

EVERYTHING

A short story by:

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Kevin Mills had everything a man could want, investments early in life had paid off and his assets had just climbed into the nine-digit range. His beautiful wife Karen, of eight years, seemed to be just as young and spry as she was the day they had met. He had two wonderful children ages six and five and an estate that spanned across 120 acres in rural Nebraska. His privacy had come to be the most important thing in his life and security on his estate now emulated that of the White House.

"Why is there a missing piece of a puzzle that seems so complete?" Assata Mahdi-Valin asked. Assata had been Kevin's therapist for three years and was bothered by his depression over the past two months.

"I don't understand it myself, Assata. My goals for life have all been achieved; I have traveled abroad, met heads of state and have a wonderful wife and kids. When I was a kid my objective was to develop a financial stature where my kids would never have to work a day in their lives. Everything has been achieved now, I wake up everyday and have nothing that I have to do. Maids do the cleaning, groundskeepers take care of the house and I have a chef on staff that masters everything from peanut butter sandwiches to Beef Wellington. My wife is as content as she could possibly be and is as loving and caring a woman as I could ask for. However, it's as if in my mind somewhere, there is something I want that I can't have. I just have no idea what that might be."

Assata sat back in what had become her chair in the den of Kevin Mills' house. Typically during therapy over the years she had sat and listened to boorish talk of vacations all over the world and recent purchases. It was the typical therapy for the "rich and shameless" as she liked to think of some of her clients. For the first time dealing with these people one actually had a clinical problem, depression. "Could it be that perhaps there is a dream vacation you are wanting to take, someone that you would like to meet? Perhaps something as simple as a furnishing you have seen that you wanted and forgotten about? I realize that this is a case of over-simplifying a complex issue, but we have to begin with the simplest things before moving to complexity."

Kevin laid back in his leather recliner. He had been trying so hard to dig deep he had completely gotten away from the possibility that this could be a simple matter. He sat staring out his window fixated on a willow tree that had been planted outside his window just after construction was completed on the house. Around the entire grounds this was the only willow tree. It had been six feet tall when it had been planted nine years prior. Now it had sprouted upward and had probably doubled in height. For some reason this tree gave him peace when nothing else was able to. It was the one piece of God's creation he had insisted upon. The hedge maze, the immense garden and the outlying wooded area had been a contribution of Karen's. She worked quite a bit with their head groundskeeper and he couldn't even remember the man's name. Of the 17 persons on his staff at Husker Estate, he associated with two on a weekly basis Luc his chef and Benjamin his butler. It dawned on him he didn't know either of their last names. Benjamin had been with him for eight years; Luc had been on staff for four.

Kevin sat back up in his chair and looked at Assata. She was an extremely beautiful woman, deep brown eyes, shining black hair and a professional, toned figure. "I'm going to need time to think about this, Assata. After delving into complexities, to switch gears and look at the simpler things is going to take time. Can we schedule our next appointment for one week instead of the usual two?"

Assata smiled and pulled out her Palm Pilot. She had originally planned on taking a three-day weekend next week and had Monday completely open. She looked through the other days and decided she would rather give Kevin time on Monday than overbook another weekday. "I have all-day available on Monday, Kevin. What time would you like?"

Kevin didn't have to consult a calendar, he was well aware he had nothing planned for next week. The week after or even the following month, he lived his life one day at a time and aside from a few social engagements, had nothing to do but enjoy time with his family. "Whatever is best for you, Assata, my entire day is free."

Assata decided she would go for late afternoon and thus have close to a three-day weekend. "Monday at 4:00 p.m. then?"

"4:00 p.m. will be fine. I appreciate you coming out to the estate to see me. I realize it seems eccentric, but I am more comfortable here than anywhere else." Kevin forced a smile.

Assata was taken aback at this comment. She had been coming here for over a year and this was the first time he had thanked her. She smiled back and managed to hold back the laugh that wanted to come up. "It's my pleasure, Kevin. You have a beautiful estate and I enjoy getting out to the country, such a refreshing change from life in Scottsbluff." She stood and shook his hand.

As was the norm, he escorted her to her car. It was rare in this day to find a 31-year-old man who was such a gentleman. The two of them said goodbye and Assata began the 18-mile drive back to town. She turned on her recorder and began reciting notes from her meeting with Kevin then she turned it off briefly and thought about his thanking her for coming out. I guess he didn't grasp the concept that she charged him 50% more for his sessions now than she had when he visited the office. She shook that thought from her head and turned the recorder on again.

Kevin decided to walk around the grounds instead of going back inside. It was a warm September day, temperatures were near 80 and the sun was shining brightly in the sky. He waved to two of the groundskeepers as he walked through the garden. Karen and the kids had gone to town to do some shopping, a rare thing for Karen, she hated shopping. He took a seat on a fishing bench beside one of the two lakes on his estate and looked across the water and focused on what simple things he could have possibly overlooked.

Karen returned home and, after parking her Mercedes in the garage, entered the house with Kevin Jr. and Kathleen. She had purchased new clothing for the kids and had gotten them more school aids. She had worked with both children since they were babies and both were well advanced scholastically for their ages. Kath was now five years old and already could write her name,

address and phone number. Kevin Jr. was now in first grade and his school was now discussing him bypassing second grade and moving to third next year.

She hung the children's new clothes up in their closet and they had gone to their playroom. She glanced out of Kath's window and saw Kevin sitting by the lake. She walked to the window and watched him with a smile on her face. He was the gentlest, kindest man she had ever met. His success had not gone to his head at all and she loved him as deeply as she had the day they were wed. She watched as he stood and walked toward the lake and then as he jumped in fully clothed. She gasped at seeing this and chuckled a little under her breath at how impulsive he could be at times. For what seemed like an hour she waited for him to resurface but he hadn't. Fear gripped her and she ran down the stairs yelling for the staff to go to the lake.

Across the grounds she raced, screaming for the groundskeepers to help her. She reached the edge of the lake and there was no sign of Kevin. Without even thinking, she dove in, it was now dusk outside and visibility was next to zero under the water. As she came back to the surface for air she excitedly told the staff gathered on the shore that Kevin was lost in the water. All of the male staff members immediately dove in as well. As the female staff member raced backed to the house to call for help. Six hours later there were over 100 rescue personnel searching the water for Kevin Mills. Two police detectives were anxiously waiting to speak with Karen Mills who had been given a sedative three hours ago and was now a zombie as she sat on the bench looking at the lake. Her physician had informed them it would be best to not push her in her current state. They had gotten the basic information; she had been at the window, saw her husband jump in the lake and never saw him come back up.

It was now daylight once again and still Karen Mills sat on the bench watching the massive rescue effort that was taking place on her once peaceful lake. There were now over 250 members of various search and rescue teams diving and dredging the massive five-acre lake. Karen's mind raced, as she sat appearing dormant. Had her husband committed suicide? He was an excellent swimmer and as far as she knew, never had even gotten into the lake before. They had an Olympic sized pool where he had spent hours a week exercising and doing laps. This made absolutely no sense, the more she thought about it, the less she could rationalize it. People were talking to her, but she couldn't hear them, she was completely engrossed in her thoughts now. She felt so helpless; all she could do now was wait for them to find her husband's body. The thought he could be found alive was now gone. It was a foregone conclusion he had drowned, now all that remained was finding him.

It had now been 18 hours since her husband had vanished into the water and there had been no encouragement at all. After hours of trying to coax her away, she finally nodded when her sister Lisa asked her to come inside the house. It was the mention that the children needed her that made her finally decide to leave the lake. She had felt close to her husband somehow by being there, even though she knew he was now deceased. As the two walked to the house she continually looked back, hoping against all odds that something would happen.

Detective Sergeant Ronald Cross sat in the midst of a huge parlor partially dreading what he was about to do and partially knowing it was just his job and not personal. He stood up and looked at the multitude of books on the shelves. Had to be at least 10,000 different titles, "no way in hell anyone has read all of these" he said to his partner. The two of them chuckled as Detective Mike Poister replied, "I couldn't even get through one of them".

Their laughter came to an abrupt halt when Karen Mills entered the room. "Good afternoon, gentlemen" she spoke softly and there was still that sense of loss in her voice.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Mills. I'm Sergeant Cross and this is my partner Detective Poister. We've come to discuss the matter of your husband's disappearance." Ron was doing his best not to let personal opinion get cloud his ability to work.

"Disappearance? You say that as if we don't know where he is. He's in that lake somewhere, gentlemen, he didn't just get up and walk away." Karen had cried nearly non-stop for two weeks, she had reached the resolution her husband was deceased and was standoffish now.

"That's where the problem lies, Mrs. Mills. In two weeks time over 200 man hours and unbelievable resources have been exhausted in an effort to recover your husband's body. Every inch of that lake has been searched, photographed and dredged. Short of draining it, there's nothing left to try. He's not in there."

"Stop, ok, I'm not crazy, I saw him go in and never come out. You must've missed something that's all. I don't care what it costs, I want that lake searched until he is found."

"Well, ma'am, that's up to you. Our investigation has to move forward now. I have here a warrant to do a thorough search of your property, inside and out."

"A warrant? What exactly do you expect to find?" Karen didn't want to sound defensive, but she couldn't help it.

"At this point ma'am, it is procedure. We have a missing person and after two weeks, we have to suspect that there has been some form of foul play. We're hoping to find evidence to the contrary, but we have to do our job." Ron found himself being defensive and quickly changed it, "good, bad, or indifferent we have to investigate. If there is anything you haven't told us, it would be wise to do so now."

"I told you everything and I've told you the same thing 100 times the past two weeks. There's nothing else to add. If the police force chooses to waste it's time searching my estate that's your decision. You do what you have to do gentlemen, please excuse me, I have to contact my lawyer regarding this warrant." She didn't give them a chance to respond quickly she turned and exited the parlor.

"That was pleasant", Mike Poister had been quiet throughout, "I went from feeling sorry for her loss to wondering exactly where she hid the body in just five minutes."

"Yeah, me too, Mike. Something isn't right, I can understand her not wanting us to search, but to be that defensive, she's hiding something." Ron began to leave the parlor. "Let's get started, go tell the others to begin searching."

Anyone finds anything, radio me, they are not to touch anything that could be evidence."

"Will do, Ron." Mike was not looking forward to this. He had been on two of these investigations in Lincoln when he was on the force there, both times the body was found and it wasn't pretty.

As Ron moved towards the back of the house, Mike went outside and instructed the other 28 police officers. He and Ron would search the residence while the rest searched the grounds. "This estate is a very well kept area. I expect it to remain that way, search, but do not destroy." Mike concluded his instructions and went back inside.

As he re-entered the house he was met by Karen Mills, "My attorney is on his way and strongly suggests that you gentlemen hold off on your search until he has a chance to look over this warrant."

"Your attorney can look it over when he gets here ma'am. In the meantime, we are going to do our job, I'm sure you are aware with the term, "Obstruction", means?" Mike had very little sympathy for this woman now.

Karen just glared at him and went back into the den. She sat at her husband's desk and stared out the window at the willow tree. Kevin had always enjoyed that tree, she however, found it hideous and would've preferred a nice cherry tree there.

When Ron and Mike entered the den and began searching, it was more than she could take. "Can I not have some privacy in my own home?" She yelled at the two men.

Mike spoke up before Ron had a chance, "I thought we already discussed obstruction, Mrs. Mills." Mike was now smug and overly blunt, "What part of that word is it that you are having trouble comprehending?"

"You can not talk to me like that in my home, I have rights." Karen's eyes were tearing up, not out of sorrow but from anger. "When this is over, I'm going to sue you and your entire department."

Once again before Ron could respond Mike chimed in, "The name's Mike Poister, that's p-o-I-s-t-e-r and my badge number is 874. Be sure and get it right." Mike glanced at Ron and could see his partner was not approving of his attitude.

"You are a smug, arrogant, jack-ass officer. That is spelled j-a-c-k-a-s-s." with that Karen left the den and entered the foyer.

Ron laughed at her retort, not bad for a high society lady, he thought to himself. "Ok, Mike, you have no further communiqué with her, she addresses you, you send her to me, got it?"

"Ok, Ron. I'm tired of her anyway." Mike went back to searching.

As the two men exited the parlor Carl Sandiford Attorney-At-Law greeted them. "Detectives, could I have a word with you in the den, please?"

"Who are you?" Mike spoke up without thinking and saw the glare from Ron.

"My name is Carl Sandiford, I am the Mills' attorney. Would you gentlemen follow me into the den for just a minute?"

"Sure, Mr. Sandiford, lead the way." Ron spoke before Mike could be rude again.

The three men entered the den and as Carl closed the door behind them he began speaking. "I realize you gentlemen have a job to do, but that does not include harassing my client. I have looked over your warrant and contacted Judge Hillyard to verify its validity. No one is going to interfere with your search, however should either of you address Mrs. Mills in anything but a respectful manner for the remainder of your time here, I will be on your asses like a squirrel with an acorn. Do we understand each other?"

Ron shushed Mike with a quick glare and turned to address this pompous lawyer. "Let me clue you in to something you seem to be overlooking. A man has quite possibly been murdered, Mr. Sandiford, and at this point, we have one suspect. You think it's easy to get a warrant to search a billionaire's home? We will be anyway we damn well please, we have not violated your client's rights in any way and I'll be damned if she is going to disrespect us and expect courtesy in return. If Mr. Mills isn't found in the next 24 hours it becomes a Federal case and guess what, those guys can get rude."

Carl Sandiford was undaunted, "Once again, do not be rude or disrespectful to my client in her home. She has lost her husband and last time I checked, your job description was to serve and protect not abuse and violate."

Ron Cross laughed and walked toward the door. "Get out of my way." He brushed past the attorney and exited the den. Mike followed grinning from ear to ear.

"Let's head upstairs, Mike. If you encounter Mrs. Mills, ignore her." Ron was holding back his temper as best he could, but he was irritated.

Mike didn't respond, he knew his partner well enough to know that now was not the time for pleasant discussion. He followed Ron up the stairs and to the back of the left hallway where they entered what appeared to be Kathleen Mills' room.

They weren't in there ten seconds when a call came across the radio. "Sir, we have what appears to be a grave out here in the woods northeast of the lake." Both men ran down the hallway and out of the house.

As they approached the area that was now flooded with police officers there was a mound of dirt approximately seven feet in length and three feet in width. Ron turned to Mike, "Go and find Mr. Sandiford and have him bring his client here."

Mike headed off towards the house as Ron turned back to face the mound. He knelt down beside it and instructed all of the officers to exit the area single file. Chances of there being any salvageable footprints or clues were pretty slim, but he wasn't going to take any chances at this point.

Fifteen minutes had passed before Mike returned with the attorney and Mrs. Mills. Ron looked at their faces and could tell something unpleasing had been said between the three. "Mrs. Mills, can you tell me about this?" Ron was doing his best to keep all emotion from his voice as he had been trained to do.

"Looks like a big mound of dirt to me." Karen Mills replied abruptly. "Maybe Jimmy Hoffa is buried there? Or perhaps the Lindbergh baby?"

Ron wanted so badly to blow up, instead he turned his attention to the woman's attorney. "Would you instruct your client to cooperate before she is taken into custody?"

As much as he wanted to tell his client to not say anything Carl knew that the apparent gravesite would be probably cause for an arrest. "Karen, do you know anything about this?"

"I'm not certain, but I'd imagine that is the grave of Diablo." Karen spoke to her attorney and not at the two detectives. "He was one of our guard dogs who passed away three weeks ago. Kevin had instructed the grounds crew to bury him properly in the woods."

"Mrs. Mills, exactly how big was this dog?" Mike spoke up again with a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

Karen glanced at Mike and then turned to face her attorney again, he nodded for her to respond. "I'm not sure of his exact size, he was part Doberman Pinscher, part Great Dane."

"Mike, go find a member of the grounds crew who drew burial detail and bring them out here, also tell the search team to continue. Mrs. Mills, you and your attorney may return to the house if you like." Ron lit a cigarette as he spoke.

Karen was getting more upset by the minute and was visibly shaken. Carl Sandiford placed his hand on her elbow and the two turned and went back to the house. "Carl, this is ridiculous, my privacy is being invaded and there is nothing I can do about it?"

"Let's let them finish with their search first, Karen. If they don't find anything we'll proceed from there." Carl was mainly a business lawyer and was beginning to think he was way out of his league.

The two went to the den and sat down. Carl had no idea what to say to her, she had lost her husband to an apparent suicide and was now becoming a suspect in his disappearance. Her world had been shattered and now it was being turned upside down for good measure.

Mike returned with two ground's crewmen who both verified that indeed it was Diablo buried in the grave they had found. When told the dog had weighed in at 235 pounds it wasn't so hard to believe that it required such a large grave. Ron asked the two men to dig up the dog anyway, couldn't possibly leave a stone this large unturned. The men left to get shovels and Ron assigned one of the uniform officers to stand by the grave and keep an eye on the crew when they dug the grave. He and Mike made their way back to the house to continue their search.

After six hours the search had been completed. No evidence of foul play was found nothing more than a deceased dog that closely resembled a horse in size. Mike and Ron now stood in front of Mrs. Karen Mills and her pompous attorney in the foyer. "On behalf of the Nebraska State Police Department, I'd like to thank you for your cooperation in our search." Ron was nearly choking on the words as they came out of his mouth. "We apologize for any inconvenience and will be in touch if we have any further information or have any additional questions." With that Ron and Mike both turned to exit the house, both hoping it would be left there. It wasn't.

"Gentlemen, did you find anything that aided in your investigation?" Carl Sandiford wasn't about to let this opportunity pass.

"No sir, but our experts will be reviewing additional information over the course of the next few days. This investigation is just beginning sir, not ending."

"I see, so you inconvenienced my client for nearly eight hours today and intend to further do so?"

"If we require anything further from your client, we'll be in touch. Otherwise we should be able to do most of the remaining investigation without disturbing her."

"I'd like it noted that from this point on, Mrs. Mills is represented by council and any questions you may have for her, will go through my office first."

Mike couldn't resist, "Where were you when Mr. Mills disappeared Mr. Sandiford?"

"What are you suggesting detective?" Carl was taken aback on this one,

"Not suggesting anything sir, simply asking a question. Since I assume you are representing yourself, I shouldn't have to contact another attorney to get an answer."

"I have no reason to answer that preposterous question. In addition, I don't like the implication that I could be involved in Mr. Mills' disappearance."

Mike smiled, as did Ron. "Thank you sir, we'll be in touch, by the way, I didn't implicate you, you just did. Have a nice day."

Both Ron and Mike exited leaving behind a flustered stuffed suit and a surprisingly quiet client. "Have a feeling my vacation has just been delayed, Mike."

"Indefinitely, it would appear" Mike chuckled, "that'll teach you to schedule a vacation when a billionaire disappears."

"Yeah, just my luck, if had been the wife who disappeared I could've enjoyed my vacation." With that both men cracked up and got into their Police Cruiser.

After a frustrating three weeks, there was no evidence why Kevin Mills had vanished. It was as if the man had just ceased to exist. No records of him being spotted anywhere and no corpse. They had statements from a psychiatrist who confirmed that hours before he was seen jumping in a lake, Kevin Mills had seemed depressed and was disoriented. A \$100,000 withdrawal from the couple's checking account had met with a dead end. Evidently Kevin Mills had just needed some pocket money and had written a check for cash two days prior to his disappearance.

That was it, nothing else even remotely out of the ordinary. The more Ron Cross looked through the nothingness that was to be considered evidence the more irritated he became. The FBI had begun investigating Kevin Mills as a missing person rather than a homicide victim. It was a nice three-ring circus and he couldn't help but feel that a billionaire had them all jumping through hoops. As he leaned back in his chair Lieutenant Paul Sarbino entered his office. "Ron, starting Monday you are on vacation, this Mills investigation has hit a brick wall, it'll be here when you get back."

Ron exhaled deeply, "Paul, you ever had a case where you just knew you had overlooked one detail? That there was one piece missing to the puzzle and you had held it in your hand many times, but you didn't know it?"

"We all have, Ron. Comes with the territory. Chances are this guy tired of his wife and is living on a beach somewhere in the Virgin Islands. From what you told me of her attitude, I certainly can't blame him. If you want to rack your brain on it for the next five days, that's up to you. You're getting no further assignments until you come back from leave."

"Ok, Paul, thanks. Maybe my wife won't divorce me after-all." Ron forced a smile.

"Well, someday you may get lucky and she'll realize she's too good for you."

"Gee thanks, get out of my office tyrant." The two men laughed heartily and Paul left the office. It had been rumored that Paul was now dating Kevin Mills' psychiatrist. "Guess someone is getting satisfaction from this case" Ron thought aloud. Two seconds later, that peacefulness he had felt for the first time in weeks was abruptly shattered.

"Ron, we gotta go. There's been a double homicide." Mike popped in and looked as if he was going to burst.

"LT says I have no more cases until after vacation, Mike. You'll have to get with Chris Mackey, all my cases will be his for two weeks."

"One of the victims is Mrs. Karen Mills." Mike knew he didn't have to say anymore.

"On second thought, my vacation can wait." Ron grabbed his jacket from the back of his chair and was out the door quickly.

As they arrived at the estate of Karen and Kevin Mills it looked like an FBI convention. Federal Agents were at the gate, throughout the grounds and in front of the house. It was an infestation they looked like ants scurrying around a mound of sugar. "Are we the last to know about this, Mike?"

"Apparently, we just got the 911 call a minute before I came to you. Must have been a delayed call." Mike was very agitated and knew his partner was also.

Mike pulled the car in behind an FBI vehicle and the two men made their way to the front door of the house. After flashing their identification they were allowed to enter, both fuming on the inside at having to flash an I.D. at a crime scene they should be in charge of. In the foyer were the two agents who were in charge of Kevin Mills' missing person's case.

"Detectives, was wondering if you were going to bother to make an appearance here." Antonio Degarces smiled as he greeted the two police officers. "I'm Special Agent Antonio Degarces, you can call me Tony, everyone else does."

"I'm sorry, didn't catch that, Antonio was it?" Mike was in instant smart-ass mode.

"Yes, Antonio Degarces."

"Well, Ant, seems someone forgot to call us. Slight oversight on your part? Or did you guys want to totally contaminate the crime scene to make it tougher for real detectives?" Mike was expecting a disapproving glare from Ron, but didn't get one instead Ron was glaring at Agent Degarces.

"Well, nice to see you have a sense of humor, detective. The maid called us when she discovered the bodies. Once we were certain the scene was free from danger we went ahead and put the 911 call in to your department. Have to look out for the men in blue these days." Tony Degarces was still smiling, he knew they were pissed off and he had the upper hand. "Would you like me to fill you in on what's what or do you wish to continue measuring penis size?"

Before Mike could answer Ron spoke up, "what have we got?"

"Two bodies, they have been identified as Karen Mills and Carl Sandiford a local attorney. They were found in the master bedroom upstairs at 9:00 a.m. by the upstairs maid, Miss Ellen Heinrich, evidently they were either murdered in their sleep or interrupted during other pursuits. Mr. Sandiford's throat was cut and Mrs. Mills had a spear shoved through her mouth and into the bed. Both victims were naked and it was confirmed they had both had recent sexual activity."

"Agent, are you aware that it is now 2:40 p.m. and that this is a State Police investigation, not a Federal one?"

"Wasn't aware of what time it was, no wonder I'm hungry I missed lunch. As for jurisdiction, I assure you, detective, we checked and since we were investigating the disappearance of Kevin Mills, this homicide was our ball to run with."

"In that case, agent, congratulations, you fumbled the ball."

Tony Degarces furrowed his brow at that comment. "What do you mean by that, detective?"

"You have at least 50 men here searching through the grounds and the house at the scene of a homicide. How many men do you have at the airport, bus station and train station? How many roadblocks do you have set up and at what perimeter?"

"Wouldn't we have to know who we were looking for in order to stake out transportation terminals. What good would stopping traffic be when we have no suspects as yet?"

"You have no suspects?" Ron began laughing, "Mike, get on the radio, APB on Kevin Mills, get his photo copied and have it shown to every ticket counter at every possible way out of here. It's too late for a roadblock since after at least seven hours he could be anywhere if he were driving. Get me his psychiatrist, have her brought here or ask her to come here on her own. Get the forensics people in here, I don't care if the Feds are here or not, I want my own evidence." Mike nodded and went back out of the house.

"Hold on detective, you can't just assume that this homicide was perpetrated by Kevin Mills. He is still one of the most prominent citizens in the United States and should not be treated like a common criminal. As for your forensics team, be my guest, we have gathered our evidence. I want the APB canceled and if Kevin Mill happens to be spotted at an airport, I want him brought in for questioning, without handcuffs. Is that clear, detective?"

Ron glanced up at the agent, "I'm sorry did you say something?" He then began walking toward the steps and turned back, "could one of your men get me a cup of coffee please?" He then continued up the steps, shaking his head at the ineptitude of the FBI.

Ron entered the master bedroom and glanced around at the people in the room. Two of the FBI Forensics team and one Agent talking with the maid just inside the door. He made his way over to the bed and pulled back the sheet that had been placed over the bodies. Both victims were totally naked Sandiford was lying on his side facing Karen Mills. She was lying on her back with no visible wounds except the blood in and around her mouth. Placed in an upright position beside the bed was what appeared to be an African spear. Ron remembered seeing a collection of those downstairs in the den during their search of the premises. It was now rapped in plastic and tagged, with blood all over the tip and down the shaft. After viewing the bodies once again, he placed the sheet back over them and proceeded to the doorway where the maid was now standing by one of the other servants.

He stopped and walked over to the Forensics Investigators, "Where's the weapon that was used to kill the male victim?"

Both Investigators stopped what they were doing and faced him. "Who are you?" One of them asked.

Ron pulled his ID out and showed it to them.

"We're going on the assumption the spear was used for both homicides. The edge on the spear is razor sharp on all four sides, no other weapons or trace of a weapon was found."

Mike entered and was now standing next to Ron. Ron was looking puzzled "You are telling me that someone used a 6 foot spear to cut someone's throat?"

"That's our initial finding, yes. With no other weapon in the room, it's all we can assume at this point. Once DNA tests are done on the spear we'll be able to determine if it was used for just one homicide or two."

Ron turned and walked toward the doorway with Mike beside him. "Quietly cancel the APB on Kevin Mills, keep our missing persons search open though. When you are done, meet me in the den."

"Something going on?" Mike was feeling slightly left out.

"Maybe, I want you there in the den with me when I speak to the servants." Ron walked out of the room and back down the stairs. As he reached the main foyer, he approached the maid and the male servant. "Excuse me, could you two wait for me in the den, I have some questions."

The maid looked startled, "We've already told your people everything."

"No ma'am, you told the FBI everything, now I will need to hear it since this will be our investigation. By the way, sir, who are you?"

The male servant was a towering man, well over 6 feet tall and 250 pounds. "My name is Benjamin, I am the Mills' butler."

"Ok, could you wait in the den also, please?"

Benjamin nodded and both he and the maid walked into the den.

As Ron turned around, Mike was entering the house with Assata, Kevin Mill's therapist. They both approached Ron, who still had the most puzzling look on his face Mike had ever seen.

"Hello, Assata." Ron had spoken with her twice in the missing person's investigation. "It's good to see you again. Could you join us in the den, please?"

Assata shook Ron's hand and said hello. The three of them then walked into the den where both of the servants now sat. Ron waited until last two enter and then closed the door behind them.

"Please, everyone have a seat." Ron gestured for them all to sit down. "Before I get started, I'd like all of your first and last names."

Assata spoke first, "Assata Mahdi-Valin". Ron noticed that she had the most attractive gleam in her dark eyes he had ever seen.

Ron looked at the maid next and she cleared her throat before speaking, "Nancy Kerns".

"How long have you worked for the Mills' Miss Kerns?"

"I have been working for them four nearly seven years now."

"Thank you, Benjamin, what is your last name please?"

"My last name is Kerns also, Nancy is my wife."

Ron didn't even blink with surprise Mike's eyes, however, grew pretty large.

"How long have you worked here?"

"I have been with the Mills' for just over eight years now."

"Assata, I will start with you" Ron sat down in the chair behind the desk.

"How long have you been Kevin Mills' psychiatrist?"

"Mr. Mills has been in therapy with me for about three years."

"You had told me he was showing signs of depression before. I realize you have a doctor/patient responsibility to uphold, but can you tell me if he knew his wife was having an affair?"

"He never mentioned anything about an affair, no. In fact, his marriage was always a positive part of his life."

Ron jotted down on his notepad as Assata spoke. "How long had he been showing signs of depression, approximately?"

"Actually, not until our last appointment, the day he disappeared."

Ron was still not looking up from his writing. "Did he ever mention Mr. Sandiford, his attorney?"

Assata thought for a moment, "No, can't say that he ever did."

Ron looked up now, "Thanks Assata." He smiled, as did she.

Ron glanced over at the Kerns' and took note that they both seemed tense.

"Mrs. Kerns, you found the victims, correct?"

"That's correct."

"What did you do when you found them, as accurately as possible, give me a step-by-step account, please?"

"I knocked on the bedroom door at about 9:00 a.m., not having seen Mrs. Mills I was concerned, she is normally up by 7:00. When there was no answer I opened the door and walked in. I saw blood all over and two people lying in the bed. I came downstairs and dialed the number on the card that the FBI had given me and reported it to them. Then I found Benjamin and he went upstairs while I sat in the kitchen trying to calm myself."

Ron waited for more as he was taking notes, but when she had been silent for a minute he looked back up. "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir. The FBI came and asked me questions."

Ron laid his pen down and leaned back in the chair. "Mr. Kerns when you went up to the room, did you touch anything?"

"No, I stepped into the room and saw it was Mrs. Mills and a gentleman and then walked back out."

"You say you stepped into the room and saw that it was Karen Mills. Exactly how far into the room did you go?"

"I'm not sure exactly, I walked to the foot of the bed I suppose."

"You suppose? Either you did or you didn't."

"Yes, I walked to the foot of the bed."

Ron shook his head slightly and smiled. "Ok, interesting stories. Now which one of you two want to tell me what really happened?"

Both Nancy and Benjamin Kerns turned and looked at each other. This was all the reaction Ron needed to know they were indeed lying. Benjamin turned back towards Ron, "Are you implying that we are being dishonest with you?"

Ron leaned forward and put his elbows on the desk, "No, sir. I'm saying you are both lying."

Benjamin spoke up quickly now "I resent that! We have cooperated both with the FBI and you, fully. You have no right to accuse of lying."

"Ok, let me retrace things for you from my point of view. First off, both of you have worked for the Mills' for at least seven years yet neither one of you are showing any signs of remorse for Karen Mills' death." Benjamin started to speak, but Ron held his hand up, "Let me finish, you two have told your tale. Mrs. Kerns, you said that Karen Mills was normally up by 7:00 a.m., but yet you waited until 9:00 a.m. to check on her. Then, instead of dialing 911 and panicking like any normal person would do, you come downstairs, find a card given to you by the FBI and call them. You then track down your husband, have a seat in the kitchen and allow him to go upstairs to a crime scene." Ron turned his head took look directly at the butler now.

"Then you, sir, do upstairs walk into the room to the foot of the bed and see it is Mrs. Mills. You then walk back out of the room. I have to ask myself, just who the hell did you think it was? Do strange people often sleep in her bed?"

Benjamin shifted in his chair "No, they do not. I merely wanted to see if they were alive or not."

"That brings me to my next point. Why did no one call an ambulance? You see two people obviously injured, but instead of calling for help, you assume they are dead and call the FBI. Who, by the way, informed me you reported it as two people had been killed."

Ron turned towards Assata and could tell by her face that she was also uneasy. "It's pretty obvious to me that you know something about the location of Kevin Mills. Everyone else has referred to him in the past tense, but not you. You are the only person who still refers to him in the present tense." Ron glanced up at Mike, who looked as if a light bulb had just gone off in his head. "Do I seem to be reading this correctly, partner? Or am I off-base?"

Mike smiled, "Seems to me, you are hitting it right on the head."

Ron turned back towards the Kerns'. "Ok, you've had a couple minutes to think about it, care to tell me the truth?"

Benjamin Kerns spoke for his wife; "We would like to speak with an attorney before answering anymore questions."

Ron smiled, "Very good answer. You can call one from the Police Station; you are now both under arrest for Interfering in a Police Investigation and Suspicion of Murder. Mike, would you be so kind as to read these two their rights and escort them to separate patrol cars while I speak with Assata?"

Mike read the Miranda Rights to them both and when he got confirmation that they understood them, he placed them both in handcuffs and lead them out of the room. When the door had closed, Ron looked back at Assata.

"You have broken no laws. You are in no trouble. However, if you do not come clean right now, I'm going to have no choice but to charge you with withholding information."

Assata fidgeted in her seat. "So at this point, I don't need an attorney?"

Ron smiled. "You tell me what you know and I assure you that you will walk out of here a free woman."

"After our session the day Kevin disappeared, I was driving back to my office. My cell phone rang and it was Kevin Mills. He told me that he had withdrawn some money a couple days earlier and needed to leave. He felt trapped and smothered in his home and asked me to go with him to Mexico. When I declined, he asked me if I would keep it confidential, I assured him I would. At that time I was just thinking he was going to leave. When I was told he was killed later that day, I figured that his wife had killed him when she was told he was leaving. I didn't for once think he had staged his death and took off, Kevin was not the kind of man to do something like that. I continued to think that until yesterday. I received a call from Kevin saying that something was going on back at his estate and that he was returning to the area tomorrow." Assata looked at Ron before continuing, "Kevin didn't do this. Someone obviously had contacted him and told him that his wife was having an affair, but I can give you nearly 100% assurance, he was not involved in these murders."

Ron stood up and walked around to Assata's chair. "Finally, someone tells me the truth in this house. I was beginning to think it wasn't possible." He chuckled. "Thank you for your cooperation, when Mr. Mills contacts you again, please have him get in touch with me or at least get a location where I can find him. If he agrees to meet with me, I'll be much more prone to believe he had nothing to do with this."

He held out his hand and assisted Assata in standing, "I will cooperate anyway I can detective, I promise you that." The two exited the den together and Assata left the house while Ron was met by Agent Degarces, "I understand you have taken the maid and the butler into custody, wanna tell me what that's about?"

"Not really, but being the nice guy I am, I'll share with you just this once. My hunch is that the two of them committed the murders, they then cleaned up the crime scene and called you."

"Interesting theory, Detective. Do you have anything to back it up?"

"I have enough, take a look upstairs at that room, Agent. You will see blood all over the bed and even some on the walls. What you won't see is any on the floor. Last time I checked gravity caused things to go in a downward motion. Someone cleaned up footprints off that floor. Also, there is no way that the spear was used to cut that man's throat. But they couldn't have two weapons in there. Anyone with any sense would figure out no murderer is gonna have a knife in one hand and a spear in the other. Not to mention that if a man's throat is being cut, it's highly doubtful the woman in bed with him is just going to lie there." Ron paused, "That's enough lessons for you today, Agent Degarces. You have a nice day and oh, by the way, I have a feeling I'll be solving your missing person's case soon also." Before the agent could respond, Ron walked out the door and met up with Mike.

"Both of them are on their way back to Headquarters. Separate cars as you asked and they will be kept separate. Are we done here?"

Ron smiled, "I may get to take my vacation after all, Mike. Yeah, let's get out of here."

By the time Ron and Mike had gotten back to the Station, the Kerns' had already met with an attorney. Mr. David Tutritch presented his card to Ron as they walked through the office. "I am representing Mr. and Mrs. Kerns can we talk in your office?"

"Sure, Mr.", Ron looked at the card, "Tutritch follow me."

Ron opened the office door and he, Mike and the attorney entered. Mike closed the door behind them.

Ron sat behind his desk, "Have a seat Mr. Tutritch, what can I do for you?"

David Tutritch sat down across from the desk from Ron and Mike stood along the wall. "My clients inform me that they were questioned before their rights were read to them. Is this true?"

"Your clients were being questioned as to what had occurred at a crime scene. Once they were charged and requested an attorney, no further questions were asked."

"Mr. Kerns also says you called him a liar?"

"I sure did, you know when I see a bird, I call it a bird, when I see a window, I call it a window and when I see a liar, guess what? I call it a liar."

"Do you have any evidence to substantiate the claim that my clients represented themselves falsely?"

"Did you read over their statements, Mr. Tutritch?"

"Yes I did. They seemed alright to me."

"Then you are in the right profession. Don't try to become a detective. Those statements are full of more holes than a sponge. If there is nothing further, I'd like to interrogate my suspects."

"That's all I have for now."

"Then let's go to interrogation, shall we?" Ron stood and took with him a notepad and a recorder. The three men entered a room where Nancy Kerns was sitting at a table.

Ron and Mike sat across from her and David Tutritch sat beside her. "Before we begin, Mrs. Kerns, I won't to take this time to inform you this conversation is being recorded and will be considered your official statement. Any false or inaccurate representations at this time will be considered perjury and you will be charged accordingly. Do you understand?"

Nancy Kerns was pale and frazzled now, not the same calm demeanor she had carried at the house. "Yes, I understand."

Ron placed the recorder in front of her. "Now, Mrs. Kerns, in your own words, please tell me exactly what you know about the murders of Karen Mills and Carl Sandiford."

Nancy leaned back and whispered back and forth with her attorney. It was David Tutritch who emerged from the private powwow vocally. "My client is ready to tell you of the events that took place, in exchange for her testimony she would like to know what you are offering."

"I can't answer that until I know what she's done. I can assure you that if she cooperates fully and I do mean, fully. I will notify the District Attorney of it as well as testify to it in court."

Once again Mrs. Kerns and her attorney conversed quietly, this time for quite awhile longer. Again it was the attorney who spoke afterwards. "Based on the information just given to me, I must now resign as attorney for Benjamin Kerns. Could we defer Mrs. Kerns statement until after he has received new presentation?"

Ron shook his head, "No, we can not. However, he will not be questioned until after new council has been assigned. Am I to understand that what Mrs. Kerns is about to say is adversely going to effect her spouse?"

"That is correct."

"Have you informed your client she does not have to testify against her spouse?"

"Yes, I have. She wishes to give her statement anyway."

"Then she may proceed when ready."

After once again whispering to her attorney, Nancy Kerns leaned forward in her chair. "When Mr. Mills disappeared he had gone to Benjamin for assistance. He would give us \$100,000 if we would help him fake his death. He had set it up to where it was going to look like he had drowned and our only task was to let him know when Mrs. Mills was watching him. I saw Mrs. Mills that day looking out the window of Kathleen's room."

"Let me interrupt a second, for the record who is Kathleen?" Ron wanted to be through.

"Kathleen is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mills." Nancy paused.

"Thank you, Mrs. Kerns, you may continue."

"I went down the stairs and phoned the guest house located beside the lake and told Benjamin that she was at Kathleen's window. Benjamin hung up and looked through binoculars to see if she was still there. When he saw that she was, he signaled Mr. Mills and Mr. Mills then jumped into the lake."

"Where did he go from there?"

"I don't know, Benjamin didn't see him again after he was submerged, nor did I."

"Ok, continue, please."

"Benjamin had a cell phone number where Mr. Mills could be reached. If anything were to go wrong, such as Mrs. Mills being charged with his disappearance, Benjamin was to call him and let him know. After your investigation had come up empty, Benjamin called the number and told Mr. Mills all was going well so far." Once again she paused.

"We'll get more into Kevin Mills location later, right now please focus on the murders."

"Four days ago, Carl Sandiford spent the night at the house. None of use knew where he had slept, but when I was making the beds the next day, none of the guestrooms had been slept in and it was evident that there had been sexual conduct in Mrs. Mills' room. That evening Mr. Sandiford came back to the house and once again spent the night. Benjamin was furious, he and Mr. Mills had been friends for a long time and this had upset him very much. He called Mr. Mills' cell phone yesterday and left a message that he needed to return immediately. Then last night Benjamin refused to let Mr. Sandiford in. Mrs. Mills fired us both and ordered us to have our things packed and be gone by this afternoon. Early this morning about 4:00 a.m. Benjamin went to the den and retrieved one of Mr. Mills' spears and a carving knife from the kitchen. He killed them both and then woke me and told me what he had done. We washed the carving knife off and put it back in the kitchen and then I cleaned the carpet in the bedroom because his footprints were in blood." Once again she paused, tears were streaming down her face.

"My husband isn't a violent man, I don't condone what he did, but you have to understand in his eyes he was defending a long-time friend and his wife." She stopped and sat back in her chair.

"Tell me about this morning."

"Once we had the room cleaned satisfactorily Benjamin decided we should call the FBI first. We decided to try and pass it off as Mr. Mills had committed the crime. After I called the FBI, Benjamin found an email from Mr. Mills saying he would be arriving by car tomorrow afternoon and he would call when he arrived. The FBI told me on the phone not to dial 911, that they would be there to investigate first."

"So, to conclude here, it's your statement that your husband committed the murders and you aided by destroying evidence?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"You had no knowledge of the murders prior to them being committed?"

"None, I went to bed at 9:00 p.m. last night as I always do. I didn't know anything about what Benjamin had done until he woke me."

"Thank you for your statement Mrs. Kerns. Is there anything else you would like to add before I turn off the recorder?"

"No, sir."

Ron turned off the recorder and stood up. "I'll review this in my office and get back with you later. For now you will be processed and placed into

custody pending a hearing." He and Mike left the room and went back to his office.

"Well, Mike. What do you think?"

"I think she covered her ass well. Maybe a little too well. I'll be interested to hear what her husband has to say."

"We are going to give him the same chance we gave her. Make sure he doesn't know anything about his wife's statement prior to interrogation."

"Sounds like a good plan to me."

"Good, now get out of here so I can think, let me know when he is done speaking with his attorney."

Mike laughed, "Nice to see you are thinking for a change, I was beginning to worry about you." Mike left the office and closed the door behind him.

Ron rewound the recorder and began playing it back. This time pausing to jot down notes as he went along.

It was nearly two hours later when Eileen Cates walked into Ron's office escorted by Mike. She had been the poor soul employed by Benjamin Kerns.

Ron was pleasant, he had time to get something to eat and calm down.

"Nice to meet you Ms. Cates, please have a seat."

"Thank you, detective." Eileen Cates was an older woman, she had been a trial lawyer for nearly five years. After talking to her client, she knew this was going to be a long day. "I assume that my client's spouse has already given her statement?"

"Yes, ma'am, she has."

"May I see it please?"

"No, you may not. For one it's being typed up right now, for two, I want to get your client's statement before I show you hers. It wouldn't be fair to either Mrs. Kerns or her attorney for me to give you that information prior to speaking with your client."

"I see, well I had to try." Eileen smiled, she knew it was a very long shot.

"So, is your client ready to cooperate or am I to expect the same nonsense I was given at the Mills Estate?"

"After speaking with him at length, he is willing to cooperate. Are you willing to offer any deals for his statement? Or will he just have to take his chances?"

"Can't offer anything until I hear what he has to say. I can assure you that with honesty on his part I will notify the both the court and the DA's office. It would be much better for him at his arraignment tomorrow."

"Fair enough. Whenever you are ready, then."

Ron picked up the recorder, which now contained a fresh tape, and the yellow notepad. "Let's go."

Once again Ron and Mike headed for interrogation with an attorney leading the way. Ron knew somewhere in his mind that this case was about to be broken wide open. As they entered the room, Ron was stunned at what he saw. Benjamin Kerns no longer had that distinguished look of a butler, but his face

now resembled that of a scared little boy. There were still stains on his face where he had been crying.

Ron and Mike took their seats across from Benjamin Kerns and his attorney. After going through the same preamble regarding the legalities of his statement, Ron placed the recorder in front of Benjamin Kerns.

Benjamin leaned back and whispered to his attorney and in turn whispered back to him. Then he leaned forward to begin his story. "Last night, Mrs. Mills fired myself and my wife because I refused to allow entry to Carl Sandiford. She had been sleeping with him the previous two nights and I felt it was wrong to cheat on her husband. She instructed us to be packed and gone by this afternoon. It was already late and since we were both highly upset Nancy and I decided to pack this morning and we went to bed. At about 4:00 this morning Nancy woke me up, she had blood all over her. She was frantic and told me she had just killed Mrs. Mills and Mr. Sandiford." Once again Benjamin leaned back to whisper to his attorney.

Eileen Cates spoke up, "Before my client continues, I'd like to know if there is any chance of waving Accessory After the Fact charges?"

Ron looked at Mike and then back at the two people sitting across from him. "No, we'll make no guarantees of dropping any charges. You'll have to take that up with the DA's office once the statements are turned in."

Eileen whispered to her client again and Benjamin continued. "Nancy and I went back upstairs together and into Mrs. Mills bedroom. It was a mess blood was everywhere and both Mr. Sandiford and Mrs. Mills were lying in the bed. Mrs. Mills had one of her husband's spears sticking out of her mouth. Mr. Mills collected artifacts from around the world and was especially proud of his spear collection. I went into the bathroom and threw up it was more than my stomach could stand. We both went back downstairs and into the kitchen. Nancy told me she had to clean the carpets because there were footprints in the bloodstains and that she had thrown away the knife she used to kill Mr. Sandiford. She left and went back upstairs while I drank a cup of tea. I went back up to the master bedroom about an hour or so later. Nancy had gotten one side of the floor clean and was working on the other. I told her to let me know when she was done, we had to figure out what we were going to do."

Benjamin took a break and took a drink of water. He was still shaking badly and Mike couldn't help but wonder which one of these two were lying and how the hell they were going to figure it out.

"When Nancy came back downstairs it was already daylight, I think it was near 9:00. She told me everything was taken care of upstairs and that she was going to call the FBI. She explained that since Mr. Mills was nowhere around that the FBI would probably consider him the primary suspect instead of us. When she called them, they told her not to call you or 911 that they would handle the investigation." Benjamin leaned back in his chair to signify he was done with his statement.

Ron furrowed his brow he couldn't hide his curiosity. "Is that it?"

Benjamin leaned forward and responded, "yes, sir."

Ron turned off the recorder and began writing on his notepad. "I need to ask you a few questions. There are some points that I need clarification on." He jotted on his notepad one word to begin with, *Bullshit*. "You said that Mr. Mills was nowhere around, are you saying he is dead or just away?"

Benjamin looked at his attorney who nodded approval for him to answer. "I don't know whether Mr. Mills is dead or away, I just meant that we haven't seen him for awhile now."

Ron decided to put that part off for now. "In your statement you said that Mrs. Kerns threw away the knife she used to kill Mr. Sandiford. Where exactly did she throw it away?"

"I'm not sure. I would have to assume it was in the trashcan in the utility room off of the kitchen. That is normally where we throw things away."

Ron made a note of this information. "It's your statement that you had nothing to do with either the murders or tampering with the crime scene?"

"That's correct."

"Why did you not allow Mr. Sandiford into the house? I realize that you and Mr. Mills were friends, but he's gone."

"Until it's proven he is dead, I don't feel that Mrs. Mills was acting appropriately."

"Thank you Mr. Kerns. Good luck at your arraignment tomorrow." Ron stood and walked out of the room with Mike in tow. "We need to go back out to the house, Mike. I'll meet you at the car."

"Ok bud. I'm gonna grab a coffee and I'll head out." Mike left Ron and walked towards the break room. He turned around long enough to see Ron had walked past his office and towards the holding cells.

As Ron approached the cell of Mrs. Kerns he was hoping she would answer one simple question without her attorney. "Mrs. Kerns, after you and your husband cleaned the carving knife, where did you put it?"

Nancy Kerns looked up from her cot. "We put it back in the silverware drawer. Why?"

"Just wanted to clarify, thank you again for your cooperation." Ron walked back to his office and dropped off the recorder he met up with Mike on the way out the door.

When the two men were in the car and on the way to the Mills Estate Ron made a call. He wanted all phone records from the Mills Estate and from private cellular phone of Mr. Benjamin Kerns of the same address.

Ron and Mike drove through an open gate and up to the house, as they stopped the car and were about to get out, Mike noticed a figure in an upstairs window. "Ron, I'm going around the back, you go in the front someone is in the house."

Ron did a double take. "What?"

"Let's go."

Mike got out and was on a flat run around the back of the house before Ron had even closed his car door. As he neared the front door of the house he noticed it was ajar. All of the servants had been instructed to leave the house,

police tape was still in tact across the front, but this door was definitely opened after they had left.

Ron entered the foyer and looked around the house. He drew his weapon as Mike came from the back part of the house. Mike had his weapon drawn also. Mike pointed up the stairs and Ron took the staircase to the left and Mike the staircase to the right. They went down their respective hallways checking room by room. As Ron neared the master bedroom he stopped. The door was closed, he knew that none of the police or FBI agents would have touched the door of a room where a murder had been committed. He looked down the hall and got Mike's attention. Mike took a position on one side of the door and Ron on the other. Just as Ron reached down to turn the doorknob the door swung open. Ron was able to just duck under the spear that was thrust towards his head. Mike stepped back and fired a round into the chest of the man about to run a spear through his partner.

Ron looked at the man lying on the bedroom floor and shook his head. "Looks like Kevin came home early."

"Yeah, sure does, makes ya wonder just how early he came home, huh?"

Ron pulled out his cell phone and called in. "I need an ambulance and two units at the Mills Estate immediately."

Mike was tending to the injured Kevin Mills. "Benjamin and Nancy are innocent" Kevin murmured.

Ron leaned down on the opposite side of him and looked up at Mike. Mike was a trained EMT and when he shook his head slowly, Ron knew he needed to get information immediately.

"What do you mean, Mr. Mills?" Ron began questioning.

"I paid them each a million dollars to take the blame for Karen's murder."

"How long had you planned this?"

"I just found out about the affair two days ago when Benjamin called me. I came back into the area yesterday. They were supposed to have you confused and hopefully neither would be able to be found guilty beyond all doubt and both would go free. I killed Karen and Carl. I sliced Carl's throat with the spearhead while he was asleep and then killed Karen." Kevin Mills was dying quickly, Ron knew it was only a matter of minutes.

"Kevin, where were you and who all knew you were alive?"

"I was in Mexico, a small coastal town north of Mexico City. Only Benjamin and Nancy knew I was alive."

"What about your psychiatrist?"

"She didn't know anything until I called her yesterday." Kevin Mills was fading fast, "tell her I said goodbye."

Before Ron could say anything else, Kevin Mills was dead. He sat down on the floor beside the body and looked at his partner. "There we have it, a death bed confession. Guess that puts an end to the whole thing, huh?"

Mike sat back and lit a cigarette. "Yeah, I guess so."

"You stay here and wait for the Paramedics to arrive, I'm going to get some air." Ron stood and left the room. The EMTs were coming up the steps as he was starting down them. "Four doors down on the right gentlemen." Ron

instructed. He proceeded down the stairs and into the kitchen. As he sat down at the table, he glanced up to see a row of drawers. As a hunch, he walked over and opened the drawers until he found one filled with silverware. Where the knives were there only steak knives, carving knives and larger cutlery were in wooden blocks on the counter. "So much for that" Ron spoke aloud. He went through the kitchen and into the utility room. As he lifted the lid to the garbage can, lying off to one side was a folded towel. He reached in and pulled it out, as he opened it up, there was a carving knife and a pair of gloves, both filled with blood. Ron reached onto the shelf nearby and pulled down a trash bag, he used it to wrap the towel and it's contents in and went back through the house to the foyer.

Mike saw Ron coming and met up with him. "So, case is closed on the murders, are we charging the Kerns' with anything?"

Ron frowned, "Yeah, murder."

Mike did a double take at this response, "Ok, what am I missing? Kevin Mills just confessed to the murders."

Ron handed Mike the trash bag. "Throw out everything he said."

Mike looked inside the bag in disbelief. "So why did he try to kill you?"

"He didn't, if he wanted to kill me he wouldn't have missed me with that sword. Kevin Mills wanted to die, he used you to commit suicide."

"A man has everything and wants to die. Why does that not make any sense to me?"

"No such thing as having everything, Mike. No matter what you have there is always something missing."

"So which one of the Kerns' are lying?"

"Both of them. Neither gave an accurate accounting of what happened. Don't think we'll ever know exactly."

"So we'll never know who killed whom? Kevin Mills will have been right after-all, that there is too much conflict between stories to go get a conviction?"

"No, not the case at all, you hold in your hand all that we need for a conviction."

Mike looked inside the bag again. "But the killer was obviously wearing these gloves, there won't be any prints."

"Ah, my dear Watson, don't you ever watch movies? The butler did it. He was the only one who knew the location of the knife. Those gloves are huge, Nancy Kerns is all of 125 pounds dripping wet. The spear pierced through the skull of Karen Mills and was embedded six inches into her mattress. Benjamin Kerns killed those two people and I can assure you, Nancy Kerns knew all about it. We'll get him on two counts of Murder-One she'll at the very least get Accessory after the Fact and Tampering with a Police Investigation."

"Pretty good day's work" Mike noted as they walked to the car.

"What did you expect? I want my damn vacation." Ron laughed as the two men got inside and drove off.

THE END

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