

Chapter 12

Carmen and her untimely date were enjoying soup and sushi and conversation in a corner of the Japanese restaurant. Unfortunately, the dining room afforded none of the privacy of booths and nooks: all tables were in view from the entryway. A fugitive seeking refuge would have wanted a different arrangement.

Their discussion meandered among several light subjects. Carmen was aware that Earl's life included a covert side, which she respected, and she did not seek to understand the circumstances of his present difficulty. Having exhausted their common interests, there was a pause. Carmen had a reasoned premonition about tomorrow, and for something to say, she ventured to bring it up.

"What do you think will happen tomorrow?"

"Nothing."

"No Rapture at all?"

"That's my guess."

"As much as I'd like to, I can't buy that," she declared.

"When did you become a believer?"

"I'm not a believer. I just Well, I happen to believe it's going to happen this time."

"Oh, come on. That's for religious fanatics."

"Yes, I agree with that. But I can't see it any other way. There's no better explanation; none even come close."

At that point they were interrupted by Peter who came to inform Earl that a police officer was in the lobby asking about reservations in names including either Kenneth or Clark.

"Randell pretended she could not get reservations up on the screen, and she needed to ask somebody for help. I sent her back to detain the cop as long as she can. Just letting you know. He might want to come in here and look around."

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Earl put on the beret.

“That hat will not do it,” said Peter, laughing.

“Would it be okay if I play the piano?”

“Can you play good enough so my customers will not leave?”

“I can.”

“All right. I will be where you can see me. Thumb up means coast is clear.”

“I can’t leave Carmen here by herself.”

“Come with me, Carmen.”

When the police officer looked in, he first scanned the tables for a well-built man with a female companion. He had already checked the sushi bar. He had a photograph on his fuzPad of Earl. Unfortunately, the photo showed him wearing a baseball cap. He became interested in the vacated table for two in the far corner with slices of rolls still on the plates. He was about to go into the kitchen to ask about it when Carmen came out wearing the Japanese-styled uniform worn by the waitresses and began clearing the table.

Earl was at the piano, wearing the beret and playing “I Don’t Know Enough About You.” From the entryway where the officer was standing, Earl’s face could not be seen. The song happened to be a favorite of his, and Earl’s rendition was so captivating that he remained there, enjoying it immensely, his eyes riveted to the piano and the beret on the pianist’s head. Carmen took notice of this, and concluded that Earl had been caught. But as soon as the last note faded away and enthusiastic applause broke out, the officer turned and was gone.

The thumb-up signal came. Earl acknowledged it but played another jazz piece for good measure while Carmen came out to clear another table. Finally, Earl took a break and went to the restroom, removing the beret on the way.

When he came out, it appeared that he had been in a fight. He ducked into the kitchen and told Carmen they needed to leave immediately. He gave Randell a large bill and told her to keep the change. Carmen took off her costume while Randell called the

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elevator to the lobby. They cautiously and quietly slipped away without being seen by anyone.

Carmen was afraid to ask him what had happened. Not until they were locked in the security of her apartment did she broach the question: “What happened?”

“The cop was waiting in the men’s room—in a stall. He came out and tried to arrest me, but I’d seen his hat over the top, and I was ready for him.”

“Obviously, he didn’t arrest you. What did you tell him?”

“Nothing. I punched him out. Then I stuffed his mouth with toilet paper and handcuffed him to the stall using his own equipment. And look at this. I found these honey-and-nut bars in one of his pockets. He deprived us of half our dinner, so I felt justified in taking them. You can have this one: it has raisins in it.”

Carmen wanted to say something, but she was speechless for several reasons: she could not think of words to scold and praise him simultaneously; it was all she could do to keep from laughing; and she was scared enough to scream. She looked up at him and shook her head. Then she noticed what was missing.

“Where is my hat?” she gasped.

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Everyone at Detention Suites, except Al Cypher, took part in preparing dinner. Pamela had sent him out with a grocery list and a promise that she would let him have a piece of the pie she intended to make. After he returned, she told him that she needed help, so he opened the suites and allowed the men into the common dining area and into the kitchen, disregarding the “Off Limits” posted on the kitchen door. Then he retired to his office, keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings in the monitors. He kept the audio on, enabling him to hear and see as well as if he had been standing in their midst.

The men hovered about Pamela, begging for jobs. She put Chub to work peeling potatoes, Mule cleaning vegetables, Milt forming hamburgers, Blink cutting fruit for the salad, Red and Buck slicing tomatoes and onions, and Lance making biscuits, while she put the cranberry-cherry pie together. By the time everything was ready, their initial confusion about her had fallen away, and everyone felt that she was his mother.

While things were baking and cooking, she sent them to their rooms to put on what they called the “formal outfits” that hung in their closets. They helped each other with the neckties, and the results were not all perfect, but they all reported for dinner complimenting each other on how fine they looked.

Pamela made up a plate of food for Al Cypher and sent Milt to deliver it to his office.

They sat down around the dining table, and Pamela had Lance give thanks to God. The men said it was the best meal they had ever had, and they kept saying it.

Afterward, they cleared the table, and Pamela brought out the pie. Al Cypher came out of his office to claim his piece.

Pamela had arranged for Al to take her to the Lakeview for the meeting. The hour was late; Cleo would already be well into her lecture. Everyone pitched in again; they hurried with the dishes, and before the prisoners knew it, they were locked back in their rooms.

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In spite of her late resolve to wait for Earl to come back at a time of his own choosing, Leila has succumbed to temptation and decided to make one last contact with the surveillance team. It is no wonder: she has been thinking of him constantly, trying to guess where he is and what he is doing since the last time she checked with them an hour ago.

Perhaps they have located him and forgotten to tell me. If only I could talk to him once more

She taps a request on her phone for an immediate voice status report from the FSA surveillance officer in charge.

"This is Lieutenant Watchman. A report has just come in from the city. They've located Clark."

"Can you put me through to the city police officer in charge? Is it still Major Bookings?"

"No, Bookings is off duty. Captain Samuel Clark is handling the case."

"I would like to speak with him directly. Thank you. ...

"Captain Clark, this is Leila Labaki of the FSA under whose requisition you are working to locate Kenneth Clark. I understand that one of your officers has made contact with Mr. Clark."

"That is correct. There was an attempted arrest at 6:43 PM."

"Does that mean Mr. Clark is *not* now in your custody?"

"Affirmative. The arrest was not successful."

"Was anyone injured?"

"The officer has bruises on his face."

"Please give me the details."

"I have the report in front of me, and I'll send it to you immediately if you like."

"That's fine. However, go ahead and read it."

5:37 PM: Request for information submitted to Traffic Surveillance.

5:55 PM: TS reports a matching vehicle entering the parking garage of the Vineyard Building at 5:07 PM.

6:15 PM: Officers stationed at all entrances to the building.

At approximately 6:30 PM, Lieutenant Headworthy entered

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Peter's, one of the three restaurants in the building, and asked to see the guest list. He was told that the computer was malfunctioning, and the attendant went for help. After he waited several minutes, she reappeared, saying that someone would be out shortly to help her with the computer. She engaged the officer in conversation, and finally, after several more minutes, she was called away. When she reappeared, she said the computer server had been rebooted. She then allowed Headworthy to examine the guest list. There was a Kenneth Johnson but no Clark. He then asked to see Peter, the owner, who informed him that he did not meet guests personally but would take him to the dining room entryway for a discreet look.

Approximately thirty-five diners were present in addition to the staff and the piano player. No one fitting the description of Kenneth Clark was observed. However, it was difficult to see every face in the crowded, dimly lit room. Officer Headworthy believed that if Clark was in any publicly accessible place within the building, it would be that particular restaurant because it was the best and most popular. Having no warrant to remain in the premises, he decided to go into the men's restroom where he could wait for a chance encounter without drawing attention to himself.

At approximately 6:50, a man entered the restroom whom Headworthy recognized as matching the photo of Mr. Clark. He stepped out and asked him his name. The suspect admitted that he was Kenneth Clark, and the officer announced that he was under arrest and approached him with handcuffs. At that point Clark struck the officer on the face and knocked him unconscious.

6:59 PM: The restaurant called to report a policeman in the men's room lying on the floor, gagged and handcuffed to a stall. His mouth was stuffed with paper, and his equipment was in the toilet.

Leila lowers the phone and slaps a hand over her mouth to muffle a giggle.

"Ms. Labaki? ... Yes, I know. And Headworthy is not easy to restrain—he's a lion of a man."

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“Then, is Clark still at large?” she asks after regaining her composure.

“We believe he is somewhere in the Vineyard Building. A hat was found in the restroom that is believed to be the one worn by the piano player. Officer Headworthy does not remember Clark coming in wearing it. If it was Mr. Clark who was playing the piano, the hat would explain why Headworthy did not recognize him in the dining room. I happen to know that Earl Clark plays the piano.”

“Yes, that’s right. He does.”

“A name was found in the hat—which apparently does not belong to Earl. There is some question as to whether the hat was left by him.”

“I happen to know that the hat he was wearing earlier today is at the bottom of the lake, and he left here without a hat, so I would not be surprised if he had been wearing a borrowed one. What was the name in it?”

“C. Hayrab. It’s a women’s beret. We have determined that a Carmen Hayrab resides in the building, and we are in the process of generating a search warrant. We checked her phone’s location history and determined that it was in the restaurant between 6:03 and 6:53 PM, and it’s now in her apartment. It is too late to get a warrant tonight without an urgent requisition, and that will be at your discretion.”

Leila’s phone is wet with tears. *He already had a girlfriend.*

“I want you to call the search off permanently,” she says quietly.

“I can’t do that. He has assaulted an officer. And I thought you were acting on behalf of the FBI.”

“You’re right. I can’t call it off either. Forgive me for suggesting that he could be set free.”

“There won’t be much risk of his escaping during the night. We have personnel nearby, and we’re monitoring the hallway cameras.”

“Excuse me, Captain Clark. ... If I may—I’m just curious. How did you know that Earl plays the piano?”

“I paid for his piano lessons. I’m his father.”

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