

## Chapter XXVIII

Paradis extended his left hand, still clutching the reporter's notebook.

“If I didn't know any better I'd say we're heading for the apocalypse. Who called out the horsemen?” he asked.

Grimaldi told him about the conversation with Sullivan and how the first call was to the state police.

“Imagine having the power to get the police out here?” Paradis murmured.

Did he see Prygocki after the Mass? Grimaldi wanted to know.

Paradis said he thought he saw him with the family at the limousine.

“You couldn't have,” Grimaldi countered.

He watched the family drive off and was certain Prygocki was no where to be seen. He motioned for Paradis to follow.

“Where to?”

“The sacristy,” he said.

If he were there, Grimaldi'd offer to drive over to the cemetery with him. If he wasn't, it would be best to get to the cemetery ASAP.

“I've got this strange sense, like *deja vu*, but it's as if we've been through this before. I swear I've seen the group of people across the street and we've had this conversation before. I remember glimpses of this, like Prygocki at the altar, along side the pastor, the limo driving off. But I know it's not something I've ever experienced. Maybe I've dreamed it,” Grimaldi said.

He looked at Paradis.

``It's a long story."`

``Don't stop now," Paradis said. ``Tell me what's next."`

``Let's get going," Grimaldi said.`

In the sacristy, Father Mallon was pulling off his robe. Grimaldi's heart jumped a beat before he realized who it was. If it had been Prygocki, he realized he would not have been ready to face him.

``Hello, Jack," the priest said.`

``Hello, Father," Grimaldi said and started to introduce Paradis.`

The old man cut him short`

``We had the unfortunate good fortune to have met the media on several occasions," he said. ``Not one good thing came of it."`

``Here to despoil a perfectly good funeral and desecrate innocent human beings?" Mallon asked.`

``I'm impressed," Grimaldi said.`

He understood the paranoia of the clergy. The pastor had outdone himself.`

``Well, Paradis," he said, ``I guess you're job is done."`

He smiled and slapped the reporter on the back.`

``Time to join the other side," he said.`

Paradis managed his own version of a pitiable grin.`

Then, Grimaldi got to work. He asked where Prygocki was. The old man told him the deacon would be handling the burial ceremony.`

``I'm too old for this. It's too new. I mean to have to bury someone who was killed in my back yard. An accident? Drinking and driving? Drugs? Those things I can handle.`

Old age. No problem. But murder is something too new. I'm afraid I'm not ready for it. I wish the good Lord, my work here were finished so I could go home."

Grimaldi patted him on the back, while Paradis hovered near the door.

In the car on the way to the cemetery, Paradis asked Grimaldi about a deacon completing services.

"I didn't know it was possible," he said.

"I didn't either," Grimaldi answered. "And I don't like it."

"With all the priest's dying off or leaving, I don't see a problem with it," Paradis said.

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