

Office of Scientific Operations

With the conclusion of the traumatic events in 1933 surrounding the shocking affair involving the city of New York and a beast commonly referred to as “King Kong” the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, established the Office of Scientific Operations (OSO). The purpose of the OSO was to monitor, evaluate the level of risk and assist in any manner the mitigation of danger of any and all scientific operations and anomalies. With the rapid pace of scientific discovery this office was given the highest priority and clearance to investigate any potential threats or consequences to the interests of the United States of America.

From the case files of the
Office of Scientific Operations:

Public Release #4

Declassified File

File #163

1954

*Commonly referred to by the public as
"The DC Creeper"*

1954...

The Autumn evening grew rapidly dark as a cold northern wind blew heavy clouds across the sky over Washington DC. Streetlights were just coming on and the streets seemed largely abandoned.

The young man had reddish blonde hair and a tall lean figure. He emerged from the bar having just finished a quick meal and a few drinks before heading back to his apartment. He pulled the collar of his coat up to ward off some of the cold wind.

Greg Ballantine glanced up and down the street. He continued to carry an odd feeling that he was being followed, but he had no idea where the feeling derived from or any reason why someone would be following him. He tried to shrug off the feeling and told himself it was silly. Ever since a series of letters had arrived at the office of his boss, the Congressman, some of the staff had been somewhat on edge.

The Congressman received many letters on a regular basis. Some of them from genuine crackpots, but these letters were different. They were clearly meant to be threatening in nature, but they were so heavily laced with references to myth and history that it was difficult to completely dismiss as just another disgruntled constituent.

Ballantine started walking west. His apartment wasn't far. Two blocks west and then another two blocks north. He moved rapidly along the sidewalk trying to reach the point in which he could turn north and no longer walk straight into the wind.

He reached the corner and turned. This street featured two story brownstone houses on both sides. The houses across the street provided a little break from the wind. Even so the wind was finding its way through Ballantine's coat.

Some of the windows of the brownstone houses were lit and the streetlights gave occasional pools of light in the quickly descending darkness. Despite the sound of the wind rustling the turning leaves of the trees lining the street a sound caught Ballantine's attention.

He stopped and turned towards the sound. It came from an alley between a couple of houses. Typically the alleys led to gravel parking areas at the back of the houses. He listened. The sound repeated, but he was still having trouble identifying it. Something in the nature of the sound, though, seemed to call to him. Like the whimper of a child or injured animal.

Ballantine hesitated. It was dark in the alley and, he admitted to himself, he wasn't exactly the bravest person. While he decided against walking into the alley he did take a couple of steps closer, but still in the circle of light from a nearby streetlight.

"Is someone there?" Ballantine asked.

Ballantine waited but heard no reply. He was about to turn and start walking again when he noticed a dark shape move in the shadows. A part of him wanted to turn and run, but instead he just stood frozen watching a figure hover right at the edge of the light.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Ballantine called out.

Ballantine didn't like this and he turned with the intent to hustle away from the alley. A blur of a tall dark figure moved out of the alley at surprising speed. A large hand grabbed Ballantine by the back of his coat and with one powerful yank pulled him back into the dark of the alley.

Shock seemed to engulf Ballantine. Something in his head wanted to fight back, but his movements were weak and feeble and he seemed to be crippled by his inability to believe this was actually happening to him. His elbows jabbed backwards and his legs pushed in an uncoordinated manner, but

the grip on him was very strong. Fear surged through him as a large hand and thick fingers were suddenly wrapping around his throat.

Ballantine began flailing about now, but it was far too late. He was struggling to breathe and blood was no longer reaching his brain. His mind could only seem to focus on the splash of light from the streetlight which a moment ago he had been in, but now seemed to be miles away. He watched the light wishing himself there as all the light in the world slowly slipped away from him.

Ballantine's body dropped to the ground. A lifeless pile. A large cloaked figure leaned over the body. It seemed to study the body closely for a moment before sliding an envelope from somewhere under the cloak and into a pocket of Ballantine's coat.

A moment later the alley was empty with the exception of the body of Greg Ballantine and a cold wind that blew over it.

Jonathon Wyatt sat in the armchair in the living room looking around. This place sure seemed much larger not long ago. It was only a short few months before that he was living here by himself. That was before his "vacation" to the South Pacific where he became involved in investigating the appearance of pteranodons in Indonesia.

Wyatt worked for the Office of Scientific Operations (OSO), a government organization created in 1933 by President Roosevelt to monitor potential threats to the United States from the misuse of science. In practice, the work of the OSO went well beyond just monitoring trouble. Typically, the agents of the OSO found themselves right in the middle of the action.

Wyatt sat back in the chair. He pushed back light brown hair from his forehead. He was lean, medium build and height and in his late twenties. He thought about his attempt at a vacation in the South Pacific. His boss, Marcus Edwards, the Director of the OSO, had redirected him from relaxation and leisure to look into a problem the Indonesian government was having. Pteranodons were terrorizing the local population on one of the many islands that comprised Eastern Indonesia.

More than just the appearance of pteranodons, what made this particular situation of special interest to the OSO was the proximity of that island to another island. An island that, under international law was forbidden for anyone to visit unless they received special permission from the United Nations and the United States government.

The island in question had once been used by an individual by the name of Dr. Zeitner for radical and dangerous experiments that led to several global disasters. Zeitner's experiments in the 1930s with genetic experimentation (a term only recently understood by modern science) created some very dangerous creatures. While it wasn't the first time this island had spawned something terrible—Dr. Moreau's prior work had been well documented—this iteration of monstrosities, though, were transported off the island and, in part because of their size, were far more deadly.

It was during Wyatt's time in Indonesia investigating the pteranodons—and the unpleasant surprise discovery of terror birds—that Wyatt had met Wanda. She was a college student trying to document in film the investigation by the Indonesian government into the pteranodon threat. After the harrowing adventure trying to not get eaten by pteranodons or terror birds, Wanda had decided to accompany Wyatt back to Washington D.C.

So Wyatt's cozy little bachelor townhouse became their shared residence. It wasn't long after their arrival in Washington that Copi showed up at their doorstep one dark and rainy night. They had met Copi, an aging man who had been the caretaker of an isolated hospital high in the mountains, on an island in Indonesia. Wyatt had taken a liking to Copi. He was a wise and reliable soul and cool under very stressful situations—like being chased by monsters. As a result, Wyatt had invited Copi to come visit them in the United States, never really believing the old man would actually make the trip.

Still, Wyatt was pleased to see Copi. Knowing that Wyatt's job inevitably required him to be away from home periods of time, it was comforting to him to know that Wanda would have Copi there to keep her company. And so, the solitary bachelor residence was now home to the three of them.

Wyatt glanced down at the newspaper sitting on his lap. He lifted it and began sifting through the stories. A creak on the wooden floor behind him told him Copi had just entered the room.

"Is there anything you need, sir?" Copi asked. "Coffee, perhaps?"

Wyatt shook his head. "No, Copi." Wyatt turned to look back at Copi. "You know, Copi, you're not a servant here. You don't have to wait on us."

Copi nodded slightly. "Yes, sir. It gives me purpose."

"And you do not need to call me sir." Wyatt said, still looking at Copi.

"Yes, sir. I know that." Copi agreed.

"Right." Wyatt said, shaking his head. He turned back to the newspaper.

"Still looking for your gilled man, sir?" Copi asked.

Wyatt nodded while still scanning the paper. "Gillman. Yes, I am. He's out there somewhere."

On his last OSO mission, Wyatt, along with his typical partner OSO agent Thomas Wayne, had been in Florida trying to stop a killing spree from an aquatic manlike creature that had been found in the Amazon jungle and foolishly brought into the United States. After several attempts to stop the creature Wyatt and Wayne had lost the monster somewhere along the St. John's river. The search for the creature continued with only an occasional unconfirmed sighting of it.

Wyatt continued to hope that the creature could be located and either captured or killed. He felt like it was a failure on the part of the OSO and in particular him, to not have stopped the beast. There had been little news of the creature. So many other threats and disasters these days were constantly grabbing people's attention and yesterday's monster was lost in the excitement of today's.

The door opened and Wanda walked in.

"I'm back." Wanda said. She shook the light rain of the day from her short black hair.

"Hey." Wyatt said, not looking up from the newspaper.

Wanda stood inside the door and stared at Wyatt for a moment. "Are you still hunting that thing?"

Wyatt lowered the paper just enough to look at Wanda. "He's still out there somewhere."

"I know." Wanda said and came into the living room and sat down. "Did you hear about the murder?"

Wyatt lowered the newspaper down to his lap. "What murder?"

"Greg Ballantine. He was found dead. This morning." Wanda said.

Wyatt stared at Wanda. He didn't say anything.

"He doesn't know who you are talking about." Copi said.

Wanda waved Copi's comment off. "I know what it means when he does the staring thing."

"Greg Ballantine was an aide to Congressman Dodd. You know, the guy I was going to do a story on."

Wanda said to Wyatt.

Wyatt nodded. "Right. OK."

"I knew him. Greg Ballantine. I talked to him a couple of times while trying to set up this interview with Congressman Dodd." Wanda said.

Wyatt nodded solemnly.

"You want to get back to looking for your gill monster." Wanda said.

Wyatt hesitated. "Yes...but it sounds like you want to talk about the murder."

"Yes, I do. There was something strange about it." Wanda said.

Wyatt's interest rose slightly. "Strange? Like what?"

"They say his throat was crushed." Wanda said.

"Crushed? That's not a good way to die. How was that done?" Wyatt asked.

Wanda shook her head. "They don't know." Wanda's expression seemed to darken.

Wyatt watched her for a moment. "There's something else?"

Wanda sighed. "I don't know. Maybe I'm just being silly, but I had the feeling walking back here that someone was following me."

Copi slowly walked over to the window and pulled the thin curtains aside and looked out at the street.

"Did you see someone following you?" Wyatt asked.

Wanda shook her head. "No. Not really anyway. It...I don't know. It sounds strange, but it seemed more like a shadow was behind me somewhere."

"Why would someone be following you? You hardly know anyone here." Wyatt said.

"I know. I don't know why anyone would be following me around." Wanda said.

Wyatt glanced over at Copi. He had turned away from the window and he shook his head.

"Perhaps, Miss Wanda, it was just your distress over the death of your friend." Copi said.

"Thank you, Copi, but I didn't really know Greg Ballantine very well and, well, after Indonesia..." Wanda said.

Copi nodded. "Yes, Miss Wanda, my apologies. I suppose, by comparison, this is quite pedestrian."

"Well, tomorrow I am going back over to Congressman Dodd's office and see if I can arrange for an interview." Wanda said.

"Perhaps, tomorrow Copi can accompany you to Dodd's office." Wyatt suggested.

"As a bodyguard?" Wanda asked.

"That would be wishful thinking on all of our parts." Copi said.

"I was thinking as another set of eyes. In the event someone is following you." Wyatt said.

Copi nodded. "Very good, sir. My eyes still work."

Wanda thought for a moment. "OK. I can see the logic of that. It's a plan."

"Did you hear that?" Johnson said turning slightly. He was a balding man of about 60 years. His watchman's uniform seemed slightly tight in all directions around his plump body.

"Hear what?" Denholm asked. He was in his later forties and a much leaner man than Johnson. As a contrast to his fellow night watchman, Denholm's uniform hung almost loosely on his frame. He also stood several inches taller than Johnson.

Johnson listened for another moment and then shrugged. "Nothing, I guess."

"How did you end up on this floor tonight?" Johnson asked.

"Henderson is sick." Denholm answered.

Johnson nodded. "Well, guess I'll see you back here in a bit."

"Right." Denholm said and, with a brief wave, turned and walked away.

Johnson watched Denholm slowly disappear into the dim light of the west wing of the museum. He turned and headed off in the direction of the east wing. It was likely to be another hour before their circuitous travels brought them back around to this post. The size of the Smithsonian always amazed him. Every year they seemed to find more space to build new exhibits.

The darkness of the night was quickly engulfing the halls of the museum. There were some night lights in the building, but they were spaced at lengthy intervals and often it was necessary for the night watchmen to employ their flashlights to avoid stumbling over a display. Damage to a display, accidental or otherwise, by any employee was seriously frowned upon.

Johnson turned on his flashlight and steadily strolled along history. Early American history, Colonial American history, the Civil War, the beginning of the twentieth century and the First World War. A sound stopped Johnson. It was a similar sound to what he thought he had heard earlier. It came from somewhere ahead, the Second World War section.

Waving his flashlight around he moved forward and into the various displays that conveyed the magnitude of World War II. The beam of light did not catch sight of anything, but something did seem out of place. It took Johnson another minute to recognize what was wrong. It was the section that depicted the horrors of the Nazi death camps. There were enlarged photos of the camps and posters relating the story of the persecution of the Jewish people in Germany and of the many other ethnic groups that felt the evil of the Nazi regime.

The first thing Johnson noticed was debris scattered all around the floor. He walked over to it and recognized it as torn paper and some broken wooden frames. He lifted his flashlight up and scanned around looking for where the debris had come from. The walls. Where the death camps had been on display. They were blank. The story of the Nazi's crimes against humanity were now just a shattered and shredded pile on the floor.

A faint rustle brought Johnson's flashlight and gaze back around towards the center of the room.

There were several mannequins near the center of the room depicting soldiers in a variety of poses. Slowly Johnson walked towards the mannequins. As he drew closer he once again had the feeling something was out of place.

As he moved the flashlight around the figures he realized, a moment too late, that one of the figures was taller than the rest and oddly covered by a large hooded cloak. A hand shot out and grabbed Johnson by the throat. The hand was large and surrounded his neck. The arm was powerful as well. It lifted Johnson up a few inches off the floor. It happened so fast Johnson did not have time to call out. The only sound was his flashlight thumping down to the floor.

Denholm had shrugged off the first time that Johnson hadn't shown up at their normal rendezvous. When Johnson failed to make a second appearance at the typical meeting point he felt it justified him leaving his respective territory to look for him.

It took a little while for Denholm to make his way into the Second World War section. The longer his calls to Johnson went unanswered the more concerned he was. Denholm didn't even notice the destroyed pictures of the Nazi death camps. His gaze was drawn to a couple of the soldier mannequins that were toppled over. He walked up and stared at them.

Denholm lifted his flashlight up and froze. Beyond the soldier mannequins was a glass case with a scene of one of the beaches in Normandy on D-Day. Laid out on the top of the glass case was the body of Johnson, clearly dead. His open, lifeless eyes was all the confirmation Denholm needed.

The flashlight shook in Denholm's hand making an odd light display around the body of Johnson.

Denholm knew he should be getting downstairs to the office and calling the police, but for a full minute he didn't move. Finally, having been teetering off balance, another one of the mannequins fell over with a gentle thump.

Like a frightened animal, Denholm turned and ran out of the room.

"It's just up here." Wanda waved ahead of them. She glanced about. For some reason she could shake the feeling that they were being watched. It felt odd to feel on edge in the middle of the day. The day was windy and cloudy, but not particularly dark. Still, there was an uneasiness that clung to Wanda that she couldn't pin down.

"Very good, Miss Wanda." Copi said. He was taller than Wanda with thinning gray hair. They rounded a corner and came to the door of the building. Walking in the door they were immediately stopped by a large reception desk. A woman looked up from where she sat behind the desk.

"Yes?" The woman asked.

"Wanda Klemp. I am here to see Congressman Dodd." Wanda said.

"Do you have an appointment?" The woman asked looking back down at an open appointment book laid out on the desk.

"Uh, no. I...talked to...Greg Ballantine the other day. He...was going to arrange a meeting for me." Wanda said hesitantly.

The woman glanced up at Wanda and then back down at her book. "Well, I don't have an appointment on the schedule for you."

A man came up behind Wanda and patiently waited for a chance to say something to the receptionist. Copi eyed the man, but after a moment seemed to dismiss him.

"Please. It's very important I talk to Congressman Dodd. It's about a documentary I am working on concerning his role in the Nuremburg Trials." Wanda pleaded.

"You will need to call his office and make an appointment." The woman said.

"I've tried calling his office, but I can never get through to anyone there." Wanda said.

The woman looked up at Wanda. Her gaze was firm. "You will have to call the Congressman's office."

"Can't you set up an appointment for me?" Wanda asked.

The woman sighed. "I am not the Congressman's chief of staff. You must go through the office of the Congressman's chief of staff to make any appointments."

Wanda hesitated. She didn't know how she could make this happen. She had been trying for two weeks and, other than her talk with Greg Ballantine, she had been unable to talk to anyone in the Congressman's office that could arrange some time with the Congressman.

"A documentary?" A voice from behind Wanda asked.

Wanda turned around to see a man in his early thirties, jet black hair and a dark complexion. He smiled at Wanda.

"Yes. About his prominent role in the Nuremburg Trials and his ongoing support for the hunting down of Nazi war criminals." Wanda said.

"Perhaps I can help." The dark haired man said. "My name is Roger Whiting. I work in the Congressman's office."

Wanda's face lit up. "Seriously. You could get me an interview with the Congressman?"

"Well," Roger's expression was unsure, "I can try, but the Congressman is very busy. I can't promise anything."

"Oh, thank you. You have no idea how much this means to me." Wanda said.

"How about you tell me more details about what you are trying to do? If I am going to get the Congressman's attention I need to be able to explain to him what you are proposing." Roger said.

"Sure. Absolutely." Wanda said.

"Perhaps, we could meet later for a cup of coffee and discuss it?" Roger asked.

Wanda wasn't sure if Roger's motives were completely centered on helping her get an interview with Dodd, but at this point she wasn't concerned about that.

Copi cleared his throat conspicuously.

Roger glanced over at him. "Oh, uh, and your father can come along too if you want."

Wanda laughed. "Oh, yeah, old Dad here, he's quite big on chaperoning."

"OK. Well, there's a coffee shop just down on the corner." Roger vaguely pointed in a direction. "We can meet there, say about 7 o'clock?"

"That would be great." Wanda said. "I will see you there."

Wanda and Copi walked out of building.

"Miss Wanda, I am not sure that young fellow is an entirely upstanding individual." Copi said.

"Thanks, Dad, but I already figured that out. I just need him to get me a meeting with Congressman Dodd." Wanda said with a smile.

"Very good, Miss Wanda." Copi said.

They walked a couple of blocks and turned a corner towards the grassy Mall that stretched from the Capitol Building to the Washington Monument. As they crossed the street Wanda saw Wyatt and waved to him. Wyatt joined them at the edge of the Mall. Wanda told Wyatt about Roger Whiting.

"That sounds promising." Wyatt agreed.

A voice from somewhere behind them on the Mall could be heard and it drew their attention. Turning, all three of them saw a small crowd gathered around a tall man, made taller by standing on a crate. He was talking loudly and with authority.

"...those are the people that are even now trying to subvert your government. They do not believe as you do, that all people are not the same. That some people are destined for leading humanity into a brighter and greater future while others would drag humanity down to its lowest, basest levels. I have witnessed this same thing before and by virtue of this I can now see the path this country is on. In these matters, I am a prophet. That is what people call me, The Prophet and I can foresee two possible futures for the people of this country." The man was bald and dressed in some kind of robe. His gestures were dramatic and his face wore a fierce expression.

Wyatt glanced over at Wanda. She stared at the man as if she couldn't quite pull her eyes away from him. Copi, on the other hand, wore an expression of disgust. Wyatt looked back the man who called himself The Prophet.

"One future leads to slavery. Your slavery. Slaves to lowest levels of humanity. The people who want everyone to be *equal*. You know what they mean by this? That the slobbering masses will rule this land. That everyone will share in everything. The lazy, the weak, the pathetic they claw at you for those things that you, by virtue of your hard work have earned for yourself. Is that what you want? This thing they call Communism is nothing more than the poor, the failures of society enslaving you to work for them. Is this what you want?" The Prophet extended his arms imploring the people for an answer.

"No!" Shouted many of the people.

"But there is another future. A bright future for the strong. One where those that work hard to rise above the rest are rewarded with the reins of this country. A future where the mindless masses are relegated to their rightful place. As a resource for the building of a great nation. Where the weak, those that cannot or will not fulfill their role are cleansed from this society. Where only the chosen people who were born to lead this world take their place at the top. This is your place. And you must be ready when the time comes to take what you deserve. Are you ready to take your proper place?"

The Prophet threw the question to the people.

There was some low key sounds of agreement from the crowd. Wyatt didn't think most of the people were quite following what The Prophet was saying to them, but Wyatt understood the direction of the man's words. There had been a worldwide war just a decade before against that kind of thinking. For a moment it seemed as though the man who called himself The Prophet stared straight at Wanda. It was difficult to interpret the man's expression.

"Let's get out of here." Wyatt said.

"OK." Wanda said. She seemed a little distracted. It took Wyatt a few minutes to realize that the words of The Prophet had brought on a dark and somber mood over her.

They had walked a short distance down along the end of the Mall and then left it behind. Wyatt noticed Copi look back over this shoulder twice.

"Something bothering you Copi?" Wyatt asked.

Copi shrugged slightly. "I do not know, sir. Just an odd feeling."

Wyatt nodded a little. "Like someone is back there?"

Copi nodded. "Yes sir."

Wyatt glanced back, but in the long shadows of the Fall afternoon he couldn't see anything suspicious. Wyatt had an idea.

"You two go on ahead to the apartment." Wyatt said stopping.

"Where are you going?" Wanda asked.

"Just want to check something out. Go ahead. I will be there shortly." Wyatt smiled at Wanda.

Wanda didn't move. She had a suspicion Wyatt was up to something, but she had no idea what it was.

Wyatt stepped over to Wanda and put a hand on her shoulder. "Go ahead. I'll be right there."

With a sigh, Wanda turned and with Copi headed off towards their apartment.

Wyatt turned and crossed the street. At the first alley between buildings Wyatt ducked into it. He quickly moved a short distance down it and dropped behind some trash cans and waited. He wasn't sure what he was waiting for, but he just wanted to see if anything odd made an appearance.

From his vantage point Wyatt could see anyone walking along either side of the street. He waited for five minutes and saw nothing. He was about to stand up and leave the alley when a cold creepy feeling came over him. He had felt that before and usually there was a monster attached to it.

Instinctively Wyatt turned around. The back of the alley turned to the left towards a side street. The light was very dim back there, but it seemed among the trash bins and piles of boxes from one of the businesses here there was the faintest of movements.

Moments passed and Wyatt was starting to doubt himself when it seemed as though one of the shadows back there moved. It disappeared around the corner of the alley. Wyatt leaped up and sprinted to the corner of the alley. He ducked around the corner. Nothing stirred the length of this section of alley. Wyatt could see out into the side street. Nothing moved.

Slowly Wyatt walked down the alley towards the side street. He glanced behind crates and trash dumpsters and into doorways as he went. He saw nothing. He had nearly reached the side street when a sound made him turn back around. There was nothing in the alley behind him, but, out of the corner of his eye, something moved higher up.

Looking up Wyatt thought he saw something, a blur of black, ducking through a window from the fire escape. He could not tell what it was he had seen. If it was the same person he thought had ducked down this alley then it was puzzling. The fire escape ladder was pulled up. The bottom of the fire escape was nearly ten feet up. Too far to jump and grab and there was nothing beneath it to climb on. He couldn't see how anyone could have made it up there from the alley.

Wyatt walked to the end of the alley and glanced out at the side street. There was a couple walking on the opposite side of the street, but no one else. He waited for another couple of minutes watching both the alley and the street, but no one else appeared.

Slowly, Wyatt walked back to his apartment. He kept a close eye in all directions on the way there, but saw nothing odd.

"There you are." Wanda said as Wyatt walked in. "What were you doing?"

Wyatt sighed. "Chasing ghosts."

"With or without gills?" Copi asked.

Wyatt shot a look at Copi. "I would assume without."

The clouds made the early evening darker than normal. The girl, Mary Ann, got up from the couch in the front room. She brushed the wrinkles out of her dress. There was no one else in the room to see the wrinkles, but she knew that when she walked back to the kitchen her mother would say something if the wrinkles were still there.

Mary Ann touched the hair band that held her black hair back, adjusting it slightly. She still held the book in her hand that she was reading for her English class. The book was boring, but the teacher had told them it was important. She had thought it was going to be a scary book, but so far it didn't seem like it. The book was called "Invisible Man", but Mary Ann thought this author, someone named Ralph Ellison, didn't know anything about mad scientists or even how to write a good science fiction story. She started to walk across the room, still carrying the book, when something outside caught her attention. She wasn't quite sure what had drawn her eyes out the window. It might have been some kind of motion just outside the pane of glass or a strange shape. She couldn't say, but something seemed like it was out there.

Mary Ann walked over to the front window. There were bushes just below the window and normally, when it wasn't so dark, most of the front lawn was visible. A car turned the corner just up the street and its headlights briefly swept across the yard. This time Mary Ann was sure that something, a shadow, appeared to be hovering out near the large maple tree that dominated the front lawn. Mary Ann walked quickly around to the front door and turned on the porch light. It only cast a dim light out across the front yard, but it was enough to see most of the lawn with. She peered through the small window in the front door at the yard, but now nothing seemed to be there. Mary Ann hesitated for another minute and then turned the light off. She slowly turned and walked straight back down the hall that ran through the middle of their house towards the kitchen at the back. Standing in the doorway to the kitchen Mary Ann watched her mothering washing dishes in the kitchen sink.

"I think I saw someone outside." Mary Ann said.

"Huh?" Her mother responded only half turning.

"I thought I saw someone outside. In the front yard." Mary Ann said.

"Outside? The front yard?" Her mother answered absently as she stared closer at an especially dirty plate.

"Yes. I think there was someone out there." Mary Ann said a little more firmly.

"Out in the yard? Its chilly out. No one would be out tonight." Her mother said clattering several plates together in the dish drainer.

Mary Ann stood there for a moment longer and then turned away. She walked part of the way back up the hall and then turned and went up the stairs. At the top of the stairs she almost went to the right towards her bedroom, but then decided to go left towards her father's home office.

The door to the office was partly open and light streamed out into the upstairs hallway. Mary Ann pushed the door open wider and walked in. Her father, Robert Weiz, a professor of Anthropology at the university, looked up from his desk.

"Hey, Mary, how is your homework coming along?" Weiz asked.

"Fine." Mary Ann answered. "Dad, I think I saw someone in the front yard."

"In our yard?" Weiz asked.

"Yeah, just outside the window at first, then further out." Mary Ann said.

"Oh, it was probably someone just passing by." Weiz said dismissing it with a wave of his hand.

"Not by the window." Mary Ann said.

"By the window? Right, you said that." Weiz noticed that Mary Ann seemed a little uneasy. He got up from the desk and came around to her. "I don't think on a cold night like this anyone would be wandering around the yard. I'm sure it's nothing."

"I..." Mary Ann started. Before she could say anything more there was the loud crashing of glass from somewhere downstairs.

Weiz quickly moved to the top of the stairs and down. Mary Ann was right behind him. Upon reaching the first floor both Mary Ann and her father stopped. There was an odd flickering light coming from the front room.

Weiz took two quick steps to reach the edge of the front room and stopped. Fire blazed across the floor. Clearly some kind of crude fire bomb had been thrown through a window. For several seconds both Weiz and Mary Ann stood mesmerized by the shock of the scene. Another crash came from dining room behind them.

Whirling around they saw a second burst of flame as gas and fire shot across the dining room table and into the hutch against the wall. In moments the dining room was becoming an inferno. A crash and a scream came from the kitchen.

Weiz turned and ran to the kitchen. Mary Ann was a step behind him. Fire was spreading across the kitchen. Mary Ann's mother was screaming as flames ran up her arm. Weiz grabbed a dish towel and began smothering the fire on his wife's arm.

"Get out!" Weiz yelled back to Mary Ann.

Mary Ann stood frozen. Weiz pulled his wife past flames crawling up a wall of the kitchen. He pushed both his wife and Mary Ann out through the back door. All three of them stumbled down the two steps outside the back door and into the drive way to the right of the house. They watched in horror as fire was quickly consuming their house.

Mary Ann stood in shock watching the house. Slowly, for some reason, she pulled her eyes away from the house and towards the street. It took her a moment for her eyes to focus. Then she saw it. A distant streetlight outlined a large dark figure standing by a tree at the front of their yard.

Mary Ann grabbed her father's arm and pulled. She turned back to the street and pointed, but there was nothing there now. Her father wasn't looking anyway. He couldn't pull his eyes away from the house.

"My work..." Weiz said quietly.

Watching the flames completely engulfing their house Mary Ann realized that everything she owned was in that house. Everything that defined who she was, her clothes, her records, her picture albums, everything was gone.

Sirens could be heard in the distance. They would be too late to save anything.

Mary Ann looked down at her clothes. It was all she had left. These clothes and...she lifted her hand. These clothes and this book. She stared at the cover for just a moment. Now I'm invisible too, she thought.

Darkness was enveloping the city when Wanda and Wyatt were making their way towards the coffee shop to meet Roger. Wyatt glanced around watching for anything unusual, but saw nothing. The twilight made every shadow look suspicious. Most people, Wyatt thought, considered the dark of the night to be unnerving, but he had always been little more edgy in the gray twilight of dusk. One could still see, but everything was fuzzy and indistinct. It was easier to "see" things that weren't there in the twilight than darkness.

They had turned the corner and were about a half a block away from the coffee shop when they heard a scream from somewhere ahead. With a quick look at each other Wanda and Wyatt ran towards the sound. Before they reached the coffee shop they stopped at the entrance to an alley. Several people now stood on the sidewalk staring into the alley. A woman was frantically pointing at something. Wyatt eased past an older couple and saw the prone body of somehow a short distance down the alley. Wyatt went to the body and Wanda appeared next to him.

"Oh my God. That's Roger Whiting." Wanda said.

Wyatt, squatting next to the body, glanced up at Wanda. "The guy you were meeting?"

Wanda nodded. "Yeah."

Wyatt noted that the guy's throat looked crushed. Instinctively he looked down into the alley. The light in the alley was dim, but he thought he saw a dark shape move.

"Stay here." Wyatt told Wanda and, pulling out his gun, he moved quickly down the alley towards the shape. As fast as Wyatt moved the shadowy form move equally fast away from him deeper into the alley. A moment later the shadow disappeared. Wyatt kept going until he reached the spot where he last saw what he felt like was a large human figure. When he reached the spot he realized there was a side alley that was perpendicular to the alley he was in.

There was a scraping sound from somewhere down the side alley. The only light down the side alley came from a dirty window at the back of a building. It cast only the faintest light, but Wyatt could still make out some kind of movement down there. As he moved down the side alley the dark figure disappeared again.

Again Wyatt had nearly reached the spot where the figure had disappeared. He had been looking at any doors or windows that the figure might have ducked into when, at the last moment, he glanced down and stopped suddenly.

At his feet was an open manhole. The cover had been slid aside. Wyatt looked down the hole, but it was just blackness. He could see or hear nothing. He hesitated. He was sure the assailant had ducked down there, but without a flashlight pursuit would be nearly impossible. Reluctantly he walked back to the entrance to the main alley where the body lay.

As Wyatt approached the end of the alley he could see the red lights of police cars. He saw a couple of police officers keeping people back from the body, but he did not see Wanda. He stood for a moment trying to spot her in the small gathering of people now surrounding the entrance to the alley.

"Wanda." Wyatt called out.

One of the police officers keeping the crowd back looked back over his shoulder at Wyatt. He looked surprised.

"Hey! You can't be back there." The officer called out. He waved vigorously at Wyatt to get out of the alley.

Wyatt scanned the crowd one more time and slowly walked over to officer. He slid out his ID and held it up for the police officer to see.

The officer only glanced at it. It was obvious he had no idea what Wyatt was showing him. "You need to be out here." The officer said waving towards the rest of the people.

Wyatt shrugged. It didn't matter. He was only concerned about finding Wanda anyway. He stepped past the officer and into the group of gawking people.

"Wanda." Wyatt called again.

"Here." A voice called back.

Wyatt worked past a couple of people and spied Wanda being led towards a car by a man in a suit.

Wyatt moved over in front of the man.

"Hang on. Who are you?" Wyatt asked.

The man with sandy colored hair, a dark suit and a dark expression stared at Wyatt.

"Out of the way. This is a police matter." The man said.

Wyatt pulled out his ID again and held out to the man. The man gave the ID a quick study and then stared again at Wyatt.

"What the hell is that?" The man asked.

"My name is Jonathon Wyatt. I am with the OSO, the Office of Scientific Operations." Wyatt said.

The man continued to stare at Wyatt. "I have never heard of...whatever that is and you need to step aside and get out of my way or I'll have you arrested for obstructing a murder investigation."

Wyatt sighed. "I don't think you want to do that. And I strongly recommend that you call your superiors and find out what the OSO is. You know, before you get yourself in trouble."

The man stared at Wyatt for a moment. He appeared to be sizing up Wyatt. He did it like he was good at it.

"I am Detective Norman. This is a murder scene and I am investigating it. Unless you're the Precinct Captain's nephew or something you need to get the hell out of the way." Norman said, but he made no move to push past Wyatt.

Wyatt smiled. "I understand that. And I am not the Precinct Captain's nephew, but if you want to know who I am you can start by calling the Mayor and working your way up from there."

Norman studied Wyatt again. A long moment passed. Finally Norman turned and waved a police officer over.

"Watch these two." Norman ordered the officer. "They're not to go anywhere."

The officer nodded.

Norman held his hand out to Wyatt. It took Wyatt a moment to realize what he was wanting. Wyatt reached in and pulled out his ID again and handed it to Norman.

Norman walked over to a patrol car. He leaned inside and called on the radio. It took about ten minutes before Norman returned. He handed the ID back to Wyatt.

"I still don't know who the hell you are, but the Mayor says to give you any and all cooperation I can."

Norman clearly wasn't thrilled with that situation.

Wyatt nodded. "Thank you. What is it you need from Wanda?"

Norman glanced at Wanda. "I noticed her name on the list the officers collected of witnesses. Her name has come up in connection with another, related murder."

"Oh, Greg Ballantine." Wanda said.

Norman gave a quick nod. "That's the one. What's your connection with him?"

Wanda explained to Norman what she was working on and how she had come to meet both Ballantine and Whiting.

"An interesting coincidence that you happen to be connected to both of these murders." Norman mused.

"So does Congressman Dodd." Wyatt said.

Norman scowled at Wyatt. "We do not suspect the Congressman in this matter."

"No, but you're looking for connections between the murders." Wyatt said.

"I am well aware of that connection." Norman said. "So, is this OSO of yours investigating these murders as well?"

Wyatt shook his head. "No. Not specifically." Wyatt hesitated. "The OSO is however interested in this case," Wyatt was making this up and hoping he could talk to Marcus about it before he heard about it through some other source, "and we will assist you in any way we can in your investigation."

"That's...comforting." Norman said. His tone suggested it really wasn't.

"Do you need anything more from Wanda?" Wyatt asked.

Norman glanced at Wanda and back to Wyatt. "No. We're done."

"Please. It's very important that I speak to the Congressman." Wanda pleaded.

The receptionist hardly glanced up at her. "I have already told you, the Congressman is far too busy right now."

Wanda sighed.

Wyatt stepped up next to Wanda. "May I use your phone?"

The receptionist gave Wyatt a withering look. This phone is not for use by the general public."

Wyatt smiled at the woman and held out his ID. "Well, that's good to hear, but I am not the general public."

The woman looked at the ID. She glanced up at Wyatt and then back at the ID. "What is that supposed to be?"

"The Office of Scientific Operations. It's a government agency." Wyatt said.

"Which government?" The woman asked.

Wyatt's smile continued. "It's just a quick phone call. I would hate for you to get in trouble from a government agency you've never even heard of."

The receptionist hesitated. She waved at the phone. "A brief phone call."

"Thank you." Wyatt said. He picked up the phone, lifting up to the higher front level of the desk and quickly dialed a number. He turned away from the receptionist and talked quietly. After a couple of minutes he hung up and handed the phone back to the receptionist.

Wyatt stood idly looking about the reception area. Wanda watched Wyatt. She was unsure what he was doing. The receptionist looked up after a couple of minutes. She was surprised to see Wyatt and Wanda still standing in front of her desk.

"Is there something else?" The woman asked sarcastically.

Wyatt smiled at her. "Not yet."

The receptionist looked confused. She clearly didn't understand what he meant by that.

Another minute passed and the phone rang. There was a distinct ring to the call. The woman seemed a little puzzled at the particular ring. She answered it.

"Yes sir?" The receptionist's head flipped up to look at Wyatt. "Uh, yes sir. He's right here. Yes sir. Right away." She slowly set the phone back down.

The receptionist looked at Wyatt. "The Congressman will see you immediately."

Wyatt nodded. "Thank you."

"Um, so...what is this Office of Scientific...?" The receptionist asked.

"The Office of Scientific Operations." Wyatt said.

"It's the thing that stands between you and monsters." Wanda told the woman.

The woman looked at Wanda strangely and then at Wyatt.

Wyatt shrugged. "Yeah, I guess, it kind of is."

Slowly the woman stood up and turned slightly. "Take the furthest elevator. The sixth floor." She pointed towards the back of the reception area.

"Thank you." Wyatt said and both he and Wanda headed to the elevator.

"That always impresses me when you do that." Wanda said.

"Do what?" Wyatt asked.

"Make a phone call and everyone starts jumping." Wanda replied.

Wyatt shrugged again. "We're part of national security. It just goes with the job."

They got off the elevator and there was a woman waiting for them.

"I am Betty, the Congressman's personal secretary. The Congressman's office is this way." Betty said leading them down a hall, around a corner, through an outer office and then straight into Dodd's office.

Dodd wasn't a tall man and his stocky frame seemed to make him seem even smaller yet. He had bright white hair and a tired, but friendly face. He rose as they walked in.

"Good morning." Dodd reached out a hand shook both of their hands.

"Agent Jonathon Wyatt and this is Wanda Klemp. Thank you for seeing us." Wyatt said.

"Anything I can do for the OSO." Dodd said.

"You are familiar with our agency?" Wyatt asked.

"Of course. The work of the OSO is known to anyone that gets regular national security briefings." Dodd said.

"Right." Wyatt said.

"So, what can I do for the OSO?" Dodd asked.

Wyatt hesitated. "Well, actually, this is kind of twofold discussion."

Dodd waited for a moment before prompting Wyatt. "OK...and that would be?"

"I do have a couple of questions concerning the murders of your two aides." Wyatt said.

Dodd's face looked a little puzzled. "The OSO is investigating those murders? Is...there some kind of imminent threat to our national security behind the murders?"

Wyatt hesitated for just a moment again. "We're not sure. This is more of a suspicion on our part. Kind of preliminary work so that we can determine if it is something we should be concerned about."

"Really? I'm not sure I see how the murders could rise to that level." Dodd said.

"Well, it seems they are tied to you in some way. Someone seems to be either directly threatening you or trying to send some kind of signal to you." Wyatt said.

Dodd shrugged. "I understand that. The police have discussed that with me already. Truth is, I am just one of 435 representatives of the American people. I don't see why I would be singled out. I am no more or less important than any of the rest of my colleagues."

"You are too modest." Wanda said. "Your leadership in the work at the Nuremburg Trials is legendary. And your continued effort to bring the rest of the Nazi war criminals to justice is a noble crusade."

Dodd smiled at Wanda. "Thank you. You are very kind. Unfortunately, that hunt for escaped Nazis has suffered a bit of a set back."

"Oh, how so?" Wanda asked.

"My friend and associate in that work, Robert Weiz, has lost nearly all of our work in a recent fire. A work of arson I'm afraid." Dodd explained.

Wyatt thought for a moment. "I think I read about that. Someone fire bombed his house."

"Yes. Fortunately, he and his family were able to escape the fire." Dodd said.

"So...Weiz was working on hunting down war criminals with you?" Wyatt asked.

"Yes. That's correct." Dodd answered.

"And the two murdered aides, what was their primary role in working for you?" Wyatt asked.

"They were both research assistants. We employ a fair number of research assistants here to track down information we need concerning work on bills or any number of other projects we have going on at any given time." Dodd said.

"Would these two have ever done work on your hunt for Nazis? Or maybe assisted Weiz at all?" Wyatt asked.

Dodd thought for a moment. "Possibly. I don't directly assign them tasks. My chief of staff does that. Alan Brooks. You can ask him that. Is it relevant?"

Wyatt shrugged. "Not sure."

"You think they were murdered because of something to do with my work searching for escaped Nazis?" Dodd asked.

"Possibly." Wyatt answered.

"So, does the OSO think there is a larger Nazi conspiracy working here in DC?" Dodd asked.

"I'm not ready to jump to that conclusion at this point. We are just trying to sort out the possibilities. That's all." Wyatt said, trying to make it sound more official than he knew it was.

"Of course." Dodd said with a nod. "So, you said there were two reasons you were here."

Wyatt hesitated. He hoped he wasn't about to get himself into trouble. "Yes, well, my associate here, Miss Klemp, has been working on putting together a documentary on your work at Nuremburg and the continued hunt for escaped Nazis and was hoping she could schedule a little of your time to participate in it."

Dodd smiled. Wyatt felt very self conscious. He was sure Dodd could see right through the whole story of the OSO looking into the murders and somehow knew all about his relationship with Wanda. Wyatt shifted uncomfortably.

"Certainly." Dodd said. "I am always glad to keep our search for these war criminals and our goal of bringing them to justice in the spotlight. Just talk to Betty on your way out and we will set up a time."

"Thank you, Congressman Dodd. You have no idea how important this is to me." Wanda said.

Wyatt and Wanda walked out of the building and looked around. Copi appeared after a moment.

"Anything?" Wyatt asked.

Copi nodded casually. "Yes sir. Across the street. The small shop to the right. In the window."

Wyatt casually looked around while actually scanning the window of the shop Copi referred to.

"I believe that is our friend from the park. The tall loud one." Copi said.

Wyatt nodded slightly. "I believe you are correct."

"What? What are you talking about?" Wanda asked.

"It seems that the man who called himself The Prophet, the one giving a speech in the Mall the other day, is watching this building. At least, that's what it looks like." Wyatt explained.

"Oh, that guy? He was creepy." Wanda said.

"His words were even creepier." Wyatt commented. "Let's go."

The three of them turned and headed back towards their apartment. Wyatt knew he would have to go talk to the Director. He had promised to brief him on what was going and, in exchange, Marcus made a quick phone call to Congressman Dodd. What, exactly, Wyatt was going to tell the Director was another matter. Wyatt, himself, wasn't sure what he was involved in.

"Detective Norman. Always a pleasure." Evan Holland, the DC coroner said as Norman walked into the examination room.

Norman flashed an unfriendly smile at Holland. "We both know that's bullshit."

Holland gave a quick nod. "So, what is it now?"

Norman held out a file folder. "This report."

Holland stood next to the examination table. A body lay on the table covered by a sheet. He glanced at the file folder, but made no attempt to take it from Norman. "What report?"

"Your report. On the murdered aide to Congressman Dodd." Norman said.

"Which one?" Holland asked as he pulled back the sheet of the dead body. He had already finished his autopsy and didn't need the sheet pulled back. He just did when he wanted to encourage people to leave. A great many people were uncomfortable around dead bodies and often it cut short their time bothering Holland. He knew it wouldn't work on Norman, but he did it anyway.

"The one from last night." Norman said.

"What about it? Everything's there in the report." Holland said.

Norman pulled the report back and flipped it open. "It says that the assailant crushed the windpipe of the victim with a powerful upward thrust, presumably from behind."

"I know what I wrote." Holland said and turned to a side table pretending to look for something.

"The victim was 6 foot 3 inches tall. How tall would a man have to be to come up from behind another man over six feet tall and be able to pull upward on his throat with enough force to crush it? That doesn't make any sense." Norman said.

Holland shrugged. "It's your job to find the person that could do something like that. I'm just telling you what I see."

"Well, if I am to believe this shit, I am looking for a giant who must be at least seven feet tall." Norman said sarcastically.

Holland gave Norman a dismissive wave. "You can believe any shit you want. I'm just telling you what the marks on the neck indicated. Oh, and the assailant would have to be closer to seven and a half feet tall to do that. Assuming that the murderer attacked his victim from just behind him."

"What are you saying? That maybe the victim was hung and not just strangled. The witnesses couldn't see the actual assault, but it took place just few feet into an alley and lasted less than a minute. There was no noose or any time to get a man hung." Norman said.

Holland gave slight shrug. "The marks didn't really support the idea of the victim being hung anyway, but a seven and a half foot murderous giant seems a bit of a stretch too."

"Great so this is useless." Norman waved the folder at Holland.

Holland shrugged. "Make of it what you will."

Norman thought for a minute. "Did the first aide that was killed have the same markings?"

Holland shook his head. "That victim didn't have quite the same look. His windpipe was crushed, but it was clearly done by the murderers fingers. They were facing each other."

Norman turned to walk out and then stopped. He turned back around. "There were a couple of other murders. Two days ago, I think. Night watchmen at the museum."

"Yeah. What about it?" Holland asked.

"Anything similar about those murders to these?" Norman asked.

Holland shook his head. "Nothing I could see. Both of them had their necks broken. Not sure the cause. Didn't seem to be any blows to the head---like from a fall or anything to indicate what happened."

"Like I said," Norman said as he turned and walked out, "useless."

The weather had turned ugly. Heavy clouds had rolled into the Capitol. With the dark clouds came a misting rain and fog. There was chill in the air that hadn't been there before. It foretold of the coming winter.

Wyatt walked through the morning drizzle to the headquarters of the OSO. He walked into the OSO offices, which only consisted of about 5 rooms, and past the desk he would normally sit at when he was in the office. Corporal Ridley stuck his head out of the small communications room.

"Hey, Jonathon." Ridley said. Ridley's job was to monitor any of the non-telephone communications in and of the OSO.

"Hey." Wyatt said with a wave as he walked on through to the reception area outside of Marcus' office. Jennifer, Marcus' receptionist, looked up as he walked in.

"He's expecting you." Jennifer said waving him on to the inner door.

Wyatt walked into Marcus' office.

"Ah, good you're here." Marcus said waving to a chair. "Sit."

Wyatt sat down. "Is...there a new case?" He was stalling a bit while he considered what he would say about the business he had gotten himself involved in.

Marcus sat back in his chair. "No. No new case at the moment, but, of course, as always there are a number of things we are monitoring. We'll see what develops."

"OK." Wyatt said and waited. "Has there been any word on the Gillman?"

Marcus had been staring at the top of the desk in front of him. "Huh? The Gillman? Oh, that thing."

Marcus shook his head. "Not much. A few sightings. Some credible, but nothing definitive. Best guess at the moment suggests that if the creature is still alive it is somewhere in the vicinity of the Everglades."

"Hmm." Wyatt said, digesting that for a moment. A minute passed.

"So, Agent Wyatt, you seem to be moonlighting on us." Marcus said. There was a trace of a smile on his face.

Wyatt did not catch the small smile. "Uh, well, you see sir, I...know we probably shouldn't, you know..."

Marcus held a hand up. "Agent Wyatt, please stop or this conversation will take us most of the morning. As a general rule, it is true that the OSO tries to not get involved in conventional crimes. That is the province of the FBI---or local law enforcement. That being said, I acknowledge that, from time to time, our agents could be drawn into investigations, preferably ones that possess an element beyond the normal scope of law enforcement."

Wyatt gave a short nod. "Yes sir. This case has...some aspects to it that are somewhat out of the ordinary."

Marcus sat back. "Such as?"

"Well, the fact that it seems to be centered around a Congressman for one thing." Wyatt said.

Marcus shrugged slightly. "Perhaps, but that still falls into the realm of the FBI."

"And...there is something about the perpetrator in these murders. Something odd." Wyatt said.

"Like what?" Marcus asked.

"I have had a couple of glimpses of the killer and...well, he looks...abnormal." Wyatt was trying to bring into focus his memory of the individual he had seen.

"Abnormal in what way?" Marcus asked.

"He was as large as the Gillman was. Maybe seven feet tall. He was fast and obviously strong." Wyatt explained.

Marcus' eyes focused on Wyatt. "OK. I am growing interested in this individual."

"I am not certain at this point, but I have a feeling that we are seeing something more than just a crazed killer roaming the streets of DC." Wyatt said.

Marcus sat quietly for a moment. "I see the newspapers are referring to him as the DC Creeper."

Wyatt nodded. "They do like drama."

Marcus also nodded. "Yes. Do you think it is possible that this individual may be more than local law enforcement can handle?"

"Possibly. I believe it is possible that he is more dangerous than an ordinary human." Wyatt said.

Again Marcus was quiet for a moment. He cleared his throat. "OK. I will authorize you to continue pursuing this case. Keep me informed about your progress."

Wyatt stood up. "Yes sir."

Wyatt turned and walked to the door.

"Oh, Agent Wyatt." Marcus said as Wyatt was reaching for the doorknob.

Wyatt turned. "Yes sir?"

"Let's try to minimize the involvement of civilians if we can. Use local law enforcement resources, if you can." Marcus said.

"Uh, yes sir." Wyatt as he eased out the door trying not to look guilty.

"I'm pretty sure." Wanda said. She stood in the middle of the living room of the apartment and stared at the window.

"I am unclear where on the scales of certainty 'pretty sure' falls, Miss Wanda." Copi said looking at the window.

Wanda gave a quick disparaging look at Copi. "OK, I think I saw someone out there."

Copi walked to the window and looked around.

"Anything?" Wanda asked.

"Nothing but bushes." Copi said.

Copi turned his back to the window. He was about to say something when Wanda pointed at the window.

"There!" Wanda called out.

Copi turned around. His body language indicated he saw something as he leaned far to his left to see further along the front of the building.

"Did you see it that time?" Wanda asked.

"Perhaps. I believe I did see something. I am not sure what though." Copi answered.

"Well, at least you know I am not crazy." Wanda said.

"I never doubted your sanity, Miss Wanda." Copi continued to look out the window. "Mister Wyatt, that may be another matter altogether." Copi said quietly.

"I heard that." Wanda said.

Copi looked back at Wanda. They stared at each other for a moment.

"OK." Wanda finally said. "He is a little obsessed with that Gillman."

Copi nodded.

Wanda moved across the room to a desk against the wall. She opened a drawer and pulled out a .45. She checked to see it was loaded as Wyatt had shown her.

Copi looked dubiously at her from across the room. "Perhaps, Miss Wanda, I should take charge of that."

Wanda hesitated. She knew her aim wasn't very good. The gun was heavy and hard to keep steady. Wyatt had only taken her out once to practice with it.

Wanda stepped over to Copi and handed him the gun. Copi took the gun and immediately both Wanda and Copi froze. There was a sound from the front door. A clicking sound. They both stepped around a short wall to look at the door. The doorknob was wiggling. It was locked. They stared at the doorknob. It stopped wiggling. It got quiet.

Slowly, Copi and Wanda eased towards the front door. As they reached the door they looked at each other. There was an unspoken question about whether to open the door or not. A long moment passed and Wanda slowly reached for the doorknob.

There was a crash of glass from the living room. Both Wanda and Copi dashed back into the living room. The front window was broken in one section and an arm was reaching through the hole. The person outside the window was not visible. The curtain along the right side of the window hid the figure outside.

Wanda grabbed Copi's arm in alarm and it prompted Copi into action. He extended his arm and took aim with Wyatt's gun. The shot rang out and a hole in the wall appeared up and to the right of the window. Copi fired a second time and both a hole and a cloud of dust appeared in an armchair down and to the left of the invading arm.

Wanda looked at Copi. "Why do you have the gun instead me?"

"It has been some time since I used a gun, Miss Wanda." Copi said calmly.

"Give it to me." Wanda said taking the gun out of Copi's hand, but when she turned to fire at the intruder, the arm had disappeared.

Slowly Wanda walked towards the front window, watching carefully for any movement.

"Be careful, Miss Wanda." Copi said as he crept along behind her.

"If I see him I will put a hole in him." Wanda said staring intently all around the window and beyond it.

"It's...harder to hit things with that than it appears." Copi said knowingly. "If need be you can throw it at him."

Wanda glanced back at Copi. "It's a gun, not a rock."

There was a sound at the front door again. Someone was working the doorknob again. Wanda and Copi ducked back out towards the front door. They rounded the corner just as the door swung open and Wanda fired a shot, shattering the wood at the top left of the door frame.

Wyatt ducked down to one knee in the doorway. He stared wildly around the room. It took him a moment to focus on Wanda, Copi and the gun. His face darkened.

"What the hell?" Wyatt said.

"Oh...shit." Wanda said. "That could have been bad."

"It might have been better to throw it." Copi said.

Wanda shot a look at Copi and quickly went to Wyatt. "Someone was trying to break in."

Wyatt held up his key. "I wasn't breaking in. I have a key."

"No. Not you. Someone else. Just a few minutes ago." Wanda explained.

Wyatt took the gun from Wanda while she told him about the would-be intruder.

Wyatt glanced at the gun, the door frame and the Wanda. "Perhaps next time you should let Copi handle the gun."

"Really?" Wanda asked indignantly. "You should take look at the living room."

Wyatt glanced at Copi.

"It has been a while, sir, since I shot such a cumbersome gun as that." Copi said.

Wyatt looked at both of them for a moment. "Wait here." Wyatt turned and eased back out the door. He moved slowly and carefully around the building, but found nothing. He returned to the apartment. Wyatt followed Wanda and Copi into the living room. He inspected the damage to the window and glanced at the hole in the wall and the armchair.

Wyatt sighed. "Perhaps a little more practice is in order." He brushed some wood chips out of his hair.

"For all our sakes. And I think I need to be more proactive."

Wyatt walked along the street towards the Mall in front of the Capitol building. Dark clouds rolled past again today as a cold wind continued to blow through the city. He scanned the grassy area of the Mall until he spotted what he was looking for.

The Prophet was haranguing a crowd of people again. Wyatt didn't really tune into what he was saying at the moment. He knew that the Prophet was essentially building an argument for dividing the people into two groups. A ruling elite and everyone else. What constituted the elites was a cult of superiority created solely to control the masses. It was the same blueprint the Nazis had used.

Wyatt eased up next to a tree that only afforded a partial view of the Prophet. It suited Wyatt's purposes because it limited the Prophet's view of Wyatt as well. Wyatt leaned against the tree and waited. He had a suspicion that this so-called Prophet was somehow tied into the recent murders. At various intervals Wyatt glanced at the Prophet. He sized the man up. While it was true that the Prophet was a tall man, Wyatt did not think his physique fit not only Wyatt's own glimpses of the Creeper, but also the physical strength required to subdue and kill man in the manner described by the police.

Exactly what that pointed to, Wyatt couldn't say. Still, he felt like it was worth trying to learn more about this man that called himself a prophet.

It took a while before the Prophet's show drew to a close. The Prophet ended his speech and, with an odd wave that seemed almost more like a salute to the crowd, he began walking away in the opposite direction of where Wyatt was.

Wyatt moved casually away from the tree and deliberately kept mingling people between the Prophet and himself. When the people thinned out Wyatt had to keep his head down and walked as if oblivious to the world around him.

The Prophet crossed several streets. Wyatt wasn't sure if the Prophet was heading towards a specific destination or suspected he was being followed and was deliberately weaving his way down streets. Wyatt tried to be as discreet as possible, but if the Prophet knew Wyatt was following him there was little Wyatt could do at this point.

As the condition of the buildings grew more and more shabby, Wyatt increasingly had a feeling that he was, in fact, being purposely led somewhere by the Prophet. This section of the city was comprised mostly of older buildings used primarily for warehouses.

When the Prophet ducked down between two shabby buildings Wyatt slid his gun out. He was sure something was coming, but at the moment he didn't see anything except the Prophet seemingly disappear into the shadows of the alley. Wyatt eased slowly down the alley. Ahead the alley made a slight bend to the right and Wyatt slowed even more as he approached that point.

Suddenly the Prophet stepped out of a recessed doorway about fifteen feet ahead of Wyatt. Glancing behind him and on both sides Wyatt saw and heard nothing.

"I usually encourage a following, but I will make an exception in your case." The Prophet said with a slight smile.

"Just curious." Wyatt said.

"Curiosity can be a deadly thing." The Prophet said.

"It can be." Wyatt agreed.

Prophet stared more closely at Wyatt. "I have seen you before. Ah, yes, you were with that woman."

"And what woman would that be?" Wyatt asked.

"The one that is seems to be working with Dodd." The Prophet said.

Wyatt hesitated. That's why someone had tried to break into the apartment. Whatever was going on was centered around Dodd and Wanda was now viewed as being associated with Dodd.

"You have an issue with Congressman Dodd?" Wyatt asked.

"Let's just say that he has made some enemies." The Prophet said.

Wyatt thought for a moment. He remembered the Prophet's speeches in the Mall and they had a distinctly Fascist sound to them.

"Nazis." Wyatt said. "Thought the world was rid of you."

The Prophet laughed a little. "Hardly. The new Reich will rise again. We are far from defeated."

"Dodd is hunting your cohorts down one by one. That's why you are threatening him." Wyatt said.

"We are doing more than just threatening. I want him to know what's coming. His time will also come." The Prophet said.

Wyatt thought for a moment. His gun, which was out, but not pointed directly at the Prophet, now moved in the direction of the tall man in front of him. "Why would you tell me that?"

"Because it doesn't matter what you know." The Prophet said.

There was thump from behind Wyatt and before he could turn completely around to see what it was something slammed Wyatt towards a brick wall along the side of the alley. Wyatt hit the wall hard and his gun flew out of his hand, sliding a short distance away. Wyatt worked to get his breath back and regain his feet. He looked over and saw the one they called The Creeper.

Wyatt stared at The Creeper for a moment. The man was easily seven feet tall. His shoulders were broad and his hands were large and thick. The Creeper's head, mostly bald except for some stringy white hair, seemed bigger than it should have been. There was something odd about his facial features, too. They were not proportioned correctly for the head. He had small eyes that seemed to be only half open. A small nose and mouth accompanied the eyes. The Creeper appeared to be sneering, but Wyatt realized that the expression was apparently frozen on his face. The sneer exposed the wildly jagged and misshapen teeth.

The Creeper started towards Wyatt. Glancing around Wyatt spotted a piece of wood from a broken pallet. He grabbed the piece of wood and swung it at The Creeper as he drew near. With a casual swat The Creeper sent the wood club flying.

Wyatt ducked under The Creeper's first lunge and rolled across the alley. He glanced up at a fire escape ladder above him. The ladder wasn't down. A latch held it up above Wyatt's head. Wyatt thought about releasing the ladder and climbing up away from The Creeper, but knew he didn't have time for that. The Creeper was nearly on him again.

Wyatt tried to duck away from The Creeper's sweeping arms again. He knew that if The Creeper grabbed a hold of him it was likely he would not get free of his grasp and even more likely be killed. Wyatt ducked low and thought he was past The Creeper when he felt what seemed like a steel trap snap around his upper right arm. With a jerk that almost dislocated his shoulder Wyatt was yanked back in front of The Creeper. A second hand locked on to Wyatt's throat.

Wyatt tried to kick The Creeper. He did manage what he felt was a solid kick into the midsection of The Creeper, but there was no noticeable reaction. Wyatt's right arm was pinned against his side so he could only get his left hand on to The Creeper's hand around his throat. Wyatt couldn't breathe and the pressure on his windpipe felt like it would crush his throat very soon. Wyatt tried to pull The Creeper's hand away from his throat, but he could tell that was hopeless.

Slowly The Creeper lifted Wyatt up off his feet. Wyatt felt like he was being hung with The Creeper's hand as the noose. He was starting to see fuzzy gray sparkles floating around in front of his eyes. Through the haze Wyatt could see the fire escape above him. He vaguely remembered the general location of the fire escape latch and started kicking towards where he thought it should be.

A strange rasping sound came out of The Creeper. After a moment Wyatt realized it was hoarse sound of laughter. Apparently it was the closest sound The Creeper could make to convey his glee. A loud clang echoed in the alley and Wyatt felt a sharp pain in his leg. Through a fog Wyatt saw the fire escape ladder drop straight down on to the head of The Creeper. Suddenly Wyatt crashed down on to the cement. He choked in some air and instinctively dove away from The Creeper. Wyatt tried to stand up, but his legs were too wobbly. He glanced over at The Creeper. The big man had actually been knocked off his feet by the heavy steel fire escape ladder crashing down on to his left shoulder and collar. The Creeper was sitting on the pavement rubbing his shoulder. He looked over at Wyatt and let out rasping screech. Wyatt tried to struggle to his feet again, but only managed to stumble to his left a few feet further along the alley. He rolled as he fell trying to gain a little bit more distance and, as he rolled across the pavement, something jammed into his back. He stopped rolling and, glancing left, spotted his gun. With a grunting roar The Creeper jumped back to his feet and started moving in Wyatt's direction. Wyatt snatched his gun and fired two shots at The Creeper. The first shot clearly missed as it sent some pieces of the brick wall to the left of The Creeper scattering. The second shot found its mark as The Creeper flinched. It seemed to hit him in the upper left chest. Wyatt hesitated. He was waiting for The Creeper to drop, but he didn't. With an angry bark The Creeper reached back and grabbed a trash can. He sent the can flying at Wyatt. Wyatt rolled backwards a foot or two and the can bounced off the pavement where Wyatt had been and then over Wyatt's prone form. Wyatt brought his gun back around towards The Creeper, but he wasn't there. The Creeper had already bounded back down towards the entrance of the alley. Wyatt got up, took a couple of steps forward and aimed at the retreating Creeper. Oddly, The Creeper had stopped. A moment later Wyatt realized why. A manhole cover came flying back towards Wyatt. It flew fast and Wyatt had only an instant to lunge to his right, towards the side of the alley, to avoid being crushed by the heavy iron disk. A loud clanging accompanied the manhole cover as it smashed through more trash cans and some wood pallets. Wyatt got up on a knee and took aim, but there was nothing to aim at. The Creeper was gone. He had disappeared down in the sewers again. Wyatt spun around and looked for The Prophet, but he was nowhere to be seen. Wyatt stood up. He walked slowly towards the open manhole, keeping his gun ready, though he was sure The Creeper was gone. Wyatt rubbed his throat and then his shoulder. He knew that was close. He stood over the open manhole and stared down. He needed to take this more seriously or the next time he would be dead. "It's time to stop just following and start hunting." Wyatt said quietly.

"Jonathon thinks The Prophet guy is involved with The Creeper." Wanda said.

"Jonathon?" Norman asked as he stood just inside the front door.

"Agent Wyatt." Wanda said flatly.

"Oh, him. Who the hell is this Prophet guy?" Norman asked.

"The crazy guy that stands out in the Mall every day shouting at people." Wanda asked.

"Huh, that describes any of a dozen crackpots out there." Norman said.

"Tall bald man in a robe." Copi volunteered.

Norman thought for a moment. "Yeah, maybe. What's he got to do with the murders?"

"I'm not sure. Jon---Agent Wyatt thinks he is connected in some way to The Creeper." Wanda said.

Norman scanned around the apartment entry area. "Well, that's nice. More useless information. And you don't know where Agent Wyatt is?"

Wanda's face darkened. She shook her head. "No and he's been gone a while."

Norman's gaze stopped at the door frame behind him. "Doesn't have anything to do with bullet holes in wall?" Norman waved towards the shattered door frame.

"Uh, no. That was me." Wanda said.

"Redecorating?" Norman asked.

"No. That was The Creeper trying to get at us." Wanda said indignantly.

"Actually..." Copi started.

Wanda waved off Copi.

"Something I should know about?" Norman asked.

"No. The Creeper was here and tried to get in. And...we took a couple of shots at it." Wanda explained.

"Did you hit him?" Norman asked.

"No...I'm pretty sure we didn't." Wanda said avoiding Norman's gaze.

"Well, that's great. I have dead bodies appearing every day and no murder suspect except some shadowy figure that no one ever seems to get a good look at and nobody knows anything about."

Norman said disgustedly.

The door behind Norman opened and Wyatt walked in.

"You're OK." Wanda said, relieved.

Wyatt nodded quickly at her and avoided eye contact. "I'm fine." He didn't want to tell how close he came to being the latest victim of The Creeper.

"Ah, Agent Wyatt. I have some questions I would appreciate some answers to." Norman said.

"Actually, I was planning on calling you." Wyatt said.

"Really? Out of inter-agency courtesy?" Norman asked, with a clear hint of sarcasm.

"That and to see if you were interested in hunting down The Creeper." Wyatt said.

Norman hesitated. "You know where to find this guy?"

"Not exactly, but I have a good idea where we can start looking." Wyatt replied.

"And where would that be?" Norman asked.

"The sewer system." Wyatt answered.

Again Norman hesitated. "There are miles of sewers running under this city and most of them are perpetually half flooded. This place was built on a swamp. We would need an army to cover all of it."

"I think we can narrow it down to a much smaller area. Most all of the murders took place in a relatively compact area. I would guess there's good chance what we are looking for is somewhere in the general vicinity of the Mall." Wyatt said.

"So, you want to wade through all that shit in the sewers looking for this Creeper guy?" Norman sighed. "Well, it beats the hell out of doing nothing. I will see how many guys I can round up at the precinct."

Wyatt shook his head. "I don't think we want to go down there with a lot of guys. I think we would attract too much attention. I think our quarry would just disappear down some more distant part of the sewers and we would never find him."

Norman looked at Wyatt. "So how many guys do you want to take down there?"

"Two." Wyatt said pointing at Norman and himself.

"What?" Wanda asked. "Just the two of you roaming around in the dark sewer tunnels with The Creeper down there just waiting for you? That's crazy."

"It does have a certain foolhardiness to it, sir." Copi added.

"I'm not sure that we are going to be able to sneak up on this Creeper. Not down there anyway." Wyatt said looking at Norman.

"So...you want us to bait the thing to us? You think if it's just the two of us it won't run off and instead come after us?" Norman asked.

"Something like that." Wyatt said.

"That's even more stupid." Wanda said angrily.

"There is a certain logic to that." Copi commented.

Wanda turned to give Copi a withering stare.

"However, sir, Miss Wanda has a point as well. Perhaps I should accompany the two of you." Copi said.

Wyatt shook his head. "No. I want you to stay here with Wanda. Besides...after the living room shootout I am a little wary about...let's say stray bullets in a confined space."

"I assure you, sir, my aim will improve." Copi said.

"Perhaps, but I do not want Wanda left alone while I am gone." Wyatt said.

"Well, that plan sounds better than just waiting for the next body to show up." Norman said.

On the walk through the streets of the city Wyatt told Norman about his encounter with The Creeper and The Prophet earlier.

"So what makes you think this particular manhole is the place to start?" Norman asked.

"Because, this manhole is two blocks that way from where Whiting was killed next to the coffee shop and about four blocks that way from the Smithsonian and, if I remember correctly, about three blocks that way from the first murder." Wyatt had pointed in several different directions. "It suggests that this spot is at least in the general vicinity of where The Creeper keeps appearing."

Norma gave a half shrug. "Maybe. Or he could be hiding out a couple of miles from here and we won't find a damn thing."

"Quite the optimist." Wyatt said glancing sideways at Norman.

"Nope. Not if I can help it. Statistically, optimists get killed about three times as often as pessimists."

Norman said.

They ventured down an alley as darkness began settling over the city. After passing up a couple of manholes Wyatt stopped at one about halfway down the alley.

"This one." Wyatt said.

Norman glanced at the manhole cover and then back at the couple of manholes they had walked past.

"What makes this one special?"

Wyatt shrugged. "Instinct. Why? You like the looks of a different one?"

Norman waved at the manhole. "What the hell. A hole is a hole."

They wrestled the manhole cover off. Wyatt pulled out a flashlight Wanda had given him as he left the apartment. Norman pulled out a flashlight he had in his car. They checked the flashlights. For a moment they both looked at one another. Finally Norman waved at the hole.

"Knock yourself out, G-Man. This is your party."

With a nod Wyatt climbed down the iron rungs and into the sewer. Norman followed. There was a small ledge running along each side of the sewer. Down the center was steady flowing stream of water about five feet wide. It was difficult in the dim light from the flashlights to tell how deep the water was. Surprisingly the water did not smell of sewage, but it didn't smell nice either.

Wyatt swung his flashlight south and then to the north. Without a word he motioned with his flashlight to head South.

"Instinct again?" Norman asked.

"Yup." Wyatt answered.

They walked in single file for a short distance until Norman's foot slid off the ledge. He swore as his foot splashed into the water, but was relieved to find that the water wasn't more than about an inch deep. With that discovery Norman crossed over the other side of the stream.

"Hey." Norman said, his voice now lower and hushed.

"Yeah?" Wyatt responded in an equally hushed tone.

"If this Creeper guy is as big and fast as you say, you think a couple of handguns are going to be enough to stop him? I am thinking we should have brought a little more firepower." Norman said.

"I think this will be enough. I know he's got one bullet in him now so, for all we know, he might have bled enough by now that he is as weak as a kitten." Wyatt said.

"Big ass kitten." Norman said.

They came to an intersection. The tunnel they were in continued on while two other tunnels ran off east and west.

"Well?" Norman said.

Wyatt waved on forward. "Let's keep going on this way."

They crossed the intersection and moved on. A short distance down another tunnel veered off to the West again. They ignored the side tunnel and kept going. They were only a dozen steps away from the last intersection when they both stopped.

"Did you hear something?" Norman asked.

Wyatt nodded. "I thought I did."

They waited in silence for a few seconds and the sound came again. It sounded like a low moan from somewhere behind them. They turned and walked back to the last intersection. They stood for a moment and the sound came from somewhere up the side tunnel.

Norman looked at Wyatt. "Sounds like an invitation to me."

Wyatt shrugged. "Guess so."

They started up the side tunnel. Some distance up that tunnel a side tunnel on the right appeared. It led North. They hesitated at that intersection. After a moment again a low moaning sound came from the tunnel to the north. Norman turned started entering the side tunnel to the north. Wyatt didn't move.

"Hey." Wyatt said to get Norman's attention.

Norman stopped and turned back to Wyatt. "What?"

"I'm not sure about this." Wyatt said.

"You getting cold feet G-Man?" Norman asked.

Wyatt shook his head. "No. I mean following this sound. If we follow it that way we are heading back in the direction we came from."

Norman stepped back into the intersection. He glanced back and forth between the tunnels.

"Are you sure?" Norman asked.

Wyatt nodded. "Yes. Definitely."

The moaning sound came again. A little louder this time.

"Well, that sure sounds like someone to me." Norman said.

"I agree, but I think that we are supposed to follow it. I think it's a wild goose chase." Wyatt said.

"Still with the instinct?" Norman asked.

"Still instinct. Don't you ever follow you're instinct?" Wyatt asked.

Norman nodded. "Actually I do and to prove it I'm standing in a sewer with you."

"Let's go back to that main tunnel. I have a feeling someone doesn't us going further down that way." Wyatt said.

The moaning sound even closer now. Norman shined his flashlight down the side tunnel, but saw nothing. He glanced at Wyatt and nodded. They turned back and returned to the main tunnel. They started back down South in the main tunnel. After a few minutes they came to another four way intersection. Again, from the west, there was a sound. This time a scraping sound.

Wyatt and Norman looked at each other. Wyatt shook his head slightly. With a nod, Norman agreed. They continued on south. They passed another intersection, but this time no sounds called out to them.

A short distance further on there was an opening on the left side, the side Wyatt was on. It was smaller than the side tunnels they had been passing. Wyatt ducked his head into the opening and shined his flashlight. He ducked back out and waved Norman over.

"What is it?" Norman said glancing into the opening.

"Stairs. They lead up to a door." Wyatt said.

Norman shined a light in. "At this level it probably leads to the basement of some building."

"Probably." Wyatt said. "I think we should take a look."

"More instinct stuff?" Norman asked.

"Maybe, but primarily because these steps have been used recently." Wyatt shined his flashlight down on to the steps. "The center of these steps have all the slime of this place worn off them."

"Huh. Quite the detective." Norman said.

"It's useful in my line of work." Wyatt said.

"What is it you guys do again?" Norman asked.

"Hunt monsters." Wyatt said.

"That's an actual job?" Norman asked.

"It is." Wyatt said. "You know, like the one in New York last year. Or the one in Tokyo earlier this year."

"Really? How much detective work does it take to find a giant beast that's stomping the shit out of a city?" Norman asked.

Wyatt shrugged. "Generally we try to find them before they get to the stomping shit."

Norman shook his head. "No thank you. I'll stick to hunting down murderers. Your job sounds like it sucks."

Wyatt nodded slightly. "Yeah. We get that a lot."

Wyatt eased forward and slowly up the steps. Norman followed. At the top Wyatt tried the door knob. It was locked.

"I think we'll have to force it." Wyatt said.

Wyatt stepped to one side to allow Norman to step up next to him. Before they could position themselves to put their shoulders into the door it suddenly swung open. The door swung out forcing Wyatt and Norman back a step.

There, framed by light from inside the door, stood The Creeper. He was a couple of steps above them in the doorway and it made him seem even larger than he already was. He towered over them. With a grumbling growl The Creeper gave both Wyatt and Norman a shove which sent them tumbling back down the stairs. The steps were old cracked cement and it made for a bruising roll back to the bottom.

Wyatt lost his grip on his gun and skittered off somewhere behind him. He twisted around while he lay on the cement to see where the gun went, but couldn't spot it. He heard scuffling and turned back around. The Creeper had bounded down the steps and grabbed Norman's arms before he could bring his gun around and take a shot. Holding both of Norman's arms together in one hand and lifting him off the ground slightly, The Creeper plucked the gun out of Norman's hand.

Wyatt struggle to his feet and was about to hurl himself at The Creeper when a voice called out from behind him.

"Enough!"

Wyatt turned to see The Prophet standing at the opening from the main sewer tunnel. He was holding a gun and it was pointed at Wyatt.

"Up the stairs." The Prophet waved the gun towards the steps.

The Creeper dropped Norman who fell to one knee. Slowly Norman stood up and both he and Wyatt went up the steps. They walked into a large musty room cluttered with various pieces of equipment and furniture.

Wyatt scanned the equipment and recognized that some of it had a distinct medical quality to it. Like a crude surgical operating unit. There was also some equipment clearly designed for some kind of chemical work. Just inside the door was an extra large cot that was obviously built for The Creeper.

"Well, it seems like the Congressman's friends have finally found me." The Prophet said as he walked past them.

"The Congressman?" Norman asked. "Dodd?"

"Don't be coy. What agency are you from?" The Prophet asked.

"Agency? I'm not from---" Norman started.

"The OSO." Wyatt said.

The Prophet hesitated. "The...OSO?"

"The Office of Scientific Operations." Wyatt said.

The Prophet shook his head. "Never heard of it."

"Well, you are typically not on our radar either." Wyatt said.

"Not...on your..." The Prophet stared at Wyatt.

"You aren't stomping the shit out of a city." Norman explained.

The Prophet shook off what they were saying. "No matter. You are here and we must deal with what is before us."

"So you have some...personal vendetta against Congressman Dodd?" Wyatt asked.

"Personal vendetta? No. It is not personal. Your Congressman just has an annoying hobby." The Prophet said.

"Annoying hobby?" Wyatt stared at The Prophet.

"He and his friend, Weiz, the Jew." The Prophet said in disgust.

"Weiz? He's the guy whose house was burned down." Norman said.

"Don't know him." Wyatt said glancing at Norman.

"He's professor at the University. Some kind of Nazi hunter." Norman explained.

Wyatt looked back at The Prophet. "Ah, that would explain it. You're a Nazi sympathizer."

"Sympathizer? That hardly explains who I am, OSO guy. There was a time when I commanded an entire research facility in the Reich." The Prophet said proudly.

"Research? You mean torture." Wyatt said.

"Torture. For the sake of science there is no cost too high to achieve one's goals. If test subjects must suffer some for success, well, that is the price they must pay. Everyone must play their role in the grand plan." The Prophet said.

"I suspect your victims didn't voluntarily participate in your grand plan." Wyatt said.

The Prophet waved off Wyatt's comment. "Our work was worth every sacrifice. It was going to be the greatest weapon ever conceived by man."

"Well, clearly that didn't work out." Wyatt said.

The Prophet shrugged. "Not yet, but our work was not wasted." The Prophet looked over at The Creeper.

Wyatt followed The Prophet's gaze. "Him. That thing was what you were working on?"

"An army of them would have swept the battlefield. Bullets hardly affect him and his ability to heal is phenomenal." The Prophet was clearly impressed with his own work.

Wyatt stared at The Creeper. He could see where he had shot The Creeper in the shoulder, but the blood stain was dry and The Creeper seemed to show no ill effects from the wound.

"He's a freak." Norman said looking at The Creeper. "A murdering freak."

Wyatt studied The Creeper for a moment. "He's...not really fully mentally functional."

The Prophet shrugged. "It was a trade off. His enhanced physical capabilities came at a price. His mind is, well, something just above a simple beast, but that was a small price to pay. As long as he is capable of following orders he is still an effective weapon."

"He's a monster." Norman said.

"Did Dodd know you were here? In Washington?" Wyatt asked.

"Perhaps. I think he suspected who I was." The Prophet acknowledged.

"We should have dropped the bomb on you guys. It might have kept the rats from escaping the sinking ship." Norman said.

The Prophet dismissed Norman's words with a wave. "It is pointless to debate such things with people like you. The unenlightened. You waste my time." The Prophet pointed his gun at Wyatt. "It is time to end this."

Wyatt tried to think of plan of escape, but The Creeper was blocking the door they had come through and, while there was another door on the far side of the room, The Prophet stood between them and that door.

Before The Prophet could fire another gun went off and an assortment of glass containers above and to the left of The Prophet's head shattered. The Prophet ducked down and looked at the door that led down to the sewer.

Wyatt and Norman spun around to see Copi standing in the doorway. He held Wyatt's gun. The Prophet fire a shot at Copi. The Prophet's aim was much better and splintered wood in the door frame next to Copi's right shoulder. Copi ducked out the door.

The Prophet turned quickly and fired a shot at Wyatt, but Wyatt had already slid to his left behind a cabinet. The Creeper took a large stride in Wyatt's direction, but Norman grabbed an arm of The Creeper. Norman took a swing at The Creeper hitting him square in the jaw, but having little affect.

The Prophet stood up from behind the desk. He circled the desk and began edging towards the cabinet where Wyatt was hiding. Wyatt looked around for some kind of weapon, but nothing visibly within reach looked like it would be much of a match against a gun. The Prophet smiled he drew closer.

From somewhere to his right Wyatt heard someone whistle. As he glanced back towards the door down to the sewer he saw his gun come sailing through the air. While the gun was heading in his general direction it was obviously going to fall short of reaching him. It was going to land on the floor in the path of the Prophet.

Wyatt knew Copi was trying to throw the gun to him, but it was going to be up to Wyatt to figure out how he was going to retrieve it. With few choices, Wyatt crouched and leaped out from behind the cabinet. The move surprised The Prophet who fired off shot that ended up being too high and slightly behind Wyatt.

Wyatt landed on his side on the cold cement floor and slid just enough to reach the gun. He snatched up the gun and, turning, took a wild shot towards The Prophet. It missed, but with surprising speed The Prophet spun around and headed towards the door at the other end of the room. Wyatt wanted to take another shot and pursue The Prophet, but the sounds of Norman's fight against The Creeper didn't sound good.

Wyatt looked over to see that Norman, after having been beaten some by The Creeper, was now being held by the throat. It was obvious that The Creeper was about to crush Norman's throat. Wyatt aimed carefully and fired off two quick shots into The Creeper's back. He saw The Creeper flinch, but otherwise seemed unaffected.

Norman had only seconds left. Wyatt quickly came up behind The Creeper. He reached up and jammed his gun into the back of The Creeper's skull. He fired. For a moment nothing happened and then The Creeper's grip on Norman loosened. Norman slid to the floor, gasping. The Creeper's body wavered and then slowly fell clumsily to the floor. The Creeper's eyes were open, but wasn't breathing.

"Thanks." Norman rasped.

Wyatt glanced over at the door at the far end of the room, but there was no sign of The Prophet.

"I thought bullets wouldn't stop him." Norman said pointing at The Creeper.

Wyatt caught his breath. "Well, his body might be able to sustain considerable damage and keep going, but it still would require instructions from his brain. A bullet through the base of the brain will pretty much stop all physical activity---including the heart beating and breathing. Basic biology."

Norman nodded slightly. "Glad I could keep him occupied for you."

Wyatt smiled. "Yeah. Nice work with your throat to keep his hands busy."

Copi appeared in the doorway. "All clear, sir?"

Wyatt eyed Copi. "Yes, it is all clear. And why exactly are you here and not with Wanda?"

"Saving you, sir. Also, Miss Wanda insisted I follow you." Copi said.

"She would." Wyatt said.

K McConnell

www.kmcconnellbooks.com

kmcconnell@kmcconnellbooks.com

The Hamlet Mysteries series...

To Not Be In Hamlet

Sam MacNeil, part time mystery writer, has returned to his hometown to house sit for his parents as they start a lengthy vacation. What Sam has forgotten while away is the quirky weirdness of the little town of Hamlet. With expectations that he would quietly do his time in Hamlet the discovery of a dead body, clearly murdered, changes everything. Now Sam finds, much to his chagrin, the residents of Hamlet are expecting him to solve the murder. Not only does Sam not want to be involved in it, but the authorities have made it clear his help is not wanted. Was it the angry businessman from Detroit? Was it the shifty handyman the victim worked with? Sam doesn't know, but when killers from Detroit show up the situation is taking a serious and deadly turn. And then there's Becky. An old friend who clearly has more than friendship on her mind. Murder, killers and romance...this is not how this brief stay in Hamlet was supposed to go.

The Art of Hamlet

An old family friend asks Sam to look into a break in at her house. She is an art collector and critic, but nothing has been stolen and the only thing disturbed are some small statues. While it is a puzzling incident Sam doesn't think it is a serious issue, but when a neighbor is murdered and found bobbing in a nearby lake the story is once again taking a dark turn. As usual Sam is not inclined to get involved in a murder investigation, but somehow he seems to be sliding in that direction anyway. In addition, the County Detective seems to have recognized that Sam might be of some use---regardless of the consequences for Sam. And what of Sam's old classmate, who is now a seemingly crazy hermit, ranting on about terrorists in Hamlet? Is that actually possible? To complicate things even further something is happening between Sam and Becky. Love and Death seem to be chasing Sam through the wacky streets of Hamlet.

Ophelia's Hunt

Sam's women troubles have seemingly tripled. There is Becky and the relationship that Sam has found himself in with her. However, suddenly, there is Callie. Sam's wealthy and wild ex-fiance who has appeared in Hamlet. Is she here to get Sam back? Everyone thinks so---including Becky. Then there's the beautiful woman named Misty. She seems to have a particular interest in Sam as well. And, of course, there's murder in Hamlet once again. Questions abound. Is the lovely Misty a suspect or a new love interest? Who are the men stalking Callie? How is Sam going explain all of this to an increasingly angry Becky? Why is the County Detective actually soliciting Sam's help? Should Sam be flattered or very careful? With love and murder swirling around Sam how is he going to survive this?

The Ghosts of Hamlet

Sam MacNeil, part time writer, is house sitting for his parents in his hometown of Hamlet. The people of Hamlet are far more quirky than Sam remembers from his childhood and he is keen on leaving them behind and getting his life back, but it's those dead bodies that are the real problem. They just keep showing up. Murder in the small town of Hamlet has taken a noticeable uptick since Sam has returned and the residents have taken notice. Sam claims it has nothing to do with him and yet...Now, even worse, the residents are seeing ghosts and they blame Sam for that as well.

Sam may get his chance to escape Hamlet now that his parents are heading home, but can he really walk away without solving the mystery of the ghosts? Will he get away before the "gangsters" from Detroit catch up with him and turn him into a ghost? And what about Becky? He really wasn't planning on a romantic entanglement to muddle things up.

So what do ghosts, gangsters, girlfriends, musk ox and talking cans of beans all have in common? Sam MacNeil and the quirky town of Hamlet, of course.

The Play of Hamlet

It is finally here. The Founder's Day festival in Hamlet. A gala event highlighted by a play depicting the bizarre founding of Hamlet. Sam is not only the star of the play, but also a target for Scanlon and his killers from Detroit. They are determined to finish him off once and for all. But Sam knows they are coming and, with the help of the quirky residents of Hamlet, he has his own plans in the works. What Sam doesn't know is that Scanlon isn't the only killer from Sam's past that is out to get him. Could the biggest day of the year in Hamlet be Sam's last?

The King of Hamlet

The sixth story in the Hamlet Mystery series starts out where most of the stories end up...with a dead body. The trouble is Sam is found standing over the dead body and refusing to explain what has happened. He seems willing to take the fall for the guy's murder, but he is clearly hiding something. His friends are sure he didn't commit murder, but who is he protecting and why? What Sam is not telling anyone is that he is playing a more dangerous game than any of them can imagine. As bodies begin piling up around Sam he is increasingly wondering if he has a guardian angel or has become an unwilling accomplice to the Angel of Death. Once again women and murder are causing headaches for Sam.

The Graves of Hamlet

As if the town of Hamlet didn't have enough trouble with dead bodies now, it appears, someone is digging them up in the cemetery. The quirky residents of Hamlet are sure this has something to do with Sam. As usual Sam doesn't really want anything to do with whatever is going on, but when someone tries to make the cemetery Sam's permanent home one dark night it would seem that Sam will need to sort this out--if only to save himself. To add to the confusion, with Becky out of town, Sam must also figure out who the half naked woman is that keeps showing up on his deck sun bathing. Oh, and who are these other guys that just showed up in Hamlet? The grandson of the recently deceased retired cop who is lying about his real identity and the suspicious looking guy casually asking questions around town about the same dead cop...?

Polonius' Plight

Here's a surprise...there's been a murder in Hamlet---again. This time, however, Sam is very much intentionally involved. It's the suspects. The guy was found with a gaping shotgun blast to the chest. Like the one in the trunk of Renee's car. Of course the last person to be seen with the murder victim was Jen---and she seems to have disappeared. And why is Reese, the County Detective looking for Becky and her grandfather's .38? Sam is sure none of his friends are murderers, but to keep any and all of them out of jail he needs to find out who the killer is and fast. To make matters worse, while Sam is trying to solve a murder and hide his friends the Town Council of Hamlet has had enough of Sam and the murders that seem to follow him around. They passed yet another of their many bizarre ordinances. Sam has been ordered to leave Hamlet.

The Office of Scientific Operations

With the conclusion of the traumatic events in 1933 surrounding the shocking affair involving the city of New York and a beast commonly referred to as "King Kong", the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, established the Office of Scientific Operations (OSO). The purpose of the OSO was to monitor and evaluate the level of risk and assist in any manner the mitigation of danger of any and all scientific operations and anomalies. With the rapid pace of scientific discovery this office was given the highest priority and clearance to investigate any potential threats or consequences to the interests of the United States of America.

What follows are the real stories behind the cinematic cover-ups presented to the general public...

Release #1

from the declassified files of the Office of Scientific Operations...

From 1953...

File #153 (commonly referred to by the public as "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms")

OSO agents Elliot Simms and Robbie Regan, while observing an atomic test in the Arctic, are unwittingly caught up in the release of prehistoric beasts from millions of years of suspended animation in the ice. Now they must help in stopping this new terror as it moves steadily down the east coast destroying anything in it's path.

From 1954...

File #157 (commonly referred to by the public as "Them")

OSO agents Simms and Regan investigate the odd circumstances surrounding a missing FBI agent only to stumble upon a horror in the New Mexico desert and if they cannot find a way to stop it there is a very good chance this could be the end of humanity.

Release #2

from the declassified files of the Office of Scientific Operations...

From 1954...

File #159 (commonly referred to by the public as "Terror in the Jungle")

OSO agent Jonathon Wyatt is pulled off vacation to an island in Indonesia to investigate sightings of pteranodons. The island is not far from the island known infamously as Z Land. It was once the headquarters of Dr. Zeitner whose experiments in genetically manipulating prehistoric monsters terrorized the world in the 1930s before the OSO put a stop to it. Wyatt's job is to determine if these are indeed Dr. Zeitner's creatures, but what he finds is much more deadly. This is no way to spend a vacation---trying not to get eaten.

Release #3

from the declassified files of the Office of Scientific Operations...

From 1954...

File #161 (commonly referred to by the public as "Revenge of the Creature")

After the capture of an unknown species of half man half fish is brought back to a Florida marine institute, OSO agents Wayne and Wyatt must determine the risk to the American people it poses. When the creature escapes and begins terrorizing the citizens of Florida the risk becomes all too real. Now they must hunt it down and stop it's killing spree, if they can.

From 1955...

File #165 (commonly referred to by the public as "It Came From Beneath the Sea")

OSO agents Simms and Regan are sent out to Pearl Harbor to investigate damage to one of the Navy's most advanced atomic submarines by some kind of giant creature. While the Navy has a hard time believing it, the OSO knows such creatures are real. It soon becomes apparent by the large number of ships being lost that something dangerous is hunting throughout the Pacific. Now, with the creature

openly attacking the west coast of the United States Simms and Regan join the fight to stop this thing before the entire Pacific is destroyed by it.

Release #4

from the declassified files of the
Office of Scientific Operations...

From 1954...

File #163 (commonly referred to by the public as "The DC Creeper")

On a break from hunting monsters for the Office of Scientific Operations, OSO Agent Wyatt is trying to adjust to a more crowded domestic life. As brutally murdered bodies begin showing up in the nation's capitol, though, this doesn't seem like it is going to be much of a break. The newspapers have dubbed the hulking killer "The Creeper" and it looks like Wyatt is going to have to hunt him down and stop him before Wyatt becomes the next victim.

Release #5

from the declassified files of the
Office of Scientific Operations...

From 1956...

File #166 (commonly referred to by the public as "Tarantula")

Agents Simms and Regan from the Office of Scientific Operations, the OSO, returning from the Pacific Coast having just finished dealing with yet another monster threatening the United States are redirected to a small town in Arizona to verify that a large tarantula that has been terrorizing the local inhabitants has been destroyed by the Air Force. With Beka, a woman who insists on tagging along with the intrepid agents---a clear violation of official regulations---in tow, they quickly discover that the threat of the giant spiders in the Arizona desert are not over just yet.

From 1956...

File #171 (commonly referred to by the public as "Invasion of the Body Snatchers")

The Office of Scientific Operations, the OSO, has sent agents Wayne and Wyatt out to the small California city of Santa Mira to locate a missing Air Force major, sent to investigate the impact of some meteors, and to understand the meaning of his last cryptic message to Washington. What they find is that, while the city of Santa Mira may look like a quaint place to visit it soon becomes apparent that a missing Air Force major is the least of Wayne and Wyatt's problems. There is something very strange and deadly going on in Santa Mira. Something that seems...alien?

The New Sheriff

Travis Ames, somehow, has developed super powers. Exactly what these powers entail he's not sure. He's still learning how to control his powers, but he's already decided that he should use this new found power to fight crime. And...if he made a little profit along the way, well, that wouldn't be so bad either. But reality has a way of altering the best laid plans. He has quickly figured out he has no idea how to go about crime fighting. And, to make matters worse, he has learned the hard way, his new powers won't protect him from getting hurt or, quite possibly, killed. Can he survive long enough to learn how to use his powers? Can he get an aging detective to teach him how to fight crime? Can he prevent Aubrey, the new girl, and everyone else at work from figuring out what he can do? How long can he keep this up before he makes that one small mistake and ends up dead?