

Chapter 3

Bob Hayes stood behind his desk in his study, staring out the window overlooking his backyard. Darkness had set in for the evening, so there was not much to focus on, though he was intent on staring into the blackness as he thought. Losing his close friend Steve Vorbach was like losing a limb. Bob had groomed Steve as his understudy since his friend had graduated from Ball State many years ago now. Steve had been on his staff when he had first become a U.S. Senator almost twenty years ago. He knew this young man had the looks, personality, and stamina to succeed in politics. And succeed Steve did, winning every campaign he had undertaken with Bob, the Mentor, giving him advice and counsel. Even the governorship was within Steve's grasp. After four years of running the state of Indiana, he could have taken Bob's place in Washington.

It had been Steve's insight that had brought BARA to his mentor's attention, and Bob Hayes immediately saw the future destructiveness of this amendment when it came to the safety of the country. He and Steve had come up with the scenario of forming a secret meeting of those like-minded men who would have the clout to stop this legislation. Mike Harris, never a favorite of Bob's, was the first man the two brought in on the plan. Bob had figured rightly, that if Mike could be convinced of the danger of BARA, while being so opposed to Bob personally, then they might have a chance to assemble a team.

Now Steve was being groomed at some funeral home, and Mike was most certainly going to be lost to the "team" after his grandstanding. Mike would become the hot-potato; too high of a profile to even attend the secret meetings in the future. The sacrifice of the junior senator was to make up for the death of his close friend. All the clichés flooded his brain.

When given a lemon..., he thought, not even finishing it in his mind. He did not want to make lemonade out of lemons anymore. *I'm feeling pretty old right now. I should just give it up.* He never had the word "quit" in his vocabulary until now. Having lost his wife of forty-eight years just three short years ago, the loneliness of the house had started changing his vocabulary, adding to it words the younger Bob Hayes never thought would ever encroach upon his life. *Quit, stop, you're too old, let the younger men...* He knew this process grew out of the grief of the hour. Nighttime adds to that aura.

Sitting down at his desk, he pulled the leather book from his top, right-hand drawer. Opening it to the bookmark, he read the next short chapter before retiring for the night.

Placing his reading glasses on his face he read to himself.

Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be...

The cell phone in his desk drawer beeped, taking his mind from the Book. Opening the same drawer he pulled his Bible from just moments before, the black phone chirped again. He stared at it as if it were not possible for this to be happening. This was the private phone that he had gotten two years before as a match to the one Steve Vorbach had. The only person who had ever called this number was now being prepared for a funeral. This was not only an unlisted number: this was a secure number which he had received from Jim Stoeffler at Ameritech. It was “off the charts,” as Jim had told him.

Another ring.

Senator Hayes remembered the procedure, taking the necessary precautions before even picking up this phone. He pushed a button underneath his desk which would secure the room by sending a jamming signal inside the four walls of the office, in order to keep anyone from listening in to the call or picking up the signal.

Then he reached for the phone.

“Well, I should be getting home.” Laura rose from the couch in the Jones’ living room and headed toward the coat closet at the front door.

It had been quite a day for the twenty-five year old young woman, starting with burying herself in her research for a case coming to the Indiana Supreme Court. Justice Jones assigned her to “jist” the case for him. That meant reading the record of the lower courts and giving him the “jist,” or essence of the case. These one-page “jists” abbreviated thousands of pages of material into a mere fifteen hundred or so words. She was in her office when the judge burst in and informed her of the helicopter accident around the other side of the Statehouse. That set the day back on its heels. She had found Randy about an hour later in the first floor pressroom, after answering questions about the crash and the status of the campaign now that their candidate was gone. There was nothing she could say to him, but just her presence, she knew, was enough. There was a charisma between the two which had built over the last few years since they first met that night in this house. Randy’s red, puffy eyes

told her volumes as to his condition. He was never emotional. But this was different, of course. This happened to their friend; and their friend had a wife and children. It made it very personal.

“Please be careful going home.” The woman who had followed her to the door had become very close since Laura’s own mother had passed away the summer before. Nancy Jones had replaced, not the mother, but the counselor that Laura needed. Ending up at the Jones’ home before heading to her apartment had become a regular, weekly habit of her life. And with Katherine being away at college, Laura had filled that void in Nancy’s life. Though years apart, the two had become close friends.

Laura turned to her older friend. “When is the Judge going to be here?”

“He should be coming any minute. He left the Vorbach’s earlier. Do you know what you two are doing tomorrow?”

“Judge gave everyone the day off to collect our thoughts.” She continued speaking as they hugged goodbye. “I’m thinking of leaving the city and maybe going to a state park.”

“Randall said the funeral would be Thursday.”

They both saw the headlights pull into the driveway.

“Laura, wait a bit and let’s see what Randall has to say about the details.”

Nancy opened the front door as her husband, Justice Randall Patrick Jones closed his car door and walked wearily toward her. They embraced as he came into the house.

“How was Stephanie,” Nancy asked.

“Holding up well right now,” was his tired reply. “Hi Laura.”

“Hello, Judge. I was just leaving for home. Is there anything new, or that I can do?”

The judge still had his left arm around his wife as he faced his legal assistant.

“Funeral’s at two, Thursday afternoon. Smith Funeral Home on North Range Line. Visitation is tomorrow night at eight at Smith’s. Have you spoken with Randy?”

“I saw him for a few minutes this afternoon. We haven’t spoken since.”

“I can’t raise him on his cell. He must really be taking this hard.” He turned toward his wife. “Has he called, Nan?”

“No.”

“Well, Laura, if he does get in touch with you, let him know I want to speak with him.”

Laura nodded her head slowly in response.

The Judge continued. “It must be devastating to be heading for the Statehouse Chief of Staff’s office, and then in one minute, lose it all. I want to assure him that he can have his position back with us.”

“I’ll keep you informed if he calls me.”

“Thank you. I know ‘enjoy’s’ not the right word, but at least, try to have a good day tomorrow.”

“I will. I will keep you all in my prayers.” Laura opened the door as her eyes felt the sting of the tears coming on. They were fully streaming as she nestled into her car seat and pulled the seatbelt over her.

She backed out of the driveway and headed down the road. The loss of her father years ago and her mother recently caused her thought to turn to what life is about. *This is not the land of the living. This is the land of dying. I am going to the Land of Living, where my mom and dad are, and where Steve Vorbach is right now.*

“Is this Senator Hayes?”

“Who is this, and how did you get this number!?” The senator was in no mood for a call, especially an unknown call on a line which only one person had access, and that person was dead.

“Senator, this is Randy Jones, Steve Vorbach’s friend.”

“Well, that’s who you are. Now, how did you get this number?”

“Actually, Senator, Steve told me to call you. I have a note here with instructions as to where to find his private phone and how to use it. I don’t know the number. It was only activated here for speed dialing. I...uh, guess it was supposed to speed dial you, Sir.”

“Mr. Jones, I know who you are. Steve has, uh, had spoken often of you. But if you called this number, then you must know a whole lot more than you are supposed to know, and we should not be talking on this phone if you don’t know how to secure the line.”

“Steve’s instructions he left for me were to meet with you.”

“Well, Mr. Jones, no offence here, but I cannot trust you. You may have been Steve’s right-hand man, but infiltrators have been known to show up in the closest places. So, I’m afraid...”

“Senator, I have an instruction sheet for you, written in Steve’s own hand. There is no forging or mistaking it as being his. I have a packet of information, explaining everything to me. His instructions to me were to contact you and meet with you, and to tell you that his accident, uh... was no accident.”

“Don’t say anything else, Jones! Don’t tell me where you are right now.” Bob Hayes was not being unkind, but persuasively cautious. “Go get into your car right now. Drive around until you see no headlights behind you, in front of you, or even near you anywhere, and call me back on this line.” The Senator hit the red button and set the phone on his desk. *No sleep tonight, I’m afraid.*

Randy made his way from the state office building to his car in the secure lot. It seemed to him as if a thousand eyes were watching him now. If the life of a state

senator was cheap, what would his life be like to those same people? Not even a whim. Pulling from his parking place he headed toward the exit. A guard at the gate opened it to allow him to pass, and waved as he recognized young Jones. Just then he glanced down on the passenger seat and noticed his personal cell phone, which he had neglected to carry with him that evening. He turned right onto Market Street as he reached to pick up his phone. Sixteen missed calls. *I wonder who was trying to get me?* He scrolled down through the calls, noticing most of them were from home. *A worried mom*, he thought.

He sped up the ramp onto I-70 east which would take him to I-65 North. He looked up into his rearview mirror. *No one behind me*. He quickly pulled to the side of the on-ramp. He still held his phone in his hand as he pulled the other from his side jacket pocket. Looking down on this black cell phone, it looked ominous in and of itself. Knowing that it was a “special” phone; a phone that was a “one of a kind,” made him wonder into what he was getting himself. As he placed his finger on the speed dial button, his phone suddenly chirped. Randy knew his nerves had not been this tight since playing hide-n-seek with his younger sister years ago. He actually shuddered as he dropped his phone onto the seat next to him. Picking it back up, he saw that it was Laura.

“Hello?”

“Lee, I’m glad to get a hold of you. We were getting worried. Your mom especially. Are you alright?”

“Had better days, Laura.” His bitterness sounded harsh even to himself.

“Yeah, we all have.” He heard her friendly voice, and it calmed his nerves.

“I’m sorry, Laura. I’m into something right now that I have to focus on. Steve left me some, uh, instructions, that, uh, I have to do tonight for him. No options. I’m not ignoring anyone; just doing my job for a friend.”

“Okay.” *What instructions?*

“So, uh, please understand that, uh, I have to go now. I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Okay?”

She paused. “...Okay. You okay?”

“I’m just fine. I’ll give mom a call as soon as we hang up.”

“You sure?” *He’s not telling me everything.*

“Laura?” His baritone voice sounded serious now. “I want you to trust me. Okay? Just trust me. This is for Steve. This is something he wanted me to do just for him, and it has to be done tonight. I’ll be okay.”

“Did you know the funeral is Thursday?”

“No. What time?”

“Two.” *Funny he didn’t know.*

“Thanks, Laura. I gotta go.”

“Randy, I have tomorrow off. Can I help you?”

“No!” *I said that too quickly. Calm down.* “No, thank you, Laura. I’m just in traffic right now and it’s hard to concentrate.”

“It’s okay, Randy. I can go. Have a safe night.” *Traffic? At eleven thirty?*

“I will...and Laura? Pray for me.”

“Okay, bye.” *He sounded serious.*

Randy threw his phone on the passenger seat and pushed the other’s green call button. It rang once.

“Jones, don’t talk, just listen. Go back to where you called me from. I’ll be there when you get there.”

The line went dead.

Oh great! Why did I leave there in the first place?

Randy took the next exit ramp and quickly entered the other side of the interstate highway, heading back the other direction. He thought he should take this time to check in with his mom and dad, so that they would not be worried about him.

“Anti-federalist George Mason spoke on the relationship between arms and liberty. Mason asserted that history had demonstrated that the most effective way to enslave a people is to disarm them. Mason suggested that divine providence had given every individual the right of self-defense, clearly including the right to defend one’s political liberty within that term. Patrick Henry argued against ratification of the Constitution by Virginia, in part because the Constitution permitted a standing army and gave the federal government some control over the militia. Henry objected to the lack of any clause forbidding disarmament of individual citizens; ‘the great object is that every man be armed Everyone who is able may have a gun.’”

Senator Michael Harris had moved to the podium at the front of the Senate chamber, just in front of the Pro Tem’s desk, and facing outward into the empty chamber. In the previous six hours the Pro Tem had tried every trick known to him to try to get Harris to make a procedural mistake, including restroom breaks that he had just made up out of thin air. Had the senator not been thoroughly prepped for this occasion, he would have succumbed to any of them.

The gallery above was empty. No senators seated in front of him. He even realized that the Pro Tem had ordered the pages and staff to go home. Harris’ own staff was “ordered” out of the building; something to do with a fire alarm being “pulled.” The Capital Police still had not allowed them to return.

The “record” was being recorded, so a staffer was still in the recording room, but with digital recording, it made his job much easier. He just needed to make sure none of the equipment malfunctioned. Harris looked down to the blue carpeting as he droned on and on. Even as he spoke, he knew his career was over. He could still think

of other situations: his wife and family, his personal staff, even his rented apartment in Georgetown.

He heard a door close somewhere upstairs in the gallery. He glanced in that direction, but did not see anyone. *Probably a janitor*, he thought. *So, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington could probably not happen in today's society*. He continued speaking for his "crowd."

"Similarly, James Madison made clear that, although the proposed Constitution offered sufficient guarantees against despotism by its checks and balances, the real deterrent to governmental abuse was the armed population. To the Anti-federalist criticism of the standing army as a threat to liberty, Madison replied: "To these [the standing army] would be opposed a militia amounting to near half a million of citizens with arms in their hands, officered by men chosen from amongst themselves, fighting for their common liberties, and united and conducted by government possessing their affections and confidence. It may well be doubted, whether a militia thus circumstanced could ever be conquered by such a proportion of regular troops... Besides the advantage of being armed, which Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation, the existence of subordinate governments, to which the people are attached, and by which the militia officers are appointed, forms a barrier against the enterprises of ambition, more insurmountable than any which a simple government of any form can admit of."

Harris saw no one now; the President Pro Tem taking another "restroom" break. He had received all kinds of messages, delivered to him over the past six hours; messages even from conservative colleagues, begging him to stop making a mockery out of the senate. The Minority Leader had written him, pleading with him, and explaining how this grandstanding would even hinder future legislation from being passed. Harris read aloud each message into the record, causing the messages to cease being delivered to him after it was found out what his tact was upon receiving them. A list of twenty senators' signatures had adorned one message. He smiled as he read Senator Bob Hayes' name into the record, knowing this was purposely forged, and that Bob was not even in Washington to sign his name.

In the quietness of the moment as he reached to pour himself another drink of water, he heard a voice coming from somewhere in the gallery.

"Senator Harris."

The senator looked up and to his right into the darkened gallery which surrounded the senate chamber so visitors could listen to the proceedings on normal occasions.

"Who is there?"

"My name is not important. Just listen to me. Senator, your action today is noted as being courageous. Courageous, but foolish...."

"This is being recorded, sir!" Harris strained to see the face in the shadows, but could not.

“The recorder even needs a restroom break, Senator Harris. There is just you and I.”

“What do you want?”

“Mr. Harris, some very important people are desirous of certain legislation to be passed without any fanfare. You are hindering that process with your little stunt.”

“Sir, I am a senator of the state of Indiana, and I will not stand here in this chamber and...”

“You will hear what I have to say, Senator Harris!”

A stunned Mike Harris stared silently into the dark upper chamber.

“Senator, you have riled some people that you should not have riled. I want you to know that they are important enough to even be able to control this building; the most secure building in the Western hemisphere, so that it is just you and me who are in this room. I would just tell you that I could have been an assassin, but I am not. But we do know where you live. We know where your wife and children are and go every day. You have until eleven o’clock in the morning, at the latest, to stop this little charade of yours. After eleven a.m., we will have the people in place to cause you to wish you had stopped much earlier. One minute after eleven, if you are still going, you will have sealed your own fate, Senator Harris. Things will return to normal here in less than five minutes. We just wanted you to know where we can go and what we can do.”

“I will not be threatened with such violent...” Mike heard a door close in the gallery. Silence crept in around him. He knew he needed counsel, advice, to talk to someone about this; to warn his wife, his friends. A door opened behind him as the President Pro Tem entered and walked to his seat on the platform.

“Continue, Mr. Harris. I am back and well relieved now. I believe I can go another few hours.”

“Thank you Mr. President. As I was saying: both Federalists and Anti-federalists believed that the main danger to the republic was tyrannical government and the ultimate check on tyrannical government was an armed population. Federalists and Anti-federalists disagreed, however, on several issues which affected the early legislation...”

Randy walked into the same building he had come out of not thirty minutes before. Even the guard at in the parking lot looked puzzled as he waved at him as Randy drove past the gate. *How did Hayes know where I was?* This thought came across his mind as he walked down the hallway; with the sound of his shoes echoing off the walls. Entering through the door to the outer office, Randy stopped and listened. *Nothing*. He crossed the room and unlocked Steve Vorbach’s door, entered, and turned the light back on. Seated at Steve’s desk was Senator Bob Hayes.

“So what’s on tap for tomorrow,” Lee asked Laura on his nightly call to his friend, just before they went to bed.

“I have the whole day off. Church is tomorrow night, but I have the day to myself. I thought about getting out of the city. All you hear in the media is about the crash.” Laura sounded depressed, still in thought about her call to Randy.

“I’ll meet you. Tell me where. Then you can attend church over here tomorrow night.”

“You don’t have to, Lee.” She knew her friend was exactly what she needed tomorrow, but did not wish to burden him with her doubts and heartaches.

“Laura, listen...”

“Okay.”

“Are you listening?”

“Uh, yes.”

“Are you sure you’re listening?”

“Uhuh.”

“Check for me. See if you’re listening, so I won’t waste my words here.”

A smile came to her lips. “I’m listening, Lee.”

“How can I be sure?”

“Just take my word.”

“You mean, the word of someone that won’t even do me a favor and check to see if she is really listening?”

“Okay. I am looking in the mirror, and as far as I can tell, I’m listening to you on the phone.”

“Good.” She waited for him to say something else. He did not.

“Are you going to tell me something?”

“Yes, but I wanted you to ask first. That shows me that you are listening.”

“Lee, you are nuts...”

“Does that mean that you’ve stopped listeni...”

“No! Don’t do this to me. I’m listening. For the last time, I’m listening to you.”

“Kay. I just wanted to tell you, while you are listening, that I’m here for you. I’m your friend, Laura Marie Stiley. You are way too close to the situation over there. I’m not as close to them as you are, so I can be a sounding board for you. Eagle Creek Park; ten in the morning. Walnut Point Road. Remember how to get there?”

“Yes.” She was relieved that she would see him and spend the entire day. The memory of this day was starting to flood her heart; emotion caused her eyes to fill.

“Laura, just make it through the night. If you need to talk, my cell will be right here in my hand.”

"Thanks, Lee."

"And, uh, Laura?"

"Yes, Lee."

"You can stop listening now."

"Huh?"

"I said, you can..., good one, ha." He chuckled. "Let me lead in prayer tonight. Okay?"

"Go ahead. He and I are both listening."

"This is quite a file Steve put together, Jones."

"I thought it was pretty complete."

"He wanted me to take you into my confidence."

"Apparently."

The old senator leaned back in Vorbach's chair and looked at Randy across the desk. The man behind the desk was struggling with something massive. Randy could tell the man, with blinking eyes, darting back and forth with no reason, was searching for the answer.

"Your call, Senator Hayes."

"As I see it right now," he said slowly, "I either have to take you in or have you killed."

Randy's eyes fastened on the senator's face. *Did I just hear that?*

A slight smile crossed the old man's lips as he saw the reaction to what he had just stated. He shook his head as he returned the younger man's stare.

"Mr. Jones, I am kidding you. 'This is a very serious situation' is what I mean. It literally is 'life and death.' You may have to make sacrifices that you never planned on making in your life. But don't worry about me killing you. I have been a Christian for fifty-three years. I don't believe I could ever take another man's life. I would just leave them in God's hands. So, please don't worry."

"So, what do I do, sir? And how do we find out who did this to Steve?"

"Not here, Jones. This office is not secure enough."

"Where then, and when?"

"About a hundred feet below where we are," he stood and rounded the desk, walking toward the door. "And right now."