

EXCERPT

CHAPTER ONE

Fields and trees teach me nothing But
the people in a city do. —Socrates
(Plato, Phaedrus)

I

7:45 a.m. John Husker wanted to be God but his addiction to follow murder made him as dangerous as the devil. He got dressed, listened to his shoulder pain and followed the scent of Colombian coffee. His wife Karen Husker stirred breakfast Chinese leftovers in the weak handled wok. Soy sauce dripped with scrambled eggs smelled up the kitchen like a German whorehouse. They lived next to an alley as the food floated pungent odors around their sleepy heads through cupboard valley of glass, china cups, and silver spoons in their town home. A cold white winter sun tried to get through the back door blinds. Eyes barely blinked, she was pissed and not half good this morning when she heard the familiar.

“Morning hon...”

“Morning,” Karen poured his coffee, “Superman.”

Karen watched him sit down; combed, dried and over six feet tall fancy man. He had to be bold, arrogant with a bad message in his eyes to stay alive. He needed a haircut All things scrubbed, her husband's face hungered for heaven stars in a cup of coffee and in his thirties an old veteran street theme from murder and mayhem of a man with wide shoulders in good shape. She served him breakfast and as he walked strong street game of city sidewalks. She kissed him as he grinned, dropped his spoon. She purred over him. He rubbed her damp back. She leaned over his coffee and let him squeeze. He reached

and kissed her on the neck under long frizzy red hair that just came out the shower. She surrendered like him. He stirred his coffee, sipped like a good Christian. Karen sat across. She was a great actress to inspire the cold buzz morning, inspired the octaves in him as he looked ready to take a bite in his British blue blazer, red silk tie, white cotton shirt and gray trousers. Her husband was going straight to hell with his sharp self.

His eyes looked like the drowsy morning clock in the Haverford railroad station. Tired savage, worth the wait She didn't think he or the miracle of local trains coming put of Haverford Junction was going to make it to work. She was a warm distracted blanket across from him. He yawned; not ready to find another murderer this day.

"You look fresh," he said. "I been married to you for over ten years and you still look like you twenty-three at every breakfast." He bit into a shrimp roll, thought this might get him a kiss.

"Honey," she yawned over her cup, "take another sip of coffee, that look will change."

"That's right, I forgot it will change." He nodded sadly, stared at his daughter with yellow bows that came down her shoulder holding her cup of orange juice. His elbows poked like wings from his body; he tried not to look at her again. He forgot she was a bitch in the morning, a family bitch in the morning; goddamn, how he loved her.

"You want sesame chicken tonight?"

"I'm not sure, is that what your mother's crystal ball asked?"

"No," this riled her good, "that's what *my* crystal ball asked."

"I guess," he brought his elbow down, "I feel like a chicken."

"John, it's my mother."

"I'm sorry," he forked up some rice, "I forgot about your mother."

"John, don't," she got mad, "don't."

The woman is getting ready to slip into heaven."

"Honey, have some respect"

"I think it's a cop-out" John glanced at his watch. "You left a great career to take care of her full time."

"Thank you," Karen ignored him, "now eat your rice." She got back on track. "Iris, turn that Mickey rat off."

"Mom," Iris turned off the television, "he's a mouse."

"Stop lying," she sipped, "you want Ruben with you anyway."

Iris slurped her milk and peeked at her parents as they kissed at the white tablecloth of painted purple finches.

"Now," he stopped, "can I go to work?" John held her. She took her hand off his back, feeling the leather strap of his .45.

"Come home early," she studied her chipped nails, "I got something for you."

"Yeah," he rubbed her shoulders, "right..."

"Don't have me come after you."

"Okay, Miss Green Eyes," he put his hands up, "the bad guys wouldn't want that"

"John," she pulled his finger, "go in late."

"Oh," her big dance eyes got him, "now you nice to me." He smiled, kissed her and left as the school bus horn broke them apart.