

Sam in retrograde  
A fictional story with some truths in it.

By  
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## Chapter 1

Sam is 96. Today is his birthday. He's lying in a bed less than 100 yards from where he was born.

"Nurse, would you please check again to see if the Police matched his fingerprints?"

Dr. Richards asked as he gently lifted Sam's frail arm again, checking on the weak pulse.

"I don't think our Mr. John Doe will be with us much longer." He added and placed the arm down in a caring, respectful way.

"OK, I'll check," the nurse said as she moved away from the computerized bedside monitoring and controls, then she looked down at the old man calmly dying with an apparent smile on his face and commented,

"He must have family or some caregiver; look at how his nails are manicured and his complexion." Nodding a reply, Dr Richards said to a second nurse,

"He barely has a pulse; let's get him on life support till we find out who he is."

Sam's breaths got deeper, slower, and drifted further apart, as if he was at peace or close to it. His eyes twitched like they were following something.

"Sir, Sir, we're here."

The cab driver said gently as he watched in his rear view mirror as Sam opened his eyes and lifted his head, and yawned. The sole proprietor cabby turned his crew-cut head and muscular upper body back around to face Sam. The bottom half of a faded tattooed heart was visible on his forearm, just below his rolled-up sleeve, next to a small Marine logo tattoo.

"That'll be 768 dollars, Sir..."

There was no divider separating the passenger and driver's section in this classic Checker A-series cab from the 1950's. There was just a privacy curtain, which was pulled open. It was a rural country cab. No extra security or bulletproof plexiglas protection was needed in the small community where the cab came from.

"...That's including the gas and tolls for the return trip, is that OK, Sir?" The Cabby looked at Sam for a reaction.

"Sounds reasonable, that was the deal, \$500 plus whatever the round-trip fare was," Sam replied alertly, refreshed from his nap. He gathered the fare and slowly leaned across the back of the front seat. Frailly propping himself up, he smiled at the cab driver and handed him six crisp one-hundred-dollar bills, four well-circulated fifties, ten cash machine-dispensed twenties, a rumped five, one two-dollar bill that was payable in silver, and six old singles, three of which were also silver certificates. He had the exact fare. The Cabby took the cash as Sam foraged in his pocket for more money and said,

"Hold on, here take this too..."

He handed the cabby a handful of miscellaneous change. A few coins fell onto the vinyl front seat. The driver reached for the other coins and noticed they were older style and all in excellent to mint condition. There was also a \$50 solid gold coin, worth its weight in gold, which, given the rare metal market, was triple the total cab fare.

"...There you go, my good man," Sam said in an upbeat tone a bit out of character for a man his age and looks. "I hope that is a sufficient tip for this kind of trip. After all, I did bring you way out of your way, and you did get me to where I need to be!"

"Yes, Sir - Thank you, Sir - thank you."

The X Marine cabby said while straightening and ordering the various bills and adding them to the \$500 bill Sam gave him at the start of the journey to secure the ride. The cabby looked at Sam as Sam shook his inside-out pockets and made sure he had no more loose money and checked again to make doubly sure there was nothing left in his pockets, not even lint.

He had one last item clutched in his hand, and with one quivering hand holding onto the front seat, he slowly eased his nearly century-old body back to the rear seat and fell into it with a puff of breath. Sam then placed his clenched hand to his open mouth, and with the other hand, he felt his chest, then took an item from his shirt pocket. He wiped the corner of his mouth with his bony, blue-veined hand. He moved his clenched lower jaw around to make some saliva and swallowed hard with a gulp and blinked. Then he swallowed again and cleared his throat.

“Also, take this, Sam said and reached over and handed the country cab owner a craftily folded origami-like item. It didn’t have a distinguishable form like a bird, frog, or other standard origami figures, but it had a distinct and deliberate, well-folded shape.

“Here, take this,” he repeated. “But promise not to open it until.” Sam’s frail hand pressed the unique item into the Cabbie’s meaty paw. He looked at the peculiar well-crafted piece of paper in his calloused hand and said to Sam, “Until when?”

Sam smiled and said,  
“You’ll know.”

## Chapter 2

The Oncology professionals went about their business, attending to Mr. John Doe, well aware of the legal imperatives of caring for an unidentified dying man, regardless of his social status. Sam was just one more patient in this fee-for-service but benevolent, don’t turn anyone away, medical institution. The century-old, once rural hospital had assisted life as it came in, and watched over life as it went out. Sam was on the verge of accomplishing both in the same hospital.

The beeps of body function monitors and the shuffle of health care workers did not disturb or concern him. Propped up in the hospital bed, Sam's wide-open eyes were glazed over with a thin, glossy film. Behind his unresponsive eyes, deep within a motionless, seemingly comatose body, there was a life very much alive. He actively reran early life snippets like black and white home movies, staring peacefully out over the bare dogwood trees and leafless white birches silhouetted against the soft meadows painted purple by the light of a cold autumn dusk. He knew those hills and thought of them as they once were, unaware of any bodily pain except the boyhood bumps and bruises replaying in his playful home movie mind. He saw his sled land hard and flinched. The Andrew Wyeth-like northern exposure drifted in and out of now and then. He fidgeted and flinched again as he replayed a fight he was in with another boy and the broken arm that was splinted not far from where he was lying. The window framed the memories of every single pain now through double-pane, tightly sealed windows.

The new windows insulated the ward from the cold winds outside. All around Sam were the multi-million-dollar results of a much-appreciated and recently completed multiyear expansion and restoration project. This landmark hospital wing was once a single proud building standing tall on the outskirts of an up-and-coming community. The original main hospital had slipped into disrepair over the years as the boom of a suburban sprawl grew up around it. New, more modern wings were added to the thriving regional medical center. The original wards were passed over year after year and left with drafty single-pane windows and peeling paint. Through anonymous generosity, the hospital got a new lease on life and could continue the mission to support it. Sam sighed as his lower lip went limp. A beep went off on a monitor, and Dr Richard casually walked over.

Dr Richards held Sam's flaccid arm, feeling his pulse weakening. He looked down and noticed a markedly white band of skin on his dying

patient's wrist. The rest of his arm was nicely tanned as if he had been in a warm sunny place or under a tanning lamp.

"A watchband?" Dr Richards thought curiously. He now wanted to know more about Mr. John Doe, who arrived at the hospital unconscious with no money, no identification, and apparently missing his watch from his tanned, now discoloring body. Sam's slowing pulse and his erratic breathing pattern told the experienced Oncologist not much time was left. Sam was nearly dead.

-BEEP-

Dr Richard's wristwatch announced the top of the hour - 6:00 pm. The News came on the muted TV in the corner of the room.

He paid it no attention to it or his watch since it goes off every hour on the hour. He held his dying patient's wrist tighter, looking for a pulse and thinking a blood pressure cuff might not be necessary.

Sam took a long, deep breath. His lungs wheezed with the extended pull of HEPA-filtered air.

### Chapter 3

-CLICK-

Less than a mile away from the newly renovated hospital wing, at precisely 6:00 pm, a warehouse manager took the next step on the list of instructions, preparing to open the other locks of what had jokingly become known as the "ticking time bomb room." None of the workers at the old converted storage facility, which was built more than 300 years ago, really believed there was a bomb in Unit #109, or hoped not anyway. But the room was always ticking - they knew that.

According to the explicit instructions, a small key turned and snapped open the ornate small padlock of an old, finely crafted brass and teakwood box. Inside, nestled in the worn dimple of a purple velvet cushion, sat two old keys. The Manager took them out, as he had routinely done for years, and began to walk down a drafty, weather-

worn cobblestone access way toward Unit # 109. Each step crunched another dried leaf as he made his way down the cold, open-air corridor of an old converted stable and carriage house. It was the remaining structure from a once glorious, fine old estate that had been demolished due to the unsustainable upkeep costs necessary to maintain the once grand, stately, and massively extravagant manor mansion. It was also part of an early colonial fort built even before that.

The curious spectators and reporters that had assembled after receiving a wax-sealed parchment letter invitation only a few days before followed along curiously.

Three hours by cab and due east of Sam's hospital bed, an old carriage house burst into flames on a sprawling country estate. Fire alarms and sirens sounded the warning alert to the neighboring gentry in the best-parceled section of a most affluent unincorporated township. The security company, paid to monitor the grounds for intruders, had video of the fire erupting, apparently from what looked like a blast in the hayloft. They immediately notified the Police and the County Fire Department. Groundskeepers and the house staff dropped their routines and frantically tried to get the horses out and remove as many valuables as they could. They started to hose down the detached old carriage house and stable, but their garden hoses were no match for this deliberately set fire, intent on burning the old barn down to the ground. Another small blast blew the door off one end of the long, narrow garage and stable structure; the wind raced through the ground floor, pulling the fire behind it. The staff could no longer safely continue their valiant salvage venture or go back in to save any more of the other priceless antique vehicles or any more of the rare collection of grandfather clocks that stood tall on the smooth, old, worn cobblestone floor that ran down the long stable line. The tall, grand old timekeepers looked like nutcracker sentries next to each stall. Within

half an hour, each upright masterpiece clock sounded its distinctive half-hour chime in near unison as their similar but distinct chimes mixed with the sound of the flames as it grew larger, threatening to silence these grand old time punctuators. The carriage house around them was running out of time and was possibly already in the past tense and beyond saving. It was now 6:30 pm exactly. The smoky fire added an orange glow and a hickory flavor to the cold autumn air and the fading sunset.

Sam blinked involuntarily, clearing the sticky film covering his old, sallow skin and his blue-gray eyes. But Sam's eyelids remained wide open. All throughout his life, he was told he slept with his eyes open. That scared most of his sleeping companions and annoyed his deceased ex-wife no end, and was added to the list of other reasons for their divorce, many years ago. She said he slept like a Madame Tussaud wax figure that snored. Sam blinked again. His eyes rolled up. His warm but cooling, rigid body and once nimble mind were no longer able to stare into his sunset memories. A bright white light was distracting him.

"Dr. Richards"

"Yes," The Doctor said and turned his Ophthalmoscope away from Sam's dilated pupil, and he released his hold that kept Sam's eyelids wide open. Sam's eyelid didn't shut, but his breathing got more erratic as the student Nurse said,

"No word yet, the police Detective said they'll continue tracing for matches, but since he's so old, there may not even be a fingerprint record. They didn't take fingerprints at birth until 1932. So he may remain Mr. John Doe, unless he has been arrested!"

"Well, let's hope they can find something soon," the Doctor said as he looked back at the dying old man and noticed his eyes shut and his lip drooping. "Maybe he just had a stroke?" He thought, but then noticed a bit of froth oozing from the corner of his unconscious, frail patient's

mouth, a strange type of froth. He looked closer to see what it was -  
"Nurse, nurse, come here, look!"

## Chapter 4

Hey, mister, nice watch, is it real? A bold young man asked Sam as they stood in the railway ticketing line.

"Yes," Sam said with a laugh, "It's real."

"Wow, a real jeweled Rolex." The boy said with envy that showed the lust of one who would do what is necessary to acquire what he wanted, rather than be among the jealous have-nots. With his curious, freckled, acne'd, and near-shaving-age face, the boy stared long enough for Sam to say,

"You want to know what it's worth, don't you?"

The boy looked up, realizing how rude it was, and felt uncomfortable since he was in a crowded train station waiting in line with his Mother standing next to him, who said,

"Billy!"

But with people on both sides of him watching, he knew he was caught and said,

"Yes, sir," ignoring his Mother's chastising single word, as she said again

"Billy! Leave that man alone!"

"Well, son, it is very rude to ask that kind of question, especially in public, so here take the watch and give me yours, and you can find out for yourself what it is worth. Sam shocked the inquisitive teenage boy who was expecting yet another lecture about his speak-your-mind rudeness.

"Really?" Are you serious?"

"Yes, I think so, but I might change my mind, so here take it quick,"

Sam replied.

They exchanged watches. Sam got a simple Timex in the exchange, which was fine with him. As the boy proudly put on his new good-luck watch, Sam said,

“But, I want it back when you can buy your first Rolex, jeweled of course, is it a deal?”

The boy looked at Sam with his jaw so wide open he actually felt air coming in and shut his mouth. He was speechless.

He felt challenged by the return clause of the deal. He knew he'd have a jeweled Rolex one day, but was totally surprised by how he got his first one. Sam sensed the boy's confidence and his incredulousness and pulled out a small leather-bound pad from his coat pocket. “Here is my card.

“And here,” Sam said, and handed the boys the leather bound notes pad and a beautiful tortoise shell and gold fountain pen.

“Now write down your name and address.”

The boy wondered if it was OK to give his address. Since he got the better end of the deal and his Mother was right there shaking her head at the whole transaction, but not objecting, he thought it would be OK and used the tortoise-shelled gold pen to write down his information.

The ink was the same green color as Sam's distractive square framed green glasses. He handed the leather pad and gold pen back to Sam.

“Very good, young man, and by the way, there is a jeweler at the corner of 57th and 5th Avenue. Someone there will tell you what it's worth, if you are curious.”

“Thank Sir! Thank you.” The boy said as they both got to their respective ticket window just as the announcement for the Albany-bound train echoed through the rotunda of the grand train station hall in central Manhattan. Sam loved the Hudson River train ride to Rhinecliff and then on by country cab to Rhinebeck and the oldest hotel in America. He had made the trip frequently.

“I'd better rush! Enjoy the watch, son, and get it back to me as quick as you can!”

“Yes, Sir,” the boy said and felt he had made a legally binding commitment. One he intended to keep.

Sam knew he did his part for the entrepreneurial spirit that had also filled him when he was the boys' age. They would meet again, they both knew, somehow.

Unit #109 was the largest ground-floor unit in the old, fortified, three-story, nearly windowless brick and stone building. The ticking time bomb room had been opened several times in the past, frequently in fact, but never by an hourly employee, and never before closing time, and never by its renter, who paid for the storage facility each year in advance with cash. The rental money was always sent in a brown letter-sized envelope, as part of a larger manila envelope or a package of varying sizes. No one knew who the sender was. There was never a return address, and the postmarks came from everywhere around the globe.

Each manager over the years was given strict instructions to open the locks and enter the room only after all workers had gone home and the premise was empty. This routine went on for nearly 48 years with one or more small to large parcels arriving every few weeks, more or less. Each one was addressed only to Unit #109: attention "Manager in Charge", and they all came with the same specific instructions.

The incumbent manager who had followed those detailed instructions for the last 10 years had received the latest packages only a day ago from a nearby postal location. One envelope inside this small brown package had a significant amount of cash, along with another envelope sealed with a distinctive wax seal. In it was a parchment sheet with a very detailed sequence of steps and the promise of a bigger bounty when the instructions were successfully and precisely completed. The last package was put away in Unit #109 and locked up. All the steps on the parchment paper list had been checked off except one. That was about to happen. The Manager stopped just in front of Unit # 109 and took one of the old locks in his hands. Cameras clicked close-ups and

wide shots. The curious entourage was there for a story, what story was a mystery, and they had no clue. They all heard the ticking loud and clear.

Although Sam couldn't witness it now, he had witnessed the once rural landscape outside his hospital room as it became well-developed. A typical suburban scene dotted with subdivision homes and timed traffic lights that turned green to orange, then red, based on environmental impact study planning. All managed a well-planned succession of intersections that stretched over several comfortably populated hills and across the upper middle-class horizon. The colors of a few early seasonal lights added a festive, random lighting effect.

The determined din and hospital commotion mixed through Sam's senses with no meaning, no cognitive definition, or real substance as his room number came over the intercom announcing a Code Blue. For Sam, it had the same colorful blur and warm feel he had experienced at birth. He no longer had any idea what was happening to him or why. His only desire was to die as quickly and as timely a death as he could. It was nearing his time.

The world he once knew continued to blur; the scene grew dark for him as he imagined what his mother must have seen while she proudly held him in her strong, nurturing arms. It was dusk back then, too, exactly 35,064 days ago, and the light of day was handing off to the night shift once again. He would not see his mother in the morning.

Sam made it just in time; his eyelid went heavy, and his breathing deepened. Sam sighed again. He knew deep inside his soul the breadth of his experiences, and the life he lived was good, regardless of the circumstances under which it was now ending. He felt no pain and had no remorse.

## Chapter 5

"I'll get the door," said the courteous cabby, and he got out of the driver's seat.

"Thanks," Sam said and waited for the door to open. When the X Marine Cabby opened the rear door, Sam looked up and smiled a twinkling sage smile that also silently asked the driver for assistance getting him out of the cab. The Cabby smiled back a sympathetic smile at the silent request and gave an outstretched hand to Sam, who, with a grunt, lifted his once fit and trim body off the vinyl rear seat. As Sam maneuvered himself out of the cab with the aid of the driver's strong, heavily tattooed arm, he noticed the Cabby's bare wrist. He was wristwatch-less. Sam glanced at his wristwatch, a jeweled Rolex with a unique new band. "Nearly noon – perfect!" he thought to himself as he grabbed tighter onto the cabby's upper arm and hoisted his creaking body up to a standing position. He made another involuntary grunt, exhibiting the somewhat pained yet surprisingly relieved expression most of his age display when finally upright.

"There we go, I'm up – Again!" He said. Sam was erect but winded. His breath puffing made a thick mist in the cold crisp air and steamed his distinctive pair of square green glasses. His glasses cleared quickly, but with each puffy breath, he fogged them again. He stood for a second, holding the cabby's arm for support, then caught his breath and said,

"You need a watch - here, take mine." He unlatched the unique adjustable band and slid the gold Rolex off his frail wrist, handing the tastefully jeweled timepiece to the surprised cab driver.

"Sir," the cabby said, and was about to say, "I can't accept that," just as Sam interrupted.

"I noticed you don't have one." he paused, took a quick breath, and continued,

"Everyone needs a wristwatch." Go on, take it. It's part of your tip!" Sam smiled and nudged his head forward twice, silently saying – "Go on, take it. I insist!"

The cabby shrugged and, not wanting to be economically impaired by his politeness, accepted the expensive gift. He slid the flexible gold band onto his left wrist below a tattoo that had inked another memorable moment in his life and fastened the band onto his strong forearm. They smiled and nodded.

"Looks good," said Sam. The cabby nodded and smiled back, "It does. Thanks!"

Sam had only one possession left, a small bag slung over his shoulder made entirely of rope pieces. In it was something that looked to be soft and very frayed, like an old blanket or a wash rag? It was bleached out but still had an amusingly colorful and cheerful look!

As Sam walked slowly away from the cab toward the historic hospital entrance across the street, which had a plaque commemorating its origins and history, the driver stood by the side of his cab with his arms propped over his open cab door. He watched long enough to make sure the determined old man was steady on his feet and able to make the short but slippery, cold trip to the hospital's newly restored main entrance.

"Can I give you a hand, Sir?" the cabby yelled out.

Sam, without stopping, turned his head and shot back without hesitation,

"Only if they're applause!"

His reply made the Cabby laugh. It was a quick quip for an old man who was hunched over and teetering as he waddled forward.

"I'll bet he's used that line before," the cabby thought.

"What a funny old character. He must be OK," the driver figured to himself, then smiled.

He gave Sam a short wave and thumbs up, and got back in the idling cab. He shut the sturdy door to his vintage Checker Series A cab and counted the money again as his window steamed up. The tip was good, alright, and he got an expensive, fancy gold watch too. "Nice," he thought to himself as he rolled his window down, then up, clearing the moisture as he looked at the old man inching his way toward the hospital's historic main entrance. Then he tucked the big bills into a safe spot between his beaded seat cover and bench seat, leaned over and pulled a pouch from the glove compartment, put the small bills and coins in, zippered the pouch shut, and threw it back into the compartment. He slid back over, adjusted his leather cap, unwrinkled his pant legs, then stared at Sam again and for a moment wondered, "Have I seen that old guy before?" He thought for another second, shrugged his shoulder, and concluded, "Nah. He put his Checker cab in gear and, with two short beeps, which startled Sam although he managed to keep his precarious balance and determined pace, the cabby said farewell and drove away to make the return leg of the trip home, all paid for by Sam - in advance. It was just after noon, he'd noticed on his fine new watch. He'd be home for dinner if there were no traffic. Sam walked on, but not in.

## Chapter 6

The local volunteer fire department was overwhelmed by the heat and just watched as the other dormers fell in what looked like a timed succession. When the county fire department trucks arrived at the old carriage house and stable out beyond the dramatically lit estate grounds and mansion, the last of eight dormers fell into the blazing hay loft, adding another whoosh to the inferno. That and the flashing red lights and sirens from the fire trucks spooked some of the horses that

were now safely in the large Dressage arena. They ran around and kicked. Then settled.

There was no hope of saving the top of the structure or a significant amount of the one-of-a-kind contents. However, they immediately began the too-little-too-late task of putting out the blaze, assuring it wouldn't spread to the historic hand hewn'd beams of the old stone and stucco mansion. The carriage building, compared to the stately mansion, was not of any great historic value it was just an old stable and carriage house, but it had valuable appointments inside and was the playhouse for an estate owned by one of the richest men around. He was a collector of many rare and valuable things.

"Where is Mr. Samuels?"

The head of the grounds and security asked the head housekeeping and Mr Samuels personnel secretary as they both raced to the fiery scene from the large guest house and the gatekeepers' home. They were very old structures as well and were also filled with expensive bric-a-brac.

"We're not sure, the personal secretary said as they ran. He drove off early this morning in his Duesenberg."

"He left a note in his study with only an address on it."

What is the address?

"12 New Bridge Road"

"12 New Bridge Road, where?"

"Didn't say!"

Two padlocks protected the roll-up door to Unit # 109. They were both Yale locks. Linus Yale Sr. and Linus Yale Jr. had made the locks personally. With a subdued thud and a CLICK-, the first of the extremely rare antique locks finally opened. Some wiggles and key reinsertions were needed for the other, even though it was the newer

one. The junior version of the two antique locks always gave the Managers trouble.

The electronic shutters clicked - click - clicked, and the bright flashes startled the Manager as he placed the key into the second lock. The news media photographer was right behind him, capturing the moment, and startled him.

“Sorry, I needed to get a wide-angle close-up,” said the photojournalist who arrived just in time to catch the opening of the first lock. He was only one part of the three-person news crews reluctantly dispatched to the seemingly uninteresting story scene.

Local rumors had surrounded the ticking time bomb room for years, but the mystery was never seemingly important. One story was that an early manager was fired for merely letting a worker open the locks. No one knew how anyone found out about the breach in the strict peculiar protocol. He was fired by a regional manager.

Some Managers who left the storage facility job openly talked about the room. They swore there were only boxes wrapped in plain brown paper inside - nothing special except for the multicolored painted squares and rectangles on the floor and walls, and bright red lines marking various heights on each of walls. Most of the spaces were filled, and many of them ticked.

“Tonight, the mystery door of the ticking time bomb room will be opened, said the remote News reporter, “And the secret contents will be revealed for all of our viewers to see.

The TV news reporter was just outside the curved stone wall of the former fort entrance, which itself had been converted to a guard house and also had a colorful history dating back to the American Revolution. The Historic landmark plaque by the road near the river mentioned the New Bridge Inn, which is still accepting guests in its circa 1739 tavern and public house rooms. It claimed, as many old buildings from that

era did, that George Washington slept there. The landmark plaque was next to the large brass address 12 New Bridge Road, which was bolted to the historic stone wall entrance.

## Chapter 7

When Sam saw the cab drive off away from the hospital and out of sight, he quickly changed his direction and slowly made his way around to the other side of the hospital complex to the emergency entrance. Within a few yards of and around the corner from the emergency entrances, Sam tossed his square green glasses into a dumpster. They hit the edge and fell behind it next to the grease-soiled cinderblock wall. "Damn," he said and slowly fell to the cold, hard ground.

Sam was unconscious when the emergency room staff found him lying by a row of sculpted hedges near the emergency entrance. He had a smile on his nearly frozen face. Although he was unconscious when admitted to the busy emergency room at 1:00 pm, there appeared to be no real emergency per se, so Sam lay there behind a curtain with a frozen smile on his now thawed, well-cared-for face. He was unconscious but not attended to. Finally, when his triage position was next. They did an examination. It was determined he had numerous health issues typical for a man his age, but none were determined to be eminently terminal. He had an unusual blood workup, but nothing to get worked up about, they thought. However, due to his old age, he had been moved to the Oncology ward at approximately 5:00 pm, which also happened to be the oldest ward of the recently renovated health care complex.

Dr. Richard, a respected Oncologist who had witnessed more deaths than most Pediatricians had witnessed births, knew the froth coming from Sam's mouth was not part of any routine natural death, no matter how violent that death may be, and some he had witnessed over his

long career were gruesomely violent. Oddly, he was an expert on and fascinated by violent deaths. This froth was not a death lubricating substance. It was a foreign agent, and Sam's body was trying to expel it. Dr Richards was very concerned that someone was trying to off Mr. Joe Doe. Clearly, from Sam's recent haircut, well-manicured nails, smooth complexion, and the few pieces of tasteful clothing he arrived in, he must have money somewhere, none of which was on him, and he was missing a watch and may have been poisoned.

"He might have been deliberately dumped here," Dr Richards thought, "But why?" was the doctor's next thought. He took a swab of the substance and carefully put it in a plastic lab test bag.

"Nurse, please take this to the lab?" It needs to be analyzed quickly. "I am not happy with this," he said to the nurse as she looked at the swab sample in the bag and shook her head in compassionate disbelief. "Poor man," she said.

"Go! I need it STAT," Dr Richard said in an authoritative yet uncharacteristically demanding way for an Oncologist who normally patiently watched as his patients died their natural and only occasionally ugly deaths.

OK! The staff nurse said and briskly walked off in an unaffected professional way.

Dr. Ricard stood over Sam and, as he looked more closely, thought, "Haven't I seen him before?"

Sam was breathing very peculiarly now and going into convulsions. His skin was turning colors almost in front of the medical staff's eyes.

"Oh my God, what is happening to him?" The student nurse voiced her distress from her inexperience.

Dr Richards said, "This man was poisoned!" He was a Doctor, but this was a murder or suicide, not an orderly exit from life as he was used to seeing. This death was not the terminal stage of liver cancer, which Sam had, or the final death rattle of a terminally failing respiratory system. This was becoming a gruesome death. Sam was starting to

bleed from his ears and nose. His eyes were shut. It was 6:45 pm.  
“Nurse Quick.”

“This second lock isn’t usually this tricky,” the storage warehouse manager said to the waiting reporter. Those who were instructed to document the event. He fidgeted with the stubborn old lock as some of the hardened reporters wondered whether this would be a waste of time or a scoop. There were three teams of reporters present, one from the local radio station, one from the local TV news, and one from a national television network. He was there with a crew that was prepared to air the event live, if necessary. The TV news director was very skeptical after being burned not long ago with the not-so-newsworthy story and the unsensational Geraldo Rivera live broadcast of Jimmy Hoffa. It was a bust. He had no intention of airing this event live. He said as he explained his position to the seasoned photo journalist.

“I’ll air the event live if Jimmy Hoffa is really buried in there. Otherwise, no deal!”

“Well, if a piece of Hoffa is in there and you don’t have a crew there, you’ll miss it,” said the scoop sniffing reporter. As he held the unusual and provocative wax-sealed invitation up to and in the news director's face a day ago.

All the guest witnesses were impressed when they received a handwritten calligraphy invitation. It had a royal wax seal that appeared to be from the court of Henry the Eighth. The seal alone, if it was real, was worth a fortune, said the Butterfield & Butterfield appraiser who was a guest at this mysterious caper and coming-out party. He felt the royal wax seal was real.

The second lock finally clicked open, and the Appraiser said,  
“This is an original Linus Yale lock! It even has his etched initials.”

"I know," said the Manager who had opened the locks a couple of hundred times over the last 10 years and noticed the markings years ago. But, he knew he was sworn to secrecy and didn't want to lose his job. He knew it was worth something, just not how much.

The Manager followed the instructions he received in the final package and opened a small, neatly wrapped flat letter-sized parcel. Inside it was another unsigned handwritten note on handmade parchment paper with the Wooky Hole watermark, signifying it was certified official document paper, and there was one additional key. Also included was a plain paper page from a spreadsheet with no heading or identification. It only had a list of contents associated with dates, names, and addresses. At the bottom of the third page of single-spaced data was a bold-faced font note that said "OPEN BOXES IN GREEN STACK FIRST," then the other boxes.

## Chapter 8

"Nurse, please get a morphine drip going. He might as well not feel anything, even if he is unconscious." Sam was unconscious, but what he was going through looked painful, as they put cotton and gauze to catch the blood that was slowly oozing out of the openings to his inner body.

"I am going to call the police myself. This man has definitely been poisoned by someone; we need a Detective STAT." Dr. Richard said and walked off.

Sam knew his life was grand. He did all he wanted to do, and as his lifeblood was leaving him uncontrollably, he still had his thoughts, peaceful thoughts of a life well lived.

Dr Richard had the Detective on the line and heard some interesting news. "The reason we can't match the prints are because Mr John Doe's fingerprints are altered fingerprints. A very difficult feat to achieve." The Detective said and went on to say he'd be right over to check out the nearly dead and poisoned patient.

"Can I trade watches with you, sir?"

Sam said, as he stopped and asked a surprised American on the river walk in Munich street outside the German Technology museum. The man was berating his employees as they exited the Tech museum. "What?" The interrupted and perturbed businessman said to Sam with a tone that exuded, "I heard what you asked for, Old Man, but you must be nuts or worse, and I can't be bothered with you. And he just repeated "What!" to drive home his annoyed, unwillingness to be bothered attitude.

"Your watch, Sir. I want to trade or buy your watch." It will be worth your while - here look. Sam thrust his fist toward the man's face and stopped short of making contact. He turned his wrist to the side to give himself a good, close view of his expensive wrist-worn timepiece. The curt American looked at the handsome watch on Sam's wrist and looked back at Sam with a less skeptical attitude.

"It's a fine-looking watch. What is it, a knock-off? How do I know it is real?"

"I assure you sir, it is real and there is a Jeweler across the street if you insist."

"You want my watch for your watch? That's it?"

The native New Yorker said to Sam with a sarcastic Scarsdale accent as he looked at his business associates huddled almost cowering two steps behind him and winked twice at them. They watched the impromptu transaction, a bit relieved that Sam had interrupted the verbal abuse their cocky boss had launched into as they walked on the

medieval stone river walk just outside the German Technology museum.

“Yes Sir” Sam said and paused, then said, “I want your watch, that’s it, and I’ll buy it if you don’t want mine.”

The amused executive stood there shaking his head and shrugged his broad shoulders,

“I don’t know,” he pondered and threw his hand up and held it out at ear level as if he was weighing the situation, then looked at his timid employees, and winked again. He looked back for Sam’s reaction.

There was none. He looked back to his sales staff this time for guidance. They shrugged back and made facial expressions, but were scared that even their noncommittal shrugs were the wrong answer.

“Well, Old Man OK – I suppose you got a deal. But let me look at the watch.”

“Of course,” Sam said calmly as he took the watch from his tanned wrist and handed it to a calculating skeptic.

As the alpha male looked it over carefully, Sam asked the other gents what they were doing in Munich so far away from home.

“Just visiting, we’re exhibiting at the Electronics Convention in Hanover, we’re doing a side trip,” One answered.

“Electronic?” Sam said.

“Yes, sir, wireless electronics - cell phones,” The conventioneer politely answered.

Sam looked pleased and said, “I’ve wanted to get one of those. Do you have a business card?”

Cell phones were in their infancy then, and Sam was an older man, now 72, and about to open a new chapter in his well-timed life.

Two men automatically reached for their business cards in a common good salesmanship reaction and said almost in unison,

“We do not sell the actual phone just the electronics for the phones.”

Sam paid little attention, looked at the cards from the cordial man, and thanked them.

“Looks good - Here you go, Pops,” The top dog executive said to Sam as he unfastened his watch and handed it over. Sam didn’t even look at it and said, “Just put it in my coat pocket. Sam held open his jacket pocket, and the rude CEO dropped it in and said, “OK. You got it,” Sam then turned and walked away. A few yards from them, Sam said over his shoulder,

“Good day to you, Gentleman - and to you to Sir.”

They all stood there watching Sam saunter off past the river bend and out of sight, and thought, “What a strange event.

“This watch has got to be worth a couple of thousand bucks, the arrogant, oppressive, and offensive boss said, “What a chump, mine was a knock off. Come on, let’s get out of here just in case the senile old kook realizes his mistake and changes his mind. Now, what the hell was I saying to you guys? Oh yeah, how many frickin times have I told you not to talk about the new software? Especially before we go public and another thing...”

The man was boisterously loud, and Sam heard the tongue lashing and shook his head as he walked on and into the Technology Museum.

Sam was a most like-able gentle man and enjoyed when people fondly called him “The Conductor.” He was a Conductor for a small portion of his rich life. In a slower-moving time when he was a faster-moving young man of 24, his father got him a job as a railroad Conductor. He loved the big watch they gave him, but was too antsy to enjoy the easy job and the monotonous traversing trips up and down the scenic Hudson River Valley, which he loved so much he visited nearly every season, every passing year of his life. It was during that time as the conductor that he developed his fondness and eventual passion for watches and mechanical motion devices of any kind. He began to research mechanical devices like watches, articulated jewelry, and automatons. He also learned that at the tender age of 24, Hans Wilsdorf opened his doors for business at 83 Hatton Garden, London, in

1905. That was the start of the Rolex Watch Company. Sam was determined to learn how to be a jeweler and a watch repairman and did.

Sam's family had a knack for collecting. After generational succession, he inherited his great-great-grandfather's autograph collection with names dating back to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, with every president's signature from Taft through Nixon and nearly every newsworthy celebrity until the early nineteen sixties. Sam also inherited a rare stamp collection, one worth coveting. Sam liked to tell the story of how his autograph book and stamp collection were almost stolen by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a young man, he sent the books to the FDR White House and included the standard cover letter about the collection with a request for his John Hancock to be added to the other leaders and celebrities. He also included a note about his rare stamp collection since he knew FDR was an avid philatelist, and like many presidents, also a philanderer.

The book was out of Sam's possession for longer than he wanted, and he sent a letter politely asking for it back. When that failed to get a response, he escalated it to FDR's mother. The autograph books arrived soon and were signed. The stamp book made it back, too, but the collection was missing a very valuable stamp, which all the Roosevelts denied any knowledge of and refused to take any responsibility for. There was nothing Sam could do. That loss of faith and trust in the highest level of authority affected Sam deeply, and he saw right then and there that lifting valuable things from others can be very lucrative and above the law, if you don't get caught. He never did, get caught.

## Chapter 9

As the night grew darker and showed only what flames were still burning, it was clear the worst was over, and the blaze was under control. Not all was lost, mostly the upper hay loft, but some important items were damaged. Mr. Samuels' personal staff were gathering the insurance papers since they knew a claim would need to be filed, and they called Mr Samuels insurance agent, who had just written a new and unusual policy.

Sam had amassed a unique collection of rare and valuable things. He traveled and visited fine shops, galleries, and museums everywhere. Any place that had valuable, rare things of intricate engineering and ingenuity. He acquired a lot of rare items and even purchased many of them.

Among all his possessions, Sam's main passion was his rare watch collection. He traded watches for a living, once. He was very successful at it. For Sam, "The Conductor" watches became his consuming passion. He fell so in love with watches that he could no longer trade them for money.

It all started with a trade with a young boy he met in Grand Central Station. He liked the feel of the trade. It made him happy to make the boy happy.

He was 36 then and already very rich due to his inheritance, wise, cunning, and sometimes ruthless investments that compounded his wealth. Sam decided to trade watches just for fun. Whenever he met someone he wanted to remember, he would ask to trade watches with them. He called it "passing the time.

For 36 more years, Sam had such a way of asking for your watch that nearly everyone he asked said, "OK, why not?" Watches were more sentimental to Sam than they were to any of their owners. He always had a few extra watches with him, but would never trade a watch he acquired from someone with a watch he received from someone else.

He kept all those watches. In his trades, the one he was passing time with always got a brand new watch or one of greater value. Often one that he had bought at some large lot sale earlier in his watchful career. He had watched lots of watches.

All of Sam's watches were real, no knock-offs, but not all were of great value. That was not the point of the trade. He was in the watch business, and he knew the value of most any timepieces and could match the value within a few dollars or whatever currency he was using at the time he found the watch.

Sam traded watches with nearly every kind of human. It seemed that once clocking time was invented, most people wanted to know what time it was. Why? Sam never knew, since most of them wasted most of their time, he thought.

As the second lock came off the latched bolt that secured Unit #109, there was a silence in the well-chosen group of documenting and spectacle-displaying spectators. It was time to see what was ticking in that ticking time bomb room.

The metal rollup door went up with the usual racket and the squeaks induced by the rusty old rollers in need of lubrication for smooth gliding. Once open and in plain sight, they all gasped at the sheer number of small and large boxes. All neatly arranged in the order designated by the anonymous sender in their detailed notes. The GREEN STACK was the largest. The packages were stacked in a Christmas tree-like pyramid and took up the center section of the back wall from the polished cement floor to near the top of ten-foot-high, thick timbered ceiling beams. The beams were lighter in color than they once were due to the coating of matte metallic fire retardant sprayed on them to protect the structure and the contents of the storage unit. The ornately arranged box placement ranged from

jewelry box size to kitchen appliance size. There were 48 boxes in the GREEN STACK.

The instructions were to open the boxes in date descending order. They should be stacked that way if the manager had followed the instructions over the last 48 years.

As instructed, the Manager got up on a step ladder and took the small box from the top, which he had put there just the day before, and opened it. Inside was a finely crafted wooden box with no key lock, just an antique and slightly tricky hasp bar. It was not too hard to get it open, but it did take a clever suggestion or two from the group. Once the puzzle hasp was opened and with the cameras rolling, the contents revealed what looked like 5 rings in a custom-made cushion. But they weren't rings, they were wax seal imprinters, and one was indeed the Henry the Eighth one that made the wax seal impression on their invitations and them.

The Butterfield appraiser pushed in to get a closer look and said with amazement and shock. "These are worth a fortune! Then he looked carefully and said with a knowing yet disturbing tone, "But at least two of them were stolen!"

One reporter said to his colleague, "It might not be Hoffa, but I'll bet this will make the news!" It did.

Dr Richards escorted the Detective to the dying mans bed. He was still hanging on by a string, but the thread was wearing thin. Sam's tan skin was getting bluish in color, which pointed to potassium gold cyanide poisoning and fit all the other life-ending stages he was going through. The poisoning was no longer a mystery, but why was.

As they were discussing the background leading up to the nearly frozen John Doe's smiley appearance on the old hospital doorstep, they examined his frail fingertips, which definitely showed signs of alterations and plastic surgery. "Very good plastic surgery." Dr Richards said. "Agreed! This guy had money!" the Detective said as another Detective walked in and held up a pair of square green glasses. "We found these out by the dumpster. We also found this rope bag and what looks like a blanket or washrag." Dr Richard looked at the very well-loved piece of soft cloth and said. "This is a birth blanket for wrapping newborns! It's from this hospital, but from a very long time ago. Look!" There was a small blue stencil with the hospital emblem of hands in prayer around the medical symbol of twisted snakes and wings. "We haven't used that logo for nearly 50 years when the board decided to be a non-denominational hospital and changed the logo to a flying bird and changed the hospital name from Holy Name to For Healths Sake Hospital. It was part of the stipulations from an anonymous benefactor."

"I wonder if the blanket is Mr John Doe's," the Detective asked. "Could be," said Dr Richard, who was not surprised by the twists and turns in the plot and fine-tuning of the strange string of events.

Sam was motionless as they looked at him and wondered. Sam knew in his now exiting psyche that life was a finite zero-sum game. He knew you can't take it with you! He also knew time was the most valuable commodity, one he could not trade. As he liked to say, "Before you go over the hill, stop and enjoy the view!" Once you start heading down, you're on the home stretch and the final sprint to the finish line." Sam made the most of his home stretch. He just somehow knew how to make friends and money. Two things they say you can never have enough of, but when you have too many or too much of either, the choices get harder.

## Chapter 10

Sam was an inventor of sorts and spent a lot of his time passing time making the finest of little things. He was not a famous inventor, just part of a small circle of highly creative tinkering minds who made things worth owning.

Sam brought one of his earliest inventions, a unique, intricately crafted automaton watch, to the German Technology museum in Munich just a few minutes after he met an ugly American watch trading partners, who he did not like “passing the time” with. Sam was 72 and realized he had no more time to pass. He needed his remaining time to fulfill his remaining plans. That trade was his last trade, and it had a satisfying twist. Sam knew the company run by the arrogant, abusive man was about to go public. When it did, he purchased enough IPO shares to have a majority stake and, at a board meeting, forced the arrogant CEO to resign and then gave a chunk of his shares to the employees who were stiffed and neglected in the IPO. So now they were taken care of, and so was the offensive CEO, but there would be more of a twist. Sam kept a less-than-controlling interest position but still had enough chips in the chips game to make out like the bandit he really was. Instead of trading watches, he would steal them or surreptitiously exchange them.

Sam’s Munich last “passing the time” encounter was also the site of Sam’s first real bandit and surreptitious slide-of-hand exchange. While delivering his new, unique, and tiny automaton invention, which he was donating to the museum, the curator of the antiquity section, whom Sam knew from conferences and the like, was showing Sam some wonderful, tiny pieces and some very rare watches. Each of them wore protective gloves so no oil or other contaminants would touch the delicate inventions. The curator knew Sam and the small group of watch and automaton aficionados loved to explore the fine

working of those rare inventions, so he left Sam alone with the expensive, rare toys.

Sam, who was now on a Robin Hood-like mission, took advantage of his friend's trust and, in his time alone, he quickly went to another drawer, pulled out another pouch, and swapped the very rare time pieces in the soft velvet rope tied pouch with the knock-off watch in his coat pocket. The knockoff watch from the offensive CEO was now in the pouch, and Sam put it back in the drawer where it would rest for another revealing day. Sam also took another very small pouch and put it in a secret pocket in his waist lining.

Security was lax back then, and Sam said goodbye to his curator friend and left knowing that the pilfered pieces would be noticed missing at some point, and the knock-off watch with the offensive boss's fingerprint all over it would be found in its place. Sam smiled as he left. He knew it would be a while before the discovery was made, and he'd be long gone and not a viable suspect.

Sam was a very nice man, not always a good or honest one, much like Robin Hood.

Sam was all about time. His timing was on full display as he gasped and took his last frothy breath just as Dr Richards watch beeped 9:00 pm.

Dr. Richards and the Detectives now knew or had a strong hunch that Sam had come to this hospital to die. But why and who he was, he was still a mystery.

Dr Richard said, "Well, I need to call the morgue, as he signed Sam's death certificate, filling in the deceased name as John Doe and noting the time and place of death. The ward they were in was once the maternity ward 96 years ago.

“But who is he?” The Detective asked in a frustrated, I want to know tone. “I don’t know, but given all we do know, I am sure it won’t be long before we find out. Someone must be looking for him.” Dr Richards looked at the two detectives and shrugged and gestured, Yes.

As they began to put Sam's body in the dead body bag, Dr. Richards placed the blanket and the green glass on him. Not knowing why he put the square green glasses on Sam’s nose, now blue from the poison, the impression showed the dimple in the bridge of the nose fit snugly around the nose piece. As he fitted the glasses' arms over Sam’s ear, he felt something; he stopped and said. Wait!

The Detectives looked at him with surprise as Dr Richard said, “This man has had plastic surgery and face reconstruction! Look!” He showed them the very finely done stitches behind his ear and neck. “His face has been altered. Now, of course, that may be a coincidence, but newly tightened skin doesn’t dimple like that. He pointed to the eyeglass bridge depression in the old nose.” The Detective said, “So that is his real nose?

“I think so,” said Dr Richards “Hold it, let me take a picture of him with the glasses on. Maybe we can find a match to a nose like his.”

## Chapter 11

The news crew that was witnessing the mysterious ticking time bomb room discoveries had gotten the attention of the News Director, who decided it was a live news story worth airing and was now airing the unwrapping story at the mansion carriage house turned storage facility, live.

The Manager opened the next box. It was larger and was filled with scrapbooks. All in fine leather-bound volumes with an age range in gold leaf on the front and spine. The newest one had 84, with no end age to the time range. The Manager opened it. It was not complete, but had a note on the last page. It said PLEASE READ ALOUD. The Manager shrugged his shoulders, cleared his throat, and began to read,

“If you are reading this, I am dead or soon will be. Please have my end age and the exact time of my death marked on the spine and cover of this volume. Place my death certificate on this page along with the obituaries from the major newspapers, and any news clippings that relate to my life and deeds. The Manager looked away and said, “That's all he wrote!”

Then the Manager looked at the camera and group and said, “He actually wrote - “That’s all he wrote!!! See!” He showed them the words on the page. They all laughed, and the handheld camera jiggled as its feed went out on its air-borne photojournalistic journey. They knew there was too much to go through each volume, but curious as they were, they went to the first volume, lifting past the stack of volumes marked 72-84, 60-72, 48-60, 36-48, and finally 24-36, which was the first volume. There was no book before the age of 24. Below the 6 volumes were four Rolex watch boxes. In one of the Rolex boxes, they found a very valuable, tiny automaton clock and wrist watch. It was made by Audemars Piguet, the very first watch that calculated leap year. “That’s worth over two million dollars.” The Butterfield continued, “They are both the very rare missing piece from the German Tech museum. They were stolen 24 years ago and never found!”

“Well, here they are, found!” The News reporter said to the group. “I’d say this constitutes a scoop!” The other news caster said, Indeed, the others agreed.

They also found two news clippings. One news article was about the hostile chip manufacturers' takeover, the disgraced CEO's resignation, and his reported embezzlement. The second article in English and German was about the German Technology museum theft and the missing pieces found with the disgraced CEO knock off watch and his fingerprints and all.

The article went on. At the trial, the ex-CEO said an old man traded watches with him. The German Rechtsanwältin prosecutor asked, "Where is that watch?" "Well, he mumbled, "I sold it." The very nervous and smarmy unemployed ex-CEO said. "So you sold the valuable watch given to you by a nice old man. Is that your story?" "Yes!" Ask my old employees." None of the employees with him in Munich would testify on his behalf or verify his whereabouts. They sensed what the nice old man had done and smiled. They would have applauded him, but that would be a giveaway. They had nothing to give away and kept the memory of him in the clear!

They also thought their old obnoxious boss got his comeuppance! He was extradited and charged with the theft and imprisoned in a German penitentiary. Justice moves slowly like the leap year indicator on a finely jeweled German watch.

As the Housekeeper and Security team chief watched as the firetrucks doused the flames, which were nearly out, the head groundskeeper, who was one of the oldest loyal employees, asked, "Where is Mr Samuels?" "We're not sure," The personal secretary said, "but he left a note with an address that was only 12 New Bridge Road, but it didn't say what town. The groundskeeper said well 12 New Bridge Road was the address of his great-grandfather's old estate before they demolished it. It was by the Hackensack River near the Regional Medical Center. It was a magnificent mansion, but it was very expensive to care for. I know my Dad worked there!"

The two looked surprised but nodded that at least they knew where to look for Mr Samuels.

The auto mechanic who had maintained the fleet of rare automobiles and motorized locomotion contraptions came over and said, well we lost a couple of vintage beauties, but the rest are repairable. The Duisenberg and the Indian motorcycle are gone. I noticed the Bugatti Royale was parked away from the garage and stable, too. That's one of only seven, so lucky it wasn't in there.

"Yeah, I don't know about the Bugatti being moved, but I saw Mr Samuels drive off this morning in the Duisenberg. I wondered about the Indian motorcycle that was on the side in the wheel well. But I figured he was going for two joy rides. The secretary said.

The mechanic said to the others, "Ya know Mr Samuels could take apart that old Indian and put it back together in record time. He said his uncle used to be a chauffeur for George Hendee, the founder of the Indian motorcycle. He even had a patent for greasing the sealed part of the Rolls-Royces. The whole family was great tinkerers and inventors."

They all nodded and looked back as the smoke from the extinguished fire wafted up and mixed with the chilling night air. Beyond the smoke was a clear dark sky sprinkled with lots of stars since the estate was far from the illuminated crowds.

The Fire Chief walked up the little hill that gave them a good perch and a bird's-eye view of the tragic fire. He took off his helmet and shook his head. Well, the top of the barns is gone. Luckily, the ground floor had fire retardant and sprinklers, so almost everything survived. The grandfather clocks could have used rain coats, but they all survived to chime another day! There was a lighthearted chuckle, and then the Personnel Secretary said, "Well, I'd better go." Can you all document

the damage and work with the Insurance folk? "Sure," they all replied. "Great! I'm going to 12 New Bridge Road. He must have left that clue for some reason. Let me know if anything comes up. "Will do," the Security Chief said and added, "Good luck." "Thanks," she said and walked to the main house, where she noticed that the blanket that was always on the statue of Sam's mother was gone. Hmmm, she thought, but shrugged it off.

## Chapter 12

The Manager opened the 24-36 volume to the first page. It had Sam's name tag and badge from his time as a Conductor and a canceled railway ticket stub, "Grand Central to Rhinecliff. The next to last page in the volume had his Rolex watch repairman certificate and a handwritten letter from Hans Wilsdorf, the Rolex founder. The letter was inside an envelope with the wax seal of the Rolex logo and Superlative Certified seal. Hans Wilsdorf wrote of the pride he had in the skills Sam showed and a wish of good fortune. On the last page of that 12-year era volume was a note in green ink with the name Billy McKeever on it and his address and his Timex watch.

Sam's life before 24 was mostly a blur. There was a short bio he wrote in his distinctive green ink that talked of his youth.

"I was born into wealth and had no reason to work, and had no passion to pursue. That combination, my wealthy, driven father knew, was not healthy. He had witnessed firsthand how children of parents of means often destroyed their lives because they searched for and pursued nothing. My father had known several high-net-worth parents who lost their sons and daughters to drugs, alcoholism, or suicide due to severe mental illness.

Luckily, I was not like that, and even as a boy, I seemed industrious but aimless. Then came my lucky Conductor kismet connection with trains and watches and all those wonderfully fascinating and delicately engineered inventions. The timing was spot on, right on time!”

Sam went on to tell how he would spend summers with his favorite uncle. Col Sam Samuels, who once was a chauffeur for Mr George Hendee, the inventor of the Indian Motorcycle. Sam learned all the parts of the “one-lunger” early motorcycle as he listened to his uncle's stories. The Col was a war hero of sorts in World Wars I and Two. He was the last Marine flier from World War one. He flew a biplane in France with a few other brave early Marine flyers.

Sam’s uncle loved to tell the story of how they all went in on a nice bottle of French wine at the end of the war and pledged that whoever was the last survivor would open it. Since the Colonial was the last flying man standing above ground, they had a bottle opening ceremony. It was a big deal and was broadcast live on the radio on Veterans Day. The announcer explained the setup, and the Col opened the bottle with a pop and took a sip. He made a face and said, “I knew we should have gotten the brandy! Everyone laughed. The radio host asked the Colonial, “So Colonial, since you are 96 and the last WW 1 flyer, to what do you owe your longevity?” The Colonial snapped back, “Crystal spring water and a clear conscience.” He waited for just the right comic beat timing and added, “I’ve never had either one! Everyone laughed. Sam never forgot his uncle's story and what lessons he taught him. Always leave them laughing.

Dr Richard and the Detective were in the morgue and got the news from the coroner that Sam had indeed been poisoned by a form of cyanide, but it was in an unusual double capsule. One part was the very slow-release poison, and the other was a very strong sedative and morphine based painkiller, and ethyl chloride, a strong numbing agent.

It was in a fast-release one, maybe half an hour to an hour for the release and full effect. The poison release would take hours. The Coroner said, "Well Mr John Doe may have died what would have been a very painful death, but he didn't feel a thing. There was a good amount of sedative in him. It alone was enough to kill a frail man like him. The ethos chloride was a surprise to me! It is a numbing agent, but it is also used in a unique kind of clock, the Beverly Atmos clocks. It allows them to tick almost forever, using changes in the atmosphere, very interesting, very ingenious. Well, if it were murder, then the murderer must have been a chemist! Personally, I think this man committed a very premeditated, well thought-out, and a very unique plan for a totally painless executed suicide!"

"Wow, the Detective said, I didn't see that one coming." Yeah, the other Detective said, and he had altered fingerprints." Who was this guy!" Dr Samuels said, "Well, I needed a new story to add to my dead-seen-everything role. "Well, you got that!" The Coroner said, "This is one for my book too!"

Dr. Richard asked what the Coroner thought of the plastic surgery work not only on his fingerprints but also on his face. "Well, he had more than one face reconstruction done. He likely had a puffier face since his cheekbones were sculpted down." "I noticed that his nose seemed untouched, was it?" Dr Richard asked curiously. "You got it! Whoever the plastic surgeon was, he took great pains to leave his nose alone and intact. It was some very fine work. This kind of work can only be done by a very talented plastic reconstruction surgeon or a skilled Mohs' surgeon." Yeah, probably a Hollywood nip and tuck guy, one Detective said." Possibly, or a NYC mob knife guy, said the other Detective. "Either way, it is the best work I've seen!" Said the Coroner.

Dr Richards looked at the Detective and said, "See, I thought that was his original nose. "It is indeed," the Coroner confirmed."

“So if we found a match in our mug shots of someone with a nose like that, we might narrow down who our old odd John Doe duck might be. After all, if he went to the lengths to alter his fingerprints and face, he must be hiding something! I’ll have the team at the office start looking through the mug shots.” The Detective said. “It’s worth a shot. Dr Richard replied.

The Coroner added, “I also think you could ask the TV stations and their investigative folks to give a hand, maybe ask for the public's help.” “That’s a great idea, and we know someone out there must be looking for him.” They all nodded.

OK, I’ll contact the News departments and give them his latest mug shot!

## Chapter 13

The Christmas tree stack of boxes was being opened. It was like Christmas for those watching. They all felt giddy as each new parcel was opened. The Manager unwrapped each next surprise with youthful anticipation. He was like a kid in a rock crystal candy store. They found beautiful diamonds and rubies and sapphires and all manner of jewels, exquisite trinkets and watches, lots of watches. All the others wondered - What’s in this one, and this one, and that one. It was like Santa's warehouse, if Santa were a thief! Among all the jewels, watches, rare toys, and automata, they found lots of news clippings and stories that documented the time and place where the items were stolen and articles about how, even after years of searching, they had never been found. The carefully assembled team of onlookers had found them, hundreds of them. They were all strewn out as the appraiser tried to catalogue the loot.

Just then Mr Samuels' personal secretary arrived. Everyone looked over at her. She saw all the boxes and contents. She was flabbergasted, which only happens when someone is well beyond very surprised. She stood there speechless for a moment to take it all in, and there was a lot to take in. She introduced herself and saw from the scrapbooks and articles that these were indeed Mr Samuels laundry list of dirty deeds and pilfered, unlaundered things. All airing out his fascinating past for all to see. It looked from the articles that it was a breeze for him!

The last 2 unopened boxes were the largest ones and were obstructing something behind them. They opened the first refrigerator-sized box and found a well-packed, very old, and rare bassinet. There were baby clothes and a birthing blanket with a blue stenciled logo of the old Regional Hospital and an article about an endowment to fund the expansion and restoration of the hospital. Sam's mother's death certificate was in there as well. The Manager read it, "Nora Samuels died at Holy Name hospital on this very day, 96 years ago, at 9:00 pm, from complications of childbirth. They all stopped and felt their and his sadness.

There was also an article about Sam's mother done long after her death. It was a very nice tribute piece to her. It told of how Sam's father was not able to be there when Sam was born. He was a very wealthy man in his day. He was off taking care of other important business. He was so sad at her untimely death and that he was not there for her that he commissioned a statue of her in the finest Carrara marble. In the bassinet was a maquette of the statue to her. It was her in a rocking chair with her arms and hands folded in a position like they were holding something, but they were empty. The full-size statue of her was in Sam's study at his estate, where the fire was now out and the main house unscathed. His Dad used to tell Sam that he had his Mothers nose. Sam was very proud of that! He loved the Mother he never knew.

In the other large box was a perambulator, a very fancy antique, and a very expensive baby stroller. In it was also a birthing blanket with the same markings from the once rural hospital.

The appraiser said, "That's a Victorian era stroller, and from my vantage point it looks like a Silver Cross." The Manager who was closer moved a blanket aside and said, "Yep, here's the maker's mark. It showed the words Silver Cross in its distinctive cursive font.

Sam's Personnel Secretary saw the blanket and said, "He had a small piece of a blanket like that in his study. It was always in the arms of the statue of Mother. I know he held it often and would smell it, then lean back and stare. It wasn't there this morning when I found the note with this address. He once told me he had a storage facility, but never told me where or what was in it."

The Manager said, " Well, now you know!

The camera had been rolling the entire time, and the TV station would switch LIVE to the storage room turned treasure trove for a time, switch away, and then back again over the time it took to unwrap the valuable mystery.

Dr. Richards and those who attended to Sam as he passed watched the revealing news about the ticking time bomb room from the hospital visitors' area. The news of the storage locker finds was captivating. They didn't know yet they were Sam's things!

The News department of the local stations all got the call from the Detectives and interrupted the programming to do a Missing Person alert, and the announcer asked, "If anyone knows this man, please

contact your local authorities. He recently died with no identification.” Sam’s image filled the screen. The hospital folks were pleased that the stations were helping find out who their Mr. John Doe was.

The well-compensated cab driver had made it home for dinner and then got a call and went out for another fare. When he had finished, he stopped for gas, filled up his vintage Checker cab, and looked over at the news on the monitor in the convenience store. It was showing Sam’s treasure chest, but he didn’t know it. He looked back at his watch. It was 9:55. “This is a really nice watch,” he thought to himself, almost out loud as he filled up the extra-large gas tank. The fluorescent lights from the Getty gas station gave the gold watch and its jeweled face an odd glow, but it definitely showed off the right look. He filled up and went in to pay the clerk. He saw the Missing Person alert on the TV. He saw Sam’s mug shot. It was blue, but his green glasses were very distinctive. He said to the clerk, “I know that man! He gave me this watch!”

There was a phone number, and he called it. He told the authorities about how he picked the old man up near Hill Top Manor in Suffield. He was standing by an Indian Motorcycle. Then he told them about the long, quiet drive with the nice old man who slept the whole way. Then told them about the 768 dollar fare, the rare coins, and the watch Sam had given him. He looked at his watch; it was 10:00, and the news headlines came on.

The lead story at the top of the hour was the unwrapping party at the storage facility, which showed all the loot in Sam’s storage facility. There were lots of Rolexes. The cabby asked if the clerk could turn up the sound. The Announcer came on and said, “What was uncovered at the infamous Ticking Time bomb room was quite a bombshell! It turns out that Sam Richard of Samuels, or whatever his real name is, had

been stealing for decades, and those stolen items are now being rediscovered. The mastermind even kept notes and clippings and said the items were merely relocated and would be returned.”

The cab driver looked on and wondered about the watch and other things that the nice man gave him. Are these hot? He wondered.

Dr Richards, the Coroner, and the staff were stunned that Sam was the mastermind behind such a decades-long streak of high-profile thefts. “No wonder he didn’t want his own fingerprints, and that explains the multiple facelifts! He was a man in disguise.

One of the Detectives came into the room. He looked very serious and said, “Well, we found a match based on his nose. And other body characteristics. Seems this is Sidney Delevanti, Willie Cullen, Dominick Drummond, and a few more! Of course, they’re all aliases and were not his real name or face! He came up a few times, all in connection with high-end jewelry thefts. Big time stuff! He was a cat burglar here and all over the world. He would leave very odd origami paper figures at the scene of the crimes, but no fingerprints, and all of the paper was custom-made and of the finest quality. Inside were stickers that said “Thanks, we’ll be in touch. They were left at the scene of the crimes.”

“Our blue-faced corpse was more of a Pink Panther than a cat burglar! INTERPOL and Scotland Yard have been looking for him for over 24 years! The Detective said. Well, I guess we got their man! Said the other.

## Chapter 14

Once the back wall was exposed, there was an old metal door. It was the door to a vault and painted green like the wall. There was a key to another Yale lock hanging there; it too was a rare antique. The combination to the large wall safe was stenciled on the door, all right

there in plain but unbelievably eye-opening sight. It was clear who ever assembled the Christmas tree of hot goods must have known there would be a time when they would be in hot water and have to face the cold water reality and come clean.

The Manager looked at his instructions, which stated to open all the other boxes before opening the safe. Since there were so many boxes of all sizes, all were numbered and dated. The Manager asked that the assembled guest witnesses each take an area, which was well marked by color and lines on the walls. The mass unwrapping began.

The Appraiser had his work cut out as he tried to document each item as it came out of their gift-wrapped box and brought their dark past to light. He began to jot down quick notes just to keep up, and he'd get back to detailing them later.

It did not take long to find out that one area was where all the watches that Sam had exchanged while "passing the time" were amassed. Each box had a note inside with the person's name, address, and phone number, all written in the distinctive green ink that matched the color of his also distinctive square green glasses.

There were all kinds of watches. Some with cartoon characters, like Disney and Looney Tunes and Hanna Barbara, others with faces of places like Mt Rushmore, or the White House, or any of those sold in gift shops at tourist attractions. Some were simple, some were gaudy. They were as wide an assortment as one can imagine, and there was a lot of imagining going on in the room as they blurted out "Wow, look at this one!" or "Oh my god, that is ugly!" Or "Aww, this one is so cute!" The Christmas spirit was in full effect as they all totally enjoyed this rich stroll down Sam's memory lane and his lovely and fascinating timekeeping obsession. What an amazing man, they all thought!

They also found several Beverly and Atmos clocks, which had a nearly perpetual winding mechanism due to the unique way they used

atmospheric pressure to keep them ticking. They were in boxes with desiccants and water flashes with porous stoppers. The wet/dry combination provided an atmosphere in the box, adding to the outside climatic change throughout the decades that some were in mothballs, which in some cases they were. There were a few hundred of the mementos of “passing the time”. A timekeeping, keep sake.

They chronicled how Sam was “passing the time” most of his life, from 36 to 72, meeting people and probably exchanging more than just a watch with them. He was a great storyteller, they could tell by now. Even after his death, he was creating a great story for them to tell. Once their timely task was completed and all the watches and other expensive trinkets were set out and hastily catalogued, the Manager said, “Well, I guess we should see what's behind the green door of unit # 109.”

The Manager, who knew the history of the place, said, “Well, this used to be an armory and they kept weapons in safes like this. In fact, we knew something must be kept there because when you look at the size of this storage unit and the width of the building, there must be something on the other side. It should be about the same size as this room.

When this was converted to a storage facility, the old owner stipulated that Unit #109 was never to be rented. The original managers said there were items in here that already covered the door. That was 48 years ago. So I’ll bet when the old manor mansion was demolished, they put some of their valuables in there. But, I don’t know that for a fact.”

The News reporter took the Appraiser aside for an interview. He told the captive viewing audience about a few of the most unique items and then said,

“I will probably spend the rest of my life appraising, authenticating, and discovering the provenance of these items. My guess is there are several hundred million dollars' worth of fine things in there. This man had great taste, and we are lucky to have found his treasures. Most of them are stolen, and soon many an unsolved heist going back decades will be solved.”

The second Detective joined the others at the hospital as they watched the suicide mystery come to life on live TV like a Soap Opera. He said, “I got an interesting call from a man who's known our Mr John Doe since he was a kid! By the way, the dead guy's name is Sam Samuels, the great-grandson of the tycoon Samuel family. It seems the man on the phone met Mr Samuels at Grand Central Station 60 years ago, and they exchanged watches. Then stayed in touch, close touch. They meet again in London years later at the Rolex factory, as per their agreement. The now-grown man, who was a Doctor by then, gave Sam back the jeweled Rolex Sam had given him. He had it inscribed on the back, “To the Conductor, many happy returns!”

Then he went on to tell me that he was the plastic surgeon who did the dead guy's fingerprints and face-lift makeovers!

He also said the old guy told him of his plans if he promised to keep it a secret until his death.

The Detective paused and looked at them. Like mystery novel readers, they were cliff hanging on his next word. After an unbearable short pause, they all said, “OK, OK, go on, what was the secret!

Well, Sam told him that since he was so rich and could buy anything he wanted, it was no longer fun buying his expensive toys. He'd rather steal them, forge them, or basically pilfer them. And he ranted on about a story of FDR stealing stamps. I'll save that for later. He also said that Sam would trade watches all his life, giving the trader a significant upgrade, as he had done with the kid in Grand Central. It was kind of like the old guy's penance for his thieving transgressions.

The Plastic surgeon agreed to the pact, and they stayed in touch and under the knife for years. He also said he was an expert at making prop masks for the movies. He made several masks for the old man of many faces so he could change his look like one of those face-changing toys. He could go into a heist site looking one way and come out looking another. The guy was remarkable, no wonder they never caught him!

“Man, can this story get any more twists and turns the Detective said. “We’ll see,” said Dr. Richards, “They haven’t opened the safe yet! “Yep, we’ll see,” said the others.

One Detective said, “Hey, I’m going to head over to that storage facility to get a bird 's-eye view of this cat burglar's crime nest.”

The others went back to watching the Sam Samuels Antique Road show as the Manager on the live TV went to the safe.

## Chapter 15

When the cab driver was in for the night, he took off his watch and showed it to his wife. She said, “This looks very expensive.” She turned it over to inspect it and said, “It has an inscription. It says, “To the Conductor, many happy returns. I wonder what that means," she said. “I don’t know. It may even be stolen. Did you see the news?” She said no, and he told her the whole story, as well as much as he knew thus far.

“He gave me this piece of paper and told me not to open it until.”  
“Until when?” she asked. “He didn’t say he just said “I’ll know” “Well, the man is dead, dear, I think it’s time!  
So he opened it.

Inside were a few smaller origami pieces that fell out. He unfolded one, and it said, "Thanks, I'll be in touch! with a smily face. It was on a circular piece of plastic, like the kind you can put on a surface, and it stays there without any stickiness.

The next origami item just said "Many Happy Returns, The Conductor." It too was on the static clinging plastic.

On the largest piece of the folded fine paper sheet were these instructions:

1. The holder of this is entitled to pick whatever they want from what was uncovered and remains unclaimed.
2. Every effort should be made to return each watch found in Unit #109 to the original owner. And each was given a coin or stamp of their choice from my collection.
3. Those individuals, institutions, and whoever had their valuables relocated by me and have one of the "Thanks, I'll be in touch" stickers should have their "borrowed" and "relocated" items returned, with a sticker that says "Many Happy Returns, The Conductor!"
4. Any items not claimed should be donated to the "For Healths Sake, Hospital and displayed in the new Nora Samuels wing, which is already endowed.
5. My mother's statue should be put in the lobby with a birthing blanket in her arms. Each newborn and mother should be given one that has my mother's likeness stenciled on the blanket.
6. The staff at my estate should find my last will under my mother's statue, and it should explain how my other worldly possessions should be distributed and enjoyed.
7. My Estate should be donated to the parks service and turned into a technology museum, and display all my fun possessions.
8. Contact Dr Billy McKeever at 808 321 4567 and say Sam told you to call. He will give you more instructions.

The long origami note was signed in green fountain pen ink, "The Conductor."

The cabby called the number, and Billy McKeever spoke to Dr. McKeever. The good doctor told the Cabby that the watch Sam gave him was not stolen and that Sam had a big surprise for whoever had the last origami marker. Then he gave the cabby some instructions. "Ok, I'll get them and meet you tomorrow. The cabby said and hung up.

"I think we may be rich!" He said to his wife. We can keep what the old man gave me.

The remaining Detective at the Hospital got a call and told the others The Missing Persons alerts are paying off. "The guys at the office have been getting calls. They said they "passed the time" with the guy in watch exchanges. No surprise, most said he looked a bit different when they met him, but his square glasses were unmistakable. Get this. They also got a few unexpected calls from some inmates, mostly jewel thieves and armed robbery felons. They said they worked for Mr Richards or Mr Delevanti or any number of aliases, but they all called him "The Conductor" since he was the one orchestrating their scores and they were part of his sleight of hand string of heists."

The Detective went on to say it seems Sam and his band lifted exquisitely tooled jewelry, fine watches, and antiquities from some of the finest halls and homes around the world. Their recanted chorus of confessions all had an interesting refrain as the inmates asked if they confessed and sang like a canary, could they get a reduced sentence? No promises were made.

They all said they only met him in person once and very briefly. He would communicate by letter and send them detailed plans and instructions, all on sealed parchment paper. The last instruction in every plan was to leave a plastic sticker at the scene of the crime that said "Thank you, I'll be in touch" around a smiley face. Then, once

they were away from the scene of the crime and in the clear, they were to burn their plans and communications.

“This old guy may be my new crime hero!” the Detectives said. Well, he certainly had a flair for the humorous and dramatic, Dr. Richard said. “Indeed, and look at his death planning. He was something alright!” The Coroner concluded.

The safe on the back wall was like an oversized door. It had both a tumbler lock and a second lock, one with a hasp and a large key lock that could be opened either first or last, but they both needed to be unlocked to gain entrance.

The key for the thick lock was hanging right there on one of the vault's handles. There was no effort to hide it. The combination sequence steps were on the wall.

The Manager looked at his posse and asked, “Which one first?”

The tumbler most said. “OK, here goes. He followed the instructions out loud -

“Three turns to the left to 9, then four turns to the right to 6.”

He went on until the last number was matched, and he turned the handles, and the cylinder bolts slid back. The vault door opened partially. The hasp lock was still standing guard over the now slightly opened vault. The musty air from inside the vault wafted into the storage facility. No one knew how long that air had been waiting to escape. The antique key was an unusual one with odd-shaped prongs. It was a puzzle lock, and it took a few tries to find the right way to open it. With a pop, the lock sprang open. The Manger removed it and spun the brass hasp off the U-shaped loop on the vault door.

He stepped back to allow all to savor the moment when the inner sanctum was about to be revealed, the second chamber entered.

The door was heavy but swung open easily since it was a well-machined, hinged, and ornate metal door. The YALE logo was prominent in the beautiful etched pattern design. Clearly a work of fine craftsmanship. More of the musty decades-old air mixed with the cold air in the storage facility. It was not unpleasant-smelling, just not fresh.

It had an air of alcohol, old paint, and papers. Like a museum, a wine cellar, and an old library.

The appraiser came in from his interview and walked to the open wall passage. In it, he saw paintings on the walls along with old antique guns and rifles. There weren't enough weapons to arm an army, but enough for a small militia to defend itself. There were even a few blunderbuses and flintlocks that dated back to the Revolutionary War and before. There was also another safe with no key or instructions. The reporter who had signed off on the live broadcast for the time being said, "This is like a Russian nesting doll, which they had also found along with Faberge eggs, with the other boxes. All stolen.

The Appraiser looked at the painting on the wall and said, "I'm not surprised, but I believe those are stolen paintings too. I'll have to do some research but it looks like these portraits were done by Gilbert Stuart the man that did the unfinished portrait of George Washington. As he said that he noticed a small but distinctive one of The First President. Yep here is finished one of Washington. Well I'll add them to the list!, as he jotted down the items.

There was a wine rack on one wall with dozens of bottles of wine, dating back to the late 1780. There was also some whiskey bottles and kegs from prohibition and it was rare rye whiskey. The Appraiser said "I am no wine expert but I'll be they are valuable!"

The personal secretary walked in after a call from the estate staff. She said, "Well, they found Mr Samuels Duisenberg abandoned in the parking lot of the exclusive boys' boarding school he attended. The Indian motorcycle was found on the nearby grounds of Hill Top Farms in Suffield, Connecticut, the estate of George Hendee the Indian motorcycle founder. Someone said they saw a Checker Cab pick him up there. The Checker cab was well known as the first A series off the line. Figures Mr Samuel would want his last long ride to be in a vintage cab." The cab ride was six hours. He went far away from the estate, but I guess that was where he had to leave the Indian and see his old school!

She looked at the wine bottles and said, "Holy crap!" The bottle with the Th. J etched on it is a bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild 1787. The Th. J was Thomas Jefferson's! It's one of only a few and is worth a few hundred thousand dollars. Mr Samuel and his family were big wine drinkers and collectors. In fact, his first and only wife's family owned Chateau Margaux they had a bottle of wine owned by Thomas Jefferson, too. It was worth five hundred thousand, but someone dropped it. Mr Samuels was not meant to have a wife, believe me, and their marriage soured and withered on the vine so to speak, with no fruit to harvest! Sad because I'll bet Mr Samuels would have made a great Dad, but a bad husband. He was very persnickety, as you might be able to tell. I know he had some of her wines stashed somewhere. But they were not in our estate wine cellar.

The only thing not opened was the antique lock box. It too had a hasp and lock. The Manager realized the key in the envelope must be for this lock. It was not a Yale lock and predated theirs by centuries. This was from the Renaissance, and no maker was marked. The Appraiser just looked and shook his head and jotted down a note.

The key fit snugly and turned easily. Clearly, a well-made Renaissance lock and key.

They swung the lock box open, and in it was an autograph book with signatures of luminaries from way back when. On one page was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's signature with a green ink line struck through his signature.

They also found a rare stamp collection book with a one-page section clearly missing a stamp.

And finally, they found a rare coin book with mint copies of large denomination, solid gold coins.

The content of the second chamber and the pyramid reveal was worthy of King Tut. It was now cataloged, and the mystery, although not solved, was exposed.

The Detective from the hospital arrived just as they were wrapping up and told them all about Billy McKeever and the "passing the time" eye witnesses. They were all slowly nodding as if there was no place in their overwhelmed brains to add any more food for thought. They were full!

The Detective said that Dr Billy McKeever was instructed to ask them all to go to the estate and told them that Mr. Samuel's last will was under the statute of his Mother. They should all meet there tomorrow. He also told them that the Checker cab driver, who was the last to see Sam alive, was told to meet there, too. Apparently, he had a surprise. The entourage of overly eye-popped spectators wondered what could surprise them. They would find out tomorrow.

## Chapter 16

As the sun rose over the estate of Sam Samuels or whatever name he was known by, the fire had burned out, but the fire about his life was just beginning. News about his death and him as a wealthy raconteur spread like wildfire. It made for good storytelling, and much intrigue was still in the offing.

His Personal Secretary got Sam's last will from under the statue of his Mother and put the small birth blanket around her arms as before, then added the others from the storage facility. Sam's Mom statue looked like she was about to do the laundry with all the birth blankets in her arms. Mr Samuels Personal Secretary smiled and nodded to the statue of Sam's Mom. "Your boy did OK," she whispered and felt Sam's mom's nose. It really was just like Sam's, and she never noticed it. But she had seen his face change a time or two as well.

Billy McKeever arrived first and introduced himself. He told her of the plastic surgeries he performed and that they were not due to medical reasons, as Sam had said. He also told her more about the life of sophisticated crime that her boss had led. He told her, "Never answer any questions from law enforcement. And say he kept you in the dark." "Well, he did," "I know," Billy said, "But still they will pry! There is a lot of money at stake, and Mr Samuels has a law firm that will navigate this!"

"Say nothing!"

He stopped as a few more of the press and Appraisers entered the room.

There was a beautiful buffet in Sam's large study and display room. They saw Sam's Mothers with all the blankets in her arms and smiled. The staff from the hospital and two detectives had arrived as well. The Checker cab driver and his wife arrived, and he said

"I brought his Indian Motorcycle back; it is by the garage. In the saddlebag, I found a small envelope sealed in wax. He handed it to Billy McKeever and said, "Here it's addressed to you!" Billy put it in his breast pocket and said, "Thanks!"

"What shall I do with this piece of paper, he asked Billy. "Just hold on to it for now, until." "Until when?" the Cabby asked. "You'll know," Billy said. The Cabby's wife smiled. She liked this intrigue. They all mingled for a bit and enjoyed Sam's fine hospitality and beautiful things in his amazing study.

Sam's Attorney arrived and announced himself as such. "I represent Mr Samuels and his estate and all. I understand you have Mr Samuels' last will."

"Yes, here it is." His Secretary said and handed it to him.

He opens it and reads the "of sound mind" and reads more about Sam's father, who was the son of a tycoon who owned the massive mansion and the carriage house that was turned into a storage facility. Sam admitted to all the crimes with the "Thanks, I'll be in touch" stickers, and how he kept his underworldly acquired gains and his ill-gotten booty gains in a storage facility.

It went on to explain that Sam had only fleeting memories of the grand estate, which he vaguely remembered before being torn down, and the times his father would speak of its robber baron opulence and his youth. His Father told him, "There is a fortune in the storage facility, add to it!" So Sam did.

It was also revealed that Samuel's family owned the storage facility but never let its ownership be known. They formed a company to provide a corporate veil.

Sam had no heirs; he was an only child with none of his own. The Attorney read on silently, then stopped. "The will says his assets are to be distributed as per the instructions in the attached enclosed origami envelope." There was a very unique outline and corner holders, but nothing in them. He looked up in surprise and said, "The envelope is missing!!!" Everyone gasped except the Cabby and Billy. The Attorney looked flummoxed, which only happens when one is beyond bewildered! The suspenseful moment only lasted a moment as the Cabby's wife whispered to him I think this is 'Until' - tell them.

The Cabby timidly spoke up, for an ex Marine, and said, "He gave me this, and handed over the refolded origami paper form, which the Appraiser recognized. That's a lucky origami star. The cabby said, "Yes, it looked like that when it was fully unfolded."

The Attorney opened it, and the two smaller origami pieces fell out that contained the little plastic stickers. And once all the folders were opened, it revealed a large paper star shape with the list for him to read, which he did.

He looked at the cabbie and said, "Well, you, sir, you are a lucky man; there is more for you. We will have to draw up documents later for you to sign."

As he got to the item about returning the stolen goods to their rightful owner, the Attorney stopped and asked, "Have all the items been cataloged?"

The Appraiser said, "Well, I did my best to keep up. Yes, for the most part, but I have more digging to do.

“Yes, you will. It says here further in the will that you are to stay with the collection if you so please and be the Archivist for his Estate.”

The Appraiser grabbed his chest like he was having a heart attack, but didn't.

Billy McKeever, who has not let on about his surgical involvement, said I would be happy to help find the watch owners if that works for you! The Attorney said, “Sure, we can go over all that later, too.”

“Well, it seems my client had many secret things he didn't tell me. I guess I was not privileged enough for the client-attorney privilege. I suppose he knew what he was doing, and it is my job to keep as much of what he has for the world to enjoy, as per his wishes. He also left quite a nice gift to all his employees and asked if you would like to staff the museum; he wants to endow you with a job for life! The staff who were on the side listening in all got excited.

The Attorney told them all that “Since all of the 'relocated' loot will be returned to the original locations and owners, they would likely have no reason to pursue legal action against the estate. I hope, he said. “However, dealing with insurance companies can be quite the hassle, which will likely take years to resolve, if ever.”

The other items that were not claimed, due to the reticence of the owner to file a claim or to admit their loss, which often was a theft in its own right, or due to the negative publicity and the private eyeing and hot finger pointing, would all be going to the stated location, as per Sam's will. There were also some hot items from the wealthy klan of overpaying auction winners. One piece, a valuable painting that had been won by a billionaire, only to have gone missing, was hanging on

the storage safe walls. If it were to be returned, it would clearly start a lawsuit. That too would take years to settle.

The Appraiser pointed out that many of the authentic antiques in Sam's storage locker were still in the museums, which meant Sam had made museum-quality replicas and absconded with the originals. "Yes," the Attorney said, "You will have to ferret that out as part of your job."

"OK. So I get to travel? Around the world," said the Attorney. "Be still, my heart," the Appraiser said as he held his chest again.

The others said Wow but they got plenty too. They all knew Sam had it all covered. He was the Pink Panther, Robin Hood, and Santa all rolled into one. He is a nice man, not always a good one, as he would say.

As they all mingled around Sam's Mother's statue and discussed their newfound good fortune courtesy of Sam, Billy wondered what was in the envelope addressed to him. He went into Sam's private bathroom with all its antique plumbing fixtures and appointments. There was even an original Thomas Crapper toilet. "Holy crap! This guy was incredible," he said as he sat on the British flushing throne. He wondered if this crapper was stolen. "Oh well," he thought. He reached into his pocket and took out the envelope. He looked it over, then opened it. It was a single stamp in a protective sleeve and a note. It said, "I paid a little visit to FDR's Hyde Park estate and found this in his hiding place!" It's a Blue Guiana 1c Magenta stamp." The note went on to say, "I knew he stole my stamp! Well, it's mine again and not his anymore. Even a President can be a lying thief! I'll bet they will never say it's missing. You keep it. It's worth 8 million. Thanks!" The Conductor.

Billy pulled the chain on the above tank toilet and walked into the study, and saw the happiest of people. Sam had something for everyone there. He was a very generous man. "I wish Sam were here to see this, he thought.

Sam was alone in the morgue. It took Sam 48 years to get to where he needed to be. He lived the first 48 years getting everywhere else. He could tell you stories, well, he once could. Now his stories were all behind him, except this last story. He knew he and his good and not-so-good deeds would make the news once they found out what he had done, and then he could rest in peace. Sam made it home on the right track and right on time, according to the schedule. Sam made it back to this place - to his birthplace. He wanted to be alone, all alone, like he was on his birthday. He did have people who loved him and cared for him. He cared deeply for them, too. But Sam knew you can't take it with you and had deliberately planned his death with the same kind of meticulous precision he had lived his life. He wanted to be an unknown dying man in need of care. That was part of the plan - a great plan, he thought, as he lay there in the morgue, even after death, he was aware of his memories. He had wondered for several years what it would be like to be dead. Now he knew. "Not bad," he thought, "I can rest in peace now, passing the time and watching!"

