

REASONABLE

DOUBT

IS

NOT

ENOUGH

EXCERPT

CHAPTER ONE

Fred Barnes, Detective

Manhattan Police Department, Homicide Division

“Very often it is what you don’t see that is the most valuable clue in a murder case,” Jack Barnes used to say.

The words of his father caused Fred to look again at the case in front of him. Maybe that’s why he believed Ivan Toth. Fred knew the evidence all pointed to Ivan, and it all seemed so ‘cut and dried.’ That’s what made him suspicious. It was circumstantial and seemed too perfect.

Fred’s fifteen years, five as a detective with the New York City Police Department, taught him to heed his intuitions. His experiences time after time validated his decisions. It wasn’t the powerful ‘hit-you-up-the-side-of-the-head’ intuition. It was that nagging feeling, that nagging question that kept bringing you back to the folder. That kept you rereading the evidence. Every time you put the folder away, something pulled you back. That “Well, maybe I ought to look at this one more time” type of intuition. He was determined to follow it.

However, Fred could never have known that this time it would change his life and the lives of some of New York’s wealthy elite. He couldn’t have known that it would involve the

Mafia, the FBI, and even touch the President of the United States. He could never have fathomed how far the murder of this seemingly innocuous gay bartender would reach. Nor could he ever prepare himself for the experience of meeting Jessica Hall, Attorney-at-Law

Sunday, The Morning After

Downtown, New York

You're sleeping. A hand jostles you. It's part of your dream. It shakes you again, this time more violently. It still seems like part of your dream. You hear noises. At least you think you do. This last time the shaker succeeds in waking you.

Opening his eyes still slightly dazed and hung over from the night before, Ivan sees a policeman pointing a gun at his head. His eyes open wider, a deep pang of fear enters his stomach and travels up to his throat, yet his brain is still not working.

As he focuses on the room it becomes apparent that there is more than one policeman. He notices there are four. His small bedroom is crowded with cops. All with guns drawn and pointing at him. He raises his right hand trying to wipe the sleep from his eyes and hears a policeman yell, "Freeze!"

His hand feels heavy when he raises it. Bringing it in view, he sees the revolver. "Where did that come from?" That gripping vice now tightening his insides even further.

The cop closest to him grabs the hand with the gun and twists it causing him to cry out, "OWW!" forcing him to release the revolver, which he does without resistance.

"Ivan Toth, you are under arrest for the murder of Peter

Bast.” The cop continues to Mirandize him as they cuff him and pull him up out of the bed. Fortunately for him, he was still wearing his clothes from the night before

“What is going on?” Ivan asks, still not fully awake but enough to know better than to resist the police.

Ivan didn’t remember much about last evening. As they walk him, still groggy, out of his room, he sees people going in and out of the apartment and a body lying in the middle of the living room floor with a bloody sheet over it. People are doing all sorts of things in his little two-bedroom apartment. Some are taking pictures, others seem to be brushing something, others searching, for what he didn’t know. He keeps asking them “What happened?”

This living room with its amber walls, a television on a stand, a couch and two side chairs whose fabrics didn’t match, a pole lamp by the TV, was crowded with people. Finally someone lifts the sheet and shows him Peter’s dead body lying in a pool of blood half covering the tattered Oriental throw rug. Now so pale, there is a blue hue to his complexion. There is a hole in his forehead, and one that he can see in his chest despite his white shirt being covered with blood. Fortunately his eyes are closed. His knees go weak at the gruesome sight of his companion lying on the floor, and he faints in the arms of the police mumbling “Poor Peter, poor Peter.”

They literally carry Ivan out of the apartment unconscious and down the stairs of this three-story building. The neighbors, lining the hallway landing and the stairway that runs down the side of the consignment shop below, hampering their exit, are standing, watching, mumbling derogatory comments about the two fags who live in 2D. The police unceremoniously shove Ivan into the back seat of a squad car and take him off to jail.

At the jail, Ivan Toth calls his attorney and friend, Joe Moran.

Sunday, The Morning After
Uptown, New York

Walter Howell was furious. His face scrunched, he ground his teeth while sitting at the round white wrought iron table on the terrace of his eighth floor apartment overlooking Central Park. The sun had just risen above the skyline and was peeking through the network of skyscrapers that make up New York City. The shadows it created made his task all the more difficult. But he stubbornly refused to go indoors where the light was better. The cool breeze on this beautiful early fall morning brought a bouquet of fresh air to his sense of smell overriding the odor of stale booze and who knows what else emanating from the dress. The \$3000 ecru-colored rose floral print, a Versace original with a scoop neck bodice and puffy sleeves, was ruined as far as he was concerned. The red stains Willa got on it would not come out. Not even scrubbing diligently with his toothbrush and Palmolive dish soap and using the effervescence of club soda to try to lift the stains would get them out completely. He didn't even want to think about what could have caused such an obstinate stain. This dress wasn't even a week old. Last night's party was the first time it was worn. He was really frustrated. He was damned if he was going to buy expensive dresses for her and have her ruin them like this.

And oh, how he just loved Versace on her.

Finally giving up, he walked back inside leaving the French doors open behind him to allow the fresh morning air to permeate the apartment and clear out the odor of stale cigarette smoke and stale people. Passing through his enormous living room with the twelve-foot ceiling, furnished totally in old French Provincial by the Manolette Furniture Gallery on Park Avenue, he set the dish soap and club soda down temporarily on one of the place mats on his Louis XIV dining room table.

“Well I’ll just put this in the hamper, and we’ll get it to the cleaner’s another day. I will not just toss out a \$3,000 dress I don’t care what’s on it.”

That decided, he finished dressing himself for the day’s business. This was the day of his monthly board meeting. Since his retirement he looked forward to it each month.

His business attire consisted of a navy blue Armani suit with a pale blue Ralph Lauren shirt, a blue and red Jerry Garcia print tie. He adored his use of colors. A pair of black Gucci Loafers topped it off. Checking his image in the full-length mirror standing next to the armoire in his bedroom, he was pleased. His silver hair and tanned complexion con-tracted well with his chosen attire. Being 5’ 7” with a slim frame, his European carriage gave him the look of old world aristocracy, which is what he identified with and secretly craved.

While sipping a cup of freshly brewed Starbucks coffee--he ground the beans himself using a French Press to make the coffee--he called downstairs to Eric, the doorman, and asked him to secure a taxi to take him to his office in Long Island.

The meeting was on the second Sunday of the month unless the second Sunday falls on a holiday. Of course, then it is the very next Sunday. His attendance is more ceremonial than practical. A privilege derived from his 51 percent ownership of the company. He started it, built it, and made it a success with no intention of

ever letting someone else have majority control unless he sold it outright. Something he was not yet prepared to do. The board he selected to run the company has done a marvelous job evidenced by the monthly checks he receives. He lets them run the company and stays out of their way on the day-to-day running of the business, though every now and then he enjoys playing shitdisturber.

He can always find some issue to stir up amongst the members to rekindle the old flames of adversarial competition. Then he walks away and lets them battle it out and stew on it until next month. It's his way of letting them know he's still in charge. "Yes! Today is going to be a fun day. It's great to be rich," he said aloud.

CHAPTER TWO

Joe Moran Attorney-at-Law

Midtown Manhattan

Joe Moran knew the case against Ivan would be tough. To refute the evidence the police had stacked against him would be difficult at best. He also knew criminal law was not his forte. He had no doubt that Ivan was innocent. Now he wanted to get him some decent representation. Lacking the expertise and the resources necessary to do the investigating to prove Ivan innocent, he knew he needed help. He couldn't afford to take the time away from his practice to represent Ivan competently.

He refused to trust it to some criminal lawyer who might run up bills and at the same time exhaust Ivan's inheritance. After talking with Ivan, he was convinced the case had a lot more to it than met the eye and confirmed the fact that he had to seek competent assistance.

Through the Attorney's grapevine, he had recently heard that Jessica Hall, the daughter of Judge Luther T. Hall and former Attorney General of the United States, had started a private practice primarily to assist people who were oppressed or indigent in getting competent legal representation. Ivan was not indigent nor was he really oppressed. But Joe hoped he could persuade

Jessica to help them because of his past association with her father.