

TIME WILL TELL

by Lynne Nuibe

January 18, 2006

Chapter 1

Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.
to Thursday, 7:00 a.m.

Traffic was light and he got to the city by six that evening. Leaving his car in the hotel's parking structure, Al carried his suit bag to the lobby. He'd considered just driving down for the dinner meeting and then right back home, but he was pretty sure that it was going to take him some time – and some drinks – to get this contract signed. So, better to stay overnight and drive home in the morning. And better to leave his car parked at the hotel and take a taxi to the restaurant.

Once he got up to his room, he called his wife, Sylvie, at home.

"Hi, Honey. I just got checked in – I'm in room 625. The drive was easy – I made it in two hours."

"That's good! That means you'll have time to rest a bit before dinner." Sylvie worried about Al working too hard.

"Yeah, I think I'll take a short nap but I want to be sure to be at the restaurant by eight o'clock. Anyway, I'll be home in the morning – let's plan on going out for lunch."

"OK, Hon. You've got a pile of mail here, but I don't see anything important... Good luck tonight! Bye."

Good luck? Al thought. I could use some good luck. I really think we should sell this property and I wish I knew why Markus disagrees.

Markus Bauer and Al Jonsen had been partners in a real estate investment business since just after college. The business was doing pretty well, but the sale of this property would mean that they could expand – move to larger offices, something they really needed to do. Markus kept talking about holding the property for a couple more years because the new freeway project might go through there, but Al just didn't see that happening. Besides, these buyers seemed perfect for the old farm – they wanted to remodel the house and set up a bed and breakfast within sight of the Poconos.

As he drifted off to sleep, he thought again about the expansion. If only they had some extra cash...Markus had joked about using some of Sylvie's money – her inheritance from the death of her parents – but Al didn't really want to do that. Maybe that's why Markus and Sylvie didn't get along – she thought that Markus had his eyes on her checkbook.

Markus really hadn't been himself since his wife, Julie, left him last year. That was just before Sylvie and Al got married – in fact, Julie was going to be in the wedding. Strange that Julie has never contacted Sylvie – they hadn't been close friends, but still...

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The next morning, Al was up and ready to leave by 7:00. The dinner had gone well and the buyers would be coming up to start escrow next week. Good thing that Markus hadn't come along, he might have found a way to mess up the deal.

Al carried his suit bag down to the garage and saw that the car next to him was being loaded with piles of luggage.

"Sorry," said a very harried-looking woman, surrounded by suitcases and kids. "We'll be out of your way as soon as we can."

"No problem," Al said, using the remote to open the trunk, "I'll just dump this stuff back here."

As the trunk lid floated open, the woman's face turned white. Her mouth opened wide and her scream echoed through the garage. Al turned to look in the trunk. There was Sylvie, her head bloodied and her eyes staring up vacantly – dead.

Chapter 2

Thursday, 9:30 a.m.

to 11:30 a.m.

"Gennaro, O'Neal! In my office!" The captain's voice echoed through the homicide room at Scranton PD.

"Oh, no" groaned Gennaro as he slowly got up and lumbered toward the boss's office. "Sounds like he's got a burr up his butt about something."

Dave O'Neal watched his partner move slowly across the room, noticing again how much weight Art had put on since his wife died. *He must be living on donuts and Philly cheesesteak*, thought O'Neal. *Of course, this close to the city you've got to expect that would be a favorite meal...*

The two detectives crowded into the captain's office. Gennaro took the single guest chair and O'Neal leaned against the wall, his arms crossed.

"We've got a request from Philly PD," the captain said. "One of our citizens was found dead down there this morning, and they want us to accompany them to check out her home. They'll be here shortly."

"I suppose that we'll just be tag-alongs, as usual," O'Neal said. "Those big city boys always think they know everything."

"Just play nice," the captain ordered. "Try to behave yourselves."

"Behave my ass," grumbled Gennaro as they waited in the squad room for the visitors. But he settled down when only one person showed up, a young guy who looked like he was on his first case. "They must think they already have the perp," he mumbled to O'Neal, "if they sent a little puppy like this."

"Hi, I'm John Doggett," the young man said. "Here's the prelim reports – you can read them in the car."

Gennaro winked at O'Neal as Doggett led the way to his car. "I told you – he's a puppy."

"OK, let's see what we've got," Gennaro said as he scanned the reports. "Sylvie Jonsen was found in the trunk of her husband's car this morning about 7:00. The car was parked in the garage of the Center City Hotel.

"Al Jonsen had checked in about 6:00 the evening before. The desk clerk said he was alone and went right to his room. He didn't receive any calls through the switchboard, but they called him a cab and it picked him up at 7:30. There was a call for his room at 7:35, but it rang back to the switchboard when there was no answer. The operator said it was a woman but that she didn't leave a message."

"I wonder why he took a cab?" Gennaro wondered, then continued with the report.

"The cab took him to the Metro Steakhouse, where he met with a couple of clients. He was with them all evening and arrived back at the hotel by cab at 10:15. He was alone and he went right to his room. No more calls that night or in the morning, and he checked out just before 7:00.

"The coroner estimates time of death between 9:00 and 11:00 last night. He says he can't get much closer than that yet. Autopsy results will help, but it'll take a day or two. So, the husband had opportunity – maybe he invited her to come down and then bashed her over the head. Or maybe she went down with him and snuck up the back way to keep from having to pay."

O'Neal shook his head at Gennaro. "Just read the report, we'll get to theories later."

"Alright, alright...it says probable cause of death was a blow to the head – maybe she was hit, or maybe she fell. There wasn't much blood in the trunk – the skull was flattened on one side but the open wound was small and it probably didn't bleed much. No blood spatter around the area, but the coroner said that he wouldn't expect much. Looks like it *could* have happened somewhere else, but lividity shows that she definitely was put in the trunk close to time of death."

"What does the husband – Al, is it? – have to say for himself?" O'Neal asked Doggett.

"They had just started interviewing him when I left. He seemed pretty upset, but who knows? We checked the garage and the street outside the hotel and didn't find her car, so we don't know how she got to Philly. Jonsen said that he called home and talked to her when he checked in, and the hotel switchboard shows a call to their home number about that time."

"So he checks in, calls his wife, goes out to dinner, back to the hotel and goes to bed. In the morning he checks out and opens his trunk and finds his wife's body. Is that it?"

"More or less," agreed Doggett. "Here we are...nice house." As the three men were walking up to the house, a woman came out of the house next door.

"Are you the police? I just heard about Sylvie! My god, I just talked to her last night!"

"What time was that?" O'Neal paused on his way up the porch steps.

"About eight o'clock – maybe a few minutes after. We had plans for today and she called to cancel."

"Can we talk to you after we finish in the house?" Gennaro asked.

"Sure, I'll be around all morning. My god, this is awful..."

They looked around the downstairs of the Jonsen house, and then Gennaro and Doggett went to check the second floor. O'Neal checked the backyard and looked in the garage – no car. The whole house was very clean – nothing out of place except for some mail on the kitchen counter.

Even that was stacked neatly, with an opened envelope lying on top. O'Neal picked it up carefully. The envelope was empty, and it was addressed to "Mr. & Mrs. Al Jonsen" – no return address, local postmark.

"Hey, O'Neal," Gennaro called from upstairs. "Come up here a minute."

O'Neal slipped the envelope into an evidence bag and followed his partner's voice up the stairs and into what looked like the master bedroom.

"This is the only place that looks off," Doggett said. "It looks like she might have dressed in a hurry; her jeans and sweater are just tossed on the bed. But it's pretty clear that she wasn't killed here."

"She must have driven down to the city," O'Neal said. "At least, there's no car in the garage or in the driveway."

"Let's go see what the neighbor has to say," Gennaro said as he started out of the room.

After inviting them in and offering coffee, the woman introduced herself as Kate Myers.

"They moved in about six months ago," she said. "Sylvie and I were friends right from the start. She and Al had only been married for a few months and she didn't know very many people here. She was a pretty nice person, maybe a little compulsive and sort of a worrier, but nice."

"What do you mean, a worrier?" O'Neal asked.

"Well...she is – oh, my god, she WAS – one of those people who want to *know* what's going on – sort of control freak, but in a nice way. I'm making her sound weird, but she wasn't. Let me give you an example. Al was on a business trip – he flew to Chicago – and he didn't leave her an extra set of keys for his car. The gardeners couldn't get to some stuff in the garage and she couldn't get the car moved. When he came back, she had an extra set made – those things are not cheap! – and she kept them on her key ring. She told me, 'Now I'll always know where his keys are if I need them again.' Like that..."

"Did she and Al get along alright?"

"Oh, sure. There were no problems that I could see. She didn't like Al's partner – a guy named Markus Bauer – and I think they had some words about that from time to time, but that's all."

"What didn't she like about Bauer?"

"Well, I'm not sure. I know that Bauer's wife left him just before she and Al got married, and Sylvie was confused about that. She and Julie hadn't been close friends, but Julie was going to be in the wedding and she took off without even saying goodbye. Sylvie said that Markus never wanted to talk about it, and so she just let it drop. But she never heard from Julie again."

"She also didn't like the way Markus treated Al. They had been talking about expanding the business and Al wanted to sell a piece of property to finance the expansion. Markus was dead set against it. Sylvie told me that Al planned to go to Philadelphia to meet with some buyers and when Markus found out about it, she could hear him yelling at Al on the phone.

"I think that she always thought that Markus wanted *her* to finance the expansion..."

"She had money?" Doggett asked.

"Yes, her parents died a couple of years ago and she inherited some. Not a fortune, she told me – but enough that she had a cushion if they needed it."

"So how come she didn't help out the business?"

"Al didn't want to use her money. She told me that he wanted her to keep that for later, when they had children...oh, I just can't talk anymore..." she cried. "This is just too awful!"

"I understand," O'Neal nodded solemnly. "Just a few more questions. Tell me what Sylvie said when she called you last night. It was about 8:00?"

"Yes. She just said that she had to go to the city and wouldn't be back until morning. She said something had come up and she needed to talk to Al right away. She tried to call him, but he'd already left for dinner. She even called Markus to get the name of the restaurant, but he didn't know it. So she was going to drive down and wait for Al at the hotel."

"I guess we should go check out this Markus Bauer dude," Gennaro said as they got back in the car. "Let's do it now, before we have lunch."

O'Neal smiled to himself. He could tell that his partner was going to get the poor puppy to pay for the meal.

Chapter 3

*Thursday, Noon
to 1:00 p.m.*

Bauer Jonsen Properties had an office in one of the older buildings downtown. As the three detectives entered the building, O'Neal could almost hear Gennaro thinking about which restaurants were nearby.

"Hey, Dave – have you eaten at that new place on the corner?"

O'Neal just smiled and shook his head as they entered the elevator.

"Can I help you gentlemen?" asked the receptionist at Bauer Jonsen. She sat behind a simple desk, guarding access to the back where the "gentlemen" could see several people on telephones, and a couple of closed doors. Everyone seemed subdued.

"We're here to speak with Markus Bauer," said Gennaro, showing his PD credentials.

"He's not in right now, but let me call the manager for you" she said, picking up the phone.

After a couple of minutes a young woman came from the back. "Why don't you come back this way?" she said. They walked back past the desks and entered one of the offices.

"This is Mr. Jonsen's office, but I'm sure it will be alright for us to talk in here" she said. "I'm Janice Wilson, the office manager for Bauer Jonsen," she said, glancing at their credentials. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, we really want to see Mr. Bauer. When do you expect him back?"

She hesitated, then glanced at her watch. "He should be back in 10 or 15 minutes, he just went around the corner to the bank. Can I get you some coffee while you wait?"

"No, but you can give us some information. I assume that you know about Sylvie Jonsen's death."

"Yes, we heard this morning. Everyone is just stunned. She was such a nice person, and she and Al seemed so happy."

"How did she get along with Mr. Bauer?" Doggett asked.

Dave O'Neal groaned to himself. The puppy should have waited for that question until they had a better idea of how Janice felt about the two partners.

"Well...." she said slowly, "of course I didn't see them together much...but, well, it did seem as though there was some tension there."

"What about tension between the partners?"

"Yes, some of that, too. They were arguing about a piece of property. Al – sorry, Mr. Jonsen – wanted to sell and Mr. Bauer didn't. In fact, as soon as Mr. Bauer heard about Sylvie's death this morning, he called the buyers and said that the sale was "on hold" for a few weeks. Mr. Jonsen is *not* going to be happy about!"

"Janice! What are you doing in there?" The man standing in the open door still had his coat on, and looked upset.

"Oh, Mr. Bauer! These detectives wanted to talk to you, and I thought I'd put them in here. I know that you don't like anyone in your office when you're not there." Janice said, nervously.

"Hmm...come along to my office, gentlemen. Janice, bring us some coffee."

O'Neal glanced back at Janice as he followed Bauer to the next office. She had a look on her face halfway between hatred and fear.

"So, what can I do for you?" Bauer asked as they settled down with their coffee. Janice quietly closed the door as she left.

"Well, you know about Sylvie Jonsen's death. We're talking to people who knew her, trying to get an idea about what she was doing during the day and evening yesterday."

Bauer hesitated. "If I tell you something, can you keep it confidential?"

"That depends on where it takes us," O'Neal said. "We'll try, but we can't make any promises."

"Well, Sylvie called me at home last night and she was very upset."

"What time was this?" Doggett interrupted.

"A little before 8:00, I think." Bauer replied. "I was catching up on my email when she called, and I know that I was done with that by 8:00 because there was a show I wanted to watch then."

"She was crying. She said that she needed to talk to Al right away. She wanted to know where he was meeting his clients, said that she'd tried the hotel but he had already left for dinner."

"And did you know where he was meeting them?" Gennaro asked.

"Well, yes, I did know. But I told her that I didn't. She was so upset – it wouldn't have been very good for business for her to show up like that. "

"Did you ask her what was wrong?"

"She said that she'd gotten an anonymous letter, that Al had a girlfriend that he was meeting in the city. I told her that was nuts – Al had a business meeting. But she didn't believe me. She said that she was going to drive down there and find him, or wait at the hotel for him."

"So what did you do?" O'Neal asked.

"After she hung up, I tried to call Al. But there was no answer in his room, and I didn't want to bother him at the restaurant. So, I just let it go."

"Did you hear from her again last night, or did Al call you after his meeting?"

"No, I didn't hear from anyone. I watched TV until about 10:00, then got back on the computer and did some posting on the 'Vet forum for a while. I was in bed by 11:30. I guess I should have contacted him. Maybe it would have made a difference..."

"What do you mean?" Gennaro asked.

"Well, if I had warned him, maybe he would have been prepared..."

"So you think he killed her?"

"Oh! I thought that was why you were here...I just assumed..."

"No, Mr. Bauer. There has not been an arrest yet." Doggett said formally. "We'll be back in contact with you if we have any further questions."

As they left the building Gennaro said, "Good job, Puppy – er, Doggett."

Doggett grinned at Gennaro. "I know, you thought I'd screwed up when I asked Janice about Bauer, didn't you?"

"Yeah, I guess I did. How come you asked her that so quickly?"

"Because of the look on her face when we said that we wanted to see Bauer. She looked almost...hopeful. I think she doesn't like him at all."

O'Neal said, "Well, I don't much like him either. But he's got no motive. So, let's go eat and I'll show you the envelope I found. You got an expense account, Puppy?"

Chapter 4

*Friday, 3:30 p.m.
to 8:00 p.m.*

Gennaro had a court case the next morning and by the time he got back it was mid-afternoon, and he had a big box of donuts.

"About time," O'Neal growled as he grabbed a glazed. "We got a call from Puppy and he's got another errand for us."

"Well, damn," grouched Gennaro. "Can I at least get some coffee? I missed lunch."

"Sure, grab a cup and a couple of donuts. I'll bring you up to date in the car."

As they headed back to the Jonsen house, O'Neal explained that Philly PD had found Sylvie Jonsen's car. They'd put out an APB on it, and a patrol unit had spotted it on the north side. Some kids were joy-riding and they claimed they'd found it down by Center City, about two blocks from the hotel. Just parked on the side of the street with the windows down and the key in the ignition.

"The whole key ring?" Gennaro asked.

"Nope, just the ignition key – interesting, huh?"

Gennaro tried to talk around his second donut. "So, where are we going now?"

"Al Jonsen is back at home – they haven't decided whether to charge him yet – and he's agreed to hand over a copy of Sylvie's will."

Jonsen opened the door, coffee cup in hand. "Come on in," he said. He looked pretty bad, like he hadn't slept at all, and his eyes were red. "My attorney is not very happy with me right now. He thinks I'm nuts to give you this stuff without a warrant, but I've got nothing to hide. I would never have hurt Sylvie – I loved her! But if I don't get this cleared up soon, I may have to sell my share of the business to pay him. I don't have any time to waste."

He handed O'Neal a copy of Sylvie's will. "As you can see, she left everything to me. Here's a copy of my will, too. Same thing, everything to Sylvie. The only real difference is the part about the partnership. When Markus and I set it up, we said that if either of us wanted to sell, we had to give the other first dibs. So, I put that in my will and attached a copy of the partnership agreement."

"Did you feel that your wife might not have followed the agreement?" O'Neal asked.

Jonsen rubbed his eyes and sighed. "I don't know. Sylvie just didn't like Markus. From the very beginning there was some kind of tension...I don't know. And then after Julie took off, it just got worse."

Back in the car, O'Neal was quiet for a while. "There's something wrong about this whole thing. Doggett says that his boss really likes Jonsen for the murder and they're trying to get a case together. But I just don't see it."

"What don't you see?" Gennaro asked.

"Well, for one, Kate Myers didn't think that Sylvie was upset with Al. But Bauer's story was just the opposite. You'd think that a woman would be much more likely to tell her friend about that kind of problem. Why would she tell Bauer – she didn't even like him.

"And then there's the envelope. If you were going to send a letter to a woman telling her that her husband was cheating on her, would you address it to *Mr. & Mrs.*?"

"Good point," Gennaro mumbled, brushing donut crumbs off his lap. "What about the timeline – does that work?"

"Well, we don't have the autopsy report – let's ask Puppy to send us a copy when it's done. Anyway, Jonsen got back to the hotel in time to do the deed. The cab dropped him off at 10:15 and the time of death is 9:00 to 11:00. But why would he put the body in his own trunk, and then *leave* it there? I'd have put it in *her* trunk before I dumped the car. Dumb... And where are the rest of her keys? She had a set of *his* keys on her key ring, remember? Where'd they go? Why would he take them?"

"Maybe he didn't want to dump her car with his keys in it," Gennaro guessed.

"But those keys are useless if you don't know which car they're for. We need to find those keys, and the letter. What happened to the letter? And another thing – Bauer said he called the hotel to warn Jonsen and there was no answer. But there's no record of another call that night – just the call from a woman. So, why did he tell us he called?"

"Look," Gennaro said. "Let's get back to basics. Who stands to gain from her death? Her husband gets her money, he wanted to expand his business, and he might have had a girlfriend on the side. But that doesn't feel right – nobody but Bauer had anything negative to say about their marriage. So, who else gains?"

"Well, Bauer will gain if Jonsen has to sell his share of the business to pay his lawyer."

Gennaro shook his head. "Nobody's gonna kill someone in the hopes that they *might* get to buy a piece of a business that they don't have any money to buy anyway. It's gotta be more than that."

"Then it comes back to the letter. Bauer's story about it being an anonymous letter about Al cheating just doesn't wash, because it was addressed to *both* of them – Mr. & Mrs."

"If the letter even came in that envelope," Gennaro cautioned. "If..."

"Yeah, I know. But I just can't see her telling Bauer about it and not mentioning it to Kate Myers. Makes no sense at all. Especially since it seems that she really didn't like Bauer. No, something is off. I just don't know what."

"Why don't we pay another visit to Janice Wilson? This time, away from the office. Maybe after dinner tonight?" Gennaro suggested.

"And I suppose that you expect *me* to buy dinner?" O'Neal joked.

"Yep, I'm in the mood for a big cheesesteak..."

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When they got to the office manager's apartment that evening, Janice wasn't happy to see them. "I really don't want to talk to you guys," she said nervously.

Gennaro stepped back and let O'Neal take the lead—he always seemed to do better with the ladies.

"I understand, but we only have a couple of questions – just some little things to clear up," O'Neal smiled. "For example, I got the impression that you didn't like your boss much. I notice things like that. Has he given you a hard time?"

"He's a bastard!" Janice said shortly. "He thinks he's god's gift to women..."

"And is he?" O'Neal asked gently.

Janice hung her head. "I thought so. He was so damn nice to me, and he talked about leaving Julie... But then she took off and I figured we'd be together. But he just turned his back on me and started acting like Mr. Boss.

"And I worked so hard getting all the records together for him for that property."

"Which property is that?" Gennaro asked quietly.

"The one in the Poconos that Mr. Jonsen wants to sell. I thought that Mr. Bauer wanted to sell it, too. I mean, he had me get all the land records and the layouts of where the septic tank was, and how deep the well was. Then all of sudden he didn't even want to discuss the property *or* us. Overnight, a complete change. It didn't make any sense..."

"And when was this?" O'Neal asked. "Just before the Jonsen wedding?"

"Yes..."

"And what's happened since then?"

Janice looked down and hesitated. "Well, the last report on the property just came in last week – the water quality report. The lab didn't even get out to take samples until a couple of weeks ago, after I called to remind them."

O'Neal guessed, "And there was something about the report that bothered you?"

Janice got up and went to the front door, keeping her face turned away from him. "I don't want to talk anymore."

"Janice, did you send a letter to the Jonsens? Just a few days ago?"

"You need to leave now," she said, opening the door. She was shaking and quickly shut the door behind them.

"Let's see if we can get a patrol car over here," O'Neal said as they hurried back to their car. "I think she's in danger, and I think she knows it."

"Yeah, now if we can just convince Philly PD," Gennaro grumbled. "Let's see if Puppy is ready for the big time."

Chapter 5

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.
to 4:00 p.m.

"Look, Doggett. There's something wrong here. I'm telling you, Bauer should be a prime suspect." O'Neal propped his feet on his desk and held the phone with his shoulder. He listened and reached for his coffee. "I know, I know. Your boss thinks Jonsen did it. But what do *you* think? What's your gut tell you?"

O'Neal listened and then grinned. "Well, there ya' go. Now all you have to do is convince your boss and then get your butt down here so we can go see Bauer. Maybe he can tell us where he was from 9:00 to 11:00 that night."

Doggett finally showed up in the early afternoon. Gennaro said, "Hey, we thought you'd be here in time for lunch."

O'Neal smiled to himself. *The kid catches on pretty quick.*

"My captain said we should have a warrant for this, so it took me a little longer than I expected." Doggett said as the three of them piled into the car. "So, what's the plan?"

"Let's go to his house first, see if he's there. I think we'll tell him that we're working on the timeline and ask if he can be more specific about what time Sylvie called him. He said he was sending email...maybe he can remember what message he was working on and we can tell from the time stamp. Then maybe I can get him to talk about that forum he mentioned. He could have followed Sylvie to the city, but there's no way he could have gotten back by 10:00 to do that forum thing."

Gennaro grinned. "Like we'd understand what he was saying even if we can get him to talk about it!"

Doggett looked over at them. "What, you guys don't post on any forums? Computer dating? Favorite foods? Maybe I can show you the ropes." He was trying to keep from laughing.

"Shut up and drive, Puppy!"

They could tell that Bauer wasn't happy to see them, but he let them in when he saw the warrant. "What's this all about? Why do you have a warrant?"

"Relax," O'Neal said. "We need some more details about what time Sylvie called you, and since you were on the computer then, we thought that you could tell the exact time from whatever message you were writing when she called. The captain decided that it would be a good idea to get a warrant. They always get nervous when there's a computer involved – old guys, you know..."

Doggett coughed to keep from laughing out loud. "Yeah, we just need to look at the message time stamp – we're not interested in what the message was or anything like that."

"OK, come on back and I'll see if I can remember which one it was," Bauer said, walking towards the back of the house. The computer was set up in a small room off the kitchen. There were pictures of Corvettes on the walls, and lots of car magazines on the desk.

"Hey, great pictures! One of these days I'm gonna have enough saved to get me one of these babies." Doggett nodded at the picture of a 1968 Corvette.

Bauer smiled, "If you do, be sure to check out the Classic 'Vet forum before you buy. They can give you lots of tips about what to look for. OK, here are the emails I sent last night. Let's see...here's the one I was working on when Sylvie called. If I remember correctly, I think I sent it while we were talking. It's stamped as sent at 7:53 p.m. Does that help?"

Doggett said, "That's just what we needed. Thanks a lot! Hey, would you show me that forum you mentioned?"

"Sure!" It was obvious that Bauer loved to show off. "Here's the main page, and here's the place where I spend most of my time. See, here are my postings from last night – I spent almost an hour going back and forth with some guy about the right size tires for the '68. Dumb ass thought he knew what he was talking about..."

"Great! Can you just print that page so I'll have the info I need to find it again? I *really* appreciate this – I'm going to have a ball on there!" Doggett gave Bauer a big grin.

Back in the car, Doggett looked over the printout and groaned. "Damn, his postings are time stamped at 10:08 p.m., 10:32 p.m., and 10:58 p.m. There's no way he could have made the round trip to Philly between 7:53 and 10:08 – it's 100 miles each way. Nope, it's just not possible."

"Could he have done those forum things – posts? – from somewhere else?" Genarro asked hopefully.

"Sure," Doggett replied. "But he'd have to be stopping along the way to find an internet connection. That's taking a pretty big chance, counting on finding that late at night."

When they got back to the station, the three of them got some coffee and continued to talk about the case. A patrol officer was passing through the room and heard Doggett mention the Classic 'Vet forum. "Hey, I love that forum! I've gotten lots of great information on there!"

O'Neal looked at him curiously. "You post on there often?"

"Well, I check in a couple of times a day – usually before I come in to work in the morning and then sometime in the evening. I don't always post, but I did this morning."

"Show me," O'Neal said, gesturing at the only computer in the room with an internet connection.

He quickly clicked through some menus and then said, "Here's my post from this morning. See, I was asking about the best way to clean the seats in a '72."

"You've got a '72?" Doggett asked.

"No, but my dad does, and I promised him I'd work on the interior for his birthday."

"O'Neal glanced at the officer's nametag and then leaned closer to the screen. "What time did you get to work this morning, Jablonski?"

"About 7:30 – shift starts at 8:00, but I like to get here a little early."

"So how come this post is time stamped at 4:03 a.m.?"

"Oh, that's the server time, and the server is in California. All those times you see are three hours earlier than Philly time."

"Let me make sure I understand this," O'Neal said slowly. "If you live here in Scranton and your post shows as 10:00 p.m., it was actually posted at 1:00 a.m. the next morning?"

"Yep," Officer Jablonski agreed. "It's kind of a pain in the beginning but after a while you get used to it."

"Hot damn!" yelled Gennaro, giving Doggett a high-five. "We got the bastard!"

Chapter 6

Saturday night

"Come on, Puppy. Have another beer – you can crash on my couch tonight," Gennaro grinned. "But I don't know why you'd want to go back to Philly. You should stay here and work with the two best homicide dicks in the whole northeast!"

Doggett smiled, "Well, maybe just in the state. I'm just glad we got him before his trash was picked up. Without the keys and that letter, we'd have never proved that he did it. Read me that letter again. Where's the copy?"

Mr. & Mrs. Jonsen,

Ask Markus Bauer what happened to his wife, Julie.

Ask him about the Poconos property.

Ask him what's in the well.

"Man, that letter sent chills up my spine. I guess we'll never know exactly what Sylvie said to him, but Markus must have known that she was suspicious. And he needed to stop her from telling anyone about her suspicions. I'll bet Janice would have been next."

"Yeah," Gennaro agreed. "No wonder he didn't want to sell the property. The new owners would've had to clean out the well...and then *'hello, Julie!'*"

Doggett groaned, "God, you're gross! What I don't understand is why he didn't just dump Sylvie in her own trunk. We probably would've figured it for a car-jacking or something."

"That garage is pretty busy around 10:00 at night – lots of people checking in or coming back from dinner. She was probably closer to Al's car when she got bashed over the head." O'Neal suggested.

"OK," Doggett agreed. "I can see that. But why not leave all the keys in her car when he dumped it? Why take some of them with him?"

Gennaro finished his beer. "I'll bet when he dumped the car, he realized that he didn't have the letter, that it was in the trunk with Sylvie. So he needed those keys to get it. He just took the ignition key off the key ring and kept the rest. And then he was in such a hurry to get home and set up his alibi on the forum that he just took the keys and the letter with him. If he'd thrown them away somewhere along the road, he might have gotten away with it."

O'Neal nodded. "Maybe, but Julie's body would have shown up eventually."

Gennaro smiled, "Well, now we've got him for both murders. Pretty good for just a couple of days' work – right, Puppy? Hey, grab that check, will ya'?"