

## Chapter 13

After Daniels leaves, Big Boy saunters downstairs and we go for a walk. Fortunately it is a cool morning with a nice breeze off the water and my Chocolate Lab isn't in any hurry. My head and ribs couldn't have handled even a light jog.

It is about 8:30 so my first pre-scheduled blog post goes live while we are out:

### **BUZZ: WHAT SECRET?**

The suicide note that is believed to be from Sue Eaton Hines will be authenticated soon by forensic experts. The question on everyone's mind is what secret? And for whom was the note intended? Who is Sweetie?

By 8:35, my cell phone is vibrating every few minutes. Big Boy and I are still a block away from Pensacola Bay. I don't answer any of the calls. They are from Dare, Gravy, Clark Spencer, Jim Gordon and a number I don't recognize. My head hurts too much to be yelled at before noon.

A block away from The Insider office, I spy a group of gray panthers with posters blocking the entrance to my office. They are charged up on Krispy Kreme coffee (there's donut box on the hood of nearby car) and look as if they haven't had a bowel movement in weeks. There apparently is a dress code for the men because they all are wearing black socks with sandals.

Save Our Pensacola is out to stifle The Insider and use me to attract attention. Bo Hines' contribution must not have cleared the bank yet and they still need the free publicity. The signs read "Stop Yellow Journalism," "Take a Walk Walker," "Bought and Paid For Reporting," and "Boycott The Insider." The protesters, about a dozen give or take a walker or oxygen tank, block the door to my office.

I take off Big Boy's leash and he walks right past the picketers unscathed and unbothered by the commotion. He sits on the mat in front on the door. I swear he's smiling at me, daring me to follow him. I hate that dog.

I see one of my shadows from their meeting at New World Landing—crew cut, Hawaiian shirt, khaki shorts and the prerequisite socks and sandals. Walking up to him, I ask if I can help him.

"We're shutting you down, Holmes," he says, not removing his aviator sunglasses. "Your bull crap has got to stop. Attacking dead women is a low for even scum like you." He jabs me in the chest to punctuate his last sentence. I hope I don't wince because I fell like I have been stuck with a hot poker.

"Freedom of the press is a bitch," I reply. Turning to all the picketers, "If you need a bathroom, our offices on the second floor. Don't pet the dog. He has fleas."

Big Boy quits smiling and we go upstairs. I email the staff and tell them to stay home today and work online. No need having them become targets, too. I listen to all my phone messages. Based on them, I am either a fool, an idiot or a jack ass. Jack ass appears to be in the lead. The unidentified number on my cell phone is one of Bo Hines's attorneys demanding I remove the buzz post. I don't return any of the calls and don't delete the post on the secret.

Instead I write up my interview with Stan Daniels and post a teaser to the blog:

**COLD CASE: CELESTE "CECE" DANIELS**

On May 14, 1967, Celeste "CeCe" Daniels, age 16, was seen leaving Catholic High School. Her family and friends never saw her again. The Insider reported on her disappearance in a cover story for our Jan. 20, 2005 issue. We believe that someone in Pensacola knows what happened to this high school freshman and we are asking for them to come forward with any information they might have. Please email me at [walker@theinsider.net](mailto:walker@theinsider.net).

After three cups of coffee, my head calms down. The ribs are tender when I turn ny torso, but otherwise I'm not hurting too bad. Outside reporters are interviewing my picketers. A TV camera crew is taping them. Every negative story about me gives an opening to their sales reps to steal one of our advertisers. Dollars, not journalism, are driving these Walker Holmes stories.

The office phone rings. It's Gravy.

"You won't answer your damn cell so I figured at least someone would pick up this line," says Gravy. "You've really stepped into it this time. The State Attorney himself called. He wants you in their offices at 3 p.m."

"I'm not going."

"Walker, they will issue a warrant and have you arrested."

"Screw 'em. I have a plan," I say, sounding more confident than I feel. "Buy me some time."

"I have nothing to offer them," says Gravy. "Your best bet is to make yourself hard to find. I will tell them you can't come until 4:30 p.m. When you miss that appointment, they probably won't get one of the judges to issue a warrant until the next day, but for you, a judge might make an exception."

Looking out my office, I can see the reporters and TV camera crews have left. The picketers are packing up, too. It must be time for "Walker Texas Ranger" or "Murder She Wrote" back at the retirement home. Crew cut is driving away in his olive green 1998 Lincoln Continental. It has a bumper sticker: "Fight Crime: Shoot Back!"

“Okay, that should work. They won’t know I’m not cooperating until it’s too late to stop me.”

“Stop you from what?”

“It’s best you not know” and I hang up the phone.

My blog posts have attracted dozens of comments. The ones on Hines and Wittman are 50-50 pro-Walker Holmes and anti-Hines and Wittman. The comments on the buzz item on the secret are decidedly anti-Bowman Hines. Readers post rumors of affairs, shady business dealings and the art council theft. Hines is getting beat up pretty hard on the blog, which is something he won’t like.

In contrast, classmates of CeCe Daniels relish the opportunity to write about her. People still remember her wit and laugh. There aren’t any new revelations, but readers love adding comments to that post.

I add my own comment:

“I have copies of the yearbooks from Catholic and Washington from that year. Celeste Daniels went to the junior-senior proms at both schools. Does anybody remember those dances? Please email me, walker@theinsider.net.”

Thirty minutes later, my next scheduled blog post goes live:

#### **FRIEND CONFIRMS HANDWRITING**

Dare Evans, close friend of Sue Eaton Hines, has confirmed that the handwriting on the apparent suicide note matches the handwriting on letters she has received from the late Mrs. Hines, as does the stationery. Forensic experts are expected to issue their report sometime tomorrow.

Dare will be pissed that I drug her into this, but she doesn’t hold grudges, at least not for long.

At a little before noon, I grab my laptop and head to Jacob Solomon’s house in North Hill for lunch. He is more than happy to meet with me and talk about CeCe Daniels, after all he is the one who gave Dare the yearbooks.