

## Chapter XIII

Church haters, bishop bashers, Prygocki was saying. "You find them anywhere, even Catholic schools — unless they're getting a break on tuition."

The man was in his element, having just finished a lively discussion of liberation theology, which included magic tricks and a standup comedy routine.

"There was one guy, we found this out afterwards, who sent a letter on the diocese's letterhead to all the parents of students Trinity High School along the shore announcing that the school would remain open. The diocese was on the verge of closing a major real estate deal with the city, and all hell broke loose. Whoever the letter writer was, he wrote as the bishop. The guy said he would be happy to celebrate the occasion, a triumph of the spirit over crass materialism, I think it was the way he put it, with his newest friends from the Trinity community."

"There are definitely people who get a little crazy over schools," Grimaldi said, but he was wondering if he really liked his former coach and teacher. He'd spent a considerable amount of time with him lately, and Prygocki was beginning to wear him down.

"Still trying to pin down the intricacies of the inner sanctum," a voice called out from behind him.

Grimaldi turned to see his young friend from the Deer River Chronicle, Benjamin Paradis.

"How in hell did they let you past the front door," Grimaldi said, and started to introduce Paradis.

“We've met on several occasions,” Prygocki said, leaving his perch on the front of his desk for a seat behind it.

“There's a little more to this than meets the naked eye,” Grimaldi said.

Neither Prygocki nor Paradis offered anything.

“It's much easier reporting on this stuff than it is trying to figure it out,” Paradis said.

“It's a little easier reporting about it than trying to understand it,” Prygocki said.

“That's about par for the course.”

“So you two really have met before,” Grimaldi said.

“One thing I've found school officials from the public and private sector have a few things in common,” Paradis said, “such as the ability to get themselves into a bind and look like jackasses trying to get out of it.”

“Jackasses,” Prygocki said, “I like that. Original.”

“Well, I've got a few things to attend to back at the office,” Grimaldi said.

“They've got you working overtime on this stuff,” Paradis said.

“It's not a job,” Grimaldi said, “it's an adventure.”

“No wonder the state of journalism is in such disarray,” Prygocki said. “I haven't heard as many clichés since I taught freshmen English. At least, you, Grimaldi, had enough sense to get out. Paradis, you're still a young man. You could learn from your friend here.”

“Before you go,” Paradis said to Grimaldi, “I wanted to run something by you. I've been fiddling around with the factory murder, and I was hoping to get with you. There are a few details that are fuzzy.”

“What's he got to do with the factory murder?” Prygocki asked.

“He was the guy originally assigned to the story.”

“Never could get it more attention,” Grimaldi said. “It was the cult angle that killed the story.”

“Believe it or not, you're standing before a bona fide cult scholar,” Paradis said and pointed to Prygocki.

“You're just full of surprises, aren't you?” Grimaldi said.

“I've worked on a few of the documents put out by the local Conference of churches. Cults happen to be a hobby. Several of my students have been recruited by Moonies. I got into it by accident,” Prygocki said.

“Well,” Paradis said, “he's drafted the conference's last document.”

“I'm not an illiterate,” Grimaldi said. “I know the story. Broke new ground on ritualistic sacrifice. Some hobby.”

He added, “Devil worship.”

“I remember the factory killing,” Prygocki said. “There was some question as to whether it was authentic or setup.”

“Never made the papers,” Grimaldi said.

Paradis threw him a wild look.

“Nobody's perfect,” he said.

“Speaking of perfect,” Paradis added, “there's one other thing. The Feds have been called in to the Brown case.”

``That explains a few things to me," Grimaldi said. He began to imagine the revelation to the guys in the chancery when it dawned on him that they must already know. Why else the dog and pony show with Collins?"

``What do you suppose they want?" Prygocki asked.

Paradis said something about it being routine procedure.

``I thought you had to get back to the chancery," Prygocki said.

``Just thinking," Grimaldi said.

``Well, I do have to run a few things by this guy," Paradis said, pointing to Prygocki.

``I'll be in the office."

``Yea," Paradis said. ``I know."

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