

## *PROLOGUE*

Saturday night and downtown Boston was deserted but not quiet as an early April storm kept most revelers hunkered down indoors. The wind shrieked between the tall buildings on Washington Street and forced the freezing rain into a sideways path of destruction. The temperature dropped each second, and the rain became ice. The sides of the buildings, street and sidewalks all glistened with a layer of ice as the wind picked up speed and continued to howl like a wounded animal. Anything that could be lifted was picked up by the wind and tossed down the street.

A Cadillac parked across the street from One Boston Place swayed as it was beaten with the ice and pushed by the wind. Bud McGruder sat in his car with the engine turned off trying to ignore the pounding and the chill working its way into his bones. Bud glanced at his Rolex, a memento from his father. The watch showed one minute had passed since he last checked it at ten o'clock. The wind and rain pelted the windshield as he tried to focus on the lights shining on the glass facade of the forty-story building.

On the twenty-sixth floor, Bailey Hampfield sat at her desk looking over the stack of exhibits she would use for Tuesday's deposition while the wind howled and pounded against the large windows behind her. She sighed, pushed her wild copper-colored hair away from

her ear and called her brother. “I’m ready to leave, Jack. If you’ve finished your work, I can meet you out front.”

Bailey’s hands shook as she ended the call and walked across the office to grab her coat. The main part of the office was dark except for a dim light in the glass-walled conference room. As she walked to the door, Bailey felt fear wash over her again as a vision of Isabella’s white cat came to her mind. Bailey shuddered as she remembered looking out the kitchen window and seeing Fluffy hanging by a noose from the tree. Bailey’s only thought was to cut down the poor animal before little Isabella saw her. But when she heard the blood curdling cry from upstairs, Bailey knew it was too late. A tear slid down her cheek, and she quickly brushed it away.

Bailey locked up the office and walked down the half-lit hallway on her way to the elevator. She reminded herself that she didn’t have the luxury of tears. She’d made her decision and would stick with it. That monster was not going to destroy her already chaotic life. Bailey wouldn’t let him. She would go back home and have all day Sunday to spend with the only one in the world who mattered, her precious Isabella. He was not going to win!

Bud McGruder speed dialed a number on his cell phone. As soon as the other party answered, Bud saw the ‘Ice Queen’ emerge through the glass front door of the glistening tall tower. “I’ll get back to you in five,” he said and disconnected the call.

Her face was hidden in the folds of a white hooded coat, but there was no mistaking that wild, red hair flying around the edges of the hood. She inched her way across the large stone blocks holding her coat closed while she tilted her head away from the bitter wind.

Bailey grabbed one of the truncated, bullet-shaped metal ground columns with her cold bare

hands as she started to slide, then took tiny steps over the ice to make her way across the street.

Bailey glanced to her right as she looked for her ride and moved toward the charcoal-colored sedan parked at the curb beside The Devonshire Building. She caught the front of the car for support as she slipped.

In a flash, Bud opened the driver's door, got out and moved in her direction. His nylon jacket flapped and his dark hair glistened with frozen flecks that dripped down his face as he smiled with no warmth. "Working late, Counselor?" he asked as he moved closer to her.

She looked up, took in a quick breath and gasped before she said, "God dammit, Bud! What do you want from me!?" She yelled over the wind not expecting an answer to her question. Bailey shouted, "Stop stalking me!"

"I want you to give me a chance. Don't want you to do anything..." Bud stopped speaking. His heart raced, and his eyes opened wide as he heard a familiar metallic click behind him. As the trigger was engaged, he dived toward her, knocking Bailey to the ground. The bullet entered the back of his head and exited the front, taking brain and bone fragments with it. Bailey lay motionless where she had fallen with Bud's body slumped on top of hers.

There was a loud cry just before a dark blue BMW exited the Pi Alley parking garage on Washington Street next to One Boston Place. Its headlights illuminated a figure holding onto a wall near the glass-enclosed ATM machine. The form stared into the glare then blended back into the shadows.

The Beamer skidded and came to rest close behind the Cadillac. The driver screamed as he witnessed the carnage on the ground.

Bud's Rolex read 10:06 p.m.