surprise. "What's happening!"

Danny grabbed his chest, gasping eyes wide. "Can't breathe!" He collapsed on the seat.

Carrie panicked, unable to understand what was happening. “I think he’s having a heart attack!”

“Heart attack!” DeWitt shouted back.

“I—I don’t know. Danny! What’s going on!” she pleaded.

He did not reply, just lay across her lap gasping in apparent open distress, hands against his chest.

“Do something!” Carrie begged DeWitt.

DeWitt floored the gas and aimed at the approaching exit, amazed at his apparent good luck. *This is too good to be true! I have the evidence and Williams expires from natural causes! I can get Zito to take out McGarrett, then see to it he takes the fall. Donagon will be harmless. The only loose piece is that kid and kids can be convinced of anything. I just deliver Williams to Queens and pray he doesn’t make it.* He picked up his radio. “DeWitt to central.”

“Central,” the female voice responded.

“Notify Queens I am on my way with a medical emergency in my vehicle. Apparent heart attack.”

“10-4.”

## Chapter Seven

Kono had nothing more to lose. Edwards had apologetically informed him that his tech had given copies of the bullet analysis and blood findings to Loui. Kono knew that if Zito and DeWitt knew he'd discovered at least part of the truth about Steve's ranch, his life was worthless. He left the lab, glancing around. The corridor was empty. He walked down the cool, semi-lit hallway, through the double doors and stopped. Heat waves shimmered off the roofs of the cars in the parking lot, but there were no people out there. *Almost too empty.* He crossed the lot to his car, unlocked it and headed for Ala Moana Boulevard, keeping one eye in his rear view mirror. *What will I say? I don't have absolute proof. But I cannot go any farther alone. If I don't act, it just a matter of time before someone recognizes Gary or Lonnie. I don't know what has happened to Danny. This is their only hope.* He parallel parked the car on the street in the closest spot he could find, half a block from the entrance to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There was a large bronze seal of the FBI stenciled on the glass doors of the one story tan brick building. Kono started for the door.

"Kono."

He froze, fear gripping him. The doorway was so close. *Maybe I should run for it.*

"Hey, Kono!" Loui called again. "I've been tryin' to hail you for hours. Your radio off?"

He turned towards his fellow officer, nervous and uncomfortable. "I don't know. I, um, was out of the car a lot."

Loui could tell that Kono was frightened. He took a step closer. "Edwards gave me some information you wanted on some evidence in McGarrett's shooting. You know, the results of those carpet fibers and the ballistics report."

Kono stood still, watching him, trying to decide if he should pull a gun on a fellow officer or not.

Loui extended a hand with several sheets of paper that rustled in the wind.

Kono's eyes narrowed.

Loui hesitated. "I've got copies here. You, um, on your way in there?" He pointed towards the FBI office.

He nodded, but made no movement towards Loui.

"Me, too. I gave the originals to DeWitt – his reaction was a bit odd. Got me to thinking." Loui walked closer. "Come on, we'd better not stand around out here."

Kono and Loui both turned towards the door.

Mark Lawson looked up as his male secretary rapped on the semi-open door. "Officers Ahuna and Kalakaua of Five-0 to see you."

He closed the file on his desk and rose to greet them with a handshake. "Good to see you again, Kono. It's been a while."

"Yeah," he replied. Funny, he always thought of Lawson as the young field officer that had handled a bank robbery eight years ago. It was a shock to see the strong mature man that was senior agent for Honolulu. Even Lawson's handshake was firm and committed, that of a man of discipline. *Our lives are in Lawson's hands. I sure hope this is the right thing to be doing.* He exchanged a glance with Loui.

"What can I do for you?" Lawson's deep blue eyes were penetrating.

“We, hum, need some help with a case,” Kono muttered. He felt like a child in the principal’s office.

A slight frown blew across Lawson’s face. “Does Jackson DeWitt know you are here?”

They both shook their heads.

Lawson crossed his arms. “Eight years ago when I arrived I was advised to stay out of Five-0’s way. McGarrett always ran a tight ship and we had a deep respect for each other. Last night was tragic, just tragic.”

Kono bit the inside of his lip, reliving the night of horror and the overwhelming fear of trying to keep Steve alive in spite of the odds. “Yes, sir,” he finally whispered.

“Is that what this is about?”

“In a way,” Kono said. “There are problems in the department. I wish I had what I needed to prove it, but we do have enough to prove that Williams did not shoot McGarrett.”

Lawson sat down behind his desk. “What do you think is wrong in your department?”

Kono licked his lips. “Somebody is dirty, maybe on the take.”

“The take?” Mark raised his eyebrows.

Kono could feel sweat collecting under his collar. “Look, I can’t prove none of it.”

Lawson scowled, placing his hands on the closed folder before him on the desk. “What if I could?”

Kono’s expression twisted in suspicion. “What?”

“I received some information by certified airmail today.” He picked up the cover letter. “Lana Taylor a private investigator out of Minneapolis mailed me a copy of research she had been conducting for Officer Richard Quinn – the *late* Richard Quinn. The agreement was she would mail a backup copy to my office if she did not hear from him by yesterday morning.”

Kono thought he might faint, but wasn’t sure if it was relief or fear. He dared to cast a look towards Loui who said glued to his chair in shock.

“From what I have seen here it isn’t too hard to imagine Reggie Zito willing to kill someone over this,” Lawson admitted. “Can you tell me where Zito is now?”

“Queens Medical Center,” Loui offered.

Lawson frowned. “He hurt?”

Loui shook his head negative.

“Why is he there?”

Loui shrugged.

Kono and Mark exchanged looks. “McGarrett is alive,” Kono suddenly said.

Lawson was already grabbing his shoulder harness and suit jacket from the back of his chair. “And DeWitt?”

“His office?” Loui guessed.

Kono dialed the Five-0 office and asked Ginny. Hanging up he turned to the others. “She says he’s on route to Queens and he has Williams with him. Some kind of medical emergency.”

“Gentlemen, let’s roll,” Lawson declared.

As Jackson's car spun into the hospital entrance, Danny went totally limp across Carrie's lap. Carrie was yelling Danny's name, yelling at DeWitt to hurry, yelling for someone to help.

"Calm down!" DeWitt shouted back at her. "We're here!"

Even as he spoke the words, the doors to ER slid open and three people with a stretcher ran out. They flung the car door open and had Danny onto the gurney and inside before Carrie could even comprehend what was happening. She jumped from the car at a dead run to catch up but was intercepted by a nurse at the desk.

"Stay right here, honey," the older woman announced.

"But you don't understand-" Carrie stammered. "Please, I need to know..." she pleaded as the stretcher disappeared around the corner.

"I do understand," the nurse replied. "There isn't anything more you can do at this point. The guys back there will give him the best."

Carrie nearly stumbled over towards the couches of the waiting area. *What is going on? What is happening to Danny? It is his heart? I never took a pulse, I never tried CPR, I just flipped out. I couldn't think! I'm supposed to always be in control, but when it counted, I didn't do anything. He may die because of me!*

Two nurses and two doctors raced the gurney into the triage room, flinging the curtains back in their haste. One slammed the brake down while one doctor yanked the intubation kit and laryngoscope from the crash cart. One nurse with sharp scissors slit Danny's shirt up the front in one motion while slapping electrodes to his chest.

"Get a tracing! Let's see what's happening!" the senior resident shouted pulling on his gloves.

The defibrillator gave a hum as it was brought it up to power.

"Hold it!" Danny suddenly shouted, coming completely alert from his seeming unconsciousness.

All four stopped as if frozen, staring at him in total silence. The pair of scissors slipped from the nurse's hand and clattered to the floor.

"Um," Danny murmured a little more self-consciously, "I'm okay."

"What is this?" The resident demanded anger plain, "some kind of practical joke?"

"I assure you – no joke." Danny heaved a sigh.

Forty minutes had passed. Carrie tried to console herself that maybe that was good, that there was something to save. Jackson DeWitt sat beside her, hands clasped over his knees, staring wordlessly straight ahead. *What is he thinking? Does he care? Danny thought we were still in trouble. Does he want Danny to die?* Carrie fought to retain her composure. The vivid recollection of the death of her first fiancé, Officer Brad Cannon, washed over her. *I cannot bare this again.*

The resident appeared in the doorway. "Williams family?" He looked tired.

Carrie leapt to her feet, aware that DeWitt was right behind her. "Is he all right?" The young doctor's expression was of remorse. "I-I'm sorry. We did we could. Maybe if he'd gotten here sooner. He was too far gone."

Her hands flew to her mouth. "Oh dear God, no!"

"Is he dead?" Jackson asked with little emotion.



The doctor looked at him. "I am very sorry." He placed an arm around Carrie's shoulders and directed her back towards the curtained cubicle.

DeWitt followed a little behind. *What a stroke of good luck! There will be no trouble weaving a story everyone will buy – except McGarrett. One small detail left to clean up.*

The doctor parted the curtain revealing the sheet-covered body on the stretcher inside the cubicle.

Carrie gave a cry and her knees buckled. The doctor caught her as she began to fall, and she managed to recover herself.

The clerk behind the nurses' station looked up. "Chief DeWitt?"

He turned.

"There is someone to meet you at the main information desk, first floor."

He turned away. *What idiot wants me now?* He gave a parting satisfied look at the stretcher and left.

The resident directed Carrie inside the cubicle and carefully drew the curtains around them. He quietly walked over to the sheet draped body and drew back the cover. "She's alone," he announced.

Danny sat up and Carrie nearly fainted again. "Carrie, I'm okay," he declared.

"What—what is this about?" she gasped. "You're okay? You're not dead? This was some kind of – of .."

"A ploy to get us away from DeWitt," he completed for her. "And it worked."

In fury she clenched her fists. "How could you do this to me! You had me scared to death! I thought – I thought.." She struggled to keep from crying in spite of her rage.

"Carrie," Danny said calmly, "what matters is it worked."

"But you could have told me!"

"I had to be convincing to get rid of DeWitt. You could have checked my pulse, my breathing, either of which would have told you I was okay," he pointed out and gave a small smirky smile. "You could have tried mouth-to-mouth you know."

She crossed her arms in frustration, but it was plain her anger was fading. It had been a good trick and, as he had pointed out, it had worked. "You let me sit out there forty minutes!"

"They wanted to suture my side." He sounded a little childlike.

"Your side?"

"He could a bullet in the right side," the doctor explained. "Managed to enter and exit, hitting nothing vital with very little bleeding. It will be fine with some antibiotics. Wish I could say the same for the leg." He gestured towards Danny. "You won't be going anywhere on that for a while. An ortho guy will need to start over with that."

"What happens now?" Carrie asked.

"I think Steve McGarrett is alive," Danny declared, "and that he is here in this hospital. How can I find out?"

"We get John does from time to time," the doctor offered. "Let me have someone check the system." He left the cubicle.

For a tense minute, Danny and Carrie faced each other before she commented. "You should have found a way to tell me."

He sighed.

The doctor came back with a printout. “Okay, we have two unidentified patients in the ICU: a female age 34 from an MVA; a male age 22 chest trauma.”

Danny scowled.

“I might add, age can change with a keystroke – sex and diagnosis won’t. That male with chest trauma could be your man.”

“I need to get to ICU,” Danny declared.

The doctor nodded. “I think it’s time for me to transfer my GSW to ICU.”

“GSW?” Carrie muttered.

“Gun shot wound,” the doctor answered.

Jackson arrived in the front lobby of the hospital and looked around quickly. There were several people in the lobby, but none he recognized. As he headed for the desk, a tall, blonde-haired man rose and approached him. DeWitt could tell by the man’s posture that he was trouble and was carrying a gun on his shoulder. His brief relief started to crumble.

“Jackson DeWitt?” the man asked.

Jackson stuck a hand out, hoping to look friendly. “May I be of assistance?”

He did not smile or accept the handshake. “Mark Lawson, FBI. It is my duty to inform you that you are under arrest. The only assistance you could possibly be would be to turn over all your files to state’s evidence and tell me where Reggie Zito is.”

DeWitt’s mouth fell open.

Reggie was impatient. He worried about McGarrett regaining consciousness and when the nurse from ICU came to him reporting that McGarrett was indeed awake, it was the last straw. Reggie had spent most of his last day stuck here at the hospital and had had plenty of time to both check out the life support equipment plan his action.

“Steve McGarrett has been awake,” the nurse announced to him. “He can’t talk to you, but I think he is aware.”

“Great,” Zito remarked, hoping he sounded sincere.

There were six ICU glass walled cubicles in a horseshoe pattern around the nurses station. McGarrett’s was the closest to the desk, but Zito hoped that would not present a problem. The staff had been very willing to explain everything he had asked about regarding Steve’s care. They had been sincere in their desire to impart a sense of their involvement and support for not just Steve, but also the officer who had taken the vigil in the waiting room. *Now this will pay off.*

Zito walked to McGarrett’s bedside, noting the wrist cuffs dangling unused from the rails. He quietly slipped one around each of Steve’s wrists and made sure the leather straps were tight. Steve made no movement. The ventilator still hissed as it supported Steve’s breathing. The nurse had explained that although Steve was breathing for himself, he was not breathing deeply enough. Because of the severe bruises on his face, a tracheotomy had been made into Steve’s neck and the ventilator tubing was connected to the small steel and plastic cuff. The heart monitor blipped silently on the wall in regular pattern. In spite of himself, Zito felt a twang of sadness. It was ironic that a man like McGarrett would be so totally helpless, unable to talk, breathe or swallow for himself. A giant of a legend, McGarrett was reduced to this point of helplessness that would be his ending.

Reggie looked around. No one was watching. He flipped the alarm lockout on the respirator, carefully reached out and disconnected the tube from the trach piece.

McGarrett's eyes opened and focused on him.

"Sorry, old man," Reggie whispered. "Only the strong survive." He placed a finger over the trach hole.

McGarrett opened his mouth, trying to shout, or breathe to no avail. He pulled against the restraints with all the strength he could muster, but knew he was helpless. The nurses, only a few yards away were completely unaware of what was happening. The heart rate began to climb on the telemetry screen.

The nurses were not at the desk. Their attention had been taken by an argument that was developing between the ICU charge nurse and a nurse with a gurney from ER.

"I've told those cowboys in ER they can't just ship patients up here without clearing it first!" the charge nurse was declaring.

McGarrett's attempts were weakening. *Am I really going to die this way?* The small red alarm light was blinking on the ventilator and the monitor, but there was no one at the desk to see. He was losing consciousness, still staring into Zito's sneering smile.

As the ER nurse started to answer the charge nurse, Danny sat up and demanded. "I need to get to Steve McGarrett!"

Zito heard the voice and turned, cursing under his breathe at the same instant, Danny saw Zito through the cubicle doorway. Danny leapt from the gurney sending it skidding one way, linens the other as he aimed for a wheeled desk chair that he managed to land on. Giving a kick with his good leg, the chair propelled him across the unit with amazing speed as the plastic wheels rattled loudly against the linoleum flooring.

Reggie spun at the sound and saw him coming just before Danny landed on him with a flying tackle that sent both of them crashing against the ventilator, exchanging blows.

"I want security up here!" the charge nurse shouted.

The clerk hit a button on the console and the operator downstairs announced over the public address system. "Code black – ICU...code black – ICU."

Downstairs in the lobby, the volunteer noting the cluster of officers around DeWitt called. "Code black is a security emergency! They need a cop in ICU!"

Danny ducked a blow from Reggie, snatched up a small steel bowl from the bed table and swung it at his attacker. It made a melodic bong as it connected with Zito's skull. As he staggered back, Danny snatched up the ventilator tube and attempted to reconnect it. Zito kicked Danny's good leg out from under him and he stumbled backward in the cramped space.

The alarm silence timed out on the equipment and the alarm sounded at the desk. The tech saw Steve's mounting heart rate and falling vital signs and pressed the automatic code button.

The operator's voice was again heard trying to maintain a peaceful quality. "Code Blue – ICU, code blue – ICU, code black – ICU, code black – ICU."

Danny grabbed hold of the wheeled chair as he stumbled and flung it towards Zito. Reggie deflected it, pulling his gun. The blast from the weapon shattered the air and people started screaming.

The impact of the bullet striking his right shoulder crashed Danny against the glass wall the vibrated violently, but held. He slid to the floor, the shoulder wound leaving a smear of blood on the glass.

The unit secretary was yelling into the phone as personnel dove under desks. “Code Red! Code Red!”

The PA now repeated the announcement, the tone of the operator’s voice noticeably edgy. “Code Red – ICU, Code Red – ICU. Code Blue – ICU. Code Blue – ICU. Code Black – ICU, Code Black – ICU.”

*Sounds like a damned rainbow*, Kono thought as he crashed through the thick door into ICU, gun in hand, Lawson and two uniformed officers behind him. The paged medical personnel were behind them.

Zito, past any reason and consumed in rage re-aimed his pistol at Danny’s head. “So long, sucker.”

“Freeze!” Kono shouted.

Zito looked up into the barrel of Kono’s magnum, Lawson’s Beretta and two .38 police specials. He glared back at Danny. “I guess I’ve nothing to lose, huh?”

“Only your life, bruddah,” Kono replied without humor.

Zito winced and took a deep breath. “Yeah – I guess.” He dropped the gun into Danny’s lap and raised his hands.

Even before Kono could get Zito away from the cubical, medical personnel were flooding into the small space and to McGarrett’s side. With the ventilator reconnected, vitals quickly began to return to normal.

The ER nurse crouched next to Danny, examining his newest wound. “Another through and through in the shoulder,” she commented. “Twice in one day, must be some kind of a record.”

A young woman doctor finished listening through her stethoscope to Steve’s chest and when she looked up made eye contact with him, noticing the concern on his face. “You’re going to be fine,” she assured him.

He tried to mouth that his real concern was for Danny.”

She seemed to understand. “You’ll both be fine.”

Danny could not remember having felt this warm, safe and comfortable in days. He was just barely conscious enough to know that for the moment nothing hurt – a vast improvement.

“Danno?” Kono’s voice penetrated the gray mist of recovery.

He did not want to answer. He wanted to stay to this cozy, drug-induced world of peace.

“Hey, Danno,” Kono’s voice again came.

Regretfully, Danny slowly opened his eyes. When he did, the mild nausea that always seemed to follow surgery set in.

Kono grinned. “How you feelin’ bruddah?”

“My tennis game is a little off,” he whispered in reply.

A nurse appeared in Danny’s tunnel vision and he felt the blood pressure cuff squeeze his arm for a moment. He wondered if he could go back to sleep before Kono spoke again.

Kono moved back in. "I want you to know that Lonnie's just fine. Gary's bringing him back home. Got his arm broke but the vet fixed him up just fine."

Danny squinted, clearing his head of the haze. "Did you say 'vet'?"

"A long story. It's okay now. Lawson and his team took that report of Richard's and are cleanin' house. It's all falling, man. Jackson, Zito, Sergie, Travis – they're all locked up and going down."

"Travis?" This was the first Danny had heard the HPD chief was involved.

"Yeah, and guess what. Masakaski's resigning. Says he's clean but doesn't want to defame the office cause he hired DeWitt."

Danny, still dull from surgery, rubbed his eyes. "How long was that surgery?"

"Five hours," the nurse replied flatly.

Kono shook his head. "Lawson's like a machine. Can't keep up with him. He's out there doin' reports on his laptop. He don't rest, don't eat, don't drink..."

"Doesn't eat, huh? That's not Hawaiian," Danny managed to say and grin.

"Maybe you wanna make him chief of Five-0 – you can be that way, too."

"Hey, don't joke about that," Kono muttered. "No governor, no Five-0 chief, no HPD chief – things are really in a bind."

The nurse interfered. "Time's up," she told Kono. "Out."

"Can his girl have a minute?" Kono asked.

She nodded and in moments Carrie was in the room and gave Danny a quick kiss. "Danny, I just don't understand...how could all this...I just don't get it all," she said in pieces. "Why you?"

"Are you all right?" he asked gently.

"Me? You're asking me? You get shot twice and rip a pin out of your leg and you ask me if I'm okay?" Her composure was slipping. "I don't understand, Danny. These things aren't supposed to happen to college professors."

He tried to smile. "They aren't supposed to happen to anyone."

"I was so scared. How did this happen?"

He could see tears starting to gather in her eyes and took her hand. "It's all right now, Carrie. It's over."

"Is it?" she whispered, voice shaking. "or is it over till next time?"

"Next time?"

"Will you keep running back to Five-0 every time someone says jump? What happens to us -- to our life?"

"It's over, Carrie," he said sincerely. "I promise." They kissed again, longer. "Really."

"And our lives will be normal again?" she asked quietly.

He nodded. "It really is over."

There was a mild commotion at the door and the nurse's voice in protest. "You can't just come in here."

"Sure I can," came the response as Mark Lawson entered recovery, waving his FBI credentials. He approached Danny and Carrie. "I have a full copy of all the arrests made by the Bureau for your files. The federal marshal's people will be here tomorrow to begin the investigation into the banking records and real estate. All sixteen of the arrests are finalized and pending charges have been logged." Lawson held out a thick file of papers.

Danny looked at him with a puzzled expression, and then at the paperwork Lawson placed on the stand between the gurney. “Why give this to me?”

Lawson blinked in mild surprise. “Lieutenant Governor Howard appointed you as acting chief of Five-0.”

Danny, shocked, glanced at Carrie and recalled his promise just moments before. They exchanged looks and both realized that far from over, it was just beginning. Carrie looked away, her expression anything but happy. Danny found it hard to think. Too much had happened. “I need some time to think.”

The nurse spoke up. “I want everyone out – now. And you—” she pointed to Lawson, “—take this with you.” She handed him back the file of papers. “He’s full of narcotics and I won’t accept the responsibility.”

Carrie left recovery wondering if in another day it would be so easy to return Lawson’s work to him. *Lieutenant Governor? Can someone just set an appointment like that? Danny still can refuse it. He will refuse it. He has to. He promised!* She found a cold drink machine and felt like taking some solace in a can of iced tea. She dropped in the change, but nothing happened. Frustrated, she crossed her arms. *It figures, this doesn’t want to cooperate either. Why can’t everyone just go away and leave us alone?*

“May I help?” Mark appeared behind her, gave the machine a powerful thump and the can dropped down. He picked it up, shook it, and opened it for her.

“You really want to help – leave us alone,” she commented flatly and walked away feeling a sense of confusion and loss. All her dreams seemed to be wilting before her eyes. She wasn’t sure why she returned to the harried ICU department. “Is McGarrett awake?” she asked the nurse.

She nodded and admitted her.

The department had been cleaned considerably. The blood had been removed from the wall and the broken furniture replaced. If not for the shell-shocked appearance of some of the staff it would have been as if the event had never happened. Carrie quietly walked to Steve’s bedside. “Steve?”

He opened his eyes, seeming pleased to have her there.

“You okay?”

He gave a brief nod.

“Hurting?”

He shook his head no.

“Danny’s okay,” she told him, then paused. “I-I thought you’d want to know that.”

He gave a slight nod and pointed to Carrie.

“Me?” She forced a smile. “Sure, I’m fine.” She looked away. “Actually, no I’m not and I don’t know why I came here – except maybe you can’t argue with me this time.”

He managed a grin at that.

“Lawson told Danny that he is being appointed as chief of Five-0.” She sighed. “I know you’ll think I’m terribly selfish, but I want him to say no. He can say no, right?”

Steve gave no response.

“It’s never going to work out for Danny and me, is it?” She shook her head. “You were right all the time.” She forced a smile. “You’ve waited for years to hear me say that, huh?”

A tired grin creased his lips as the ventilator hissed.

“I do love him, Steve.” A tear slipped down one cheek. “But I can’t do this.” She lowered her face to her hand on the railing and quietly cried.

He placed his hand on her hair for comfort.

Two days later, Steve had been gradually weaned from the ventilator. Five days later, his doctor proclaimed his recuperative ability to be outstanding and he was transferred out of intensive care into a “real” room. His first visitors were Danny and Lonnie.

“Hey, you look good,” Danny said confidently from the hospital wheelchair. He had two more days before he would be discharged.

“See my cast?” Lonnie strutted his above-the-elbow cast that was a mass of signatures. “Wanna sign it?”

Steve accepted the marker pen and found a small empty place to scribble a signature. “It seems to take longer to recover now a days,” Steve complained in his voice that was just barely above a whisper.

“That’s not what your doc says,” Danny commented.

Steve smiled. “Is everything okay?”

“Getting there. Gideon and Audrey will be home tonight. From all reports the marshals and Lawson’s team have done a first rate job. By the end of the week, I can pick up. Kono and Gary have been looking through applicants. I’d like you to look them over, too.”

Steve felt mildly flattered. “Sure. What about Carrie?”

His expression melted slightly. “I haven’t see her in five days.”

“What will you do?”

Danny masked his emotions. “I’ll go to work.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

He glanced at Lonnie, then back at Steve. “I guess that’s up to Carrie, isn’t it? I didn’t ask her to change who she was. I can’t change either. But I can’t just walk away from this appointment. Would you walk away?”

“I never did,” Steve counseled.

“I can’t either – even if I want to.”

“Do you wish you could?”

He lifted an eyebrow. He could feel emotions of mixed anger and sorrow churn within. “Yeah – I guess I do,” he admitted.

Steve sighed and slowly reached out to touch his friend’s shoulder. “Sometimes I did, too.”

“Maybe she just needs some time to think,” Danny suggested, but did not actually believe it.

Lonnie, who had never wanted Carrie as part of their lives was now gripped with a sense of loss and guilt. “I’m sorry, Dad. I don’t understand why she’s so mad. She said she loved you. How could she love you one day and not the next?”

“She didn’t stop loving, Lonnie. She just allowed fear to steal her heart away,” Steve whispered. “Love isn’t that warm fuzzy feeling, it’s what goes the distance when the fuzzy isn’t there. Maybe it’s still too early to know if Carrie has that kind of love inside.”

The knock at her door caused Carrie’s blood to freeze. *After almost a week, everything still terrifies me. I can’t even go to work and be calm. I can’t eat, think, sleep. I can’t bring myself to go to the hospital. I am afraid of everything!* As she chastised herself, she walked to the newly installed fish-eye peephole on the door and looked out. She recognized Mark Lawson and opened the door.

“What is it this time, Mark?” she asked him.

“Good afternoon, Ms. Donagon,” he replied formally, remaining on the front step.

“Do you need something else signed?” she asked abruptly. Seeing Mark Lawson caused feelings of fear to rise within her. He had been back to the house three times with affidavits and reports for her to sign. Every time made her relive the horror of that day. *I thought I would die, I thought Danny would die – we did almost die.*

“No, ma’am, nothing to sign,” he answered. “I have some information. I cannot keep it from the press for more than another hour or two. Danny asked I give it to you first – give you a chance to get the scoop.”

She brightened some. *Danny must know I haven’t been to the office in almost a week. He’s right, I need to do something besides cower in this house. Maybe if this is a good lead I can do something.* “Is this gospel?” she asked.

“You’re getting it from the source,” he promised.

She hesitated. “Come inside.”

Mark followed her through the door into the front room that was dim from the curtains and blinds being drawn shut. She offered the couch, but he continued to stand. She couldn’t help thinking he looked like a soldier at stiff at-ease. He started without prelude. “Masakski thought we’d leave him alone if he resigned, but we didn’t. We discovered that prior to his dealings with the Fidel crime syndicate in New Orleans, he’d made a tacit agreement with a crime organization that promised him power here. The Caputos. He was directly involved in the death of Max Connor.”

Color drained from Carrie’s face as she recalled how Masakski had handed Nina Connor that folded flag at Max’s funeral, sorrow and pity so obvious on his face. She remembered his statements to the press, how he had praised Five-0 with McGarrett again at the helm. It had all be a charade. She also remembered the previous history of the Caputo family. “Danny knows this?”

“Yes, he asked me to let you know.”

“Why didn’t he tell me himself?” she asked.

Mark looked a little uncomfortable. “I imagine he thought you’d want to hear it from the source face to face and not on the phone...” he searched for words. “You haven’t spent much time up at the hospital.”

She pursed her lips. “You mean I haven’t spent any time there.”

He shrugged. “It’s not my business. It is really hard to get through bad things sometimes.” He glanced around at the dim room. “Life does go on.”



She snorted. “What would you know about life? You guys all have hearts of stone. Blow it off and move on to the next case. You know, I did try this before. I was engaged to a guy who was a cop. He was sweet, warm, loveable – a lot like Danny – and somebody shot and killed him. I can’t go through that again.”

He refused to be insulted. “I know what it’s like to love someone – and to lose them. I was married once.”

Carrie gave a knowing look. “You’re not married now?”

He slowly shook his head.

She gave a smirk. “Yes – law enforcement and marriage don’t mix. Cop’s wife syndrome, right?”

“No,” he said quietly. “She died from complications of diabetes during her pregnancy. They both died.”

Carrie felt embarrassed. “I-I’m sorry.”

“I didn’t tell you that to make you feel bad, or make you feel sorry for me. The three years I had with Sarah were the best of my life. I don’t know if I’ll ever fall in love again, but if I do, I don’t think I’ll make her take a physical to be sure she doesn’t have diabetes. Love doesn’t work that way. This doesn’t have to do with Danny’s job, it has to do with your heart.”

Carrie stopped on her way to the hospital and picked up some of Danny’s favorite Chinese food. Smiling broadly, she entered his hospital room the little white carton first. “She comes bearing a peace offering,” she announced.

He glanced up from the crossword puzzle to give her a small smile. “It’s good to see you, Carrie.”

“You to,” she answered honestly as she dramatically placed the carton and a pair of chopsticks on the table. “Eat it while it’s hot.”

“I saw you on the news last night,” he said in a friendly manner. “You looked good.”

“It felt really strange to be back, but – well, I guess it was the right thing to do. I’m glad I did. And glad that you gave me the scoop. Boy, things are hopping at the statehouse today.”

“I guess so,” he replied, aware that they were quickly running out of superficial conversation. Uncomfortable silence filled the gap. “Why don’t you just talk about it, Carrie.”

“I needed some time to think,” she admitted.

“All right,” he said, trying to look non-judgmental, but six days had been plenty of time for the sorrow to begin its volatile metamorphosis into bitterness and rage.

“I guess,” Carrie said, taking a deep breath, “I guess I’m uncertain about our relationship.”

“Uncertain?” he repeated, not offering any escape by picking up the conversation.

She was aware he was not making this easy. “Danny, you promised me!” she suddenly blurted. “You knew I could not handle this cop thing! The Danno I fell in love with was a college professor.” Her expression pleaded with him to understand.

“Okay, so do you want out?” he asked, his face a mask.

She blinked. “What?”

“What do you want me to do, Carrie? Beg? There is more to this than just you and me. There’s Lonnie and Audrey. What do you plan to tell them? You can’t come bouncing into and out of our lives as it meets your pleasure. You are either in or out.” Rage kindled in his eyes.

“Danny, you are wrong, this is about you and me – I didn’t apply for position of nanny, you know. I’m not marrying your children, I’m marrying you. Or is that all I meant to you? Am I a convenience?”

The conversation was degenerating and he knew it. *Maybe the best I can offer her is a big fight. She will leave anyway and she won’t feel so guilty.* He stared at the blankets on the bed.

Carrie tried to read him, but years of practice had perfected his stoicism. “Danny? Do you love me?” she asked quietly.

He blinked several times before daring to look back up at her. “Carrie, I am what I am. I am a cop and I can’t change that. It is what I am. And it is a package deal: me, the kids, the job, the whole thing. It’s all or nothing.”

She knew he had not answered her question. “I asked if you loved me.”

He felt vulnerable and angry and like his heart was dying inside all at once. “I thought you knew the answer to that. If you don’t, my telling you again won’t matter.”

*Why can’t he just make it easy? Does it matter what he does? Look at all we have been through – shouldn’t that make us stronger? Is there a way back to where we were a week ago? Why can’t we just sail off into the sunset like other people?* “I want this to work, Danny. I don’t know why, but I really do. I love you – I really do – but, I just don’t know!” She jumped to her feet. “What is wrong with me?”

Between the shoulder sling and his leg cast, his mobility was pretty well restricted, but he managed to take hold of her hand before she got away. “Take a little more time, Carrie. Decide what is really important to you. I’ll do some thinking, too. Six weeks and this leg cast comes off. You make your decision during that time and I’ll make mine. If you decide that you want me, meet me at the cottage the night after the cast is off. If you don’t come, I’ll understand.”

## ***Epilogue***

The waves on the shore were running high, there was an unseen storm way out there probably a thousand miles away, but its signs were on the beach. The sun was turning crimson as it descended towards the Pacific and overhead the seagulls were calling to each other. A pelican dove into the sea and flew back up, a fish flapping half out of his large beak.

Danny had walked amongst the blackened charred remains of the cottage and paced out his plans for restoration. With the inheritance from Adair, he could have built sixteen cottages. He decided to make this one comfortable enough for all of them: Lonnie, Audrey, himself, and a small bungalow add-on for Gideon to live out his retirement.

*Too bad rebuilding my personal life isn't this easy.* The strolls through the charred remains of his relationship with Carrie were much harder to make. There were no carefully drawn and labeled plans for rebuilding a better life. He gazed across the blackened property one more time. *It's getting late, it's past eight o'clock and is getting dark.* He picked up the roll of architect's drawings of the house and the cane he was using to assist his left leg and started for the car. *Perhaps it is just as well.*

"Hi."

He spun at Carrie's voice. "Carrie?" He was awash with the sudden surge of hope and apprehension.

"I couldn't just not show up," she said quietly. "I love you too much for that. I never wanted to hurt you."

"I don't want to hurt you either," he answered.

"I've been offered an anchor position in Chicago," she announced. "I start in a week."

He stood still. "That sounds good, Carrie," he forced himself to say.

"You could come with me," she suggested.

He gave a small smile. "I don't think I'd like Chicago."

Carrie nodded. "Danny, I can't marry you."

It was his turn to nod an acknowledgement. "I know. I think I always knew."

Neither said anything for several minutes. They stood side by side leaning on the car and looking at the ocean. The silence seemed to provide a healing that words could not. As the last of the edge of the sun dipped below the horizon, they both turned, as though they had watched the end of a show.

"Everyone tells me I'll hate it in Chicago and come back, but I'm going to try it," Carrie commented.

"You'll hate it and come back," he advised.

She cracked a smile. "Thanks."

He managed a smile back. "Go on, Carrie, but if you ever come back, if you don't find what you're after on the mainland, look me up, okay?"

"Only if you promise not to get shot or something."

He lifted an eyebrow. "Promise."

She smiled, but there was a tear in her eye as she turned away.

His gaze followed her as she walked back to her car, but then he turned to watch the light fade on the ocean and didn't watch her leave.

**end**