

## 2 NIGHT CRAWLERS

At ten o'clock that night, Bogie sat at the desk in his office finishing reports for the security firm that he and Rose Jones owned while Amanda lounged on a couch in the large lobby with her two blonde girlfriends, Tiffany and Zoe, on either side of her like bookends.

The girls watched TV while they ate unbuttered popcorn and sipped sweet tea. Bogie called his sister, Ann. As soon as she answered the phone, Ann started sobbing. "Don't cry, Annie! I'll be there tomorrow," he said helplessly.

"I can't believe this. I can't stand this anymore!" Ann wailed.

"You have to be strong, Ann."

"No, I don't! I'm not tough like you. I'm not a strong person. I'm sick of all of this. And now Bud's dead! This is a nightmare!"

Suspecting his sister was fairly well lubricated, he said gently, "Get some rest. I'll be there tomorrow. I love you, Annie!"

"I love you too," she whimpered.

After he ended the call, Tiffany looked at him sitting behind the desk in the office. "Mr. M," she called out.

"Yes, Tiff?"

“Is your sister still mad at Mandie?”

Bogie shook his head.

“The last time she talked to her she gave Mandie crap about TBS.”

Bogie looked over his half glasses and shook his head. “That was a long time ago. Ann’s got other things on her mind now.”

Bogie recalled the girls’ tarnished scholastic records from their stay at The Benjamin School. When he and Amanda flew into Palm Beach four years earlier, Bogie planned on passing papers on the property, meeting with prospective construction supervisors and then returning to Boston to work out a timetable for their move. He expected Bailey, the love of his life, to be a part of it. Bogie hadn’t planned on Bailey dumping him or that he he’d have a heart attack en route to Palm Beach. The property was uninhabitable so when Rose arrived, she got a six month sublet in North Palm Beach where Bogie and Amanda lived while Bogie underwent open heart surgery and recuperated. It was Ann who had found the Benjamin School and insisted that was the place for Amanda to mingle with her social peers. Ann paid her tuition for one year, and Amanda reluctantly attended. The only thing Amanda liked about the school were the friendships she formed with Zoe and Tiffany. When it was time for final exams, the girls were not prepared; however, they obtained copies of the exams complete with the correct answers. Their test scores were almost perfect. Taking into account that Amanda and Tiffany were barely C students while Zoe was just a cut above, the teachers and administrators questioned the girls over and over and over. Fingers were pointed at Amanda and Tiffany whose ability to obtain such scores was highly questionable. They were expelled, and Zoe stayed at the school. Bogie knew all the girls were involved and

spoke to Paul Gallagher, Tiffany's dad, because he was a cop. They agreed that it was probably Zoe who came up with the answers, but Zoe was smart enough to keep her mouth closed and not incriminate herself.

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When their mindless program ended, the girls sighed. Zoe pushed her streaked blonde hair back behind her ear and checked a small chip on one of her hot pink acrylic nails while asking, "Did he call you?"

Amanda shook her head sadly and her shiny black hair moved from side to side over her shoulders.

"What are you gonna do?" Tiffany asked scrunching up her freckled nose.

"I can't think about it!" Amanda said dramatically. "I can only deal with one tragedy at a time! Maybe he doesn't even know what happened."

The two blondes studied her. Zoe asked, "Do you want me to tell him about your uncle?"

Amanda shook her head believing Zoe would be only too happy to pass along the news to Randy and maybe ease her way into the spot Amanda had vacated.

Bogie listened to these young ladies and wondered if they had a clue about life, love, family or raising a child. He hoped that, unlike her mother, Amanda would come to realize that it wasn't a Barbie doll she was giving birth to but a real human being.

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As her granddaughter and her friends lounged on couches in the apartment complex lobby in Florida, Elizabeth McGruder sat straight up in her bed in Boston. Wearing a white flannel nightgown, Elizabeth walked to the bedroom window and stood

staring into the backyard which was shrouded in darkness. Elizabeth grasped the window sill as she stood bare-footed with her thinning white hair hanging down her back. She saw him! She caught him! Elizabeth made her way down the staircase of the brownstone. She moved through the back hallway to the den. Sitting in a large leather chair behind a mahogany desk, she cried while she inserted six bullets into the cylinder chamber of a .38 revolver. She pulled back the hammer and muttered, "I saw you go over there, you cheating snake!" Without her cane but fortified by the sedatives and a half a bottle of scotch consumed over the course of the day, she headed for the kitchen and out the back door. When she entered the tiny back yard, she walked over to the adjoining brownstone and fired six shots through the kitchen window yelling, "You, lying, cheating bastard! I did everything in this world for you! And how do you repay me? You take up with yet another whore! And this Russian whore, Olga. She's your son's wife and has *your* baby!?"

A shot blasted over Elizabeth's head as Jeannie McGruder, herself drunk, yelled through the broken window, "You fuck'n crazy bitch! Go home and sleep it off. That dickwad's dead and so is his whore!"