

## CHAPTER 9

### THE BUREAU

THE FBI COMMAND CENTER was set up in a vacant warehouse in an industrial park near the Lexington Airport. Agents arrived early in a swarm of no-frills black sedans and they worked late so they could pad their overtime hours and expense reports. Out of view of the public, agents peeled off their dark suit jackets for that working-my-ass-off look, validated by conservative ties loosely knotted and pistols in shoulder harnesses. The partition walls around them were decorated with mug shots, girlie centerfolds, and March Madness brackets.

Anyone could see that Agent Bogart was in charge. His rolled-up sleeves exposed hairy forearms, so vital for advancement in the Bureau. He alone had whiteboard marker privileges, and his penmanship was first-rate. His gun was bigger than the guns of other agents. He didn't have to say *sir* to anyone in the center, and only he could utter expletives beginning with the letter *F*. Agent Bogart was one tough cookie.

Agent Bogart had been promoted after suggesting that the Bureau use a single world-wide time benchmark -- Newfoundland Standard Time, which was Greenwich Mean Time minus three-and-one-half hours. Agent Bogart's suggestion never got traction, but his ornate writing style and heavy use of words like *utilize* were enough to get the job done. He was a smart cookie, too.

He was also good at saying, *Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full*. At last, he was commander of his little chunk of the FBI universe, and he could say anything he wanted to say. He copied the style of his cinematic namesake as he briefed his team of gallant agents.

"This is dirty stuff. Dirty, I tell you. Kentucky Barber College? Never heard of them." He pointed his finger at his favorite agent. "You ever heard of 'em?"

"Never heard of 'em," the agent said.

"I never heard of Brut University," said his least favorite agent, a Brown graduate who knew about only Ivy schools -- Dartmouth, Cornell, Penn, Columbia, Princeton, Yale, Brown, and . . . oh, yeah, Harvard.

"There's a lot of crap you never heard of," Agent Bogart said. Pressures to shut down illegal gambling during March Madness made him grumpy. "Millions of dollars is corrupting the tournament, see? We're going to bust it wide open, wide open, I tell you." He gestured toward a tournament bracket taped to the whiteboard. "Turn in your money and your brackets by seventeen hundred." Probably local Eastern Standard Time, not Newfoundland Standard or Greenwich Mean Time. Agent Bogart had won the tournament pool two years running. March Madness was his favorite time of year.