

*Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection*  
**Presents**

# **Games People Play**

**A Serialized Novel by  
Wesley Adams and Daphne McGee**

**Series Created by Gary Brin**

# **Episodes 1-6**

A mysterious key leads several persons in search of treasure said to be lost since the seventeenth century. For some, murder isn't a problem while for others the revelations from the past changes their lives forever, as tragedy stalks everyone looking for the long-lost treasure in an abandoned estate in New Orleans where nothing is what it seems.

**Games  
People  
Play**



# **Games People Play**

**A Serialized Novel by  
Wesley Adams and Daphne McGee**

**Book 6 of the Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection  
Series Created by Gary Brin**

**Episodes 1-6**

*Standish Press*

---

The serialized story in this novel is fiction. Real persons, geographical locations, books, television shows, films, music, and specific events mentioned or which appears as part of the multi-character ensemble in this story were dramatized for entertainment purposes only and have no actual connection to fictional characters and created storylines in this book or reflects upon actual reality of things that may have happened previously or of which seems somewhat similar to real-life situations.

**Names of real people mentioned in this book are in bold letters.**

Specific references to several characters from the 1883 novel *Treasure Island* as well as filming locations used for the 1980s CBS television series *Falcon Crest* was embellished for dramatic purposes only and does not reflect upon actual reality of either.

Select comments by fictional characters in this novel about historical figures, true crime cases, and, or pop culture icons are based on fact and additional information can be found online in reputable sites as well as numerous published books.

Several characters from the novels *Glass Owl*, *Desperate Lives*, *Thomas Nix* and *Ocean Landing* appear within this story as part of the continuing storyline.

All of the novels mentioned above are original publications from Standish Press and part of the Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection Series.

---

Cover photograph courtesy of [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

Cover photograph was digitally enhanced and visually altered for this edition.

Cover design and book layout © 2021 by Standish Press

FIRST EDITION

Copyright © 2021 by Standish Press

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means whatsoever without written permission from the publisher.

For more information about reprint rights please visit  
[www.standishpress.com](http://www.standishpress.com)

ISBN—978-1-945510-07-6

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Sometimes when you least expect it a chance meeting happens  
and changes history forever in ways never imagined.

---

An opportunity is what you make of it—though the end results  
aren't always what you wanted or expected.





# Contents

Intro	9
<b>Prologue</b>	11
A Brief Look at the First Episode	14
<b>Episode 1 Look Back in Fear</b>	15
A Brief Look at the Second Episode	40
<b>Episode 2 Ties That Bind</b>	41
A Brief Look at the Third Episode	66
<b>Episode 3 Can You Hear the Laughter</b>	67
A Brief Look at the Fourth Episode	92
<b>Episode 4 Empire in the Air</b>	93
A Brief Look at the Fifth Episode	118
<b>Episode 5 Dark Mansions</b>	119
A Brief Look at the Final Episode	144
<b>Episode 6 Out of the Shadows</b>	145
About the Series Creator	150



---

## Intro

---

*Games People Play* was inspired partly by the beloved classic novel *Treasure Island*. While several characters from Robert Louis Stevenson's masterpiece are mentioned in relation to present-day characters in this serialized story—this novel is not a direct sequel to Stevenson's novel. For the most part it could be considered a spinoff of sorts but not in the traditional sense. In addition to mentioning several characters from Stevenson's novel, several real-life historical events and people not part of the original storyline of *Treasure Island* was linked to his entertaining masterpiece as well for dramatic purposes only, and in no way should it be deemed Stevenson's idea or connected in any way to the fictional 1883 novel. Aspects of other novels were also thrown in for good measure as well when needed, most notably the classic 1930 novel *Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett.

This is a soap opera inspired episodic novel written specifically to continue similarly formatted themes from beloved daytime soap operas as well as memorable prime-time soap classics—but with adult storylines added. Nevertheless *Games People Play* was specifically written to resemble a filmed YouTube web series and though it occasionally imitates traditional classic

soap operas to a certain extent—it was written with the intention that it’s playing to a visual audience and therefore will emulate a scripted format (without camera angle directions) rather than the usual storytelling methods displayed in popular full-length novels such as *Bourne Identity* by Robert Ludlum. It should also be noted that each episode of this serialized novel were written in a brief span of 6-12 days or less and therefore shouldn’t be confused with being great literature. The primary goal of this novel series was simply to mimic episodes of modern-day soap operas or filmed web series dramas—by creating visual entertainment on a printed page—and not to create a literary masterpiece.

The present storyline in *Games People Play* takes place approximately around the same time the drama in *Ocean Landing* concluded. Several existing characters from the Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection Series are included in this novel as well in order to continue several previously unfinished storylines.

Gary Brin  
Series Creator

In an effort to have an accurate portrayal of the dialogue used for the *Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection Series* people were anonymously observed in shopping malls, schools, places of employment, and on public streets in order to capture a definitive portrayal of how people of various ages and cultures interacted and talked to each other when they thought no one was listening. While some select dialogue was exaggerated for dramatic purposes when needed—the manner and tone of which people were observed speaking to each other in casual and private conversations is accurate. Exact wording was not copied verbatim for the most part, but the way certain types of topics and conversations are addressed by characters in this serialized series is based on actual situations that were observed over a period of several dozen years.

---

# Prologue

---

1

## **New Orleans Less Than a Week Ago**

“Two centuries give or take.”

The man peers at the object in his hand and smiles broadly as he turns to face his eager young assistant.

“It’s been hidden in this moldy tomb since the end of the Civil War. Who would have thought to look in a tomb?”

He turns around and looks at the coffins lying inside the cobweb-covered windowless building. He sighs loudly.

“I think we should leave now.”

The man turns to look at his assistant.

2

“Don’t lose sight of either of them.”

A man dressed in an expensive business suit walks back and forth in front of a window fronting the French Quarter in downtown New Orleans. He seems irritated and stops.

“They must have found it—damn them.”

He clenches his fist angrily and sighs loudly.

"Of course—do you even have to ask me such inane questions? Follow them back to their hotel room and rub them both out. Leave no witnesses behind—I've waited too long to get my hands on that frigging statue. I want them both dead."

He laughs and turns away from the window.

"He had partners no doubt—I want them in the morgue as well. Dead men tell no tales—do what must be done."

He clenches his fists yet again.

"I'll expect results before nightfall."

He sighs loudly as he shuts off his cell phone.

"If only Calvin and Eldon had lived to see this day."

He rubs his chin several times.

### 3

The view from the binoculars is clear as fingers reach out to adjust the lenses. Two men sit in a car several yards away from the entrance of an abandoned estate and watch the front gates with an intensity reserved for accomplished spies. They look at each other briefly before the one sitting in the driver's seat puts the binoculars down and rubs his eyes. He rubs his eyes again.

"We'll follow them and see where they go."

The other man nods in agreement.

"What if the Levitov brothers show up?"

There is a slight pause.

"We'll deal with them if we have to."

"That'll put a bounty on our heads courtesy of Whitney."

The man sitting in the driver's seat shakes his head and sighs loudly. He looks at the entrance of the estate again.

### 4

The man and his assistant slowly close to iron doors to the mausoleum and walk to their car a few feet away. They stop.

"Do you think anyone saw us earlier?"

They notice the eerie silence around them. The older man sighs and looks at the bulge under his jacket. He smirks.

“Does it look like anyone was looking? I doubt if anyone has been here in years. Every stiff here is over a century old.”

The younger man seems uneasy.

## 5

“We have orders to take them both out.”

Standing behind one of the large mausoleums they watch as the two men drive away. They turn to look at each other.

“Whitney is a gem without a doubt.”

They both laugh.

“That man has ice water in his veins.”

Seconds later they get into their car parked across the street. One of them pulls out a cell phone and begins dialing.

“We’ve got to keep that freak happy.”

They both shake their heads in agreement.

## 6

People are moving about as two men slowly walk into the hotel and disappear inside the cavernous lobby. A few steps behind two men follow them—while behind them another man pulls out a cell phone and begins talking feverishly. He seems nervous as he begins speaking in Russian to someone on the other end. His behavior seems erratic and worsens as the seconds tick by. He clenches his fist several times and shrugs.

---

## **A Brief Look at the First Episode**

---

A search for a mysterious object sets several events into motion in multiple cities where murder is not a problem and greed makes for curious friendships among a team of dangerous rivals.



---

Episode 1  
**Look Back in Fear**

---

1  
**San Francisco  
Present Day**

Lincoln Ross seems worried as he glances at his watch again and then at the vast terminal in front of him. He sighs loudly as people are milling around him from every direction.

“I bet he got lost—even though I told him.”

He hears a laugh and turns around.

“I stopped to grab a bite.”

Lincoln rolls his eyes knowingly and reaches out to hug his cousin. They look at each other briefly. Parker Ross glances at where David Sherwood is standing. He points and grins.

“This is my best friend David Sherwood.”

Lincoln and David shake hands.

“Quite amazing both of you got into Point College.”

Parker makes a gesture with his hand.

“We tweaked a few rules.”

Lincoln lazily points his finger at his cousin.

“Uh-huh—I’ll just bet you did.”

He jabs Parker lightly.  
“Your East Coast snooty behavior is annoying.”  
“Not my fault your dad decided to move to California after he graduated from San Francisco State back in the day.”  
Lincoln jabs Parker again.  
“He saw opportunity—made a killing in Napa.”  
David notices a few women walking by and grins broadly.  
“How are the women out here with dating?”  
Lincoln shoots David a sly look.  
“They’re quite open to new ideas and positions.”  
Parker looks at David.  
“David was quite popular in Castle Beach.”  
David winks.  
“Chicks dig me—deal with it.”  
Lincoln turns to look at the exit.  
“Guess we should head over to our new pad.”  
Parker grabs Lincoln’s arm.  
“You rented a house?”  
Lincoln nods.

## 2

Lorraine McCall turns away from an antique mirror and seems upset as she looks at a strange object on a table nearby. The small statue-looking sculpture appears very, very old. She reaches out to pick it up cautiously and sighs loudly. She slowly slides her finger over the detailed grooves along the side. As her fingers slide toward the bottom, a feeling of terror suddenly overcomes her and she places the statue back on the table.

“Uncle Gerald really loved creepy things.”

She glances at the rest of the objects scattered throughout the room. She shakes her head and walks toward a window a few feet away. She looks out. From behind her she feels a presence and turns around to see her older half-sister.

“I’m headed out to the mall—want to come?”

“How about we stop at Dairy Queen on the way?”

Evelyn Hayes nods and follows Lorraine out the door. As she leaves and closes the door behind her, the statue falls to the floor and rolls under a huge oak dresser a few feet away.

### 3

Stanley Ross shakes his head again as he looks at the paperwork in front of him. He seems upset as he faces the window of his office looking out toward Alcatraz Island.

"How could this happen?"

He slams his fist down on his desk.

"I was so careful."

He glances at the report in front of him.

"Goodbye Hillcrest Winery."

He leans back in his chair.

"At least I still have Marigold Publishing to rely on for the moment. Well, that and Gold Flower Creations in Berkeley."

He grabs his cell phone and dials.

### 4

#### Washington DC

"I told you already things aren't what they seem."

John Berringer sighs loudly as he walks back and forth in a covered parking lot. He stops and nods quickly several times.

"Of course I realize the implication of what happened with Gerald McCall. His death was certainly not by natural causes."

He grimaces and shrugs.

"I'm aware of what happened to him."

He glances at his car parked a few feet away.

"The question is what do we do now?"

He gestures with his hand.

"He seemed fine a week ago."

Loud yells can be heard coming from the cell phone.

"He royally pissed off someone no doubt."

He angrily clenches his fist.

“Fine—whatever you say—it’s your skin not mine.”

He shuts his cell phone off and sighs.

“What exactly did McCall find in New Orleans?”

Seconds later his cell phone begins buzzing as multiple messages begin appearing. He runs his fingers through his hair and clicks on the first one. An image of a plantation appears.

## 5

### San Diego

“I thought you said we’d spend the afternoon together?”

Christian Malinger turns to look at his much younger girlfriend while pulling on a pair of boxer briefs. He shrugs.

“Got a call—got to go.”

Marisa Sanz seems annoyed.

“I took off work for you?”

Christian rolls his eyes and pulls on his Levi’s.

“I’m sorry.”

He pulls on a T-shirt and walks over to the bed with a smirk. They look at each other briefly before he leans over and kisses Marisa lightly on the lips. She kisses him back as he pulls away. He turns around and stops. He faces her and laughs.

“How about I come back tonight?”

Marisa rolls her eyes.

“You’re just lucky you’re hot.”

“Hot and good in bed—don’t forget that part.”

He blows her a kiss and leaves seconds later. She leans back in bed and looks at the fresh stains on the satin sheets.

## 6

“What’s the big deal about Gerald McCall?”

Tyler Fields turns to face Hugh Blandwick a few feet away.

“Why exactly is Orlov so determined to get his hands on the info McCall had? Dude was a liar—lied endlessly.”

Hugh pulls out a handgun and hands it to Tyler.

"I don't know the gory details and really don't care."  
Tyler slides his fingers across the barrel.  
"I'm tired of being Orlov's lapdog. I want out."  
They look at each other.

## 7 New Orleans

Cole Bouvier glances at the open door of the centuries-old mausoleum and shrugs. He turns to face William La Porte.

"Were the coffins disturbed?"

William shakes his head and sighs loudly.

"I have no idea."

He wipes sweat from his brow.

"I was told the door had been breached—that's all."

He faces the above-ground tombs once again.

"I haven't been here in years."

He sighs loudly again.

"It's been shuttered for almost a century at least. The rest of my relatives are buried elsewhere—mostly in town I think."

Cole pulls the door of the mausoleum shut.

"I'll have someone come by to inspect the coffins."

He leans toward William.

"Is there any possible reason why someone might want to disturb the final resting place of your distant relatives?"

William shakes his head and shrugs.

## 8

Tiffany Dennington smiles as she places a CD into a player and turns around to face a teenage boy. Marko Prinze grins.

"I brought plenty of condoms with me."

Tiffany rolls her eyes.

"I never said I would give myself to you."

He grins broadly.

"You didn't—but you will."

He makes a lewd gesture with his finger.

"I've got a sweet rep."

Tiffany sits down next to Marko.

"My dad hates you."

Marko laughs.

"That's even more of a reason to lose your virginity today—it'll really piss him off to know you gave it up to me."

Tiffany reaches out and strokes Marko's hand.

"My sister is still upset she lost her virginity to you on prom night—said you used her and then threw her away."

Marko smirks.

"I did no such thing. She was mad at Thad and took me up on my offer to fuck in the backseat of her car—end of story."

He begins to unzip his jeans.

"I didn't know she was still a virgin until I was already inside her and she blurted it out. I thought she and Thad Wreene had already slept together. Thad has a terrible rep with girls."

Tiffany watches Marko curiously as he gently takes her hand—seconds later her fingers slide over his stiff erection straining against his boxer briefs. He winks at her and sighs.

"Your father will be really angry when he finds out I took the virginities of both his daughters—he'll probably forbid you to see me after the fact—telling you how to live your life according to his fucked-up rules—and calling me **Brandon deWilde**."

Tiffany leans over to kiss Marko.

"I never listen to what my father says."

Marko kisses Tiffany passionately.

"How about we move this situation to my bed?"

Tiffany looks toward the door.

"What about your mother?"

Marko winks slyly and walks to the door. He locks it.

"My mother is no longer an issue."

Tiffany's eyes fall on his swelling erection.

"What if the condom breaks?"

Marko smirks as he extends his hand to Tiffany.

"I'll take you to an abortion clinic."

Tiffany seems confused.  
“Has this happened to you already?”  
Marko snickers.  
“Uh-huh—it was no big deal.”  
Tiffany stands up.

## 9

“This isn’t going to be easy.”  
Steve Andersen looks at a few sheets of paper spread out in front of him. He faces Erik Smith with a worried look.  
“Tell me something I don’t know.”  
Erik grabs several pieces of paper from Steve.  
“Are you in or out?”  
Steve stands up and looks at his watch nervously.  
“What if we get caught?”  
Erik rolls his eyes.  
“Did we get caught in New Orleans?”  
Steve sighs loudly.  
“What if we’re wrong about this place too?”  
Erik seems annoyed.  
“McCall had a fucking fortune with him when he dropped dead—like sixty-five frigging million dollars to be exact.”  
Erik shrugs as Steve sighs once more.  
“Gerald McCall’s family has no clue about the stuff he hid—they think he was a bumbling idiot—an oddball weirdo.”  
Erik looks at the pieces of paper in his hand.  
“My great-great grandfather was the grandson of **Henry Morgan** and he told my grandfather before he kicked it he had a stash of gold coins—then died—took his secret to the grave.”  
Steve rolls his eyes and yawns loudly.  
“Yeah yeah—and you think Gerald McCall found Morgan’s loot. Stole it and hid it somewhere for safekeeping before he croaked—except there’s no proof to that belief one way or the other. For the record this story is really beginning to reek like something lifted right out of some bad 1940s B movie.”

Steve snatches the pieces of paper from Erik.

"New Orleans was a dead end—nothing was inside the mausoleum we broke into—except a bunch of old coffins."

Erik grins slyly and waves his hand.

"Uh-huh—but who knew they buried people with jewelry back in the 1860s—made a killing selling what we found to a shady art dealer yesterday—that loser was seriously happy."

Steve looks at Erik curiously.

"Exactly what do you want me to do?"

Erik grins broadly.

## 10

Veronica Ross sighs loudly as her lawyer leans back in his chair with a worried look. Chad Winchester watches Veronica nervously as she glances at the paperwork in front of her.

"You can always change your mind?"

Veronica shakes her head.

"It's time I took action."

They look at each other for a few seconds.

"Stanley and I have been heading in this direction for years now—this won't be a shock to him. He expects it."

Chad taps his finger on top of his desk.

"Does he?"

Veronica nods.

"We've been estranged for two months."

Chad gives her a knowing look.

"What about the children?"

Veronica glances at the window briefly.

"Lincoln already knows and Roosevelt will adjust."

Chad stands up and walks to the window.

"Regardless I think you should take a day or two to think about what you really want to do. Come back when you do."

Veronica watches as Chad's gaze seems focused on the expanse of the Golden Gate Bridge in the far distance. She grabs the paperwork and heads to the door. She stops suddenly.



“Stanley doesn’t suspect that you and I had an affair last year. As far as he’s concerned you and I are just acquaintances and nothing more. He’s not going to come after you in case you were wondering. He’s not a revenge mongrel by any means.”

Chad turns to face Veronica slightly upset.

“It never crossed my mind.”

Veronica nods and reaches for the doorknob.

“Say hi to your wife.”

Chad watches as Veronica leaves.

## 11

### New Orleans

“La Porte was as clueless as we were on this case.”

Wesley Trudeau shakes his head.

“Where does this leave us?”

Cole shrugs.

“Get the mausoleum inspected ASAP.”

Wesley winces.

“Who’s gonna be the lucky guy to inspect the stiffs?”

Cole glances at his cell phone and grins.

“Brian Delgado.”

Wesley laughs loudly.

“He’s gonna hate you for sure.”

Cole grins slyly.

“He’ll get over it.”

He glances at the door nervously.

“It’s time for him to face his fear of decaying bodies.”

He sits down at his desk.

“He’s much too freaky about old cemeteries—time he addressed that sooner than later. Besides, it’s not my fault he likes binge-watching zombie movies on cable—serves young Delgado right if truth be told—such terrible acting. Ugh.”

Wesley looks at the front door.

“He’s due to start his shift any minute now.”

Cole stifles a smirk and laughs.

"I know. He certainly won't like what's coming."  
They begin laughing in a mocking way.

**12**

"That view is something else."

David faces Lincoln as he turns away from the window overlooking San Francisco Bay. He gestures with his hand.

"How did you get this place so cheap?"

Lincoln looks at Parker.

"My dad leased it from one of his associates."

David and Parker share a look.

"Exactly how filthy rich is your dad?"

Lincoln looks at David curiously and rolls his eyes.

"He's got some dough."

David looks at the window again.

"It must be sweet to be rich."

Lincoln shakes his head.

"It has its moments."

Davis seems bored and sighs loudly.

"Is Alcatraz still in play?"

Lincoln nods.

"I booked tickets for next week."

Parker seems disappointed and shrugs.

"No sooner?"

Lincoln shakes his head.

"Place is usually booked solid months in advance."

Parker rolls his eyes.

"That sucks."

Lincoln glances at David and Parker with a curious stare as he pulls out a rolled-up newspaper from his jacket pocket.

"When were you going to tell me what really happened in Castle Beach last month? People are still talking about it."

David and Parker turn to look at each other nervously.

"Not much to tell. There was an outbreak of some weird tropical disease but the CDC got it under control quickly."

Lincoln looks at Parker curiously.

"That's not the story you told me initially."

Lincoln looks at the newspaper again.

"As I recall you told me someone was stealing dead bodies from the morgue—and using them for nefarious reasons."

Parker glances at David.

"I know what I said—but I was wrong—that weird bug I told you about did things to the bodies—but the CDC was able to stop it from spreading—nothing more to tell—end of story."

Lincoln looks at Parker suspiciously.

"I don't buy it."

He glances at the newspaper again and sighs.

"According to the *Boston Herald*, the CDC was never able to determine what really occurred—only that whatever was happening suddenly stopped as quickly as it had begun."

David walks over to Lincoln.

"It was seriously scary seeing people really sick—knowing they were going to die—not a pretty sight for anyone to witness firsthand if truth be known. Is that what you want to hear?"

Lincoln shrugs and turns away.

"I just thought the body snatching angle was wicked cool—like they did back in England in the eighteenth century."

David and Parker share a glance.

"This was nowhere as morbid as that."

He runs his fingers through his hair.

"It was a really scary nightmare in the daylight."

David sighs loudly and looks at Parker.

"Parker and I lost a lot of friends—really good friends. It all happened so fast—no warning. There were plenty of tears."

David faces Lincoln again.

"Not anything you'd want to experience."

He seems upset.

"How about we never talk about this again?"

Lincoln faces Parker.

"I can't make such promises."

David shoots Lincoln a strange look.

## 13

Marko winks as he pulls out of Tiffany. She watches as he stretches out in bed and sighs loudly. She reaches over to touch his hand. He looks at her and grins broadly. He sighs again.

“Are you going to miss being a boring virgin?”

Tiffany rolls her eyes.

“I’m not sorry about giving myself to you. I wanted you to be my first—to take me exactly the way you did my sister.”

Marko laughs.

“Good call on your part I assure you.”

Tiffany leans over to kiss Marko.

## 14

### New Orleans

“I could swear that car was here yesterday.”

William glances at a black sedan parked by the sidewalk in front of his home. He pulls into the driveway and turns to face the sidewalk again. The sedan suddenly drives away as he steps out of his car. He hears a noise behind him and as he turns—a strong muscular arm slides around his neck. William gasps for air.

“You have something I want.”

William struggles as the grip around his neck tightens.

“Have what?”

His neck is jerked backwards.

“Keep it up—keep playing dumb—you’ll regret it.”

Without warning his assailant punches William in the chest with his other free arm. William reacts from the blow.

“You have one week to play ball.”

Anton Levitov laughs.

“Then I kill you.”

He throws William toward the pavement.

“One week.”

William rubs his neck.

“Who are you?”

Anton viciously kicks William in his face twice.

“One week.”

He turns to leave.

“If you talk to the cops I’ll know.”

He makes a slashing gesture with his finger across his neck as he slowly walks across the street toward a motorcycle.

## 15

Erik seems worried as he shuts off his cell phone and turns to look at Steve. His eyes fall on a map in front of him.

“There’s an unfortunate snag in our plans.”

He seems nervous and sighs.

“That was Rafael—word on the street seems to be that some operatives working for the Russian mob are on the trail of McCall’s loot. It looks like some of our contacts are less than honorable when it comes to honesty—two-timers actually.”

Steve rolls his eyes.

“What does that mean for us?”

Erik looks at the map again.

“It means we have to stay one step ahead of those Russian thugs—from what I’ve heard they’re a pretty ruthless bunch.”

He sighs loudly.

“Corpses left everywhere.”

Steve watches as Erik stands up.

“Four people last night in the French Quarter in New Orleans—seven people last week in San Diego—and three more bodies found floating in Morro Bay about a week before that.”

“Maybe they drowned?”

Erik seems about to laugh as he faces Steve.

“Yeah—except for the fact that they each had two huge bullet holes in their skulls—from Russian-made bullets.”

Steve sighs loudly.

“This isn’t fun anymore.”

Erik’s cell phone begins ringing.

16

"Is it really over between you and dad?"

Veronica nods as she looks at the reaction of her teenage son. Roosevelt Ross glances at the tennis racket in his hand.

"Where am I going to live?"

Veronica shrugs.

"It's up to you."

Roosevelt looks up at the mansion a few yards away.

"I don't want to live in a studio apartment."

Veronica seems about to laugh.

"I rented a condo."

Roosevelt looks at the mansion again.

"Let me think about it."

Veronica nods.

17

San Diego

"This is quite disturbing."

Christian nods as he looks at Jared Goulet.

"Is there anything your brother might have been involved with that led to his death this morning? Like drugs? Or sex?"

Jared glances at Christian with a shocked look as he slowly leans back in his chair. He shakes his head several times.

"My brother was into art relics. He didn't do drugs and most certainly wouldn't be involved in the illicit sex trade."

Christian leans forward.

"Your brother's body was found with Russian-made bullets lodged in his brain. He was most likely killed by someone working for the Russian mob. These are not nice people. They play dirty and kill their targets without even so much as a thought."

"Should I be worried for my safety?"

Christian points at Jared.

"Those guys don't have issues with murder."

Christian looks at the photos in front of him of seven bloated corpses. He reaches for his cell phone and sighs.

“Murder is a means to an end for them.”

He sighs again.

“I recommend twenty-four-seven police protection.”

Jared rolls his eyes and seems disgusted.

“I teach history at San Diego High. How is this going to look if I show up with a bodyguard? It’ll be a freak show.”

Christian stands up and walks over to Jared.

“Better a freak show than dead.”

They look at each other.

“You said there were two other deaths yesterday? What was their connection to my brother and the other victims?”

Jared wipes sweat from his brow.

“Was one of them named Scott Bington?”

Christian looks at Jared curiously.

“Scott Bington?”

Jared wrings his hands several times.

“Bington is—was my brother’s most recent assistant in hunting relics—he attends the University of San Diego.”

Jared watches as Christian jots down Scott Bington’s name. He glances back at the photographs on his desk.

“One of the victims was Dane McMarker. He was found about a mile away from where we found your brother’s body. He was killed with Russian-made bullets also. From what I know he was a part-time courier of expensive statues for museums.”

Jared looks at Christian angrily.

“My brother wasn’t involved with art theft.”

“I never said he was. But he was connected somehow to the victims in some way or the other is my guess. Possibly through casual online associates—one of which was apparently McMarker. My guess is your brother was in the wrong place at the wrong time and was assumed to have info that someone clearly thought was worth killing for—and will kill again as long as whatever has become the object of interest remains elusive.”

Jared reacts and sighs loudly.

Stanley shuts the door to his car and walks toward the back entrance of his mansion. He notices Roosevelt sitting in a pavilion at the edge of a garden and walks over to where his youngest son is sitting. Roosevelt looks up. He seems sad.

"What's up?"

Roosevelt watches as his father sits next to him. They stare at each other for a few seconds without saying a word.

"Having girl trouble at school?"

Roosevelt rolls his eyes.

"Been there—done that. Got dumped last month by Tammy Barnes—said I spent too much time playing tennis."

Stanley gestures with his hand and sighs.

"Isn't her father Riley Barnes?"

Stanley looks at his son.

"CEO of Barnes Electronics in Marin County—maker of those stupid puzzle boxes everyone thinks is a sweet deal."

Roosevelt nods.

"Uh-huh—but Tammy isn't the reason I'm in a funk."

"It's you and mom."

Stanley seems confused.

"What are you talking about?"

Roosevelt glances at the mansion.

"Talk to mom."

Stanley stands up.

"I can't be pregnant."

Sherry Barnes looks at herself in the mirror.

"It happened only one time. Marko promised me it couldn't happen the first time—he said he only shot blanks."

"And you believed him?"

Sherry turns around to look at her sister.



“He promised.”

Tammy Barnes laughs.

“This is Marko Prinze we’re talking about. He has a rep for a reason. He’s slept his way through every girl at school. Rumor has it that he’s also dallied with some of our teachers. Have you forgotten how fast our English teacher left last year? Word on the street was that she left because she got pregnant by one of the guys at school—want to guess who the proud papa could be?”

Sherry glances at her stomach.

“What should I do?”

Tammy rolls her eyes.

“Time for us to pay a visit to one of those public clinics on Haight-Ashbury and get you fixed before anyone finds out.”

Sherry seems upset at the thought and sighs.

“Marko needs to know.”

Tammy grabs Sherry by the arm.

## 20

### Miami

Todd Whitney seems annoyed as he leans back in his chair. He glances at the cell phone on his desk and smirks.

“McMarker played a dangerous game.”

He gestures with his hand.

“But Vladimir Orlov is not to be made a fool of. That worm McMarker deserved what Orlov did to him. Good riddance.”

He laughs loudly.

“Let that be a lesson to non-believers.”

As he turns to look at the Miami skyline he hears the door to his office open. He turns around to see Adam Sanchez holding a thick folder in his hand. He nervously takes a step forward.

“This is the info you asked for about that situation from Atlanta concerning Eldon’s ex-wife. It’s ready when you see fit to act. Corinne Rodson can be dealt with harshly if necessary.”

Todd sighs loudly and nods.

“Thank you Adam. I appreciate your diligence.”

Adam nods and hands the folder to Todd and leaves. As he closes the door Todd looks at the folder. He thumbs through the paperwork and smiles broadly. He snaps his fingers twice.

"It's time I make Corinne see the light."

He clenches his fists.

"But I've got to figure out a plan of action—in case her lawyers get in the way. Of course there's always Plan B."

He grins slyly as he looks at a photo of Corinne Rodson and clenches his fists again. He closes the folder suddenly.

"She's trying my last nerve without a doubt."

He smirks and leans forward.

"Her demise would be justifiable after what she did."

He clenches his fist again and shrugs.

"Accidents happen every day in hazardous workplaces across this country—and what's more hazardous than a hospital emergency room where people with mental issues target those who try to help them—definitely something to think about."

He stands up and walks to the window.

## 21

"I think we can sell most of Gerald's crappy junk online."

Lorraine looks at Evelyn curiously.

"You really think so?"

Evelyn nods and takes a sip of coffee.

"People will buy anything. Better than just sitting on that junk for the next ten years—hoping it'll be worth something."

Lorraine sighs loudly.

"Gerald would freak royally if he could hear us right now talking about his collection as if it was just garage sale crap."

Evelyn rolls her eyes.

"Luckily he can't—he's dead."

She smirks.

"Life is for the living and that junk is garbage. This stuff might get us a few dollars if we're lucky—but nothing more."

Lorraine reacts and seems shocked.

"I forgot how mean you could be sometimes."  
Evelyn grins broadly and gestures.  
"I'm a realist—deal already."  
She gestures with her hand again and laughs slyly.

22

"How about you and me see a movie later?"  
Marko grins.  
"I'll even see a chick flick."  
Diane Singer looks at Marko curiously from behind the concession stand at the movie theater where she works.  
"What about you and Tiffany Dennington?"  
Marko cracks a smile.  
"What about her?"  
Diane looks at Marko suspiciously for a few seconds.  
"I thought the two of you were a couple?"  
Marko laughs.  
"You thought wrong."  
He makes a lewd gesture with his finger.  
"I don't have a girlfriend."  
He reaches out to stroke Diane's hand and winks.  
"After the movie we can get to know the backseat of my car better—so many things we can do—it's been a long time."  
Diane blushes.  
"I missed you so much."  
Marko tenderly kisses Diane's hand.  
"I know—I missed you too."  
He pulls her toward him and kisses her on the lips. She sighs loudly as he kisses her more passionately. As he pulls away from her she notices his erection straining under his Levi's.  
"I'm on the pill—since two weeks ago."  
Marko makes another lewd gesture with his finger as he kisses her again and looks down at his bulging erection.  
"I like girls who come prepared."  
He begins laughing.

**23**  
**New Orleans**

“La Porte got the message loud and clear about what will happen to him. He knows the deal if he dares to cross me.”

Anton laughs.

“This time next week there might be another corpse floating face down in one of those disgusting canals near the French Quarter if La Porte fails to take my threat seriously.”

He grins broadly and laughs.

“What’s one more corpse found in the canal? Place has more dead bodies than a morgue. Local gangs kill people every day for fun. Just today two guys were shot point-blank in front of a pansy barber shop. Heard the reason was simply because they were holding hands. I guess being openly gay can be deadly.”

He makes a gesture with his hands and smirks.

“Oh well—maybe they should have been into girls.”

He laughs loudly.

**24**

Stanley looks at Veronica and then glances at the folder in front of him. He wipes sweat from his brow and blinks.

“Is this really necessary?”

Veronica nods.

“It’s for the best Stanley.”

She turns around to look at the garden outside.

“I’ve already rented a condo on Nob Hill.”

Stanley looks at Veronica.

“Isn’t that a little pricy?”

Veronica sighs.

“It’s my father’s money in case you forgot.”

Stanley grimaces.

“I only meant.”

“I know what you meant.”

Stanley looks at his watch for a second.  
"I wish you wouldn't leave. But it's your choice."  
He leaves the room.  
"I guess I assumed it would be easy."  
She turns around to see Roosevelt standing at the door.

## 25 San Diego

Christian looks at his watch and then at the house in front of him with a white picket fence and rose garden. He sighs.  
"There's no pretty way to dress up murder."  
He steps out of his car and walks toward the house.

## 26

Tyler tiptoes down the hallway as the floorboards creak under his feet. He looks around a few times and continues toward the room at the end of the hallway. Wind whistles through an open window creating swishing sounds. Tyler stops suddenly. As he turns to look toward the driveway below he notices Lorraine and Evelyn getting out of their car. He grits his teeth harshly.

"Fuck it. I thought they were gone for the day."  
He looks back at the room at the end of the hallway.  
"If they find me—death will find them."  
Footsteps can be heard entering the house.  
"Damn McCall for making this hard."

He darts into the room and hides behind a large stack of boxes. Seconds later he hears Lorraine and Evelyn coming up the stairs. He holds his breath as their footsteps seem to fade away a moment later. Silence permeates the room immediately.

## 27

"Does Lincoln know you've made it final with dad?"  
Veronica looks at Roosevelt curiously.

“He does.”

She glances at the front door.

“This is for the best.”

Roosevelt watches as his mother walks past him toward the hallway leading upstairs. His cell phone begins to flash repeatedly with text messages from one of his classmates.

## 28

“You still haven’t told me about this new guy you met last week at Miranda’s bookstore? What’s his name? Spill it.”

Evelyn watches Lorraine’s reaction to her question and gives her a knowing look. She turns away with a sly smile.

“There’s nothing to tell.”

Evelyn grabs Lorraine by the arm.

“From what Miranda said earlier the two of you were quite friendly. Flirted endlessly—teased each other nonstop.”

Lorraine rolls her eyes.

“Remind me to cross Miranda Wu off my Christmas list.”

Evelyn grins slyly.

“Don’t blame Miranda for your behavior.”

She glances at Lorraine’s cell phone lying on a table a few feet away. Lorraine notices and quickly grabs the cell phone.

“I’m taking the fifth.”

Evelyn tries to grab the cell phone.

“Miranda said he was some sort of artist?”

Lorraine smirks.

“Like I said I’m taking the fifth.”

At that moment they hear creaking sounds upstairs. They look at each other for a few seconds. They seem alarmed.

“Is someone upstairs?”

Evelyn takes a step forward.

“Could be a homeless person?”

There is another loud creak and then silence.

“Think we should call the cops?”

Evelyn rolls her eyes.

"They'll take too long. Let's check it out."

Lorraine seems aghast at the idea.

"Maybe we should wait?"

Evelyn pulls out a small handgun from her purse.

"I've been taking lessons at the range."

Before Lorraine can answer Evelyn runs up the stairs and stops as she reaches the hallway. She cautiously takes a step forward and stops. Wind whistles through the hallway.

"Ugh. I really hate this house."

She turns to face Lorraine.

"How could Gerald live here all those years?"

They look at each other as the wind causes the floor to creak again. Evelyn laughs as she leans against the wall.

"This old house has a mind of its own."

They turn around and head downstairs again.

## 29

Tyler peeks through the bushes and then runs toward the street a few feet away. Hugh throws open the door to his car as Tyler climbs in seconds later. He's out of breath as he turns to look back at the house while Hugh seems upset and sighs.

"Did those two aging hens see you?"

Tyler shakes his head.

"This isn't going to be easy."

Tyler rolls his eyes.

"That place is full of junk."

He sighs loudly.

"McCall had bad taste—*like* really bad taste. But it has to be in that house somewhere—somewhere in all that junk."

Tyler looks back at the house.

"Those two women might be a problem."

He runs his fingers through his hair and sighs loudly.

"I might have to take them out permanently."

"Orlov won't care either way."

Hugh shakes his head several times.

"Those Russian mob types play for keeps."

Tyler wipes sweat from his brow.

"His freak show goons killed my brother last year. They tossed him into San Francisco Bay like a used piece of trash after they handcuffed him to a fifty pound piece of cinder block."

He seems upset as he turns to face Hugh.

"You know what, I'm done. This isn't worth it."

Hugh looks back at the house.

"Orlov will kill you."

Tyler shrugs.

"He'll have to find me first."

Hugh's cell phone begins to ring loudly.

"What about me?"

Tyler looks at Hugh curiously.

*"Does everything always have to be about you?"*

Hugh angrily grabs Tyler by his shirt collar.

"I'm involved in this mess too in case you forgot."

Tyler pushes Hugh away.

"I'm tired of dealing with Orlov and his people."

Hugh laughs nervously.

"Don't forget Orlov is tight with San Francisco's finest."

He looks at his cell phone again.

"Most of the San Francisco PD works for the Russian mob and take their orders directly. You're a dead man walking."

Tyler wrings his hands.

"I want out."

Hugh shows Tyler his cell phone and sighs.

"Orlov is calling me directly. He's not happy with us."

Tyler looks away.

### 30

Vladimir Orlov slams his cell phone down on his desk.

"That jerk is trying my last nerve."

He faces Bruce Copeland.

"Find that ungrateful miserable wretch."



Bruce smirks knowingly.

“And when I do?”

Vladimir grins broadly.

“It’s time for him to join his brother in San Francisco Bay.”

He walks over to where Bruce is standing.

“Hire someone classy to film his bon voyage.”

Bruce touches his badge as Vladimir hands him a gun wrapped in a rolled-up newspaper and makes a lewd gesture.

“Shoot him in the knee but don’t kill him.”

He laughs slyly.

“I want him to know what’s happening when he’s thrown from the Golden Gate Bridge by you and Erwin. His death will be a warning to anyone else stupid enough to defy me. I will not tolerate useless garbage like that wretch disrespecting me by refusing to follow my orders. Take him out at midnight.”

Bruce nods and leaves Vladimir’s office.

**TO BE CONTINUED**



Nancy  
Hanks  
Lincoln  
Public  
Library

---

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Historical Book Collection