

### Chapter Forty-Nine

Senator Raymond had been warned. *Do not return to the townhouse*, his attorney had advised. But anger superseded reason and late Saturday evening, he returned to their shared home. Maybe I can talk some sense into her, he had thought to himself, this whole mess is just a misunderstanding. Prepared for the inevitable shouting match, he was both surprised and disappointed to find the house empty. He had made the assumption that Connie had gone out for the night with friend, a female friend he had hoped. At his assumed post in the living room, he thumbed through a stack of documents while anxiously awaiting her return. By one-thirty in the morning, however, he found it impossible to keep his eyes open and while stretched out on the couch, drifted off to sleep.

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He awakened Sunday morning to the fact that Connie had not returned home. As the hours passed, the knowledge of his wife's homebody lifestyle led to concern, that by three o'clock in the afternoon had morphed into alarm. As he sat in the kitchen drinking coffee, a host of scenarios went through his mind. Had she taken ill, he wondered, was she visiting a friend or even worse, had she spent the night in the arms of another? Paging through her personal telephone directory, he found the number of her closest friend and dialed. "Diane, this John Raymond ..."

"Oh, hello senator," she interrupted, "what a rare pleasure."

"Sorry to bother you, but have you heard from Connie recently?"

She hesitated. "What do you mean?" she questioned, with a air of confusion.

"I came back to the townhouse last night hoping to have a chance to talk some sense into her but she wasn't there and hasn't returned."

"Well, we were out together Friday night and I did speak to her the following morning."

"Did she talk about her plans for the day?"

"Not really," Diane lied.

"So, you haven't seen or heard from her since then?" he asked, with an air of legal authority.

"Is that unusual?"

"No, we don't tell each other everything and why are you interrogating me?"

"I'm worried," he said.

"Don't be, I'm sure she'll show up anytime now."

"It's not like her to go out and not come home," he remarked, his voice beginning to crack.

"Well, John, things have changed, haven't they? Maybe you really didn't know Connie that well after all."

"Look, you are her friend and I understand how you may be pissed off at me but I'm seriously getting concerned ... where could she be?"

"I really don't know, senator, but if I hear from her I'll be sure to let you know."

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The senator had barely fallen asleep when he was roused late Sunday night by an incessant knocking on townhouse front door.

"Alright, alright, I'm coming," he shouted, as he grabbed a robe and wobbled to the door.

"Senator John Raymond?" a badge wielding man asked.

"Yes?" he replied, tentatively.

"I'm Detective Quan," said the dark skinned male, still holding the gold badge, his blue jeans and green sport coat appearing somewhat incongruous. "This is my partner, Detective Cole," he added, while pointing to an attractive female clad in a jogging suit.

"How can I help you, Detectives?" the senator inquired, wondering if they were for real.

"Can we come in?" Quan asked, stuffing the badge wallet inside his jacket.

"Not until I know why you have awakened me at this hour."

"It's about your wife, sir."

"What about my my wife?" the senator asked, with instant alarm.

"Can we come in?"

With a sick feeling in his gut, his heart rate quickening, the senator led the two detectives into the living room. "Has there been an accident or something?" he asked, agitatedly, as they stood before the couch.

Quan gazed at his partner, took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. "I think you had better sit down," he said.

The senator shivered and brought his hand to his mouth. "Go ahead," he replied, "I'd rather stand."

Quan ran a hand through his short hair, lowered his head and grimaced. "OK," he said, "we found an abandoned car ..."

"My wife's," the senator interrupted anxiously.

"No, but ..."

"Then what?" he again interrupted.

"Please let me finish, senator, this ain't gonna be easy."

"OK, I'm sorry, go ahead."

"As I was sayin', we found this car out near Golden Gate Park and inside was your wife's purse and ID."

"Was it a white Lexus?"

"No sir."

"Then it wasn't her car, she has a Lexus," the senator rambled on, briefly relieved.

"Yeah, we already established that," Quan whispered.

"Is there more?" the senator inquired.

"I'm afraid so," Quan replied, while his partner shifted her gaze towards the ground. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, sir, but we found her body not twenty yards from the car, half hidden by the thicket."

The senator swallowed hard. "Her body?" he stuttered.

"Looks like she'd been strangled and dumped there," Quan offered.

The senator slumped into a nearby chair and began to weep. "Dear God, not Connie," he murmured between sobs, "why her?"

Detective Cole fumbled in her purse, withdrew a small package of tissues and offered it to the senator.

"Thank you," he said with a sniff, "was it a robbery?"

"The M.E. didn't think so," Quan said.

"Then what?"

"What I have to tell you is entirely preliminary and unofficial and you might not want to hear it right now ..."

"Go ahead," the senator broke in, "what could be worse than what you have already told me?"

"Looks like some kind of sexual thing, she was nude."

"A rape?" the senator exclaimed, wiping away a new crop of tears.

"There were no signs of struggle in the car or bushes. She was probably killed elsewhere and then dumped in the park."

The senator winced at the sound of the word 'killed'. "Were her clothes in the car?" he asked, his legal training surfacing.

"Only two articles, sir."

"And they were?"

"A rain coat and a bra."

"What?" he shouted incredulously.

"That's all there was."

The senator gazed up at the ceiling, trying to clear his mind, but the vision of his wife leaving the house wearing only those two items just didn't compute. Why would she do that? he asked himself, unless, she was having some kind of kinky affair.

"Senator," Cole asked, "are you alright, sir?"

"Yes, I was just thinking. Aside from the signs of strangulation, was there anything else?"

"Yes, the M.E. found clear evidence for recent sexual activity," Quan commented.

"Then it had to be a rape crime," the senator burst out, while formulating his own version of damage control.

"But, the absence of other clothing?" Cole interjected.

"Connie wasn't the type to go out and pick up a stranger nor did she have any unusual sexual proclivities."

"And that would be to the best of your knowledge, correct?" Quan gently inquired.

"Well, of course."

"Look, senator, we understand that you are going through a divorce, correct?"

"Yes, that's true but what has that got to do with anything?"

"Do you think your wife was having an affair?"

"Connie? God no. She was a homebody, rarely went out unless it was with a girlfriend," the senator replied, as the shock from her death was momentarily clouded by the mental image of her body entwined in the arms of another.

"Could you give us the names of her friends?"

"Her closet friend is a Diane Boxer. I'll get her number for you," the senator offered, as he rose on wobbly legs to retrieve the telephone directory, returned and handed it to Quan.

Quan passed the thin book to his partner and got up from the couch. "One last question," he said, "for now, that is."

"OK."

"Did you or your wife have any enemies?"

An alarm went off in the senator's head. The Credit Industry legislation, he said to himself, I let it drop. Those bastards threatened to do something like this.

"Senator?" Quan said.

"Uh, no, none that I can think of," he replied, having decided to keep the NAPCO business a secret until he had had enough time to contemplate the potential consequences of disclosure.

"OK," Quan remarked, while handing his business card to the senator and preparing to leave. "If you think of anything else, you have my number, otherwise, I'll be in touch with you."

"One more thing, Detective, where will they take her?" the senator asked, solemnly.

"The M.E. has her at the morgue. He'll let you know when the body can be released.

"Thank you," he replied, as he closed the door behind them.