

One

There are some things in life a person never forgets. The scent of your father's after shave perhaps; or the flavor of bubble gum when you were a child. The flash of fractured sunlight shooting through Grand Central Station early on a summer morning, or what Rockefeller Center looked like at Christmas. There are other things of course: like when your mother first warned you never to accept rides from strangers or where you were when one of the Kennedys was shot. These thoughts and more had raced chaotically through my mind while I anxiously sat in my lawyer's office that afternoon. The weird thing was that the erratic rushing of those thoughts suddenly stopped when I recalled an old professor's favorite quote about the Iliad: "Violent force is as pitiless to the one who possesses it as it is to its victims – the first it intoxicates, the second it crushes."

As I sat in my lawyer's office it had all lucidly come back to me. Those college lectures on Greek mythology and Shakespearean tragedy had suddenly seemed foreboding and I found myself cynically amazed at how those fabulous tales illustrating the forces of fate and the broad strokes of hubris had lasted through the centuries. Clearly I did not learn much from those lectures. For if I had I wouldn't have been sitting where I was that afternoon.

I recall how my lawyer sat comfortably behind his large, nicely polished desk patiently waiting to hear my story. I also recall the cold chill running up my spine and the hollow pit forming in my stomach as I realized when I finished he would accompany me to the 19th

precinct to turn myself in as a 'person of interest' in a grizzly double murder. How I had come to be in such an awful spot that afternoon seems embarrassingly simple now. But as recently as the day before my lawyer's office in midtown Manhattan was the last place I believed I would be.

Morris Bergman wasn't actually my lawyer. He was an old college friend who just happened to be a lawyer, the only lawyer I knew to call in my time of need. We met when we attended school at a small, somewhat prestigious college in New England. After rooming together our senior year Morris moved on to law school in Boston and I took a job in advertising for the Times. That was fifteen years ago.

Since then I worked my way up the ladder in ad sales while Morris worked his way through the Manhattan District Attorney's office. Eventually he left to start a private practice defending the kinds of people he used to prosecute. He's done quite well for himself. I, on the other hand, remained with the Times where I am now Vice President of Advertising Sales.

My name is Jared Chase. I am known as Jed and I suppose I should tell you about my parents and the rest of my family but, frankly, it's not truly necessary and I'm certain they'd prefer to be left out of this sordid tale. Suffice it to say I descend from a long line of blue-blooded Yankees who had landed in Boston not too long after the first ones did in the early 1600's.

One interesting bit though is the one about my great-grandfather, a man whose name was Ezekiel Isaiah Chase. The story is he ran away from home while a teenager after having gotten into some sort of scrape. A women's honor and an act of revenge are mentioned but no one seems to remember exactly what it was and after a period at sea my great-grandfather landed in

New York City. A disavowal and disinheritance by the family in Boston quickly followed as punishment for his disappearance and splash of dishonor upon the family. That episode of Yankee stubbornness caused us to become known as the 'poor' Chases. But my grandfather, and my father after him, stiffly stuck their Yankee chins out, both having gained seats on the New York Stock Exchange. Now we are not as poor as some would have us. Nevertheless, there are two distinct Chase families, the New England Chases and the New York Chases. I am a New York Chase.

The sun fell behind a building, darkening the room a shade, and I watched Morris slowly twist a fat cigar between his fingers. Suddenly I found myself envious in a melancholic way. Not of his career or office or anything like that. No, I found myself envious of Morris because when this day ends he will return to his home, enter his living room with shoes off and a martini in hand, and watch the evening news. I, on the other hand, stood a very strong chance of being fingerprinted, strip-searched, and locked up in the Manhattan House of Detention. No doubt one of the news stories Morris would be watching as he sipped his martini. I could tell Morris sensed my anxiety as he continued to roll his cigar back and forth between his thumb and index finger.

"Well," I said. "Are you going to light that thing, or what?" I reached into my pocket for my cigarettes. Morris slowly shook his head.

“You can’t smoke in here,” he said, laying the cigar carefully on top of the ink blotter, his sorrowful eyes gazing at it with open disappointment.

“Why not?” I asked. “This is your office, isn’t it?”

“Well, according to a recently passed New York City law this office is now a ‘smoke-free’ environment. We can go outside if you wish.” Morris’ eyes drooped like a basset hound’s.

“That’s okay,” I said. “I’m trying to quit anyway.”

“Well then, Jed, old buddy,” Morris said as he picked up the cigar again, licking it and running it under his nostrils slowly. “Tell me everything from the beginning. Wherever you think that is.”

The beginning, I thought. He wants the beginning. Where was the beginning? Was it yesterday when Katherine met me at the coffee shop on Third Avenue? Was it three weeks ago when she pulled me into her plan? Was it ten years ago when I first met her? No. Morris meant the beginning of the nasty business that brought me to his office. The reason I am sitting here. He wants only to know the story of why I have become embroiled in a case of murder. Nothing else.