



Chapter 2

Schaffer O’Grady’s phone rang, threatening to pull him from his coma-like sleep.

From deep within the fog of his dream, he could see a faceless man telling him to answer the phone. “Not tonight!” Schaffer answered from within the dream. “Go away!” His mind rushed to the surface of consciousness. The evil beast continued to ring. Reluctantly, he opened one eye above the surface of his precious slumber. The clock blared back in bright red neon, like the eyes of a hungry dragon: 2:15.

At the sixth ring, he knew he would have to answer the phone or the ringing would never stop. He reached for it. “Schaffer O’Grady,” he whispered, exhausted, trying to sound put off by the intrusion. On the other end, Schaffer could only hear heavy, panicked breathing. He started to hang up, but heard a grunt forming in the caller’s voice. Schaffer sat up, wiped the sleep from his eyes, and turned on the lamp. Was this a family member? A friend? One of the prostitutes he’d befriended during the weeks of his investigation? Still too groggy to make out words, whoever it was sounded in trouble. Adrenaline pumped through Schaffer’s veins, and suddenly he felt revived. Automatically he grabbed a pen and pad from his bedside table, covered with notes and scraps of paper he’d been scribbling and reading before falling asleep.

“This is Schaffer O’Grady,” he repeated. “Are you in some type of trouble?”

“Yes,” the caller’s voice squeaked, one syllable of fear.

It was a male voice, almost inaudible, indistinguishable to Schaffer. He looked at the caller ID, and peered at what should have been the number. It read ‘PAY PHONE’, no number. He toggled the key on his caller ID box to get more info, but only a series of dashes ran across the window.

“I’m not sure that I’m doing the right thing,” the voice trembled.

Schaffer readied his pen. He knew he had to keep the voice talking, get the name of the caller, the reason for the call. “Tell me what it is and



maybe I can help you.” He felt his breathing quicken as he anticipated the caller’s response. Blood rushed through his ears, the rhythm marking time that seemed like hours passing. Impatient, Schaffer shouted, “Come on, man, give me something! You called me!”

“This is... Harold Cosby. We met during the president’s campaign.”

“Chief of Staff Cosby?” Schaffer clarified. He could hear what he thought was the metal coil of the payphone cord grating against the metal shelf of the phone booth. Why was Harold Cosby calling him at 2:15 in the morning?

“I have information about four Americans being held in Cuba that the people of the United States need to know about,” Cosby said, breathlessly. “If I don’t do something, we could start a war. You were the only person that I could think of that I can trust. You proved that during the election.”

“Why are they being held?” Schaffer nearly shouted. He rose from his bed, cradling the portable phone, pen and paper in hand. He moved toward his dressing room.

“Ian must have found out about it. I’m afraid the president will agree with Ian. Secretary of State Ian Mackenzie, that is... We’ll invade Cuba needlessly.”

“Invade Cuba?” Schaffer stopped in his tracks.

“We already have a SEAL team ready to go in to get them,” Cosby explained. “Xavier Benders, also called Ciefuentes, is leading the team. They could be into Cuba as early as tomorrow. People are going to die because we want what they have. What makes this even more deplorable is the Cubans aren’t even aware of it.”

Schaffer’s mind reeled. “Is Castro holding these men because he knows of the invasion?”

“I told you they don’t have a clue about anything,” Cosby shouted, the fear in his voice transforming to impatience. “Innocent lives will be lost, don’t you understand?”

“I do,” Shaffer said coolly. “I understand.”

“I’m sorry. The innocent lives that will be lost is where we need to focus. We’ve got to stop Ian Mackenzie before a lot of innocent Cubans are killed!” Cosby grunted.

Schaffer calculated. “Beginning a war over four CIA agents won’t help our standing with the rest of the world.” He felt his eyebrows rise thinking over this. “I guess we’ve started wars with less solid reasoning.”

“Look, we can’t talk about it on the phone, it’s too dangerous.” He sounded faint now, as if he were about to hyperventilate. After several



sharp gasps of air, he continued. “Meet me at the Lincoln Memorial in one hour. I’ll fill you in at that time. Don’t be late. I can’t wait.” The line went dead.

Schaffer tossed the phone back to the bed. He looked at his clothes, all evenly spaced, and arranged by color. His shoes were on shelves, and each pair contained shoetrees to keep them fresh. An old girlfriend once said he could dress in the dark. He slipped on a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt before leaving the dressing room.