

Chapter IV

Grimaldi cut the engine and listened. His instincts told him to run, to do something, but he waited and listened until he thought he had located the origin of the shot.

He grabbed the sawed-in-half baseball bat from under the front seat, pocketed the keys, and slammed the door behind him.

The shot came from around the other side of the school. He broke into a jog. His heart pounded in his ears and the adrenaline flowed through his veins. He concentrated all his effort on listening, perceiving.

An ignition cranked and turned over, starting a car somewhere. He looked quickly around and saw the rear red lights of a car pull out, but that was down a side street. The noise was loud and clear, yet the car was about a quarter of a mile away.

Another car whizzed by.

Bushes rustled. He saw a couple emerging from behind a laurel bush. When he passed them, they parted without as much as a word.

"Didn't you hear that?" he yelled.

Grimaldi stopped running when he got to the long sidewalk that separated the school grounds and cathedral parking lot. In the heavy darkness, Grimaldi had a difficult time distinguishing the gradations of light that would help guide him.

The wielder of the gun could be almost anywhere in this tangle of buildings, brush, and trees. He walked slowly, taking practiced steps that could only have come from his time in 'Nam. He was surprised how quickly some things returned.

Then he knew he was listening with the same sense that was refined when he was in Vietnam, 'Nam, his war. Here was the same detachment, the same frightening calm that made him one hell of a lieutenant and a killing machine.

He paused every ten yards or so, in turn letting his body absorb and devour the environment, going through it, over and under it, distinguishing insignificant crackles, searching for breath of a sound that a blade of grass made under a knowledgeable foot, seeking the eye of the stalker.

Another part of him worked in concert analyzing the terrain. Where had the sound originated? He sniffed the air. Had someone run down the sidewalk? He reached out with a hand as if to feel for a presence. Did he hear a door slam somewhere?

He was thirty yards from the cathedral when movement caught his eye. A figure crossed the parking lot from the opposite side of the cathedral. It hugged the building, walking slowly. He stood perfectly still.

It was a woman. There was something that she was concentrating on or else he was certain she would have seen him. She made no sound.

When she broke into a run, Grimaldi could see that she was carrying a shoe in each hand. She ran quickly to the sidewalk and bent down. He saw it now, and he started to run toward the woman and the body. She didn't stay long, though. He watched as she fumbled with the body and slipped something into her pocket and disappeared in the deep shadows.

Grimaldi stood alone over the body of a young, tall man. There was no movement. He checked for a pulse, without disturbing the body. Blood from the body

collected in small pools. One shot, Grimaldi thought. It hit him in the chest and ripped open his back.

Grimaldi felt the weight of the baseball bat grow heavy for the first time since picking it up.

“What the hell was I going to do with this?” he asked himself. It was a thick-handed thirty-four ounce bat with Joe Torres' signature, at least it held Torres' signature until he cut it down. Torres caught for the St. Louis Cardinals and coached the New York Mets for a few years.

When he came up to bat with it in his hands, Grimaldi felt like he could hit anything, and he did. For two years in high school, he batted over four-hundred. It was entirely psychological. The thickness gave him security. At least at one time it did.

Now, he threw the bat down on the lawn and sat there. He was certain there would be a cruiser pulling up at any second.

A half-a-minute later a white and blue city police car drove slowly into the parking lot, flashing its search light.

Grimaldi stood up and waved his arms.

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