

# Chapter 1

Sunlight streamed into the apartment window as John continued to beat on his alarm clock. As the buzzing continued, John realized it was his phone and not the alarm clock making the horrible racket. As he focused his eyes on the name flashing on his phone, John groaned. “Mommy” continued to flash across the face of his phone as John set his feet on the floor and held his head in his hands. It wasn’t his real Mother, of course. His real Mother hadn’t spoken to him in three years now; which was fine by him. In fact, John couldn’t remember speaking to any of his family since the funeral. No, thought John, they would speak to me; I just don’t want to speak to them... not since I made that scene at the gravesite after the funeral.

The funeral; it had been three years, and it still seemed like yesterday. It seemed like just yesterday when his father-in-law cussed him in front of everyone at the gravesite. It probably didn’t help that John was three sheets to the wind while his father-in-law was doing it. It probably didn’t help that John had told Arthur, John’s father-in-law, that he was an interfering waste of human flesh. It probably didn’t help that he told Arthur that John and Sam had never had children, not because of John’s job, but because Sam didn’t want Arthur’s interfering nose in

the child's life. It sure didn't help that Arthur was right about John. If John hadn't been drinking. If... John's thoughts were interrupted by the phone buzzing again.

John stood up and stretched. He glanced out the window at the city. New York. Sam had wanted to live here. "Where else can you find the arts, the different types of people, the nightlife, and all the other wonders this city held?" she had asked him. The most exciting city in the world... for Sam; for John, it was the loneliest city in the world. John had only one friend here. Most of John's friends apparently agreed with the words his father-in-law had spoken. In fact, except for Chet, none of his friends had spoken to him since the funeral. That was fine with John. He didn't need anyone. No sirree, he was doing just fine on his own.

"They say every cloud has a silver lining and the silver lining is that I haven't had to listen to your stupidity, Arthur, since I lost her. I don't have to listen to your judgments, your foolish ideas, and I don't have to listen to you speak."

John smiled. As he glanced over to the picture on his nightstand of himself and the beautiful girl with him, his stomach dropped all over again. The smile fell from his face.

"I know Sam," he said out loud. "It's a lie. I am not fine. I'm a wreck and I don't know how to go on each day without you."

The phone buzzed again. John walked out of the bedroom and walked into the kitchen. He opened the freezer and stared at the bottle of vodka. The bottle was a reminder to him of all he had done ... not that he could ever forget. He had not touched the bottle since the funeral. If only he hadn't touched it before then... John had fought the same fight every morning for more than 3 years. He had been to AA meetings, but he had never spoken. He left the FBI after the incident. He looked where his PI license hung on the wall and scoffed.

If you watched TV in the 1980's, you would think every other street in every city had a private investigator on it. What TV didn't tell you was the majority of the work included process serving, chasing down debtors, and, of course, spying on a spouse that someone thinks is cheating. Oh that was the best. All of the training John had received at ECU and Quantico wasted. There was nothing like renting some seedy hotel room and getting some interesting pictures of some not-so beautiful people doing things with other not-so beautiful people. John shook his head in disgust of the mental image that had invaded his mind.

With the type of work he did alone, it was a miracle he had been sober over the last three years. The thought of those people just then was enough to drive most sane men to drink. John barked a laugh at the joke his life and his investigative skills had become. John stared at the bottle and tears welled up in his eyes. "Blast it Sam! I'm..." He was interrupted by a pounding on the door. John knew who it

was without even looking out the peep hole in the door. He knew once Chet started in on him, there was no stopping him. He knew that for some reason, known only to Chet, it was time for them to talk. John wiped the tears from his eyes, shut the freezer door, sighed, and headed toward the door.

## Chapter 2

The pounding on the door continued. “John!!! John!! Are you in there?! I will break down this door! JOHN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” John stared at the door. He peered through the peep hole to see his best friend... well, his only friend. Chet looked furious. John stood there thinking of his options. It was early. Well, it was 2 in the afternoon, but it was early for him. He hadn’t slept much from the PI case he had just finished working... and, honestly, he slept as little as possible for the past three years to avoid dreaming about Sam. His mind wasn’t thinking very clearly due to the lack of sleep. John did not think he was in good enough physical shape to try to climb down the fire escape. Well, that was a lie. He was in shape; he just didn’t want to exert himself if it wasn’t warranted. While John really didn’t want to deal with Chet right that second; to climb down a rusty fire escape, which might collapse in the process, seemed a little extreme.

John realized he had to do something soon. Chet was a member of the FBI, so John was pretty sure Chet could actually kick in the door and get away with it. “JOHN!!!!!!!!!!” John sighed and opened the door to face his friend. Chet barged past him and straight into John’s bedroom. John knew an explosion was seconds away. John counted down from three on his fingers. When his fingers reached

zero, he heard, "WHAT THE . . . !?!?!? Why does it say Mommy on your cell phone?!?!? That's how you list me in your phone?!?!?"

John sat down on the couch and smiled. "Good to see you too Chet. What can I do for you this morning?"

"Why?!?!?!? Why do I bother?!?!?" Chet stormed around the living room while John tried to suppress a smirk. "My last girlfriend told me that the best thing I could do is to let you fall into whatever deep depression filled hole it is that you want to!! She told me that all you want to do is join Sam. I told her that she was wrong. I told her that you were just going through a rough spot and you would get through it. I broke up with this girl because of the things she said about you!! Do you realize that John?!?!? I left her because of YOU!!!! DO YOU KNOW HOW HOT SHE WAS?!?!?!?!?"

John had been trying to hold back the laughter, but the last statement by Chet had pushed him over the edge. John roared with laughter. He laughed until his sides hurt. As he looked through the tears that were rolling out of his eyes he noticed Chet was sitting on the chair laughing as hard as he was.

After several minutes of laughter, and when the chuckles died down, John spoke. "You're the only person that cares about me Chet, that's why I named your cellphone number Mommy." John tried to keep a straight face but he burst into

laughter and Chet did the same. As the laughter finally subsided, John noticed a folder Chet was holding.

“Bring me a present Chet?” John asked. Chet would sometimes throw things John’s way that the FBI couldn’t, or didn’t want to, touch. Chet hesitated. In that instant John read Chet’s face and knew what was in his hand. Oh crap, thought John. “No! No!! I am done with the FBI!!!” John was furious.

“Now John, calm down. You are being brought on as a consultant only.”

“Chet, I have no interest.” John replied.

“John, look, I know you don’t need the money... Oh crap, I’m so sorry.”

John looked away. Sam had a trust that was left to her by her grandparents. Her grandparents were the only members of Sam’s family that John believed liked him. Honestly, her grandparents were stinking, filthy, rich. John had no idea how much money they had; he honestly thought it was billions. All of Sam’s trust had been left to John. He didn’t know how much was exactly in the trust, but he knew it was enough for him to live five lives on.

Chet opened the folder in front of John. He laid out four pictures of people that had been shot perfectly in the head. John tried to ignore the pictures but the shots were right in the center of each forehead. The pictures had John’s interest. Chet let John look. The case would sell itself and Chet knew that. Chet just had to

wait and John would hook himself. As John leaned back, seeming to lose interest, Chet reeled him in with one little sentence.

“They were all shot by the same person, within five seconds of each other.” Chet said casually. John’s eyebrow shot up, and Chet knew he had his best friend back on the hunt with him.