



Knight of Swords, Knight of Cups

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Days are short in the northern hemisphere as winter approaches. The sun rises late, as if reluctant to begin its daily journey through the sullen gray sky. The solar disc is pale and wan, a chill white circle that sheds no heat and little light to cheer the people who scurry through the city streets, all of them huddled in coats and scarves that do little to shield fragile flesh from the cold damp wind. The gloom increases in the afternoon, purple shadows thickening as the sun plunges westward, as if eager to dip below the horizon and retreat to warmer, safer climes. Darkness rules the north as the year ebbs, and winter is the time when night's creatures rule supreme —

Nick Knight lay immobile on the bed in his loft apartment, a pale shape in the shadowy room. Tiny frown lines appeared between his widely-spaced eyes as his superhuman senses noted the imminent sunset. Fine tremors ran through his muscles as his body prepared to throw off its deep, trancelike sleep. As the sun slid beneath the horizon, Nick's greenish eyes snapped open.

Knight arose from the bed and stretched lazily, muscles moving easily under his smooth skin. He reached out and snagged a black silk robe, shrugging into the garment with the languid, delicate movements of a cat. His bare feet made no sound as he went down the stairs to the apartment's main room. Not bothering to switch on the lights, he padded to the window and drew the heavy curtains, watching moodily as the streetlamps beneath him flickered to life. The man sighed heavily, his attention drawn to the western sky as the last faint flow of daylight surrendered to darkness, fading from red to purple to black in mere heartbeats. A look of longing etched itself on his handsome features and the fine-boned hand still holding the curtain clenched into a fist, twisting tensely in the heavy fabric.

A hushed mechanical beep sounded behind him and he turned away from his contemplation of the twilight city. As he moved, the curtain fell back into place, cutting off the feeble outside light and plunging the loft into deep gloom.

Knight moved easily through the darkness, avoiding the furniture with supple feline grace. He quickly reached his goal, a low table on which reposed a telephone and answering machine, and reached out to trigger the rewind button. He dropped into a chair and at last switched on a lamp, running a hand through his curly, dark-blond hair as he waited impatiently for the tape to rewind.

The machine finally signaled its readiness. Nick reached out to hit the playback switch and settled back to listen to his messages.

Hiss. Beep. Click. "Knight, this is Stonetree. We've hit a snag in the Martin case. Your witness is changing his story — I think someone's either trying to buy him off or threaten him. Or maybe

he's just spooked. Anyway, talk to him. Offer him protection if you have to. We're dead in the water without his testimony." *Click*.

Knight frowned as he listened to his captain's voice. *Damn*, he thought. *I thought the Martin case was all wrapped up. What the hell's the matter with Frankie? He was all set to be the star of the courtroom the last time I saw him.* Deciding to drop by Frankie's diner before reporting to work, the blond man turned his attention back to the tape.

A new voice was issuing from the speaker. "Hey, partner, it's me, Schanke. Listen, I'm goin' in early tonight. Myra's sister's visiting and she's driving me nuts! Nag, nag — don't smoke, lose weight, don't drink so much — if I don't get outta here, I swear you'll be arresting *me*, 'cause I'm gonna murder her!

"Anyway, I'm gonna go back to that convenience store from last night, the one where the clerk got shot. Somethin's not right there, know what I mean? Catch ya later. Hasta la bye-bye!"

Knight grinned at his partner's harried tones.

The machine beeped imperiously as if demanding that he pay attention to the third speaker — a woman this time. "Nick, it's Natalie. I left a new solution for you to try. New formula, heavier on proteins. Sorry about the color, but that's the best I could do. And don't you dare pour it down the drain, you hear me? Drink every drop. This won't work if you don't cooperate! We'll try it for a week then run the tests again. The stuff's in the refrigerator.

"Oh, and I ran across something weird in the Jonas autopsy — cause of death was a bullet to the heart all right, but the guy had been poisoned as well! There was enough arsenic in him to take out an elephant! Drop by the lab later and we'll talk, okay?

"Don't forget what I said — ignore the color and drink it! *All of it!*" *Click*.

Shaking his head ruefully, Nick rose and wandered over to the kitchen area, stopping in front of the gleaming white refrigerator. He opened the door and peered inside.

A casual visitor would have been astonished at the pristine appearance of the appliance's interior, for it harbored none of the typical bachelor's cheerful jumble of beer, leftover pizza and other more-or-less edible items. No, this sleek white convenience held *nothing* other than a dozen corked wine bottles and a clear glass laboratory beaker containing a thick, viscous liquid.

Knight reached in and gingerly picked up the beaker, holding it at arm's length and studying it with acute distaste. In the sterile white light cast by the refrigerator's interior bulb, the oily stuff glowed sullenly.

"*Purple?*" Nick exclaimed in pained disbelief. "Nat, you've *got* to be kidding!" He snapped open the lid and sniffed cautiously. His features twisted in disgust and he turned his head away hurriedly, suppressing the urge to hurl the container into the sink and let the vile-smelling stuff trickle down the drain.

Carefully he placed the beaker on the countertop and retreated. His eyes never leaving the flask, he reached back into the refrigerator. His seeking fingers closed over the cool, smooth neck of one of the wine bottles. He picked it up and turned, pushing the appliance's door shut with his other hand.

Hiss. Click. Beep. The answering machine was spinning out another message — some prosecutor babbling about court dates and depositions. Nick let the meaningless sounds wash over him. Still staring at the damned glass container, he retreated to the circle of golden light cast by the lamp and sank back into the chair's embrace.

The hand holding the wine bottle began to shake, fine tremors barely noticeable to an observer, had there been anyone to see, but enough to set the liquid within to gurgling. He looked down at the cork longingly, then resolutely fastened his gaze back on Natalie's offering. He blinked rapidly, the lamp's dim glow suddenly too bright, too harsh. He shrugged irritably, the fine silk swathing his body suddenly as coarse and prickly as old burlap. The tremors increased, crawling up his arm. His shoulder and neck began to cramp. Still he stared resolutely at the flask.

The tape played on. *Hiss. Click. Beep.* "Nick, it's me again." Schanke. "Listen, I can't find the file on the convenience store thing. Will you do me a favor and quit hidin' stuff?"

Knight raised the wine bottle to his mouth. Slowly he grasped the cork in his teeth and gave a sharp jerk of his head. The soft plug pulled out of the bottle with a nearly soundless pop. He spit the cork out, aware of its trajectory as it tumbled to the floor. Eyes still locked on Natalie's beaker, Nick raised the wine bottle, bringing it closer to his face. He inhaled the sweet musty fragrance arising from the narrow neck.

Hiss. Click. Beep. "Nick?" Schanke again. "I found the file. If I'd known it was on my desk, I'da been more careful where I put the donut bag. But don't worry, you can still read most of it. It's just a little greasy. Hasta la bye-bye."

The blond man tipped back his head, the bottle slanting to follow the motion. A drop of its contents fell on his tongue. He gave a huge, shuddering sigh and smiled in feral satisfaction.

Hiss. Click. Beep. "Nick." Natalie's voice. "I meant what I said. You've got to *try*. And please, eat something!" Snarling, Knight jerked the bottle away from his mouth and glared at the machine, his face a mask of rage.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Click. Silence. Nat's had been the last message.

Long moments passed. At last he closed his eyes and shook his head, visibly willing himself to relax. Slowly he reached down and picked up the cork. He stood and headed for the kitchen, resealing the bottle as he went. He thrust it back into the refrigerator without looking at it again, his movements suggesting one who labored to resist overwhelming temptation. Blindly he stumbled to the counter and swept up the flask, bringing it quickly to his lips. Tilting his head back he drank, determined to drain the beaker as quickly as possible. He managed four gulps before the taste registered, a rancid bitterness that made him choke. Gagging, he dropped the container into the sink where it shattered, its oily contents staining and fouling the gleaming white porcelain.

Grimly, Knight fought the nausea, swallowing repeatedly, refusing to give in to the urge to vomit. He reached out blindly, eyes streaming, and turned on the tap, letting the cold water rinse away the purple mess, splinters of glass and all.

A sheen of perspiration broke out on his skin as his stomach heaved again. He ducked his head under the stream of water, letting the coolness take him, concentrating on the feel of it, the smoothness caressing the back of his neck.

At last the sickness passed. He ran a shaking hand through his drenched hair and straightened up, staring at the few remaining shards of glass in the sink. "You're a terrific friend Nat," he growled, a wry smile playing around his lips, "and a brilliant doctor. But lady, you are also one *lousy* cook!" He turned and headed for the bathroom to shower and change.

A half hour later he clattered back downstairs, now clad in turtleneck, jeans and boots, all black. He paused at the desk to pick up his wallet and keys, stowing them in his pockets. He shrugged

into his shoulder holster with an ease of long practice and checked his gun, making sure it contained a full clip before sliding it into the holster, settling its familiar weight comfortably.

Last, he picked up his cape-like black leather coat and shrugged into it before heading for the downstairs garage. Detective Nick Knight of the Toronto P.D. was ready to hit the dark streets. Night watch, as always. By his own request. Vampires never work the day shift.

The diner's garish neon signs reflected in the oily puddles as Nick left the building and headed for his car. He chuckled and shook his head as he recalled his conversation with the nervous witness in the Martin homicide. Stonetree had suspected intimidation or a payoff. Knight had discovered that fear was indeed the key to this little puzzle, but not because of any threat from the accused. No, Frankie's fear lay closer to home. Very close to home, indeed.

The detective's grin widened as he remembered the panic on the short order cook's face and the hushed whisper as the man blurted out his dilemma.

"Man, if I testify, then I gotta tell *why* I was at the motel, right?" Frankie had hissed, rolling his eyes nervously. "And with who?"

The "who" turned out to be a shapely blonde waitress named Gloria. And Frankie's fiancée and partner, Brenda, had a black belt and a hot temper. Convincing the terrified Lothario that facing a perjury charge was even worse than facing an enraged Brenda had taken the cop the better part of an hour.

Visions of more than one hapless two-timer encountered in his more than eight centuries of existence drifted through the vampire's mind as he made his way to his car. He laughed quietly as he fished his keys out of his pocket. Schanke and the captain were going to *love* hearing about Frankie's problem.

He unlocked the door and slid into the driver's seat of the 1959 Cadillac. His train of thought was broken by the shrill summons of his cellular phone. He snapped the device open. "Knight here," he barked into the mouthpiece. "I'm on my way in now."

"Don't bother," replied Stonetree, his voice distorted by static. "We've got a new case. Schanke, the coroner and forensics are already on their way. They'll meet you there."

"Natalie's on duty tonight, isn't she?" Nick asked as he reached for the ignition.

"Right," the captain answered.

"I take it this is a suspicious death?" the detective went on as the car's big engine purred to life. Stonetree sighed heavily. "Got it in one," he grumbled. "This is all we need, with the caseload already through the roof! Maybe we'll get lucky and the perp will just hand himself over like a nice little criminal. Now get going!"

"Cap? Just one more thing," Nick said cheerfully.

"What?"

"*Where* am I headed?" The blond man grinned at the incoherent growl coming from the phone.

"Gardiner Place," the captain snapped. "The theatre section."

"I'm not far from there. On my way."

Gardiner Place was a collection of imposing brick buildings with a long, somewhat spotty history. A combination of theatre, restaurant and private club, it had been built during the final decades of the last century to cater to the needs of the rich and cultured. Its elegantly decorated auditorium/theatre could hold nearly a thousand people and the huge marble foyer had often doubled as a ballroom. The most famous actors and musicians of the day had graced its stage and its several salons had been the site of many an elegant soiree and reception, catered by a renowned kitchen staff and featuring the contents of a famous wine cellar. Hundreds of white-clad debutantes had descended the great stairway to be presented to society, and many a bride and groom had danced their first waltz as a married couple on its shining floor, all under the watchful and approving eye of their dotting (and of course, wealthy) parents.

In the oak-paneled meeting rooms that overlooked the lovingly-tended garden, captains of industry had met over brandy and cigars, striking many an advantageous deal, interviewing prospective sons-in-law or merely enjoying a quiet hand or two of poker.

The rot had set in soon after the Great War, though the afterglow had lingered through the twenties, fueled then by the money handed over by gun-toting "businessmen" who had spoken with harsh Chicago accents and called Al Capone "Boss."

But as the city grew and the restless rich migrated elsewhere, the Place had fallen on hard times. It had limped through the forties and fifties as a drama and music school, with the theatre serving as a recital hall and second-run movie house, but it couldn't last. By the eighties, it was a boarded-up hulk, home to transients, drug-dealers and rats, slated for the wrecking ball.

But urban renewal and a small group of dedicated preservationists had rescued the tired old structure. Slowly, carefully, they had restored, rebuilt and refurbished the Place until it emerged from a century's worth of dust to play host to a new generation of gentility.

The blond detective strode up the shallow steps and into the marble foyer, blinking in the brilliant light shed by massive crystal chandeliers. A sign on an easel to his right welcomed him to the "Second Annual Gala of the Toronto History Association." Clumps of chattering people milled aimlessly around the huge space, their faces reflecting shock, bewilderment and the guilty excitement of having been present when something shocking and scandalous took place. The vampire's progress was tracked by the curious gaze of men clad in formal black and white and the appreciative and speculative eyes of females swathed in rainbow-hued gowns.

Spotting a uniformed patrolmen up ahead, Knight flashed his badge and raised an enquiring eyebrow. Nodding, the man waved the detective toward a corridor on the right. Mouthing a silent "thanks", Nick headed toward the arched doorway. As he ducked around a uniformed cop who was stringing yellow "crime scene" tape across the hallway's entrance, the detective noticed a woman hovering uncertainly to one side. She was tall, with dark auburn hair arranged in a severe hairstyle, an austerity echoed in her black, high-necked dress. She brushed absently at a smears stain on the dress's long, full skirt as she gazed nervously down the corridor. Looking up, she noticed the blond man watching her. Flushing uncomfortably, the woman turned away and walked toward a group of chattering guests.

Making a mental note to check out the nervous woman's identity, Nick strode briskly down the hall. Through an open doorway on the left, he heard a familiar voice.

Looking into the room, he saw a slender woman standing beside another patrolman.

"Get the tape up as soon as you can," she said, "and make sure nobody touches anything until the team arrives." She gestured at the body sprawled in the middle of the floor. "There's not much more I can do until they get here."

"What've we got, Nat?" Knight asked, coming farther into the room.

The attractive coroner looked around and smiled in greeting. Her long brown hair, now confined in a loose ponytail, swirled around her head at the movement. Her features were delicate and well-formed, dominated by pair of intelligent, lively dark eyes.

"See for yourself," she replied, drawing a pair of latex gloves from her pocket. She turned back to the uniformed cop. "Would you mind going to see what's keeping forensics?" she asked.

The man shook his head emphatically. "Not at all, lady," he said in relief. "I'd rather be anywhere than stuck in a room with a stiff!" He grimaced in embarrassed apology. "Don't see how you can stand it!" He spun around and almost bolted for the hallway.

"Hey, it's a living!" Natalie called after him.

Nick walked over to the body and crouched down beside it, careful to disturb nothing. His keen gaze took in a myriad of details, from the well-shod feet to the bloodstained hair.

Natalie moved to stand behind the detective. "The victim is James Edwin Higgins, PhD. Age 56. Tenured professor of ancient history at the University. Approximate time of death, 6:45 p.m. That's about forty-five minutes ago. Apparent cause of death —"

"Is obvious," Knight gut in, gesturing at the corpse's battered skull and the huge pool of blood soaking into the green carpet. "How about the weapon?"

"Over there," the coroner replied, pointing.

The heavy walking stick lay in the far corner of the room. Made of a rich, dark wood, it was crowned with a beautifully detailed golden serpent. The snake's shining surface was marred with thick crimson streaks.

Knight regarded the beautiful, deadly thing intently. "Cobra," he murmured. "Looks like Egyptian style. The royal symbol." He stood and walked over to examine it more closely.

Behind him, Natalie knelt next to the body and began to mutter preliminary comments into a small tape recorder she carried with her everywhere.

A red mark on the wall caught the vampire's eye. Frowning, he turned to regard the body, then the door, calculating force and trajectory as he did so. "Looks like our killer panicked," he remarked. "Bludgeoned the professor and ran for the door. He must have realized he still had the cane in his hand and just threw it away as he reached the doorway. Didn't even try to hide it." Nat looked up. "A spur-of-the-moment thing, then?"

"Oh, definitely unplanned," Nick agreed. "It's all too easy to kill someone without meaning to. Especially if you hit out with something like that." He nodded at the walking stick. "Especially if you're angry."

"Looks like the good professor made someone very, very angry," the coroner commented.

"Very, very, very angry," a cheerful voice echoed from the hallway.

Nick and Natalie looked up as the newcomer bounced jauntily into the room. He was a man of perhaps forty or so, shorter and heavier than Knight, with a round, good-natured face topped by thinning black hair. He looked down at the corpse and his mobile features twisted into a moue of distaste. "Nasty," he said.

"What have you got, Schanke?" Knight asked, regarding his partner with resigned patience.

"Oh, nuthin' much, old buddy," the balding detective replied genially. "Just a chief suspect. *And* motive, means and opportunity," he finished triumphantly, looking at Nick and the coroner as if expecting a round of applause. "It's all over bar the shouting," he prompted as the other two merely looked at him in silence. He grinned. "The perp's shouting, that is. He's good at it, too." The grin faded. "Well, say something!"

"Congratulations." Knight's voice was dry.

Natalie looked away, trying unsuccessfully to turn a laugh into a cough.

Schanke's mouth opened but his defensive comment was drowned out by the arrival of two men with a gurney and the missing members of the forensic team. The photographer darted forward, eager to begin capturing the scene on film.

Nat pointed at the door. "You two. Out," she ordered.

The two detectives obediently retreated. Nick paused in the doorway, frowning. He looked back at the crimson stain on the wall, his eyes narrowed in thought. The stain, the angle from the door — obvious what had happened. *Too* obvious? "Nat," he said, "be sure to get samples from that splotch on the wall, will you? And —"

The woman glared at him. "And *nothing*," she snapped. "I don't tell you how to do your job and *you* don't tell me how to do mine. *Out!*"

"I'm going, I'm going," the vampire groused teasingly. He joined Schanke in the hall and grinned at his partner. "So, tell me. You said you've got it all?"

"That I do, amigo," the shorter detective declared smugly.

Knight sighed when the other man fell silent. "You're gonna make me work for this, aren't you?"

"Yep." Schanke nodded, a cheshire cat grin on his round face.

Knight sighed and shook his head resignedly. "Okay, we do it the hard way. Start at the beginning, o wise one."

"Anything for my respectful partner," the balding cop smirked. "Now, the University, in cahoots with the History Association, is throwing this shindig for two reasons. One: money. The people here paid through the nose to attend. Also, it generates good PR for everyone concerned."

Nick nodded.

Encouraged, Schanke went on. "Reason two: to honor this VIP — a very important professor, that is. Who also happens to be our killer."

Knight's eyebrows rose sharply in surprise.

The other cop nodded, pulling out his notebook, consulting its mystic scribbles. "Yeah. Now, this is a very posh affair. Black tie —"

"I'd noticed," Nick commented drily.

"— gala reception," the balding man went on, airily ignoring the interruption, "presentation to the guest of honor, drinkies, munchies, a talk by the VIP, then a sitdown dinner." He frowned at the notes. "You wouldn't believe the menu. *Loaded* with cholesterol. Myra'd kill me if I even *thought* about eating some of this stuff," he mourned.

"*Schanke*," the blond man growled.

"Oh, yeah — sorry. Ya know, you wouldn't be so grouchy if you'd start eatin' right," the other commented.

Knight came to a dead stop, glaring at his partner in exasperation.

Schanke, realizing at last that he had gone too far, shrugged and hurried on. "Anyway, things did *not* go as planned. Right after the presentation, Higgins showed up. Witnesses said he was half-drunk and loaded for bear."

Nick leaned against the wall and regarded his companion with interest. "Spoiling for a fight, was he?"

"Oh, yeah," the other man agreed. "Seems everyone was surprised to see him, since he and this American professor — did I tell you the perp's American? — have had a *very* heavy-duty feud going on for a l-o-o-n-g time. At each other's throats every time they met, dueling papers in journals — all that academic crap."

Nick nodded. He wasn't unfamiliar with the passions stirred by conflicting views. More than one ivy-covered tower had been a battlefield. "Ah," he murmured.

Encouraged, the smaller man went on. "The folks I talked to said that the soon-to-be-corpse showed up just after the guest of honor had been presented a gift for — let me get this right — 'for distinguished contributions to the fields of archaeology, history and linguistics'." He looked up from the scrawled page. "The gift in question was a cane with a gold snake wrapped around the top."

"The murder weapon."

Schanke nodded. "You got it. Anyhow, Higgins starts making loud cracks about glory hounds and questionable finds, not to mention out and out fraud and something *else* no one cares to repeat. The VIP took exception. He *also* took a swing at Higgins, then went for his throat. It took two guys to pull him off. So Higgins is yelling assault and threatening to sue and the American's threatening to rearrange Higgins's anatomy — permanently." He looked down at the notes again and grinned. "Had some creative ideas about which body part should go where."

"So, you've got motive. A good one," Nick mused. "And the weapon's firmly tied in, as well."

"Don't forget opportunity," the other chimed in. "After the fight, the Yank stormed off by himself." He caught Knight's eye. "And yeah, he *was* carrying the cane *and* he headed down this corridor. Everyone left him alone, hoping he'd cool down, ya know? But we've got at least two witnesses who saw him go into the room where the body was found."

"And Higgins?" the vampire asked intently.

Schanke shrugged again. "Not sure. We're trying to track his movements, but it's no go so far. He wasn't real noticeable, according to the people here. The kind who fades into the woodwork if he stands still. *And* everyone was ignoring him 'cause they were pissed off that he'd spoiled the party and made the University and the Association look bad in front of the press."

"How *much* press?" Knight demanded, pushing away from the wall.

"Enough," his partner grinned. "Including a TV camera." The grin deepened. Schanke loved seeing his own face on a television screen. "Not to worry, we've got 'em penned up for the moment. But we won't be able to sit on 'em for too much longer," he warned, scratching his ear consideringly. "In fact, I gave orders to turn 'em loose as soon as this corridor was taped off."

"Wonderful," the blond detective growled.

"We gotta play ball with 'em," Schanke protested. "We've already confiscated the tape they shot earlier. Evidence." He nodded slyly at Nick's sharp look. "Yep. They got some great footage of the fight."

Nick rubbed his hand over his forehead. "Get back to Higgins," he demanded.

"Okay. So, we're not sure where he went." The balding cop started walking again and Nick fell in beside him. They headed down the hallway toward a door guarded by another uniformed policeman.

"But we know where he ended up," Knight remarked wryly.

"That we do," the stocky man chuckled. "Higgins must have followed the Yank and continued the fight, so our suspect obliged him and finished it for good and all. Wham, bam, hasta la bye-bye!"

Nick nodded. "Open and shut."

"You got it," Schanke agreed. "A rookie coulda handled this one. Not that the perp'll serve much time."

"Why not?" the vampire asked in surprise.

"Didn't I tell you?" Schanke said, halting at the guarded door, his hand on the heavy latch. "The man in here, our killer, is older than *God!* Nearly a hundred, can you believe it?" He shook his head, perplexed. "That's the one thing that really gets me, ya know? Who'd expect an old man like that to whack someone?"

"You'd be surprised what an old man can do, Schanke," Knight retorted, his eyes gleaming in veiled amusement. "There's one more thing you haven't told me," he added as the stocky detective worked the latch and the heavy door began to swing inward.

"What's that?"

"Our suspect's name," Nick hissed, passing his partner and entering the room, the other man hot on his heels.

"Oh, yeah," the balding cop muttered. "It's — *ooooof!*" Schanke's breath whooshed from his lungs as he ran into his suddenly immobile partner.

Knight stood in frozen shock, staring at the fierce old man who glared up at him from the depths of a leather chair set near a massive fireplace in the far wall. The glare was in no way diluted by the fact that only one sharp hazel eye was visible behind the heavy, black-framed spectacles, its mate hidden behind a piratical black patch. Iron-gray hair, cropped short, crowned the man's head. His face was craggy, the skin lined and cracked like old leather. He had a strong nose, a stubborn chin, and his determined mouth was turned down in an angry scowl. His large hands, still powerful though somewhat gnarled and heavily veined, gripped the leather armrests angrily. Smears of dust streaked his elegant evening attire and a gritty, ashlike substance marred the polished surface of his black shoes.

"Indiana Jones!?" Knight gasped. "What the *hell* — !"

Schanke refilled his lungs and looked at his fellow cop quizzically. "Yeah." He stopped, looked curiously at Nick, then shook his head in bewilderment. "I mean, no. The Jones part is right, but the other part's Henry. Professor Henry Jones Jr. Indiana's a *state*, not a person. You feelin' all right, Nick?"

The other detective ignored him, as did the suspect.

"It's about time someone with a little sense showed up around here," the professor snapped. He tilted his head, peering up at Nick. The pose reminded the vampire of an old, wary vulture. "I take it you're a cop, now," Indiana went on disapprovingly. "What a waste."

Knight smiled in spite of himself. "A man's got to make a living, Indy."

Amusement and challenge gleamed in Jones's visible eye. "But you *could* have found something that requires intelligence," he retorted. "Obviously not a necessity in your current career, if your companion here is anything to go by!"

"Hey!" Schanke began, stung.

"Let it go, partner," Knight advised. "He's a lot meaner than you are. With him it's an art form, and he's had lots of time to practice."

"Yeah, well —" the other replied reluctantly. He looked from Nick to the old man. "I take it you two know each other."

"Our — paths have crossed now and again," the vampire admitted, glancing at the archaeologist.

"That's a novel way of putting it," Indy grunted.

"When was that, exactly?" Schanke questioned eagerly. He knew virtually nothing about his partner's past, little more about his personal life, and every hard-won detail only whetted his avid curiosity.

"Don't you have something else to do, Schanke?" Nick inquired, glancing pointedly at the door behind him. "Like checking on the forensics people to see how they're doing? Or riding herd on the press?"

"How about counting flowers on the wall?" the other cop retorted sarcastically. "Okay, okay, I can take a hint, O man of mystery!" He turned and left the room, the door swinging shut behind him.

Knight turned back to the professor and shook his head. "Indy, can't you *ever* stay out of trouble?" His voice was rueful.

"Trouble's been following me around for damn close to a century now," Jones snorted. "I'm kinda used to it."

Nick laughed and sank down in a chair next to that occupied by the archaeologist. "I imagine so. Now, start at the beginning. How do we get you out of this mess and find the real killer?"

Indy peered at him craftily. "Are you so *sure* I didn't do it?" he said cheerfully.

H

ours later, Nick slumped wearily against the wall, regarding the stubborn old man seated at the table with frustration. The interrogation room was stuffy and claustrophobic. Schanke and Captain Stonetree were seated across from Jones. The table's surface was littered with empty cardboard coffee cups and candy wrappers.

Stonetree sighed. "Now, professor, let's take it from the beginning."

"We've taken it from the beginning three times," Indy snapped. "Four times if you count the conversation I had with Nick before you dragged me into this place. For the last time, I didn't do it!"

"Doctor Jones, please. Let me remind you that a man was killed tonight," the captain began.

"Not by me!" Jones interrupted fiercely. "He was a slimy little worm, small loss to anyone, but he wasn't worth killing. He's more trouble dead than he ever was alive!" he added, turning to Nick.

Knight leaned over, bracing his hands on the table. "But *you* threatened him, Indy."

"With a sound whipping!" the professor snorted spiritedly. "And if I'd had my whip with me, then this interrogation would be justified."

"You carry a *whip*?" Schanke gulped.

"Used to," Indy snapped in reply. "Nine foot bullwhip. Came in handy, some of the places I've been. My daughter took it away from me a while back." He grinned at Nick. "I think she was afraid I'd be tempted to use it on one of my granddaughter's boyfriends." He stopped and tilted his head musingly. "Might not have been a bad idea at that!"

"Get back to tonight, please, professor," Stonetree prompted. "You were very angry with Doctor Higgins."

"I've been angry with that ego-inflated gasbag for twenty years and more!" Jones replied. "It started when he was a snot-nosed grad student. Never was very bright, had no imagination and no originality. So the only way he could make himself noticed was to suck up to the department heads and rip other, better, scholars' work apart. If he couldn't steal it and claim it as his own, that is.

"He decided that I was a good target," the old man went on. "I'd been out of the field for a while, hadn't been working much. That was when my Marion was sick," he added quietly, his fierce gaze softening momentarily. After a moment he shook himself and went on. "Hell, maybe he thought I was dead! Anyway, he launched an attack on my work. I didn't take kindly to *that*!"

"I imagine you didn't," Nick murmured with a grin.

"I took him apart in several papers," Indy went on with a wolfish grin. "Merely to set the record straight, you understand."

"And I imagine you weren't very tactful, were you?" the blond detective put in.

Jones snorted derisively. "Tact doesn't work with his sort! Anyway, he's been buzzing about ever since, always trying to find me in error. Made more than a few nasty accusations. He himself meant nothing, but he'd managed to acquire a few patrons, mostly old enemies of mine."

Nick's partner pounced on that. "You have a lot of enemies, professor?"

The archaeologist glared at the stocky man. "A man with no enemies has led a boring life," he snapped. "Boring is one thing no one has ever been able to accuse me of!"

Knight managed to choke back a laugh.

Indy shot a sharp look at the amused vampire then turned his attention back to the other cops. "Most of my enemies were worthy of the name, dammit! Real adversaries, dangerous men. But I've outlived 'em all. This sorry little egomaniac was a foe unworthy of my steel! Higgins was a gnat, that's all. A particularly virulent gnat. "

"A gnat you finally got tired of and swatted, right?" Schanke snapped, slamming his meaty hand down on the tabletop.

"No!" the professor shouted. The long night seemed to catch up to him and he slumped in his chair, rubbing his hand wearily over his forehead.

Nick looked at the captain, who stood and gestured both detectives to follow him into the corridor outside. The three cops met in a worried knot near the door.

"That's enough for tonight," Stonetree began.

"Ah, c'mon Cap," Schanke said. "He's just about to crack. One more round and he'll confess."

"No," the heavy-set senior officer said decisively. "He's too old for much more. Hell, *I'm* too old for much more tonight. Right, Nick?"

The vampire shrugged. "Jones is tougher than you'd ever believe," he said, smiling faintly. "But I agree, we're not going to get any further tonight. I'll run him back to his hotel before I go off duty."

"Back to his hotel? Are you *nuts*?" the balding detective squeaked incredulously. "Five minutes after you drive away he'll be heading for the border!"

"Oh, come on, Schanke!" Nick reprimanded him. "You yourself said it — he's older than God, remember? Or do you think he's gonna try to swim the lake?"

"I'd believe *anything* about that mean old bird," his partner snapped back. "Like *you* just said, he's tougher than we'd ever believe! The man used to carry a *whip*!" His expression was a mix of respect and bemusement, not untouched by fear.

Stonetree held up a hand. "Enough," he sighed wearily. "We've got too much circumstantial evidence to let him loose," he said. "And probable cause. Book him."

"But Cap —" Knight objected.

"Sorry, Nick, I'd gathered he's a friend of yours. If you'd rather that Schanke took him down —"

The vampire shook his head. "No. But you're making a mistake, captain."

"Maybe," Stonetree's deepset eyes were troubled. "Maybe not. But Schanke's right, he *is* a flight risk. And this is a high-profile case. The press would have a field day if we treat Jones with kid gloves. Book him."

Nick's lips tightened but he made no further objections. "I'll handle it, then." Without another word he slipped inside the interrogation room, closing the door on Schanke's next words.

Indy was still slumped in the chair, head pillowed wearily on his hands. His eye didn't open as Nick approached him.

"Indy," the detective began. "I'm sorry, but —"

"I'm going to be spending what's left of the night in a cell," Jones stated calmly. "I'd expected as much." He raised his head and gave the blond man a ghost of a grin. "Won't be the first time. But if I'm lucky, it *will* be the last!" He stood up, gaze steady on his old acquaintance. "I'm only going to ask one question, Nick," he said seriously.

"What?" the detective asked cautiously.

"What are you calling yourself this time?" the old man demanded. "I'd hate to call you Girard or Chollis or Nick the Guru in front of that bloodhound you call a partner." He shook his head. "At the very least, he'd decide he had proof that I'm senile."

The vampire smiled, a hint of tired bitterness in the expression. "Knight. With a 'k'."

"How — appropriate," Indy said at last. He turned away from the other's steady gaze. "It's a strange old world, isn't it?" he murmured softly.

"You mean you just figured that out, Junior?" Nick asked mockingly.

Jones whirled on him menacingly. "Do you know how much I regret ever telling you how much I *hate* being called that?"

"Yep." Knight's voice was smug. His smile faded and he reached out to grasp the professor's elbow. "C'mon, old friend. And after you're booked, I want your suit jacket and your shoes."

"Afraid I'm going to run away?" the old man smirked, then sighed. "Not on foot. Not anymore. But if I knew where to scare up a motorcycle —"

"That's enough!" Nick chuckled. "Now cooperate, or you'll end up in a jailhouse jumpsuit, and *that* my friend, would be damned hard on your — dignity."

"And on my cellmate's eyesight!" Jones hooted. He stopped laughing and peered curiously at the vampire. "Why do you want the jacket and shoes?"

"I want those stains analyzed," the other explained patiently.

"Damn!" the professor huffed, looking down at the smeared marks. "I should have known you'd spot those!" He reached up to scrub one hand across his stained sleeve.

Knight grabbed his wrist, preventing the old man from touching the marks. "That's evidence," he warned. His eyes narrowed and he stared intently at the archaeologist's averted face. "What's going on, Indy? Where did you get these stains?"

The professor pulled his arm away. "They're not blood, at least. And I'm not saying another word on the subject!"

Knight shook his head. "I should have known you'd have something up your sleeve. You could have cleared this up at the beginning, couldn't you?"

Indy shrugged uncomfortably. "Not necessarily."

The vampire regarded him intently. "You're shielding someone, aren't you?"

"She didn't do it either!" Jones interjected hotly.

"She! Of course!" Knight threw his hands up in exasperation. "I should have known! There's *always* a damsel in distress, isn't there?"

Jones actually blushed.

The detective took pity on him. "What's her name, Indy? And can she give you an alibi?"

"Her name's Kate. Dr. Katherine Sullivan. And she'll back me up, even though it lands her in the hot seat instead of me." He shook his head at Knight's quizzical look. "I'm not saying anything more right now, Nick."

"I'll make a note of it," the blond agreed blandly.

Jones shook himself. "Now what?" he said wearily.

"You've got a date with the watch sergeant," Knight replied with a maddening smile. "And I've just decided we'd better analyze your trousers as well. Now come on. I've got to get you down to booking. When I get out of here, I'll try to arrange a lawyer for you. And someone who'll be able to pay your bail. If the judge will even consider setting bail, that is. According to my captain, you're a flight risk."

The professor snorted scornfully. "What do they expect? " He tilted his head consideringly. "Though, if I *could* get my hands on a motorcycle, I *could* go cross-country —"

"No motorcycles!" Nick said firmly, his mouth twitching. "Or horses, or hot air balloons, or —"

"All right! All right! I promise!" Indy chortled. "For once in my life, I'll be a good boy!"

"See that you do," the vampire replied. "Now, if bail is granted, it's going to be high. But I think I can swing it. Trust me."

Indiana regarded him warily. "I don't want to be in your debt," he began.

"Don't worry," was the breezy reply. "You won't be."



It was still an hour or so before dawn when Nick parked the Caddy in a quiet alley and slid out of the driver's seat. He walked swiftly down the rain-wet pavement, heading for a most peculiar establishment. The exterior was drab, the discreet sign featuring a black bird deliberately understated. But, as in so many things, there was far more to The Raven than met the eye.

The inside throbbed with music and movement. Dancers swayed amid the beaded streamers that hung from the shadowy ceiling, insubstantial shapes that touched briefly then spun apart, guided by the driving beat.

A few of the regular patrons watched Nick's progress warily, their eyes hard and hostile. Knight ignored them and made his way to a dark, slim woman who held court at the bar.

An exotic flower in a poisoned garden, the woman wore a flame-red velvet dress. Her midnight-black straight hair was coiled in an elaborate coiffure about her well-shaped skull. Her heavily-made up eyes slid sideways to watch Knight's approach, and her carmine lips stretched in a mocking smile. With an elegant motion, she shoed her attendants away and turned so her back was to the bar. She rested her elbows on its dark surface, flaunting her overwhelming sensuality. "*Bon soir, mon vieux,*" she purred. "And what do you want this time?"

Knight took her gloved hand in his own, bowing over it in a gesture that was almost, though not quite, a mockery. "Are you so sure that I want something, Janette?" he retorted.

"*Mais certainment*," she replied, snatching her hand away haughtily. "Since you have abandoned us, you come to me *only* when you cannot turn to one of your precious mortals."

"Not always, my sweet," he replied. His manner was a blend of flirtation and distaste. "Sometimes I merely feel compelled to gaze upon your matchless beauty."

"Ahh," she purred. "You always did have such a pretty manner, Nicholas." She turned to face him. Slowly, she drew off one white glove. Smiling coquettishly, she dipped one slender finger into the wineglass that stood near her elbow. The crimson liquid coated the taloned digit. She brought the finger to her mouth, licking at it with precise, delicate movements of her pink tongue, her intent gaze never leaving Nick's face as she did so.

His eyes flickered hungrily, a sulphurous green glow lighting their depths momentarily. He licked his suddenly dry lips.

The woman saw and laughed throatily. "It — suffices, but just barely. Undiluted with wine, straight from the living source, that is still much the best, *non?*" she taunted.

Knight spun away from her desperately. "Enough!" he growled.

"Poor Nicholas!" she cooed. "Do I torment you?"

"Don't you mean to?" he snapped. The bar seemed stuffy, suddenly, the heavy clouds of smoke stinging his eyes. The light flickered like a flame in a breeze. Smoke — and dancing light —

Torchlight, flickering in the drafty room. Stone walls, sheened with moisture. So long ago. Himself, reclining on a bed in the middle of the cold room. The woman, Janette, clad in a loose-fitting, gorgeously embroidered gown. Smiling, he watched her approach, enjoying the bold sensuality of her movements. The flaring light cast blue highlights on her raven-dark hair. She knelt over him, her mouth caressing his, moving down to his throat. Then, movement behind her. He looked over her shoulder to see a thin, pale man, white hair forming a close-cropped halo above a high forehead. The stranger stared at the reclining young man, his eyes predatory and possessive. He smiled, his thin lips parting to reveal shining fangs —

"Didn't you always mean to?" The detective's voice was hoarse and bitter.

"But of course," she replied with a wide smile.

"Of course," he echoed, a reluctant smile hovering about his lips. "But now you do it for your own sake, not at LaCroix's bidding."

She pouted at the mention of that name and looked away. "Dawn is near," she pointed out, her manner suddenly brisk. "What is it that you wish me to do?"

"I need a good lawyer, and probably a sizeable bail," Knight replied, grateful that she had tired of the endless game. "And the lawyer is on no account to hear my name."

She shrugged. "The lawyer — that is no problem. But the bail — just *how* sizeable an amount, mmm?"

"Hard-headed businesswoman, eh?" he teased.

Her black eyebrows rose expressively. "I expect my investment to be safeguarded, *cherie*," she replied sweetly. "Will *you* guarantee the sum?"

He held up his hands in surrender. "Of course," he laughed. "But there is no danger. This man is no risk."

"You sound very sure of yourself — and him." She regarded him askance. "Who is this paragon — this trustworthy mortal?"

He grinned widely. "Do you remember Indiana Jones?" he asked innocently.

She dropped her elegant pose and frankly stared at him. "You jest!" she all but shrieked. "*C'est enfant terrible?*"

"*Terrible* still, but *enfant* no longer," he riposted. "He is old now, *cherie*, but still strong. And in trouble."

"As always," she said wryly. Her eyes twinkled impishly. "I recall him well. A pretty boy, who became such a *handsome* man. Truly *formidable*, *n'est-ce pas?* Yes, for your adventurous Indy, I shall risk my hard-earned wealth. Perhaps I shall even invite him to my establishment."

"He'd probably enjoy himself immensely," Knight said blandly. "And now I must go. Thank you, Janette. *Au revoir.*"

"*A bientot, cherie*," she called after him.

The first intimation of false dawn colored the sky as Nick returned to his apartment. Slinging aside his coat, he strode to the kitchen, extracting one of the wine bottles from the depths of the refrigerator before collapsing on the chair next to the phone. As before, he pried the cork loose with his teeth. He toed off his boots as he dialed a well-known number, frowning in impatience as he waited through the distant rings and tinny, brief message on the answering machine. At last the beep sounded. "Nat? It's Nick. There are a few things I want you to do, if you don't mind. First, I've had Doctor Jones's shoes and tux tagged and bagged as evidence. There are some smudges on them I want analyzed, and I want you to do it if you can. I have a feeling it's important." He stopped, hesitating over his next words. "Look, you might as well know, Doctor Jones and I go way back. He's a good friend, and he knows a lot about me." He paused again. "I've arranged a lawyer for him. *If* bail can be arranged, can you look after him? Take him to your place or something. I'll call you after I get up." He looked down at the bottle in his hand and grimaced. "And before you ask; no, I didn't eat anything. And yes, I *did* drink some of your damned witches' brew! Good night."

He hung up and reached out to set the machine to record. He looked again at the bottle and shrugged before bringing it to his lips and taking a healthy swallow. He shuddered at the chill as the salty-sweet taste of blood filled his mouth and trickled down his throat. Another swallow, and he closed his eyes, lost in the pleasure. A third, and he forced the glass neck away from his lips, resolutely recorking the bottle and replacing it with its fellows before making his way to bed. Already he could feel the heaviness in his limbs that spoke of imminent sunrise.

Dr. Natalie Lambert stood outside the courtroom, desperately trying to stifle her yawns. Her eyes felt gritty and hot, and she rubbed at them irritably. She glanced at her watch for the fifth time in as many minutes and shook her head ruefully. Only for Nick Knight would she have ventured out this early on her day off!

She reached up to massage an aching shoulder muscle, impatiently pushing her heavy brown hair off her neck as she did so. "Come on, come on," she muttered under her breath. "What's taking so long?"

As she spoke, the heavy door swung open and two men walked out into the hallway. One of them, by far the elder, was clad incongruously in patched, too-large jeans and a wrinkled dress shirt. A pair of grubby white sneakers covered his feet, and he leaned on a plain black cane. Despite his eccentric attire, the old man carried himself with an air of dignity and ease.

The other man was an anonymous professional type, clad in an impeccable three-piece suit, expensive briefcase held loosely in one hand. His features were bland and unremarkable, though his glance was shrewd as Natalie stepped up to the pair.

"Doctor Jones?" the coroner said.

The archaeologist nodded briefly.

Nat smiled. "My name is Natalie. Our ... mutual friend Nick asked me to look after you."

The old man looked the woman over appreciatively. "That was very ... kind of him. It's always a pleasure to be in the company of such a lovely young lady," he said with a roguish grin.

The lawyer regarded his client impassively. "If you will wait here, Professor Jones," he said pompously, "I will arrange for the bail to be paid."

"Yes, yes, go on," Indy said impatiently. "The sooner I can get out of here, the better I'll feel." He scowled down at his haphazard attire. "I look like a tramp!" he protested.

The other man bowed his head solemnly and walked away, his carriage funereal.

"Pompous idiot!" Jones huffed.

Nat giggled, and the professor turned his gaze on her.

"Now, Miss Natalie," he said sternly, "suppose you tell me just who you are. You say you're a friend of Nick's?"

The coroner nodded and gestured at a padded bench not far away. "Let's sit there while we wait for your bail ticket," she suggested. Strangely, she felt totally at ease with the old man, as if they had known each other for years and had enjoyed a close, comfortable friendship that had survived many meetings and partings.

Indy's expression told her that the man felt the same sense of instant rapport. Gallantly taking her arm, he steered her to the bench, making sure she was comfortable before sitting down beside her. Fixing her with an imperious glare, he said, "I saw you last night at the Place. Surrounded by policemen, as I recall. Do I assume you and Nick work together in an official capacity?"

Nat nodded. "I'm with the coroner's office, Dr. Jones," she told him. She paused, expecting some comment. To her surprise, he merely waited patiently for her to continue.

Shrugging inwardly, she smiled and went on. "Since I'm already involved in the case, Nick felt I was the best one to look after you until he could meet with you again."

"And that won't be until after sunset, of course," Indy said softly, watching her intently.

Her eyes flew to his. His steady, one-eyed gaze never faltered. "You *do* know about him, then," she replied in relief.

"Oh, yes," Jones smiled. "For a long time." The smile grew into a wide grin. "He scared the hell out of me when I first met him!"

"Me, too," Natalie laughed.

Indy looked around cautiously. "I think we have a great deal to discuss, my dear," he said. "But not here."

"I agree," she replied, standing as she saw the lawyer approaching, release papers in hand.

As the archaeologist's topcoat had been left behind in the Place's cloakroom, Natalie volunteered to fetch her car and meet her charge in front of the courthouse. Once away from the imposing building, the coroner drove the old professor to his hotel, waiting in the lobby while Jones retired to his room to shower and change.

He rejoined her in less than an hour, clad in a threadbare brown suit and carrying a ratty old leather and sheepskin coat. He leaned heavily on his plain black cane and carried a battered, sweat-stained brown fedora in his free hand. He marched up to her, complaining indignantly that his belongings had been thoroughly searched.

"Procedure," she said.

"Procedure be damned!" he nearly shouted. "They've taken half my notes and got the rest so messed up that it'll take me a week to get them straight again. And worse than that, they've taken my journal! That is an invasion of privacy that can't be overlooked!"

Natalie took his arm, steering him toward the entrance. "I'm sure it's very annoying," she said soothingly.

Indy jerked his arm out of her grasp, angrily shrugging into the coat. "Don't humor me, girl," he growled. "I'm not a child!"

"Then stop acting like one!" she snapped in exasperation.

The old man glared at her then smiled charmingly. "Did anyone ever tell you you're gorgeous when you're angry?" he said.

"That's the oldest line in the book!" she giggled.

"So? I'm the second oldest man you've ever met!" he shot back.

"I give up!" she laughed. "Get in the car. I'm taking you to my place."

"Sounds interesting," he leered.

"Doctor Jones!" she retorted in mock indignation. "Whatever am I going to do with you?"

"Oh, I'm sure you'll think of something!" he said smugly. "But first you'll have to feed me."

A

short time later they were seated in Nat's living room, amiably sharing a pot of strong coffee and a bag of still-warm donuts.

Leaning back, Indy turned to regard the woman beside him. "So. Just how did you meet Nick?"

"In an official capacity," she replied, amused and startled at his bluntness. At the old man's encouraging nod, she went on. "He was a DOA. He'd thrown himself on a pipe bomb." She shuddered. "I was supposed to do the autopsy. But when I turned around — " She broke off, unable to describe the scene — the "corpse" who suddenly got up from the table, the terrible green glow shining in his eyes. She cleared her throat uncomfortably.

"He needed blood, of course," Indy put in quietly.

"The blood bank supplies were right there," she answered.

"Ah," the old archaeologist sighed.

"Anyway," she went on after a moment, "I persuaded him to stay."

"Even though you knew what he was?" Jones probed.

She nodded silently.

"Why?"

She shrugged. "At first, because I couldn't really believe what I'd seen," she answered at last. "And then when I *did* believe —" she moved restlessly on the couch, avoiding Jones's piercing curiosity. "I'm a scientist, a doctor," she said finally. "He was ... a puzzle, something entirely new." She looked up and smiled ruefully. "I've never been able to resist a mystery," she said. "I wanted to study him, find out what makes him tick. At first, that was all it was. But as I got to know him as a person —"

Indy nodded in understanding. "Yes. He's a fascinating individual. And a good friend. He's more human, and humane, than a lot of people I've met."

She looked at him. "You've felt it too, then. And he's so alone —" She shook her head. "I wanted to help him if I could. To cure him."

Jones's eye widened. "Cure him? He's tried that before, you know." At her nod, he went on. "Is it even possible?" he said doubtfully.

"I'm damn well going to find out," she said forcefully.

Indy grinned at her vehement tone. "Good for you, girl!" he said approvingly. "I believe you'll do it! Nick's damned lucky to have you on his side!"

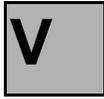
"Thank you, kind sir," she replied, feeling a little embarrassed by his warm regard. To cover her confusion, she leaned forward and picked up the coffee pot. "More?" she asked.

He held out his empty cup in reply. She poured the dark liquid into the delicate china. "And how and when did *you* meet our mutual friend?" she asked, eager to have the focus of the conversation shifted away from her relationship with the centuries-old vampire.

Indy settled back into the sofa cushions. He sipped cautiously at the hot coffee before he replied.

"It was in France," he said at last. "I was, oh, sixteen or so. A friend and I had decided that it would be a great adventure to fight in the war. The Great War, that is, the one that was to end *all* wars. Remy was Belgian, so we joined the Belgian army. It took us a while to get to Europe, but we finally made it. After a brief, though *very* eventful stopover in Dublin, we reached London and joined up. That was in late March. By mid-May, we had been rushed through training and were sent to the front." His eye lost its sharp focus, as if he were seeing the past rather than the present. "We were attached to the French army at Verdun, saw our first action at *le Mort Homme*, Dead Man's Hill." A wry smile touched his voice. "When they found out I could speak

more than one language and could ride motorcycles, they promoted me to corporal and made me a courier." He shook his head. "Heaven help me, I still thought it was exciting! But a few more weeks in that hell cured me of that notion —"



ERDUN
June, 1916

It was an ancient town, nestled in green hills. The sparkling river Meuse ran through its center. Many had supposed that history had passed it by, its last moment of glory seen in 841 when the heirs of Charlemagne had gathered in its quiet streets to divide their illustrious ancestor's possessions among themselves.

Verdun had drowsed, guardian to isolated farmholds, almost indifferent to the turning of the years. Oh, to be sure, some few fortresses had been built in the past few years, as the Kaiser rattled his sabre and blustered threats, and the initial tide of war *had* swept through its ancient streets. But the full fury and clash of arms had fallen elsewhere; in Belgium, along the Marne, south and east of the quiet city. It was almost possible to forget the German presence in St. Mihiel, just a few miles east, and to disregard the zigzag of trenches, a scarce five miles away, that marked the front. Verdun was a backwater, its ring of fortresses that bore names like Douaumont and Vaux falling into disrepair, their guns gone, taken to more active battlefields. Unimportant, disregarded by all, the city dreamed.

The dream ended in February of 1916, when German troops under the command of Crown Prince Rupprecht suddenly attacked. Only the miracle of bad weather kept Verdun from falling, the chill rains bogging down the German attack and allowing Joffre of France to rush reinforcements to the few troops holding the unremarkable town. From that first day, Verdun had become a synonym for Hell.



he growl of the motorcycle's engine sang in the young man's ears, a mosquito whine compared to the elephantine roars of the trucks and tanks he passed on the dark road from Bar-le-Duc, some forty miles south of Verdun. This road, the only communications artery uncut by the Germans, was the only way into or out of the beleaguered salient. That it was still open was regarded as a miracle by the exhausted defenders — they called it *la Voie Sacree*: the Sacred Way. Everything came to Verdun along this path, mostly at night. Food. Medicine. Replacements. Ammunition. Information.

Information in the form of dispatches, such as those carried by the youth on the motorcycle. The boy, for it was obvious he was some years shy of twenty, was clad in the drab brown uniform of the Belgian army. Insignia, so new that the colors were bright and unfaded, proclaimed him a corporal. He maneuvered the machine with expertise, avoiding the worst of the muddy ruts and forestalling a collision with a field ambulance by inches. Looping around the ungainly bulk of the ammunition trucks heading north, the young soldier gunned the engine and raced onward through the night.

Corporal Henri Defense was considered experienced on this route, this being his third trip into the screaming inferno of Verdun. The first had also been under cover of darkness, in a crowded troop carrier, on his way to assignment as just another nameless soldier in the troops commanded by General Petain himself. The second had been a round-trip during the day with an exhausted, shell-shocked veteran of the February offensive. Tonight, the young soldier was on his own, his erstwhile mentor having fallen victim to an artillery barrage that had swept the Sacred Way just yesterday.

The wheels slipped, losing traction, threatening to spin out of control. Defense fought the movement, with difficulty avoiding skidding under the wheels of another truck.

"Watch it," he muttered through clenched teeth. "Getting yourself smashed into a pancake would be dumber than joining up in the first place!"

At last he topped the rise that led directly to the heart of the salient. The June heat was stifling, the air thick and almost unbreathable. Grimly, the corporal headed his cycle toward headquarters, gagging as the scent of rotting flesh engulfed him. Though he couldn't see them through the midnight shadows, he could smell the thousands of bodies, human and horse, who lay where they had fallen. Many had lain so since February. Verdun allowed little time for niceties such as decent burial.

The man-made thunder of heavy artillery boomed sullenly on the horizon as the young Belgian soldier at last reached his objective. A bedraggled private ran to Defense's side, taking charge of the cycle. Henri wearily made his way to the dispatch room, thankfully turning over his leather case to the officer in charge. Saluting sloppily, he waited for dismissal, thinking longingly of a long drink of cool water and perhaps something to eat. Or maybe just water and a chance to collapse and sleep for a while. The thought of a rickety camp cot sounded as inviting as the softest of featherbeds to the weary youth.

The tense captain behind the desk snapped open the dispatch case, eagerly extracting its contents. His eyes slid over the muddy, sweat-soaked figure in front of him. "Wait here," he rapped out. He stood up hurriedly and scurried down the corridor that led to the operations room.

Henri looked after him in weary surprise, his visions of rest and refreshment shattered. He shrugged bemusedly. "Oh, well," he said aloud. "I guess it beats algebra." Unthinkingly, he had spoken in English. A passing sergeant looked at him strangely. Defense offered a crisp salute and a smile. The older NCO went on his way, shaking his head and muttering about shellshock.

The captain came scurrying down the hall again. Pausing at the door, he gestured to the corporal. "Come with me," he snapped, "quickly!"

Defense obeyed, trotting along at the officer's heels. He was led into a small dark room, its most outstanding feature a huge desk piled high with papers. Maps lined the unwindowed walls, all of them decorated with colored pins arranged in sweeping, haphazard patterns.

A tall, thick-set man stood behind the desk, his wide shoulders slumping wearily. Dark, bloodshot eyes peered out of purple-ringed sockets. His black hair was thickly shot with white, as was his luxurious moustache and short-clipped beard. Yet his blue uniform, with its gold braid and bright buttons, was immaculate and his manner alert and intelligent.

"The courier, *mon colonel*," the captain announced, standing at attention and saluting with fussy precision.

"Very good, captain," the senior officer rumbled, returning the salute. "You are dismissed."

Defense's guide spun on his heel and retreated, leaving the Belgian corporal alone with the tall colonel. Uncertainly, the messenger saluted.

The officer nodded in reply. "I am Colonel Giraud," he said gravely. "Intelligence." He stopped, waiting for the soldier to reply.

"Uh — Defense, sir. Henri Defense," the boy stammered. "Uh, *Corporal* Defense, I mean. Belgian army. Sir." His voice trailed off weakly.

The colonel took no notice of his distinctly non-military manner. "I was told you are a veteran courier, Defense."

The young man's eyes widened in disbelief. His mouth opened, but he could think of nothing to say.

Giraud noted his confusion and sank heavily into the chair behind the desk. "Just how long *have* you been a courier, corporal?" he asked.

"A week, sir," the boy replied, his eyes fixed on the wall behind the officer.

"A week," the colonel repeated. "And how many messages have you carried?"

"Four, sir," was the reply. "Two to Bar-le-Duc, two back here."

"Four." The officer shook his head and rubbed his red-rimmed eyes. He raised his head and seemed to really see the young Belgian for the first time. "How old are you, corporal?"

"Eighteen, sir."

"Of course," Giraud agreed drily. His eyes searched the boy's expressionless face. "Very well, then, corporal. You are to deliver a dispatch to Fort Souville. Do you know where that is?"

"On the right bank of the river, sir," Henri answered promptly.

"Good. You are to deliver these messages to the officer in command." As Giraud spoke, he was stuffing papers into a leather dispatch case. "At last report, that was Colonel LaBouche, but we have had no word since the barrage two mornings ago, so — " his voice trailed off, his massive shoulders tensing. Then he shrugged. "No matter. Find the ranking officer and report to him."

"Yes, colonel," Defense said, holding out his hand for the case.

The older man refused to relinquish the pouch, however. He fixed his eyes on the young man's face, studying him intently. "There is more, corporal," he said, his voice falling to a near-whisper. "What I tell you now cannot be committed to paper. You are to tell the commander of Souville that the Germans are moving up. The fort is threatened. *It must not fall!* Do you understand? We cannot afford another loss such as Fort de Vaux! He must hold, and hold, and *hold!* We will send what reinforcements we can, but he *must hold!* Now go. Immediately."

"I understand, colonel," the young Belgian stammered, almost frightened by the officer's desperate urgency. He grabbed the pouch from the outstretched hand, saluted quickly and retreated from the stuffy map-lined room, almost running down the hall.

Giraud listened to the sound of the boy's hurried footsteps. Again, he rubbed his burning eyes. "And so we send even the children into the fire," he said in weary disgust.

Defense ran into the courtyard and reclaimed his motorcycle from the hands of its attendant private. Assured by the tired soldier that the tank was filled, he wheeled the machine in a tight circle and headed out onto the street, turning north as he reached it, making for the bridge that would carry him to the right side of the Meuse. A few minutes' drive brought him to the edge of the battered town. Carefully, he took the track that would lead him through the village of Fleury and thence to Fort Souville.

Little moved out here, even under cover of darkness. Even the rats had learned caution. Nothing grew in the soupy mass of chalk and clay churned up by countless charges and countercharges, unnumbered advances and retreats. The landscape was sterile, alien, broken only by the occasional blasted tree or gaping shell-hole.

Alert for the slightest threat, the young courier urged his machine to top speed. Darkness and speed were his only advantages. If he moved fast enough, he would perhaps be too difficult a

target to hit, even for the notorious German recon squads that stole through this blasted wilderness.

He was approaching the village when his luck ran out. The slowly lightening sky was split with flame and thunder as the German guns opened up. Shells rained down on the far side of town. Above the crash of explosives, the roaring voices of thousands of men were heard. Startled, Defense braked hard. The cycle skidded into a wild circle, sliding helter-skelter toward the deep ditch that ran alongside the track. The corporal and the cycle parted company abruptly, the boy rolling to one side, the machine the other. The corporal managed to avoid plummeting into the ditch, but the crashing sounds that met his ears convinced him that his means of transport was now no more than one more bit of scrap metal littering the wasted plain.

The boy drew himself to his knees, cautiously raising his head and peering toward Fleury. The flash of artillery and crack of rifle fire told him that the village was definitely under attack and the fighting there was hot and lively.

"Damn!" he yelled, wondering just what he should do. Heading into Fleury right now seemed like a one-way ticket to suicide. Head back to Verdun itself? Perhaps he should report the assault on the village. "Somehow, I think they already know," he told himself as the ground shook from the explosions and tracers and star-shells burst brightly in the dim, pre-dawn sky. "Well, think of something," he went on. "You sure can't stay *here!*"

As if to underline the sense of his last statement, a random shell detonated high above him, raining shrapnel down on the track below. With a startled yelp, the courier dove for the ditch.

It was far deeper than he had realized. He rolled down the packed-clay slope to land on a smooth, wide surface. Winded, he lay there for long moments, hearing only the desperate beating of his heart. At last he sat up warily, poised to flee if necessary. No movement. No sound. He scabbled in his uniform pocket and found a pack of matches, blessedly dry. Cautiously, he lit one, shielding the tiny flame with his hand. The ditch was wide and regular, he saw by the faint glow, extending in a straight line for some distance. An old trench, he realized, long abandoned. "If I follow this," he mused, "I might find a way to circle Fleury, then strike north and east to Souville." All right. It was a plan. Maybe not a good one, but it was all that he had. He allowed the match to flicker out, resolving to use the others sparingly if at all. He cautiously reached out with his right hand, encountering the trench's slimy wall. His other hand checked for the dispatch case slung at his hip, and the holster containing his pistol that hung beside it. He took a deep breath and started forward cautiously, using the wall as his guide.

As the gray light of false dawn filtered down into the abandoned ditch, he moved faster. Often he stumbled over the relics of earlier battles. Some were mercifully unrecognizable. Others — he resolutely turned his eyes away, refusing to let the sights register on his tired brain. Luck was with him, for the trench looped away from the beleaguered village, heading east. From time to time the courier would scramble up to ground level, taking his bearings and checking on the progress of the battle.

By mid-morning, a faint, acrid odor was swept eastward on the slight breeze. The smell burned his nose and throat, and tears formed in his eyes to run hotly down his face. Defense clambered up a half-rotted wooden ladder, peering cautiously over the trench's lip. Miles away, in the fields beyond Fleury, noxious green clouds oozed over the land. Men in blue uniforms fell back as it rolled toward them. They ran, their hands over their mouths and noses. Many fell, choking, and did not rise again. The courier dropped back into the ditch. He grabbed a handkerchief from his back pocket and soaked it with water from his canteen. Securing the wet rag over his nose and mouth, he continued on his way.

It was nearly noon when he ran into the end of the trench. The heavy claybearing soil had collapsed in on itself here, leaving a sloping pile of rubble and broken timbers. Defense studied

the unstable pile consideringly. It offered him no shelter, that was certain. Carefully, moving as lightly as he could, he climbed to ground level. He moved in a fog of exhaustion, knowing only that he *had* to find shelter, a place to hide and rest in safety.

Behind him and to his left, clouds of smoke and the rumble of big guns told him that Fleury still held out. To his right stretched a jagged expanse of bare land, pockmarked by thousands of shell-holes. No shelter there.

But there, straight ahead, about fifty yards. The young soldier's eyes narrowed appraisingly. Yes, a slight bluff rose over the plain. Not much of a rise, but enough to hide him, perhaps. His gaze swept along its base. There! Another crater, just at the bottom, exposing a rocky wall. And in the wall, a small gap, black and shadowy, hidden behind tumbled stones. Defense licked his lips. Yes, if he could reach it — he could hide behind the rocks, retreat into the dark cleft if he had to.

He raised himself cautiously over the edge of the trench to lay full length on the ground above. He did not dare stand erect. Praying that his drab brown uniform would blend in with the rocks and soil, he slithered across the open ground, moving as quickly as he could.

After a nervous eternity, he reached the crater and swung his feet over the edge. Carefully, slowly, he slid down on his rump, praying that the floor was solid. He landed in mud, of course, but not the deep quagmire he had feared. Keeping to the sloping sides, he scuttled around to the cleft, halting abruptly when he realized that the tumble of stones was in fact a lifeless, gray-clad body.

The German's filmed-over eyes seemed to glare at the courier. He backed up uneasily, but the mutter of gunfire on the horizon stopped his retreat. The only shelter available was the cleft. Steeling himself, the young man stepped over the body and ducked down and crept into the dark opening.

Henri found himself in a hollow space lined with brick. The floor was covered with slimy gray stone. Cautiously, fearful of bashing his head, he straightened up, realizing as he did so that what he had taken for a small bluff was in fact the remains of a building, perhaps one of the few isolated farmhouses that had once nestled near the banks of the Meuse. This small space was probably once part of the basement or root cellar.

A low moan from the shadows on his right nearly made the young Belgian jump out of his skin. Clawing for his pistol, he spun toward the sound, eyes desperately trying to pierce the darkness.

The moan came again, resolved itself into a word. "*Wasser*," it said. "*Bitte. Wasser.*" The voice fell silent with a gurgling sigh.

Clutching his gun in his right hand, the courier fumbled for a match. He brought it to life with a flick of his thumbnail. The little flame seemed unbearably bright in the small dark space. Its glow disclosed two limp figures sprawled near the far wall, fallen from blows apparently struck at the same time.

One of the men wore the blue uniform of France. An officer, judging by the touches of gold at throat and wrists. He lay on his back, open eyes staring unseeingly at the ceiling. His dark blond curls were matted with blood from a gaping cut on his scalp. His torso was a welter of gore, for he had been split from crotch to throat by the slashing bite of a bayonet. A crimson puddle lay beneath him, the liquid slowly dripping from the ghastly wound.

The other body lay face down, and was clad in German gray. It too lay in a spreading red circle. As Henri watched, the hands clenched feebly and the helmeted head rolled weakly from side to side. Again came the plea for water.

Defense stood indecisively for a moment as the match flickered down, burning his fingers. He struck another and moved forward, circling the prone German. Prudently, he kicked the bayonet-bearing rifle away, hearing it skitter off into the darkness. Cautiously he prodded at the inert form with his foot, levering it over so that it lay on its back. The stench hit him then, and he staggered back. The man had been gut-shot, he realized, and was certainly dying. He was no threat.

Henri realized that the gravely wounded man was looking up at him, squinting against the feeble light. The soldier was young, he realized, probably not much older than the courier himself. And he was dying, alone and afraid.

The German licked his dry lips. "*Wasser*," he whispered again, his voice a mere thread of sound. One of his hands fumbled for the canteen slung on his belt.

Defense knelt down beside the enemy soldier, cautiously staying out of range until he had satisfied himself that the man was unarmed. He struck a new match and gingerly reached out, grasping the canteen and unhooking it from the man's belt. The flask's surface was wet and slimy. The Belgian grimaced as he realized it was coated with the wounded man's blood. Reaching up to his own face, he removed the damp handkerchief that had protected his nose and throat through his long journey through the trench and used the cloth to wipe off the canteen.

The German watched his every move intently. His breathing was shallow, his skin pale and clammy. Defense uncapped the canteen. As he did so, the match sputtered out.

In the darkness, Henri reached out carefully. He lifted the German's head slowly, and after two fumbling attempts, managed to get the canteen to the man's lips. The dying one drank in deep, shuddering swallows, protesting weakly when the courier withdrew the flask. "Not too much," Henri said in German. "It will make you sick."

The wounded man stiffened in surprise to be addressed in his native language. "It does not matter," he gasped at last. "I am dying anyway."

Defense couldn't deny it.

The wounded man's head fell back. After a while he stirred again. "I was with a friend —" he gasped. "The Frenchman shot him —"

"There's a body outside," the courier said wearily.

"Ah." The enemy nodded. "And the French captain?"

"Dead as well," the courier replied.

"Good," the other sighed in satisfaction. "I used the bayonet. Bastard shot me as he fell." He fell silent once more.

Defense backed away from him, sliding across the floor till his back rested on the opposite wall. He reached for his own canteen, taking several deep swallows of the tepid, metallic liquid. His head fell back and he dozed, exhaustion overcoming him.

The darkness hid the bodies from his gaze, so he didn't see the massive wound on the French captain's torso slowly knit itself closed, didn't see the slash on the scalp close over, didn't see the thick puddle of blood reverse its direction and flow back *into* the lifeless form.

The corporal slid into heavy sleep, never hearing the renewed cries for water from the wounded German, unaware of the sun outside sliding from zenith to the western horizon, oblivious to the slight movements of the blue-uniformed body that became more pronounced as night fell.

A sharp, gasping scream brought Defense to his feet, peering blindly into the all-encompassing darkness. He fumbled for a match, flicking it with his thumbnail to bring it to life.

He screamed as he realized what he was seeing in the fitful, flaring light. *The dead man was crouched over the feebly twitching form of the German, his mouth worrying at the wounded man's throat!* Grottesque sucking sounds accompanied the macabre vision. Defense screamed again and the Frenchman looked up, snarling at the interruption. Ghastly green fire flamed in the dead officer's eyes, and blood ran down his chin, dripping from the fangs protruding from the open mouth.

Henri screamed a third time. The captain dropped his now-silent prey and launched himself at the courier. The corporal threw the match aside and turned to flee. An ice-cold hand grasped the youth's neck and squeezed with steady, merciless pressure. Defense batted at it, trying to dislodge that iron grip, but the young soldier was as helpless as a kitten captured by a mastiff. Blood roared in the courier's ears, and the darkness became deeper, blacker. His struggles ceased and he went limp.

Henri awoke to the dim glow of a small lantern, its fitful light creating shadows that loomed menacingly in the small confined space. His wrists were bound behind him and a rag had been stuffed into his mouth. He squinted toward the door, frowning as he realized that the entrance had been covered by a tattered blanket, preventing a stray beam of light from escaping to betray the makeshift sanctuary's position. A quick glance at the far wall showed him that the German's corpse was gone, as was the impossibly-animated Frenchman — the courier was alone. Smiling grimly around the gag, the young man began to twist and flex his bound wrists. *Careful*, he told himself. *Do it slowly, just like Houdini showed you. Relax, relax* — He felt the ropes give, falling away from his hands. He reached up and plucked the cloth from his mouth, working his aching jaw gingerly.

The blanket shrouding the entrance fluttered and Henri spun around to see the undead Frenchman regarding him balefully. The courier scrabbled at his collar for the chain worn around his neck — his dogtags, and more importantly, the small celtic cross fastened next to them. "Stay away from me!" he yelled shrilly, vaguely realizing that he had forgotten that he was supposed to be Belgian and was shouting in English. He raised the little crucifix higher, the dim light making it glow. "I mean it! *Get back!*" His voice cracked from the stress.

The animated corpse, who now appeared to be a perfectly normal man in his late twenties or early thirties, threw up his hand, sheltering his eyes from the cross as if the sight of it pained him. "Put that thing away!" he growled, also in English.

The young man looked from the cross to the figure flinching away from it. "Holy cow! It *works!*" he crowed, breathing a silent, though heartfelt, word of thanks to the Irishman who'd tossed the little gold charm to him on the Dublin docks less than a month before. He advanced tentatively, and the other retreated, still shielding his eyes.

"Put it away, I said!" the Frenchman demanded. "I won't harm you, I swear!"

The "Belgian" tilted his head consideringly. It was insane to obey this ... this ... *creature*, but it didn't seem so threatening now. And curiosity had always run strong and hot in the youth's veins. Slowly he slid the crucifix down past his collar, hiding it from the other's view. But since curiosity was one thing and total idiocy quite another, he kept a firm grip on the little golden object, ready to pull it into the open the second the undead man made an even slightly threatening move.

The officer's hand fell away from his face. "Thank you," he said with ironic courtesy.

"You're welcome," the young man said, avidly studying other's features. The Frenchman was handsome, somewhat above medium height. His features were refined, aristocratic, dominated by expressive, intelligent eyes. His hair was dark blond, thick and curly, matted on one side with dried blood.

Dried blood? The youth's eyes narrowed, realizing at once that there was no sign of the head wound. His gaze flickered downward, confirming that the massive damage to the torso had also vanished without a trace. Pale, unmarked skin gleamed through the tatters of the slashed and stained blue uniform.

"Amazing," the courier breathed. "The stories were true! You guys really *are* indestructible!" He looked up, staring into the others eyes. "The healing, the reaction to the cross — hey, is the bit about wooden stakes true too?"

The Frenchman's lips twisted wryly. "I wouldn't encourage an attempt at experimentation," he said, his voice as dry as the dust from an ancient tomb.

"Oh, yeah," the boy said, abashed. "I can see where a vampire would be touchy about —" His voice trailed off. "A vampire," he repeated. His knees felt shaky all of a sudden, and he abruptly backed up until his back was against the wall, sliding down its rough surface to sit heavily on the cold floor. "You know, I can't believe I'm having this conversation."

"Neither can I," the captain said. The feeble light from the small field-lantern flickered wildly, threatening to die away altogether. The officer walked over and crouched beside it, efficiently dealing with the sputtering wick, turning his back on the courier as he did so.

Henri considered the Frenchman's back then glanced at the door, gauging the distance. "Where did you get the lantern?" he asked casually. He gathered himself, preparing to jump to his feet and run —

"I wouldn't," the officer said quietly, his gaze still intent on the troublesome lamp. "Oh, I wouldn't bother to pursue you, but there are several Boche patrols out there. You wouldn't stand a chance. And to answer your question, I found the lamp in one of the German's packs. The blanket too."

"Oh." Deflated, the youth relaxed.

"So, how did you manage to get yourself trapped — alone — so far behind the lines, Corporal — ?"

"Ah — Defense, sir. Henri Defense. From — uh — Antwerp," the courier stammered.

"No." The blond head swung from side to side in negation. "I don't think so. Suppose you tell me the truth."

"Rats." The boy looked down, abashed. "What gave me away?" He groaned, realizing that he was *still* speaking English, as was the vampire. "Stupid, huh?" he asked, disgusted with himself.

Reluctant amusement flitted over the other's face. "A little stupid, perhaps," he agreed gravely. "But understandable." He watched the embarrassed color rise in the boy's face with some sympathy. "So, how does an American schoolboy find himself lost on a battlefield in France?"

"I'm *not* — I mean, I'm eight — ah, nuts!" the boy blustered. "Okay, I'm sixteen. Joining the army seemed like a good idea at the time! My friend, Remy, he really *is* Belgian, and he *had* to come

home to fight for his country, and — it was supposed to be an adventure! Not — not *this* —" His hand swept out, encompassing the bleak reality that lay beyond the door. "Not this," he whispered.

"I had the same reaction to *my* first battlefield," the captain said quietly. "I'd gone to war for much the same reasons as you. A grand and glorious crusade, they told me. I thought to fight on the side of the angels — and found only devils and death. And, perhaps, something worse than death." He shook his head sadly and looked away, his eyes seeming to peer down a long corridor lined with horrors.

The corporal leaned forward, fascinated questions dancing in his hazel eyes, but an abrupt gesture of the other's hand made the eager queries die unspoken.

The blond man looked at the youth again, his gaze once more sharp and questioning. "So you became a soldier, Corporal Defense." He grimaced. "Defense?"

The youth shrugged unconcernedly. "I needed a French-sounding name, and there was this 'no smoking' sign on the wall, so —"

The vampire looked down, unwilling to let the boy see the laughter in his eyes. "Of course," he said in a slightly strangled voice. "And your real name is — ?"

"Jones. Henry Jones, Jr. But my friends call me Indy," the American said. "It's short for Indiana," he went on, taking note of the vampire's quizzically lifted eyebrow.

The captain rubbed his forehead with one long-fingered hand. "Indiana," he echoed. "No. I won't ask. I don't think I want to know. Now, the problem is — how are we going to get out of this mess. Where were you heading —" He stopped and stiffened, listening intently, his attention fixed on the darkness beyond the door. With swift, catlike grace, he moved to the lantern, quickly dousing its dim glow.

Indy peered helplessly into the inky darkness, ears straining for the slightest sound. He gasped at a sudden flurry of movement at his side, flinching as a cold hand was clapped against his mouth. He struggled fiercely, his heart pounding in terror. The skin under his color twitched, anticipating the sharp pain, the hot rush of blood fountaining from torn flesh. *This is what I get for sitting around interviewing a vampire!* he told himself, wild thoughts and visions racing through his head. *How am I going to explain the fangs to Dad? Maybe I can teach night school.* Slowly, through his fear, he began to hear the captain's voice whispering urgently in his ear.

"Shut up, you little fool!" the vampire hissed. "There's a pair of Boche out there. Stop struggling, dammit, they'll hear you!"

Jones obediently went limp, though he was still shaking and his hands were damp with sweat. Perhaps he *wasn't* going to die or be initiated into the ranks of the undead! As his frantic movements ceased, the hand covering his mouth was withdrawn.

"Stay here," the captain ordered. "Don't move, don't speak, don't even *breathe* if you can help it." Then he was gone, moving as silently as smoke.

Indy crouched silently in the darkness, clinging to the wall beside him. For long moments, the only sound he could hear was the thundering of his own heart, but at last he began to make out others: the faint clink of metal on metal, a word or two of German spoken in hushed whispers, the creaking of leather. A sudden wild scream nearly made the young American jump out of his skin. It was a man's voice, harsh with surprise and fear. A second voice joined in, also crying out in panic. The first shriek ended in a gurgling moan. The second continued for a few more

moments, only to be cut off by a series of crashes and the sound of a heavy weight hitting the ground.

Trembling, Jones waited, fearing the sudden return of silence, but grateful that there was no repetition of the ghastly sounds.

Minutes passed like years before a voice called out of the darkness. "It's over," the vampire said quietly. "One tried to run. Fell into a shell crater and broke his neck."

"Oh," the American replied in a faint voice. The vampire said nothing about the other German, and Indy decided he really didn't care to ask.

The captain relit the small lantern and Jones blinked uncertainly in the sudden light. He looked over at the blond, queasily noting the fresh stains around the man's mouth. "Oh," he said again.

"Back to our problem," the vampire said calmly. "You're a courier. Where were you heading?"

"Oh lord," the youth moaned, belatedly checking on the whereabouts of his dispatch pouch. He sighed in relief as he realized that it still dangled from his belt. "I was to report to the commander of Fort Souville," he told the waiting captain.

The officer nodded slowly, eyes slitted in thought. "Souville, eh?" he said at last. "Good. Very good. It could work." He slipped a hand into his uniform pocket, extracting a sheaf of stained papers. "Here," he said, thrusting them at Jones. "Put these with the others in the pouch."

Indy did as he was told, his eyes never leaving the other. The officer pointed to the blanket-shrouded entrance and Jones obediently moved to stand beside it.

Nodding in approval, the vampire extinguished the light, moving easily to join the American at the doorway. He thrust the material aside and moved into the night, the young courier following at his heels.

A glow in the distance caught the corporal's attention. He reached out, grasping the officer's wrist. The blond looked around and Indy pointed. "Fleury," the young man whispered. "It was under attack today. I was trying to get around it —"

The vampire nodded. "Probably fallen," he agreed.

The warm summer air was thick with the stench of smoke and gunpowder and something else — something acrid and nauseating. Indy swallowed hard, trying not to choke.

"What *is* that?" that captain muttered, his nostrils flaring with distaste, though he showed no signs of physical distress.

"Something new," Indy coughed, his eyes beginning to tear. "They used some kind of gas, I think. Green clouds of it, rolling over the ground."

"Damn!" the officer muttered as the wind strengthened and the American began to cough again, deep, tearing spasms that were painful to hear. The vampire snarled, belatedly realizing why the two German's he'd killed had been wearing gas masks. He looked around, then nodded abruptly as he came to a decision. He caught the boy's face between his pale, cool hands and forced the youth to look at him. "Indy, we're going to have to do this the fastest way we can. I want you to look at me," he said, his voice commanding. "Look *only* at me," he went on. His eyes began to glow slightly, spheres of green phosphorescence that pierced through the shrouding darkness.

The American was caught by the sight, staring at the vampire blearily through watering, bloodshot eyes. "No," Jones protested, feebly trying to turn away.

"Yes," the other contradicted him. The green glow increased. "Sleep, Indy." The boy's eyelids drooped, snapped open, then drooped again. This time they stayed closed and the youth's wiry form slumped heavily in the blond's arms. "Good," the officer muttered. Holding the corporal tightly, the vampire rose into the night sky, skimming effortlessly and rapidly toward the beleaguered fort.

Less than twenty minutes later, the undead captain returned to earth, the American still cradled in his strong arms. He let the boy's form slip to the ground in a sitting position. He crouched beside the dazed youth and touched him lightly on the bridge of the nose.

"Mmmm?" Jones mumbled sleepily, blinking rapidly and yawning.

"Shhh!" the vampire whispered. "We're close to the fort's first picket line. I imagine they'll shoot first and then not even bother to ask questions."

Indy peered around him, trying to get his bearings. "The fort? But how — ?"

"Don't ask," the officer told him. "You really don't want to know. Now, one last thing." He reached under his tunic's collar, and unfastened the chain that held his identity disks. He stared at the young courier, his eyes once again glowing slightly. "When you report to the commander, you will tell him you stumbled across the body of a French captain. You found maps and charts in his pocket, so you put them in your pouch. You also removed his identification so that he could be listed as officially dead. Do you understand?"

Now recovered from the effects of the gas, reviving in the slightly cooler breeze blowing in from the west, Jones resisted the compulsive quality of the vampire's voice.

"I don't understand," he whispered fiercely.

"You don't need to!" the other snapped. "Now get going. And do as I told you!"

Stung, the youth began to scramble to his feet.

The officer stood up as well. "If you see me again, boy," he said quietly, "it would be better — safer — if you ignored me."

"Safer for who?" Indy challenged.

"For both of us," was the enigmatic reply. The captain retreated a few paces, blending in with the shadows.

Jones stumbled forward, peering into the darkness, but the vampire was gone.

"*Qui vive?*" a harsh voice shouted behind him.

Indiana halted, swallowing nervously. Slowly, carefully, he raised his arms and turned, facing the two grim-faced soldiers who stood there, rifles at the ready.

"Courier from headquarters," he squeaked in French.

Suspiciously, they gestured for him to move forward into the light.



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"Did the fort hold?" Natalie asked breathlessly as the old man fell silent.

"Oh, yes," the professor replied. "It held. And eventually the French pushed the Germans back, retaking all of Verdun except for the St. Mihiel salient. The Americans took care of that much later in the war." He snorted scornfully. "The French still call it a victory. Victory! A year of fighting, almost a million dead, all over a tiny piece of real estate barely twenty-five miles wide! God save us from "victories" like that!" His visible eye flashed angrily. "A million dead, can you imagine that?"

"Not really," the woman replied. "Maybe nobody can."

"Especially damn fool generals," the archaeologist agreed. "Is there any more coffee?"

"In the kitchen," she said, getting to her feet.

Fresh pot in hand, the woman returned to the sofa. "What about Nick?" she said. "Did you do as he said?"

Indy smiled at her carefully casual tone. "Oh, yes," he answered. "There wasn't much else I *could* do. After all, I had those extra maps and such in the pouch, and the identity disks of one Captain Nicholas Chollis, lately attached to General Petain's intelligence staff! And I was having enough trouble trying to explain how I'd gotten to Souville so quickly!" He chuckled and shook his head. "Luckily, they didn't question me too much. They needed the information I'd brought and weren't about to look a gift horse — or courier — in the mouth!"

"I suppose not," Nat giggled.

"Besides —" he hesitated, then plunged on, "if I'd tried to tell them what *really* happened —" again he shook his head. "If I was lucky, they'd have diagnosed shell shock and given me a bottle of little pink pills! I wasn't sure I believed it myself, you know."

"I can imagine," Natalie retorted. "I still have a few doubts about my sanity, I can tell you!"

Indy grinned at her. "I can't think why," he retorted.

"Did you see him again?" the woman asked. "During the war, I mean."

"Oh, yes," the old man replied cheerfully. "A time or two. Once in Paris, when I was on leave. And in London, late in the war. I was an officer myself by then."

"And you didn't approach him?" the woman pressed.

"I was tempted," the professor admitted. "But — in Paris, I was in the company of a fascinating lady, and I didn't really want to claim his acquaintance." He cleared his throat uncomfortably. "And I wasn't sure it was him, at first. He was in a British uniform, you see."

"And in London?"

Indy took a deep swallow of coffee. "Oh, I was sure it was him, then. But he was with another English officer." His shoulders twitched uneasily. "I didn't want to get anywhere *near* that one! Thin as a skeleton, he was; corpse-pale, with the coldest eyes I've ever seen. Just like a cobra's. Moved like a snake, too." He grimaced. "I hate snakes," he added defensively.

He put his cup down on the table before him. "And now, young lady, I'll trouble you to drive me back to the hotel. I have a feeling we've got a long night ahead of us, and I think I need a nap."

"Oh, you're welcome to stay here," she said. "I have to go to the office, anyway, and no one will disturb you."

"If you're sure it's no trouble," he began.

"Of course not," she replied. "The spare bedroom's down the hall and to the right. Make yourself comfortable, Dr. Jones."

Natalie took a reluctant sip of the battery acid that masqueraded as coffee in the coroner's office. It was bad enough hot, but cold — She wrinkled her nose in distaste and pitched the cardboard container into the trash. "Who needs formaldehyde?" she muttered. Sighing, she lowered her head to stare at the open file folder on her desk, rubbing her aching eyes as if that could change the damning words on the page. Unfortunately, the words stayed the same. She slapped the folder closed and jumped to her feet, crossing the room to stare moodily out of the door. She glanced up at the clock on the wall. Nearly four. Good. She turned back to her desk, grabbed the phone and tapped out a familiar number. Three rings, then the sound of the recorded message. She drummed her fingertips on the phone, waiting for the beep. At last it came. "Nick, it's Natalie. I'm on my way over to your place, so stay there, okay? We've got something important to discuss in regards to your old buddy, Indy. Oh, by the way, he's safe at my place. For the moment."

Hanging up abruptly, she hurried across the room and grabbed her coat and purse from the hallway by the filing cabinet. Rummaging for her keys, she shut the office door, locked it, and headed for the parking garage, detouring past the lab where she grabbed a beaker from the refrigerator. Making sure the container was tightly stoppered, she put the flask into her purse and left the building, heading for her car.

As she drove to Nick's apartment, the sun slid below the horizon. She parked in the alley and trotted toward the warehouse door. She crossed the cavernous space quickly, activating the clumsy freight elevator with the ease of long practice.

Knight was waiting for her as the doors slid open. Clad in his customary black, he looked as calm and unruffled as always.

Lambert pushed past him, shedding her coat as she did so. She reached into her purse and grabbed out the vial, holding it out to the vampire. "Before anything else," she said in a no-nonsense tone of voice, "Drink this."

Nick's face screwed up in distaste, either at the command or the sight of the purple fluid, but one look at her determined expression convinced him that arguing would do no good. He reached out a reluctant hand and took the offending container. Carrying it over to the sink, he withdrew the stopper, wincing as the smell hit his nostrils.

He looked at the woman appealingly, but she just folded her arms and returned his steady stare. *No quarter there*, he mused. He braced himself and held the beaker to his lips, swallowing manfully. This time he managed five gulps before the choking and nausea overwhelmed him.

When the spasms finally ceased, Knight shakily turned on the cold water tap, splashing his face liberally with its bracing coolness. Cursing, he groped blindly for something to wipe the moisture from his eyes.

"Here," Nat's voice said from behind him, thrusting a towel into his seeking hand.

Nick accepted it gratefully.

"Did this happen yesterday, too?" A frown of concern made a sharp 'V' of her dark eyebrows.

"Yes," he said, crossing the room and slumping heavily onto the couch. "But it was much worse yesterday," he offered as he saw her worried expression. "And I managed to drink more today. Kept more down, too," he added, a faint teasing smile hovering about his lips.

She sat down beside him, faint relief showing in her eyes. "Maybe we've hit on the right formula, then," she opined.

"Maybe." He shrugged and looked down at the towel in his hands. It was too soon to hope, he knew, but it was damned hard not to. Clearing his throat uncomfortably, he turned the conversation to another, perhaps equally touchy, subject. "You said you had something important to tell me," he began.

Nat looked away.

Concerned, the detective leaned forward. "Hey, come on, Nat," he said. He reached up and touched her face, silently urging her to look back at him. When she did so, his eyes narrowed at the worry in her eyes. "The analysis," he guessed.

The coroner nodded unhappily. "At first, I thought there had been a mistake," she told him. "So I ran the tests a second time. Then a third. Same results."

"And?" he prompted.

"The coat and the trousers showed mold spores, dust, and an organic substance that turned out to be cobwebs," she said. "But the shoes — Nick, the white smears on the shoes were cocaine!"

Knight sat back in surprise. He'd been expecting almost anything, but not this. "No, Nat," he said vehemently. "Not drugs. Not *Indy*! There has to be some other —"

Natalie smiled grimly at his reaction. "Some other explanation, you mean? Like someone at the party dropped his stash and Dr. Jones innocently walked through it?" She slowly shook her head. "That doesn't wash, Nick. If it had been a small amount, maybe. But not in the quantities I found. On *both* shoes. And the stuff was nearly pure. *Very* high grade. Worth a lot. There's only one place he could have walked through that concentrated an amount."

"A safe house or a lab," the detective agreed reluctantly. "Someplace where the stuff is prepared for distribution." He stood up, running a hand agitatedly through his thick hair. "But where? The only places he's been in Toronto are the airport, his hotel and Gardiner Place. And the place was swarming with cops last night. *Someone* would have noticed something. And he was in full view all night —" His voice trailed off.

"Except for the time he disappeared after that highly-public shouting match with Higgins," Nat put in dispassionately. "What if that was a blind, Nick? What if —"

"What if Jones is a drug-smuggler and Higgins was his contact?" the vampire interrupted bitterly. "Put everyone off the scent, is that what you're saying?"

"Maybe," Lambert said quietly. "Or maybe Higgins trailed him, trying to get something on him. From what I've heard, the late, unlamented James Edwin Higgins would have *adored* blowing the whistle on his old enemy."

"You're right," Nick said after a moment. He sat back down, resting his arms on his knees and staring at his loosely clasped hands. "It makes sense. Too damned *much* sense." He raised his head and stared at the woman defiantly. "With anyone else, I'd agree, that's the reason. But this is *Indy*, and I can't believe it. I know him too well, dammit!"

"Do you?" the coroner asked. "Do you really know him?" She met his hard stare, almost daring him to interrupt her. "All right, you met him in 1916. He was a gutsy kid, right?"

Nick raised his eyebrows at her challenging words and nodded, keeping silent.

"All right, maybe you met him a few times after that. The same, gutsy kid, a little older, but you trusted him because he kept his mouth shut about you. And maybe about LaCroix and Janette as well, right? And maybe because you envied him, living his life, free to be a real archaeologist, to publish under his real name, to travel and lecture without worrying, without looking over his shoulder all the time, right?"

The vampire looked away, shrugging faintly. "That may have been part of it."

"But do you know what he was doing the *rest* of the time, the times he *wasn't* under your eye? Do you?" she insisted.

"I — kept up with him when I could, read his reports, his papers —"

"Those are only the tip of the iceberg!" Lambert snapped. "I made an excuse to get into Stonetree's office this afternoon." She swallowed and looked down uncomfortably. "That was after I ran the third set of tests," she confessed. "And I talked him into letting me read Jones's file. Nick, he's a buccaneer! A — a *swashbuckler*! Oh, he's respectable enough *now*, but I think that's mostly because he's lived so long, seen so much. Higgins may have been a sleazebag, but he was right — some of Indy's finds have been controversial — there are claims of smuggled artifacts dating back to the 1920s!" She paused for breath, not noticing the quizzical smile on the detective's face.

"*And* some of his connections have been dubious, to say the least! And though there are no outstanding warrants on him, there are several police forces around the world that would just *love* the opportunity to ask him some very pointed questions!"

She stopped, stunned, as Nick lost control and roared with laughter. "So, smuggled artifacts equals smuggled drugs, all things being equal, is that it?" he choked out.

"Aren't they?" she asked weakly, dumbfounded at his reaction.

"Two very different things, Nat," he said, his chuckles dying away. "You have to understand that archaeology has always been one of the most bloodthirsty, double-dealing disciplines." He stretched lazily. "Until recently, it had very little, if anything, to do with studying the past. It had *everything* to do with treasure-hunting." He stood up and walked over to the window, lifting the drapes aside to peer moodily down at the dimly lit street. "It was smash and grab, Nat. Find the jewels, the gold, and carry them off. Sometimes to museums, usually to wealthy collectors." He let the curtain drop and turned back to her. "There were a few exceptions. Schleimann at Troy, Elgin at Athens, but they were few and far between. There was a lot of fame and money involved, always."

"And Indy?" she asked.

"My young friend is a true historian," he smiled. "He was never interested in an artifact's worth, just in how it fit into the puzzle, illuminated history and explained the people that made it. He

wanted things displayed, safe in museums so everyone could see and study them." He smiled widely. "If he *hadn't* been ethical, he'd be a lot richer than he is!"

"But the complaints — the police files?" she prodded.

"You have to remember that he was usually up against powerful interests," Knight rebuked her. "And sometimes those interests were political. The world was a dangerous place back then." He sighed and turned back to watching the street. "It still is," he muttered. "And Indy was always ready to fight the good fight." His gaze was on the dark pavement below him, but his mind's eye roved from Budapest to the jungles of South America and beyond. He chuckled softly. "Of course, he always did love the sheer excitement of getting away with something." He fell silent and stiffened, realizing what he had just said.

Natalie had moved to stand behind him, and she pounced on the statement. "Could that be it, then?" she asked. "Not the profit, but the challenge? He's very old, Nick," she went on when the man made no reply. "Would he see it as one last hurrah, one last chance to get away with it?"

The vampire whirled away from her, pale hands shielding his eyes from her view. "No!" he grated. "I can't believe it."

"Can't?" she pressed. "Or won't?"

His hands fell away and he glared at her.

Stubbornly she returned his look, her eyes sympathetic. "I don't want to believe it either, Nick," she said. "I like him. I really do. He's funny and charming and —"

"I know," he said. He rubbed a nervous hand over the back of his neck, trying to think of what to do next. Finally he strode over to the desk, gathering up his possessions, stowing them in appropriate pockets. He picked up the woman's coat, holding it out for her.

"Nick?" she questioned, taking the garment and slipping it over her shoulders. She picked up her bag, following him as he strode toward the door. "What are we going to do?"

He slipped into his own leather coat as the elevator door slid open. "We are going to find out what's going on," he said firmly. "You go get Indy and drive him to headquarters. I'll meet you there."

"And how about you?" she asked as the lift mechanism creaked and groaned.

"I am going to interview a lady," he said smoothly. "One Dr. Katherine Sullivan. Maybe she can throw a little light on this mess."

The Cadillac prowled through the foggy streets like a lion stalking prey, its big engine growling quietly and efficiently. A quick call to headquarters had gotten the detective the information he needed: the address of Katherine M. Sullivan, PhD, assistant professor of history. Nick handled the big machine with the grace that marked all his movements, his eyes darting ceaselessly from side to side, taking in all details of his surroundings.

At last he reached his destination, a pleasant little two-story brick house, one of a whole block of pleasant little two-story brick houses, all nestled in a quiet residential neighborhood.

He pulled into the driveway, the car's headlights reflecting off the garage windows. He snapped off the lights and killed the engine, taking a deep breath before he opened the door and got out.

Making his way up the paved walk, he stepped up onto the porch and strode to the door. He reached out and rang the doorbell, then waited.

Shadows moved behind the curtain covered window on his left. He tilted his head, listening as light footsteps came toward the door. The porch light came on and the detective blinked in the sudden brightness. There was the sound of locks being undone and the inner door opened a bit. An eye regarded him through the crack. "Yes?" the woman said. Her voice was husky, a little nervous at finding a stranger on her doorstep.

Knight pulled his badge out of his hip pocket, held it up for her inspection. "Detective Knight, Dr. Sullivan. I'd like to talk to you, if I may."

"Oh," she said faintly. "Oh, yes, of course. Wait just a moment." The door swung shut and Nick heard the sound of the security chain being unhooked before it swung open again. The woman reached out to unlock the screen door and stepped back, gesturing for the cop to follow. He frowned thoughtfully. Something about her seemed familiar, but she was turned away from him and he hadn't yet had a good look at her face. She was tall, he noted, not slim but not fat, either, clad casually in well-worn jeans and a dark, oversized sweatshirt. Her feet were bare. Something about the way she moved, though, struck a chord in his memory. Oh, well, if it was important, he would remember. Shrugging, he moved forward.

He stepped into the living room and halted, looking around. It was a pleasant room, with all the usual paraphernalia of modern life, comfortable sofa and chairs, CD and tape player tucked away in a corner, television set and VCR. What set the room apart was the astounding number of books. They were everywhere. Stacked on the shelves that covered one whole wall, piled on the three tables that flanked the sofa, even a few thrown carelessly on the floor.

"I like to read," the woman said wryly, noting the direction of his gaze.

"I'd never have guessed," he retorted with a faint grin.

Her mouth turned up slightly and she gestured nervously with one short-nailed hand. "Uh — would you like to sit down?" she said, pointing at the couch.

He nodded his thanks, moving to stand beside the sofa and waiting for her to sink down in a chair before taking a seat.

Something moved behind him as he did so and he jumped in surprise, looking down warily. There was an indignant squall and a large, smoke-gray cat extracted itself from under the afghan thrown over the couch's arm. Offended yellow-green eyes glared at the detective before the feline ostentatiously turned his back on the intruder and sat down to groom itself.

"Oh, lord," Dr. Sullivan groaned. "I forgot to warn you about Merlin. He has a habit of playing tent, I'm afraid, and that's his favorite spot." She reached behind her as she spoke and snapped on another lamp. "I've been expecting you," she said in quite a different tone. "I was a little surprised that the police hadn't called me in, to tell you the truth." She turned to face him.

His eyes widened as he got his first good look at her features. Long, auburn hair, confined now in a french braid, accentuated her oval face. Her eyes were a mixture of gold and brown, the color of topaz. "I saw you last night, didn't I?" he asked, leaning forward. "At the Place. Hovering near the hallway when I got there." The woman in the black dress.

"Hovering's the word for it," she said, her mouth twisting in self-mockery. "I was trying to decide whether or not to come forward."

"Why didn't you?" he asked, watching her eyes. "You surely knew we were questioning Dr. Jones. As a matter of fact, you were *hovering* nearby when we took him out of the building. Weren't you?"

She nodded and flushed, embarrassed color crawling up her neck and flooding her face, but she met his gaze unflinchingly. "That was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do," she said steadily. "But I had promised Indy — Professor Jones — that I'd wait twenty-four hours. If he couldn't straighten it out by then — well, if you hadn't shown up here tonight, I'd have been down at headquarters in the morning." She straightened her shoulders proudly. "That's the truth."

The detective nodded but said nothing, his eyes never leaving the woman's face.

"He insisted that I stay out of it," she continued after a moment. "He could handle it, he said." She looked down at the fingers that were twisting in her lap. In a tight, ashamed voice she added, "I've never been good at backing down, I'm afraid. Can't walk away from a confrontation." She smiled painfully. "If I had a smaller chip on my shoulder, neither Indy nor I would be in this mess." She looked up, meeting his eyes again. "But we are." She smiled wryly. "But I swear that *neither* of us killed Higgins. If you can believe it."

"I think I do," he replied.

"Thank you." She rose, looking around her vaguely. "You know, I think it's much easier this way. If I panic, you can keep me from running away," she said, mocking her own fear. "Would it be all right if I feed Merlin before we go?"

The cat looked up, recognizing the words. He strolled over to the woman, rubbing against her ankles and purring loudly. His yellow eyes looked up at her adoringly.

"Shameless hypocrite," she chuckled wanly.

"Most cats are," the vampire said cynically. The feline glared at him and hissed, then led the way into the kitchen, tail held high.

The blond man followed Dr. Sullivan into the kitchen, lounging against the door as she opened a can of cat food and heaped half of it into a blue china bowl. She made sure her pet had fresh water as well, then turned to face the detective. "I'll just get my coat and purse," she said quietly. "And some shoes," she added, glancing down at her bare toes.

Shoes! The cop closed his eyes, the memory of last night flashing through his mind. She had been wearing black shoes last night, the rhinestone-decorated toes peeking out from under her skirt. The long, full, skirt — which had been *stained!* Yes, he could see the graying patch near the hem, another near the hip.

He reached out as she passed, catching at her wrist.

Curious, she looked up at him. "Is there something the matter?" she asked.

"Dr. Sullivan, the dress and shoes you wore last night," he began, his voice tense. "Where are they?"

She looked at him askance. "On the floor in my bedroom, I think," she answered after a moment. "It was so late when I got in, I just —" she grinned ruefully. "Besides, I tend to be a lousy housekeeper."

"Would you mind if I took a look at them?" he demanded.

"Why — no. I suppose not," she said. "I'll go get them."

"No," he interrupted. "I'd rather — it's important that as few people as possible handle them."

She shrugged. "Okay. But remember, I *did* warn you that I'm a slob."

"I won't look," he promised.

"I'll hold you to that," she quipped and led the way upstairs. When they reached the bedroom door, she fell back. "The light switch is on the right," she told him.

He reached around, flipping the switch. He glanced around the room, grinning as he saw the bookshelves, volumes crammed into every available space. Then he saw the black dress draped over a chair in front of the vanity. The rhinestone-trimmed velvet pumps lay on the floor nearby. He crouched beside the dress and nodded with satisfaction. There was one of the stains he remembered, a few inches from the hem. He turned his attention to the shoes. A film of white powder clung to the soles.

He turned to regard the woman watching him from the doorway. "Dr. Sullivan, I'd like to take these in for a lab analysis," he said. He watched carefully for the signs of nervousness or alarm, but her face was perfectly calm, though puzzled. "I can get a warrant if I have to —"

"Whatever for?" she asked. "Do you think it will help Indy?" she asked hopefully. "It might," he answered. "But — it may cause *you* some problems," he added honestly.

"I don't see how," she replied. "Go ahead, take them." He smiled in relief. "Do you have any plastic bags? Garbage bags, unused ones?"

"There are some in the bathroom, I think," she said. "They're not the big ones, though. Will they do?"

"Fine. Go get them, please."

She padded down the hall, returning momentarily with a handful of plastic. Knight took the bags from her and carefully slid the dress into one, the shoes into another. She watched him, puzzled, then shrugged and grabbed a pair of socks, slipping them over her bare feet. Looking around, she spotted a pair of battered running shoes. She put them on and hastily did up the laces. She looked up to see the policeman waiting for her.

"Ready?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "But let's get going anyway."



nce again, Knight found himself confronting Indiana Jones across the interrogation room table. The old man glared at the detective and turned to his right to murmur something to Dr. Sullivan, who sat beside him. The woman smiled briefly as Indy spoke, then turned her attention back to her study of the tabletop.

The detective got to his feet and prowled restlessly around the small room. The door opened and he spun, hoping to see Natalie. But it was the stocky figure of Captain Stonetree that entered, not the petite coroner. The senior officer walked over to stand beside his subordinate.

"Where's Schanke?" Nick asked in an undertone. "He was supposed to be here by now."

Stonetree held up his hands placatingly. "There's more than one case going on," he said evenly. "And yours and Schanke's favorite cold trail just heated up again. Report came in just after sunset. I sent your partner to handle the preliminaries."

"Cold trail?" Knight's eyebrows drew together in a puzzled frown. Then the penny dropped and he sank into the straight-backed chair beside him. He rested his elbows on the table and dropped his head into his hands. "Oh, shit," he groaned. "Not *that* one again!"

"Fraid so," the captain said mournfully, dropping into the chair at the head of the table. "Guy walking his dog found it."

Nick kept his face buried in his hands. "How much this time?" he asked, not really wanting to know the answer.

"Just a leg," the rotund officer informed him. "Male."

"Damn, damn, *damn!*" Knight moaned, his voice rising steadily. He'd really hoped that the lunatic killer, whom his partner had dubbed "the Jigsaw Man," had crawled back under his rock. Or maybe moved to California. No such luck, it seemed.

"Something wrong, Nick?" Indy's voice slid into the silence following Knight's outburst. The vampire glared at him.

"Detective Knight just got some bad news," Stonetree said neutrally.

Jones regarded the captain's impassive face, obviously deciding not to challenge the heavy-set man. "Then, can we get on with this?" the archaeologist asked wearily.

"Anytime you and Dr. Sullivan are ready," the dark-haired police official replied.

At that moment the door swung open and Natalie rushed in, two folders clenched in her hand. She slipped into a chair beside Nick. Catching the blond man's eye, she nodded and grinned.

"It checks out?" the detective asked her quickly.

"Seems to. Preliminary tests match," she affirmed. "The night shift is handling the more detailed checks. The results should be in by late tomorrow afternoon." Lambert leaned forward, sliding one file over so the vampire could read it. "Looks like I've been jumping to conclusions," she murmured for his ears alone, then raised her voice to include the others sitting around the table. "I've also got the preliminary file on Higgins's autopsy," she said, indicating the other file. "Blood screens, drug-tests, some other chemical work will take a little longer. But we've got the basics. A lot of it was straight-forward, like the cause of death. But there were a few surprises."

He grinned at the petite brunette then turned his attention on Jones. "Okay, Indy," he said. "Talk."

The old professor grinned, a sharklike expression on his seamed face. "Where do you want me to start?" he asked, his one eye gleaming.

"Be original," the vampire retorted. "Start at the beginning and go straight through to the end. For a change."

"Or you could tell us why you tried to discourage Dr. Sullivan from coming forward with what she knew," Stonetree put in. He regarded the older man balefully. "Obstruction of justice is a serious matter, Dr. Jones."

"I wasn't obstructing anything!" Jones snapped. "Just — delaying it a little. I'd hoped that it could all be cleared up without bringing Katie into it at all!"

"So you knew something incriminating about her?" the captain challenged.

"No!" Indy roared. "Not incriminating at all! Just —"

"On the face of it, it *could* be incriminating, you know." Kate Sullivan's voice was dispassionate, trembling just a little. She turned to look straight at Stonetree. "Indy saw me deck that little bastard Higgins," she stated.

The two detectives goggled at her. Natalie looked stunned. Jones groaned and looked at the red-haired woman in disgust. "Good grief, girl," the archaeologist growled testily, "didn't anyone ever tell you that bluntness is *not* necessarily a virtue?"

She smiled and patted his hand. "Honesty is the best policy," she cooed sweetly then laughed as he growled again.

The door swung open to admit Schanke. The stocky detective quietly made his way to a chair and sat down. His normally ruddy complexion was faded, with a distinct greenish cast. He was sweating slightly. He sipped nervously from a can of soda he held tightly in his right hand.

Knight looked at the new arrival, one eyebrow raised in enquiry.

Schanke shook his head slightly. "Tell you later," he mouthed.

Nick nodded and raised his finger to his lips for silence, then turned his attention back to the woman historian.

"You — decked Higgins?" Stonetree asked incredulously. He had barely noticed Schanke's entrance.

Sullivan nodded ruefully. "It wasn't a very hard punch," she said seriously. "But he lost his balance and fell backwards. He was very drunk, you see."

Natalie tilted her head to one side. "That's for sure." She flipped open the folder in front of her, consulted it rapidly. "Blood alcohol was nearly twice the legal limit." She looked up, scowling. "It's a wonder he didn't kill himself on the way to the Place." She turned her attention back to the other woman. "Where did you hit him?" she asked.

Kate closed her eyes, trying to remember. "He was in front of me," she said slowly. "I was trying to go around him, but he wouldn't move. So I —" she lifted her right hand, curled it into a loose fist. "I hit him in the face," she said at last. "Near the chin, I think. When I looked down, there was blood on my hand. Just a trickle." She nodded decisively. "Yes. I was wearing my grandmother's ring — antique onyx. It has an elaborate setting, you see. I think I must have scratched him with it."

Lambert again consulted the files. "It checks out," she said. "There was a faint bruise and a small cut on the left side of his chin. Consistent with the incident you've described. Go on," she urged.

Dr. Sullivan rested her hands on the tabletop, twisting her fingers together in the now-familiar gesture. "I hit him. He fell back — he hit the floor hard. I thought he was faking, but I couldn't be sure. When I leaned over him, I realized he was unconscious." She looked up, her eyes bright. "I couldn't believe it! I was *sure* I hadn't hit him that hard!" She shrugged. "Then I thought maybe he'd just passed out from the booze, you know? I decided to get out of there and headed for the door. I hoped that he wouldn't remember what had happened when he woke up. But there were voices in the hall, and I didn't dare be seen. Then Higgins groaned and moved a little. He was starting to come to. I didn't know what to do. I was trapped!" She shuddered, remembering the helpless panic she'd felt.

"And then?" Nick prompted quietly.

"And that's when Indy popped out of the wall," she answered, laughing weakly.

"That's when Indy popped out of the wall," Stonetree repeated blankly. "Oh, lord!" he sighed gustily, cradling his aching head in his hands. "I don't know if I really want to hear this."

"Me, neither, Cap," Knight said sympathetically. "But I think we have to."

"It's not really all that complicated," Jones put in. "If you'll permit me, Kate?" he asked, turning to the woman courteously.

"I think you'd better," she answered, smiling up at him impishly. "I think I've just made things worse."

"A lovely lady can *never* make things worse," the old man said gallantly.

"Dammit, Indy, flirt on your own time!" Knight all but roared. "What the hell have you been up to?"

Jones shot him a wounded look, but obeyed. He sat up very straight, and his voice took on an impartial tone, a lecturer addressing a group of not-too-bright students.

"Very well, then," he said. "Let's start with the presentation. Until then, it had been a very normal function. A little boring, but normal. But at that point, things started to go wrong."

"I'll say," Sullivan said *sotto voce*.

Indy glared at her and she subsided. "Anyway, I was called to the dais to receive the Society's gift —"



and so, it gives me great honor to present this gift to Dr. Henry Jones Jr. on behalf of the Association and the University, in recognition of his long and brilliant career serving the muse of history."

"Muse of history!" Indy snorted. He glared up at the woman on the platform, wincing again at the Wagnerian vision standing by the microphone.

"Long-winded old bat," he muttered to the red-haired woman standing next to him. "Lungs like a Valkyrie," he added, deciding to carry the Wagner simile to its logical conclusion.

Kate Sullivan smothered a giggle. "Hush," she reprimanded the old man, though her eyes twinkled in agreement. "Mrs. Franklin's a sweet old thing, really."

Jones's answering glare challenged her assessment, but he had no chance to reply as the woman by the microphone called his name.

"Dr. Jones, will you please join me on the platform," Mrs. Franklin asked in her ringing, demanding voice.

The applause swelled around him as the archaeologist moved slowly forward, leaning on his plain black cane. He mounted the stairs and crossed the platform.

The grande dame smiled and simpered girlishly as she extended a long, thin case in his direction. He nodded graciously and opened the box, his expression freezing as he took a good look at the contents.

He closed his good eye in disbelief, but when he opened it again, the sight had not changed. A handsome walking stick of heavy black wood, topped with — *A snake! Why did it have to be a snake?* he asked himself sickly as he regarded the beautifully crafted golden cobra that wreathed around the cane's upper end. He swallowed manfully and removed the walking stick from the case, shuddering as his hand came in contact with the metal serpent.

"Do you like it?" Mrs. Franklin cooed, beaming at him.

He looked up at her, smiling stiffly. "It — there are no words to tell you what I think of it, dear lady," he said with automatic courtesy.

She smiled happily and raised a plump, bejeweled hand, poking one nervous finger at her elaborate, heavily-sprayed coiffure. Her massive bosom heaved as she sighed in relief, straining at the fuschia satin swathing it. "Oh, good," she giggled. "Then you won't be needing *this* old thing," she went on, neatly snaring Indy's plain old cane from his unresisting hand. She turned back to the microphone. "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Dr. Henry Jones Jr." She swept off the platform, carrying the case and the old cane with her.

The applause went on for some time. Indy looked down, located Kate Sullivan in the throng around the little stage. He looked at her pleadingly, jerking his head in the direction of Mrs. Franklin's retreating figure. The young historian nodded understandingly and began to make her way toward the matriarch.

Jones sighed in relief, secure in the knowledge that Kate would get his own cane back and that he wouldn't have to carry the new, snake-bedecked stick all night.

The clapping finally died away and Jones launched into his prepared speech, a snappy little homily about the dangers and rewards of a career in archaeology. He'd used it before, and it had always gone over well. Not this time, however.

As he described the difficulties in excavating, the primitive conditions that so often prevailed on a dig, a drunken voice bellowed from the audience.

"Cut the crap, Jones!" it roared.

"What the hell?" Indy began, looking around to locate the source of the voice.

A tubby little figure stepped forward, swaying slightly. In formal black and white, the plump man looked like nothing so much as a debauched penguin. He ran a hand through his limp, mouse brown hair and bellowed again. "I said, cut the *crap!*"

Jones shook his head in exasperation. "Go home and sleep it off, Higgins," he ordered disgustedly. "No one here wants to listen to you raving tonight."

"Don't care if they want to or not!" the tubby professor yelled, gesticulating wildly. "They're *gonna* listen! They're gonna hear what a fraud you really are!"

The people around Higgins started edging away in distaste, leaving him alone, isolated in front of the dais. The drunken challenger noticed the crowd melting away from him and spun around in a wild circle, sneering. "Yeah, you're *all* gonna hear what I have to say," he blustered. He lurched around, staring blearily up at the man behind the microphone.

"Why don't you tell 'em the truth, eh?" he yelled belligerently. "An *honor* to the profession of historian!" He laughed wildly. "Sure you were, ol' buddy. *Sure* you were! No better'n a smuggler!" he shouted. "How many goodies did you keep, Indy, ol' pal? How many golden

goodies, 'n jewels 'n sht-sh-stuff? Hmmm? An' how about that wife of yours? Heard a lot about her, too!" He cackled.

Jones, who had been standing stock still during Higgins wild tirade, clenched his fists and took a step forward. "Shut your mouth, you bastard," he warned.

"Make me," the other taunted, like a manic schoolboy. "She ever help you? Hide stuff under her skirt, maybe?" He laughed again. "That's not all that went under her skirt, was it? I heard some great stories about her. She could show a man a hot time, even in Nepal —"

With an inarticulate roar, Jones moved. He threw the snake-topped walking stick aside and swung himself down from the dais, moving with the speed and agility of a much younger man. He struck out with one fist, missing his target only because the inebriated Higgins was swaying so wildly that it was impossible to land a solid punch in the man's grinning mouth.

"I have proof, Jones!" Higgins roared triumphantly. "Documents, letters, you name it! I'm going to destroy you!"

Indy didn't try a second blow. It wasn't worth it. Instead he reached out and grabbed the wobbling man, getting a good grip on the throat. His still-powerful hands tightened and he *squeezed* —

Alarm crossed the tubby man's face, as if he had just realized that he had gone too far. He tried to squirm away but Indy's hands tightened once more. Higgins's eyes widened in terror, almost starting from their sockets. His pale face reddened, got darker —

"Dr. Jones!" A voice was shouting over the roaring in Indy's ears. "*Dr. Jones! Let go! You're strangling him!*"

Hands grabbed at his arms, forcing him to lose his grip on Higgin's throat. He was surrounded by tuxedo-clad men and they were forcing him back — He was conscious of the sound of his own voice roaring insults and threats.

"Indy!" A woman's voice, a woman's form beside him, her hand on his arm. Kate. As abruptly as it had risen, his rage died away and he found himself at the center of a knot of men. He froze, looking at the red-haired historian.

"Stop it, Indy," Sullivan said. "Let it go. No one cares what he has to say."

He looked around at the men surrounding him, noting their wary looks. His head fell. "You're right," he said. "I — oh, to hell with it."

He shrugged loose from the men holding him, breaking free of their restraining hands. "I'm all right," he muttered and cleared his throat. "Get that little weasel out of my sight," he demanded, raising his voice as he caught sight of Higgins, who was also being restrained. The tubby little man glared at him and lifted one hand, sketching an obscene gesture.

Anger crested again. "You're a miserable excuse of a man, Higgins!" he shouted. "Braying like the ass you are! You deserve a sound horsewhipping, you bastard! By God, if I had my whip —"

The drunken professor blanched at the hatred flaring in Jones's face. He drew himself up, feebly trying to straighten his jacket and tie. "I'll see you in jail for this, Jones," he squeaked shrilly. "This was assault! I've got witnesses!" He gestured at the crowd. One by one, the partygoers moved away from the blustering figure, pointedly turning their backs on him. His face fell as he realized he had not one shred of support. "I can sue, you know," he threatened. "You'll be hearing from my lawyer!" He turned and wobbled away, lurching through the thinning crowd.

"He certainly knows how to break up a party," Indy muttered.

"That's not all he knows how to break," Kate said grimly, watching Higgins's inglorious retreat.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jones demanded.

"Nothing," she replied. "Nothing at all." She looked up at him, smiling brightly. "Are you going to need your cane? I haven't managed to smuggle the old one out of Mrs. Franklin's possession." She winced, embarrassed as she realized that "smuggle" was *not* the best word to use right now.

"Don't worry about it," Indy advised her kindly. "And yes, I suppose I do need the cane." He put a hand to his back and winced. "I'm not used to leaping about anymore. My bones are too old for heroics, I suppose."

"Nonsense," she retorted. She stepped away from him and stooped to retrieve the serpent-adorned walking stick from where it lay abandoned on the floor. Returning to his side, she held it out to him. "Here," she said.

Jones took it unenthusiastically.

"You really hate it, don't you?" she remarked, surprised at his reaction.

"I *loathe* snakes," he answered, grimacing in distaste. "Always have. Gives me the shivers to touch this thing."

"Ah, so *that's* it," she mused. "You hid it well," she congratulated him.

"I developed a good poker face a long time ago," he replied. He grinned. "It's served me well." He looked around, saw that groups of people were gathered here and there about the room, all of them staring at Dr. Sullivan and himself. The buzz of voices filled the room. "We seem to be the focus of all eyes," he remarked wryly.

She looked around as well. "Now that you mention it —" she began.

He smiled down at her. "I'm getting out of here," he interrupted. "The stares are making me nervous."

"Do you want some company?" she asked.

He tilted his head, considering her offer. "No," he said at last. "Not that your company could ever be unwelcome." He added hastily. "But I need a drink, and I'd rather be alone for a bit." He leaned forward. "Confidentially, I have something I want to check out. A bit of local history, if you will?"

"Something scandalous, I hope," she giggled, topaz eyes glinting mischievously.

"Oh, definitely," he whispered back.

"Can I help?" she begged.

"If you like," he replied. "Tell you what — go see if you can find my old cane, then meet me a little later."

"Where?" she asked. "And will I need a password?"

"You've been reading too much Fleming," he rebuked. "Down that passage, the one on the right. See it?"

She peeped around him, then nodded.

"I'll be in one of the rooms on the left, the ones *not* overlooking the gardens. Got it?"

She assumed a melodramatic Russian accent. "Da. I got it, comrade dollink! The vuns vith no vindows, right?"

"You got it, Natasha," he grinned. "And if you see moose and squirrel, you no nothink!" He walked away, smiling at her laughter. He made his way to the bar, nodding and smiling pleasantly to the curious people he passed. "Whiskey and soda," he told the bartender. "Make it a double."

"Yes, *sir*," the young man replied. It was obvious he was spoiling to discuss the fight, but Jones glared at him coldly, cutting off any comment the other might have made.

Clutching his drink in his hand, he made his way out of the foyer. He paced down the carpeted hallway, glancing left and right, considering the tales he had been told of the glory days of Gardiner Place. There had been a lot more to the old complex than met the eye once. Maybe there still was. It was worth checking out, anyway, he told himself. A smile of anticipation lit his craggy face and he chose a door at random and entered one of the paneled rooms. Switching on the light, he crossed to the far wall. He drained his drink and put the empty glass on a nearby table and leaned the walking stick against it as well. Determinedly turning away from the glittering cobra, he considered the dark panelling carefully. "All right," he breathed. "Where would the mechanism be?"

Meanwhile, Kate was being accosted by friends, colleagues and total strangers as she circulated through the foyer, trying to track down Mrs. Franklin. Deflecting eager questions about Drs. Jones and Higgins with tact and civility soon had her teeth on edge and it was with acute relief that she spotted a flash of fuschia ahead of her. Hurrying to the society matron's side, she noted delightedly that the older woman still clutched the plain black cane in her pudgy hands, as well as the leather presentation case that had held Dr. Jones's ceremonial gift. She flashed the flustered woman a concerned look. "Mrs. Franklin," the historian said, "are you all right?"

The president of the Historical Association looked up as Dr. Sullivan spoke. Her faded blue eyes were brimming with tears and her mouth trembled unhappily. She looked like a disappointed child, Kate thought suddenly, feeling a rush of sympathy for the overdressed matriarch.

"Come," the historian coaxed. "I think you need to sit down." She took hold of the other's arm and guided her to a small curtained alcove nearby. She drew back the heavy velvet drapes, discovering a small sofa and two chairs grouped together in a cozy arrangement. "Here, this looks comfortable," she said, urging the woman to sit down and relax.

Mrs. Franklin looked up at her gratefully. "Thank you," she said. Her eyes brimmed over and a few tears trickled down her thickly powdered cheeks. "It was all going so *well*!" she wailed. "Until that *horrible* little man had to show up. I could just *kill* him!"

"I think you'd have to stand in line," Kate retorted drily.

The older woman looked at her in shock, a sob caught in her throat. She smiled tremulously, encouraged by Dr. Sullivan's bracing tone. "I suppose I would, at that," she said, almost but not quite giggling.

"I don't know about you, but I could use a drink," Kate went on. "It has been a rather stressful evening."

"Oh, I really shouldn't. But — a Harvey Wallbanger would just hit the spot right now," the genteel old lady said.

Sullivan's eyes widened a bit at the other's choice of libation, then shrugged. "You sit right here then," she said. "I'll be right back."

"Thank you, my dear," Mrs. Franklin said.

It took little time for Sullivan to make her way to the bar and return to the alcove, drinks in hand. She found the association's president in a slightly more cheerful mood, thoughtfully puffing on a cigarette. She looked up as the historian sat down, grimacing apologetically and waving one hand, trying to disperse the smoke.

"Don't bother," Kate said genially. "I don't mind. As a matter of fact, I only managed to give up the habit a year ago."

She handed Mrs. Franklin her drink and seated herself on one of the delicate little chairs.

"Thank you, my dear," the older woman said in relief. "I don't often indulge myself." She smiled and tapped the cigarette's glowing end against the edge of the little lidded tin box she had placed on the table beside her. "It's strange, really," she mused. "I used to have to sneak a cigarette. My girlfriends and I all did it," she giggled. "It made us feel so sophisticated! I never thought I'd be doing it again, at my age! Only this time I'm hiding from my children and grandchildren instead of my parents!" She ground out the cigarette and dropped it in the little box, then snapped the lid closed and returned the makeshift ashtray to her purse. "Time does move in a circle," she said, leaning back and sipping at her drink.

The two women sat in companionable silence for a while. At last Mrs. Franklin stirred. "I saw you talking to Dr. Jones after the — incident," she said. "That was very kind of you. He's a dear man, isn't he?"

Kate smiled a little. "Dear" wasn't exactly the way *she* would describe Indiana Jones! But she contented herself with a little smile and nod, sipping at her gin and tonic.

"I wanted to *cheer* when he went after that dreadful Higgins man," the association president went on. "It's about time someone gave that odious little toad a taste of his own medicine! Lord knows, he's caused the university a good deal of grief through the years."

"Really?" Dr. Sullivan perked up her ears. She'd had a few run-ins with Higgins herself, and had heard a few things on the academic grapevine as well, but for *Mrs. Franklin*, of all people, to bring up the subject — well, Kate told herself, I've always been too curious for my own good.

Looking, although she didn't realize it, like Merlin on the elusive trail of a mouse, the historian leaned forward. "I'd *heard* a few rumors," she began.

Mrs. Franklin leaned forward conspiratorially. "My dear, whatever you've heard, it's probably not the *half* of it!" She settled her plump curves more comfortably and took another healthy swig from her glass. "He's an absolute *scandal!* A womanizer, for one thing. *Three* marriages, *and* as many divorces in ten years. And lord knows *how* many of his female students have had to put up with his advances!"

"His *students*?!" Dr. Sullivan was taken aback. She'd been aware of Higgins's string of wives, but hadn't realized the little rat didn't have the sense to keep his libido out of the classroom.

"Oh, dear, yes!" the older woman said. "There was one, little Anna Larsen. She worked with the association, you know, that's how I met her." She looked around. "She was one of the volunteers that helped restore the Place, as a matter of fact."

"I remember her, I think," Kate said. "She took my 101 and 102 courses. A good student, excellent work. She was a little blonde, wasn't she?"

"That's the one," Mrs. Franklin confirmed. "Tiny thing, blue eyes and a sweet expression. And a rather large bosom, unfortunately. *That* was the problem, I'm afraid."

Sullivan looked at her, askance. "You've lost me," she confessed.

The older woman flushed uncomfortably. "Dr. Higgins was *also* heavily involved in the restoration, as the group's secretary. He and Dean Markham's son John and Myra Gardiner were the big guns, you know. An unholy trio if there ever was one! Anyway, Higgins noticed Anna and began making advances. He's —" the flush deepened to a glowing blush. "Well, he made it clear that he found a — *well-endowed* — female very attractive. Poor little Anna! Every time she turned around, there he was, peering down her blouse, making the most *indecent* comments. She came to me in tears on at least two occasions."

"And?" Kate prompted.

"So I went to talk to him." Mrs. Franklin pulled herself up indignantly, resembling a ruffled fuschia pigeon. Her blue eyes blazed indignantly. "He told me to *buzz off!* Said he'd done nothing wrong, that Anna was a hysterical little flirt and that *I* was a nosy old *biddy* who should keep her nose out of *his* business!" She scowled angrily. "I shouldn't have interfered, I suppose," she went on after a moment. "I'm afraid I just made things worse for Anna."

"In what way?" Dr. Sullivan asked.

"Higgins turned hostile," the other said. "He was quite rude to Anna whenever he met her, sneered at the work she was doing at Gardiner. Then, there were other things — but she could never prove it was him."

"What things?" Kate snapped.

"There were notes, nasty ones. Some through the mail, some pinned on the windshield of her car. And there were phone calls. The caller never spoke, but she got them at all hours of the day and night. And she often felt that someone was *following* her. At last she couldn't take it any more and left the university entirely." She sighed heavily. "Such a shame."

"Was she the first student he'd harassed?" the historian asked.

"The first I'd heard about," Mrs. Franklin admitted. "But I've been doing some checking — there are very few secrets on campus that I can't ferret out when I put my mind to it!" She patted her hair complacently. "Anna's case was the worst so far, but there *have* been several other complaints. All hushed up, I might add!"

"By who?"

"By Dean Markham!" The older woman bridled. "*Always!* He seems to be blind to Higgins's shortcomings. Of course, Markham recommended Higgins to the school, so I suppose he feels responsible." She sniffed indignantly. "But even *he* should recognize that Higgins crossed the line tonight! Mark my words, there *will* be a disciplinary hearing at the very least!" She finished her drink and set the glass down on the table with a sharp crack. She rose, straightening her dress as she did so. "So, my dear," this has been very pleasant, but I should go out and mingle. You've been very sweet to listen to me ramble."

Kate also finished her drink and arose. "It's been my pleasure, Mrs. Franklin," she said sincerely. She reached out and picked up the cane and the case. "I'll take charge of these," she said smiling. "The hostess of this event shouldn't have to lug other people's bits and pieces around with her."

"Thank you, my dear," Mrs. Franklin said. She turned and walked to the velvet curtain. As she reached it she turned and shot the historian a dazzling smile. "When you see Dr. Jones, tell him I said *well done!*" She winked gaily and was gone.

Kate chuckled at the exit line. Making her own way out into the foyer, juggling cane, case and her evening bag, she made her way to the cloakroom. As she walked, her expression grew sober. Although she hadn't confided in Mrs. Franklin, Kate, too, had had a few run-ins with Higgins. More than a few, if she were honest. Though he'd never tried sexual intimidation, he'd often encroached on her professional life. Twice, when they'd team-taught a special subject, he'd left her to do the work and then snatched all the credit. Her colleagues had listened to her grumbles, then advised her to forget it. A formal complaint would get her nowhere, they said, because Higgins was Dean Markham's fair-haired boy and no word against him would be tolerated, especially a word by a junior faculty member!

She reached the cloakroom, entering and absent-mindedly propping the presentation case against the wall under Dr. Jones's greatcoat. The frown between her eyebrows deepened as she turned and left the room. She tried desperately to remember the rumors she'd overheard floating around the history offices. Admittedly, she'd tried to ignore Higgins's existence ever since the last time they'd crossed swords, but —

Come on, girl, think! she ordered herself. Something about money, right? With Higgins, it was always money. And his increasing moodiness. *Picture yourself in the lounge, she thought. Peggy and Larry were talking. Now what were they saying?* The lines in her forehead cleared as she remembered the scene. The two other assistant professors had been sitting at the table, sipping coffee, animatedly discussing the latest chapter in the real-life soap they'd dubbed "Higgygate." The discussion had centered around the tubby man's latest mood — a savage anger that had been directed at anyone who crossed his path. He'd totally lost it at a seminar, they told her, reducing a male grad student nearly to tears with his vicious criticisms.

Larry and Peg had speculated endlessly about what had caused his foul mood. Peggy had insisted that one or more of his ex-wives was demanding more alimony. No, Larry had said, it was more likely due to the upkeep on his new Porsche, or maybe the payments on his fashionable condo had gone up. No, a third teacher, Mike, who'd just entered, insisted, it was the problem with the development fund. There was a lot of school money unaccounted for, and Higgy had been asked some very embarrassing questions. It had been time for class then, and the little group had scattered. As they exited the lounge, they had all expressed their relief that none of them had been granted any money from the fund.

No one except me, Kate thought uneasily as she made her way back to the bar. She signaled to the waiter, ordering another gin and tonic. Paying for the drink, she turned away, her mind uneasily returning to the money. *Oh, come on,* she told herself. *It was less than five hundred dollars, after all. Small change. And I can account for every penny. If heads roll, even Higgins's head, I'm in the clear.* She took a sip from her drink, resolutely deciding to push the matter away from her mind and enjoy herself.

As she walked away from the bar, the cane which she still held in her left hand whacked her across the shins. She looked down at it in annoyance, then smiled, remembering Indy's promise. She'd go find him, she decided, and let the old man's stories clear the rest of the unease out of her head. Purposefully she headed for the arched corridor.

She made her way down the carpeted hallway, peering into each room as she went. The lights were on in all of them, but all were deserted. Toward the end of the double row of wooden doors, she at last found a trace of the missing archaeologist — the hated, snake-headed walking stick sat propped up against a table, abandoned.

Grinning, she walked into the room. "Indy," she called softly. "It's Kate." She waited expectantly, her smile fading when no one answered. "Indy?" she repeated, slowly turning in a full circle. Again, no one answered. Shrugging, she walked over to a chair and sat down, placing the black cane on the floor beside her. Surely Dr. Jones would return soon. Perhaps he'd just stepped out to find a men's room or something. She sat on the edge of her seat, nervously sipping her drink. The empty room seemed threatening somehow, the sounds from the party far off and muted. She looked around, noticing how the shadows seemed to lie heavily in the windowless, wood-paneled room. She felt very isolated at that moment. *Stop it!* she told herself sternly. *You're giving yourself a good case of the creeps, that's all. Indy will come through that door in a moment and everything will be just fine. Even if he doesn't, you're a big girl. You can take care of yourself.* She settled back in her seat, again sipping at her drink. Her palms were wet, she noticed in surprise. She wished that she hadn't given up smoking.

A tuxedo clad figure appeared at the door and Sullivan jumped to her feet in relief. "Dr. Jones," she began happily, only to fall silent as the man moved into the light.

"Not Dr. Jones," Higgins said nastily. "Though it appears that you're one of his little fan club."

She shrank back as the tubby man shuffled toward her, his hands outstretched.

His eyes were very bright, and there was a hectic flush on his plump cheeks. He swayed a little as he walked and his voice was slurred as he said, "Where is he? We have some unsettled business, you know."

She sidled to the right, carefully putting her glass on the small table behind her. She gathered up her purse and moved again, heading slowly for the door. "I haven't seen him for a while," she said in a calm voice. "Now, if you'll excuse me —"

He moved far quicker than she thought anyone in his condition could. His right hand clamped over her left wrist in a painful grip.

"Let me go!" she yelled, trying without success to pull free. "You're hurting me!"

"Shut up, you little bitch!" he growled. "I've got some business with *you*, too! Don't think I haven't seen what you're doing, trying to undermine me, always sneaking around behind my back! Always so quiet, so mush-mouthed in public. But you're good at knifing people in the dark, aren't you?"

She stared at him, anger giving way to bewilderment and more than a little fear. "What are you talking about?" she gasped.

"Trying to hog credit, stealing my research," he answered. His voice rose. "And the money! Dammit, where's the money?"

Again she tugged at his restraining hand, wincing as his grip tightened in response. "What money!?" she asked, trying to keep her voice from trembling.

"From the fund!" he roared. "You got some. Lots of it! What'd you do with it?"

She was sweating heavily now. "I — I ordered some books and tapes," she responded. "And some maps — the old set was —" she broke off, aware that she was babbling.

"I want the truth, bitch!" he yelled, weaving unsteadily. He pulled her closer, breathing heavily into her face. A wave of alcohol fumes surrounded her, making her dizzy. Mixed with the smell of the booze was a heavy, cloying odor, strong and potent. Gagging, she tried once more to wrench away.

His voice dropped to an intense whisper. "You got thousands," he hissed. "You've got to return it. You've got to get them off my back!" A crafty smile crossed his round face and the glassy look in his eyes intensified. "Better yet, give it to *me!* I'll get it back to them. They'll never even know it was you!"

"I haven't got it, you idiot!" she yelled.

His mouth twisted into an ugly grimace. "Don't give me that!" he snarled. "Damn it, I'll *make* you cooperate —"

Kate was terrified. She *had* to get away. Unthinkingly, she curled her right hand into a fist and hit out, catching him low on the jaw. The impact was jarring and she felt a tearing sensation as her antique ring dug into his chin.

Higgins moaned and crashed backwards, measuring his length on the carpeted floor. He didn't move. For a moment, she didn't think he was breathing.

Massaging her aching left wrist, she peered down at the fallen drunk. After a moment, she noted with relief that he *was* breathing, though he was definitely unconscious. *Serves him right*, she thought shakily. *Let somebody else deal with him. I'm getting out of here!* She grabbed up her purse and headed for the door, only to pause on the threshold as the sound of voices floated toward her. Anxiously, she peered out around the door. In the shadows, she caught a fleeting glimpse of two figures, a man and a woman, slowly making their way toward her. Cursing, she popped back into the room, closing the door and looking in vain for a lock. *Now* what was she supposed to do?

T here was a rumbling, grinding sound behind her. She spun around defensively, her eyes widening as a narrow panel in the far wall slid aside. There was someone — a man — standing in the opening.

"Nice right jab," Indiana Jones told her, his tone admiring. "Remind me never to get fresh with you, young lady!"

"Indy!" She boggled at him, torn between anger and laughter. "What the *hell* —"

"I would've stepped in sooner, but I couldn't find the latch on this side," he continued. "Had a great view, though. There's a peephole down there a ways," he said, pointing.

She shook her head, leaning weakly against the table. Higgins moaned and stirred.

"Damn," Jones said. "We'd best get out of here. I don't feel up to dealing with a belligerent drunk with a sore jaw right now." He stepped out of the hidden passage. "And explanations are always a pain in the posterior!"

"We can't leave," she said, gesturing toward the hallway. "There are people out there."

"Damn," the archaeologist snapped. A determined glint appeared in his eye. "Well, if retreat is cut off, find a way to go around. Come on." He stepped back into the passage. "By the way, have you got my cane?"

"Yes," she answered. Moving toward him, she grabbed the old black cane from the floor as she passed. She handed it to him and stepped into the passage.

Taking a firm grip on his old walking stick, Indy reached up, running his hand over the beams that flanked the opening. "Now, where was that — here we are." He pushed the concealed control, nodding in satisfaction as the panel slid closed. "Wish I had a match," he whispered. "It's too dark in here to see anything!"

"Hang on a second," Kate hissed back. She fumbled in her bag, sighing in relief as her fingers closed around a smooth metal tube. She twisted one end and a small, intense beam of light shot out, dimly illuminating the dusty passage.

"Good girl!" the old man applauded. "You always carry that?"

"Always," Sullivan affirmed. She closed her eyes. "I'm afraid of the dark." Her voice was trembling and she swallowed heavily. "It's stupid, I know, but —"

Jones moved closer to her, putting his arm around her. "I react the same way to snakes," he whispered.

She looked up at him gratefully, but her reply was cut off by the sound of raised voices in the room they'd just vacated.

"Sounds like Higgins just woke up," she whispered.

"Mmm," the man at her side agreed. "And up to his old tricks, I see. He's arguing with someone." He moved carefully down the passage, feeling his way.

She reached out and grabbed at his coat. "What are you doing?" she hissed.

"Trying to find the peephole," was his answer. "I want to see who he's yelling at now."

"Leave it go, Indy," she snapped. "Let's just get out of here!"

"But —" he turned, looking at her reproachfully. His glare softened as he turned the light on her. She was trembling, he realized, and her eyes were wide with distress. *Afraid of the dark*, he reminded himself. *And maybe a little claustrophobic, I'd say.* He came back to her side, grasping her sweating hand reassuringly. "All right," he whispered. "Now, it seems to me the foyer is that way." He indicated the direction with the tip of his cane. "So, if we follow along, we should be able to find another panel. Okay?"

"Okay," she returned.

"A

nd so we did," Indy concluded. "Took a few wrong turns, but finally we found a way out. Through the cloakroom, as a matter of fact."

"And you didn't see who it was that Higgins argued with?" Nick pressed.

"Nope," the archaeologist replied.

The detective turned to Dr. Sullivan. "Did you recognize the people in the corridor?" he asked.

The woman shook her head. "Sorry," she said. "I just got a quick glimpse of them, silhouetted against the light. The corridor was too dim for me to get a good look, just an impression of a man and a woman."

Schanke had been watching the archaeologist, his expression changing from skepticism to fascinated interest. "Secret passages," he breathed now. "Sounds like something out of Nancy Drew!"

"Why, Schanke," Natalie teased, "where did *you* ever hear of Nancy Drew?"

The stocky detective flushed. "My sister was always reading the damn books," he blustered.

"She was a lovely little thing," Indy put in. "Bright, too. Brave as a lion, she was!"

"Who?" Knight asked, thoroughly confused.

"Nancy, of course!" the old man snapped.

"Indy," Kate said, concerned. "Nancy Drew wasn't real!"

Jones glared at her. "She certainly *was*," he retorted. "Oh, not the fictional girl detective. The girl she was based on. The publisher's daughter. As a matter of fact, she ended up writing many of those mysteries herself!"

"Really?" Natalie said, intrigued. She leaned forward eagerly. So did Schanke.

"Enough!" the vampire shouted. "Look, everybody, let's get back to the case in hand, okay?" He turned back to the archaeologist. "Now, how did you find the passage?" he said.

"I was looking for it," the professor said calmly. As Knight's mouth opened, the archaeologist held up a hand for silence. "I'd heard a lot about Gardiner Place," he said. "From various friends. The old place had quite a racy reputation in certain circles." He stopped and chuckled. "Just among the men, of course. The ladies were never told. That would have ruined everything, you see."

"Would you care to explain that, Dr. Jones?" Stonetree put in. The captain was holding on to his patience with a great effort.

Jones looked at the senior policeman and nodded. "That particular wing of the Place was the men's territory," he said. "They'd gather there for brandy and cigars, maybe a little poker and pool. All very innocent, right?" He paused, gathering his thoughts. "And half the rooms *were* innocent. The ones overlooking the gardens. The ones with windows. But the ones on the *other* side — to put it simply, they were a front. Each one connects to the passage through a hidden door. And the passage leads, eventually, to the stables. Actually, to the attic above the stables." He paused, looking around expectantly.

The others looked at him blankly, not understanding what he was getting at.

Indiana shook his head at their obtuseness. "The attic was supposed to be storage space," he went on. "Actually, it was occupied by several rooms, all very luxurious. All the comforts of home, you might say. They also had some comforts that the gentlemen *couldn't* find at home, if you get my drift."

Schanke's eyes widened. "Hookers?" he breathed. "You mean old Gardiner was running a *whorehouse*?"

Jones winced. "Not exactly," he said, "but you've got the right idea." He looked at the stocky cop with surprised approval. "It was a place of assignation, certainly. The — ladies — most of them

professionals, I admit, and no doubt highly paid, could enter through the back entrance, and no one would see them but servants."

"Who knew enough to keep their mouths shut," Schanke put in.

"Precisely," the old man agreed. "And so the gentlemen would escort their wives in the front door, excuse themselves and retreat to masculine territory, use the passage to move unseen to their trysts, with their wives or mothers never the wiser. Even if some female came looking for them, their colleagues would make their excuses. After all, none of them wanted to rock the boat!"

"How incredibly Victorian," Kate commented, amused.

"Not to mention sneaky and hypocritical," Natalie chimed in indignantly.

"That's what I *said*," Sullivan laughed.

"How many people know about those passages?" Knight pressed.

Indy shrugged. "I have no idea," he admitted. "I'd heard the rumors long ago, during the twenties, I think. I had a friend who'd played here when it was a Vaudeville house. That was some time *after* it was a playground for the rich, of course. But the story always stuck in my mind, and when I found out that the dinner was to be held there, I decided to check it out. To tell you the truth, I didn't expect to find anything. Not after the renovations and restorations."

Nick and Stonetree exchanged glances. "Who was in charge of those renovations?" the captain queried.

"The Gardiner Foundation," Katherine piped up.

"Which was headed by — ?" Knight prompted.

"Myra Gardiner," the red-haired woman began. Her eyes widened and her voice rose slightly. "John Markham was the PR man, and the Secretary was —" She leaned forward, propping her elbows on the table before her, letting her head rest on her upraised hands. "The secretary was Dr. James Higgins," she went on hoarsely. "*That's* what Mrs. Franklin meant! She called them an unholy trio!"

Knight was nodding to himself. "It makes sense," he mused. "I just have two more questions. Indy, Kate, think back. Do you remember seeing any white dust on the floor of that passage?"

The two looked at each other. "No," Sullivan said at last.

Jones frowned. "The whole thing was dusty, as I recall." He tilted his head consideringly. "Not as dusty as it should have been, not if it had been unused for decades." He frowned, closing his eye in concentration. "It should have smelled mustier, too. There was fresh air coming from somewhere."

The vampire grinned. "Good. Second question. Dr. Sullivan, you said that Higgins had been moody lately. Was that new?"

The young historian tapped her finger against her lips, thinking hard. "No — well, yes." She grimaced in frustration. "Let me start over," she said. "Look, he's always been moody — cheerful one minute and mad as a hornet the next. But lately, it's been *really* bad. Even for him, it was extreme. As a matter of fact, one of the secretaries asked me if I thought he had a drinking problem." She looked up at the blond detective intently. "She'd made one typo in one of his

memos and he hit the roof. Threatened to have her fired. Then the next day he gave her flowers and begged her to forgive him." She shrugged.

Knight glanced over at his partner. Schanke was leaning forward, nodding as he made the connections.

"And was he a boozier?" the stocky detective asked.

Again, Kate shrugged. "I — lord, I don't know! I've seen him take a drink now and again, but then, so do I!" She looked down at her hands and frowned. "But one thing I can tell you — I never smelled liquor on him at school. If he was a closet drunk, he kept it very well hidden." She nibbled absently at one fingernail. "But — "

Schanke's eyes sharpened. "You've remembered something," he accused.

"Well, I'm not sure," she said haltingly. "Last night — it was his eyes," she went on in a rush. "Oh, he was tanked to the gills all right, but there was a lot more going on. His eyes — they were bright and shiny, like they'd been crystallized or something. Like hard, shiny marbles. And I've just realized, his eyes have looked like that a lot lately. Not all the time, but a lot."

Natalie's voice slid into the silence. "It fits," she said. "There was considerable irritation of the nose tissue and mucous membrane. Not advanced as yet, but noticeable."

"So, he was takin' a sniff now and then?" the stocky cop asked.

"I'd say so. Not an habitual user, not yet. But give it a little longer —" the coroner agreed.

"So he was in the process of getting hooked," Knight interrupted. "Losing control, becoming a liability."

"And if he was in on this —" Schanke took up the thread.

"— with someone else, that someone else might grab the opportunity to get rid of the loose cannon before everything got blown out of the water," the vampire completed the thought.

"I like it," his partner said.

"So do I." Nick cocked an eyebrow at Stonetree. "Warrants?" he queried.

The senior official grinned wolfishly. "Leave that to me," he said. "Full search of the premises, financial records, everything I can think of. First thing in the morning."

"Right." Nick stood up. "Tonight, I think I'll make the rounds of my informants, see what I can scare up."

Schanke gulped down the remains of his soda and jumped to his feet. "Right with ya, partner."

Knight grinned at him and shook his head. "Not tonight. I'll move faster alone." The stocky man started to protest and the vampire's grin turned slightly malicious. "Besides, Schanke, *you* have a hot date for the night, remember?"

The other looked puzzled. "Huh?" he asked intelligently.

"With the typewriter, remember?" the blond man reminded him. "The report on the Jigsaw Man's latest little offering?"

"Aaahhhh, *shit!*" The dark-haired man sat down heavily, slumping dispiritedly in the chair. "You would have to bring that up!"

"Jigsaw Man?" Indy broke in.

Schanke looked up at the archaeologist morosely, absently crushing his cup in his hand.

Knight laughed. "It's my partner's favorite case, Indy," he said.

"Damn maniac," the other cop put in disgustedly. "Four victims. He kills 'em, chops 'em up, and leaves the parts lyin' around for people to find. Real funny, huh?" He threw the remains of the cup down on the table. "And we got *bupkes*. No IDs. No motive. No witnesses. Like I said, *bupkes*."

Jones sat forward, both of his hands braced on his cane. His expression was sympathetic. At sometime during the last few hours, his earlier antipathy for the bumptious cop had faded. "Don't take it so hard, young fella," he said. "Sometimes you just run into a brick wall and there's no way over it or around it." He chuckled dryly. "My old college roommate ended up a cop of sorts," he went on, "and he ran into a similar case. Very similar. He never solved that one, either. Drove poor Elliot crazy."

Schanke regarded the old man suspiciously. "Elliot?" he asked.

"Elliot Ness," the archaeologist produced the name with a flourish. "You ever hear of him?"

"Ness? Like in the *Untouchables*?" The stocky man's eyes shone with respect and something approaching awe. "You really knew *him*?"

"Indeed, I did," the archaeologist said, gratified at the regard in the detective's face.

Before Jones could launch into the story, Nick cleared his throat ostentatiously. "Later, Indy." *Much, much later*, he added silently. He glared into the professor's one good eye. *Watch what you say, dammit!* he thought. Cleveland in the thirties was *not* one of the vampire's favorite memories. He reached into his pocket for his keys and nodded at his old friend. "Come on, I'll give you a lift back to your hotel."

Stonetree held up a hand. "Dr. Jones, Dr. Sullivan, I hate to inconvenience you, but I'd like you both to dictate and sign a statement before you leave." He turned to the blond man. "You go on ahead. I'll see that both of them are driven home."

"Yeah, Nick, don't worry. I'll take him back to the hotel myself," Schanke said. He turned to the archaeologist. "That is, if Dr. Jones doesn't mind."

"Sounds fine to me," Jones said heartily. "You run along, Nick. I'll be just fine." He turned to Stonetree. "Now, Captain, about this statement —"

"I can take care of that," Schanke put in eagerly. "You just come down to the office with me. I'll call a steno. You can use Nick's desk. You don't mind, do you partner?"

"I —" the vampire began.

Schanke never noticed. He was already leading Jones from the interrogation room. "So, you and Ness were roomies, eh? Tell me, did he really look like Robert Stack? How about Kevin Costner?"

The door swung shut behind the odd pair. Bemused, Nick looked first at Natalie, then at Joe Stonetree. The captain shrugged.

"Looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship," Nat deadpanned.

Knight, Sullivan and Stonetree cracked up. The coroner grinned at the detective, waving him out of the room. "You go play cops and robbers," she grinned. "Come on Kate, you can use my office if you like. I have some reports to go over."



ut in the corridor, Schanke rang for the elevator, still peppering the amused and somewhat flattered Indy with questions.

The door slid aside and the pair entered the empty car. As the doors closed, the detective fell silent, regarding Jones with a faintly apprehensive expression.

"Something wrong?" the older man asked.

The stocky cop looked around nervously, checking to make sure that they were *absolutely* alone. "Uh, look Dr. Jones," he began.

"Call me Indy," the professor broke in.

"Oh, yeah, right," Schanke smiled jerkily. "Look, you said you knew Nancy Drew, right? The real one, I mean."

"I did." *Where is this leading?* the old man thought.

The younger man looked away. He was almost sweating now. He licked his lips. "Look," he said at last, his eyes almost pleading. "I've never told *anyone* this. And if you say anything, I'll deny it, okay?"

Jones smiled. "Young man, if you knew me at all, you'd know that I'm good at keeping secrets. *Very* good."

The cop watched him intently. "Okay. I trust you." He bit his lip, then blurted out, "Man, I *love* Nancy Drew! I've read almost all her books! Used to swipe 'em from my sister. And now I buy 'em for my daughter." He flushed.

Indy leaned forward conspiratorially. "Now I'll tell *you* something, friend."

Schanke looked up, staring tensely at the older man.

"I've read 'em all, too," Jones said, grinning widely. "Cracking good yarns, all of 'em."

The cop grinned back. "Yeah," he agreed happily.

The elevator car stopped moving and the doors slid open. "Look," the detective said as he led the professor down the hall, "After I finish my report and you've signed your statement, what say we put on the old feedbag, eh? There's a diner I know, does great breakfasts. Steak and eggs, homefries on the side. Whaddya say?"

"Sounds good," Indy said.

"Great!" the other burbled. "And while we're chowin' down, you can tell me all about Nancy and Elliot and —"

Jones looked down at his enthusiastic companion and sighed. Admiration was always flattering, but he just might have made a major mistake. *I think I've just created a monster*, he thought.

Knight spent what was left of the night scouring the dark streets, sometimes behind the wheel of the big Caddy, more often taking to the sky. His path was littered with strung-out junkies and street-wise minor dealers, all of them shaken and disturbed by his angry eyes and voice. He pushed at them, badgering them impatiently for any crumb of information, sometimes even resorting to his vampiric abilities to read their very thoughts, a trick he normally despised. He gathered rumor and hearsay, hints here and there, his anger growing all the while. Of all the scum he dealt with in this job, the ones who preyed on the helpless were the worst. Hiding behind a mask of respectability, they grew rich and comfortable on the misery of their victims. He hated them passionately — because they were so much like him and his kind.

He was in a black mood when he finally parked the car near The Raven. Impatiently he strode into the bar and headed for Janette, patrons hurriedly scrambling out of his way.

"You look like a thundercloud, *cherie*," the owner of The Raven cooed.

"I'm not in the mood tonight for any games," he growled.

She pouted, lighting one of the slim little cigars she favored. She blew a cloud of scented smoke into the heavy air, watching it move and disperse with sultry eyes. She was dressed in purple tonight, a dark rich color that highlighted her pale skin. "Poor Nicholas," she said throatily. "Again I tell you, forget these foolish mortals. They are nothing to you. Come back to us." At his scowl, she sighed theatrically. "But since you will not," she went on, "perhaps you can use this." She reached down to the stool beside her and picked up a heavy file folder, offering it to him.

"What's this?" he asked warily, accepting the thick pile of papers.

"Information, *mon amour*," she answered. "It occurred to me that you might just need some help in clearing our so-handsome little Indy." She shrugged, an elegant, languorous movement. "I am owed many favors. I merely let it be known that I wished to know *everything* about this murder, and about the place where it occurred. It amused me." She took another puff on the cigar, watching the end brighten. She smiled unpleasantly. "Besides, I know the man who was killed. An unpleasant little roach, as are his two cronies. Markham and the Gardiner woman."

"They were customers of yours?" Nick asked sharply.

Again she shrugged. "Occasionally," she replied. "Once or twice. They liked the *ambiance* of my little establishment." She lounged gracefully against the bar. "But they were troublemakers," she went on, her voice growing steely. "I would not tolerate their manner. I so dislike arrogant humans, don't you, *cherie*?"

"You threw them out?" Knight said, amused.

"*Mais certainement*," Janette snapped. "Oh, they threatened me, but I do not regard them. They thought their money could buy *anything*. They were wrong."

He was skimming through the file as she spoke. He looked up at her with a brilliant smile. "My thanks," he told her. "I owe you." Without another word, he tucked the file under his arm and left the bar.

Janette watched him go, smiling quietly. "Indeed you do, *mon coeur*," she murmured. "And be sure, be very sure, that I will collect my due."

Nick glanced at the sky, then at his watch. He still had a while before sunrise. He frowned in thought for a moment, then came to a decision, spinning the wheel to the right with careless ease and heading the car in the direction of Indy's hotel.

He parked on the north side of the elegant building. Exiting the Cadillac, he looked consideringly up at one of the balconies on the fifteenth floor. His eyes narrowed: yes, there was a dim light shining through the curtains. He tensed his body and concentrated, rising effortlessly into the chill night air.

He hovered quietly, peering in through the drapes. A smile crossed his face as the figure of his old friend left the bathroom and made his way to a chair next to the bed. Landing softly as a cat, the vampire stole to the sliding door, tapping quietly on the glass.

Jones jumped at the nearly-inaudible sound, his grizzled head snapping around to identify the source. He frowned in mock anger when he saw Nick grinning impishly at him, then rose and crossed to the door, unlocking it and sliding it open.

"Should you be here this close to daylight?" the old man snapped testily as the vampire slipped inside the room. "The only place you could pass the day safely here would be in the bathroom, and I don't know how I'd explain *that* to the maids!"

"I'm touched by your concern," Knight riposted drily. "But if worse comes to worst, I can curl up in the Caddy."

Jones sat down on the bed, gesturing for his unexpected guest to take the chair. "I suppose that makes sense," the archaeologist said.

"It's a 1959 Caddy, Indy," the other explained. "Has the biggest trunk of any car I know of."

"Ah, so *that's* why you tool around in that land-going yacht," Jones said sarcastically. "And here I thought you were making a statement." He shook his head. "The trunk, huh? Sounds uncomfortable."

"It is," Nick conceded. "But it beats the alternative."

Jones looked at him in amusement. "I bet it does, at that." He poured himself a glass of water and sipped it. "Now, you haven't got much time, and I'm sleepy. So let's get on with it. What brings you here?"

"This." Knight waved the file. "And the request of a lovely lady. Janette wanted me to tender her regards."

"Janette?!" Jones was taken aback at the name. "Good grief! *She's* still with you?"

"No," Knight protested hastily. "But she *is* here, in Toronto. She may invite you to her place. Whether or not you go is up to you."

Jones chuckled, shaking his head. "Ah, Janette. As beautiful and lethal as a poisoned dagger. No, I think I'll decline. With thanks, of course."

"You've gotten wiser, my friend," the vampire told him, laughing. He leaned forward, tapping the file. "But with *this*, and the tips I've picked up tonight, plus what the warrants uncover tomorrow, I can tell you that both you and Dr. Sullivan are off the hook."

Indy leaned against the headboard, slumping in relief. "Good," he said. "Then you know who really killed Higgins?"

The vampire nodded. "And why," he said. "The how we already know."

"That we do," Jones agreed. "The passages were the key, weren't they?" At the other's nod, the professor went on. "Smuggling?"

"Right," Nick said. "Drugs, mostly. And there was money-laundering going on as well. They thought they had the perfect cover." He frowned. "They've made a lot of mistakes, but killing Higgins was the worst."

"You said 'they'," the professor remarked. "Who?"

Knight shook his head. "No names. Not until we've got them. They're panicky right now, might do anything."

"Including trying to shut me up?" the professor asked.

"It's a possibility," the vampire agreed. "I'd rather you stay put tomorrow, here in the room. Order room service, watch cable. And don't leave the hotel with *anyone* except me, Nat or Schanke."

"I'm neither a child nor an idiot!" Indy snapped angrily. "And I've taken care of myself for a good many years, thank you!"

The blond man stared at him challengingly. "Seems to me you sang a different tune in Budapest," he retorted. "And in Guatemala. Not to *mention* New York. Or how about —"

"All right! All right!" the other man surrendered, waving his arms irritably. "I'll stay put."

"Good." The vampire stood up.

Indy rose as well. "Just one more thing, Nick," he said. The cop paused expectantly at the window.

"Did these people mean to frame me?" the archaeologist asked. "Because if they did —"

"Sorry, Indy," the detective interrupted. "I don't think they planned this murder. It just happened. You were simply a stroke of good luck. Incidental."

The old man's heavy eyebrows twitched irritably. "Incidental!" he growled. "Now *that's* damned insulting!"

Nick laughed, and reached out to push the curtain out of his way. "Take care, Indy," he said, stepping out on the patio. "Oh, and if Schanke starts asking questions —"

"What do you mean *if?*" the professor growled. "He never stopped!"

"That's my partner!" Knight chuckled. "But, if he asks about that case of Ness's —"

"He already has," Jones said. "And I told him the official version. That's exciting enough, don't you think? No use confusing the issue with incidentals, don't you think?"

The vampire sighed. "I really didn't have to ask, did I?"

Jones returned his look gravely. "No. You didn't." He scowled amiably. "Now get out of here. I'm tired."

"And a young kid like you needs his beauty sleep," Knight taunted as he launched himself into the air, leaving the archaeologist sputtering.

"Smartass!" Indy hollered after the dark form. Laughing, he stepped back into the room, locking the door and drawing the curtain. He puttered around for a while, getting ready for bed.

Finally, clad in pajamas and robe, he grabbed a bottle of juice from the small hotel refrigerator. He turned out the light and opened the curtain. Sitting down in the chair, he stared out into the lightening sky, remembering ...



LEVELAND, OHIO
MAY, 1936

The mournful whistle wailed like a wounded banshee as the train swept around the bend. Indiana Jones glanced out of the window and nodded in satisfaction. The view of rolling hills and open fields, broken now and again by small towns had at last given way to sight the of warehouses and factories. *Must be getting near the city*, he thought.

As if in answer, the uniformed conductor appeared at the end of the aisle. "Cleveland!" the man shouted, "coming into Cleveland." He pulled off the gold-decorated cap and wiped his sweating brow.

The archaeologist rose from the seat and stepped into the aisle, stretching lazily as he did so. He braced his feet on the swaying, rattling floor and reached up to the baggage compartment over the window, pulling down his heavy suitcase and his battered leather briefcase. The train slowed, jolting sharply and Jones fell sideways, plowing directly into the conductor as he did so.

"Sorry," the professor gasped.

"Not to worry, young fella," the cheery little uniformed man replied. He reached over and retrieved the briefcase, which had skittered into the aisle. "Happens all the time."

Indy accepted the case and smiled down at the man, who again wiped his streaming brow before settling his hat more firmly on his white hair. Twinkling blue eyes peered up at the younger man and the florid cheeks shook slightly as the man grinned.

Looks like Santa Claus, Jones mused to himself. *Minus the beard and the red suit*. He smiled at the thought. "Hot, isn't it?" he asked.

"You can say that again," the older man wheezed in agreement. "Awful warm for early May. And that big ol' lake makes it feel worse. The humidity, you know. But the sun feels mighty good after the winter we had round these parts."

"Bad, huh?" Jones asked absently.

"Real bad," the conductor said. "Thought I'd never get warm again. But you don't look like *you* missed any sunshine, not with a tan like that."

Indy laughed. He was indeed bronzed, his brown hair streaked with sun-bleached gold. He reached up and straightened the collar on his faded tan work shirt. "Spent most of the winter in a desert, digging," he volunteered. He grimaced at his dust-stained brown trousers and well worn boots. "Looks like I brought half the sand away with me."

The conductor's eyes widened with interest. "Lookin' for gold in Death Valley?" he asked.

"No. Just pottery and city walls in Egypt," Indy replied, smiling.

"Egypt, huh? Find any buried treasure, another Tut's tomb, mebbe?" The older man was as excited as a schoolboy at the idea.

Jones shook his head ruefully. "No such luck, I'm afraid."

"Well, mebbe you'll do better next time. Now, young fella, you better sit back down. There's a lot of curves and dips from here to the tower. Makes for tricky footin'." The conductor made his way down the swaying aisle. "Cleveland!" echoed after him. "Comin' into Cleveland."

Indy took the man's advice and once again settled himself in his seat, propping his suitcase in the seat across from him. The briefcase he placed in the seat beside him, digging into its depths for the list of artifacts that had accompanied him across country from the New York docks.

He checked over the papers, nodding. There should be no problem, he decided. It was all very straightforward and he'd been assured that someone from the museum would be meeting the train.

Up in the front of the train, the engineer again applied the brakes and the train jerked and slowed, its wheels squealing as it headed for Terminal Tower, passing into the cavernous space that led to the underground station.

Indy blinked in the sudden dimness and put away his notes. The train jolted again and slid to a stop, sighing as if in relief that it had made yet another successful run. Steam billowed up from beneath the wheels, shrouding the platform in grayish mist.

Jones grabbed his leather jacket and fedora with one hand and gathered his suitcase with the other. The briefcase he tucked under his arm. Thus laden, he made his way to the door, carefully stepping out onto the pavement. He peered around, looking for the museum employee.

There was a click of high heels to his right, and an attractive, dark-haired woman trotted up to him. "Dr. Jones?" she said in a pleasant contralto voice. The archaeologist smiled and nodded, and the woman sighed in relief. "I was afraid I'd miss you," she said. "I've been running late all day! My name's Jennifer Grayson." She held out her hand.

Indy dropped his suitcase and took her hand in his and smiled down at her, his hazel eyes running over her in quick assessment. She was short, barely five foot two, he estimated. Trim figure clad in a narrow blue skirt and lacy white blouse, enameled broach clasped at the high collar. Her face was oval, the skin creamy. Delicately arched brows swept over bright blue eyes. Her hair was dark, almost black, pulled back to a neat bun at the nape of her long neck. The hand he still held was small and well shaped, with short nails. There were callouses on the fingertips, and small scratches and scrapes marred the skin.

She blushed and snatched her hand away as she caught him studying it, hiding it behind her. "I work on restorations at the museum," she muttered, besides helping to build and mount the exhibits."

"Hey, don't worry about it," the man grinned. He held up his own hand, exhibiting his own callouses, as well as the many little scars that tracked the bronzed surface. "I never trust anyone with soft hands," he said. "Shows no character, if you ask me!"

She giggled reluctantly then forced herself back to a professional manner. "Now," she said briskly, "if you'll follow me, we'll see to getting the artifacts unloaded. I understand that there's quite a lot, so I have two trucks standing by."

Together, they strolled down the platform, heading for the rear of the train and the baggage cars.

"You're right," the professor said as they walked. "There is quite a bit. Not only the Art Museum's share of the Collins dig in Egypt, the one I was on, but the Colby expedition in Persia. Some of that stuff is massive. We may need more trucks."

They did, in the end, have to send for one more vehicle and crew, but the work of moving the padded crates from the train to the trucks went on apace, Indy giving thanks for an experienced and capable work crew. Less than two hours after the train had pulled in, the three trucks were loaded and on their way to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Jones and Jennifer made their way up to the ground level of the tower, Indy looking around appreciatively at the marble-lined corridors. "Nice," he said approvingly. "Especially after some of the stations I've seen recently."

The woman smiled at him. "Well, we're proud of it," she said. "It's pretty new, only been open a couple of years. We've been itching to show off our whole new downtown," she added as they headed for the door. "And this summer we've finally got the chance!"

"Yeah, I heard about the Great Lakes Expo," Jones commented.

She nodded her dark head. "And the Republican Convention, and the American Legion, too! So *that*," she snapped her fingers in dismissal, "for people who call us the mistake on the lake!"

Jones stopped and grinned down at her. "I take it I'm talking to a native?" he drawled.

"Born and bred," she laughed. "However did you know?"

"Why, Jennifer, I'm psychic," he answered.

"Call me Jenny," she giggled.

"You got it," he laughed. "And you can call me —"

"*Indy!*"

Jones spun around at the sound, grinning as he spotted the tall, gangling figure rushing toward him across the marble expanse. The man who had called was young, perhaps a year or two younger than the archaeologist. His face was craggy, with a long jaw and sensitive mouth. Deep blue eyes sparkled as he approached. The blue-clad figure of a uniformed policeman was pulled along in his wake.

"Indy!" the newcomer yelled again, thrusting his right hand out in front of him.

The professor dropped jacket, suitcase and briefcase, reaching out and grabbing the man's hand in a hearty clasp. His other arm circled around the man's shoulders, administering a sound thump of greeting. "Elliot!" he shouted, smiling. He dropped the man's hand and stepped back, pointing at the puffing policeman who trotted up to stand gasping behind the newcomer. "So they still won't let you out without a keeper, eh?" He turned to the smiling Jenny. "Looks like he's gone to seed without me to take care of him," he commented, winking.

"Oh, from what I've heard, Mr. Ness can take care of himself," she answered.

"I've managed to muddle through a few tight spots without old Indy's guidance," Elliot grinned. He turned back to his friend. "What in the world brings you to Cleveland?" he asked. "Last I heard, you were galloping around the sands of Egypt or something."

Jones shrugged. "The museum and Western Reserve University helped pay for the last two digs," he said. "For a consideration, of course. The museum gets the artifacts, the university gets a guest lecturer."

"You?" Ness asked.

Indy nodded. "Yep. I'm here 'til September."

"That's grand!" the other beamed. "Where are you staying?"

"We've arranged for Dr. Jones to have a suite at Stouffer's," Jennifer put in.

"Um, nice," Ness nodded. "Are you headed for there now?"

Jenny glanced at the professor. "If you like," she said. "Or we can drive over to the museum first."

"I'd rather check and make sure the crates are safe," Jones stated.

"Fine," Elliot said. "Officer MacCormack and I have some business to do here at the station," he went on, gesturing at the silent cop at his back. "Security matters for the Republican National convention," he confided. "What say I meet you two in the hotel's lobby at about five-thirty or so? I know a great restaurant just a short walk from there. Dinner's on me." He smiled boyishly. "We have a lot of catching up to do," he said.

Jones grinned back. "Sounds good," he said. "But what about your wife? Won't she object to such short notice?"

Elliot grimaced. "I'm a bachelor for the next few weeks," he said. "My wife and daughter are back in Chicago, visiting relatives. You'll be saving me a boring, solitary evening."

"Okay, then," Indy said. He turned to the woman at his side. "How about you, Jenny?"

She shook her head. "Sorry, but I have other plans," she said pleasantly. "Maybe some other time. Besides, I have the feeling I'd just be in the way."

"A lovely lady is never in the way," Elliot assured her gallantly and she laughed.

Jones scowled in mock anger. "Listen to him!" he said. "Just because he fights a few gangsters, he suddenly thinks he's a ladies' man!"

"I always was," the other retorted. "You just never noticed, *you* were too busy striking out. Remember that little blonde, what was her name — ?"

"Get outta here, Ness," Jones growled. "Some of us have work to do!"

Elliot grinned and turned away, calling over his shoulder, "Five-thirty, in the lobby, remember!" He rushed away, trailed by his faithful uniformed shadow.

Chuckling, Indy picked up his bags and turned to find the woman regarding him in amusement.

"Something wrong?" he asked warily.

She shook her head, her smile widening. "Just didn't expect you to be on such close terms with the town's newest boy wonder," she said.

"We were roommates at the University of Chicago," Jones explained. "He was a quiet, shy bookworm in those days." He shook his head. "He's changed a little since then."

"I imagine that busting down the doors of illegal breweries and trading shots with the Capone mob *might* give you a new attitude," she said drily. "Let's hope he has as much success here as he did in Chicago." She started toward the door, Indy following in her wake. "It might be a good idea to drop off your luggage right now," she said as they stepped outside. "The hotel's just a few steps from here."

"Good idea," Jones replied.

W

ithin a few minutes, they had turned Indy's suitcase and jacket over to an obliging desk clerk and attended to the formalities of checking in. Room key safely stowed in his pants pocket, the professor followed the woman out of the hotel and down the street to the lot where her car was parked.

Jenny was a good driver, handling her small roadster with ease as she threaded through the afternoon traffic. She kept up a running commentary as she drove, pointing out the city's amenities. Indy relaxed and enjoyed the drive.

The museum was handsome, a white grecian-style structure set on a slight hill. The grounds were beautiful, from the formal gardens to the small lagoon that mirrored the museum in its still waters.

Jennifer pulled the car into a sweeping turn, heading for the staff parking lot set off to one side. They got out of the vehicle and set off across the pavement, heading for the freight entrance.

"Afternoon, Miss Grayson," said the guard on duty at the entrance, a tall, cadaverous individual with the saddest eyes Indy had ever seen in a human face. *Looks like a man-sized beagle*, the archaeologist thought.

"Hi, Carl," Jenny said. "This is Professor Jones. He'll be working here this summer."

Carl nodded mournfully. "Pleased to meetcha," he said.

Indy nodded back speechlessly.

"Did the trucks get here?" Jennifer went on.

The guard nodded again. "All unloaded," he answered. "Don't think anything got dropped, but I don't guarantee anything. World's going to hell in a handbasket these days."

"Thanks, Carl," the woman smiled and led the way into the building.

"Cheerful sort, isn't he?" Indy muttered to her as soon as they were out of earshot of the glum guard. "Looks like he'd be more at home in a funeral parlor."

Jenny giggled. "Hey, we're lucky we caught him in a *good* mood," she said. "You should see him when he's depressed!"

It took the two little more than an hour to check the crates, making sure they had taken no damage in transit. Tired, they agreed to meet in the morning to begin the tedious work of unpacking and matching up each artifact to the correct entry on the manifest.

They left the building, nodding to Carl as they did so, and climbed back into Grayson's little car.

"Do you want me to pick you up in the morning?" Jenny asked as they bowled along.

"Thanks, but I think I'll just grab the bus," the professor replied. "Might as well start finding my own way around the city."

She nodded brightly, circling Public Square and pulling up in front of Stouffer's. "Well, if you get lost, call the museum," she said as he opened the door and got out. "I'll send out the marines."

"Make it the girl scouts," Indy called out, waving as she pulled away. He checked his watch as he strode into the hotel. Just after five. Good, that gave him time to grab a quick shower and change clothes before meeting his old college buddy in the lobby.

A

t precisely five thirty, the hotel's outer doors burst open and Elliot Ness strode in, looking dapper in his impeccable blue suit. Even his collar was unwilted, Indy noticed, despite the hot stickiness of the evening. "So," the younger man said, spotting his old friend, "you ready for the best steaks this side of the Mississippi?"

Jones grinned in reply. "Sounds terrific." He followed Ness out into the street, savoring the faint breeze that sprang up from Lake Erie. He glanced at the man walking by his side, comparing Elliot's sartorial splendor to his own worn-out gray tweeds. "I need some advice, old buddy," he said.

"You got it," the other said promptly.

"Tell me the best place to buy some clothes," the archaeologist went on wryly.

"Sure. What do you need?" Ness asked.

"Everything," was the answer. "All I've got is a suitcase full of raggy shirts and pants. Somehow, I don't think the folks at Western Reserve will be impressed by those."

Ness cocked his head to one side. "Mmm — for suits, Richmond Brothers," he said after a moment. "For shirts and ties, Higbee's. That one's easy, it's right by your hotel. For everything else, Fries and Schiele. It's over by the West Side Market."

"Thanks, kid," Jones grinned as they swung into a side street. A few doors down, a uniformed doorman stood under a discreet green awning. As the two men headed his way, the doorman came to attention and smiled. "Evening, Mr. Ness," he said, his teeth gleaming in his dark face.

"Evening, Joe," Elliot replied as the man held the door for them.

The interior was dim and cool, well-appointed tables scattered about the large room. A smiling headwaiter appeared. "Your regular table, Mr. Ness?" he asked. Not waiting for a reply, he set out across the room to a table half-hidden by an ornamental screen.

"I take it you've been here before," Indy said drily as the two men sat down.

Elliot shrugged. "Now and again," he smiled.

Another waiter rushed up, taking their dinner orders.

Ness leaned his elbows on the table. "Okay, now talk," he demanded. "I want to hear everything you've done since I last saw you."

The tales of Indy's adventures lasted through the salad, main course and dessert, Elliot's eyes shining as the archaeologist regaled him with descriptions of his travels.

"London, Budapest, Cairo, Shanghai, Guatemala," Ness mused at last. He leaned back and drew a cigar from his breast pocket, offering one to his friend. Indy accepted and the two men went through the familiar ritual of lighting up. Elliot blew out a cloud of blue smoke and shook his head. "All of them exotic, all of them places I've dreamed of going. And I'll feel lucky if I can take a few days off and take my family to Cedar Point!"

"Exotic isn't everything," Jones said. "Seems to me you've had more than enough excitement without ever leaving home!"

Ness smiled shyly. "It was ... interesting at times," he said.

"Oh, come on, Mr. Untouchable!" Jones teased. "And now a brand new job in a brand new city. What else do you need?"

"About twenty more hours a day and a few more honest cops," Ness replied, not really joking. "The city's a mess, Indy." He raised his arm, summoning a waiter. "Do you want a brandy?" he asked the professor.

Jones nodded and the servingman hurried off, returning in short order with two balloon glasses containing a generous portion of amber fluid.

The archaeologist accepted his glass, cradling it in his big hands and savoring the aroma that arose from the rim. He grinned as he watched his companion do the same.

"What?" Elliot asked suspiciously.

"Just seems funny to see *you* drink in public," the older man said.

"Prohibition's dead, thank God," Ness replied spiritedly. "No longer the law of the land." He stared into his glass and sighed. "But it paved the way for a lot of things that are far worse."

"You said things were bad?" Indy prompted.

"The 18th Amendment's dead, but the mobs aren't," the other replied. "When booze became legal, they looked for other ways to make money. And they found 'em." He waved a hand in the air. "Look around you, Indy. Cleveland's a nice place, right? Pretty lake, nice people, hell, we've even got a baseball team and a nice new shiny stadium. Great city.

"*But* —" he leaned forward, his voice dropping, "take a look under the surface. You've got between seventy and one hundred thousand people out of work. One fourth of the city is on some kind of government assistance. There are thousands of transients passing through every day. Some of 'em are hobos, but most are men looking for work. Down by the flats, there are Hoovervilles and shantytowns galore, whole families living in shacks made out of tin cans or boxes." He took a gulp of brandy and plowed on. "And the government! Burton's a good man, but he's only been in office for a little over a year. *He's* solidly anticorruption, but the rot goes deep. Hell, only two days ago my testimony helped send Cadek, the old police chief, away for twenty years!"

"Bribery?" Jones asked.

"Oh, yeah," the city's Safety Director agreed. "Graft, paybacks, the whole shootin' match. The syndicates think they *own* this town, Indy, have done ever since Moe Dalitz left the Purple Gang and took over the Mayfield Road Mob. The hell of it is, they're nearly right." He puffed agitatedly on the cigar. "They're into everything — prostitution, loan sharking, labor unions, you name it! But the big money maker is gambling, it bankrolls all the rest. Here in the city it's the numbers racket, in the suburbs it's discreet little clubs, catering to the very best people." He grimaced in

disgust. "Cleveland's a "safe" city," he concluded. "Just ask Dillinger or what's left of the Barker gang. They hide out here regularly."

"Sounds like you've got your work cut out for you," Jones replied softly. "But I can't think of anyone else who could tackle it."

The younger man smiled grimly. "Thanks." He sat back and took a swig of brandy. "And that's just the tip of the iceberg," he went on tiredly. "Half the cops are on the take, the good ones are demoralized. You wouldn't believe the amount of robberies and assaults that take place every day. The Third Precinct is wide open, even the cops are afraid to go in *there* alone. And to top it all off, we've got a lunatic running around decapitating people and chopping up their bodies." He raised his glass ironically. "Life in the big city!"

"Amen!" a new voice chimed in. "And don't forget the Baptist!"

Ness and Jones turned to see a short, thin man grinning down at them. He was middle-aged, sparse of hair, with sharp eyes behind wire-rimmed spectacles. He was dressed in a drab blue suit and wilted shirt, but his red bow-tie was fresh and jaunty.

"Clayton!" Ness smiled. "Join us!"

The newcomer hailed the waiter, ordered a whiskey and soda and sat down, studying the archaeologist intently.

"Indy, this is Clayton Fritchey of the *Cleveland Press*, the best damned reporter in the city," Elliot said. "Clay, this is —"

"Dr. Henry Jones Jr.," the other interrupted smoothly. "Though his friends and colleagues call him Indy or Indiana. Archaeologist and treasure-hunter, graduated from Chicago University, here to be guest lecturer at Western Reserve over the summer and to supervise the mounting of the new Sumerian/Egyptian exhibit at the art museum." He cocked his head sideways, looking like a wise, aged robin. "I've heard that the artifacts you escorted here are superb, especially the winged bull from Mesopotamia," he went on, his tight mouth twisted into a prim smile. "Would you be willing to be interviewed, Dr. Jones? Oh, and by the way, congratulations on being hired by the University of Pennsylvania. College Station's going to be tame after Egypt, isn't it?"

Jones goggled at the little man and Ness convulsed with laughter. "Isn't he incredible, Indy?" Elliot gasped. "Closest thing I've ever met to my old hero, Sherlock Holmes. There's *nothing* about this city Clay doesn't know."

"I wouldn't say that," Fritchey shrugged. "Don't know who the Butcher is. Don't know who the Baptist is, either." The waiter appeared at the reporter's elbow, drink in hand. Clayton accepted it with a nod of thanks.

"The Baptist?" Indiana echoed weakly.

"One of the local lunatics," Ness informed him. "Luckily, a lot more innocuous than our so-called Butcher of Kingsbury Run. Some kind of religious mania, we think. He runs up to someone in the dark, yells something and splashes them with water. He's waved a cross at some of his targets, too."

"Hit a woman with one tonight," Clayton put in.

"Really?" Ness said, eyes sparking with interest.

"Yep." The reporter reached into his breast pocket and withdrew a small, battered notebook. Flipping through the pages, he scowled down at the final page. "One Elizabeth Bennett," he said.

"Night operator for the Bell. On her way to work this evening, after sunset. A shape rose up out of the dark, she says, and yelled something, threw a bucket of water over her head, then hit her in the forehead with something hard before running away. Emergency ward at St. Vincent's said there's no concussion, but it left quite a bruise. Could have been caused by the crosspiece of a crucifix." He took a deep swallow of his drink.

"Could she tell if it was a man or a woman?" Ness snapped.

"Man, definitely, but she couldn't identify him. His face was in shadow. And he moved very fast." He shrugged. "Said he was yelling in some foreign language, that a few words sounded like Latin. She's Catholic, so she should know."

"This is the first time he's hurt someone," Ness said moodily.

"Could've been an accident," the spry little man speculated. "Swung too hard, or maybe his aim was a little off." He gulped the rest of his drink and stood up. "See ya later, Elliot," he growled. "Dr. Jones, I'll have a reporter meet you at the museum tomorrow. Nine o'clock all right?"

"Better make it ten," the professor told him. "I'll want to check with the museum authorities before I talk to your man."

"They'll be thrilled," the reporter commented drily. "Publicity. Times like these, they can use all the good press they can get. Helps with donations. Good night." He turned and stalked away.

Jones stared after him, not quite knowing what to make of the gruff individual.

"University of Pennsylvania, eh?" Ness's voice snapped the archaeologist's attention back to him. "That settles it. *Definitely* Richmond Brothers. You can't teach there in an off the rack suit!

"Now, finish your brandy and I'll walk you back to your hotel. We've both got a lot of work ahead of us."

The next day dawned warm and fair. Indy indulged in room service, lingering over a huge breakfast and leisurely glancing through the morning *Plain Dealer*. The outcome of the trial that Ness had spoken of the night before was the subject of several approving editorials, all of them praising the work of the city's new Safety Director. Quotes from that worthy were prominently featured and Indy smiled. His old friend always *had* loved the limelight!

A little after eight, the professor emerged from the hotel and stepped onto the bus that would deposit him near the museum.

Carl was again on duty and Indy waved at the glum man cheerfully, receiving a morose nod in return.

Jenny had arrived before the archaeologist and was already surrounded by half-dismantled crates and shredded packing material. Jones nodded a hello and fell to work.

After an hour or two, Indy looked up to see his assistant seated wearily on a stool, a smear of dust across her cheek and her hair pulling loose from the neat chignon. "Hey," he called to her. "We've got most of the invoices checked and I could use a break. How's about we stop for a cup of coffee?"

"Sounds *wonderful!*" the woman replied. "I swear they packed three centuries of dust with the pottery!"

"One of the hazards of a love affair with the past," Jones told her. "Listen, do you think you could direct me to the head of the museum? I probably should have checked in with him before this, but —"

"Oh, lord," the brunette said ruefully. "I should have taken you up and introduced you to Martin myself!"

"Martin?" Indy asked.

"Dr. Martin Lane," she answered. "Head curator, head of finance —"

"Head flunky," a voice chimed in. A stout graying man entered the big storage area, fastidiously threading his way through the debris. "It's all right, Jenny," the newcomer said. He was about sixty, clad in a rumpled, light-weight suit. His round face was genial, with pronounced laugh lines deeply engraved around nose and mouth. "I would rather Dr. Jones spent his time working with you than making polite chitchat in my office!" His hand met Jones's in a firm shake. "Delighted to have you with us, Dr. Jones!" he went on.

"Call me Indy, Dr. Lane," the archaeologist replied.

The curator peered around at the statuary and pottery set everywhere. "Oh, excellent!" he chortled. "Very good, indeed!" He peered up at the younger man. "This will make a *splendid* exhibit! Bring the people in in droves!"

"We can hope so," Jenny replied, somewhat primly.

"Oh, but of course it will, my dear!" the museum director protested. "All we have to do is *tell* them about it. And speaking of that," he continued, turning to the professor, "I've just received a call from the *Press*. Seems that they've heard of your arrival and would like to send someone to interview you. And you too, my dear," he put in, turning hastily to his employee. "I said that would be fine. The reporter should be here soon. I hope you don't mind?"

Jones grinned and shook his head. "That's okay by me, Dr. Lane, if it's all right with Jenny."

The woman sniffed resignedly. "I suppose so," she said, her voice cold. Jones looked at her quizzically, but she turned away. "I'll just go get the coffee," she said and left the room.

"Well, then, I'll just leave you to it, shall I?" Martin said. "Drop by my office any time, my boy. And let me know if there are any problems. That's what I'm here for." He peered up at a massive Sumerian bas-relief, emerging like an unlikely Venus from the straw that had protected it during its journey. "Oh, yes, just *splendid!*" the curator chirped again and trotted out of the room.

Jones grinned after him and returned his attention to the invoices. The archaeologist was upside down in a packing crate, scrabbling for pottery fragments, when Jenny returned.

The woman found a clear space on a nearby bench and placed the coffee tray on its dusty surface. "Coffee's on," she said.

"Be there in a minute," Jones muttered. "Can't find — oh, there it is!" He latched on to the elusive piece of baked clay and carefully extricated himself from the crate. "Some of this stuff shook its way loose from the wrappings," he frowned. "We'll have to sift through the straw very carefully."

"We're on a break, remember?" Jenny chided him. She held up a mug of steaming coffee. "How do you take this?" she asked.

"Black," the archaeologist replied, thankfully accepting the cup.

"Two sugars for me," said a man's voice, a pleasant baritone just touched with the lightest of Scottish accents. Indy looked up to see a young, blond man lounging against the doorway, the skinny frame of Carl the security guard hovering beside him. "And tell this guy I'm *supposed* to be here, okay?"

"Are you?" Jennifer asked, her manner freezing. "I was under the impression that your proper place was under some slimy rock."

"Ah, c'mon, Jenny, don't be like that," the man said cajolingly. He stepped forward. "And how about my coffee?"

The look in the woman's eyes suggested that she would dearly love to dump the steaming liquid over the young man's head. "Get your own!" she snapped. Turning to Indy, she said formally, "Dr. Jones, if you're through with the invoices, I'll run them up to the office for you. I think that this *gentleman* wants to talk to you." She took the papers from Jones's unresisting hand and swept away across the floor. At the doorway she turned and glared at the blond man. "And I'll have you know that *every* object in this exhibit is authentic," she snapped. "So if that sleazy rag of yours *dares* to say otherwise, I will personally feed you to your own printing press!" She whirled and stalked out, Carl tagging along at her heels.

"Ah, she loves me!" the young man cried, sighing theatrically.

"Optimist," Jones replied.

The blond grinned at him, large gray eyes sparkling in amusement. "Well, she'd just *love* to have my guts for garters," he amended. "I'm MacDonald. Ian MacDonald. From the *Press*?"

"I've been expecting you," the professor acknowledged. He glanced over to the doorway. "May I ask *what* my assistant has against you?"

MacDonald glanced around furtively. "She loves this dusty old dump," he said. "Fusses over it like it was a baby, won't hear a word against it."

"So?"

"So," the blond sighed, "last year I proved that three of the 'old masters' that hung on these hallowed walls were fakes. Bad ones at that." He shrugged. "She was *not* happy."

"That'd do it," Indy commented, gravely offering the younger man a cup of coffee.

"So," Ian said, accepting the mug with a nod, "enough about the Ice Queen." He pulled out a stool and sat down, carefully setting the mug down before drawing out a small notebook and the battered stub of a pencil. "Tell me, Dr. Jones, how do you find Cleveland?"

"You turn right at Pittsburgh," the archaeologist dead-panned.

Much to his surprise, Indy enjoyed the interview. MacDonald was brash and full of himself, to be sure, but he was also a canny journalist and a good listener, with a knack for asking good questions, never straying into trivialities.

Midway through the questioning, Indy stood up and made his way to the coffeepot, pouring himself another cup and offering a refill to the reporter.

The blond smiled and held out his cup. "Thanks."

"Edinburgh, right?" Jones asked.

The other looked at him in surprise. "Right. Most folk can't hear it anymore."

The professor shrugged. "I've got a good ear," he said dismissively. "How'd you end up here?"

"Same as a lot of others. There was no work back home, there was lots of work here. My dad moved the whole family here when I was six."

The two men looked around at the sound of footsteps. Jennifer Grayson strode into the room. "Excuse me, *Mister* MacDonald, but there's a call for you. From your boss, I believe." She turned away and then looked back. "The phone's under there someplace."

Grimacing at the woman's cold tones, the reporter located the phone under the bench. He picked up the receiver and barked into it. "MacDonald!" As he listened to the excited voice on the other end, the young man's breezy, easy going manner vanished abruptly. "Okay, where? Yeah, but *where* along Kingsbury Run? Okay, the Kinsman bridge. Yeah, I know where it is. Look, any sign of the body? Well, are they looking? Okay, okay, on my way."

He replaced the earpiece and spun to confront the archaeologist. "Sorry, Indy, I gotta run. We can finish this later, okay? Maybe tomorrow, if you're free." He turned on his heel and headed for the door, but stopped in his tracks as Jennifer called out.

"MacDonald?" the woman asked, her voice trembling. "Is it the — "

"The Butcher?" the reporter finished for her as her voice trailed off.

Jenny nodded, her face pale.

"Looks like it," the blond told her. "Coupla kids taking a short cut found a head. No sign of a body."

"Oh, God!" she raised a trembling hand to her mouth.

"Take it easy, Jenny," the reporter admonished her. "This joker haunts the Run, not dusty little museums."

Color swept back into her cheeks and she glared at the impudent newspaperman. "Get out of here!" she yelled.

"Anything my lady commands," the young man replied, burlesquing a sweeping bow. Laughing, he spun around and ran out of the room before the woman could decide to throw something at him.

Jenny stared at the floor. "I hate him!" she said vehemently, her eyes glistening. "He's a sleazy, ambulance-chasing scandal-monger and I *hate* him!"

"Uh-huh," Indy agreed, glumly deciding that he probably wouldn't be asking Miss Jennifer on a date any time soon. It had taken him awhile, but he had finally gained enough experience to know when a woman was in love — with someone else. Sighing inwardly for a lost opportunity, he looked over at the fuming woman. "Come on, Jenny," he said. "Let's get back to work."

A

s the day wore on, Jennifer's mood improved, but Indy could tell that her thoughts were never far from the day's gruesome discovery. He encouraged her to talk about it, figuring that was better for her than brooding.

The story was strange, he had to admit. It seemed a modern-day Jack the Ripper was haunting the dark streets of Cleveland.

The first body, that of a woman, had floated ashore on Euclid Beach in September of 1934 — at least part of it had. The lower torso, and part of the legs. At last it had been matched up with an upper torso found over thirty miles away. No one had paid much attention and the woman had never been identified.

But a year later, two boys climbing Jackass Hill near Kingsbury run had run screaming for the cops when they found the headless corpse of a dead man halfway up the hill. When the cops came to see what all the shouting was about, they had found yet another corpse — also male, also nude, also headless. Both heads had been found buried in shallow graves nearby.

During the following January, during one of the worst cold-snaps of a brutal winter, the fourth victim had been discovered — a woman. Bits and pieces of her body had been found in a bushel basket in an alley in the Third Precinct. More had been found the following month behind a fence surrounding an abandoned house.

"And just a month ago some poor girl tripped over a headless body in Brooklyn," Jenny concluded. "It was just lying along the tracks by the river." She closed her eyes and shivered. "That made it worse, because Brooklyn's west side and everybody thought he was just — kind of staying by the Flats, around the Run. And now *this* — it just scares me. I mean, who knows what a maniac like that will do next?"

"Maybe this has nothing to do with the others," Indy offered.

"You don't really believe that," the woman chided. "Neither will anybody else." She stared at him, her eyes hard. "But I'll tell you something, Indy. Your buddy Elliot Ness had better find this lunatic — and *fast*. People are scared. *All* of us."

There was nothing to say to that.

A

ll the next day, Indy kept an eye out for the young reporter, but MacDonald didn't reappear. Jenny seemed to have regained her composure, cheerfully doing her share of the work and then some, but the professor could see the fear lurking in her eyes.

During a late lunch break, the phone rang. Indy waved to the woman to keep her seat and answered the shrilling instrument himself. "Jones here," he said into the mouthpiece.

"It's Ian MacDonald, Indy," said the voice at the other end. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I'll have to put of the rest of our interview for a few days. Something's come up."

"I understand," Indy said quietly, flashing a quick glance at his assistant, seeing with relief that she was concentrating fixedly on a proposed floorplan for the exhibit. He turned so he was facing away from her. "More of the same as yesterday?" he murmured into the phone.

"Exactly," the young journalist agreed. "The body was found by some railroad workers this morning."

"I see," Indy remarked, raising his voice slightly. "Well, don't worry about it. Whenever you find the time, I'll be available. If not here, try the hotel. Or the university."

"Right. Thanks, Indy." The line clicked, and the dial tone buzzed in the professor's ear.

"Something wrong, Indy?" Jenny called over.

"Ah, no — no. Just my tailor," he lied.



little while later, the phone rang again. Jennifer answered it this time. She spoke rapidly into the receiver, then raised her head and called Jones over. "It's Elliot Ness," she said, handing him the phone.

"Elliot? How's it going?" the professor asked.

"Not good." Ness's voice was harried. "Things are going crazy around here. I presume you've heard about the body they found?"

"Hard to avoid," Indy said laconically.

Elliot's answering laughter was forced. "Look, would you mind having dinner with me tonight? I can't face going home to an empty house."

"Sure. Where?"

The safety director paused. "Why don't you just come to my office? We can decide when you get here."

"Sounds good. About six?" Jones asked.

"Great. See you tonight."

Indy hung up, shaking his head. Elliot sounded tense, rattled almost. Maybe Jennifer's fears *weren't* an isolated overreaction after all.

City Hall was a buzzing beehive when Indy walked in. He flagged down a passing cop, asking for directions to Elliot's office. The harried man pointed up a long corridor and hurried away before the archaeologist could thank him.

Indy headed up the hallway, finally pausing at a doorway marked "Director of Public Safety." He reached out and knocked softly. No answer. He tried the knob, finding that it turned easily in his hand. Peering around the door, he called, "Elliot?"

The door to the inner office swung open and a shirt-sleeved, rumpled Ness appeared. Dark circles ringed his bloodshot eyes. He smiled wearily and gestured the professor into the room. "I'd almost forgotten you were coming," he admitted as he rounded the desk and slumped heavily into the padded leather chair. "Sit down," he said, gesturing vaguely at a pair of chairs across from him.

"You look like hell," Jones commented as he seated himself.

Ness rubbed his forehead. "I feel a whole lot worse than that," he admitted. "God, it's been insane around here!" He stood up and grabbed his coat. "Come on, let's get out of here before someone else comes looking for me. I'm starved. There's a diner over on the next block. That okay with you?"

Indy nodded and rose. The two men made their way out of the building and walked slowly down the street.

"This thing is getting to me," Ness said as they walked along. "And to a lot of other people, too. The city's scared." He paused and shook his head. "You know, I've read about London during the Jack the Ripper business, how the city panicked. I always thought that was just newspaper exaggeration, you know." He stopped in front of little diner tucked cozily between two tall buildings. "But now — I tell you, friend, one more murder and I'm afraid something is going to snap in this town. And I don't know what the hell to do about it."

"Is it that serious?" Indy questioned, following his friend into the greasy spoon's bright interior. He was remembering the fear in Jenny's eyes, the tense undertone in MacDonald's voice.

Elliot slumped into a booth. Jones took a seat across from him. A pink-uniformed waitress offered them menus, took their orders for burgers and fries. A moment later she reappeared, placing a cup of hot strong coffee in front of each man.

Ness leaned forward and grasped the thick china mug, holding on to it tightly. "Oh, yeah, it's serious," he replied to the professor's question. "But the damn thing's so *shapeless*, Indy! Half the victims haven't been identified. The two we have haven't exactly been the most upstanding of citizens. One was a petty crook and part-time pimp, the other made her living walking the streets. Both of them were well known in the Third Precinct." He gulped at the coffee then fixed his bleary eyes on his friend.

"No witnesses?" the older man prompted.

"Not a damn thing," was the reply. "Not a hair, not a whisper. Dr. Pearse is sure it's the same killer — and that the cause of death is decapitation. The dismemberment is skillful, and there's always some sexual mutilation. The men have all been emasculated," he added, his voice dropping to an uncomfortable whisper. "We know that each victim has been tied up and then slaughtered. But we don't know why, by whom, or where. We never know *anything* until somebody trips over the remains. And no one's ever seen anybody carrying suspicious parcels. Hell, at the one near Jackass Hill, the two bodies were laid out, arms at their sides, heels placed together, real neat. But no one saw this joker dragging the bodies there, or burying the heads. And it's a steep hill, it must have taken hours." He sipped at his coffee. "Not even the report of a suspicious car. I'll tell you, it's almost enough to make you believe the old stories that the Run is haunted, that whoever's doing this isn't human."

Indy started at the words, sipping at his own coffee. He looked over at the other man. "Oh come on," he said uneasily. "I thought you were the last of the big-time rationalists. You and Sherlock Holmes, remember?" His voice rang hollow in his own ears.

Ness started to say something, then fell silent as the waitress returned with their orders. As she left, he picked up a french fry and bit into it. "And another thing. There's never any blood. Not a drop."

Jones, who had been pouring ketchup over his own fries, gulped and hastily set the bottle down. "No *blood*?" he echoed. "None at all?" He stared down at the rich, red tomato sauce and his face turned slightly green. He closed his eyes, and saw two faces dance on the inner lid — one male, one female. Blond and brunette. Both sets of eyes lit with an unholy green fire. Both mouths open, laughing, fang teeth gleaming in the light.

"Indy? Indy? Hey, old buddy, *I'm* the one who's punchdrunk here, remember?" Elliot's concerned voice cut through Jones's waking nightmare.

"Oh, sorry," the archaeologist mumbled. "Been breathin' in too much dust, I guess."

"You know, I didn't ask you to have dinner with me so you could hear me moan about this damned case," the safety director said with a smile. "So, tell me about the museum. Have you been to the campus yet? When do you start the lectures?"

Jones laughed at the barrage of questions. "I take it you want details?"

"You got it. Tell me all about your nice, normal world," the other said.

Sometimes my world is anything but normal, the professor thought grimly. But for the sake of his friend, he forced himself to smile and talk throughout the meal. But in the back of his mind, Elliot's words echoed steadily. No blood. *Oh, God*, Indy begged silently. *Don't let it be Nick. Please don't let it be him.*

Grimly, he forced himself to smile and talk with his friend. He even managed to eat most of his meal, though it had all the savor of dried library paste in his mouth. He took pride in the fact that Ness never noticed his abstracted manner, but then, the safety director was hardly in an observant mood himself. At last the meal was over and the two men left the diner and strolled back to City Hall, parting in front of the steps.

Indy walked back to the hotel through the dark city streets, the memories of the vampire he called friend taunting him. Not that he really thought the Butcher of Kingsbury Run was Nick, of course. But the archaeologist knew well that Nick wasn't the only one of his kind. *Damn*, Jones thought savagely, running a hand through his sweat-soaked hair. *There's LaCroix. And Janette, as well. And who knows how many others? For all I know, there's a whole tribe of 'em right here! Should I tell Elliot?* He shook his head, angrily rejecting the thought. *He'd think I've flipped. Can just hear him now — 'Sure, Indy, the Butcher's a vampire. There's no proof that such things exist, but since you're an old friend, I believe you. Thanks for solving my case. I'm gonna send out fifty patrol cars right now, all armed with crosses and garlic, and we'll catch him, okay? Meanwhile, I want you to sit right down here. I've got some friends I'd like you to meet. You'll like them, they wear these really pretty white coats —'* The professor smiled glumly. If he didn't know Nick, if he hadn't seen the things he had — *I'd think I was crazy, too!* he reasoned.

He was close to Public Square now, close enough to see his hotel on the corner. Still undecided, he walked slowly along the pavement. *All right, Jones, be logical. Keep your mouth shut for now*, he told himself. *But keep your eyes open. And if you spot the least shred of provable evidence, you go straight to Elliot and damn the consequences!* His strides lengthened as he approached Stouffer's. His smile was wry as he turned and opened the heavy hotel doors. *And you pray like mad that you never do have to face your old roomie and try to explain that he's up against a vampire. After all, teaching at Pennsylvania is bound to be more comfortable than a year or two in a mental ward here in Cleveland!*

He knew it wasn't the best decision he'd ever made, but it would just have to do. For now.

B ut the next day dawned, and the next, and nothing happened. The sky didn't fall and no more bodies (or pieces thereof) were discovered. The panic receded and the city took a long breath and relaxed. So did Indy.

The work at the museum went on apace, Jones finding Jenny to be a near-perfect assistant, cheerful and competent, except on the day that MacDonald returned to the museum to finish the interview.

To add to his contentment, he made the acquaintance of Dr. Lane's secretary, a lovely redhead named Mary Riley, who was more than delighted to enter into a casual, lighthearted courtship with the good professor. Indy gave thanks to whatever god had granted his wish, and if an occasional shiver coursed down his spine when someone mentioned the Butcher, he firmly pushed his uneasiness away.

Tiring of depending on busses and taxis, the professor pored over both the *Plain Dealer* and the *Press*, watching for a good deal on a used car. Within three days, he'd spotted a bargain and was soon tooling through the streets in a battered little Model A.

The archaeologist's new suits were ready the day before his first lecture and he took off work early to pick them up. As he drew up before the shop, he waved at Ness, who was coming out.

"Indy!" the former treasury agent cried delightedly. "I haven't seen you for at least a week! Nice car. Yours?"

"Yep," the other replied. "I figured I needed my own transportation now that I'm back in the States to stay." He smiled and gestured at the garment bag his friend held in his hand. "Looks like you're here for the same reason I am."

Elliot grimaced. "New 'formal occasion' black suit," he said. "Have to keep up the image, you know. Thank goodness they finished the alterations today — I have a hot date tonight!"

"And does *Catherine* know about this?" Jones asked innocently.

Ness scowled and aimed a mock blow at his friend's smirking face. "*Catherine is* my hot date!" he retorted. "You're just jealous because you haven't been able to find a weak-willed female willing to be seen in public with you!"

Indy tipped back the rim of his fedora and fixed the safety director with a bleak glare. "You're in a heap 'a trouble now, lawman!" he growled in his best Gary Cooper imitation.

Elliot fell back, impressed. "Wow, great Edward G. Robinson!" he said enthusiastically. "Can you do Mickey Mouse, too?"

"Nah, just Minnie!" Jones laughed. "Seriously, you have just insulted a certain lovely redhead."

"I have?" the other asked, confused.

Indy nodded solemnly. "You have. And though *I* am a generous enough soul to overlook your boorishness, I can't answer for Mary Riley. She's got a quick temper, she has. *And* a good right-cross!"

"And how did you find out about that?" Elliot retorted, neatly turning the tables.

Indy, taken aback, groped for a dignified answer. Finding none, he shrugged and sighed gustily. "A man's in a bad way when even his friends turn on him," he said sadly.

Ness chuckled and abandoned the game. "So, are you and Miss Riley free tonight?" he asked, shifting the garment bag to his other arm.

Jones looked at him suspiciously and shrugged. "For what?"

"How's dinner and the symphony sound?" the other answered. "A friend is loaning me his box, there's plenty of room. And Cathy has been asking me to invite you over for dinner. How about it?" He grinned. "Now that you're able to dress like a gentleman, you might even be presentable enough to sit next to the eminent Director of Public Safety of the City of Cleveland," he intoned.

"Nice to see success hasn't gone to your head," the professor growled. "I suppose I could give Mary a call —"

"Do it now," the other urged. He rummaged through his pocket. "Here's a nickel."

"Gee thanks, sport," Jones replied.

"You're welcome," Ness grinned. "C'mon, the ladies love an excuse to dress up! A nice dinner, terrific orchestra, good company. What else could you want?"



want to be someplace else, Indy thought frantically. *Anyplace else. Athens. Cairo. The snakepit at the London Zoo.*

"Indy? Is there something wrong? You've gone quite pale." Catherine Ness, a serene blonde woman, leaned forward, touching the professor's arm in concern. "Are you feeling all right?" she asked.

Alerted by his wife's worried tone, Elliot leaned across her to peer at Jones's face. "Maybe the oysters didn't agree with you?" he offered.

Indy shook his head and leaned back. "No," he said, dismayed when his voice cracked. He cleared his throat and tried again. "No, I'm fine. Just got a little dizzy for a moment there, that's all."

"I've got some smelling salts in my bag," Mary said from Indy's other side, snapping open her little evening purse and rummaging through it.

Jones reached out and took her hand, stopping her search. "No, really. I'm all right, Mary. Don't worry."

The redhead looked at him and smiled doubtfully. "If you say so," she said.

"I do," he said, dredging up a smile that felt like it would crack his stiff face.

Evidently the smile fooled the others, for they all leaned back in their plush chairs, looking expectantly at the stage as the sounds of a symphony orchestra tuning up for a performance filled the air of Severance Hall.

Feigning interest in the glittering scene below him, Jones leaned his arms on the box's railing, pretending to study the well-dressed audience. Cautiously, his surreptitious gaze flew to the box across the way, praying that he really *hadn't* seen two familiar faces — that it was just his imagination or guilty conscience playing tricks on him.

His heart sank as he studied the pair across from him, clearly visible in the hall's house lights. The man in immaculate black and white, dark blond curly hair gleaming in the illumination cast by the wall sconces. He laughed at a comment made by his companion, a lovely, slender woman clad in dark red satin, rubies gleaming at her throat and in her night-black hair. She swept a lacy black fan in front of her face, peering over it coquettishly.

No hallucination, no dream, Indy told himself grimly. *That's Nick all right. And Janette. Damn!* A small groan escaped him and he tensed, hoping that Elliot and the others hadn't heard, relaxing when he realized that the sounds from behind the curtain had masked his quiet outburst.

A hand touched his arm and he nearly leapt over the railing. "Indy?" Mary said quietly.

He managed to pull a mask of calm over his face and turned to her. "Yes?" he answered, his voice hoarse with control.

"Thanks for inviting me," she said gaily. "It's not often I get to travel in these circles!"

"Don't see why not," he answered, striving for normalcy. "You've had *me* traveling in circles ever since we met!"

"Flirt!" she giggled. "You make me sound like a carousel horse!"

"Not just a horse!" he bantered back. "A beautiful, prancing chestnut thoroughbred, all fire and spirit!"

"Remind me to take you to Euclid Beach Park this summer," she said throatily, leaning forward to look steadily into his eyes. "Now there's a carrousel! And when we get tired of riding —"

"Yes?" The look in the redhead's eyes was almost making the professor forget about the pair seated in the opposite box.

"Well," she murmured, "a walk on the beach is always nice, don't you think? Especially if there's a full moon."

"It's a date," he promised, mentally making a note to look up the date of the summer's first full moon. And the second. Maybe even the third —

"C'mon you two, break it up, you're embarrassing us old married folks," Elliot teased. "Besides, the overture's about to start."

"Now, Elliot, they're just being romantic," Catherine chided him, amused. She tilted her head and stared at her husband consideringly. "Something we've seemed to have a shortage of lately. Perhaps I should ask Indy to give *you* a refresher course in the subject."

Ness's eyes widened indignantly, but his reply was cut off by the sudden dimming of the house lights and the applause of the audience. But the aggrieved *now see what you've started* look he shot his old friend boded ill for the intermission's conversation.

Indy leaned back in his seat, his slight grin fading as his attention was again caught by the couple across the way. Even the dimness of the auditorium couldn't quench the gleam of the man's eyes, the sparkle of the woman's jewels. His stomach rolled queasily as he realized that his nightmares just might be coming true.

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he last chords reverberated through the hall and the audience surged to its feet, clapping heartily. The curtain swept shut and the houselights brightened slowly.

Jones blinked in the sudden brightness, looking like a startled owl. He hadn't heard a single note of the performance, caught as he was on the horns of an ethical dilemma.

"Are you okay, Indy?" Ness said, putting a hand on the archaeologist's shoulder. "You look like you're miles away."

Indy shook his head. "Good music does that to me," he muttered.

"The orchestra's in fine form tonight," Catherine put in.

"It always is," Riley retorted.

"I make it a point to never argue with a native Clevelander," Indy teased, laughing as Mary scowled at him.

The foursome rose. "Refreshments?" Ness asked as they made their way to the back of the box.

The two women looked at each other and shook their heads, smiling. "Powder room," they answered in chorus.

"But you can get me a lemonade, Elliot," the blonde told her husband.

"How about you, Mary?" the professor inquired.

"Lemonade sounds fine to me too," was the reply.

In the corridor the four split up, the women heading for the ladies' lounge, the men for the lobby.

Indy stiffened as they entered the large, airy expanse. There, near the bar, were the two people that had been haunting his uneasy thoughts.

"Are you all right?" Elliot said, frowning. "You know, I'm getting tired of asking you that."

Jones shrugged. "Just saw someone I know," he said. "Look, I'm going to go speak to them. Can you handle the drinks yourself?" He was moving even as he spoke.

"Well, yeah," Ness said, a frown of concern creasing his brow. "But what about you?" he called after his retreating friend.

"Get me one of whatever you're having!" Indy called back over his shoulder. Grimly, he strode forward, making his way through the crowd, moving slowly toward his goal.

The professor was still some distance away when the blond man looked up, catching sight of him. He smiled broadly and held up a hand in greeting.

The woman turned at the gesture and saw the archaeologist. A look of purely feminine appraisal crossed her face and she snapped open her fan, regarding him over its lacy rim. Wicked laughter danced in her midnight eyes as the young man blushed. "Indiana Jones," she said in her husky voice as he covered the last small distance between them. "You have grown up, *cherie*," she continued, tilting her head to look up at him. "In Budapest you were still a little boy, though pretty. Now —" her voice trailed off and she looked him over thoroughly, licking her lips. "Now you are a man, *n'est-ce pas*? And so handsome!" She snapped the fan shut and ran it along his jaw.

Jones found himself unable to look away, though he moved uneasily as the lacy fan tickled his chin.

The woman chuckled, enjoying his nervousness. "Perhaps you would join me after the performance," she cooed. "We will walk in the moonlight, *non*?"

"There's no moon," the professor stammered. "And I'm escorting another lady tonight, Janette."

"Perhaps another time," she pressed, moving closer.

"I — I don't think so," Jones muttered.

"You make me think you are afraid of me," the woman vampire pouted, the compulsion in her eyes dying away and being replaced by sheer mischief.

"Oh, I am," the archaeologist said fervently.

"Then you've developed a little sense since the last time I saw you," the blond man said drily, holding out his hand. He had been watching the little scene with some amusement. "But what are you doing here, Indy? I thought Chicago was your stamping ground."

"It used to be, until I graduated," the professor answered, taking Nick's hand in a firm clasp. The coolness of the other's flesh shocked him, as always, and he hastily let go. "It's been ten years since we met in Hungary, remember. I have my degree now. I'm just here for the summer, then I go on to a real teaching job. In Pennsylvania."

"Boring," Janette said haughtily. "If you insist on burying yourself alive in a dusty classroom, you should do it in a place with tradition. Oxford, perhaps, or the Sorbonne. *Not* Penn-see-vahn-ee-ah." She shuddered. "*Tiens!* What a name!"

"*You* are a snob!" Nick rebuked her.

"But of course!" she answered pertly. "But you love me anyway. Now, I will go to the ladies' room and check my makeup, while you two speak of things that I will find boring." She walked away, smiling back over her shoulder.

"LaCroix isn't here, is he?" Jones asked nervously.

Nick's features hardened. "He has no use for the new world," he answered shortly. "And his whereabouts are no longer my concern, just as mine are no longer his."

"You were serious about breaking with him, then?" Indy asked.

"I was." The vampire leaned wearily against the wall. "But I've meant it before." He smiled wryly. "Maybe it'll take this time."

Jones could no longer indulge in pointless small talk. He reached out and caught at the other's sleeve. "Nick, this is important. How long have you been here?"

The blond man stared at the professor through narrowed eyes. He grasped Jones's wrist, exerting pressure, forcing the young archaeologist's hand to release its grasp. "And what right do you have to question me?" he said, his voice soft and menacing.

Indy stared back, undeterred. "It's important," he insisted.

The vampire's expression didn't soften. "Janette and I arrived by last night's train from New York," he said expressionlessly. "Our ship docked the evening before that. The *Normandie*. Perhaps you would care to check?"

Jones sagged in relief. "No, I know you wouldn't lie," he said, his eyes still locked on the other man's face.

Nick nodded, his face still stony. "You mean, you know of no reason why I should." His voice was smooth, silky, dangerously so.

Indy's gaze never wavered. "One more question," he said doggedly. "Are there any other — any others like you here in the city?" His voice was rough with urgency.

The anger in the vampire's face faded. The man facing him was obviously distressed. The sincerity in the hazel eyes couldn't be faked. "No," he said slowly, one eyebrow cocked quizzically. "None that I know of," he amended. "We're hardly a close fraternity, Junior."

"Don't call me that!" the other barked angrily, at the same time reassured by Nick's teasing tone. "Can you find out?" he pressed.

The vampire's other eyebrow rose in surprise. "I can try, I suppose," he temporized. "If I had a good enough reason."

"How about a string of murders?" Indy growled.

Nick shrugged. "There are always murders," he said disinterestedly.

"Not like these!" Jones insisted. "These are —" he ran out of words and shrugged. "Different," he said at last. "Very different."

"And you think that one of *us* is behind it?" the blond asked softly, watching the young man's face. "Why?"

"Because — oh, *damn!*" The lights flickered, signaling the end of the intermission. "Look, we can't talk here," the archaeologist said desperately. "I'm at Stouffer's, downtown. It's on the square, do you know it?"

Nick nodded.

"Can you meet me there later tonight?" the professor rushed on. "Please. It's important."

"If you wish," the vampire answered, intrigued despite himself.

"Good," Jones sighed. The lights flickered again and the two men could see Janette's scarlet-draped figure approaching. "I'll see you then," the professor said and strode off, bowing to the brunette as he passed her.

Janette gestured to her escort and the two vampires strolled slowly toward their box. The female shook her head. "A handsome man, our Indy," she said. "But nervous, *non?* I had not remembered him as being so — so fearful."

Nick shook his head, replaying the recent conversation through his mind. "I don't think he *is* fearful," he said. "And I admit that the thought of something that can scare Indiana Jones makes *me* nervous."

The concert's second half had ended in a flurry of standing ovations and encores, and Indy and his friends joined the audience in the rush for the exits. As they reached the pavement, Elliot nudged the professor. "Hey, aren't those your friends?" he said, jerking his head to the right.

Jones looked up to see Nick and Janette standing on the sidewalk, part of a queue waiting for taxis to be summoned. "Umm, yeah," he said unenthusiastically, hoping that Ness would take the hint.

Elliot, of course, had no intention of doing so. "Aren't you going to introduce us?" he pressed.

"Uh, well —" Jones hedged, hoping that the vampiric duo would climb into a cab and be whisked away.

His hopes were dashed as Janette turned and saw him standing there. She waved cheerfully and made her way over to the little group, a somber Nick trailing in her wake. "Indy, *mon cher,*" she purred. "Nicholas and I are going to a jazz club, so amusing, *non?* Perhaps you and your friends would care to join us?" The look she shot the blushing archaeologist was predatory, sizzling.

Mary Riley was not amused. She glared at the sinuous brunette, and her grip on Indy's arm tightened possessively.

Jones felt like a mouse caught between two very hungry cats. "Ah, well —" he sputtered helplessly. "Ah, Nick, Janette, I'd like to introduce you to Elliot Ness and his wife Catherine. And this is Mary Riley," he said, turning to the redhead who stood at his side. "People, this is Nick —" he stopped, realizing that he didn't have the faintest idea what name the vampire was currently using.

"Merrick," the blond man said smoothly. "And my lovely companion is Janette Corbeau."

"Elliot Ness?" the dark-haired woman said, tilting her head to look up at the tall lawman. "From Chicago? But I have heard of *you* — you fought the gang boss Capone, *non*?" She moved closer to the tall, loose-limbed man. "So brave, like the sheriffs in the cinema. The show down." Her voice dropped an octave, coming out a throaty whisper. "Some time you must tell me *why* they call you 'Untouchable'."

It was Catherine's turn to bridle, glare and place a possessive hand on her man's arm; just as it was Elliot's turn to smile weakly and try to ignore the feminine battlelines that had just been established. His eyes turned desperately to Jones. "So, where did you two meet?" he squeaked.

"In France," Indy said.

"On a battlefield," Nick added, placing an arm around the raven-haired woman's waist and drawing her back to his side.

Ness closed his eyes in relief, glad to be out of the line of fire. "And you haven't seen each other since the War?" he went on.

"We — stumbled over each other in Budapest in '26," the blond offered.

"Nick was — involved in the dig I told you about," Jones said.

"Oh, you're an archaeologist, too, then?" Mary asked, smiling at the handsome vampire.

Nick shook his head, smiling faintly. "Just an interested amateur, I'm afraid," he told her. "I — dabble — in the past." He looked over his shoulder and spotted a cab hovering near the curb. "But I'm afraid Janette and I must leave you now. It has been a pleasure, Mr. and Mrs. Ness, Miss Riley. Indy, I shall see you *soon*." His voice stressed the last word.

Jones nodded fractionally in understanding and the vampire smiled.

"A pleasant evening to you all," the vampire said and escorted the raven-haired woman to the taxi and climbed in after her. The yellow cab zoomed away, leaving the foursome staring after it.

"Interesting people," Ness commented at last.

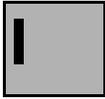
"He was all right, but that woman — !" Mary huffed.

Catherine snorted in agreement. "I have never seen such a blatant *flirt*!" she snapped. "The nerve — ogling my husband in front of my eyes!" She turned indignant gaze to her spouse. "And you just *stood* there!" she accused.

"You, too, Indy!" Riley chimed in. "I was never so embarrassed!" She and Catherine exchanged a long-suffering look. "*Men!*" they chorused and stalked toward the parking lot, side by side.

Indy and Elliot looked at each other and shrugged. "So much for the perfect end to the perfect evening," Ness said resignedly.

"You said it, brother," Jones agreed. At least one problem was solved: it didn't look like he'd have to explain to Mary *why* he was driving her straight home and hurriedly dropping her off. Judging by the expression on her face, even if he *didn't* have to hurry back to the hotel to meet the vampire, he'd nothing to look forward to but a handshake and a frosty, "Good *night*, Doctor Jones."



It was past three o'clock when a soft tapping at the suite's door announced Nick's arrival. Indy answered the summons and invited the blond man into the spacious sitting room.

The vampire looked around curiously. "I wasn't sure you'd be in yet," he admitted.

"Oh, I've been here for *hours*," Indy said glumly, slumping onto the sofa. "Mary wasn't exactly in an expansive mood this evening. Not after meeting your companion, that is."

Nick smiled faintly. "Janette often has that effect on other females," he remarked, prowling restlessly around the room. "I've seen it hundreds of times."

"Would you please sit down?" Jones asked edgily. "You're making me nervous."

Obligingly, the blond man chose a comfortable armchair facing the sofa. He stared at the younger man, noting the lines of maturity in the familiar face. "You're looking well," he said. "You're a success in your field, I take it?"

The archaeologist smiled sheepishly and shrugged. "Moderately so, I guess."

"So, you have the work you love *and* your dreams as well," the blond went on.

"Some of them, anyway," Jones agreed.

"All you need is one," the vampire said softly.

Indy looked sharply at him. "What about *your* dream, Nick? Are you any closer to finding a cure?"

"No." Sadness clouded the greenish eyes. "After Hungary —"

Jones shivered at *that* memory.

Nick noticed the other's reaction and nodded. "A disaster, I agree," he said. "After that, I drifted. LaCroix and Janette caught up to me in Vienna. Since then —" he shrugged. "The trail is cold."

"What about South America?" the professor said, leaning forward intently. "Another expedition. There may be more jade cups —"

Nick grimaced in revulsion. "Perhaps," he said reluctantly. "But not now. I'm not ready to face another failure just yet."

"Why the States?" Indy asked after a long moment of silence.

"I like it here," was the reply. "And LaCroix does not. I need not fear his interference here."

"And Janette?"

The vampire shrugged. "She was bored. And LaCroix had angered her. I didn't ask. I imagine she'll drift off on her own in a month or two." He stretched lazily. "But I'm here on more serious business. Tell me about these murders of yours."

Indy nodded and tapped the pile of papers lying on the coffee table between the chair and sofa. "It might be quicker if you just read these," he said. "Some are newspaper clippings, the rest are notes made by a young reporter I know."

Silently, the blond man picked up the file and opened it, becoming engrossed in the contents.

Jones used this opportunity to study the mysterious individual across from him. He was struck, as always, by the other's seeming normalcy. No sign of what Nick was showed in his appearance, on his face. It was a good face, most of the time a kind face, open and boyish, the firm mouth always ready to smile. It was inconceivable that those features could twist into an inhuman mask, that the wide-spaced eyes could flare with the fires of undying hunger.

"Can't find the mark of Cain, Indy?" Nick murmured, his eyes still glued to the file.

Jones jumped at the sound of the man's voice. "Didn't know I was being that obvious," he muttered and turned away. He rummaged through the open briefcase lying next to the couch, finally locating the notes for his next lecture. Determinedly he settled down to study them. Silence, broken only by the rustle of papers, reigned for long minutes.

At last Nick closed the file and tossed it onto the table. Indy looked up questioningly.

"No," the vampire said firmly. "Not one of us, I'm happy to say. What you have here is a plain, garden-variety human lunatic."

"You're sure?" Jones pressed.

"Very," the other replied. "There are rules, Indy, about *not* calling attention to ourselves. Rules that are very *strictly* enforced." His closed his eyes, the memory of a young battlefield reporter he had met nearly seventy years earlier skittering across his mind. "There isn't one of us that would be willing to court such a punishment. Believe me."

Indy stared at him for another moment, then nodded. "Okay," he said. "If you say so."

"I do." He hesitated. "But if I run across this Butcher — I'll take care of him."

"Nick —" the professor protested warningly. "If it's not one of your — people — I mean, should you get involved?"

"Oh, I won't get involved," the other told him grimly. "The murders will just — stop." He smiled mirthlessly. "You understand."

The archaeologist nodded slowly. "I wish you hadn't told me that," he said uneasily.

"Then forget I said it." Nick rose and smiled. "I imagine we'll see each other now and again," he said. "It's not so big a city that we can avoid each other entirely."

"Sure thing," Indy said, standing up and offering his hand. "Maybe we'll get together, go see the Indians play. They have night games, you know," he grinned. "You should enjoy it — all those *bats* —"

Nick scowled in mock anger. "You know, *Junior*, it's really a wonder that *you* weren't murdered years ago. Someone *should* have — what do they call it? Bumped you off? — during your extended adolescence. Just on general principles." He smiled reluctantly and shook hands. "Someday that mouth of yours is going to get you in real trouble," he warned. He reached into his breast pocket and pulled out a small piece of paper, thrusting it into Jones's hand. "Here's the address of the house I've rented, and the telephone number of a message service," he said.

"I'll be in touch," Indy promised.

The vampire crossed to the door and opened it. "We're all off the hook, my friend," he said. "Sleep well."

"I will," Jones said quietly as the door closed.

T

he nightmares gone, the next two weeks sped by. The work at the museum went well and it appeared that the exhibit would be ready well before the opening date. Indy's lectures were well-received. May slid imperceptibly into June and Indy at last stopped looking over his shoulder.

The knocking at the suite's door startled the young archaeologist out of a sound sleep. He sat up in bed, rubbing his hand over sleep-mazed eyes, listening intently. *Must've been a dream*, he assured himself, and was just settling back into the pillows when it came again. Indy virtually levitated out of bed and headed for the door, his bare feet coming into painful contact with what seemed to be each and every piece of furniture in the two rooms. At length he reached the door and flung it open. "There had better be a *damn* good reason for this!" he roared, before blinking and lowering his voice, trying desperately to find a civil tone. "Good morning, officer," he said, smiling weakly. "Is something wrong?"

The burly, blue clad man shook his head and advanced into the room, Jones falling back before him. The professor stumbled to a table and snapped on a lamp just as the cop quietly closed the door.

"Apologies for the early hour, Dr. Jones," the officer said. "I'm Frank Polenski. I'm attached to the Safety Director's staff."

"One of Elliot's men?" Indy said around an enormous yawn. He scratched vaguely at his head, still not quite awake. He peered at the big blond man vaguely. "What time *is* it, anyway?"

Polenski looked at his watch. "Just after five-thirty," he commented impassively.

Jones collapsed on the couch. "God!" he mumbled. "I didn't get in till two. If this is my ol' buddy's idea of a joke —"

"It's no joke, sir," the big man said patiently. "If you'll just read this." He pulled a piece of paper out of his uniform pocket and handed it to the archaeologist.

Indy held it up in front of his eyes, blinking and trying to focus. The few words on the paper hit him like a bucket of cold water.

"Indy," it said, "I need your help. Please accompany Officer Polenski. It's urgent." The few words were hastily scrawled, the signature almost unreadable, as if Ness's hand had been shaking as he wrote. Jones frowned. The terse note was unlike his friend. Elliot must be really rattled.

The archaeologist got up and headed for the bedroom. "I'll be with you in five minutes," he told the waiting officer.

The big man nodded impassively.

Indy wasted no time in dressing. He hastily pulled on a pair of brown slacks and tan shirt, disdaining a necktie. He grabbed a pair of socks, pulled them on and slid his feet into his well-worn leather boots. Last of all, he grabbed his fedora and headed for the door. "Let's go, Polenski," he said.

The prowler car sped through the city streets, which were almost deserted at this early hour. Dawn light filtered through sullen clouds and the air was still and breathless. "Looks like a storm comin' in," Indy offered, more to break the silence than anything else.

"Probably," Polenski grunted. He spun the steering wheel in his massive hands.

Well, that went over like a lead balloon, Jones commented to himself. He looked around at the passing scenery, aware that he was now in a part of the city he'd never seen before. The street was narrow, lined with small shops and restaurants. To his left was a large Catholic church, its domed roof ghostly in the dim morning light. Before him, the street twisted and rose in a steep hill. "Where are we?" the professor asked.

"Murray Hill," his laconic companion replied, shifting gears as the cop car climbed the hill. "Little Italy. See that wall over there?" he said, jerking his head to the left.

"Yep," the professor answered drily. The wall was hard to miss. Built of tightly fitted gray stone, it rose to twice the height of a man, paralleling the road as it climbed to the summit. "What about it?"

"There's still bullets buried in it, from where the Porello Brothers shot it out with the Mayfield Road gang a few years back," the other replied, some animation finally becoming apparent in his voice. "Got three of 'em. The other four — well, last I heard, they was still runnin'!" He grinned, disclosing discolored, horse-sized teeth.

"Right." Jones grinned back weakly. He noticed the top of a blackened, conical tower rising over the wall. "What's that?" he asked quickly, not really in the mood to hear about any more dead gangsters. Not until he'd had a cup of coffee, at least.

"What's what?" the cop asked, frowning.

"That tower."

"Oh. Garfield Memorial," the other answered. "He was assassinated, you know. Shot. Just like Lincoln."

"I think I heard about it." Jones slid down in the seat and pulled his fedora over his eyes.

The car crested the hill and Polenski pulled it into a sharp left turn, stopping in a short drive that led to massive metal gates. Two uniformed cops stood in front of the barrier. Polenski stuck his head out of the window. "Open up, guys," he yelled.

The policemen nodded and complied. Metal squealed as the gates moved. When the opening was wide enough, Polenski eased the car forward. As the vehicle passed through, the two cops pushed the gates closed again.

"We're here, Doc," the big policeman said.

Indy sat up and pushed back the brim of his hat. His eyes darted back and forth, widening as they took in the array of tombstones and mausoleums lining the graveled path. "This is a cemetery!" he objected.

"Yep," the other replied phlegmatically. "Lakeview. Pretty, isn't it? Very classy place. Got lots o' millionaires'n such planted here." He slowed the car and guided it to the edge of the path. "Can't go no further in the car," he grunted. "Gotta park it here'n go the rest of the way on foot."

The two men left the prowler car and headed down the path, Polenski slightly in the lead.

"Look, just what is this all about?" Jones panted, trotting to keep up with the big man's huge strides.

"Mr. Ness wanted to fill you in hisself," the cop commented guardedly.

"Aw, come *on*," Indy growled. He stopped dead in his tracks, scowling. "At least give me a hint, or I swear I'm finding my way out of here and flagging down the first cab I see!"

Polenski worried his lower lip. "Okay, okay, keep your shirt on, Doc! Thing is, they found a body."

"No!" Jones gasped sarcastically. "A *body*? In a *cemetery*!? What *is* the world coming to?"

The officer shook his massive head, a slight twinkle playing in his pale blue eyes, momentarily lightening his stoic features. "Good one, Doc," he acknowledged. The glint of humor disappeared abruptly. "Thing is, this body just became a body recently. *Very* recently, if you take my meaning. And it sure as *hell* don't belong here."

Elliot was standing at the top of a small rise as Indy and Polenski approached. Near the lawman was an elaborate marble tombstone topped by a massive angel, wings outstretched. The ex-treasury agent was deep in conversation with three other men, two of them in sober business suits, the third in a blue uniform.

"Right, then, Chief Mercer, if you're willing to work with me and my men —" Ness said.

"*More* than willing, Mr. Safety Director," the policeman cut in. He was a rotund, middle-aged man, and was sweating heavily. "It's very clear. The cemetery is on the Cleveland side of the line. You'll get no jurisdictional squeaks from me *or* the mayor here. My boys are good, but they just can't handle something like — like *that!*" He gestured to the right and shuddered. "Anything you need, just name it!"

One of the suit-wearing gentlemen nodded emphatically.

"Thank you Chief, Mr. Mayor," Elliot replied. His voice dropped. "You *do* agree we should keep the lid on this," he said conspiratorially. "Don't want the papers blowing this up out of proportion."

The mayor nodded emphatically. "Indeed not!" he blustered. "Cleveland Heights is a nice, *quiet* little town," he snorted. "Just because *Cleveland's* maniac decided to — to *desecrate* this fine cemetery —" His voice trailed off.

"No use giving the bastard the satisfaction! Even if the victim turns out to be one of *our* fine citizens," Mercer rumbled indignantly.

"Just so," Ness agreed smoothly. "I promise I'll keep you both informed as to the progress of the investigation — ahh, *there* you are, Indy!" He turned back to the disgruntled officials. "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet Professor Henry Jones, Jr., an old friend and an authority on the unusual. He's offered to give us his expert advice on this difficult matter."

The two men nodded and shook hands with Jones, then took their leave, almost, but not quite, scurrying for their car.

"What's *their* problem?" Indy asked, looking after their retreating forms. "And for that matter, what's *your* problem, EI? And since when have I been a dispenser of 'expert advice' to the Cleveland police?"

"Since about four thirty this morning!" his friend snapped, glaring at the archaeologist. He sighed heavily and rubbed his shaking hand over his mouth. "Look, Indy, I'm sorry I had to drag you into this, but I'm drowning here! Technically, I'm not supposed to be involved in an ordinary murder, let alone call in outside help, but —"

Jones reached out and grasped the other man's shoulder in concern. "Take it easy," he said encouragingly. "Start at the beginning."

Ness took a deep breath. "Right. At about four-thirty this morning, the watchman was making his regular rounds. He spotted someone lying under one of the statues. Thought it was a drunk sleeping it off, or maybe somebody'd got locked in when the gates closed last night. When he got closer, he saw —"

"Dead?" Indy asked.

Elliot nodded. "Oh yes," he said heavily. "And mutilated."

"Damn!" Jones breathed. "The Butcher again."

The other man shook his head slowly. "That's the worst part," he almost whispered. "I really don't think it is."

Indy stared at his friend, stunned.

Ness returned the look steadily. "Come with me," he said at last. "I wasn't kidding about needing your opinion. No, don't ask me anything else right now," he ordered, forestalling the questions rising in the professor's eyes. "Just — come and take a look. Tell me what you think."

The two men walked down the gravel pathway to where it forked at the base of a hill. At the top of the rise, in the thick velvety grass, the stone form of a magnificent deer faced the road, the antler-crowned head brooding down on the tombstones as if in challenge.

"Up there," the lawman muttered. "To the right of the deer." He strode a little ahead, gesturing to the knot of men gathered around something laying on the ground. "This is Dr. Jones," the Safety Director said. "Stand back and let him have a look."

The men moved back, all save one young man with a camera, who doggedly persisted in taking as many exposures as he could, from as many angles as he could.

"Klein!" Ness snapped.

"It's all right," Jones told his friend. "He won't be in my way." The archaeologist moved forward slowly, forcing himself to look at the grisly scene before him.

The corpse was female, tiny — an old lady still clinging to the fashions of her long-past youth. Long black dress, high-necked and long-sleeved, modest enough to have won a nod of approval from Queen Victoria herself. She lay on her back, arms neatly at her sides. Her legs were stretched out, feet primly together. Snow-white hair was tucked primly under a close fitting hat, the hat itself swathed in a black veil. The veil was flung back, disclosing the face. The features were twisted in a grimace of fear, faded blue eyes staring at the sky in terror. There was a huge bruise on the wrinkled forehead.

Indy forced his gaze away from the face and looked down to the scrawny chest, considering the weapon that had brought a violent end to the old lady's life. It was a wooden stake, driven through the muscle and fabric directly over the heart. About four feet long, it stood erect in its gory stand. About a foot from the top, a crosspiece was lashed, forming a rude crucifix.

Incongruously, candles had been placed at her head, feet and to either side, and there was a wide ring of a gritty white substance circling her.

Jones winced and looked away. "God, how old *was* she?" he asked.

"Seventy-four," one of the hovering men told him in grim tones.

"God!" the professor repeated. He moved closer to the body, trying not to touch the white ring surrounding the corpse, and crouched down, staring at the bloodstained base of the wooden cross. "Took a lot of strength to drive the thing in this far," he commented. He reached out a shaking finger and prodded gingerly at the ribcage. "A *lot* of strength," he said. "She was wearing a corset!"

A bearded man carrying a black bag left the little huddle of bystanders and knelt down on the other side of the body. "Not as much as you'd think," he said, his tone clinical. "Look, she was hit first and fell, so she was on her back. The stake was driven in from above, with all the weight of the attacker's body behind it. Took considerable strength, yes, but any able-bodied man could have managed it." He leaned forward, brushing the veil aside. "Just as any able-bodied man could have managed this," he said.

Indy gagged when he saw that the head had been severed from the body. He lost his balance and fell backward, landing heavily on the grass.

The bearded man looked at him in surprise. "Sorry," he said after a moment. "I thought you'd been told."

"Nobody told me anything," Jones snapped. He shook his head and grimaced. "And I'm not sure I *want* to know, either."

Elliot walked forward and extended a hand to the professor, helping him to his feet. "Indy, this is Doctor Pearse, the coroner. Please, Arthur, go on."

The bearded man nodded. "The decapitation was definitely done post mortem," he went on. "Again, the blow came from above. One stroke, with a heavy, thick-bladed instrument of some kind. The edges of the wound are fairly smooth, you see. One blow," he repeated, getting to his feet. "Sheared easily through cartilage and bone."

"You're *sure* it was done after death?" Ness pressed doggedly.

Pearse nodded. "Fairly sure," he said. "Look at the blood. Most came from the chest, the clothes are stiff with it. The neck wound, on the other hand, shows no evidence of hemorrhage. So, I'd say that the heart had definitely ceased beating when the decapitation took place."

"And she was killed here," the lawman commented.

Pearse looked at him consideringly. "I'd say so, yes." He shook his head. "Sorry, Elliot, but I'd have to say that in my opinion, this is *not* the work of the same man."

"Damn!" Elliot clenched his fists in frustration. "So now I've got *two* lunatics running loose." He sighed. "All right Arthur, you can move the body whenever you're ready. Just don't talk to any reporters, all right? Let's keep a lid on this as long as we can."

The coroner nodded. "I'll make sure my people keep their mouths shut as well." He turned away, beckoning to the hovering photographer. "We'll be needing more shots after we move the body, Klein," he said.

Ness turned back to Indy. "Well?" he said hopefully.

Indy stood silently, still staring at the body. "The blood," he said suddenly. "There should be some blood on the forehead. Look," he went on, again crouching by the body, his hand going out to indicate the massive bruise, "the skin is split. There should be at least a trace of blood there."

Ness and the coroner looked at each other then they, too, crouched down beside the black-clad corpse. Pearse leaned forward, frowning. "You're right," he said at last.

Indy peered closer. "The hat and veil are wet," he commented, touching them.

"There was a heavy dew," Pearse began.

"No," Jones retorted. "If it were dew, her dress would be wet too, and it's not, only damp. Look."

The safety director and the coroner did as they were told. Indy was right, the black material was only slightly damp.

Jones rubbed a hand over his eyes. He turned away from the body and extended a hand to the white, gritty circle surrounding the old woman, prodding it with a finger. "Do you know what this is?" he asked.

"Salt," Pearse told him, puzzled. "Plain, ordinary salt."

The professor shook his head as if puzzled. "I don't understand *that*," he said, rising, "but as for the rest, there's no doubt."

"No doubt about *what*?" Elliot snapped in exasperation.

Jones swept out a hand, encompassing the entire scene. "Look at it," he said. "Candles, a cross and water. A death ritual." He looked at Ness. "I think your Baptist's just graduated to another sacrament." He turned and started back down the hill, Elliot at his heels.

"Indy," the lawman began, "would you care to explain —"

"Yes, I would," the archaeologist snapped. "But not here. I don't want anyone overhearing this, Elliot." The fierce look in the hazel eyes took Ness aback.

"All right," the ex-treasury agent said quietly. "Let me get someone to take over for me and we'll find someplace to talk."

"My hotel room," Jones said.

"I'll meet you there," Ness agreed. "Polenski! Drive Dr. Jones back to Stouffer's, please."

As the large cop headed obediently for the prowl car, Indy caught his friend's arm. "You're not going to like this, El," he said gravely.

"I already don't," the other replied. "Go on. I'll be there as soon as I can."



nce back in his suite, Indy headed straight for the telephone. The first call, to room service, guaranteed him hot coffee and a plate of sandwiches within half an hour. The second, to the museum, took little time, Jenny happily agreeing to take over his few duties there.

The third — ah, *that* was a little more difficult. He fumbled through the papers on the table, searching for the small square of cardboard Nick had given him weeks before. Clasp

right hand, Indy picked up the receiver reluctantly, looked at it and frowned. He finally slammed it back into place and rose, crossing the room to throw open the window. He took a deep breath of fresh air and turned back to the telephone.

"I need an outside line please," he told the hotel operator, drumming his fingers on the table as he waited for the dial tone. Before he could second-guess himself, he reached out and firmly dialed the number. The card frayed in his damp fingers as he counted the rings. One. Two. Three —

"Lakeside Messenger Service," said an anonymous female voice.

"Yes, this is In — I mean, Doctor Henry Jones, Jr.," Indy said. "I'm calling with a message for Nick Merrick. Please tell him to contact me as soon as possible. It's urgent. He has the number."

"Thank you," the woman said and hung up.

Indy replaced the receiver and paced nervously about the untidy room, absent-mindedly gathering books and papers into some semblance of order. The knock on the door nearly made him leap out of his skin.

He was across the room in two strides, hastily throwing the door open. Elliot stood there, the dark circles under his eyes even more pronounced than they had been when Indy had left him in the cemetery.

"Get in here and sit down before you *fall* down," Jones growled in concern.

Ness nodded tiredly and ambled across the threshold, making his way to the couch. He slumped down into the soft cushions with an audible sigh of relief.

The professor was swinging the door shut when the sound of squeaky wheels in the corridor made him stop and peer around the lintel. The room service cart, pushed by a young bellhop, made its way down the hallway. Indy smiled and stepped out into the hall. "That for Jones?" he asked.

The bellboy consulted his delivery order and nodded.

Jones grabbed a bill out of his pocket and handed it over, grabbing the heavy tray. "Keep the change," he told the bewildered lad.

"Gee, *thanks*, mister," the bellhop beamed and wheeled the cart around, whistling cheerfully as he pushed it back toward the elevators.

Hope that was a five and not a twenty, the archaeologist thought uneasily as he carried the tray across the threshold. He kicked the door closed with his foot as he passed. "Ei, push those books out of the way," he ordered.

The exhausted lawman complied and Indy placed the tray in the center of the coffee table. He seated himself in one of the chairs and poured the dark liquid into the cups, gesturing for Ness to take one.

Elliot swallowed half the contents of his cup in one long swallow. "God," he said, "I needed that."

"Amen, brother," Jones agreed. "Help yourself to a sandwich if you want. Now, what've you got?"

Ness picked up a sandwich, scowling queasily at the thick slice of pink ham visible between the slices of bread. He shuddered and put it down hastily. "Maybe later," he gulped. He took another fortifying sip of coffee. "Okay. We've got a name for the victim. Miss Mary Lou Mowbry. She was a citizen of Cleveland Heights, but Mercer and his police chief are sticking to their promise to let *us* handle this." He smiled grimly. "The lady lived over on Coventry, well within walking distance of the cemetery. Widow, ex-vaudeville performer."

Indy's eyebrows rose in disbelief. "That sweet little old lady?" he said, voice going high in shock.

"Unbelievable, isn't it?" Ness grinned faintly. "She was a magician's assistant. Played the Orpheum Circuit. Headliners, I'm told. Until her magician, also her husband, died in Cleveland. Literally."

"Couldn't get out of the box?" Jones asked.

"Got run over by a brewery wagon," Ness said, shaking his head.

"And some folks said Prohibition was a bad idea," the professor deadpanned.

The lawman shot his friend a dark look and went on with his recitation. "So the late Hubert Mowbry, a.k.a. Mowbry the Magnificent, was duly interred in Lakeview Cemetery. So Miss Mary Lou, and the couple's two children, settled here. She had a head for business, I'm told, played the stock market. Successfully. *And* got out before the crash. The family was comfortable. Son's now an army major, posted to Fort Hood. Daughter's married to a writer — she lives in Florida."

"Okay," Indy put in. "Now the big question: What was she doing wandering around a graveyard in the dead of night?"

"According to the cemetery director, she did it all the time," Ness sighed. He leaned forward to pour himself more coffee. "Our Miss Mary Lou was what you might call a local character." He shook his head. "A little eccentric, you see. Had some theory that she could communicate with her late lamented Hubert — but only at night. Around midnight."

"Ah, the witching hour," the professor put in irrepressibly.

Ness ignored the jocular tone. "Exactly. So they were used to her slipping in every now and then for a little chat with the dear departed."

"And got herself departed in the process," Indy sighed, all humor gone from his tone. "How did she get in?" he asked suddenly.

"Gap in the fence," the detective shrugged. "Most of the kids in the neighborhood know about it. And the lady wasn't very big — she could slip in easily. She never caused any harm, the director said. Just headed for her husband's grave, sat there for a while and left." He shook his head grimly. "As I left, there was a work crew heading over to block that gap. Fat lot of good *that'll* do."

"D'you think the murder got in that way?" Jones inquired.

"No," the other man answered glumly, again picking up the sandwich and regarding it dubiously. "The gap's small, only a kid or a very small adult could get through. We're dealing with a man, Indy," he said, looking up seriously. "A big, strong man." He looked faintly sick. "When they moved the body, they realized that the stake had gone clear through. She was pinned to the ground." He put the sandwich back down, swallowing hastily. "Even though the damn thing had been sharpened to a hard point, can you imagine the force needed to do that? No, a guy that big could never have wiggled through a space less than a foot and a half wide."

Indy nodded. "How did he get in, then?" he mused.

"Hell, / don't know!" the lawman snapped, waving his free hand around wildly. "Maybe he jumped, or flew! Maybe he crawled out of one of the graves, then crawled back in!"

"Take it easy, El," Jones soothed.

"Don't tell *me* to take it easy!" the other snorted, glaring at the professor. "All right, now it's *your* turn! You know something, Jones. Now, *give!*"

Indy stood up and began to pace, one hand uneasily rubbing the back of his neck. He whirled to stare down at his friend. "All right, but it's really off the wall," he warned. "Promise you'll just sit there and listen, all right?"

Ness nodded silently, his eyes intent on the other man.

Jones sighed. "All right. Now, I've never actually *seen* this kind of ritual murder, but I've *heard* about it. In eastern Europe." He sighed. "The stake, the cross, the beheading — even the planting and lighting of candles to release the soul. To make sure it doesn't come back." He grimaced and stared directly into Ness's eyes. "El, somebody killed Miss Mary Lou because they thought she was a vampire."

Elliot's eyes widened and he stared blankly at his friend. His body began to shake and his face crumpled into helpless laughter. "A vampire!" he choked, pounding on the sofa pillows. His coffee cup went flying with the force of his hilarity. "A *vampire!*" he howled, tears of laughter streaming down his cheeks.

Jones watched him, unsmiling and serious. The archaeologist's grim silence finally penetrated Elliot's laughter.

Ness sat up straight, tremors of mirth still shaking his thin frame. He wiped his streaming eyes and peered up at the professor. "You're serious!" he said at last.

"Very," Indy replied. "Oh, / know there's no such —" he cut himself off abruptly. "I mean, / know she wasn't a vampire, *you* know she wasn't a vampire, but *someone* out there was convinced she *was!* And took steps."

All trace of laughter was gone from Ness's face. "Go on," he said.

Jones sank back down in his chair, leaning forward intently. "Look, you find this stuff in the folktales of half-a-dozen countries in Eastern Europe. Tales of the *wurdalak*, the *vlokoslak*. The undead, who rise from the grave in search of blood, sometimes for vengeance, sometimes because they've been cursed. Or have just had the misfortune to be the victim of one of the fiends."

"Oh, come *on*," Elliot scoffed. "Don't forget, I've read Bram Stoker too!"

"Stoker didn't create anything new!" Jones snapped. "He just was the first western writer to tap into a vast pool of myth that stretches back for centuries!" He stood up and began to pace, automatically falling into his lecture mode. "There are villages in the Carpathian Alps that close up tight at sunset. *No one and nothing* moves 'til sunrise. Even today." He paused. "Dracula was real, you know. Vlad the Impaler, they called him. A so-called Christian prince who fought the Turks. He killed thousands, so many that even his own people whispered that he drank the blood of his enemies. Then there was Elizabeth Bathory." He stopped again, too-vivid memories

forcing themselves into his mind. "She — well, they finally walled her up alive. She killed hundreds — especially young women. She drank their blood — and *bathed* in it as well."

"Fascinating," Ness said drily. "But what has all that got to do with a murder in Cleveland Heights, for God's sake?"

Indy scrubbed his hands over his face and sighed, groping for the words. He glared down at Elliot. "All right, let's put it this way," he said, reaching for patience. "There is a huge pool of belief in vampires, especially in Eastern Europe, even today. Right?"

Ness nodded.

"Okay. Now, the people who believe these tales have evolved a way of dealing with the creatures they fear. In other words, they have a way to kill them. Still with me?" Again, the lawman nodded.

"The way to kill a vampire, according to that belief, is to drive a stake through his or her heart. A wooden stake. A *sharp* wooden stake. And to make *absolutely* sure that it won't rise again, you behead it." The archaeologist paused, looking at his friend. "Sound familiar?"

Elliot leaned forward, interest plain in his eyes. "Very familiar," he said. "Go on."

"Now, say you have somebody — a Hungarian, say — or a Romanian — anyway, someone who was either born in some little godforsaken village in the Carpathians, or their parents were. Someplace where the fear of vampires, the *belief* in the creatures, is so strong that *no* corpse, no matter what the cause of death, is buried without being staked and beheaded. Maybe even a clove of garlic or sprig of wolfsbane is forced into the mouth. Because you never know, they might come back. So you make sure they don't!"

The lawman was appalled. "You're kidding!" he protested. "There really *are* such places?"

Indy nodded wearily. "There are. Trust me. Anyway, say you've got somebody who really believes. And he sees little Miss Mary Lou. All dressed in black. Haunting the cemetery. At night. Talking to the dead. But the old tales have told him how to handle the situation."

"So he does," the Safety Director sighed. "Damn it, it works. I hate to admit it."

"So do I," Jones said grimly. "Because he's not going to stop. Anybody out at night might become his target."

"Wait a second," Ness snapped. "What you said at the graveyard — that the Baptiser had graduated to another sacrament. You *meant* that?"

Indy nodded and slumped back into the chair, eyes fixed on the ceiling.

"Why?" Elliot pressed.

"Just a hunch," the professor admitted. "But it makes sense." He dropped his eyes to his friend's face. "There are a few things that vampires can't abide — that hurt them. Sunlight. Garlic. The sight or feel of a cross. And water — *holy* water."

"Oh, lord," Ness moaned, understanding washing over him. "So *that's* what the Baptiser was doing? *Vampire hunting?*"

"Yep," the professor confirmed. "Holy water burns 'em like acid, according to the legends. And the sight or touch of a cross works the same way."

Ness again looked nauseous. "So you think that's what he poured over Mowbry's head? After he —"

"Exactly," the archaeologist confirmed. "Or maybe he was setting her soul free, cleansing it of the taint. Hell, *I* don't know. When we catch this loony-tune, we can ask *him!*"

"Right," Elliot said, rising. "Well, at least I have a place to start." He straightened his tie as he started for the door. "I'll get my people to start nosing around discreetly. Maybe some of the priests will help." He laughed mirthlessly. "*If* someone doesn't decide I've cracked and lock me up someplace nice and safe."

"Elliot," Indy said hesitantly.

The lawman turned and looked at the professor inquiringly.

"Look, I want to help," Jones went on. "I — might have a few contacts you either don't know about or wouldn't want to use. I swear none of this will get into the papers," he said hastily as the other man frowned and began to shake his head.

"Who are you thinking about?" Ness said cautiously.

"My assistant at the museum, Jennifer," Indy said. "And Ian MacDonald."

"A *reporter!*?" the ex-treasury man erupted.

"Wait a second," Indy interrupted. "Look, he's a good man, he knows the city, people will talk to him where they won't talk to a stranger or a cop. And he'll keep his mouth shut, I promise."

"All right," Ness agreed at last. "But if he prints one *word* of this, I'll —"

"I'll lend you my whip," Jones grinned.

"I'll hold you to that promise," Elliot said. "Anybody else?"

"Yeah. My old buddy, Nick. And his friend, Janette."

The lawman's eyebrows rose. "Those two know about vampires? Seems to me they're both too sophisticated to be interested in superstitious twaddle."

"Oh, you'd be surprised what Nick knows," Indy assured him. "Or what he's interested in. Now, can you make a set of the reports and photos available to me? Today?"

"You're asking a lot," Ness grumbled. "But, what the hell. Okay. But you guard them with your life, you hear. And if anybody asks where you got them —"

"I snuck into headquarters and stole them with my own two hands," Jones teased. "And you can have Catherine bake me a nice cake with a file in it and bring it to me on visiting day. Right?"

"Right." Once more, Elliot moved toward the door. "You know, I'm glad you're going to poke into this. I won't be able to spare much manpower for the next week or so. The convention starts in two days, and I've already got Republicans streaming into town." He sighed. "Security's a nightmare. Odds are that nothing's gonna happen, but ever since someone took a shot at FDR at the Democrats' last convention —" he shrugged. "Vampires and Republicans. What a combination! Lord, what a *world*, right?" He opened the door and stepped into the hallway. "I'll

have those things sent over by messenger within an hour. Good luck!" The door closed and Indy could hear his muffled footsteps receding down the corridor.

"You don't know the *half* of it," he mused. He sat down and picked up the telephone, again requesting an outside line. He dialed the number to the *Press*, asking for MacDonald when the receptionist came on the line.

"Ian? It's Indy. Look, I've got to talk to you. Can you meet me at the museum about three o'clock? No, not really a story, but — I'll explain it there. Okay? Good."

He hung up and reached for a sandwich, wolfing it down in a few bites. He poured himself a cup of coffee, and once more lifted the receiver. "Outside line, please." He dialed the number of the message service.

"This is Doctor Jones, again," he said. "With another message for Merrick. Tell him that if he can't reach me at Stouffer's to try the museum. And repeat that it's urgent. Thank you."

He sat back and reached for another sandwich. Something told him he'd better rest while he could. It was undoubtedly going to be a long day, and an even longer night.

At ten minutes to three, Indy drove his little car into the museum's staff parking lot. Nodding in approval as he spotted MacDonald's old Chevy parked nearby, the professor killed the ignition and grabbed his briefcase before vaulting out of the Model A. He strode briskly across the pavement, waving at the ever-mournful guard who checked him in.

As he made his way to the little office behind the shipping area, he could hear two voices — one male, one female — raised in anger.

"I don't care! Doctor Jones said *nothing* about a meeting to me, and I want you out of my office. *Now!* Do you hear me, MacDonald!?"

"Every tanker on Lake Erie can hear you, sweet Jennifer!" Ian retorted. "And since when is this *your* office? Where's your name on the door?"

"*Get out!*" Jennifer yelled.

"*Hey!* Don't throw that!"

Crash!

"Now you've done it," MacDonald accused. "Well, I'm not paying for that priceless piece of — what *was* it, anyway?"

"It *was* a cheap copy of a tomb statue, you ignoramus. Now get out or I'll have you thrown out! I will *not* have you sneaking around trying to get another slimy story —"

"It *was not* slimy!" the reported interrupted indignantly. "It was the truth! Just because you can't stand to have the slightest thing said against this dusty old hulk —"

Crash!

"Uh, was *that* a cheap copy, too?" MacDonald asked.

Indy stuck his head into the office before Jennifer could reply. "I certainly *hope* it was a copy," the archaeologist roared. "Now, both of you, sit down and shut up!"

"But he —"

"But she —"

"*Neutral corners!*" Jones bellowed, interrupting the simultaneous protests. "Now!"

Glaring at each other, the young people took chairs on opposite sides of the little room, as far away from each other as they could get.

"All right," Indy said in a normal tone of voice. "Now, I'm declaring a truce. Snipe at each other on your own time. We've got a problem and I need your help."

"What kind of problem?" MacDonald said eagerly, sensing a story.

"Don't tell him anything you don't want splashed across that rag of his," the woman sniffed.

"I said truce!" Jones reminded them. He turned to the young reporter. "First of all, this is *entirely* confidential," he said firmly. "You either agree *not* to write a word, Ian, or you get out now."

"But —" the blond man objected, his gray eyes glinting angrily. "The public has a right to know!" he grated.

"The public is scared enough right now," the professor shot back. "Believe me, this could start a panic. Do you want to be responsible for that?"

The young man hesitated, clearly torn between his duty as a reporter and his rampant curiosity. "No," he said at last.

"All right, then," Indy replied. "I'll trust you." He reached into his briefcase and drew out the pictures taken that morning at Lakeview Cemetery.

"Oh, my *God!*" Jenny gasped, clapping a hand over her mouth, her fair skin going a peculiar shade of green.

"The Butcher!" Ian whispered. His eyes blazed as he glared at Jones. "All bets are off, Professor," he snapped. "If the Butcher's moved inland —"

Indy reached out and grabbed the younger man's shoulder, shoving him back into place. "It's not the Butcher," he said in a low, commanding voice. "Just shut up and listen."

Briefly, in as few words as possible, the archaeologist filled the two in on the murder and his speculations as to the killer's motive. The expressions on the two young people's faces progressed from hostility to skepticism and at last to horrified belief.

"Oh, lord," moaned Jennifer as Indy's narrative ceased. "If people hear about this —"

"The town'll go up like a tinderbox," Ian agreed grimly. "There could be riots or at the very least, people barricading themselves in at night."

"And any poor fool with the wrong accent could find himself lynched," Jenny concluded soberly. She looked over at Ian and raised an inquiring eyebrow.

MacDonald nodded in reply.

They both turned to Jones. "What do you want us to do?" Ian asked for both of them, his faint Scots accent magnified by tension.

"Good," Indy said approvingly. He turned to the woman. "Jen, how many contacts do you have with the libraries around here? Not just the public ones," he added.

She closed her eyes and tilted her head consideringly. "I've worked with a lot of people," she said slowly. "I think I could talk my way into most of them. Why?"

"I want you to check out folklore and myth," Indy told her. "See if you can narrow the field. Concentrate on the salt circle. That's a little different, a variation I'm unfamiliar with." He rubbed his eyes, scowling in concentration. "Though it rings a faint bell —" the scowl deepened. and he sighed. "No, I just can't make the connection."

"Right. I'm sure there's someone I can call," she said, reaching for her phone book.

Jones turned to Ian. "Have you got any contacts among the immigrant communities?" he asked.

The blond nodded slowly. "Aye," he said at last. "I can think of a few down in the Roaring Third." He pursed his lips. "There's a few that owe me favors. But how do I explain —" he paused, groping for words.

"Asking about vampires?" Indy offered.

The blond nodded.

"Well, how about telling them you're doing a feature article on superstitions?" the professor asked. "For Halloween."

"Halloween?" Ian repeated, aghast. "Indy, it's only June!"

The archaeologist shrugged. "So, you want to do a good job and surprise your editor."

MacDonald grinned. "That's stupid enough to work," he said admiringly.

"Thanks," the professor returned drily.

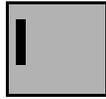
"How about you?" Jenny asked from the desk. Her smoothly-coiffed head was bent over her list of phone numbers.

"I'm going to check out a few anthropological sources at Western Reserve," the professor replied. "Then I'll head back for the hotel. If I think of anything else, I'll let you know." He grabbed the photos and files and stuffed them back into his briefcase. "Let's move it, troops."

Tired and frustrated, Jones was back in his hotel suite by six thirty. Jenny and Ian had both left messages at the desk, reporting nothing but failure. They promised to try again tomorrow.

Indy stared moodily out of his window, watching the people hurrying by on Public Square, several stories below. Unable to stand still for very long, he whirled away from the window and began to pace. For the third time that day, he grabbed the phone, requesting the outside line and dialling Nick's message service. "This is Jones," he snapped when the same woman answered. "Please, tell Nick Merrick — oh, never mind, I'll tell him myself." He banged the receiver back into the cradle and headed for the door, grabbing his hat and car keys as he went.

Moments later he was in his car and heading west along the shore of the lake, heading for the house rented by Nick and Janette.



It was cool along the lakeshore and Indy shivered in the light breeze. To his right, the sun appeared as a massive, blood-red ball sliding slowly toward the water's shining surface.

Turning off the main road, Jones slowed the car's progress to a crawl, comparing mailbox numbers to the address printed on the card Nick had given him. At last, at the very end of the lane, he found the right driveway. He turned into the gloomy, tree-shrouded path. The sun was very close to the edge of the water when he emerged onto a rocky promontory high above the lake.

He stopped the car and got out, looking around him curiously. The house that Nick currently called home was a large, rather tumbledown mansion, a neo-gothic revival built of gray stone. Lonely and proud, it stood over the waters of Lake Erie, a survivor of better times.

Indy shook his head and, briefcase in hand, made his way over the shaggy lawn, heading for the massive front door, carefully mounting the shallow steps.

As he raised his hand to knock, the portal swung open. A small, plump, birdlike woman blinked up at him in surprise. "Can I help you?" she said in a hesitant voice.

"My name's Jones," Indy replied. "Dr. Jones. I'm a friend of Mr. Merrick's. Is he in?"

"Oh, he's in, right enough," the woman said dubiously. "But — I don't know if he'll be wantin' t' be disturbed. His health, you know."

"Ah, yes, —" Jones stammered. "But — maybe if I could just wait for him? Inside."

Above them, the sky darkened to red-shot amethyst. "No," the little woman said, shaking her head. "I don't think —"

"Is that you, Madame Graham?" Janette's voice called from within the house. "I thought that you would have been gone by now. It's getting dark, you know."

"Janette!" Indy called. "It's me, Indy. Can I come in?"

"*Mon cher Indy!*" the raven-haired vampire replied, coming to the door. "But of course, you must come in! Nicholas will be so happy to see you." She smiled widely. "As am I." She turned back to the housekeeper. "*Bon soir, Madame,*" she said. "Drive carefully."

Mrs. Graham nodded her head shyly and made her way down the three shallow steps, heading for an old Buick parked in the shadow of the carport.

Indy and Janette watched her go, then retreated into the house. The archaeologist looked around nervously, trying to see through the gloom. "Ah, would you mind turning on a light?" he stammered.

"Oh, of course," the woman laughed. "I forget, you cannot see in the dark as I do." She walked to the wall and manipulated the switches there. Two crystal chandeliers sprang into blazing light. "There, is that better, *cherie?*" Again, she smiled.

The hair on the back of the professor's neck crawled. "Much better," he said. "Thanks."

She crossed the room, long skirt swirling about her ankles. Her eyes never left his face. Indy felt like a mouse confronted with a big, playful cat.

"Have you never thought of crossing, *mon cher* Indiana?" the woman asked, slowly licking her lips with the point of her tongue.

"Crossing?" Indy squeaked, looking around hopefully for Nick.

"Crossing," she repeated, slowly drawing near him. "Becoming what I am. What Nick is." She smiled slowly, a green glow appearing deep in her eyes. "It is — *magnifique*. More than you could ever imagine." She reached out one pale hand, drawing her cool fingers over his sleeve. Again she licked her lips. "You would make a strong child of the night," she said. "You are so like us in so many ways already."

"Ah, didn't we have this conversation before?" Jones said, edging away from her. "In Budapest?"

"Then you were a child," she purred, again moving closer. "A little boy. Now you are a man." She smiled, the green glow in her eyes becoming more pronounced. "Think of it, *cherie*. To stay as you are, forever. No need to grow old and feeble, to die." She moved closer yet, close enough for the professor to feel her cool breath whispering over the skin below his ear —

"Ah, thanks, but I think I'll take a raincheck," he gasped, sliding away from her.

She snarled and gathered herself as if to spring.

"The gentleman — our *guest*, Janette — said no."

Indy spun to see Nick regarding him from an arched doorway on the right. "Nick!" he said, sighing in relief. "Man, I'm glad to see you!"

"I imagine so," the vampire said drily, moving into the hallway. As he left the shadows, Indy could see he was dressed in his customary black. "Now, what disaster brings you all the way out here?"

The woman pouted and backed away from the two of them. "I will leave you to your conversations, then," she pouted. "I am going out."

"Janette, wait!" Indy said quickly.

The woman glared at him. "No," she said. "I am hungry."

"Please. It's important. There might be danger — even for you. And Nick." The professor held out his hand to her. "Please. Just listen."

Nick watched the younger man, eyes narrowed at the archaeologist's serious tone. "Do as he says, Janette," he said.

"But —" she began.

"You can do as I do," the blond man said. "Just for tonight."

"Oh, very well," she huffed ungraciously.

"Indy, come with us," the man calling himself Merrick ordered.

The archaeologist followed the vampire couple through the large living room into an adjoining hallway, Nick considerably switching on lamps to light their progress. At the end of one corridor was a steel door. The blond man removed a key from his pocket, manipulating the chain and padlock holding it closed. "In here," he said.

The three entered the room, Nick flicking on the lights as he walked in. Indy peered around curiously. The large room was tiled in white and was fitted out as a laboratory, complete with sinks, bunsen burners and microscopes.

"Playing mad scientist?" the archaeologist asked, looking at the male vampire.

Nick shrugged. "Something like that," he admitted. "For the record, I'm doing some chemical research, trying to find a cure for my condition."

"Huh?" Jones said, lost.

"The condition caused by the war," the blond man elaborated, smiling at his friend's puzzled expression. "If anyone asks, I was gassed. Phosgene. It caused acute photosensitivity. Therefore bright light hurts my eyes, and sunlight affects me disastrously."

Indy grinned. "Clever," he applauded.

Nick nodded his head, accepting Indy's admiration. "And of course, Mademoiselle Corbeau's village was also gassed, causing her to suffer the same condition." He grinned. "So, here I am, puttering around with my experiments, trying to isolate the chemical in the blood. So I don't have to explain these." He crossed to a large refrigerator standing in the corner and pulled open the door. The cavernous space within was filled with bottles of a viscous red substance.

"Is that all —" Jones gasped, swallowing nervously.

"Blood?" the vampire put in. "Yes." He shook his head. "Cow's blood, Indy. A farmer nearby lets me have all I need. And the beasts aren't harmed."

"Like the Masai tribesmen," the archaeologist breathed.

"Exactly." Nick leaned forward and drew two bottles out of the icebox. He handed one to a pouting Janette. "*A votre sante, cherie,*" he said, smiling sarcastically.

The woman snatched the offending object from his hand. "It is *cold*," she snapped, affronted.

"There's wine in the cupboard," Merrick snapped back. "Mix it with that."

"Barbarous!" she snorted, but did as she was told.

Nick drew the cork from the other container and held it to his lips. He looked steadily at Indy. "You may prefer not to watch," he said quietly.

"Oh," Jones said. "Oh, yeah. Sure." Cursing himself for his clumsiness, he turned away, rummaging in his briefcase. Behind him, he could hear gulping sounds and he determinedly fought down his queasiness.

At last Nick's voice cut through the heavy stillness. "It's over now, my friend."

Indy looked up, fighting to control his expression when he saw Nick wiping his mouth with a starched white handkerchief, leaving wide red stains on the material.

"Yes, well," the archaeologist stammered. "Look, I'm here because we've got a problem."

"The problems of mortals do *not* concern us," Janette growled from the corner. She swaggered forward, sipping at the glass she held in her hand.

"This one does," Indy retorted angrily. He threw the pictures down on the counter before them. "Take a look at these!" he ordered.

Both vampires did as he demanded and simultaneously flinched back from the sight of the crude cross impaling the old woman.

"Cover those things up!" Merrick commanded, throwing a hand over his eyes.

Janette's eyes sparked green fire and she spun away, swearing in a language Indy had never before heard.

"Now are you willing to listen?" the professor asked.

Two pairs of green-flecked eyes stared at him. "Go on," Nick growled.

For the second time in less than twelve hours, Jones launched into his tale. His second audience was even more attentive than his first. At last the archaeologist shrugged. "That's about all we know," he concluded. "Any ideas?"

Nick and Janette looked at each other. "Eastern Europe, *mais certainment*," the woman said.

The blond man nodded in agreement. "Carpathian, I think. Eastern Hungary. The salt —"

"Ah, yes," the raven-tressed woman agreed. "I remember." She shivered. "Save me from ignorant peasants!" she spat venomously. She turned on the archaeologist. "And what do you propose we do?" she shot at him.

Jones held up his hands defensively, hastily explaining the steps he had already taken.

"And you propose that we should work with you and these two young people?" Nick said when Indy had finished.

"It's the best shot we have," the professor told him seriously. "For your own safety, I think you should play along."

Janette sniffed.

"Look, I don't think that your arrival set this guy off," Indy told her. "But what happens if he sees you? He's big, he's fast and he's got weapons that could hurt either one of you."

"He's right," Merrick told the woman.

"This *cochon* is naught but a stinking peasant!" Janette cried.

"He's also dangerous," the blond man grated. "Now, either cooperate or leave!"

The two vampires glared at each other, their warring wills almost visible in the lab's bright light. At last the woman nodded slowly, giving in with scant grace. "For a while, I will do as you say," she said. Then she smiled coquettishly, looking up at the professor through her long dark lashes. "Because the so handsome, so gallant Indy asks it of me." She turned and flounced out of the room.

Jones looked after her and turned to regard the male vampire, raising a quizzical eyebrow.

Nick sighed wearily. "She'll cooperate. For a while, as she says. How long that will be?" He shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine." He rubbed a hand over the back of his neck. "So what do you want us to do?"

"Keep a sharp lookout," was the archaeologist's prompt answer. "See if you can spot anyone acting suspiciously. Look for a guy carrying a cross. Hell, I don't know," he finished wearily. "Just — see if you spot anything and tell me if you do." He looked up at his friend and smiled wryly. "And watch yourself, okay? I think I might miss you."

"Don't worry, I have no intention of taking chances," Nick said quietly. "Not when I have hopes of a cure."

"I'd thought you'd more or less given up on that one," Indy said curiously. "Or didn't you mean it about not heading back to Guatemala? Need an archaeologist?" He grinned.

The vampire's answering smile was melancholy. "You misunderstand," he said. He waved his hand, taking in the whole laboratory with the gesture. "I have given up on the old magic, my friend," he said. "Now I think I will give the *new* magic a try."

"New magic?" Jones echoed. "You mean science?"

"Why not?" the other shrugged. "Perhaps there *is* an answer in these test tubes and microscopes. A chemical, a virus, that can be neutralized."

"You really think so?" Jones said, gathering up the photos and files and shoving them into his briefcase.

"No," the blond man said sadly. "But I need to *hope* so."

"I understand," the professor said softly, turning toward the door. "I really have to be going. You'll stay in touch?"

"I will talk to you every night," the other promised, leading the way back to the main hallway. "Who knows? We may even get lucky."

"I hope so," the younger man said. "This has been driving me crazy all day." He rubbed his bloodshot eyes with his free hand. "At times I was imagining that old Miss Mary Lou was one of your kind."

Nick shook his head gently. "I knew from the beginning she was not," he said.

Jones stared at him. "How?" he asked.

"There was a body," the vampire told him matter-of-factly. "When one of us dies, even the newest among us, the body disintegrates very quickly. There is nothing left."

"*Nothing?*" Indy repeated, horrified.

"Nothing recognizable," Merrick amended. "Just the clothes and a handful of ashes or dust."

Indy looked at him, incomprehension writ large on his face. "Did you *know* all that before you — before you crossed?"

The vampire shrugged. "Some of it," he admitted.

"Then — *why?*" the mortal demanded.

The blond man's smile was weary. "Because, at the time, I thought it was worth the price. Now, you'd best be on your way. I'll check with you tomorrow night."

Jones stumbled through the door and quickly made his way to the car. Throwing the briefcase on the seat, he turned around to see Nick watching him from the arched entrance. He waved, a gesture the vampire copied.

As Indy drove away, the door swung shut, blocking out the light within.

Three days, then four, went by with no breaks. Indy saw nothing of Nick, Janette or Elliot. The vampires left messages with the hotel night clerks. The notes, couched in guarded commonplaces, reported no luck in the hunt for the killer. Elliot's brief phone calls dealt more with the difficulty of providing security for hundreds of politicians, delegates, ward bosses and party officials than they did with the horror in the cemetery.

That left the archaeologist alone with only his first two aides, Jenny and Ian. But even they had come up empty.

"Dammit!" Indy exploded the evening of the fourth day, when he and Jenny rendezvoused with Ian in a small restaurant near the museum. "This guy just *can't* have disappeared into the woodwork!"

"I'm afraid that's just what he *has* done," Jen said sympathetically.

"Yeah," Ian confirmed, wolfing down the remains of his sandwich. "Don't forget, it's a big city. Lots of places to hide. And there's a lot of people who don't talk to outsiders, either."

The professor turned to him appealingly. "So you haven't turned up *anything?*" he asked plaintively.

The blond head shook in negation. "I've been talking to a lot of people in the third precinct," he said. "Got lots of stories — hell, if I *was* doing a story on superstition, I'd have enough for a whole damn *series!* But nothing that would lead us to our man, so far. You wouldn't *believe* the jumble of people that live there," he went on dispiritedly. "So far, I've counted something like forty different nationalities and almost as many languages, with God alone knows how many dialects. I feel like I'm drowning."

"So you're gonna give up?" the archaeologist snapped.

"Now, that's not fair!" Jenny burst out. "Don't take it out on Ian, he's doing the best he can!"

The younger man's eyes swung to her face in amazement. "I don't need you to defend me!" he snapped, then flushed, dropping his eyes to the ashtray in front of him. He moodily stubbed out the cigarette he'd been smoking. "But thanks anyway," he mumbled, disconcerted.

Jennifer glared at him and sniffed, then turned back to the professor. "Look, we've *all* been trying. Maybe *too* hard. Anyway, maybe —" her eyes sparkled with sudden hope, "— maybe he's stopped. Maybe he won't do it anymore."

Indy shook his head, but before he could speak, Ian jumped in.

"That won't wash, Jen," the reporter said. He raised his head and looked at her with a tired grin, the usual mockery conspicuously absent from his face. "This one's like a dog gone wild. He's had the taste of blood, and he'll want more."

Jennifer slumped. "I was afraid you'd say that," she sighed. "So what do we do now?"

"More of the same, I suppose," Indy grumbled. He pulled some money out of his pocket and threw it on the table in front of him.

The three walked slowly out of the restaurant, turning toward the museum's parking lot.

"More of the same," Jennifer sighed morosely. "Back to the libraries. You know, I've talked to more professors in the past week than I did in college! Anthropologists, psychologists, you name it! Lord, getting my BA was *nothing* compared to this!" She turned to Ian and giggled. "You know," she said jokingly, "when this is over, we ought to combine forces and write a book. *Very* academic, of course." She laughed again and gestured grandly with her hand. "Can't you see it? *Theory and Usage of Folklore and Superstition in a Modern American City.*" She hesitated briefly. "Of course, *my* name would come first!"

Ian glared at her. "Hey, *I'm* the one with journalistic credentials! *My* name should come first. Or maybe it should read, *Foreign Spooks in America* by Ian MacDonald. *With* the assistance of Jennifer Grayson."

Jen stopped short and glared right back at him, her eyes spitting blue fire. "You glory-grabbing, ink-stained —" she fell to sputtering, unable to think up an insult strong enough.

"Cad?" Ian smirked.

The *crack* of her hand connecting with MacDonald's face was loud in the still, evening air.

"Children, children!" Indy chided, stepping forward to separate the two. "Look, *here's* what you do. *You,*" he turned to the fuming brunette, "go back to school. Get your master's — anthropology, I think, but maybe a minor in psychology. Write your thesis on superstition." He turned to the stunned reporter. "In the meantime, *you* work on getting better stories, something not quite so sensational. Set your eyes on the Pulitzer." He smiled. "Then, you marry each other, and spend your life writing books and raising kids. How does *that* sound?"

Crack! Again, the sound of flesh on flesh echoed through the humid air. Indy held a hand to his stinging cheek, looking aggrievedly down at a furious assistant.

"*Me?* Marry *him?*" she gasped. "You — you — argh! Good *night*, Dr. Jones!" She whirled away and stalked angrily down the street.

"Uh, see you tomorrow, Jenny!" the archaeologist called after her. He turned to Ian and shrugged. "Women," he said.

"Look, the only reason I didn't give you a fat lip was that Jenny beat me to the punch!" the reporter growled, as angry as the woman had been. "You have the nerve to suggest that I *marry* that snobbish, self-important spitfire?" His gray eyes kindled in fury. "You know something? You're either crazy or a *sadist!* Like the lady said, good *night* Dr. Jones!" He too took off down the sidewalk as if the furies were on his tail.

"Does this mean I don't get to be best man?" Indy yelled after him. He rubbed his cheek and grinned ruefully. "Ah," he sighed. "Young love!"

During the next few days, MacDonald was conspicuous by his absence, and at the museum, Jennifer's manner toward the archaeologist was so cool that Jones expected to come down with frostbite.

Finally, Indy had had enough. Walking into Jenny's tiny office, Jones planted his hands on her desk and stared at the still-miffed brunette.

"Look, this is getting us nowhere," the professor stated calmly. "So I'm calling a meeting. You, me, Ian, Nick and Janette. Tonight, my hotel suite, after my lecture. Maybe I can get Elliot in on it too. I'll handle the telephoning, okay?"

The woman nodded her head in reluctant agreement. "What do you want *me* to do?" she asked, her manner thawing somewhat.

"Gather all your notes," he told her.

She cleared her throat. "I've been talking to another specialist," she offered hesitantly. "A criminologist. Shall I bring those notes, too?"

Jones beamed at her. "Good girl!" he applauded. The smile faded. "Look, Jenny, there's one more thing. When I call Ian, I'm gonna tell him to pick you up tonight." He held up his hands defensively as the woman's blue eyes sparkled militantly. "Now, hear me out!" he cried.

Her mouth thinned into an angry line, but Jenny held her peace.

Indy nodded gratefully. "Look, Jenny, do I have to remind you that we've got not one, but *two*, count 'em, *two* maniacs running around out there? And one of them killed a sweet little old lady in a particularly nasty way just a week ago? At night? I just don't think it's a good idea for you to be running around the city, at *night*, by yourself. Okay?"

She blinked up at him resentfully. "You do," she snapped.

"Yeah, but I've been carrying *this*," he replied, shrugging aside the folds of his light-weight suit coat to show her the whip coiled at his side. "And at night, I've got a pistol tucked into my briefcase," he went on. "Now, do you know how to use either one of these — or any other weapon, for that matter?"

She shook her dark head mutely, eyes wide.

"And I don't have the time to teach you," the professor went on. "So, your best bet is to stick to the old standby. 'Safety in numbers,' okay? And stick to lighted places, with plenty of people around." His eyes softened. "I'd hate to see either you or Ian with a stake sticking out of your chest."

She smiled up at him warmly. "We'd feel the same way about you, Indy. Take care tonight, okay?"

He patted her hand. "Don't worry about me, babe. First sign of danger, I do what I always do. Run like a rabbit!"

She tilted her head skeptically. "Somehow I doubt that," she teased.

He raised his eyes to the heavens. "Why do women always tell me that?" he complained to an invisible deity.

"Because women are smarter than you are," his assistant told him solemnly. "All women. Everywhere. It's a rule."

"I wish I could, just *once*, meet a woman who hadn't read the damn rulebook!" he grumbled.

Despite the relief of once more being on good terms with Jennifer, Indy became increasingly tense as the day wore on. He left messages for Nick, Ian and Elliot, and tried hard to concentrate on the exhibit and his lecture notes. But it was no use, his thoughts kept circling around to the corpse in the graveyard. He felt in his gut that the killer would strike again soon, but *why* he was sure of this, he couldn't say.

As he climbed into the car to make the drive to the campus of Western Reserve, the thought returned with an intensity that nearly made him sick.

Tired of the whirl of half-connected notions circling in his befuddled brain, the professor impatiently reached out and snapped on the radio, hoping for a little soothing music to calm him down.

No luck. Instead of Glenn Miller, the speaker spouted a drivel of commercials, then the booming tones of an announcer. "And we once again return to those thrilling days of yesteryear —"

"Oh, *brother!*" Indy moaned. He would have reached out to fiddle with the tuner dial, but he was coming up on a busy intersection and dared not take his hands from the wheel.

The announcer babbled on. "When we left our heros, Tonto had just returned from town, to report on the movements of the Culpepper Gang."

The actor playing the Lone Ranger began his lines. "So, Tonto, you say the Culpeppers have been hiding the stolen gold under the stable floor, eh? How long have they been using that hiding place?"

Another voice spoke. "Not sure, *kemosabe*," it grunted. "One, maybe two moons —"

Light went off behind Jones's eyes. "Oh, my God!" he gasped. "Moons! That's it!" He hit the brakes, nearly causing the car behind him to plow into his back bumper.

"Hey, watch it, ya idjit!" an aggrieved voice shouted at him. "Ya wanna cause an accident?" The car behind, a maroon Chevy, pulled around and gunned its engine. "Goddamn Sunday driver!" the angry motorist yelled as he drove past.

Indy barely heard him. The archaeologist was still too enthralled with his sudden brainstorm to take offense. Automatically, he put his Ford in gear and continued down the street. "Moon," he mused again. A week ago, the moon had been at the half, waxing. And tonight — tonight was the first night of the full moon. "That's it," he muttered again. "Something about the phases of the moon — think, Indy, *think!* Remember what Stefan told you in Budapest!"

The professor had reached the campus parking lot. He quickly pulled in, found a parking space and killed the car's engine. He beat his hands on the steering wheel impatiently, screwing his eyes shut in the effort to concentrate. The gypsy's mustachioed face spun in his mind. *They had been at a tavern, drinking beer, Indy just about to join the dig at Csejthe, near the ancestral estate of Elizabeth Bathory, the Blood Countess. Stefan had laughed at the young archaeologist's destination, laughter that held an uneasy undertone of fear. Then he had begun to spin tales about the woman whose raging spirit was still said to haunt the walled-in chamber where she had died.*

Jones nodded to himself, and wiped his sweating forehead with one shaking hand. The tales had changed after a while, his gypsy friend advising him on how to protect himself from vampires. He had said something about the moon, the professor was sure. What was it? He forced himself to relax, to think back —

Stefan leaned forward, his dark eyes reflecting the candlelight. "You do not take me seriously, young Indy," he rumbled.

The young man took a hefty swig from his tankard and returned the gypsy's stern look, smiling wryly. "You'd be surprised at how seriously I take the subject of vampires," he returned.

The mustached man nodded slowly. "I can see that you do," he said in approval. "So I will tell you one last thing. I have mentioned the stake, the cross, garlic and wolfsbane. And holy water! The fiends flee all five. But if you do have occasion to use these things, remember the moon, my friend."

"The moon?" the fledgling archaeologist replied, somewhat fuddled by the strong beer.

"Aye, the moon. Vampires are ruled by blood, and the blood is ruled by the moon. So if you use the stake, use it during the dark of the moon, the waxing half, the full, or the waning half. The moon witch will call to them, then, and they will go to her. And then the circle of salt, to prevent others of their kind from removing the stake. That is what the old ones of the mountains tell us, and they are wise. Remember, the moon and the circle of salt."

Indy's eyes flew open. "That's it!" he yelled. He shook his head. "I've got to get to a phone," he gasped and took off running for the classroom building on his right. Spotting a bank of phone booths in the lobby, he made for one. Juggling his heavy briefcase in one hand, he clawed for change with the other. Trembling, he dropped coins in the slot and dialled Elliot's office with the other.

"Come on, come on," he urged, as the number rang once, then twice.

Click. "Office of the Director of Public Safety," a woman's voice said. "Can I help you?"

"This is Dr. Jones," Indy said hastily. "I've got to talk to Ness right now, it's urgent."

"I'm sorry," the woman began.

Jones cut her off. "Dammit, it's an *emergency!*"

"I'm sorry, sir," the woman repeated frostily. "Director Ness is not in his office right now. Can I take a message."

"Oh, damn!" Jones swore. "All right, look — tell him Indy called. That's I-N-D-Y, got it? He'll know who it is. Tell him that the —" his voice trailed off as he tried to find a way to frame the message without letting the game away. "The matter I helped him with last week is going to repeat itself tonight. *Tonight*, got that? And he should take all due precautions. And that I'm heading straight for the hotel after my lecture. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir, very clear," the woman huffed indignantly. "Will that be all?"

"Yes," Jones barked and hung up. He leaned against the side of the booth for a long moment, gathering his composure. *Watch yourself tonight, Nick* he thought. Then he went off to give his lecture.



ones paced tensely through the revolving doors that led to Stouffer's lobby. He had little memory of the lecture he had concluded barely an hour before, even less about the drive here through the dark city streets.

He was headed for the desk when a voice hailed him. "Indy! Over here!"

He looked around and saw Ian waving to him from a couch near the elevators. Jenny was seated next to the reporter and Nick stood off to the right.

Jones quickly made his way to his friends. "It's going to happen again tonight!" he muttered.

The three looked at each other in consternation, then back at Indy. "What makes you think so?" Ian asked.

Nick held up a hand. "Not here in the open," he murmured in a low voice. "Upstairs, behind closed doors."

The professor nodded. "Nick's right. Let's go."

They hurried for the elevators. MacDonald reached out with a thin finger, agitatedly ringing again and again. At last the doors slid open and they all piled in. The car's operator looked at them quizzically. "You folks in a hurry?" he grinned slyly. "Usually only honeymooners ring the buzzer that hard."

"Fifth floor," Jones told him tersely.

"Right, right," the man said, sliding the door closed and grabbing the controls. "Goin' up."

The ride seemed endless, but they all held their silence, unwilling to say anything in front of the curious hotel employee.

At last they reached the fifth floor and tumbled out of the car. Indy led the way down the corridor, fishing for his keys as he did so. He unlocked the door and threw it open, striding forward to snap on the lights and throw his briefcase on the table.

"All right, you said tonight," Ian snapped as he shut and locked the door. "What do you know?"

The professor turned to Nick. "Remember Stefan from Hungary?" he said tensely.

The vampire nodded. "Your gypsy friend," he agreed. "What about him?"

"Remember that I told you that he had been spouting vampire lore at me in Budapest? Well, I suddenly remembered what he'd said about the moon!"

Nick's eyes widened and he ran his hands through his hair. "Damn, I'd forgotten about that!" he gasped. He turned to look through the window, where the swollen pale-gold shape of the full moon now hung in the sky over the lake. "*Damn!*" the vampire snarled again.

"What are you two talking about?" the reporter demanded angrily.

"I think I know," Jennifer said slowly. "I ran across it somewhere. Some people — Hungarians, I think — have this thing about the moon ruling blood."

Jones nodded. "That's it," he agreed. "The salt ties them in as well."

"Will someone *please* tell me what you're talking about?" MacDonald snapped.

Jenny grabbed him by the arm and yanked him down on the couch. In a low voice, she began to explain.

The professor left her to it and joined Nick at the window. "Where's Janette?" he hissed.

The vampire shrugged. "She went off on her own," the blond man explained in a low voice. "She hungers for the hunt. My — substitutes — are not to her liking."

"Dammit!" Jones snapped. "Why did you let her —"

The other man cut him off with a look. "I am not the lady's keeper, Indy," he said. "I have no power over her." He smiled cynically. "I shouldn't worry about her, though," he went on. "She's been taking care of herself for a very long time, now."

"But —" Jones began.

There was a thunderous knocking at the door. "What the hell — ?" the professor muttered, crossing the room to answer the summons.

The familiar and unwelcome figure of Officer Frank Polenski loomed over him in the dim corridor. "Evenin', Dr. Jones," the cop said in his customary monotone. "Safety Director Ness wants to see you. Now." He reached out and grabbed Indy's arm. "So if you'll just come along quiet-like —"

Jones shrugged out of the policeman's hold. "Wait a minute," he snapped. "Just what's going on here?"

"There's been another — incident — Dr. Jones," the big man told him. "Like at Lakeview? Seems you warned Mr. Ness that it was gonna happen, and he'd kinda like to know how you knew that."

"Oh, for —" Jones sighed exasperatedly. "Where?"

"St. Vincent's," the cop said.

"At a *hospital*?" Jenny said, rising to her feet.

"No, miss," Polenski replied, looking over her trim figure with approval. "Victim's there. Bastard didn't manage to kill this time." He turned back to Jones. "Now, you gonna come along or do I have to cuff you?"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," Indy said resignedly. He turned to look at the others. "You follow us. Nick, can you drive a car?"

The vampire stared at him disdainfully. "No thanks, I'd rather fly," he said sarcastically.

"That's not what I meant," Indy snapped defensively. "Look, take my car and drive yourself over, okay? The keys are on the table. Follow Jenny and Ian." Polenski grabbed the professor's arm again and began towing him down the hall. "And don't forget to lock the room!" he yelled.

The emergency ward of St. Vincent's Charity Hospital was a brightly-lit madhouse, littered with wailing children, tense adults and bustling medical personnel. Indy spotted Ness as soon as Polenski dragged him into the building.

"Elliot!" the archaeologist yelled, raising his voice to be heard.

The lawman looked up and grinned with relief. "It's about time you got here," he said as Jones's keeper ushered him to the Safety Director's side.

"Yeah, well, I came on winged feet at your gracious summons," the professor growled. "Now, will you call off your gorilla? My arm's about to drop off, dammit!"

Ness looked in puzzlement at the big cop's firm grip on Indy's upper arm. "Polenski, what are you doing?" he asked.

"Makin' sure the suspect don't get away, sir," the policeman answered. "Want me to cuff him?"

Elliot closed his eyes in resigned weariness. "Polenski, Dr. Jones is *not* a suspect. He's helping us, remember? That means he's on *our* side. Now, let him go."

"Okay," the big man sighed. "You want me to stick around? Just in case?" He sounded hopeful.

"No, thank you," his boss sighed. "Go find the cafeteria and get yourself some coffee. I'll send for you if I need you."

Polenski nodded and loped off. Ness shook his head. "You know, he's a good cop," he told his friend apologetically. "And honest."

"And strong," Jones retorted, rubbing his numbed arm. "Okay, what've we got?"

Just then Nick, Ian and Jennifer ran into the emergency room and spotted them. They quickly trotted over to the two men.

"Ah, not here," Elliot said quickly. He peered around, and waved to a white-coated man standing near the door. "Doctor Willis?" he called.

The medical man looked up and walked over. "Something wrong?" he asked in a tired voice.

"My people and I need a quiet place to confer," the Safety Director said. "Can you find us a room, please?"

The physician ran a hand through his thinning brown hair. "I suppose you can use Sister Elizabeth's office," he said after a moment. "She's the administrator — I don't think she'd mind. It's over there," he said, pointing.

"Thanks," Ness said and led the way.

They all piled in to the little space, Elliot snapping on the lights and shutting the door when he saw they were all present.

Nick gasped and doubled over suddenly, his skin paling noticeably.

"Are you all right?" Jennifer asked, holding out a concerned hand.

"Do you need a doctor?" Ian chimed in.

"No, no," the vampire grated, holding a trembling hand to his face to shield his eyes. "It's — it's just the light. So bright."

Elliot watched the other man with worried eyes. "Indy told me about your — what'd he call it — photosensitivity? Didn't realize it was this bad."

"I've learned to live with it," the vampire assured him.

Indy, meanwhile, had been scanning the walls. At last he spotted the source of his friend's discomfort — the plain black crucifix hung on the wall behind the desk. Moving slowly, he moved to stand in front of it, blocking the vampire's view of the object.

Nick looked up at him, shooting him a small smile of gratitude. "I'm fine now," he said. "So, shall we get on with it?"

"Okay, if you're sure," Ness said hesitantly.

Merrick nodded encouragingly once more.

"Right," the lawman said. "Victim is one Joseph Palermo. Motorman, gets off work at ten. He was heading for home when he was attacked. Managed to duck and get away. The attacker fled."

"Are we sure he was attacked by the Mowbry's killer?" Indy interjected.

"Oh, yeah," Ness assured him. "The guy dropped something when he ran. A wooden cross, the bottom of it sharpened to a nice long point. It was the same one, all right."

"Fingerprints?" MacDonald snapped.

The lawman shook his head regretfully. "Nope. None on the one that killed Mowbry, either. Wood's too rough to take prints."

"Where was the attack?" Indy asked.

"Not far from here. There's lots of houses and apartments around this area, you know. There's a school down on Myerson. Has a playground and a little park around it. Palermo says he cuts through there all the time, it makes a good shortcut. People all over during the day, but it's usually pretty quiet at night."

"That makes sense," Indy agreed. "So our friendly neighborhood vampire slayer lays in wait until he spots one of the undead and *wham!*"

Nick winced and glared at the archaeologist. "You do have a way with words," he muttered.

Indy grinned. "I always have," he retorted modestly.

There was a soft tap at the door. Elliot opened it to disclose a nursing sister standing just outside. "We've moved Mr. Palermo to a ward, Mr. Ness," she said. "You asked to be notified."

"Thank you, Sister," the ex-treasury agent said. "We'll be with you in a moment." He turned back to Jones. "I'd still like to know how you knew this lunatic would strike again tonight," he commented.

"Look, Ian and Jenny know what's been going on," the archaeologist said. "Why don't you let them fill you in while Nick and I go talk to this Palermo?"

Ness tilted his head consideringly. "All right," he said, "But this doesn't mean you're off the hook. I still want to talk to you."

"Hey, you can buy me a drink after we're through," Indy grinned. "One beer and I'll babble everything I know. Deal?"

"Deal," the other said finally. He turned to the reporter. "All right, Mr. MacDonald —"

Jones grabbed Nick's sleeve and pulled the vampire out of the office. Carefully inserting himself between the patiently waiting nun and the vampire, he smiled charmingly. "Could you take us to Mr. Palermo's room, Sister?"

"Are you with the police?" she said doubtfully.

"Well, not exactly," Jones confessed.

"Are you medical personnel?" the sister went on.

"Well, not exactly," Jones said again.

"Then, I'm afraid —"

Nick's smooth voice cut her off. "But we *are* specialists in our own way," he said. "And we *are* assisting Mr. Ness in this terrible matter." He smiled, carefully keeping his eyes fixed on her face, trying desperately not to glance at the crucifix that hung at the end of the rosary secured to her waist. "You can check with him if you like, but that *would* perhaps be a waste of time."

"Yes, it would," Indy chimed in. "Please, Sister, it's important. We only need to talk to your patient for a moment."

"Well," the nun hesitated. "The poor man's been through so much tonight —"

"Five minutes, we promise," Nick assured her. "We only want to see if he can help us prevent this from happening to some other poor soul."

"Then you're doing God's work," the sister declared. "Follow me."

"God's work?" Indy whispered to his friend as they followed in the sister's wake.

"It's been a long time since anyone said that to *me*," the vampire said wryly. "It seems the age of miracles is not quite passed, after all."



Joseph Palermo proved to be a lively, cheerful man of about forty. He was of medium height, about five foot nine, with a wiry, muscular build. His face, wreathed with curly, coal-black hair, was oval in shape. His dark eyes were expressive and intelligent. He looked at Indy and Nick quizzically. "I suppose you guys wanna hear what happened, right?" he asked.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Palermo." Indy said.

"Call me Joe. I don't mind, but I think I'm gonna get sick of tellin' the story," the patient chuckled. "Okay, so what happened is this. I got off work, caught the streetcar home. Now, I get off on Myerson, right. So I gotta walk nearly a mile to get to my house. *But*, if I cut through the park and the playground, I only gotta walk 'bout a half a mile. Saves me from going up and around over Tyler and Cuyahoga."

Jones nodded. "And you do this every night?" he asked.

"Pretty much," Palermo said. "Unless I feel like droppin' off at Vinnie's bar for a beer or somethin'.

"Anyhow, I'm through the playground 'n goin' into the park when I get the feelin' I'm not alone, know what I mean?"

"Did you see something?" Nick asked intently. "Or maybe hear something?"

The injured man stared at him thoughtfully. "Nah," he said consideringly. "But — there *was* somethin' funny, now you come to mention it."

"What was it?" Jones's rapped out.

"I smelled somethin'!" Joe said. "Yeah, *that* was it. Somethin' strong." He frowned, then broke into a smile. "Garlic!" he said triumphantly. "That's it — you could smell garlic, real strong! Then somethin' came flyin' at me and I ducked." He rubbed at the bandage that swathed the right side of his head. "Ya know, if I *hadn't* ducked right then, whatever that joker hit me with woulda got me right between the eyes!"

"I think you were very lucky, Mr. Palermo," Nick said gravely.

"Don't I know it! Anyhow, I *did* hit the ground, ya know. Seein' stars and all that. Then, outta the corner of my eye, I sees this guy start ta swing somethin' at me. Right at my chest, ya know? So I dives outta the way." He rubbed his ribs and winced again. "Caught me good. I hadda have stitches!" He was indignant. "And alla time he's mumblin' something. Sounds like he was prayin', ya know. Almost like in church."

"Latin?" Jones's voice was sharp.

"I think so," the other replied. "Course, I don't know much, just enough to get through Mass, but that's what it sounded like."

"What happened then?" Nick urged.

"Well, by then I was mad," Joe said. "So I reaches out and grabs the stick he stabbed me with. He jerks back, startled like. Then he throws water in my eyes and takes off like a stripe-assed —"

"*Mister* Palermo!" a woman's voice expostulated.

The three men looked around to see that the little nun had quietly reentered the room.

Joe flushed, his olive skin reddening in embarrassment. "Sorry, Sister," he mumbled, sounding like the schoolboy he'd once been.

"I should hope so," the nun reprimanded him. She fixed a militant eye on the archaeologist and his companion. "All right you two. It's been five minutes. Out."

"Just a couple more questions, Sister," Indy wheedled.

The sister looked at him sternly. "Very well," she said at last. "But make them quick." She showed no intention of leaving her patient, so the archaeologist turned back to the figure on the hospital bed.

"Okay, Joe," he said. "One. Did you get a look at this guy?"

Palermo shook his head. "Not really. It was a man, that's for sure. Taller'n me, 'n strong. And it was fer sure a man's voice." He frowned. "But I never really saw his face."

Nick nodded. "Second question," he said, shooting a look at Indy. "Are there any churches or cemeteries near where you were attacked?"

"Yeah," Joe said, puzzlement crossing his face. "St. Mary's is only two blocks over." He scratched his head. "An' there's supposed to be an old graveyard next to the park, now I come to think about it." He shrugged. "Never paid no attention, to tell you the truth."

Indy jumped in hurriedly. "And what were you wearing?"

Palermo shook his head. "You guys ask weird questions," he said. "I was wearing what I always were. My uniform."

"And it's black?" Jones persisted, ignoring the nun's glare.

"Blue," the injured man said. "Navy blue."

"But it would look black at night, right?" the professor insisted.

"I guess so," Joe said. "Never stopped to think of it."

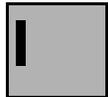
"All right, *gentlemen*," the sister snapped. "That is *quite* enough. Out. Now."

"Whatever you say, Sister," Indy said sweetly. "Good night, Joe. Take care, now."

"Right!" Palermo's voice followed them out of the room. "You go get this guy, right? And then you let *me* at 'im. Two minutes, that's all I need —"

The nun's voice cut over his excited shouting. "Now, that's quite enough, Joseph," she said. "It's not good for us to get so upset."

"But, Sister!" Joe protested.



an, Jenny and Elliot were waiting for them in the corridor outside the emergency room. None of the three looked very happy.

Indy looked at the lawman consideringly. "I suppose you still want to talk to me, right?"

"You got it," Ness agreed. "But not here."

"I know a bar not too far from here," Ian interjected.

"I'm quite sure *you* know every dive in the city," Jennifer put in. "Not to mention the suburbs."

The reporter's eyes gazed reproachfully at the brunette. "Are you going to start again?" he asked.

The woman flushed and looked down. "No," she said. "Sorry. Force of habit."

Jones rubbed his burning eyes and sighed. "Let's get out of here," he insisted. "The smell of formaldehyde is getting to me."

The group tramped through the doors and stood on the pavement outside. As they headed for the parking lot, Nick grabbed Indy's sleeve, pulling him aside. "Look, I'm not going with you," the vampire said in a low tone. "I'm going to try to track down Janette."

Jones nodded. "Okay. Here, take my car if you like. Just leave it in the lot by the hotel. Drop the keys off at the desk."

"Thanks. I'll call you tomorrow night," the blond man said. He slipped off through the shadows.

The others were waiting near MacDonald's car. As Indy approached, Ness craned his head. "Where's Nick?" the detective asked.

"He — ah, he didn't feel up to any more tonight," Jones hedged.

Jenny made a sympathetic face. "Poor man," she said. "He didn't look at all well in the office. Should one of us go with him? I mean, should he be driving?"

"Oh, yeah," the professor said hastily. "He — he just needed some fresh air. He'll be fine, don't worry. He's got my car, though." He cleared his throat and plowed ahead, eager to change the subject. "So, who's driving and where are we going?"

MacDonald glanced over at the lawman. "I'll lead, you follow?" he suggested.

Elliot nodded in agreement. They piled into the two cars, Jenny with Ian, Indy with Ness, and pulled out into the quiet side street.

Fifteen minutes later, the foursome entered a neighborhood bar and grill called Shelley's, a quiet little bar catering to the working man. Ian nodded and waved to several of the regulars as he led the way, heading for a quiet booth in the corner.

"Hey, Ian!" the waitress called out. "The usual?"

"Beer okay with all of you?" the blond asked the others. They nodded and the reporter turned back to the waiting woman. "Yeah, Lila," he called. "Four cold ones back here, okay?"

"You got it, sweetie," the thin, dark-haired waitress grinned. "Comin' right up."

They slid onto the benches, Indy next to Elliot, Ian next to Jenny. The reporter stared across the table at the professor. "Okay, Indy," he said. "Give. What did Palermo have to say?"

In a quiet voice, the professor filled them in on what the injured man had told him, breaking off when the waitress brought their beers, resuming after she had scurried away to fill other orders.

At the end of his narrative, the other three exchanged worried glances. "Garlic," Jenny commented at last. "It makes sense, in a lunatic kind of way."

"Yeah, and the moon and salt thing kind of narrows it down," Jones stated. "We're probably looking for a Hungarian, maybe born in the old country, who believes in vampires. I mean, *really* believes in them."

Elliot sighed and stared moodily at the beer in his glass. "Terrific," he groaned. "Do you know how many Hungarians there are in this city?"

"Don't tell me," Indy said jokingly. "Lots and lots?"

Ness glared at him. "Did anybody ever tell you you've got a lousy sense of humor, Jones?" he snarled half-heartedly. He slumped down in the bench, absently massaging the bridge of his nose with shaking fingers. "We've managed to keep the details about Mowbry out of the papers," he said. "Luckily, with no next-of-kin in town, it wasn't difficult. And Palermo — well, he wasn't seriously hurt, and no one seemed too interested in what happened to him. Hell, even *he* didn't

seem to find it strange. *But* —" he dropped his hand and glanced around the table, "if there's another attack, or God forbid, another *murder* —" His voice trailed off and he shook his head. "I don't know if the city can take another shock. One demon, maybe — though the Butcher's got a lot of people running scared. *Two* — this town will blow!"

Indy reached out and grasped his friend's shoulder in reassurance. "We've got two weeks," he said. "We'll find him, El."

Ness shrugged, reaching out to lift his glass. "Can you guarantee that, old buddy?" he said sarcastically.

MacDonald reached into his shirt pocket and drew out a battered cigarette case. Choosing one, he put it between his lips and lit it. "Look," he said, exhaling a cloud of blue smoke. "Let's try to take this logically."

"I thought that's what we were doing," Jenny replied.

"All I mean is, so far we've been attacking this academically, right?" the reporter went on. The others nodded, gazing at him intently. "But we've forgotten a few questions, I think. Crucial ones." He took another drag on the cigarette.

"Like what?" Indy pressed.

"Like, why *now*?" Ian replied. "I mean, what set this guy off? Presumably, he's believed this junk for years, but why suddenly start "baptising" and then go on to murdering? If he'd been doing it for years, we would have heard about it, right?"

Ness leaned forward. "I see your point," he said excitedly. "So if he's done it before, he hasn't done it *here*."

"Exactly," MacDonald agreed. "And if he *hasn't* done it before —"

"Like you said, why *now*?" Jones finished for him. "So, we start checking, right?"

Ian ground out his cigarette and grinned. "You got it."

"For what?" Jenny asked, confused.

"For some sort of tragedy," Jones said firmly. "Something that happened to a Hungarian family. I'd say a death, wouldn't you?" he asked, turning back to Ian.

The blond head nodded in assent. "Yeah. Maybe a murder, maybe something else. I'll check around the hospitals, and talk to some of the guys on the police beat." He made a wry face. "The precinct houses too. There's a *lot* that goes on that never gets into the paper."

Elliot took a long swallow of beer. "I'll nose around immigration," he said, wiping his mouth. "Ship's records, too. Sailors — they come from all over, and a lot of 'em jump ship here. And I'll make a few phone calls. I've got friends in police forces all over the country. Maybe one of them had a case or two that were similar."

"Good," Jones said approvingly.

Jenny glared at the archaeologist, affronted at being left out. "And what do *we* do?" she demanded.

"We get the *good* stuff," the professor told her. "We get to go through city maps."

The woman looked at him suspiciously. "Why?"

"It's just something that occurred to me," Indy admitted, running a weary hand through his hair. "The first attack was in a graveyard. This one — well, Palermo told me there's an old cemetery sharing a fence with the park where he was attacked. I think it's important."

"So we look up old *burial grounds*?" Jen squeaked. "Do you know how many of those there must be? And if you say 'lots and lots', I'm going to slap you again. Harder."

Jones grinned mockingly and rubbed his cheek. "Please don't," he begged. "Seriously, I think it's vital. So be prepared to be bored to tears and inhale lots of dust." He drained his glass. "Now, will somebody please drive me back to the hotel?"

"I will," Ness said. The four stood up and left the bar, Ian waving cheerfully to the smiling Lila as they went.

"One last thing," Jones said, as they headed for their cars. "When you're going to be out at night, be sure to wear something light — no black, no dark blue, okay?"

Jenny tilted her head and looked up at him thoughtfully. "The colors of the living rather than those of the dead?" she asked.

"It just might keep you alive," the professor said somberly.

The pale gray light of false dawn was beginning to filter through the curtains when the phone next to Indy's bed rang shrilly. The archaeologist jerked awake and fumbled for the receiver. "mmf-'lo?" he mumbled into the mouthpiece.

"Wake up, Indy," Nick's voice rasped in his ear.

Jones swung himself into a sitting position, pajamaed legs dangling over the side of the bed. He reached over and hastily switched on the light. "What's up?" he snapped, immediately alert.

"Janette saw something tonight," the vampire told him, his tone urgent. "Write this down — 1129 Clover Street. It's over by the Flats, Janette says."

"Got it," Jones rapped out, scribbling frantically on the notepad on the table. "What did —"
"I haven't got time now," Nick said, his voice becoming hoarser. "I'll call you tonight."

The phone clicked in the professor's ear. Indy stared at it blankly, then gently replaced the receiver. After a long moment, he snapped off the light and lay back down, though he knew that he had precious little chance of falling back to sleep.

Jones wandered through the day in a haze of exhaustion, barely able to keep up with Jenny as the energetic brunette doggedly attacked various city ordinance maps, searching for potential attack sites. The woman had come up with the idea that they should also check old church records, a notion that Indy would have applauded had he been able to keep his eyes open. The hot, humid and increasingly dusty air of his assistant's tiny office had the archaeologist nearly comatose by noon.

His depression deepened further when he was unable to contact MacDonald and give him the Clover Street address until nearly four o'clock, far too late for the reporter to dig up anything that day.

Soon after he spoke to Ian, the professor, deciding he was doing nothing constructive save driving his assistant to distraction, left the museum and headed back to Stouffer's, thanking whatever deity there was for the fact that he didn't have to lecture tonight.

But a few hours sleep, a shower and a steak dinner, courtesy of room service, had Jones in a much happier frame of mind by the time sunset painted its fiery glow over Erie's waters.

When the phone rang, the archaeologist was waiting. He grabbed the receiver eagerly. "Nick?" he snapped.

"Good evening, Indy," the vampire replied, sounding amused. "Have you used the information I gave you this morning?"

Indy slumped into a chair. "MacDonald's going to check it out tomorrow," he said. "I had a hell of a time getting him to believe that it was a valid tip. Kept asking *where* I'd gotten it, *who* had seen what. That kid's like a bulldog!"

Nick chuckled. "Reporter's instincts," he said.

"Yeah, well, we'd better find a way to muzzle him before he asks the wrong question and gets himself in trouble with your bunch," Indy snapped aggrievedly.

"Don't worry, my friend," the vampire said. "I'm sure you'll think of something."

"Terrific," Jones muttered morosely. "Forget that for now," he went on. "How did Janette stumble across — whatever she stumbled across?"

"Now, Indy, you should know that our beautiful friend *never* stumbles," Merrick chided. "She's very nimble." The amusement left his deep voice. "The lady was — ah, strolling? Prowling?"

"Look, we both know what she was doing," Indy put in impatiently. "Get to the point, dammit!"

"As you wish," Nick agreed. "She was in the area where Palermo was attacked and heard him shout."

Indy leaned forward in his chair, eagerly pressing the receiver closer to his ear. "And — ?" he prompted.

"She saw a man running from the park," the vampire went on. "As a matter of fact, he pushed her out of his way."

"And she thinks he's the one?" the professor rapped out.

"She does," the other affirmed. "For one thing, he smelled of garlic. *Reeked* of it, she said. She watched him run down the street, jump into an old truck and drive off."

"Damn, so she lost him!" Jones groaned.

"You forget who you're talking about," the vampire reproved. "No, she followed. She didn't say, but I imagine she took to the air. It's much easier that way."

"Oh, yeah —" the professor said weakly.

"He parked the truck at the address I gave you," Nick continued smoothly. "Then he ran into the house. Janette tried to peep into the windows, but she couldn't get very close."

"Why?"

"Because there's a cross etched into each and every one of them," Merrick said. "On the doors and windows of the garage, as well."

The professor nodded slowly. "That's got to be our man," he said at last. "Did she ever see his face?"

"Not clearly," the other replied. "He was wearing some sort of hat that hid his features. And she could never get that close. But it was a man, tall and very strong. Very wide shoulders. And she doesn't think he was very old."

"No *one's* very old next to you two," Indy retorted.

"True," the other laughed. "So what next?"

Indy rubbed his jaw consideringly. "We'll see what MacDonald comes up with," he said slowly. "It might take a few days, but we have two weeks. And in the meantime, you and Janette stay away from graveyards."

"Ah," the vampire breathed, making the connection immediately. "You think that's it — how he chooses his sites? Sanctified ground?"

"I think it's a factor," the archaeologist replied. "I also think it's significant that both victims were dressed in dark clothes. Maybe the two of you should make it a point to dress in white."

"It wouldn't fit our image," the other laughed. "Besides — white *stains* so easily."

"Just what I need, a smartass vampire," Jones groaned. "Look, just watch out, okay? I'll let you know when Ian comes up with anything."

"Good," Nick said. "And Indy?" His voice was serious. "You watch *your* back as well. I'd hate to think I hauled your carcass out of a trench in France and out of a tomb in Hungary only to have you die in Cleveland!" Without giving the professor a chance to reply, he cut the connection.

Indy smiled ruefully at the buzzing receiver. "Yeah, I worry about you too, pal," he said.



It took MacDonald far longer to track down the inhabitants of the house on Clover Street than any of them had expected, for no sooner had the Republican Convention packed its banners and stuffed elephants and left town than the public's attention turned once more to the Kingsbury Run Monster.

Indy heard about the latest corpse when an excited Ian called him at the museum.

"Indy?" the young man's voice was taut with stress. "I won't be able to meet you and Jenny tonight, I've got a murder to cover. Tell her, okay?"

"What's up, kid?" Jones asked, tensing involuntarily at the peculiar note in the other's tone. "Not — we've got another week, dammit! And he's always hit at night!"

"This one wasn't our boy," the reporter said. "This is definitely the Butcher. Trackwalkers found the head this morning, and the body's just surfaced — literally — in a cesspool down by the trainyards. Ness and the police chief are down there now, along with every reporter in the area. Look, I gotta go."

"Who was that?" Jenny asked curiously, walking into the office to see Indy staring moodily at the phone.

"Ian," the archaeologist said tersely. He went on to explain why tonight's meeting was off.

As he spoke, the woman's face went pale. "The Butcher," she said as Indy finished speaking. She smiled weakly. "I'd almost forgotten about him."

"Nobody else has," Indy told her. He frowned. "That may be a good thing," he said slowly.

"Why?" his assistant asked in surprise.

"If people are afraid of the Butcher, they might be reluctant to go wandering around alone at night," the professor went on. "And that might make it easier for us to deal with our fearless vampire killer."

"Fewer targets in dark areas," Jenny said, catching on.

"Exactly," Indy said. He smiled grimly. "And maybe, just maybe, easier for us to trap."

Jenny gulped and shivered. "I was afraid you were going to say *us*," she said.

Jones looked over at her and smiled charmingly. "Don't worry, Jen. It won't hurt a bit."

"Isn't that what the fisherman said to the worm?"

Four nights later, a grim little group gathered in Indy's hotel suite. Jenny was calm, but very pale, and showed a marked tendency to stay very close to Ian. The reporter didn't look as if he minded.

Nick was darkly elegant, lounging easily beside the window. Janette, sleek and beautiful in a red dress, flirted shamelessly with Indy and Ian, amused when Jenny bristled angrily.

"All right," Jones said, when they were comfortable. "Elliot will try to drop by later, but he couldn't promise. He's got a lot going on right now."

"That's for sure," MacDonald agreed, reaching for a sandwich from the tray before him. "This latest body's got everybody upset — the mayor, the citizens, the girl scouts —"

Jen dug her elbow into the blond man's ribs. "Knock it off," she said.

"Yes, oh light of my life," the young reporter replied, flashing her a devilish grin.

"What is it with you two?" Indy growled. "Ian, suppose you tell us what you've found."

The teasing glint fled from the gray eyes. "I think we've found our man. Though I'd *still* like to know how —"

"Never mind," Jones cut him off. "Just get on with it."

Ian opened the notebook that lay on his lap. "Right. Name: Janos Molnar. Hungarian descent. *He* was born here, in 1895, but both parents were born in a little village in the Carpathians, just inside the border. I can't pronounce the name, it's all consonants and no vowels, you know?" He looked up, his gaze sweeping the circle of interested faces. Satisfied that they were all paying attention, he dropped his eyes to the page before him.

"All right. The parents, and the father's mother, left Hungary about a year before Janos' birth, made their way here. Father died in some sort of construction accident when our boy was six, the mother died in childbirth a few months later. The baby died too. Tuberculosis was a contributing factor. So the boy was raised by his grandmother."

"Sounds like a thousand other immigrant families," Jennifer commented.

Ian looked up at her. "Yeah, except for one thing. The grandmother, the elder Mrs. Molnar. She happens to be a witch."

"Oh, come *on!*" Jen said, rolling her eyes.

"No, really," the reporter protested. "She's a witch, or a wise woman, whatever you want to call it. That's how she supported herself and her grandson. The people around the neighborhood call her 'Hunky Ann', and go to her for everything from advice to love potions." He turned to regard Indy. "It's almost another world on that side of town," he said. "Everybody dirt poor, they don't speak the language, and they don't trust outsiders."

Jones nodded. "It's a familiar pattern," he said. "Go on."

"Well, Mrs. Molnar is their doctor, their midwife, she even lays out the dead. *And* she knows herbs and spells, too. She claims to be part gypsy." He shrugged. "Maybe she is."

Nick walked forward into the light. "Superstitious, of course," he said. "And religious, as well. Goes to mass every morning, prays to every saint on the calendar, then calls upon the ancient powers when necessary."

Ian's gray eyes went to the vampire in surprise. "You called it," he said.

"And she raised this Janos," Janette put in, her voice icy. "Trained him to be a killer."

Nick's hand clenched on his female companion's shoulder. "*Doucement, cherie,*" he murmured. "There is more?" he asked, returning his gaze to the reporter.

Ian nodded. "Molnar grew up more or less normal," he said. "Oh, superstitious, yes, but so are a lot of other people. Made it through eighth grade with no problem, then quit school and went to work. He's a good carpenter and an excellent gardener. He married a girl from the neighborhood, Maria, and they have four kids. In fact, nothing out of the way happened until January of this year." He paused and poured himself a cup of coffee, taking a long swallow of the dark liquid.

"And that was?" Indy urged, leaning forward.

"The youngest child died," MacDonald replied, setting down his cup.

"Where?" Jones snapped, his voice overlapping Nick's as the vampire demanded, "How?"

"Where? St. Vincent's," the young man replied, his eyes solemn. "How?" He shook his blond head. "Officially it was a massive infection — caused by a rat bite."

Jennifer caught her breath and looked away, one hand flying to her mouth.

Janette looked at the other woman curiously. "It happens," she said, shrugging. "Rats — the weather turns cold and they look for food. They always attack the weak. It has always been so."

Indy's assistant turned to stare at the female vampire. "It *shouldn't* happen! Not to a child! Not to *anyone!*"

Janette shrugged again. "I did not make the world," she said coolly. "I only exist in it. Why should I upset myself about things that have always been, things I cannot change?"

Nick's voice cut off Jen's horrified protest. "We are getting into philosophy," he said, "and we have no time for such pursuits. Ian, if you would continue?"

MacDonald complied, his curious expression confirming that he, too, was shaken by the older woman's callous attitude. "The key factor is that Janos is the one that found his daughter, lying in her bed, covered in blood from the wound on her neck."

"Oh, God," Indy said, closing his eyes.

"Exactly," the young blond confirmed. "He got her to the hospital, but there was nothing anyone could do. Little Anna was dead within twenty-four hours."

He threw the notebook down on the table and got up. Nervously, he rummaged in his pocket for a cigarette, lighting it and drawing the smoke deep into his lungs. "The sister on the charity ward, Sister Clare, remembers the case very well — she especially remembers the grandmother. The old woman was lighting candles everywhere, and hanging cloves of garlic all around the bed. The ward still smells of it, according to Sister Clare. And the old woman kept muttering one word over and over."

"And that was?" Nick asked as the young man fell silent.

"*Vlokoslak*," was the reply. The gray eyes flickered uneasily. "Jenny told me what it means."

"Ahh," Janette sighed, looking at the man standing behind her.

Nick returned her gaze and nodded.

The reporter regarded the burning tip of the cigarette moodily. "I checked with the undertaker," he went on at last. "The wake was in the house, of course. The grandmother and Janos chased everyone out of the living room before it was time to leave for the church. There was some banging and hammering, and when they let the undertaker back in, the coffin was already closed and nailed down. Molnar himself had built that coffin."

"Anything else?" Indy said into the silence that followed the young man's last words.

Ian took another drag and exhaled smoke. "Just a few things," he said. "The priest that buried the little girl said that the coffin smelled of garlic, strong enough that he could smell it over the incense. And Molnar stood and watched as the diggers filled in the grave. When they'd finished, he put candles — four of them — around it, and lit them. Then he poured a circle of salt around it." He found an ashtray and ground out his cigarette. "One of them said that Molnar was crying, promising his little girl that he would find the monster that had murdered her and that he would kill it. The gravedigger thought he was talking about the rat."

"When did the little girl die?" Nick asked.

"January the twelfth," the reporter said heavily. "And before you ask, the first Baptiser incident was reported on the sixteenth, the night after they buried her." He crossed the room and slumped into the sofa beside Jennifer, absently reaching for her hand.

Indy stood up and stretched. "I think that just about covers it," he said somberly. "There's no doubt, is there?"

The others all shook their heads.

"Right," the professor said at last. "So, now what do we do? There's no proof, you know."

Nick paced back over to the window and looked down onto the streetlamp illuminated square. "You said this man is a carpenter, a gardener," he said.

"Right," the reporter affirmed wearily.

"Where does he work?" the vampire pressed.

The younger man shrugged. "Anywhere he can," he said. "Whatever he can find each day. Sometimes for the city, in parks; sometimes for people who can afford to pay help — it varies."

"Cemeteries?" Merrick asked.

Ian closed his eyes wearily. "Often. Sometimes for the management, sometimes a family will hire him. It varies."

"It would make sense," Indy said.

The vampire turned back to the room. "Ian," he said, "see if you can find out how he gets these jobs. Maybe you can find out where he was on the nights of the attacks, and more importantly, where he *will* be on the night of the half moon. See if you can find out by tomorrow night."

"I already know the answers," the reporter said quietly. "One: There's a small office near the Flats that posts available positions. They know him down there, and they keep a file for him, sometimes for a week in advance. Two: He often works at cemeteries, even the older ones. And yes, he *was* at Lakeview, *and* at Rosemont, on the right dates." He rubbed his forehead exhaustedly. "Three: He's supposed to be working down by the stadium for the next few days. They're trying to landscape the hill behind it." He looked up. "I checked. There're no cemeteries anywhere near there."

Jennifer stirred. "Does it *have* to be a real cemetery?" she asked.

"What do you mean?" Nick asked, pinning her with his burning gaze.

"You said it had to be sanctified ground," she answered, moving uneasily under his intent regard. "Would a memorial do? One that's been blessed?"

"The old Mariner's shrine!" Ian gasped, sitting up straight. He looked over at Nick, nodding emphatically. "That's got to be it!"

"What is it?" Jones asked, leaning forward to catch the younger man's eye.

"It's a statue of St. Elmo, I think," the reporter said. "It's been there forever, just a little square with a garden, and a plaque that's dedicated to the sailors that have been lost to the lake. Even now, funeral services are held there sometimes. They throw wreaths into the water."

"Isolated?" Nick asked.

"A *garden*?" Indy inquired simultaneously.

Ian nodded. "Yes to both questions," he said. "And no, I don't know if Molnar's ever worked there. But he grew up in Cleveland, I'm sure he knows about it."

Nick and Jones looked at each other. "That's it," the professor said grimly.

The vampire nodded silently.

"Okay, then, troops," Indy continued. "Anybody got any ideas about what we do now? Hey, Ian, where are you going?"

The blond man was headed for the phone. "I'm calling room service," he said over his shoulder. "It's gonna be a long night, and I think I need a drink."

The professor regarded him silently for a long moment. "To hell with a drink," he said at last. "Order up a bottle."

"A

re you out of your *mind*?" Ness yelled. The lawman got up and paced angrily around his office. "You have pulled some harebrained stunts in your day — lord, I've even *helped* you with some of 'em — but *this* — !" He whirled back to glare at the object of his anger.

Indiana Jones sat quietly in the visitor's chair, watching his friend's fury with amusement dancing in his hazel eyes. "You got any better ideas?" he asked at last.

"No, dammit!" Elliot admitted, deflating. He threw himself into his own chair and met Indy's eyes. "But it doesn't mean I have to like it!"

"I'm not really thrilled either, old buddy," Jones said. "But we think we can pull it off."

"Can I stop you?" Ness asked with a trace of bitterness. "No, don't bother to answer. Damn, sometimes I wish I was back in Chicago, fighting bootleggers. I don't remember *Capone* causing me this much trouble!"

"Things are tough all over," Indy said unsympathetically. "Look, I know you want in on this, but the way things are going with the Butcher, you can't leave your office without a flock of concerned citizens and nosy reporters surrounding you like hungry vultures. Right?"

Ness nodded wearily, rubbing the back of his neck, stretching to ease the taut muscles in his shoulders.

"So we *use* that," the professor continued. "Misdirection, that's the key. The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Misdirection is the foundation of all successful magic. And you have to admit, this will be one hell of a trick if we can pull it off."

"If you start dragging in more quotes from your old friend Houdini, I'll either hit you or scream," Ness warned him.

"It's a pain in the butt for you," Jones went on, ignoring the lawman's comment. "but it's good in other ways. One: Everyone's so fixated on Kingsbury Run that *our* little vampire slayer has gone unnoticed." He leaned forward, watching his friend intently. "And two: With everyone's attention on *you*, the five of *us* can pull this off without a lot of hoopla. If things go right tonight, we lay the trap, catch this guy and turn him over. Then *you* can get him put away where he's no danger to anyone else, and maybe get him the help he needs. Everything's copacetic." He grinned and waved his hands expansively.

Ness regarded him glumly. "Yeah," he said. "So why do I have such a bad feeling about this?" He sighed and shrugged. "So is there *anything* I can do?"

Jones stood up. "You can let us have a cop," he said briskly. "Preferably *not* in uniform. And a radio car, unmarked if you have one. We may need to scream for help."

Elliot grinned nastily. "Anything for a pal," he said and leaned forward to press a button on his desk.

"Yes, sir?" his secretary said, sticking her head through the door of the inner office in answer to the summons.

"Would you please get me Officer Frank Polenski?" the safety director said pleasantly. "Tell him to report to me here. I have a little job for him. Oh, and tell him it's plain clothes, would you?"

Jones grabbed his fedora and plopped it angrily on his head, looking daggers at his old roommate. "I'll get you for this," he hissed, heading for the door. "I ask you for help and you send me King Kong!"

"Don't knock it, buddy," Elliot retorted. "You gotta admit, he's big enough to give you some real backup."

"I guess so," Indy snapped back. "I just need one more thing, now."

"What's that?" the other asked.

"The name of a fruitstand that sells giant bananas!" the professor snapped and let himself out of the office, Elliot's laughter trailing him down the hall.

T

wilight. The sun, hugely swollen and angry red, slipped through the increasingly cloudy sky, plunging steadily toward the watery horizon. The sky, an eerie expanse of lavender shot with orange and gold, looked unreal, threatening.

Near the traintracks below Municipal Stadium, a group of four people huddled; Jennifer, Ian, Indy and Officer Polenski. The two young people were clad in light summery clothes; Jenny in a pink seersucker sundress and MacDonald in light slacks and billowing white shirt. Indy wore blue; light blue slacks and a short-sleeved shirt of a lighter hue, his fedora pulled down over his eyes. He also wore a light, loose-fitting jacket. Polenski was the most noticeable of the four. The big cop wore battered tan pants and a disreputable yellow shirt, topped by an olive green vest. On his head was a shapeless mass that might have once been called a hat. From his massive right hand dangled two old fishing poles and the strap of a wicker basket descended from his left shoulder.

"Okay, let's get this straight," Indy muttered, glancing over to the workcrew on the slope beneath the stadium's northern facade one more time. The men were getting ready to put their tools away, straggling by ones and twos to a small shed at the top of the hill where the foreman waited to give them their pay envelopes.

The professor's eyes scanned the crew. "Which one is him?" he hissed at MacDonald.

The blond head jerked slightly. "Over there," Ian answered. "The one near the bottom, by the stonework."

Indy's eyes widened as the man in question stood up, shouldering his heavy shovels. "Wow," he whistled. "He *is* a big one, isn't he?"

Molnar was indeed a big man. He stood well over six feet, with wide shoulders and thick, muscular arms and legs. His long face was morose and secretive. He brushed a hand over the straw-blond fringe that straggled over his wide forehead, and headed up the hill toward the foreman, moving slowly and speaking to none of his crewmates. He silently accepted his pay envelope and wandered over to the little shed, downing his shovel and picking up a large, canvas sack which he slung over his shoulder.

"Tools of the trade, you think?" Ian asked, his voice tense.

Indy nodded. "I'd bet on it," he replied.

"And we intend to tackle *him*?" Jennifer questioned, trepidation writ large on her face.

"He won't cause *me* no trouble," Polenski said confidently.

"He'll be armed with a stake," Indy reminded the policeman uneasily.

The massive shoulders moved in a shrug. "I can handle him," the cop repeated. "And my gun's in the creel here, just in case." He patted the wicker basket with one hand.

"Yeah, just remember, we don't shoot unless we have to," Jones snapped.

"Whaddya mean, we?" Polenski asked suspiciously.

In answer, the professor opened his jacket, giving the cop a glimpse of the revolver nestled in a shoulder holster tucked under the archaeologist's right armpit.

Polenski nodded approvingly. "You any good with that?" he said.

"Good enough," the younger man replied. "But I'm better with this." He slipped the other side of the jacket open, displaying the bullwhip coiled at his side.

"That's right pretty, Doc," the policeman said, grinning.

"Call me Indy," the professor said in a slightly exasperated tone of voice.

"Call me Frank, Indy," the cop replied imperturbably.

"Damn!" Ian said softly. "Molnar's leaving!"

"Oh, God, what if we were wrong?" Jen groaned.

"Never you worry, missy," Polenski said genially. "He ain't headin' for his truck, so I reckon he means to stay in the area."

"How do you know?" Jones asked.

"Cause me'n my buddy Kozlovski scoped him out this afternoon," the big cop answered. "Got his plate number from Mr. Ness. Our boy's parked five blocks north, in a public lot. 'N Bobby, Officer Kozlovski that is, he'n his partner are gonna be patrollin' round here for most of the night." He grinned, showing huge teeth. "'N even if Molnar *does* give us the slip, he won't be goin' nowheres in that ol' truck of his. Not with two flat tires'n sand in the gas tank." He shook his head piously. "Society's goin' ta hell when a man can't leave his vee-hickle in a parkin' lot without some rowdies messin' it up."

Indy shook his head in wonderment. *Looks like ol' Kong is smarter than I gave him credit for*, he thought. The nervous tremors in the professor's stomach eased a trifle. "Where do you think he's going, then?"

Frank screwed up his face, watching the distant figure of Molnar amble down the street. "Probably down to one a them little restaurants down by the piers," he said. "Good food in most of 'em. And cheap. He'll be there for a while, I bet."

"And what do we do in the meantime?" Ian insistently.

"We get into position, boy," Polenski replied. He squinted at the reporter and Indy's assistant. "You and the little missy here — well, there's a bench over near the shrine, on top of a little bluff. Looks out over the water — nice view, real quiet. Good place for courtin' couples to watch the

moon rise and share a little — conversation?" He leered at the two young people amiably. "Just try to keep your minds on what we're here for."

Color burned high in Jenny's cheeks and her eyes sparkled dangerously.

Ian, recognizing the danger signals, reached forward and grabbed her arm. "Sounds good," he said hastily. "How about you two?"

"Me'n Indy's goin' fishin'," Frank said, handing the professor one of the poles. "Over to the other side of the shrine, there's a big ol' rock, used t'be part of the breakwall. Nice place to practice castin' and just watch the sun go down."

Jones looked dubiously at the rod in his hand. "Will anybody fall for that?" he asked.

"Oh, sure," the cop assured him. "Who knows? Might even catch somethin', though it's not likely. If ya wanna catch somethin', you're better farther out. Or off the Ninth Street Pier." He smiled slowly. "The great thing 'bout fishin' is that nobody asks no questions. People see a man with a pole in his hands, they figger he either knows what he's doin' or he's crazy. 'N either way, they ain't gonna interfere. Great way to just stand'n watch the world go by."

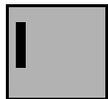
"Shades of Isaac Walton," the archaeologist murmured.

"You read ol' Isaac?" Frank said, grinning delightedly. "Y'know, Indy, I think you'n me're gonna get along just fine. Now let's go."

"Ah, wait a second," MacDonald protested. "Didn't anybody notice that we're missing someone? *Two* someones, to be precise."

"Yes," Jen chimed in. "Where *are* Nick and — and what's-her-name anyway? They should be here by now, no matter how far they had to drive."

"They weren't driving," Indy said. "They — ah — actually, they spent last night here in the city." He pointedly didn't mention where — he didn't see how he'd explain that the two people in question had actually spent the daylight hours in vacant mummy cases located in one of the museum's sub-basement storage rooms. He closed his eyes, reliving the pre-dawn foray past the (fortunately) non-vigilant, ever-gloomy Carl. "They'll be here soon, I'm sure," he went on heartily. "Okay, troops, let's take our places for Act One."



Indy looked out over Lake Erie, hoping to spot the elusive "green flash" as the sun sank beneath its waves, sighing in disappointment as the fiery orb vanished without a trace of the phenomenon.

Frank turned his head as the archaeologist sighed. "Never mind, Indy," he said quietly. "You'll get lots more chances this summer. That is, if you're gonna be here that long."

"I'm here till the end of August," the professor said. He smiled and returned his attention to the water, still surprised at the rapport that had suddenly sprung up between him and the policeman. The conversation that had flowed between them for the past hour or so had cancelled out the unfortunate circumstances of the two's previous meetings, and Jones had been astounded and delighted to discover an agile mind hiding behind Frank's doltish exterior. The cop was a mine of information about the city he loved, and was a great story teller.

The big man suddenly stiffened, his head slowly turning to the right.

"What is it?" Indy whispered.

"Hsst!" the other whispered back. "Someone comin'!"

The archaeologist tensed, then relaxed as Nick's familiar shape slipped out of the shadows. "It's okay," Indy told the cop. "He's one of us."

"How about the woman?" Frank asked suspiciously.

"Where?" Jones asked, peering about intently.

"Over there, behind that pile of crates," the cop said, jerking his head in that direction.

Indy squinted, barely able to make out Janette's black-clad shape against the shadows. "She's with him," the professor replied, waving his hand at the vampire.

Polenski glowered at Nick. "Some guys got all the luck," he grunted.

Jones hastily introduced the two men then turned back to the vampire, frowning. "I thought I told you *not* to wear black?" he said accusingly, taking in the blond man's black trousers and long sleeved black shirt.

Merrick shrugged elegantly. "Some habits are too strong to break," he stated unapologetically. "Besides, if our friend goes after those dressed in dark colors, it only makes sense that the bait in our trap should wear black."

"Bait!" Indy bellowed.

Nick grabbed the professor's shoulder and squeezed — hard. The archaeologist winced and tried to pull away. "Keep your voice down, dammit!" Merrick snapped.

"All right," Jones hissed. "What do you mean, *bait*?"

"To catch a mouse, you need cheese," the vampire said in a reasonable tone. "To catch this killer, you need a victim. I propose to play that role myself. Or do you propose that we huddle here and hope some poor innocent comes stumbling along, presenting himself to be staked? Can we take that chance?"

"No," Indy snapped, taking care to keep his voice low. "But you're not going out there. I am."

"Noble, very noble," the vampire taunted him. "But I look the part."

"Your friend's right, you know," Frank said quietly. "Look, you two fight it out. I'm gonna go check the car, see if Bobby 'n his partner are anywheres near. Maybe they can catch sight of Molnar; he should be headin' back here soon." He stood up straight and pointed across the lakes. "Moon's risin', see?"

Jones and Merrick looked to where he had pointed. The moon was indeed climbing into the sky; a hazy, golden shape slipping through the light clouds. It seemed to grin down at them, a malevolent mockery of the Cheshire Cat's smile.

Frank grunted. "Be right back," he said. The cop slipped away quietly, moving with amazing silence for a man of his bulk.

As soon as Frank was out of earshot, Indy turned on his friend. "Are you *nuts*?" he whispered angrily. "Molnar has a stake — in the shape of a *cross*, remember. *And* a crucifix *and* holy water! You may look the part, but you and Janette are the most vulnerable to his choice of weapons!"

"Indy is right, *mon coeur*," Janette said softly, moving forward to stand beside the two men. "You are being foolish. Let one of *them* lure this crazed peasant into the open. Once he is disarmed, we will dispose of him." She licked her lips and smiled unpleasantly. "Just like the old days," she added.

Merrick snarled at her and she withdrew, pouting. The vampire took a deep breath, fighting to control his anger. He turned back to Indy, green sparks dancing in his eyes. "I can evade anything he throws at me," Nick growled, trying to infuse his voice with a confidence he didn't really feel. "I'm faster and stronger than I look, remember? When he makes his move, I'll duck. He'll be off-balance, confused, maybe a little scared. And that's when I'll need you and that bullwhip of yours, to make sure he can't come at me a second time. And once he's down, make sure he *stays* down. You and Polenski and Ian can *sit* on him, if you have to."

Jones nodded in reluctant agreement. "I still don't like it," he said sourly.

"I'm not thrilled either," Nick admitted, his voice hard. "But it's the only shot we've got." He looked up as the cop's big figure approached.

"Bobby says our boy's headed this way," Frank said tensely. "I already told the two on the bench."

Indy looked over at Ian and Jenny. The reporter nodded, the sullen moonlight glinting off his bright hair. "Right," he said. "Okay, Nick, curtain's going up."

Nick nodded tensely and glided away, taking up his position near the mariner's shrine. Janette ghosted along behind him, her black-clad form sliding from one patch of shadow to the next.

Indy swallowed, tasting the metallic tang of fear in the back of his throat.

"Don't worry," the cop whispered in the professor's ear. "It'll work. It's a good plan."

"Robert Burns had a few words to say about good plans," Indy breathed back.

As it turned out, Robert Burns was right.

Father John Bennett was a young priest, only ordained a year before. Born in a farm community in central Ohio, he had always envisioned himself as the pastor of a rural parish, working among people like his parents and friends. Instead, he found himself assigned to St. John's Cathedral in downtown Cleveland, serving as a part-time secretary to the bishop and ministering to a sophisticated (to him) city flock. Bennett felt himself alien; alone. In short, he was homesick. To counteract his loneliness, the young clergyman had taken to walking for miles each night, up and down the city streets, trying to come to terms with this unfamiliar place that was now his home.

On the night of the waning half-moon, chance led his footsteps to Public Square and beyond, to the path that led behind the stadium. He sauntered along, long black cassock rippling in the cool breeze coming off the lake.

Molnar, heading for the shrine, saw the dark figure walking ahead of him. The maddened man smiled, scenting his prey. He reached into the canvas sack slung at his side and withdrew his holy weapons — the stake and the crucifix. "For you, Anna," he whispered, and ran forward.



ndy's whole attention was fixed on Nick's shadowy figure as the vampire wandered indolently back and forth in front of the statue of St. Elmo. So intent was he on any sign of movement toward the shrine that at first he disregarded the hoarse screams coming from behind him.

It was only when Polenski dropped his fishing pole and went crashing up the hill, swearing, that the archaeologist realized what he was hearing. Then he, too, spun and ran, blindly groping for his whip.

A black shape flashed past the professor, and Jones realized that Nick, too, had heard the sounds and was answering the frantic summons.

Up ahead, in the shadows cast by the stadium, the professor could see a hulking shape hovering above a supine form. The killer, Molnar, held the cross-shaped stake in both hands, striving to push it down into the center of his victim's chest. The man on the ground, slight and dazed, was fighting back desperately, both of his hands clasped above the wicked point, straining to keep it from impaling him.

"Halt! Police!" Polenski bellowed, waving his gun in the air. "Give it up, Molnar!" He fired into the air. Breathing hard, Jones swept past the policeman, grimly following the racing figure of his vampire friend. He was vaguely aware of other running shapes: Janette, Ian, Jenny. But he could spare them no attention, for Nick was getting very close to the crazed man, almost close enough to grab him.

As the shot echoed through the still, humid air, Molnar looked up, grimacing wildly as he saw the three men approaching. He snarled, his face a mask of animal ferocity. "*Vlokoslak!*" he screamed. His right hand let go of the stake and fumbled for something in his pocket. The object came free and he threw it in Polenski's direction. The crucifix spun through the air, narrowly missing the advancing figure of Janette. The female vampire hissed and jumped back.

Molnar spun and ran, stake still clenched tightly in his massive left hand, Indy and Nick close on his heels.

Frank reached the side of the killer's half-conscious, would-be victim, kneeling beside the huddled shape. He reached out and touched the man's neck, feeling for a pulse. "He's alive," the cop said tersely. He grimaced in distaste as his hand came away wet and sticky. "Bastard got him pretty good, though." He sneezed, frowning. "Damn, smell the garlic!" he protested.

Ian and Jen came running up then. "Which way?" the reporter bellowed.

"Toward the stadium," the cop hollered back.

The blond man sprinted off.

Jen fell to her knees beside the wounded priest. "Give me something to stop the bleeding!" she yelled. Frank grabbed a handkerchief from his pocket, passed it over. "Not big enough!" Indy's assistant screamed, wadding the cloth against the crimson river flowing from Bennett's shoulder.

"I don't have anything else!" the cop shouted.

"Damn!" Jenny snarled and stood up, reaching under her dress and wriggling out of her cotton half-slip. She tossed the garment to Janette, who stood several feet away, the predatory gleam in her sulphurous eyes hidden in shadow as she paced in frustration at the sight of the flowing blood. "Rip that up," she demanded.

The vampire glared at her, but did as she was told.

Jennifer turned her attention back to Polenski. "Get to the radio," she demanded. "Get us some help!" She reached up and grabbed the strips of material Janette was holding out to her.

Frank looked anxiously at the shadows into which the killer had vanished, followed by Indy, Nick and Ian, plainly wanting to be in on the chase and capture. At that moment, the young priest groaned loudly, dazed.

"Damn!" the cop swore. He held out his gun to Janette. "Here, girly, you take this," he said. "If that bastard comes back, you shoot him, you understand?"

"I most certainly do," the brunette snapped.

Frank turned and ran for his car.

Molnar ran for the stadium, aware of the pursuit behind him. With a last desperate burst of speed, he reached the locked gates. He grabbed the canvas sack and threw it over, onto the concrete floor beyond the barrier. The stake followed. Then the killer pulled himself up and over. He stooped over and grabbed bag and weapon and vanished into the echoing darkness.

Nick reached the stadium moments later. The vampire leapt lightly into the air, hurdling the gates with no sign of effort. Indy, a few steps behind his friend, scowled disgustedly as Merrick vanished into the shadows. Grimly, the professor grabbed the steel gates and started climbing, pulling himself up with considerable effort. As he reached the top of the gate, he heard Ian shouting at him.

"Indy!" the reporter yelled, running up the barrier. "Wait up!"

"Don't have the time," the archaeologist bellowed back. "Come on!" Leaving the younger man to make his own way into the stadium, Indy plunged into the gloom, ears straining for any sound. There! Somewhere to his right — men's voices shouting. He ran toward the noise, fumbling for the whip as he did so. *Thank God for security lighting*, he thought, realizing that there was a dim glow from a few bulbs high up in the ceiling. *Nick may be able to see in the dark, but I sure as hell can't!*

Merrick and Molnar were facing each other near one of the ramps when Jones found them. The killer was bellowing hoarsely in Hungarian and Latin, wildly waving the stake in circles. He had discarded the sack, the professor saw, but his left hand held a glass jug filled with a clear liquid. Nick was keeping his distance, obviously unable to get close to the madman. As the archaeologist moved closer, he realized the cause of Nick's dilemma — even from yards away, the reek of garlic coming from the murderer made the professor's eyes water. *It must be ten times worse for Nick*, Indy told himself as his stomach heaved.

Merrick saw the archaeologist's approach out of the corner of his eye. "Stay back, Indy!" he yelled, taking his gaze off his foe for one crucial moment.

Molnar seized on the second's inattention. He threw the jug and whirled away, sprinting up the ramp.

The jug shattered against the wall, splattering the vampire with its contents. Indy ran forward, horrified, expecting to see his friend's skin bubble and dissolve. Nick's eyes were tightly shut, his expression one of a man expecting mortal pain. A long moment passed. At last Nick opened his eyes, looking incredulously down at his dripping hands, reaching up cautiously to touch his wet hair and face. He glanced at Indy. "I guess it wasn't holy water," he said, smiling weakly.

Jones shrugged. "Hey, the nun said you were doing God's work," he retorted. "Maybe He decided to give you a break."

"You don't really believe that," the vampire said, shaking his head.

"Nope. But it sounded good."

A panting Ian came running up to them. "Which way?" he gasped.

Nick pointed up the ramp. "There," he said and started forward.

Indy and MacDonald fell in behind the vampire. Jones glanced over at the young reporter. "Ian, are you armed?" he asked urgently.

The younger blond man regarded him blankly before shaking his head.

"Damn!" Jones hesitated a moment, then drew his revolver, pressing it into Ian's hands. "You know how to use this?" he growled. The blond nodded. "Don't hesitate to shoot," Indy told him.

They had reached the stadium's top level, directly under the huge structure's roof. On either side stretched the walkways that led out to the seats in the upper deck.

A flicker of movement to the right. Indy spun, shouting "Look out!"

Molnar came roaring out of the darkness, cross-shaped weapon wielded like a club. He swung the stake at Nick's head. The vampire reached out reflexively, grabbing the thing out of the madman's hands. The vampire screamed in agony as the skin of his hands began to smoke.

The killer's eyes widened in triumph, lunging forward to grab at the stake. "You!" he bellowed. "*Monster! You killed my Anna!*"

With the last of his strength, Merrick threw the stake away from him, through the arched windows behind him, out of the stadium. The murderer grabbed him by the throat, shaking him. Nick groaned, wincing back from the overwhelming scent of garlic.

Indy leapt forward, tackling the big Hungarian. Molnar lost his grip on the vampire's throat. Nick toppled forward, almost unconscious from the pain of his still-smoking hands.

Molnar got to his feet and ran for one of the walkways, Indy right behind him. The killer reached the top of the concrete stairs and turned. He lowered his head and ran at his pursuer. Indy sidestepped the charge. He raised the whip. "Keep back!" he shouted. He snapped the bullwhip, making the leather sing. "It's over, Molnar! Give it up." He drew the whip back, watching for an opening. He could wrap it around the big man's ankles, he knew, tripping him up. Judging the time to be right, he snapped his arm forward —

Just as Molnar charged again. The leather missed his left ankle, but snagged the right. The big man was thrown off-balance. He stumbled and fell —

Headfirst. Down the stairs. Tumbling and rolling all the way to the bottom, to crash against wall. He teetered there for a moment and slowly slipped over the rail, to crash into the seats in the deck below.

Indy raced after the bouncing form, slowing down as he approached the rail. He peered over, looking down at the body. Molnar's eyes were open, glaring up emptily at the night sky so far above him. Indy made no motion to leap down; the unnatural angle of the neck and complete

absence of movement told him that there was no need. The tortured man was undoubtedly dead. "Poor bastard," he murmured, and turned to make his way back up the steps.

The professor was halfway up when he realized the danger to Ian. *Nick's hands!* he moaned to himself, once again seeing the skin smoking and peeling away. "*Shit!*" he yelled and broke into a run, taking the steps two at a time. He raced over the walkway to find his worst nightmare come true: Ian, his eyes wide with fear, back against the wall, being stalked by a wounded Nick.

"No!" the archaeologist howled, throwing himself between the two. He realized that MacDonald still held the gun, the barrel held before him. "Put that away!" he roared at the frightened reporter. "It won't do any good!"

He whirled then, bracing himself to face the vampire. Nick's lips were drawn back in a snarl, his fangs fully extended and gleaming in the dim light. The eyes were inhuman, filled with green fire. Growling softly, the undead thing that he had called his friend paced forward, intent on claiming his prey, lusting for the blood.

"*Nick!*" Indy yelled. "Fight it! Dammit, we're your *friends!*"

Panting, his breath coming in sobs, the vampire paced forward once more — then hesitated. A film of sweat broke out over his pale skin. The demonic green fire flickered and died. Nick spun away, his wounded hands cradled against his chest. "Don't come near me!" he commanded hoarsely.

Indy nodded and backed away, dragging MacDonald with him. The reporter's eyes were fastened on the vampire's shaking form. "My God," he blurted. "Molnar was right! What a *story!*"

Jones grabbed him by the hair, jerking the younger man's head up and back. "No story!" he barked.

"Are you crazy?" Ian protested.

"No, but *you* are if you think they'll let you print *any* of this!" Indy retorted.

"*They* who?" the reporter questioned angrily. "The publishers? City Hall? Ness? Well, let me tell you —"

"Not them, you young fool!" Indy interrupted. "I'm talking about the others like *him!*" He waved his hand at Nick's back.

"Others?" Ian said weakly.

"Yes, others," the vampire said hoarsely, turning slowly to regard the two humans intently. He stepped forward, grimacing as MacDonald shrank away. "There *are* others, you know. And our existence depends on secrecy. There are those who enforce that silence." He looked away, the memory of a young photographer on a Civil War battlefield haunting his thoughts. "Keep silent, boy, and keep yourself *alive.*"

Ian's gray eyes locked with Nick's. At last the reporter nodded, accepting the truth of the vampire's words. "Silent. Okay," he said. That was all that was necessary. From the way he shook his head, Indy had the feeling that what Ian had just seen was already receding into the realm of half-forgotten dream, soon to be forgotten entirely.

Jones stepped forward, fishing a handkerchief out of his pocket. He tore it in two and began wrapping Nick's right hand with one half the material.

Merrick patiently accepted the professor's ministrations. "Molnar?" he asked as Jones finished with the right hand and started on the left.

"Dead," the archaeologist said shortly.

Nick nodded wearily. "Perhaps it's best that way," he said.

"I wonder if his wife and children would agree," Ian said softly.

The vampire shrugged.

The three men turned and slowly made their way down the ramp. As they reached the main floor, they found Janette, Frank and Jennifer waiting for them. Two uniformed officers flanked Polenski.

The big cop looked up as they approached. "The victim's gonna make it," he said. "We got to him in time, the ambulance guys said. How about Molnar?"

"Dead. Fell down into the lower deck," Indy said wearily. "Broken neck." At a nod from Frank, the two uniformed cops headed for the stands. "He's behind the hometeam dugout," Jones called after them.

Polenski gestured at Nick's bandaged hands. "I can give you a lift to the hospital, if you're hurt."

Merrick shook his head. "Just lost some skin," he said. "I'll be fine." Janette walked over to his side, put her arm around him. The blond man looked down at her and smiled wryly. The expression faded as he raised his head to look at Indy. "I think we'll call it a night," he said. Without another word, the two vampires headed for the gate.

"See you tomorrow night?" Jones called after them.

Nick grinned over his shoulders. "I'll be in touch, Junior," he retorted.

Indy watched them vanish into the shadows, knowing that the two of them would be gone from the city by tomorrow night. "Have a good trip," he whispered.

He turned back to Ian, smiling to see that Jennifer had wrapped her arms around the young man's waist and showed no intention of ever letting go.

"You know, I'm hungry," he said. "Anybody else feel in the mood for a nice steak?" He began to laugh as the other three advanced on him threateningly.

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Professor Henry Jones Jr. smiled to himself and got up out of the chair. He turned off the light and headed for the bed. Removing his robe and slippers, he slipped under the covers and composed himself for sleep. "Too bad I couldn't tell Schanke the *whole* story," he chuckled wearily. "Oh, well, he's a big boy. I think he'll survive." He turned out the light and fell asleep.

I

Indy slept well into the day, the events of the last few days tiring him out more than he would admit. Rising in the early afternoon, he took Nick's advice to heart, staying in his room, ordering room service and busying himself with tidying his notes and writing in the journal an apologetic Schanke had returned to him the night before.

By two o'clock he was bored out of his mind. By two-thirty, he was climbing the walls. A glint of steely determination shone from his one good eye as he grabbed the phone, angrily punching in the number of the coroner's office.

"Natalie?" he barked when he finally got through to Dr. Lambert.

"Hello, Indy," the woman said, resigned amusement in her tone. "What can I do for you?"

"You can let me know what the hell's going on!" he snapped. "I've been stuck in this little room all day, and nobody's even had the courtesy to call me and —"

"Sorry, Indy," Nat said, stemming the tide of his words. "I guess Nick and Schanke forgot to —"

"*Forgot!*" Jones roared. "How dare they *forget* me! Those —"

"— leave word that you were to be kept updated," the coroner went on smoothly, disregarding his angry eruption. "But give me a few minutes. I'll nose around, see what I can find out, and call you right back. 'Bye."

She cut the connection, leaving the old professor staring in frustration at the buzzing receiver. "Women!" he huffed, "shoulda never given 'em the vote!" Blithely disregarding the fact that every important woman in his life, including his mother and his still sorely-missed wife Marion, had hardly been the clinging vine type, the miffed archaeologist spent several enjoyable minutes complaining about uppity females that didn't know their proper place, expressing sentiments that would have had Betty Friedan and every member of NOW screaming for the old man's blood.

"So there!" he concluded triumphantly as the phone rang. He snatched up the receiver. "Jones here," he snapped. "About *time* you called back!"

"Oh, did you miss me, Indy?" Natalie teased. "Okay, here's what's going on. The task force hit the Place early this morning, armed with warrants, dogs, and God knows what else. At the same time, the white-collar brigade hit the banks, the lawyer's offices and accountants." She paused and giggled. "Markham and Gardiner's associates never knew what hit 'em! It's a mess down in booking, I can tell you. All kinds of terrified, wealthy yuppies, branches of some of the finest family trees in the area, all pulled in as *common felons!* Wonder what the society pages are gonna do with *this* story?"

"Depends on how many newspeople's kids are among the ones arrested, I guess," the professor said cynically. "How about the ringleaders?"

"Flown the coop," Nat informed him breezily.

"You sound awfully complacent," the archaeologist complained.

"Oh, they won't get far," she said. "All the airports are under surveillance, as well as every border crossing. They've got the RCMP on the job, and you know what they say about our Mounties!"

"Let's hope it's the truth and not just PR," Jones grumbled. "Does that mean I can leave this damned little shoebox I'm locked in?"

"No, I wouldn't say that," Natalie returned, her tone apologetic.

"Somehow I knew you'd say that," Indy snapped.

"Look, at this time of year, Nick should be reporting in a little after four," the woman said. "How about this: I'll check with him, see what his plans are. Then I'll swing by Kate's house, pick her up and bring her to the hotel. The three of us can have dinner together."

"Hmmm," Jones said. "Well, it's not exactly freedom, but it'll have to do." He grinned, letting his amusement creep into his voice. "Tell you what, I'll let you two young ladies get me licked up and then you can have your way with me."

"*Indy!*" the coroner gasped. "I'm shocked!"

"Why?" the old man chuckled. "Afraid I won't survive the experience?"

"No," she said drily. "Afraid that *Kate and I* won't! See you about five." She hung up, laughing.

Soon after ten, Nick made his way down the hotel corridor, heading for his old friend's room. He tapped on the door and it swung open, revealing a grinning Natalie.

"It's about time you got here," she complained amiably. "I was just about to call for help. These two," she went on, gesturing at Indy and Kate, "are about to declare war on each other."

"Any particular reason?" the vampire asked as he entered the room and shut the door behind him.

"Just on general principals," Sullivan snapped. "Your *friend* here is the most stubborn, pig-headed, maddening —"

"Now, now, Katie," Jones grinned. "Enough with the compliments, you'll turn my head." He transferred his gaze to Knight. "What's up?" he demanded.

"Just about everything," the vampire responded, making his way to a vacant chair and sitting down. "Even our flown birds are in custody — Myra Gardiner was picked up in Niagara Falls." He shook his head. "Fugitives should *never* try to escape in fire-engine red Mercedes," he said sadly.

"She shoulda tried a motorcycle," Indy agreed with mock solemnity. "That was always *my favorite*. Go on —"

"John Markham was a little more creative — or sneakier. He was picked up in Vancouver. Disguised as a woman. He'd stolen his mother's passport." The vampire shook his head. "He might have gotten away with it if he'd just remembered to shave his mustache."

"Oh, I don't know," Indy said, cocking his head to one side consideringly. "I've known *plenty* of ladies with mustaches."

"You're heading into deep water, Jones," Natalie warned. Behind her, Kate nodded enthusiastically, the light of battle entering her eye.

"Ah, well, yes," the archaeologist sputtered. "So, does this mean that Kate and I are sprung from house arrest?"

"Exactly," Knight smiled. "A few formalities, and that's it. You're free to leave, Indy."

Jones looked disappointed, then brightened. "But you *will* need me to testify, right?" he asked. "After all, it was the cocaine on my shoes and Katherine's that tipped you off to the

drug-smuggling in the first place." He tilted his head and stared questioningly at Nick. "Did you ever find out how that happened, by the way?"

Nick laughed. "Yep. Seems Higgins had helped himself to a hefty part of the last shipment the night of the party," he answered. "After your quarrel with him, Indy. That's where he disappeared to for so long. He was wandering around in the passage, snorting the stuff. He apparently spilled a great deal of it, then went looking for Gardiner and Markham. You were probably lucky you didn't run into him when you were exploring. As for testifying —" The detective shrugged. "Maybe," he said. "But I don't think so."

Indy sat back, somewhat deflated.

Dr. Sullivan glanced at her watch. "Well," she said, "since I'm free to leave my house tomorrow, I'd better get going. I've got an eight-thirty class in the morning." She stood and crossed to stand before Jones. She leaned down and took his face in her hands. "Good night, Indy," she smiled and kissed him affectionately. "And don't you dare leave town without saying goodbye."

"And if I do?" he teased.

"Then I'll buy a bullwhip of my own and come looking for you," the historian laughed.

The twinkle returned to the old man's eye, his spirits rising. "Gonna miss me, huh, gorgeous?" "You better believe it, handsome," Kate laughed. She turned to Nat. "Ready, Natalie?"

"Be right with you," the coroner replied. "I just have to say something to Nick. Meet you in the hall."

With a final, cheerful wave, Kate left the room.

Nat glanced at Indy, and the old man tactfully cleared his throat. "Excuse me," he said, "I gotta —" he waved his hand in the air and headed for the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

Lambert turned to the detective. "Have you been taking the serum?" she said in a low, urgent voice.

"Yes, mother," the man replied in an amused tone. He grimaced and shuddered. "What the hell's *in* that stuff, anyway?" he said.

"Do you really want to know?" the coroner challenged.
"No."

"Good." She ran a quick hand through her thick brown hair. "Look, after this is all over, I want you in the lab for some tests. Including UV tolerance."

"Not that one," Nick groaned.

"Hey, no pain, no gain," she quipped, heading for the door.

"How come it's always *my* pain?" the vampire grumbled, following her.

The bathroom door opened and Indy emerged in time to say goodbye. "You got a good one here, Nick," he said, hugging the petite doctor.

"Yeah, but she's a lousy cook," Knight chided.

Natalie grimaced and left.

Indy chuckled. "You want to talk lousy cooking?" he said. "Let's talk about my Marion. The only dish that woman could produce without burning it was yak stew." He sat down on the sofa. "And I *hate* yak stew. Fortunately, we didn't have it all that often — awful hard to get yak meat in the Midwest, you know." He shook his head as Nick sat down in a chair near him. "Marion," the archaeologist sighed. "I still miss her, Nick. More every day."

"She was a terrific lady," the vampire agreed. "Unflappable."

"That she was," the old professor laughed. "Most of the time." He paused. "Memories," he said at last. "That seems to be all I have these days. The past comes back so clear — I was thinking about Cleveland last night. Ian and Jennifer."

"Did they ever get together?" Knight asked.

"Oh, my, yes," Indy smiled. "Tied the knot in thirty-seven. I was best man." He grinned. "Jen even took my advice, went back to school. Got her PhD, finally. Dr. Jennifer Grayson MacDonald, expert in folklore and superstition." He shook his head. "Did all that and raised four kids while Ian was careering around the globe. He was one of the best war correspondents, you know. There was Murrow, Pyle, and him. All through the war, and then Korea." His voice fell, saddened. "Vietnam. He died there in sixty-nine. Heart attack. Damn shame."

"Yeah," the detective murmured.

The archaeologist fixed the blond man with a serene gaze. "Don't mind me," he smiled. "Us old men get kinda melancholy now and then."

"I wouldn't know," Nick teased, standing up. "Well, I'd better get back to work. I'll keep you posted."

"You do that," Indy agreed, rising. He winced as his right knee cracked loudly. "Damn," he swore. "That's the worst part about getting old — nothing works the way it's supposed to." He grabbed his cane, leaning heavily on it. "It's one of the things I *won't* miss when the time comes for me to make my exit." He smiled gently. "Don't think that's gonna be too far off, now."

"Do you know how much I envy you?" Nick asked quietly. "Aches and pains and all?"

Jones looked at him solemnly. "I think I do," he said softly. "But you'll get there, Nick. I believe that." He cleared his throat. "Now go on, get outta here."

Nick hugged the fragile old man quickly and headed for the door. "When are you leaving then?" he called back, his hand on the doorknob.

"Well, since you don't need me, I'll take my scheduled flight. Ten o'clock tomorrow night."

"Take a cab to the station first," Knight demanded. "I'll drive you to the airport."

"In that big old Caddy of yours?" the professor challenged.

"Of course," the blond answered.

"Well, all right," Indy said after a moment. "On one condition."

"What's that?" the vampire asked warily.

"That only my *luggage* goes in the trunk," Jones shot back. "I get to ride in the front!"

"You got it, Junior!" Nick grinned and hastily exited the room, the other's infuriated howl of "*Don't call me Junior!*" audible over the vampire's laughter.

Nick glanced up at the clock on the interrogation wall and sighed. Nearly eight o'clock. He stretched and rubbed at his aching neck, looking over at his exasperated partner.

Schanke grimaced and turned back to the rigid figure of Myra Gardiner. "All right, *Ms. Gardiner*," he sighed. "Let's take it from the top. It was *your* idea to smuggle the drugs, right?"

"Don't answer that!" came a squeaky voice from the corner. Miss Gardiner's lawyer, a skinny, lugubrious little man with an enormous nose and even larger mustache leaned forward indignantly. "My client is —"

"Under arrest for drug-smuggling and murder, Mr. Halkind," the dark-haired detective snapped. "And she has agreed to make a statement."

"Hush, Lawrence," Gardiner scolded. "I want to get this over with."

"But Myra," the little man said, trying to sound firm. "*I must* protest —"

"I said *hush!*" the would-be aristocrat said haughtily. She turned her attention back to Schanke. "What was your question again?"

"It was your idea to smuggle the drugs into this country, right?" he repeated, his patience fraying noticeably.

The woman sniffed disdainfully. "I suppose so," she snapped. "But *not* for sale on the streets! Only for the gatherings at the Place." She glared at the stocky detective. "You have to see my position! My friends and I are *not* addicts like the low-life scum *you* people deal with! We are well-to-do professionals, educated people from good families. If we want to socialize and indulge ourselves — well, we've *earned* the right to do so."

"Of course," Schanke grated out through clenched teeth. "So, you decided to fix up the old rooms above the stable at the Place — so you and your friends could 'socialize' and 'indulge' in comfort."

"Exactly," the woman smirked. "And it made sense for us to buy what we needed direct from the suppliers overseas. After all, one never knows what these low-life dealers on the streets add, does one?" Her mouth tightened disapprovingly. "And the *prices!*" She shook her head.

The stocky cop looked up at his partner pleadingly, silently urging him to take over the questioning. Realizing that Schanke was fighting the urge to strangle the snobbish bitch, Nick leaned over the table, attracting Myra Gardiner's attention.

"So you never intended the drugs for sale?" he said, smiling charmingly.

The woman's manner thawed appreciatively. "Of course not," she said. "That was Higgins idea!" She grimaced at the name. "Such a greedy, *common* little man!"

"But he was in on the plan from the beginning?" Knight pressed. "About restoring the Place?"

"We needed someone to be secretary for the project," she agreed. "Someone who would approve work orders without asking questions, someone who would pass bills without demanding answers."

"Someone who could be bought off," Schanke interjected.

"If you have to be crude about it, yes!" Gardiner snapped.

"And it worked," Knight put in, shooting a cautionary glance at his partner.

"For quite some time," the woman said complacently. "All of us were having fun, and making a tidy profit. The only price we paid was having to put up with Higgins. But even *he* was on his best behavior for a while — playing with the money, rubbing elbows with his betters." Her mouth thinned again. "Until Johnny gave a 'friend' a half a kilo of cocaine to cover a gambling debt." She scowled. "This 'friend' was impressed with the quality, wanted to buy at a profit. Johnny and Higgins went crazy — wanted to import more and more. I *knew* we couldn't do it! I could control Johnny, talk sense to him. But *Higgins* —"

"He was the wild card, right?" Knight jumped in. "The loose cannon. So you and John Markham killed him."

She looked at the blond detective pityingly. "*I* didn't," she said. "Johnny did. The fool panicked that night." She shook her head disapprovingly. "My plan would have worked so much better," she sighed.

"Your plan?" the vampire probed encouragingly.

"I thought we could simply keep feeding Higgins booze and coke," Myra said coolly. "Eventually he'd either overdose or wreck his car. Everyone would assume his connection was a campus dealer. Everyone *knows* how these university students are."

Knight and Schanke exchanged a long look, bemused by the woman's callous manner. "Right," the vampire said at last. "But Markham ignored the plan. Why?"

"The idiot panicked," Myra said in a long-suffering tone. "Higgins was in debt, needed lots of money. That's why he wanted to make the sales to Johnny's friend, you see."

The detective nodded his blond head, urging her to go on.

"When Johnny and I refused, the little worm got nasty — started making threats." She stopped and sipped at the glass of water offered to her by Schanke. "Thank you. Anyway, that's why he showed up at the Historical Association Gala — to try to make us change our minds. After that *dreadfully* embarrassing incident with Dr. Jones, Johnny pulled him aside, tried to reason with him. But Higgins pulled away, and said he was going to find Johnny's father, Dean Markham, and tell him *everything* unless we agreed to the drug deal."

"And what did Markham do?" Schanke prodded.

"What he always does," she answered disgustedly. "He panicked and came running to me. He's never had much backbone, you know. His mother was Irish, you know," she added, grimacing. "And *everyone* knows what cowards *they* are!"

"Just so," Knight murmured. "And then?"

"We went looking for him, of course!" the woman snapped. "Found him flat on his back in one of the paneled rooms. *Somebody* had slugged him." Her eyes glinted with malicious amusement. "We didn't know who. But it was delightful to see him lying there, groaning." Her tight smile faded. "Then Johnny went crazy. He picked up that vulgar walking stick and started hitting Higgins with it — over and over."

"Did you try to stop him?" the vampire asked.

"I — never thought of that," she said, staring at him blankly. "I was just so surprised!" Her cheeks flushed angrily. "And then, when it was all over, Johnny just ran for the panel — running away again. He wouldn't even come back to help me drag the damned body into the passage!"

"So that's when you threw the cane at him, and it hit the wall instead," Nick interjected.

"Well, yes," she admitted, her expression surprised. "How did you know?"

"Oh, us common policemen have a few brains, lady," Schanke told her sarcastically.

"I suppose you must," she retorted coolly. "Is there anything else? I have a dinner party tonight. I'm the hostess and I really *can't* be late. That would be rude."

"Just one thing," Knight said, glaring at his partner. "That night at the gala — you were wearing gloves, correct?"

She smiled regally. "Yes. Long opera gloves, to be precise."

"So that's why your fingerprints are *not* on the cane." He nodded. "What about Markham?"

She frowned. "Why, no. Gentlemen no longer wear gloves in the evening. Why?"

"Then why aren't his prints on the cane?" Knight pressed.

She flushed angrily and opened her mouth, but no sound came out.

"You know, your friend Johnny is in a room like this one, just up the hall," the vampire went on urbanely. "And he told us just about the same story — with one exception. According to him, *you* were the one who grabbed that cane and beat Higgins to death."

"He's a damned liar!" Myra screeched, her aristocratic demeanor fast becoming a thing of the past.

"Is he? By the way, we've recovered the dress you wore that night — dark blue velvet, very tasteful. Wonder if we'll find any bloodstains? Ones that match Higgins's blood-type."

She stared at him, eyes dark with fury. Her lips drew back in a feral snarl. "You wouldn't *dare* —" she began.

"Oh, you'd be surprised what us peasants are allowed to do these days," Schanke smirked. "And your little pal told us something else — about how you got rid of a certain architect that worked on the restoration project. One Tom Dyerson."

Myra glared at him, a cornered animal.

"And when we checked the autopsy report on Dyerson, what do you think we found?" Knight put in. "He'd crashed his car into a bridge abutment — while he was high on coke and booze. You were right, Myra, it was a good plan. Too bad you lost your temper with Higgins. You might have gotten away with it — again."

The woman's composure vanished completely and she lunged at the blond man, screaming and clawing, her manicured talons seeking his eyes.

Nick pushed her away. "You'd better listen to your lawyer, Myra," he said. "Afraid you'll be missing your dinner party tonight. And a lot more." He walked to the door and opened it, summoning two uniformed female officers. "Watch out for this one," he said, gesturing toward the screaming Gardiner. "She's got claws."

He and Schanke left the room, thankfully leaving the furious woman to the other cops' tender mercies.

Schanke rubbed at his sweating forehead. "That is one *mean* broad," he said. "Glad you were with me in there, partner."

"Any time, Schank," Nick grinned.

"I never have any luck with women named Myra," the dark-haired cop went on in a disgusted voice.

"Hey, you *married* one," Knight protested.

Schanke shot his partner a frowning look. "*That's* what I mean! Hey, look who's here!" the stocky detective said, pointing to the bench at the end of the corridor. "Hey, Indy!" he carolled delightedly. "You come to say goodbye?"

"That and to catch a ride to the airport," Jones said, rising as the two cops approached.

"I'll get my coat and be right with you," Nick said, turning into his office.

Schanke held out his hand. "We're gonna miss you, Indy," he said. "Thanks for all the stories."

"Thank you for listening," Jones replied.

Just then, Stonetree stuck his head out of his office door. "Schanke!" he bellowed. "Get over to the Royal Alexandra Theater. Somebody left a little surprise package at the stage door!"

"Ah, shit," Schanke moaned. "The Jigsaw Man again?"

"Right," the captain said. "Move it. Oh, you leaving, Dr. Jones?" he asked, seeming to see Indy for the first time.

"Heading for the airport now," the archaeologist said.

"Well, have a good flight," Stonetree told him. He looked over his shoulder. "There goes my phone," he said. "Goodbye."

"Hey, Indy?" Schanke was still standing beside the professor. "You know that killer you told me about, the Cleveland Torso guy?"

"Yes?" Jones asked encouragingly.

"Did Ness ever get the bastard?"

The old man shook his head. "Nope. Drove Elliot nuts." He shrugged. "Eventually, it cost him his job. And the election, when he ran for mayor."

"Great," Schanke sighed dejectedly. Then he brightened. "Hey, if I catch the Jigsaw Man, I'll be one up on *Elliot Ness*! How about that! Well, take care,

Indy. Hasta la bye-bye!" He beamed, clapped the professor on the shoulder and raced down the corridor.

"Ready to go?" Nick asked, emerging from his office and shrugging into his long, capelike leather coat.

"Any time," Indy replied, letting the vampire help him into his own leather-and-sheepskin. He clapped the fedora on his head and grabbed his cane and briefcase.

The vampire looked over his shoulder, frowning.

"Looking for someone," the archaeologist asked.

"I thought Nat would show up to say goodbye," Nick said.

Indy grinned. "She and Kate took me to lunch," he said. "We had a great time, and said our farewells without getting all sentimental and gooey about it. Let's go."

Knight picked up the suitcase and led the way out of the building. Within five minutes they were in the car, heading for Toronto International. As they drove, Nick regaled his friend with the story of Murderous Myra and her idiot boyfriend Johnny.

"Sounds like it's gonna be quite a scandal," Jones chuckled. "All those high-class, high-paid friends of hers, all hauled into court to explain why they figured that the law didn't apply to them!" He laughed outright. "Poor old Higgins! He's finally in the spotlight, and he can't enjoy it!"

Nick joined in his laughter, spinning the steering wheel as he pulled into the visitor's parking lot at the airport.

The two men got out of the car, Knight fishing in the trunk for Indy's suitcase, and they headed slowly across the pavement to the terminal. A light snow had begun to fall, and the professor shivered. "Never did like the cold, much," he commented as they walked into the vast building. "Oh, one more thing," he said. "Give my regards to Janette, won't you? Tell her I'm sorry I didn't have time to take her up on her kind invitation."

"Are you *really* sorry?" Nick teased, one eyebrow arched mockingly.

The other man glared at him. "What do *you* think?" he snapped. "But that is *one* lady even I hesitate to offend!"

"Definitely getting smarter in your old age," Knight muttered cheerfully.

It took only a few minutes to check in at the airline desk and send the suitcase through to the baggage handler. They walked in silence down the hall to the gate, coming to a halt in front of a huge wall of glass overlooking the snowswept runway.

"You going to be all right, my friend?" Nick said at last, somewhat disturbed by Jones's silence.

"Don't worry about me," the other replied, humor glinting in his eye. "Just wondering what I'm going to do for excitement when I get back home."

"Haven't you had enough of that?" the vampire laughed.

"Nope," the old man chuckled incorrigibly. "Listen, they're calling my flight." He held out his hand. "Well, if you need me to testify, you know where I am."

Knight held out his own hand, returning Jones's hearty grip. "I do," he said.

"And if you don't, I figure I'll see you — oh, let's see — roundabout 2008. Yeah, that sounds about right, seeing that we've stumbled over each other just about once a decade since 1916!"

The vampire's eyes widened. "Indy —" he began, then hesitated, unsure of what to say.

"You thinking about what I said last night? About my time being close?" the professor grinned.

Knight nodded.

"Well, I've been wrong before," Jones went on, still smiling. "And though I know I said I wouldn't be sorry to go, I *don't* remember saying I was in a *hurry!*"

Nick gave in at last, laughter finally overwhelming him. He grabbed his old friend into a fierce hug, unable to speak.

Indy returned the embrace, his thin old arms stronger than they looked. At last he pulled away, blinking hard. "Go on, get out of here," he said gruffly. "Before I start crying and ruin my 'grouchy old man' image."

Knight nodded and looked long and hard into Indy's face before turning away. "Take care of yourself, Junior," he murmured and walked away rapidly, not looking back.

"You, too, Nick," Jones's said, fishing for a handkerchief. "And *don't call me Junior!*" He blew his nose briskly and headed for the jetway.

The tired archaeologist settled into his aisle seat with a weary sigh, smiling up at the trim figure of the stewardess. "How much time till takeoff?" he asked, watching as she stowed his heavy briefcase in the overhead compartment.

"Not too much longer, now," she said, smiling down at him. "We're running a few minutes late, though. The Air France connection from Paris was a few minutes late and we're waiting for the last few passengers — oh, there they are. Excuse me." She hurried away.

Indy put his head back and closed his eye, feeling the cabin pressure change as the doors were closed and secured. Beneath him, he could feel the thrum of the idling jets.

Someone brushed passed him and he listened idly. A young man, he decided, babbling eagerly to someone behind him.

"Paris was okay," the boy's voice said. "But it's gonna be great to be home. Here's my seat — you guys must be over there. Here, let me take that — I'll put it overhead for you."

"I'd rather do it myself," a woman's voice answered. Indy smiled at the sound. It was a pleasant voice, lightly accented. It reminded him of Janette in one of her teasing moods. "Here, just let me —"

"No, really," the boy protested. "I can — look out!"

"Oooh!" the woman squealed and Jones's eye flew open as something soft and warm collapsed into his lap.

The embarrassed woman stared at him helplessly, her brown eyes wide. She reached up and brushed her blonde hair off her forehead. "Oh, lord," she said helplessly. "*Excusez-moi* — I mean, I'm so sorry —"

Indy chuckled, inclining his head courteously. "No need to apologize, miss," he laughed. "At my age, believe me, it's an *honor* when a pretty lady throws herself at you."

The woman laughed, relaxing a little.

A man's voice came from behind Jones's head. "Are you all right, Tess?"

Indy craned his head around to see the speaker and his grin widened. The man standing there was tall, well built, with long dark hair caught into a ponytail which was secured by a leather thong.

The professor cleared his throat. "Your lady seems to have fallen rather heavily for me, Duncan. So be a good chap and go sit someplace else, all right?"

The tall man, in the act of helping the woman to her feet, froze and stared down at the old man. He shook his head, a long-suffering look passing over his handsome features. "Oh, God," he said. "Why me?"

"You two know each other?" the young man who had precipitated the woman's dive into Indy's lap asked, curiosity alive on his mobile features.

"Oh, you might say our ... paths have crossed now and again," Indy replied, his grin widening. "It's a long story."

"It's a long flight," the boy pointed out, running his hands through his curly auburn hair. "I'm Richie," he said. "And that's Tess," he went on, pointing at the woman who had removed herself from Jones's lap and was settling himself into the window seat.

"And it's going to seem even longer," Duncan MacLeod rasped. "Get in your seat and buckle in, Richie. Now!"

The boy subsided and did as he was told, shooting interested glances across the aisle all the while.

The tall man squeezed in front of the professor, taking the middle seat between the old man and Tess. He sighed with immortal aggravation. "Out of all the planes in all the world, *he* has to be on this one!" he complained.

"Very good!" Indy applauded. "Tell me, do you do Bogart, too?"

Duncan groaned and Tess giggled. The archaeologist grinned at her and settled back into his seat. *Looks like this is going to be an interesting trip after all*, he thought happily. *Very interesting, indeed!*