

A Life Separate: Together

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Dedicated to my parents who gave me unconditional love.

True love is given with nothing expected in return.

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CHAPTER 1

I WOKE UP AND the morning sun was coming through the window. I was still a little drunk from the night before; I felt like I had been run over by a truck. I lay there with her naked body on top of the sheets, feeling her breath. I got up, slipped on a pair of shorts, and headed for the kitchen to put on a pot of espresso. Sitting at the kitchen table waiting for the coffee, I tried to get my head around the events of the last day.

When the coffee was finished, I made myself a cappuccino, grabbed a stale Cornetto, and opened the French doors to the terrace. It was going to be another hot day. I walked out onto the second-floor terrace and sat at the table staring at the view. I love this time in the morning in summer. It's warm with a coolness in the air. From the terrace, you can see over the red tile rooftops of the village all the way to the Po Valley. I sat there deep in thought, remembering the phrase "be careful of what you wish for." I didn't really wish for this. I thought I would never see her again. Cindy O'Brian, the woman of my dreams, sitting at my table available to me. I thought of her every day



since I last saw her three years ago. Unexpectedly here she is. I've been married three times. After a few years, they all ended in the same place, with me being very distant from the wives. My last marriage – the third – was most successful. We were married thirty years before my wife died. Still at the end, we lived separate lives. Maybe I'm the person who loves deeply what they cannot have. Cindy is a wonderful person. Maybe, now that she is here and available I will screw this up.

We only had a little less than five weeks together and most of that was running from authorities, trying to escape Italy with our lives. She had a family in the States and came to Italy to escapes an investigation of her husband's business. We met in an Italian language school and for me it was love at first sight. One look into her eyes and I developed feelings about her that I have never felt before. She was 24 years younger, happily married and with a family. Yep, definitely not available and off limits to me; or so I thought. It wasn't long before we were in love and afraid to talk about it. We both knew it couldn't go anywhere. Then she disappeared and was on the run from the FBI, Home Land Security and a terrorist group. Her husband's coffee import company had gotten involved with money laundering and smuggling weapons to a terrorist group. She had a file of e-mails that implicated the Director of Homeland Security and proved she and her husband were innocent. The FBI wanted to arrest her. The terrorists wanted to kill her and recover the file before she could give it to the FBI, and implicate the Director of Home Land Security.

She contacted me. With the help of Jim Marino, a friend with an international security company, and my Italian friends and family members, we fled Italy. We got to America, where we were almost murdered in Kansas. We were arrested – but with some extreme luck – the file was found, the bad guys were caught, and we were released. She went back to her family and

I returned to Italy to live half the year in a house in the small village of Varni. Varni is a village of 400 people who live partway up the mountains that form the beginning of the Aosta Valley. It is the village of my Great Grandfather. This all happened during a few weeks. I know, the story sounds like a book of fiction. It was. I wrote it, a novel called *The Willing*, by Warren Steelgrave. The book was fiction but it was a true depiction of falling in love with Cindy O'Brian and all the events related to us getting out of Italy.

I was a retired Electrical Contractor who had just lost his wife. I came to Italy to learn Italian and spend time with family and start the last chapter of my life. Little did I know starting that chapter would take 40 years of connections and experiences to save it. The book became a best seller, and now I guess I'm a writer. I have thought of Cindy every day for three years. I never called her. I did not want to intrude on her life and family. There was no point to it. In fact, what I loved about her the most was her loyalty to her husband and family.

Yesterday, I was sitting outside at the Bar Pasticceria Cabosse checking emails when I looked up and she was standing at my table. Her husband had fallen in love with a coworker and she was divorced. She came to Italy looking for me. We spent the day walking around Castellamonte and had dinner at the Tre Re. After dinner, we came back here to my house. Now I am sitting quietly questioning myself, wondering whether this is good for her. It's possible she can get terribly hurt in the end. Suddenly, I feel her touch my arm.

"Good morning, or should I say *Buongiorno*."

I smiled and looked up. Cindy was standing there wearing only my tee shirt God she was beautiful. "Good morning, how did you sleep?"

"Like a rock, Warren. I didn't even feel you get up. Have you been up long?"

“Naw, only about twenty minutes. Coffee?”

She pulled out a chair and sat down. “I would love a cup. The smell of the coffee is what woke me up.”

“One cappuccino coming up.”

As I stood up and headed to the kitchen, I heard her say “When I came out you seemed deep in thought. Did I interrupt something important?”

“Nope, nothing that won’t work itself out in time.” I made her a cappuccino, grabbed the last stale Cornetto, and brought it to her on the terrace. “Is everything all right Warren? You seem a little distant this morning. Maybe I should not have come.”

“Don’t be silly. Think of it like this. A person has been a working stiff all of his life, never able to put two cents together and – all at once out of the blue – that person wins the lottery for 20 million dollars. It can be a little overwhelming. It can take a while before you believe it’s true and not a dream. That’s all that’s going on with me. I’m still in shock that you showed up.” She smiled and went back to the view.

As she was finishing her coffee she turned to me and asked. “What’s on the agenda today?”

“I don’t know. What would you like to see?”

“I want you to show me your Italy. I don’t mean the Italy of travel books but the Italy you love the most.”

I thought about what she asked and then replied, “Let’s take a drive up the Aosta Valley to Gran St. Bernard Pass and see the dogs. After, on our way down from the pass, we can have lunch in Aosta.”

“What dogs?” she asked.

“Saint Bernards. The monks have been breeding them for centuries to help rescue travelers on their way over the pass in the winter.”

“You’re saying that Saint Bernards, with the cask of brandy around their necks, are bred in Italy?”

“Not quite. The Monastery is in Swaziland but just a couple of 100 yards across from the Italian border. Gran San Bernardo pass is the highest point Pilgrims would cross going to Rome from Canterbury, England. The Monastery was built in 1049 as a place for Pilgrims to seek safety from storms and a place to stay during the night on their pilgrimage to Rome. The dogs were bred to help rescue lost pilgrims. To this day, people still walk from Canterbury, England to Rome.”

“It sounds fascinating and a lot of fun. Give me a few minutes to shower and let’s go.” Cindy went to change. I got up and brought our plates and coffee cups into the kitchen. I was washing out the coffee cups when I saw movement out the window. There is an alley between my house and that of my neighbors and the window faces it. I turned and looked out the window and caught just a glimpse of a man leaving the alley. I had the distinct feeling that he had been looking in the window.

CHAPTER 2

CINDY ENTERED THE living room, wearing a dark blue, short-sleeved, open-collared silk blouse, ivory-colored cotton slacks and white open-toed sandals. Her hair was long, with beautiful waves and a sheen to it. It folded slightly on her shoulders. Of course, she was wearing the Borsalino hat I bought for her in Monte Carlo. It was if Lauren Bacall was standing there. She looked up from under the brim of the hat and said, “Shall we go?” It had the same effect on me as that first day of class three years ago, when she asked, “May I sit here,” and I fell in love. To think she came to Italy to look for me.

“Let’s go. I hope you enjoy the drive. It is absolutely spectacular.” With that we left.

We made our way by car down the mountain and through the other small villages to the Autostrada. We got onto the Autostrada heading to Gran San Bernardo. It was a beautiful day with the deepest blue sky. When we began going through the Aosta Valley,

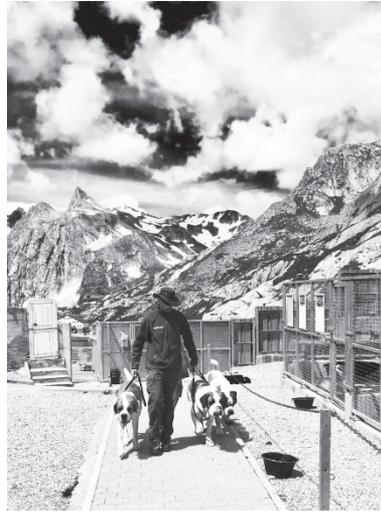


Cindy turned to me and said, “You weren’t exaggerating when you said the drive would be spectacular. Everywhere I look, I see a castle up high on the walls of the valley. It reminds me of driving Highway 395 from Carson City, Nevada to Lone Pine, California, except you have the Sierra Nevada Range on both sides of the highway with Castles.”

“Just a little different from our last road trip, being chased by the FBI across parts of Kansas and West Texas,” I replied.

“I should say so!” Cindy said.

After about an hour and a half, we arrived at Gran San Bernardo Pass and the Saint Bernards. It was such a beautiful day. The sky was so blue, with the whitest cumulus clouds above the Alps. We saw some of the St. Bernards in the distance. Watching these magnificent animals moving through the green grass with their handlers, with the Alps as a backdrop, was truly stunning. We toured the



Monastery and Cindy had her picture taken helping groom one of the dogs. She finished grooming the dog, and walked towards me, with a look of contentment and satisfaction. She took me by my arm, looked up to me and said, “That was unbelievable. What an experience.”

“You ready for lunch?” I asked.

“I guess so. I think I could stay here forever,” she replied.

We started toward the parking lot. Parked on one end, was

a gray Fiat 500 that caught my attention. “Is something wrong, Warren?”

“No,” I replied.

“Warren, tell me.”

I guess we’ll always be connected at a deep, intuitive level. There is no lying to her, I thought.

“It’s really nothing, Cindy, See that Fiat at the end of the parking lot? I thought I saw it coming out of the village. Being a photographer and now a writer, I tend to be more observant than most. It’s nothing, I’m sure.” How quickly a little thing can end a good mood and bring up the memories of fear and being hunted from three years earlier.

We headed down from the pass to Aosta for lunch. I parked the car near the Arch of Augustus. As we got out of the car, Cindy said, “My God, what a charming village, with snow still on the top of the Alps as a backdrop. Just beautiful.”

“Come on. There’s a restaurant just on the right as we enter the city going towards the Roman Gate.” We had lunch at the *Ristorante Il Borgo Antico*. After a great lunch and enjoying an espresso, I asked “Cindy, is there something wrong at home? I mean do you think there’s a reason someone would be following you?”

“What? No, of course not. Why would you ask me that?”

“I don’t want to alarm you or make you paranoid, but there’s a man drinking coffee just to my right down the street. This is the second time I’ve seen him today. He was with the car we saw at Gran San Bernardo, too.”

“Are you serious?”

“Maybe it’s just our past that’s making me a little paranoid, but I felt I had to ask. When we leave, take notice of him and remember the face.”

We finished our coffees. I paid the bill and we left. We went

down the street through the Roman Gate, made a right and headed to the Roman Ruins, and what was left of the Roman Theater. After touring the ruins, we went back to the car and headed home.

Cindy was quiet. After about 30 minutes of looking out the window, she said, "I saw that man one more time today, just before we got to the car; he was looking into a store window which also gave him a view of the car in the reflection."

"Yeah, I noticed that, also." Wanting to change the topic and hopefully the mood, I said, "I thought we would eat at the Tre Re in Castellamonte again tonight. Do you mind?"

"No, not at all."

The rest of the time driving back home, nothing much was said. Cindy's mood had darkened, and I have to admit I was concerned. I was wondering if this person following us was the same person outside my kitchen window.

We arrived at Castellamonte around 7:00 p.m., and parked in front of Carrefour Express.

Cindy looked at me, confused. "I want to get something for breakfast. Anything you would like me to get?"

"Maybe some fruit?"

"Got it."

I came out of Carrefour and then I drove straight to the Tre Re.

We entered the Tre Re and Mario, the owner, was at the counter. As we walked up, I raised two fingers and Mario gave me a nod and grabbed two menus. He proceeded to seat us at a table in the back. As he seated us, he turned to me and gave me a look that I knew meant something was up. I asked for two bottles of water without gas and he nodded and left. He returned with the water. As he set my bottle down, he slid a note under my napkin with a hand movement that would make the best magician proud. I poured myself a glass of water. As I put

my napkin on my lap with a move as smooth as his, I took the note.

After we ordered, I excused myself to go wash my hands. I entered the bathroom and read the note. *“Mr. Steelgrave, let me first apologize for today. I was not sure I had the right house this morning. I knew from your reputation, you would see that I was tailing you. I was not worried about you. My orders were that, before I approach you, I should make sure that no one was tailing me. Jim Marino needs your help and asked that I contact you. Is there a time and place we can meet? Let Mario know.”*

I thought for a minute. The village was so small he would know if he was followed. I wrote on the back of the same note: “My house tomorrow night at 8:00.”

I exited the restroom. On my way back to the table, I stopped at the register to request champagne, and slid the note to Mario.

As I sat down at the table, Cindy looked at me and said, “What did the note say?”

I looked up with a puzzled look as if to say, what are you talking about? But then I realized I better not try to lie. “Nothing for us to worry about; lets enjoy dinner and I’ll fill you in when we get back to my place.”

She smiled, relaxed, and said, “Good.”

We had a very relaxing dinner. Cindy could sense my mood change after coming back from the restroom. She could tell the note had something to do with us being followed and it had relieved my concerns. She would wait for the details. Right now, she just wanted to enjoy being with me.

After dinner, we drove back to Varni. We entered the house and I started to the kitchen. “A nightcap?” I asked.

“Sure,” was her reply.

I went over to a small Cabinet Bar in the living room, and got out a bottle of Amaretto and two glasses. I set the two cocktail glasses on the counter and filled them with ice and Amaretto.

I turned and followed Cindy through the French doors onto the terrace. We sat in silence, admiring the view. It was a warm, still night and the moon was three quarters full. Cindy broke the silence, saying, “This view tonight takes me to that night we spent in Monte Carlo.”

“I was thinking the same thing . . . About the note. The gentleman following us today was looking for an opportunity to approach me. He needs to meet with me and wanted to be sure he wasn’t being followed before he approached me. He was sent by Jim Marino. You remember Jim?”

“Of course. He was the deck of cards, the one responsible for saving our lives.”

“I am not sure what he needs. That gentleman is going to meet with me here tomorrow night.”

“What if he is followed tomorrow?”

“First, he is smart. That’s why he waited for the perfect time and place to get me the note. Second, you saw how small and dark the road is coming up here, no traffic. If a car starts to follow him, he will see them turn onto the road. If someone does, he can go left at the “Y” and go to the village of Campo and back to Castellamonte.” I sat a moment, then said low and half to myself, “We’ll find out soon enough what this is all about.”

“Good,” was Cindy’s response.

We sat in silence enjoying each other’s presence. I was thinking of how much I enjoyed the day when Cindy broke the silence.

“Warren, I have been wanting to ask, have you been writing?”

“That is funny you should ask me that. My publisher has been on me for three months to start a new book. He wants a sequel to the first book. He says he gets many letters wanting to know what happened to the girl and the guy. I’ve been putting him off because I haven’t told anyone that – although it was written as fiction – it was too close to the reality of what happened.

How can I write a made-up story about my life? I'm not really a writer. All I did was put to paper the story from the diary in my mind of the events from three years ago. I never planned on it being a best seller. It was a way for me to stay connected to you. I had an editor go through it, and in that process, I was contacted by the gentleman who is now my agent. The answer is, No, I have not started a new book."

We finished our drinks and I stood up to take them into the kitchen. She stood and began to follow. She reached forward and slid her arm through mine and kind of hugged me as we entered the house. "I am here, Jim Marino is contacting you, and we are being followed all on my first day. This could be the beginning of a sequel."

CHAPTER 3

THE NEXT MORNING, I got up and made coffee. Just as I was finishing up and putting everything on a tray, Cindy walked into the kitchen. “I was just coming with the coffee and some fruit.”

“Warren, do you think we could have it out on the terrace again. I can’t get enough of the view.”

“Of course.”

The house was built around 1580. It has two floors built on top of what were years ago small barns for the cows. When restoring the house, I had those old barns converted to a library and a wine cellar. From the yard in front of the wine cellar, you take stairs up to the front door. You enter the house on the second floor. The second floor consists of a stairway to the third floor, a large living room, a kitchen, a bathroom and a small office next to the kitchen. Across from the kitchen are French doors that lead out to a terrace. The terrace is about twelve feet wide and runs the length of the building. The third floor has a large sitting room, a bathroom and two large bedrooms. The master bedroom has French doors that lead to a terrace as well. This terrace, like the one downstairs, runs the length of the building, and forms a ceiling for the terrace below.

Carrying the tray, I followed Cindy out the doors to the

terrace. We sat enjoying the cool morning and view, drinking our coffee in silence. Unexpectedly she asked. “Warren, do you think people are born intuitive or is it a learned skill?”

“I think we all have it. Some of us to a greater degree than others. Like most skills, if not practiced it diminishes over time. My Grandmother taught me to use and trust it. I would be staying with her for a weekend; I would think to myself, I’d like some juice. Before I could ask she would smile and go get it. I learned to be careful around her and never try to lie. She also taught me to play cards, as a way to practice my intuitive skills. We would play poker with matchsticks, kind of a tutoring lesson. She could always tell what cards I had. After a while I began to trust my gut about her cards. Then the most important lesson of all. She would call my bet and raise, challenging me. Instead of folding, I could sense she didn’t have the right cards to win and would go all in and lose. It taught me that sometimes a skilled person would send you false information. I have developed little tests to check whether someone is doing that. For instance, I can tell you are very intuitive. How did you come by it?”

“I don’t know. I always had it. It was a long time before I realized not everyone communicated at that level,” replied Cindy.

“Cindy, I think everyone does communicate at that level, most just don’t realize it. When my older boy was young, I coached one of his basketball teams. I would stand out of bounds with a player in front to block an inbound pass. I would put two players behind him, one on his left and one on his right. I’d tell him I was going to pass the ball to the player on his right, and instruct him to block it. I would pass the ball to the player on his right over and over again. After about ten minutes of this, I’d gather the team and explain why he missed blocking the pass. It was because he was listening to my intuitive voice

and not reacting to the ball movement. Some understood and some did not.”

“What you’re saying Warren, is you would tell him verbally you were passing to the right and intuitively you communicated you were going to pass to the left?”

“Exactly, Cindy. He would start to react to the left, and by the time he recovered, the ball was just past him. I would instruct the players how important it is at times to shut up the intuitive communication.”

“Gosh Warren, I never thought about it in those terms. I mean I have never considered how someone could use what I thought was my gift against me. That gives me a lot to think about.”

“Cindy, last night you asked me about *my* writing. Have you been writing?”

“I have, Warren. In fact, on my return home, I’m releasing an album of twelve love songs I wrote. Do you remember when we were running from the FBI three years ago, and our conversation about destiny? You told me about Winston Churchill? We laughed about being caught, and you writing a book from Guantanamo.”

“I do.”

Cindy went on. “Churchill said he realized his whole tumultuous life was preparing him for his destiny, and saving England was it. You also said a curious thing. You said maybe all that we were going through was preparing us for our destiny. Well, I think you were right. You have a bestselling book and I have new songs.”

“So, tell me about your songs.”

Cindy’s mood changed, and in a quieter reflective tone, she said, “After we were released from jail and returned home, I also started reliving what you and I had gone through. I realized I never really understood what real love was until what we went

through. I started writing songs that described what I was feeling about you when we were trying to escape the terrorists. Love conquers all was no longer a cliché. It had real meaning for me. I started writing and after the second year, I had many songs. Six months ago, I picked the twelve best and decided to record a demo of love songs. I rented some studio time, and was working through one of the songs, when after the session, a gentleman was waiting. He approached me and gave me a card. He was next door producing a new artist, and they finished early. On his way out, he stopped and listened to what I was doing and liked it. He wanted to sign me to a contract and produce my album. I followed my intuition and said ok. It's due for release this month."

I was delighted and excited for her. "Cindy," I said, "That is great! What great news, and what is the title of the album."

"*Your Love Carried Me Through*. This brings me to a favor I need. The producer is waiting for me to approve an album cover. I wanted to talk to you first which is one of the reasons I looked you up. I would like to use your photograph that was in the safe house. The one titled *Badwater*. It was our last night together, but more than that, it reminds me of the last three years. The scene appears so lonely and yet not. It was how I felt being away from you, alone but never lonely"

"I'm honored that you want to use it, so of course you can."

The rest of the morning, we talked about her song writing.

Around noon I put a quiche in the oven that I bought at the bakery for our lunch. The rest of the afternoon, we sat around eating quiche, drinking wine and enjoying each other's company. I had been living alone for so long, I had forgotten how much I enjoy a woman's company and point of view. Women see the world so differently from men. We talked about all kinds of things as we did when we drove across the west three years ago. We were lost in the enjoyment of each other's company.

Suddenly I realized it was getting late and our guest would be arriving soon. “Cindy it’s getting late. What would you like to do for dinner?”

“Are you joking, Warren? We’ve finished off a whole quiche and three bottles of wine this afternoon.”

I thought for a moment and replied. “How about I prepare a tray of salami, Prosciutto, and cheese for when our guest arrives?” I got up and headed for the kitchen with Cindy following. Entering the house, I went straight to the bar. I opened the cabinet and set out the Gin and two martini glasses. I turned to Cindy and said, “Would you make the martinis while I prepare the tray?”

Smiling and shaking her head, she said, “I forgot how much you like an early evening martini.”

“I haven’t forgotten how well you make them.” I finished the tray and set it on the kitchen counter with a bottle of wine and three wine glasses. When I turned, and walked out of the kitchen Cindy was standing with two very cold martinis and we headed back out to the terrace.

CHAPTER 4

WE SAT QUIETLY with our martinis, watching the day turn to night, enjoying the sunset. Then about a mile away, we saw headlights from a car coming up the winding road to the village.” Must be our guest,” I said

“I don’t see any headlights following him,” replied Cindy.

We sat, finishing our drinks, watching the car come up the road. He parked in front of the house, got out and entered the yard through the gate. When he started up the stairs, I got up and headed for the front door saying, “Let’s find out what the intrigue is about.”

I opened the door just as he got to the top of the stairs. “Good evening Mr. Steelgrave. I am Mike Smith.”

I extended a hand and we shook hands. “Good to meet you, Mr. Smith. Please come in.” He was not what I expected. He was maybe 5 feet 6 inches in height. A little overweight, with dark hair that was mostly grey, and a face that was narrow and pointed. I couldn’t tell the color of his eyes through his thick glasses. He was wearing a grey suit that didn’t fit well; overall, he was somewhat mousey looking. I expected a field agent from Jim’s office to be more athletic looking. He entered the living room and he followed me to the kitchen. Cindy was just setting out some small plates. “Mike, would you like a glass of wine?”

“Yes, thank you.”

I turned to Cindy and said, “Cindy, this is Mike Smith. Mike, let me present Cindy O’Brian.”

“My pleasure, Ms. O’Brian.” Then after a pause he smiled and said, “You’re the girl in the book.”

Cindy, with a slight smile and a little roll of her eyes said, “Apparently, that’s what everyone thinks. I keep reminding them the book is in the fiction section.”

Mike gave a smile and said, “Right!”

We all sat down at the table and he began.

“Jim said I should give you this and you would know what it meant.” He handed me a playing card, the ace of spades. I smiled and looked at Cindy and she was smiling. Three years ago, when we were running for our lives from terrorists, to relieve her worries I would say I still have a card or two up my sleeve to play. When we were safe, she realized Jim Marino was helping us. When she met him, she said, “So, you were the deck of cards.”

“What is it Jim needs my help with, and why all the intrigue?” I asked

“Jim has a son, Tom.”

I interrupted. “The Professor that teaches physics at MIT.”

“Yes.” He went on. “In the 8th grade, Tom needed to do a science report for his final. He chose to do it on Nicola Tesla, and became obsessed with Tesla and his theory on unlimited power. It was what inspired Tom to pursue science as a career. From then on, Tom collected everything he could on Tesla. He searched old bookstores and garage sales for old papers and books written by Tesla. After starting at MIT, he spent vacations and sabbaticals where he could stay at hotels and in rooms where Tesla had lived.” Smith continued the story of Tom’s interest in Tesla, as Cindy and I listened curiously.

According to Smith, Tesla believed he could harness the energy trapped in the ionosphere for unlimited free power

anywhere on earth. Tesla also believed this power could be used for a Death Ray Machine, which he said he had invented. Tesla claimed this Death Ray could destroy 10,000 airplanes at a distance of 250 miles. He talked about it in a letter to J.P. Morgan on November 29, 1934. The U. S. Government had been trying to perfect the theory with the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) project in Alaska. They were close but couldn't get it to work, as it should have in theory.

It has always been rumored that Tesla had hidden a file with the answer to how to get the research program to work. Two years ago, Tom had visited the site of Tesla's Wardenclyffe Tower. He cut his vacation short and returned home. Then last year, he spent every spare minute in his lab at MIT. Rumors started. The word was that in one of the manuscripts he had bought that belonged to Tesla, he found what appeared to be some rambling hand-written thoughts on the last page. Tom studied the pages for days, and discovered it was a code. Tom studied the code for months and finely deciphered it. The code was directions to where the lost file was hidden. He followed the directions to the site of Wardenclyffe Tower and found it. No one really believed the rumors until the previous month when the University and the surrounding area began having large power disruptions.

Last week Tom disappeared, but managed to get a coded message to his dad. He was afraid he was about to be abducted for the file. He went underground and came to Italy. Jim realized that whether his son had the file or not wasn't important. The fact that he was rumored to have it and the answer to the Death Ray put him at risk.

"Jim wanted to contact you personally but didn't want to raise suspicion about you being involved. Jim's company, besides international security for corporate executives and diplomats, also does forensic accounting. I've been working with a client in Turin for a month. On weekends, I drive to historic sites

and small villages as a way to spend my free time. I was sent to ask for your help, because I wouldn't raise the suspicion a field agent would."

"What's Jim asking me to do?" I asked.

"It has been advertised that you have a book signing at the Rizzoli in the Galleria in Milan on Saturday. Jim wanted you to be aware of the situation in the event that Tom contacts you at the event."

With concern in my voice, I asked, "If I am contacted, what does Jim want me to do?"

"Jim hopes Tom does have the file. If he does have it, Jim wants you to convince Tom to turn it over to the U. S. Government and leak word to the press that he is in their custody, so he can get out from under being hunted by foreign government agents and others."

Handing me a card he said, "Jim wants you to coordinate through me. I call the office every day and messages can come through me without raising suspicion."

I started to fill his glass with a little more wine but he stopped me and said, "It's getting late. I need to get back." We all got up and started for the door. After he left, I turned to Cindy and asked, "What did you think?"

Cindy had a confused look as if she was searching deep in her mind for the answer. Then, she responded, "Something is all wrong, I don't trust him. And you, what do you think?"

"I think he's a fool or was sent by a fool. Jim would never ask me to send information through a third party."

"He did know about the cards, Warren."

"It's in my book, Cindy." Thinking for a moment I said, "Tomorrow I'll ask my cousin to get me a safe phone. I'll call Jim and see how much of this story is true. Let's go to bed."

She took my hand and said as we started up the stairs, "Do you drink this much every day?"