

Chapter One

I.

A blue-faced boy was sunk into the frozen grass on a highway median. Of late he had assumed that intense look that came upon the newly dead.

"Follow me, exactly in this way," police photographer Mick Wing said to Bob House, a private detective of little professional standing. Mick pressed an index finger to the boy's light purple lips. Just then, Wing was curious to find out how long the body had been out there. He wanted to see if, upon contacting the cold flesh, a crinkling sound would emerge from it like a candy wrapper about to be discarded.

If it did, he realized, it would be significant. He knew it was the sign of a forty-eight hour freeze at minimum. An amateur sleuth, Mick Wing had the pretensions of Sherlock Holmes married to the competency of a buffoon. He had a big beard and a big belly. Weird in the sex department as well. Weird with little dead boys and the erotic cloud they seemed to emit invariably, just like the cloud of fly larvae sure to be present once the weather turned warmer and the Michigan snow melted.

First on the scene as ever, Mick was looking for ways to amuse himself until the real

detectives arrived to take an account of the crime. Despite his didacticism concerning murder, he wasn't into crime solving so much as becoming familiar with the details of a particular crime. He was a philosopher of murder more so than a peace officer. He lacked a keen sense of right and wrong. He didn't give a damn after the dead and grieving.

"With this one," he said to House then paused to listen for more crinkling skin, "I think we got ourselves a little evidence of *malum in se*, a murder for murder's sake. No sign of struggle on the body or around it. I think we got ourselves something for the headshrinkers in Quantico, Virginia as opposed to local law enforcement."

Both he and Bob House had assumed the blue-faced boy signaled the appearance in the area of what had recently been classified by the FBI as a "serial" killer, that is, one who killed repeatedly and for no apparent monetary gain. The reason as to why now and why here was not hard for either of them to deduce. A bad economy had descended into Lower Michigan's southeast corner sometime within 1977's dreary spring. Presently it was here to stay. Lean times like these had tended to breed such nightmarish faunae as serial killers like mushrooms after heavy rain. Mick Wing thought eventually the case would draw national attention. He assumed the local cops with their one-size-fits-all techniques of investigation were out of their element here. There would be a black man to frame invariably, per routine. He realized the continued murder of white children in this manner wouldn't hurt the killer's chances of becoming a national media star, big as *Three For the Road's* Leif Garret. This was a boy who, according to Mick, was ripe for a busted cherry in the dramatic way that Roman generals did the

honor upon returning home to their waifish slaves. Mick had a poster of Leif Garret on his bedroom wall much to the dismay of his long-suffering wife, Helen. He had a plethora of sperm-laced tube socks that he kept hidden underneath their mattress to forestall detection by Helen in the laundry during the week.

"They weren't born homos, these centurions, they earned it through force of rank," was how Mick put it to Bob concerning the Roman Generals' raffish ways and for the first time today thought about performing an act vaguely connected to his police photographer's job. They still used police photographers in Wayne County, Michigan even in this age of budget-conscious governments, but that's more to do with the managerial inertia inherent in a union-plagued economy than the greater need for a police photographer in this neck of the woods. Mick Wing took no pride in the job. He did what he had to do to keep his job, and he got his kicks on the side. Always boys on his mind all the while, that and an imagined androgynous whore who could shit on his hairy belly on cue. He didn't think this fetish to be so strange at all. Something about the Fallen Life that constipates a boy/girl severely apparently. Heroin is not so good in that regard. It produces bowels the consistency of porcelain, hard enough to scratch glass.

Three For the Road's Leif Garret was a boy/girl (colon blockage unknown) who, as of this winter in 1978, possessed beautiful long blond locks riding atop a pale and hairless body that looked to be, from Mick Wing's talented eye, as deeply malleable as this blue-faced boy's body was stiff.

"This one, I wouldn't fuck on a dare," Mick told Bob, producing a light meter from a pocket in his gray sweatshirt and waved it around the

body as if it was a priest's cross used in an exorcism. Neither a necro-ophile nor a man whose favored mode of communication was the Dark Ironic, thus, it should be assumed, he was talking about when the boy was alive. A man abusive toward, if not wholly ignorant of, sexual categorization, Mick Wing would not cop to being gay under threat of castration. Gayness being a political yolk in 1978, less so a human sub-species, he would always claim not to know what the term meant. He sought sex rather where sex sought him. He was in love with life and shameless about the procedure of loving. Wanted to fuck *Three for the Road's* Leif Garret something fierce. He thought he could make him love it through force of rank. He was Caius Brutus returning from the Third Punic War. His slave boy was on the bed's edge, naked except for fragrant oil, waiting for his tutelage to begin.

Mick's job as police photographer for the Wayne County Sherriff's department called for him to take photographs of the crime scene from eight different specific points of view and using three different camera filters.

"Soon enough you'll be needed," he said to Bob House, referring to the tape measure whose end would eventually need steadying against the boy's pursed lips. This sort of precision might seem lurid to an outside observer, but Mick's boss was always giving him hell for slip-ups in procedure and threatening to fire him monthly. The proper distance from the corpse's most *identifiable characteristic* (language used in case his or her entire face was shot or sliced off) was eight feet four inches at an isometric angle. Who the fuck knew why, but it was eight feet four inches at an isometric angle. Of course, you didn't want to touch the corpse in any way like Mick already had done, but there

you have the difficulty of his job. You needed to be precise but delicate in your operations. The job of police photographer was one fraught with subcutaneous difficulties. Nobody was claiming you had to be smart to do it. In fact, it would have been an advantage to you if you were not smart at all.

In marketing themselves as first responders, Mick and Bob both thought there might be money to be made from such situations as this one laid out in front of them like so much frozen gristle. Just at the moment however, they were at a loss to figure out exactly how. They didn't know who had loved this boy or if vengeance would be sought by his parents. Presently Mick Wing was out to take as many good pictures as possible. He couldn't say exactly how he would gain by this later on, other than the dreary prospect of retaining employment for another week. This hardly seemed like the pot-o-gold at the end of the rainbow. He hated his life generally. He was looking to upgrade constantly.

Here at a crime scene, here at a fresh crime scene, there seemed obvious and lucrative possibilities that waited translation into action by an enterprising soul.

"Do you think," Bob said to Mick, "somebody loved this boy at some point deeply? Do you think somebody's at home now checking after their missing person complaint and jumping three feet in the air whenever the phone rings?"

"He's white underneath all the blue," Mick said to Bob. "So the answer's a definite yes. You can check his knuckles if you want for any sign of callouses or old breaks and it looks like his nose is still in the shape God favored. A good kid in other words, from a good family. He had to be lured into whatever situation caused him to wind up a corpse. He wasn't

looking for trouble, you'd think, when the evil descended and made his own wishes beside the point."

Now, if Mick had been allowed into the pathologist's examination room, he could give Bob a full report about the boy's history with far more detail than any professional detective could provide absent a break in the case.

"I'd go to the family, bring flowers, and offer to sell these snapshots back to them at twenty dollars a pop as a kind of heirloom," Mick told Bob then directed him to hold the tape measure steadily against the boy's lips. Let's face it. In the face of death people are hardly rational. They can be swayed with ridiculous arguments that appeal to their need to be relieved of grief. A hollow promise about righting a wrong concerning a loved one's passing could be accepted on face value without the skepticism it required.

Mick Wing never had kids himself but he imagined that one of these dying on you, especially in a mysterious manner, could cause a certain loss of perspective in one if just for a little while.

"They begin to think to themselves why me," Mick said to Bob, "as if there's some type of heavenly judgment come down against them. Really, I think they all need to broaden their horizons emotionally with this. I think they all need to realize that nobody's up there against them and even if something were there's nothing they could do about it anyway. So there's no guilt required of them in any way."

It's easy for Mick Wing to say such things as admittedly he was, often as not, not on speaking terms with the rest of the human race. He saw himself as more intellectually evolved than others, but likely he was merely emotionally retarded and conceived of the

deficiency perversely as a strength.

"Excellent," Mick said to Bob once that first angle was shot and dug around in his heavy jacket for more film. He thought there was another half hour before the real cops arrived at which point he would be able to split for good. He didn't know why it took the county patrol so long to answer a simple police dispatch. He didn't know why they didn't seem to give a damn about their job as much as they properly should.

Cy Abel, the passing motorist who had called the body in originally, was sitting in green station wagon thirty yards up the road's shoulder calmly smoking an unfiltered cigarette. Unlike Mick Wing or Bob House, Cy didn't seem to be in a hurry. He seemed to be taking this all in stride like maybe it happened to him every day.

"I'm feeling this chill in my bones all of a sudden," Wing said to Bob House and told him to take several steps back. The shadow that House was casting was falling over the boy's anguished blue face. He needed to perform his work properly as there was increasing talk in the Department of paying him per piece. He needed to show himself as a serious professional whom the Department would miss dearly if they ever decided to shit can him for good. Not a charity case. He needed to show himself as somebody who gave a damn.

Neither happy-looking nor sad, the particular way the boy appeared at the moment suggested nothing as to the method of his demise.

"Just think of the fame when it hits, what it will be like for us," Mick said to Bob and reached into his lapel pocket for yet another roll of film. "Eventually, somebody's going to want to tell our life stories. Both us guys.

Eventually Hollywood's going to approach us demanding to know how it all got started with us two, the death profiteers or whatever we want to call ourselves when it comes time to tell our own fucking story."

Along with House, Mick Wing was aware that being in the right place at the right time was all-important when it came to "owning" a murder case. This was why he kept a police radio beside his bed and in his truck at all times. This was why he provided his services to the cops for so little money. He needed an "in" with a corpse to make his dreams come true. He needed to be the first official witness to a particular crime.

"When God made me, bud," Mick said to Bob, and used an armpit to wipe the retractable tape measure clean of snow, "he outdid himself to the nth motherfucking degree."

In fact it was Mick Wing's plan to sell these blue boy photos to a magazine publisher eventually along with his life story. Why any publisher would be interested in a documenter of murder scenes and his subjects was unclear. *True Crime*, that type of seriously exploitative shit of the Eisenhower-era, was twenty years in society's rearview mirror. Even if such rags still existed, they wouldn't give a damn after Mick. Snapping murder scene photos wouldn't make him a homicide expert. By itself, it wouldn't make him worthy of the Hollywood treatment, a la' Vincent Bugliosi.

At the very least maybe if these first photos were good, Wing's reputation as a crime insider would build and he would find himself with further negotiating leverage with the Sherriff's Department for later on.

"What do you think of this angle," he said to House then asked for help placing the boy's blue body in an especially alarming pose. Such

manipulations were against police procedure certainly, not to mention common decency. But Wing went ahead and began to pose the body anyway. Look, he was a hungry man. He was looking to escape from his present circumstances. He was looking to adopt a lifestyle more in keeping with somebody of his grandiose self-worth. Didn't have time for all the ethical bullshit, the small print, the legal technicalities. He was looking to score like so many others before him had scored. He was looking for a way to profit upon human misery.

Mick Wing thought folding the blue boy's arms across his body, a la Dracula in his grave, would lend the photo a gothic quality that a journal like the *National Enquirer* would pay richly for once it came across their media wire. Such a detail would suggest a type of calm deliberateness on the killer's part. It would lend a psychology to him more like a vampire's than any random promulgator of mayhem.

Then again, maybe he should place the boy's hands behind his head as if he was a Norman Rockwell gamine staring up at stars in wonder. But even for the *Enquirer*, this would be over-egging the batter. Nobody would go for it. Too off-putting. Nobody would think that a human killer of humans would conduct his affairs in this way, quoting Norman Rockwell.

He supposed he would have to decide within the space of a few minutes which way he wanted the boy posed lest he be accused by the County Mounties of being in dereliction of his duty.

"Awright," he said to Bob a few seconds later then began to snap official photographs as quickly as he might. He had decided suddenly that quantity trumped quality in the present situation. He wasn't fucking around here anymore. He decided to simply get on with the matter at hand and shoot until the film ran out.

Eventually Mick Wing felt safe enough to look up and down I-94 in search of officers of the law.

"What do you think," he said to Bob House. "Heads up their asses more than usual. Where have they've gone to anyway?"

Bob House told Mick Wing that they would likely be here within two minutes. It was too high profile an assignment for the ignominious county wretches to have them blow it off like they would, say, a pregnant motorist in trouble. A Michigan county deputy was the lowest rung on the law enforcement ladder but even some of these lumpen-p's knew about media exposure. There was too much potential for the publicizing of their undervalued organization to simply let the blue faced boy rot. Could lead to bigger and better things for all involved. The FBI surely would be consulting. Good way to spread ones resume around. Good way to make it clear to even a disinterested observer that one was fulsome with ambition, not a slow witted backwoods gendarme on the government payroll counting the days to retirement.

Through his station wagon's slightly fogged front window, Cy Abel, the concerned citizen, could see that there was no real detective work going on at the moment. He leaned backwards in the front seat calmly. Already he had judged Bob and Mick for what they were. Non-cop cops. Parasites and thrill-seekers, men without portfolio, despite whatever their cheap business cards might say to the contrary. They were people of no consequence in this scenario. They were to be spoken to only as a social courtesy.

After he had run through his third film roll, Mick Wing had squatted down in the median's snow then thought out loud of pursuing another career path entirely.

"Jeezus, you motherfucking freak," he said

to House and leaned in to watch Bob's glove-concealed fingers moved across the boy's still blue face in the same general manner of Wing's, only less lovingly. Mick was going to take a picture of him doing it but he didn't want to break open another roll just for that. Silver-based film was expensive nowadays. The stock market was in free fall and folks were seeking the safety of a precious metal. Also, Mick didn't yet know after the depravity of Bob's intentions. He didn't want to get him caught, as it were, with his hands in the cookie jar. Still his friend, he didn't want to have to go down to the county jail and bail his ne'er-do-well associate out yet again.

He and House shared a depraved history, but there were limits about what one should be allowed to do with the newly dead, even for Mick, and especially if it was a child.

"Theories and speculation are useless in this instance," he said to Bob then put his camera away. "I think maybe this youngster was caught out doing that which he shouldn't have. Despite his middle class status, I think maybe he had it coming."

More or less, this summation of Wing's was what he usually said at such scenes where some mystery existed and Bob House pointed this out to him. That the dead had deserved their fate completely. For himself, Bob House didn't think all murder was justified. He thought that there should be some limits placed on human behavior. He didn't think, for example, just because some rich kid gave you a hard time about something you had to go and strangle the life out of him as a response.

Whoever did this, you know, was a crazy fuck and this was provable not by the fact that he murdered but by the almost dainty way the body was displayed out here in this industrial

corridor with semis rolling by every forty seconds like the crashing of ocean waves.

"Here," House said to Mick Wing and pointed at the blue tarp bunched underneath the boy's head. It might have been put in place there by the killer merely to keep the boy's moist head from sticking to the icy grass underneath. Why he gave a damn about the state of his victim's hair was unclear. The killer seemed concerned about how the boy would appear to those that examined him later on up close. Needed to take pride in his work, maybe. He didn't want to be perceived as a killer without distinction, House believed. He didn't deposit the body here so much as lay it out like a Christmas feast. Here he was making a point to all about his own fastidiousness. He was announcing himself as somebody utterly in control of his own bag.

It might have taken him ten minutes, twenty minutes to climb out of whatever vehicle he drove down into this median from the elevated shoulder and trundled the body out. It was dark likely and he was maybe using a tiny light. He was entirely cool to the possibility of his being apprehended. It was beyond his ability to worry about it or at least this was the impression he was trying to leave on law enforcement at the moment.

"A lot of meticulous work here," House said to Wing and pointed to the grainy waves of snow a few feet away from where the disappearing tire tracks pointed to eastbound I-94's macadam shoulder. Presumably this feature had been made by the killer in order to obscure his boot heels' imprint. Probably he had not bothered using gloves while handling the body as he knew fingerprints on dead exposed flesh were as evanescent as puddles in spring.

For House, the bottom line was that this chap knew what he was doing when he strayed off

the concrete ribbon last night. This might have identified him as somebody in law enforcement. Or maybe he was just clever about things and would prove elusive when a genuine police investigation began. In Bob House's view, the investigation was likely over before it began. There was actually little headway murder investigators could make when dealing with a disciplined perp. Short of dumb luck, breakthroughs were extremely unlikely when trying to apprehend an intelligent man who had no desire to be caught. The ones who got caught were either dumb, or rash, or had a desire to be caught as a means of achieving some sort of atonement for their spectacular sins.

Now, if he killed again likely it would take years for the authorities to admit this even to themselves. White kids started showing up blue-faced in highway medians and various centers of authority went utterly ape-shit over it. In the face of severe public scrutiny, they wouldn't be able to fess up to their ineffectualness. They knew that after a time the crimes they were investigating would become a mirror reflecting their own failures as peace enforcers.

It would be an occasion upon which rational men would lose their motherfucking minds.

"Listen," Bob House said to Mick Wing and wondered vaguely at the present lack of a police presence. It had been only fifteen minutes since their arrival but, nevertheless, given the level of urgency associated with the crime, there was a developing notion in both men that such tardiness bordered on contempt. The state troopers, whose jurisdiction this highway median fell under, didn't seem in any real hurry to perform actual police work. Gradually such duties appeared an impediment to them, distracting from the real work of manning speed

traps and writing citations of dubious legality for busted tail lights and the rest.

Strange that in this day in 1978, the police were still coming to grips with a mandated vision of themselves as servants of the people and not, as was true in a former age, vice-versa.

"Buddy," Bob House said to Cy Abel after making a slow trudge through the crunchy snow of the highway median towards his parked station wagon with wood paneling on the side. In Bob's army jacket, there were black and white business cards that he had paid for at an Ypsilanti printer at a rate of a penny a piece. House had a notion to hit this Good Samaritan up for investigative work. Of the three men here, it appeared Cy was the only one impatient to leave. This hinted at a life beyond highway roaming. He had responsibilities, this Cy Abel. He had legitimate business contacts in what was thought of as the legitimate world.

The logo that was printed on House's business card was the Pinkerton Agency's famous unblinking eye. Too poor to worry over a copy write infringement lawsuit, he stole from the famous agency knowingly. He thought the matter would sort itself out if push ever came to shove. He doubted very greatly that push would ever come to shove in this matter. Couldn't squeeze blood from a stone. He doubted seriously if anybody cared so much about his professional exploits to ever make push come to shove.

Bob thought Cy Abel was somebody who could help him out in this matter. The real reason he came here with Mick Wing, out to this dreary circumstance, was to network, to press the flesh with potential clients or men who could lead him to potential clients straight off. Due to his crimped circumstances, he desired detective work constantly nowadays. He desired a permanent roof

over his head and the daily availability of food and reliable transportation and booze.

For a private investigator of certain dubious leanings, the ill feelings created within a parent upon the delivery of the news of a dead child, were like updrafts to a cliff-dwelling bird.

House knew that the first link in a chain of bereavement was the person who had found the body. He knew that this Cy Abel, if he was a decent sort, would accept the family's invitation for an audience, preferably with Bob's Pinkerton card on his person.

Before the police arrived and shoved House aside, he needed to talk Abel up on this matter. More than this, he was sick of being out here. He had been out here too long with Mick Wing and his strange obsessions about fame and hairless boys. The bars in downtown Ypsi were long since open. He needed to fucking bear down here and get on to the pressing matters at hand.

Also, it was fucking cold out here, a damp sort of dreary iciness that refused to allow a person to acclimate to it, no matter how many layers one had on. The snow was a foot thick on this median and standing in it over an hour as they had been doing made it seem slightly colder than otherwise. A typical Michigan winter, so called, but maybe not. There was an unyielding quality to this season, as if it was a curse from above. April would be colder than March, the gray summer as cold as the white spring. A persistent metallic quality had entered into the atmosphere, suggesting mankind was outside of Mother Nature's good graces. He wouldn't have been surprised if the world had ended later that year. The bad weather was a herald of something. He wouldn't have been surprised if 1979 came and nobody had been there to ring the fucker in.

When Bob House arrived at the paneled

station wagon's driver-side window, he noticed that Cy Abel looked to have dozed off inside.

"Eyes open wide," he said to Cy and immediately regretted the decision not to shave this morning. A Rotarian if ever there was one, this Cy Abel, in Bob's estimation, and in addition he appeared to be a hard case. The fedora with the peacock feather he was wearing seemed an un-ironic attempt at high fashion, for example. He was bald underneath the fedora and wore wire-rim glasses. He seemed above all both lugubrious and taciturn in the manner of a man perpetually on the point of dozing off next to a raucous stranger on an airplane.

More than anything, Cy was deeply upset about the cops' absence of presence on the scene. Unlike House, Cy wasn't aware of the Wayne County Mounties' famous lack of acumen regarding standard operating procedure. He didn't know about their pettiness and jealousies concerning municipal law enforcement. This was the primary reason for them being tardy at such a scene. These interstates were their jurisdiction and they would feel the need to point this out repeatedly to all involved parties. In other words, fuck them if another department thought it disgraceful that a corpse should grow moldy before it was toe-tagged. The Sherriff's Office didn't give a shit about either the grieving or the newly dead. They surely didn't give a shit about the timetable of any concerned citizen-type like Cy Abel, if that's what he was.

When asked by Bob where he was anxious to get to, Cy told him that he had a meeting to attend at the Callico Motors headquarters in Dearborn. This was being held by a Vice-President of Engine Design.

A Vice-President of Engine Design.

Cy Abel said it again, using the man's

title as a complete sentence. Well, he had a decision to make soon, because of this appointment. A Callico Motors Vice-President of Engine Design was expecting his presence anytime soon. Their HQ was thirty miles away as the crow flies. And he was supposed to be there in less than an hour.

Cy thought that in another ten minutes he would have to make a decision, which is to say, execute the decision he had already made several minutes before.

"Now, bub, you," he said to Bob House and retrieved today's copy of the *Detroit Free Press* lying next to him on the front seat. "Look," he said, "You look for yourself in the front section."

He said that nowadays in and around a crime-ridden Detroit, the discovery of a dead body did not warrant mention in the papers' first six pages, but was relegated rather across from the funnies, the vitamin ads, and Evangeline Adams' syndicated horoscope column. Its impact on society grew appreciably less over time apparently. It was no big deal after a fashion. In a manner of speaking, the value of life decreased as time flew.

A legitimate business opportunity in this day and age, on the other hand, was a truly precious thing!

Let this be known: one does not linger lightly over a meeting with a Callico Motors vice-president. Himself, Cy was a senior sales representative of a firm that produced gaskets for the Big Four. Somebody in such a position is not confident that such an opportunity would occur twice. Auto execs don't want to meet with parts supply sales reps as a point of personal pride. They've been promoted out of the glad handing business. They're at a point in their careers where the entire parts supply industry

could be taken for granted, as if those vendors would always be there for them, mere parasites who provided a simple service and could be replaced with one phone call.

The Vice-president of Engine Design, Cy Abel intimated to Bob House, was about to unveil something conceptual and epochal to the meeting attendees, akin to a new musical form. There'd be a company historian of a type at this meeting taking notes. There'd be chances for questions at the end and, on the way out, the serving of angel food cake.

On this stretch of eastbound I-94, the road narrowed inexplicably as if the surrounding factories were eager to discourage public inspection. Semis were constantly driving by at seventy mph disrupting Cy and Bob's patterns of speech. The trucks' drivers didn't seem to have any regard for the well-being of either the wood paneling of Cy's station wagon or Bob House. They seemed blind to the spectacle of murder plainly displayed, driven on by the desire to get where they were going to in a hurry and double back for home.

It was after one of these enormous vehicles passed two feet from his bellbottoms that Bob hit upon the notion of him taking Cy's place upon the arrival of the State Police.

"Buddy, listen, you're a godsend in wolf's clothing," Abel said to House after a short while once the switch was proposed, "You strike me as somebody who realizes the strife daily experienced by the common man. A regular Joe. You strike me as the sort who is taken for granted big time."

In fact, Cy Abel had business cards of his own at the ready, multi-colored with raised serif lettering, absent of the Pinkerton Eye. When he set to distribute one of them unto Bob, he did so with a practiced ease.

"Cy Abel," Cy Abel said to Bob House reading his own card. "You know: Cy Abel," he said to House. "You know all that Cy Abel's been through just by taking one look at the lines on his drum skin face."

Now, if Bob House had been any sort of business man, this was where he would have given his private dick pitch. His stony reticence, however, betrayed the truth that Bob House was destitute for a reason. His personality just didn't sync with America's omnipresent capitalist jive. *Gotta sell, sell, sell the whole day through!* He just didn't understand its syncopated rhythms. A lot of back and forth to it like a Chick Webb solo. He didn't see finally the good it would do anybody, all this avarice, this drive for material success.

So here he was being hustled by Cy when he had intended to be the hustler only minutes before.

In such situations, he always felt flatfooted. But today he was about to get lucky.

To Bob, Cy made the point that the 911 call he had made down the road in the rest area minutes earlier was to an unknown dispatcher who wouldn't be on the scene or in a position to provide identification for the Samaritan.

"Now you're getting the hang of it, bub," Cy told Bob, and pointed through the station wagon window's splattered glass. "But your friend over there. Oh, your weirdo friend..."

According to Bob House, Mick Wing was hardly his friend and, in fact, was somebody so emotionally disposable so as not to even be considered fully human. To him, he was more like a physical punch line or any over-protective parent's worst nightmare come to life. Boy fucker with a sociopathic side. He was a prisoner of his own desire. But he did have an in with the state police that would allow Bob to

hang around murder scenes and troll for clients. For this attribute he was useful. And he was entertaining enough at times like these when gloom and boredom hung in the air in more or less equal amounts.

Presently, Mick was down on his knees in the slightly dirty snow seeking out a proper shooting angle. All angles on all crime scene photographs were intended to be the same, isometrically composed. It was felt that some sort of scientific documentation of the mayhem would prove beneficial for its future control. By objectively recording what had occurred, it was felt that detailed clues could be pulled from the images later.

Experienced homicide detectives knew better, however, and every time they saw Wing they tended to throw their lit cigarette butts at him.

"They say, 'you've seen one murder scene, you've seen you've seen them all,'" Mick once told Bob, paraphrasing detectives' conclusion that, short of a confession note with the killer's full name and present address stuck in a bullet hole, there was nothing but clean-up work to occupy policemen's time at such an area. Accurate DNA-testing, along with much of the science of CSI was unknown in 1978. Fingerprints in an exposed winter area were worthless even as fodder for speculation. The body left few reliable clues. And unobserved murderers who had no desire to be caught generally in those days were home free.

The geometric rigor of Mick Wing's photographic compositions had had been completely abandoned by him after he ran through his first two rolls of film. He had largely forgotten about the original job he had been contracted to perform. He didn't think it would help him anyway with his immediate needs. He

didn't think its successful execution would gain him the respect of his peer group long term.

Slowly the benefits of Bob House's proposal were becoming clear to Cy Abel.

"Cy," Bob House said to him. "Sigh. Cyrus? Cy."

"They call me Kid Dynamite," Cy Abel said as an answer to House's question. "That's what they used to call me back in school anyway. The holy-as-God incarnation of the American dream. I can sell a Jew a gas chamber. I can move into the ghetto and sell niggers white hoods and the Confederate flag."

"Are you a real auto executive?" Bob House asked Cy. "Are you somebody with real power in the industry?"

"Sayonara, bub," Cy Abel said to him and rolled up his station wagon window. He put the pea green vehicle in gear and rolled up the shoulder fifty feet. Seconds later he put it in reverse and rolled back.

By this point Bob House had seemed to hold all the leverage in that negotiation.

"Now that I think of it..." he said to Cy and told him to hurry up and make a decision.

"You're ready to deal, I see," Cy Abel said to him with suddenly wide eyes.

"If you give me fifty bucks," Bob said, "I'll make up something for you to the troopers. I'll say, 'I never saw that weird looking man in his puke green station wagon with such and such a license plate number going such and such a place. Which is a crime, believe it or not, a refusal to cooperate with an investigation. I'll take the Fifth basically,'" he said. "I'll deny all eyewitness accounts to the contrary."

He didn't know what the real reason was for Cy's present eagerness to flee but he had plenty of pet theories. He certainly didn't believe his presence was required at any high level meeting

at Callico Motors. Not this seersucker wearing jerk off. Because why would he still be here waiting around if that was the case? He was hiding something from Bob obviously and hiding something from himself. A salesman to the bone, he was working the angles trying to take the best deal he could.

"Tell me one thing though can you, Cy?" Bob House asked him.

Cy Abel told him, "I know what you're about to say."

Bob House asked Cy Abel if he knew the blue faced boy's name. Or anything else about him actually.

Because some people, serial killer-types specifically, Bob said, sometimes became nervous or guilty over their lack of impulse control. So they doubled-backed onto the scene. Some even were known to report on themselves anonymously. Sometimes it occurred that they would wait at the crime scene just like arsonists did to observe their handiwork. Sometimes they would get nervous while waiting. They would conceal their identity from whatever person was asking and assume the mantle of Good Samaritan for "discovering" a dead body somewhere off the beaten track.

Couldn't help it really, these sad fucks, as such foolishness/impulsiveness was part of their mania. It wasn't a question of arrogance, Bob didn't think, so much as an inability to shut off the demons within. You see, if a nerve-racked serial killer could even moderately control their desires they wouldn't have found themselves at a murder scene to begin with. They were always bouncing from one disturbing situation to the next. They were always restless and nursing bizarre fantasies. And they disgusted even themselves frequently.

Of the fedora-wearing Cy Abel, Bob House

wanted to know how he was involved with the boy's murder. He was prepared to ask him about it in a very breezy way. He wasn't the authority figure here. He was a fact-hoarder in the midst of hoarding facts. It's what he did for a living after a fashion. He was as amoral as they came. He had no rooting interest in the human cavalcade's final destination. Didn't care if they used the bomb on each other and then that would be that for eternity.

"If you thought I had anything to do with it, rummy," Abel said to him, "why would you even be asking? Why would you be making inquiries of somebody who's absolutely prepared to lie to save himself?"

It was House's eventual opinion that this Cy Abel was too at ease at himself to be involved in any direct way.

Regardless, eventually he grew tired of the smug answers he was receiving and took the money offered to him. He had Cy's license plate number memorized by this point. He didn't care so much if Abel stuck around. Bob knew how to get to him if it was needed.

"But who the fuck knows about people," he told Mick Wing seconds later after the station wagon had disappeared over the median's lip.

"Nowadays," he said, "It's impossible to explain the motherfucking shit people get themselves into. You can't look into somebody's eyes and read them. It's impossible to tell where the good part of them leaves off and the evil part begins."

Maybe Cy was a mere scavenger, a mere scumbag like Wing, or an associate of the man who had really done this and--too late for the child--had developed a bit of a bad conscience later. Whichever, he would certainly be able to provide further insight into this question of who had done what. Perhaps he was what he

represented himself to be, and as such could rightfully claim himself as an aggrieved party. Some people were unique in that they became defensive while telling the truth. This was because it was such a novel act for them. They couldn't differentiate anymore between one form of communication and the next. To them, reality seemed like an extension of their own dream life. They didn't see other people as real.

It had always been House's belief that when an objectively bad person claimed his innocence, it never sounded right, even to the person himself. There had always been a bit of angst involved in the process of divining a killer. Nobody should be really sure that the work of detection had not become emotionally overwhelming for a man no matter how many safeguards he put up to prevent this from taking place.

Presently Mick Wing had his dick out in the cold damp air in preparation of taking a piss.

"Zip up and shut up," House told him and watched as he put it back in. For all the world, it looked as if Bob House, P.I. was about to be given the opportunity to collect a fee for a case. He wanted to be seen in the eyes of prevailing authority (whenever they arrived) as being entirely above reproach. Until the contract was signed, he wanted to be taken for a serious professional investigator intent on solving a serious case. He had these aspirations all of a sudden. He had, it seemed, a full proof way of paying his rent for months on end.