

**48 SHORT STORIES
OF A PRIVATE
INVESTIGATOR**

48 SHORT STORIES OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

BY

JAMES PAUL ELLISON



www.bookstandpublishing.com

Published by
Bookstand Publishing
Pasadena, CA 91101
4880_1

Copyright © 2021 by James Paul Ellison

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

ISBN 978-1-953710-68-0

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family and friends.

To all Police Officers and Private Investigators.

To all the business owners out there. I hope you do not have any dishonest employees working for you. Do a background check on future employees.

To my Cousin Barbara Calvert in Valrico, Florida. I love all the long phone calls we have. I like sharing my book ideas with you, too. You are a great friend to have.

And to all the honest people out there in the work force. Always be honest and truthful. Be proud of your last name. Do not turn a blind eye when you see a wrong happening. Speak up. Say something. Never lie, ever.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	v
1. Dad’s Home, Hide!	1
2. Easter Egg Hunt	5
3. Blind Man	13
4. Hidden Toothpick	23
5. Hiding in a Hot Trailer.....	27
6. I Need a Taxi.....	33
7. Two Hundred Eighteen	39
8. Two Mistakes.....	49
9. The Wheelchair.....	55
10. Tricky Wife.....	59
11. Riding in the Backseat	61
12. The Semi Truck.....	65
13. The Rookie.....	69
14. The Liar.....	75
15. The Hotel Guest	81
16. The Burglary	87
17. The Covert Helmet Camera	93
18. The Faker	101
19. The Wedding.....	111
20. Buffing Floors.....	117
21. The Shoplifter	123
22. The Dead Man.....	129

23. The Bartender.....	135
24. The Trip to Bowling Green.....	143
25. The Right Wrist Injury.....	149
26. Always Home.....	157
27. The Cheating Husband.....	169
28. Too Many Deck Boats.....	181
29. The Parents from Italy.....	189
30. Donna’s First Assignment.....	201
31. The Warehouse Theft.....	213
32. The Stolen Vehicle.....	229
33. Do Not Take Danny.....	237
34. The Eighteen Photos.....	249
35. The Steam Roller.....	257
36. The Dishonest Employees.....	267
37. Extortion.....	275
38. Corvette.....	283
39. Las Vegas.....	293
40. Season Passes.....	303
41. The Law Firm.....	315
42. Party Time.....	329
43. Bad Cop.....	339
44. Hercules.....	349
45. Betrayed.....	361
46. The Spouse.....	371
47. The Taxi Ride.....	379
48. A Second Chance.....	387

1

DAD'S HOME, HIDE!

Ben was born in the State of Washington and adopted at 3 days old by a military family. He now lives on an Army base in Biloxi, MS.

His adoptive mother, Barb, was always in the kitchen baking desserts. Steve Sr. required a cake every night and Barb always came through.

There were 6 adopted kids in the family: Steve Jr, 17; Dennis, 14; Ben, 12; twin sisters, Angel and Vivian, 9; and Alvin, 6.

Ben's strict military father had many rules in his home. One rule was no playing games in the living room. He expected his wife to enforce them. She never did.

Ben and his siblings played board games in the living room but watched for their father to drive up in the family's station wagon. The kids were having fun until someone yelled, "Dad's home, hide!"

They would carry the board games to a bedroom, then dash out to the living room with a school book and pretend they were doing their homework the whole time.

Steve Sr. would enter the house and his wife would give him a kiss and hand him his nightly drink, a glass of whisky. Barb would join him later with her drink, a tall glass of rum and coke.

Ben and his brothers were never allowed to call Steve Sr. father, dad, pop or by any other name except Sir. The girls, however, could do no wrong in their father's eyes.

The children always feared dinner time because that was when their strict father would interrogate them, trying to catch them in a lie.

One morning Steve Sr. made oatmeal for breakfast. Ben hated oatmeal and his father knew it. He was told to finish it before he caught the school bus.

Ben's plan was to eat the oatmeal slowly so he could just leave the unfinished large bowl on the breakfast table and run off to catch the bus. A good plan but his alert father spotted his son looking at the kitchen clock a few times.

As his brothers were leaving for the bus his father put Ben's large bowl of oatmeal into a clear glass jar and handed it to his son with a grin: "Take this to school and eat the oatmeal for lunch. You'd better eat it. I might come to your school to check."

"Yes, Sir," replied Ben.

He walked to the bus stop and joined the other kids. They all saw Ben standing there holding a large jar of oatmeal and called it brain matter. They made fun of him the whole time he was waiting.

Finally the bus arrived and all the neighborhood kids boarded it for the 3 mile ride to school.

48 SHORT STORIES OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

That night, Ben was whipped with a leather belt for not telling the truth. His family of 8 were sitting around the dinner table listening to their father interrogate each of them, one at a time.

Steve Sr. always sat at the head of the table. To his left were Barb, Angel, Alvin, and Ben. To his right sat Vivian, Dennis, and Steve Jr.

Ben had left his oatmeal jar on the bus. He thought he could lie to his father and say he ate his oatmeal at lunchtime in the cafeteria.

His father turned to Ben and asked, “Did you have your oatmeal?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“All of it?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Where did you eat your oatmeal?”

“Cafeteria, Sir”

“What did you eat it with?”

“A spoon, Sir.”

“Where did you get the spoon?”

“The cafeteria, Sir.”

“You ate all the oatmeal I put in the jar?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“All of it?”

“Yes, Sir.”

Ben's father got up and stormed like a wild elephant over to the other end of the table. He was a big man: he stood 6'5", weighed 240 and was a paratrooper during the Gulf War.

Ben looked very scared as his father approached him. His dad removed his leather belt from his pants and stood over his adopted son.

"You ate all your oatmeal at school today?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You ate all your oatmeal and with a spoon from the cafeteria?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You lying punk!" and with that, Ben got the whipping of his life. His father only stopped because the old leather belt broke.

He kept saying to Ben, "You lying punk! You didn't eat all your oatmeal, because if you had, you would have found the spoon I hid in your oatmeal jar."

A few hours later his brothers and sisters entered Ben's bedroom grinning while holding up spoons.

- Lesson 1. It pays to tell the truth!
- Lesson 2. Dump the oatmeal in the school toilet and return the spoon to your adopted father.
- Lesson 3. Eat the oatmeal and return the spoon to your adopted father.

2

EASTER EGG HUNT

Fun Land Amusement Park is located in Fairbanks, Alaska. Every year for Easter they have a huge egg hunt for colored plastic eggs.

The community donates many gifts as prizes, based on the color of the eggs a person finds during the hunt in the park.

Bobby Johnson, age 15, wanted a dirt bike. His family was from the poor side of town, so getting a dirt bike for his birthday or for Christmas was out of the question. It cost \$600 at Dick's Sporting Goods Store.

The local newspaper listed all the prizes donated by businesses and what color egg you needed to find in order to claim the prize. Bobby checked for his dirt bike and he needed a gold colored egg.

Thousands of people would be pouring into the large park and searching for the best prizes. He needed an advantage if he was going to get the dirt bike of his dreams.

The Easter egg hunt was to start at 4 PM. Employees of the park were out in force, walking the grounds and placing the different colored eggs in hiding spots.

Last year Bobby searched for an egg and came up empty. Too many people hunting and too many hiding spots. This year Bobby would find his gold egg and he had a plan.

Susan answered her doorbell and was surprised to see Bobby standing there with a big smile on his face. In his hand was the local newspaper.

“What prize will you be going for this year, Susan?”

She looked at her new boyfriend standing there with the newspaper in his hand. He was cute. He had big blue eyes and a nice warm smile. It helped that Bobby was the quarterback for the Eagles, over at Fairbanks Middle School.

Susan viewed the prize list and said, “I want the 100 dollar shopping spree at The Crossing Shopping Mall.”

Bobby said, “You need a yellow colored egg and I know just how to find it.”

“How?”

“Loan me your dad’s hunting binoculars and meet me in front of the park at three in the afternoon.”

“Why at three and what are you up to? You know you can’t afford any more trouble with your parents.”

Bobby smiled and replied, “We need to get to the park early to beat the crowd if we are to be the first to grab our eggs.”

“What do you need my dad’s binoculars for?”

“I will tell you after the Easter egg hunt. Bring your younger sister and I will bring my 2 younger brothers.”

“Why?”

“Because I plan to find many eggs today and if I do, each of our siblings will win prizes.”

After getting the binoculars Bobby gave a quick hug to Susan, also 15, and ran down the street. He knew a way to get into the park and to hide from security.

He ran to the amusement park. It was now noon and all the rides were being tested.

The train and the attached passenger cars were circling the park from inside the security fence. Bobby found the hole he dug the night before between some bushes and crawled under the fence. He quietly made his way to the dark tunnel and waited for the train.

A few minutes later Bobby hopped on board and laid low in a back seat of the open train. Only one employee was on board and he was busy operating the locomotive and blowing the whistle.

Bobby hopped off in front of Mark Twain’s Riverboat and snuck inside the large vessel. The boat overlooked the whole park. He worked his way to the Captain’s steering wheel and pulled out his borrowed binoculars.

Employees were walking around with egg cartons with the tops removed and each employee had 12 eggs to hide. Bobby searched for any employee carrying yellow and/or gold colored eggs. When he spotted one, he would watch that employee till the person hid the egg he needed. He did this for almost 2 hours.

Bobby quietly exited the riverboat and made his way to the train tunnel and waited for the locomotive. After 10 minutes he was crawling back under the hole he made in the security fence.

The sneaky spy made it to the front of the park and waited for his partners in crime to arrive. They were running late because of the crowds arriving at the park at about the same time as Bobby.

“Sorry we are late,” said Susan. “So why the binoculars and why are you smiling from ear to ear?”

Bobby told his 2 brothers, Susan, and her sister what he had done. They all knew it was dishonest but each wanted the best prizes: gold, yellow or red in color plastic eggs.

Bobby pulled out his small notepad and flipped to the pages he used to keep track of all the hidden eggs.

Bobby gave each bandit locations to dash too as soon as the park opened. Susan was to pick up her yellow egg in a bush by the 3rd lamppost by the stagecoach.

His gold colored egg was in the right boot of the gunfighter statue in front of the barbershop. He gave Susan and the others at least a dozen locations where the best plastic eggs could be found.

“Remember, after we find as many eggs as we can, we meet in front of Mark Twain’s Riverboat and we will go together as a team to the prize redemption office to claim our prizes.

Do not ever tell anyone how we found the eggs. It will be our secret and we can do it next year too,” said Bobby to the grinning and excited gang of thieves.

A few hours later they met at the riverboat and walked to the prize redemption office. Bobby went in first with his 4 eggs. He had 2 gold, 1 yellow and 1 green. The clerk was surprised he had so many. Most guests have 2 eggs max when they come in.

Bobby picked up the winning certificates for the dirt bike, a shopping spree at the mall, movie passes for a year and clothing at the new country store on Main Street.

Susan found 3 eggs and claimed her prizes. Her sister found 2 eggs and Bobby's 2 brothers found 2 eggs each.

They went to McDonalds across the street and sat in a large corner booth. While drinking their sodas, they talked about exchanging each other's prize certificates.

They were laughing when Jimmy Johnson, age 14, walked up and took their photo.

"What are you doing here, Jimmy?" asked Bobby.

"I am the newest reporter for 'The Fairbanks Times' and my boss told me to cover the Easter Egg Hunt at the amusement park. I was on my way back there to take more photos but got hungry and was waiting to order when I saw you all laughing and exchanging certificates."

"We will have our photo in the paper tomorrow?" inquired Susan.

"I don't know, I hope my paper adds my photos. It will be under the entertainment section with the caption 'Easter Egg Hunt Winners' if they do."

Jimmy left and walked across the street to the park entrance. The gang of thieves started arguing louder and louder on what prices each wanted.

They were fussing so much the manager of the restaurant asked them to leave.

They argued all the way to Bobby's house. His mother said hi as they flew by her and headed to Bobby's room without saying a word.

In the bedroom, Roger, age 10, wanted the \$100 toy certificate from Toy Land. The problem was that Susan's younger sister wanted the same gift.

Bobby's younger brother yelled, "I get the Toy Land gift card or else."

"Or else what, Roger?" said the group in unison.

"Or else I will tell mom what you did, Bobby; how you used binoculars to spy on them planting the eggs."

"Go ahead, stupid, and tell mom. If you do, mom will take it all back to Fun Land Amusement Park and we get nothing," said Bobby trying to stand up to block his younger brother from leaving the room.

Roger was faster than his older brother and exited the room shouting, "Mom, Mom, Mom, Bobby cheated, Bobby cheated!"

An hour later, Bobby and the gang along with their mothers were in front of the Easter Egg Hunt organizers.

Bobby's mother handed back every gift card or prize certificate to the officials and made each child apologize for cheating.

To punish the kids for being dishonest, they had to wash and dry every Fun Land employees' personal car over the summer.

Bobby turned to his rat of a brother as he washed the last car of the hundred employees of the amusement park and said, "You are on my poop list. I will get even with you someday for this."

Roger just stuck his tongue out at his older brother and replied, "I don't care."

It took Bobby 3 months but he finally got even. He stole Roger's piggy bank hidden in a box under his bed and spent the \$20 at the arcade in the bowling alley.

Bobby replaced the coins with slugs so Roger would not know his money was missing till he opened the piggy bank to go to Toy Land to buy toys.

Bobby just laughed when Roger ran into the kitchen crying, "Mom, someone switched out my coins with these." He showed his mother all the grey in color slugs in his hand.

- Lesson 1. Don't tell people what you plan to do. Just do it.
- Lesson 2. Hide your piggy bank better.

James Paul Ellison

3

BLIND MAN

Attorney Doug Thompson filed a \$20 million lawsuit in Sarasota, FL and arranged for the media to gather on the courthouse steps.

Next to him stood his client, Jack Smith, who wore dark sunglasses and held a blind man's cane in his right hand.

Attorney Doug Thompson turned to the cameras and said, "We are suing Sarasota Memorial Hospital and Dr. Rafael Turner for the failed operation on my client's brain tumor, causing complications resulting in Jack slowly going blind from the pressure put on his Occipital Lobe."

Private Investigator Sean Adams and his boss, Attorney Bill Green, watched the newscast replay of Jack Smith.

Attorney Green turned to his trusted private investigator and said, "I need as much video as you can get on this plaintiff. They are asking for \$20 million and they may get it."

"How much time do I have to work this case?"

"His trial is scheduled for the 3rd of next month. You have 2 weeks to obtain video of the plaintiff."

“I guess you want the normal surveillance video of the man walking, driving, not using his cane or wearing his required sunglasses?”

“Whatever you can get. He claims to be losing his eye sight, his ability to walk, loss of balance, you name it and he claims it. He has a sharp lawyer and my insurance client waited too long to investigate this. The assigned adjuster was involved in a bad auto accident and was in a coma for 3 weeks. No other adjuster in her office picked up her files. When they finally did, they hired me, but my hands were tied by then. I was only able to take the man’s deposition which ended yesterday.”

“You made a copy of the deposition for me to read, right?”

“Yes, and I highlighted in red ink all his injury claims. Go see my secretary, she has his background check results. His attorney knows we are a team so they will suspect surveillance. I tried to throw them off this morning by pretending we wanted to settle. My client offered \$1 million but his lawyer is stuck on his \$20 million demand.”

“What’s my budget this time?”

“Unlimited. Use as many field agents as you need and work 24 hours a day. I’d rather pay you \$50,000 than \$20 million to the plaintiff. I plan to use your video to get the demand down to a more reasonable amount.”

“OK, I will go see Johanna now.”

Sean walked down the hall and entered the office of Johanna Jones. She was on the phone but motioned for him to have a seat. Sean

sat on her leather couch and picked up the local newspaper while he waited for her to finish.

Five minutes later Johanna turned to the firm's in-house investigator and said with a smile, "Bill is really worried about this case. The new client put us in a jam this time. Now we go to trial in a few weeks and we only have the man's deposition so far. No medical records, no depositions of the hospital staff, we have no defense. We are hoping you will obtain the home run video we will need to get the demand way down."

"Bill said to see you about obtaining a copy of the plaintiff's deposition and background check."

"Here you go. The deposition was taken over a two-day period. Bill tried to ask as many questions as he could think of. He underlined in red ink the most important questions and answers."

"I hate all these rush cases."

"If you can help our firm get this case settled, or a jury to return with a lower amount than \$20 million, then we will look good in front of our new client. That means a ton of new business for the firm and for you, too."

"I can't make the claimant be active. All I can do is wait and observe. If I was a plaintiff and I had a possible \$20 million payday coming in less than 3 weeks, I would go into hiding."

"Well, Sean, we are counting on you to come through."

"I will do my best."

"You always do, and good luck."

“Thanks, Johanna, for my copy of the deposition. I will keep you posted on what video I obtain.”

“Good hunting, Tarzan.”

Sean just laughed and left Johanna’s office. He arrived at his company car in no time flat. He was called, ‘Tarzan’, because he was known to hide in trees to obtain the video he needed.

The first thing he did was read the background check on the claimant. The data revealed addresses, vehicles, places of employment, contact information for neighbors and other useful facts that he needed.

This was Sean’s 173rd case in 4 years since working for ‘Carp, Johnson and Green Law Group’. He was also known as a hound dog, because once on your trail, he never gave up.

Sean was paid over \$100,000 a year in salary and bonuses. The firm was thrilled with his work performance.

Sean was single. He had to be as he was never home. He had no social life and ate junk food all the time. Heck, McDonalds and Burger King were like family.

The data report showed that Jack and Shirley Smith lived in a golfing community called ‘High Winds’. There were 3 exit points for them to depart their neighborhood and they owned 4 vehicles. The property deed section of the background report showed they lived in the same house for over 10 years.

Sean suspected the claimant would ask his neighbors to watch out for investigators hired by a suspicious insurance company or law

firm. He checked Facebook and other social media sites but they were of no use. The Google map site helped. It allowed him to study the departure routes out of the community.

Sean opened his surveillance backpack and pulled out his secret weapon, a Sony model FRX 2000 surveillance camera. It had all the bells and whistles and even recorded in total darkness. It was expensive. The camera cost \$7,000.

Sean looked in his pi contact book and called 2 investigators to help him with this case. Dan and Louis were available and agreed to meet with him at Denny's Restaurant in 3 hours.

At the meeting, both investigators said they were happy he called. It was a slow month at their own investigative firm, 'Gotcha Investigations'.

Sean was glad Attorney Bill Green offered him their newly created in-house investigative position. That was 4 years ago. He folded up his one-man shop and moved into a corner office on the 3rd floor of the firm's 8 story building.

Being in-house was better. He had lots of perks and a steady paycheck. Being on his own was very stressful; he never knew when another case would come in.

He had a bonus arrangement with his law firm: If a case settled before trial he earned a \$10,000 bonus, \$5,000 if it went to trial and the firm won, and zero if they lost the case.

Sean met with his 2 investigators at Denny's and treated them to a large meal. He agreed to pay them \$50 an hour each plus gas.

He required them to put any new assignment they received on hold and to work his case till it was finished. They agreed to his terms.

Sean's plan was to have Dan sit in a neighbor's driveway and not on the street itself. This way he looked like a visitor and not a stranger.

Obtaining a driveway to watch the claimant from was easy. Sean pulled up to a house down the street from his claimant and knocked on the door.

The owner listened as Sean explained that his employer, a cell testing company, needed him to park in a driveway. He would then be able to test the cell signals in the area.

Sean said, "Our office pays homeowners \$50 a day just to sit in a driveway. We need your location for 10 days." The owner agreed and Sean handed the man \$500 in cash.

Dan was now parked in the neighbor's driveway with cell testing signs. He had a clear view of the claimant's front door and their 4 vehicles. It was easy work. Just call Sean on the walkie when the claimant left.

Louis waited in the parking lot of the pro golf shop and blended in with the other parked cars. He had a walkie talkie and waited for Dan to call him.

Sean found his own driveway near the main entrance to the golf course community and started reading the plaintiff's deposition.

Jack claimed he could not walk for a long distance, had balance issues, and muscle weakness. He also claimed to be 80 percent blind

because of the pressure put on his occipital lobe from the failed brain tumor operation.

Johanna called and said the plaintiff is now claiming to have arm and leg weakness on the right side of his body.

Sean knew that adding additional claims of injury was the plaintiff's way of putting pressure on the client to pay the \$20 million demand.

Jack was careful every time he departed his residence. He walked slowly, used a cane, wore sunglasses and always was a passenger.

His wife drove under the posted speed limit as a way to see if they were being followed.

Sean could stay way back because Dan had placed a GPS tracker on each of the vehicles parked in the driveway.

The garage was full of boxes and there was a 'for sale' sign in the yard.

"Tarzan, the target is on the move as a passenger in the blue Honda Civic. His wife is driving, he is using a cane and wearing sunglasses," said Dan.

"We copy, right, Louis?"

"Right, Tarzan."

The investigators followed the claimant for a week straight from 6 AM to 8 PM. On each trip the claimant would ride as a passenger and hardly get out of the vehicle.

When he did exit the car he used his cane and wore his sunglasses. Jack was what they called, ‘a professional claimant’.

Sean changed the hours on the 2nd week of his surveillance. They now worked from noon to 2 AM.

On day 12 at 10 in the evening Sean’s walkie talkie radio came alive.

“Tarzan, he is leaving in a red Ford pickup with Arizona plates.”

“Is he alone?”

“No, an older white male is driving and the claimant is not using any walking aid,” said Dan

“I am on him,” said Sean.

“Me too,” said Louis with excitement in his voice.

“We have no GPS tracking device on this pickup so we need to follow and not get caught. Dan, leave your driveway and catch up. This may be the break we have been waiting for.”

“On the way, Tarzan.”

The visitor drove over 40 miles to a small town and pulled into a driveway of a 2 story residence. Parked in the yard was a large fishing boat and trailer. Painted on the rear was the name ‘Million Dollars’.

Sean was patient and waited down the street. He just looked through his night vision binoculars and waited for action. Ten minutes later his waiting paid off.

Sean got out his surveillance camera, switched over to the night vision mode and videoed his claimant climbing all over the boat with tools.

Sean obtained over an hour's worth of good video of the plaintiff lifting a small boat motor, carrying fishing rods and walking around without his cane.

After 90 minutes the claimant went inside the house.

"Guys, we have to sleep in our cars. The claimant will leave in the morning and go fishing. Dan, can you sneak up and put a GPS tracker on the man's Ford pickup?"

"Will do."

"Guys, get some sleep. I will stay up and watch."

"Ok, Tarzan," both men said as Sean turned on his car radio.

The next day at 5 in the evening Sean walked into his law firm's conference room with a big smile on his face. He had a CD he wanted Johanna and Bill to view.

They all watched the claimant exit the Ford pickup and walk along the dock. They viewed him climbing into the fishing boat with 3 other men.

The time stamp on the video showed 7 AM. The claimant wore no sunglasses and did not use his cane. The video was still playing when Bill turned to his investigator.

"Again, great job. You saved my butt, Sean."

"We were lucky, Sir."

At trial the jury awarded the man nothing. The Division of Fraud was waiting for Jack when he exited the courthouse. As they placed handcuffs on him, a Channel 7 news reporter walked up and with cameras rolling asked, “What do you have to say?”

Jack said nothing and just bowed his head.

- Lesson 1. Do not fake an injury and demand money.
- Lesson 2. If you do file a claim, hide till trial.
- Lesson 3. Wear all medical devices ordered by your doctor.
- Lesson 4. Check for GPS tracking devices.

4

HIDDEN TOOTHPICK

“**M**om, can I have the extra piece of cake tonight?” is what every one of Betty’s 6 children begged when they arrived home from school.

She was tired of her children fighting over the last slice of cake so she came up with a solution. From now on, Betty would hide a colored toothpick somewhere in her cake.

If you found it, you would receive the extra piece. If the toothpick remained in the last slice of cake, it would go to her husband.

After dinner they all waited patiently for their mother to serve the cake. They watched her slice the dessert into 9 equal sections. Betty’s cakes were very delicious, all had rich filling, whip cream and cherries on top.

The kids loved to watch their mother slice up the dessert and hand each child their piece. The only requirement: everyone had to wait for their mother to sit down before taking a bite.

Some of the kids smashed down their slice with their forks while the others ate their piece slowly hoping to find the hidden toothpick.

The younger kids got upset when the toothpick went to someone else. Betty was happy with the hidden toothpick idea and it became a nightly event.

Jimmy had the biggest sweet tooth of all the children. He wanted the extra piece every night and came up with a plan to obtain it.

He started staying in the kitchen when he returned home from school. He would sit at the breakfast table, do his homework and talk to his mother over a glass of milk.

He was really there to spy where his mother inserted the hidden toothpick into the cake.

Betty had a routine when baking her cakes. She would place vanilla filling between 2 cake halves, insert the special colored toothpick, cover the outside of the cake with whipped cream frosting and then add cherries on top. She would then place the finished cake on the kitchen counter for all to see.

Jimmy found a way to steal the toothpick from the cake and hide it in his shirt pocket. Then each night when he received his slice, he would quickly insert the toothpick, take a bite and say with excitement, "I have the toothpick."

His mother would then reward her son with the extra slice. Jimmy's trick worked all month.

Some nights Jimmy did not have a chance to insert the toothpick when he received his piece of cake as his siblings were watching him.

When no toothpick was found, Betty would tell the disappointed children, “I must have forgotten to hide one.”

Other nights before Jimmy could insert the toothpick, one of his siblings would say, “I bet you have the toothpick again, let’s trade slices.”

Jimmy would respond, “Ok, let’s trade. I bet the toothpick is in your piece of cake today.” The kids would then turn their attention to the sibling that had Jimmy’s piece. This gave Jimmy time to slip the hidden toothpick into his new slice.

Jimmy would later say, “I have the toothpick.”

His younger siblings would start crying and say, “He always gets the toothpick. I hate this stupid game.”

Jimmy was having fun for weeks watching his younger siblings search for the hidden toothpick.

Just to upset his brothers and sisters, Jimmy would grin from ear to ear and make comments like: “delicious, glad I won, love the whipped cream and cherries.”

One night Jimmy got tired of playing the hidden toothpick switch game and revealed to his family how he did it. He said, “I will show you tonight my hidden toothpick trick.”

When his mother handed Jimmy his piece of cake he pulled the hidden toothpick out of his shirt pocket and said,

“This afternoon after mom inserted the toothpick into the cake and covered it with whipped cream I went over and pretend to be

sampling the frosting. What I really was doing was marking with a dab of whipped cream the spot where the toothpick lined up on the plate.”

Jimmy pointed to the marking on the cake plate and said, “That is where mother put the toothpick earlier.”

“Tricky,” said his father.

“All I had to do before the rest of you came home was find my dab mark, remove the toothpick and fill the open spot with extra whipped cream.”

Jimmy laughed as he spoke again, “The hardest part of my plan was to insert the toothpick without any of you seeing me do it when mom handed me my slice.”

“Tricky,” said his dad one more time with a stern look on his face.

“I wondered why you won every night,” said his mom. .

Betty was not amused. She turned to her tricky son and said, “For being dishonest you will do dishes by hand for 3 months starting tonight.”

- Lesson 1. Don’t tell anyone what you did, just stop doing it.
- Lesson 2. If dishonest you have to be punished.

5

HIDING IN A HOT TRAILER

Miami, Florida was boiling in heat. The radio stations warned everyone to drink lots of fluids and to sit in the shade. The Miami Dolphins Football Team cancelled their daily practice.

U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agents, also known as ICE, were out in force around the city bringing in illegal immigrants. Each passing day it became harder for ICE to make arrests because the illegals started hiding from them.

Farm owners were angry because they counted on their illegal labor to help them pick their crops rotting in the fields. The Department of Homeland Security warned that some illegals were in gangs and a risk to the public.

Private Investigator Roderick Patterson turned off his car radio when he arrived at his surveillance assignment in a rundown trailer park called ‘Flamingo’.

The assignment sheet given to him by an adjuster with Delta Insurance said the claimant, Robert Beck, lived in trailer 36 and his alleged injury was his neck.

The adjuster told Roderick that they had already tried 3 other pi agencies and not one had obtained video. According to his neighbors, Robert was addicted to video games and stayed mostly indoors.

The insurance company was willing to try one more time and agreed to pay Roderick \$1,500 for 3 days of surveillance.

The claimant alleges that he was rear ended at a traffic light by a senior citizen and his lawyer demanded \$200,000. The adjuster said they were willing to pay \$5,000.

The claim's office needed video of the claimant driving, turning his head and neck and not using his neck brace.

Roderick knew his surveillance video would help a jury see that there was nothing wrong with Robert Beck and that all he wanted was money.

The other driver told the adjuster he barely tapped him and when the claimant exited his car he was turning his head and neck like nothing was wrong.

The claimant's lawyer advertised on television, highway billboards and on the top of taxis. The firm had a catchy phone number that would be easy for anyone to remember, '1-800 BIG BUCKS'.

Roderick brought his lunch with him. He did not want to take a chance and leave for gas or take other breaks in case the claimant left. He called this, 'Stick and Stay'.

The PI found the claimant's trailer and on a walk-by noticed that the claimant's red jeep was parked in the rear, hidden out of view. There was no place to sit and watch for Robert to leave the area.

There were at least 5 exit routes the claimant could take. What Roderick needed was a great observation spot to watch the man's back door and vehicle.

He drove every street in the huge trailer park and finally found the driveway he needed. Trailer number 49 had no cars in front of it but did have a child's swing set and toys on the left side of the residence.

Roderick exited his surveillance vehicle to get permission from the owner to sit in his driveway. This location was perfect to keep an eye on the claimant's backdoor.

He clipped his gold private investigator's badge to his belt so he would be noticed and carried a walkie talkie in his hand to look official.

Roderick knocked and knocked on trailer door number 49. He said, 'Detective Patterson'.

He could hear a television set playing in Spanish and thought he heard voices when he first knocked but no one came to the door. There were no cars in the backyard either.

Roderick entered his vehicle, turned his radio back on to his favorite news station and started his surveillance.

He was happy with his new Crown Victoria with good a/c. Roderick liked driving the same type of car the police drove. It was fun watching people slowdown in traffic when he approached.

He knew if he used his ‘stick and stay’ plan he would get video. He sat in the driveway of trailer number 49 all day in the 120 degree heat and finally obtained video.

Rodrick obtained 3 minutes of the claimant standing on his back porch smoking, wearing no neck brace and turning his head and neck.

Just before he left Roderick taped a note to trailer 49’s door. The message said he would be back in the morning and wanted to use their driveway. He listed his cell phone number and departed on this very hot day.

A mile down the road Roderick’s cell phone rang. It was the owner of trailer 49 saying he could use the driveway in the morning. The man spoke broken English.

Instead of going home Roderick did a u-turn and drove right back to trailer 49 to say hello to the owner. The man was sitting on his front porch when the pi pulled up.

He looked Mexican. Roderick said, “I am a private investigator and I need your driveway to watch someone.”

The man smiled and said in broken English, “You no immigration?” Roderick unclipped his gold badge and showed that it said private investigator.

The Mexican was very sweaty and admitted he and his whole family were hiding in their hot, hot trailer all day with no a/c, waiting on Roderick to leave.

He thought Roderick was an Immigration Officer. He then said something in Spanish to the occupants inside. Out walked a woman and 4 little kids.

The family sat in that hot trailer all day in the worst heat wave to hit Miami because they thought Roderick was an ICE Enforcement Agent.

Roderick felt very bad for them. They were nice people and the adults talked to him while the kids played on the swing set.

The next morning, Roderick brought the Mexican family a box of donuts and gave them money to buy food. They were very thankful.

The man's brother lived on the next street and he too was hiding yesterday in his hot trailer because his brother warned him, 'Immigration is parked in my driveway'.

- Lesson 1. Always be nice to people.

James Paul Ellison

6

I NEED A TAXI

Joan Baxter lives in Jacksonville, Florida. She is married, has 3 teenage sons, and is a secretary at a medical office but hates her job.

Last week while driving to her place of employment she was involved in an auto accident. A semi ran a red light and struck the right rear section of her Toyota Camry.

Joan was tossed around inside her vehicle and claimed a serious neck injury. She told her adjuster she was afraid to drive and that it hurt every time she turned her neck.

Joan demanded a taxi take her to and from her place of employment located 4 miles from her residence.

Insurance adjusters are trained from day one to keep their claimants happy so they do not hire a lawyer. If the alleged injured party hires one, then it will cost more to defend their case with depositions and medical experts. Best to give the injured party what they want, within limits, as some claimants are known to take advantage of the system.

Betty Jenkins was a new adjuster at the Allstate Insurance office in Miami, Florida when she received a call from Joan Baxter.

The woman complained of neck pain every time she had to look left and right when driving. Joan said, "I need a taxi to take me to and from work."

Betty said she would arrange for the taxi service and it would start the following Monday. After giving the adjuster her work schedule Joan hung up.

For 3 weeks the insurance company paid for the daily taxi trips to and from work. Joan claimed her neck still hurt, was wearing a neck brace and that her doctor requested more weeks of physical therapy.

Betty attended a lecture one day on fraud and learned that claimants know how to milk the system. That is was best now and then to hire a private investigator. The snoop could check on their claimants to see how hurt they really were.

Being new in the office, Betty turned to a co-worker, Mike, and asked him for the name of a private investigator and for how many days she should hire him.

"Use Rafael Torres of Torres Protection Group in Jacksonville, Florida. Hire him to see what your claimant does on a weekend. Here is his number, give him a call."

Betty called the investigator and asked how much it would cost for a weekend of surveillance.

"I will charge you a flat fee of two thousand dollars," said Torres.

Betty hired him and went to lunch.

Rafael called one of his field investigators to handle the claim and emailed over the assignment sheet and the data background findings.

“Matt, I want you to video her on Friday morning getting in the taxi and then video her getting out of the taxi at work.”

“Will do, Boss.”

“Video her entering the taxi for her return to her residence and finally I want you to video her arriving back home.

“Will do, Boss,” he said again.

“Watch her the whole weekend. She may drive alone somewhere. End your surveillance with her entering the taxi for work on Monday morning.”

“Will do, Boss. Do you think she will be out driving?”

“Fraud is out there, Matt. I bet she is just milking the system. The data report shows that the family owns 5 vehicles and there are 5 in the family. I think she will wear the neck brace in the taxi but not when she drives her own car.”

Matt arrived at 6 AM Friday on Joan’s street and waited. The taxi arrived at 8 AM and Matt obtained video of Joan exiting her residence, walking down the sidewalk and entering the Yellow taxi wearing the neck brace.

Matt followed the woman to her place of employment and videoed her exiting the Yellow Taxi and entering the building.

He returned at 4 PM and videoed Joan leaving work, entering the taxi wearing her neck brace, arriving at her house and entering. Matt stayed on the job as instructed.

Ten minutes later the garage door opened and a black Volvo S60 backed out. The driver was the claimant and she wore no neck brace.

The claimant was very active on Friday evening, shopping at a few department stores and spending her money.

Over the weekend the claimant departed her residence alone in the Volvo and wore no medical devices.

Matt made notes in his report that the claimant did not need to drive, that she could ride as a passenger in one of her son's vehicles.

Monday morning, Matt obtained video of the claimant entering the Yellow Taxi wearing her neck brace.

When the adjuster received the report and video, she cut the claimant off from any more free taxi rides.

The claimant called her and came up with some excuse about needing to drive her car that week-end and said she needed a taxi again.

Betty turned again to her co-worker, Mike, and asked him what he would do if it was his case.

“I think you jumped the gun and cut her free taxi rides off too quickly. To eliminate all doubt and to play it safe, I would have done another weekend of surveillance. If she then drove her own car again, I would stop the taxi service for good.”

Betty called Rafael Torres and asked him to do another Friday to Monday morning on her claimant. The PI told her he would need a 2nd investigator because he knew the claimant would be looking for him. She said ok.

On the 2nd investigation Matt had a problem. On Saturday morning the claimant's husband and all 3 sons were driving around the neighborhood searching for investigators. Matt and his helper, Tony, had to leave the area.

Matt went one mile down the road to the left of the neighborhood entrance and Tony went one mile down the road to the right. They then waited for the claimant's Volvo to drive by.

A few hours later, Tony called and said he had her driving alone and without a neck brace. The claimant left one more time on Saturday and 2 times on Sunday.

Rafael turned in his report and video evidence. Betty stopped the taxi service and said 'no' to Joan every time she demanded, 'I need a taxi'.

- Lesson 1. Do not lie to your insurance adjuster.
- Lesson 2. Ride as a passenger and wear your neck brace.

James Paul Ellison

7

TWO HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

Patrick Cummings was injured on the job running after a purse snatcher. The 5-year veteran of The Ocala, Florida, Police Department tore his right knee and needed surgery after hopping a fence and falling into a backyard hole.

Now he demanded a lifetime disability paycheck from the city. He secretly wanted to move to Fort Myers, Florida, and help his younger brother run his growing used car business.

Patrick claimed he could not return to police work because he could not drive more than 10 miles before his knee gave out on him. His place of employment was 20 miles away.

He did research on disability claims. If he stuck to the 10-mile work search radius and his insurance company couldn't find him a suitable job within that radius, he would receive his disability retirement pension.

Joey Rodgers, of State Farm Insurance was frustrated with the Cummings claim file. He could not make Patrick move to a new area and he could not find him a police job within the 10-mile work search

radius. He did not want to pay the police officer any lifetime disability payments either.

Joey received a tip a few days ago and drove to the City of Fort Myers to check the information out. A fellow police officer left him a voicemail saying Patrick Cummings was committing fraud.

The tipster said Patrick was lying about the 10-mile work search area. What he really wanted was a lifetime paycheck to fall back on just in case his brother's used car business did not work out.

The tipster said that Patrick was going to join his younger brother, Alvin, as soon as he received his disability pension.

The adjuster pulled up to "Alvin's Used Car Lot" and walked up to a man washing one of the used vehicles.

"Hi, my name is Joey and I am looking for the owner."

The man stopped washing the red Ford Mustang, tossed his rag into the soapy water bucket and said, "I am Alvin. What car are you interested in buying today?"

Joey said he just got out of the Army and was looking for employment. He asked Alvin for a job.

"Sorry, sales are slow right now. Besides, I am waiting on my older brother, Patrick, to join me in a few weeks." Joey took Alvin's business card and said he would check back in a few months in case things improved.

The insurance agent drove the 75 miles back to his office in Sarasota, Florida, and called the private investigator he always used.

"Spy-Group, Sean speaking."

“Hi, Sean, Joey here with State Farm. I have another case for you.”

“Great, tell me what you need.”

“It is very simple, Sean. My subject claims he can’t drive more than 10 miles before his right knee gives out. I need to prove he can drive farther than that. The longer the driving radius the better.”

“Is he working?”

“No. He is a police officer looking for a total disability paycheck for life. His plan is to join his younger brother in Ft. Myers in his used car business. Obtain video of Patrick Cummings driving more than 10 miles, will you?”

“You know me Joey, I will do my best. I will need a 2nd investigator because your claimant is a police officer and will be alert and looking for surveillance. What is your budget?”

“Start with \$7,000 and call me when you get close to that amount.”

“You normally spend only \$2,500 on an assignment. You really must want this guy bad. What city am I traveling to this time?”

“Officer Patrick Cummings lives outside of Ocala. He owns a black Ford Mustang. If he wins his disability claim it will cost State Farm more than \$3,000 a month and he is only 27 years old. So I am looking at paying him more than \$2 million over his lifetime.”

“I will start this week and will call you with an update.”

“Thanks, Sean. I really need you to hit a homerun on this case.”

The private investigator of 11 years called a female pi that lived in Sarasota to help him. She said no, that she was too busy with her own cases. He tried another number in Miami and on the 3rd ring a male voice answered, “Hello.”

“Hi, Aaron. I need your help. I have a big case. I will pay you \$2,000 for 4 days work. Do you want it?”

“Heck, yea, I really need the work. When do we start and what city this time?”

“The claimant is a cop and lives in Ocala. I want you to meet me at Denny’s at 6 am the day after tomorrow at the same location we had breakfast the last time.”

“I’ll be there bright and early.”

Before going to bed, Sean ran background data, checked social media sites and studied the Google aerial map for his new assignment.

He lived in Pensacola, Florida and had a long trip to Ocala. During the 380 mile drive he listened to country music and stopped now and then for more black coffee.

He loved his job as a surveillance expert and took pride in always getting the video his clients needed. He was white, stood 5’11”, weighed 200 pounds, and had short brown hair. Sean was single and 30 years old.

Aaron was waiting for Sean in a corner booth. They had their meal and headed for their assignment. The claimant lived off a dirt road about 8 miles outside Ocala. There was no place to just sit and wait without the subject being aware of a stranger in the area.

Sean checked in with the County Sheriff's Department. He said he and his helper were cell phone tower testers and would be roaming around the area off Robinson Road testing the strength of cell signals.

Both investigators placed magnetic cell testing signs on their vehicle doors and wore matching ball caps to blend in.

The claimant's dirt road led to Robinson Road and from there he could travel North or South to the interstate.

They boxed their claimant in. Sean sat to the North and waited at a gas station while Aaron sat at a nearby fruit market located by Interstate 75, some 3 miles from the claimant's road. Both men waited for the claimant to drive by their locations.

Surveillance was the art of waiting: Wait long enough and your claimant will be active. That is what his old boss told him some 11 years ago when he first got into the pi business.

Sean's first case was following his own wife who he caught cheating. That marriage lasted only 2 years. His ex-wife now lives in Meridian, Mississippi.

At 2 pm on Thursday Sean received a call from his partner. "The claimant just drove by me and he has a young woman with him."

"You sure? Did you confirm the license plate?"

"Sure did, CDH483."

"Alright. Set your odometer to zero and let us see how far he travels. I am getting on the interstate as we speak. Let me know what exit he gets off at."

"Will do."

The claimant exited the interstate at Highway 27 and stopped at a restaurant.

“Pizza Hut off of Highway 27, turn right when you exit the interstate and the restaurant is on the left. He drove 8.2 miles”

“Only 8.2 miles, Aaron?”

“Afraid so and he is wearing a brace on his right knee.”

“What does the woman look like?”

“Chubby like him with long blonde hair. They are going into Pizza Hut holding hands.”

“I will be there as soon as I get gas.”

Sean brought his helper a cup of coffee and a meal from McDonalds. They sat in Aaron’s vehicle and waited.

“He is making sure he stays within the 10 mile radius” said Sean as he took a sip of his coffee. After lunch the claimant returned to his residence which was hidden from the main road.

Sean opened his trunk and removed a backpack. Inside was his new toy which he named Sean II. It was a drone with an attached camera.

The pi flew it over the property of the claimant. “There is a blue in color Cadillac in his driveway. We will have to watch for that vehicle leaving with him in it,” said Sean.

The claimant stayed home the rest of the first day and was not observed at all on days 2 and 3. This was confirmed by Sean II in fly-overs. Both vehicles were parked in front of the small house the whole time.

“I hope he leaves on my last day,” said Aaron over his walkie-talkie.

“My client will give me more time so we may be on this job for at least a week. Can you stay after tomorrow, Aaron?”

“Yes, I just need to call the doggy motel to keep my dog longer.”

On Day 4 the claimant left alone and drove 9.6 miles to a private residence. He picked up his mother and returned to his house.

Sean called his client and gave him an update. “The farthest he has traveled so far has been 9.6 miles.”

“Stay on him, please. I need Patrick driving farther than 10 miles.”

“Will do, Joey.”

“I interviewed his coworkers and they all said he was planning to quit before he got hurt. So I know he is setting State Farm up for a lifetime paycheck.”

Sean finally got lucky on day 9. The claimant hit the interstate alone at 6 AM and headed South in the Blue Cadillac.

“My odometer says he has traveled 55 miles so far, Sean.”

“Video his car every time we pass an exit number off Interstate 75, please, Aaron.”

“I have been. You taught me right 4 years ago.”

The claimant drove all the way to his brother’s used car lot in Ft. Myers and exited his vehicle. He was not wearing a brace on his right knee.

“He drove 218 miles. I have video of him exiting his car and walking into the used car lot office.”

“Great to hear, Aaron. Go to the used car lot and pretend you want to buy a car. See if you can get the claimant and his brother over to the West side of the car lot by that red Camaro so I can obtain the extra video I want to have.”

“Will do.”

The investigators hit pay dirt again. Both brothers walked the lot and tried to get Aaron to buy a car. He said he was passing through town but would come back next week.

“I have his business card with his name and title. Patrick is the used cars sales manager.”

“What a jerk. A cop committing fraud. The police are supposed to be honest, Aaron.”

“They are honest in my book, just not this one.”

Sean called the adjuster on his cell phone.

“Hello.”

“218.”

“218?”

“Yes. Patrick Cummings drove 218 miles one way from his house to his brother’s used car lot.”

“No crap!”

“We have his business card as well. It says he is the used cars sales manager.”

“State Farm is going to give you a lot of business, I will make sure of that. Do you know how I am sure?”

“How is that, Joey?”

“I was promoted yesterday to Claims Manager for Florida. I am in charge of all 12 claim offices. Bring me your homerun video soon, please.”

“I will be in your office first thing in the morning.”

“Great, see you then.”

Sean turned to Aaron. “I just hung up with my adjuster and he has been promoted to claims manager for all of Florida and promises to give me all his surveillances.”

“Wow, lucky you!”

Sean turned to Aaron and asked, “Want to team up together?”

“Sure do.”

“Then as of right now we are equal business partners.”

Both investigators shook hands.

“What do you want to call our new company, Sean?”

“218 Investigative Group.”

Sean and Aaron went to Red Lobster for a celebration type meal.

They agreed to split the state into 2 territories: Aaron would operate Miami to Orlando and Sean would cover the rest of Florida.

James Paul Ellison

- Lesson 1. Do not commit insurance fraud.
- Lesson 2. Ride as a passenger till your claim is settled.
- Lesson 3. Beware of surveillance if you see a drone flying over your house.

8

TWO MISTAKES

A woman called the Coral Gables, Florida, Police Department and asked for the detective bureau.

“I’ll connect you now,” said the operator.

“Detective Joe Dicenso, Robbery Division.”

“Hello, Detective. Last year one of your officers was shot and almost killed and the shooter was never caught, right?”

“That is correct, it was Officer Bobby Henderson. Who am I speaking with and do you have some information for me?”

“My name is Carla Addison and I live at 247 Crooked Creek Drive in Pembroke Pines. I know who shot the officer and where the gun used in the shooting is hidden. Is there a reward for this information?”

“There sure is, \$100,000.”

“Well, my husband shot that officer and the gun he used is in our attic,” the female voice said without hesitation.

“What is your husband’s name and date of birth?”

“His name is Roger and he was born on October 5th, 1984.”

“Where is he now and why are you reporting your husband?”

“I do not know where he lives now. I am divorcing him. He may be at his girlfriend’s house.”

“Who is that and where does she live?”

“Her name is Susan Parker and she lives somewhere in Miami.”

“Do you have any children, Carla?”

“Yes, I have 3 young boys.”

“So if we arrest your husband and he is put away for life, then you get custody of your sons, right?”

“Correct. I do not have the money for a lawyer and I read online where a woman did the same thing I am doing now, turning in her cheating husband.”

“Believe it or not, Carla, it happens all the time. How do you know for sure Roger shot our officer?” inquired the detective.

“He told me that night. He said, ‘Me and Pete robbed a Burger King and when we ran down the dark alley a cop stopped us. I shot him 4 times when he went to frisk me’.”

“And you say the gun he used to shoot the officer is in your attic?”

“Yes. I checked this morning and it is still there, wrapped in a towel.”

“What is Pete’s last name and do you know his address?”

“I do not have a last name. He came over a few times. He is black, maybe 6 feet tall and the last time I saw him he had a beard.

“His age?”

“Young, maybe 20, 21.”

“Lock your door and do not let anyone in till the police arrive. My partner just notified the Pembroke Pines Police. They are on their way to your house as we speak.”

“Locking my doors now.”

“Are your 3 boys with you?”

“Yes, they are napping.”

“How old are your sons?”

“Timmy is 6, Brad is 4, and Andrew just turned 3.”

“Do not talk about this call with anyone. We need to locate and arrest Roger first.”

“I understand.”

“I will stay on the line with you till the police arrive. Then I will drive over and take your statement.”

“Your voice is calming. I am a nervous wreck. I wanted to report this months ago but was afraid to do so.”

“Well, you did the right thing.”

“Wow, the police are knocking on my door already.”

“I am on my way over as well.”

“Bye, Detective.”

Dicenso ran a background check on Roger Addison. He has a rap sheet a mile long and has been in and out of jail for drugs, stealing cars and armed robberies.

The detective found Roger's Facebook page and searched for Pete. He took cell phone photos of some men posted at the site to see if the tipster could ID one as Pete.

The police located the firearm in the attic and sent it over to the ballistics lab. It was a match. It took a few weeks but they arrested Roger and he gave up his crime partner, Pete Matthews.

Carla received the \$100,000 reward money and after her divorce moved out of state a richer woman. Both crooks were convicted of their crimes and the judge sentenced them to life.

Det. Dicenso drove to the home of the now retired officer that was shot in the alley. Bobby Henderson opened his door slowly and invited his buddy in.

“Glad you caught those sons of bitches, Joe.”

“Me too, Bobby. I never stopped looking for those 2 suspects. You were very lucky you made it that night.”

“Yep. My doctor said the steak meal I had just prior to being shot is what saved me. They found the bullet lodged inside the steak I just ate. The meat slowed the bullet down. I made one mistake that night, Joe”

“Which was?”

“I was sitting in my patrol car doing my reports when the 2 shooters ran into the alley. I pulled my firearm and ordered them against the wall. My only mistake was putting my firearm away to pat them down. When I did, the shooter hit me hard with his right elbow and I fell to the pavement. Then he turned around and shot me 4 times

and ran off. I pulled out my firearm and shot into the air to call for help.”

“Well, Bobby, you were lucky the police got a call of shots fired. Our dispatcher alertly did a roll call safety check and you were the only officer on duty that did not answer. She sent a few units to your last location and they found you lying there bleeding to death.”

“I was writing a vandalism report of a sporting goods store at the time,” said Bobby.

“No one knew they had just robbed that Burger King. Luckily, Carla Addison was getting a divorce and called me,” said Joe to his old friend.

“If I had not made that one stupid mistake of putting my firearm away to pat them down, I would still be on the force fighting crime.”

“The doctors made you retire. They said one blow to your stomach could kill you.”

“They were right to retire me.”

“I have to say you made 2 mistakes that night, not one.”

“What 2nd mistake was that, Joe?”

“Your 2nd mistake was not wearing your bullet-proof vest.”

- Lesson 1. When patting down a suspect keep your gun in your hand.
- Lesson 2. Always wear your bullet-proof vest.

James Paul Ellison

- Lesson 3. Hold your suspects at gunpoint till your backup arrives.
- Lesson 4. Eat steak for dinner. It may save your life.

9

THE WHEELCHAIR

“**H**ere is a Facebook photo of your next claimant, Charlie Rose. I need surveillance video of him not using his wheelchair,” said Attorney Paul Bentley to Private Investigator Josh Coleman sitting across from him. “In his deposition he claimed that since his auto accident he has been totally disabled and wheelchair bound.”

“Isn’t discovery over with, Paul?”

“It is, Josh, but I plan to impeach the plaintiff’s parents whom I plan to call first to the stand. According to their depositions, their only son, age 35, does everything in his wheelchair. I need video of him walking.”

Josh turned to his client and said, “I’ll do my best.”

“I got a tip a few months ago from our medical doctor that saw the plaintiff before his appointment. He saw him exit his vehicle with ease, walk to his trunk and remove the wheelchair. The claimant said he needed a wheelchair 24/7.

I asked my client to authorize surveillance but they sat on my request till just now. I go to trial in 2 weeks.”

“Not much time. I hate rush cases. The clock is against me,” said Josh.

“I have an open budget. Update me daily and if you get lucky I will need to see the video right away. Here is my cell phone number and my home address.”

Josh took his client’s information, stood up and said, “I will start as soon as I leave your office.”

He drove over to Charlie Rose’s residence in the town of Gulfport, MS and confirmed it was a good address. No vehicles were in the driveway but he did have a 2-car garage.

Josh spoke to the elderly couple that lived across the street and received their permission to park in their driveway. He showed the neighbor his magnetic cell testing signs and explained he would be receiving and testing cell tower signal strengths.

Three hours later, the claimant’s garage opened and the Ford Escort departed. The driver was a woman and the passenger was Charlie Rose.

Josh followed them to Walmart.

The PI obtained video of the claimant being helped into his wheelchair and being pushed around the store. He called his client with the news of the claimant using his wheelchair.

“I expect the plaintiff to act like he is disabled. Glad you have some video of him being pushed around in his wheelchair. Now I need him walking on his own without assistance,” said Attorney Bentley.

Josh sat in his vehicle for many hours for a week straight. Every day the wife drove the claimant around town. Either he would sit in the car and wait for the wife to return, or the claimant would be pushed around while riding in his wheelchair.

On day 8, Josh planned to depart the area of the claimant's residence at 9 pm but fell asleep in his car. He awoke to the sound of an ambulance with sirens blaring driving by. His dash clock read midnight. He was about to depart when the claimant's garage door opened.

Josh pulled out his binoculars and saw the claimant behind the wheel of his second vehicle, a Ford Mustang. A few minutes later the man was driving on the highway.

The claimant pulled into Treasure Bay Casino and stopped at Valet. Josh pulled out his key chain hidden camera and videoed Charlie Rose exit his vehicle, receive his valet ticket and walk on his own into the gambling establishment.

The claimant was wearing a pony-tail wig baseball cap, but Josh knew it was his man.

He obtained over 2 hours of covert video of Charlie Rose walking around the casino and playing assorted slot machines.

The claimant had a few beers at the sports bar. He then played Craps for 30 minutes and finally walked out of the casino.

Josh was only 10 feet behind the claimant, with his small covert keychain camera in his right hand. The investigator followed the claimant back to his residence.

James Paul Ellison

At noon the next day, Josh walked into Attorney Paul Bentley's office with a CD. They watched the surveillance video and laughed when the claimant, in disguise, walked quickly to the cashier cage to redeem his winning ticket.

- Lesson 1. Stay in the wheelchair till your case is settled.

10

TRICKY WIFE

Sandy Rogers is a pretty blonde and has been married to her husband, Joseph, for 10 years. They have 3 children, ages 4 to 8, and live in a new, 2-story residence in a gated golf course community in Valrico, Florida.

Every Saturday morning Sandy's younger sister, Rachel, would stop by to pick her up. Together they would go shopping at Edgewater Mall.

Joseph always asked to tag along with the children but Sandy would say, "No need, Rachael and I won't be long."

This Saturday would be different because Joseph hired a private investigator to follow his wife to see what she was doing. Their love making had declined and he suspected she was having an affair.

Joseph hired a private eye named Travis McGee, a retired cop, and hoped his \$400 fee to follow Sandy was money well spent.

'Is my wife still in love with me and really out shopping or having an affair?' said the father of 3 to himself as he waved goodbye to Sandy and his sister-in-law.

Travis followed the 2 women to the parking lot of Edgewater Mall. They exited their vehicle and walked off in different directions.

To his surprise Sandy walked over to a small truck camper and climbed inside. A man's hand reached out and closed the back door behind her. Over the next 2 hours the investigator videoed the small camper rocking back and forth.

Rachel returned to her vehicle carrying many shopping bags. A short time later, Sandy exited the camper, entered her sister's Honda and they departed the area.

Travis did not follow. He waited and videoed a young man exiting the camper, entering his truck and driving away.

He called his client with an update.

While his wife and sister-in law showed off all the clothes they purchased, Joseph was given the bad news about Sandy cheating on him.

- Lesson 1. Do not cheat. Just get a divorce.
- Lesson 2. Always go shopping with your spouse.

11

RIDING IN THE BACKSEAT

Connie Adams lived in a trailer with her husband and their 2 young daughters. Today she had another medical appointment to treat her back and right leg due to a recent automobile accident.

The insurance company was paying for her taxi to and from the hospital. Her husband, Kevin, said goodbye to her as she departed in her taxi. She sat in the backseat and waved back.

Connie Adams was under surveillance. William, the private eye, was parked down the road and videoed her walking slowly to the waiting taxi.

The adjuster wanted proof that her alleged injuries were legit. He knew from previous surveillances that most claimants faked or exaggerated their claims.

William set his GPS for the claimant's scheduled medical appointment location which was about 6 miles away. While following them in traffic he could see the driver and Connie talking and laughing.

At the next traffic light, Connie exited the backseat of the taxi and rode the rest of the way as the front seat passenger.

A few traffic lights later the PI was surprised to see the driver and Connie kissing. William got most of it on film from his Toyota Celica with dark tinted windows.

At every red light the couple kissed. The taxi arrived at her medical appointment and Connie went inside. The cab waited in an assigned parking spot marked for transport vehicles.

Forty minutes later Connie exited the hospital, entered the taxi as a front seat passenger and kissed the driver. She did not return to her trailer and waiting husband; instead, she went to a small home off a dirt road about 10 miles away. The driver pulled his taxi into the garage and closed it.

William ran the address and found that the taxi driver was named Bennie Press and he was 30 years old.

Two hours later the garage door opened and Bennie's cab left with Connie in the front seat. They kissed now and then on the trip to her own trailer.

About 3 blocks from her residence the cab stopped and Connie returned to the backseat of the taxi. William videoed this activity along with the husband meeting her at the front door and giving his wife a kiss.

William called his client and said, "You can settle this claim for almost nothing. Do you know why, Mike?"

"No."

“Have your lawyer take her deposition and show my video. If she really loves her husband and wants to save her marriage she will settle with you. Again, do you know why?”

“No.”

“Because right after her deposition your lawyer will take her husband’s deposition and he will see my video of his wife kissing the taxi driver and spending time at his residence. This will confirm she is having an affair. If she wants to save her marriage she will not want her husband to see my video and will accept your offer.”

“Smart plan, William. Thanks, I will do just that.”

“It should work. I had a similar case a year ago and the wife settled.”

A few weeks later Connie and her husband went to their scheduled depositions. The husband sat in the next room waiting his turn.

Connie watched the video of her cheating and accepted the low ball offer. She then joined her husband in the waiting room and said, “All done. We settled.”

William watched the couple stroll down the hall to the elevator holding hands.

The adjuster walked up to the private investigator with a big smile and said, “Wish all my cases were as easy as that one.”

“How did she react when she saw the video?”

“She started crying and kept whispering to her lawyer, ‘My husband can’t know about my affair’.”

James Paul Ellison

“How much did they demand before the deposition?”

“\$100,000.”

“What amount did she accept?”

“I offered \$2,000.”

- Lesson 1. When riding in a taxi, sit in the backseat.
- Lesson 2. Do not file a fake injury insurance claim.
- Lesson 3. Think twice before you cheat. There are so many ways to get caught.

12

THE SEMI TRUCK

The plaintiff demanded \$15 million but the insurance company had to pay zero at trial. All because of a letter discovered by private investigator Sean Adams.

About a year ago, the plaintiff, Tony Rodgers, age 24, was struck by a semi-truck. He claimed the semi crossed the highway's yellow line and hit him while he was checking his mailbox.

The truck driver said he struck the young man when Tony suddenly darted out in front of him for no apparent reason.

Tony survived his accident but was now a quadriplegic and needed around-the-clock medical care.

Just before trial the insurance company offered \$2 million to settle the claim but the plaintiff's lawyer stuck to his original demand of \$15 million.

Insurance Attorney Bill Green was worried the jury would agree with the claimant's attorney that the semi driver crossed the yellow line and struck his client.

When Sean found the letter at Tony's ex-wife's residence he knew it was important. It showed the claimant's state of mind, that he

was suicidal and maybe stepped in front of the semi on purpose just like the truck driver claimed he did from day one.

In the letter Tony said that if he couldn't be married to his wife anymore he had nothing to live for.

After finding the letter Sean went and interviewed the friend that drove Tony home the night of the accident.

The witness first claimed he saw the semi cross the yellow line and strike Tony. After reading the found letter the witness changed his story and said that Tony stepped in front of the fast moving semi on purpose.

He mentioned that Tony was still very much in love with his wife and when he saw her at a party, walked up and said, "Hi, wife."

In front of everyone she replied, "We are getting a divorce so leave me alone."

The witness said that Tony was very depressed that night and wanted to kill himself. The driver said that when he dropped him off, Tony looked at him and bitterly said, "I will show the bitch," and stepped in front of the moving semi on purpose.

The witness said he lied to the police the first time because Tony's father asked him to, that they needed the insurance money to take care of their son.

The jury came back and awarded the plaintiff zero money. They ruled it was not the truck driver's fault because Tony stepped in front of his semi.

After the trial the PI turned to his client and said, “Hard to believe that the plaintiff stepped in front of that fast moving semi on purpose and survived.”

- Lesson 1. Nothing is worth dying for.
- Lesson 2. Just get divorced and move on with your life.

James Paul Ellison

13

THE ROOKIE

Officer John Gibson was a rookie on the 300 man police force in Miami Beach, Florida. After 6 months in the police academy and 3 additional months training with 4 different Field Training Officers he was allowed to patrol the streets alone. Over the radio came his first call.

“Unit 23, Unit 23,” said the female dispatcher.

“Unit 23, Qsk,”¹ said Gibson as he pulled over to take notes.

“Take a 22 at Mel’s Diner, 487 Jackson Street. See the owner standing out front,” said the dispatcher in a calm voice.

“Qsl, Unit 23, Out,”² said John as he turned on his blue lights and quietly sped to the scene.

A ‘22’ call is for a drunk person. Sometimes a drunk will be friendly and listen to your commands or they could be violent, carry a knife and say, ‘I am not going to jail’.

You just never know what you will run into on a drunk call. All you can do is stay alert and watch the person’s hands.

¹ Qsk = Speak to me.

² Qsl = I read you.

“You just do not know how anyone high on drugs or alcohol will act,” said Gibson’s last field training officer who was hurt a few weeks ago from a ‘22’ call.

Officer Rogers was back on patrol after receiving 4 stiches in his scalp. He hated domestic calls. No one likes to be told what to do in their own home. Plus, if they have weapons they have time to hide them. They have time to use them as well.

On Officer Rogers’ last call a middle-aged married couple were fighting in the living room. It took Officer Rogers and 2 other policemen to tackle the husband and place the handcuffs on him.

The drunk homeowner was punching his wife in the face over and over when the officers walked in. He had just thrown a chair into their television set in the living room.

As the officers focused on placing their handcuffs on the drunken man, his wife struck Officer Rogers over the head with a wooden broom handle. She hit the officer 2 more times in rapid succession. “Leave my husband alone, I love him,” she kept saying in a drunken voice.

Officer Rogers walked up to John after roll call that morning, removed his cap, pointed to his 4 stiches and said, “I was lucky the broom handle wasn’t a knife. Be careful out there.”

“I will, Sir.”

Officer Gibson arrived on his first drunk call in front of Mel’s Diner and met with the owner.

“I have 3 drunken men sitting on my trash dumpster. They keep shouting over and over to my workers, “Feed us! Feed us! Feed us!”

The restaurant owner was a nice old man named Willie. He didn't want the drunks arrested, just to leave his property and to never come back.

Gibson and the owner were about to enter the restaurant when a police cruiser showed up. It was Officer Rogers. “Came to watch how you handle your first ‘22’ call.”

All 3 walked through the closed restaurant at midnight, into the kitchen and out the back door. Sitting on a closed trash dumpster were the 3 drunks. They all were in their sixties and very loud. They were talking and singing till they saw the 2 lawmen approach.

Officer Gibson took charge of his first rookie call. “Men, I am Police Officer Gibson and this is my partner, Officer Rogers. Standing by the backdoor is the restaurant owner and his name is Willie.

The owner wants you to leave and never come back. Willie will tell you that in front of me. If you ever return, you will be arrested for trespassing after a warning is issued.”

The drunks just kept drinking their beers.

“Now keep your hands in front of you for my safety. Then after your trespass warning is given by the restaurant owner, you will get off the dumpster. I want you to stand there so I can search each of you for weapons. Acknowledge that each of you have heard my instructions.”

All 3 drunks started singing at the same time, “Yes, Officer.”

Willie shouted from the safety of his backdoor. “Stay away from my family restaurant. Do not come back.”

John had all 3 men jump off the dumpster. He searched them for weapons as his partner covered him. In a shirt pocket of all 3 he found an empty cigarette pack with a folded matchbook.

Inside each matchbook was a hidden razor blade placed by the edge. Drunks did this for protection. It acts like a box cutter knife.

The drunks would pretend to smoke, grab the matchbook and slice your hand, face or throat if they felt their life was in danger.

If you did not know about the ‘matchbook razor blade trick’ you could get hurt. Gibson learned about this trick in the police academy and from each of his field training officers.

“Gentlemen, you are under arrest for being drunk and for carrying a concealed weapon. Place your hands behind your back, please.”

One of the drunks spoke up. “You must be a rookie, you said please.” He started laughing and the other 2 drunks joined in.

All 3 were escorted through the closed restaurant and placed into the back of Officer Gibson’s patrol car.

Officer Rogers turned to John and said, “Good job. Take them to the new Detox Center in Miami.”

Officer Gibson drove off with the 3 men singing songs and laughing at each other’s dirty jokes. It was like they were at a party. They were having a good time.

When John reached the top of the causeway bridge that connected Miami Beach to Miami he realized he did not know the location of the new Detox Center.

He didn't want to call his dispatcher or a fellow officer for directions because they would just make fun of him at his next rollcall.

John had an idea. He turned to the 3 drunks he was transporting. "Men. I need directions to Miami's Detox Center that opened a few weeks ago."

"Buy me a pack of smokes and I will tell you," said one. The other 2 piped in, "Buy us something to eat at McDonalds and we will take you there." They all started laughing and singing, "The rookie is lost, the rookie is lost."

Gibson turned to the 3 stooges at a traffic light and said, "You have a deal."

The drunks started clapping.

"I will buy each of you a meal and a pack of smokes in exchange for directions to Miami's Detox Center. You have to promise not to tell anyone about our deal."

All 3 promised. The officer bought each of them a meal and a pack of smokes. They then directed Officer Gibson to Miami's new Detox Center. Once inside the facility they were led to a holding cell.

Gibson started to leave when one of the drunks shouted, "Hey, Officer, do you need directions back to Miami Beach?" The other 2 drunks started singing, "The rookie is lost."

The officer turned to them and replied, "I know the way back."

James Paul Ellison

- Lesson 1. Buy a GPS device.
- Lesson 2. Be nice to the drunks.

14

THE LIAR

Joe Cummings has been a police officer in Naples, Florida for 28 years. He only has 2 months to go till his retirement.

On his dinner breaks he would sit in his patrol car and read the brochure about ‘Look Out Mountain’. This was a log cabin style community in the hills of North Carolina about 50 miles north of Greenville.

All the retired cops from his department were now living in Look Out Mountain. They asked him to read the brochure and pay them a visit. If he did, they were sure he would buy a cabin there and settle down because it was very peaceful.

The police dispatcher came on the air and said, “All units, take a fight in progress inside Joe’s Bar, at 248 Bird Road. The manager says at least 7 men with broken beer bottles are going at it.”

Cummings put down the brochure, turned on his blue lights and siren and sped in the direction of the bar. Four minutes later he joined other officers arriving at the scene.

They arrested all the men. One officer was slightly hurt breaking up the fight.

“You’re going to miss being a cop,” said Officer Drake as he lit a cigarette.

“Not one bit,” said Joe. “I plan to play golf, fish and just relax in my log cabin on Look Out Mountain.”

“That is what Officer Mitchell said to me as well. It lasted 4 months. Now he is back on patrol.”

“Not me, Drake. When I leave here I plan to just relax.”

“I will check up on you in 4 months to see if it’s true.”

Cummings was walking back to his patrol car when the dispatcher called him on his radio. “Unit 26. Unit 26.”

“Unit 26, Qsk.”

“Take a ‘44’ sleeping in the lobby of the Holiday Inn, located at 3922 Lake Drive. See the night clerk; he will show you where the ‘44’ is sleeping.”

“Unit 26, Qsl.”

Ten minutes later the desk clerk walked the officer over to a leather couch by the closed bar and pointed to a man snoring loudly.

“I was cleaning up when I heard him. He wasn’t snoring till just a few minutes ago.” The clerk then returned to cleaning up the lobby.

Cummings bent over the sleeping man and could smell a strong odor of whiskey as he did so. He shook the man awake and ordered him to stand. The drunk in his forties did as he was told.

The officer asked the trespasser for identification and ran him on NCIC, but Bob Butler was clean. “Where do you live at, Sir?”

“685 Broadway, apartment 5, Officer. Can you take me?”

“Sure can.”

“I was visiting some friends in room 1224 when they kicked me out for being drunk. I was going to walk home when I spotted this couch.”

“Tell you what. This time I will take you home, but next time...”

“There will be no next time, I promise.”

“Hop in the back of my patrol car and I will take you home.”

“Thank you, Officer, thank you.”

On the ride over to his apartment Bob asked a question. “Can we stop at the 7-11 store? I want to buy a pack of smokes.”

Joe pulled up to the store and opened the backdoor of his patrol car. The man’s trousers were wet and he smelled.

“Did you just pee in my car?”

“Sorry, Officer. I could not hold it.”

“Give me the money and I will buy the pack of smokes for you. What kind do you want?”

“I have no money on me. I can give you the money as soon as I get to my apartment. I smoke Cools One Hundreds”

Cummings walked into the store, bought the drunk his pack of smokes and walked back out.

“Here are your smokes. You owe me \$5.”

The accommodating officer drove Bob to the ‘Pacific Palace Apartments’ and let him out of his patrol car. “I will wait here. Go inside and get me my \$5,” said the trusting officer.

“Thank you again, Sir, for the ride. Sorry I went to the bathroom in your patrol car. I will be right back with your money.”

Cummings waited and waited but the drunk never did come back. The officer walked into the building but there was no apartment number 5. The officer returned to the Holiday Inn but room 1224 was a vacant room. He drove around the area but Cummings never found the drunk liar that night.

For the next few weeks Joe responded to every drunk call on his shift. He was hoping to find the drunk liar that stole his money and urinated in his patrol car.

One night, he finally got lucky. Sitting on a wall behind a closed business were 4 drunks. Cummings exited his patrol car, shined his flashlight in Bob’s face, and said, “You are under arrest.”

“Just me?”

“Yes, just you, and do you know why?”

“No, Officer.”

“You don’t remember me, do you?”

“No, Officer.”

“I spent \$5 buying you a pack of cigarettes and all you did was pee in my car and lie to me about paying me back. I waited and waited for you to return but you snuck out the back of that apartment complex I took you to.”

The other drunks sitting on the concrete wall said, “So you were the officer?” They started laughing.

Cummings placed the liar in the back of his patrol car and said to him as he closed the back door. “You better not pee inside my patrol car this time.” He drove him straight to jail.

- Lesson 1. Don't loan drunks any money.
- Lesson 2. Sad you can't be nice to everyone.

James Paul Ellison

15

THE HOTEL GUEST

Miami Beach, Florida is a resort city. On this July weekend all the hotels along the beach were sold out. It was a hot morning when Officer Mitchell G. Bundy received a call over his police radio.

“Unit 24, Unit 24.”

“This is Unit 24, Qsk.”

“Take a 37 at The Hilton, 2435 Collins Avenue. See security.”

“Unit 24, Osl.”

Officer Bundy wrote the information down on his legal pad and sped to the scene. He walked into the hotel’s security office. There stood 3 men with cups of coffee in their hands. “You called the station about a person defrauding an innkeeper?”

“Yes, Sir, we did. He is still in room 503”, said security officer Jackson as he shook the police officer’s hand. “Follow me, I will escort you to room 503.”

As both men rode up in the elevator the security guard said, “The front desk started receiving room charges from the pool café, the gift shop and the spa. The front desk showed on their computer that room 503 was a check-out. So I went to room 503 to investigate.”

“What did you find when you got there?”

“A man sitting on the bed. He was only in his underwear watching TV. He did not belong in the room. He is still there because we have a guard posted outside the room waiting on you.”

“How did he get a room key if the room was a check-out?”

“Good question! I do not know.”

Both men entered room 503. The unwanted guest was eating a chicken meal he ordered from the café. Room Service brought up his meal.

The security guard said, “This man promised our room service employee a tip, too.”

Officer Bundy asked the man to stand up and show his identification. He had none. He said his name was Justin Miller and he gave his date of birth as November 5th, 1974.

The policeman ran his provided information in the NCIC computer but there were no hits. “How did you obtain a key to this room, Mr. Miller?”

“I stole it off a maid’s cleaning cart.”

“So after stealing the key you entered this room and started making charges?”

“Yes, Officer. I was hungry.”

“Well, the party is over. You are under arrest for defrauding an innkeeper. Stand up and get dressed.”

Officer Bundy instructed the two guards as they escorted him and his prisoner down the hall to tell the maids to control the checkout

guest keys from now on. He then placed the man into the back seat of his squad car and picked up his police radio.

“Unit 24 to dispatch.”

“Dispatch, Qsk.”

“I will be back in service with 1 arrest for defrauding an innkeeper.”

“Qsl. Take him over to Miami’s jail since ours is being remodeled.”

“Qsl. En-route.”

Officer Bundy made small talk with the man on the drive over to Miami from Miami Beach. During the 20 minute transport ride, Justin said, “I lost my job as a cook a month ago and have been living on the beach.”

“What you did was wrong. You can’t just walk into hotels, steal a room key and start pretending you are a guest,” said Officer Bundy.

“I know, but it worked.”

Officer Bundy escorted the unemployed man to the jail receiving desk. They were waiting for him to arrive. Miami Beach Dispatch had already called over that he was coming.

Mitchell turned to his prisoner and said, “You can stay here at no charge.” He then drove back the 12 miles to Miami Beach and started handling other calls.

One hour later, Officer Bundy received another defrauding an innkeeper call at the hotel next door to The Hilton. “What is going on

with these defrauding an innkeeper calls?’ he thought as he pulled up to the Hotel Naughton.

Security was waiting outside the hotel and escorted him to Penthouse 3.

Mitchell turned to the young guard and said, “This is my 2nd call for defrauding an innkeeper in less than an hour.”

“The unwanted guest charged items from our drug store and had a big dinner sent up to his room.”

Both men entered Penthouse 3 and there in bed stuffing his face was Justin Miller. Office Bundy was in shock seeing him.

“We meet again, Officer.”

“How did you get out of jail so fast?”

“I talked the Miami jail clerk into letting me go on my own reconnaissance.”

“What? They gave you O.R.?”

The security guard asked, “What is O.R.?”

“O.R. means there is no bond money paid to the courts and no bond is posted. He is just released on his own reconnaissance after promising, in writing, to appear in court at a later date.”

“The jail said they were overcrowded because Miami Beach was dropping their prisoners off at their facility and they were mad.”

“They said that to you Mr. Miller?”

“Yes. They were tired of all the extra paperwork.”

“So how did you get from the jail to The Hotel Naughton?”

“I called a taxi and told the driver to drop me off at The Hilton. I told the driver to wait, that my wallet was in my room. I just walked out the back door of the hotel and walked the beach to this hotel.”

“How did you get the key to Penthouse 3?”

“I told the maid in the hallway that I left a few things in my room. I saw her earlier closing the door to the vacant room.”

“Your name should be Justin Tricky, not Miller. Stand up, you are under arrest again for defrauding an innkeeper.”

The man took one more bite of his meal and stood up.

Officer Bundy escorted his prisoner out of the hotel and into the back seat of his patrol car. The patrolman then drove over to the Miami Jail again. This time Bundy said to the clerks on duty, “Gentlemen, do not let him out.”

- Lesson 1. Do not walk into a hotel and use any keys that do not belong to you.
- Lesson 2. Do not overstay your visit. Eat and run.

James Paul Ellison

16

THE BURGLARY

The homeowner, Maxwell Stone, had a great plan. He was going to stage his own burglary and file a loss claim with his insurance company.

There was just one problem. Adjuster Leroy Jenkins of State Farm Insurance hired a private investigator to check out the burglary. This is what happened to Mr. Stone's plan a few months later in court.

Jimmy Evans, the owner of Evans Investigative Group, sat on the witness stand. At the defense table were the homeowner, Mr. Maxwell Stone and his high priced lawyer, Nick Shull.

The prosecutor for the state, Barbara Covert, reminded the jury that this was a fraud case. The burglary was staged to collect \$3 million from State Farm Insurance Company.

"So explain in your own words, Mr. Evans, how you solved this bogus claim," said Miss Covert as she spoke to the jury.

"An adjuster over at State Farm Insurance Company, Leroy Jenkins, asked me to drive to Boca Raton, Florida to a 6 million dollar mansion located in a gated community."

"What were your instructions?"

“To confirm if a burglary really occurred, and if so, what was stolen and the value of each missing item.”

“What did the homeowner claim was stolen?”

“Mr. Stone said he had priceless oil paintings and jewelry kept in a special room off the master bedroom. The room was hidden behind full-length mirrors.”

“Did you hire an appraiser to research the value of the allegedly stolen art?”

“Yes, I did.”

“What were the results?”

“The homeowner, under the terms of his insurance policy, was required to give me a sworn statement. I asked Mr. Stone if he had ever met the appraiser I hired, Mr. Mike Pollack, before I had the remaining art that was left in the home appraised.”

“Why did you ask Mr. Stone that question under oath?”

“This would help me determine the value of what was stolen.”

“How?”

“If you claim Rolex watches are stolen from your home and after the burglary I only find Timex watches in the house I would assume you didn’t have Rolex watches in the first place.”

“What was the answer of the homeowner?”

“Mr. Stone swore under oath that he never met the appraiser before I brought him.”

“Was that true?”

“No. I located traffic logs in records at the security gate that showed Mr. Stone meeting with the appraiser the night before I took the homeowner’s sworn statement.”

“Did you take a sworn statement from the appraiser?”

“Yes. He said that Mr. Stone asked him to appraise his remaining paintings at a higher value.”

“Did the appraiser do a higher value?”

“Yes, but only after Mr. Stone gave him \$25,000 in cash to do so.”

“Did you interview all the security guards on all shifts?”

“Yes. Each guard was told by Mr. Stone not to log in any of his visitors. Some guards did as instructed but a few didn’t like Mr. Stone and logged all his visitors.”

“What did the partial logs reveal?” asked the prosecutor.

“Mr. Stone is married and has 3 young daughters. Every time the wife and kids were out of town he would have single females spend the night. I confirmed this fact with each of the single females I located.”

“How do you know the burglary was staged?”

“I located a plumber that was called to Mr. Stone’s residence by the maid on the morning of the burglary that occurred later in the evening.”

“Why was finding this man so important?”

“The maid was having water flow problems in the home. The plumber had to inspect the water tank and the maid escorted the plumber to the hidden room.

There was a small water tank in this hidden room but it only controlled the master bathroom water. The normal water tank for the residence was in the garage.”

“Did you interview this plumber and if so what did he tell you?”

“He remembers the hidden room and all that was inside. The plumber had to remove the shoe rack and shoes to get to the hidden water tank. He found that the tank was too small to be the main water tank for the residence.

The young plumber had to then put back the shoe wall and all the shoes. So he spent over an hour in that special hidden room that Mr. Stone claimed was full of priceless art.”

“What did the plumber say was in the hidden room that morning?”

“Just clothes, wine, a bag of coins and some rugs.”

“No oil paintings or jewelry?”

“No oil paintings or jewelry,” said Jimmy as he looked towards the jury.

“Did you interview anyone else at Mr. Stone’s residence during your investigation?”

“Yes. His butler and maid. They both said they were given the weekend of the burglary off. So no one was home when the burglary occurred.”

“Where was Mr. Stone the night of the alleged burglary?”

“He was on a friend’s yacht sailing in the ocean.”

“Did Mr. Stone do this often, go on yachts?”

“No. This was his first time since he bought his residence 7 years ago.”

“So tell the jury what really happened to his oil paintings and jewelry?”

“Mr. Stone had his wife and children go visit his in-laws in California. He then sent his maid and butler away for the weekend. Mr. Stone then loaded up his oil paintings and jewelry onto his own yacht to by-pass the security guards at the main entrance and sailed away. He then waited on his friend’s yacht for either his maid or butler to call him about the burglary when they returned to the residence.”

“Why stage a burglary?”

“Mr. Stone was getting a divorce. He was afraid he would have to sell his paintings.”

“Did the returning maid or butler discover the alleged burglary?”

“No. Both arrived home and went to their bedrooms via the garage. The alleged burglary entry point was the front door. When neither called their boss, Mr. Stone, had to report the alleged burglary himself when he returned home.”

“Why steal your own paintings?”

“His loyal wife found out about all the women visitors from an honest guard. He didn’t want her getting any of his valuables in a divorce proceeding so he staged the fake burglary. He bypassed the

security guards by sailing over to Jones Marina and unloading his paintings to his younger brother for safekeeping.”

“How did you know his brother had the paintings?”

“I landed a job at the pest control company that does the brother’s house. I did a walk-through and videoed the paintings hanging on the walls. The paintings were the same ones listed as stolen on Mr. Stone’s burglary list.”

“What did you do next?”

“I notified the police and they recovered all of the paintings. Mr. Stone later told the police he forgot he gave the paintings to his brother. So the police did nothing as no crime had been committed.”

“But a crime had been committed. Right?”

“Yes. The police did not know that Mr. Stone had filed a \$3 million dollar insurance claim for the oil paintings that were never stolen.”

A few hours later the jury convicted Mr. Stone of insurance fraud. He didn’t spend any time in jail. He bonded out and fled the country.

- Lesson 1. Think twice before you file a false insurance claim.
- Lesson 2. Be faithful to your spouse.

17

THE COVERT HELMET CAMERA

Private Investigator, Tony Johnson, loved building spy type cameras for his job. His newest invention was a small camera built inside a motorcycle helmet.

He sanded the top of the helmet so it would not roll when Tony sat it down. He painted the helmet black to hide that the bottom surface was flat.

Tony tinted the glass visor extra dark and rigged a small camera mount inside the helmet. He then purchased a pair of large riding gloves to sit on top of his hidden camera. The gloves would block anyone from looking inside the helmet.

Tony visited numerous shops to try out his invention. It worked every time. The clerks just saw a man carrying his motorcycle helmet and gloves as he walked around the store.

Tony wore a motorcycle type jacket as part of his street wear. He would walk up to a store clerk and put his helmet down. He would then film the clerk working behind the counter.

The covert camera was easy to use and the quality of the video he shot was excellent. Tony couldn't wait to try it out on his next claimant.

He didn't have to wait long. An insurance adjuster over at State Farm Insurance hired him to follow a subject who claimed to be hurt in an auto accident.

“What is the subject's name and where does he live?”

The adjuster, Jack Daniels, said, “His name is Alvin Banks and he lives at 244 Cove Lane in Tupelo, Mississippi.”

“What is his alleged injury and date of birth?”

“His neck and he was born on January 5th, 1995.”

“Any known medical appointments coming up?”

“Yes. Next Tuesday morning he has to see Dr. Tom Wilkinson at the Pain Clinic located at 3392 Wind Road in Tupelo at 10 A.M.”

“Great. I will pick him up arriving at the clinic. What is the budget you want to spend on this case?”

“Start with \$2,500 and call me after that.”

“Will do. I will run a background check on the subject and email you a copy.”

“Great. I hope you do a good job. My boss said to try you out.”

“Thank you for the assignment, Sir. I won't let you down.”

The rookie private investigator ran a background check on his subject. It showed he was 22 years old and lived with his parents at the address provided by his client. The subject drove a red Ford Mustang with Mississippi license plate, ADR288.

Tony opened a file on his new case, pulled out his covert helmet camera and placed it next to his other surveillance gear. He

then did a Google map search which showed only one way out of the subject's neighborhood.

Tony programmed the address of the doctor's appointment into his GPS device. The private investigator then turned the lights off inside his office and went to dinner.

On Tuesday morning the subject showed up for his medical appointment and Tony videoed the man exiting his vehicle and entering the building.

The private investigator then called the adjuster with an update. "Your subject wore a neck brace to the doctor's office. When he returned to his vehicle, the subject tossed his medical device into the backseat."

"Good. His lawyer is demanding \$50,000. Alvin Banks not wearing his neck device will cost him. Thanks for the update."

Tony followed the man to The Sunshine Mall. He grabbed his helmet camera and followed the subject inside. The claimant went directly to 'Tobacco Joe's' and walked behind the counter.

When the PI entered the store he noticed that the subject wore a name tag on his shirt. The name, 'Alvin,' confirmed that Tony had the right person.

The private investigator walked around the large store and stopped at several display cases. The subject walked up and asked, "Can I help you with something?"

Tony knew he was not allowed to talk with any claimant unless he had to. He looked up and smiled, "No, just looking," The private

investigator then placed his covert helmet camera on top of a display case. Tony then started recording his claimant turning his head and neck.

Alvin started helping a customer. Tony decided he had enough video for now and left the store. He visited several other stores before returning to his surveillance vehicle.

The investigator removed his covert camera from the helmet and played back the video. He had recorded almost 10 minutes of his claimant turning his head and neck.

Tony killed some time by sitting in his vehicle and listening to the radio. He then entered the mall again.

He walked back into Tobacco Joe's Store with his covert helmet camera. He placed his camera down on a display counter and pretended he was interested in some lighters.

The claimant came up to him and asked again, "Can I help you with something?" This time Tony spoke up. "Yes. I want to buy a lighter for my father." Ten minutes later he walked out with his gift.

Tony returned to his surveillance vehicle and removed the large set of leather gloves from the helmet. He then unscrewed the camera from the tripod and started watching the video he just obtained.

A minute later, there was a loud knock on his driver's window. Tony looked up to see the claimant and a security guard motioning for him to step out of his vehicle. Instead, Tony, started his car, backed up and departed the parking lot.

He was upset at himself for allowing a claimant to follow him to his vehicle, and for looking at the video instead of watching his surroundings. Now the claimant knew he was under surveillance.

Ten minutes later Tony's new client called. "Drop what you are doing and come to my office." The adjuster said nothing else but Tony knew he was angry about something.

The private investigator parked in front of State Farm Insurance office and went inside. He was instructed to go into the manager's office. Once there, Tony was greeted by the adjuster and another man. "Have a seat. This is my boss, Bob Kline."

The adjuster spoke first. "The claimant's lawyer just called and said you ran over his client's foot. He is at the hospital now. The doctor confirms he has a broken right toe."

"Not true."

"They claim you did run over his foot."

"I did not run over anyone's foot. He knocked on my driver's window while I was looking at the surveillance video I just recorded. He had a security guard with him and they motioned for me to step out. Instead, I just backed up and left the parking lot. That is the truth."

"Young man, it may be the truth, but the claimant has a witness. The security guard just gave us a statement over the phone confirming what the subject's attorney is claiming," said Bob Kline.

The adjuster spoke next. "We have a problem. A claimant is hurt and he has a witness."

“That security guard is lying. I did not run over any one’s foot.”

“That may be true, but we just agreed to settle this whole claim for \$100,000. Please make a copy of what surveillance footage you have, issue us a report and give us your invoice.”

“I will not charge you for my services on this case. I do not want your money. I just want your business.”

The manager and the adjuster remained silent.

“If you will just investigate this bogus claim you will find out that I am telling you both the truth.”

Mr. Kline then spoke next. “We believe you young man but we can’t take a chance and deny the claim. Have you ever heard of ‘bad faith’?”

“No, Sir.”

“Insurance Bad Faith is a tort law where a claimant’s lawyer will sue directly our insurance company for its bad acts. Punitive damages are unavailable for this claim but are available for tort claims. The plaintiff’s lawyer will sue us directly. He can do this because we hired you, and as our agent, you caused a bad act. You caused the alleged injury to his client. If they prove their bad faith case we will be paying them millions. To prevent this huge financial exposure we are playing it safe by paying them a quick \$100,000 to settle the whole claim.”

“But why? I am telling you the truth.”

“It doesn’t matter if you are telling the truth young man. They are taking advantage of you getting caught. They will claim you injured their client and we acted in bad faith. Our risk exposure is too great. We have no choice but to settle. ”

Tony left his new client’s office. The insurance company never issued him anymore surveillance assignments.

The covert helmet camera now sits on a bookshelf gathering dust. There is a sign taped to the helmet that reads: ‘A 100,000 dollar mistake.’ Tony is still building hidden cameras and trying them out. His newest invention is a Pepsi soda can hidden camera.

- Lesson 1. Always stay alert.
- Lesson 2. Make sure your claimant doesn’t follow you to your surveillance vehicle.
- Lesson 3. Enter a store one time only and obtain as much video as you can.

James Paul Ellison

18

THE FAKER

Some people will try anything to score money from an insurance company. Chris Harrison, age 26, was an unemployed cook when he filed a lawsuit claiming he was struck by a vehicle.

The alleged victim reported to the police that he was walking down the sidewalk when an old man in a black Volvo jumped the curb while trying to park and struck him on his right leg.

A witness, Sean Pitts, called the Sarasota, Florida Police Department to report the accident. As he dialed 911, the Volvo owner exited his car and walked by Chris, whom was now laying on the sidewalk holding his right leg and crying out in pain.

“Faker,” said the old man as he entered Doug’s Barbershop located a short distance away.

A few minutes later the sidewalk was full of police and an ambulance.

Chris told his story to Officer Peterson as he was being loaded onto a stretcher while pretending to be in pain. “I was walking down the sidewalk when this old man, that can’t drive, jumped the curb in his Volvo and struck me. He then exited his car where it is parked now and walked into that barbershop.”

Chris pointed to Doug's Barbershop. "He didn't even stop to help me. He just laughed and said, "Faker."

Officer Peterson entered the barbershop and located the old man in chair number 3. "What is your name, Sir?"

"William Stone. Why?"

"A young man claims you struck him on his right leg when your car jumped the curb. He says you didn't stop to offer any aid and you called him a 'Faker'."

"I didn't jump no curb. I parked my vehicle between 2 other vehicles on the street. The man took his right hand and slapped my car real hard. He then screamed out in pain and laid down on the sidewalk. I exited my car and said to him, 'Faker' and walked to my haircut appointment."

"The victim has a witness who claims you did jump the curb and you did strike the victim. I need to see your driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance."

"Why? I did not strike the man with my car."

"We have statements from a witness and the victim and they say otherwise. You will be issued a citation for leaving the scene of an accident with injuries. Let the judge decide"

William handed the policeman his driver's license. "My registration and proof of insurance are in my glovebox."

"Who is your insurance carrier?"

"Florida Farm Bureau."

“Report this accident to your insurance company as soon as you can. Here is my business card in case the adjuster has any questions.”

“I did not strike the man. He slapped my car with his right hand and then laid down on the sidewalk screaming in pain.”

“All I can do is put down in the accident report your side of the events, Sir.”

A reporter from a local news station walked into the barbershop and started taking pictures of the old man. Doug, the owner, pointed to his front door and said, “Get out and stay out.”

William spoke next. “I am 74 years old. My heart does not need all the stress this is causing. I did not strike the man. He is a Faker.”

A few days later, the adjuster, Tim Brown, called his favorite PI but got his answering machine. “Matt, I need you to come to my office as soon as you can. I have another case for you. The claimant is Chris Harrison and my insured is William Stone. Call me back when you hear this message.”

Matt Green walked into his private investigative office 30 minutes later. After playing back his messages he gave Tim a call. “Hi, Tim. What is my next case all about?”

“I am too busy at this time to discuss the case. Just come in and I will explain.”

“Fine. I will be down shortly.” Matt hung up and started returning other calls left on his answering machine.

Chris Harrison walked slowly out of the hospital using a pair of crutches. He also wore a thigh-high leg brace. His best friend and witness to the accident helped him into the passenger seat of a Honda Civic.

While stopped at a traffic light, Sean Pitts turned to Chris and said, “That was some acting you did today. I even thought you were hurt.”

“Thanks to your witness statement Sean, the police gave that old man a ticket for leaving the scene of an accident with injuries.”

“What is the next step in your plan?”

“We will attend the old man’s court date and let the world see me in the room wearing a leg brace and using my crutches.”

Matt sat in Adjuster Tim Brown’s corner office later that afternoon and took notes on a yellow legal pad.

“I can’t sit here and discuss this case in detail. I have to get to Jacksonville in a hurry. We just had a passenger train hit a semi-truck and derail. Some 90 passengers are hurt.”

“Wow! What happened?”

“The semi got stuck crossing over the railroad tracks. Here is a list of things I need you to do for me on this case. Start with a \$3,000 budget and keep me updated.”

Matt sat in his surveillance van and went over the list. He had to interview all the police that were at the accident scene, take a statement from the witness, search for any street video that might have captured the alleged accident, talk to the old man for more details, do a

background check on the claimant and do 3 days of surveillance. Matt had one week to complete his assignment.

William Stone lived in a gated and secured golfing community. The gate guard let Matt in.

“How do I get to his residence?”

The security guard said, “Turn left at the dead-end and turn right on Links Drive.”

Matt and the old man shook hands. They walked all around the car that allegedly struck the claimant. There were no signs of damage. Not even a scratch.

“I have been driving for over 55 years and never had a ticket or accident till that cop gave me a citation.”

“Your insurance company hired me to investigate this claim. I am in your corner, Mr. Stone. I will try to find the evidence we need to get your charge of leaving the scene of an accident with injuries dismissed.”

The 2 men talked for about 20 minutes more. Matt finished writing his notes while sitting in his van at the golf course parking lot.

Matt had already run a background check on the claimant and found nothing important that his client could use. He would save the statements of the police and the witness for last. Matt thought his best bet was to place the claimant under surveillance. He would start at the court house the next day.

Court room 3-C was full when Matt found a seat in the back. He viewed Mr. Stone and his lawyer in the front row. He looked

around and tried to figure out which man sitting in the room was Chris Harrison.

The judge called on Mr. Stone's citation case some 20 minutes later. The old man pleaded not guilty. His trial date was set for 2 weeks later.

As planned, Mr. Stone looked at the claimant and said, "Faker." Matt now knew for sure who his claimant was.

The investigator's helper picked him up in front of the courthouse. "Follow that man using the crutches while I video," pointed Matt as he started filming.

"Will do, Boss," said Jake.

The claimant slowly walked about 2 blocks to his friend's Honda Civic. Under his blue jeans was a thigh-high leg brace. The man stopped and looked around in all directions.

"What is he looking for?" asked Jake.

"I don't know," said Matt as he filmed his claimant standing by the passenger door. A few minutes later he had his answer.

The claimant dropped his pants and let them hit the ground. He removed the thigh-high leg brace and tossed it into the back seat along with the crutches he used.

Jake laughed. "I hope you are getting all this on video."

"Yep, his white briefs and all."

The investigators followed the claimant for the rest of the day. Every time he exited the vehicle he had no limp, carried no crutches and wore no leg brace. He walked with a normal gait.

“What a Faker,” said Jake as he watched the claimant enter a restaurant.

“The man with him is his loyal witness,” said Matt putting down his video camera after both went inside.

The next morning the private investigator walked in the area of the alleged accident in search of any video cameras a business might have.

An hour later he had no luck, so Matt expanded the search area. He hit pay dirt. He located a roof top camera a block away at the new Hilton Hotel. The camera was pointed in the right direction.

In the security office of the hotel, Matt watched the claimant slap the right side of Mr. Stone’s vehicle with his right hand, then lay down on the sidewalk. The security office made 3 copies of the video as requested and Matt departed a happy man.

The investigator pulled up unannounced at the residence of Sean Pitts, the accident witness, and knocked. He left 20 minutes later with the man’s statement. His story was all a lie. He stuck to his original statement he gave to Officer Peterson.

Matt drove 4 hours north to Jacksonville. He wanted to surprise his client with the video he obtained. He also was hoping the good news would land him more assignments.

It did. The adjuster was so happy that Matt uncovered fraud, he said, “Florida Farm Bureau has 12 claimants so far that were on the train that derailed. I will need surveillance on each of them.”

A few weeks later the police asked the victim, Chris Harrison, to come to the station. When he did, he was arrested for filing a false accident report. He came into the police station wearing a thigh-high leg brace and using crutches.

The police made a deal with the witness, Sean Pitts. He would receive probation in exchange for telling the truth and testifying against Chris Harrison that his accident was staged.

Mr. Stone was playing a round of golf when he received the good news from the investigator: The claimant was arrested for insurance fraud for staging the accident and Mr. Stone's citation had been dismissed.

Matt was on his 3rd surveillance from the train derailment when his helper, Jake, called him on his cell phone. "Thanks for the raise, Boss."

"You're welcome. You are turning out to be a good surveillance investigator."

"Well it helps when you have a great teacher. How long have you been a private investigator?"

"I am on my 33rd year. I love my surveillance job too. Every day is different."

48 SHORT STORIES OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Lesson 1. Wear your leg brace every day.

Lesson 2. Make sure your witness sticks to his story.

Lesson 3. Just be honest.

James Paul Ellison

19

THE WEDDING

In private investigative work you get some strange cases. What are people thinking when they call you? Maybe they watch too many television shows and think you can do anything for them. Sometimes you have to turn down an assignment and tell your client ‘no’.

Sandy White was married to a rich doctor, lived in a \$2 million dollar mansion overlooking the ocean in Miami, Florida, had 3 small children, a new sports car and was miserable.

She just found out from a close friend that her husband of twelve years was cheating. He claimed he had to work overtime because of a doctor’s shortage. Sandy didn’t know what to do with this information.

She contacted her best friend in California. The lady said to hire a private investigator to see if he was really working late or seeing someone else.

Sandy looked in the yellow pages for one. A small ad with the caption ‘Is your spouse really working late?’ caught her eye. She called the phone number listed.

On the 2nd ring a male’s voice answered, “Truth Investigations.”

Sandy told the man her problem and they agreed to meet at a Dunkin Donuts Store on Miami Avenue. She was to bring a photo of her husband, information on what vehicle he drove, the license plate number, his work schedule and a cash retainer of \$1,000.

The private investigator waited in a corner booth and was into his 4th donut when Sandy walked in with a small envelope. Joe Kilmer stood up and motioned for his pretty new client to have a seat.

“Can I get you something to drink or eat?”

“No thanks. I have my neighbor watching my 3 boys and I have to get back home as soon as I can.”

“What are the ages of your boys?”

“Tim is 7, William is 6 and Peter is 4.”

“Is that envelope in your hand for me?”

“Yes. I could only come up with \$600 right now. My husband Rick controls all our money.”

“\$600 will do. May I call you Sandy?”

“Please do.”

“Here are tips for you in case your spouse is cheating: Start saving your money, get a few credit cards in your name, think of a divorce lawyer you want to hire and start looking for a job to give you income. You said you are a stay-at-home mom?”

“Yes I am. I never have worked in my life.”

“I ran data on your husband and he is worth millions.”

“My husband is a rich jerk. I know he is cheating on me. I smell her perfume on his clothes when he comes home. When can you start?”

“I can start today. My fee is \$100 an hour. It might take 40 or more hours to uncover the truth. I will trust you to pay me as soon as you can. You look like an honest woman.”

“Thank you Mr. Kilmer for helping me.”

“Call me Joe and you are welcome.”

They said their goodbyes and Joe drove over to Miami Medical Center on Broadway Street. There in the employee parking lot sat Rick White’s blue BMW with license plate ‘DR377’.

At 6 in the evening his target walked into view with a pretty nurse with blonde hair. They were holding hands. His target helped the woman into the passenger seat and kissed her as he did so. Joe videoed the whole thing.

The couple drove over to an apartment complex called ‘Baymont’ and entered unit 245. Three hours later Rick left alone and went home to his loyal wife, Sandy.

The next day was Saturday and Sandy said her unfaithful husband would leave their house for work around nine in the morning.

Joe arrived an hour earlier and was into his 3rd Dunkin Donut when the garage door opened. He followed Rick to a bookstore in a strip mall.

Normally the PI would just wait for his subject to return to his vehicle. This time Joe went into the store with his key chain hidden camera. He was happy he did.

Inside the book store was the nurse that Rick was with the night before. They kissed and held hands as they browsed the book aisles. Forty minutes later they departed in her car.

Joe ran the license plate number to the red Honda Civic. Tag GHE459 came back to a Heather Brown.

The address was apartment 245, at 3688 Silver Drive in the Baymont Apartment Complex. Joe followed the 2 lovebirds to Hyde Park. They sat on a bench and were flipping thru a newspaper in their hands.

It appeared they were looking for something. After 10 minutes they tossed the newspaper in the trash and walked away with only one page. Joe stopped and retrieved the rest of the newspaper. Pages 27 and 28 were missing.

The love birds stopped at The Oaks Apartments and went inside the rental office. A few minutes later they were escorted by a male sales agent to inspect a few units. They then returned to the sales office.

After 30 minutes the pair left and Joe did not follow. Instead he went inside the model office and talked to the same sales agent. "I was just hired at Miami Memorial Hospital and a doctor there said for me to stop here," lied Joe.

The sales agent said his name was Cory. “I just showed a few units to a doctor and his fiancée from the same hospital. They are moving in at the beginning of the month.”

Joe told the agent he would be back in the morning with his wife and left. He then bought a newspaper and found pages 27 and 28 were for apartment rentals.

On Monday morning Joe watched Rick leave for work but he did not follow. Instead he called his client and asked her to meet him at Dunkin Donuts.

An hour later over a cup of coffee and a sugar donut Joe broke the news to Sandy. “I know he is telling you he loves you and that he wants the marriage to work but it is all lies.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I followed the love birds over to the Oak Apartments rental office. After they left the building I went inside. I spoke to the agent on duty and he said your husband and his fiancée were moving in the first of the month.”

“So he does plan to divorce me!”

“Afraid so, Sandy. The video I am about to show you has them in a romantic relationship.”

Sandy cried when viewing the film. Joe felt bad about showing her the video. He told her the \$600 she already paid him was all he wanted.

Over the next nine months Sandy kept in touch with Joe. She said her cheating husband moved into the Oak Apartments with Heather.

One day, Sandy called her private investigator. She wanted to hire him again.

“Why?”

“My children are invited to their father’s wedding to Heather.”

“So?”

“I want to hire you to video the wedding so I can see it.”

“No. I will not do this for you. You need to just move on with your life.”

“Can you refer me to another private investigator then?”

“No. Please move on with your life. He has.”

Joe never found out if Sandy ever hired another Private Investigator to film the wedding.

He suspects she did.

Every time he hears church bells he thinks of Sandy and her crazy request.

- Lesson 1. Just get divorced and move on with your life.

20

BUFFING FLOORS

In the private investigative business you never know what hours to work a surveillance assignment. Do you work weekdays or weekends? Maybe mix the days up. Do you watch your claimant in the morning? The afternoon? The evening? Your guess is just as good as mine.

Surveillance is the ‘Art of Waiting’. If you wait long enough your person will be active. The problem is your insurance client does not have an unlimited budget for you to just sit and wait for activity.

Most clients will issue you a 3-day surveillance assignment and leave the days and hours you work up to you. Most investigative firms are under pressure to obtain video on every assignment or the client will hire someone else.

If you turn in a case without video and the insurance agency hires a new pi firm and that firm obtains video on your subject, guess which firm will get the next assignment?

So the rule of thumb is: For job security and repeat business from your client you have to stay on a case till you obtain video.

The client needs your video to help settle their alleged injury claim. This is why it is called ‘The Art of Waiting’.

Investigator Dennis Ward was on his 5th day of surveillance on a 3-day assignment. He was frustrated that he was still working the case. Most of the time he would have injury related video in a day or two and be home waiting for his next assignment.

This claimant was being very careful and was not exiting his residence at all. Why should he? In about 2 weeks, the claimant, Mike Green, would go to court knowing the insurance company had no video to show the jury.

If there was no video of the claimant performing normal tasks with his alleged injured right wrist, Mike's attorney told him, "You are in for a big payday".

The claimant's employer is Delta Airlines. Mike has been a janitor with them for 6 years. He was injured on the job 5 months ago when a heavy box fell on him.

His lawyer warned him to lay low, that Delta Airlines and their insurance company would be placing him under surveillance. The attorney just did not know when.

Mike did as he was instructed and stayed inside his residence. If he did depart, he always wore his medical device on his alleged injured right wrist. He never used his right hand and kept it in his pocket. He would open and close all doors with his left hand. This claimant was a great actor.

Mike spotted 3 different surveillance investigators following him over the last 4 months. He was told by his attorney that most

investigators will work from 6 am to 2 pm and drive vehicles with tinted windows.

He was also told that the investigator would use some kind of pretext to call his residence to make sure he was home.

The last strange call he received was from someone offering a free trial newspaper delivery. The call before that was from a man saying he was a car salesman and that Toyota had a sale going on.

Dennis was a hard core private investigator and never in his 12 years had he turned in an assignment without injury related video. He also never called a claimant to see if they were home. He just waited.

Dennis was known as ‘Mr. Video’ and he was proud of the title. He charged twice as much and knew his assignment was a last resort effort by some adjuster to obtain video.

On this Sunday night Dennis planned to work from 6 PM to 6 AM. He normally worked from 6 AM to 6 PM. This was a 12 hour day. He loved his job and it showed. Other investigators wanted to work for him but he said no. He always worked alone.

The claimant, Mike Green, lived in an apartment above his younger brother’s coffee shop. It was a small place located off a very busy road in Tampa, Florida.

The coffee shop has been closed for a week but was due to reopen the next day. His brother, Jose, was on vacation with his family in Disney World. Signs posted in the front window said they would reopen on Monday for breakfast.

Dennis was 8 hours into his shift when he saw lights come on inside the closed coffee shop. He wrote in his report, ‘Lights on for some reason inside the closed coffee shop at 2 AM’.

“Who is in there and what is the person doing?” thought Dennis as he exited his surveillance vehicle to investigate.

The private investigator walked up to a side window and peaked in. He was shocked to see his claimant buffing floors and using his right hand and wrist without any medical devices.

“Dumb ass”, said Dennis to himself as he videoed his claimant buffing floors for 30 minutes at 2 in the morning.

“I guess he feels safe working at this hour,” Dennis said to himself.

The claimant was wearing headphones as he buffed away. When the claimant finished buffing the floors he turned the coffee shop lights out and walked out of view. Dennis returned to his surveillance van and fell asleep.

Later that morning, Dennis walked into the coffee shop and Jose, the owner, served him his breakfast.

They got to chatting and Dennis found out that Jose had built a staircase in the back of his coffee shop that led to the apartment the claimant was living in.

After finishing his breakfast, Dennis returned to his own office and made a copy of the film for his client.

The video proved the claimant was a fraud. Delta had to pay zero. For his dedication to never giving up Dennis landed the Delta Airlines account.

If you ever visit Dennis's office, you will see hanging on his case display wall a photo of a clock stopped at 2 AM to remind him of his claimant buffing floors.

- Lesson 1. Never give up.
- Lesson 2. Mix the days and hours you work a case.

James Paul Ellison

21

THE SHOPLIFTER

Sean Patterson of Espy-Group drove from Tupelo to Jackson, Mississippi to meet his newest surveillance assistant.

Cory Morrison called his new boss on his cell phone and said, “I am sitting in a corner booth at The Denny’s Restaurant located at 685 US 80 in Pearl.”

“My GPS says I will be there in 10 minutes. Do you have the yellow notepad I told you to bring?”

“I sure do, Sir.”

“Great. Order me a stack of pancakes, please.”

“Will do, Sir.”

Cory and Sean talked for over an hour. They then left the restaurant and sat in Sean’s Toyota. The private investigator showed his new hire a few videos from his last assignments.

“I will teach you what you need to know to be a surveillance expert. Every free minute you have you will need to practice what I show you. That is the only way you will learn.”

“I have been in the surveillance business a year now and I am glad you are taking me under your wing. I want to be the best PI I can be.”

“Good to hear you are willing to learn. You just need to practice as much as you can, Cory. I am issuing you a surveillance camera, a pair of binoculars, a hidden covert key chain and 2 magnetic signs that read ‘Cell Testing’.”

“What is cell testing, Sir? My old boss never told me about it.”

“There are times we will have to sit close to a claimant’s house to see what vehicle they will leave in. To allow us to sit in one spot all day we use our cell testing signs.”

“It really works, Sir?”

“Yes it does. We explain to neighbors of the claimant that we are testing cell phone signals to see if they will reach the cell tower we are building.”

“Cool trick.”

“Yes, Cory, it is a cool trick but you have to act like you are a cell tester when you place the signs on your surveillance car. We have to make the people in the area believe we are good guys and not up to no good.”

“You mentioned this morning you have a new assignment we will be starting today?”

“Yes. Follow me to the claimant’s neighborhood. Once we get a block away I will pull over. I want you to hop in my car and we will do a drive-by.”

Cory did as instructed and followed his boss to Windance Country Club located a few miles north of Jackson. The investigators

drove by Billy Dean's 2 story residence and observed the claimant's black in color Ford Mustang in the driveway.

Sean then drove his new employee back to the man's car and said, "There is a vacant house for sale as soon as you enter the community. I want you to sit there with your cell testing signs on and wait for that Mustang to drive by. Here is a walkie-talkie to contact me on."

"What is the man's license plate number?"

"I was just about to give you a folder with all the information you will need. The tag is 'Casino 3' and he is out on worker's compensation from The Gold Strike Casino in Tunica. He is renting the house he is currently in from his father. His alleged injury is his right wrist."

"So what happens next, Sir?"

"Let me show you how the 2 cameras work and you will call me on the walkie if he departs. If you can't reach me on the walkie then call me on my cell. We will follow him, shoot as much video as we can and write a report."

"Sounds simple enough. And for this I will earn \$15 an hour?"

"Yes. Now, Cory, I have to take a crap and get some gas so I am leaving you for a while. Stay alert and look for his car departing the area. I will be back in about 20 minutes."

The new hire watched his boss drive away. He wrote the tag of the claimant down on his note pad and started reading the file his boss gave him.

Dean was 33 years old, married, and had 2 young boys. Before getting hurt he was a blackjack dealer working the noon to eight shift. Cory was looking at the claimant's medical records when the mustang drove by him.

The new investigator followed him to Walmart Super Center store. He grabbed his hidden camera key chain and followed the target inside. Cory tried to call Sean on his cell but had no reception. He was on his own.

Dean went to the men's shirt section of the store and tried on a few shirts. He bought one shirt and returned to his mustang. Cory sat a dozen or so cars away and waited for the man to leave.

Instead, the claimant took off some extra shirts from under his own clothing and exited his vehicle empty handed. He returned to the Walmart store and went to the shirt section again.

He went into the changing room with more shirts, bought one and returned to his mustang.

Cory was in the men's section as well and obtained good close-up video of the claimant selecting shirts. "Sean will be proud of me for sure," Cory said to himself.

Dean sat in his car removing shirts from under his own clothing again. He then returned inside the store and returned to the shirt section one more time.

This time Cory exited the store early and moved his own vehicle with dark-tinted windows next to the claimant's mustang and waited.

About 10 minutes later the target returned to his vehicle empty handed. Cory videoed the man removing his shirt and 3 other shirts he had on underneath. Cory watched the man remove the price tags as he did so.

The private investigator now knew what his claimant was up to. He was shoplifting new shirts by hiding them under his own clothing. He bought a shirt or 2 to make it look like he was a paying customer.

Cory tried calling Sean again but no answer. He left him a message. “Sean, I am at Walmart Super Center off I-55 at exit 47. The claimant is shoplifting shirts. Please hurry over here as fast as you can. I am parked by the north door.”

The claimant departed in his vehicle and Cory had no choice but to follow. When they waited at the red light to turn north onto I-55 he had a plan on what to do next.

Cory called the Highway Patrol. He told them he was a store detective following a shoplifter and he needed a trooper to pull the crook over. They took his information down and said they would send a unit north on I-55 pass exit 47.

Cory never spoke to Sean. A state trooper did pull over his shoplifter.

Cory had called Walmart earlier and advised them of the theft. He told them to send a security officer to mile marker 54 off I-55 to identify their stolen merchandise.

Cory told the trooper that he was a private investigator and that Walmart's security was on the way. Ten minutes later Cory videoed the claimant being arrested and obtained the names of the trooper and the security guard.

Cory called Sean one more time but for some reason there was no reception. He drove back to Windance and sitting there in the driveway of the vacant home was Sean.

“Where the hell have you been? Sleeping somewhere?”

“No, Sir. I was catching our claimant shoplifting.”

- Lesson 1. Think fast on your feet.
- Lesson 2. Sit close to see what the subject is doing.
- Lesson 3. Keep trying to reach your boss by cell phone.

22

THE DEAD MAN

Claimants hire a lawyer when they have an injury claim. Most lawyers look for clients involved in auto accidents or from slip and falls.

Once they have a new client the game begins between the plaintiff lawyer and the defense lawyer hired by the insurance company to defend them.

To find clients, most plaintiff lawyers advertise on billboards seen along the highway. Some will place ad signs on top of taxis, or on sides of buses. Most even have advertisements on television.

The lawyers have catchy phone numbers or sayings that are easy to remember. They offer free consultation as well. The numbers the lawyers use are simple ones like 888-8888 or 999-9999. They use slogans like; ‘One call does it all’ or 1-800-Big Bucks’.

After signing up a new client the plaintiff attorney will then send the person to a medical doctor who will examine them from head to toe.

The doctor is normally the lawyer’s golfing buddy and he will run up the treatment cost by doing a lot of needless medical tests.

It looks better in court if a jury hears that the injured party has \$25,000 in medical bills instead of \$4,000. It makes the claimant seemed injured.

Most cases do not make it to trial. Both sides rather settle and move on. If a case goes all the way to trial the plaintiff attorney will charge his client a 40% fee but only if he or she wins.

If they settle before trial with an insurance company or a defense attorney the plaintiff lawyer will charge just 33%. Why work up a case and go to trial with the risk of losing just for 7% more in fees? The risk is too great, so they settle.

Private Investigator Tony Rodgers was hired by Allstate Insurance Company to place a claimant under surveillance in Miami, FL.

The plaintiff's lawyer, Doug Lamar, demanded \$200,000 for his client, Steve Young, because of an alleged spinal injury.

Steve was waiting at a red light when an old man rear-ended him at 25 miles an hour. He rode in an ambulance to the hospital and spent 3 days in intensive care.

The adjuster, Susan Coen, hired Tony to place Mr. Young under surveillance for 3 days. She gave her PI all the information he needed over the telephone.

Tony arrived near the claimant's townhouse on Cold Creek Drive and waited for his target to depart in his brown Ford truck which was parked in the driveway.

On day 1, Tony worked from 7 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon but there was no activity. On day 2 he started later in the day and worked till 9 at night. The claimant again was not observed.

On day 3 the investigator dressed up like a package delivery driver and used an old brown van with magnetic signs that read 'Ace Delivery'.

He knocked on a few of the claimant's neighbors doors and found out that Steve was on vacation in Key West. They did not know where in Key West he was staying at.

Tony returned to his office and ran a background check on Mr. Steve Young. One of his old addresses was listed in Key West. So Tony hopped into his Toyota and drove the 165 miles to check the location out.

The claimant's 2nd known vehicle, a Ford truck, was parked in the driveway. Tony parked down the street and waited.

No sign of his target that first day, so the investigator checked into a low budget hotel for the night. Tony did a few spot checks in the late evening and again in the early morning hours but no lights were on inside the residence.

The next morning the PI arrived at 7 am and waited down the street for activity. At 4 pm with no movement at all he decided to knock on a few neighbors doors again.

He found out to his surprise that his claimant had died from a drug overdose 9 days before. He went to the Key West Police Department and obtained the death report.

He sat in the parking lot of his hotel and read where Steve Young was found in the early morning hours by a volley ball net with a needle in his arm. He died of a heroin overdose.

Tony went to his hotel room and wrote up his report. The next morning after breakfast he called his client, Susan Coen, at Allstate Insurance with the news.

“What date did you say he died?”

Tony said, “August 5th at 3:36 AM.”

“You sure of the date, Tony?”

“Positive. Why, Susan?”

I received a letter in the mail dated August 10th from his lawyer saying they were willing to settle for a reduce demand of \$50,000.” The lawyer said he talked to his client on the 7th.

“But he died on the 5th....”

“Exactly. Now that he is dead I do not have to pay on the claim. I can’t believe his lawyer makes a demand knowing his client is dead.”

“So what are you going to do now, Susan?”

“Simple. I will play along with the scumbag lawyer and set up a deposition of his claimant and see what the attorney does next.”

Susan called Attorney Lamar and said she was willing to settle but wanted to take the deposition of his client first. He never called back and the case went away.

The next morning, Tony walked into his client’s office with his report and the death certificate of Steve Young.

Susan was happy to see him. “I will make a copy of the death certificate and frame it. I will then place it on my fraud wall with the other fraud cases.”

Tony just laughed when she said it.

Susan turned to her best private investigator and said, “I have another case for you.”

“Great. Where is the job?”

“Orlando.”

“I like that city. I always find the time to visit Disney World.”

“Maybe this claimant is dead as well,” said Susan as she handed Tony his next case.

- Lesson 1. Always locate your claimant.
- Lesson 2. Some lawyers will try to collect no matter what, even on a dead client.

James Paul Ellison

23

THE BARTENDER

Some claimants get bored sitting around their residence while waiting for their lawyer to settle their alleged injury claim.

They are told to lay low and do nothing but some claimants do not listen. They go out and work a small side job.

Their lawyers work hard to get their case ready for court or for settlement thinking their client is listening to them about staying home and doing nothing.

If they follow their lawyer's instructions they can walk away with many thousands of dollars. Why claimants go out and do something stupid I do not know.

Some of them even go out and work the night before their trial. I guess they think no one is watching them. Chuck Jones was one of those claimants.

He had a legit injury that was documented by the police and the hospital. He was a victim of a robbery. Chuck Jones was shot in the right shoulder when the bar he worked at was robbed by 3 men.

Mr. Jones sued his employer, 'The Midnight Bar', claiming he could not return to work as a bartender. Chuck was only 27 years old and earning \$600 a week before he was injured.

The defense attorney representing the bar was Doug Turner. He turned to his favorite private investigator and said, “James, we need as much video as you can obtain on this claimant using his alleged injured right arm and shoulder.”

“What kind of budget do I have on this one, Sir?”

“The starting budget is \$10,000.”

“Must be a big case then, Doug?”

“Yes it is. He claims he can never work again. So do the math: No income for one year is \$32,000, times it by 38 more years he could work and you are looking at a wage loss claim of \$1,200,000.”

“Wow! Really that much, Doug?”

“Yes and we aren’t even figuring in his pain and suffering. That amount is just wage loss alone. Mr. Jones has a very sharp attorney so I know he has told his client to lay low and do nothing.”

“Most claimants do not listen to their lawyer.”

“That is what I am counting on, James. I need Chuck moving that right arm and shoulder to show the jury that he is capable of working. This will reduce the amount he may receive by at least 50%.”

“What if I find Chuck working somewhere?”

“Don’t count on it, James. We only have 3 weeks till trial. If I was him I would go into hiding till my trial date. I bet his attorney has told him to do just that.”

“I will start in the morning and keep you posted on what I find out.”

“Thanks, James, and good luck.”

The investigator drove back to his office located on the 3rd floor of the Merrick Building in downtown Jacksonville, Florida. James ran a background check on Chuck Jones.

The data showed that the claimant lived in an apartment complex called 'Blue Waters' in unit 4-C on the ground floor. The next morning at 6 James drove over there. Chuck's Dodge van was parked in front of his unit.

The data showed he also owned a 2nd vehicle: A Toyota Celica which was not located in the huge apartment complex.

James parked his surveillance van down the street and waited. At 5 pm with no sign of movement the investigator left for the day.

James started his 2nd day of his assignment at noon. At 6 in the evening with no movement coming from unit 4-C he knocked on the claimant's neighbors doors.

James lied and said he was an Army buddy out on leave and asked if anyone had seen Chuck around. Most said they did not know him but an older man in unit 2-C did.

The man said that Chuck was staying with his rich girlfriend on her yacht in the Bahamas. The boat's name was 'The Garden'. James thanked the old man and left the area.

The investigator returned to his office and started making calls to all the marinas in the Bahamas. After about 20 calls he got lucky.

He contacted The Atlantis Yacht Club and asked if his friend's yacht, 'The Garden' was docked there. "Yes", came the reply from a male employee.

He confirmed it was at the end of dock number 2. James thanked the man and hung up. He then booked the next flight out on Copa Airlines. He paid \$700 for the 10 am flight.

Once the investigator arrived in Nassau he rode in a taxi to the luxury resort of Atlantis. James took a leisure stroll on the docks and located the boat slip assigned for the yacht named 'The Garden'. It was not there.

A skipper on the next yacht over confirmed they would return at 3 pm after a day of sailing.

The man said the marina could service yachts as big as 240 feet. He loved the place because he had direct access from Nassau Harbor.

James went inside the resort and booked a 2-night stay. He rented a \$300 a night Grand Suite room because it overlooked dock number 2. The hotel clerk said if he had a yacht he could rent a slip at \$7.00 a foot per day.

From his room balcony on the 14th floor James had a clear view of dock number 2. He set up a tripod and placed his video camera with telephoto lens on it. He then removed a pair of binoculars from his gym bag and waited.

At 3:20 in the afternoon the yacht he was looking for pulled into the harbor. On deck was his claimant. This was confirmed from a Facebook page the man posted a few weeks prior.

James obtained about 20 minutes of useful video of the claimant. Chuck and his pretty girlfriend were walking around the yacht with drinks in their hands.

“How the hell did he meet her,” thought James as he watched them exit the yacht and head his way. He went downstairs and located them at a pool bar with another couple.

James went out to the girlfriend’s yacht and found a crew member that would talk to him. The man confirmed the yacht was 220 feet long, that the water depth at low tide was 12 feet and that the marina had 63 mega yacht slips.

James was about to walk away when the man asked, “Are you coming to our party tonight?”

“Do I need an invitation?”

“No. Each night a different yacht throws a party for fellow yacht owners and their guests. Hotel Atlantis caters the whole thing.”

“What time does your party start?”

“At 8.”

“Yes. I plan to attend.”

“Between us, do you need a deck hand?” asked the worker.

“Tell you what, write down your name and email address and we will talk in the next few days. What is your name?”

“Billy Ray. I am from Miami.”

“How long have you been employed on ‘The Garden’?”

“A regular deck hand became sick so I was called in at the last minute. We will stay here till the 29th, then we will sail back to Miami.”

“Make sure you email me. My name is James Paul and you can reach me at the email address on my card.”

“I will do that, Sir. See you tonight.”

The claimant had it made. All he had to do was stay on this 220 foot beautiful yacht with his hot-looking girlfriend and just walk into court on the 30th. So Doug was right. He was hiding out on this yacht till his trial.

The investigator videoed all the yacht owners boarding ‘The Garden’ wearing casual shorts, tank tops and sandals.

James changed into the same type of attire and made his way to the huge party. In his pocket, James carried a key chain hidden camera. He could record an hour’s worth of video before the battery died.

Once on board the luxury yacht James was given a drink of his choice. He also started eating the chicken wings offered to him.

The claimant wore a red shirt which stood out among the lighter colors in the crowd. The PI found out that the girlfriend’s dad was the owner of the yacht. He owned a stock brokerage business. The girlfriend was named Cindy Porter. She was only 22 years old and had no job.

James sipped on his glass of red wine and watched his claimant walking around the yacht with a drink in his hand.

At about 10 pm James could not believe his luck. The claimant, now drunk, stepped behind the bar and started making drinks for all 40 guests still on board the yacht.

The investigator pulled out his key chain camera and documented this activity.

The claimant was talking loudly as he mixed the drinks. “I was a bartender in Miami till I got shot in my right shoulder.”

Someone in the crowd asked, “Did they catch the person that shot you?”

“Not yet.”

James videoed his claimant mixing drinks, shaking drink containers high up in the air with his alleged right shoulder injury and serving his guests till his hidden video camera battery died.

James then returned to his high priced suite and filmed people coming and going from the yacht for the rest of the evening.

The next day James took the day off and just laid on the sandy white beaches and swam in the clear blue water. He had a relaxing time. He then returned to his room, wrote his report and reviewed the video.

Two days later James walked into the office of his client and showed them his video. They were very happy with the results.

They paid his large invoice and later won their case against the claimant. James’s video proved the claimant could work. The jury only rewarded Chuck \$150,000 for being shot.

Why did the claimant walk behind the bar on the yacht and start working as a bartender? Who knows! But it was a million-dollar mistake to do so.

- Lesson 1. Hide till trial and do not work.

24

THE TRIP TO BOWLING GREEN

“**A**lways have a full tank of gas if you do a pre-surveillance check on your next claimant is what my old boss used to tell me,” said the PI to his son.

Dennis, the investigator, was trying to teach his son, Manny, the ‘Art of Surveillance’. He wanted to retire to a life of fishing but needed a steady income from his son taking over the business to do so.

Dennis was hoping his son was his meal ticket. He would pay his helper \$30 an hour but charge clients \$80 an hour. If Manny worked out then Dennis knew he would have \$1,500 a week in income. He figured: \$50 an hour profit, times 30 hours a week of work.

Plenty of money to travel around the state of Mississippi and try out all the fishing locations he discovered in the 30 years of traveling the state while conducting surveillances.

Manny was 22 years old and fresh out of college. His degree was in Business and he wanted his own company.

His dad turned to his only son and said, “Once you are trained to operate the business you can redesign the website and anything else you think you will need to do to attract new clients.”

“Thanks, Dad. Your logo of a man standing by an old car is not landing us more business. I think I will need to attend conventions and go on the road to attract new clients.”

“See my loyal clients too, Son.”

“To me they are your fishing buddies, not clients.”

“But they are loyal fishing buddies. They all said they plan to work another 5 years and would continue to use you as long as you obtained video.”

“Dad, I have been riding with you for 2 months now. You keep telling me I can’t go home without video of my claimant, so I won’t. I will ‘stick and stay’ like you do.”

“Good to hear. My pension from this business depends on you keeping my current clients and landing new ones.”

“This case is from a new client, right?”

“Yes it is. State Farm opened a 3rd office recently. One day after working a case and before going fishing I stopped in. Their 1st office had told them to use me. This is their first case using us. Let’s kick butt.”

Manny pulled out the assignment sheet. He read where the claimant was a young lady, Virginia Farmer, age 22, and lived at home with her divorce father.

“What is her injury?” asked Dennis.

“Her right leg and lower back from being in a car accident.”

“Remember, Son, before you go on a case to go over your check-list, which is?”

“Full tank of gas, carry money and credit cards, all camera batteries fully charged, my GPS already programmed, run a data check on the person and get plenty of sleep the night before.”

“I see I am teaching you well.”

“Dad, I am a fast learner.”

They both laughed and drove to their next claimant’s address. The location was a small farm about 5 miles outside Tupelo. The data showed they owned 2 vehicles.

“Which car do you think she will leave in, Son?”

“Her red Mustang.”

“I think she will be a passenger in her father’s old white Chevy truck.”

“Why do you think that, Dad?”

“Most old men, like your father, love to drive.”

The 2 investigators drove by the farm and saw movement in the yard. Manny pulled out his binoculars and took a look.

“The claimant and her father are putting luggage into the back of the old truck. Looks like they are taking a trip.”

“We can’t stop here in the middle of the road to film this activity. They may look over and see us. We will find a hiding spot and watch them leave.”

“Good idea, Dad.”

Twenty minutes later the father and son surveillance team watched from far away as their claimant departed in the old truck as the passenger.

They followed them to a gas station. The young woman went inside while her father pumped gas.

“Son, go inside and chat her up. Try to find out where they are traveling to. I will stay here and film the old man filling up.”

Manny was a good looking young man with a nice smile. He walked up to Virginia at the check-out counter with a soda in his hand. “That sure is an old truck you have there.”

The pretty woman looked up to see a friendly looking face talking to her. “Yes. My father has had it for many years.”

“Do you live around here?”

“Not anymore. We are on a one way trip to Bowling Green, Kentucky.”

“How far away is that?”

“About a 5-hour drive.”

“Why are you moving there if you don’t mind me asking?”

“My father met a lady on the internet and wants to get to know her better. Nice talking to you. I have to go.”

Manny waited for them to depart the gas station before running back to his father’s vehicle. “They are on their way to Bowling Green, Kentucky. That is 5 hours from here, Dad.”

“I always wanted to see that state too, Son. I bet they have great fishing spots.”

“Virginia told me they are moving there for good because her father met a lady on the internet.”

“Strange reason to just pack-up and go, Son.”

“You have to follow your heart, Dad.”

Forty miles down the road the private investigators had a flat tire on the right front of their vehicle. “Shoot, not now,” said Dennis as he pulled off to the side of the road.

“There they go,” said Manny as he watched Virginia disappear. He opened the trunk of his dad’s Toyota and the spare tire was almost flat.

“You always tell me to have everything in order when I hit the road. Right, Dad?”

“Yes I do.”

“Well your spare tire is almost flat.”

“Shoot.”

Ten minutes later they were back on the road. They sped up on the highway but never did find the claimant’s old truck.

“That is the end of this case for now, Son. Tomorrow I will run some new data. When a new address pops up we will have the client send us to Bowling Green.”

The two disappointed investigators drove back to Tupelo and had lunch at a local restaurant. They then returned to the same gas station the claimant had been at earlier. Dennis wanted to buy some fishing bate.

As they pulled up to the gas station there was the claimant’s father pumping gas. “Go inside and chat her up again.”

Manny opened the door to the store just as Virginia was exiting with 2 bottles of water.

“Hi. We meet again. Thought you were on your way to Bowman Green, Kentucky?”

“It’s called Bowling Green, Kentucky. My dad forgot his heart medication. We are going there now.”

Manny returned to his dad. “The old man forgot his heart medication and went back to the house to get it.”

“Lucky for us he did, Son. Now let us enjoy the trip to Bowling Green.”

“I hope we do not have another flat, Dad.”

“That would suck for sure Son. I am glad he forgot his medication. Now we can follow them to their new location, get paid for doing so and then go fishing.”

- Lesson 1. Make sure your spare tire has air.
- Lesson 2. Hang around the area, the claimant might return for some reason.
- Lesson 3. Bring your fishing pole.

25

THE RIGHT WRIST INJURY

The three-car accident was not a violent one. No parties had to be transported to the local hospital in an ambulance except Paul Salver. The young car wash attendant complained of a hurt right wrist.

At the hospital, the x-ray of his wrist showed it was not broken, only badly sprained. Paul wasted no time in retaining an attorney. He found this lawyer from a billboard ad on Highway forty-nine in Gulfport, Mississippi. ‘One call does it all’, said the ad.

Paul contacted the lawyer, a Brandon Fairley, and made an appointment to see him. Paul is what you call a professional con man. He knows how the insurance companies operate.

If you ride in an ambulance, the value of your case goes up. If you constantly complain to everyone you meet about your wrist hurting, and bring those people into court, they will state that Paul always was in pain with his right wrist.

At Paul’s appointment, Attorney Fairley made Paul sign a contract to confirm he understood the lawyer’s legal fees. There was no fee if the attorney lost, but the attorney collects thirty-three percent before trial and forty percent if the case went to trial.

The attorney said, “Paul, at some point the insurance company or the insurance defense lawyer against us will place you under surveillance. They want to obtain video of you using the right wrist. If they do, then expect no money. It will never go to court and the insurance company will not settle either.”

Paul shakes his head up and down like he understands. This is his fifth case in a year. The most he collected was seventy-five thousand dollars for an alleged bad back from a worker’s compensation case.

His lawyer on that one received thirty-three percent, plus two thousand in expenses. Paul netted a cool fifty-thousand dollars. The insurance company did not place Paul under surveillance. The adjuster is trained to save their employer the extra expense of hiring a private investigator.

Paul also knows to hide-out somewhere and never go to his own residence. If the private investigator cannot find you, he cannot video you either.

Sometimes the adjuster calls and informs the private investigator of the claimant’s next medical appointment at a doctor’s office. The private investigator then follows the claimant to where he is residing and starts obtaining video.

Knowing this, Paul shows up way early and sees the doctor. So, when the private investigator shows up for the scheduled appointment, he obtains no video of the claimant and still does not know where the claimant resides.

Private Investigator JP is attending an insurance fraud seminar at the Beau Rivage Casino Hotel. The speaker is talking about billions in losses from fraud. The next hour is a break for the buffet lunch the seminar is paying for.

JP's phone is on vibrate. The phone starts to shake. It is his PI firm, 'Video Results' that is texting him. JP reads the text. 'Call the office right away, a surveillance assignment just came in. JP leaves the seminar that is going on.

In the hallway, JP contacts his office.

"Video Results, Peggy speaking."

"Good morning, Peggy, this is JP. The company paged me about a new assignment."

"Morning to you, too JP. I will connect you to Maggie."

"This is Maggie."

"Good morning to you, Maggie. This is JP checking in on a new assignment that just came in."

"JP, this is a rush case."

JP laughs and says, "all of Video Results cases are a rush according to the boss. He says an assignment can be cancelled at any time by the client. If the assignment is cancelled, we all lose money.

"Are you working a case right now?"

"No. The boss sent me to the fraud seminar at the Beau Rivage Casino Hotel."

"Lucky you. I bet you are gambling during the seminar's breaks."

“I was going to play after I ate the free buffet. Lunch is on now. So, what do you have for me?”

“An accident case. A three-day surveillance on a young man from Biloxi. He claims an alleged right wrist injury. Our insurance doctor says the man is fine.”

JP laughs at Maggie’s comment and says, “The doctors all say the same thing.”

“We need video of his activities. There is a note from the boss that warns this man is a professional claimant. He has had five claims this year alone. He won money in each claim, too. So, be careful out there when you arrive on scene.”

“What is the man’s name and address?”

“His name is Paul Salver, and he lives at the “Skyway Apartments, unit forty-one, located at 2451 Jackson Avenue in Biloxi.”

“Do we have a vehicle for him, Maggie?”

“Data shows a red, 2008 Honda Civic with Mississippi license plate, PS222.”

“What is his race and other descriptions?”

Maggie says, “He is a white male, six feet-two. You can contact Police Officer John Corn and ask him for more of a description.”

JP says, “You should never contact anyone. They will just inform the claimant, maybe they know each other. Always keep the element of surprise.”

“Oh, I understand now. There is so much to learn in this business.”

JP says, “Tell the boss I will start this afternoon. I must go. The seminar is serving lunch and I am starved.”

Later that afternoon JP drives by the claimant’s residence. There are no vehicles in the carport. JP speaks with neighbors and finds out that Paul Salver owns the property but does not live there. He still owns and drives the Green in color Honda Civic.

JP has the office run new data and to focus this time on known relatives. Thirty-minutes later Video Results calls and provides JP with six addresses. JP ends the case for the day.

At midnight, JP starts checking the six addresses for Paul Salver’s known vehicle. On the fifth address, JP gets lucky. The claimant’s vehicle is parked in the rear of a trailer in a rural area, just nine miles outside Gulfport. JP uses his night vision binoculars and spots a small front section of Paul Salver’s vehicle.

The next morning, JP asks the company for a second investigator. They assign him a female; her name is Priscilla. They provide JP with her cell phone number.

JP calls Priscilla and they agree to meet at five am at Dunkin Donuts, located on Highway 49 in Gulfport. Priscilla has worked with JP on many cases. They like working together as a team.

JP walks into Dunkin Donuts at five am. Priscilla is already waiting with a donut and a hot cup of coffee for him. JP breaks down the assignment instructions. “The claimant alleges a right wrist injury.

The medical doctor for the insurance company claims he is faking his injury. We need to obtain video.”

Priscilla laughs and says, “Batman and Superwoman always get their claimant.”

JP and Priscilla stay way back and wait for Paul Salver to drive by. JP is at a gas station a few blocks South and Priscilla found a homeowner that allowed her to sit in his driveway just four houses away. JP says, “Remember, surveillance is the art of waiting. We wait long enough, and he will come out.”

JP was right. At one pm, Paul and a girl drove by in Paul’s green Honda. Paul’s the driver. He drove Priscilla’s way and she obtains video of the claimant driving.

The private investigators followed the claimant all day. He was highly active. He wore no medical device on his right wrist. Paul played nine holes of golf, rode a horse, and jumped up and down on a trampoline.

The investigators obtained over two hours’ worth of closeup video.

The next morning the claimant went to visit his lawyer. He wore a medical device on the right wrist. Back in his car at a traffic light, Priscilla obtained video of the claimant tossing his wrist splint into the back seat.

The claimant stopped at a coffee shop and went inside. Priscilla followed the claimant in with her key chain covert camera and sat right across from his table.

The claimant was soon visited by a blond middle-aged woman. Priscilla overheard. The claimant discussing his insurance claim. He told the woman sitting across from him, “My lawyer is demanding thirty thousand dollars. If they say no, he will file a lawsuit.”

When the couple exited the coffee shop, JP videoed them getting into two separate vehicles. JP wrote down the license plate of the woman’s red in color Jeep. He ran the license plate. It belonged to Virginia Salver. She was Paul’s Aunt. Paul made only one stop, at a gas station to pump gas. JP videoed the claimant up close pumping gas with his right wrist. He did not wear any medical devices. The claimant drove home and parked his vehicle behind the trailer. He remained there the rest of the day.

On day three the next morning, the claimant’s vehicle was parked behind the trailer. The claimant did not depart the whole day. JP and Priscila used their free time to write their report for the office.

The office and the client were incredibly happy with the results of the field agents. They quickly paid the three-thousand-dollar invoice too.

The boos gave a two-hundred-dollar bonus to each of the investigators and said, “You two always make Video Results Surveillance Agency look good.”

Once back in their vehicles, JP calls Superwoman and says, “Can I treat you to lunch?”

Priscilla replies, “Thanks, but no thanks. I am on a diet. I need to lose thirty pounds.”

James Paul Ellison

26

ALWAYS HOME

Sally Wiggins, age thirty-five, was out on workers compensation for two-months. She claimed to have carpal tunnel in both wrists from typing all day as a secretary for her employer, a busy law firm.

State Farm Insurance adjuster, Barbara Calvert, calls Miami Investigations and demands they retain her favorite private investigator, Jack Brown, to place the claimant under surveillance for 3-days. Barbara provides all the information Jack will need to do his job.

Jack sees from Google Maps that Sally Wiggins lives in an upscale neighborhood called West Side. Jack runs data on the woman from his house office. The data shows that Sally Wiggins has resided in West Side for eleven years. That means the woman knows every neighbor and every vehicle in her neighborhood. Jack is afraid he will stand-out just by sitting there all day waiting for the claimant to be active.

Sally is married to a schoolteacher, named Carl. He departs every morning at seven am in the family's SUV. A second vehicle, a brown in color Kia sits in the open garage. Before entering West Side,

Jack places cell testing signs on his vehicle. The signs allow him to sit all day without being disturbed.

The private investigator made cell testing flyers to hand out to anyone that approached him sitting in his Volvo with tinted windows. Neighbors walking their dogs would stop and stare at the strange vehicle just sitting there in their neighborhood. Several Crime Watch signs are posted on their streets.

Jack would always exit his vehicle and approach the neighbor if their dog would allow him to get close. Jack would say in a friendly tone, "I am cell testing in your neighborhood today. Our company is building a cell phone tower in the area. Once constructed it will allow better cell phone reception."

An 800 number is on the flyer. If anyone called the toll-free number, Jack's wife, Joan, a stay-at-home mother would answer and say, "Ace Cell Testing, how can I help you? If anyone were worried about a strange car on their street Joan would reply, "If you are worried, please contact your local police department." Almost no one did contact the police.

Jack listened to audio books while sitting in his Volvo. Jack would depart the neighborhood during his twelve-hour surveillance of a claimant only if he had to go to the restroom or to buy something to eat.

Jack always tried to find a place to park in the shade. This time he was lucky. A family of five with only one vehicle allowed him to

sit in their two-car carport. Jack's location was just three houses down from his claimant. If the claimant departed, he would know it.

Jack saw no movement from the claimant. He knew she was home because he saw her briefly at the front door in her robe when the husband departed. At five pm the husband arrived back home. He checked the mailbox and went inside his residence.

Jack decided to start the surveillance again after the weekend. Jack wanted the weekend off to lay on the beach. Miami has clean sandy beaches and pretty girls in skimpy bikinis walking along the shoreline. Jack was just twenty-five years old and single. Jack is fit. He works out at the gym three-days a week.

Monday morning Jack was back on his surveillance on Sally Wiggins. Today would be an even longer day. Jack wanted to know what the husband and the claimant did after the husband returned from work.

Just like clockwork the husband departs in his SUV at seven-am. The claimant is at the front door in her white robe watching her husband of nine years backout of the driveway.

The couple have no dogs to walk or young children to walk in the neighborhood. The couple had no visitors either. Jack wondered what Sally all day did to occupy her time. Maybe she was a marketer for a company selling some product. She had to do be doing something Jack thought as he sipped his cold coke.

Jack's boss calls and wants a job status for their new client. Jack laughs and replies, this claimant stays home all day and night. I

have maybe thirty-seconds of her standing in her white robe at her front door watching her husband back out of the driveway.”

The boss says, “stay on her. We need video.”

Jack replies, “will do, sir.”

Jack is reading a magazine when the claimant’s husband arrives home in the SUV. He parks in the driveway this time and enters his residence. The residence is a single-story brick house situated on a long quiet street.

Jack puts his magazine down and picks up his video camera. He is ready for action.

The husband exits thirty-minutes later alone and departs in the SUV. He returns twenty-minutes later carrying a large Kentucky Fried Chicken box and another bag and enters his home. Jack films out on a street sign and ends his long day.

On the drive home, Jack thinks about what his boss always tells his investigators, “Surveillance is the art of waiting. Wait long enough and your claimant will be active.” Jack turns his radio on to a country station to relax.

Jack oversleeps and arrives at Sally Wiggins residence at eight am. Her brown in color Kia is not in the open garage. Jack is so mad at himself. He now drives the few miles into town to start looking for her. Miami is so big. It is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Jack is twenty-minutes into his search when he decides to stop for a Dunkin Donut and a hot cup of coffee. While waiting in the long

line at the drive-up, Jack looks around. He cannot believe his luck; he spots a brown in color Kia across the street at a strip mall.

Jack exits the long line and drives over to the strip mall. Jack checks the license plate number; it is the same. Jack exits his vehicle and starts checking the six stores in the strip mall. He enters an Office Max store and starts searching the aisles. He spots Sally Wiggins pushing a cart down aisle three.

Jack turns on his hidden key chain camera and starts videoing his claimant. She is wearing medical devices on both wrists. Sally stops a store employee and says, "I am writing a novel at home and I am looking for software to help me edit it."

The young female employee replies, "What is your book's name and what is the book about?"

Sally says, "It is called Deception. The book is about a woman that files an insurance claim and wins. She was hurt by boxes falling on her at work."

The employee asks, "Is the novel finished?"

Sally says, "I still have a few more chapters to write, then I have to edit it."

The employee replies, "Follow me. I will show you what we have in editing. Jack makes a note of the employee's name tag, Sandra, as he walks by. Jack does not follow the claimant anymore. He returns to his vehicle and waits for Sally Wiggins, the author, to return to her vehicle.

Ten minutes later, Jack obtains video of Sally with a small bag with Home Depot on it. She exits the parking lot and drives straight home. Jack gets brief video of the claimant in the garage area.

Jack makes a phone call to a fellow private investigator in New York City.

“Trust Investigations, Johanna speaking.”

“Hello, Johana, this is Jack Brown.”

“Well, hello, stranger. Are you married yet?”

“Nope, but I am still looking for a beauty.”

Johanna laughs and says, “I guess you want to speak with my husband?”

“I sure do.”

Johanna shouts out loud, “Billy it is for you. It is Jack down in Miami.”

Billy picks up the phone and says, “Hi, Jack, what have you been up to?”

Jack says, “Just working surveillances.”

Billy laughs and says, “I am an office man. I hate doing surveillances. They are so boring for me.”

“Bill, I need your help. I have a female claimant named Sally Wiggins. She filed for workers comp claiming she has carpal tunnel on both wrist from typing too much for her employer. I just discovered today that she is home writing a novel called Deception”.

Bill asks, “So, how do I fit in on all this?”

Jack laughs and says, “I need you to contact her as a publishing company and have her mail you her manuscript, called Deception. When it arrives just mail it to me.”

“How did I get her phone number and how did I find out about her manuscript?”

“Tell her you do not know, but you receive many tips daily.”

“When do you want me to contact her?”

“Call her in a few days, Use Johana if you want, female to female may work better.”

Bill replies, I will do it for you on one condition, you come visit your older brother more often.”

“I will come this November for your birthday.”

Billy says, “Bring a pretty girl with you, too.”

Jack says, “I will try, call me after you speak to Sally Wiggins.”

“Ok.”

Both brothers say their goodbyes. Jack drives to his place for a long nap.

At five pm Jack drives over to Sally Wiggins residence and films both cars in the open garage. He then departs the area.

A few days later Johana calls.

“Morning Jack. I called your claimant, a Sally Wiggins, and she is mailing me her manuscript today. I have the post office tracking number.”

Jack says, “Fantastic. Invoice me two hundred for your troubles.”

“I will do that. I will call you back when I receive the manuscript.”

Both Jack and Johanna talk a few more minutes before saying goodbye.

Jack was sitting in his office doing paperwork when Johanna calls.

“I just received the manuscript. It is a good story. I am mailing it to you now, priority mail. I will call you back with the tracking number.”

Jack replies, “I cannot wait to get my hands on that manuscript. Just think, I was sitting there on surveillance for many hours, and she never came out. Why? Because she was busy writing her award-winning manuscript. She has been writing while receiving income from her employer for her alleged wrist injuries. That is fraud my friend.”

Johanna and Jack talk a few minutes more before saying goodbye.

Jack calls his employer.

“Morning, Barbara. I have an update for you on the Sally Wiggins case.”

“I hope it is good news.”

“It is. I sat out front of her residence for three days. She finally departed on day three. She went alone to the Office Depot Store.”

“Was my claimant wearing any medical devices on her wrists?”

“Yes. Sally spoke to a clerk at the store and asked for editing software as she was writing a novel. That means she has been home using her wrist to type away on your dime. I guess she wanted to write a novel and not go to work at the law firm all day.”

Barbara asks, “Do you have proof she is writing a novel?”

I have two things; I have the Office Depot clerk she spoke with and in a few days, I will have her manuscript. I located a publisher in New York she mailed the manuscript too.”

Barbara screams, “Fantastic news, Jack. Bring me the manuscript when you receive it, please.”

“Will do.”

Barbara hangs up her phone after saying goodbye.

Three days later, Jack checks his mailbox at the Post Office. There is a package from his siter-in-law waiting for him. Jack returns to his car and opens the package. There in front of him is what he has been waiting for. ‘Deception by Sally Wiggins’.

Jack does not read the manuscript. He drives straight over to Barbara’s office and waits to speak with her. Ten minutes go by when she walks out with a smile. “Let us go to the conference room. Do you care for anything to drink?”

“How about a Coke with some ice.”

In the conference room Barbara dials an extension and says, “Bring me a glass of coke with some ice, please to the conference room.”

Jack shows Barbara the manuscript by Sally Wiggins. Barbara is excited to have it. “I am so tired of my claimants committing fraud. How many cases have I issued you where you turned up fraud for me?”

Jack replies, “I am six for six.”

“That is why I demanded your company put you on my cases. I have a question for you, Jack. Why don’t you go on your own, I will give you all my work? Between you and I, I am about to be the manager of this State Farm Office. When this happens, I will instruct all four of my adjusters to use your services.”

“I will form a company next week. I will call it Claimant Surveillance Group or CSG for short. I always wanted to be my own boss too. I was just afraid I would starve waiting by my office phone for it to ring.”

Barbara replies, “Once you have your own business, drop by and give me your business cards. I will pass them around the office. I will also instruct the different law firms I use to call you as well.”

Barbara and Jack talk a few minutes more before saying goodbye.

Three months later, Barbara contacts Jack Brown.

“Claimant Surveillance Group, Jack speaking.”

“Hi, Jack. This is Barbara. Do you have a minute?”

“I always have a minute for my favorite client.”

“Sally Wiggins retained a lawyer a few months ago. I used my favorite Insurance Defense Lawyer, Tom Green, to represent me. Yesterday, we took the deposition of Sally Wiggins. We caught her in a lie about not being able to use her wrist. Sally was shocked when we pulled out her manuscript and mentioned the clerk at Office Depot.

“I wish I was there to see her face.”

“You can, we always video tape our depositions of our claimants.”

What happened after Sally saw her manuscript?”

Her lawyer just picked up his file and said, “We are done here.”

Jack asks, “What happens next with your case?”

“I will receive a low settlement offers. I will pay nothing, too. I will say, have Sally drop her lawsuit and I will not report her to the State of Florida for fraud. Oh, I

instructed one of my adjusters to call you for a new assignment.”

“Then I will be seven- for- seven”, says Jack laughing.

“I do hope so”, replies Barbara. “I sure hope so”.

James Paul Ellison

27

THE CHEATING HUSBAND

Sandy Long was a happily married stay-at-home mother with three little children. Her husband, Johnny, was a medical doctor at Memorial Hospital. The only thing she hated was his crazy work hours. There were a few times Johnny came home days later, claiming he had to stay at the hospital.

At breakfast one morning in May, Johnny said, “The hospital is finally getting us new beds for the Doctors. I should be able to sleep better now if I have to work late.”

Sandy was a nurse when she met her husband. They have been married now for eight years. Jack, their oldest, is seven and he wanted to go to the park to throw ball with his dad this weekend.

“I am sorry, Son, but I have to work this weekend,” he lied. “I am working another doctor’s shift as his daughter just gave birth to his first Grand Child in Texas. I promise we will have father-son time next weekend.”

Sandy loved living in West Palm Beach, Florida and taking her children to the beach with her sister, Joan. She just hated not having a man around to drive, load and unload all the gear for their children and just being there as a loving father.

Last weekend Joan said, “Sis, just have your husband transfer to a different hospital. He will be able to slow down for sure. That is what happened to Mitch. He now has steady hours and only works one-weekend a month.”

After her husband departed for the hospital at seven am, Sally decided to do a load of laundry. In one of her husband’s shirt pockets was a note. It read, “Loved having lunch yesterday” and it was signed Beverly.

Sandy called her younger sister and told her about the note.

Joan said, “Maybe Johnny is having an affair. How is your sex life, Sis?”

“It has slacked off lately. Johnny claims to be too tired for any love making.”

Joan says, “Hire a private investigator to follow your husband for a few days. I know of a really good one too.”

Sandy asks, “How do you know of a really good private investigator?”

“I hired the firm months ago to follow Mitch. He was not having an affair thank God, he was secretly arraigning my birthday party”. Joan laughs when saying it.

Sally asks, “Who is the private investigator and what is his telephone number?”

“Just look up Gotcha Investigations and ask for Aaron Anderson. Mention my husband’s name and ask for a reduced rate too.”

Sandy replies, “Maybe Johnny is having an affair. He has hardly been home in weeks. I hope he is being faithful. I will divorce him if he is cheating on me. I will call Gotcha Investigations today.”

Sandy stays on the line with her sister for over an hour talking about their kids. Then the women hang up as their children can be heard in the background crying.

Sally was undecided on what to do about having her husband followed by a private investigator. She felt funny even thinking about it. That night at dinner as she sat across from her husband, she asked him, “Can you find more time for me and the children?” He took a bite of his meat and said, “I will try. The hospital is short staffed.”

Johnny was already gone from the house leaving no note when Sandy woke up the next morning. After feeding her children, cleaning the house, and taking a shower, Sandy got out the yellow pages of the phonebook. She looked up Gotcha Investigative Agency and dialed their number.

A female voice answered, “Gotcha Investigations, how may we help you?”

“I would like to hire your firm to follow my husband, I believe he is cheating on me.”

“Let me connect you to one of our field agents, just a moment please.”

“Bob here, whom am I speaking with?”

“My name is Sandy Long.”

“Hello, Sandy. My name is Bob, and I will be your field agent on this matter. Please tell me why you feel your spouse is cheating on you.”

“Johnny is a medical doctor at Memorial Hospital. I found a note in his shirt pocket while doing laundry and the note said, loved having lunch yesterday, and it was signed Beverly.”

Bob asked, “How has your love life been lately with your husband?”

“It could be better. My husband has been working long hours. He claims the hospital has a shortage of doctors.”

What type of car does Johnny drive?”

“My husband drives a white BMW.”

“Do you know the license plate number?”

“Yes. It is Johnny three.”

“What is your husband’s normal shift hours?”

“It started out being seven am to 5 pm, then he claims he had to work late into the night.”

Bob asks, “Has he ever not come home from working a shift?”

“Yes. The hospital has a few rooms set aside with beds in them.”

Bob says, “Our agency charges ninety dollars an hour. It may take me just one day or five days to discover if your spouse is cheating or not. We require a retainer of one thousand dollars to start.”

“I will have my sister, Joan, come by with the money. I am a stay-at-home mother of three small children.”

Bob says, "Tell her to ask for Bob when she comes by our office."

"I will tell her."

"Now Sally, who is Beverly?"

"I have no clue."

Bob says, "Tell no one you hired a private investigator, except Joan, and lead a normal life. What is the best number to call you on?"

Sandy gives Bob her cell number.

Bob says, "When I call you, I am with Rooms to Go. If you cannot talk to me because your spouse is around, say I am not interested in buying any furniture and hang up."

"Rooms to Go, got it."

Remember now, be relaxed around the spouse, do not question him, or ask any questions about his schedule, nothing. I will start following him from tomorrow on. If I uncover any cheating, I will call you right away. Just make sure your sister drops off the thousand dollars retained as soon as she can."

"I will have her drop off the retainer tomorrow."

"One more thing, what does your husband look like?"

"Johnny is forty-two years old, stands about six foot-three, weighs two hundred twenty pounds, wears glasses and has a moustache."

"What is your home address?"

"We live at 12467 Flamingo Court in West Palm Beach."

Bob says, "I will be on your husband at six-thirty am tomorrow. Remember, just be your self around him and do not ask him any questions."

"I can do that. I hope you uncover that my husband is a loyal, loving husband and father that works many hours to support his family."

"I hope I do. It was nice talking to you, Sandy. I will be in touch soon."

Sandy calls her sister and says, "I did it. I hired Gotcha Investigations. You need to drop off my retainer of a thousand dollars as soon as possible. Ask for Bob when you go there."

Joan says, "I will drop off the retainer tomorrow afternoon when I pick my kids up from school. I do hope Johnny is not cheating on you. I hope he is just working long crazy hours."

"My private investigator's name is Bob. He says he will start tomorrow morning at six-thirty am."

"I won't call you, Sis. You call me with the results."

Sandy says, "Will do. I have to go now; the young ones are crying."

Bob started at six-thirty-am. While waiting for activity, he starts his notes. This is Bob, field agent nine. Today is Thursday, April seventh and the time is six-thirty am. I am on the Johnny Long surveillance. The house lights are on.

The garage door opens at seven-am sharp. The claimant departs driving his BMW. He is wearing blue medical attire. Bob follows from

a distance. The doctor arrives at Memorial Hospital and parks on the second floor in a parking spot reserved for doctors.

Bob finds a parking spot that is not assigned to a doctor and waits. He kills his time by working crossword puzzles or watching DVDs on his laptop. Bob is in the middle of his movie when he has activity.

Johnny Long walks to his BMW holding hands with a tall, blonde female with long hair. The woman is wearing a nursing outfit. He opens the passenger door for her and gives her a kiss just before she enters the vehicle. Bob videos this as he watches.

The couple drive over to Taco Bell Restaurant and use the drive thru to order their meal. Bob follows them to Moss Point Park. They exit the BMW holding hands and carrying a Taco Bell bag. They find a quite bench and start to eat their meal.

Bob enters a men's restroom nearby and films the couple thru small slats in the restroom walls. He must stop filming now and then when a male enters the restroom. Bob would pretend he is washing his hands.

The lovebirds kiss now and then and seem to be in love with their actions. After their lunch, the couple took a walk in the park, stopping now and then to feed the birds. Bob believes the woman must be Beverly.

Thirty minutes go by before they depart the park. The lovebirds next stop at a bookstore where the woman enters only. She returns

shortly after with a purchase. The couple then drive back to Memorial Hospital and enter the parking garage. Bob follows them in.

The woman walks over to a blue in color Honda and places her book purchase in the trunk. Bob writes down her license plate. After the couple walk back into the hospital, Bob brings his notes up to date.

Bob runs the license plate of the woman thru his data base account.

Data shows the Honda belongs to a Beverly Smith at 375 Fairley Lane in West Palm Beach. Beverly is thirty-three years old. Bob returns to watching DVDs on his laptop.

Johnny Long exits the hospital alone at six pm and drives straight home. Bob sits down the street from the residence and catches up with his notes. He then films out on a street sign and calls it a night.

Bob cannot work the case on Friday. He has court on a different matter. Bob starts his surveillance again on Johnny Long on Saturday morning at six am.

At eight am the garage opens and Bob can see the BMW backing out of the garage. A young boy runs out of the house with a ball and glove in his hands. The father shakes his head back and forth and departs. The young boy is viewed by Bob, standing there alone in the driveway crying.

Bob calls Sandy as he follows her husband.

“Morning Sandy, it is Bob. It was so sad to see your son crying in the driveway as his father departed.”

“My husband promised our son to play ball today, that he had the day off.”

“I am following him now. I will call you later with an update.”

“Please do.”

Bob follows Johnny over to Beverly’s residence. He obtains video of her being helped into the BMW by Johnny, but not before they exchange a few kisses.

Bob follows the couple over to a huge apartment complex called, Riverview. Bob films them entering the rental office. He soon videos them again with a male salesperson as they take a golf cart deeper into the huge complex.

About forty minutes later they return to the sales office and enter. Johnny and Beverly soon depart with papers in their hands. Bob does not follow. He waits thirty minutes and enters the sales office.

Bob walks up to the only salesperson in the office. It is the same man that showed Johnny and Beverly around the rental complex.

Bob says, “I was just hired by Memorial Hospital and was told to come here for an apartment. I need a two-two unit.”

“My name is Jake. Here is my business card.”

Bob takes his business card and says, “My name is Bob Andrews.”

Jake says, “You are the second person this morning from Memorial Hospital. I just rented a three-two unit to a lovely couple. They plan to marry in November.”

Bob soon leaves with several brochures and with more information on the lovely couple. It seems Johnny and Beverly plan to move into the complex in two weeks. Bob calls his client with an update.

“Morning Sandy, this is Bob. Can you talk?”

“Yes, my children are in the living room watching cartoons.”

“I confirmed that your spouse is having an affair with a woman named Beverly Smith. I also confirmed that this woman is a nurse on the same floor as your husband. I have video of them holding hands and kissing.”

Sandy says, “We have been seeing a marriage counselor for three months now, trying to save this marriage.”

Bob replies, “Johnny plans to divorce you and move in with this Beverly Smith. He just signed a rental agreement with an apartment complex for two. He moves in with her in two weeks. He told the rental agent he plans to marry in November.”

Sandy starts to cry over the phone. She says, “I married a snake.”

Bob says, “Find yourself a good divorce lawyer, open a bank account in your own name, credit cards as well and remove as much money from your joint account as you can. I will be mailing to your sister my invoice. The total is one thousand-six hundred. Sorry I had to give you the bad news.”

Sandy says, “Better now than a few years from now that is for sure. Thanks so much for helping me.”

Bob and Sandy talk a few more minutes before saying goodbye.

Six Months Later

Six months later, Bob gets a call from Sandy Long.

“Hello, Bob I need your services again. My ex-husband is getting married this weekend to Beverly and I want you to video the wedding for me. My sons are invited but I am not.”

Bob replies, “Sandy, let it go and move on with your life. I will not take this assignment.”

James Paul Ellison

28

TOO MANY DECK BOATS

Tommy Shaw was twenty-nine years old. He was single and lived in Englewood, Florida. He was self-employed. He owned a charter boat, and transported lovers over to Palm Island, accessible only by boat.

Young couples had two choices. Once on Palm Island they could stay days or weeks at the Palm Island Resort or just go for the Honeymoon Cove package, which was from nine pm to four am.

Most young lovers went for the Honeymoon Cove package which cost sixty dollars a person. The package consisted of a water taxi ride to and from the island and a picnic basket containing cheese, crackers, two glasses, and a bottle of wine. The young lovers just needed to bring a blanket.

The Honeymoon Cove package was extremely popular with all the college students that dotted the area. You had to book weeks in advance if you wanted to pay Palm Island a visit. Repeat lovers received a twenty percent discount on their next trip.

Tommy made a good living with his year-around charter business. His charter boat was named, *Pleasure One*. One day he had a

money-making idea. Train crews to operate a few more boats and triple his income.

Tommy visited his bank, Regions, and applied for a loan. It also helped that his younger sister worked at the same bank as a teller. Tommy's CPA provided all his financial records he would need for him to apply for his loan. Tommy used his forty thousand dollars he had in savings as his collateral.

A week later, Tommy had his loan of two hundred thousand dollars. He wasted no time and bought a few water taxi type small deck boats to use as charter boats. He painted each boat with a name; Pleasure two, Pleasure three, Pleasure four and Pleasure five. Tommy then found, trained, and hired a group of college kids to be boat pilots.

Tommy's business took off like crazy. His calendar was full for the next few months. He hired a young college female to pass out flyers around the different colleges that dotted the area of Englewood. The flyers read, "get romantic tonight, visit Honeymoon Cove with your lover."

Tommy had no problem making the loan payments on his four new deck boats that cost forty-thousand dollars each. The only problem Tommy had was parting too much. He did not save funds for a rainy day like his father warned him to do, when he received his boat loan of two hundred thousand dollars.

Two months later and Tommy's business dried up. A small ferry went into business to compete with the water taxis. The ferry could carry more passengers and charge a lower price of ten dollars a

round trip per person, instead of the sixty-dollars a round trip the charter boats were charging.

Tommy soon failed to make his boat payments to his bank. He had to face it; he was in debt big time. One evening as he watched the ferry full of passengers depart the dock for Honeymoon Cove, he had another idea come to him.

Tommy would sell all his deck boats and get another job all together. For weeks he tried to sell his boats at a discount, but he had no takers. So, Tommy had no choice but to commit a crime of insurance fraud.

One moonlit night Tommy towed his four new boats out in rough seas and sunk them in the deepest part of Biscayne Bay. He then filed a false insurance claim with Travelers Insurance Company. Tommy swore under oath that he was towing his boats over to Miami to sell when the tow rope broke. Huge waves then swamped his deck boats, and they sank.

Traveler's Insurance Adjuster, Tina Pearson, did not believe Tommy's story. She hired a private investigator named Frank Nixon to investigate Tommy's claim.

Frank was a diver. He took his own boat out to the wreck site and dove down to the boats sitting at the bottom of Biscayne Bay. Frank videoed each boat and noticed some expensive boat items were missing from each boat.

The next morning Frank showed Tina his underwater video. As the adjuster watched Frank's video he said, "each boat was stripped of

the following items, A marine receiver, a stereo system, an outboard motor, and a canvas shade. I estimate the missing items to cost at least twelve thousand dollars a boat.”

Tina watches the video and replies, “I am waiting for my claimant’s inventory list to come in. I did check the night of his accident and there were huge, ruff waves. So, the boats may have sunk the way Mr. Shaw says they did.

The next day, Tina calls his private investigator.

“I just received Mr. Shaw’s inventory list on each boat that was lost. He has what you have listed, but has one other item listed, a Zeus Multifunctional Display and he listed a replacement price of six thousand dollars a boat.”

Frank says, “I am a boater and I know ahead of time what the weather is like before I venture out. Why did Mr. Shaw just go out in bad weather towing four small boats? He was warned of the bad weather by fellow boaters. It doesn’t make sense unless he could not afford the boat payments.”

Tina says, “Each boat cost new, forty-thousand dollars. Frank, I want you to visit the marina and ask questions about Mr. Shaw, find out if he had a buyer in Miami for his four deck boats.”

“Will do. I will go first thing tomorrow. I must be careful asking questions as boaters are a tight group and they do not discuss other boaters.”

At nine am the next morning Frank went to the marina posing as a reporter from the Miami Herald. He wore fake company ID

around his neck and passed out fake business cards with an eight hundred number that just rings in his home office.

Frank asked about how business was chartering people over to Palm Island.

The boaters were terribly upset because of a new ferry. It seems the ferry could charter people over at a lower price. The ferry could charge a lower price because they carried more people. The boaters only business now was fishing charters.

Frank said, "I guess a few of you went out of business when the ferry arrived?"

One old boater laughed and replied, "I won't mention names, but some idiot bought four deck boats to increase his charter business for Moonlight Cove. He was doing well for a few months till the ferry arrived. He tried to sell his deck boats but had no buyers. He said he was going to tow the deck boats to Miami and sell them there. I warned him about the rough waves that day, but he didn't listen."

Another boater says, "after the deck boats sunk the man wasn't upset. He just said, "I'll just get the insurance company to pay up."

The old man says, "The ferry runs twenty-four hours a day. That ferry just killed our water taxi rides to Palm Island and our Moonlight Cove lover trips at night."

Frank asks the old man, "If I had navigational type items to sell, who would I go to?"

The old man replies, "We all go to Heather Locket. She owns a shop in Englewood called "Anchors'.

Frank hangs around the old man for twenty minutes before saying goodbye.

Frank drives over to Anchors Store and enters with his fake Miami Herald newspaper badge around his neck.

“I am looking for Heather.”

A woman in her fifty’s steps forward and says, “That is me. Who might you be?”

“My name is Frank Nixon on my first reporting job for the Miami Herald. I was told a ferry put many boaters out of the chartered business to Palm Island.”

Heather says, “That is true what you heard about the ferry.”

Frank says, “I heard a boater sold you a bunch of navigation equipment before selling his deck boats and going out of business.”

Heather replies, “I did have one boater so far do just that. I expect others will be doing the same thing soon.”

Frank asks, “I would like to speak with that boater that sold you his navigation equipment. Can I have his number to speak with him?”

Heather says, “On one condition, you didn’t get his number from me.”

“Deal. I will say an old man at the marina did if he asks.”

Heather says, “his name is Tommy Shaw, and his cell number is area code 305-222-4353.”

Frank asks, “what did this Tommy Shaw sell you?”

Heather searches through a few invoices and pulls one out. Tommy sold me four of each of the following: a marine receiver, a stereo system, a boat shade, and a Zeus Multifunctional Display system. He wanted to sell me four outboard motors, but I said no, as they take up too much room in my storage room. Remember, you didn't get any of this information from me."

"I got this information from the old man at the marina," says Frank as he shakes her hand goodbye.

Frank drives straight over to Tina's office and gives her his report.

Tina reads it and says, "I will get our in-house lawyer to subpoena all the records from Heather. Great job, Frank."

Frank asks, "What happens next?"

Tina says, "Simple. Tommy Shaw drops his false boat claim and goes away, or I will prosecute him for insurance fraud."

Frank says goodbye to Tina and goes straight home to take a nap.

James Paul Ellison

29

THE PARENTS FROM ITALY

Private Investigator Craig Campbell was sitting in his recliner chair watching a college football game he recorded earlier when his telephone rang.

“Hello?”

“Evening, Craig, this is Attorney Todd Denison. I was given your name by another attorney in our law firm. A lawyer in our New York office needs to hire a private investigator right away. I will be the lawyer you will report to. Are you available?”

“I am available 24/7.”

“Great to hear. A rich client of our law firm who lives in Italy owns many shoe stores in the United States. They have a son, named Ricardo, living right here in Miami, Florida. They are sending Ricardo tomorrow morning at 8 am on Delta to inspect shoe stores in California. He will be away for the weekend. They are doing it on purpose because they suspect Ricardo’s American girlfriend, Tara Lockett, is a gold-digger. They want to see what she does while their son is away.”

“What is my budget on this case?”

“The family wants 24/7 coverage until their son returns from California. The family will contact the New York Lawyer and he will contact me with the date and time of his arrival. The investigative budget is unlimited.”

“What does Tara look like and where does she live?”

“I have a photograph. I will email it over to you. Tara is a white female, she stands 5’ 2” inches, weighs about one hundred twenty pounds and has long blonde hair. The parents say their son is spending too much money on this woman. He already bought her a Honda Accord, white in color and a two hundred-thousand-dollar condo.”

“Nice,” replies Craig.

“Ready to copy her home address?”

“Shoot.”

“She lives at 13689 Pelican Bay, unit 45, a condominium called Sienna.”

“Where does her boyfriend reside?”

“Ricardo lives in the same condominium in Penthouse Two. He drives a black in color BMW. The license plate is Shoeman4.”

“What is her license plate number?”

“Let me find it in my notes. Tina’s license plate is CHF322.”

“I will be on them at six am tomorrow.”

The lawyer says, “you are the man. Good luck, too.”

The next morning at six am sharp Craig is at the condominium in the parking lot watching for movement from Ricardo and Tina.

It was not long before both came out of the building. Ricardo was rolling a suitcase in one hand and holding Tina's hand with the other. Ricardo placed the suitcase in the trunk of Tina's car, and they departed the area.

When they arrived at the airport, Ricardo removed his suitcase from the trunk of Tina's white Honda Accord, kissed his girlfriend goodbye and entered the terminal. Tina tooted her horn, waved goodbye, and left the area. Craig followed her from a safe distance.

Tina did not return to her condominium. Instead, she went to a townhouse in a quiet community called Wingate. She exited her vehicle and went to unit 3C and knocked. A young man kissed her and pulled her inside. Craig obtained video of this activity.

A few hours later the lovebirds exited the townhouse and departed in Tina's car with the unknown male as driver. They arrived at a restaurant a few miles away and entered. Craig went inside too with his hidden car key covert camera.

Sitting at a table across from his subject, Craig was able to eavesdrop on their conversation. Tina said, "We have the weekend together sweetheart. Ricardo must visit shoe stores across California. He told me to expect a phone call late on Monday to pick him up at the airport."

The unknown male said, "It must be nice to be dating a rich man with deep pockets."

"It is," said Tina sipping on her coffee. "Ricardo is a fool. He buys me whatever I wish for. When he returns from his trip, I will ask

him for some jewelry. I am sure he will run out and buy it for me too,” laughs Tina.

The man asks, “How did you meet, Ricardo?”

“We met at a gym down the street from his shoe store on Cowan Avenue. He told me it was love at first sight when he saw me walk in wearing tight fitting shorts. Ricardo is an ass man. I didn’t know he was rich until he showed me pictures of his family and his lifestyle back home.”

“Lucky you, Tina. I wish I could find me a rich girl with a firm ass, too.”

Tina laughs at Ricardo’s comment. “We have this weekend together. What do you want to do?”

The man replies, “How about we go on a trip to Disney World?”

Tina says, “I just want to stay in bed all weekend.”

The man says, “Let us go back to my place and make love.”

Tina laughs and replies, “Let us get our meals to go.”

Ten minutes later the two lovebirds exit the restaurant with a large restaurant bag under Ricardo’s arm. The couple return to Ricardo’s townhouse and go inside. Craig parks down the street and waits. Craig gets tired of waiting for some activity and falls asleep.

When Craig wakes up from his short nap a tow truck is parked next to Tina’s Honda. The young tow man is changing her tires. They are all flat. Craig wonders what is going on. He moves his own car

near Tina's and cracks open one of his tinted windows and eavesdrops on Tina's conversation with the tow truck driver.

Tina is shouting, "My lover is a real jerk. He wanted me to do cocaine with him this morning. When I said no, he came out to my car and slashed my tires."

The tow truck driver asks, "Where is your lover now?"

He is in his townhouse crashed out on the couch. He does drugs too much. I tried in the past to have him enter a rehab center, but no luck."

"I know how it is. My wife before we divorced was a drug addict as well."

Tina replies, "I hate illicit drugs. My younger brother is an addict, too. I avoid them at all costs."

The tow truck driver says while changing the last tire on Tina's Honda, "Best advice I can give you is to dump this lover of yours and start fresh before you really get hurt. You are lucky he slashed your tires instead of your pretty face."

"How much is the fee for your services today?"

"I charge fifty dollars a tire plus my travel time. So, the total is two hundred and fifty dollars."

Tina shakes her head and says, "Wow, can I have time to pay for this?"

The tow truck driver smiles and replies, "I am self-employed. I own my own tow truck business. Tell you what, go out on a date with me and my services today are free."

Tina says, "You have a deal. What is your name? My name is Tina.

The man stands up and replies, "My name is Richard."

Tina replies, "Can I have your address?"

He starts to write it down for her and says, "Can I have yours as well?"

Tina says, "No. My boyfriend lives in my condominium just a few floors above me. I cannot afford for him to see me with you."

Richard asks, "You have a boyfriend plus this lover guy sleeping on his couch?"

Tina laughs and says, "Ricardo was an old lover who recently found me on Face Book. We decided to hook-up when my boyfriend went out of town this weekend on business."

Richard changes the last tire on Tina's Honda and says, "I will not ask for your phone number. Just call me tomorrow sometime and tell me the restaurant we will meet at. Here is all my information."

Tina talks with Richard a few minutes more. They shake hands and the tow truck driver departs. Craig obtains video of the tow truck driver changing Tina's tires. He then writes his notes for his report to the lawyer. Tina just sits in her car and uses her cell phone.

Tina later departs the townhouse complex and returns to her condominium. Craig parks down the street and waits for activity. Craig is into his seventh - crossword puzzle when Tina's Honda goes by his car.

Craig follows Tina to a gym called “Star Workout.” She is in her gym outfit and carries a small gym bag inside with her. An hour later Tina reappears with a body builder escorting her to her car.

They chat awhile before he kisses her and says, “See you here tomorrow at the same time.”

Tina says, “Maybe.”

Tina departs the gym parking lot and returns to her condominium. Craig returns to his parking spot and waits again for her to depart.

It is nighttime when Tina drives by the private investigator who is listening to country western music on his car radio. Craig turns the music off so he can concentrate following Tina.

Tina arrives at a sea food restaurant, locks her car, and enters the establishment. Tina sits in a booth by a window that is all lit up. She looks at her watch and waits and waits.

A tow truck arrives, and Richard exits wearing work coveralls. He enters the restaurant and sits across from Tina. They start to have a conversation. Craig videos the couple now and then to document their activity.

Craig moves his car closer to Tina’s and waits. He cracks his tinted car windows just a little so he can hear better.

After an hour, the couple exit the restaurant and walk over to Tina’s car. Craig hears Richard say, “Sorry I was late. I had a customer needing my services. The man was locked out of his car.”

Tina laughs and says, “I locked myself out of my car once. I waited over two hours for a tow truck that never showed. I just smashed my window, started my car, and left. I was so mad.”

Richard gives Tina a kiss on her right cheek and says, “When can I see you again?”

Tina replies, “I do not know. I do have a steady boyfriend. I want to see how my relationship with him develops. Just give me time, but I will call you, I promise.”

They hug and say their goodbyes.

Tina returns to her condominium. Craig calls it a night as well and returns to his one- bedroom apartment in a gated community called, Riverside.

Sunday morning Tina goes for a jog. Craig follows from a distance. After Tina returns, he does not see her the rest of the day or evening.

Monday morning at ten am his client calls.

“Morning, Craig. This is Attorney Todd Denison. Can you fill me in on Tina’s activities?”

“I sue can. After dropping her boyfriend off at the airport she went to see a man at a townhouse complex. I have video of them kissing and holding hands. I eavesdropped on them in a restaurant and overheard them talking about going back to his place and making love.”

The attorney says, “Fantastic news.”

Craig replies, “Back at his townhouse they got into a fight. He flattened all her tires on her Honda. He wanted her to do cocaine with him and she said no. He got mad and slashed all of her tires.”

“Do you have the man’s name?”

“No, not yet. The data computers are down. Once I have his information, I will call you.”

The attorney asks, “Anything else happen?”

Craig laughs and says, “Yes. She went out on a dinner date with the tow truck driver the next night. At her car I heard her say to him, that she was in a relationship with her boyfriend but would keep in touch.”

The attorney says, “Ricardo needs to dump this woman pronto.”

Craig laughs at the lawyer’s comment.

The lawyer asks, “When Can I have your report, the video and your invoice?”

Craig says, “When Tina picks Ricardo up from the airport later today I will end my case. I will return to my home office and work on your report.”

The lawyer replies, “Tina is to pick Ricardo up at four pm in from of the Delta terminal.”

Craig says, “Thanks for that information. You will have your report, video and invoice later tonight.”

The lawyer says, “Come by my office tomorrow afternoon. I will have your check for you.”

Craig says he must go and hangs up.

At three-thirty pm Tina departs in her Honda. He follows her to the airport and videos Tina and Ricardo kissing in front of the Delta terminal. Ricardo places his luggage in the trunk and departs in Tina's Honda as the driver.

They stop in front of a fancy jewelry store and they both go in.

Craig videos Tina wearing a necklace, earrings, and a bracelet on her right hand.

The couple then drive back to their condominium building.

Craig ends his case on Tina and returns to his office.

Craig works late into the evening to finish his report. He emails everything to his client at 11 pm. He then goes straight to bed.

The next afternoon Craig stops to visit his client, Attorney Denison. They go to the conference room to discuss Craig's assignment.

The lawyer says, "I read your report and watched the video, too. You did an exceptionally good job. The family in Italy is happy as well with your findings."

Craig asks, "What was Ricardo's reaction?"

"Supposedly, the family will not tell him what they did. They just took away his credit cards and reduced his income. He is not a rich boy anymore. The family said they will be moving Ricardo to California to run their show stores soon."

Craig says, “I wonder if Tina will follow Ricardo to California or will she develop a relationship with the tow-truck driver. Remember, Tina is a gold-digger.”

The attorney says, “only time will tell. Oh, I almost forgot. Here s a letter from the family to you. They want you to go to any of their Miami shoe stores and pick up whatever men’s shoes you want.”

Craig takes the letter and replies, “I just love the Italians”.

James Paul Ellison

30

DONNA'S FIRST ASSIGNMENT

It was a hot day in June in the City of Tampa, Florida when the small, private investigative class graduated. The recruits waited in their classroom to be interviewed by their new employer, Priority Investigations.

Bobby Walker enters the classroom dressed in a dark, blue suit. He faces the ten new men and women his Corporation trained over the past three months.

“Good Afternoon, my name is Bobby Walker. I am the Vice President of Priority Investigations. I project, one or two of you will quit and either you will work for another private investigative agency or you will quit the private Investigative business altogether.

In about three years I project, one or two of you will quit their employer and go into the private investigative business as an owner, but for now you are our employee.

We expect you to do your assignments correctly and on time, too. We need everyone to confirm the claimant is the claimant on surveillance assignments. No twin brother or a best friend will do.”

A female recruit raises her hand and asks, “Can I request what region of the State of Florida I want to work in?”

Bobby Walker gives her a warm smile and says, “Yes. We want each of you to be happy. We do not want you to quit or to go to some other private investigative agency.

You do not know it now, but we are the best firm to work for. We offer from the start of your employment; a 401K plan, full medical, two-weeks paid vacation, bonuses now and then and a top starting pay of twenty-five dollars an hour. We also issue you all your camera equipment and finally we issue you a company credit card for your expenses.”

A man raises his hand.

Bobby Walker points to him and asks, “and your name is?”

The young man stands up and replies, “my name is Billy Brown, sir. I would like to address my fellow classmates.”

Bobby Walker says, “please do.”

Billy Brown says to his fellow classmates, “It is all true what Mr. Walker says. I worked for the Johnson Group here in Tampa and I started at 13 an hour with no other benefits. I had to buy my own equipment, pay my own expenses, and wait weeks to be reimbursed. I also had to room in a hotel with a fellow investigator. The company made me rent a motel that cost forty-dollars or less a night.”

Bobby Walker says, “Thank you, Young Man for advising the group of your former employer. What city is my agency stationing you at?”

“I am being assigned to my hometown, which is Orlando, the home of Mickey Mouse.”

Bobby Walker replies, “I look forward to reviewing your written reports and watching your surveillance videos.”

Billy Brown sits back down, and Bobby Walker turns his attention to the whole class.

Mr. Walker says, “You will receive pay raises and other perks with my company, if you video your claimants with the hidden camera that was issued to you. We also will pay extra if your reports are written well, and your surveillance videos look professional.

Please use your tripod on all cases. This will help reduce the bounce and shake when you video your claimant’s activity. Welcome aboard. Please stop by our personnel office to receive your employment packet.”

Later that afternoon, Billy was sitting on a bench in front of the office building housing Priority Investigations, when a fellow classmate walks up.

“Care if I join you?”

Billy looks up to see Donna Jones standing there with her employment packet in her hands.

“Please sit down, Donna.”

Donna says, “I don’t think I will last long with Priority Investigations. I am so accident prone. I have been all my life.”

Billy replies, “We all make mistakes, Donna. Just do not do it all the time.”

Donna laughs and says, “I really want to be a private investigator really bad. I scored remarkably high on the final test. I practice all the time with my video camera and covert camera as well.”

Billy looks at her and says, “I bet in the next few months you will receive a pay raises before I do. Lady luck is on your side. Tell you what I will do for you. Let me review your written reports and watch your surveillance videos before you send them to the agency. I will correct the reports and give you tips on what you are doing right and wrong with your surveillances.”

Donna asks, “What do you want in return for helping me?”

Billy laughs and says, “I want nothing in return. I just want you to make it with Positive Investigations.”

Donna reaches over and kisses Billy’s cheek and says, “You are a nice man. I bet you have lots of women chasing you.”

Billy laughs and replies. “I have many men chasing me. I am gay.”

Donna and Billy sit on the bench and talk for a long time.

Billy looks at his watch and says, “I have to go. Here is my cell phone number and my email address. Make sure you keep in touch. Send me your written reports and your videos. Good luck in the field.”

Donna stands up and gives Billy a huge hug.

She replies, “Good luck in the field as well.”

The next morning at five am, Donna arrives at her first surveillance assignment near Lakeland, FL. Donna looks over her

three-day surveillance assignment that the office emailed to her the night before.

The claimant is a white male, sixty-five years old with a serious right leg injury, he received in a four-car accident. The insurance adjuster wants to know if the claimant, Tony Sanders, is using a cane and or operating a vehicle.

Donna sits down the street from Tony's trailer park. She has a direct view of the claimant's front door. Donna waits almost all day for activity. The mailman in a postal truck arrives at the mailboxes for the complex located at the front of the trailer park.

Ten minutes after the mailman departs the area, Tony's front door opens. The claimant exits his residence using a cane. He walks slowly to the mailboxes, some five-hundred yards away.

Donna picks up her camera and free hands the activity of her claimant. She videos the claimant all the way to the mailboxes. She videos the claimant retrieving a few pieces of mail. The claimant is about to walk away when a Honda, green in color pulls up to him.

Tony stands there for a long time chatting and laughing before the Honda departs. The claimant then slowly walks with his cane toward his trailer. Suddenly, there is a quick down pour of rain. Tony picks up his cane and runs the five hundred yards to his residence.

Donna says to herself, 'faker.'

In class Donna learned to stay late and prove the alleged injury was a fake injury. She needed to document the claimant walking with his cane again. Just before darkness lady luck kicked in. The claimant

exited his trailer and walked across the roadway to another trailer. Tony was walking slowly using his cane.

Donna stayed a few more hours, but the claimant did not exit the trailer across the street. Dona drove home, wrote her notes, had dinner, and went to bed.

Donna woke up early the next morning and was on her job at five am. At ten am her cell phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Donna. This is Billy. How is it going on your first surveillance?”

“Hello, Billy. Thanks for calling me. This case is very boring. I just sit and sit all day. I must have worked twenty crossword puzzles.”

Billy laughs and replies, “Go to the Library and check-out audio books. This way you can just relax and let someone tell you a story. That is what I do.”

“Great idea,” says Donna.

Billy asks, “Have you obtained any surveillance video yet?”

Donna laughs and says, “Lady Luck was on my side yesterday. The old man, age sixty-five, finally came out of his trailer. He used a cane to walk the thousand yards to check his mailbox.

The claimant spoke to someone unknown who stopped in a green Honda to talk. The claimant was walking slowly back to his residence when we had a sudden down pour of rain. The claimant picked up his cane and ran all the way home.”

Billy laughs and replies, “make sure I review that video when you are finished with the case.”

Donna says, “I will do that. I stayed late yesterday and obtained more video. This time he exited his trailer using a cane to walk. He crossed his rode and visited a neighbor’s trailer.”

Billy says, “I think the company will be giving you a raise for this. You have a homerun on your first case.”

Donna asks, “What is a homerun?”

Billy says, “A homerun is when you prove to the client that their claimant is a faker regarding their alleged injury. Thank God for the sudden rain down pour. We get them now and then in Florida.”

Donna says, “I will call you back. My claimant’s front door is opening.”

Tony exits his trailer using a cane to aid him in his walking. He walks slowly, stops now and then to rub his alleged right leg injury, and uses the cane for balance.

Donna laughs to herself and says, “What an actor you are.”

Tony walks a long way to a bus stop. He stands there with several other people waiting on the bus. Ten minutes go by before his ride arrives. Donna follows the bus into downtown Tampa.

Tony exits the bus but is not walking with his cane. He carries it in his hand. Donna obtains video of her claimant walking normally into the Wal Mart store. Donna parks and enters the grocery store as well.

Donna grabs a shopping cart and locates the claimant in the milk aisle. Donna uses her hidden covert key camera to obtain video of the claimant shopping. The claimant pushes his shopping cart down almost every aisle. He walks without the use of his medical device.

When the claimant goes to check-out, Donna parks her shopping cart and exits the store. Donna goes to her vehicle and moves it to be near the stores entrance. Donna knows her agency wants their field agents to obtain close-up surveillance video. The insurance adjusters will forward the video to their medical experts.

It is not long before the claimant exits with a shopping bag. Tony stands there till a taxi pulls up. The driver places Tony's purchase in his trunk. The driver also helps Tony into the rear passenger seat.

When the taxi arrives at the trailer park, the driver opens his trunk and carries the shopping bag inside the trailer. Donna obtains video of Tony walking up a few steps and entering his residence without the use of his cane.

Donna does not observe the claimant for the rest of the day. She films out and drives home to write her report. On the way to her residence, she calls Billy.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Billy it is Donna. Can you talk?”

“Just for a minute. I am following my claimant on Highway Ten.”

Donna says, “I will be brief. I obtained more surveillance video of my claimant not using his cane.”

Billy replies, “See, what did I tell you about lady luck.”

Donna starts to speak when Billy says, “I have to go, my claimant is exiting the highway.”

Donna returns to her residence and her three cats. She is not hungry yet, so she brings her surveillance report up to date.

The next morning, Donna arrives on her job at seven am. There is no activity of her claimant all day. Donna just sits there working her crossword puzzles till her eight hours are up. Donna drives straight home to finish her written report and to make her surveillance video.

Around nine pm, Donna is finished with her report and video. She calls Billy on his cell phone.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Billy. Donna here. Can you come over to my place? My surveillance report and video is finished. I will have hot tea and homemade cookies waiting.”

Billy laughs and says, “I will be there in an hour.”

Donna is excited to show her surveillance of her claimant to Billy. She knows he has been a surveillance private investigator for years. Donna knows Billy will make her look good with her new employer. Donna prepares the coffee and heats-up her homemade cookies in the oven.

Billy arrives in less than thirty minutes at Donna's residence. They talk about the surveillance business while they enjoy their hot coffee and warm cookies.

Billy says, "Priority Investigations is my fifth company in nine years. This time I found a professional agency. I just have to obtain video on all my claimants."

Donna asks, "What was wrong with your previous employers?"

Billy finishes his cookie and says, "low pay, unprofessional helpers sleeping on the job or not showing up at all, no training classes to make me better, and bosses yelling at me when they reviewed my reports or my surveillance videos."

Donna says, "it is hard enough working a case to deal with bosses breathing down your neck."

Billy takes a sip of his coffee and asks, "let me review your surveillance video, Donna."

Donna runs over to her equipment bag and retrieves her company issued video camera. Donna turns the camera on and hands it over to Billy.

Billy starts to make comments to Donna on her surveillance video as he watches her film.

"You are not using your company issued tripod. The video is bouncy because of it. Your video is blurry in some spots because you zoom in and out too much. The video of your claimant is too far away to make a positive identification that the claimant is the claimant. Your biggest mistake, Donna, is the camera shows the wrong date."

Donna shouts, “What? the wrong date, no way.”

Billy hands back the video camera to Donna and says, “I am not kidding, look for yourself.”

Donna looks at her surveillance video of her claimant and about dies. The date reads April 5th, 2024 instead of April 5th, 2021.

“What do I do now, Billy?”

Billy laughs and says, “tell the office this is your first case. Tell them it will not happen again. When using the camera Donna, why didn’t you look at the date displayed on the screen?”

Donna looks at Billy and replies, “I was too excited as I was obtaining video of my first claimant.”

Billy takes the camera back from Donna and corrects the date and time to the right time and date.

Donna gives Billy a kiss on his cheek and says, “thank you so much.”

Billy replies, “now let me review your surveillance report quickly as I have to rise early for my next case.”

Billy points out some minor details and Donna writes her errors down to correct later after Billy leaves.

The next day at eleven am Donna walks into the office of Positive Investigations for her scheduled appointment with Mr. Bob Walker.

The female receptionist escorts Donna to a large conference room and says, “Mr. Walker will be right with you.”

Donna's boss enters the meeting room and is all business. Mr. Walker reviews Donna's video and says, 'the video is bouncy, shot too far away, too much zoom and you have the wrong date. I cannot use your services Young Lady. Please go to personnel for your paycheck.' Mr. Walker then exits the meeting room.

Donna just sits there in shock for a minute. She calls Billy on his cell. "I have been fired by Mr. Walker. He says the video is bouncy, shot too far away, I zoomed in and out too much and I have the wrong date."

Billy laughs and replies, "welcome to the private investigative business. I have a great idea. Let us quit and start our own private investigative agency."

Donna asks, "what will the name be?"

Billy laughs and says, "we will call the new agency Lady Luck Investigations or LLI for short."

Donna says, "I like the name. Let us do it."

31

THE WAREHOUSE THEFT

It was a hot day in Miami, Florida when private investigator Sonny Jackson received a call from a good friend.

“Hello?”

“Sonny, this is Harry calling from Boston. I have a problem I need your services on.”

“Hey, Harry, it has been a long time. What help do you need?”

“My HD cargo pick-up business in Miami is under attack. A watch company is missing over three-hundred thousand dollars’ worth of their watches from seven delivers across the nation. I just got off a phone conference between me, the warehouse owners, and the watch company. The warehouse people blame me, and I blame them for this situation. We all agreed to hire a private investigator and I recommended your company.”

“That was nice of you to do, Harry. Tell me how the shipping operation works from the beginning to the end.”

Harry replies, “simple really. The Carter Watch company contracts out with a customs bonded warehouse to house, pack up and ship nationwide their watches when orders come in from jewelers.

That is where my cargo pick-up business comes in. My drivers would go to the warehouse, pick-up the unmarked boxes and we would then ship the contents out with the airlines.

When their shipments arrived, the Jewelers would open-up their boxes and verify their orders. A few of the jewelers lately have discovered a few watches missing from their delivered shipments.

The Carter Watch company suspects my drivers of opening up the boxes and removing a few watches before they are shipped by air.”

Sonny says, “you do have a problem. Maybe the airline cargo employees are involved with the watch thefts.”

Harry replies, “Carter Watches is a particularly good contract to have, the watch brand is well known. Having their account makes my shipping business look legit. The President of the watch company, Gabriel Auch, on his letterhead, just authorized you full access to the customs bonded warehouse where his watches are stored in a vault.”

Sonny asks, “what is a customs bonded warehouse?”

Harry says, “A facility that holds imported, duty-payable goods in storage for processing before they are delivered to their final destination.”

Sonny asks, “What is the name and address of this custom bonded warehouse I am to investigate?”

Harry replies, “The warehouse is called, Minus, and is located at 13421 Cargo Lane, Miami, Florida. The owners of the warehouse are Jose Minus and his brother. Their telephone number is 305-555-4434. He is expecting your call. You have full access to their

warehouse, and the Minus Brothers are to give you anything you need.”

Sonny asks, “Where is Carter Watches headquarters located?”

Harry says, “Gabriel’s company is based in London, England.”

Sonny says, “I will be on this case first thing in the morning. Can you email me the names of your drivers so I can interview them?”

Harry says, “my driver is my brother-in-law, Hector Morales. I trust him completely. One more thing. in our phone meeting, we all agreed that if the watch thefts occurred from either the warehouse or from my cargo pick-up, we would be responsible to pay back the lost money to Carter Watches.”

Sonny says, “this means, you may be on the hook for three-hundred thousand dollars if I discover the watch thefts were on your men.”

Harry replies, “exactly. That is why I pushed to have your pi firm investigate this matter. I know you will conduct a top-notch investigation.”

Sonny says, “I will keep you informed on the progress of my investigation.”

Harry says, “Gabriel Auch is a powerful man. He ships not just watches, but clothing, perfume, and other goods. If you have his business you will grow, because he will spread your name around with his many contacts around the world.”

Harry and Sonny talk for five more minutes before hanging up.

Sonny stops at a local jeweler and asks to see all their Carter Watches. The saleswoman brings out her collection. Sonny is shocked to see the list prices start from one-thousand dollars and up.

The next morning at nine am, Sonny, age thirty, pulls up to Minus's warehouse. The facility is remarkably busy. Their cargo bays are full of different size trucks that are loading cargo to be shipped.

Sonny enters the warehouse office and asks for the owner. Sonny gives the receptionist his correct name but lies when he says he is a salesman.

Mr. Minus, age sixty, approaches Sonny and asks, "can I help you?"

Sonny hands the man his investigative card and says, "I know you have been expecting me."

Mr. Minus shakes Sonny's hand and replies, "follow me."

The two men sit in a conference room and talk. Mr. Minus says, "All of the Carter Watches are stored in a walk-in safe in a secured fenced in area. There are only two ladies that fill the watch orders. They pack the watches and place the unmarked boxes back in the vault till the cargo pick-up truck arrives."

Sonny asks, "how long have the two ladies been working for you that pack the watches?"

Mr. Minus replies, "the two women are my relatives. I trust my Aunt and Cousin completely. My Aunt is named Estella and my Cousin is named Barbara. Do you want to go meet them? I can let my relatives show you how they pack the watches."

On the walk over to the two ladies, Sonny asks Mr. Minus, “tell me about your alarm system and who has access to turn the alarm on and off.”

Mr. Minus responds, “I am the only person with full access. If I am out of town, then my brother Raul can operate the alarm system.”

Sonny asks, “Where is Raul’s office. I need to interview him as well.?”

Mr. Minus laughs and says, “Raul works from home. He only comes here when I am not able to.”

The two men enter the vault for Cater Watches. The two women stop packing and turn to face their boss.

Mr. Minus says, “ladies, this is Sonny Jackson. He is a private investigator hired by Gabriel Auch. He has full access to this facility. Provide him with anything he request. I am returning to my office.”

The two women introduce themselves.

Sonny turns to Estella and asks, “Do you have the combination to the vault?”

Estella shakes her head and says, “no, I only have the first half of the six numbers required to open the vault. Barbara has the other set of numbers.”

Sonny asks, “can you show me how a shipment of watches are prepared?”

Barbara steps forward and shows the private investigator their next order to fill. The shipping form shows fourteen men’s watches,

and nine ladies watches to be packed and shipped to Edward's Jewelry Store at 2311 Stone Drive in Las Vegas, Nevada 89101.

We wrap each watch separately in bubble foam wrap to protect the watches during transit. The order is then packed in an unmarked box. We then give all our completed orders to the cargo delivery driver from HD. The driver we turn the boxes over to his Hector Morales."

Estella adds, "when we are leaving for the night, both Barbara and I double check that the vault lock is secured."

Sonny says, "Thank you for your time ladies. I hope I can get to the bottom of these watch thefts."

Estella replies, we had a meeting with Mr. Minus and agreed to take a polygraph. My Cousin and I passed with flying colors, too."

Sonny returns to Mr. Minus's office. He waits for the man to get off the telephone.

Mr. Minus turns to Sonny and asks, "how did it go with Estella and Barbara?"

Sonny says, "Estella claims to know only half the vault's combination and that Barbara knows only the other half. Is that true?"

Mr. Minus replies, "My brother and I are the only ones that have the full combination. We gave Estella the first half of the combination and told her to guard the code with her life. We did the same with Barbara."

Sonny then asks about the building's alarm system.

Mr. Minus says, "AT&T is our alarm company and has been for years. Each employee has access to the building using an electronic

card that records their name and time they entered. The same thing happens when they exit the building.”

Sonny asks, how many employees do you have?”

Mr. Minus replies, ‘we have seventeen total. We have three office staff, two employees in the watch vault, ten employees in cargo and two employees in security.’”

Sonny says, “I would like to meet with your security staff, please.”

Mr. Minus walks Sonny over to an elderly man in a security uniform sitting at a desk in a small office marked security.

“Mr. Jackson, I would like to introduce you to my father, Carlos.”

Sonny shakes the man’s hand.

Mr. Minus says, “Dad, this is Sonny Jackson, he is a private investigator hired my Gabriel Auch to investigate the watch thefts. Provide this man with what ever he needs. I am returning to my office. I am expecting an important call to come in.”

Sonny sits down in a chair across from the security guard.

Carlos asks, ‘care for a cup of coffee? I just made a fresh pot.’”

‘no thanks. Tell me your duties here at Minus Corporation.’”

Carlos sips on his cup of coffee and says, “my work shift is from seven am to five pm, Monday to Friday. The company is closed on the weekends. I am relieved by my nephew, Lenny. He works from five pm to midnight, Monday to Friday.”

Sonny says, “that is a big walk-in vault the company has.”

Carlos replies, “it weighs tons too.”

“Tell me about the alarm system from AT & T, please.”

Carlos takes another sip of coffee and says, “the alarm covers all the doors and windows. We have motion sensors as well to detect motion. I think we have good protection when Minus Corporation is closed. The Minus brothers are the only ones with the alarm code. Each employee is issued an ID badge that they have to swipe to enter the building.”

Sonny asks, “tell me, Carlos, how many sons and daughters do you have?”

“I have two sons, Raul and Jose. Raul is married and has three children. Jose is divorced with no children. Minus Corporation is a family run business.”

“What do you do work wise on your shift?”

“I make my rounds checking to make sure all doors and windows are closed, that no employee is causing problems with other co-workers and making sure we have no fires.”

Sonny stays a few minutes more before saying goodbye. He walks over to Mr. Minus’s office and waits to be waved in.

Mr. Minus asks, “how was your visit with my father?”

“It was good. I see your corporation is a family run operation.”

Mr. Minus laughs and says, “I try to hire friends and relatives. I have less turnover.”

Sonny says, “I need to pay a visit to AT&T’s office, whom will be my contact over there?”

Mr. Minus replies, “go see a Mr. Chris Brown. I will call ahead so he will be expecting you.”

Sonny replies, “thank you for your help. I will be back to observe the watches being loaded by the cargo pick-up company, HD.”

Mr. Minus says, “Harry really fought in our phone conference to hire your private investigative firm to investigate the theft of the Carter watches.”

Sonny replies, I helped Harry on a few matters over the years. He knows I am honest, hardworking, and dedicated to discovering the truth. I was a policeman for ten years before becoming a pi.”

Sonny drives over to the offices of AT&T and request to meet with a Mr. Chris Brown. The receptionist escorts Sonny to a small room with a conference table. Sonny has a note pad and pen with him.

A few minutes later a Mr. Brown enters and asks Sonny if he would like something to drink.

“No thanks. I just wanted a copy of your alarm records for the last three months for the Minus Corporation. Are you aware of the watch thefts going on?”

Mr. Brown says, ‘yes, Mr. Minus filled me in. He strongly believes the cargo pick-up driver is opening the boxes, removing a few watches, then closing the boxes back up and rewrapping the boxes for shipment.”

Sonny lies and replies, ‘I believe the cargo hold men at the airlines are involved. They have plenty of time to do a theft before a flight takes off.”

Chris Brown says, ‘let me obtain the alarm records for the three months for you. I will be right back.’”

Sonny calls Harry on his cell phone.

“Hello?”

“Harry I only have a minute. I want you to call me back with the dates and times your man, Hector, picked up the shipments for the Carter watches. When you call me back, I will then be able to fill you in on what I have done so far.”

Sonny calls Mr. Minus.

“Sir, I need the police reports on all the thefts that occurred regarding the Carter watches. I will be leaving AT&T in a few minutes and heading your way.”

Mr. Minus replies, “I will have them for you when you get here.”

Mr. Chris Brown returns with a thick file. “Here you go, sir.”

Sonny talks with the man a few more minutes before leaving the AT&T office.

Sonny drives over to the Minus Corporation and picks up the police reports from Mr. Minus. Sonny then drives to his home office with all the documents.

While comparing the alarm records with the theft of the watches, Harry calls.

“Hey, Buddy, any luck yet on your investigation?”

Sonny plays a joke on his friend.

“Yes. It’s Hector Morales that is removing the watches from the boxes.”

Harry shouts, “What?”

Sonny laughs and says, “I was just joking. I met with Mr. Minus, a Mr. Brown from AT&T, I interviewed the 2 ladies in the vault room and the day guard. I now plan to review the alarm records.”

Harry replies, “I can see you have been busy.”

Sonny says, “the police reports show more lady watches are missing than men are. If I were a crook and I knew the value of the watches, I would just take the whole box.”

Harry replies, ‘just save me from paying three-hundred thousand dollars will you.’”

Sonny says, “let me get back to work. I will call you tomorrow sometime with my findings.”

Sonny spends hours pouring over the alarm records and comparing those records with the theft dates. He notices right away a pattern. He calls Harry back on his cell.

“Hello?”

“This is Sonny. I found out who I believe the thief is.”

“Who will that be?”

“Our good friend, Mr. Minus himself. I compared the entry and exit alarm times with the shipping times and dates and found a pattern. On the days there were no pickups from your company, Mr. Minus would show up at noon and depart at four pm. On the days, that watches were to be shipped and picked up by your cargo company,

Mr. Minus either stay late the night before or came in early on the days of the thefts.

This tells me he would open the watch boxes, select what watches he wanted, then he would rewrap and reseal the boxes and let your driver take the wrap for the thefts. An airline employee would take the whole box.

I think Mr. Minus is a lonely man seeking female attention. He uses the ladies' watches as gifts to obtain their affection. Now I just have to prove it.”

Harry asks, “how are you going to do that?”

“Simple. I will place him under surveillance and see if the women he is with are wearing Carter watches. If so, I will interview the women to see if Mr. Minus gave the Carter watch to them. The watches have serial numbers on them. We just compare the watches the women are wearing with the stolen list.”

Harry says, “I am so glad we hired you.”

Sonny says, ‘tomorrow on, I will place Mr. Minus under surveillance with a female investigator I trained recently and see what happens. I will talk to you later, Buddy.’”

Jackie Foster is relaxing in her apartment when her telephone rings.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Jackie, Sonny here. Are you ready to place a man under surveillance for me?”

“Yes. It is an auto accident claim?”

Sonny says, “Nope. A theft of some watches. I want you to follow someone in the late afternoons and evenings to see if he meets up with women. If he does, I need you to check if the women are wearing a Carter watch.

If they are, chat them up to determine if my subject, Mr. Minus, gave them the watches. If so, the watches may be stolen. Flash your badge and check the serial numbers on the back of the watches. I will meet with you in an hour. I will provide you with the list of serial numbers.”

“Sounds exciting. See you in an hour at my place.”

Sonny drives over to Mr. Minus’s office. He is in his office on the telephone. Sonny takes his photo with his covert hidden key chain. Sonny then departs the building to meet up with Jackie.

Once at Jackie’s apartment, Sonny runs data on Mr. Minus to locate his residence and what vehicle he drives.

Sonny gives Jackie the covert keychain and says, “when you download the photo it will be of your subject. I just ran his data. He drives a blue in color Cadillac and lives at 47422 Flamingo Lane.

I do not need video of him until he is with a woman. Then I need to know if the woman is wearing a Carter watch. If so, check the serial number with our list of serial numbers from the stolen watches. If a match, confiscate the watch and give the woman a receipt, along with your business card. Tell the woman Carter Watch Corporation will give her a new watch within two days.”

Sonny returns to his home and takes a nap.

Four days go by before Sonny receives any news from Jackie.

“Hey, Boss. I have a ladies’ watch in my hands that matches the serial number from your stolen watch list. Can you meet me at the lady’s house that owns the watch?”

“Fantastic news Jackie. What is the address?”

“Come to 3419 Cowan Avenue. I will be waiting with your evidence.”

Sonny drives as fast as he can to 3419 Cowan Avenue. He knocks on the house door. Jackie opens the door.

“Hello Boss. Here is the watch in question and let me introduce you to Sally Evans.”

Sonny says to the woman, “How long have you know Mr. Minus?”

Sally replies, “A month or so now. Out of the blue, he gave me the stolen watch. I did not know the watch was stolen.”

“How do you know Mr. Minus?”

“I serve him breakfast every morning at the Café I work at.”

Sonny takes a statement from Sally and hands her his business card. I will contact you in two days to deliver to you a brand-new Carter watch. Do not contact Mr. Minus. If you do, then you will not receive a Carter watch.”

Sonny, Sally, and Jackie chat for a few more minutes before the investigators depart the area.

Once on the road, Sonny calls Jackie on her cell phone.

“I am paying you a bonus of five-hundred dollars for uncovering the watch for me.”

Jackie replies, “Thank you boss. I can use the money. Mr. Minus is a lonely man. He chatted up almost every woman he encountered.”

Sonny contacts Harry in Boston with the news of the recovered watch.

Harry says, “I am on the next flight from Boston to see you.”

That night, Harry knocks on Sonny’s door.

Sonny gives his friend, Sally’s statement, and the lady’s watch he uncovered.

Harry is incredibly happy and replies, “I cannot wait to see the face on Mr. Minus when I present him with the lady’s watch.”

The next morning at nine am sharp, Harry and Sonny show up at the Minus Corporation. A minute or so later they both are in the office of Mr. Minus.

Harry places the lady’s watch on his desk and says, “Read me the serial number, please. Mr. Minus does. Sonny then shows Mr. Minus the police report from a month ago.

“The serial number you just read aloud is the serial number of a lady’s watch that was stolen in a shipment of Carter watches last month. I have a statement from a Sally Evans that says you gave her the watch in question.”

Mr. Minus puts his head down on his desk and starts crying. “I just want to find a woman to love me. I am sorry I took the watches. I will pay back to Mr. Auch the three-hundred thousand dollars due him.

Harry turns his small tape recorder off that was in his suit pocket and says to Mr. Minus. “Call Mr. Auch in front of us and tell him what you just told us. That you will pay him the three-hundred thousand you owe him for the stolen watches.

Mr. Minus picks up his phone and dials a long-distance number. He says, “Can I speak with Mr. Auch? Tell him it is Mr. Minus in the states.”

32

THE STOLEN VEHICLE

“My client’s Cadillac has been stolen and I need your help in finding it,” says Attorney Mitch Naughton to his trusted private investigator.

Patrick Collins, a twenty-year veteran PI, reaches for a notepad and pen and says, “Start from the beginning. When and where did this theft occur?”

Attorney Naughton says, “My client is a doctor. He left his Cadillac at a garage for service. He goes back a week later thinking the Cadillac is ready. The manager tells him the Cadillac was taken by an ex-mechanic that they fired a few days earlier.”

Patrick says, “Did the doctor file a police report?”

Attorney Naughton laughs and replies, “Dr. Brexton did file a stolen vehicle police report. That was over four-months ago and still the Cadillac is missing.”

Patrick smirks and says, “What can I do. It has been four-months already. It must have been sold by now to a chop shop.”

The attorney says, “You have to do something. My client bugs me everyday and it is driving me nuts. Please give the doctor a call and at least act like you will help him.”

“Man, I get the strangest cases from you,” says Patrick. “Give me the doctor’s name and phone number. I will also need the case number the police department gave to your client. Oh, one more thing, I will need the name and address of the service garage.”

Attorney Naughton says, “Raise your rate fee on this one. The doctor is very wealthy. My client’s name is Doctor John Braxton, his cell phone number is 305-243-5774, the Miami Police case number is CD342-1. The service garage is named Zippy, and their address is 3429 West Pass Street.”

Patrick laughs and replies, “The garage needs to change its name. I will call your client as soon as we hang-up. I want a retainer of one-thousand dollars. I am charging you one-hundred-twenty an hour. My normal rate fee is ninety-an hour.”

Attorney Naughton says, “Your rate fee is fine with me. I will put the retainer check in the mail today. Just get my client off my back about his stupid Cadillac.”

Patrick asks, “If the doctor is so wealthy why does he care so much for this Cadillac? He can just go buy a new one.”

Attorney Naughton replies, “The Cadillac belonged to his late wife. He drives the car on weekends only, like she did. Just help my client find his Cadillac.”

Patrick laughs again and jokes, “Tell you what. I will locate the stolen car today.”

Attorney Naughton laughs and says, “That would be fantastic if you could find the stolen Cadillac today. Good luck and thanks again for taking this assignment.”

Patrick calls the doctor on his cell phone. He answers on the fifth ring.

“Hello, Doctor Braxton here.”

“Morning sir. My name is Patrick Collins. I am a private investigator. Attorney Mitch Naughton asked me to give you a call regarding a stolen Cadillac.”

“Thank you so much for calling me. I have been going nuts about my late wife’s pride and joy. I need to get her Cadillac back. I haven’t slept a wink since the Cadillac was stolen.”

Patrick asks, “What color is the Cadillac, and I will need the license plate number as well.”

“Blue is the color, and the license plate is Baby-One.”

“Do you know who your mechanic was at Zippy’s that serviced the Cadillac?”

“I have been going to him for years. His name is Juan Carlos. I cannot believe he quit the garage and stole my Cadillac.”

“I will start working your case as soon as we hang up. I called the garage, and the shop is open 24-7. My rate fee is one-hundred-twenty an hour.”

“I don’t care how much it cost me, just find the Cadillac for me.”

Patrick speaks with the doctor for a few more minutes before he hangs up.

Patrick drives over to the busy repair shop called Zippy. He goes inside to speak with the manager. An employee says his boss has left for the day.

Patrick flashes his gold badge like a detective does and says, “What is your name?”

“Eduardo”.

“Well Eduardo I am searching for Juan Carlos. I know he was fired from his job over four months ago. Can you gather the other employees for me? I will ask you all the same questions.”

Eduardo calls the other three mechanics to come to him. They stop working on their cars and walk over.

Patrick says, “I am a detective. I am searching for Juan Carlos. He left in a blue Cadillac that was not his. The owner of the car, a doctor, filed a stolen car report. I am just trying to locate the vehicle. I do not care about arresting your friend. Do any of you know where Juan Carlos lives?”

The men all shake their heads from side-to-side.

“Have any of you been to his residence?”

Eduardo says, “I have been but that was a long time ago.”

Patrick asks, “Can you give me directions to his residence?”

“No, but I think I can take you to the neighborhood we went to. He went home that day to retrieve some tools. I went for the ride. I remember the house was two-stories and sat back from the street. We

drove for a few minutes after we turned off from the main road. That is all I can remember.”

Patrick says, “Get in my car and show me the neighborhood. I will then take you right back to the garage.”

Eduardo says something in Spanish to the other employees before entering Patrick’s car.

Patrick says, “Show me the neighborhood, please.”

Eduardo gives the detective the directions to the neighborhood of Juan Carlos. “This is the area, I think. The house could also be across the main road to the right as well. It has been six-months or more since I rode with him.”

Patrick drives Eduardo back to the garage.

“Thank you, Eduardo, for helping me. I will now drive thru the neighborhoods looking for Juan Carlos’s house and the blue Cadillac.”

Patrick stops first at McDonalds for lunch before driving to the area of Juan Carlos. Patrick first goes to the right off the main road and drives the many residential streets but has no luck in finding Juan Carlos’s residence or the blue Cadillac.

Patrick then tries the left side of the highway.

The doctor calls Patrick’s cell phone.

“I hope you can find the Cadillac for me.”

Patrick says, “I am searching different neighborhoods now. I spoke to the employees at the garage. One man named Eduardo had been to Juan Carlos’s residence about six-months ago. Eduardo showed me a residential area that he believes Juan Carlos might reside

in. It is a shot in the dark, but all I can do today is search different neighborhoods for your blue Cadillac.”

The two men talk a little longer before they hang-up.

Patrick drives really slow down each residential street. He looks left and right as he drives. Fifteen minutes into his search, Patrick spots the blue Cadillac. The car is up on jacks in the front yard. The license plate is Baby-1. The house is two-story and sits way back off the street, just like Eduardo remembered.

Patrick contacts the doctor.

“I found your blue Cadillac with the license plate of Baby-1. Please write this address down. Tell me when you are ready to write.”

The Doctor keeps telling Patrick thank you for finding his blue Cadillac. The doctor says’ I am ready to write.”

“Go to the police station with your case number of CD342-1 and tell them your private investigator located the stolen Cadillac. The address is 629 Cedar Lane. The Cadillac is on jacks in the front yard. Go with the police to the residence. Do not go by yourself. It looks to me like Juan Carlos was planning to repair your car but ran out of money to do so. I am finished. I will be mailing an invoice for my services to Attorney Naughton.”

Doctor Braxton says, “Please add a bonus to your invoice. I am so happy you found my late wife’s car.”

Patrick is on his way home when he receives a phone call.

“Hello?”

“Patrick, how in the hell did you locate my client’s blue Cadillac so fast?”

Patrick laughs and replies, “I am not telling.”

James Paul Ellison

33

DO NOT TAKE DANNY

Gerald Hawk enters his favorite restaurant and finds a seat in the crowded joint. His favorite, cute, young waitress walks up to his table.

“How is the private investigative business, Gerald?”

“It is slow right now. How are your tips, Brenda?”

“It is slow right now,” she laughs. “What can I get you to drink?”

“A large coke with no ice.”

Francis Moore, the owner of Beaches Restaurant walks up to Gerald and asks, “Can you come to my back office once you finish your meal? I have a job for you.”

Gerald asks, “Can you tell me what your case is about?”

“My daughter has a major problem regarding her upcoming divorce over custody of her young son.”

Gerald has a nice steak dinner and a piece of apple pie for dessert. Brenda walks by Gerald’s table.

“Brenda, can I have my check, please.”

“Per the owner, your meal is on the house.”

Gerald leaves Brenda a twenty-dollar tip and walks to the back office. Sitting at her desk doing paperwork is Francis Moore. Gerald knocks and waits for permission to enter.

Francis motions for the private investigator to enter and points to a leather chair.

Gerald sits down and says, "I appreciate the free meal. That was unexpected. Why do you need my services for?"

"My daughter, Cindy, is in a bitter divorce. Her husband is from Iran and she is afraid he will fly back to his country with Danny, age four." They share custody and Armeen has him every other weekend. The final court judgement on who will end up with my grandson is this coming Monday at 2 pm."

"Where does Armeen reside, and do you have a photograph of him?"

Francis opens her wallet up and hands a photo of Armeen to Gerald.

"Where does Armeen reside and what kind of vehicle does he drive?"

Francis says, "Armeen resides in a big two-story house located at 2467 Beach Boulevard. He drives a brown SUV. I think the license plate is Professor-34. He is a professor at the University of Miami."

"What is Armeen's last name?"

"My son-in-law's last name is Arbab, which means Boss or Master."

"Does Armeen get your grandson, Danny, this weekend?"

“Yes. That is why I need your services. This is Thursday evening, so I am happy we found time to get together. I left a voicemail on your home office answering machine earlier.”

“I play my messages only when I get home.”

“What is your rate fee?”

“For you, since you are my mom’s best friend, I will only charge you fifty-dollars an hour. This case has to be 24/7 since he can split at any hour with Danny.”

“Where is the location where Armeen will pick Danny up at?”

“He picks Danny up at five pm on Friday at my daughter’s residence, 3229 Laura Avenue. He drops Danny back off to my daughter’s at 8 am on Monday morning.

I just want piece of mine knowing Danny will not be leaving the country with him.”

“What are the numbers for your house phone and your cell phone?”

“My house phone is 305-458-9872 and my cell phone is 305-326-7541.”

“I will do a pre-surveillance check today to make sure Armeen is home and what he is driving.” Please do not contact me. I will contact you when I have some news. Does Armeen have a new woman in his life?”

“I believe he does. I think the woman is one of his students at the University.”

Gerald says goodbye and drives to his home office. He runs data on Armeen. The data shows no criminal record. Gerald calls a good friend in Customs.

“Hey Kory, can you do a background check on a man that might flee back to Iran in the next few days with his child, Danny, age four. He is in a custody dispute with his ex-wife.”

Kory says, “Sure, but I need a favor from you as well.”

Gerald asks, “What favor is that Buddy?”

“I need a woman to fall in love with me. You have many secretares that work in law firms. I want you to talk about me. Show the women my photo. I will give you a photograph of me. I am forty-years old, and I am not getting any younger. I do not want to visit those on-line dating sites. Those sites are bad news most of the time.”

Gerald laughs at the request but says, “For you Kory, I will do it as soon as I receive your photograph.”

“What is the man’s name and where does he reside?”

“His name is Armeen Arbab, and he lives at 2467 Beach Boulevard. I want to know the last time he left our country and where he went to.”

“Give me 24-hours. Your cell phone number still the same?”

“Yes.”

Kory says, “I will call you soon. Take care Gerald.”

Francis calls her daughter.

“Hi Honey. I hired a private investigator to watch Armeen this weekend. Gerald has my cell number in case Armeen heads to an

airport. Do you really believe your ex-husband will flee this weekend with Danny?”

“Yes, I do. He knows the courts rule for the mother of the child ninety-five percent of the time. I am a good mother, and the courts know it.”

“Cindy, what worries me is your claim that Armeen touched Danny in a sexual way. Why did you make that up? Armeen is a great father, and he loves Danny very much. The jury may not believe your claim.”

Cindy says, “I lied because I want to be sure I win custody.”

Francis replies, “We just have to wait for the court ruling at 2 pm on Monday.”

Francis and Cindy talk a few more minutes before saying goodbye.

Gerald drives over to Armeen’s residence for his pre-surveillance.

Gerald stops down the road from the neighborhood entrance for Armeen and places cell-testing signs on his vehicle doors. The signs allows him to blend in better. The residence is on the water overlooking the bay. The residence is two-story with a 2-car garage on the left side.

A young man is mowing the front yard. No vehicles are observed in the circular driveway. Gerald looks around for a place to wait for activity from Armeen when he starts his surveillance.

Nine houses down the street from Armeen's sits the house Gerald wants to sit at. Gerald spots an elderly couple sitting on their front porch as he pulls up into their driveway. The private investigator opens his glove box and removes a cell testing flyer.

Gerald walks up to the elderly couple with a smile.

"Afternoon Folks. I need your help. My company performs cell testing to help improve your reception when using your cell phone. I am required to sit in a driveway and not on the street. Here is our cell-testing flyer explaining everything.

How is your cell phone reception?"

The old man says, "It stinks. I have to be outside most of the time to talk with my children."

Gerald lies and says, "In a few months our company will be finished with a taller cell tower. Your cell reception will then improve for sure. Can I sit in your driveway for a few days, starting now? I do not get out of my vehicle."

The old man replies, "You can sit in my driveway anytime young man, any time."

Gerald asks, "What are your names? My name is Gerald."

The old man says, "I am Rick, and this is my wife, Susan. We have been together fifty-five years next month."

"That is a long time to be together, Folks. I come from divorced parents. They lasted ten years."

Gerald talks to the elder man for ten more minutes before returning to his vehicle. The private investigator is happy he found his

surveillance spot to sit. Now he will blend in better while sitting and waiting for activity from Armeen.

Gerald is sitting in his vehicle for about two hours when Armeen drives by in his brown Toyota SUV toward his residence. He has a young female as his passenger. Gerald departs the area after confirming Armeen's address and vehicle.

The next day at four-thirty pm, Gerald waits at a gas station close to Cindy's house. He does not have to wait long. Armeen in his Toyota SUV drives into her neighborhood with a young female passenger.

A short time later, Armeen departs Cindy's neighborhood.

Cindy calls Gerald on his cell phone.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Gerald. This is Cindy. Armeen just picked my son up."

"I know he did. I was down the street when he drove by. Why did your mother give you my cell phone number? I told Francis I would call her when I had any news. Please do not call me. I may be in the bushes watching Armeen and you calling may blow my cover."

Cindy replies, "I am sorry. My mother did not tell me I could not call you. I will not bother you anymore. I am just on pins and needles that is all."

Gerald says, "I promise I have to hang up now. I want to focus on my job. I will contact you right away if anything happens regarding your son."

Gerald follow Armeen to a McDonald's drive-in, a gas station, then back to his own residence on Beach Boulevard. Gerald then pulls into the driveway at 2391 and waves to Rick and Susan sitting on their front porch.

Gerald calls a fellow pi that is self-employed and always looking for work.

“Hi Tony. This is Gerald Hawk, how is it going with cases?”

Tony says, “Why do you always introduce yourself? Don't you know I know your voice by now? It has only been two years.”

Gerald laughs and says, “It is out of habit, I guess. I have a rush case I am working and wanted to know if you wanted some hours.”

“Of course,” says Tony. “Where at, and what are my work hours?”

“You can relieve me at 2391 Beach Boulevard. This is a single-story residence owned by an elderly couple named Rick and Susan. Place cell-testing signs on your car before you arrive. The couple thinks we are cell testers, so play the part. How about you work from nine pm to six am starting tonight. Do the same hours on Saturday and Sunday night as well.?”

“What am I being paid an hour this time?”

“I am giving you twenty-seven hours of work. I will pay you thirty-five dollars an hour. I am charging my client just fifty an hour.”

“I will be there at nine pm tomorrow night. Why are you only charging fifty n hour instead of one-hundred an hour like you normally do?”

“My client is a friend of my mom’s. I will explain what the case is about when you come to relieve me tomorrow night. What color and make of a vehicle are you driving?”

Tony says, “I am driving a Ford F150, black in color.”

“Good to know. I will see you later tonight.”

Gerald exits his vehicle and walks up to Rick and Susan still sitting on their front porch.

“Evening, Rick and Susan. My relief is named Tony, and he drives a black in color Ford F150. Our boss says we need to be out here 24/7 starting tomorrow night till Monday morning at 8 am.”

Rick laughs and says, “You must be a rich young man working all those hours.”

Gerald laughs at the old man’s comments and says, “I am a poor working stiff.”

Rick says, “We have no problems with Tony sitting in our driveway.”

Gerald says, “I will see you Folks tomorrow then”. Gerald enters his vehicle and departs the neighborhood.

Cindy is a nervous wreck after waking up Friday morning. She worries her Ex will take Danny away from her this weekend. Cindy is also worried about the final court ruling on which parent will receive

custody. Cindy only has coffee for breakfast. She is in no mood for a meal.

Later that day, Cindy takes her son Danny to the park to let him play with other children. A good friend walks over and asks, “How is your child custody case going, Cindy?”

“The final ruling is on Monday at 2 pm,” Tina.”

Tina sees that Cindy is worried about the final court ruling and says, “If there is anything I can do for you, just call.”

Gerald is sitting at a strip mall parking lot located next to the entrance of Cindy’s neighborhood. The time is 4:40 pm.

At 5:10 pm Gerald observes Armeen in his brown Toyota SUV drive into the neighborhood. A few minutes later Gerald observes Armeen exiting the neighborhood with Danny in a booster chair.

Gerald and Rick take turns all weekend watching Armeen’s residence. On Monday morning Gerald calls his client.

“Morning Francis. Let me give you an update with what Armeen did with your grandson over the weekend. Armeen departed four times. Every morning he drove alone to McDonalds and back.

On Saturday and Sunday, Armeen would take long walks in his neighborhood with an unknown female and your grandson, Danny. Armeen never drove to the airport. He seems very relaxed and was smiling and laughing while on his walks. Armeen just dropped Danny off at your daughter’s house. This ends my assignment.”

Francis says, “Thank you for watching Armeen for me this weekend. My daughter is going crazy with this child custody issue.

Armeen has been in Iran the past few months. He only returned two weeks ago.

His lawyer and my lawyer get along fine. I see no problems at all with the custody issue. Armeen's lawyer already said that his client is happy with the every-other weekend visitation. I will be glad when this whole thing is behind me."

Gerald says, "Let me know what the ruling is today. I am going to my office to write my report and to make my invoice to you."

At one pm, Cindy drops her son off at her mother's and heads to the courthouse.

The courtroom is empty except for the Judge, his female clerk, the two lawyers, and Armeen and Cindy. The hearing last just twenty-minute. Cindy exits the courtroom crying. She calls her mother.

"Mom, the judge ruled that Armeen is to have full custody of my son. I can have him every other weekend. Armeen is driving over to your residence to pick up Danny. He will then come to my house to pick up Danny's clothes and toys. A policeman will be with him the whole time."

Two Months Later

Gerald turns on his television to watch the local six pm news. The announcer says, "We have breaking news. Cindy Arbab kidnapped her son this morning. She cleaned out her clothes and other personal effects and disappeared. The woman left her Ex a note, taped to the fridge door. We do not have the full details of the note, but our

sources claim Cindy Arbab said to her Ex, you will never see Danny again.”

Gerald calls Francis on her cell phone but it goes straight to voicemail. Gerald leaves a message.

“Francis, this is Gerald. Call me please. I was just watching the 6 pm news. Your daughter is on the run with Danny.”

Forty minutes later Francis calls the private investigator back.

“Hi Gerald. The FBI just left my residence. I have the news media camped out on my lawn and I am a nervous wreck right now.”

Gerald asks, “Do you want me to come over and keep you company?”

“Will you please?”

“I am on my way. Do you need anything from the store?”

“Just milk.”

“So where did Cindy go with her son?”

“I can trust you not to say anything, right?”

“Of course.”

“My daughter went underground. She is in contact with a group that hides mothers and their children from the police.”

Three Years Later

Cindy is still on the run with her son.

34

THE EIGHTEEN PHOTOS

Private Investigator Steven Connors arrives at Region's Bank to make a deposit. While walking through the lobby he hears a voice calling his name. It is the manager, a Peggy Wilson waving her hands for him to come over.

Steven walks over and says, "Afternoon Peggy, how are you and your family doing?"

Peggy says, "Sit down for a moment please, Steven. I have a big favor to ask of you."

The private investigator takes a seat in a leather chair next to her desk.

"My younger brother just got out of the Army and is living with me and my family. I need to find him a job and then move him to a trailer, where the rent is low. Can you hire him and train him to be a surveillance investigator with your pi agency?"

"What is his first name?"

"Billy Joe.

"I am about to expand my services to my insurance and lawyer clients. I currently offer background checks, locates, and surveillances. I will now offer them investigations. Have Billy Joe call my cell

phone. I will meet him for coffee somewhere and we will talk about a job. If Billy interviews well, I will hire and train him to be an investigator with my agency.”

Peggy says, “Thank you for getting me out of a jam. My brother was slowly driving me nuts just sitting around my house doing nothing.”

Steven replies, “I may need a small business loan if my new investigative business gets off the ground.”

Peggy winks and says, “Steven, you are pre-approved for a small business loan with Regions Bank.”

Peggy and Steven shake hands

“By the way, how old is Billy Joe?”

“My brother is twenty-five.”

Later in the afternoon Steven receives a telephone call on his cell phone.

“Hello, this is Steven.”

“Good Afternoon, sir. My name is Billy Joe and my sister said for me to call you about a job.”

“Yes, Billy Joe, I own a large private investigative agency here in Gulfport. We cover all of the State of Mississippi for lawyers and insurance companies. I am opening a new investigative business. Let us meet over some coffee and I will tell you more.”

“Where do you want to meet, Sir?”

“Let us get together at the McDonalds on Kory Avenue next to the courthouse. Meet it at six pm tonight. Will that work for you?”

“Yes, Sir. I will see you then. How will we know each other?”

Steven says, “I will be wearing a black t-shirt with my camera logo on it. I will be wearing a black baseball cap too.”

Billy Joe replies, I will be wearing a white shirt and blue jeans.”

“See you at six pm then, Billy Joe.”

Steven arrives at the meeting site early and has a cup of coffee while he finishes his paperwork on his last assignment. Ten minutes later a man is standing in front of him wearing a white shirt. Steven looks up, smiles, and says, “You must be Billy Joe.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Please quit calling me Sir. Call me Steven. When you call me Sir, it makes me feel like an old man. Have a seat, Billy Joe.”

Billy Joe sits down and asks, “How do you know my sister?”

“I do business with her every day when I make my bank deposits from my agency. She wants to help you find a job.”

“I can find a job on my own. I just have been lazy since leaving the Army.”

“What type of work did you do in the Army?”

“I was a cook. I want to do something else now, what type of work I do not know.”

Steven says, “I am starting a new division in my private investigative agency. Till now I offered my clients background checks, locates and surveillances. Now I will offer them investigations. I train my own people. I do not hire anyone else.

Since your sister wants to help you and I want to help your sister I will make you my first investigator. I will pay you fifteen an hour to train and once trained I will pay you twenty-five an hour.”

“How long is my training?”

“It will depend on how fast you can catch on. It may be only a week or a month, I do not know. I get calls all the time for clients wanting something done for them. I will be glad once you are trained, Billy Joe. You can be my extra pair of legs. The main thing I look for is someone that can listen to my instructions.”

“That is easy for me, Steven. In the Army you had to listen to your commanders.”

“I also need honesty and trust. There is no need to lie around me.”

“I am ready to start if you are willing to hire me.”

Steven says, “I will give you a ninety-day probation period starting right now. You are on the clock at fifteen an hour when you are with me. I will call you in the morning on where to meet. You will follow me in your vehicle all day. Tell me your cell phone number and type of vehicle you drive.”

“I drive a white in color Honda Civic and my cell phone number is (228) 437-2559.”

Steven puts Billy Joe’s cell phone number into his own cell phone and says, “Now add my cell number which is (228) 224-7659.”

Billy Joe asks, “What make, model, and color vehicle will you be driving tomorrow?”

“I will be operating a blue Toyota Camry.”

Over the next two-weeks Steven teaches Billy Joe the investigative business. Steven teaches his recruit how to interview and take statements, take photographs, and how to write a detailed report.

Steven says, “I believe you are ready for your first assignment on your own.”

Billy Joe rubs his hands together and replies, “I am so ready.”

Steven says, “Good. Write my instructions down on your first assignment.

Contact a Mr. William Green at 2937 Oak Lane in Gulfport. Tell him you work for his lawyer, a Mr. John Miller, and you are calling him to come over to his residence to take some photographs.

Mr. Green’s phone number is (228) 224-8731. When you arrive at his residence, hand him my business card. This case is an auto accident case. So, I need you to take 24-photographs of him from all sides. Use a neutral wall. Make sure Mr. Green is not smiling as he is supposed to be in pain. If he was issued any medical devices for his injuries, then have them in the photos as well.”

Billy Joe asks, “What are Mr. Green’s injuries?”

Steven says, “His neck, back and right leg. I need 24-photos of Mr. Green’s damaged car. Start with his license plate, then walk around the entire vehicle and snap a photo of each car panel. End the photos back on the license plate.

Then deposit the film at Bob’s Camera Shop on Miller Road. Tell the employee to bill my account. Wait at Bob’s for the finished

photos. I want 48 total photos all 4 x 6 size. When you are all done, call my cell. We will meet, so I can collect the 48 photos from you to issue to my client in the morning. Now repeat to me my instructions.”

“I am to meet with Mr. Green, snap 24-photos of him, make sure he is not smiling and make sure his medical devices are in the photographs. Then locate Mr. Green’s damaged vehicle and take 24-photographs of the car. Start and end on his license plate and snap each car panel. Take the 48 photos to Bob’s Camera Shop to be developed, all 4-6 size. Wait for the finished photographs, then meet up with you to hand over the photographs.”

Steven says, “That is correct. Good luck.”

Steven contacts his client and confirms his agency is taking the 48 photographs today.

Five hours later Billy Joe calls his boss and says, “I am all done. Where are you?”

“Meet me at College Park on Tate Street. I am finishing some paperwork.”

Thirty minutes later Billy Joe pulls alongside his boss and says, “I saved you some money. I took 18 photographs. I just finished using the film roll with my son’s birthday party on it.”

Steven is shocked at what he was just told by his recruit. “You blew your assignment young man. I wanted a total of 48-photographs, 24 of the victim and 24 of his damaged car. Because you used your son’s birthday party film roll to do my case, the defense side in court will put you on the stand. The insurance defense lawyer will then show

the jury your son's birthday party photographs. Go home. I will call you in the morning."

Steven calls his client and gets the lawyer's voicemail message. Steven says, "My photographs did not come out on Mr. Green. I will take them in the morning, and I will drop them off to you in the afternoon."

The next morning at 9 am Steven calls Peggy over at Regions Bank.

"Morning Peggy, "I can not use your brother's services. I trained him for two-weeks and gave him his first assignment yesterday. He was to snap a total of 48 photographs. 24 photos of the victim and 24 photographs of his damaged car, get the 48 photos developed and drop the package off to me. Guess how many photographs I received from Billy Joe?"

Peggy says, "My brother handed over 48 photographs just like you requested."

"Wrong. I received 18 photographs. The rest of the pictures were of his son's birthday party. He pulled up to me yesterday in the late afternoon and said, "I saved you some money. I requested a total of 48 photographs from your brother and I received 18 photographs. Your brother is untrainable. I just cannot believe he did not follow my instructions. I requested 48 photographs and your brother hands me only 18 photographs."

James Paul Ellison

35

THE STEAM ROLLER

Charles Young was only fourteen years old when he died behind the Cinema complex, while waiting for his father to pick him and his five friends up after the movie ended.

The young boys were bored from waiting over an hour for their ride home. Adam, the youngest of the group said to Charles, “Where is your father. I have to get home?”

Charles shrugged his shoulders and replied, “I do not know. He is not answering our home phone.”

“Why didn’t you bring your cell phone with you tonight, Charles, one of the group members asked?”

“I do not know. I guess I forgot when I was getting ready. I will keep borrowing your cell phone Adam to call my father till he answers.”

While waiting for Charles’s dad, the boys went behind the cinema complex to see what was there. The time was six pm. A paving company left some of their machinery parked overnight from a paving assignment. The boys started climbing all over the equipment.

Adam somehow got the steam roller machine started. The boys took turns operating the machine, while the other five boys rode on the

machine. The group of boys were having lots of fun doing so. Charles jumped off the steam roller, but his pants leg got caught on a part of the machinery. The steam roller accidentally rode over his young body.

The other boys ran back to the front of the cinema complex looking for help. Adam ran inside the Cinema building and spotted an employee cleaning up the lobby. "Please call an ambulance. My friend is hurt behind your building. He was jumping off the steam roller machine and it rolled over him."

Detective Randy White of the Gulfport Police Department, age forty-six, was eating dinner at home with his wife and two twin sons, when the call came in over his police radio, "Unit eight, take a possible forty-five over at King's Cinema Complex located at 4597 Cinema Road."

The detective acknowledged his dispatcher, took another bite of his meatloaf, and stood up from the dining table. His wife asked, "What is a forty-five signal again, Honey?"

Detective White said while putting on his suit jacket, "A forty-five signal means a death occurred. Save me the meatloaf. I will finish it when I get back." The detective gives a kiss to his wife, then departs for his forty-five's location."

Brandon Young wakes up from his alcohol induced nap and looks at his watch. He is shocked to see it is 7 pm. Brandon calls his son's cell phone, but it starts ringing in Charles's bedroom. Brandon washes his face and dashes out his front door.

Brandon arrives at the cinema complex to discover many police cars with their blue lights on and yellow evidence tape across the parking lot. A policeman stops him from going any further.

“This is a crime scene, sir, you may not go any further.”

“I am here to big up my child. He is fourteen years old; his name is Charles Young.”

“Please wait here. “I am having an officer come to you to explain what is going on.”

Detective White arrives at the accident scene. He is shown the body under the tarp. The officer says, “The deceased is Charles Young, age fourteen. The steam roller next to him, crushed his body when he jumped off the running machine. A part of his pants leg got caught on the machine when he jumped off. His five friends are in the lobby of the cinema.”

Detective White enters the lobby of the cinema house. A female police officer directs him to the five young men sitting in chairs crying.

“Boys’ My name is Detective White. I am sorry for the loss of your friend. Can anyone of you tell me what happened?”

Adam raises his hand and says, “We finished watching the movie and waited out front for Charles’s father to pick us up. We waited over an hour, but his dad never showed up. We were bored so we went behind the building to see what was there.

We found several construction machines, so we all started climbing on and off of them. I got the steam roller to start and...”

Detective White stops the young man from finishing his story and asks, "How did you get the steam roller started?"

"I pulled on a handle several times and pushed a big black button, and the steam roller started."

"You did not need a key?"

"No sir. The steam roller just started."

"What is your name, young man?"

"I am Adam Rodgers."

"Well Adam where are your parents at?"

The policewoman standing next to the detective says, "All five parents are being held in Cinema number one. We let them in via the back door."

Detective White asks the policewoman, "Do you have the five boy's information?"

"Yes, Sir I do. I have their names, ages, addresses and home phone numbers."

"I will speak to their parents. Then we will release the boys to go home."

Detective White turns to the young men and says, "I am so sorry for the loss of your friend. In a few minutes I will release you to your parents. Do not talk to anyone about how this accident happened. I will contact each of you soon to find out what you know. Here is my detective card."

Detective White hands each crying boy his business card.

“I will go speak to your parents now. They are being held in Cinema number one.”

Detective White enters cinema number one to find the parents sitting in chairs and being guarded by a policeman.

“Evening everyone. My name is Detective White. I am in charge of this death case. I just spoke to your sons and advised them not to speak with anyone. I will be out to your homes tomorrow sometime to interview them in detail of the events of tonight.

The young men are in shock right now. Please do not ask your son any questions. Here is what I know so far. Charles Young’s dad dropped the boys off to see a movie. He was to pick them up two hours later but never showed. Why I do not know yet.

The boys went exploring while waiting to be picked up. The boys found construction equipment in the rear of the cinema. The boys started climbing all over the machinery. Adam somehow got the steam roller going and the boys took turns driving the steam roller around the rear parking lot.

One boy drove while the others rode on the machine. When Charles Young went to jump off, his clothing got caught on the machine. The steam roller than ran over the young man, killing him instantly. That is all I know so far.

Please come up and take my business card. Then go to the lobby and pick your child up. Make sure the police officer has your names, addresses and home phone numbers before leaving this room. I will be in touch with you sometime tomorrow.”

Detective White exits out the back door of cinema one and walks to the crime scene. A police officer walks up and says, “Sir, the deceased boy’s father is in the front parking lot being detained by Officer Wilkins.”

Detective White walks to the front of the building and over to Officer Wilkins. Standing next to him was a middle-aged man.

Detective White asks, “Are you Charles Young’s father?”

“Yes, I am. Where is my son? He didn’t do anything wrong has he?”

“No. I have no easy way to tell you this, but your son is deceased. He was riding on a steam roller machine and when he went to jump off, his clothing got caught on the machine and it crushed him. I am sorry for your loss.”

Brandon Young starts crying. He asked, “Can I go see my son’s body?”

Detective White says, “Come with me. You have to I.D. your son anyway. May I ask your first name?”

“My name is Brandon. I overslept. I work two jobs to support Charles and I.”

Detective White says, “I am assigning an officer to stay with you for the next few days. If there is anything you need the officer will make sure you, have it. You will ride back with the officer to your house. Another officer will drive your car home. May I have your car keys please?”

Brandon replies, “My cat keys are in the ignition.”

Detective White escorts Brandon over to a body under a dark tarp. Before he lifts the tarp, the detective says, “I have to show you the body. I need a positive identification. Are you ready, can you handle this?”

Brandon nods his head up and down. Detective White lifts the tarp. Brandon kneels down over the body and says, “This is my son,” and starts crying.

The news media shows up in a van. Detective White tells an officer nearby, “Get the media out of here.”

Brandon cries for a long time. Detective White says, “I need to take you to the police station.”

The two men then leave the crime scene.

Three Weeks Later

Detective White knocks on his commander’s door.

“Come in,” says Commander Anderson.

Detective White enters and places in front of his boss a large file. “Sir, here is my final report on the Charles Young Investigation. This case was a hard one to work for me. I have twin boys, age twelve.”

The commander says, “Yes, it must have been difficult to work. Can you save me some time right now and high lite what your findings were?”

Detective White replies: The steam rolling machine had no key starter. To start the machine all someone had to do was pull on a choke a few times and hit the starter button.

The paving company stated they ordered a starting system, but the manufacture sent the wrong one. So, their mechanics rigged up a simple starting system for their drivers.

The paving equipment company requires all their machinery be brought to their work yard on a daily basis. The work yard on this assignment was only two miles away. The supervisor, since fired, went to a bar with his men instead. If the work crew had done their job and returned the machinery to the work yard, the young man would be alive today.

The paving company is now being sued by the cinema complex and by the deceased boy's father. I just received a subpoena for my deposition in this matter. The paving company was contracted by the shopping mall to repave the back parking lot after a few water pipes were repaired.

A security guard hired by the cinema left his post and went shopping at the mall for a gift for his wife. The guard company is being sued by the cinema complex, the shopping mall, and the paving company. They all claim this accident would have been avoided if the guard remained on post. Part of his security job was to patrol the parking lots.

This will be one big civil lawsuit. I see myself being subpoenaed by everyone, not just for my upcoming deposition but also

for the civil trial. So, sir, can you reduce my case workload for a few months?”

The commander says, “Nope. You are my best investigator. That is why you were assigned the steam roller case.”

James Paul Ellison

36

THE DISHONEST EMPLOYEES

Alex Nettles, age forty-four owns several small businesses in Miami, Florida. He leaves his CPA's office with troubling news. His two businesses are not making him any money. His accountant, Tom Burton, shows him the books and says to him, "You are losing money. I believe your employees are stealing from you."

Alex asks, "How are you so sure it is my employees and not other factors like food cost or labor cost?"

Tom Burton says, "You have no revenue coming in, yet you tell me you have been busy all year with customers. I am telling you, Alex, the cause has to be your employees. I would hire a private investigator to find out for sure if it is your employees or not."

"Do you know of any honest private investigator I can contact?"

"Yes, Alex I do. One of my clients is a private investigator. He tells me many stories of dishonest employees he has uncovered when he comes in to see me. Here is his cell phone number. Give him a call and mention I am the one that provided you with his information."

Alex asks, "What is his name?"

Tom Burton laughs and says, “That would help. His name is Tyler Conroy. He has been a client for three years.”

Alex sits in his red Mustang and dials the private investigator’s number.

“Hello? This is Tyler.”

“Hello, Tyler. My name is Alex Nettles, and I was given your name by your CPA, a Mr. Tom Burton.”

“Thanks for calling me, Tyler. What can I do for you today?”

“I own a put-put golf course called, ‘A Hole in One’ on Dickens Street and I took over a small cinema tri-plex when my late father passed away. The Tri-plex is called, ‘The Old Cinema House’, and it is located on Brandon Court. My CPA says I am losing money and he believes it is from dishonest employees.”

Tyler laughs and says, “I bet the CPA is correct. I found too many thieves in the last five years, and almost all were employees.”

“Really?”

Tyler replies, Really. My last case involved a Kentucky Fried Chicken Store. It turns out an employee was ripping the owner off for over two years. The employee’s, first name is Gerald.

His plan was simple. He worked the cashier station for the drive-up. All he had to do was bring plenty of change to work. When a customer drove-up and ordered a meal, the thief was ready.

He took their order and when they pulled up to pay, he would give the customer the correct amount to pay. Instead of opening the

cash register to complete the transaction, he would, reach in his pocket and give the customer the correct amount of change due them.

The employee then pockets the customer's payment for their food into his own pocket. Now do the math. He takes money from fifty customers and makes ten dollars on each customer's transaction, works out to five-hundred dollars a night. Do this five nights a week for a year and you have one-hundred twenty-five thousand dollars my friend."

"Wow. How did you catch him?"

Tyson says, "Not only did the owner lose money each night, but he also lost the food going out the door to the paying customers. His new CPA noticed the store owner was buying too much food supply, and his revenue was way down. So, the store owner hired me.

I installed a hidden camera to watch the cash register transactions. We did that for a week and gathered all the evidence we needed to prosecute him."

"What happened to the employee that was dishonest?"

"He is doing one year in prison. The good thing for me is, I receive life-time free meals from the client in exchange for my services."

"So, you barter?"

"Yes, I do. Why not? Long as the business operates, I collect. Not a bad deal."

"Will you barter with me, too?"

"Yes. I love put-put golf and going to the movies."

“So how will you help me catch my dishonest employees?”

“Simple, I will have my brother go in during closing hours to install a hidden camera to watch the cash registers. The camera feed will go to your smart phone and home computer. This way you can watch at any time. I will have my own feed as well. We will gather the evidence to fire the dishonest employees and to prosecute if you want.”

“I only want to fire them, no jail time.”

Tyson laughs and says, “Alright, no jail time for the dishonest employees.”

It was just after midnight when Tyler’s brother, Bobby, and his crew arrived at the Hole in One Golf Course. Bobby walks up to Tyler and Alex and says, “We will be out of your hair by five am. I will show you how to view the cameras from a distance. Think of a password for access. I will be back to ask you for the password when I am finished installing all the hardware.”

Bobby gives his brother a hug, then enters the small building.

Tyson says to Alex, “You hungry? Let us go get us something to eat.”

Over coffee and pancakes Tyler asks, “Do you like the put-put business?”

“Hell no. I am selling the dame thing. I have a real estate agent, just no sign in front of the business. I am selling the cinema house as well. I plan to move to Alaska and live there.”

“Why Alaska?”

“I like the cold. I plan to buy a log cabin in the woods and just hunt and fish. I have enough money set aside to retire at age forty-four.”

Tyler laughs at that answer. “Not me. I like the heat. I have never been to a cold weather state.”

The two men talk for almost an hour. They are on their seventh cup of coffee when Bobby calls his brother.

“I am all finished. Where are you?”

“We are having coffee at Adam’s Steak House. They serve breakfast twenty-four hours a day. I love their coffee. Our waitress is cute, too.”

“I am coming over. Order me an egg breakfast, please.”

Ten minutes later Bobby joins his brother and Alex at their corner booth.

“That was fast, brother. You must have been flying in your car.”

“I was. There is hardly any traffic, and the cops are at Dunkin Donuts or sleeping somewhere.”

Tyler and Alex laugh at Bobby’s answer.”

Bobby hands Alex his invoice for the cameras being installed. I reduced my hourly fee because of my brother. I will meet you at your Old Cinema House tomorrow night at midnight.”

A cute blonde waitress walks over and serves Bobby his meal.

“Miss., Can I get my breakfast to go, please?”

The three men talk for a few more minutes before they all exit the restaurant and depart the area.

The next night, Alex and Tyler are standing by their vehicles waiting for Bobby and their crew to arrive.

Tyler asks, “How much are you selling your put-put business for?”

“I am asking only three-hundred thousand for my eighteen-hole golf course. I own the small building and the acre of land the course sits on. The new owner can be an owner and hire a manager to run the operation.”

“You mean an honest manager, right?”

Alex laughs and nods his head yes.

“On a good year, how much could one make after employee salaries and other cost to run the business?”

“I made on average between fifty and one-hundred thousand a year.”

“I will talk to my brother, Bobby, about going into business with me. I can own and manage it, no problem. I will go out and market the business, too.”

“I never did market the put-put; I hate getting in front of people.”

“Not me, I can talk and talk.”

Bobby calls his brother and asks to speak with Alex.

“Alex, what will your password be for both businesses?”

“Dishonest One,” replies Alex.

“I will be at your establishment in fifteen minutes. I am bringing with me an extra work crew to help me tonight. I want to be out of there by 11 am.”

Later that day, Alex is sitting at his house dining room table with his lap top open. Bobby shows his client how to watch both businesses without leaving his home.

It did not take long to catch his put-put employees from stealing. Alex counted one-hundred adults and ninety children coming through the front door. He calculated gross sales for the day at two-thousand dollars. He went right away to his put-put facility. The long-term employee handed over one-thousand seven hundred dollars.

Alex said, “John, you are short some three hundred dollars.”

John replied, “No, the amount is correct. I would not cheat you.”

Alex pointed to his wall clock hanging on the wall near the cash register. There is a hidden covert camera behind the clock, and I am recording everything. I counted how many adults visited my business today and timed it by our entrance fee of twenty dollars a family. I am short three-hundred dollars.”

“Here are the store keys. I quit. I am no thief,” says John knocking over a stand of golf clubs.”

Alex calls Tyler on his cell phone.

“The cameras work. I just caught my long-term employee shortchanging me for at least three hundred. My problem now is finding and hiring an honest employee.”

Tyler says,” there are many honest people out there seeking employment. You just have to find them. I am glad the cameras work.”

Alex says, “Tomorrow, I will watch my cinema employees from home. I love the cameras your brother installed. I cannot wait to sell my two businesses and move to Alaska. The state is so beautiful and peaceful looking. I will not own another business. I do not want to hire anymore dishonest employees.”

37

EXTORTION

Matt Thompson, age 50, was at his desk dictating to his secretary, Donna, when he receives a phone call from an Insurance adjuster.

“Hello, Matt. This is Joey Bateman, over at State Farm Insurance. I was just advised by my secretary that an employee of yours was killed in an auto accident.”

Matt whispers to Donna, “How the heck does he know about Carlos’s death?”

“Good afternoon, Joey. It is true, Carlos Rodriguez, age twenty-four was killed in a head-on automobile accident a week ago near Miami. Carlos leaves behind a wife and two small children. The other driver also died at the scene. He was drunk and going the wrong way on Highway 95.”

“Sorry to hear that, Matt.”

“It was a shock to all of us here at Eagle Investigations. Can I ask you, Joey, how you heard about Carlos’s tragic accident?”

“My fellow adjuster, Scott, sitting right here next to me was told by one of your investigators.”

“Can I speak with Scott, please?”

“Sure, just a minutes.”

“This is Scott.”

“Hello, Scott, this is the owner of Eagle Investigations. Can you tell me which of my ten field investigators told you about our employee’s accident in Miami?”

“Let me think for a moment. It was your messenger, Tony Letterman. He was in our office dropping off a finished report on the Turner case last week.”

Matt replies, “Everything we do at our investigative agency is confidential. All our employees know this, too.”

Scott says, “I didn’t get Tony in trouble, did I?”

“You did, but he will never know. If he told you about the accident, then he mentioned it to others as well. I will have a serious talk with him about keeping our information confidential.”

Scott says, “Thanks for not getting me involved. I am passing the telephone back over to Tony.”

Joey and Matt talk for a few minutes before saying goodbye to each other.

Matt turns to Donna and says, ‘Bring Tony in here, please.’”

Tony enters the boss’s office. “Yes, Sir, you wanted to see me?”

“Yes, sit down please.”

Tony sits down on the office’s leather couch.

“How long have you been employed with Eagle Investigations?”

“Two years, why?”

“How many meetings have I had with all my employees where I said, we needed to keep everything we do in this agency confidential?”

“You mentioned keeping everything confidential at every meeting.”

“When hired by this agency, you signed a confidential agreement, correct, Tony?”

“Yes, sir I did.”

“Well, I am not happy about you breaking our confidential agreement. It seems when delivering finished case packets to my clients, you were talking about the tragic accident of Carlos Rodriguez.”

Tony says, “You know me, I like to talk to people.”

Matt replies, “I don’t mind you talking to people, Tony. Just keep what my agency does confidential. I worry now, what else in my company you mentioned to people you came in contact with.”

“I am sorry, sir, it will not happen again.”

“I know it won’t happen again. You are fired. Go with Donna to see Cindy in bookkeeping for your last check.”

Tony and Donna exit the office.

Ten minutes later Tony returns to Matt’s office with his last paycheck.

Tony pulls out of his shirt pocket a small tape recorder.

“I recorded this conversation we just had.”

Matt gets mad and says, “In the State of Florida you need two-party consent to record, and I did not give you permission.”

Tony laughs at Matt’s last comment.

Matt says, “You are a law student over at Florida International University. You should know about the two-party consent rule.”

“I know it. So, what?”

Tony exits the private investigative office with his tape recorder in his hand.

Matt steps out of his office and speaks with Donna standing nearby.

“Did you just hear Tony saying he tape recorded my conversation with him?”

“Yes, I did. I even heard him say, so what?”

Matt goes back into his office with Donna to finish dictating.

Two hours later a fax comes over the machine at Eagle Investigations. It is from Tony.

Matt reads the fax out loud to Donna: “Give me back my personnel file and the confidentiality agreement I signed, and I won’t spread bad things about your agency. I will also give you the recorded conversation tape.”

Matt laughs at the fax he just received.

“Tony just committed extortion: ‘Give me what I want or else.’ I am calling the police department. I want to meet with a detective on Tony’s extortion threat.”

Thirty minutes later a detective walks into Eagle Investigations.

“Afternoon, I am Detective Dan Alamo. I am here to meet with Matt Thompson.”

Donna escorts the detective to Matt’s office.

“Matt, this is Detective Dan Alamo.”

Matt motions for the detective to have a seat on his couch.

Matt shows the detective what Tony faxed over to him.

Detective Dan Alamo says, “This is extortion alright. You can have the man arrested. Better yet, to make the charges stick in court, have Tony come to your office for his personnel file. Then when he comes to collect his file, I will be hiding nearby to arrest him after he departs Eagle Investigations.”

Matt smiles as he dials Tony’s telephone number.

“Tony, this is Matt Thomson. Come to my office tomorrow at ten am sharp. I will be here to hand over your personnel file.”

Tony says, “And you will hand over my signed confidentiality agreement, too.”

“Yes, and you will give me the recorded tape.”

“I will be there at ten am.”

Matt hangs up the telephone and says to the detective, “I was a cop in Orlando for twelve years. I have owned Eagle Investigations for nine years now. I treat all my employees well. This extortion matter upsets me.”

Detective Alamo asks, “What type of car does Tony Letterman drive?”

Matt says, “A blue in color Honda Accord with a cracked front driver’s window.”

Detective Alamo says, “I will arrest Tony Letterman after he walks out with his personnel file, enters his vehicle and drives away.”

Matt smiles and replies, “See you tomorrow, then.”

The next morning at ten am, ex-employee, Tony Letterman arrives at Eagle Investigations. He walks straight over to Matt’s office.

“I am here for my personnel file and confidentiality agreement I signed.”

Matt replies, “Just hand over the recorded tape and your personnel file and confidentiality agreement are yours.”

Tony hands over the recorded tape, picks up his personnel file along with his confidentiality agreement and walks to the front door. He stops, turns to Matt, and gives him the middle finger. Tony then exits the building.

Matt watches his ex-employee enter his vehicle and depart the area.

Ten minutes later the detective drives up to Matt’s office building and exits his vehicle.

In Matt’s office the detective says, “I need the recorded tape as evidence. The young man is crying like a baby in my back seat.”

Matt hands over the recorded tape and says, “Let me walk you out, Detective.”

Matt walks up to the police car and views Tony in the backseat handcuffed. Matt smiles and gives Tony his middle finger as the detective departs the area.

James Paul Ellison

38

CORVETTE

Sally Smith received a brand-new red Corvette for her twenty-third birthday. The Corvette was a birthday gift from her boyfriend, Kevin Short, age sixty-five, and owner of a sports car dealership in Orlando, Florida.

Sally used to work for Kevin as the dealership's receptionist. She liked the job but being a gold-digger, Sally wanted more. Every free minute she had, Sally would flirt with Kevin when he walked by her desk. It worked. The next thing she knew, Kevin was knocking on her apartment door.

Kevin said, "If you become my secret girlfriend, I will surround you with luxury; give you anything you want."

Sally let the lonely old man in and sat him down on her couch. Sally made tea and the two had a long talk about life. Kevin had been married three times before meeting Sally. The marriages all ended in divorce. Sally did not want to be wife number four.

The two lovers agreed to show affection for one another only when they were alone.

Kevin said, "Tomorrow, I am moving you out of this dump of an apartment and moving you to my mansion overlooking the lake."

Sally took Kevin by the hand and led him to her bedroom. She undressed Kevin, then herself, and climbed into the bed with her new boyfriend.

Later in the day, Sally made Kevin his favorite dish, meatloaf. The two lovers spent the entire day and night together. The next morning over breakfast Kevin said, "Pack your bags and follow me over to my place."

Sally opened her closet, removed what clothing she had -which was not much- and placed the belongings into a large trash bags, since she did not have a set of luggage to her name.

Sally asked, "What about my year's lease? I have six more months to go."

Kevin replied, "Do not worry about it, sweetheart. You are with me now. Pass me any mail you receive from the leasing company requesting payment and I will take care of it."

Kevin helps Sally carry her trash bags to his Rolls Royce. He opens the trunk and places the trash bags inside. When Kevin closes the trunk, Sally asks, "Can I drive?"

Sally leaves her old Honda Civic in the apartment complex parking lot, and hops into the blue Roll Royce as the driver. She turns the stereo on and finds a country western station and turns the volume up.

Kevin gives his new girlfriend directions to his large residence in a private gated community. Kevin asks, "Sally, do you golf?"

"No, but I would love for you to teach me."

Kevin helps carry Sally's trash bags into his mansion. He shows her his large bedroom with a king-size bed. "In the morning, Sally, we are going shopping for clothes."

Sally replies, "I also need some shoes and some jewelry. What do I do with my car?"

Kevin says, "Hand me the car keys. I will donate it to the local Goodwill."

"What do I do for transportation?"

"You can drive my Rolls Royce for now. When is your birthday?"

"In ten days from now. I cannot believe I will be twenty-three soon. How time flies."

Kevin says, "I will buy you a new car on your birthday, what will it be?"

"I always wanted a red corvette. That car is so cool-looking."

Kevin replies, "I will buy the corvette for you on one condition."

Sally asks, "What is that condition, sweetheart?"

"You drive the corvette at posted speed limits, and you wear a seatbelt at all times."

Sally walks over to Kevin and gives him a big kiss. "I promise you; I will obey all traffic laws."

The next day Kevin returns to his car dealership and Sally sleeps in. She cannot believe her luck. She went from rags to riches in no time.

Sally calls her best friend, Gail.

“Hello?”

“Morning, Gail, this is Sally calling you from my new residence, a huge mansion overlooking the lake.”

“You are dreaming, girl, just like the *Pretty Woman* movie.”

“You don’t believe me? Drive over to 3428 Waterview Avenue. I am living now in a gated community called Deer Creek. I will show you I am not lying.”

Gail says, “I am coming over as we speak. Tell me who the lucky man is.”

“My new boyfriend’s name is Kevin Short, age sixty-five. He owns a sports car dealership and is very wealthy. I tell you, Gail, I hit the jackpot on this one. Kevin treats me like a queen and is good in bed as well.”

Gail laughs, “Sixty-five is too old for me. I like my men to be body builders, fit and firm.”

“I’d rather have a younger lover as well, but they are nine-to-five working stiffs with no money. The only thing they can offer me are muscles.”

Gail asks, “How did you meet this Kevin?”

“I was working as his receptionist for his car dealership. I just flirted with him every time he walked by me. It worked like a charm. Next week for my twenty-third birthday he is buying me a brand-new red Corvette.”

Gail laughs and replies, “Now that I would like to see.”

Sally says, “When I get my new Corvette, I will pick you up and we will go for a long drive. For now, Kevin lets me drive his blue Rolls Royce. Do you have any money with you? If yes, stop at Taco Bell and buy me a few soft tacos and a coke.”

“I have twenty dollars on me. I’ll stop at Taco Bell now and I’ll see you in ten minutes.”

Sally gets dressed and makes a pot of coffee.

Gail stops at the guard shack at the entrance to Deer Creek Subdivision.

The armed guard asks, “Can I help you?”

“Yes, I am here to visit a Sally Smith at 3428 Waterview Avenue. I also will need directions.”

The guard enters the guard shack and confirms on the computer that a Sally Smith resides at that address, along with the owner of the residence, a Kevin Short.

The guard exits the guard shack and provides directions to 3428 Waterview Avenue.

Gail arrives and pulls into the circle driveway of the large mansion. She knocks on the front door.

Sally comes to the front door with a cup of coffee in her hands.

“Welcome to my home, Gail. Do you care for a cup of coffee?”

Gail just laughs and says, “You are the ‘pretty woman’ in the Pretty Woman movie. She landed her man and so did you. Show me around your new place.”

Gail and Sally later sit on the back porch taking in the lake view.

Sally says, "It won't be long till I get my birthday present. I cannot wait for my red Corvette."

Gail says, "You are so lucky. You always were lucky, too. I wish I could find someone wealthy. Maybe your man has a friend for me. Ask him when he gets home, will ya?"

Gail leaves the residence before Kevin arrives home.

Ten Days Later

Sally wakes up next to Kevin sitting on the edge of their bed. He is dressed in his robe and holding a small box in his hand.

"Morning, sweetheart. Happy Birthday." Kevin hands his new lover her gift.

Sally sits up in bed and opens the box. Inside is a set of car keys with a key chain that says 'Corvette'. Sally jumps out of her bed in her pajamas and runs to the front door. She sees her new red Corvette sitting there in the driveway.

Sally turns around and kisses her man.

"I cannot wait to drive this car."

Kevin reminds her, "You promise to obey all traffic laws, remember?"

Sally gives Kevin a kiss and says, "I promise."

Kevin says, "In the kitchen is your second gift."

Sally runs to the kitchen and discovers a box on the kitchen counter. She quickly opens the box and sees a cell phone, pink in color. Kevin says, "I already programmed your cell phone with my cell and business phone numbers."

Sally is disappointed. She was expecting jewelry, not a cell phone. She fakes excitement and gives her lover another big kiss.

"Thanks, honey, for the cell phone."

Kevin asks, "What is for breakfast?"

Sally says, "Let us go to a restaurant for breakfast. I will drive us there in my birthday gift."

Three Days Later

Sally calls Gail on her pink cell phone.

"What about a ride in my brand-new red Corvette?"

Gail shouts, "I am ready to see your birthday gift. When will you arrive to pick me up?"

"I will head over there now."

Sally picks up her friend and they drive to the interstate and head out of Orlando.

Gail says, "Wow, what a nice car. Can I drive it?"

Sally replies, "You can drive my baby on the way back to Kevin's place. I know of a road nearby that my old boyfriend took me to. All the bikers race on it. The road is straight for a long stretch, with hardly any traffic on it."

Gail looks at Sally and asks, "What are you planning to do?"

“I want to see how fast my baby can go.”

Kevin takes a break from a meeting in his showroom and calls his lover on her new cell phone.

“This is Sally.”

“Hi, sweetheart, how is your day going?”

“I am taking a long drive with my girlfriend, Gail, in my car. Thanks so much for my birthday gift. I just love it!”

Kevin says, “You’re welcome, sweetheart. I am happy that you are happy. Just keep your promise and obey all traffic laws.”

Sally lies and replies, “Sure, honey.”

Kevin and Sally talk for a few minutes longer before saying goodbye to each other.

Sally is driving on the road her old boyfriend took her to.

Sally says out loud with excitement, “I am at seventy, now eighty, wow this corvette can fly! I am at ninety now. I just went over one hundred. I am at one hundred-twenty and I have no shake!”

Gail says, “Get us back to the speed limit on that sign we just past. This crazy driving frightens me.”

Sally laughs and says, “Wasn’t that fun? O.K., Gail, I am slowing down now.”

The Next Morning

Sally and Kevin are having coffee in their dining room.

Kevin asks, “Can I have your Corvette car keys, please?”

Sally hands her lover the keys and asks, “Why do you need my car keys, honey?”

“Sally, you lied to me. You promised to obey all traffic laws.”

“I do obey all the traffic laws, honey.”

Kevin puts the Corvette car keys in his pocket and says, “When we spoke to each other yesterday., you accidently left your cell phone on. I heard you saying to your friend how fast you were going. She made you slow down when you reached one-hundred and twenty miles an hour.”

Sally puts her head down and replies, “I am sorry I broke my promise.”

Kevin looks at her and says, “You broke my trust in you. What else have you done that I do not know about? I am at the car dealership while you are out having fun. I just cannot trust you, Sally. You will have to find a new sugar daddy. We are through. We are done as a couple. I can call a cab to take you to your friend’s place.”

Sally calls Gail on her cell phone.

“Can I stay with you? I need a new home. Kevin took the red Corvette, too.”

“What? You and Kevin are not an item anymore? What happened?”

Sally watches Kevin walk out of the dining room. Sally says, “I accidently left my cell phone on yesterday, and Kevin heard how fast I was going in the Corvette. He just told me to leave his residence. I have no car and no place to live. I need your help, Gail.”

James Paul Ellison

“I will be right over to pick you up.”

Sally says, “Thanks, Gail. You are an angel. I will pack and be waiting out front for you.”

Sally looks out the living room window and sees Kevin driving away in her red Corvette.

39

LAS VEGAS

Attorney Marvin Taylor says to Mary Dawson, his new client, “All the Inheritance Trust papers are drawn up. You are free to issue your son his check. I do not think it is a good idea to just hand over one million dollars. You have no protection if your son goes wild with the money. For example, what if your son runs off with a woman, starts doing drugs, and starts spending his inheritance the wrong way?”

Mary says, “Not my Maxwell.”

Attorney Taylor responds, “Your Maxwell may not pay off his mortgage and cars and start a college fund for your four grandsons like you wish. The way the Inheritance Trust documents are drawn up, your son can do what he wants with the money you are giving him.”

Mary Dawson, age sixty and extremely ill, says, “My son Maxwell is a good man. He is a loving husband and father. Maxwell has never been in trouble with the law. My son has been a teacher at the same school for ten years. My son is very stable. I am not worried about him going crazy and spending the money on anything but his family.”

Attorney Taylor asks, “How old is your son?”

“Maxwell is thirty.”

Attorney Taylor says, “What you want may not be what they want to do with your million dollars, Mary. Living in quite Gulfport, Mississippi is one thing, but traveling to New York, for example, is just asking for trouble. New York City is wild.”

“Maxwell has never left the State before. I am not worried at all. Cindy is a good mother and wife. She is a stay-at-home mother to my four grandchildren. I want them to have the money to pay off their house and cars and to have no debt. I want them to start their children’s college funds and to have extra in the bank for any emergency that comes up.”

“How old are your grandchildren?”

“Tony is eight, Bobby is seven, Sally is four, and Billy is three. I am doing this donation to my son now while I am alive. My colon cancer has come back with a vengeance and the doctors believe I have less than a year to live.”

Attorney Taylor replies, “I can set the Inheritance Trust up so no money can be withdrawn without my signature on it. This offers you an extra layer of protection.”

“No need. I trust my son one hundred percent to do the right thing.”

Attorney Taylor says one more time, “For the record, I warned you about how I wrote up your Trust. I wanted the trust to say your son would place the funds in the account to pay off his mortgage, cars, and start a college fund for each child. But I followed your wishes instead.”

Mary stands up to say goodbye. She slowly exits Attorney Taylor's office using a four prong cane.

Attorney Taylor walks next door to Attorney Johnson's office and says, "Joe, look out the window. See my elderly female client walking with the four-prong cane?"

"I see her."

"Mary Dawson is sixty years old and dying of Colon Cancer. The lady is giving her only child, Maxwell, and his wife, Cindy, one-million dollars, no strings attached. She says she trusts her child one hundred percent. She expects her son to pay off his mortgage and car loans and to set up four trust funds for her grandchildren."

"Well, Marvin, it is her money to do what she wants with."

Attorney Taylor replies, "I know it, Joe, but all of a sudden, receiving that much money may temp her son to go on a stupid spending spree."

"Only time will tell if you are right or not, Marvin."

Two Weeks Later

Attorney Taylor is at his desk working on a court motion when Mary Dawson calls him in a panic.

"Cindy just called me. My son is in Las Vegas. He lied to her, and said he was going to Las Vegas for a teacher's convention. There is none. Cindy told me they have been fighting lately. She is afraid he is spending some of their million dollars gambling or using illegal

drugs. Now Max has turned his cell phone off. It has been a week since Max left home for Las Vegas. I need to freeze the funds.”

Attorney Taylor says, “You can only freeze the money with a court order from a judge. To get the court order we need evidence your son is in Las Vegas gambling and doing any illegal drugs. I will have to hire a private investigator to fly to Las Vegas, to find your son, and then document his activities.”

Mary says, “Do you recommend a certain private investigator?”

“I do. His name is Duncan Rodgers. I will contact him now. He has always come through before. I just wished that weeks ago you had listened to me, Mary.”

“I wish now I did listen to you, sir.”

Attorney Taylor calls the investigator on his cell phone.

“This is Duncan, who is calling?”

“Hi, Duncan, Attorney Taylor here. I am sitting with my client, Mary Dawson and I have you on speaker phone. We have a super rush case out in Las Vegas. Her son flew out to Sin City last week and has not returned. We believe he is spending his million-dollar inheritance by gambling and maybe doing illegal drugs.”

“Do you have a hotel and a room number he is staying at?”

“We only have a hotel. The Wynn Hotel on the strip.”

“Email me his photo while I make my airline reservations.”

“What are your investigative rates on this one?”

“Let me see. This is a rush case. I have my airfare, hotel and my food expenses, and my time to find the man and to follow him as well. My total invoice will depend on how long you want me to stay in Las Vegas.”

“Stay in the city long enough to gather the evidence we need to go in front of a judge to freeze his million-dollar inheritance.”

“What kind of evidence do you need me to obtain?”

Attorney Taylor replies, “I need to show that Maxwell is gambling, spending money on drugs, and on other women. He is married and has children. Maxwell lied to his wife. He told her he was at a teacher’s convention in Las Vegas. There is no teacher’s convention. We strongly feel he is out in Las Vegas gambling his inheritance money away. He has no reason to be in Las Vegas. We can only freeze his money with your evidence. Then we can go in front of a judge and get him to return the money to his mother.”

Duncan says, “This case will be a minimum of five-thousand dollars. Email me the man’s photo. I will hang-up now and make my airline and hotel reservations. How old is Maxwell and what is his last name?”

“Maxwell is thirty and his last name is Dawson.”

Duncan adds, “Tell the family that if Maxwell contacts them to play it cool. If not, he will go under-ground and we may never find him. Pray he is using his real name at the hotel he is staying at.”

Attorney Taylor says to his private investigator, “Hold on for just a minute. I need my client to approve the five-thousand dollars you are requesting.”

Attorney Taylor pushes the hold button on his office phone and looks over at Mary Dawson.

“Pay the man whatever he needs. I need to freeze my son’s funds as soon as possible.”

Attorney Taylor releases the hold button on the telephone and says, “Duncan, you are a go for Las Vegas. I am authorizing the five-thousand dollars.”

Duncan says, “Maxwell may have switched hotels. I will have my office start calling the hotels on the strip to locate his hotel and room number. I will give you an update once I have news.”

Duncan contacts Delta Airlines and makes a reservation first-class from Gulfport, Mississippi to Las Vegas. Duncan then returns to his residence to pack his clothing and his surveillance equipment.

Duncan rushes to the airport and catches the next flight out of town. He has to change planes in Dallas. He has an hour to wait for his next connection. Duncan calls his office.

“Results Investigations, Alexis speaking.”

“Alexis, any luck in locating Maxwell Dawson’s room number and hotel in Las Vegas for me?”

“Yes, sir. I called the Wynn Hotel on the strip. He is staying in room 1012.”

“How did you get the hotel to give you his room number? That is private information.”

Alexis says, “I asked for his hotel room. When Maxwell came on the line, I posed as maintenance. I told him his water may be cut off for a few hours. I asked him his room number for my records, and he gave it to me.”

“Fantastic. I will land in a couple of hours and I will go straight to the Wynn Hotel.”

“Sir, when I was speaking to Maxwell, I could hear female voices in the background laughing.”

“Good to know, thanks Alexis. You just earned a two-hundred-dollar bonus.”

Duncan lands in Las Vegas and takes a taxi to the Wynn Hotel. The investigator goes straight up to the tenth floor to find the best room for him in order to watch Maxwell come and go from his room.

Duncan checks in at the front desk. He says to the clerk, “Can I have my old room, number 1009, please?”

The clerk smiles and says, “Sure.”

Ten minutes later, Duncan is riding the elevator to the tenth floor. After checking into room 1009, he leaves the door slightly ajar. This allows him to watch Maxwell’s room door just down the hall.

An hour goes by before Maxwell exits his room with a woman under each arm. Duncan exits his own room and walks behind the trio. Duncan uses his ink pen covert camera in the elevator.

One woman says to Maxwell, “Can I have some poker chips, Honey?”

Duncan videos Maxwell reaching into his jacket pocket and pulling out a stack of poker chips. He says to the woman, “Win this time, Baby.”

Duncan follows his subject over to a slot machine. He watches him put one-thousand dollars into the machine. Duncan documents Maxwell playing eight dollars a spin. A waitress comes over and he asks for two glasses of wine.

Duncan watches his subject putting large bills into slot machines and playing for hours. At one point, Maxwell walks over to the cashier cage. Duncan gets close and hears the subject asking for ten-thousand dollars from his line of credit.

Hours later, Duncan watches the three enter an elevator for the tenth floor. Duncan then calls Attorney Taylor’s cell phone.

“Hello?”

“This is Duncan, sir, with an update on the case.”

“Go ahead. I hope you have good news for me.”

No, sir. I have great news for you. I located Maxwell Dawson in room 1012 over at the Wynn Hotel. I obtained video of him with two women gambling and drinking wine. He also went to the cashier cage and borrowed ten-thousand dollars from his line of credit. He is spending his inheritance money for sure.”

Attorney Taylor says, “Fantastic news. Fly home now. I will see you in the morning at 11 at the courthouse. We will go in front of a

judge and we will show him your evidence. The judge will then stop Maxwell from spending anymore of his inheritance.’

The Next Day at 11 a.m.

Attorney Taylor, Duncan, and Mary Dawson stand in front of Judge Clark.

The judge says, “After watching your surveillance video, I agree that Maxwell Dawson, a married man, is gambling, drinking, and seeing other women. Therefore, I will grant an emergency order to freeze Maxwell Dawson’s inheritance money. I also will order that Mary Dawson be the sole person to take control of the inheritance funds.”

Two Weeks Later

Attorney Taylor has a meeting with Mary Dawson. “I heard from the management at the Wynn Hotel. Your son had a hundred-thousand-dollar line of credit with them. He owes the hotel fifty-five-thousand dollars from his credit line.

The hotel reviewed the surveillance footage and confirmed the two women with Maxwell are known street walkers. When the maid cleaned room 1012, she found a small packet of white powder under the king size bed. The hotel turned the packet over to the police. I am waiting for the results of the test as we speak.”

Mary Dawson says, “Cindy told me she is filing for a divorce, that Maxwell is now using illegal drugs and drinking too much. He is yelling at her and the kids. Oh, I almost forgot. Here is the check for the private investigator. Thanks to him we were able to freeze Maxwell’s inheritance money.”

Attorney Taylor takes the check and says, “Duncan’s invoice was only for five thousand dollars, not ten thousand.”

Mary Dawson says, “I know. It is my way of saying thank you for a job well done.”

Attorney Taylor says, “You are getting back from your son just over nine-hundred-thousand dollars.”

Mary Dawson says, “One more thing before you go, Marvin. I want you to set up an inheritance trust fund for Cindy Dawson.”

40

SEASON PASSES

Insurance Adjuster Victoria Bates dials a phone number.

“Day Investigations, Diana speaking.”

“Good morning, this is Adjuster Bates over at State Farm. Can I speak with James Day, please?”

“One moment. I will connect you to him.”

“James Day speaking.”

“Hi, James. It has been a while since we last spoke. This is Insurance Adjuster Victoria Bates of State Farm. I have an important case for you.”

“Yes, Victoria, it has been a long time. I thought you didn’t like my last surveillance and you went with a different vendor.”

“No way. The last video on Tom Carpenter was excellent. Just that business has been slow.”

James Day says, “That is good to hear about my surveillance. What can I do for you?”

“I have a claimant I follow on his Facebook page. His name is Willy Gunn. He mentions he is getting ready to take a trip with his family.”

“Where is he going and when will he depart?”

“That is the question. I have no clue. That is where Day Investigations comes in. I want to hire you, starting right now, to place Willie Gunn under surveillance. I will fill out your order form online as soon as we hang up. His alleged injury is the fingers on his right hand. He claims he has no use of the hand or his fingers.”

“What happened to the right hand of your claimant?”

“Willie Gunn claims a customer at a small food store slammed a sliding display door on his right hand. He is a surgeon over at Memorial Hospital here in Miami. He is suing for pain and suffering and more importantly, for wage loss. He claims he cannot perform anymore surgeries.”

James asks, “How old is the claimant?”

“Willie Gunn is forty-four years of age. If he wins in court, I will have to pay his doctor salary till he reaches age sixty-five. That is twenty-one years’ worth of high salary payments. My younger sister works at the same hospital and his co-workers all say he is just burnt out and wants to retire and this claim is his meal ticket to retirement.”

“Did your sister observe the doctor using his right hand?”

“I wish she did. My sister says that the claimant had his right hand in his medical jacket the whole time she observed him.”

“So, Victoria, this case is worth millions.”

“I am afraid so. I need you to obtain video of the man using his right hand and fingers to drive, open and close doors and grabbing and carrying items in that right hand.”

Where does this Willie Gunn reside at?”

“He lives right here in Miami, Florida.”

“I will need a second investigator to help me on this case.”

“Why, may I ask, is a second investigator needed?”

“Simple. It would look funny if I followed the claimant everywhere he went. For example, in the morning he has breakfast at McDonalds. I go inside to obtain covert video. A few hours later he is shopping at Target. There I am again going down the shopping aisles with him. We need to mix these kind of things up.”

“What does a second man cost me?”

“I want to do the case right. I need a second man to do that. I will only charge you forty an hour on him.”

“What is your hourly fee, James?”

“I charge one-hundred an hour.”

“Can I get a break on your hourly fee?”

“I tell you what. I will only charge you seventy-five an hour on one condition.”

“What condition is that?”

“When I am finished with your case, you walk me around to the other adjusters in your office and introduce me.”

“You have a deal. Seventy-five dollars an hour for you and forty-dollars an hour for the second man.”

James Day is at his home office desk when an email comes in from Victoria Bates. She emailed the three-page order form along with a letter:

“This letter is to confirm that I authorize a second investigator for Day Investigations. This second man will cost State Farm forty dollars an hour. The first investigator hourly fee will be seventy-five dollars. The budget for this surveillance is limited to five days.”

James reads the rest of the letter and opens a file for the case. He runs data on his computer to locate addresses and vehicles on the claimant, Willie Gunn.

James picks up his telephone and dials a phone number.

“Stan Day speaking.”

“Hi, Stan. Your older brother has an assignment for you. I will pay you thirty an hour. We will work together, and we will work a twelve-hour shift. The assignment starts now. Gather your surveillance gear and meet me at Burger King on Ninth Avenue in ten-minutes.”

“Thirty an hour is good, but I want more an hour. You know I am incredibly good at following.”

James laughs and replies, “But your surveillance reports are bad. I have to spend extra time rewriting your notes.”

“I want forty an hour or I will stay home and play video games.”

James laughs at his brother’s comment but says, “I will pay you forty an hour for this important case. Now gather your equipment and meet me at Burger King on Ninth Avenue in ten minutes.”

Stan arrives at Burger King and joins his brother sitting inside at a corner booth.

“How are mom and dad doing?”

“They miss you. Why don’t you come to the house to visit anymore?”

“I do not get along with dad. Let us change subjects, let me tell you about our surveillance assignment.”

Stan says, “Let me grab something to eat first.”

Stan gets up and walks over to the Burger King food counter.

Five minutes later Stan tells his older brother, “I am ready. What is our case about?”

“The claimant’s name is Willie Gunn. I just received the assignment from the client.

Our subject is a doctor, he works over at Memorial Hospital. He is white, age forty-four, married with three boys, ages twelve, ten, and nine. On his Facebook page he mentions he is about to take a trip somewhere with his family. The client does not know where Mr. Gunn is going.”

Stan says, “The client wants us to follow him to see where he takes his family to?”

“Exactly. He may have already left for his vacation; I do not know. We will have to work twenty-four-seven till he departs. I will work the first twelve-hour shift, then you will relieve me for your twelve-hour shift. Stay on the claimant’s residence, do not leave for a bathroom break or to get something to eat. With our luck, the claimant may depart while we are gone.”

Stan says, “This case sounds exciting, knowing the claimant will be active by taking a trip somewhere.”

James replies, “We need to do this case right. No mistakes on our part. We will use our tripods; covert cameras; and we will keep our element of surprise. He will not know we are on him. Once we have him packing up to travel the case becomes two-man. I have the walkie-talkies charging at my place.”

Stan asks, “What are his vehicles?”

“They own three cars. A Blue in color Honda Accord, a red in color Honda Civic, and a white in color Honda Civic. I wrote down all three license plates on your copy of the three-page assignment sheet.”

Stan says, “This family sure does like Hondas.”

James says, “Finish your meal. We need to drive over to his residence and see what is going on. Follow me to his neighborhood. Then park your car somewhere and ride with me to his place. We will figure out together where we need to sit to watch the subject.”

The two brothers soon exit the Burger King lot. James drives over to a development called ‘Riverrun’. Stan pulls into the driveway of a vacant house for sale and parks his black in color Ford F150 truck. Stan then enters his brother’s brown in color Honda Civic.

The two brothers drive by 3427 Canada Drive. The three known vehicles are in the driveway or in the open garage. No other activity can be viewed in the quick drive-by.

James says, “Good, they haven’t departed yet. Let us go fill up on gas. Make sure you always have a full tank. They may not stop for gas. Go home now, Stan, your shift starts at midnight. You will work

till twelve noon. I will relieve you then or join you sooner if they depart on their trip.”

Stan says, “I will go to the store now and buy you some snacks and something to drink. I will be right back.”

“Thanks, Stan. I will go find me a spot to sit now.”

Stan says, “Take my spot at the house for sale. No one will bother you there.”

James replies, “A better spot is sitting in a neighbor’s driveway by saying I am cell testing.”

Stan laughs and says, “I will see you later, Cell Tester.”

Stan drives over to a local food store and stocks up on snacks for his older brother. He returns to the claimant’s neighborhood and locates his brother parked in a driveway. Stan exits his truck with the snacks he just purchased.

Stan says to his brother, “Nice spot you have.”

“I told the elderly couple I was cell testing, showed them my signs and handed them a flyer explaining what cell testing is about. I told them you were my relief and gave them the make, model, and color of your vehicle. You are all set for tonight. Their names are Richard and Rita.”

“RR, I can remember that” says Stan saying goodbye.

The Surveillance Starts

No activity occurs from the doctor on James’s watch. Stan shows up at midnight.

“Now, do not fall asleep this time, Stan. The doctor and his family can depart at any hour. You have a good view from here of the claimant’s house and driveway. If you get any activity, call me, and then start shooting video. I will be here as quick as I can.”

James departs the neighborhood and Stan pops in a country music CD he just bought and reclines back his seat and listens to the music. Stan falls asleep. At four-thirty am, Stan is woken by a City trash truck making its weekly run. Stan looks in the direction of the doctor’s residence and observes the family getting into the Honda Accord.

Stan calls his brother, as the family backs out of their driveway and heads his way.

Stan follows the family to a gas station. He videos the claimant pumping gas with his right hand. The doctor uses the fingers of his right hand to close the cap on the gas tank. The wife and their three boys return from the gas stations itself with a few bags.

The family departs and heads for the highway. Stan calls his brother and tells him where he is at. James catches up when the family pays a toll and heads north on the Florida Turnpike.

Doctor Gunn has no clue that two private investigators are following him on the Florida Turnpike.

Stan calls his brother and says, “I wonder where they are headed.”

“Beats me. Do you have a full tank of gas, Stan?”

“No, I forgot to fill up. I hope they stop again at a gas station.”

Three hours later the family stop at a small rest area and enter the building. James sends Stan in with a covert camera to obtain video.

“Stan, focus on his right hand and fingers.”

Stan obtains a few minutes of video of the claimant putting coins into a candy vending machine with his right hand. The claimant slams the machine at one point with his right hand. The family return to their vehicle and depart.

Stan calls his brother on his cell and says, “We are going to Disney World. I heard the family talking about Mickey Mouse. I got some video of the claimant putting coins into a vending machine using the fingers on his right hand.”

“Disney World, wow, I hope the place isn’t crowded,” says James.

Stan says, “I have never been to Disney World.”

James says, “It is a fun place to visit but not for us. We are going to Disney World to work and not have fun.”

Stan says, “I have to get off at the next exit. I need gas. I am on fumes.”

James says, “Now you know why I drive a Honda Civic and not a gas guzzling truck like yours. I told you to always fill up on gas before starting a case. You are making a rookie mistake, Stan.”

“I only have two more days of my six-week training program, then I am not a rookie any longer.”

James says, “Till you graduate from my training school, you are a rookie. As the owner of the company, you are lucky I am paying you forty an hour on this case.”

“I am getting off this exit to get gas. I will try to rejoin you as fast as I can.”

James keeps his distance on the Florida Turnpike. Traffic is heavy. The GPS in James’s car says he is only thirty minutes away from Disney World.

Stan finds a gas station, but all the pumps are busy. He waits five minutes before a pump opens up. He fills his tank, pays at the gas pump, and departs the area.

Stan calls his brother and says, “I am back on the road Where are you, Brother?”

“I am entering Disney World’s parking lot. I will be riding the tram over to the park with the Gunn family.”

James whispers, “I am on the tram, I have to go. I will call you back in ten minutes.”

The tram arrives in front of the park. The Dunn family goes straight to the season pass holders’ gate. James has no season pass and has to go to the regular entrance gate and purchase a ticket.

The purchase line is exceptionally long. James knows he cannot stay in this line or he will never find the Gunn Family inside the park.

James acts fast and goes straight to the front of the purchase line. The next people to purchase tickets for the park are a family of eight.

James turns to the family and whispers, "I need to enter Disney World right now. I will pay for your tickets to the park if you let me join you here in line." James flashes his gold investigator's badge as he speaks.

One of the adults in the group of eight says, "Sure, Officer, why not?"

James approaches the ticket window when it is his turn. He says to the ticket agent, "I need a ticket for me and eight tickets for my brother and his family."

James purchases nine tickets with his credit card and says to the group, "Well, Brother, enjoy the rides. I will see you in the park for lunch."

James hands the group their eight tickets and runs to the entrance gate to the park. James gives the ticket taker his ticket and starts looking around.

Ten minutes into his search he locates the family at a gift shop looking at Mickey mouse shirts for the boys. James uses his covert ink pen camera to record the claimant using his righthand and fingers to button his children's shirts they are trying on.

Forty minutes later Stan calls James on his cell phone.

"I am at the park but the line to purchase an entrance ticket is really long."

James laughs and says, “Tell me about it. We need to buy season passes.”

The Conclusion

James hooks up with Stan and together they obtain video of Doctor Gunn using his right hand and fingers to grab, pull and carry many items without using any medical devices.

James calls the adjuster and gets Victoria’s voicemail. He says, “I am at Disney World with Doctor Gunn and his family. I am obtaining killer video for you. The claimant uses his right hand and right fingers to do everything. He is not using any medical devices either. Remind me to tell you why I need to purchase season passes.”

41

THE LAW FIRM

Attorney Jack Hoffman is a one-man office in downtown Miami, Florida. His business loan just came in from Regions Bank. Now he has the funds to hire a secretary. Jack places a ‘Help Wanted’ ad in the local Herald newspaper for a secretary and a private investigator. He lists a mailing address for the applicants to respond to.

A few days go by before Attorney Hoffman can retrieve his mail from a UPS Store mailbox. The mailbox is full of applicants. Jack sits in his Ford F150 truck and reads his mail. He likes one applicant’s letter right away.

The woman sprayed perfume on the letter and enclosed her photograph as well. Jack liked what he saw. The photograph shows a woman on a horse with the caption, ‘I like to ride’.

Her name is Cindy Hightower, and she says in her letter that she is single, age twenty-four, and has long brown hair. The letter goes on to mention that Cindy just graduated from a secretarial school with high marks.

Jack dials the phone number in the application.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Cindy. This is Attorney Jack Hoffman. I have your employment letter in front of me. Is this a good time to talk?”

Cindy is excited about the call and says, “Yes, sir, it is.”

Jack says, “You don’t have to call me sir. Please call me Jack.”

“Alright. Hello, Jack.”

“I see you just graduated from a secretarial school.”

“Yes, ‘The Moon Light Academy for Women’. It is a night-time school. I attended classes part-time for six months. It is a good school, and I learned a lot. I really would like the opportunity to be employed at your law firm.”

Jack says, “Come to my office in the morning, anytime after nine am and we can discuss the job opening.”

“Is it alright if I wear jeans? I have plans in the afternoon to go ride my horse, Jupiter.”

“Jeans are fine. I will see you in the morning. Have a good day.”

Jack places all the other secretarial applications into a large pile and puts them in his briefcase. Jack returns to his small corner office on the third floor of the Fairley Building. The rent costs him close to two thousand a month but it is worth every penny.

Jack’s office overlooks Biscayne Bay and is conveniently close to the courthouse. Jack is a plaintiff’s lawyer and specializes in auto-accidents. His job is to represent claimants who are suing the insurance companies. He just would like to have more clients in need of his services.

Jack cannot afford to spend money on advertising like the big boys in town can do. He relies on his friends and family to spread the word. Jack won his last case and received forty percent of his last client's award. He deposited twenty-five thousand dollars in his Regions bank account.

Jack is busy at his work desk when someone unlocks his office door and enters.

The woman is his mother, Barbara.

"Afternoon, son. Are you working on a case?"

"No, mom. I am just reading a law bulletin. Why did you come over by yourself? where is dad?"

"Your father came with me. He is using the restroom in the lobby. We want to talk to you about giving you a loan."

The law firm's front door opens, and Jack's father enters the office.

"Hi, dad. Please come and sit down. You too, mother."

Bob says to his only son, "Your mother and I want to give you a business loan at low interest. I know how it is starting your own business. You starve most of the time."

"That is kind of you both. Can you afford to loan me money long term? I might not be able to pay you back for years to come."

Bob laughs and replies, "I do not want to go into too much detail, son, but we are doing very well in the stock market."

“Well, yes, I could certainly use a loan. As you can see, I need better furniture. The second-hand items from Goodwill are alright for now, but I could do better. How much of a loan can I have?”

“Your mother and I will loan you fifty thousand dollars at three percent interest.”

“I do need to hire a secretary and a private investigator. I could use your loan to pay their weekly salary till I land another client or win my next case.”

Jack and his parents shake hands on the fifty-thousand-dollar loan at three percent.

Bob looks at his Rolex watch and says, “We have to say goodbye, son. We are on the way to the airport. We are flying out on Delta Airlines to Las Vegas. Your mother and me feel lucky.”

Jack gives his parents the last forty dollars in his wallet and replies, “Win at a slot machine for me.”

Jack gives his parents a hug and sees them to the front door. Bob pulls out his wallet and places Jack’s money inside. Barbara finishes writing the fifty-thousand-dollar check to her son and hands it to him. “Do not blow it all at once.”

Jack returns to his office desk and starts working on the one Plaintiff’s case he has.

The next morning at ten am, Jack’s secretarial applicant knocks on his office door.

“Come in.”

Cindy Hightower walks in wearing blue jeans and a white blouse. Her brown hair is in a ponytail. She smiles and says, “I am here to meet with Jack.”

Jack stands up and shakes her hand, “You are looking at him. Have a seat, please. I would offer you something to drink, but I haven’t purchased any beverages yet.”

Cindy laughs and replies, “I just had breakfast. I am fine, thanks.”

Jack pulls out a notepad and pen and says, “I need a full-time secretary that can work by herself and get my work finished on time. I am a one-man firm and I like it that way. I am either in court or visiting with future clients all day. I will check-in with you for my messages. Can you work by yourself?”

“Yes. No problem. I can find things to do all day.”

“I will hire you at four-hundred-dollars a week to start. In ninety days if I am happy with your services, I will increase the pay to five-hundred-dollars a week.”

Cindy asks, “How many applicants have you interviewed before me, Jack?”

“None. I opened your application, smelled the perfume on the letter and saw your photo attached and I was hooked. Nothing like a pretty woman around you all day.”

Cindy smiles and says, “I like that in a man, honesty”

Jack laughs and says, “Can you start tomorrow at nine am?”

Cindy replies, “I sure can, Jack. What is the dress code?”

“Just look professional for my future clients.”

Cindy starts to ask another question when there is a knock at the firm’s front door.

Jack says, “Come in”.

A tall, good looking young man enters the office and says, “My name is Drew Watson. I am a private investigator. I just graduated from a private investigative academy. I mailed you the application I saw in the newspaper. I just wanted to come in person and say hello”.

Jack says, Drew, this is my secretary, Cindy. Have a seat on the couch and tell us about yourself.”

Drew makes himself comfortable and replies, “I am twenty-four years old, single, and I like riding horses. I own two: Handcuff and Key are their names. The pi academy I attended in Orlando was six months long. I would live in Orlando, but my mother is ill, so I am living in Miami to take care of her. I need a job really bad. Our medical bills are piling up.”

Jack says, “I have many private investigator applications in my briefcase.” Jack opens his briefcase and looks for Drew’s application, which he finds. Jack takes the other applications and throws them in his trash bin. “Drew, you are hired. I like men that are aggressive when searching for employment”.

“May I ask when I will start and what my weekly salary will be?”

Jack says, “I will pay you four-hundred a week for ninety days. If you do a good job, I will bump you up to five hundred a week. You

can work from home or be in the office with Cindy. I will be buying new furniture today. You can start officially tomorrow. Be here at nine am. I have an assignment for you.”

On the way out of the office, Cindy says to Drew, “I ride hoses too. My horse’s name is Jupiter”

Drew whispers, “We will talk more tomorrow about our horses.”

Jack says to Cindy, “Do you want to ride over with me to Rooms-to-Go? This office needs new furniture, and you can help me chose it.”

Cindy asks, “Can we buy a small refrigerator for our beverages?”

Jack says, “Yes, and we will buy a microwave-oven for the kitchen, too.”

Cindy and Jack leave the law firm office and Jack locks the front door.

In the car on the way to buying furniture, Jack asks, “Can you teach me to ride a horse?”

Cindy laughs and says, “I sure can. Do you own a horse?”

“No yet but if I win my next case, I will certainly consider buying one. I already have the name picked out: Truthful.”

“What is your next case about, Jack?”

“Cindy, what ever we do and say to each other has to be confidential. No talking to anyone outside of our law firm, agreed?”

“I agree’, says Cindy. “I agree.”

Jack says, “The law firm’s next case involves a semi-truck trailer coming in contact with and killing a cow.

My client, Jo Taylor, is in the hospital with multiple injuries. He tried to avoid the dead cow in the road, swerved and lost control of his vehicle. His Honda Civic flipped like four times and ended up in a ditch. He is lucky even to be alive.”

“So, you are going after the insurance coverage of the semi-truck trailer’s company?”

“That, and if I can find the owner of the cow, I will sue him as well. It is the cow’s owner’s fault for the semi hitting the cow and my client trying to avoid the dead cow laying in the middle of the road. No cow, no accident, simple as that.”

Cindy and Jack talk all the way to Rooms-to-Go. They walk around the store selecting items they need. Jack turns to the saleswoman and asks, “Can I have this furniture delivered to my office tomorrow?”

The saleslady replies, “The earliest I can have the furniture delivered is the day after tomorrow in the late afternoon”.

Jack looks over at Cindy, shrugs his shoulders and says, “That will work.”

The Next Day

Drew knocks on the law firm’s front door. Cindy opens and says, “Good morning, Drew, care for a hot cup of coffee?”

“Yes, that would be great. I see we have new furniture. Where is the boss?”

Cindy pours two cups of coffee and says, “Jack is in court. He just called and said he was on the way back here.”

Drew asks, “You call him Jack instead of Mr. Hoffman?”

Cindy says, “He wants to be called Jack. He does not want us to call him sir, boss, or Mr. Hoffman. Just call the boss Jack.”

Drew takes a sip and replies, “Jack it will be then.”

Cindy asks, “How is your mom doing today?”

“My mother is slowly dying from breast cancer. When they discovered the cancer, it was too late. The cancer had already spread to her other organs. She is all doped up to avoid the pain. Most of the time my mother is sleeping.”

“Does she have a home health care nurse taking care of her when you are away?”

“We had no insurance of any kind. And we definitely cannot afford a nurse. My dad is my mom’s nurse. I have to tell Jack I need local investigative work. I need to be home nightly for my mother.”

Jack walks in and says, “It is about to rain. Drew, please bring a chair over to my desk. We have to discuss your assignment.”

Drew slides a new chair over and sits down with his cup of coffee.

Jack hands his new private investigator a notepad and pen.

“Write this down. A semi-trailer truck owned by ‘Shipper Enterprise’ struck and killed a cow that was wondering on the

highway. I need you to go out and find the cow's owner. The owner has to live close by. The accident occurred in the early morning hours on March 6, 2021, at mile marker 362."

"Any identifying marks on the cow to help me locate an owner. Did the cow have a tag? All owners tag their cows to identify them as theirs."

Jack asks, "How do you know about the tagging of the cows?"

"My Uncle owns a farm in Gainesville, Florida. When I was in College at UF, I would spend my weekends helping him on his farm".

Jack says, "At three this afternoon the State of Florida is excavating the dead cow.

I made a motion in court and it was granted by the judge to excavate the cow to search for a tag to identify the owner of the cow."

Drew writes everything down on his notepad. "So, are we going to go over and watch this excavating of the dead cow?"

Jack laughs and says, "No. Only you are going, Drew. I suggest you buy a jar of Vic's Vapor Rub before you head out to the accident scene. You may need it. I heard the smell is strong."

Drew says, "What if the State finds no tag on the dead cow. You still want me to talk to the farmers in the area?"

"Yes, I do. If a tag is recovered, then I bet the owner of the cow removed all the tags on his cows so he would not be sued. I am still suing the truck company. I am in talks now for a large settlement. Good luck. Oh, I almost forgot."

Jack opens a desk drawer and pulls out a video camera and hands it over to Drew.

“Video the excavation of the cow and get the names of everyone present at the excavation today, including the backhoe driver.”

Jack and Drew talk while Cindy makes a fresh pot of coffee.

Later in the day, Drew grabs the video camera and says to Jack and Cindy, “I am off to video the dead cow.”

Drew drives to the accident location and pulls off the road. He is the first person at the scene.

Ten minutes go by before a marked police car pulls over behind Drew’s car.

The Policeman walks up to Drew’s vehicle and says, “Why are you pulled over on the side of the road?”

“I am a private investigator for the Hoffman Law Firm. I am here to video the excavation of a cow.”

The policeman laughs and says, “So am I.”

Drew asks the policeman for his name for his report. The policeman hands Drew his business card with his information on it.

A few minutes later the work crew for the State of Florida shows up with a backhoe machine. Drew exits his car and identifies himself as a private investigator and asks each worker for his name. The workers comply and they get to work to excavate for the cow. Drew starts to video their activity.

About five minutes into the excavation a black male shows up. Drew walks over to the man and identifies himself as a private investigator working for Attorney Hoffman. The man identifies himself as Attorney Andrew Crabtree and he represents Shipper Enterprises. Both men exchange their personal information.

Drew videos all the men there, plus the excavation hole itself. Five minutes into the dig with the backhoe, the machine finds the dead cow. The smell is terrible. Drew opens his small bottle of Vic's Vapor Rub and spreads the gel underneath his nose.

Drew passes the gel to everyone at the scene. The backhoe digs up what is left of the cow, but they do not find any identifying tag for the cow. The backhoe refills the excavation hole.

Attorney Crabtree approaches Drew and says, "Too bad the cow had no tag. I wanted the farmer to be part of the lawsuit. Have your boss call me, will you?"

Drew calls his office and Cindy answers, "Hoffman Law Firm, Cindy speaking".

"Hi, Cindy, Drew here. I just finished videoing the excavation of the cow. There was no tag found for the cow. I will now canvas the area and speak with the farmers. Please order me some private investigator business cards."

Cindy says, "I wrote this all down and I will hand it to Jack when he returns from court."

"One more thing, please have Jack call Attorney Andrew Crabtree".

Drew walks over to two farmers that have cows grazing in the fields close to the accident scene. The farmers denied losing a cow. Drew walked the fence line of both farmers and noticed a section of the fence that appeared to be new. Drew filmed the repair and departed the area.

Drew returns to the law firm and writes his report at his new desk.

Cindy says, “I love the new chairs we bought. They are extremely comfortable.”

Drew laughs at Cindy’s comment. “Do you have fresh coffee made, Cindy?”

“No, but I will make you a fresh pot”

Jack returns to his office with a smile on his face.

“I settled my dead cow case with the truck company for a million dollars. You both will be given a ten-thousand-dollar bonus. If I win, you both win. We are a team.”

Cindy and Jack standup and clap at the news.

Drew says, “Jack, no tag was found on the dead cow. Thank God I had the Vic’s you mentioned for me to purchase. I canvased the farms in the area. There were only two farms. Both farm owners denied missing a cow and no farmer had tags on their cows either. I walked the fence lines of both farmers. I videoed a section of fence that appears to be new, like it was recently repaired.”

“Which farm was that at, Drew?”

Drew looks at his notes and says, “The farm belonging to a Josh Leverman, located at 25381 Virginia Loop Road”.

“Good work, I will get in touch with Mr. Leverman. If he is smart, he will settle with me.”

Jack, Drew, and Cindy sit around the law firm and drink hot coffee. The business telephone rings and Cindy answers, “Jack Hoffman Law Office, Cindy speaking.”

Cindy speaks with her mother, but pretends it is a new client on the other end. Cindy hangs up and says, “That is a new client. She lost her dog to a neighbor backing out of the driveway. She will be here at 9 am sharp tomorrow. Her name is Miss Fool- You.” Cindy starts to laugh. “It was my mother reminding me to bring her some milk.”

Jack laughs and says, “This law firm only hires wise staff....”

42

PARTY TIME

Aaron Master owned a large surveillance agency in Tampa, Florida. He hires a new manager to run the operation. Her name is Stella Jones, age forty. Aaron works with Stella for weeks to teach her the job of operations and how his agency works.

Aaron says, “Make sure the office staff do their jobs. They are to answer the telephone, ‘Master Surveillance Agency’ and their first name. If they are given an assignment, the person in the office is to take the assignment, email the client a confirmation, then run data on the claimant and issue the case to a field agent.”

Stella writes this information down as her boss speaks.

“When a case is finished, the field agent will turn in their report and submit their surveillance video. The office staff will type an invoice and a cover letter, then submit the entire report to you for final review. Once a week I will need you to contact the clients and make sure they received their reports and videos and are 100% satisfied with our work.”

Stella nods her head in agreement as she takes more notes.

Six Months Later

Stella is in her office with a pile of paperwork on her desk when her boss walks in.

Aaron says, “Remember, I will call you from Barcelona, Spain at one pm your time every weekday. I will make a list of things to talk about and you do the same.”

Stella laughs and says, “Aaron, we have been over this one pm phone call like twenty times. Can you relax and go on vacation? You deserve a break. Relax, I got this.”

Aaron replies, “I know you do, Stella. This business is my life, and I want to make sure it runs smoothly while I am on vacation, that’s all.”

A horn toots a few times from the parking lot reminding Aaron it is time to go. Just before he exits the office, Aaron says to his office staff, made up of six women, “I will bring you all a gift from Barcelona. Now listen to Stella while I am away.”

The next morning, a Tuesday, Stella and her six-office staff are working away. Carol is sixty-five years old and does not fit in with the other five younger women. She stays to herself. Carol is the typist and receives all the notes from the field investigators.

At one pm sharp the office telephone rings, and it is Aaron on the line.

Susan, an employee of four years answers the telephone. “Master Surveillance Agency, Susan speaking”.

“Hi, Susan, Aaron calling from Barcelona, Spain. How is everything going in the office?”

“We are busy answering the phones and Carol is busy typing away”.

“That is good to hear. Can I speak to Stella, please? I need an update from her.”

Stella comes on the telephone and says, “Hello, Aaron. You are a punctual boss. It is one pm sharp. How was your flight to Spain?”

Aaron replies, “The flight was on time. Any issues at the office we have to go over?”

Stella looks at her notepad and replies, “No problems from the field agents. Let me put you on hold for a few seconds while I go to my office.”

Stella puts the telephone on hold. A few seconds later she says, “I am in my office, I can talk freely now. We have one problem: Carol. She is a slow typist, is hard of hearing and does not fit in with me, and the other younger staff. She is a loner, and we are team players. I think you should consider replacing her with a younger typist”.

Aaron says, “Carol has been with me from day one, and that has been ten years now. She is the mother I never had. I will not replace her ever. I will hire a second typist when I return from my vacation. Anything else?”

“No, boss, not today so far.”

“Good to hear. I will call you again tomorrow at one pm. Bye”.

Stella walks out of her office and says to the office staff, “Party Time!”

Susan asks, “Whose birthday is it?”

Stella says, “It is no one’s birthday. We will have half workdays starting today. You will be paid for the full workday, too. I just need one of you to remain behind to cover the telephone. So, each of you will work one day a week as a full day to cover the business phones. Carol is exempt from answering the telephones. If the boss calls again after one pm, tell him I went to visit a client.”

Susan asks, “That is nice of the boss to give us half-days off but pay us for the full day.”

Stella replies, “This half day is my idea. If and when the boss calls, we never mention the half day workday to him. We cannot leave the office until the boss calls us at one pm from Spain. The half-day weekday is a go for thirty days. You can never mention to the boss that we did this half-day weekday, either. This has to remain our little secret.”

All the women except Carol start clapping about the half-day workday deal.

Aaron and his family are having a great time visiting his wife’s relatives and sightseeing, going to the beach, and enjoying the city life. Aaron keeps looking at his watch for the one pm call to the States. One pm in Tampa, Florida is seven pm in Spain.

Susan is at her office desk on Wednesday at one pm when the boss calls.

“Master Surveillance Agency, Susan speaking.”

“Afternoon, Susan, this is Aaron. Can you connect me with Stella, please?”

“Stella is on the other line speaking with a client.”

“How are things going there in the office. You women getting along?”

“Yes, sir, we are. We landed the Chevron account today. Stella had to fill out paperwork for us to be an approved vendor.”

“Fantastic,” says Aaron as he waits to talk to Stella. “How are your two boys doing at school?”

“Stan and Mack are doing better. They love their new teacher. I do not have to fight them anymore to go to school.” Johanna laughs and says, “My boys are waiting at the front door to leave for school.”

“Glad to hear.”

“Stella is off the phone now, let me connect you to her.”

“Hello, boss.”

“Hi, Stella. Susan mentioned we landed the Chevron account I have been marketing like crazy to get.”

“Yes, sir. I filled out the last bit of paperwork the lady needed.”

“Fantastic news. Any cases or problems we need to discuss today?”

“No, sir. I have a handle on everything. How is the vacation going?”

“Fun as hell. I sure needed a vacation. It has been long overdue.”

Stella asks, “Why didn’t you take a vacation sooner?”

“I had no good manager to cover the office while I was away. I never trusted any manager anyway until you. I am glad you are on board and watching my back. Your loyalty means a lot to me.”

“That is nice to hear, sir. Don’t worry about a thing; the office is running smoothly.”

“Thanks. I will call again tomorrow at one pm. Bye.”

Stella hangs up and walks into the general office and yells, “Party Time!”

All the women stand up to leave for the day except for Johanna. It is her day to man the telephones and to cover Stella’s half day workday.

Stella says, “Tell me ladies what you did yesterday with your half-day off.”

Johanna says, “I took the time to go to the library and to pick up some books to read.”

Susan says, “I was able to be home early for my boys. Traffic was so light at 1 pm. It was great.”

Stacy replies, “I went to Target and shopped for three hours all by myself. I felt free. No kids tagging along.”

Trudy speaks next, “I had time to visit my grandmother in the nursing home.”

As the women exit the office, they say goodbye to Carol, who is typing away.

Stella walks over to Carol and says, “You are free to go, Carol. I am giving all the staff a half-day off each day.”

“I have no other person to help me type the reports of the field agents. I am so backed up. The company hired five more investigators last month. I am glad the agency is growing, but I am over worked. When the boss returns, you need to get him to hire me a helper.”

“I promise to speak to him. I must go. I am meeting my daughter for lunch.”

Stella says goodbye to Johanna on her way out of the office.

Johanna goes into the small kitchen to make a fresh pot of coffee. Johanna asks Carol, “Want a cup of coffee, I am making a fresh pot.”

Carol says, “Yes, please, with sugar and cream.”

A little while later Johanna brings her a cup of hot coffee and asks, “How long have you worked for Master Surveillance Agency, Carol?”

“I was hired ten years ago next month. I was the first person hired by Aaron. He is a good boss, works hard and pays very well, too. We are lucky to be his employees.”

Johanna replies, “I agree with you. My last boss was pretty obnoxious. I needed a job because we had too many bills piled up at home, but my husband made me quit. Aaron is a true gentleman. I love working here. Best job I ever had.”

The women talk for a few minutes before the office phone rings.

“Master Surveillance Agency, Johanna speaking.”

“Hi, Johanna, Aaron here. Let me speak with Stella, please.”

Johanna lies, “Stella left to drop off some reports to a client. Can I leave her a message?”

“Yes. Have her contact Insurance Defense Lawyer Brad Stewart for me. My deposition is in ten days. Ask him to change the date as I am on vacation.”

“I will do that, sir. I will tape a big note to her office door.”

Aaron asks, “How is everything in the office and with the field agents?”

“No problems from anyone. Stella is on top of us all.”

“Good. I will call again at one pm tomorrow.”

Aaron called every day for a month at one pm to trouble shoot any problems his agency had. Stella took his call every weekday for thirty days, too. When Aaron hung up from the long-distance phone call, Stefanie would say to her office staff, ‘Party Time, girls!’

30 Days Later

Aaron walks into his office with gifts from Barcelona, Spain, and hands them over to each of the six females. He says, “I hope you like the gifts. I cannot exchange them.”

After five pm when the office staff left for the day, Carol knocked on Aaron’s door.

“Come in, Carol. Stella told me about your need for a second typist. I will find one soon for you.”

Carol says, “You need to replace all five women in this office. They are all dishonest. Stella took your one pm call each day for a month, and when you hung up, she told the women, ‘Party Time’.”

Aaron asks, “What is Party Time?”

Carol replies, “Party Time was Stella’s words for a half-day workday. Stefanie kept one office person behind to cover the telephones for clients and in case you called back again. When you did call back, the office person would lie and say Stella was visiting a client.”

Aaron was shocked, “What? I trusted everyone in the office to cover my back while I was on vacation. I pay my staff well, and this Party Time is my reward for doing so?”

Carol says, “To make things worse, each of the women would sit around the office and talk about what they did on their half-day off. Stella made them promise not to mention Party Time to you. It was their little secret.”

“Did you take time off, too, Carol, now and then?”

“Nope, I certainly did not. I would not take advantage of your absence and play while the boss was away. I just sat at my desk and did my job.”

Aaron says, “Good to know, Carol. I need loyal and reliable staff around me. I can see you are office manager material. No more typing. I will train you to run my office and will give you a raise, too. I am doubling your salary. By the way, I do not think we need six people in this office, what do you think, Carol?”

Carol replied, “We can manage with two typists and one lady and me answering the telephones. This will save you two salaries.”

“Tomorrow morning I will clean house. I have no choice. I will meet each staff member at the front door with their belongings and tell them they are fired. Remind me to call the locksmith and change the office locks as well.

First thing tomorrow, we need to place an ad for two new typists. You will select and interview the applicants and hire each new staff member. I can start each new employee at five hundred a week. The key is to have honest, reliable people to run this office. Thank you, Carol, for your loyalty.”

43

BAD COP

Steve Robbins, age twenty-three, an employee of Video Results Surveillance Agency was sitting in his Honda Civic waiting for his claimant to be active. His claimant, Charles Parker, was an old man, age seventy, that claimed a man parking his car struck his leg with the back bumper as he walked by.

The driver of the car claims he struck no one, that the man just slapped his hand on the car as he was parking. The insurance company decided to place Charles Parker under surveillance for three days to determine if the claimant was injured or not. Steve knew that Miami, Florida was known as an insurance fraud city.

Charles Parker was not injured at all. He just wanted quick insurance money. He is a professional con man that makes a living filing false claims. Charles just settled a claim with his landlord for ten-thousand dollars, claiming he tripped on a cracked sidewalk.

This time, Charles said he injured his right knee when the rear bumper struck him. The insurance doctor that examined Mr. Parker claims the man is one hundred percent fine. The hospital x-ray showed no damage to Mr. Parker's right knee either.

Steve is sitting in his car, working a crossword puzzle when a police car pulls up behind him with their blue lights on. The two policemen walk up on both sides of his vehicle.

The policeman on the driver's side says, "Your driver's license and registration."

"What did I do wrong, Officer? I am a licensed private investigator on a surveillance."

The policeman says nothing. He just takes Steve's documents to his police vehicle. The second officer keeps an eye on Steve and any movements he makes.

The policeman returns with Steve's documents and says, "Here are your driver's license and your vehicle registration. Now step out of your vehicle. I want to search it."

Steve complies with the officer's command and steps out of his Honda.

Steve says, "Officer, you need my permission to search my car and I am not giving you my permission."

The policeman just laughs at Steve's comment.

"I have nothing to hide. You can't search my vehicle without my permission or without a warrant."

The black policeman standing over six-feet tall and wearing dark sunglasses on this hot July day laughs and says, "I am the law on the street, and I do what I want. The judge is the law in court. The judge will decide if I did anything wrong. Now, step over to the curb so I can search your vehicle."

Steve walks over to the curb as instructed. A young white male cop in his med-twenties walks over and says, “Turn around so I can search you for weapons.”

The white policeman searches Steve and says out loud, “He is clean.”

The black cop searching Steve’s Honda pulls out a gun and says, “Place him under arrest. I just found this firearm under his front seat.”

“What? No way!” Steve shouts as the white policeman puts handcuffs on him and places Steve in the back of the police car. Steve again shouts, “Liar, I had no gun. You planted it there!”

For you, Young Man, it is too late. You are being arrested and will be going to jail for carrying a concealed firearm. I am towing your car as well. So, keep complaining and I will add additional charges.”

The black cop looks at Steve, smiles and repeats, “Remember, I am the law on the streets. I do what I want.”

Steve shouts, “I want both your names. This is a false arrest!”

The black cop says, “We are known as Cuff and Key on the street.”

Steve sits handcuffed in the back of the hot police car asking for air conditioning.

The black cop turns on the heat instead and asks, “Is that better?”

Steve observes the two policemen talking by the front of their vehicle. A tow truck soon arrives and tows Steve’s Honda away. The

cops enter their patrol car, and the white cop says, “Cuff, you turned the heat on instead of the air conditioning.”

Cuff looks over at Steve, sitting there with sweat pouring down his face and says with a smile, “Sorry about that. My mistake.”

Down at the police station Steve is charged with carrying a concealed firearm. He is booked and escorted to his jail cell.

Steve turns to the guard and says, “I am entitled to my one phone call.”

The guard opens his cell and escorts him to a telephone on the wall. The guard says, “Make it quick.”

Steve calls his older brother.

“Jimmy, I have been arrested by the Miami Police for carrying a concealed firearm. I am innocent. The black cop planted that gun in my car. Come bond me out.”

The guard starts to escort Steve back to his jail cell, when Steve asks, “How much is my bond anyway?”

The guard replies, “Bond for carrying a concealed firearm is fifty-thousand dollars.”

Later that day the guard comes to Steve’s jail cell. “You have made bond. You are free to go.”

Steve collects his personal property from the property room and walks out the jailhouse door a free man. There to greet him is his older brother.

“Jimmy, I was framed. They planted the gun in my car. You know I do not like firearms. Those were bad cops. I am lucky they didn’t beat me up, or worse, shoot me.”

Jimmy says, “You are correct, Steve. We are going straight to Internal Affairs and file a complaint. Then we will pay a visit to Defense Lawyer Lenny Bruce, to have him represent you in court.”

At the front desk of the police station an officer says, “Have a seat. I’ll have someone from Internal Affairs coming over to meet with you.”

Twenty-five minutes later a white male in his 50’s dressed in a business suit walks up to the pair waiting on a bench.

“I am with Internal Affairs. Does one of you want to file an official complaint on one of our officers?”

Steven stands up and says, “An officer named Cuff and his partner, named Key planted a firearm in my car. I am a private investigator just doing my job. I was waiting for my insurance claimant to come out of his residence when the officers pulled up.”

“Wait right there with your story. Let us all go upstairs to my office. I can then record your statement and start my investigation. My name is Detective Green. Follow me.”

The three ride an elevator to the third floor. Detective Green says, “I have had many complaints on Cuff. His real name is Johnny Jones. He is a bad apple. It always comes down to his word against yours.

His rookie partner, Key, as he is known on the street is really named Marvin Stone. He has few complaints against him.”

Inside Internal Affairs Office the three men make themselves comfortable. Detective Green says, “Let me make a pot of coffee. I could sure use some.”

Once back at his desk, Detective Green turns on his tape recorder and says, “This is Detective Green. Today’s date is March 9th, 2021 and the time is seven-ten pm. I am taking the recorded statement from Steve Robbins on Officer Johnny Jones.

“Sir, state your full name for the record, please.”

“My name is Steve Robbins.”

“Do I have your permission to tape record you?”

“Yes, you do.”

“Are you aware that you are being tape recorded at this time?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Tell me in your own words your interaction today with police officer Johnny Jones.”

“I am a licensed private investigator with Video Results Surveillance Agency, and I was on a surveillance on an elderly claimant when Officer Johnny Jones pulled up behind me with his blue lights on.

He asked for my driver’s license and vehicle registration. I gave him my documents and the officer returned to his police vehicle. He returned a few minutes later and handed me back my documents.

Officer Jones then said, step out of your car and step over to the curb, so my partner can keep an eye on you. I am going to search your car.

I said, you have no right to search my car without my permission or without a warrant.

Officer Jones laughed and said, I am the law on the street. I can do what I want.

He bends into my car and pulls out a gun and claims the firearm is mine. He makes his partner arrest me for carrying a concealed firearm. I called the officer a liar.

Once in the police car I asked for some air conditioning. Officer Jones puts the heat on instead.

The officer then towed my car and drove me to the police station for booking.”

“Officer Jones never struck you?”

“No. I was not touched.”

“Do you own a firearm, Mr. Robbins?”

“No, I do not. That officer planted a firearm in my vehicle.”

“Are you willing to take a polygraph regarding Officer Jones planting a firearm in your car?”

“I sure am.”

“Everything you told me tonight is the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?”

“I swear I am telling you the whole truth.”

“I had your permission to take your statement tonight?”

“Yes, you did.”

“You are aware my tape recorder was recording our conversation tonight?”

“Yes, I was aware.”

The time is now seven-forty pm. I am ending the recorded statement at this time.”

Steven asks, “Are we all done here?”

“No. Now I will walk you over to our polygraph room. Follow me.”

Steven and Detective Green walk across the hall to a door marked ‘Polygraph’ in big letters.

Detective Green speaks to the polygraph examiner for a few minutes then exits the room.

The polygraph examiner says, “I am Officer Welch. Have you ever taken a polygraph before?”

“No, sir, I have not.”

“I will be asking you some questions regarding your interaction with Officer Jones, today. Just answer every question with a yes or a no. I will be running three test with the same questions. When I am finished, I will read your charts. I will know instantly if you are telling the truth or not.”

“I do not lie. I am telling you the truth.”

“The polygraph will soon let me know the truth. I will be attaching some components on you, then we will start. Do not move and just relax.”

Thirty minutes later the polygraph examiner walks across the hall and speaks with Detective Green.

“Steve Robbins passed with flying colors. He was not lying about the events that took place today.”

Detective Green walks back with the polygraph examiner and enters the polygraph office.

“Steven, you passed the polygraph. You are free to go. I will investigate Officer Jones planting a firearm in your car. I will be in touch.”

Detective Green hands Steve his business card and escorts him to the front entrance of the police station.

“I am telling you the truth. You have a bad cop on your police force.”

“I will investigate your claim, Mr. Robbins. We will be in touch.”

Two Weeks Later

Detective Green makes a call to Steve Robbins.

“Hello?”

“Morning, Steve. This is Detective Green. I just wanted to update you on your claim against Officer Jones.”

“Please, give me some good news.”

“Our police department has arrested Officer Jones for planting a firearm in your vehicle. It turns out, he stole the firearm two-weeks

prior when handling a burglary call at a pawn shop. The firearm planted in your vehicle is the same firearm from the pawn shop.”

“What happens now, sir?”

“Officer Jones will be going to court and you will have to testify against him.”

“I will be more than happy to testify against the crooked police officer.”

“I will be in touch. Oh, one more thing, you can sue the police officer and this police department for false arrest if you want to.”

“I just may do that. Thank you, Detective Green for investigating my claim.”

Detective Green says, “Between you and me, Officer Jones is a bad cop.”

44

HERCULES

Private Detective James Cobb, age twenty-nine, the owner of CSG Surveillance Agency, rode the elevator to the second floor of The Alexander Building to attend an insurance fraud seminar.

The conference room was busy. James looked around and found an empty seat near the back of the room. Seating next to him was a woman in her late fifties. She was reading a brochure of the conference.

James sat there looking at text messages on his cell phone when a female voice said over a loudspeaker, “The conference is about to start. Please turn off your cell phones at this time, thank you.”

A man in a dark suit stands in front of all the attendees and says, “Welcome to the sixth insurance fraud seminar presented by my law firm, Jackson & Smith, right here in Sunny Miami, Florida. My name is Attorney Mike Bailey, and we have offices in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa, Florida. I am out of our Miami office.

Please stop me at any time during my power point presentation if you have any questions.”

A photo slide appears on the big screen behind Attorney Bailey. The photo is of a man water skiing. “This man filed a false claim. He claimed to have a bad back.”

The conference room fills up with laughter.

Attorney Bailey continues, “Fraud is out there. Too many people are filing false insurance claims. They think they will score big and be able to retire on their false lawsuit.

If you are an insurance adjuster, that is where you come in. You have to investigate the claim. Go into the field and ask questions. Use the six magic words: who, what, where, why, when, and how.”

A young woman stands up and says, “I am an insurance adjuster with Allstate. I do not have time to go into the field. I would like to, but I am loaded down with claim files. I wish I could be able to spend more time in the field, but I just cannot.”

Attorney Bailey says, “If you cannot go out into the field to ask questions about the insurance claim, then hire a private investigator to be your eyes and ears. We use CSG Surveillance Agency. Their office is right here in Miami. I believe the owner of the agency is here in the room. James Cobb, can you please stand up and introduce yourself?”

James stands up. He waves at the large crowd in the room.

“Good Morning, everyone. Fraud is out there. Our surveillance agency obtains video on so many claimants with alleged injuries, it is not funny. Like Attorney Bailey says, you need to investigate each insurance claim with a fine-tooth comb.”

James sits back down, and Attorney Bailey continues his fraud seminar.

One Week Later

James Cobb is sitting in the law office of Attorney Mike Bailey of the Jackson & Smith Law Firm.

“What did you think of my presentation last week?” asks Attorney Bailey.

“Your power point presentation with the fraud slides were great. The people in the room took notice, that was for sure. I landed some new accounts thanks to you.”

“As your brother-in-law, you scratch my back, and I will scratch yours.”

“What new case am I working on for you this week?”

Attorney Bailey opens his thick file and says, “I am dealing with a professional claimant. This file is thick with false claims. The sad thing is this man won every lawsuit. He will not win against me; I am sure of that.”

James asks, “What is the man’s name and where does he reside?”

Attorney Bailey looks in his thick file and says, “Sunny Atkinson’s last known address is 7529 Butler Road right here in Miami. I am taking his deposition in two weeks. I need surveillance video on him.”

“What is his age and what are his alleged injuries?”

My claimant is forty-nine years old. Mr. Atkinson’s alleged injuries are his neck and back. This is an auto accident plus a worker’s

comp claim as well. This man is a mechanic but has not returned to work since the accident.”

“What is the date of loss and your case file number?”

“The date of loss is April 9th, 2019. Our file number is SA1362.”

“What, this file is two years old?”

“We just landed a new account, and this is one of their messed-up files. Safeco hired a few surveillance firms to obtain video, but each was caught by the claimant.”

“Where did Sunny Atkinson work as a mechanic?”

“ABC Auto Repair, located at 5589 Whitfield Road.”

“What is my surveillance budget on this case?”

“I talked my client into giving you a six-thousand-dollar budget.”

“I will use a second investigator and our total fee an hour is one-hundred and fifty dollars. The six thousand budget works out to forty hours’ worth of surveillance. Let me get started. I do not have much time, if your deposition of the claimant is less than two weeks away.”

Attorney Bailey says, “Nail this man for me. This is a new account and if we get results our firm will land more cases. More cases means more surveillances for your agency.”

“I will obtain video for you.”

“I hope you do. Good luck and be careful out there.”

James drives over to Sonny's neighborhood to scope out his job. James drives by 7529 Butler Road and observes a black F150 with tinted windows sitting in the driveway. James writes down the license plate number 'Sunny3', as he drives by.

James notices there are no neighbors living nearby and no place to sit and watch the claimant's residence without being noticed. The house sits in a large lot and is surrounded by large mature trees, making it almost impossible to obtain video. James knew he needed a second private investigator to help him on the job.

James looks in his directory of contacts and calls a cell phone number.

"This is Pete. Leave a message and phone number at the beep."

"Pete, this is James, the man that trained you ten years ago. Call me. I have a case for us to work together. (228) 224-7659."

James returns to his residence and enters a bedroom that has been converted to an office. He runs background data on Sunny Atkinson. There is no criminal record, and he has resided at his current residence for twelve years. He owns a black F150, a Gray Jaguar and a white BMW. James writes down all three license plates listed in the data.

James's cell phone starts ringing.

"Hello?"

"Funny message you left on my phone. You will always remind me that you trained me many years ago, won't you, Buddy?"

James laughs and says, “Hi, Pete. What has been going on in your life?”

“I was on vacation for a month with my girlfriend. We flew to Barcelona, Spain and took a cruise. Very relaxing! I am back from my trip and ready to work again.”

“Perfect timing then. I have a professional claimant with an alleged back injury. My client landed a new account. If we do a good job, I will receive more assignments.”

“Then let us nail the man. Where is the job?”

“It is right here in Miami. Let us meet and I can give you all the details at that time.”

“Where do we meet?”

“The McDonalds, on 5th street, say in an hour?”

“I will see you then, James.”

James departs the claimant’s neighborhood. He fills up his car with gas and heads over to the McDonalds on 5th Street.

Pete pulls up to the meeting location, enters McDonalds and walks over to James’s table.

“Hi, Buddy. Long time no see.”

James shakes Pete’s hand and replies, “It has been too long, that is for sure. If we do this case right, we will meet more often.”

“I am ready to help you, James.”

“That is good to hear. Finding help is hard these days; no one wants to work.”

“Count me in on all your assignments. I enjoy working with you.”

James says, “I will call you first on all future assignments I receive. Here is the file I made for you regarding this claimant. He can drive one of three vehicles. I listed the vehicles and the license plates for you.”

“You always were a detailed type of person. When do we start?”

“We start tomorrow morning. We will stay out of the claimant’s neighborhood completely. We will box in Sunny Atkinson’s movements. When he exits his neighborhood, he can go one of two ways. I will cover his route to the left and you cover his route to the right. This way we will box him in.”

Pete says, “Let me show you my trip photos to Barcelona. You have to take the two-week cruise around the Mediterranean. It was a blast!”

James asks as he looks at the pictures, “Wow, you have a good-looking girlfriend. What is her name and where did you meet her?”

“I met her at a college class I am taking. We started talking and the next thing I knew we were holding hands.”

“Does she have a twin sister?”

“I am afraid not. She only has an older brother. I don’t think you will be interested.”

James just laughs at Pete’s comment.

The two men discuss the case over a hot cup of coffee.

Next Day

James and Pete take up their surveillance positions away from the neighborhood.

Pete is sitting at a corner gas station and James is sitting in the driveway of a vacant house for sale.

James says, "Surveillance is the Art of Waiting. Wait long enough and the claimant will be active."

Pete says, "Let us make a small wager, how about a hundred dollars? We guess what time the claimant will depart today. The closest to the time wins the money."

James says, "It is now four-thirty am, I say the claimant will depart by seven am."

Pete replies, "It will be closer to noon before the man departs his neighborhood."

James says, "The bet is on. When I collect the hundred dollars, I plan to buy video games over at the Game Stop Store."

Pete laughs and says, "You are dreaming if you think you will win, Buddy. Most of my claimants sleep in and are active in the early afternoon. When I collect the hundred dollars, I will treat my girlfriend to dinner, a movie and a walk on the beach."

James looks at his watch and says, "In my surveillances the claimants depart around seven am for work."

Pete says, "Our claimant may just stay home and never depart the area."

James says, “That is always a possibility. I will do extra days at no charge to obtain video. I am known as The Video Results Man.”

“Ok, Video Results Man, let us see who is right today.”

At six-fifty am the claimant’s black F150 Ford truck departs with the claimant and a female passenger.

James talks into his walkie, “The claimant just came my way. I am following him now. I win the bet; he left before seven am.”

“Lucky Dog, I am coming your way. Man, I wanted to treat my girlfriend to a nice dinner, too.”

James and Pete follow the claimant to a private residence. James finds a spot to sit to observe the claimant.

James says over his walkie, “Two young men are hooking up a boat to the claimant’s truck. The claimant is just sitting in his truck watching them.”

“You are right, James. This man is a professional claimant and is being careful.”

James says, “we will keep our distance till the three reach the boat dock, then we will close in and obtain our video.”

The claimant departs with two young men as passengers. James writes down the address where the boat was attached as he drives by. At a traffic light, James runs the data on the residence.

“Hey, Pete. I just ran data on the residence we were just at, and it comes back to Jerry Atkinson. He may be the claimant’s younger brother or his son.”

“OK, thanks for the info. Are you keeping notes, or am I?”

James says, “I will keep the notes, no problem.”

The crew arrive at Jones Park and drive over to the marina. They wait to launch their boat. Ten minutes later the claimant backs his Ford F150 truck till the boat is launched. The claimant attempts to leave, but his truck is stuck in the water.

He tries and tries to get out of the boat ramp’s water, but it is no use.

James sits just twenty feet away in the marina parking lot. He shoots steady surveillance video of the claimant bending over to look at his truck stuck in the water.

The claimant says, “Jerry, hop in the truck and gun the engine. I will get behind the truck to see if I can budge it free.”

Jerry walks over to the F150 and climbs in. He starts to gun the engine. The claimant enters the water and gets behind his truck. His back faces the truck and with both arms, he lifts his truck out of the water enough for the truck to get unstuck.

Jerry drives away from the boat ramp and parks the truck in the parking lot.

Jerry walks over to Sunny, laughing, “Glad Hercules was here today. I cannot believe you lifted the truck.”

Sunny just flexes his muscles and says, “My name is Hercules.”

James obtained the close-up video of the claimant that his client needed. He turned the surveillance video over to his brother-in-

law and said, “My client will love this video. I nailed the guy. He lifts his truck with his back and says he is Hercules.”

James Paul Ellison

45

BETRAYED

Larry Porter just retired after twenty-one years with the Miami Beach Police Department. It felt good turning in his badge and gun to the Chief of Police.

The Chief asks, “What kind of side work will do you now?”

“I plan to take cruises for the next six months. Travelling and just relaxing; that is all I am thinking about right now.”

“What will you do with your time after the cruises are over?”

“I plan to open a private investigative agency. I will then hire and train a small group of field agents to work my cases for me.”

“Do you have a name for your private investigative agency, yet?”

“Yes, I do. Just Results Investigations.”

Six Months Later

Larry Porter walks into the Chief’s office and hands out his business cards. Larry then walks over to the uniform patrol office and does the same. Larry continues his marketing by handing out his business cards to the men in the detective bureau and the property room.

Larry stops at the front desk and hands his business card over to Officer Maxwell Stone.

The officer says, "I have an assignment for you, Larry. Call my brother-in-law, Attorney John Stone. He has a wealthy client that needs a private investigator to follow his wife. I was going to do it, but I would be violating police policy on this type of work. Tell John I told you about the assignment. His office number is 305-453-5792."

"Thanks, Max for the case. I will give you a ten percent referral fee."

Larry walks over to his Toyota Camry and makes a call to Attorney John Stone.

"The law offices of Miller, Johnson, and Cowen. This is Carol, can I help you?"

Larry laughs and says, "You are lucky there are only three partners in the firm."

The woman laughs and says, "You are so right. Who do you want to speak with?"

"I would like to speak with Attorney John Stone. Tell him his brother-in-law, Maxwell, gave me his name."

"Can I ask who is calling?"

"Yes. My name is Larry Porter. I am a private investigator."

"Can I have your phone number, please. My older sister needs to hire a detective to follow her husband."

"Sure. My phone number is 305-453-5792. What is your name and your sister's name?"

“My sister’s name is Joan, and I am Carol.”

“When can I call your sister?”

“Call her from ten am to three pm, Monday to Friday. She will be home alone with her two kids.”

“What kind of work does her husband do?”

“He is a probation officer over in Miami.”

“Alright, Carol, I will give your sister a call tomorrow. What is her husband’s name?”

“The snake is Calvin Connors. They have been married nine years.”

“Carol, can you now connect me to Attorney John Stone?”

Five minutes later, Attorney Stone meets up with Larry in the conference room.

“How does it feel to be retired from the police force, Larry?”

“It feels good, sir. It feels good.”

“Call me John, since we will be working together on this possible divorce case.”

“John, do you need surveillance on someone’s wife?”

“Yes. My client owns a huge communications company in Chicago. He flies from Miami to Chicago twice a week and stays there often. He thinks his wife is cheating on him. She is home less often, and his neighbors have witnessed her returning home late at night with a man.”

“What is her name, age and residence address?”

“My client says money is no object. He just wants the truth. Her name is Virginia Waters, age twenty-six and their address is 349 Bay View Lane in Miami Shores. What is your hourly rate and when can you start?”

“I charge my clients one-hundred-twenty an hour, plus twenty-five-cents a mile. I will need a retainer on this case?”

“How does five-thousand-dollars sound as a retainer? Now, whatever you do, make sure you do not get caught following her.”

“I am on it right now. I will keep my distance, don’t worry.”

Larry and John spend twenty more minutes in the law firm’s conference room.

On Larry’s way out he waves goodbye to Carol, who is busy on the telephone.

Once back in his car, Larry gives Joan a call.

“Hello?”

“May I speak to Joan? Her sister Carol told me this number.”

Kids can be heard in the background as Joan says, “This is Joan.”

“My name is Larry Porter; I am a private investigator. Is this a good time to talk?”

“Just give me a few minutes. I am saying goodbye to a friend and her children.”

Joan is back a few minutes later. “Are you still there?”

Larry says, “I am still here. Your sister mentioned that you wanted to have your husband followed.”

“Yes. He is hardly home, and a different perfume is on his clothes.”

“What is your husband’s name and what is his occupation?”

“Calvin Connors and he is the manager of a warehouse by the airport.”

“What kind of vehicle does your husband drive?”

“He drives a Honda Civic, green in color with a tag of HYT628.”

“May I call you Joan?”

“Yes.”

“Please call me Larry. How do you know his license plate? Have you had your husband followed before?”

“No. I don’t have the funds. He controls it all. I have to borrow the money from my sister. I watch a lot of TV cop shows. How much will your services cost me?”

“I’ll tell you what, Joan. If your sister spreads my name around the law firm she works for, I will do it for cost.”

“For cost?”

“Just pay for my gas and any meals. This case may take a day or two at the most. What day of the week do you believe he is cheating on you?”

“He comes home very late on Thursdays.”

Larry says, “Today is Tuesday. I will be on him Thursday afternoon leaving work. Just act natural and do not ask him any

questions. I will call you on Friday and give you updates on his activity.”

“Thank you, Larry, for helping me out and at cost, too. I will have Carol mention your name at work as often as my sister can.”

Larry arrives at 349 Bay View Lane, a magnificent two-story mansion overlooking the water. A blue in color Rolls Royce is in the driveway. Larry runs data on the residence. The value of the house is twelve million dollars.

Larry waits at the gas station just down the road for any activity.

At nine thirty that night, the Rolls Royce drives by his surveillance location. Larry follows the vehicle to a night club called *Midnights*, located on Miami Beach. The driver pulls up to the front door and hands her keys to a valet. The good-looking woman enters the night club.

Larry waits ten minutes and enters the night club, too. Sitting at the bar is his claimant. Larry sits a few tables away and has a beer while he listens to the live band. The claimant does not dance or talk with any men while the club is open.

Larry sits in his car after the night club closes. The claimant is still inside.

A Miami Beach Police Officer working security for the club walks over to Larry.

“Hi, Larry. How is the PI business?”

Hi, Mike. I am busy.”

Mike says, "I know why you are at the night club. You are watching Virginia Waters. I can give you inside information if you keep it between us."

Larry says, "You are right, I am watching her. What information do you have for me?"

"The lady is dating the night club owner and has been for at least two months. His name is Antonio Diaz. He does not drive. They both will be out soon, so get your video camera ready."

"How are your wife and kids?"

Mike says, "The family is fine. I am about to quit the force. I do not get along with the new chief. I don't agree with the new policies he is implementing."

"Will you become a PI like me?"

"I may, but I have other options I cannot discuss right now."

"I will have you help me and my client, Attorney John Stone, as he has plenty of work coming my way."

"I will think about your offer, Larry. I have to return to my security post. Be safe out there."

"You be safe as well, Mike."

Thirty minutes later, the claimant and a man, believed to be the night club owner exit the club, enter Virginia's car, and depart the area. Virginia is driving. At each traffic light the couple stop at they kiss. Larry obtains video of their actions. Virginia drives right to her place and both enter holding hands.

Larry remains on site. He passes his time doing crossword puzzles. At eight am, Larry receives a call from his client.

“This is Attorney Stone. You can break off your surveillance. Virginia knows you are out there watching.”

Larry replies, “How can she know? I was extra careful in following her. I kept a safe distance.”

“Her boyfriend, the night club owner, was tipped off by a Miami Beach Cop.”

That night, Larry drives back to the night club and spots Officer Mike Hodge standing by the main entrance in uniform. Larry toots his horn and Mike walks over.

“Hey, Buddy. See, I told you the night club owner is with your subject.”

“You also told the night club owner I was watching them.”

“No way in hell would I rat out a fellow policeman I worked with for six years.”

“You did rat me out. My client received a phone call from the night club owner’s attorney. The lawyer said a Miami Beach Police Officer told his client that his girlfriend was under surveillance. Why did you betray me, Mike?”

“I am sorry, Larry. I wanted to get on the good side of the night club owner. He is opening a second night club and I want to manage the security for him. I do not want to be a policeman anymore.”

“Well, Mike, you betrayed me.”

Three Months Later

Larry is on another surveillance when Attorney Stone calls him.

“Morning, Larry. Do you have a copy of the Miami Herald News Paper with you?”

“No, why?”

“Go buy one. Read the article on page two, top right.”

Larry stops his surveillance and buys the Miami Herald. He finds the article in question.

There is a photo of Virginia Waters standing next to Antonio Diaz and the cop that betrayed him. The article says that the club owner is getting married, and that Mike is the best man.

James Paul Ellison

46

THE SPOUSE

Jake Cummings walks into the law office of Bryan Stewart and stops at the reception desk.

“Hello, I have a two pm appointment with Attorney Stewart.”

“Can I ask who is calling?”

“Private Investigator Jake Cummings.”

The reception says, “Please have a seat while I try to locate Attorney Stewart.”

A few minutes later Attorney Stewart walks over to his two pm appointment.

“Afternoon. You must be the gum shoe I have been hearing about. I am Attorney Bryan Stewart.”

Jake stands up and shakes the man’s hand and says, “Private Investigator Jake Cummings at your service.”

“Follow me young man to our conference room. You must be twenty-five years old.”

“No, Sir. I will be twenty-three in two weeks. You must be sixty years old.”

“I wish I were sixty. I am seventy-one years old.”

“You look good, sir, for your age.”

“I try to stay in shape and eat right. My wife of fifty-years sees to that.”

The two men enter the large conference room and sit at the Oak desk. On the table are a file and a notepad and pen.

Attorney Stewart slides the notepad and pen over and says, “This is for you, Young Man.”

“My mother said you wanted to see me about a divorce case?”

“Yes, I did. You live and work from home?”

“Yes, I do. Why pay rent and hire someone, when I can live at home and have my mother take my calls. I even get free meals,” laughs Jake.

“Can I offer you anything to drink before we dive into my case?”

“I am fine, thanks.”

Attorney Stewart opens a thin file folder and says, “I just received this case. I met with my client late yesterday afternoon. Her name is Betty Beckman, and she is very wealthy. She comes from a good political family and wants to keep this file quiet.”

“How old is Becky and where does she reside?”

“Becky is forty years old and resides at 4982 Cowan Avenue here in Tampa. She says her husband owns a car dealership and has access to too many cars to keep track of. He is currently driving a 2021 Jeep, black in color.”

“I charge one-hundred-dollars an hour. Will that be a problem?”

“It seems reasonable to me.”

“Good. What is your client’s budget for this surveillance?”

“She doesn’t have one. She just told me to find out if her husband is cheating or not.”

“What is her husband’s name?”

“First name is Phillip, and the last name of course is Beckman. He is sixty, with dark hair, and he wears glasses.”

“This sounds like an easy case to me.”

Attorney Stewart says, “when will you start this assignment?”

“I will start tomorrow.”

“Please, give me updates when you have some news?”

“I will do that, just do not pass any news to Betty Beckman. I need her relaxed and acting normal around her husband.”

The Next Morning

Jake arrives in the vicinity of the Beckman’s residence at five am. No cars are in the driveway, but there is a three-car garage attached to the two-story brick residence.

At eight-twenty am the black Jeep drives past Jake’s surveillance position.

The private investigator follows his target to I Hop Restaurant on Ninth Street. Jake waits a few minutes and enters the restaurant, too. Jake sits at a table behind his subject.

The pretty waitress walks up to Phillip Beckman’s table.

“What would you like to drink, sir?”

“I will have coffee and my friend, who should be here any minutes will have hot tea.”

The waitress then stops at Jake’s table. Jake orders pancakes with sausage and black coffee.

Phillip makes a phone call after waiting twenty minutes for his unknown friend.

“Where are you, Johnny? Your hot tea is now cold.”

Phillip says, “I understand. Just call me later after your flat tire is fixed.”

When the waitress walks by, Phillip says, “The check, please. My friend cannot make it this morning.”

Jake leaves a twenty-dollar bill at his table, and a note saying he had to leave in a rush. Jake returns to his car and waits to video Phillip when he comes out.

Phillip exits the restaurant talking on his cell phone.

Jake follows his subject over to a private residence located at 249 Palm Court. Phillip rings the doorbell. A young man opens the door and pulls Phillip inside.

Jake waits down the street for further activity.

An hour goes by before Phillip and the young man exit the residence holding hands. Phillip opens his passenger front door, and the unknown young man climbs inside. Phillip closes his door, enters on the driver’s side, and departs the area.

Jake runs the address of 249 Palm Court. The owner comes back as Jonny Norton.

The two men stop at Billy Bob's Café on NW 30th Avenue and enter.

Jake waits a few minutes and enters the restaurant wearing a different colored shirt and wearing a ball cap. He grabs a table next to the two men, who are sitting side by side.

Phillip says, "I missed you this morning for breakfast, Honey."

Johnny replies, "I was so mad to come out of my residence to find a flat tire. I was looking forward to our breakfast, too."

"Well, that is behind you now. We have the whole day to ourselves."

Jonny says, "Let us return to my place. We can change there and go to the beach. I have trunks that will fit you."

Phillip reaches over and the two men give each other a quick kiss.

The two men have their meal, exit the restaurant, and depart in Phillip's car.

Jake follows their car from a distance and videos the two men holding hands as they enter Johnny's residence.

Twenty minutes later, the two men exit wearing swimming trunks and carrying towels over their shoulders. They enter Phillip's car and depart the area.

Jake follows the two men to Brandon Park. Jake shoots video of the two men as they walk hand-in-hand to the beach. Jake waits for the two men to return to their car.

Jake wakes up from a nap to find Phillip's car missing. He drives over to Johnny's residence and sitting in the driveway is Phillip's car. Jake parks down the street and waits.

At midnight, Jake calls his surveillance for the day. The two men never left the residence after returning from Byron's Park.

The next morning at five am, Jake returns to the vicinity of Johnny's residence. Phillip's Jeep is parked in the driveway. Jake starts to yarn. He only had four hour's sleep. Jake videos the Jeep in the driveway.

At ten am Jake has activity. Phillip exits the residence alone. Standing in the doorway is Johnny wearing a white robe. He waves goodbye to his lover as he backs out of the driveway.

Jake does not follow. He returns to his own residence to write his report and to prepare his surveillance invoice.

Two hours later Jake walks into Attorney Stewart's office. He is told by the receptionist to go to the conference room, that Attorney Stewart will meet him there.

Attorney Stewart walks into the conference room holding a coffee cup. "Care for something to drink, Jake?"

"I would love a cup of coffee. I am running on fumes. I was up almost all night."

The Attorney dials a number, orders a cup of coffee, and hangs up the phone receiver.

Jake hands over his surveillance report, his video, and his invoice.

Attorney Stewart asks, “What is the woman’s name he is cheating with?”

Jake laughs and says, “Your client’s husband is Gay. He is with a man named Johnny.”

The receptionist brings in a tray carrying Jake’s coffee. On the tray also are cream, and sugar, if Jake needs it.

After the receptionist exits the room, Attorney Stewart says, “My client was told by a close friend, I think your husband is seeing my husband. You just confirmed her suspicion. You found out for sure Betty’s husband is gay.”

“I guess Betty Beckman will file for divorce now.”

“Nope. Betty told me when we first met here in my law office, if her husband were seeing a Gay man, she would not seek a divorce. She said, she would just sleep in the guest bedroom.”

“Why not just divorce the cheater, asks Jake.

Attorney Stewart explains, “Betty is smart. There is no ugly divorce, no one has to know her husband is gay, and she can still have a nice lifestyle.”

“Your client is smart. I like her plan.”

James Paul Ellison

47

THE TAXI RIDE

Dan Gibson enters the law office of Attorney Doug Bagman. He walks up to the receptionist and asks, “Is Attorney Doug Bagman in?”

“Who should I say is calling?”

“My name is Dan Gibson. I am a private investigator.

The receptionist dials an extension and says, “I have a private investigator by the name of Dan Gibson out front requesting to speak with Doug.”

The receptionist hangs up her telephone, turns to Dan and says, “Please wait in our conference room” and she points to a door.

Dan walks in and sits at the far end of the long conference table made out of Oak.

A man walks in carrying a file under his arm. I am Attorney Doug Bagman. It is nice to meet you. My colleagues have told me so many stories of your success in the field. Can I get you something to drink?”

Dan shakes the man’s hand and says, “Nice meeting you as well. No, I do not want anything to drink, thanks.”

Dan is fifty-five years old, stands six-feet-four, wears his brown hair in a ponytail and wears glasses. Dan has been a private investigator for thirty-years. Before being a PI, Dan was a cop for five years.

Attorney Bagman says, “Before we get started on my case can you tell me a few of your old cases?”

“Sure. Here is a case I call The Taxi Ride. I received the assignment from Attorney John Craft.

I arrive in the vicinity of Tracy Hill’s trailer at six am to start my next surveillance assignment. Tracy has a scheduled medical appointment at ten am over at Memorial Hospital on Jackson Street in Tampa, Florida.

Tracy was involved in a two-car accident two months earlier and alleges she has a sore neck and a bad beck. She claims she is in pain twenty-four hours a day and needs help taking care of her two small children, ages three and one. Her husband, Stan, is a truck driver and is out of town often.

The insurance company, State Farm, hired a daycare helper to come to her residence seven days a week. Tracy also claimed she could not drive. She used taxies to get around to do her shopping and for medical appointments. The taxi rides are all paid for by State Farm Insurance Company.

.Tracy is living a big lie. What no one knows is that Tracy is a faker. Tracy was not hurt in the two-car accident and she does not need anyone to take care of her children on a daily basis.

Her husband is not a trucker, but an unemployed cook. Her husband, Stan, stays home to take care of the kids when she has her medical appointments. Tracy's mom does her grocery shopping for her.

I find a surveillance spot to sit at from where I can watch for a taxi to arrive and then depart the Winddance Trailer Park located on Hill Street. I keep busy by doing crossword puzzles.

At nine-forty am a Sunshine cab enters the trailer park. I go inside the same trailer park and I obtain video of Tracy exiting the trailer, entering the taxi in the back seat, and waving to her husband as she departs the area.

On the way to the hospital, at a traffic light, the claimant moves from the back seat to the front seat of the taxi. The cab driver and Tracy start to kiss. I pick up my video camera and video the two when their lips lock.

The taxi driver drops Tracy off at the hospital, then parks in the main parking lot to wait for his passenger. I enter the hospital with the claimant and ride in the elevator with her to the third floor. When the claimant enters room three-ten, I return to my car and wait. To kill time, I catch up with my notes.

One hour later the taxi driver drives over to the main entrance. Waiting in the shadows is Tracy. She is all smiles when her lover appears. Tracy enters the front seat and kisses her man. I record on video their romance.

The taxi driver does not return Tracy to her residence. Instead, they drive over to his residence located at 3497 Cedar Court and enter holding hands. Two hours later they reappear. The man is buttoning his shirt as they return to his taxi. They enter the taxi and depart the area.

Two blocks from her residence the taxi pulls over to the side of the road. Tracy now moves from the front seat of the taxi to the back seat. The taxi then drives her home.

Tracy exits the taxi and returns to her husband standing in the doorway holding one of their children. I wait down the street for any activity from my claimant. At three pm and without any movement from the claimant I end my surveillance for the day.

The next morning, I visit the law office of Attorney John Craft. I show the attorney the surveillance video of Tracy and her romance with the taxi driver.

Attorney Craft says, "I am taking her deposition next Monday. I will show her the video of her with the taxi driver. If she wants to save her marriage, she will settle her case. Why? Because her husband's deposition follows hers and he will watch the video of her kissing the taxi driver."

Dan says, "I call that story, The Taxi Ride."

Attorney Bagman laughs and says, "That is a good one. We have time for one more story."

Dan says, "My next story also involves a taxi. I do lots of work for State Farm. An adjuster by the name of Brenda Alamo, wanted to

place her claimant, Ronda Gold, under surveillance. The adjuster wanted to know if Ronda could drive a car anymore. She was paying for Ronda's taxi to and from work for six weeks already."

The attorney asks, "What was Ronda claiming?"

"Ronda had a bad head-on crash and ever since the crash, she claimed she was afraid to drive."

"Did you obtain video of Ronda driving?"

Dan says, "I sure did. On day one of my surveillance, I had on video, the taxi dropping Ronda off from work and not two minutes later, Ronda entering her own car and driving out of her neighborhood. Ronda went to a drug store, and shopping at a strip mall."

The attorney says, "I guess the adjuster stopped the free taxi rides to Ronda."

"You are right, she did.

Ronda sued State Farm saying she had to drive that day to pick up medication. The State Farm attorney told the adjuster she cut the claimant's claim off too early. The adjuster should have had more video of her driving on different days."

"The attorney was right. You need to demonstrate a pattern of abuse. So, did the adjuster hire you again to go back out on Ronda?"

"Yes, the adjuster did. It took me five days of surveillance, but I obtained video of Ronda driving. During the first day of surveillance, Ronda had her family riding and walking around the neighborhood looking for me."

"The family never spotted you?"

“Nope. I sat in the back seat of my Honda.”

“So, what happened?”

“After that, I boxed Ronda in. I sat in one direction out of the neighborhood and my helper sat the other way. Once Ronda believed she was not under surveillance again, she went shopping alone, driving her own car.”

“I guess the adjuster stopped the free taxi rides again.”

“Brenda Alamo sure did. She settled quickly with Ronda too. Brenda threatened to turn Ronda over to the State of Florida for fraud if she did not settle with State Farm.”

Attorney Bagman looks at his watch and says, “I could be here all night listening to your stories, but I have to go over my own case I need surveillance on.”

Dan laughs and asks. “Does your case involve a taxi in any way?”

“No. My case involves a dog bite. My claimant, Allison Freeman, claims she is afraid of dogs. Allison claims she cannot take walks anymore in her neighborhood. I need you to obtain video of my claimant taking walks and over several days, too.”

Dan says, “I will need a good budget if you need multiple days of your claimant taking walks.”

“How much money do you need? I will ask my client for the funds.”

Dan says, "If it takes me five days at eight-hundred a day, that will be four-thousand dollars. Tell your client I will need five-thousand dollars max."

"I will do that. In the meantime, I want you to drive over to the claimant's residence and take a look at the job. Call me and tell me what the job sit looks like."

Dan says, "No problem. I have a strong feeling this woman takes daily walks in her neighborhood and is not afraid of any dogs."

"You may be right. I bet in the future you will be telling a new client about my case."

Dan laughs and says, "I think you are right; I will be adding your case to my story telling pile."

Dan drives over to the claimant's residence. There is no activity. Dan calls the Attorney's cell phone but gets a recording.

Dan leaves his new client a message, "Sir, I drove over to the claimant's residence. It was quite, there was no activity. Let me know if I can start my surveillance on her tomorrow."

Not five minutes later the Attorney calls back.

Hello?"

"Dan, this is Attorney Bagman. My client authorized a starting budget of three-thousand-dollars."

"Perfect. I will be on your claimant first thing in the morning."

The Next Morning

Dan arrives in the vicinity of the claimant's residence at five am. The house is dark. Dan opens his thermos and pours himself a cup of coffee. He is into his second cup of coffee when the garage opens. Dan grabs his video camera.

The claimant, Allison Freeman, walks into view with a big, black Lab on a leash. She starts walking down her street. Allison stops now and then for her dog to meet other dogs that are on leashes with their own owners walking them.

Dan writes in his report: 'The claimant takes a long walk around the block with her Lab. Allison Freeman stops a total of four times to allow her dog to visit with other dogs. The claimant even stops to pet a Pit Bull. Allison Freeman is laughing and talking with her neighbors while out on her walk.'

When the claimant returns to her residence, Dan calls Attorney Bagman's cell phone but gets the Attorney's voicemail.

"Morning, sir. This is private investigator Dan Gibson. I am all done with my dog case. I will be billing you for only three hours of my time. Your claimant is not afraid of dogs. Allison Freeman has a big, black Lab of her own. She went for a walk around the block and allowed her dog to meet other dogs. The claimant even stops to pet a Pit Bull."

48

A SECOND CHANCE

Sam Truman is twenty-nine years old. He is a good-looking young man. Sam stands six-feet-one, weighs a fit two hundred pounds, and has short brown hair. Sam is a fireman for the Orlando, Florida fire department. He loves his job and his work hours. His crew works twenty-four hours on and forty-eight hours off.

Sam is married to his high school sweetheart, Robin Carter. Robin is very pretty, she stands five-foot, weighs just ninety pounds and has long blonde hair and deep blue eyes. Robin is a stay-at-home mother to their only child, Sam Junior age two.

Sam and Robin have been married for eight years but dating a total of twelve years. Sam tells all his work buddies how much in love he is. Sam walks around with pictures of his wife holding his son and tells his work crew, "I hope Sam Junior wants to be a fireman like his Papa."

Sam and Robin live in an apartment complex called Diamond Creek. On Sam's days off he loves staying home to play with his son. This allows Robin her free time to go shopping at Good Will, searching for clothes for Sam Junior. Robin's sister lives down the road in a new

house they just bought. His brother-in-law works for Delta Airlines as a pilot.

On Sunday, just two days ago, Sam got the shock of his life. A good friend and neighbor in the complex, named Pete Stone, a real estate agent, asked Sam if he was separated.

“Hell no. Why are you asking?”

“Because I saw Robin holding hands with a different man. I was showing a couple a residential house in the Gator Subdivision off of 5th Street when I looked out the living room window and saw Robin holding hands with a man in a pest control uniform. I watched them walk back into a residential home and enter. Here is the address.”

Sam did not know what to do. He had no signs that Robin was not happy in her relationship with him. “What did this man look like?”

“He was average height, maybe five-ten, stocky build, dark hair, he looked Latin.”

Sam calls his brother, Drew, in Los Angeles.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Brother. I have a problem, a major problem. Can you talk or do I need to call you back?”

“I can talk, what is it, Sam?”

“A good friend of mine, a real estate agent, saw Robin holding hands with a man in a pest control uniform while he was showing a couple a house for sale. This was on Sunday, just two days ago. I just cannot believe my wife is not happy being married to me.”

“Maybe the real estate agent saw some woman that looked like Robin. How far away from her was he?”

“I do not know. It sounds like he was close enough to say something to me about it.”

“Hire a private investigator to find out the truth. Do not do the surveillance yourself. It is too emotional for you. You may do something stupid like beat the man up, or worse, kill him. You just do not know what you will do in that emotional state.”

“I am so in love with Robin, I am home a lot and I spend quality time with her and...”

Drew interrupts his younger brother and asks, “How has your love life been lately?”

“It could be better. She complains often that Sam Junior wears her out and she is too tired for love making.”

“Sam, I would hate to be in your shoes. You need to discover the truth, one way or the other. Hire a private investigator and you will know the answer, whether or not Robin is cheating on you.”

Sam drives over to his fire station with his two-year-old, Sam Junior, in a booster chair in the back seat. Chad spots his good buddy pulling up to the rear parking lot of the fire station and walks over.

“Hi, Sam. What brings you here today on your day off?”

“Hi, Chad. I need your help and you have to keep this between us. I need to hire a private investigator. Do you know of one?”

“I used one when I divorced Rebecca, but that was three years ago. I can call him to see if he is still in business. He nailed Rebecca cheating on me. I will give him a call to find out.”

“If he is still in the business tell him I will have to call him back and to provide you with his contact information. What is his name?”

“I forgot his last name, but his first name is Rafael.”

“Text me his information. I need a PI and if he is not available, maybe he knows of a PI that is free to help me.”

Sam waits by his cell phone. The call he needs finally arrives.

“Hello?”

“Sam Truman, please.”

“Speaking.”

“Hi, my name is Rafael Rodriguez, a private investigator. I was told you need my services.”

“I am afraid so. A good friend, a real estate agent, saw my wife holding hands with a man in a pest control uniform. They then entered a private residence. I need to know the truth, is my wife having an affair on me?”

“I will need a photo of your wife; plus, the address she was observed entering and the description of the other man.”

“I will write it all down for you. Can we meet, so I can give you the photo of my wife?”

“Sure. I will need an advance up front as this is a private case. My rate is 100 dollars an hour. When I work for lawyers or insurance companies, I just invoice them and wait to be paid. I never had a

problem collecting from them, but I always do in private cases. People want my services but refuse to pay for them.”

“Do you take credit cards?” I am a fireman and that is all I have on me.”

“You are a fireman? Where?”

“Fire Station twelve, off of Rodger’s Avenue. I have been a fireman almost eight years now.”

The private investigator says, “My brother Henry is a fireman, too. He lives in sunny California. Tell you what, I will only charge you fifty an hour, call it the Fireman’s discount.”

“I like the sound of that. Any money I can save will be greatly appreciated.”

“Sure thing, Sam. Where are you right now?”

“I am about to pull up to Burger King at 3487 Summer Street.”

“Order me a hamburger, fries, and a coke. I will be there in no time. I am wearing a striped, white shirt. You cannot miss me.”

“I will order your meal. I am wearing a light brown t-shirt and I am at a corner table on the NW side of the establishment.”

Sam is eating his hamburger when Rafael walks over. The two men shake hands and Rafael sits down at the table.

Sam slides Rafael’s meal over and says, “My treat. Call it a Fireman’s gift.”

Rafael laughs and replies, “I like that. Thanks.”

Sam slides over a photo of Robin he always keeps in his wallet. Robin is holding his son, Sam Junior.

“I took this photo just three weeks ago at our son’s second birthday.”

Rafael says, “Divorce-type cases are very emotional. You have to let me do my job. Do not call me a thousand times wanting a blow-by-blow description. You have to act normal at home, like you know nothing about her seeing another man. Do not grill her on her activities, just play a loving father to your son. Can you do that, Sam?”

“I will try to act normal. I work tomorrow so Robin knows where I will be for twenty-four hours.”

Rafael replies, “Your wife is very pretty. I can see why you fell in love with her. Just relax. I will be on her early tomorrow. What does your wife drive and who watches your child if she runs around?”

Her mom comes over to be with her grandchild. Robin drives a white in color Toyota Camry. I do not have the license plate at this time.”

“That’s ok. I will run data on her for my file. I will get the license plate off the data. What does your mother-in-law drive?”

“She drives a black BMW.”

“Do you have any questions for me before I start the surveillance, Sam?”

“No right now. Here is my credit card for the payment advance.”

“No need. I know I can trust a fireman. I will meet you again once I discover the truth. I will give you a written report, your video on a DVD and my invoice.”

“I will be waiting for your call on my million-dollar question: Is my wife cheating on me?”

The Surveillance

Rafael arrives at six am and finds his subject’s residence dark. He sits back and plays a county music CD as he waits for any activity from the residence.

At eight-thirty am, a black BMW pulls up and a good-looking woman in her fifties exits the vehicle and enters the residence.

A few minutes later a white Toyota Camry backs out of the two-car garage. Rafael follows the woman to a private residence located at 2986 Willow Lane. In the driveway is a green in color van with Joe’s Pest Control written on the side. A Latin male in his twenties exits his residence in boxer shorts and gives Robin a kiss. Rafael videos the love birds enter the love nest.”

Rafael videos the two kissing and walking into the residence. He starts to catch up on his notes when Sam taps on his driver’s window.

“What are you doing here, Sam? I thought you were working your twenty-four-hour shift over at the fire station.”

“I switched shifts with a buddy. I followed you following Robin. I saw my wife kiss that man, too. I am going in and confronting them. I need to speak to my wife and try to save my marriage. Even if she is cheating on me, I will give her a second chance.”

Sam starts to walk in the direction of the residence when Rafael says, “That’s a bad idea, Sam. I would not go in there if I were you. The guy may be armed.”

Sam lifts his shirt to reveal a firearm in his waistband. “I am armed, too.”

Rafael watches Sam go straight to the residence and enter the unlocked front door.

Five minutes later Sam steps out of the residence and walks over to Rafael.

“I found my wife in his bedroom. Lucky for them they were still wearing clothes, or I would have killed them. I told her if she valued her marriage, she would come right home. I told her I was giving her a second chance.”

Sam enters his vehicle and departs the area.

Robin does not follow her husband over to their residence. Rafael obtains video of the couple, kissing and holding hands as they walk around the neighborhood.

Later that night with no more activity from his subject, Rafael calls it a night. On his way home he stops by Sam’s place and rings the front doorbell. Sam comes to the door, red eyed.

“Come in. Follow me to the kitchen. I am making a pot of coffee.”

Sam keeps saying over and over to Rafael, “I gave Robin a second chance.”