



DIRTY HARRY

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DEATH IN THE AIR

DANE HARTMAN

#11

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RUSHING TOWARD DEATH

The killer came up right behind Denise Patterson just as the train rushed into the mouth of the BAR station. He wrapped one arm around her waist, and with the other hand around her neck, he started walking purposefully to the edge of the subway platform.

Harry pulled out his Magnum, pointed it at the ceiling like a starter's pistol, and pulled the trigger.

Like a thunderclap, the explosion of the .44 drowned out the din in the station. The killer turned and saw Harry. But that didn't stop him. With all of his strength, the killer threw Patterson onto the tracks.

Harry had no choice. He jumped off the platform, onto the tracks, and raced toward the woman—arriving right at the on-rushing train.

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**Death
In The
Air**

Dane Hartman



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DIRTY HARRY #11

**DEATH
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CHAPTER

One

The girl's body was torn apart as if she were a goldfish whirling in a blender. Her flaxen hair fluttered in the air as she fell screaming onto the tracks. Her arms looked as if she were trying to fly as the BART car bore down on her.

There was no screeching of brakes and clatter of ancient metal machinery, as there would have been in almost any other major city's subway. San Francisco's BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT system was sleek, efficient, brand new, and, in Martha Murray's case, deadly.

As the train swept into the Fulton Street Station at over forty miles an hour, the high school girl didn't have a chance. Despite waving her arms, she couldn't keep her feet from hitting the ground, and the monstrous train from coming on.

At first, it seemed as if she were trying to keep her balance for a last-ditch attempt at hurling herself away from the speeding vehicle. But then her knees buckled, putting her into a crouched position, as if she were praying to the looming transport.

Her arms continued to flutter, as if she were weakly motioning for the BART train to stop or flow above her, somehow. And it wasn't as if the trainmen didn't try. The fact was, there were no trainmen to try. BART was fully automated, which didn't help the girl one whit. The braking process was already in effect, and there was nothing anyone could do to stop the process.

All eyes were on the horror-frozen girl as the train's lights spread across her, outlining her in white blaze before her form slipped between the glowing orbs a split second before they connected.

Her screams were cut off by the sickening, swatting crunch of the car smashing into her. Her classmates cried out in shock and horror as her broken body was hurled forward by the blow, only to tumble in front of the moving train once again, farther down the line.

Almost all of the bystanders turned their heads from the sight, but there was enough time for one man to see the once-pretty girl's body collapse in a flattened, torn, bloody heap in front of the braking vehicle—her eyes still horribly open. He watched with a certain perverted satisfaction as the train then went on to hit her a second time.

This time its speed had been reduced enough so that she wasn't catapulted forward, but dragged beneath the spinning wheels. The bottom of the head BART car slammed into her chest, bending her back at an unnatural angle, and then her form was beneath the bullet-shaped transport. The sight of her ultimate fate was cut off from her friends and the innocent bystanders.

All they heard was the sound. No amount of sobbing could cover the sound of her body being shredded by the spinning technology. It was a wet, cracking, tearing noise that sent several of her classmates reeling back, their half-digested lunches splattering on the clean, slick platform walls and floor.

* * *

Along the edge of the platform were several people who fainted from shock, others who couldn't take their eyes off the blood-flecked base of the BART, and one who surveyed the scene with a warped enjoyment.

It had started off badly. He hadn't meant to push the pretty blond girl at all. He had initially targeted a plain, mousey, brown-haired student who clutched her books and flute case to her chest as they would have run away if she had loosened her grip. But, in the ever-undulating throng of chattering students, the girl had been jostled aside just as he moved in. His hand had pushed sound into Murray's back as he timed the train's entrance perfectly.

It was definitely a mistake, but not one they couldn't use to their advantage. At least, that's the reasoning he'd use with his masters when he made his report. After all, his instructions had been to choose an uninteresting victim. But the prevailing order had been even more pressing. Another had to die today.

The man made his way to one of several Fulton Street exits just as one door on the stalled train slipped open and another man in a beaten leather coat and scuffed, brown jeans stepped out. He was a tall man, his face lined, and his brown hair swept back. He had been stretched out on one of the BART's seats, his long legs protruding into the aisle, his arms crossed over his chest, and his eyes closed.

When the tall man heard the computerized train grinding the innocent girl beneath its unfeeling wheels, he had reacted as if he had been shaken out of a fitful sleep, as if he had been expecting something like this all along.

But that wasn't because, like the first man, he had some hand in the murder. It was because he was familiar with tragedy, horror, and death. He had long ago come to accept the fact that he was a natural magnet for trouble. When he was stirred from his rest by the sodden thumping beneath the car, he merely opened his eyes, struggled to a full sitting position, leaned forward, and said succinctly, "Shit."

He got up, made his way across the carpeted floor to the panel beside the sliding door, opened his pocket with a quarter from his pocket, and pulled the lever. One of the two connecting doors opened a crack, allowing him to slip his fingers in and push the obstruction aside.

What he couldn't see completely through the car's tinted windows was all too clear to him now. He started to move toward the front of the train when a transportation official cut him off.

"Stay on the train, please," the official said hurriedly, not looking the man in the eye. "Please remain seated on the train." The transport man put his hand on the tall man's chest, feeling the great consistency of his jacket and the strength of the chest beyond. Then the official noticed that no matter how hard he pushed, the man didn't budge.

Looking up, the official saw an open billfold. On one side was a badge numbered 2211. On the other was an ID labeling the pushee as Inspector 71 of the San Francisco Homicide Department: Harry Callahan.

After Dirty Harry had moved purposefully through the throng to where the stationmaster knelt and had seen what looked like a cut-rate dissection, his laconic expression hardened into stone, a determination that bordered on hate.

He looked down the length of the sleek metal BART snake to see if it could have been possible for the victim to have accidentally danced across the platform and onto the sunken tracks. From where he stood, it appeared that, with all the safety devices the Transportation Board had installed, the victim

would have had to impersonate Peter Pan to fly that far.

The stationmaster looked away from the shredded corpse, his skin ashen, with tinges of green around his eyes, nose, and mouth. Martha Murray had been torn open like a package of Poppin' Fresh dough. Her guts were splashed around like spilled taco filling, and spread around beneath the car.

The stationmaster was surprised to see the inspector, but there was recognition in his eyes as Harry stared unflinchingly at the girl's remains.

"Callahan," the stationmaster croaked, "don't you ever sleep?"

The man's attempt at levity fell, bruised, to the crimson-streaked tracks. Harry finally removed his eyes from the rent body and clamped them on the nauseated trainman.

"Not on the subway," he said. "Not when things like this are happening."

CHAPTER

T W O

Harry didn't like the new San Francisco subway. He didn't like any subways. Where there were subways, he figured, there would be crime. Even if those subways were well appointed, sumptuous, carpeted, and slickly designed. When you put a hole in the ground, and stuck people in it where no one could see them, it wouldn't be long before the rats came out.

And it wasn't. BART had opened in the early seventies, and, as the decade crept toward its middle, the usual problems arose: graffiti, at best, and mugging murders, at worst.

Graffiti the TB could handle. That wasn't a disease—that was a problem for the Transportation Board. The mugging problem was Callahan's job. As a cop, even when he was in disguise, undercover, Harry still carried his badge. And one or two other things that made this assignment easier.

No, Harry didn't like the subway, but he was used to it. He had to be, since that was where he had spent most of his evenings for the last week and a half. Originally, the BART system had closed at midnight, but the pressure from club patrons and theatergoers pushed closing time first to one and then to two in the morning.

If the Transportation Board had its way, that closing time would be pushed back as soon as possible, but the workings of city government were laborious. The state representatives argued that the needs of the people must be met, while the Board contended that the few people out at two in the morning could take a taxi.

Sandy Richards learned the truth of the Board's argument the hard way. In the middle of November she had stayed late at a downtown office finishing up some transcriptions for a well-paying, high-powered client. The temperature was brisk, and rain was coming down in cold, slicing sheets. The second-to-last BART run was practically empty except for Sandy, a town drunk, and five fairly well-dressed young men.

The secretary had cast a leery eye at the inebriated man who sat slumped in the train seat, but she remained in the car because of the other group. She felt safe with the five reputable-looking, collegial age kids. After all, she knew she was a young, attractive woman dressed in a smart suit, riding alone at night. She was aware of the possibility that she might be robbed, accosted, or even worse.

She was. Her body was found at the base of Telegraph Hill, in the shadow of the Coit Memorial Tower. Her pocketbook and most of her smart suit were missing. She lay among some overturned garbage cans, where two curious kids had found her. She had been raped and beaten to death.

At her place of business, her boss had spoken glowingly of her to Harry. According to the boss, she had been the model of efficiency. Why, she had even completed some very important paper work the night of her death. The man had been so impressed, he held up the stack of transcriptions for Harry to see.

On the basis of his own experience in putting together a report, Callahan figured she couldn't have gotten all of that done on a nine-to-five shift. As far as he was concerned, that placed her at large.

the city after working hours. And, since he knew her office was in Garfield Square, across the city from where she had been found, Harry traced the various ways she could have gotten from one place to another.

The bus and cab driver interviews turned up nothing, so Callahan turned his attention to the BART workers. It was just this kind of tedious, futile investigation that turned police officers into jaded, pessimistic people. Callahan had had his share of dangerous thrills during his career, but most of his time was occupied with just this sort of garbage collecting.

Only this time, the bull-shitting paid off. One BART driver remembered a woman matching Sandra Richards's description riding the train on the day in question. From there, Harry decided to find the run's regular riders for further elaboration. With Ted Huxley, the BART drunk, he hit pay dirt.

Ted was a good old boy who came west to find his fortune. But so did a lot of good old boys, and while some of them had the right stuff to make a success of it, Huxley wasn't able to make the grade. The drop was steep and long, and Ted ended up right where Harry found him.

He was tall and gaunt, but extremely observant for a souse. He remembered the girl, he remembered the five young men, and he remembered that the half-dozen people got off together at the Washington Square stop. Unfortunately, the drunk's words wouldn't hold up in a court of law, so Harry made the man a deal.

Callahan gave him enough stool-pigeon money for booze and a decent place to hole up in, so Huxley wouldn't have to hang out in the subway. Then Harry took over his spot. The inspector visited the Salvation Army, selected the worst-looking and worst-smelling clothes he could handle, and, for the next ten days, became a sloshed fixture on the last BART morning runs.

His timing was impeccable. For, while Huxley remembered the five youths well, the five youths remembered him only vaguely. It wasn't surprising that the young men mistook the staked-out Harry for the bombed-out Ted, given their similarities.

In mid-December, Harry was slumped in a seat on the late-night BART train, his worn leather collar covering most of his face, and a ratty slouch hat covering his head. Through the crack between the top of the collar and the bottom of the hat rim, he saw five well-dressed young men get on the nearly empty train at the Market Street stop.

As the smoothly running transport picked up speed on its way to Oakland, the bunch of guys checked out the surrounding cars with a few furtive glances, and then came over to where Harry was sitting. Callahan saw that they were the only ones in the section.

"Say, old man," said the first youth, a slender, brown-haired fellow in designer jeans and a V-necked sweater. "How you doing tonight, huh?"

From the way he stood, right in front of the supposed drunk, and the way his friends spread out to block the entry and exit doors on either end of the car, Harry figured his well-being was not their first concern—contrary to the lead's words.

One kid, a short, broad guy with dirty blond hair, leaned against the door to the next car, which was on Harry's right. Another—a guy who looked like a front end for a college football team, complete with a crew cut—went to the other end of the car and stood before the opposite door, which led to the next section.

With those portals covered, another pair of young men sandwiched Harry between them. One stood to his left, and the other sat next to him on his right. The standee was a handsome, rugged sort, with

looked incomplete without an ascot and pipe. He wore a casual, fashionable suit with thin lapels, thin collar, and a tie. His black hair was cut and styled short, and he had the sultry, pouty look of an overgrown preppie. The sittee was a thin, nervous, ferret-eyed type in a baseball jacket and sneakers who had patches of acne scars across both cheeks.

Harry heard the swooping sound of the train dipping into the entrance to the tunnel which linked San Francisco with Oakland across the Bay. It was the longest underwater transit tube in the world which made this part of the ride lengthy, and uninterrupted by stops.

It was what the five had been waiting for. With no more pedestrians coming on or getting off, they had the drunk all to themselves. The various stationmasters had been informed by the SFPD about Harry's assignment, so they wouldn't roust him, but the trainmen wouldn't be able to help Harry now. As usual, the cop was on his own.

With the city lights cut off by the BART's entry into the submerged tunnel, the train's recessed lighting cast an eerie, pale, blue and beige glow over everything. The five young men shifted about in the weird illumination like skittish fish.

"Hey, you remember us, old man?" the lead, brown-haired youth asked, trying to peer through Harry's sartorial obstructions.

"It makes no difference," the nervous one next to Harry said abruptly. "You know that."

"We can't take the chance," the good-looking one said slowly. "I thought we all decided that before we came back here."

That was enough for Callahan. His hunch had been correct. Worried that the drunk might remember and finger them, they had returned to check it out. But, also worried that the drunk knew, but was playing dumb, they had decided to play it safe and get rid of him. They figured that no one would think twice about the murder of an old drunk.

"All right, all right," the lead man complained. "I just wanted to make sure, that's all."

Actually, the kid had cold feet, Harry figured. That put Callahan's benefit of doubt on the brunette's side. He wouldn't kill him unless he absolutely had to. But, from the way the others were approaching it, their exit from the human race might be reason to celebrate. Not surprisingly, they were all talking as if the old drunk wasn't even there.

"Don't worry about it," the football player called from the other end of the car.

"Nobody's going to miss him," the blond at the nearest door hissed. "Get it over with."

The hesitant brunette looked to the handsome standee. He, in turn, looked to the nervous ferret and nodded. The sitting one nodded back, his eyes glowing, and he removed a switchblade from his baseball jacket pocket.

What they were planning was simplicity itself. A long, thin blade shoved up between the drunk's ribs and the old man would be quietly, almost cleanly dead within seconds. Then the five would simply wander off to other cars. The corpse would remain sitting. By the time the run ended, and his death was discovered, no one would have the slightest idea who might have killed him, or why.

But Harry had some ideas of his own.

He heard the knife open rather than saw it. He didn't have time to see it if he was to get to the end of the line alive. He had to use the fact that the five thought he was a bleary-brained, near-paralytic. He also had to use all of his props.

Harry gripped the top of the booze bottle in the paper bag on his lap with his left hand. He jerked his right hand forward as he swung the glass container up while kicking out.

His sweeping right fist collided with the kid's knife hand, driving the blade away from his side and into the kid's thigh. At the same time, the thick, green sour mash bottle slipped out of the rumpled brown paper bag and smashed across the good-looking guy's face. Finally, his foot hit the lead brunette's family jewels.

In one move, Harry had evened the odds considerably. Like most young, middle-class sadists, the nervous kid with the knife really didn't know what pain was, so when his nerve endings started sending hysterical messages of anguish from his thigh to his brain, he completely overreacted. Grabbing his thigh, he slipped from the seat to the carpeted floor, howling.

The sour mash bottle all but ruined the handsome one's possible modeling career, the heavy glass spinning across his ripped skin like termites going to work on a wooden foundation. His arms went useless to prevent the shredding, and he slammed solidly against the sealed sliding doors behind him.

The brunette did what almost anyone kicked in the balls would do. He doubled over, his hands covering the damage, his face purple, and his mouth frozen in a high-pressured round O. His eyes moved wildly, trying to take in his friend's plight before his pupils teared. Harry waited until the youth closed his eyes before standing and driving his fist into the unprotected face.

The brunette snapped to attention like a recruit on his first day at boot camp. His tortured expression became blandly peaceful, and then he fell swiftly back, his hands at his sides. He collided with some seats across the aisle, thus interrupting his perfect backward plank drop.

"Police," Harry managed to say. "You're all under arrest." He had his hands full with the blond who came charging to his associates' aid as soon as the supposed drunk showed teeth.

The blond tried to tackle the cop, but Callahan utilized a classic shoulder throw, dumping the kid onto the floor in front of him. He looked over the flipped kid to the last man. Much to his shock, the football player had produced a snubnosed revolver from his waistband.

Harry did what any red-blooded American cop would do in such a circumstance: he ducked behind the dazed blond kid. He heard the nasty little gun fire with a sizzling crack, and heard the bullet thud into flesh behind him. He glanced up to see that the switchblade kid had managed to stand, pull the knife out of his leg, and stumble within striking distance.

The thirty-eight-calibre bullet put an end to the kid's pained attempt. When Harry ducked, the lead dug into the youth's chest, scrambling everything just below his sternum. The bleeding hole in his thigh was joined by a fountain of drooling, crimson liquid pumping out from between his stomach and his chest.

The kid's mouth opened in surprise, he blinked, all expression of suffering left his face for a second, and then he died in anguish. Amazed by the sudden death of his friend, the football player wrenched open the connecting door behind him and ran for it.

Harry pulled out his gun as he rose. The blue steel Smith and Wesson model twenty-nine .44 Magnum gleamed in the BART light. The flipped blond started to get up in front of it just as the glass-torn, black-haired man tried jumping Callahan from the side.

Harry brought the butt of the weapon down on the top of the blond's rising head, as he dug the fingers of his left hand into the cut guy's face. The blond hair sprouted several red strands as the Magnum-made slice in the kid's skull spit blood and he stopped rising.

Harry then pushed the once-handsome, black-haired man away from him. Callahan slammed the suspect against the subway car's wall. The guy's face seemed to be slipping between Harry's fingers as if his visage was made up of bloodworms. The kid whined in torture. Harry was about to let up on him when he remembered how Sandy Richards looked half-naked among the garbage at the bottom of Telegraph Hill.

"How does it feel, punk?" Harry asked the squealing kid.

Callahan purposely squeezed the man's ruined face. The black-haired man fainted from the pain. The cop immediately released him, hopped over the prone, pistol-whipped blond, and went after the gun-toting football player.

He found him in the last car just as the BART train swept out from under the Bay and into Oakland. The lights from that city made a backdrop for the tableau of the muscular blond holding an old lady in front of him for protection as he stood framed in the window of the rear door. The other three passengers looked on in amazement.

"Don't come any closer, cop," the blond punk warned stridently, "or I'll blow her brains all over this car!"

Harry stood in the middle of the section, his big .44 still pointing at the two standing people. The old lady was frightened enough by the initial attack, but when she saw the Magnum, she nearly swooned in shock. The brawny football player kept her sagging body upright.

"You already have one murder against you," Harry reminded him flatly. "With the right lawyer, you might be able to beat that rap. Ain't no way you're going to see anything but stir if you kill that lady in front of all these witnesses."

The brawny survivor of the preppie rapist-murderers looked wildly around. "I'll kill all of you," he announced. "I'll kill you all and then get away at the next station."

Callahan interrupted the short cries of fear from the trio of innocent bystanders. "That's a .38 Special," Harry told him with slow purpose. "You don't have enough ammunition to kill everybody."

Harry watched in satisfaction as the guy glanced at the snubnose in confusion. He was anything but professional. He probably didn't even know what kind of gun he was using. All he knew was that he was one tough, gun-toting hombre, who carried around the guilt of gang-raping a secretary like a Boy Scout badge of merit. He made Harry sick, so the cop wasn't averse to rubbing it in a little.

"I know what you're thinking," he said. "You're thinking, does this .38 take five or six bullets? Well, in all this excitement, I kind of forgot myself. So, now you've got to ask yourself a question. Do I feel lucky?"

Harry raised his heavy revolver, the barrel seeming to glow in the train compartment, until it was level with the last guy's head.

"Well?" he asked. "Do you, punk?"

Before the football player could make a decision, the BART train rounded a left corner at forty miles an hour, causing the car to lurch. Everyone was thrown to the side. In order to keep his balance, the man had to drop the nearly unconscious lady. He twisted as he fell so he could keep the snubnose pointed at Callahan.

Harry fought gravity enough to keep from sliding into the right wall, but he let his feet slip out from under him. He landed on the carpeted floor sideways, his own gun still aiming as well.

He waited while the surprised gunman instinctively pulled the snubnose's trigger while trying to regain his balance. The bullet plowed into the floor two feet in front of Harry.

"Drop it," Harry warned.

He rolled over to the left as the kid pushed himself away from the wall and fired again. The bullet hit an upright on a window frame, cracking the glass and ricocheting into the ceiling.

"Give up!" Harry yelled in anger, unable to fire back until he was sure he wouldn't hit any of the others. He pushed off from the opposite wall and got up on one knee as the train straightened.

The kid had planted himself in the middle of the car. He saw Harry rising, the Magnum steadying as he came up. In panic, the football player squeezed off two more shots. The first smacked into the floor between Harry's foot and bent knee. The second ripped through the side of Harry's loose drunk jacket.

"That's five," Harry shouted, adding the bullet which had killed the kid's knife-wielding friend. "Quick, does it have a sixth chamber? Take a guess, punk."

The football player gave his answer by pulling the trigger one last time. As the .38 hammer clicked on a spent shell, Harry shot back. The .44 slug grabbed the killer by the chest, picked him up, and threw him against the rear door. The combination of the shell's point-blank power and the guy's weight sent him through the glass. He somersaulted backward out of the car, and tumbled brutally onto the BART tracks as spinning hunks of tinted window fell like jagged snowflakes around him.

All that remained of the man, in the BART car, was the snubnose, which had flown out of his hand and clattered onto the floor. Harry holstered his own smoking gun and rose. He walked between the stunned passengers, one of whom was tending to the old woman. He leaned down and picked up the gun he had immediately recognized. It was a Charter Arms Undercover .38 Special.

"Colts are the ones with a six-round chamber," he told the night beyond the broken window, as he opened the snubnose. "Charter Arms has five." He clicked the weapon shut. "Only five."

CHAPTER

Three

The operation took a while to clean up, but the mop-up officers were used to that by now.

“Sorry,” the Inspector said to one of the officers pulling the various dead and wounded bodies out the Oakland BART stop.

“That’s okay,” a plainclothesman said with a smirk. “When we get the word that Dirty Harry’s on job, we put the meat wagon on twenty-four-hour standby alert.”

Callahan sighed and looked out over Oakland and Alameda. The sun was just coming up, tracing the horizon in thick tones of blue and red. Harry looked and knew he wouldn’t sleep for several hours yet. There was still more to do. Only after he joined the Oakland officers for a little talk with the BART fight survivors was he able to get back on the Oakland-San Francisco run for a subway ride home.

It had all come out at the hospital. The boys had prowled the nights looking for “fun” until father intervened and delivered Sandy Richards into their hands. She had thought that, by going with all them, she’d be safe on her trip home. They had thought that she, by refusing to service them for the favor, wasn’t being a good sport.

Naturally, they didn’t mean to kill her. Between the youths forcing themselves on her too hard, and her fighting back too much, something snapped. The accident didn’t make her any less dead, and the guys’ reaction wasn’t any less criminal.

Harry was ruminating on the new generation’s amoral stupidity when Martha Murray was thrown into the BART people-processor below the train.

Callahan turned away from the pale stationmaster and vaulted back to the Fulton Station’s platform just as a group of trainmen rushed to their boss’s aid.

“Seal off the entrances and exits,” Harry instructed them quietly. “Put a seven-fifty into Homicide headquarters at the Justice Building.”

The stationmaster swallowed. “There’s no need for that, is there, Inspector?” he asked hopefully. “This was just an accident, wasn’t it?”

Harry kneeled at the lip of the platform so that no one but the transportation boss could hear him. “She would have had to do a double somersault just to get to the edge,” he said. “I’m handling it as homicide until we find out whether she was suicidal.” He got up and faced the other trainmen. “Go to it.”

They all looked at their shaken boss on the tracks. He nodded. They went to it. The stationmaster awkwardly pulled himself back to the platform. Harry was too busy surveying the crowd to help him. The BART boss finally got to his feet, wheezing, next to Harry.

“You don’t think this had anything to do with the two other pushing incidents this past month, do you?” he asked the cop, with more concern over the threat of scandal than the loss of young life. Although he was still unnerved, he had relegated the formless corpse below the train to the very back

of his subconscious.

Harry kept his eyes on the milling, upset crowd while he blew on his fingertips. "I hope not," he said to himself. "This city has enough drug pushers. We don't need a subway pusher."

With that, Callahan began circulating around the platform, looking at every person. By the time he reached the midway point on the platform, one of the trainmen returned with a uniformed San Francisco officer in tow.

"This is the guy," the trainman said to the patrolman.

"I recognize him," the uniformed cop replied, snapping off a salute at Harry. "All the exits are covered as you ordered, Inspector."

"To our knowledge, no one's gotten out," the trainman pitched in.

Just then, the increasingly surly captive crowd surged aside to allow a television camera crew to go by. Complete with an on-the-air reporter, cameraman, and soundman, the unit was filming wildly, trying to get to the head of the stalled BART train. Harry looked meaningfully at the trainman.

"Well," the embarrassed transportation man drawled. "I said no one had gotten out. I didn't say anything about getting in."

But Harry and the patrolman had already moved forward to cut the television crew off before they could film Murray's remains. Callahan's appearance before them was reason enough for renewed celebration. The reporter immediately recognized the inspector, and just as quickly assumed that the death was a homicide.

"What can you tell us about the murder, Inspector?" the reporter demanded, as Harry and the uniformed cop halted their forward progress.

"It's a death, that's all," Harry said tiredly. "I was just coming back from Oakland when it happened. That's all I know, so far."

That wasn't enough for the reporter. "Do you think this is connected with the two other BART pushings in the last month?" he pressed. "Was this victim a young girl, just as those two were?"

"We're still investigating," Harry announced, beginning to move the television crew back.

"Well, how long is this going to take?" an angry businessman interrupted. "I see no reason why we should be kept here while you clean up the mess. We've got jobs, too, you know."

As soon as he started complaining, the camera swung in his direction, which didn't stifle his "righteous indignation." Harry saw that he was in a no-win situation. No matter what he said to the press or to the impatient businessman, the police could be made to look incompetent. He decided that honesty, in this case, was the best policy.

"Someone has died a brutal, ugly death," he told the interrupting man flatly. "We can't act as if nothing has happened."

"I can understand that," piped up a middle-aged woman who had been listening, and who moved from where she was standing against the wall. "But do we have to be kept down here? It's so cold. Look," she continued, holding up her hands, "I've already started to get frostbite."

Sure enough, the tips of her wrinkled, gnarled fingers were the pasty-white color which came when blood didn't reach the extremities. Callahan suddenly became aware that his own fingers were cold—that was why he had unconsciously blown on them earlier. There was a strange chill in the air down here. Even though it was mid-December, the San Francisco season was such that the temperature

rarely sank below fifty-five degrees. Even the Oakland night air was mild compared to the chill of the Fulton Station.

There was a general murmur of agreement from everyone nearby about the cold and about the unfairness of keeping them all stuck underground. To keep their minds off their captivity, Harry instructed the patrolman to start collecting each witness's story. If anyone saw more than the girl falling, he wanted to know about it.

The Inspector continued to work his way down the line, preoccupied with looking at every person on the platform. But try as he might, he couldn't get rid of the reporter, who tagged along behind him like a pet dog overly proud of his talent for heeling.

"How do you feel about this death, Inspector?" the reporter asked with a straight face—seemingly trying to get "up close and personal" in his reporting. When Harry didn't answer, the man tried again, holding his microphone up as if he were checking Callahan for radioactivity. "Do you feel that subway crime is on the upswing? Can we expect a rash of criminal activity on the BART system?"

As the reporter's voice droned on, Harry looked ahead, seeing a plain, brown-haired girl standing at the very edge of the platform. She held her books and musical instrument case tightly, as if they were beloved friends. Her eyes were cast down, and she seemed intent on examining the tips of her penny loafers. Harry began walking in her direction.

"What action can we expect the police department to take in these matters?" the reporter asked, and Harry picked up speed.

The reporter tried to keep up, but it wasn't long before Harry was going as fast as he could without running. He was almost on the very edge of the platform, so there was nothing between him and the plain-looking girl.

The reporter slowed, and watched in amazement as Callahan bore down on the oblivious schoolgirl. Just as it seemed that Harry would run right over the girl, a small, dark figure, who had been hiding behind the girl in the shadows, suddenly bolted in the opposite direction.

The reporter's amazement grew to confused awe as Harry instantly changed direction and took off after the mysterious man. Callahan's quarry slipped in between the other people on the platform like some sort of weasel.

Just as the man got to the base of the stairs, Harry unsheathed his .44 cannon. That was all it took. The sound of the big gun being emancipated from its special, leather holster was a noise the slipper man recognized. In the enclosed environs of the subway platform, the sound reverberated loudly.

Not only was the sound enough to slow the man down, it was enough to get all of the bystanders between Harry and his target out of the way. They pushed themselves away from the tall cop in their ragged clothes as if he were a leper. They seemed to melt back into the walls, leaving a clear shot from Harry to his quarry. If there was any doubt in that quarry's mind about his predicament, Harry put an end to it the next second.

"Stop," was all Callahan said. It was enough. The man froze, his hands straight up in the air.

"Turn around," Harry said. The man complied, slowly. His pinched, angular face held an expression of whimsical embarrassment, as if the whole thing were a mistake. But his strict posture revealed that the hands-up position was one he was all too familiar with.

The uniformed patrolman who had been collecting evidence ran to Harry's side, his own .357 drawn from his holster. As soon as he saw Harry's prisoner, his mouth stretched into a knowing smile.

“Well, if it isn’t Marshall Maggin,” he said. Maggin shrugged. He didn’t bother to say anything because ~~clutched in one of his upraised hands was a woman’s pocketbook. And, unless he was coming out of the closet in a big way, he was literally caught red-handed.~~

The patrolman holstered his weapon, moved forward, and plucked the pocketbook out of the great man’s still upraised hand. He tossed the purse to Harry and told Maggin to “assume the position.” Maggin immediately spread his legs and leaned against the wall.

While the uniformed cop searched the thief and then cuffed him, Harry checked out the contents of the purse. Inside was a tiny, blue makeup case, a round tin of imported hard candy, a packet of Kleenex, and a wallet. Inside the wallet were two dollars and thirty-seven cents, a fuzzy, wrinkled photo of a young man in jeans and a numbered jersey, a ticket stub from a Civic Center concert, and a yellowing Social Security card.

The name on the card was Martha Joan Murray 546-894-5062.

CHAPTER

Four

The man who had pushed Martha Joan Murray to her death placed the clear, plastic scrambler device over the mouthpiece of the pay phone in the Abbot's Bar booth.

He did most of his pay phoning at Abbot's, because it was one of the few places left in the city that actually had a phone booth. Almost everywhere else, there were these naked pay phones attached to the wall, with no privacy.

Here he could disappear into the dark recesses of the thick, wooden walls, and if he switched off the dim, yellow light, almost no one outside could see him. And, thanks to the television set over the bar and the usual volume of booze-lubricated conversation, no one could hear him, either.

He dialed the necessary number, waited until the ringing turned into a high computer tone, and then dialed another five-digit number. Then he listened to the silence on the line until a voice answered.

"The job is done?" It was not surprising that there wasn't a hello. Only the killer had the use of the line. He also didn't waste time trying to recognize the voice on the other end. It was being disguised automatically.

"Yes," the pusher replied. Even though the scrambler altered his voice so that even if he were being recorded no one could match his tonal patterns, the man on the other end recognized something different in the way the killer answered.

"Anything else to report?" he asked cautiously.

The pusher told him about the sudden change in victims, the appearance of the homicide inspector and the subsequent arrest.

"Who is this inspector?" the man asked.

"The stationmaster called him Callahan," the pusher replied. There was a short pause, on the other end.

"Could this Maggin have seen anything?" the other voice finally said.

"I can't make any guarantees," the pusher replied. There was another pause, during which the killer smiled. He had already guessed what his superior's reaction would be. He had initially dreaded making the call, because it had appeared that his usefulness to the Program was at an end. But now, with the intervention of the thief and the cop, the killer could still accomplish some good.

"We cannot afford to take chances," the man on the other end said. "We shall see what the computer comes up with on Maggin and Callahan. Wait thirty minutes, and then return to your office. Instructions will be waiting for you there."

"Very good, sir," said the killer. "Thank you, sir."

The killer hung up, removed the special mouthpiece, left the booth, and had lunch at the bar. Afterward, he leisurely made his way back to the run-down, four-story brick building in the shadow

the Bay Bridge. As he walked up the warped steps to his second-floor office, he heard the comings and goings of the buses at the nearby Bay Bridge Terminal through the dirty, smoked windows.

From all appearances, his office was exactly as he had left it. In fact, even his crude security device—the hair he had glued to the edge of his closed, locked door—was still in place. But when he unlocked the door and entered the simple, windowless, corner room, there was a bulky manila envelope on the large, chipped, wooden desk that hadn't been there before.

The killer closed and locked the door behind him. He walked around the desk once before sitting in the one padded, metal chair. After making a rudimentary, almost unconscious examination of the envelope to make sure it wasn't a letter-bomb, he opened the package.

Inside was a thin, small hypodermic gun with a metal vial screwed into it. The only other thing was a coded message written on flash paper. The killer translated the complex code into a simple message.

Maggin would be taken to the hospital. He wasn't to leave it alive. If Inspector Callahan could have an accident in the process, all the better.

The killer leaned back, producing a thin lighter from his pocket. With a touch, a small flame appeared. Like a practiced magician, he barely touched the edge of the paper with the flame, and the message disappeared. Only a single tiny ash fell to the desk. That was why they called it flash paper.

The killer nonchalantly wiped the ash away and leaned back, smiling.

Halfway to headquarters, Maggin started getting a serious case of the shakes.

“Aw, shit,” said the uniformed patrolman who had identified the pickpocket in the first place.

“What?” Harry opened one eye to ask, remaining slumped in the passenger seat.

The patrolman hooked a thumb toward Maggin, who vibrated in the caged back seat. “Marshall must've lifted the pocketbook to get money for a fix,” the cop replied. “It looks like he was too late.”

Harry sat up and looked over his shoulder. Sure enough, Maggin was showing the unmistakable signs of a loser on withdrawal.

“We're never going to get him back to the station in that condition,” the uniformed cop, who had introduced himself as Jim Petrillo, said. “Any lawyer worth his salt could make a case for ‘cruel and unusual punishment’ if we bring him in like that.”

“Head for the hospital, then,” Harry suggested, hunkering back down in his seat, trying to catch one wink, let alone forty.

“I guess well have to,” Petrillo agreed. He took a fast right off of Market Street, away from the Justice Building, and onto Tenth—toward San Francisco General Hospital.

As the patrol car sped south, Callahan thought about what Petrillo had told him. Maggin was a well-known purse snatcher, pickpocket, and small-time thief in the precinct. Petrillo himself had arrested Marshall at least twice, and almost every beat walker had a Maggin story to tell back at the lockup room.

But because of the insanity of the legal process, Maggin was still waiting for the third delay on his first rap trial to clear up. And while he was waiting, he was out committing his second through twelfth. Harry's arrest was Maggin's thirteenth rap, and Petrillo hoped it would be the guy's unlucky one. Maybe now, the patrolman figured, they could make a case for Maggin being an undesirable, and

get him exiled to Angel Island or something.

All Maggin himself had to say, however, was that he knew nothing, saw nothing, and did nothing but pick up this pocketbook which was lying on the platform with no owner. He didn't know the Murray girl, and he didn't know that what was left of her was under the BART train. He had come after the subway had run her down.

Callahan knew he would have to hold off rest for a while longer, since they were heading for the hospital. At least back at his office he could catch some Z's at his desk or curled up on Lieutenant Bressler's couch. No such luck at S.F. General, unless he wanted to be mistaken for a patient.

"Hand me the radio, will you?" he asked the patrolman, without opening his eyes. He felt the mike being put into his outstretched hand. Since patrolmen had been reduced to one to a car in an attempt at economizing, Petrillo didn't mind Harry's company or demands.

Callahan got a clear channel to Homicide and asked for Sergeant Frank DiGeorgio. Soon, his longtime backup man got on the line.

"I thought you'd be back home and in bed by now," the heavy, Italian police vet greeted him.

"Don't rub it in," Harry replied. "I'm in car number—" He looked at Petrillo.

"Seventeen," the cop informed him.

"—Seventeen," Callahan continued, "heading for the emergency ward at S.F. General."

"You all right, Harry?" another voice asked with concern. Callahan recognized the rough tone of his immediate superior.

"I didn't know you cared, Lieutenant," he told Bressler. "Yeah, I'm fine. We just got a package of cold turkey in the back of the car here for delivery."

"So what's the call for?" Bressler asked. "We know you don't need a chaperone."

"I need DiGeorgio to meet me there with the files from this BART thing," Harry replied.

"Yeah," said the Sergeant. "I heard about Fulton Station, already. That's tough, Harry. It's the third accident, but the first death."

"That doesn't mean it was murder," Bressler interrupted. "Let the detectives handle it, Harry. That's their job. I need you back on the Goldfarb bust."

Hiram Goldfarb was a Hassidic Jew who was also one of the best jewelry men in the state. That didn't keep him from winding up on a morgue slab, however, with two and one-half million dollars worth of diamonds missing. Bressler had gotten a line on his killers, but he wanted an experienced homicide team in on the arrests in case of trouble.

"That ready to go yet?" Harry inquired. He had started the subway stakeout only because the Goldfarb thing needed some more legwork done.

"Soon," Bressler promised.

"All right," retorted Callahan. "In the meantime, give DiGeorgio the files and have him meet me at the hospital." Without waiting for a reply, Harry signed off, hooked the mike back in place, and leaned back.

Petrillo smirked, shaking his head in amazement. "Like pulling teeth to get anything done around here."

Without opening his eyes, Harry replied, "Just remember that, and you'll go far. Always keep your

pliers nearby.”

San Francisco General Hospital was a venerable institution which had had several modern additions built onto it—looking like black-glass leeches sucking up to classic stone.

Patrolman Petrillo followed the labyrinthian arrows which led them to the emergency entrance where he and Harry unloaded a positively quaking Marshall Maggin. Maggin had already chewed his lower lip into bloody pulp, and he was groaning as if all his bones had suddenly sprouted thorns.

“I can take it from here, Inspector,” Petrillo assured Harry. “I’m used to it. You can wait for your partner at the front desk.”

Harry thanked him and started on his way to the lobby. He got lost twice in the maze of differently colored corridors with different names, so, after he reached his destination, it was only a few minutes before DiGeorgio appeared through the revolving doors. The stout, crew-cut partner was glancing at a stapled stack of papers in his hand.

“You’re in luck, Harry,” he said. “Second victim was Betty Ann Lowry. She managed to jump to the other side of the tracks before the train got to her. She couldn’t say whether she was pushed or fell. She had just come from a long lunch period of playing handball, and was feeling pretty weak. Anyway, she was treated for a bruise or two, and then released.”

“I don’t feel any luckier,” Harry retorted, in slight confusion.

“The first victim wasn’t so lucky,” DiGeorgio went on. “Although she was far luckier than that girl this morning. The fall broke her leg. She still managed to pull herself into the space between the train and the platform. She was brought here for treatment. I called up right after I got off the radio with you. She’s still here. She’s being discharged from treatment today.”

Luck stayed with the two homicide cops as they went up to the patients’ private rooms and found the first victim packing her bags. Harry had read what they had on her on the way up in the elevator. Name: Denise Patterson. Age: thirty-two. Height: five feet, six and one-half inches. Weight: one hundred and eight pounds. Hair color: light brown. Eye color: hazel.

She was just as impressive in person as she was on paper. The report didn’t describe her intelligent face, strong body, or fashionable style. She wore tan slacks, a maroon turtleneck, and a zip-up jacket.

The first sight Harry had of her was from the rear, but that view was impressive enough. She was one tightly-packed lady, with no visible panty lines. He could see her musculature work slightly as she crammed the various clothes, magazines, and books into her overnight bag—remnants of a long hospital stay.

When she turned back toward her closet, she was initially surprised by the appearance of two men in her doorway. Her attractive face was framed by a mane of shoulder-length, wheat-colored hair, but her expression was one of concern.

“Can I help you?” she said slowly, her voice strong and low.

“How’s the leg?” Harry asked.

She looked down at the shapely limb in the well-fitting slacks. “Fine,” she said with slight hesitation. Then, taking a flippant attitude, she cocked her head and said, “Who wants to know?”

“Excuse me,” Callahan said with a smile, remembering that he was still wearing his slightly odorous drunk’s outfit. He reached into his back pocket, and, for the second time that morning, showed his identification.

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