

# **The Girl In The Trunk**

*A Novel By*

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**- ONE -**

They found the trunk on the sidewalk on the west side of Mosholu Parkway at a little past four in the morning on a Wednesday in late September. It was an old, battered dormitory model with leather handles, and inside was the body of a delicately lovely young woman, fully dressed. The credit cards in her handbag identified her as Elizabeth Albano of 1644 Rhinelander Avenue, in the Morris Park neighborhood of the West Bronx. At 4:16, the sector patrolmen called in the duty detectives from the 52nd Precinct. By 5:05, Anthony Rizzo from the Homicide Squad was on the scene.

Rizzo was a compact, wiry man in his mid-thirties with a reputation as a tough investigator who knew his stuff--stubborn, methodical, cocky. He took one look at the dead girl in the trunk, asked a few questions of the patrolmen, and then sent a man to get his buddy Mike Villanova out of bed and bring him over.

There was a glow in the eastern sky by the time Villanova arrived. He was bigger and rangier than Rizzo, a little older, and quieter. The cops knew him, but he wasn't a cop. They knew him because he had done work for the Homicide Squad on and off for a number of years, and also because he wrote a crime column for the *Spectrum* that some of them liked to read. He made the better part of his living as a private investigator. Villanova happened to live in attic

rooms only a few blocks off Mosholu, down Bainbridge Avenue, but that didn't seem a good reason to him, he told Rizzo, to be shouted out of bed to look at a trunk. What he didn't tell Rizzo was that he'd been wrapped in pleasant sleep with a woman who mattered to him when the pounding started on the door. Rizzo told him to calm down and go look in the trunk.

Mosholu Parkway was really a boulevard with a grassy median, flanked by pre-war apartment buildings of four or five storeys. Sycamores and overgrown sumacs blotted out the streetlights, and the trunk sat concealed in the gloom a little to one side of the double-door entry to 658. The lid hung open, and one of the patrolmen threw a nine-volt torch on the inside so Villanova could look. Villanova said later that it made all the difference, seeing it in the light that way, so that you could feel what a desolate thing night really was and how terrible it could make anything at all.

Inside the trunk was a slender young woman in a black or dark blue dress. She was on her side with her knees jackknifed against her chest and her arms folded around her shins. Her face was tilted upward so that the torchlight caught all its white beauty and filled her wide brown eyes with false luster. She had a fine nose, high cheekbones, a round chin, a delicate brow. Her rose-colored lipstick was slightly smudged, her long, dark, wavy hair disarrayed. She wore a plain silver bracelet, a college ring, black high-heeled pumps, and stockings. The only visible mark on her was a fine ligature burn on her neck. Like everything dead, she had a ghastly, inhuman look, but there was something perfect about her too, pale, smooth, and frozen, like the marble statues in churches. What Villanova looked for as he stared into the trunk was a bit of rescuing ordinariness, so he could get about the work to be done, or else tell Rizzo to leave him alone and let him go back to bed.

But he couldn't find it. He studied the dead girl's face, the faint crease in her brow that caught all her childlike frailty as well as the terror and surprise of her last moments. Something cold closed on his insides, something between dread and anger, and he walked away into the dark and stood with his back to the trunk and the cops and the lights. After a while, he came back and said to the cop with the torch, "Who took the handbag out? You?"

"I did," Rizzo said. That was by-the-book procedure when the crime was warm.

"What did you find in it?"

"Nothing much. Forty bucks in cash. A glass heart in a gift box, with a card, 'For Margarita.' Change, keys, make-up, the usual."

"Where was the bag?" Villanova said.

Rizzo pointed. "Behind her head, in the corner."

"And where's the guy that first opened the trunk?"

"That big guy over there with the precinct men."

"You talked with him?"

"Yeah. And the Super too. The trash cans are kept in the alley. The sidewalk was clean at eleven last night."

Villanova went over to the beefy guy standing beside the two uniformed cops. "You the one who opened the trunk?"

"No."

"Aren't you the one who called 911?"

"I just peeked under the lid, I didn't open it."

"You didn't move anything?"

"No."

"See anyone?"

"Nope."

Rizzo came over. "I already talked with him," he told Villanova. "He bartends down at the Web. Walks home three-thirty to four A.M., six nights a week. 654 Mosholu, second

floor. We went up and checked with his wife, we got his boss on the phone."

Villanova turned away and walked down the sidewalk, and Rizzo walked after him. They stopped about fifteen yards away from the others and stood half-facing each other. To the east, the sky above the apartment houses was streaked with pink, and the dark froth at the southern end of the Parkway had sharpened into the outline of the Botanical Gardens. Villanova pulled a pack of Chesterfields from his shirt pocket and lit one with an old-fashioned nickel-chrome lighter. The flame illuminated the deep brown eyes and coal black brows that gave his face its striking quality. It was an appealing face, strong-featured, intelligent, expressive. Hope, appetite, outrage, grief, tolerance, fatigue, humor, disillusion, determination had all written on it. Rizzo's face, fairer and less regular in feature, a face not handsome but compelling in its own way, was cut to fewer and coarser facets: ambition, lust, obstinacy, pride, good humor. Rizzo was a married man, a sports buff, a sometime drinker and womanizer; he liked poker, nightlife, guns, and country-western music. Villanova liked jazz, tools, books, old cars, old movies; he was a widower, a traveler, a thinker, a loner. Both men liked women and liked each other. Both had grown up playing stickball, handball, and pick-up basketball, both could handle themselves in a fight. Each lived his own life, and a few times a year, in observance of a cycle neither had ever figured out, they put their heads together on a case. Villanova had to do some adapting for these ventures; Rizzo was a Juggernaut-style investigator with a savvy all his own and a legendary stamina: he could operate for days at a time on nothing but black coffee. But he was open to Villanova's more serendipitous style, too.

It was an old habit, in fact, a method, which required that Villanova see everything that Rizzo had seen at the scene

of a crime and ask some of the same questions. Urgency was part of the method too, especially in a murder. Villanova, particularly, believed that the experience of a crime could still be entered hours after the victim had died. The breeze, the starlight, the quality of silence, the situation of things and people, the facial expression and posture of the victim, the mood of the time and place, all these survived for a little while before dissipating or being disturbed by the boys from the Crime Lab, and were vital to the way Villanova worked. Villanova also believed that the spirit left a corpse slowly, like warmth, and that there were things a detective could sense if he could get near soon enough.

Rizzo let Villanova think for a while, away from the others, and then he said, "Well, Buddy?"

Villanova looked at him uneasily. He was going to be shaken for a long time by the sight of that dead girl, but not for the reasons that Rizzo believed. Finally, he shrugged and said, "All right."

Rizzo glanced at his watch. "The duty men went over to the family at a little after five. They've had an hour and a half."

"Okay, then," Villanova said, "we might as well go." The Crime Lab van was making a U-turn down at the corner. Villanova looked back toward the trunk and said, "Couldn't we just close her eyes?"

"You know we can't, Buddy."

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Rizzo had an unmarked car, a wreck of a four-door Plymouth that was past going out to bid. As they pulled away down Mosholu, Jay Stefanek and Tommy Layer from the Lab were already setting up the lights for the photographs and diagrams. "That's the end of it," Villanova said. He meant that the human life of Elizabeth Albano was finished...that

whatever was on the sidewalk now was an object inside an object. Rizzo nodded.

The dawn put a blush on the tenement rows as they drove down Webster to Fordham Road, but to Villanova the area had a perpetual stripped and embarrassed look without the old El. The Shamrock, Joe D's, the Web, even the Flim-Flam looked sheepish and harmless in the morning light. They took Fordham Road past the campus, Villanova's *alma mater*, to Williamsbridge, then turned down Morris Park Avenue. It was a six or seven minute ride. The Italian bakeries weren't open yet, but one of the little markets was, and people were going in and out. "I've gotta get coffee for this," Rizzo said, and they stopped. The place was narrow and cramped, with a tiny counter way in the back and no proprietor in sight. There were customers ahead of them, and each helped himself and left money on the counter, calling out "I've got a *Post*, Angelo!" or "Pack of Marlboros, Angelo!" One guy crowed, "Hey, Angelo, the Mets died last night!", which brought from somewhere in the back: "Your *mother* died!" Then Angelo appeared, stocky and greying and dull-eyed, with a tray of buttered rolls and bagels wrapped in wax paper, and sold Rizzo and Villanova their coffees, which they gulped down in the two blocks before Rhineland Avenue.

The street, like most in Morris Park, featured well-kept row houses and detached two-family's, with tiny flower gardens and solitary mimosa trees, a statue of the madonna here and there, and chain link fences to compartmentalize every driveway and square of turf. A precinct car sat in the driveway of number 1644. The house was red brick with a Spanish tile roof and vintage stained glass panels around the front door. Elizabeth Albano's father, a slender, handsome man wearing a white t-shirt, slacks, and jogging sneakers, let them in. His thick-browed, unshaven face looked strained and distraught.

Rizzo took over and sorted things out quickly. In the kitchen were the precinct detectives and the dead girl's two older brothers, big, well-made men. The women were in a back bedroom with the door ajar, the mother and a daughter-in-law, huddled on the edge of the bed, their faces red with crying and their eyes dazed. The father was trying to be in charge, and the sons kept trying to insulate him and show him that *they* could be in charge. "Go in the bedroom," they kept telling him, "go sit with Ma," and he kept ignoring them and trying to be helpful. The precinct guys had broken the news, gotten the two brothers and the sister-in-law down from the upstairs apartment, checked photographs, culled the dead girl's personal effects for leads, and arranged to take the brothers downtown to the morgue for a personal ID. Neither brother would go alone, and neither would let the father go. The precinct guys were eager to get out of that painful atmosphere, and as soon as Rizzo was done debriefing them, he let them take the two sons and go, while he and Villanova gave the dead girl's room and effects another going over, with the girl's father hovering.

When they were done, the father, Tom Albano, went with them into the front room to answer questions. He offered them a drink or a shot of whatever they wanted. They declined, and all three sat in the plush armchairs. Albano dropped his face in his hands for a few seconds, but then pulled himself up. He looked like a man who had learned, from a few agonizing events over five decades of life, how to steel himself.

"The first thing we have to assume in a case like this," Rizzo explained to the man, "is that your daughter was harmed by someone she knew. So you've got to do two things for us. You've got to help us reconstruct her movements up to the last time she was seen. And you've got to name for us any enemy or acquaintance or boyfriend who might have harmed her.

What we want to do is eliminate the chance that she just wandered into a dangerous situation, or was made a random victim."

"No," her father said, "that's one thing she wouldn't do. She was smart, she knew where she shouldn't go, what streets she shouldn't walk. She wanted to go away to school, but that's the reason we wouldn't let her, you know, go off somewhere where God-knows-what could happen to her. You read about kids getting raped in their dormitories, what have you. Drugs and sex and abortion, you name it. We sent her to Fordham, so she could live at home. All my kids went to school at home. The boys went to Manhattan College. Liz wanted to go to N.Y.U. downtown, but no, I wouldn't go for that. Ride the subway, at night and what have you? Forget it."

"Your daughter was a college student, Mr. Albano?"

"Graduate student. At Fordham. A Ph.D. student."

"What's her age, exactly?"

"Twenty-three. Twenty-four next February eleventh."

"She was wearing a dress and heels. Did she dress that way for school?"

"No, for work. At school the women wear pants. Though Liz was more of a dresser. We taught her, you know, to take pride, to be a lady."

"Where did she work, Mr. Albano?"

"At Mount Saint Mary's, up Bedford Park Boulevard. An English teacher. She just started, day after Labor Day."

Rizzo got busy with notepad and pen. "Did she go to work yesterday? What were her hours?"

"Seven-thirty in the morning, she leaves." Albano's voice wavered suddenly, and he struggled to maintain his composure. "About this time," he said quietly, glancing at his watch.

"And she went yesterday, same as always?"

Albano nodded.

Villanova watched and listened, and meanwhile mapped the room with his eyes. It was a fairly ample but crowded room intended to be formal. The walls were Federal blue, the drapes and carpeting a deeper shade. A walnut bookcase sported the Encyclopedia Britannica and the Britannica Junior, and the Book of the Year up to 1993. Oversized lamps stood on their own scimitar-base tables, and sconces studded the walls on either side of a false fireplace. A huge mahogany TV cabinet with sliding front panels took up almost a quarter of the room. Framed photos clustered on every surface, family portraits from years past. From many of them Elizabeth Albano's face stood out--she was a hauntingly beautiful and highly photogenic girl. There was a fineness about her, a grace and self-possession that separated her from the rest of her family, though it was also easy enough to see where her looks came from, as a number of the photos captured Tom Albano and his wife in their youth. Albano had a thin, dark, handsome face, and his wife was fair and round-faced and dimpled, with faintly Asian cheekbones and clear, artless eyes--a knockout. Together, they looked like street kids endowed with a vibrant and wholesome beauty. Elizabeth had her father's features and expressions, her mother's bone structure and complexion, a very happy combination.

Albano, talking quietly and unconsciously wringing his hands, explained that his daughter had begun high school teaching reluctantly, that she had been expecting an assistantship or something at Fordham which didn't come through, that she'd been struggling to handle the workload on top of preparing for exams. She had, to his knowledge, spent the previous day at Mount Saint Mary's and at Fordham, and had not come home for dinner, which was not unusual. She worked on her dissertation in the library in the evenings, sometimes went out afterward with friends and came in at one

or one-thirty, long after her parents were asleep. Usually, she called home if she was going to be very late, but not always.

She was a wholesome girl, Albano stressed, a chaste girl, "a good girl"--it was when he used this phrase that Villanova could hear his despairing sense of loss, right under the surface. "All her life she loved to read," he said. "In grade school, she was nuts about the space program. She built models of Atlas rockets, lunar modules, what have you. And then she taught herself how to sew. She started making all her own clothes." A pride came into his voice as he enumerated his daughter's virtues: she got along well with people, helped her mother with housework, learned to cook, even painted her own room every year. As a high school student at Mount Saint Mary's, she was on the student government and wrote for the school paper. She never went through a rebel or boy-crazy stage. All through college she was an "A" student and a volunteer in various outreach programs. For the past two years she'd been tutoring ESL students one night a week at John F. Kennedy High School on Fordham Road, without pay. "Liz felt sorry for people who're up against it, she was always trying to help someone. But she never wanted any kind of praise." She was a good Catholic, Albano said, and never missed Sunday mass at Saint Clare's, where he himself was an usher. She still wore her Confirmation crucifix on a gold neck chain. Two of her high school classmates had gone into the Dominican novitiate at Sparkill, and Liz had even had a friend who was a priest, but she always wanted a home and a family.

"Was she wearing her crucifix yesterday?" Rizzo asked.

"Probably," Albano said.

"Would you recognize it if you saw it?"

"I'm the one who gave it to her."

"What night is her class at JFK?"

"Wednesday night--that's tonight." Albano's voice wavered again, and this time Villanova was sure he was going to lose it. But he held on. "I guess I better call them," he murmured. "I better call Mount Saint Mary's too."

"We'll do that if you want."

"No. It's my responsibility. I'll do it."

Rizzo and Villanova glanced at each other and nodded.

"JFK is a pretty rough school," Rizzo said. "Didn't it bother you that she went there?"

"You bet it bothered me. I made a real stink about it."

"And?"

"I'm a bigger girl than you think,' Liz told me. 'I can take care of myself.'"

"What about friends? Did Liz have a girlfriend we could talk to, somebody at school maybe, or in the neighborhood?"

Albano shook his head. "That's one funny thing, she wasn't close with any girl. Her high school friends, they all got married or moved down to Manhattan to work. She lost touch with them."

"How about someone named Margarita? That ring a bell?"

"Margarita? No, never heard that name."

"What about boyfriends? Did Liz date?"

"She went with boys, sure. Three years in college, she went with this one boy, an Irish boy. Name's Tom, like me. Nice boy, an unusual boy. Built like a bull, likes to write poetry. He didn't graduate. His father died and he went back upstate. The family has a farm, or orchards or something. After him, Liz started dating again, you know, but nothing serious. Last year, not so much. Too busy, I guess, with the studies and all. She was always at school at night, always at the library."

"Nothing like a steady boyfriend, then? How about male friends? How about any man who seemed interested in her?"

"There was a guy at school, a professor. He was definitely interested. Maybe there was even a little something starting between them. But then it turns out he's married. My daughter must have really frozen him out when she found out, because this guy got worked up enough to come over here to talk to me."

"When was all this?"

"About three weeks ago, he came to see me. Talking a mile a minute, asking questions...trying to feel me out, I guess. I couldn't tell if he was mad or scared. What did he think I was going to do, give him my blessing? I felt like pitching him out of the house." The muscles in Albano's jaw tightened; he let off wringing his hands for a moment and clutched one in the other, fist to palm. "But after a while I sized the guy up, I saw that he really had it bad for my daughter. So I said, 'Look, you got a wife, you care about her, right? You don't want to hurt her. What do you need this kind of heartache for?'" His brow furrowed and his eyes held Villanova's; there was a poignant blend of emotions in them, a stoical compassion mixed with repugnance. For an instant, Villanova sensed he was seeing Elizabeth Albano alive, in her father's expression.

"What's this professor's name?" Rizzo said.

"McVicar. Brian McVicar. An English professor."

"Ever hear from him again?"

"No. I didn't mention to Liz that he was here. I figured the less said, the better."

"Could he be still in the picture?"

Albano shrugged. "From his end, maybe."

"What else? Any other men she might have been dating in the last month or so?"

Albano took a breath and let it out heavily. "There was an artist guy she went around with. A friend, not a boyfriend, I think. He only showed up here once, uninvited. A wise guy. Made fun of us, the furniture and everything. Here, look, he made fun of these pictures. That's me with Cardinal Cooke. And this is when they swore me in as Grand Knight, in '89. Gate of Heaven Lodge."

"Can you give us this artist's name and address?"

"His first name's Jack. All I know, he lives near Fordham, over on the other side of Fordham Road, with the Puerto Ricans."

"Would your wife know this guy's last name?"

"I don't think so. We only saw him the once. And Liz wouldn't talk about him. She was funny that way about her friends, private, you know?"

"Tell us what this guy looked like."

"Long hair, glasses, red face...ugly. Not big but solid, rough-looking. Late twenties, I'd say--Jeez, at his age I already had a wife and three kids."

"Where did Liz know him from? School?"

"I don't think so. Could be. Fordham's changed a lot. When I was a kid, I used to look through the fence and see these guys walking around in gowns, like the Middle Ages. It impressed me, you know?" He shrugged. "My wife and me, we never got to go to college. But I wanted my kids to have that." He went back to wringing his hands.

"How about a photo of your daughter. Got one that we can have, just a plain one, no big smile or anything?"

"No smile? Take this one here." Albano leaned across and retrieved a framed three-by-five from the end table. It showed Elizabeth sitting in the dappled shade of a willow, looking up at the camera with a serene, precociously sage expression. Albano tugged it out of the frame and handed it

over. Rizzo took it and passed it along to Villanova for safekeeping.

Rizzo asked a few more questions, and Albano, as he ran dry on hard information, grew more digressive, talking about changing times, the happiness and closeness of his family in the early years, his aspirations for his children--decent, modest aspirations. Villanova was glad that Rizzo didn't stop the man. He was very sorry for Tom Albano, and also knew it would be important to hear how he saw and thought. Above all he hated how these interrogations reduced a life to a paragraph of notes, and forced the victims themselves to do the reducing. Albano was going to succor himself by declaiming for his daughter, and himself. He explained that he'd worked his way up from a mason to a tile and terrazzo contractor, a member of the electricians' and carpenters' unions. He motioned toward the tilework on the kitchen floor, he again offered drinks, and stood and opened the mahogany TV cabinet to display the dry bar he had custom-built inside it: the design and the refinishing were first rate.

This time Villanova accepted a shot of bourbon. He understood that Albano needed to be acknowledged as one in spirit with ordinary, physical men, like cops and other working stiffs. He was a plain guy with no illusions, and his decency, bred out of deprivation early in life, was sincere.

After a while, Rizzo went into the other room to talk to the dead girl's mother. Villanova stayed with Tom Albano. He could see that the man was desperate to keep talking and not be alone with all that misery dammed up inside, so he asked him a few questions and let him rattle on about the Knights of Columbus, his business partner's paraplegic son, the guy next door who took all five of his sons into his lumber business and who stewed a year's supply of tomato sauce every fall in the back yard, his own sons' athletic prowess, his

childhood, his drunken father, his broken home, his kind aunts and cousins who raised him, his suffering in the streets and in shape-outs and in the army, his youthful romanticism, his life of toil. When the sounds of crying started up in the back bedroom, Villanova asked Albano to show him around, and got a narrated tour of the basement machine shop, the weight room and heavy-bag, the renovations Albano and his sons had effected inside the house and out: the new plumbing, the new natural-gas fired furnace, the fresh-pointed brick and everlast windows on the facades, the aluminum-clad eaves, the glass-bricked basement windows, the electronic security system, the permanent and maintenance-free and shatter-proof, vermin-proof, rot-proof carapace he had fashioned for his family to live in and be at ease in. It took a while, but Villanova understood that Albano was making an incantation: family was all that mattered, and with a fortress to shelter it, a family was supposed to be safe from hurt. This was the dogma of his life, and his talk was a workingman's long and oblique and eloquent cry of outrage.

The last thing Villanova did was ask Tom Albano to leave him alone for a few minutes in his daughter's room. He stood there in the quiet and let his eyes roam over all the things the unsuspecting girl had thought she was coming back to: the folders of notes, the index cards, the piles of books and the proofmarked manuscript of her dissertation-in-progress; the half-knit sweater in a basket by her bed; the open copy of *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* on her nighttable, its margins heavily penned; the Claude Bolling tape in her portable deck; the unironed cotton blouses hanging on her closet door; the tray of perfumes, polishes, make-up, the jewelry case, the vinyl bag of hairbrushes, grooming items, ornaments; the stack of essays written by her students, partially graded, with a little note to herself on top: "Finish!"

Villanova flipped through some of her books. Many of them, including the one on her nighttable, were annotated in two hands, and bore the initials "B. M." inside the cover-- Brian McVicar. A critical text authored by McVicar himself, titled *The Dimmesdale Complex*, lay among the books on her desk. Its margins too were richly worked.

He paged through her dissertation, which, by its outline, was something like two-thirds complete. He read enough to get a grasp of its argument. The writing was competent, even good, and there were citations a-plenty. Up to the last couple of chapters, *The Dimmesdale Complex* was the heavily favored source; then the references to it virtually disappeared. That was no surprise, in light of what her father had said.

Lastly, he glanced through the student papers and read a few of the comments she'd penned on them: "Great sentence!" "Is this really the word you want?" "Much better than last time." "Describe more here, let me see what he looks like." The hand she wrote in was scarcely less childlike than her students'.

Little more of her was on display, and her few keepsakes were wholly plain: no trophies, concert tickets, cute photos, mugs, buttons, or trinkets; the one obvious treasure was a faded Sweet Sixteen birthday card from her father. There was a quiet innocence all through her room, bespeaking a simple acceptance of the world as given, with its duties, roles, and hopes. It was the same kind of innocence that had once stirred Villanova to love, the same kind that had seared his insides when it fell to the world's savagery. His young wife had been dead for many years now, the person responsible had walked his own anonymous path for many years, but the outrage still smoldered in Villanova's breast, a secret from all the rest of the world, including Rizzo. The sight of Elizabeth Albano's bedroom gave that fire a good stoking. Her room

was full of the naive certainty that tomorrow follows today, that the world is worth exploring, that people get better at what they do. It was full of the trust his own wife had left behind for him to see and touch, to fold away, seal up, and forget, just as Tom Albano would now have to fold away the life of his beautiful child. Villanova felt himself starting to cook, and was sure that it had been a mistake to let Rizzo bring him into this case.

And just at that moment, Rizzo came into the room, and it was time to go.

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They stopped at Angelo's market for breakfast specials, then pulled under the trees on Pelham Parkway to eat and talk. The day had bloomed mild and overcast, and the commuter rush, mostly day students heading toward Fordham and Bronx Community College, was in full stride. "Well, what do you think, Buddy?" Rizzo said as he unwrapped his "Hungry Man Special"--double-egg, cheese, sausage, and home fries shoveled into a hero bun.

"You first." Villanova didn't like to put words to his feelings until he was sure they had finished stewing.

"No, you."

Villanova unwrapped his double-egg-over-easy-with-bacon and popped the lid off his coffee. He took a swallow of the strong, hot brew. "She sounds like a damn sweet girl, if you go by her father," he said. "But even if you don't, she looks like your basic decent person: a good student, a hard worker, on good terms with everyone in the house, moving along on an academic track, a degree program, a fellowship, some part-time teaching, regular hours. She was under a bit of strain, but no despondency, no romantic upheaval, no obsessions, a steady supply of attention, but she doesn't sound like one of those really pretty girls who get greedy or arrogant about it." He pulled the photograph of Elizabeth from his

shirt pocket and studied it. "I read her as a kind of outsider in her family, nice, like they are, and decent, but with one foot definitely out there in a larger world."

Rizzo nodded. "Good. So basically we've got a real nice girl...and the question is, how did this girl go off her nice safe track between her house and the college and Mount Saint Mary's and wind up in a coffin over on Mosholu Parkway?" He took a man-sized bite of his sandwich. "We've got to work backwards and forwards, soon as Pathology gives us the time-of-death...soon as we talk to the people who last saw her alive, at work or whatever. We can figure she got knocked off indoors someplace, because someone had to find a way to hide her body and dump it."

"Right," Villanova said. "If some street punk dragged her into an alley or something, there'd be no reason to hide her and dump her somewhere else. So it had to be someone who knew her and knew we'd be coming to look."

"Or else someone who had to hide her from someone else who lived there." Rizzo took a gulp of coffee; almost half of his enormous sandwich had already vanished. "Mosholu Parkway is only about four blocks from Mount Saint Mary's. I say we start by having the canvassing squad work Mosholu in both directions from 658." He looked at his watch. "It's time to make a few calls. The Crime Lab might have something ready, and we need to call Mount Saint Mary's, and we need an address on this English professor--he's our lead, right now. Too bad the girl's address book didn't turn up, but we'll have one of the boys contact all her teachers and work connections and any close friends we can come up with." He began listing items in his notepad as he spoke. "We'll run down her credit cards and see if we can find out who sold her that glass heart. And we'll have Gilman get the LUD sheets from the phone company and check out who's gotten a call from the Albano phone over the last few weeks. He can check

out the faculty phones at Mount Saint Mary's too. --Hey, Buddy, you with me?"

Villanova had been staring at the photograph. The eyes of Elizabeth Albano, youthfully serene on the surface, full of somber wisdom underneath, stared back at him. "Yeah," he said. "I'm with you." He put the photo back in his pocket.

"There's phones up under the El stop at White Plains Road. Here, hold my coffee for me, will you, Buddy?"

Villanova took it. "Jesus, what is this, a 48 ounce cup?" He held his own cup between his knees so he could eat.

Rizzo bulled his way into the traffic and headed west on Pelham Parkway, steering with one hand and eating with the other. "What else did you get out of the girl's father?"

"Nothing much. He's in a lot worse pain than he looks. What about the mother?"

"She's a study. Wants to help, wants to communicate, but hasn't got many words. A little bitter underneath, I think. Didn't see the point of her daughter 'spending her life in school.' Wished she'd just settled down and got married like her brother. As if that would have saved her life."

Villanova nodded. "How about the girl's room? You get a fix on it?"

Rizzo shrugged. "Plenty of books. Neat as a pin."

"Right. That figures, in a way. Did you see how many books were initialed 'B. M.'?"

"Sure. What do you suppose that stands for--Bowel Movement?"

"She was halfway through her dissertation. The chapter drafts were on her desk, 'Dimmesdale and Hysteria.' That figures in a way, too."

"The room speaks to you, Buddy? What does it say?"

"Everything neat and tidy, like you say, meticulous, even." Villanova bit into his sandwich. "And yet there's a funny kind of tension underneath it all. --*Shit!*"

"What happened?"

Egg yolk had spurted down the front of Villanova's bar striped Oxford. "Every goddam time I put on a good shirt!"

"You put on a good shirt for *this*?" Rizzo said through a mouthful of bread and cheese.

"Christ, you're the one that eats like a pig. How come *you* never get it?"

"What do you mean, I eat like a pig?" Rizzo took another huge bite of his sandwich, tossed the remnant over the back of the seat, and relieved Villanova of the coffee. The floor in the back was littered a foot deep in brown bags, styrofoam cups, stale danish, and empty apple juice bottles. "The way *you* eat, Buddy, you oughta buy shirts off the back of a truck. Like me." He punched the horn, beat the traffic signal at White Plains Road, and pulled over in the shadow of the El.

They got out and made the calls. Rizzo took his coffee with him and called the Crime Lab and the Homicide Squad. Villanova lit a cigarette and called Mount Saint Mary's and Fordham University. Villanova got back to the car first.

"She signed out at the high school at 11:30, the end of fourth period," he told Rizzo when he slid back behind the wheel. "Her usual time."

Rizzo nodded. "And Pathology figures time of death between noon and one o'clock."

"Cause?"

"Smothering. She was probably unconscious when it happened. Hair and Fiber came up with nothing, fingernails included. The guess is, her face was pressed into a mattress, or something soft was held over her nose and mouth."

"What about the ligature burn?"

"Only partial. They figure a cord, maybe...something that broke, like a shoelace."

"Or a chain. Any sign of her crucifix?"

Rizzo shook his head. "And no prints, either, not even from her handbag. Wiped. On the inside, just her own."

"Was she molested?"

"Nope. And we know she wasn't robbed." He took a long pull from his coffee cup. "Not robbed, not molested... but you know what?"

"What?"

"Pregnant. About eight weeks."

Villanova raised his eyebrows.

"You get an address on the professor, Buddy boy?"

"Yup. 2317 Decatur."

"That's only a couple of blocks from Mount Saint Mary's."

"That's about half way between Mount Saint Mary's and Mosholu Parkway."

Rizzo nodded and checked his watch. "It's 9:05. Is Professor Bowel Movement in his office yet, do you suppose?"

"Professor Bowel Movement is home in bed. He's scheduled to teach one class a day, 1:00 to 4:10 p.m."

Rizzo drained the coffee and flipped the cup into the back. "Let's go."

